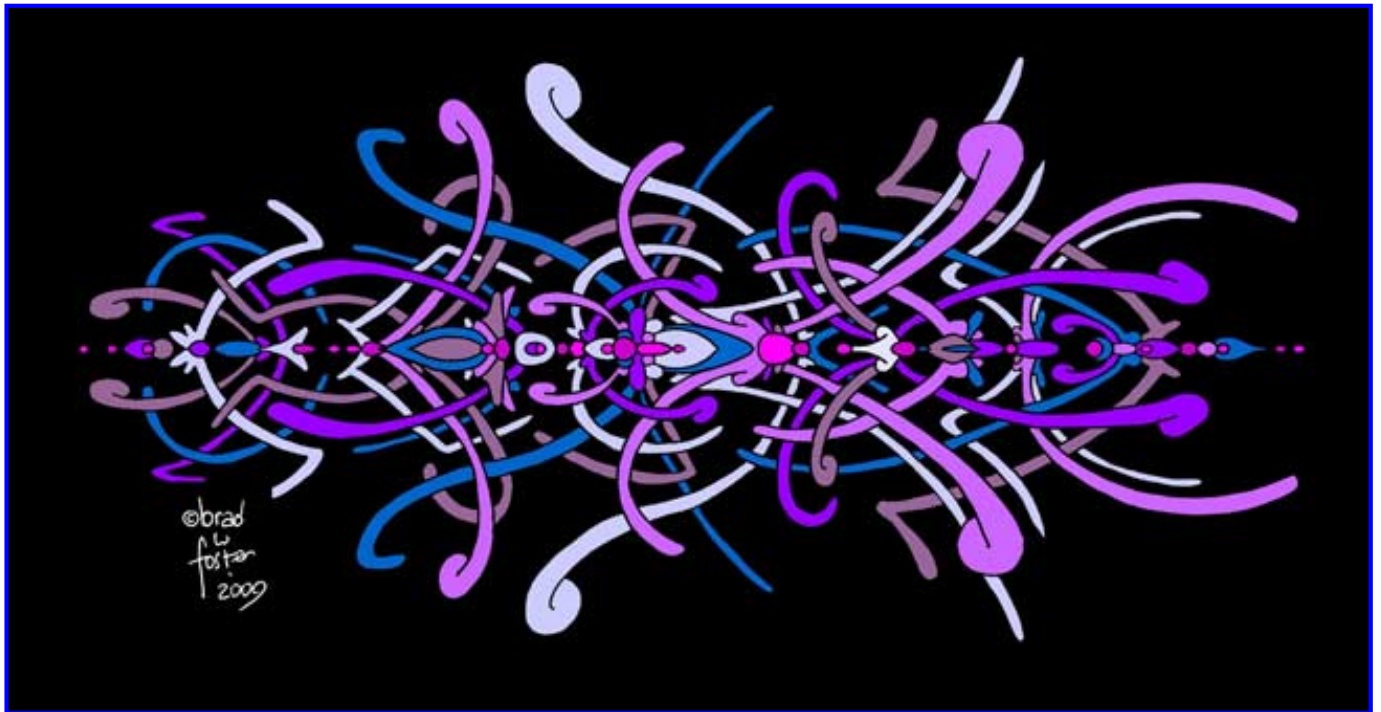




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“Purple Haze,” by Brad Foster

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When writers crack up, when they really end up in the nut house, is when they can't do it any more.
—Kurt Vonnegut

THIS ISSUE OF eI is in memory of Mike Glicksohn.

#

EGOBOO: Last minute good stuff....

Just as I was closing out this issue of eI, I discovered the following review of one of my old sleazebooks that was posted only this past weekend, while I was away participating in the March 27th LA Paperback Show and sale. During that event, Michael Hemmingson, by prearrangement, met me and had me sign his copy of *Bayou Sinners* for him...the very same copy he used and pictured in:

<http://vintagesleazepaperbacks.wordpress.com/>

And, to add insult to injury, he didn't even tell me that he had posted this almost rave (Arrogant! Moi?) review only the day before. Go figure!

#

As always, everything in this issue of eI beneath my byline is part of my in-progress rough-draft memoirs. As such, I would appreciate any corrections, revisions, extensions, anecdotes, photographs, jpegs, or what have you sent to me at earl@earlkemp.com and thank you in advance for all your help.

Bill Burns is *jefe* around here. If it wasn't for him, nothing would get done. He inspires activity. He deserves

some really great rewards. It is a privilege and a pleasure to have him working with me to make *eI* whatever it is.

Other than Bill Burns, Dave Locke, and Robert Lichtman, these are the people who made this issue of *eI* possible: Victor J. Banis, Bruce Brenner, Ed Gorman, Jacques Hamon, Hari Kunzru, Christopher M. O'Brien, Robert Speray, and Jerome Winter.

ARTWORK: This issue of *eI* features original artwork by Ditmar and Brad Foster.

...Return to sender, address unknown.... 45

The Official *eI* Letters to the Editor Column

By Earl Kemp

We get letters. Some parts of some of them are printable. Your letter of comment is most wanted via email to earl@earlkemp.com or by snail mail to P.O. Box 369, PMB 205, Tecate, CA 91980 and thank you.

Also, please note, I observe DNQs and make arbitrary and capricious deletions from these letters in order to remain on topic.

This is the official Letter Column of *eI*, and following are a few quotes from a few of those letters concerning the last issue of *eI*. All this in an effort to get you to write letters of comment to *eI* so you can look for them when they appear here.

Hey, you. Yes, you. I want to thank you (plural) for those great LoCs you sent me. I especially liked your perceptive comments regarding my all Harlan Ellison issue of *eI*. And I extra-special liked the additional anecdotes you shared about him.

What I didn't like was your (plural) forbidding me to quote from your letters and to share your delightful memories with the rest of my readers. Naturally, I understand your reluctance to do so but that doesn't mean I like it.

Needless to say, your letters of comment have been deleted and no longer exist.

—Earl Kemp

#

Tuesday February 1, 2011:

Chris Garcia: Harlan Ellison? The man had the good taste enough to say that I was the Devil, so you have to admire him to some degree. In recent months I've been looking at his scripts, including *Valley of the Dolls*, which I really do think is far better with the ending they forced onto it than the realistic one that Harlan wrote. This is a rarity, the only other example I can come up with is *Angels & Demons*, where the book version is completely absurd, and then the film's version was more realistic and thus failed. Strange things, screenplays.

I was hoping to go to the Eaton Conference after enjoying the 2009 version, but alas, it was the weekend that we put CorFlu on. Such is the way of life.

So, Chris, whose fault was that? And then Harlan Ellison canceled out of the event.

—Earl Kemp

To tell the truth, I'm much more into Harlan as a personality than I am of him as an artist. It's my thing, I admit that he's got some of the most important writing of the last century, but really, a lot of it leaves me cold after a burn-fire opening paragraph. Perhaps that's his plan. I am a huge fan of *Dangerous Visions* and *Again, Dangerous Visions*. These are the two most important anthologies of Science Fiction and Fantasy ever compiled. <Chris goes through memory of any others that might qualify... None Found?> and his personal vision, perhaps the most dangerous of all, is what comes through in every piece, and not just through the introduction. The Vonnegut piece "The Big Space Fuck," is a personal favorite of mine.

In a way, I should be pissed at you for this issue. It's my dream project to do Harlan Stories: *An Anthology of Stories about a Dangerous Human*. I was waiting until he passed into that dark realm where he couldn't sue me for publishing the truth! Go figure that the **Best Fanzine in the World Today** (emphasis added –EK) would trump me and do a far better job than I could ever pull off! Leigh Ann Hildebrand, possibly the biggest Harlan fan I know, has always promised that she would write Harlan Porn if I ever ended up putting it together.

Rob Latham's piece was probably my favorite because it echoes many of my own thoughts on *Dangerous Visions* and Harlan's place in the SF Universe. I've always loved "Riders of the Purple Wage" and think it's one of the best pieces of Sexy SF ever written, though it's only the second best story in the collection and fourth best of all the *Dangerous Visions* stories.

I'm a huge typewriter fan, but sadly Typewriter Fandom (which has some really fun eZines these days) has priced me out of many of the ones I'd like to acquire, so now all I have is an IBM Selectric II with a couple of extra type balls. I feel so ashamed of the fact that it's my only typewriter.

Some lovely personal recollections, too. Ted's and Richard's are probably my faves.

Also, somehow, my doppelganger's name is Bud Webster....

Great stuff and I can't wait to see what you do next!

Wednesday February 2, 2011:

Brad Foster: Just got finished looking in on *e154* today. Loved the mix of Ellison stories. Those have always been around, but somehow reading all of them now, with the mix of comments about people who didn't want to say anything, suddenly put me in mind of people being scared to draw cartoons of Mohammad. I don't know where to go with that comparison, beyond simply throwing it out there for others to play with!

My own fleeting brushes with Ellison were ages ago. The first was at a comics/sf convention in Dallas, mid seventies. I was standing at a table of books in the dealer's room, minding my own business looking through things, when the guy standing next to me starts ranting to the dealer something about "How dare this idiot dedicate that crap to me." (Or words to that affect.) He left, I picked up the book (no recollection now of what it was), and saw the dedication to "Harlan Ellison." Ahh, so THAT was the legendary Harlan. Good thing I didn't say anything.

Years later, someone asked me to draw a portrait of Harlan for an article in a small press publication. Said he would have to run any drawings past Harlan before using them. Again, all I really remember at this point is that somewhere in the article there was a comparison (or contrast, something) between Ellison and Jiminy Cricket, so I did a drawing of him with Jiminy on his shoulder. Evidently this did not go over well, but the only response I got directly was the editor sending a letter with a "Sorry, we're going another way." I think I sold the original to someone a few years ago, since I knew it wasn't anything I would ever be able to make any use of.

Thursday February 3, 2011:

Robert Speray: The latest *eI* is full of stuff to read. I'm working on it. It's dense. The link to YouTube took me away for hours as I got distracted by all the Harlan Ellison ones, including the stuff about his early stories being related to the *Terminator* movie.

Friday, February 4, 2011:

Rylan Bachman: Reading your latest issue of *eI* on efanazines I thought I'd forward notes I made regarding a book signing when Harlan Ellison was at Dreamhaven comics in Minnesota. I hope you find them amusing.

Notable standing in line people include a New Orleans Katrina refugee 55+-year-old woman named Cinnamon. Harlan said to her something like, "Were you a stripper back in the day?" being half sarcastic but half nostalgic at the name, recalling a New Orleans stripper named Cinnamon. She said YES! so he was amazed at how 30 years later this stripper he lusted after meets him in Minnesota, and she not realizing he saw her back then.

A little girl (maybe 3 or 4 years old) commented to him that, "My ancestors were from Ireland," and he replied with an accent, "my ancestors were from Ireland."

"NO, MINE WERE!" cried the little girl. He then told a poop joke to calm her down involving a bunny and a bear and the woods that usually goes over well with young children (according to him) but it flew over her head.

Tuesday February 22, 2011:

Lloyd Penney: Another *eI* is here, issue 54, entering its tenth volume! Well done, and keep going, please. Great Stiles cover. You'd think in the 24th century, Cupid could get himself a more up-to-date wardrobe, though...diapers are so 22nd-century...

Have I voted for TAFF? Sure have. I will get Paypal straightened out at some point, but not today. Cash still works wonders in this later day.

My loc...another trip to Mr. Batta's store is in order, but I found a small used bookstore on the way to work, a short walk away from our local SF bookstore, and found some Sheckleys I didn't know existed. I will be back, in Ahnold fashion.

Harlan Ellison...I've enjoyed his work, I've never met him, and I wasn't impressed with his performance at the 2006 Hugos. I think our local convention asked him to be a Guest of Honour one year, and we got a very rude rejection. I will say that I have a DVD of *Dreams with Sharp Teeth*, and found it...illuminating. Perhaps he's always been the street kid from Cleveland, and never learned to deal with others, at least as much as the others want to be treated. I think I will deal with the great stories, and merely acknowledge the author. As he said, if he'd been guilty of all he's been accused of, he'd be the new Hannibal Lecter. I wish him happiness and long life, and if he's got some more good stories in him, he'll keep me as a reader.

Wish I could write up some more, Earl, but the above paragraph seems to sum up all I can say about the subject. I am sure I will have some more to write about with the next issue. Looking forward to it.

True terror is to wake up one morning and discover your high school class is running the country.
—Kurt Vonnegut

An Interview with William Lawrence Hamling

by Christopher M. O'Brien

For over a decade I have been researching early science fiction fandom and the magazines from which the movement sprang. Initially this revolved around an abortive book of autobiographical pieces by individuals involved with the genre pulp magazines. Finding few of the authors and artists left living and those that were unwilling to contribute to such an effort at their advanced age, I in turn began contacting persons of the "First Fandom" generation. Gradually I became more interested in the original fans of this material and their accomplishments.

By a quirk of fate, several of the fans-turned-publishers proved to be the longest-lived. One individual, who is covered in a number of the standard reference works in the field, but not to any great extent, is William Lawrence Hamling. Hamling, born June 14, 1921 in Chicago, was an active fan who edited the fanzine *Stardust*, containing material by professional authors and went on to edit and publish professional science fiction magazines and lines of erotic paperbacks and periodicals.

I conducted the following telephone interview with Hamling in March 2009. Knowing of his long association with Hamling, and that he had run material on him in the past, I sent the piece to Mr. Kemp at *eI*, and he agreed to run it in his ezine.

O'Brien: You discovered SF in 1935. Do you remember what the first magazine you read was?

Hamling: *Amazing Stories*.

O'B: I understand that you learned the printing trade at Chicago's Albert G. Lane Technical High School.

H: No, I didn't learn the printing trade.

O'B: No? What about *The Lane Tech Prep*?

H: I was the editor of the school magazine, yes. But that's not the printing trade.

O'B: Okay, well I think I might have gotten that from Sam Moskowitz's book [1].

H: I don't know.

O'B: I understand that *The Lane Tech Prep* had some science fiction stories in it.

H: Yeah, I wrote a few and published them in the magazine.

O'B: They were just by you?

H: I would say, yeah.



L-R, standing: William Lawrence Hamling, Erle Melvin Korshak, Willy Ley
L-R, seated: Olga Ley, Frances Hamling
World Science Fiction Convention, New Orleans, 1951.
Photograph by Ben Jason, provided by John L. Coker, III

O'B: I mean, you didn't use anything by any of the other fans you were friendly with at the time?

H: No.

O'B: You had a story, "War With Jupiter" co-written with Mark Reinsberg, [2] in the May 1939 *Amazing Stories*.

H: Well I wrote it. He supplied the idea for it, and I sold it to Ray Palmer [3] at Ziff-Davis [4] for *Amazing Stories*.

O'B: When did you meet Palmer?

H: I sold the story to him in 1938 and I met him a couple of years earlier than that, about '36, '37. Shit, I'm eighty-eight years old!

O'B: How did you come to edit and produce the program book for the 2nd WorldCon [5]?

H: That was with Korshak [6] and Reinsberg.

O'B: Do you remember anything about what was involved in putting it together?

H: No. It didn't strike me as being very meaningful. I don't know how to answer that because it didn't mean anything.

O'B: This must have meant something to you in your life at the time though, right?

H: I was a science fiction fan, that's all it meant.

O'B: While you attended the University of Chicago in 1940, you started the fanzine *Stardust* [7]. Why did it end?

H: I got old enough to outgrow it.

O'B: It had some interesting contents, profiles of the writers of the time, etc.

H: At the time, but my memory is faulty on meaning for all of that stuff.

O'B: These fanzines are interesting as historical documents.

H: To you people, but not to me.

O'B: I understand that you formed the Chicago Science Fiction League chapter too.

H: With Korshak and Reinsberg, and also another fan named Richard Meyer [8].

O'B: Were you a *Weird Tales* reader?

H: Oh, yes.

O'B: Did you ever meet Farnsworth Wright [9]?

H: Never met him, no. He was older than me (laughs).

O'B: You went to the first WorldCon [10]?

H: Yeah, but I don't remember any of the incidents from it.

O'B: This is going back seventy years, I understand.

H: And all of that stuff was meaningful then but over the years lost its importance in my life.

O'B: After college, you worked for Ziff-Davis.

H: I worked for Ziff-Davis for five years. I left there as managing editor of their fiction group.

O'B: Did you meet Richard Shaver [11]?

H: Oh, hell he was a close friend of mine.

O'B: Really? How was he in person?

H: Oh, he was a nice guy. A little deluded of course.

O'B: He really believed in these things that he wrote about, I guess.

H: Oh, absolutely. A very serious guy on the "Deros", and etcetera.

O'B: You never believed it for a minute.

H: It's a lot of bullshit.

O'B: Was Jerry Siegel [12] the art director of Ziff-Davis at this time?

H: He was not. There never was a guy at Ziff-Davis during my time frame named Jerry Siegel.

O'B: You remained in Chicago (Evanston) when Ziff-Davis moved to New York.

H: That's correct.

O'B: And then you started to publish *Imagination*?

H: Well I started to publish it in 1950 [13]. I was still at Ziff-Davis in 1950 but Bernie Davis [14], the president of the firm, gave me permission to still be working at Ziff-Davis and an outside publishing unit.

O'B: Now when does Publishers Development Corporation come into it?

H: Well, it was in that same time frame. Z-D was gonna move away and PDC needed a magazine division and they had hired the editor of *Flying* [15] magazine at Ziff-Davis, Curt Fuller [16]. Curt talked to me and said would I join him at this publishing operation for six months or a year while he established a new magazine there called *Modern Man* [17], and I said, "Sure I'll do it as a favor to you," and so I got permission at Ziff-



Frances and William Lawrence Hamling. World Science Fiction Convention, Philadelphia, 1953. Photograph by Charles Harri, provided by John L. Coker, III)

Davis to do that too.

O'B: What made you get out of publishing?

H: What? I've never been out of it.

O'B: Are you still putting out stuff now?

H: No, not any more.

O'B: Were you publishing anything after the 1970's?

H: Really, no.

O'B: You don't go to the conventions or keep up with science fiction, I guess.

H: No, no. I haven't followed science fiction for many years. I wrote a lot of science fiction. I used a lot of pen names like "Alexander Blade" [18]. I published hundreds of thousands of words under "Alexander Blade" and other pen names. I've been a writer and an editor and a publisher. I've been a highly successful publisher over the years. I've got a book in the Truman Library [19].

O'B: Oh, really?

H: Well, yes. Nobody ever asks me about that.

O'B: What's the book called?

H: *Truman and the Pendergasts* [20]. The president gave me permission to have a writer visit him for a couple of weeks and out of his research, I published the book and the president then ordered a couple of copies in Moroccan leather and they're ensconced in the Truman Library.

[THIS IS NOT the way I remember how this book got terribly screwed up. I wrote about it in "Remembering Regency" <http://efanzines.com/EK/eI11/index.htm> where the truth was told already. —Earl Kemp]

O'B: So would you say that's something you'd be most proud of?

H: I mention it in passing. I did other things than science fiction. Hell, I even published sex books and was highly successful in the marketplace too, I might add.

O'B: I also have that you wrote for *Mammoth Adventure*, *Mammoth Mystery*, and *Mammoth Detective* [21] magazines.

H: All of those magazines. Seven different magazines at least, sometimes there'd be two cover stories under my pen names from "S.M. Tenneshaw [22]", "Bradley Howell" [?] so forth and so on, over the years.

O'B: So what would you say overall about these things that you put out?

H: What do you mean put out?

O'B: The different magazines and the works that you authored.

H: You mean in science fiction? *Space Travel*, *Imagination*, *Imaginative Tales*. Those were the main product

line.

O'B: Right, but what would you say about them overall as compared to the competition at the time?

H: What would I say? I don't know. I liked 'em.

1 Moskowitz, Sam. *The Immortal Storm: A History of Science Fiction Fandom*. Atlanta: Atlanta Science Fiction Association Press, 1954.

2 Mark Reinsberg (1923--1981)

3 Raymond A(rthur) Palmer (1910–1977)

4 Ziff-Davis Publishing Company

5 Chicon I held September 1-2 1940 at Chicago's Hotel Chicagoan

6 Erle Melvin Korshak (1923-)

7 *Stardust*, which H edited from March to November 1940 carried fiction by Robert Moore Williams, L. Sprague de Camp, and Jack Williamson. Vol. 1. No. 2. May 1940. (p. 15.) featured "Advance Vision" a profile of Robert A. Heinlein by Forrest J Ackerman. See Moskowitz's *The Immortal Storm* (p. 239), Harry Warner's Jr.'s *All Our Yesterdays: An Informal History of Science Fiction Fandom in the Forties*. Chicago: Advent Publishers, Inc. 1969. (p. 282) and the installment of Harry Warner's "All Our Yesterdays- STARDUST" (from *Focal Point*. No. 17. Nov. 1970) <<http://efanzines.com/AOY/AOY-33.htm>>

8 Richard I. Meyer (1923-2009)

9 Farnsworth Wright (1888-1940) edited *Weird Tales* from November 1924 to March 1940. *Weird Tales* was published out of Chicago from 1924-38.

10 The first World Science Fiction Convention, Nycon I held July 2-4, 1939 at Caravan Hall in Manhattan

11 Richard S(harpe) Shaver (1907-1975) whose saga of a warring subterranean civilization was inaugurated with "I Remember Lemuria!" in the March 1945 *Amazing Stories*

12 Jerome "Jerry" Siegel (1914-1996) Ohio fan and co-creator of "Superman"

13 The first issue of *Imagination* was dated October 1950.

14 Ziff-Davis co-founder Bernard George Davis (1906–1972)

15 *Flying*, a long-running aviation periodical

16 Curtis G. Fuller (1912-1991), co-founder of *Fate* magazine, served as vice president of Greenleaf Publishing Co., 1956-57.

17 *Modern Man: The Adult Picture Magazine* ran from 1952-(?), described by Harlan Ellison™ as "arguably the first true men's magazine" ("Introduction to "The Howling Man" in: Beaumont, Charles. *Charles Beaumont: Selected Stories*. Ed. Roger Anker. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, 1988, p. 112)

18 "Alexander Blade" was a "house name" used by H, Robert Silverberg, Edmond Hamilton, John Jakes, Howard Browne, and others. H also wrote Westerns as "Richard H. Nelson".

19 The Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum in Independence, Missouri

20 Mason, Frank. *Truman and the Pendergasts*. Evanston, IL: Regency Books, 1963. (revised by Algis Budrys and Earl Kemp); Tom Pendergast (1870-1945)

21 The *Mammoth* line was a product of Ziff-Davis.

22 "S.M. Tenneshaw" was another "house name" employed by H, Hamilton, Jakes, Silverberg, Milton Lesser, Frank M. Robinson, etc.

Am I proposing a redistribution of wealth? You bet, since the wealth is being redistributed in any case, and often most crazily, and against the national interest. Am I proposing that we tax and tax and spend and spend? Yes, I am. Virtually every transaction is being skimmed already, and some private persons have done this at such confiscatory rates as to become as rich as smaller sovereign nations in a few years' time. And they spend and spend. On what? On what?

—Kurt Vonnegut, An acceptance speech for Michael Dukakis, "My fellow Americans: what I'd say if they asked me," *The Nation*, July 16, 1988

Belladonna*

by Victor J. Banis

Tanya had a job to do. That's all this was. Nothing personal. Just a job. Or, really, a prelude, the first step to the real thing. But it was an important first step. She had to do it right.



Victor Banis

It was unreal. Gordon Hartman was drunk, a little too. Not so drunk he didn't know she was beautiful, in a cheap kind of way. That was okay. He liked them cheap. He liked them petite, too, with long dark hair that spilled, like hers, all the way down to that pouty little butt that was practically in his face. She was ahead of him on the stairs. He could have leaned a little forward and taken a bite out of her buns if he wanted. Her skimpy skirt lifted with each upward step she took on those skyscraper heels, giving him off and on glimpses of lace edged panties. Pussy pink. A favorite of his.

His impatient hand reached for her butt, fondled it. When she looked over her shoulder, grinning down at him, that long hair tickled the backs of his fingers. His cock tented his trousers, so hard it was almost painful.

She paused near the top of the stairs, turned toward him. Excited, he took her in his arms and kissed her, pushing his aching dick against her, his hands getting bolder as his breath got more ragged. She reached down to give his throbbing erection a squeeze.

Jesus, she was as hot as he was. He almost shot a load there and then. He loved it when they got all hot and bothered over him, over his dick. His hand got bolder still, felt between them.

Suddenly he took his mouth from hers, his eyes wide, surprised. "Shit, you're not a real..." he started to say, but she jerked his head down, kissed him again, stemming his words. He felt something against his chest, something hard wedged between them, but there was scarcely time for it to register before she shot him.

The gun was small caliber, only a twenty-two, but at this close range, aimed as precisely as it was at his heart, it was enough to kill him instantly. The sound was muffled between their bodies, came out little more than a pop, hardly any more noise than a balloon bursting.

She held on to his jacket to keep him from toppling down the stairs, let him drop slowly, almost noiselessly to the tiled steps, on his back, his chest with the bullet hole and the blood beginning to flow turned upward, before she let go. She didn't want him tumbling to the bottom, messing up her handiwork. Finally, she turned, stepping over his body, hurrying down the stairs.

She was in the building's central atrium, a long rectangle open to the sky. It was a big, sprawling apartment complex, apartments on three levels, tiled walkways past the doors, stucco half walls overlooking the atrium. The building's main entrance opened from the street into a foyer off the atrium and hallways ran from the foyer in both directions to the side gates at the opposite ends of the complex. It was the sort of building in which delivery people and new tenants got lost.

"Break out the bloodhounds," the manager said a lot. It was an old building joke.

She was halfway across the atrium when she heard the front gate in the foyer close with a wrought-iron clang.



Someone coming in from the street. She stopped dead-still by the gently splashing fountain, waiting, heard footsteps cross the foyer in her direction

#.

Jeremy Clark came through the open arch into the atrium, was halfway across the atrium, looking down, before he became aware of her and looked up. She still had the gun in her hand. His eyes went straight to it, and widened.

She burst into movement, ran past him, her heels clattering on the tile floor. He was too startled, or maybe too frightened by the gun, to try to stop her. He only stared after her. The tattoo of her heels faded down one of the side corridors. A metal gate clanged.

Above him, at the top of the stairs, a door opened, and Jake Acheson said, "I thought I heard a shot...."

*Excerpt from *Deadly Nightshade* by Victor J. Banis, available from MLRPress.com, in print or e-edition.

Or with the computer mania. What you can do is, you can retreat from it. We were talking about if you don't like life, you can retreat from it. If you don't like all this technological stuff, you can put together some kind of life apart from all of it. Of course, the grotesque example of somebody that did that, long before there were technologies, was Henry David Thoreau. But he was protecting his soul, and his personality. It's harder and harder to do that now.

—Kurt Vonnegut, Star News article, 6/00

The Cosmic Space Club

by Ed Gorman

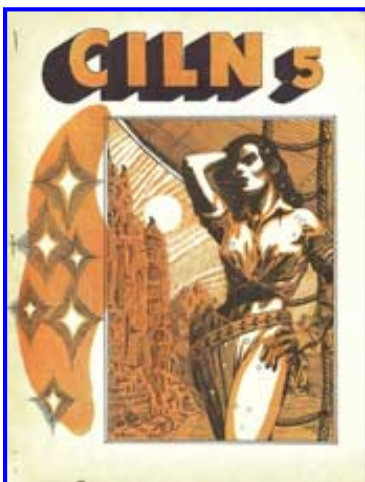
“A year or so after that I joined (Wilson) Tucker and Ed Gorman, a fan from Cedar Rapids, on a trip to the MidWestCon in Cincinnati. We drove in my family’s Dodge, nearly skidding off a road in Indiana, talking all the way about fandom in a giddy rapid-fire exchange of inside jargon. At a motel in Cincinnati, I made people laugh with my reproductions of Bob and Ray routines, and drank a little beer, which felt like a lot of beer to an inexperienced drinker, and—here is the earth-shaking part—I actually met Buck and Juanita Coulson, Dick and Pat Lupoff, and Harlan Ellison! The Coulsons struck me as two of the nicest people I had ever met, the kind of people where you would like to move into their spare room, and the astonishingly long run of their *Yandro* was one of the monuments of fandom. The Lupoffs were enormously funny and smart New Yorkers—that city that the novels of Thomas Wolfe had forever colored in my daydreams. Harlan was—how old? Twenty? Young and cocky, with the color proofs for the cover of his new paperback that Berkeley Books was about to publish, and as he showed me the glossy reproduction, I knew envy of a desperately sincere kind.” --Roger Ebert



Roger Ebert

(To read the entire article about Roger Ebert and science fiction fandom, a remarkable piece indeed, here’s the link: http://www.asimovs.com/issue_0501/thoughtexperiments.shtml)

The 1961 trip Roger describes proved to be the finale of my six-year run as an active fan. During those years I published a number of fanzines beginning with a hectograph (raise your hand if you even know what that is) two-pager that was thankfully just about impossible to read. I would quote it here but now’s the time to mention that I’m recalling all my zines from memory. The last time we moved, seventeen years ago, we thought we’d hired the moving company known as the “Gentlemen.” Somehow we ended up with the “Thugs.” A lot of things got broken and seven large boxes were lost, two of the boxes containing copies of my fanzines plus stories I’d written for nowhere literary magazines and a few things for downscale men’s magazines. All I have left of my endeavors was a copy of a nifty two-color cover George Barr did for me in (I think) 1962, my swan song as a publisher.



Many years later I would meet and become friends with Howard Browne, the editor of the juvenile magazines *Amazing* and *Fantastic*. Even though as a thirteen year old I was reading Bradbury and Asimov and Heinlein and Clark and Sturgeon, I could not resist the siren call of reading Browne’s magazines—nor Bill Hamling’s imitations, *Imagination* and *Imaginative Tales*. I loved them like no other. Rip roarin’ space opry.

This was the era of “The Cosmic Space Club” in Browne’s magazines. The Club invited scrawny, pimply slackers of the teenage variety to exchange letters and enthusiasms. Since I fit the stereotype well (I guess I didn’t have pimples but I’m sure I had some other horrific malady to compensate) I got to be pen pals with a number of other geeks who secretly longed to be accepted by anybody at any time anywhere.

The pen pal who encouraged me to publish a fanzine was Ron Haydock. As some of you may know, Ron left his Illinois home to try and make it in Los Angeles as, variously, leader of a rock band, writer, movie scripiter, and (I believe) some kind of worker on porn flicks. When I was in touch with him he was both a fair artist as well as a more-than-fair writer. He was in every issue of my first ditto’d fanzine, the name of which escapes me. I think I did four or five issues of it. The contributors all came from

contacts with the Space Club. I don't suppose they were much good. I've seen samples of my writing from that time over the years. I gave new meaning to the word illiteracy. Much later, most if not all his dreams dashed, Ron was struck and killed walking along a freeway.

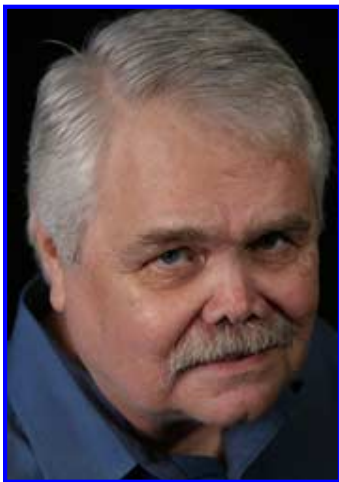
At this point I was in tenth grade. I had managed to con my working class parents into buying me a mimeograph for \$35, very big money at that time. And they also had to float all the supplies. I was in love with Twill-Tone paper thanks to my obsession with the fanzine *Yandro*. Still it took some issues to make the zine something valuable. My cousin Terry Butler and our friend John McHugh and I spent many hours in my basement cranking out stacks of paper that would later be stapled together to enlighten and amaze the world at large.

Fortunately by then I was getting contributions from a few name writers including Robert Bloch, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Greg Benford.

The only time I met any fans was at the convention Roger writes about. The people I read and dealt with in fandom were in many ways abstractions, pieces of typing paper really, at least at first. Another fan I'd contacted through the Space Club was Kent Moomaw. He was my age and he was brilliant. His critiques of books and magazines were always impressive. He promised he was going to write something for me. It never came. One day I opened up a zine and learned the reason why. Kent had committed suicide. In a terrible way I learned that my fan friends were not, after all, abstractions.

Roger also mentions how fandom introduced him to the world outside the one he grew up in. By this he meant the cultural changes being wrought by the era of the Beats and Lenny Bruce and the harmless naughtiness of Russ Myers. Again I was slow responding to this. My only real interest in fandom was the opportunity it offered me to write about science fiction and fantasy.

All that changed when I began to get the zine *Habukkuk* edited by Bill Donaho. First of all by fannish standards the damned thing was a door stopper. Second of all it reveled in its counter-culture stance. This was '60 and '61. Ozzie Nelson still ruled America. Everything that had ever pissed off suburban America could be found in its pages. I was already an admirer of Jack Kerouac and Alan Ginsberg, so *Habukkuk* became my bible. For the first time I began to form a crude political philosophy thanks to the great clamorous debates raging in every issue. Not to mention debates about sex, religion, drugs, and jazz.



Ed Gorman

My two favorite science fiction fanzines were *Yandro* and *Xero*. As my role model George Costanza once asked Jerry, "Have you ever yearned?" Well, I yearned for *Yandro* every month. Yearned. Buck and Juanita Coulson were fine writers and fine people. As publishers of *Yandro* they brought wit, wisdom, and warmth to the zine world. Buck's book reviews were always a pleasure. He could get cranky but he never got mean or personal. He occasionally criticized his own work as forcefully as he criticized that of other writers. Juanita, a very good writer, belongs in the book of saints. What a sweetheart. She still is. I liked her books so much I even read her gothics which I enjoyed greatly.

The other fanzine that made me pine was *Xero*. Publishers Pat and Dick Lupoff were on fire. This was like a hot new club opening up. While the issues generally stuck to science fiction and comic books (monumental pieces on comic book history) there was a hipness to it I'd never encountered before in fandom. *Xero* was COOL. The Lupoffs were COOL. And very nice people as well. I still own two water-logged copies of it. I'd love to have a run of them.

As I said, the convention Roger and I attended was my fannish finale. I still wrote letters and I published a few more issues but by then (alas) I was an alcoholic and investigating the wonderful world of drugs.

Tonight, by coincidence, a guy wrote me wanting to be on my Facebook list. He wrote, "I read your fanzine when I was a kid and have followed your career with interest since. I'm as interested in the mystery scene as I

am in sf. All best.”

I get letters like this every once in awhile. They always make me smile and feel pretty damned good.

I think that one of the things parents have to do is to teach children hypocrisy, because that's how you survive -- by being nice to people who are contemptible. So the kid coming into the world sees hypocrisy and wants to point it out. You're nice to this awful person? What you're doing is a crime, isn't it, Dad?

—Kurt Vonnegut, 10/99 Salon interview

2011 Eaton Conference on Global Science Fiction

by Jerome Winter

The 2011 Eaton Conference was a big event, a seismically sizable rumbling in the SF world, as hundreds of scholars, students, writers, and fans gathered February 11 through 13 at the Mission Inn in Downtown Riverside. Jump-starting the conference was a symposium on “The Singularity in SF Literature and Theory.” Neil Easterbrook, Brooks Landon, and the conference organizer Rob Latham discussed the fraught topic of the exponential acceleration of technological breakthroughs in recent years and how SF writers as diverse as Thomas Pynchon, Vernon Vinge, Charles Stross, Greg Egan, and Ian McDonald have attempted to register the impact of such breakneck change. Approaching the trope from a rich multiplicity of angles, the symposium put some much-needed theoretico-critical wind in the sails of a concept Ken MacLeod once famously dismissed as “the Rapture for Nerds.”



Rob Latham at the Mission Inn.

Early Friday morning, a packed house fought off sleep deprivation for the first of two panel discussions and paper presentations on China Miéville called “Politics, Aesthetics, and Post-Humanism.” Easterbrook gave a lively talk on *Kraken* and the blending of realistic and fantastic genre borrowings.



Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. and China Miéville.

Next Carl Freedman lucidly parsed *The City & The City* as a politically charged fusing of noir crime fiction and New Weird conventions. Joan Gordon then coined the term “amborg” to describe the human/animal/machine hybrids in *Perdido Street Station*. China Miéville himself was in the back of the room during these proceedings, so it was a testament either to his unflinching politeness or the presenters’ critical acuity that the panel was not brought to a stand-still with a Joe Wilson-esque “You lie!”

As the panels took place over two full days and consisted of five time slots of four panels each, it was not humanly possible for me to attend all the panels. So I can bear witness only to a partial account of the weekend in which it still seemed to me at any rate that the cup of serious thinking and research runnethed

over. The second panel I attended (and moderated) was on “Orientalism in SF and the Pulp.” Mingming Liu discussed how Philip K. Dick, in *The Man in the High Castle*, exoticized Taoism and situated this reading as a New Wave representation between the Yellow Peril pulps and the techno-oriental cyberpunks. Jess Nevins then excavated a goldmine of archival material in the form of stories written for pulp magazines and cheap novels by Asian American writers from the first half of the twentieth century and in which a kind of self-directed Orientalism, that is, the pernicious, systematic misrepresentation of Asian culture, was predominant. Stephen Hong Sohn then talked about how the Asian American SF writer Ted Chiang in *The Merchant and the Alchemist’s Gate* captured a vision of the Middle East in line with a pan-Asian viewpoint.



The Saturday reception buffet.

On Saturday, I attended (and presented for) a panel on “Neo-Colonialism, Global Capitalism, and Monstrous Subalterns.” Steven Shaviro made a case for a reading of Richard K. Morgan’s hyperbolic extrapolation of future war as a market investment. Diane Nelson then presented on her first-hand experience with Guatemalan “snake dances” as a magical resolution of entrenched economic injustices. Lastly, I discussed Ian McDonald’s *River of Gods* and its representation of the problematics of Indian nationalist struggles, the recent high-tech boom, and the plight of impoverished millions. I then attended a panel on Polish SF and in case you wondered if such a literature was limited to one author, Stanislaw Lem, the Polish SF scholar Pawel Frelik demonstrated what a vibrant field post-1989 Polish SF (dubbed *fantastika*) is, though most of these titles have regrettably not been translated into English.

There was also a panel on Harlan Ellison who won the 2011 Eaton Lifetime Achievement Award. Due to his being unwell, Ellison called Melissa Conway at the Eaton Collection well in advance and told her how genuinely disappointed he was that he couldn’t make it. He sent a heartfelt note of apology, sincere thanks, and regret over not being there to accept the award.

In the panel devoted to him, Rob Latham explicated some of his major stories according to the thematic of social justice that pervades all his fiction. Rob also discussed Ellison’s getting his start in digest fiction, his relationship to the Milford school of science-fiction creative writers, and the taboo-breaking role of *Dangerous Visions*. At one point in the presentation, Rob asked the audience how many people in the room had read “Repent Harlequin!” Said the Ticktockman.” Everyone’s hands in the room shot up, neatly illustrating Ellison’s canonicity or the audience’s level of fandom, or both. Phil Nichols then canvassed the role of point of view in Ellison’s sophisticated manipulation of narrative technique.



The Plenary Panel.

On Saturday night, swarms of conference attendees congregated at the Culver Center UCR ARTSblock for the plenary events. Mike Davis gave the keynote address on Ward Moore. The speech was a stirring tribute to a sometimes forgotten SF writer that celebrated Moore's "broad church" genre affiliations, his courage in speaking out against Jim Crow in *Bring the Jubilee*, and his exploration of ecological disaster and Los Angeles in *Greener Than You Think*. On the heels of Davis's address came the night's premier panel discussion featuring Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., Nalo Hopkinson, China Miéville, Karen Tei Yamashita, and Rob Latham. Rob wondrously noted that his top choices to speak on the topic of "global SF" were all available and willing. Miéville talked about an emerging group of science fiction consumers and producers he called "global geeks." He also noted skepticism about "subverting" entrenched power structures through fiction given that "last time he checked capitalism was doing fine."

In a question and answer period, Rob probed whether Miéville believed, though, that the "counterfactual" in fiction could open up a space for the imaginative overcoming of insuperable barriers. In response, China maintained that whenever talk of subversion occurs he always wants to qualify "when, where, to whom, in what context" and that future generations will likely look back and feel faintly embarrassed about such overstated claims.

A delighted Nalo Hopkinson then announced that she was hired as the new creative writing professor at UCRiverside. She then mentioned how science fiction is becoming more open to other cultures and voices, and that the SF community has to rally around promoting access to new science-fiction literature through reading and publishing, as well as supporting libraries. Hopkinson also mentioned that the critique of Western bias that SF seems to increasingly explore, but cautioned that "guilt doesn't help anybody." Karen Tei Yamashita said that she approached SF through the Magical Realist tradition of Gabriel García Márquez, the representation of LA and the contagion of multiculturalism in the film *Bladerunner*, and the stereotyping of Asian American culture in *Godzilla* movies and the TV show re-boot of *Battlestar Galactica*. Then Csicsery-Ronay expressed grave doubts that he was no longer sure what "science fiction" meant, "global" meant, or whether the thrill of science fiction was worth its complicity with technocultural hegemony. Csicsery-Ronay nonetheless noted that science fiction from new parts of the globe are being increasingly read and analyzed, despite grim reports that the print book industry is imploding.



Robert Reginald and Gregory Benford.

Following the panel, Terry Harpold announced a translation award. And Sheila Finch and Howard Hendrix presented the science fiction short story contest: honorable mention for Mark Biswas, second prize of \$250 to Leonid Leonov and Sebastian Shepard, and first prize of \$500 to Jonathan Tanner. Rob then announced that the 2011 R.D. Mullen fellowship had been awarded to Gerry Canavan. Lastly, Ruth M. Jackson presented the Lifetime Achievement Awards for 2010 and 2011 to Samuel R. Delany and Harlan Ellison, respectively. After this embarrassment of riches in terms of food for thought, the night ended with food for food, a catered reception.

Photos by Gwido Zlatkes and Sarah Allison, courtesy of Special Collections & Archives, University of California Riverside.

I think that novels that leave out technology misrepresent life as badly as Victorians misrepresented life by leaving out sex.

—Kurt Vonnegut, "A Man without a Country"

When Hari Kunzru met Michael Moorcock*

By Hari Kunzru

Hari Kunzru was introduced to science fiction aged 10 – and was hooked. After years of fandom, he went to meet master of the genre Michael Moorcock at home in Texas, where they discussed his 15,000 word a day habit, taking acid with his friend J.G. Ballard, and writing a *Doctor Who* novel

#

I could choose any number of beginnings, but the one that seems to explain most is a conversation that took place at school when I was 10 years old. I was talking to my classmate Jacob as we got changed to play cricket. Jacob was a weird kid. He had longer hair than the school rules allowed. He smelled funny and had peculiar facts at his disposal, to do with ancient languages and the sexual habits of dinosaurs. He made no secret of his scorn for cricket. He was, it goes without saying, not popular. I was telling him about the cosmic greatness of *The Lord of the Rings*, a book which at that point I considered the alpha and omega of world literature.

"It's good," Jacob allowed. "But have you read *Dune*?" I'd never even heard of Frank Herbert, or his saga of rebellion on a desert planet. Jacob mentioned a couple of other writers, both unknown to me. "You should go to Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed," he said.



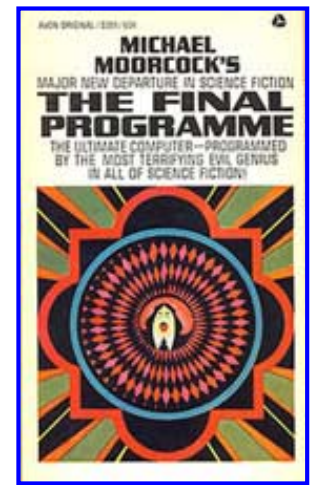
J.G. Ballard and Michael Moorcock at Heathrow.

I was impressed. That was the name of a place? A shop, Jacob said, specializing in science fiction. Books and comics, fanzines. It was named, he told me, with the air of someone imparting vital knowledge, after a short story by Ray Bradbury. I don't know how long it was before I found my way to Dark They Were. At weekends I was allowed to take the tube up to central London, where I'd wander round the British Museum or the trashy souvenir shops on the Tottenham Court Road. But I did find it, in an alley off Wardour Street. I have only the vaguest memory of what it was like, overlaid by other memories of the many such places I've been in since – the grimy floor, the racks of publications, the supercilious staff, always ready with an acid remark or an eye-roll to show a prepubescent newbie his lowly place on the ladder of fandom. Almost certainly I didn't buy anything. I expect I self-consciously perused the shelves, made mental Christmas present notes, then left.

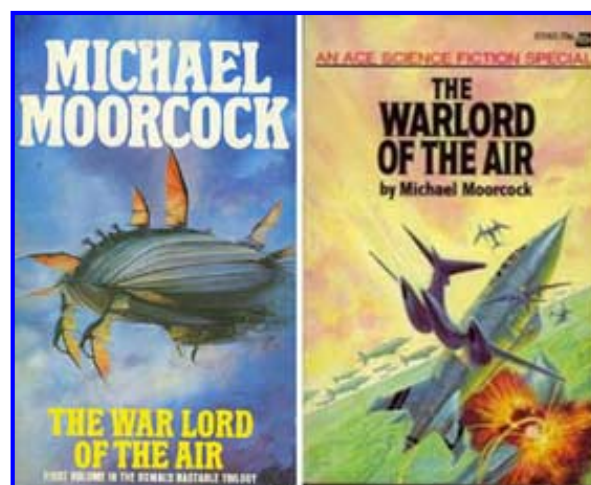
It was my first experience of a subculture. I was hooked, not just by the content, but by the realization there was stuff out there being made and thought and done that wasn't visible on the TV screens of suburban Essex. As I got older I became a kind of subcultural junkie, foraging around in music, street fashion, and eventually art, politics, and the freakier reaches of the Internet, hunting the next discovery, the next seam of

underground gold. But in my early teens, science fiction and fantasy had an almost-total hold over my imagination. Their outcast status was part of their appeal. The cool kids held them in disdain. It was territory I could own. When I wasn't reading about alternate realities I was trying to live inside one, playing Dungeons and Dragons or Traveller or Call of Cthulhu or Bushido, games that allowed me to inhabit ancient Japan or deep space or various arcane fantasy worlds.

Most of my books came from charity shops or the Whipps Cross Hospital fête, where my dad – who as a doctor was expected to put his hand in his pocket on such occasions – would give me pound notes to convert into teetering piles of paperbacks. There was something so much more interesting about these books, fished out of crates and cardboard boxes, than the ones in the library, let alone the expensive, sensible fare which seemed to be on sale in ordinary bookshops. They were musty-smelling 10p messages from the futuristic past, complete with cover designs (and content) that were unlike anything I'd seen before.



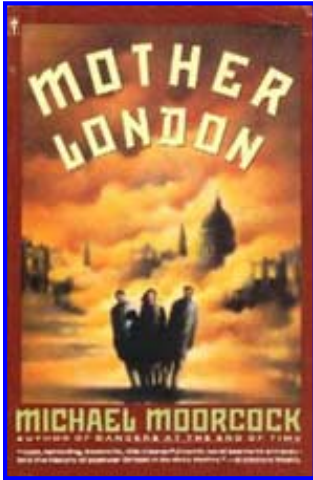
I'm fairly certain that this was how I first came across Michael Moorcock, in an early-'70s Mayflower paperback, with a psychedelic cover by Bob Haberfield. Soon I was combing London for these editions, which I've carried through numerous house-moves, keeping them even after I ditched the majority of my SF and fantasy collection in favour of student bookshelf-adornments intended to attract potential sexual partners. That first crucial title could well have been Moorcock's 1968 novel *The Final Programme*. Haberfield's cover for this is one part Bosch, one part pop-art and one part Tibetan tantra. A naked woman, hair in flames, lies in a kind of amniotic ocean, her breasts rising up with architectural impressiveness. From her open mouth pours a carnivalesque stream of figures – rock musicians, ringmasters, rapist, and murderers, businessmen, freaks, and addicts of all kinds. She's flanked by twin skeletons, a pope, and a king. Behind her some kind of skyscraper is shattering under the influence of beams of cosmic energy. The writing behind this cover was itself an orgiastic riot, featuring the adventures of one Jerry Cornelius, a hipster secret agent in swinging London, who seemed to jump into bed with men and women, and who appeared, shockingly, to be aware of himself as a character in a novel. As far as I could follow the plot, it concerned Cornelius's attempt to rescue his brother from some kind of peril, but then diverted into something really weird, involving Cornelius being fused in mystical union with an evil sexpot called Miss Brunner, from which he emerged as a hermaphrodite, the world's "first all-purpose human being," *The Lord of the Rings* it wasn't.



In retrospect, it's easy to place *The Final Programme* as a product of the same culture (and period) that spawned *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Trout Fishing in America*, *Giles Goat-Boy*, and *The Atrocity Exhibition* – part of the headspace opened up by the associative riffs and "routines" of William Burroughs's *The Naked Lunch*. But at the age of 12, this was my first clue that anything like it even existed. It blew (as they say) my tiny mind. Through Moorcock I was introduced to a whole set of countercultural possibilities, as well as to the idea that

writing didn't have to conform to – well, to anything really.

I soon discovered that the Cornelius novels were only a tiny corner of Moorcock's sprawling oeuvre. There seemed to be innumerable books, most of them with some kind of fantastical setting, often featuring heroes with names that appeared to echo Cornelius – Jherек Carnelian, Erekoze, Elric, Corum. There were books that were straightforward genre works, books which fused, pastiched, or even created genres (his 1971 novel *Warlord of the Air*, with its alternate-world Edwardian setting, can lay claim to being the first steampunk novel) and books that belonged to no genre at all. The quality varied – I later found out that Moorcock was capable of writing 15,000 words a day and had produced some of his slighter works in as little as three days. Other books are high literature. The *Dancers at the End of Time* trilogy is one of the great postwar English fantasies. In 1977 *The Condition of Muzak* was awarded the Guardian Fiction prize, and *Mother London*, an intricate and affecting love letter to the city, was shortlisted for the 1988 Whitbread award.



Moorcock's biography reads like a rebuke to every wannabe novelist who's pottering through a creative writing MFA. At 16 he got a job editing *Tarzan Adventures*, moving on to write pulp detective fiction for Fleetway's Sexton Blake Library. His first novel was published in 1961, when he was 23, by which time he was already a veteran writer. In 1963 he became editor of *New Worlds* magazine, using it to transform science fiction, moving the genre away from the "golden age" of rayguns and spaceships towards a concern with psychology, the mass media, and altered states of consciousness. By the late '60s he was a pivotal figure in London's underground scene, a point of contact between science fiction novelists such as J.G. Ballard and Brian Aldiss and the musicians and artists who were transforming British pop culture. He became a lyricist and occasional performer with the west London psychedelic band Hawkwind, while in *New Worlds* he was publishing writers such as Thomas Pynchon, Christopher Logue, and George Macbeth alongside Ballard, Harlan Ellison, Philip José Farmer, and M. John Harrison. Since the *New Worlds* days he has carried on writing at a furious pace, weaving an ever more complex web of novels and stories, filled with associations, refractions, and knowing references, a delightful maze for his fans and a source of perplexity for bibliographers. This prolific, promiscuous output is perhaps one reason he's not accorded the status he deserves in the postwar canon of English literature. Unlike his friend Ballard, whose reputation has been transformed in recent years, Moorcock remains something of an outsider, regarded with trepidation (if he's known at all) by a literary establishment that prefers clear blue water between literature and genre writing.

These days Moorcock lives in Texas, in the town of Bastrop, just outside Austin. It's always a risk to meet one's heroes, and a small Texas town seemed an inhospitable spot for a writer who, throughout all his multifarious work, has retained a specifically English sensibility. Mummery, the knowingly named central character of *Mother London* (who shares much biographical information with his creator), says "London is my mother, source of most of my ambivalences and most of my loyalties." I wondered if I would find a writer in exile, or adrift.

Instead, I discover Moorcock with his feet up in the den of a charming Victorian house, surrounded by books, cats, and a clutter of antique furniture. He is tall, impressively bearded, though less Falstaffian than some of his publicity photos. Why did he and his wife move to Texas? "We'd lived in England for 15 years, and Linda was sick of it. She used to get shit all the time just for being American. I didn't want to live somewhere that was an enclave of the British abroad. I thought: where am I going to get the most experience and hear what people really think?"

I ask how he came to be an editor at such a young age. "I'd started doing fanzines from the age of nine. I'd been doing as many copies as you can get carbon paper into an upright typewriter and I'd try to sell them at school." He was a fan of school stories, particularly P.G. Wodehouse, and when he ran out of stories in book form he started buying old magazines from dealers, eventually coming into contact with a fan subculture, much as I did many years later. "If you were interested in popular fiction, the only place where it was discussed at all was in fanzines. It gradually put you in touch with other people. It was like a very slow-

working internet.”

These old-fashioned stories must have been remote from his own school experience. “Oh, totally. I was expelled from a Rudolf Steiner school. I was the only person ever expelled until quite recently. I kept running away. Looking back it was pure separation anxiety. My father had buggered off at a very early age. I had this funny family. At one end they were breeding dogs in south-east London – for greyhound racing – and at the other my uncle was living in Downing Street. And I would actually go to Downing Street, which didn’t strike me as funny. I’d get on the number 15 bus.”

Moorcock then tells an anecdote about this uncle who’d been Winston Churchill’s secretary and served a succession of prime ministers. It’s a piece of back story he gives to Mummery in *Mother London*. Throughout our conversation there’s a kind of free-associative drift, as one thing tumbles into another. Biography melds with fiction. It’s a quality one also finds in Moorcock’s work. As he published at breakneck pace during the 1970s, he came up with the notion of the “multiverse,” a kaleidoscope of interconnected parallel realities. His various fictional heroes all became avatars of a single hero, the “Eternal Champion” who struggles for the cosmic balance between Law and Chaos. This metaphysics is sometimes explicit in his novels, often not. Moorcock soon invited other writers to set stories in his worlds, a cheerful openness which is one of his salient characteristics.

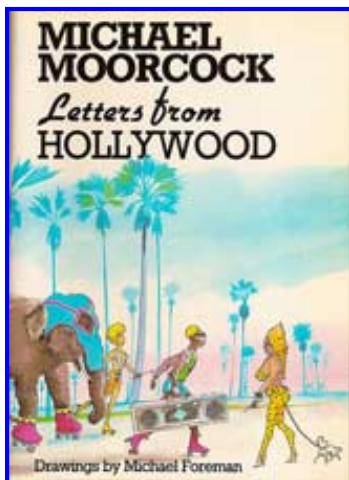
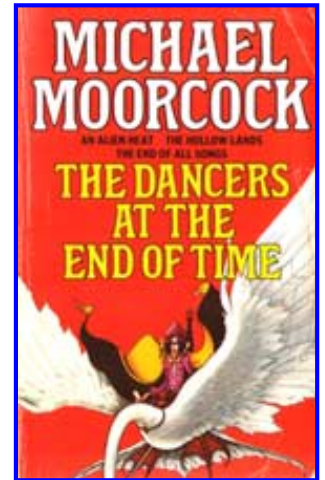
Moorcock’s “funny family” gave him an outsider’s perspective on postwar England. He was a rebellious teenager, something he thinks of as a family trait. “I really did have a very egalitarian upbringing.”

At Fleetway, the publisher of the Eagle, Look and Learn and innumerable cowboy, detective, and superhero comics, Moorcock’s anti-authoritarian streak continued. Violent second world war stories were a mainstay of Fleetway’s output, featuring square-jawed Tommies bayoneting craven Germans while snarling xenophobic insults. When Moorcock refused to write for these titles, “they decided I was a communist. But the boss of my department wouldn’t fire me, because he was convinced the Red Army was going to come marching up Fleet Street any minute, and there I’d be with my Makarov pistol and my rimless glasses, lining people up to be shot. They kept me on as a kind of insurance.” Another Fleetway executive was “a raging fascist,” an ex-member of Mosley’s blackshirts. Moorcock, who was a member of the West London Anti-fascist Youth Committee, once found him closeted in his office, drawing a world map to illustrate a proposed racial resettlement plan. The British got all of Africa. During this time, Moorcock also infiltrated Colin Jordan’s British National party, posing as a young recruit and going for tea with the elderly widow of Arnold Leese, an infamous far-right politician who regarded his rival Mosley as a “kosher fascist.” “It was a bit like *The Man Who Was Thursday*. There were three of us who’d go and see her and we were all infiltrators. Not one of us was an actual follower. She’d pour out the tea and say ‘you know the Jews did so and so’ and we’d pretend to agree with her.”

Moorcock has an initially perplexing relationship to literary Englishness. On the one hand, he’s steeped in the conservative canon of popular fiction, from the boarding-school stories he loved as a child to the various upright chaps – from Sexton Blake to world war one flying aces – he channelled for Fleetway. On the other, he has a strong anarchist streak and is deeply hostile to the Christian pastoral fantasy tradition of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. His own fantasy writing has always delighted in ambiguity, in contrast to the nursery-school morality of much of the genre. In a 1978 essay he skewered *The Lord of the Rings*, calling it “Winnie-the-Pooh, posing as an epic.” He derided Tolkien’s “petit bourgeois” artisan-hobbits, who are portrayed in the novel as a “bulwark against chaos,” standing for “solid good sense” against the evil industrial-worker orcs. Tolkien’s work, he writes, is nothing more than “a pernicious confirmation of the values of a morally bankrupt middle class,” something not so far from the fascism he had agitated against as a young activist. Against Tolkien, Moorcock has always championed the work of Mervyn Peake, whose *Gormenghast* books were informed by his experience as one of the first civilians to enter the concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen. Peake’s work is shot through with an uncanny darkness, a tone which Moorcock (who as a young man was a friend of Peake) often adopts. I ask him why he dislikes Tolkien and the Inklings so much. “It would be the same if we were talking about Warwick Deeping or R.C. Sherriff. It’s the British character sentimentalized, the illusion of decency, that whole nonsense of ‘no British boy would do this sort of thing.’ It was also the tone of the BBC when I was growing up. I hated it.”

In contrast to the rural decencies of Tolkien, Moorcock's writing belongs to an urban tradition, which celebrates the fantastical city as a place of chance and mystery. The wondrous spaces of M. John Harrison, China Miéville, Fritz Leiber, Gene Wolfe, and Alan Moore are all part of this, as are Iain Sinclair's London, Judge Dredd's Mega-City One, the part-virtual cyberpunk mazes of William Gibson, and the decadent Paris of the Baudelarian flâneur. Like these other urban fantasists, Moorcock delights in a kind of sublime palimpsest, in imagining an environment that through size, age, scale, or complexity exceeds our comprehension, producing fear and awe. Crucially, the city isn't a place of moral clarity.

Moorcock's dislike of authoritarian sentiment has led him in many directions: Jerry Cornelius's ambiguity is sexual, social, and even ontological; one of Moorcock's most popular heroes, Elric, was written as a rebuke to the bluff, muscular goody-goodies that populate so much fantasy fiction. Elric, a decadent albino weakling, is amoral, perhaps even evil. As a not-so-metaphorical junkie, Elric allowed Moorcock to revel in unwholesomeness, and helped return fantasy to its roots in the late romanticism of the decadents, a literary school close to Moorcock's heart. In a recent introduction to *The Dancers at the End of Time*, which is set in a decadent far future, Moorcock claims to have sported Wildean green carnations as a teenager, not to mention "the first pair of Edwardian flared trousers (made by Burton) as well as the first high-button frock coat to be seen in London since 1910." Elric, much less robust than his creator, who admits his dandyish threads gave him "the bluff domestic air of a Hamburg Zeppelin commander," is part Maldoror, part Yellow Book poseur, and part William Burroughs; within a few years of his first appearance in 1961, British culture suddenly seemed to be producing real-life Elrics by the dozen, as Keith Richards, Jimmy Page, and others defined an image of the English rock star as an effeminate, velvet-clad lotus-eater. Moorcock was very popular among musicians, and it's tempting to see him as co-creator of the butterfly-on-a-wheel character, which still wanders the halls of English culture in guises ranging from Sebastian Horsley to Russell Brand. I ask him whether he felt at the time that the '60s rockers were living out a role he'd imagined. He's too modest to agree, but tells an anecdote that seems to sum up psychedelic London's openness to fantasy of all kinds. "I'm in the Mountain grill on the Portobello Road, where everyone used to meet to get on the tour buses. I'm sitting there, and this bloke called Geronimo is trying to sell me some dope. He says 'have you heard about the tunnel under Ladbroke Grove?' He starts to elaborate, about how it's under the Poor Clares nunnery, and you can go into that and come out in an entirely different world. I said to him, 'Geronimo, I think I wrote that.' It didn't seem to bother him much."



Younger than most of the writers who were remaking postwar British science fiction, Moorcock acted as an important conduit between the SF chaps (still, judging by contemporary pictures, pipe-smoking collar-and-tie types) and the denizens of the music and art scenes. "At first I was the only one," he says. "Then the people who worked on *New Worlds* started coming in. They shared the lifestyle. When I first met Tom Disch, he'd got stuck in Spain because he contracted hepatitis from taking bad acid. Soon all of the really good writers on *New Worlds* apart from Jimmy [Ballard] and Brian [Aldiss] had basically the same cultural experience as I did."

Moorcock's good friend Ballard was reluctant to leave his suburban lair in Shepperton, and relied on Moorcock to introduce him to people and experiences useful for his fiction. In the early '80s, when Moorcock was living in LA, he wrote Ballard a series of long descriptive letters about the city, which were later published as *Letters from Hollywood*. "I was," Moorcock says, "his running-boy for experience." In the late-'60s west London melting-pot, it was Moorcock who introduced Ballard to pop artists such as Eduardo Paolozzi and who brokered uneasy meetings between his whisky-drinking, socially-awkward friend and loon-panted extroverts like Hawkwind's Nik Turner, who had a predilection for make-up, strong drugs, and ancient Egyptian stage outfits. Occasionally, Ballard would "dip in" to the scene, with mixed results.

“I got Jimmy some acid one time,” Moorcock reminisces, with a grimace. “He insisted. I got him a sugar cube and I said to him ‘don’t take it now’ because he was as drunk as a skunk. And of course, being Jimmy, he took it immediately. Appalling, psychotic – snakes all over the bed. Everything bad about Shanghai on top of everything bad about everything else. He didn’t describe this. His girlfriend at the time told me about it. She was basically saying, for God’s sake don’t give him any more. And I didn’t. It would have been a waste.”

The friendship between Ballard and Moorcock – two writers with overlapping but extremely different styles and concerns – is gradually emerging as one of the most important in the literary underground of late ’60s and early ’70s London. At a time when English fiction was dominated by well-crafted realism, the two of them were on a mission to revitalize it (or undermine it, depending on your point of view) through the medium of SF, which as the most despised of all literary genres, was also the most open to experiment. “Jimmy did it from the point of view of surrealism, which was his great love, and I did it from absurdism, which was mine.” Moorcock evidently has some difficulty with the post-mortem transformation of his old friend into a kind of cultural plaster saint. “It’s a pretty strange thing to see a friend turn into – he was somebody pretty different to the image the world’s got.” Moorcock’s Ballard is a much darker and more damaged figure than the public image of the widowed father, dreaming his fantastical dreams between the morning and afternoon school runs. “We were estranged for some time because of his treatment of women. I got sick of it. When I finally said something, this being Jimmy, he withdrew completely – bingo, I wasn’t there any more.” Much of Ballard’s bad behavior was related to his drinking, and it’s evident that Moorcock feels he would have been better off with less Scotch and more pot. However, “he did come out of it. He eventually emerged on the other side. I have to say that most of his best writing was done during this particular period, when he was incredibly miserable.”

Moorcock steered *New Worlds* towards a set of concerns that chimed with the times; this was the period ruled by Marshal McLuhan and R.D. Laing, and the exploration of “inner space” seemed just as interesting as the “outer space” of satellites and moonshots. This turn was controversial, not just with die-hard pulp fans, but, surprisingly, with people such as the pop artist Richard Hamilton, another denizen of the London scene. “He thought we were turning science fiction into something namby-pamby, losing its roots,” Moorcock says. “He wanted explosions and spaceships and robots.” It also led to censorship troubles, as W.H. Smith refused to distribute the title, claiming that it was pornographic. The controversy eventually led to a question being asked in the House of Commons, concerning *New Worlds*’ receipt of a small Arts Council grant. Moorcock considers it all rank hypocrisy, noting that at the time Smiths was perfectly happy to distribute actual soft porn.

New Worlds was one of the few venues that brought experimental writing to a large audience. Many of the writers Moorcock was commissioning hadn’t written science fiction before, and he also encouraged veteran SF writers to strip their stories of genre elements which they’d included so conventional SF magazines would buy their work. There was a remarkable overlap with *Ambit*, the small-circulation literary magazine for which Ballard was fiction editor. Moorcock remembers parties where William Burroughs would be in the same room as Arthur C. Clarke, not a combination that usually springs to mind. But Moorcock wanted *New Worlds* to be a commercial magazine and was scornful of the attempts of *Ambit*’s high-cultural coterie to keep up with the rapid changes in the underground scene. “It was like the mums and dads getting really enthusiastic about what their kids were into.” He remembers being invited to UEA, where Malcolm Bradbury’s crowd would pump him for news. “I was like the barbarian, the vital outsider. I should have been playing a banjo.”

The literary culture in which Moorcock, Ballard, and their peers could make a living from magazine serializations seems as distant now, in the era of the Internet, as the Grub Street of the 18th century to which it bears a more than passing resemblance. I ask Moorcock about his famous 15,000 daily word-rate. How on earth is it possible to produce so much? “It’s all planning. I’d have been in bed for three days, during which I’ve had time to sketch out the story. Then I spring out of bed and I’ve got a straight nine to five – or nine to six or seven – regime, which frequently includes taking the kids to school, then I just sit down and go through with an hour break for lunch.” He makes it sound deceptively simple, though not without its side-effects. “When you write that fast the book really does start to write you, you get high on the book. It’s partly lack of sleep, it’s partly the sugar – in my case I only had strong black coffee because it kept me going.” Apart from

stimulants, the other key is “formula. You have to have a formula that’s absolutely strong enough to hold anything. That’s where people like me are very fortunate. I have a kind of innate sense of structure, which also makes me a good mimic. It’s very close to mathematics. When I wrote a computer game a few years ago, it was in some ways the easiest job I’d ever had because it’s all structure, and the guys know it has to be. If you’re talking to a Hollywood person they never know what they’re doing structurally. They ask for changes and everything falls apart, but computer game people are just perfect because they know the purpose of every element.”

After the manic productivity of the '60s and '70s, Moorcock slowed down (slightly) during the '80s and '90s, producing increasingly literary and complex picaresques, such as the tetralogy featuring Captain Pyat, an anti-hero whose peregrinations through the 20th century take him from the Russian revolution to a flat on the Portobello Road, where he tells his unlikely tale to a writer called Moorcock. However, despite productions like the Pyat books, which are maximalist fables of the type that have made global stars out of Pynchon or Rushdie, Moorcock has never shown any interest in eschewing genre. He seems to see little difference between his various kinds of production. I ask what he’s working on now and he begins to frown, saying it’s the hardest thing he’s done for a while. “It’s not easy. And I didn’t start it for a long time. It’s their fault. They didn’t send me a contract for ages. I can’t write without a contract – old habit.” Winningly, this turned out to be not some literary project, but a *Doctor Who* novel. Elements of Moorcock’s multiverse have been incorporated by other writers into *Doctor Who* stories. Moorcock blends the two things together, adding yet another layer of complexity to his oeuvre.



The plot of *The Coming of the Terraphiles* finds the Doctor “abroad in the multiverse,” and concerns “an object which will save it, putting Law and Chaos back into synch. I’ve tried to write much of it in a sub-Wodehousian style and with a musical comedy sub-plot involving a game that’s a mixture of cricket and archery.” In its skewed, carnivalesque Englishness, this sounds like vintage Moorcock. I note that the book includes a pirate called Cornelius. “Yes, and incidentally one of the ‘decent chaps’ is called Hari Agincourt. He’s not a prince but he ends up an earl. Damn. It’s all supposed to be embargoed. Now they’ll probably have to kill us both.”

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I think we don’t care much anymore. Most of us, as when we were children, have very sound ethical instincts and realize that it’s all a lot of baloney. And so we’re completely fatalistic about our government’s being for sale.

—Kurt Vonnegut 10/99 Salon interview



“Follow Me,” by Ditmar [Martin James Ditmar Jensen]