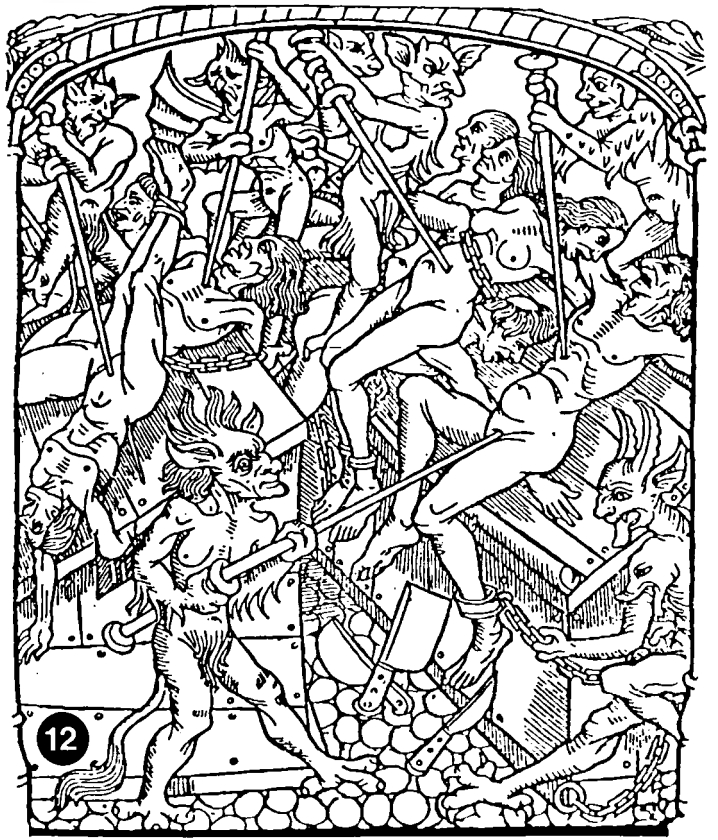
FOCUS

AN S.F. WRITERS' MAGAZINE



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FOCUS 12 was edited by Paul Grunwell, 218 Rainsford Road, CHELMSFORD, Essex, CM1 2PD tel: (0245) 350889

FOCUS is published 3 times a year by the British Science Fiction Association Ltd, an amateur organisation which aims to promote the reading, writing and publishing of sf in all its forms. Membership of the BSFA costs £7 a year; details from Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Terrace, BLANTYRE, Lanarkshire, G72 9NA (in the US, Cy Chauvin, 14248 Wilfred, DETROIT, Michigan 48213)

contents

The cover is from a 15th Century book of advice on writing, and depicts a meeting of writers and editors; unfortunately, since only one mutilated copy of this book exists, there is no way of knowing which group is supposed to be which...

Back cover and illustration p.24, Colin P. Davies; other illustrations Public Domain.

Many thanks to Sue Thomason for offering the suggestion, and to John Harvey and the committee for providing the opportunity.

Printed by PDC Copyprint, 11 Jeffries Passage, GUILDFORD, Surrey

Focal Point(s)

Well, now. My first Focus editorial. Should I be formal or chatty? Sound a jolly welcome note or boom a sententious manifesto? Should I present my credentials for the job? Give my life's history? My political and religious beliefs? My literary affections and affiliations?

Nah.

I do want to say what this magazine — coming back to life after fourteen long months in the grave — is aiming for, but... I've found that Chris Evans and Rob Holdstock, back in the premiere Focal Point in 1979, said pretty much what I was going to say. So I might just as well quote them, nicht wahr?

The first aim of Focus, they wrote, was "to bring alive the behind-the-scenes of science fiction, and indeed fiction in a broader sense.

"Our second aim is to be a forum for discussion, for the dissemination of information, a place through which the changing shape of the market, and the changing pressures on writers, can be made plain; and be useful in an advisory way.

"Our third aim is to encourage developing talents in the field by showcasing their work. The only constraints we place on stories submitted to Focus are that (a) they should contain some element of the fantastic and thus qualify broadly as sf, and (b) they should be no longer that 5,000 words."

These three aims remain, and I would voice only a single contradiction — I will not restrict the length of fiction, although the longer a piece is, the more outstanding it will need to be. But if, say, a really good novella came in which the pro outlets had shortsightedly turned down, I'd use up a whole issue printing it.

For the future, I'm sounding out several established writers to contribute, and hope in forthcoming issues to feature pieces by Messrs Evens and Holdstock, Garry Kilworth, Colin Greenland, and others. I'm also in the process of establishing a transatlantic connec-

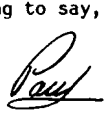
tion. Focus will only ultimately survive, however, on the strength of readership support, and that means YOU contributing fully. I won't flog this point (I may, later, but for now let's be optimistic) — I'll just spell out what I'm looking for:

I want the articles and features carried in Focus to range from craft (basic nuts-and-bolts advice on the mechanics of writing) through to art (discussions of aesthetic concerns) and right on up into the realms of philosophy (what is the purpose of writing?).

I want the fiction to be the best one can find in an amateur magazine, and hope that the writers here will be frequently graduating to professional publication.

The bridge between these two areas will be provided by sharp and constructive criticism of the stories — both in pre-production (if you submit a story I want to use but isn't quite "there", I'll give clear instructions and advice on what revision I feel would make it work) and in print (that is, I want to spend at least a couple of pages per issue on reactions to stories, and hope particularly that professional writers will become involved in this).

So, I expect to hear from you immediately. You've seen that Focus has indeed risen from the grave (and not as a walking corpse, either), so now is the time to make sure that you help keep it alive. And don't, please, think "Oh well, four months to the next issue, plenty of time to think about it" — think about it now, and if you have unresolved ideas kicking around, write to me or 'phone me and I'll kick them around with you until we get them into a useable shape. Whatever you do, don't imagine that Focus (or any other BSFA publication) is the exclusive preserve of a little coterie of the cognoscente who write and talk and waffle among themselves, turn and turn about. I myself only joined the BSFA in April this year, and if I can step straight into editing one of their magazines, that gives you a fair indication of how open to outsiders the Association is, doesn't it? So, if you have something to say, say it — I'm listening.



BRILLIANT CORNERS

by Paul M. Grunwell

Chickers could hear the bus, now, as it came nearer down the dusty road under the bright yellow sky; the noise wasn't engine noise — more like some kind of singing. He fingered the pulsegun in the pocket of his fatigues, and waved his arm, smiling. This was going to be a piece of cake.

The bus crooned to a stop, and the driver smiled out at Chickers from the big round window at the back; reasonably humanoid, apart from the pale green blotches on his skin, and the fact that he had six arms. "+@¶#], ¶//- *)*!+µ¶#¶" he said, cheerfully.

Chickers banged a big fist against the Translatebox stapled to his right hip. "<...my very good sir traveler?>" he heard as the box clicked into action.

"I want a ride," snapped Chickers, holding the Transmike in front of his mouth, but getting too near it and distorting the words. The driver looked quizzical, and Chickers repeated himself, keeping his mouth back from the mike this time.

"<Oh sure of course we'll ride you,>" said the driver. "<Be very exceptionally glad to, sir traveler — all the way to our fairest most mellifluous city and singing as we go.>"

Chickers smiled, the bus door chattered open, and he stepped forward. The dozen or so passengers already on the bus started to hum low, tuning up ready for getting moving again. The driver held out one of his six six-fingered hands and added, "<Five teks, seventy, the charge is for this lovely distance, my sir.>"

"I got no money," grunted Chickers, his face falling, his hand fondling the pulsegun. "I just crashed my — "

"<Five teks, seventy,>" the driver insisted, still beaming broadly.

Hum.

"I told you, Fingers — I don't got no money." He pulled out the gun. "Now just lemme on and I won't need t'blow your ugly skull away, okay?"

"<Oh,>" said the driver, assessing the situation.

"<Oh!>" echoed the passengers, gesticulating wildly with their many limbs.

Chickers was watching all the driver's arms, but it was one of his feet that flicked quickly at a switch.

A blue electric flash hit Chickers square in the groin, and he toppled back off the bus clutching at the pain, his pulsegun spinning down to land in the dirt just before he did.

The bus drove off, throwing a cloud of dust in his face. And singing, merrily.

"You won't be missin' nothing," said a voice behind Chickers. "Their city's lousy — all that damned singing."

Chickers turned, grasping for his pulsegun. A gangly, weatherbeaten man, dressed in fatigues the same as his own, was sitting by the roadside.

"Al? Al Brillante?"

"Small galaxy, eh, Chick? Can't say I was 'specting to see you again, neither." Brillante came over and helped Chickers to his feet. He was limping badly, his feet bandaged. "You looking at the footwear, right? Well, I walked all the way t'their fikkin' city — an' all th'way back, too. Turns out these people don't travel space — don't even have InterPlanComm. A dead loss. And they're not types you'd wanna spend the rest of y'life around, so I come back out here."

The pain in Chickers' groin was starting to pass, but hearing Brillante's words, seeing the years stretching out before him, stranded on this piss-sky planet, his face remained set in a mask of agony.

"Yo — you look like you just seen your ma snapped up by an Arcturan eaterlily, Chick. I didn't tell y'the good part, yet."

There were sixty-nine of them in all, holed up in a deserted native town. All of them had escaped from the same prisonship — some solo, like Chickers, some in groups. All their lifeboats had crashed here. That wasn't the good part Brillante had been talking about.

The good part was that some of the cons in the group — especially some of the women — were Communications wizzes. It seemed like some of them could stick a couple of tin cans together and get a direct line to Earth, almost. Within a couple of weeks of Chicker's arrival, a Commset had been scratched together from bits and pieces of the circuits of the crashed lifeboats, and they picked up the wavelength of an Altarian freighter, just out of the orbit of the planet they were on.

Chickers, somehow, managed to get the job of talking to them, while the other forty men and twenty-eight women of the makeshift colony gathered around the receiver, one of the women keeping her hand on the tuning dial to hold the fluttering wavelength. "Hello, Altarians," Chickers barked through his Transmike.

"<Good evening to you,>" came the Altarian reply.

"We're stuck," said Chickers. "C'n you take us offworld?"

"<We have travelquarters, and you would be most welcome indeed aboard our graceful and most efficient starcraft,>" said the Altarian. Sounds like a smug little cretin, thought Chickers. "<Of what kinds and how many are you?>"

"Earthians. Sixty-nine of us," said Chickers. The cons held their breath, hoping the Altarians would have enough room for them.

"< — Then I am pleased and honoured to inform you that we can accomodate you with luxury and ease.>"

There was a pause, and the airwaves fizzed and popped as silent prayers of thanks were said for their deliverance.

The Altarian's voice continued, "<The purser informs me that the cost for your illustrious and lately misfortunate party's passage to the nearest nice Earthian world will be twenty-four thousand, one hundred and fifty thrikkls — that is, boys and girls, nine hundred and forty eight and three-fourths Gal KiloCredits at current exchange.>"

Chickers would have sworn that the groan that went up from himself and the rest of the convicts must have been audible in the singing city, a hundred kilometers away.

It was audible, in fact, much farther away than that, through the monitoring sensors nestling in the components of the primitively-assembled Commset. A young prisonship Lieutenant and his Commander were listening in.

"Better blow the set," said the Commander, "or someday they might contact one of those goody-goody rimworld ships who'll take 'em off for free."

The Lieutenant fed a harmless blast impulse down into the monitoring bugs, instantly destroying the cannibalised Commset. "Home, now, sir?"

"Soon, Lieutenant. We have to let another fifty or so 'escape' a couple of sectors down the line — and two stops after that. Scattering the rest of this human flotsam around the obscure corners of the galaxy. We won't be hearing from them again after that. Then we can go home."

"And back to lower taxes, eh, sir?"

"Let's hope so, Lieutenant."

"I still don't get it, though, sir. These worlds, where we're dumping them — they're primitive, certainly. Backward, isolated... But they're not exactly hell holes, are they?"

"They're beautiful worlds," said the Commander. "The Presidents would never have gotten the plan through to law if they hadn't convinced the liberal faction of that."

"So how come the cons can't stand them?"

The commander just shrugged, left the room, and the door clicked closed behind him.

Genesis of a Dream

Trevor Jones

Dream Magazine was originally born out of my conviction that British sf needed a publication that would aim primarily to entertain its readers. Interzone was doing a fine job catering for those who enjoyed the more literary forms of the art and the more experimental subject matter, but in many conversations with fans of sf and fantasy I found a marked preference for a more traditional form of the literature, with fast-moving plots and plainly-written tales designed to provide an easy read. This, the vast majority felt, was not being provided, in magazine format at least, by the publications readily available.

Science fiction magazines, many say, are a breed close to extinction, in the UK at least. I was spoiled; I grew up in the era of multiple choise in the sf magazine field. Despite the prophets of doom and gloom I remain convinced that there remains a large readership who would enjoy a regular dose of sf in magazine format, if only there were a magazine that gave them the type of fiction that they enjoyed. Out of this convition Dream was born.

In 1984 my health deteriorated to the extent that I was forced to take early retirement from my full-time employment; apart from many less pleasant consequences, this left me with a lot of spare time on my hands. For what was really the first time in my life, I found myself with the opportunity to spend time doing what I wanted — and what I wanted was to produce a magazine which printed the type of sf that I, and the many others who had expressed their opinions to me, wanted to read.

Dream is now over one year old. Against the odds, perhaps. we have survived and grown stronger. Seven issues have been published so far, at fairly regular bi-monthly intervals. The eighth issue will be generally available by the time you read this. We have published twenty short stories by both new and established authors.

One of the first decisions I made was that I would pay a small amount for the fiction I published. At the moment, Dream pays ½p per word; our rates have doubled since we started up and I hope to increase them further in the future as our circulation grows. Whether due to the payment or whether because of the limited markets available elsewhere, I have found myself deluged with good quality manuscripts — so much so, in fact, that I have had to stop buying until January 1987, as I am severely overstocked. Of course, one solution to this problem would be to publish Dream more frequently, or to expand the number of pages in the magazine — but I am already finding the job of

regularly providing a magazine giving 20,000 words of new fiction each issue as much as I can handle.

I am hoping, however, to bring out a companion to Dream, New Moon, early in 1987, which will give our establised (and aspiring) authors the chance of another regular market. At the moment, I'm engaged in arm-twisting exercises to gain funding and editorial assistance with the proposed new magazine, but am hoping that it will emerge in a few months time.

For those who might like to contribute to Dream let me just say that our primary purpose is to publish stories that entertain. We encompass a wide variety of styles and subject matter. Humour, fantasy, space opera, love stories, war stories, political comment — it doesn't really matter; the overriding consideration is that the readership find it interesting and/or enjoyable. We always try and listen to the reader's opinions. They are the ones that count. Of course, different people want different things, but it's surprising how much of a consensus actually exists, and it is not always the most vociferous who represent the wishes of the majority.

Dream aims to fill a gap in the British sf magazine market. It can, of course, only do so in a small way at present. However, if enough of you like us and decide to join us, who knows what we may achieve in the future? I'm sure of one thing, at any rate: love us or hate us, you won't be bored by what you find in our pages.

DREAM MAGAZINE (60pp, A5 format) is available from 1 Ravenshoe, Godmanchester, HUNTINGDON, Cambs., PE18 8DE. A sample issue costs 70p, one year's subscription (6 issues) is £3.95, and two years' (12 issues) is £7.40 (cheues/POs made payable to Trevor Jones). All rates include postage and packing, and will be subject to increase from January 1987.


I WAS DENNIS WHEATLEY'S BATMAN
by Stan Nicholls

By the early '70s, Dennis Wheatley's books had sold 30 million copies worldwide and been translated into every major foreign language you can think of. Along with Barbara Cartland, Ian Fleming and Arthur Hailey, he was at that time in the first rank of popular writers saleswise, and several of his stories had been filmed. In 1973, thanks to a generous recommendation from author and anthologist Michael Parry, I landed a job as a freelance Editorial Consultant with Sphere Books. My function was to supply research assistance to Wheatley, who had contracted to select and edit a series to be called Dennis Wheatley's Library of the Occult. This was an extremely ambitious project, embracing both fiction and non-fiction, and it was envisaged that some four hundred titles would eventually be published, drawn from Wheatley's extensive knowledge — and library — of the fantastic and paranormal.

As research experience the task was invaluable. My duties included checking copyright, locating copies of the books to be reprinted, and compiling bibliographies of the authors, on which Wheatley based his Introductions. In the first instance I was given a list of around 600 writers — along with Wheatley's somewhat idiosyncratic versions of the titles of their books — in order to ascertain suitability for publication and availability. Of course, any series aiming to be definitive, as this was, would be bound to include a percentage of material in the Public Domain; in fact, it was obvious that the enterprise could be viable only if that were the case (reinforced by the fact that Wheatley's familiarity with the field — which was impressive — tended to be a bit hazy when it came to post-war titles).

No mass market publisher can seriously contemplate catering solely for fans. There may be many more people these days who fall into the category, but they still represent a tiny minority overall. However, the extent of the proportion of non-copyright — and thus cheaper and more familiar — product to be used became rather a contentious issue between Wheatley, the publishers and myself all through the six months or so of my involvement. The basic dichotomy of producing a series appealing both to the general reader and the enthusiast, while conforming to a tight budget, meant that a very fine line had to be walked.

Once or twice a week, usually late on a weekday afternoon after he had completed his day's work quota (he was writing a book about the Battle of Trafalgar at the time), I had to present myself at Wheatley's plush apartment in Chelsea. His home was somehow very fitting considering the kind of fiction he was associated with: elegantly and expensively furnished, but in a style perhaps more suited to the '30s. With its elaborate wall-hangings, solid wooden furniture, heavy candelabra and sound-muffling deep-pile carpets, it reminded me of nothing so much as a Hammer movie set. In common with many professional

writers he maintained a fairly rigid routine, and this extended to my visits. I would be shown into one of the rooms — usually a study, sometimes the dining room with its massive oak table — and after a few minutes the great man would make his entrance (and it always was an entrance — I have never met a writer who better exemplified Logan Pearsal Smith's contention that "Every author, however modest, keeps a most outrageous vanity chained like a madman in the padded cell of his breast...").

We invariably began with one little ritual I frankly could have done without in the circumstances: a decanter of syrupy vintage amontillado would be produced and two large, crystal goblets filled to the very brim. He threw back his at a draught, with absolutely no discernable effect, and I was expected to do the same. The stuff always hit me in the back of the head like a wallop from a sledgehammer and, on those occasions when the business at hand required a longer than usual session, I would be obliged to get through two or three of these brews — eventually reeling into the gathering twilight completely legless.

A strange thing about Wheatley was that, privately, he was a considerable authority on the occult and many of its famous (and infamous) adherents, yet his fiction on the subject is considered to be of very little value by present day practitioners. Indeed, many with a serious interest in the subject have accused him of misrepresentation and cheap sensationalism. It's a continuing paradox that, with very few exceptions (e.g. his enlightening non-fiction book THE DEVIL AND ALL HIS WORKS), he seemed content to live with this image.

One of the fascinating aspects of working with him was his fund of anecdotes. His conversation was peppered with references to, and stories about, various monarchs, presidents, literary giants, politicians, famous socialites and black magicians of his past acquaintance. (He knew Aleister Crowley well, although his attitude toward "The Wickedest Man in the World" was ambivalent. I could never decide whether he regarded Crowley as a genuine adept or a complete charlatan, but he had some choice tales to tell. Most of these are unrepeatable, but he did confirm something I had until then thought apocryphal: Crowley, on being invited to some swish social function, like a dinner party, was wont to lower his trousers, crouch on his hostess' living room floor and defacate over the carpet. This irksome behaviour was not undertaken for its own sake; apparently, in common with some satanists and supposedly the Knights Templar, the intention was to shock onlookers into a state of higher consciousness...)

Another source of fascination for me, as a lifelong book lover, was his library. Or rather, libraries — he had two, fiction and non-fiction, housed in seperate rooms. Even here there was a sense of the perverse, in that he had had all the

volumes re-bound (heresy to the collector) in either red or blue. Everything I saw was a first edition; those with a gold star on the spine — the majority — were also signed, often with a personal annotation. This peculiar fixation with making all the books conform to a standard appearance probably diminished their individual value considerably. Here was a superb collection of 20th Century literature, and an equally comprehensive hoard of occult material, that could only be of interest to those super-collectors accustomed to purchasing whole libraries. I've often wondered what became of this amazing accumulation after his death.

These compensations — the stories, the books — made up in a small way for the rather irascible nature of Wheatley himself. He was a man of strong and entrenched opinions. He saw himself as very much a member of the Establishment, and I would say that his world view had been indelibly stamped on him in his younger days, when most of the map was still coloured red. His response to most international problems was "HMG should send a gunboat". Seriously. As I was totally opposed to virtually his every utterance, and at that time sported a head of hair long enough to sit on, God only knows what he made of me (I think I can guess). However, whilst apt to be a mite fractious when things weren't going well, I have to say that he was a gentleman of the old school and his dealings with me were usually characterised by courtesy and consideration.

Although unbendingly consistent in his political and social views, the same could not, unfortunately, be said for his attitude towards Dennis Wheatley's Library of the Occult. Many of the aforementioned meetings consisted of my being told to scrap most of the work I'd undertaken in the previous week and start afresh. Between our soirees I was bombraded with letters, telegrams and 'phone calls, usually containing contradictory instructions. Wheatley had been given a great deal of editorial discretion, so anxious were Sphere to get his name on their lists, but they kept a firm hold on the financial side. Actually, the budget was pretty decent, but the deal they had to strike with him — a fee for the use of his name, a payment for each introduction he wrote, an additional payment for the anthologies he edited as part of the series and a generous royalty on all the titles — meant that he got the lion's share. (I should worry. They were paying me enough to choke a horse myself. Not that money's everything. As the rich tell the poor.) The situation was further complicated by the fact that Wheatley was actually putting the series together for a Packager — and extremely able and highly respected figure in British publishing — who also happened to be a lifelong friend of his. This luminary acted as an intermediary between Wheatley and the Publisher, a hotline to the heady heights when lowly editors baulked at catering to less prudent suggestions (like paying £50

for a rare book because none of us had read it).

Inevitably, with everyone taking sides depending on their current allegiance, and me doing a passable impression of a ping-pong ball, the final result was a fudge. In the event only forty-two volumes were published and, whilst many of them were first-rate, the majority weren't exactly unknown to even the most casual of bookshop browsers. It would be fair to say that the series was not a success — indeed, by the time the final volume appeared, the first six had already been remaindered.

"A man with one watch knows what time it is.
A man with two is never sure"
(Siegel's Law)

There is a curious footnote to this story, for which I have no explanation. During my researches into all those authors being considered for inclusion in the series, I noticed a recurring theme. Of the 621 writers comprising the master list of sources, over fifty attributed the inspiration for at least some of their work to dreams. Several examples of this are well known outside the field — for example, Stoker conceived the idea for DRACULA during a malaria fever dream, Mary Shelley dreamt FRANKENSTEIN, and Robert Louis Stevenson recorded that the whole of THE STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE came to him in the form of a nightmare. Similar claims were made by William Hope Hodgson, A.E.W. Mason, Goethe, Huysmans, Lord Dunsany and Charles Williams, amongst others.

In order to make life easier for myself, I drew up charts of all the authors and their books, with columns for different pieces of information, so that I could get at the relevent facts more quickly. Having done this, I noticed something strange about the original publication dates of the books — something that would probably have escaped the attention of someone with no interest in the paranormal and offbeat matters. In all but three of the fifty-odd "dream inspired" works mentioned above, the date coincided with UFO "flap" years (a flap is a period of time during which unusually high levels of UFO activity are reported). For example, 1897 turned up five times, and that year saw what UFOlogists refer to as The Great Airship Mystery, when hundreds of people — mostly in the United States — claimed to have seen large and sophisticated dirigible-like airships in the skies. This at a time before such craft supposedly existed.

I wrote up this phenomenon at the time in journals more suited to such esoterica than Focus, so I won't go into tedious detail here; except to say that I extended the principle to other areas and found further correlations — with poltergeist activity, Christian "miracles", mystery animal sightings, sunspots, astrology... I was well into a massively complicated

attempt to reconcile it all in some vast cosmic scheme when other demands on my time mercifully forced me to abandon the whole thing. Just as well. I would probably have ended up insisting that I was a teapot.

THE DENNIS WHEATLEY LIBRARY OF THE OCCULT

1 Bram Stoker, *Dracula*
2 Guy Endore, *The Werewolf of Paris*
3 Aleister Crowley, *Moonchild*
4 H.P. Blavatsky, *Studies in Occultism*
5 William Hope Hodgson, *Carnacki the Ghost-Finder*
6 Elliot O'Donnell, *The Sorcery Club*
7 Paul Tabori, *Harry Price, Ghost-Hunter*
8 E. Marion Crawford, *The Witch of Prague*
9 Dennis Wheatley (ed.), *Uncanny Tales 1*
10 A.E.W. Mason, *The Prisoner in the Opal*
11 J.W. Brodie-Innes, *The Devil's Mistress*
12 Cheiro, *You and Your Hand*
13 Marjorie Bowen, *Black Magic*
14 Philip Bonewits, *Real Magic*
15 J.W. von Goethe, *Faust*
16 Dennis Wheatley (ed.), *Uncanny Tales 2*
17 John Buchan, *The Gap in the Curtain*
18 Zolar, *The Interpretation of Dreams*
19 Alfred Metraux, *Voodoo*
20 R.H. Benson, *The Necromancers*
21 Dennis Wheatley (ed.), *Satanism and Witches*
22 Joan Grant, *The Winged Pharoah*
23 J.K. Huysmans, *Down There*
24 Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*
25 Alexander Dumas, *Horror at Fontenay*
26 Donald McCormick, *The Hell-Fire Club*
27 Marie Corelli, *The Mighty Atom*
28 Frances Mossiker, *The Affair of the Poisons*
29 Hilda Lewis, *The Witch and the Priest*
30 Julian Franklyn, *Death by Enchantment*
31 Ida B. Prangley, *Fortune Telling by Cards*
32 Peter Saxon, *Dark Ways to Death*
33 Willian Hope Hodgson, *The Ghost Pirate*
34 Gaston Leroux, *The Phantom of the Opera*
35 Charles Williams, *The Greater Trumps*
36 Maurice Magre, *The Return of the Magi*
37 Dennis Wheatley (ed.), *Uncanny Tales 3*
38 Evelyn Eaton, *The King is a Witch*
39 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
40 Lord Dunsany, *The Curse of the Wise Woman*
41 Sax Rohmer, *Brood of the Witch Queen*
42 Pedro McGregor, *Brazilian Magic: Is it the Answer?*

◀ MARKET

publication	editor/address	length
TWILIGHT ZONE	Tappan King, Montcalm Publishing Co. 800 2nd Avenue, NEW YORK, NY10017	5,000 max
NIGHT CRY	Michael Blaine & Alan Rodgers same pub/address as TWILIGHT ZONE	5,000 max?
FANTASY BOOK	Nick Smith Box 60126 PASADENA, California 91106	2,000-10,000
STARWIND	David F. Powell The Starwind Press Box 98, RIPLEY, Ohio 45167	2,000-10,000
PLAYBOY	Alice K. Turner (Fiction Editor) 919 N.Michigan, CHICAGO, IL 60611	3,000-6,000 (short-shorts 1,000-1,500)
PENTHOUSE	Kathryn Green (Fiction Editor) 1965 Broadway, NEW YORK, NY 10023	3,500-6,000
CAVALIER	Nye Willden (Fiction Editor) Suite 204, 2355 Salzedo Street Coral Gables, FLORIDA, 33134	2,500-3,500
OUI	Jeffrey Goodman Laurent Publications 300 W 43rd Street, NEW YORK, 10036	1,500-2,500
SATURDAY EVENING POST	Jack Gramling (Fiction Editor) 1100 Waterway Boulevard, INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46202	1,500-5,000
ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE	Eleanor Sullivan (Editor) Davis Publications Inc. 380 Lexington Ave, NEW YORK, 10017	6,000 max

This first new-style Market Space lists some American publications you may not have considered. The "bible" for US outlets is WRITER'S MARKET, published by Writer's Digest Books — over a thousand pages of detailed information, putting our own WRITERS' AND ARTISTS' YEARBOOK to shame.

SPACE 

payment	circulation/frequency	comments
5c pw	150,000	Fantasy, understated horror and surrealism; no hard sf, sword & sorcery or sadism.
5-10c pw	30,000 quarterly	Horror and dark fantasy; dark or psychological sf.
2½-4c pw	5,000 quarterly	Consider all types of fantasy with strong characterisation and carefully-developed plot.
1-4c pw	2,500 quarterly	Fantasy and sf.
$2,000 min (short-shorts $1,000 min)	4,000,000 monthly	Very prestigious story market. Competition tough, but always seeking good short-shorts.
$1,500 min	3,400,000	Quality fiction; action-oriented, with central male character. Sex not mandatory.
$250 max	250,000 monthly	At least one explicit sex scene per story. Looks for stories that are "imaginative & sensational".
"negotiable"	800,000 monthly	Erotic/sexual slant preferred. Avoid "typical" situations — hookers, bordellos, etc.
$150-750	735,000 9 times p.a.	Avoid sex, horror, bad language. Wide parameters — fantasy, sf, adventure, mystery, etc.
3-8c pw (short-shorts	375,000 monthly	Occasionally takes futuristic crime stories. Particularly encourages beginning writers.

NEWS: L.Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future competition has been extended, so there are now quarterly contests until July 1987. WARNING: Avoid competitions — like the recent Science for People one, and unlike the above — which take copyright of entries. NEVER part with copyright.

NEW Markets for OLD

Paul Kincaid

I am frequently running into would-be writers who ask where they can send their short stories. I've even had the odd story sent to Vector which, if nothing else, reveals that the author committed the cardinal sin of not checking out the publication before sending off the story. But I do get the distinct impression that would-be sf writers imagine that if they can't get into Interzone then there is no other market for what they produce.

Okay, perhaps that's a little unfair, most of them would probably have the nous to get an International Reply Coupon or two from their local Post Office and bundle their latest opus across the sea to one of the half-dozen or so regular science fiction magazines published in America. Nevertheless, there seems to be a persistant belief that unless the magazine advertises itself as "SF", is is not even going to look at an sf story. If that's what you think, you couldn't be more wrong.

At the moment sf is going through something of a boom. This is nothing like the explosion in the genre that followed films like STAR WARS in the 1970s, but more and more publishers do seem to be recognising sf as, at least, a commercially viable proposition. Allen and Unwin, after years of reaping the benefits of Tolkien's phenomenal popularity, suddenly realised that there was a market for fantasy and launched their Unicorn imprint; now they have taken a further step with the launch of their specialist sf line, Orion. New small presses devoted to sf or fantasy, like Kerosina or Oriflamme, are now cropping up with bewildering regularity and, hopefully, surviving. Greenhill are starting a series of reprints of rediscovered science fiction from the early years of this century.

But this is a very different boom from what has gone before. What we are seeing is not so much an explosion of the same old stereotypical sf, but an expansion of the boundaries of the genre. Writers like George Orwell (1984) and Angus Wilson (THE OLD MEN AT THE ZOO) have used science fictional devices in

the past, but the practice is far more common these days. Novels of the mainstream that have won considerable critical aclaim, like Peter Carey's ILLYWHACKER, Angela Carter's NIGHTS AT THE CIRCUS, John Fowles' A MAGGOT, and the work of Borges, Calvino and the South American Magical Realists, all depend on devices that would not be our of place in sf. Other books, like LANARK by Alasdair Gray or WALKING ON GLASS by Iain Banks, could not have been written without some grounding in science fiction. In other words, the science fictional hardware of futures, robots and alternative realities are becoming common literary tools.

At the same time writers like Brian Aldiss, J.G. Ballard, Christopher Priest and M. John Harrison are achieving critical aclaim and — more importantly in the present context — critical respectability outside the ghetto walls. In literary terms, sf has at last come of age. Your story is not going to be bounced from a magazine simply because it does not conform to the strict realism of the mainstream. Of course, it can still be rejected for all the usual crimes: poor writing, unoriginality, bad characterisation and so on — in fact, these literary verities are now more important than ever. But simply writing sf is now no longer enough to shut you off from any market place.

So, where can you submit your sf stories? The answer is to virtually any magazine that publishes short fiction — but never forget that you will always have to adjust your fiction to the needs of the marketplace. A stirring space opera full of gruesome aliens and bloody battles is never going to make it into Woman's Own or its ilk, but a realistic contemporary story with an element of romantic fantasy might well be just the thing.

The regular outlets for short fiction in this country are all liable to give just as serious consideration to a science fiction story as thet would to any other. The Fiction Magazine, for instance, has had occasional sf special issues, and anyway has featured such writers as Aldiss, Priest, Ursula LeGuin and Colin Greenland. Penguin's annual anthology series, Firebird, also features sf stories from the likes of Ballard, Keith Roberts, Alasdair Gray and Angela Carter. The editor of the first four Firebirds, Robin Robertson, has now moved to Secker and Warburg to launch a similar anthology series there, so it is not unreasonable to assume that a similar policy will operate there. What's more, all these outlets are constantly on the look-out for new writers, though it must be remembered that these are literary magazines — they are not necessarily looking for the most outrageous new scifi idea, but for the best pieces of writing around, whatever their genre.

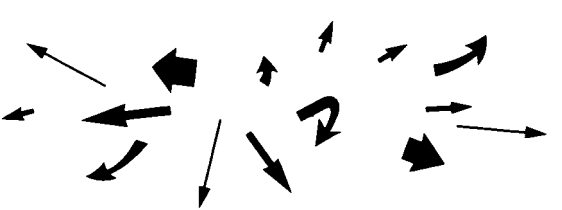
Inside or outside sf there are constant complaints about the dearth of short story outlets, but in fact when you look around there are quite a number of magazines to choose from.

There is, for instance, Ambit, of which J.G. Ballard is long-time prose editor, and he would be the last person to reject science fiction because of its genre; but here you must remember that Ambit is a rather experimental literary journal, so that a straighforward sf narrative written with Isaac Asimov's Magazine in mind is hardly likely to find favour here. Pretty much the same is also true of similar small magazines like Stand or Panurge, though each has its own distinctive flavour which makes it vital that you read them carefully before you try sending stories.

It's also worth bearing in mind the men's magazines. Playboy, for instance, has a reputation for paying one of the highest rates in the marketplace, and it has also published some of the leading sf authors. And you don't need to be writing about sex – even back in the 1960s Isaac Asimov was boasting of selling a story to Playboy which didn't have any women in it (and no, it wasn't about homosexuals either). Of course, Playboy is at the top end of this particular market, both in terms of rates and quality; but a lively, preferably funny sf story about sex should find a ready market in some of the countless other men's magazines.

And so it goes on. The WRITERS' AND ARTISTS' YEARBOOK is a vital tool for any writer, and contains addresses for most of these publications and more. And if you're looking for more ideas about where to send your story look in any collection of stories by your favourite writer – turn to the acknowledgements page and see where the stories first saw print. There might be a few surprises – WINTER'S TALES, The Scotsman, Irish Times. Then get hold of a few copies of the publication to see for yourself what it is like. When you feel your story suits the publication, send it off and see what happens.

Remember, one rejection doesn't mean your story won't see print. There are always plenty more places to try. All it takes is a little imagination – which is something no sf writer should be short of.



Why the Rejection?

When you first begin collecting rejection slips (and there are very few of us who, like the Bobs Heinlein and Shaw, don't start out with a seemingly endless string of the buggers) the main problem is that they don't usually say more than "Thanks but no thanks". At least one American sf magazine, however, still uses a checklist slip which, apart from showing you with a tick where your particular story erred, also provides you with a fairly extensive list of pitfalls to avoid in the future. So, if you haven't already garnered one of these, read on and inwardly digest:

1 The story's subject matter was inappropriate for our readership.
2 The age level of the story was inappropriate for our readership.
3 The ms. was a simultaneous submission; we do not consider story submissions sent simultaneously to other publishing houses.
4 The ms. was a reprint offering; we do not reprint stories that have already been published.
5 The ms. was not typed double-spaced with one-inch margins.
6 The ms. was typed on both sides of the typing paper.
7 The ms. was a poorly reproduced photocopy or was typed on slick, glossy or on excessively grey paper.
8 The ms. type was printed too lightly, thus could not be read.
9 If a computer-generated ms., the type font used was not easy to read (i.e. it was dot-matrix, and not of letter-quality).
10 No SAE accompanied the ms.; thus, it could not be returned.
11 The basic premise of the story presented weak, over-obvious or antique ideas.
12 The story's focus was hard to access, opaque, or murky.
13 The background detail of the story was inconsistent or obtrusive.
14 Story conflict was missing.
15 Characters were stock or two-dimensional in nature.
16 Characters did not act consistently in order to resolve properly the established conflict.
17 The plot did not develop or resolve logically, or actions were futile.
18 The story did not convince the reader to suspend his disbelief.
19 The story was tediousled to hold the interest of the reader.
20 Avoid using cliches or trite ideas.
21 An unacceptable number of grammar or spelling errors occurred.
22 The story was overwritten, contained awkward structures, or had improper word choices.
23 The story contained too much lecture or static description.

— *Plenty there to bear in mind. Of course, you'll still feel lousy whenever you get a rejection, but how much worse would you feel if the rejection was just because your typing ribbon needed replacing?*

Success Makes it Real?

by David Mace

[David was asked to contribute to the miscellany on "Coping With Rejection" that Sue Thomason had begun assembling. His response is such an object lesson to all of us that I've decided to run the piece on its own. It was written in April 1985, since when Granada (Grafton) have also published FIRELANCE.]

What do I know about being turned down? I mean, I just succeeded, didn't I?

Last year DEMON-4 was published, just in time for me to turn up — totally incognito, unnoticed and unmolested but a "real writer" just the same — at the Eastercon in Brighton. This year NIGHTRIDER has been published and now both books can boast Chris Foss covers thanks to Granada's generous coffers, and both of them are due to appear in the States in a year or so. I've even had the joy of an excellent review by Faren Miller in Locus (thanks, Faren, if you happen to be reading this, and I mean it).

— Isn't that succeeding?

Well yes, now it is. But then it wasn't. 'Then' is all of my life from 16 to 30 (it was in 1982 that Granada took DEMON-4). I started sending novels to publishers way back then... and nothing ever happened. And went on never happening. I dropped out of university, having realised my condition, i.e. that the "burning need to write" was serious and so ought to be taken seriously; and having learned that, for me, writing a novel is only possible as an eight-hours-a-day five-days-a-week as-many-weeks-as-it-takes activity, and that when I write in my spare time I merely write rubbish. So any other form of career, any hope of a regular job, had to be sacrificed to writing.

And success went on never happening. It went on and on, until I thought that I and my life and my writing — which itself is the only point and purpose or realisation of my existance that I could or can see — was simply vanishing out of the world. I got into quite a terrible state, worsened by the certainty that I was learning and getting better and nearer to a breakthrough even as time was running out. And run out it did.

When I wrote DEMON-4 in 1979 it was my eighteenth full-length novel, and it was my last attempt. I put typewriter and files away and set off to try to find some threads that could be picked up and woven into a new life.

And still nothing happened for three bitter years. Until a senseless little war out of the blue brought me the 'phone call of my life, also out of the blue. The bleak and empty bottom end of the earth where Demon-4 plies its silent path had suddenly become marketable. Success by the skin of my teeth, by coincidence.

The moral? The world will catch up with you, recognition always comes in the end? No — to tell that to someone who's still desperately trying would be a cruel lie. Success might come in the end, and if you're good enough it damnwell should come — but unfortunately neither anything you do nor anything anyone else might say or profess to or promise to you can guarantee that it will come. You succeed, with that first publication that so magically multiplies your further chances, if you succeed. If you're lucky. Being good means that given the luck to get into print, then you'll begin to actually get somewhere. But being good won't in itself give you that little piece of luck.

So — give up? When I remember those eleven years of cumulative deepest despair and then the three years of icy and compacting bitterness, the answer is yes. It's the only responsible advise anyone could give — you can't encourage another person to tear themselves to shreds inside in the prosecution of a desperate need to communicate in story form, when the echo is an endless empty silence.

But, there's a but. If you don't give up. Or if you think you have, but then the door opens a tiny crack and you turn away from everything else and put every ounce of your intentions into shouldering it open and forcing a way through. If you cannot give up...

Being published and being paid makes you a professional; it gives you readers and a consumation of your communicative act, but it isn't what makes you a real writer. The converse is the truth — it is necessary to be a real writer in order to have any chance at all of surviving the accumulating pain of rejection and apparent failure, while your skill grows before your eyes but your certainty slowly dissolves into confusion. It hurts like hell; it hurts as deep as the roots that urge you to write — and the deeper they go, the worse the pain. But if, despite it all, you cannot give up... then there's hope, there's a chance. If you cannot give up, then go on trying.

Because, in that case, you really are a writer.

TILL DEATH MAY US PART

Colin P. Davies

For some time, Alexander Wood had been rubbing his hand along the rusty quayside rail, absently watching the brittle flakes of greying paint glide down to the waves, when he was startled by a call from behind. His head jerked up and, for the first time, he noticed the sun, low and brilliant in the damp dawn air.

"Mister Wood?" the voice called again.

He raised his fingers and brought them close to his face; they were smeared with blood. Immediately they pulsed with a hot, strangely soporific throbbing, a rhythm so enticing that he sank to his knees and pressed his cheek against the coolness of the iron railing. As if through a suddenly-opened door the crashing, buzzing, scraping sounds of the dock flooded in to wash away the lingering after-images of his dream.

A battered schooner lay moored nearby, a limp foreign flag hanging from its mast. Dark-skinned sailors hopped to the quay and vanished amid the clutter of shacks and unloaded cargo.

Stacking crates in neat geometry, stunted, thick-bodied men and women engaged in playful shoulder-slapping, their laughter bright as the sunlight flashing off their sweat-sheened muscles. High above them a clanking, skeletal crane spat steam, like insults hissed at the bales it hoisted from the schooner's hold.

And everywhere the grating moans of arthritic machines.

He felt foolish; he had believed he was alone.

"I'd like to introduce myself, Mister Wood – sir?"

It had been dark when he emerged from the dismal alleys of the town to saunter along the coast road. The gusty wind had moved on with its catch of pre-dawn raincloulds, and the air was still and fresh. Over the black ocean a pale sky, marking the place where the sun would rise, helped him avoid the many water-filled potholes. The harbour had been silent.

"Mister Wood. My name is Courtney, from the Chamber of – " A sharp whistle from the dockyard sent up a chorus of discordant echoes; the sounds were as cold as the railing pressed to Alexander's face.

" – The Chamber of Trade, sir. I'm the Official Observer."

Alexander twisted around to peer into a lean face. Immediately the woman backed away. She tried a smile, but her mouth merely twitched nervously.

"It's a great day, sir, for all of us. The whole County." Her words were delivered cleanly, almost staccato. "I'm very proud to be here." Her body was as thin as her voice.

In spite of her discomfort, Alexander took time to study her appearance. Stubby black hair in the Record Guild style, highly polished sandals, and a tan uniform patterned with creases – much too large, likely borrowed.

"How old are you?"

"I don't know. That is, I'm not really sure, Mister Wood." Her arms were swallowed to the elbows by the pockets of her jacket.

"Neither am I," said Alexander, his attention drawn by a screaming gull skimming the wave-tops. "Three months they've been gone. Did you know that?"

Taking a deep breath, as if to gain volume, she answered steadily, "Yes, sir. And I'd like to say that I'm very honoured to be appointed Official Observer. This is such a special day — our first ship returning. The Chamber hopes for great changes in intercounty trade — you've given us a much stronger hand."

He regarded her coolly. The smile was struggling to appear again. Was she genuinely honoured, or simply reciting a speech prepared months ago by others? It hardly mattered to him, anyway. He watched the waves.

Ceaseless pounding on stone; the rhythms of erosion — the patience of the waves thrilled him. For Alexander, the sea had always been a wonder.

Through thin denims and bony knees, he felt the rumbling of a passing creature-and-cart and turned to watch it shrink away across the wide expanse of concrete. Beyond the flat greyness, against the sudden rising wall of a low mountain, the rebuilt warehouses were scattered like fallen rocks at the foot of a cliff.

Already the sea-mist had thinned into straggling wisps and the growing onshore breeze was warmer; still, Alexander shivered as he shielded his eyes with the shade of the rail and looked eastward, between the steep black rocks at the mouth of the harbour. He searched for the tiny speck of his ship, but could find only the insect silhouettes of seabirds against the glare of the cloudless sky.

The waves slapped rythmically below.

"Shall I tell you what really matters?" he said abruptly. He sat back on his heels and tugged his coat shut. "It's not power or extended life or wealth — I've got those." He stabbed his finger towards the sea. "What matters to me is out there, on my ship. She alone is important to me."

The Observer withdrew a few steps, trying not to catch sight of the tears in his eyes; but they held her, impaled on their agony.

More gently, he said, "Let me tell you."

"But Mister Wood..."

"Let me tell you!"

Leaning over the lower rail, he looked down at the bobbing seaweed, flecked with grey paint. He tried to see below the green net with its catch of driftwood and careless cast-offs. Not far beneath, he was sure, the weed would be parting.

A body would be rising.

Alice screamed as she hurled the framed painting of the Remembered Glory across the bedroom. It smashed into the oval rosewood mirror — secreter of their scribed initials for decades

— which hung beside the door. Silver needles splashed over the carpet. Alexander recalled months of snow and ice in the shipyard; stalactites grinning from the rigging like rows of uneven teeth, thick ice on the deck with its grimy patches of ground-in filth and pockets of frozen blood.

"No! I hate the ocean — it's too large and... empty." Her voice trembled as she searched for words. "I'm scared for myself — and I know that's selfish. I admit that I'm weak."

Alexander was looking at Alice through the glass, through shards still lodged within the frame. Drawing a gold blanket close to her chest, she sat on the edge of the elegant antique bed. Seen like this, she appeared disjointed, unreal; a fantasy image, pale and frightened. Her statuesque, sculpted features were harder and more angular, as if she were the early stage of some artist's portrait. She was a soulless representation of his wife, her spirit trapped in the web of cracks.

"I do understand," he said softly, though his anger simmered. "It's grief that scares you — it's being left, alone."

"We're all scared."

He shook his head and turned to face her directly. "Not all of us."

"Yes, I know — but you're different."

Alexander dropped into a chair and allowed his eyelids to close. He was weary of this argument; how could they both have what they wanted — needed? Alice had grown too close to him, too dependant. By marrying outside her guild she had cut herself off from her natural family — and Alexander had become more than he wished to be. Should anything happen to him, she would be helpless — emotionally, if not physically — and the effect of death on those left behind was unknown. Death was so rare.

"I just don't think I could bear it," she whispered. "Not for year after year after year."

"You could find someone else," he said, allowing a grin to warm his cold features.

"Where?" She swept an accusing finger. "Out there? Those people?"

Between the open curtains he could see out into the night. The sky reflected flame, and the smell of wood-smoke had entered the room. Nearby voices held his attention for a moment, then faded.

"They seem to be fighting somewhere else tonight," he said, hoping to convince himself as much as Alice; but they were both concerned.

Noticing the cool sweat on her face, he got up to wrap the blanket snugly around her shoulders. With a gentle finger, he brushed the tails of matted hair from her forehead. At times, in his drive for fulfilment, it was easy to forget that he did

care about her. She avoided his eyes, staring instead across the room.

He had become aware that he was unlike most of the others — the guildspeople, the subpeople. They were as scared as Alice. With the possibility of immortality, all danger had to be avoided; there was so much life to lose. One chance in a million was considered poor odds.

He was different; and the men and women who would crew his vessel were different. They were misfits — despised and envied.

Now he would make a promise which he did not intend to keep.

He would not sail.

Alexander raised his head, grabbed the top railing, and hauled himself to his feet. His body was still young, but he could find little strength. With a shake of his head he threw his charcoal-black hair from his face. He took air in gulps, then spat; his breath tasted bitter. The rotting smell from the ocean was strong.

"She's always been weak," he whispered, and stroked his smooth chin. "Does the sea scare you — Courtney, is it? — "

"Yes, sir. Carol Courtney, Official Observer." She went to stand at the railing and stroked the rusty bar distastefully. Her eyes scanned the cliffs of the harbour and the short stretch of open sea. "No sign of the ship yet, Mister Wood." She chewed at her bottom lip and began to speak, but her words were smothered by the crash of an unloaded crate.

"It fascinates you — am I right?" he asked.

"Like a bad dream fascinates, yes."

The railings cast a network of long angled shadows over the mossy concrete. Alexander imagined himself entangled, like a corpse trapped in twisted seaweed. As though any struggle for release would only bind him tighter, he remained standing, shaded his eyes with a hand, and squinted across the harbour to where his own giant head jutted above the waves.

Rising from a small island of rough brown rock, it had been erected as a monument to his power and influence in the County. He alone had the wealth and the will to build a ship. He viewed the statue as another form of immortality.

Alice hated it.

She likened its appearance in the harbour to the overnight emergence of a new ugly boil on a smooth fresh face. He had laughed at that. She had the sort of humour which endeared her to neither man nor woman; but she was special to Alexander, who had a feeling — though he could not discover its source — that her cruelest joke was yet to come.

Shortly she would be returning, sailing past his image of finely-hewn stone with its prematurely seagull-aged hair. No doubt she would ignore it.

"She's a mysterious woman," he sighed. "Can you see her yet?"

His companion opened her mouth to reply, but saw that his gaze was aimed above her — he was speaking to a gull circling low overhead.

"I can't lose her now. I know exactly where she is."

The white bird landed, silent as a spirit, on the rail beside Alexander. Their eyes met briefly before, with a scream of amusement, it swooped out again over the sea.

Alexander glared at their retreating backs; three poorly-dressed motherborn men, escaping rapidly down the narrow street, stumbling over discarded boxes. They walked erratically, glancing back with timid expressions.

They could not help him.

He stood in the shadows beneath the ancient brick bridge. The streetlights cast a wan illumination through the snow which, just then, began to swirl again in the heavy red sky. He listened to the hollow echoings of uneasy creatures and the ring of distant yells. To either side he could see the steep white roofs with their exaggerated eaves and small peaked dormers, the pockmarked faces of the houses with an occasional unshielded window spilling light over the street. Then all were snatched from view as the storm fell suddenly from above.

He backed up against the cold, soot-coated wall of the bridge and slid down to sit on the wet cobbles. Through the brickwork he imagined he could feel the vibrations of an era long dead; the magnificent, thundering passage of the transit machines. Now only rickety handcarts and rattling bicycles threaded their way through the brambles high above his head.

The house was empty!

He remembered with sudden urgency that he had to find her.

Clambering to his feet, he stumbled out into the open.

The wind bit.

Up the street and into an alley, he ran between the gable of a boarding house and the high wall of a disused cemetery; flurries of snow blew down off the coping to cover his shirt in stinging ice.

Entering a wide street of shuttered shops, he saw a cloaked figure standing before the bright rectangle of an open doorway. Before his sliding feet could move him, though, the snow erupted again in a blinding wall and the figure was gone.

Alexander collapsed exhausted into a deep drift and lay still, while the fierce cold knifed his flesh.

Across the town the storm had begun to extinguish the fires; the mobs had been driven to shelter. Only an occasional cry rose above the far crackling of flame.

In his last moments of consciousness, he dreamed. He saw Alice standing on the deck as his ship sailed into the black

gloom.

Then a white dust of snow took her from his sight.

Alexander stepped out of his shoes and took several steps back. His bare feet could feel the night-chill still in the concrete. Finding a clean patch of ground, he sat down cross-legged and wrapped his arms around his shins. As he brushed away dust, he noticed his trousers were thin at the knees.

"The cold can play tricks on your mind," he said, glancing up at Courtney. "And fear. Are you often frightened?"

She put her back to the rail and sat on the lower bar. "We were all frightened of the fighting. But that's all passed now — it's all forgotten..." Her words fell away. She twisted around, hiding her face and dabbed at her eyes with an overlong sleeve. "I'm sorry." She switched her attention to the foreign schooner.

Not far from Alexander, at the base of a post, a long blade of coarse grass bobbed as if in contest with the wind. He found a small pebble, held it to his eye, and took aim; but, switching targets, he tossed it in a high arc to land inside one of his shoes. He laughed. The odds were high against that.

But then, he thought, odds could never be trusted.

Jumping up, he ran to the shoes and kicked them, right and left, far out over the water. One sank immediately, the other floated for a few moments like a small boat, then slipped beneath the surface. His foot trailed wet red smudges as he marched to and fro.

He stared at the back of the woman's uniform, noticing the frayed collar and the threadbare patches at the elbows. Were the woman and the uniform to be taken as evidence of the County's enthusiasm for his project? Where were the leaders? The excited public? She was an expression of their stagnation.

He launched himself angrily at the railings, leaned far out over the water, and peered down at the slapping waves. Courtney came across to join him.

"This is where they found her," he said.

The grey, ragged corpse broke the surface, limbs entangled in the green morass, face obscured by clotted hair. Alexander knelt at the edge, gritty steel grasped hard in both hands, watching the boats dipping and rocking. He felt the path of a solitary tear, which hung briefly from his chin before falling down into the harsh crash of a wave.

The woman's body was pulled, dripping, from the sea. The dragging hands of weed were torn away.

A fog of confusing, momentary images. But, as with the long seconds of a nightmare, he would have time to remember every detail: the slap of bare feet on wet sandstone steps as

the silent group climbed from the sea; a dark trail leading to a dusty white truck, a skull-and-crossbones drawn by some critical finger on the dirt-veneered door; and a sad, weary face with red eyes, wavering in and out of his vision.

As the truck pulled away, steam shrieking through the murmurs of the crowd, Alexander did not look up, but watched ripples in a puddle until his reflection grew smooth and still.

They had taken her for resurrection — that was the law. And it was more than law; death was immoral as well as illegal.

But Alexander was unsure. She had been in the water so long, and the techniques were not perfect.

For now, he would have to wait.

Whatever happened, he could not go with her.

Now she sailed towards him out of the sharp brilliance — a half-moon skating over the mirrored sky. The sounds grew louder. The crew rushed about the deck to the accompaniment of muffled yells and the calls of sea-birds. White sails snapped at passing breaths of wind.

He searched for Alice — and saw her, directing the crew in towards the quay. His throat constricted.

He glanced across at Courtney; she stood rigid, her cheeks pale. An odd girl; so dour and frightened.

And she was crying.

He climbed up to straddle the rail, wrapping his feet around the lower bar, and watched the vessel turn. Slowly it heaved its way toward the quay.

A bead of sweat ran down his forehead and into his eye. He blinked and rubbed with a knuckle, trying to see Alice more clearly. She was blurred, shifting focus.

For a moment he felt confused; frames of past events flickered behind his eyes.

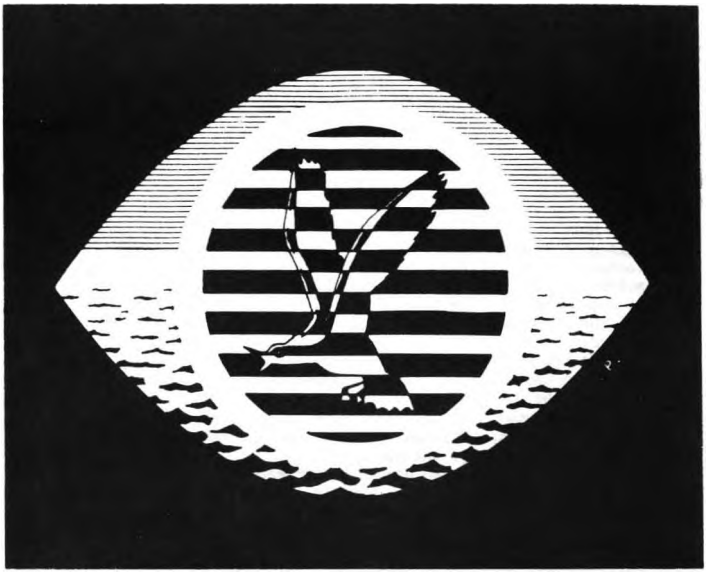
Then his confusion fell away and his vision grew sharp. She was majestic, beautiful, hanging below the prow of his Remembered Glory; a figurehead to lead the crew safely through haunted storms, protect them from the spirit of the ocean. Her whispered greetings teased his ears.

But, as the ocean-scarred vessel drew in against the quay, as the crew shouted and ropes were thrown, he saw that the sea had been hard on her.

With a desolate cry he saw the flaking skin on her once-smooth face, the hole in her shoulder where the securing bolt had driven through; dried brown flesh still clung to the shaft.

A treasure-seeking seabird had found her eyes.

Hollow pits could not see him fall.



Just a few more words before shifting out of focus for now:

Colin Davies' Till Death May Us Part was, believe it or not, his first serious story. Since it was written, 18 months ago, he's had three professional acceptances, and looks set fair for many more.

Stan Nicholls and Paul Kincaid both provided substantial pieces at the drop of a proverbial hat, for which they have my (and, I trust, your) hearty thanks.

Trevor Jones is editing and publishing a very promising magazine, which certainly deserves to be well supported.

David Mace has shared with us a very tough lesson; he learned the hard way that you often achieve your goals only once you're prepared to give them up — but I won't wax philosophical at this stage...