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DARKWORLDS

WINTER 2017 THE CULTURE OF SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY & HORROR QUARTERLY

Marc Scott Zicree

Talks TWILIGHT ZONE, STAR TREK and his new television series SPACE COMMAND

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DARK WORLDS QUARTERLY is published four times a year by RAGE Machine Books. An electronic version of this publication is published as a free, downloadable PDF file from the Rage Machine Books website: *ragemachinebooks.gwthomas.org*

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DARK WORLDS QUARTERLY

THE CULTURE OF SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY & HORROR WINTER 2017

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The Role of the Critic

by G. W. Thomas

The literary critic is bound by certain conventions. What happens when a critic oversteps those bounds?

Something happened recently that really brought home my own role as a writer of articles about books and stories I like. I don't consider myself a serious "critic" because I can't be bothered with all those bibliographies and academic stuff. I'm not interested in writing a thesis. I just like to share the Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror and other genres I read. I value good critics, such as Jack Sullivan, Christopher Booker and Michael Drout because they have helped me see genre fiction with clarity and depth. I am not a critic per se, but I am certainly not *anti*-critic.

Someone who I respected as a critic was S. T. Joshi. He bucked the politics of success and didn't declare Stephen King the greatest present day horror writer. Joshi chose Ramsey Campbell. You can agree or disagree, but he made his case in a book called *The Modern Weird Tale* (2001). Joshi's prejudices are evident as he holds H. P. Lovecraft as the master of all horror writers. Campbell is more Lovecraftian than King, etc…

Up to this point, Joshi was operating as a critic should. (Let's be clear here. Joshi is not

a reviewer, but a critic. A reviewer, as opposed to a critic, serves the reader to decide in whether to read a book or not, but offers no real analysis.)

Both Campbell and King have large canons of works and can certainly afford to ignore an army of S. T. Joshis. But things changed recently when Joshi felt his role was to comment on living writing of less prominence. Specifically, two craftsmen by the name of Willie Meikle and Brian Keene.

Is it Joshi's place to comment, perhaps destructively, on a working writer? How would Lovecraft have done if some Joshi had attacked him in his reclusive Rhode Island home?

Writers are human, some like HPL, fragile. If HPL's work had been sabotaged by a critic he might never have written "The Call of Cthulhu" or "At the Mountains of Madness". Then where would Mr. Joshi be?

The role of the critic, as I see it, is to comment constructively on old work. I'm not saying the author has to be dead, but time gives us perspective. (Take J. Sheridan Le Fanu for instance. Even as late as 1910 he was still considered a serious Victorian novelist. By the 1970s he was that "ghost story" writer. Even the mighty can fall.) Writers who are important fade while others obscured rise to the front. Think of Philip K. Dick. And, of course, H. P. Lovecraft. No critic in the 1920s or 1930s would have said, hey, here is an important writer. (Or the 1940s or 1950s or….)

Nobody knew who would be declared the most important writer of the 20th Century. Will Meikle or Keene be the 21st Century's master? They have as much of a shot as any of us. Who is to say what works they have yet to create. The sad truth is most, if not all of us, will fade and be forgotten fairly quickly. Who remembers Robert S. Carr, the author of "Spider Bite"? The author was once declared the best that *Weird Tales* produced. Carr left pulp writing for the slicks and mainstream success. Who remembers Robert Barbour Johnson, author of "Down There"? His story was declared the best by some, though Johnson disagreed with the idea. Both writers are mere footnotes to the Horror Genre.

To get back to Mr. Joshi. He has a right to his opinion as does every reader. He can make his case in a learned manner, with mounds of evidence or he can just shoot off his mouth and lessen any impact he might have as a critic. But I would caution any critic from destroying the work being created today. It is hard enough to write anything new in our politically correct, ultra-sensitive, attack-heavy world. We don't need critics putting up unconstructive barriers to creation.

The reading public and future critics will decide who stays and who goes. All those librarians and reviewers of the 1920s who said Edgar Rice Burroughs and L. Frank Baum were bad writers to be ignored, blocked and forgotten have been proven wrong. Joshi's attacks haven't even risen to the level of a reviewer. We don't need more trolls. We can find enough of them in Tolkien and on the Internet.

▲

Marc Scott Zicree on the set of Space Command: Redemption. *Photo by Doug Mazell*

MARC SCOTT ZICREE: Twilight Zone, Star Trek and Space Command

by M. D. Jackson

Marc Scott Zicree, author of the Twilight Zone Companion and numerous episodes of SF television is creating his own Science Fiction universe

Marc Zicree's landmark book *The Twilight Zone Companion* has been credited with creating the modern genre of books on TV series. *The Twilight Zone Companion* was an instant bestseller (over a half million copies to date) and named in 2006 by the *New York Times* one of "ten Science Fiction books for the ages," the only non-fiction book on the list.

I talked to Marc Zicree recently from his home in Los Angeles.

DARK WORLDS QUARTERLY: *I want to start with The Twilight Zone Companion. That book is getting re-issued soon, isn't it?*

MARC SCOTT ZICREE: It is, yes. The new edition comes out of Christmas. It's published by Silman/James Press (www.silmanjamespress.com) who has been my publisher for many years. It'll be in e-book format, trade paperback and probably hardcover as well. It's going to have over 100 pages of new material, hundreds of new photographs plus links to audio and video rarities and new interviews with Rod Serling's daughter Jodi and George Takei. Those will be both transcribed for the book, but also you will be able to watch them or listen to them via links given in the book. So it's going to be a lot of fun.

DWQ: *It's going to be a multimedia, interactive sort of book?*

MSZ: Yeah, exactly! The fun part is that when I wrote the book when I was in my early 20s if you wanted to watch something like *Playhouse 90* or any of those kind of shows you'd have to go to a university and put a 16mm print on moviola to watch it. Now you can just click on YouTube and there's a ton of stuff. I thought it would be really fun to have links you can follow to watch stuff or listen to stuff: Rod Serling's speeches, commercials he did, themes. For instance, there was an earlier version of one of the *Twilight Zone* episodes that was actually done on the Kate Smith TV show in the 1950's. It was an episode called "The Hunt" and James Dean is in it. Dean plays a role that was later played by a different actor in the *Twilight Zone* episode that Earl Handler wrote. So, it's going to have a lot of really fun stuff.

DWQ: *Now, the original edition was released in 1982. You wrote it while you were in your early twenties.*

MSZ: Yeah. I started writing right out of college. I started working on it in 1977.

DWQ: *Why* The Twilight Zone?

MSZ: Well, the three shows that made me want to be a writer were the original *Twilight Zone*, the original *Outer Limits* and the original *Star Trek*. By the time I got out of college I knew I wanted to be a writer or producer in television, but there were no classes in that. So I thought: Well, if I'm going to learn how to do this maybe I should study one of the greatest TV shows ever made. So I started started writing about that. I started working on that book when I was 22 and by the time I was 23 I was writing for network television.

DWQ: *I've seen pictures of people who have their copies of the first edition of the Twilight Zone Companion and they are extremely well-worn. The book is a comprehensive guide to the show and people treasure their copies, or buy multiple copies after their original falls apart. So with the new material coming out in this new edition there must be a lot of excitement about that.*

"A captivating look at possibly the best TV series of all time."
—LEONARD MALTIN

THE TWILIGHT ZONE COMPANION

SECOND EDITION

Marc Scott Zicree

Magic Time. Harper Collins 2002/Magic Time: Ghostlands, Harper Collins 2005

MSZ: Yeah, there is. I'm always very gratified when someone sends me a photo of their copy of the book that they've read until it falls apart. I think that's a well-loved and a well-used book and I'm very proud to be part of that.

DWQ: *When does the new edition come out?*

MSZ: The previous edition is still available but the new edition will be coming out a little before Christmas. The e-book edition is available now at the i-Tunes store. The print editions will follow shortly.

DWQ: *I wanted to talk about your own book series* -- Magic Time. *Those are fantasy books, but they're a little different. They're kind of a dystopic sort of fantasy.*

MSZ: *Magic Time* started as a two-hour television pilot that my wife Elaine and I wrote. It was optioned eight times. Once by the Jim Henson Company, once by Davis entertainment, etc. Never produced. But I had the idea of doing as a trilogy of novels so I sold it to Harper Collins. I co-wrote the first one with Barbara Hambley. Basically, all the machines in the world stop running. Magic comes back. Certain people turn into the mythic creatures that they are by their natures. It was really fun to bring everything to a stop. But the idea was: how horrible is that all the machines stop, but how wonderful it would be if

they stopped because the distractions which keep people apart would be gone. So people wouldn't be just be walking down the street looking at their iPhones. They would actually have to interrelate with other people in order to survive. I thought that would be a really fun world to write about. It's come out in in hardcover, paperback and audiobook and now we've just released an audio play of the two-hour pilot that stars Christina Moses (who is on *The Original*s now) and Armin Shimmerman from *Deep Space Nine* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer.*

DWQ: *All three books are still in print?*

MSZ: Yeah, I believe so. We're also planning to do is a television show in the future as well. That's definitely on our "to-do" list.

DWQ: *So it's definitely still "in play" as far as other media is concerned. When did you write them originally?*

MSZ: I wrote them from around 2001 to 2006. The audio play just came out. It was just released a few months ago. (https://www.amazon.com/Magic-Time-Audio-Play-Book/dp/1470857383)

DWQ: *Now, you've also written scripts for Star Trek: The Next Generation and Deep Space Nine?*

MSZ: I've been a professional writer since I was 18 or 19 years old. My first radio play aired when I was 18 on KPFK. I sold my official story when I was 19 and I was writing television from, like I said, from when I was 22 or 23. I've been writing since the '70's

DWQ: *What was the first story you wrote?*

MSZ: I attended the Clarion Writers Workshop, which is the leading writing workshop in the country. Basically 25 students live in the dorms at Michigan State University and each week a different famous Science Fiction writer comes and lives with us in the dorms and you write like crazy. I attended in 1975 when I was 19. Damon Knight, who wrote the original story "To Serve Man", which was made into a very famous *Twilight Zone* episode... he was a famous writer and an editor. He was editing an anthology and he was looking for stories. I'd written a story in my first English class UCLA called "Leader of the Club". See, that year the president had given a speech at Disney World. It occurred to me that if they took the robots of the president from the Hall of Presidents and swapped it out for the real president, then Disney would be running the country. So I started following that idea. People said that Walt Disney had been cryogenically frozen. So, basically in my story it's many decades hence and he's thawed out. Disney World is literally the entire world. It was a very fun story and that was my first sale and Damon Knight published it in his anthology.

Other writers who went to Clarion when I was there were Kim Stanley Robinson, who went on to become a very famous Science Fiction writer, and Robert Crais, who became a very famous mystery writer. So it was it was really fun and our teachers were Roger Zelazny, Gene Wolfe, Joe Haldeman, Damon Knight, Kate Willhelm and Samuel R. Delaney. It was a really great group of teachers. All of them were very famous Science Fiction writers.

DWQ: *It must have been amazing just to be in the same room with them.*

MSZ: Yeah! It was a dream come true. When I got back to UCLA Theodore Sturgeon was teaching an adult education class. Now, as an undergraduate at UCLA, I was forbidden to take those classes. But I thought, well, I'm not going to miss this opportunity. So I took that class anyway and Ted Sturgeon became one of my mentors. So that was really invaluable. He was really a teriffic person and absolutely brilliant.

DWQ: *What was the first TV script that you wrote?*

MSZ: I started writing spec scripts before I sold anything. I wrote spec scripts for *M*A*S*H**, things like that. Michael Reaves was a teaching assistant in Ted Sturgeon's class. Michael had graduated from Clarion in 1972 and he was already writing professionally He was writing all of the episodes of the of an animated show on NBC called *Space Stars*. Space Ghost was the main character. Michael asked if I'd like to write one with him. At that time *The Smurfs* were just starting up, so I wrote an episode of *The Smurfs* with Michael. By then it was obvious that I knew how to write on my own. I wrote for *He-Man* and tons of animated shows before jumping over to live-action with *Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future* which I developed for TV. Then after that was *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and all the other shows I did.

DWQ: *I'm glad you mentioned Michael Reaves because I wanted to ask you about the* Star Trek: New Voyages *episode that you wrote with him, "*World Enough and Time".

MSZ: Michael Reaves and I wrote on-and-off together for many years. He is a very good friend. Back in the 70's they were trying to bring *Star Trek* back as a TV series. It was to be called *Star Trek: Phase Two*. They spent a year developing it and Michael pitched this great Sulu episode, which they really loved. But then *Star Wars* came out and Paramount decided to make the *Star Trek* movie instead of a *Star Trek* TV show. They pulled the plug on that. It never got made. But years later when I saw that there were fans doing these wonderful *Star Trek* episodes online and were getting more viewers at the time than *Enterprise* was getting on UPN, I decided to see if I could make that episode. I had always wanted to work with George Takei. I proposed it to Michael and he was game so then I met with George Takei and said "We've never gotten a great Sulu episode. I'd love to do this with you." He agreed and we spent a year building a production team. We shot for nine days in upstate New York and two days on the Excelsior set – Captain Sulu's ship – which


THE CAWLEY ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY WITH THE MAGIC TIME COMPANY PRESENTS
WINNER TV GUIDE AWARD
NOMINEE NEBULA AWARD
NOMINEE HUGO AWARD
"WORLD ENOUGH AND TIME"
STARRING GEORGE TAKEI
STAR TREK
NEW VOYAGES

Mister Sci-Fi - Youtube

we built here in L.A. One day with the effects team in Orlando – The Dave School.

The episode was seen by millions of people. It got nominated for the Hugo and the Nebula Awards. It's posted on my YouTube channel: Mister Sci-Fi (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4197h-lJxBk&t=1636s) so people can watch it. I'm hugely proud of it.

There was an actress in the cast playing George Takei's daughter -- Christina Moses. She'd never done film or TV. Just stage. She is the most amazing actress I ever worked with. That episode led to her getting a talent deal with J.J. Abrams. Most recently she was starring in *Containment* (from the CW) and now she's in a show called *Condor*. She's terrific. She's going to be in *Space Command* and *Magic Time* as well. She's a dear friend and a teriffic actress.

So, Michael came up with the story in 1976 and we ended up making *World Enough and Time* in 2006 – 2007 and a year later it was nominated for the Hugo and Nebular awards. It was the first non-studio, non-network production ever nominated for those awards. So, from 1976 it was actually 30 years later that we ended up actually making it. Michael jokes that it was the longest development period of any story he ever did. But I knew it would be teriffic. I loved the story and I was thrilled to be able to write it with him.

DWQ: *Absolutely. But the episode of* Deep Space Nine *that you co-wrote, "*Far Beyond the Stars"*, that's one of my favorites. That was an amazing episode. I would include it amongst some of the best scripts ever written for television.*

MSZ: Well, thanks. Thank you. We all knew that it was going to be really important. We all knew that it was going to be remembered because it was so profoundly truthfully. The inspiration really was from when Theodore Sturgeon was writing for those pulp magazines in the fifties. We wouldn't have *Star Trek* or *Star Wars* without those guys writing

for a penny a word or three cents a word for the pulp magazines I wanted to show that world. I was very interested in showing where we came from and why it was important to write our emotional truth and create a future of inclusion. That was very very important. I'm very proud of it.

DWQ: *That's one of my favorite things about the episode is that it depicts the old pulp magazine offices and the writers and the artists.*

MSZ: Yeah, it was really fun.

DWQ: *I want to talk about your Mister Sci-Fi videos. These are amazing videos that you put on your YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkKt7gHnZpcY0nreB-dPhwmQ) They're all fascinating. Some of them you seem to just record them when you're walking around.*

MSZ: The genesis of Mister Sci-Fi was... I was having lunch a couple years ago with my friend Glenn Mazzara. He was the showrunner on *The Walking Dead* and he was the Executive Producer on *The Shield*. We're friends. He said; "You know. You're such an expert on Science Fiction. You should have your own YouTube channel and just talk about Science Fiction. I thought; well, that would be fun. But I wanted to make it really easy because *Space Command* is such a huge project, such a huge undertaking that I didn't want to do anything that was going to be time-consuming. I wanted it to be easy and fun for me. So I got a YouTube channel and I shoot videos. I'll shoot them in my office or wherever. I'll drop in a visual of some kind but more often or not what I do in the morning is I get up and I walk the dog for an hour. So I'll just be walking the dog in my neighborhood and I'll just put the camera on me and I'll just talk about whatever I want to talk about. It might be a Science Fiction novel or a Science Fiction movie or a TV show. I just talk off the top of my head.

DWQ: *So you just walk around the neighborhood talking to your phone?I was going to ask if people look at you funny while you're doing that, but I guess a lot of people are doing that now, particularly in L.A.*

MSZ: Well, it's usually very early in the morning. It's usually like 7:00 a.m. or earlier, so there's not a lot of people out on the street. It's funny because in the video you'll see me talking and then you see me, for seemingly no reason at all, make a complete circle. The reason for that is because I'm going where the dog goes.***** But, again, for me it's about my long... long knowledge of Science Fiction. I know the history of the genre and in many cases I've known the major people doing the writing and producing and directing of these shows. It's fun to tell everyone stories that I know and that no one knows but me. Like how Doug Hayes, who was a director for *The Twilight Zone*, when he was directing an episode realized they were going to run short when they were doing "Eye of the Beholder".

***** *Sadly, since this interview was conducted, Marc's dog, Squirrel, died of cancer.*

Rod wasn't around so he wrote a theme for that episode. No one knew that he wrote it. Well, it's fun to be able to tell that story. I really enjoy that. They're fun to do.

DWQ: *And they're fun to listen to. You mentioned Space Command – that it's a huge project. Tell me about that.*

MSZ: I came up with the idea because there was a time a few years ago when all the Science Fiction was very dark and very dystopic. You had *Elysium* and *After Earth* and as much as I liked *Battlestar Galactica*, it was a very dark vision. But I grew up with *Star Trek* which is a very hopeful vision and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was as well.

"Space Command *is not going to be nostalgic or tongue-in-cheek or quaint. It's something where we could say; Look, there's going to be challenges that lie ahead but we can reach across boundaries."*

The visual esthetic of Science Fiction in the 1950's was quite wonderful. With *Space Patrol* and *Tom Corbett: Space Cadet*, *Forbidden Planet* and the wonderful writing of Robert A. Heinlein, Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke and illustrators like Wally Wood and Chesley Bonestell. Virgil Finlay and Al Williamson. They were creating a vision of the future that was really incredible and wonderful. You had a future that was really hopeful and heroic. One that we could all subscribe to and believe in and actually feel like we were all going to be a part of. I wanted to create something that could be hopeful again. Something that could be positive and forward looking.

Space Command is not going to be nostalgic or tongue-in-cheek or quaint. It's something where we could say: Look, there's going to be challenges that lie ahead but we can reach cross boundaries. We can across borders. We can create a hopeful vision of the future. We can make a better tomorrow if we just have the will to do so and the courage to reach across to other people of good heart. It was basically that compassion and love and kindness are a counterweight against all of the darkness and destruction in the world. I don't think that's Pollyannish. I think that's real. It's certainly real in my life.

A lot of my friends are showrunners and they said: "Let's walk this into a studio and get a pilot deal. But I knew if I got a pilot deal I knew I could get cut off at the script or get a cut off at the pilot, or the notes from the network or the studio would wreck it.

I mentor a lot of people in Hollywood – a lot of young people. I've run a roundtable that's made up of several thousand people – I've been running it for every Thursday night

for 24 years – and I've been hearing about crowdfunding and I thought: Well, I've never raised money, but let me see if I can try. My target was to raise $75,000 in two months. We raised that three days. I kept going. I raised two hundred and twenty one thousand on the Kickstarter campaign. Then I sold investment shares to my backers and I raised over another half million. So that was enough to open my own studio and start shooting.

So I sat down and I wrote the first eight hours of *Space Command*. I outlined the rest of the season. We built a studio and shot the first two hours. I approached a lot of my friends who had starred on different TV shows. Robert Picardo (The Doctor on *Voyager*), Doug Jones (*Pan's Labirynth, Star Trek: Discovery*), Mira Furlan (*Babylon 5*), Bill Mumy (*Lost in Space, Babylon 5*), Michael J Harney (*Orange is the New Black*) and James Hong (*Big Trouble in Little China, Blade Runner*). They all said yes.

The lovely thing is that I didn't have to ask anyone's permission at all. I just asked who I wanted to be in it and I wrote what I want to write. My wife, Elaine, and I wrote, directed and produced. There's an army of people helping us. Now that we've shot it, we're in post-production on the first two hours. We've shot 35 minutes of the second two hours and we've shot the opening scene of the third two-hour story.

Now we're going to the different platforms and the networks to see who wants to buy

Ethan McDowell as Captain Jack Kemmer on Space Command

the first season of the show. It could be the Syfy channel. It could be Amazon, It could be any number of people, but mainly were looking for executives who are going to be on our wavelength or going to have a similar vision. But the fact that I was able to greenlight myself, thanks to my audience, made it very liberating. I'm not disparaging the networks or the studios because all the hundreds of hours of TV that I've done were greenlit and financed by those those entities. I've had great artistic freedom on most of what I've done throughout my career but in this case I really wanted to see if I could try a new model. Fortunately it worked.

DWQ: *So you're not shopping a concept, but a completed show. One that you've been able to keep artistic control of.*

MSZ: We've shot a two-hour pilot and 35 minutes of the second two-hours. There's enough to show what the show is. That, along with the scripts... They'd have to order a 12 episode season. So it's a win-win. I get to write with little or no limitations and no one is second-guessing me or insisting on something that I disagree with. So many of my friends who run shows, they talk about how shows get ruined by network notes or interference or bad casting choices that are imposed upon them. I've been very lucky in my career. Many of the shows I've written for have been shows that I have been very proud of. I don't regret any of those choices. I've been really lucky and I'm happy to be doing things the way I'm doing them now.

DWQ: Space Command *looks amazing. I'm really looking forward to seeing where it lands. If someone wants to know more about Space Command where would they go?*

MSZ: They can go to spacecommandseries.com or marczicree.com and also I'm on my

Marc Zicree and the cast of Space Command

Facebook page pretty much every day and on Twitter. So people can pretty easily find me. We're also building a much larger production entity, Better Angels Production Company that includes features and TV shows and books. My wife just got hired to write a movie that we're on board with as producers. We went to South Africa for the research and then we'll be doing that we're trying to do another three features beyond that in the next few years plus all the TV stuff. So we're just starting.

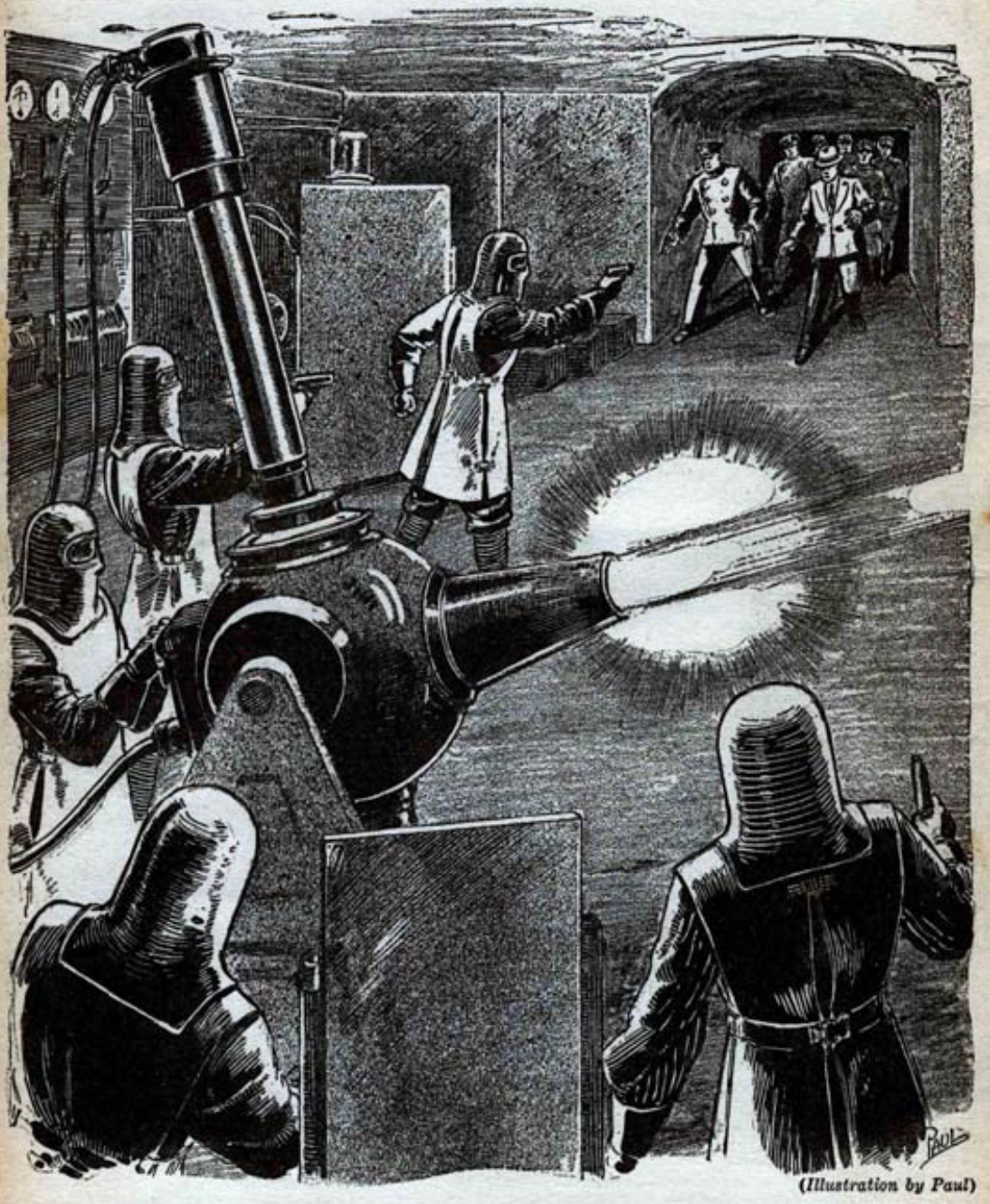
DWQ: *I really appreciate you taking the time to talk to us. Is there anything else you want to add to what you have said?*

MSZ: The only other thing I can say is that I mentor a lot of people. I teach classes when I mentor people. People can find out about that on my website. But what I would say to anyone who has a dream is don't let anything stop you. Don't let anybody discourage you. Just find a way to make it happen and learn from people who have done it. The first thing I did with *The Twilight Zone Companion* was that I learned from people who had made wonderful TV. They were my mentors and my guides. Make sure you have the right teachers. Ray Bradbury was also one of my mentors as was Guillermo Del Toro. Look at people who are doing what you love. Science Fiction conventions allow you on meet many of your heroes and you can learn from those people. That's what I would advise strongly and don't let anything stop you.

▲

VANISHING GOLD

By Capt. S. P. Meek



(Illustration by Paul)

The attention of the men was on a half dozen grotesque figures facing them. They were attired in a sort of medieval armor. Their hands held revolvers menacing the attackers.

1320

Wonder Stories, May 1932 Frank R. Paul, artist

Captain Meek & Doctor Bird

by G. W. Thomas

Part Sherlock Holmes, part Professor Challenger, Doctor Bird faced sixteen encounters with the strange and fantastic

Captain Sterner St. Paul Meek (1894-1972) was the perfect writer to create a scientist-adventurer. Meek was a military chemist who worked on ordinance in WWI and wrote as a hobby. He sold his first story to *Field and Stream* in 1928. Only two years later he would be a prolific producer of Science Fiction adventure yarns. It was in 1930, for the very first issue of the Clayton *Astounding Stories of Super Science* that Meek created his alter-ego in scientist-adventurer, Professor Bird. Part Sherlock Holmes, part Professor Challenger, Doctor Bird and his military side-kick, Operative Carnes, faced sixteen encounters with the strange and fantastic.

"The Cave of Horror" (*Astounding*, January 1930) introduces Doctor Bird :

"Carnes sat on the edge of a bench and watched with admiration the long nervous hands and the slim tapering fingers of the famous scientist. Dr. Bird stood well over six feet and weighed two hundred and six pounds stripped: his massive shoulders and heavy shock of unruly black hair combined to give him the appearance of a prize fighter-- until

one looked at his hands."

Later in the story we learn that Bird had been an athlete of note during his college days as he easily catches up to his two fleeing companions. Here is the first inkling of Doc Savage, scientist-adventurer yet to be invented in 1933.

Bird and Carnes are off to Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, where tourists and soldiers keep disappearing. Screams and shots are heard, a strange musky odor lingers but few other clues exist. After an initial encounter with the monster, Bird realizes it is invisible and brings in special military equipment to deal with it. His ultra-violet photos prove the beast is flat and able to worm its way through cracks despite being very tall and vicious. In the end he kills it but isn't able to secure the body as evidence. Haunted cave stories were nothing new, even in 1930. Two that may have inspired Meek were C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne's "The Lizard" (1898) and Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Terror of Blue John Gap" (1910). The horror feel of the story was one of the reasons that Lester Del Rey described the contents of the first issue of *Astounding* as "a sadly mixed business." (*The Worlds of Science Fiction*, 1976). As a kind of scientific ghostbreaker tale it works fine, having the required Gernsbackian goobly-gook to explain the technology. A similar plot would be used on *Star Trek*'s "The Devil in the Dark" episode (June 15, 1967) thirty-seven years later.

The second adventure of Dr. Bird, "The Radio Robbery", appeared in *Astounding*'s competition, *Amazing Stories*, February 1930. I am not sure why this happened but we can surmise that Meek sent one story to Harry Bates at *Astounding* and another to T. O'Connor Sloane at *Amazing*, hedging his bets that one of the editors would bite. It appears both did.

As the title suggests, this plot involves the theft of gold bars and the solution lies in radio technology. A man is killed and a vault full of gold bricks turned to copper. Carnes calls Dr. Bird in and using radio detection equipment he triangulates the location of the villain, a Dr. Wallace, the creator of unstable synthetic gold. The tale is not so much a Science Fiction tale as a Mystery solved using Science. This format would dominate the rest of the series.

"The Thief of Time" (*Astounding*, February 1930) has another bank robbery by a seemingly invisible man. When Dr. Bird finds a track star who is doping he quickly collars the bank robber, Dr. James Kirkwood, formerly of Bird's own Bureau of Standards. Kirkwood stole a metabolic steroid that allowed him to move faster than the eye can perceive. As with "The Radio Robbery", Bird has become the scientist who hunts down other scientists turned bad, thwarting their plans to use Science for ill-gotten gain. The terms "Superhero" and "Super-Villain" have yet to be invented but Meek leads the way.

"Cold Light" (*Astounding*, March 1930) pulls Dr. Bird from his holiday to find what device could freeze an airplane mid-flight, shattering its occupants like glass. Bird tracks the cold source to a lonely shack in the mountains near the plane crash. After an exciting shoot-out and an exposure to the deadly freeze ray, Bird and Carnes find the dying scientist who created the beam weapon. They also find and kill a Russian spy. The anonymous scientist, who goes only by John Smith, dies after admitting to stealing the diamonds on the plane. His Russian cohort was after War Department plans. Smith blows up his cold

weapon, not wanting Bird to discover its secrets.

In "The Ray of Madness" (*Astounding*, April 1930), Operative Carnes is now in the Secret Service, protecting the President of the United States. He brings in Dr. Bird when the head of state begins to act strangely with the coming of each full moon. Sadly, it's not lycanthropy but a Russian agent using a machine that directs lunium, a band of light found in moonlight, to drive the President crazy.

The next two stories appeared in Gernsback magazines, one specially designed for a Bird type character. "The Perfect Counterfeit" (*Scientific Detective*, January 1930) features the creation of a matter duplicator (shades of *Star Trek*'s replicator) that is used to make perfect counterfeit twenty dollar bills. Bird tracks down the wayward scientist by knowing all the researchers in the field of matter duplication.

"Stolen Brains" (Astounding, October 1930) Bird and Carnes go fishing but in reality they are meeting their doubles so Bird can track down the villains who have been stealing brain fluid from the smartest men in America

"The Gland Murders" (*Amazing Detective*, June 1930) has the Russians poisoning America by introducing glandular chemicals into expensive whiskey. The essence of a murderer's glands is targeted at the rich, the only ones who buy expense scotch. The killer's psychotic behavior is transferred to the drinker, who attacks those around him. Bird calls in the help of a bootlegger, who though a criminal, still believes in the Capitalist system. This is the last story to appear in a Gernsback magazine until Dr. Bird's final story.

"Stolen Brains" (*Astounding*, October 1930) is a creepy adventure worthy of a 45,000 word Doc Savage novel. Bird and Carnes go fishing but in reality they are meeting their doubles so Bird can track down the villains who have been stealing brain fluid from the smartest men in America. The bad guys show up in a sphere-shaped ship and abduct the Bird look-a-like. The duo and their pilot track the ship back to Bald Mountain, a remote spot on the Canadian border. There they find an underground lab right out of a Bond movie and the head of the gang, a deformed dwarf named Slavatsky. Bird witnesses the Russian draining "menthium" from a victim's brain and injecting it into his partners'. (After "Cold Light" Meek's bad guys all become Russians.) The villains capture the doctor and are about to extract all the menthium from his brain, reducing him to an idiot, when Carnes

shows up with the cavalry. Dr. Bird in turn takes the menthium from Slavatsky's brain to save a man who has come with the President of the United States. Carnes does not recognize him as the President's brother. This episode predates all the controversial Doc Savage brain operations that Lester Dent will write about. It also shows for the first time just how brutal Bird can be with his enemies.

"The Sea Terror" (*Astounding*, December 1930) sees a return to the monster story (at last!) A man supposed killed along with the entire crew of his ship, the *Arethusa*, seeks out Dr. Bird. He tells a tale of a gigantic monster that attacked his ship that was carrying a supply of gold. Bird creates a special glass diving bubble to investigate, finding the gold is gone. Bird surmises a plot by the gland specialist Dr. Saranoff, to steal the gold by using an octopus grown to magnificent proportions. The bubble is re-equipped and a fishing expedition for the giant squid begins, using the sphere as bait. Bird discovers Saranoff's sub and his secret cave that he uses to house the monster and its baby. When the monster tries to swallow the diving bubble, Bird pumps it full of Prussic acid, killing it. In its death throws, it destroys Saranoff's sub. This story introduces Saranoff, who will become the recurring villain for the rest of the series. He is, of course, Russian.

"The Black Lamp" (*Astounding*, February 1931) follows an invasion into Dr. Bird's lab on the top floor of his building at the Bureau of Standards. Bird has created a new explosive called radite and the gun designed to shoot it has been stolen. Breslau, the gun's designer, has been reduced to unconsciousness by some new device that also caused Bird's windows to become foggy in color. The evil device is used again in a prison where a Communist weapons expert, Karuksa, is detained. Bird learns from one guard that a helmet made of vitrilene, the glass he invented for the diving bubble in "The Sea Terror", blocks the effects of the new weapon. Karuska is taken and subjected to a lethal electrical and ultra-violet treatment for information. Bird learns the device is called the Black Lamp and that the Communists have a secret platform outside Washington from which they plan to shell the city with radite bombs. He also learns Saranoff is not dead and that there is a mole in the Bureau of Standards. Bird and the secret service track the Communists to a warehouse but they escape, leaving a gruesome message, three men turned to red glass by the lamp. Two booby-traps fail to kill Bird and the men are off to the swamp to find the bombing platform. With two tanks and two airplanes, Bird, Carnes and the others destroy the platform (and its impervious vitrilene dome), shooting the fleeing helicopter with a radite shell.

"When Caverns Yawned" (*Astounding*, May 1931) begins with an attack on the President. While out campaigning in Charleston, his train is almost swallowed by a sudden collapse of the earth. Saranoff is back and he has a new device that can level cities. Carnes and Dr. Bird attempt to locate his submarine that is carrying the borer, an underground digging machine that works by reducing the space between atoms. With this machine Saranoff destroys two Navy destroyers as well as Charleston and Wilmington, NC. Washington DC and the President are next. Bird has only one night to build a similar weapon but can not. Instead he creates a machine that reverses the atom reducing ray. When the borer comes for Washington, Dr. Bird simply reverses the beam, crushing the borer under tons of re-expanded rock.

"Port of Missing Planes" (*Astounding*, August 1931) has Carnes and Bird captured quickly by Saranoff. With the help of a race of intelligent, telepathic moles, called the Selim, Saranoff has been kidnapping pilots for an air force of zombie-flown planes that will bomb America into submission. (Saranoff found the Selim during his attack on Washington. This fact saved his life.) Bird studies the Selim and realizes they are an intelligent and fair-minded race, only misled by Saranoff's version of human politics. The Russian attempts to lobotomize Dr. Bird but King Astok arrives in time to stop him. The two human minds are studied by the Selim but they find both scientists truly believes he is right. The Selim remain neutral, wiping all knowledge of their super-science from Saranoff and Bird's minds.

"The Solar Magnet" (*Astounding*, October 1931) begins with a failed assassination attempt on the President, which might actually have been intended for Dr. Bird. Someone is messing with the tilt of the Earth's axis, with the intention of turning the Northern hemisphere into a land of sun while the Southern hemisphere dwells forever in shadow. Bird immediately suspects Saranoff and is off to Russia aboard *The Denver*. Using a plane from the ship, Bird's attempt to bomb Saranoff's base is a failure because the Russian neutralizes his ordinance with a new ray. Carnes and Bird are shot down and captured. They escape with the help of Feodrovna Androvitch, a Communist woman who owes Dr. Bird a debt. Bird had been kind to her brother, Stefan, who had worked at the Bureau of Standards. (He died when Bird's crew blew up the helicopter in "The Black Lamp".) The men kidnap the woman for her own good and a running gun battle follows. When McCready, Bird's pilot, steals a truck, he gets a battery to start their plane and they escape. *The Denver* shells the base with the solar magnet and the earth responds with a massive storm.

"Poisoned Air" (*Astounding*, March 1932) has a mysterious fog that causes polymerized oxygen crystals to form in the lungs. Dr. Bird actually solves a medical mystery in this one. His new assistant, Miss Andrews is actually Feodrovna Androvitch, taken in by Bird and given a new identity. When Carnes and Bird go into the swamp to stem the second wave of the plague, Peter Denberg, Saranoff`s agent captures him. Denberg has been helped in his ambush by Androvitch, who has gone back to her Communist brothers. When Denberg tries to kill Bird with the plague, Feodrovna comes to his rescue, flashing a deadly knife until Carnes can ride in as the cavalry. Bird wakes in the hospital to hear that all of Saranoff's deadly microbes have been captured and Carnes learns that Miss Andrews was not a traitor but a double agent.

"The Great Drought" (*Astounding*, May 1932) begins with a massive fleet of airplanes flying over a certain spot in Maryland. The United States has been suffering a drought for two years and Dr. Bird knows it must be Saranoff behind it. The planes discover an area in which to search for a device throwing off negative particles and affecting the weather. Miss Andrews seems to have gone AWOL again but in truth has discovered Saranoff's secret base. While meeting her, Bird is captured by Saranoff. In true villain style he doesn't put a slug in Bird's brain but straps him to a bomb and sends Carnes unwittingly to detonate it. Bird escapes his shackles by creating an electromagnet and getting the keys. When the Russians spring their trap they get a surprise. One of their own turns against

them, shooting them in the dark. It is Thelma Andrews, who assumed the identity of one of Saranoff's thugs weeks before. Saranoff has escaped an hour earlier.

The Clayton *Astounding* was in trouble and Meek may have jumped ship early. Since three of the stories had appeared with Gernsback it made sense to finish the series in a Gernsback's magazine. "Vanishing Gold", the final Dr. Bird tale appeared in Hugo Gernsback's *Wonder Stories*, May 1932. This story is for the most part a re-write of "The Radio Robbery" showing Meek was running out of ideas. This time the gold is not turning into copper but slowly losing weight. Bird tries to triangulate the direction that the device causing the breakdown, while at the same time Thelma Andrews goes undercover and is only able to send one message, "Under Central Park". Looking at old maps Bird finds a tunnel where Saranoff might be working from and attacks from both ends. His squad and Carnes' break through in time to save the machine but not capture Saranoff. The villains' guns fail to work during the attack because Bird uses Saranoff's own weapon from "The Solar Magnet" to render firearms useless. Thelma is stabbed during the hostilities but Bird gives her medical treatment. She expresses her love and the Doctor reprimands her for being emotional. This is the third story to end this way and suggests that Bird's Doc Savage-like celibacy might have eventually lead to something. If not, Della Street-like, Thelma might have gone on loving and serving. We'll never know since the series ended here.

Meek claimed he dropped the series because of complaints by left-wing readers who did not like his attacks on Russian Communism. It is just as likely that he found Science Fiction played out. Meek finished with Science Fiction in 1932, finding the juvenile animal story better suited to his talents. He is remembered as one of the pioneers of the early SF pulps creating a series character to stand beside Anthony Gilmore's Hawk Carse and Sewell Peaslee Wright's Hanson of the Space Patrol. Isaac Asimov writes in *Before the Golden Age* (1975): "Something else that was very prevalent in the science fiction of the 1930s was the adventure story fitted out with just enough scientific trappings to enable it to pass muster. And in the science fiction magazines of the early part of the decade, no one was better at it than Captain S. P. Meek." Samuel R. Delany called him "unbelievably bad" (*Silent Interviews*, 1994) but the ideas found in his stories, super speed, freeze beams, insanity rays, mole men, sinister rays have all become part of the SF mix, especially in the superhero comics. Delany might say these are "unbelievably bad" too but I watched Captain Cold on *The Flash* this week and have yet to see a *Dhalghren* mini-series.

Robert Sampson said: "The series is the tramp art of science fiction, mildly interesting ideas, told badly." (*Yesterday's Faces 2: Strange Days*, 1984) There has been a tendency to ridicule Meek, and in particular, the Dr. Bird stories, which I think is unfortunate. While the series is not anything approaching Campbellian Science Fiction, it was a precursor to Doc Savage, and later, comic books. In this respect, Meek is an important link in the history of Fantastic literature.

Jennifer Agutter in the infamous "Circuit" outfit. 1976. Bill Thomas, designer.

The Barely-There Costumes of Logan's Run

by Jack Mackenzie

In the year before Star Wars, a Science Fiction film made a scene with its costumes - or lack thereof!

Science Fiction films of the 1970's weren't exactly subtle. Beginning with the *Planet of the Apes* movies, a sub genre of SF cinema began to emerge which has been dubbed "Shattered Earth". This type of film included some classics as well as some forgettable efforts.

Films like *The Omega Man, THX 1138, Z.P.G., The Final Programme, Soylent Green, Phase IV, A Boy and His Dog*, and *The Ultimate Warrior* explored dystopic visions of the future either after some sort of holocaust level disaster or in a repressive society that was designed in response to, or in order to prevent, said disaster.

Logan's Run Poster artwork. Charles Moll, artist

In 1976 *Logan's Run* was one of the last notable films of this school and it was arguably the most successful and most memorable (after the *Planet of the Apes* films).

The special effects, the model work and the production design all push *Logan's Run* to the top of the heap of a less than reputable sub-genre of film. The story, as unsubtle as it was, caught the imagination of audiences enough to warrant a television series spin-off, if not an actual sequel. It was as successful a Science Fiction film as there could be before *Star Wars* came and changed the game.

But it was the costume design (or lack thereof) that really caught some people's attention at the time.

Up until *Logan's Run* costumes in Science Fiction films were generally relegated to either bulky spacesuits, formless white prison garb or elaborate outfits that featured oversized jewellry and odd helmets or other head dresses.

Logan's Run, chose to go with a "less is more" approach.

And in the case of some costumes there was a lot of emphasis on the "less".

Bill Thomas was the costume designer for *Logan's Run*. He was an Academy Award-winning designer who had over 180 credits. He designed for films like *Babes in Toyland, Spartacus* and *The Happiest Millionaire*. His approach to the costumes of *Logan's Run* was to stick to fabrics and esthetics of the time, which is why the film today seems hopelessly outdated. The film has a distinctive 1970's feel to it.

The costumes worn by the Sandmen, the police force of the futuristic city, the ones who catch the runners, made quite an impact, despite their simplicity. A black form fitting

Michael York, Farrah Fawcett and Jennifer Agutter on the New You Shop set

outfit with a grey band across the chest is as minimalist as it gets for a distinctive uniform, but the outfits are striking especially when compared with the costumes worn by the rest of the cast.

Which was not much.

The costumes worn by the citizens of the City, the futuristic home of the last of humanity, all under thirty, all white, are very revealing. The "California" sensibility is redolent throughout the population (this despite the fact that much of the City scenes were filmed in Dallas, Texas). The clothing is sparse. The skirts are short. The sleeves are practically non-existant and the materials are synthetic fibers like lycra and spandex. These materials were considered "fashion forward" at the time. Satin was also used along with cotton and sheer materials.

Very sheer. And, as is usual in these kinds of films, there are no bras in the future.

Most of the costumes for the movie were modified from pieces bought in retail stores like tunic shirts and wrap dresses. Once the base outfit was chosen, costumers would sew on patches of brightly colored fabric cut into geometric shapes to make them look futuristic.

In order to make the costumes "pop" all that was needed was a light spray of adhesive and a dusting of glitter or sequins. Accessories also played a huge part in the finished product. Jewlry and belts were the perfect "finishing off" of the costumes. The bigger and more elaborate the better.

The costumes from the movie resemble a lot of the "wild" clothing that was worn

Bill Thomas' original costume designs

in the disco clubs of the day and later became the fashion of the early 80's, like off the shoulder tops and wide belts.

As revealing as the costumes from *Logan's Run* are they were originally designed to be much more revealing. But that would have meant spending much more on makeup for exposed skin.

One outfit in particular stands out from the pack. This was worn by Jennifer Agutter who played Jessica, the female lead. It consisted of a piece of fabric which barely covers the actor's front and back and leaves her sides exposed. All that holds the front and back pieces together is a small length of chain.

Again, there is clearly no underwear in the future.

Jenny Agutter, not surprisingly, wasn't wild about that outfit. "*Logan's Run* was fairly embarrassing," she stated in an interview. "But I'm thrilled that I've been a part of it all."

Now, you have to understand that when this film was released in theaters it was not given an R rating. It was rated PG, which meant Parental Guidance was suggested. In 1976 I was eleven years old and I know that I went to see this film in our local theater (more than once, actually) without my parents. Myself and a group of like-minded friends (The oldest of which would have been thirteen, maybe) paid real money to see it at least twice if not more times. Given the amount of nudity and near-nudity that *Logan's Run* featured I can only surmise that a small town cinema was likely more interested in ticket sales than in safeguarding the moral purity of the town's youth.

Francis (Richard Jordan) pursues Logan and Jessica while ignoring the temptations of the Love Shop

There is one scene in particular where Logan and Jessica are chased by Francis and the other Sandmen. From the New You shop (which featured a scantily clad Farrah Fawcett and a silver suited Michael Anderson Jr.) Logan 5 and Jessica 6 dash through the Love Shop, which amounts to nothing more than an open-air brothel in which an orgy is in progress. A notable extra in this scene is Ashley Cox who also plays the timid girl who touches the Peter Usinov's face at the very end. A future Playboy model, she appears nude at the beginning of the Love-Shop scene, making a grab at Logan.

Now, for an eleven year old that scene was custom designed to blow my mind.

But even before that scene there is a lot of frank talk about sex and sexuality. It is, after all, a hedonistic utopia in which the last of humanity is living. There's just one catch.

The film was made during the "sexual revolution" of the late 1960s/1970s. Nods to the new sexual freedom are found throughout. When Logan returns home, just after he and Francis have killed a runner, he seeks "companionship" on something called "the circuit". The first companion offered is male, which is clearly not an accident. Logan politely smiles at the young man, shakes his head, and tries again. Then, when Jessica arrives from the circuit, and isn't immediately interested in coupling, Logan asks whether she prefers women.

This is the scene where Jennifer Agutter is scene wearing the aforementioned revealing outfit.

Bill Thomas' costume designs for this film have been criticised as being uninspired. Clearly, however, Thomas was a master at his craft. On the day of shooting that scene,

"Let's have sex."

director Michael Anderson and producer Saul David decided that Logan should look more "casual" for the first scene in his apartment. Costume designer Bill Thomas threw together Logan's black house robe in about two hours while the set was being lit. Michael York kept the robe as a souvenir after filming.

There is a lot of futuristic looking furnishings in Logan 5's apartment which today looks rather dated. That is because much of it was actually commercially available furnishings. There is a striking "terraced" leather sofa found in Logan's residence, for instance, was not a unique production design item. It was, in fact, a commercially available - though expensive - home furnishing of the era. It was created in 1973 by Swiss designer Ubald Klug for the de Sede furniture company.

Aside from the dash through the Love Shop with the extras all completely unclothed (although production stills, if closely examined, will reveal that some of the extras wore skin coloured body stockings) the other scene that includeds plenty of titilation (at least for my eleven year old self) was a scene that comes later. Logan and Jessica have left the city and have to swim through the bowels of the city. They find giant machines and eventually make their way to a frozen cavern wherein they encounter the robot, Box.

Roscoe Lee Browne both voiced and performed Box the robot on-set. The robot's costume was clunky, clumsy and unweildy. So unweildy, in fact that if Brown fell over while wearing it, it was impossible for him to right himself. Consequently, the robot's appearance is less than impressive despite Brown's vocal performance.

The ice cave sequence was actually filmed in the middle of the summer in Los Angeles.

Contestants for Carousel. The flaming designs are a foreshadowing of things to come.

Box shows off people, former runners, that have been frozen in the ice. These were extras who were spray painted white. They were all naked and had to stand perfectly still for several minutes at a time for each take.

During this scene Logan and Jessica take off the wet clothers they are wearing and change into furs provided by Box. This results in a quick flash of nudity, but apparently the original script called for more of that.

According to John Obendorfer, a scene in the original shooting script was written based on a scene from the novel. "They actually did shoot a version of the novel scene where Box has Logan & Jessica pose nude, kissing, while Box quickly makes an ice sculpture. It was deleted from the release for ratings reasons, presumably because it would result in an R-rating," Obendorfer says. "Film clips of this scene were a hot property among SF fans in '77-'78, and I saw several floating around at STAR-San Diego dealer tables. I don't remember about Michael York, but Jenny Agutter definitely did a full-frontal nude shot."

This has been partly corroborated by an article in *Cinescape Maganzine*, according to Curt Wiederhoeft. "Apparently, they filmed Jenny Agutter peeling off her clothes SEVERAL times. She claims that this 'knickers reel' floated around Hollywood for a while."

Before you get the idea that *Logan's Run* was just wall-to-wall nudity, I should point out that there actually was a storyline through the picture. One that, at the time, was very relevant to what was going on in the outside world. The subject of rampant pollution and world population growth was very much on people's minds. That, plus the emergent

Peter Ustinov meets the citizens of the City

"youth culture' combined to create what amounts to a great cautionary tale, told in a not so very subtle fashion.

The film's opening prologue states: "Sometime in the 23rd century...the survivors of war, overpopulation and pollution are living in a great domed city, sealed away from the forgotten world outside. Here, in an ecologically balanced world, mankind lives only for pleasure, freed by the servo-mechanisms which provide everything. There's just one catch: life must end at thirty unless reborn in the fiery ritual of the Carousel".

This is before the film even begins. Science Fiction ideas had to be delineated to audiences in no uncertain terms, because Hollywood thought that moviegoing audiences at the time were too dumb to catch on. I used to disgree with that assessment of people's intelligence before the Internet came along and changed my mind. Nevertheless, that's the conceit of the picture.

The Carousel costumes were little more than spandex jumpsuits worn under white robes and finished off with an ice-hockey mask. But they were colourful and the scenes of those struggling to renew while floating around a great coliseum are fun to look at, especially since most of them get blasted by laserbeams before they can make it to the top.

Incidentally, In the original script by William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson, there was no 'Carousel.' Folks on lastday went into a Sleepshop, as in the novel. A test scene of this was filmed, but when the movie hit a huge production delay (and appeared dead), the Sleepshop scene was appropriated by the director of *Soylent Green* for Edward

Gregory Harrison as Logan and Heather Menzies as Jessica from the Logan's Run TV series (1977)

G. Robinson's death scene. When production on *Logan's Run* cranked up again, the Carousel element was added.

And, as we all know, Carousel is a lie.

By the standards of 1976, *Logan's Run* was considered fairly successful for a science-fiction film, enough to spawn a short-lived 14 episode American CBS television series which aired during the 1977-78 television season. Obviously for television the costumes had to be "toned down" and suggestions of sexuality were glossed over or couched in double entendre so the kids couldn't figure out what was going on.

Despite that, the costume worn by Heather Menzies, who played Jessica 6 in the series, was very short indeed. "They have to be careful with the camera with this costume," Menzies is reported to have said in an interview. "When I bend over they're in trouble."

Logan's Run was the seminal film of the "Shattered Earth" cinema sub genre. But it was also an influential film in regards to design and intent. For all its flaws and its datedness the film is fondly remembered by Science Fiction film enthusiasts today, particularly those young, star struck filmgoers like I was, hungry for any film that featured ray guns and robots.

And, as is ubiquitous in Hollywood, the skimpier the outfits, the better.

▲

A Christmas Carol 1843 John Leech, artist

Christmas Spirits: The Ghost Stories of Charles Dickens

by G. W. Thomas

Through his spooky tales Charles Dickens came to quantify the Victorian love of ghosts and Christmas

Just the name Charles Dickens is enough to fill the ghost-story reader with images of snowy Christmas and Ebenezer Scrooge. Dickens, through his novel *A Christmas Carol* and his frequent publishing of ghost stories in *Households Words* and *All the Year Round*, came to quantify the Victorian love of ghosts and Christmas.

Charles Dickens will be largely remembered as a creator of characters, Oliver Twist, the Artful Dodger, David Copperfield, Little Nell, fat, jolly Pickwick and numerous others. He will also be remembered as a social reformer, the man who embodied the drudgery and despair of the working man during the hey-deys of the Industrial Revolution. But

before these things, Dickens was a lover of ghost stories. His nanny, Mary Weller, frightened the six year old Charlie with penny-dreadful-style gore-fests like those recounted in "Captain Murderer and the Devil's Bargain". Of his terrorizing nurse he says "...Her name was Mercy, though she had none on me."

But Dickens did not begin his holiday hauntings with Scrooge and Marley but worked slowly up to that book with small episodes tucked into larger serials. Right from *The Pickwick Papers* (1836) onward did he utilize the ghost story as editorial, emotional counter-point and with many installments to be provided on such short notice, filler.

Pickwick and his friends tell five ghost stories in the course of the book, starting with "The Lawyer and the Ghost". In this initial story the author states his position on the existence of ghosts: why do they haunt unpleasant places, when you could be someplace nice. The tenant of the haunted house asks this question of a ghost who haunts the wardrobe. The specter replies, "Egad, that's very true; I never thought of that before... we must be very dull fellows, very dull fellows, indeed, I can't imagine how we can have been so stupid." And disappears never to return. Dickens has begun his long career of ghost-stories writing with humor, something he would use more often than not, as well a sense of editorializing. The ghosts of Dickens are often ideas played out rather than frightening specters.

"The Queer Chair" is a modern fairy story rather than a tale of haunting. The ghost, a chair who has human features rather than a spirit of the dead, could as easily be a fairy or some other supernatural creature.

The plot concerns Tom Smart, a delivery man who finds himself in a cozy inn on a rainy night. Tom likes the establishment, the food, the punch, the serving girls and especially the widow landlady. But she is being pursued by a tall suitor, whom Tom takes an immediate dislike to. Once in bed, the odd-looking chair of the title begins to form human features, the legs and arms become man-like, the backing a head. The chair tells how he fears he will be sold off when the widow marries the scoundrel, who has a wife and six kids and many debts. Tom uses a letter from the wardrobe to prove the suitor a villain and marries the widow. The chair is not mentioned again, but has served it purpose like a fairy godmother or other supernatural assistant.

"The Ghosts of the Mail", in the same vein as the other stories in *The Pickwick Papers*, uses the ghost as a vehicle to do something else. The phantom coaches of the retired mail service take the man back in time to engage him in derring-do reminiscent of an American tall-tale. The narrator of the previous tale now tells of his uncle, a good friend of Tom Smart. While in Edinburgh, the uncle, also a delivery man, leaves a dinner where his hosts have been drunk under the table, to find a collection of abandoned old mail coaches. While sitting on one coach he travels back in time to the days of three-cornerd hats and powdered wigs, rescues a beautiful woman from two rogues, who he bests in sword-play even though they are veterans and he only a natural fighter. The high-point of the story comes when the uncle impales the two villains on two different swords "...jerking their arms and legs about in agony..." like two bugs.

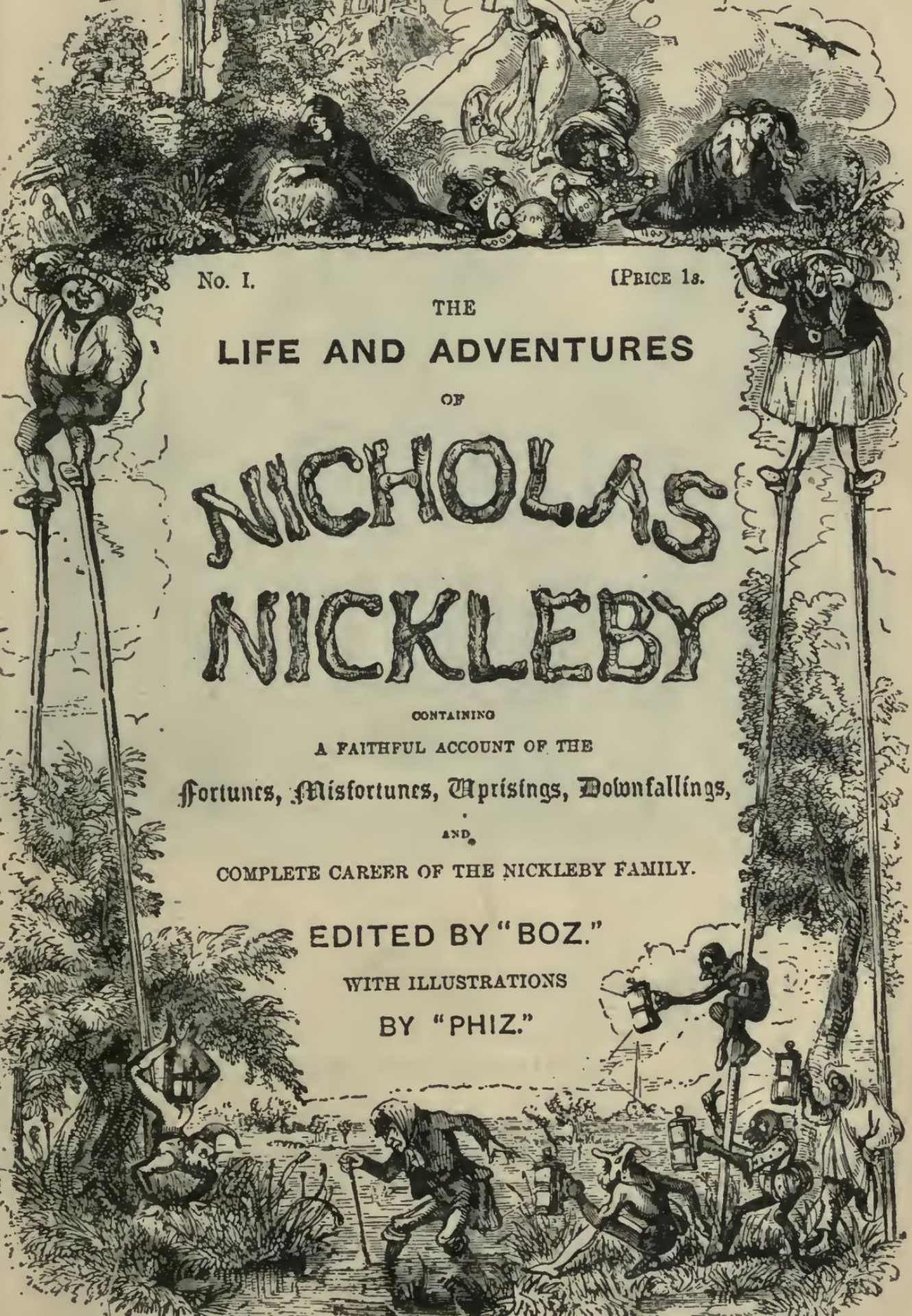
"A Madman's Manuscript" is the odd-man-out in The *Pickwick Papers*. Rather than a humorous tale utilizing ghosts, it is a Poe-esque tale about insanity written from the point-

Charles Dickens in 1868. Photograph by Jeremiah Gurney

of-view of the lunatic. Like Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" or "The Black Cat", the narrator is known to be unbalanced but the reader is driven on by the power of his madness to see what happens next.

The story concerns a rich young lord who has congenital insanity. He hides his ailment while reveling in his deception. He marries a beautiful young woman who is forced into the marriage by the poverty of her family. When the man tries to cut her throat with a razor she goes mad and dies. When her brother comes to confront the husband, the lunatic loses his facade and tries to kill his accuser. The secret is out and the young lord is chased through the streets and finally locked up. It is in the asylum that he pens the manuscript, a cliche of the pulps of a hundred years later, but refreshingly new in Dickens' time. It is a technique that Robert Louis Stevenson would use in "Markham" and Guy de Maupassant in several tales.

"The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton" is perhaps the most interesting of the five, for it is the dry run to Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Gabriel Grubb is a mean-hearted sexton (or gravedigger) who drinks and works on Christmas. A group of goblins capture him and take him to their underground cave. There they show him scenes of his fellow humans, including a poor family whose small son dies (precursors to Crackitt and Tiny Tim) and beat him mercilessly. In the end he becomes a changed man but can not face his townsmen and goes off to another village to live. Stories of Grubb's disappearance grow but he puts them to rest when he returns home, a truly changed man.



No. I. [PRICE 1s.

THE

LIFE AND ADVENTURES

OF

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

CONTAINING

A FAITHFUL ACCOUNT OF THE

Fortunes, Misfortunes, Uprisings, Downfallings,

AND

COMPLETE CAREER OF THE NICKLEBY FAMILY.

EDITED BY "BOZ."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BY "PHIZ."

The similarities to *A Christmas Carol* are many. The meanness of Scrooge, the supernatural intervention and change are all there but none of the color or detail. What changes Grubb remains largely unseen and ineffective to the reader. In fleshing out the tale, Dickens invested it with a stronger theme, brighter characters and a truly Yuletide spirit.

Similarities to another author's work are also apparent in "The Goblins Who Stole a Sexton", those of the American, Washington Irving. The goblins and underground lair are very similar to those in "Rip Van Winkle" and the leaving home to live elsewhere at the end is reminscient of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" in which Ichabod Crane leaves Sleepy Hollow never to return. These two stories appeared in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1820) and were popular on both sides of the Atlantic.

"Baron Koeldwethout's Apparation" from *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-9) is an important story because it is the first to use a truly 'Dickensian' ghost. The narrative follows a young baron who marries and quickly finds domestic life both emotional unfulfilling and financially ruinous. He becomes so despondent that he contempts suicide. To achieve this he hides in a crumbling tower, drinks heavily and prepares to cut his own throat. It is then that he is visited by "… a wrinkled hideous figure, with deeply sunk and bloodshot eyes, and an immensely long cadaverous face. He wore a kind of tunic of a dull bluish colour... was clasped or ornamented down the front with coffin handles. His legs too, were encased in coffin plates as though in armour..." This weird spirit is the Genius of Despair and Suicide. He tempts the baron onto death but the lord regains his sense of humor at the last, driving out the spectre and re-arranging his life.

The Genius of Despair and Suicide is interesting for two reasons. First, he is the first true Dickens-style ghost, not a dead person so much as an idea embodied in the form of a ghost. He is the predecessor to the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come in *A Christmas Caro*l and the Haunter in "The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain". Secondly, he is decked out in a strange, symbolic attire much like Jacob Marley and his chain of money boxes.

It is also interesting to note the Baron Koeldwethout like the uncle of the bagman, Tom Smart, and Gabriel Grubb sees his unearthly visitors only after consuming large amounts of alcohol. Dickens may have been hedging his bets with his readers, as if to say, I don't really believe in ghosts. In "Baron Koeldwethout's Apparation" the names of the two families are puns on alcohol, "Grogzwig" and "Swillenhausen". Dickens would later declare his exact beliefs in the stories, "The Haunted House" and "Well-Authenticated Rappings".

In "The Mother's Eyes" from *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840), Dickens returns to the Poe-esque style of tale. A man alone at Christmas meets a tall, deaf man and they become friends. The deaf man relates a terrible story from a prison in the time of Charles the Second. The story is a confession of a murderer, who's sister-in-law once terrified him with her condemning stare. When the woman and her husband die, the killer adopts the boy as his wife is the sister of the boy's mother. The lad has done nothing to warrant the uncle's hate except possessing the same condemning eyes.

The man cuts the boy down with his sword and buries the body under a newly sodded

Nicholas Nickleby, 1839. Phiz, artist

lawn. The terror of discovery is so bad that he either dreams of his capture or stares at the spot. He is finally apprehended when blood-hounds are brought in to find what they think is a lost boy. The dogs smell the dead child and tear at the lawn. The killer's guilty action quickly place a rope around his neck.

This early tale shows two of Dickens' influence. The more obscure is once again Washington Irving. Dickens tells how the deaf man possesses a pipe once belonging to a German Student and hints at terrible stories about him. This would seem to be referring to Irving's "The Adventure of the German Student". The other influence is again Edgar Allan Poe. The guilt and burial are remonscient of Poe's masterpiece, "The Tell-Tale Heart".

A Christmas Carol (1843) is without doubt Dickens' best and most famous work. I won't bother to recount a plot so well-known to so many readers. The book was an instant classic and has sold steadily since it was written. It's success was followed by other "Christmas books": *The Chimes, The Cricket on the Hearth, The Battle of Life,* and *The Haunted Man and the Ghost Bargain*. Of these only the last is a supernatural tale, and will be looked at next.

The writing of *A Christmas Carol* seasoned Dickens' talent for writing about ghosts. The earlier tales for the most part are humourous when not in imitation of Poe. But after the adventures of Scrooge, Dickens' tales take on a gloomier feel, closer to the idea of the Victorian ghost story. With "The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain" (1848) Dickens writes the only other novel-length ghost story. Where the story of Scrooge is about a wicked man turned to good, "The Haunted Man", as it is often abbreviated, is about a good man turned to evil then returned to good.

The story concerns a chemist named Redlaw. He has lost his sister and feels terrible guilt and sorrow over the incident. Redlaw is a kind and giving person but appears to others to be "a haunted man". What haunts him is his specter of guilt. This ghost, who resembles most Baron's Koeldwethout's Genius of Despair and Suicide as well as the double in Poe's "William Wilson", makes the offer to remove his pain and suffering. The result is that Redlaw becomes indifferent and morose without care for others. His presense is enough to make others uncaring, first a poor family named Tetterby, then their sick neighbour, a scholar.

Realizing his curse, the only person Redlaw can associate with is a street urchin, a creature more animal than human. The chemist follows the boy to a house filled with the sick. There he finds his servant and the servant's father at the death bed of a long lost brother. Redlaw's sickness infects them and they abandon the dying man.

The ending to "The Haunted Man" is Dickens at his most sickenly sweet but is rescued by the characterization of Mrs. Swidger. Redlaw meets with his haunter again on Christmas morning, hearing sweet music. All the evil he has done is reversed by the presence of Milly Swidgers, and the servants, the Tetterbys and the student are filled with joy and forgiveness. If Dickens had left the story here the tale would have seemed to possess a tacked-on happy ending. He saves it from maudlin sentimentality with the character of Milly, who leads Redlaw through his rehabilitation, to appreciate his sorrow as a devise for forgiving the wrongs done to us by life. Understanding this, Redlaw forgives the loss of his sister and allays the ghost's curse.

If Dickens had thought he was writing another *Christmas Carol* he must have been disappointed. "The Haunted Man" lacks the movement of Scrooge and his ghosts, is murky and its ending is less exact than that of Scrooge who shows his joy rather than discussing it as Mrs. Swidgers and Redlaw do. More likely Dickens was exorcising the ghosts within himself. His sister, Fanny, had died of consumption the summer before. The glowing, loving character of Mrs. Swidgers is no doubt Fanny as Dickens idealizes her. Redlaw embodies the author's own misery and pain.

"A Child's Dream of a Star" (1850) is a short fable about a boy who wishes he could join his lost relatives in heaven. Each night after their deaths he has a dream of them joining the others and the angels. The boy grows to be an old man and finally joins them on his death. The tale is not haunting but typical of Dickens sentimental side. Like the ending to "The Haunted Man", this story seems to point to an author who indulges in sentimentality and nostalgia.

"Christmas Ghosts" or "Ghosts at Christmas" is an article from *A Christmas Tree* (1850) . In it, Dickens lays out two of the traditions of Christmas for which he has become famous: snow and ghosts. It may be hard for someone, like myself who lives in a snowy region, to understand what is so unusual about a White Christmas, but London, England is rarely visited by heavy snow at Christmas time. The snowy Christmases of Dickens may have come from a period in his childhood when it snowed for seven Christmases in a row.

More importantly, Dickens summarizes all his favorite ghost story plots, many of which will be familiar to afficiandos of the genre. The author speaks in a sentimental fashion which slips all too easily into an unintended sarcasm. Though Dickens helped spawn the Victorian ghost story, one almost wonders if even he has had too much of rattling chains and evil portraits. This can only be fathomed by the tonality of his words and is open to interpretation.

Of the plots he mentions he includes: the dead servant girl who killed herself for an unworthy lord, the phantom stain that can't be removed, the clock that strikes thirteen, heralding death, the phantom coach, the compact that brings a friend back from the dead, the girl who sees her own dead self in premonition of her death, the distant relative who appears but has really died in a far country, and the orphan boy who was killed cruelly but appears to maiden aunts. The catalogue could be much longer, but these are the cliches of Dickens' time.

"The Last Words of the Old Year" (1851) is not so much a ghost story as an editorial masquerading as a story. In it Dickens has the Year 1850 commenting on his passing reign. Dickens targets all the social ills that most worry him as a humanitarian: the state of the sewers, the lack of lifeboats on steamships, the lack of secular education, and many other current political issues. There is no real supernatural or ghostly events.

"To Be Read At Dusk" (1852) demonstrates the change that has come over Dickens and the ghost story itself. This tale lacks the typical Dickensian feel with funny names and symbolic spirits, but reads like a typical ghost story. It could be a work by J. Sheridan Le Fanu, Ameilia B. Edwards or even Algernon Blackwood. The ghost story by the 1850's had become genrified in its methods, to some extent thanks to Dickens himself.

"To Be Read at Dusk" concerns a man who overhears some couriers in the Swiss mountains, telling of unusual happenings. The story has two parts which weakens its over-all structure. The first episode, and the longer and more interesting of the two, is about a newly-wed bride who has a dream of a man with a dark face and grey moustache. The husband and servants search the ancient schloss they have rented for a painting with the face but find none. (Here Dickens uses a ghost-story cliche to divert the reader. This prop dates back to Horace Walpole and the Gothic School.) Later, the couple meet Signor Dellombra who looks exactly like the man in the dream. The husband seeks his friendship in an attempt to cure his wife of her fears. Ultimately he kidnaps her and they are never seen again.

The other episode is less interesting. It tells of twin brothers, one becomes ill and sends his spirit to warn his brother of his sickness. The addition of this tale is anticlimatic and one wonders why Dickens includes it? Is it filler or is he simply using the same hodge-podge structure that he used in *Pickwick* and later in "Captain Murderer and the Devil's Bargain"?

"The Ghost Chamber" (1857) is another "typical" ghost story about two men who stay a night in a haunted house.

"The Ghost Chamber" (1857) is another "typical" ghost story about two men who stay a night in a haunted house. At the stroke of one a strange old man enters, takes a seat and relates the story of an evil man who marries a woman for her money but does not inherit after her death. To get his hands on her fortune, he places his weak-willed daughter in a private school and coerces her to marry him. Once married, he drives her to death. When she asks repeatedly, "I will do anything you wish. I beg your pardon, sir. Forgive me!" he answers by commanding her to "Die!" which she does. The murderer is pleased that he has killed her and inherited her money but his plan fails when a young man, who has watched the wife longingly, reveals the husband's guilt. The man kills the lad and buries him under the tree outside the manor. Wanting to escape the house, the killer is now trapped in the house lest his secret gets out, which happens when lightning strikes the tree, drawing much attention to the spot.

The husband is hung, and in death is condemned to haunt the ghost chamber, the room the two visitors have chosen, until two men hear his confession. This never happens because one of them is always driven to sleep, prolonging the ghost's torment. The tale ends with the two men arguing about what really happened in the room.

Though a standard ghost story in many respects, it does feature one very creepy bit,

reminscient of Dickens' better parts of *A Christmas Carol*. The ghost husband is himself haunted by two fellow ghosts, the lad who dwells in the tree and the wife: "...She and I were there. I, in the chair upon the hearth; she, a white wreck again, trailing itself towards me on the floor. But, I was the speaker no more, and the one word she said to me from midnight until dawn was, 'Live!'"

"Well-Authenticated Rappings" (1858) or "The Rapping Spirits" is a strange piece though it seems to hint at Dicken's feelings toward Spiritualism, which was at its height during the later part of his career. The story is the supposed report of a spiritualist seance. The spirits seem little more than spoiled children while the mediums buffoons. The intentially effect is humourous. Dickens may have liked a good ghost story but didn't care too much for table tipping and automatic writing that was the craze of the 1850's.

"The Haunted House" (1856) is a confused conglomeration in its modern form. It would have made four good stories but instead is episodic and unsatisfying. The reason for this is that Dickens wrote it as part of a Christmas number of *All the Year Round*. The story was filled out by the stories of other writers including Amelia B. Edwards. These are missing so the piece seems incomplete.

It begins with a man at a train meeting a spiritualist. As with "Well-Authenticated Rappings", he shows his dislike for spiritualists. The man is engaged in writing down the words of 17479 ghosts including Socrates, Pythagoras, Galileo, Milton and Prince Arthur, the nephew of King John. The ghostly messages are all cliches and commonly known. Dickens makes a pun with "A bird in the hand is worth two in the Bosh."

The next episode tells how this traveller, rid of his spiritualist companion, finds and rents a haunted house. Unable to keep servants, he brings a large group of interesting friends to spend three months there, through the Christmas holiday. Each of the guests promises to reveal nothing of their experiences until after Twelfth Night, so as not to influence the others.

Up to this point the story has been much like a traditional ghost story with a few digressions. It is with Chapter Two that Dickens abandons his goal as ghost story writer and segways into a strange nostalgic fairy tale. The narrator has taken the room of the mysterious Master B. He sees the phantom in his shaving mirror then in his bed. The ghost leads him on many adventures of which only one is related: a dual tale of Arabian Nights as acted out by children. The tale ends with the narrator admitting the only real phantom is the ghost of his childhood. He is resigned to sharing his bed with Master B's skeleton. The tale ends there as mysterious and unfinished as it began.

As mentioned at the beginning, "Captain Murderer and The Devil's Bargain" from *The Uncommercial Traveller* (1860) are told as one reminsicience of the bloody stories of Dickens' nanny, Mary Weller. The first is a folk-tale similar to "Bluebeard" or "Mr. Fox". A cannibal captain marries girls and asks them to make a pie crust. Once ready, he cuts them up and eats them. The heroine allows this to happen to her but laces the pie with poison. The second and more effective tale smacks of "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" in its infestation of rats. The story is about a shipwright named Chips who makes a deal with the Devil as his father and grandfather before him. One of the conditions of the deal is that a talking rat will live with the man. Chips defies the Devil and sells the rat. After this

the builder is haunted by rats. They are in his food, clothes, everywhere. That no one can see them does not matter. He is locked up as mad. Later, he is hired onto one of the king's ships where he can hear the rats plotting to sink the ship. His entreaties go unheeded and everyone dies. His dead body floats ashore, covered in rats.

Dickens' rats are well remembered. He says, "...At intervals ever since, I have been morbidly afraid of my own pocket, lest my exploring hand should find a specimen of two of those vermin in it." Later horror writers would use rats with similar effect, including Bram Stoker and Stephen King. J. Sheridan Le Fanu's evil, ghostly monkey in "Green Tea" has a similar haunting effect as the unseen rats. H. P. Lovecraft would have a talking rat creature in Brown Jenkin from "Dreams in the Witch-House".

Also from the same book, "Mr. Testator's Visitation" (1860) is a short piece reminiscent of Pickwick, in which a poor man borrows some furniture without permission. The owner turns up months later, a drunken man who consumes all the man's gin then disappears, a ghost. The tale is brief but humorous.

"Four Ghost Stories" (1861) is four vignettes like those mentioned in "Christmas Ghosts", published anonymously in *All the Year Round*. The first tells of a painter who is asked by a woman strange to him if he could remember her face so that he could paint it. Later he is asked to paint her portrait by her father. The woman had died two years ago, on the day the painter had met her. The second unnamed piece is brief and the least interesting of the four. A woman is separated by her brother who goes to India. The siblings have made a pact that if either should die, they will appear as an apparation to the other. This happens and the tell-tale letter comes by the next mail. Story Three is another version of the same story. A sailor wishing to earn a young woman's hand, dies at sea but appears to his intended bride. Story Four is probably the best of the quartet, involving a fairy-tale style. A woman is godmother to a baby belonging to small people living in the well. For this she is given shavings which are made into two metal fish and some coins. If she keeps the metal pieces, her family will be blessed, but if they lose any of them then evil will follow. Several generations later, the family misplaces one of the fish and is thrown into poverty and dishonour. The count who is narrating the story tells how he is summoned to Sweden by an unknown dying man. He has the missing fish. Upon his return the Count's fortunes instantly improve.

"The Portrait-Painter's Story" (1861) is Dickens' own true ghost story. He published "Four Ghosts" September 1861, only to have the actual participant of the first of the four tales complain that he had written about the events before him. Not only did Dickens write the story from tales he had heard, but even guessed the correct date for the death of the daughter, September 13th.

The portrait-painters story tell show the artist was contracted by a family named Kirkbeck to do a portrait. Their card does not have an address so he forgets about the job. Travelling months later he stumbles across the family again and visits them. While on the train to their home he meets a beautiful woman who says they will meet again. At the Kirkbeck's he sees her again but no one acknowledges her presence. The next day the servant has no recollection of her.

Months later, close to Christmas, the artist meets her again in his studio. The woman

gives him a picture of a Lady M. A. who she feels looks like her. The visitor wants him to do a portrait from memory. The artist does a couple of quick sketches and she is gone. Before she leaves she warns him of the portrait *"...much depended on it."*

Travelling again, the artist gets stuck in a small boring country town. To liven up his forced visit he looks up an old friend. The man who responds to his message is not his friend, but a Mr. Lute. The artist had mysteriously put the wrong name on the letter. The man invites the artist to his home to paint a portrait of his dead daughter. The surviving sister warns the painter that her father is insane, seeing visions. The artist attempts to paint the portrait with little success until the sister mentions the portrait of Lady M. A. which has disappeared. The artist retrieves it with his own sketches and completes the job. The father's sanity is confirmed as he had seen his daughter on the train, at the Kirkbeck's and in the artist's studio in his visions.

"The Goodwood Ghost Story" (1862) marks a change for Dickens. This spare ghost story is told with economy, lacking the usual Dickensian idiosyncritiies (possibly because he didn't write it?). The plot concerns a widow who dies in a carriage accident. At the time that she is attempting to gasp her dying words, her ghost is seen in the family barn, many miles away. The ghost does not speak. The widow leaves two daughters who are not claimed by any relatives. The narrator sees the woman's ghost one last time, late at night, and understands at last what she is trying to say: "Take care of my children."

This more modern style along with a lack of corresponding records has caused some critics to think the story the work of another. It appeared in *All the Year Round* anonymously, but when one reads the stories that followed "The Goodwood Story" you will see that Dickens had abandoned the style of *A Christmas Carol* for that of the modern Victorian ghost story writers.

"The Trial For Murder" (1865) is perhaps Dickens' most famous ghostly tale after *A Christmas Carol*. A man looks out his window and sees two men, one following the other. The first man looks harried, while the second has a face "...the color of impure wax." This second man shows up again through a sealed door in the narrator's house. It is then that the man realizes this fellow is a ghost. The narrator is able to allow his servent to see the ghost too when he touches him.

Later the narrator is selected for jury duty. The defendant is the first man, a murderer, who realizes that the narrator is on the side of his haunter. The criminal tries to challange the man's selection but can give no reasonable explanation. The narrator becomes the jury foreman and is haunted with a thirteenth, phantom juror. The narrator sees the second man, the ghost of the murderer's victim, whispering in the ears of the jurors in their secluded quarters. The jurors eventually come to a verdict of "guilty" and the phantom disappears, with justice having been served.

Dickens' final spine-tingler is the often anthologized, "The Signal-Man" (1866). Like "The Goodwood Ghost Story" it has a clear, straight forward style. The tale tells of a man who likes to visit a lonely railroad man who operates a station beside a tunnel. The railroad man jumps at the other's first words, called down to him, "Halloa! below there!" Later, the visitor gains the railroader's confidence and finds out why the signalman is nervous. He has seen a phantom beside the tunnel, his face obscured and his arms motioning him to

The Signalman (1976) BBC adaptation

step aside. This ghost had foretold a terrible accident on the track as well as a single lady's death. The signal man feared and waitied in haunted silence for its third premonition. The visitor promises to return to him but when he does the signal man is dead, killed by a train, the driver calling out "Halloa! Below there!" and waving his arms.

Dickens grew despondent about the way people celebrated Christmas. In later years, he came to see that though his classic of Ebeneezer Scrooge lost none of its popularity, its message was often lost on the public. This souring shows in his later stories but he never abandoned the ghost story. As the unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) shows, Dickens loved Christmas to the last. The incomplete novel is set at Christmas and many people have guessed what Dickens might have written later on in the book. Was it a straight mystery? Would it have contained ghosts and spiritualists?

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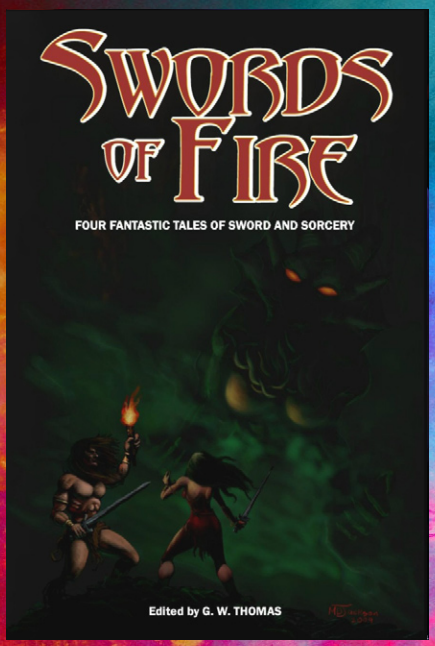

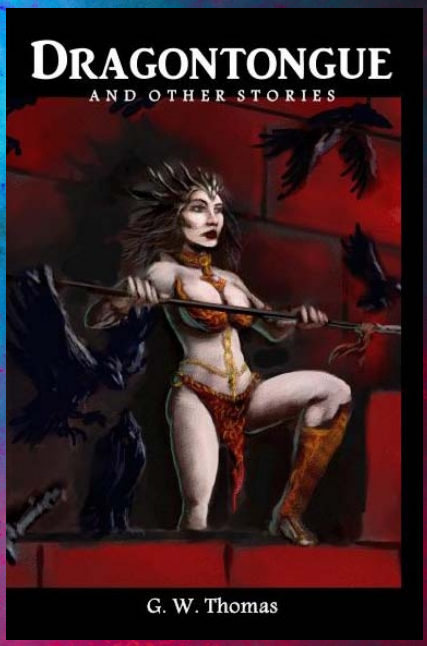

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Amazing Stories June 1945 Robert Gibson Jones, artist

The Art of the Shaver Mystery

by M. D. Jackson

Was it a deliberate hoax or did the editor of *Amazing Stories* use a man's mental illness for profit?

The Shaver Mystery is part of the history of *Amazing Stories* Magazine, but it is certainly not considered one of the magazine's shining moments. In a nutshell, the Shaver Mystery was the "UFO phenomenon" before the actual UFO phenomenon.

In 1943, Richard Sharpe Shaver began writing letters to the then publisher of *Amazing Stories*, Ray Palmer, detailing the existence of a sinister, ancient civilization living below the earth's surface. In caverns deep underground these beings, called Deros, harbored fantastic technology and occasionally kidnapped people from the surface and performed unspeakable tortures upon them.

Shaver's semi-coherent ramblings, which he claimed were delivered to him telepathically through his welding machine in the factory in which he worked (I'm not making this

Richard Sharpe Shaver and Raymond A. Palmer

stuff up, I swear) caught Ray Palmer's attention. Instead of referring him to a psychiatrist, Palmer contacted Shaver and encouraged his delusions, prompting him to write more and more about this fantastic story.

Perhaps it started out as an amusing diversion, but Palmer published Shaver's letters. He re-wrote Shaver's 10,000 word missive, originally entitled "A Warning to Future Man". He added 20,000 more words of exciting plot and retitled it *I Remember Lemuria*. It was published in the March 1945 issue. The issue sold out and generated a significant response. People wrote letters attesting to the truth of Shaver's claims. Sales increased and soon over 75% of the magazine's content was given over to writings about the Shaver Mystery.

Whatever you feel about the right or wrong of the Shaver Mystery, the phenomenon produced some amazing art during its run in *Amazing Stories* and when it eventually moved to its own dedicated publication, *The Shaver Mystery Magazine* in 1947.

The first Shaver Mystery cover was the March 1945 edition which featured *I Remember Lemuria* as the lead story. The cover for that issue was by Robert Gibson Jones and depicts a metal bikini-clad woman (a ubiquitous sight on pulp covers of the time) in black rubber gloves preparing to throw a massive switch while regarding a green bat-like creature in a glass cage. One would assume that the switch will do something nasty to the critter and the critter seems to know it, judging by its expression.

The artwork looks pretty standard for a pulp cover. I imagine readers were anticipating

Amazing Stories March 1945. Robert Gibson Jones, artist

MOON OF DOUBLE TROUBLE by A. R. Steber

See Back Cover

AMAZING STORIES

MARCH
25¢
IN CANADA 30¢

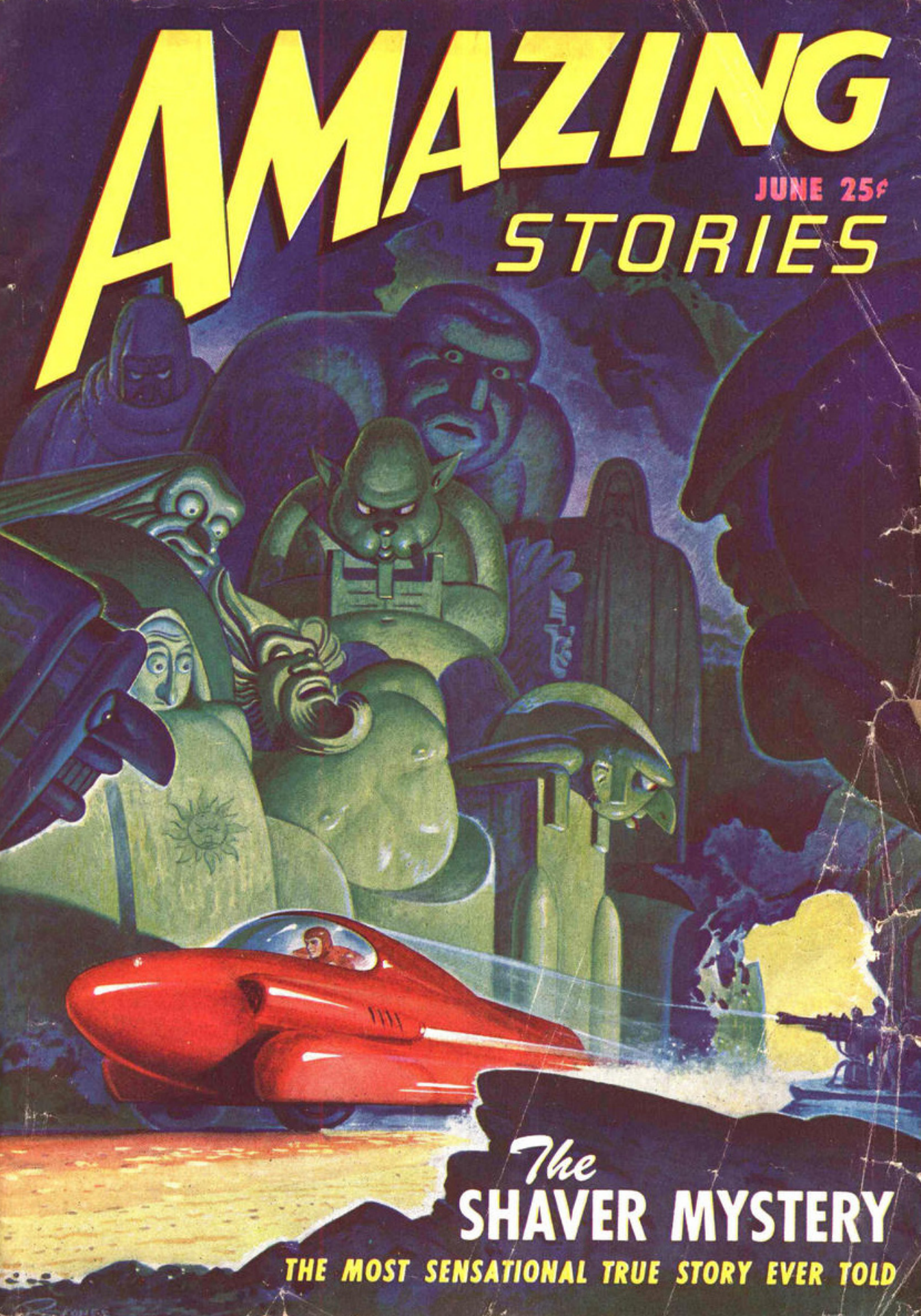
SENSATIONAL "RACIAL MEMORY" STORY...

I REMEMBER LEMURIA

By RICHARD S. SHAVER

AMAZING STORIES

JUNE 25¢



The SHAVER MYSTERY

THE MOST SENSATIONAL TRUE STORY EVER TOLD

Detail from H. W. McCauley's cover art for The Mind Rovers*, January 1947*

an exciting Science Fiction story. What they got was an assurance that this was all real!

Some called it a hoax. Perhaps it was. I'm certain that Palmer had little doubt that Shaver's hold on reality wasn't all that firm. Nevertheless, he certainly wasn't above exploiting it for his own purposes. When the issue sold out, there was no turning back.

January 1947's cover was by H. W. McCauley and sports a frightened looking woman (who kind of resembles the actress Patricia Neal). She is in a metal room holding some sort of wand or stick into a fire or some sort of forge. A strange looking helmet sits nearby. She is startled by something that the viewer can't see, but by her frightened expression it can't be good. *THE MIND ROVERS* blares the bold typeface, a story attributed to Richard Shaver but likely "sweetened" by Palmer himself.

Another Robert Gibson Jones cover from two years later, June 1947 is also a pulp cover standout. No holds barred now. The bold title is THE SHAVER MYSTERY, and the subtitle states that it is "*THE MOST SENSATIONAL TRUE STORY EVER TOLD*"! The cover shows a sleek red vehicle traveling through a weird landscape under the baleful gaze

Amazing Stories, June 1947. Robert Gibson Jones, artist

of a group of giant and fearsome creatures.

Well, a good thing can't last forever. Palmer himself claimed that the thing just ran its course and stories having to do with the Shaver Mystery just weren't moving magazines off the racks like they used to. It had nothing to do with the backlash of longtime *Amazing Stories* readers and writers (including a young Harlan Ellison who claimed that he badgered Palmer into admitting the whole thing was a "publicity grabber") who wanted the magazine to go back to publishing real SF and not this tabloid dreck.

Undaunted by the loss of *Amazing Stories* as a venue, Richard Shaver and his wife decided to publish their own pulp magazine. *The Shaver Mystery Magazine* published irregularly and suffered without Ray Palmer's "sweetening". Nevertheless, the magazine did feature some very high quality artwork by H. W. McCauley as well as illustrations by Virgil Finlay, a perennial illustrator of the pulps.

Eventually public interest waned. The wild tales of Richard Shaver were replaced by more believable stories of flying saucers and little men from outer space.

Ray Palmer himself after leaving *Amazing Stories* (or was he fired? There is some question about the actual circumstances) went on to publish two magazines that explored (expoited?) the new UFO craze. *Fate* and later *Search* were publications that popularized (or sensationalized, if you will) the strange and bizarre world of flying saucers and other strange phenomena. He moved to Amherst, Wisconsin and set up his own printing house. He used the old techniques of Science Fiction fandom, publishing letters from UFO true believers and creating a network of fandom around the magazines.

Later he published a magazine called *Flying Saucers from Other Worlds* which served to keep interest in the subject going. Palmer continued publishing magazines of this sort until his death in 1977.

Was Palmer just following the money? Had the Shaver Mystery experience made him realize that belief was a lucrative market? Did he actually believe himself or was he merely the man making money off it all? There are, it seems, more questions than hard and fast answers with this subject.

It is a fascinating story, though, and interesting to look back on the hysteria that it produced. Even today little remnants of Shaver's mythology still show up in odd places, particularly in the work of artist Jermaine Rogers who uses his version of Shaver's Deros in his concert posters and art prints. His Deros designs have even been made into a line of vinyl toys.

As for Shaver himself, he spent the last decade of his life exploring the mystery of "rock books" – stones that he believed had been created by the advanced ancient races and embedded into rocks with legible pictures and texts.

Richard Shaver died in 1975 in Summit, Arkansas.

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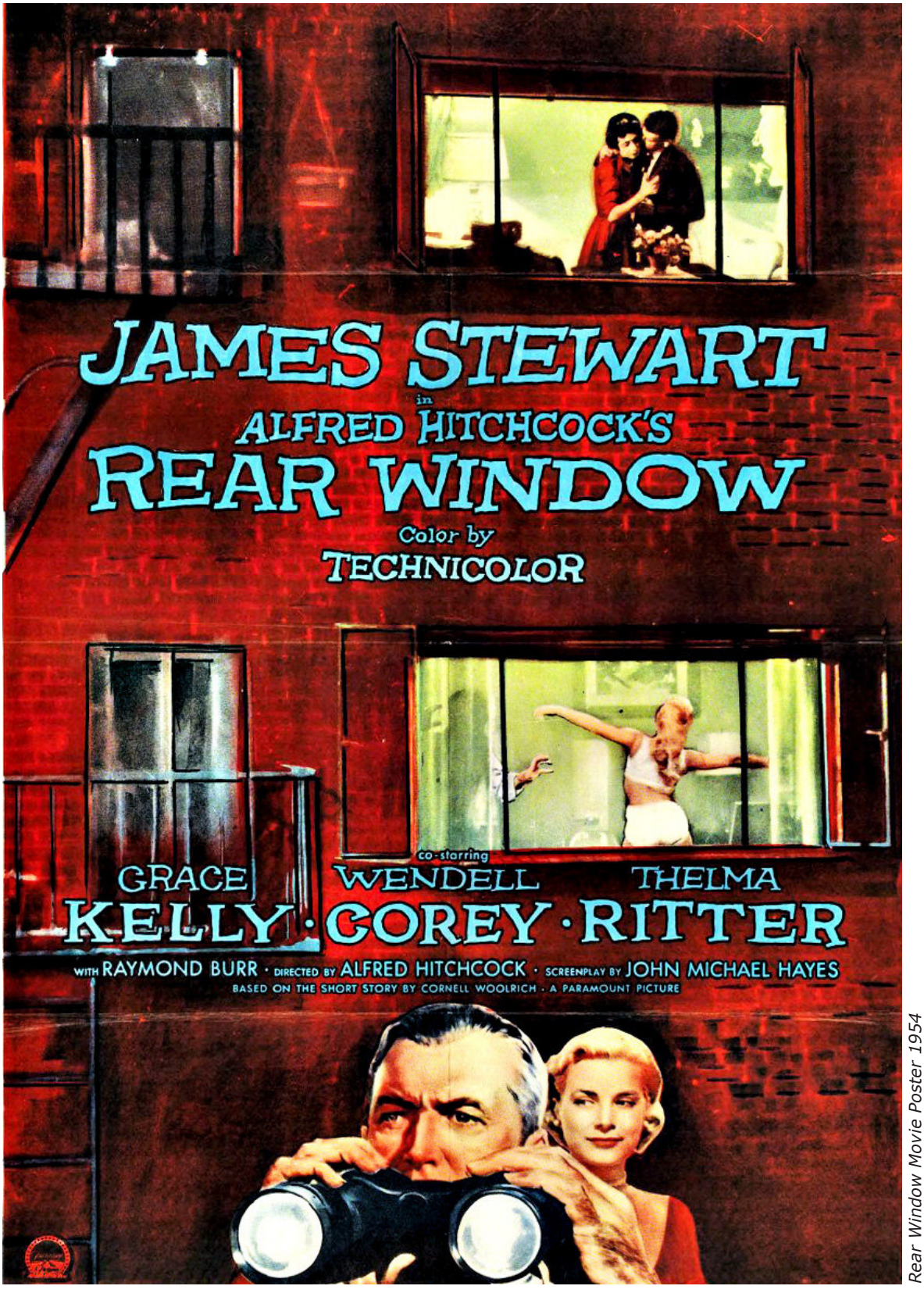
The Shaver Mystery Magazine #1, 1947. Artist unknown



Rear Window Movie Poster 1954

REAR WINDOWS: Hollywood and Cornell Woolrich

by G. W. Thomas

What seems like a cut and dry case of cinematic plagiarism turns out to be not so simple

In 2007, the movie *Disturbia*, starring Shia Lebeouf, came and went and the older crowd just shrugged and said, "Rear Window". Replace the word "murderer" with "serial killer", a broken leg with house arrest and David Morse gets to be Raymond Burr (a part that helped him get Perry Mason in 1957). Did the movie openly admit that it was a remake? No, but younger viewers more than likely said, "Who's Alfred Hitchcock anyway?" The whole thing came and went and all we really have to remember it is the song "Disturbia" by Rihanna.

Or so we thought. In fact, the movie spawned a lengthy legal battle that ended with the

Rear Window (1954) Grace Kelly, James Stewart

Supreme Court. The film trust that holds Woolrich's copyright for "It Had To Be Murder" (*Dime Detective*, February 1942) took the producer, Steven Spielberg, to task. Ultimately, they did not win. The Guardian tells of the judge's verdict: *"Where Disturbia is rife with sub-plots, the short story has none…The setting and mood of the short story are static and tense, whereas the setting and mood of Disturbia are more dynamic and peppered with humour and teen romance."* Perhaps it is because there have been questions about who really owns the property?

Would Cornell Woolrich, who died in 1968, have been angry about all this? I'm not so sure. He might have shrugged and said it was all part of the business. He liked the voyeur theme and even wrote a second story about murder witnesses in a tale called "The Boy Cried Murder" (*Mystery Book Magazine*, March 1947). It was made into the movie *The Window* (1949) starring Bobby Driscoll. This film is about Tommy Woodry, a little fibber, who witnesses his neighbors murder a sailor but Tommy's parents don't believe him. Dad and mom were played by Arthur Kennedy and Barbara Hale (Hey, there's that Perry Mason connection again!) Eventually the killers figures out that Tommy knows and come for him. Woolrich quite clearly established this theme as his own.

Or was it? Check out H. G. Wells' "Through a Window", which he wrote in 1894. Wells begins with: "After his legs were set, they carried Bailey into the study and put him on a couch before the open window. There he lay, a live--even a feverish man down to the loins, and below that a double-barrelled mummy swathed in white wrappings. He tried to read, even tried to write a little, but most of the time he looked out of the window." In that opening paragraph we have 80% of *Rear Window*. The remaining 20% is an escaped slave

Disturbia (2007) Sarah Roemer, Shia Lebeouf

who comes through the window: "In another moment a hairy brown hand had appeared and clutched the balcony railings, and in another the face of the Malay was peering through these at the man on the couch. His expression was an unpleasant grin, by reason of the *krees* he held between his teeth, and he was bleeding from an ugly wound in his cheek. His hair wet to drying stuck out like horns from his head. His body was bare save for the wet trousers that clung to him. Bailey's first impulse was to spring from the couch, but his legs reminded him that this was impossible." I won't ruin the surprise of the ending.

Beyond the distasteful racism of the time, we can see here the idea of the man who is trapped because of an injury then is attacked by what is perceived as a violent type of person. This is the basis of *Rear Window* for sure, as well as *The Window*. Did anyone know about this story in the court case against *Disturbia*? Not to my knowledge (which I admit is not great) but *Disturbia* could have made the case they were using Wells' story (which is in the public domain). It's not a great case but it would have been damaging to show Woolrich was not that original. (Spielberg might have to have to set the story in the tropics to win that case though.) H. G. Wells' story doesn't have any sub-plots or teenage romance either.

Just a couple closing asides: the 1998 TV remake of *Rear Window* with quadripelgic, Christopher Reeve, was a legally contracted film. Critical reception for the show was weak. It surprises me that Spielberg would want to remake the classic movie for a third time. Better yet, Kevin Bacon wowed fans with the Broadway version of the story in 2015.

▲

A Princess of Mars 1917 Frank Schoonover, artist

CRACKING THE COLOUR CODE OF MARS:
The Barsoomian "Trilogy" of Edgar Rice Burroughs

by D. K. Latta

Burroughs' Mars is filled with races of all colours, but do those those colours have earthly analogs?

Best remembered today as the creator of *Tarzan of the Apes*, American writer Edgar Rice Burroughs enjoyed his first success with *A Princess of Mars*, a swords n' science swashbuckler featuring the earthman John Carter. The Martian landscape that Burroughs dubbed "Barsoom" remains his second most famous literary creation after a certain Lord Greystoke -- or at least vying for that second chair with the inner world of Pellucidar. The latter received its big screen treatment in 1976's *At the Earth's Core* -- John Carter didn't get his stab at celluloid glory until 2012!

Burroughs dabbled in everything from historical fiction to crime melodramas in addition to his signature jungle and extra-planetary adventures. Yet despite his publically self-deprecating attitude toward his work, I suspect he fancied himself a social commentator-cum-satirist, even a modern day Jonathan Swift. Such ambition is a two-edged sword. It lends his pulpy writing an unexpected ambition at times but, equally, it's hard to dismiss Burroughs' more dated attitudes as unintentional.

I grew up reading Burroughs, but I willingly acknowledge problematic aspects of his work. Appreciating art doesn't require willfully ignoring its pros and cons. So with that out of the way, let's jump into Burroughs's Martian books with both feet, because for years I've found them a fascinating study in ambiguity.

One could argue the Martian books are a victim of their own success -- the sheer number of them diluting their impact (eleven books all told -- though I guess there's some question whether the final book was partly ghostwritten ~ see "Dimes for Tarzan" by G.W. Thomas in *Dark Worlds Quarterly* #1). They remain an enduring work for generations of SF fans, it's true. But my late brother once remarked to me that if Burroughs had stopped with the initial trilogy -- *A Princess of Mars*, *The Gods of Mars*, and *The Warlord of Mars* - today they might well be regarded as something akin to literature, maybe even in the same vein as *The Lord of the Rings*, The *Foundation* books, or even *Dune*.

Well, maybe not quite in that company, the books' swashbuckling tone is easy to dismiss as "just" escapist fantasy. But in terms of world building, of creativity, and in terms of social and political themes there is a genuine ambition to those volumes (especially the first two -- the third book a necessary wrap up to the plot threads, but maybe not as ambitious). Some of the themes are explicit, such as the saga's critique/satire of religion, with John Carter discovering the dark secret at the heart of Barsoom's main religion.

Part of the problem with trying to decipher a work of art is understanding the creator's motives, whether even they had settled views on issues. And are we seeing things the way the author imagined them? Terms change, too. One chapter of *A Princess of Mars* is titled "Love-Making on Mars" -- but, settle down, kids. Love-making in that context was simply a euphemism for courting. (And if you find that disappointing, wait till you get to all the people "ejaculating").

So with an acknowledgement that meaning can change with time, I've always been intrigued by the racial dynamics inherent in Burroughs' Barsoom.

John Carter himself is a white American from Virginia -- and a Confederate veteran, to boot. Something to which Burroughs doesn't necessarily ascribe much political significance; Carter is neither especially bitter that the south lost the Civil War, nor guilt-ridden by his participation. It seems mainly there just to set him up as a professional soldier of an "army which no longer existed" (and possibly to make him seem exotic -- a Southern Gentleman). While on Mars there are five sentient races: Green Men, Red Men, White Men, Black Men, and Yellow Men.

Here's where it starts to get interesting.

Of those, the Green Martians are alien-looking: with tusks and four arms. The other four look human...and their colours correspond to colours ascribed to human races, especially at the time. We still commonly use white and black, but though red and yellow have fallen

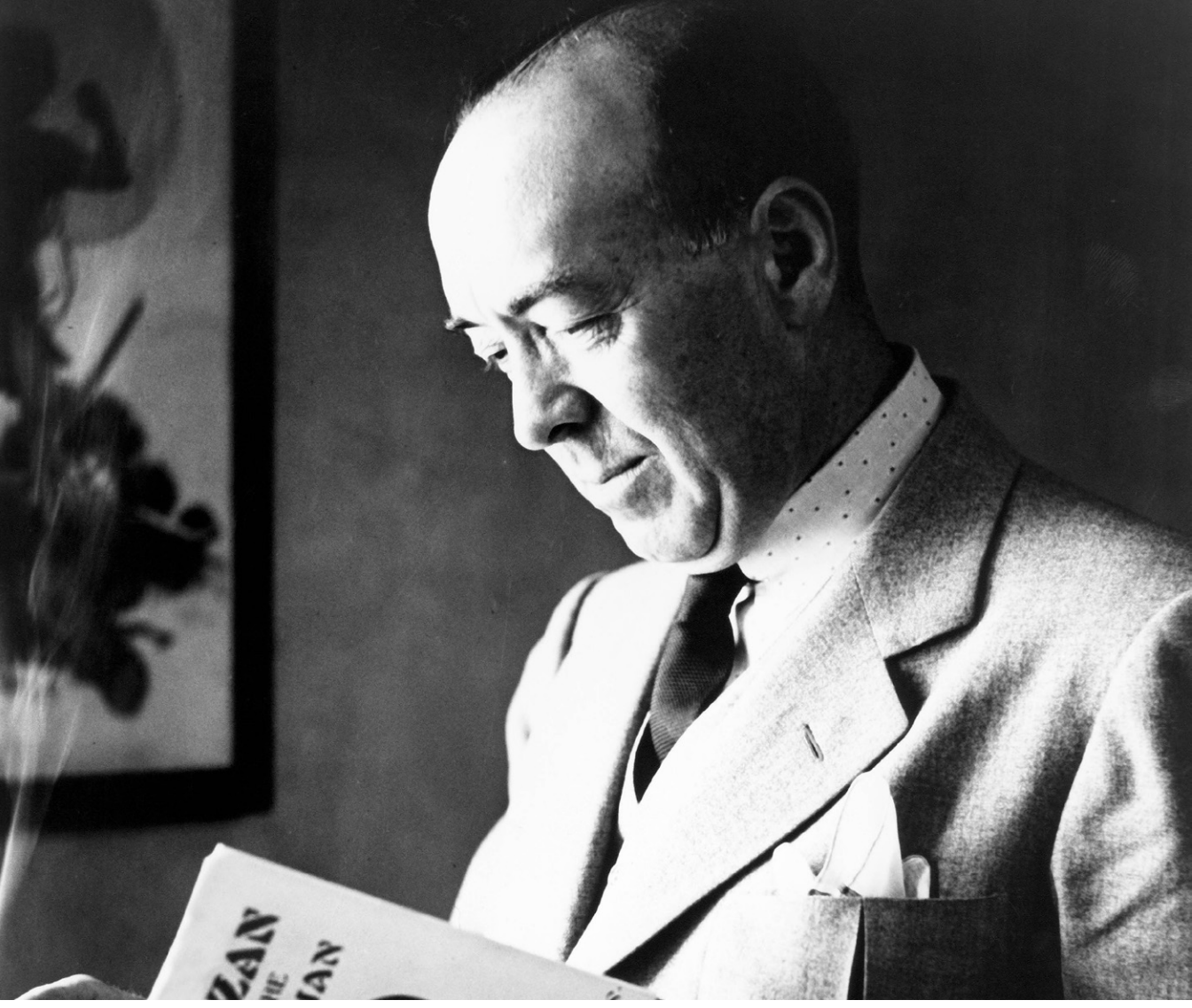
The Gods of Mars 1979, art by Michael Whelan

into disrepute, to Burroughs' post-Edwardian readers, red and yellow were commonly used to describe Indigenous North Americans and Asians respectively.

John Carter can pass for a White Martian, indicating Burroughs was picturing "White" as Caucasian pink. So the intriguing question is to wonder if Burroughs meant for his readers to envision the Red Martians...as North American Indians.

Just to take a back step for a moment, it's worth acknowledging how, well, weird are aspects of *A Princess of Mars*. Even prior to his adventures on Mars, we are told John Carter is ageless with no memory of a childhood (one possibility I've long considered is that Burroughs had intended to have Carter discover he was from Mars himself, where people live millennia -- but then he simply forgot about that plot idea). The story begins with a gold-prospecting John Carter pursued through the Arizona desert by Apaches circa the 1860s; he gets chased into a cave where he succumbs to a mysterious paralyzing gas and has an out-of-body experience where he floats up to the planet Mars. On Mars he finds a surreal existence where people barely age despite existing for millennia and time has little meaning (Burroughs seemed fascinated by timelessness, revisiting the theme in Pellucidar, the island Caprona, and Tarzan had trouble understanding the human concept of time).

It's all very dreamlike -- and I wonder if that was the point. When Carter arrives on Mars he first encounters the Green Martians -- nomadic desert warriors marked by their humourlessness and penchant for torture, but not without their gruff nobility and respect for



Edgar Rice Burroughs 1930

bravery. In other words: very much the then-popular stereotype of "savage" Indians. And the first human Martian he sees is Dejah Thoris: a Red Martian. So it's possible Burroughs, nervous about the public reception to his outlandish flight of fancy (initially releasing it under a pseudonym), intended to present it ambiguously, open to being interpreted as simply a dream ala the (later) movie version of *The Wizard of Oz*: Carter falls unconscious being chased by Apaches across the desert, experiences a kind of dream paralysis, and wakes up in a desert world populated by green "savages" and red-skinned humans ("And you were there, and you..." as Dorothy says to her friends once back in Kansas).

Whether literally or symbolically, on some level the colours must have been intended to resonate. Otherwise, why aren't there Purple or Saffron Martians? Why is the only Martian skin colour without a human parallel reserved for the decidedly unhuman Green Martians?

Yet if Burroughs did intend Red Martians to be North American Indians, I'm not sure most picked up on that. Certainly book covers, comic books, and the 2012 movie don't

seem to subscribe to this interpretation. In the movie they are mostly played by white actors painted red -- though I suppose that's about par for the course in Hollywood even if they were meant to be Native Indian!

(There's obviously a Catch-22 here: I'm suggesting Burroughs might have intended his Martians as multi-racial, not just white guys in primary hues -- but if a modern comic book artist or a filmmaker with the best of intentions started visualizing Yellow Martians as, say, Asian, while still calling them "Yellow"...well, that'd be a whole other controversy. Though equally, if we are meant to envision the hues as literally Red, Yellow, etc., then there's no reason Martians would have to be ethnically European, either. A "Red" Martian could just as easily be drawn as a black or Asian person with red skin, or played as such

The Red Martians are the dominant culture... The Black Martians are the oldest, most technologically sophisticated. The White Martians? They're effin' nuts.

in a movie -- but, funnily, no one usually does that, do they? Anyway, for the moment I'm just pondering Burroughs' original intent).

Where this becomes even more intriguing is in the cultural dynamics of the Martian races. The Red Martians are the dominant culture with whom Carter, and therefore the reader, align themselves. The Black Martians are the oldest, most technologically sophisticated. Perhaps most intriguing: the White Martians? They're effin' nuts. Seriously -- stay away from them, they're baaaad news.

So Burroughs, who was racist by modern standards (regardless of how extreme or moderate he was by the standards of his day) creates a world in which the white guys are crazy as loons, the black guys advanced, and the Indigenous people are the heroes.

So, was Burroughs being progressive?

Maybe yes -- but most likely no. On the yes side, it's possible Burroughs had conflicted feelings about these issues. After all, Tarzan novels are full of superstitious black Africans with rolling eyes -- and also heroic, noble Waziri warriors.

One thing to remember is Burroughs was a pulp writer -- with an eye very much on the commercial market. So the point of view expressed in his books, though sometimes heartfelt, might equally be shaped by whatever he figured his readers would want, or expect. So either a sincere but inconsistent world view, or simple mercenary pragmatism, might explain contradictory themes in his books (the cynical view of civilization in Tarzan stories contrasts with attempts to civilize a primal land in the Pellucidar books).

Maybe Burroughs' racial division of Mars was meant to be satirical, or a flight of fancy. Maybe his depiction of the White Martians as the dregs of the Martian cultures was

not meant to challenge his (mostly white) readers, but simply an outrageous story idea; an inversion of the norm accepted by Burroughs and his peers. Likewise, making the Black Martians the oldest of the Martian races may well have been Burroughs riffing on the Out of Africa assumption that humans began in Africa. But his decision to make them, as a result, the most technologically sophisticated race might simply have been imagining an alternate cultural evolution.

What makes the racial make-up of Barsoom so intriguing is that there's little doubt Burroughs intended it, at least on some level, as a kind of parable about universal brotherhood. Which is yet another paradox of Burroughs' views. The stories are gung ho action-adventures where being declared the "Warlord" of Mars is a good thing -- yet equally there's a kind of anti-war theme at work.

The set-up of Barsoom is that it is a planet in a perpetual state of conflict -- a planet the Romans identified with their God of War. It's a dying world of dwindling resources, dried up ocean beds dotted with the spooky remnants of dead cities, and where even the atmosphere is artificially maintained by generators. The Red and Green Martians are bitter enemies and the cultural estrangement so extreme that some races are even regarded as myths. Into this cauldron of conflict comes John Carter, plucky earthman, who over the course of his adventures befriends the fearsome Green Martian, Tars Tarkas, makes love (remember: not what you think) to the Red Martian, Dejah Thoris, and gradually his entourage includes Black and White Martians as well.

Carter and his comrades ride into cities Magnificent Seven-style, pedestrians gawking because never before have they seen -- or even heard -- of Martians of different races riding side-by-side.

So did Burroughs, who, as noted, could be racist in his other writings, really intend his Martian trilogy as some paean to multiculturalism? Maybe. Maybe he could embrace the concept in its abstract, hypothetical form set on an alien world, even if he might have faltered applying it to his everyday existence. Or perhaps race itself was merely a metaphor. Mayhap he was thinking of the tensions in Europe that would explode into the First World War in less than two years (as an aside, Burroughs' *The Lost Continent*, written in the midst of WW I when America was still neutral, pessimistically envisions America losing all contact with Europe as it collapses into anarchy).

Themes and metaphors change when viewed by ensuing generations. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a good example of a story in which what the Creature represents gets redefined as society, and technology, changes around it. (Don't get me started on *Frankenstein* or we'll be here all day!)

Regardless of how literal or metaphorical it was meant, it's fair to argue a central theme of the original Martian trilogy is a world torn apart by cultural divides and that John Carter is a kind of messianic unifier (Holy Moly! I just realized that his initials are J.C.! Okay, no, really, even I don't seriously believe Burroughs saw Carter as some Jesus figure. I'm not that crazy. Though, you know, there was all that weird stuff about Carter being immortal, perpetually "a man of about thirty," coming back from the dead, and -- no. That's best left for another day.) Even if Burroughs, in his more racist age, was merely using race as a metaphor for internecine conflict, it's not hard to imagine that Burroughs

John Carter of Mars, 2011. Art by Joe Jusko


DUSKO
11

John Carter (2012) James Purefoy as Kantos Kahn

living today would have meant it more literally.

When analyzing or deciphering a work of art, it's often interesting to see what different people focus on, how others interpret themes. First reading the Martian books in my youth I was tuned into the -- to me -- obvious theme of a man finding a world torn apart by ethnic and racial divides and breaking through those barriers simply by making friends where others saw only enemies.

I think that was one of the disappointments of the big budget 2012 film, John Carter.

After literally decades of rumours and false-starts concerning a Hollywood treatment of the Barsoomian stories, they finally came to fruition in an f/x heavy, lavish spectacular that was reportedly one of the most expensive movies ever made...and which tanked at the

box office. I didn't dis-like the movie, but equally I felt it didn't quite spark.

But what struck me as curious was the way the filmmakers tried up-dating it for modern mores -- while missing the obvious.

So they transformed the ex-Confederate adventurer into an embittered man fed up with fighting -- as audiences expect from war veteran heroes post-Vietnam War. It was meant to give Carter himself a narrative arc: the reluctant hero. (Apparently Burroughs' more simple motivator -- Carter's love for Dejah Thoris -- may have seemed too sappy; but interestingly, one of the things that distinguishes Burroughs from many of his compeers in the adventure/fantasy field is this recurring emphasis on love driving the action).

But beyond this imposed character arc, the movie seemed to have no central theme, no underlying *raison d'etre* to support its vast sets and f/x. Although it recreated aspects of the novel surprisingly faithfully, it diverged further as it went -- particularly by turning the White Martians into mysterious interplanetary aliens.

Purity to the source aside, I understand the impulse for adapters to impose (or inject) new ideas into old stories, either to enrich the work for a modern (theoretically more sophisticated) audience, or because of dated aspects (such as racism and sexism). I seem to recall a good example of this was the 1975 movie version of Burroughs' *The Land That Time Forgot* which stayed true to the novel, but added more nuance and subtlety to the characters.

But all too often it can feel like adapters simply cut n' paste another template onto the material (ie: the embittered hero who balks at getting involved) rather than coming up with a fresh perspective based on the existing material. Even the White Martians as technologically advanced manipulators has its echo in other stories.

To me, the potential for deeper themes didn't need to be imported; they were already in the original books.

Personally, if I had been crafting a John Carter movie I would've focused more on the (false) religion stuff, and the theme of bridging the races of a divided world. Those were the themes that allow an otherwise pulp adventure to claw itself half-way toward literature. (The movie does have the Green and Red Martians uniting. But it felt more a plot, rather than a philosophical, point. But maybe other viewers would disagree).

It struck me as ironic that the filmmakers (who included Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Chabon!) tried to impose a reinterpretation of Carter's character while ignoring the very contemporary themes already lurking in the text. Themes of a world struggling with dwindling resources, religious zealotry, and ethnic intolerance just waiting to be teased out and embellished upon for a 21st Century audience.

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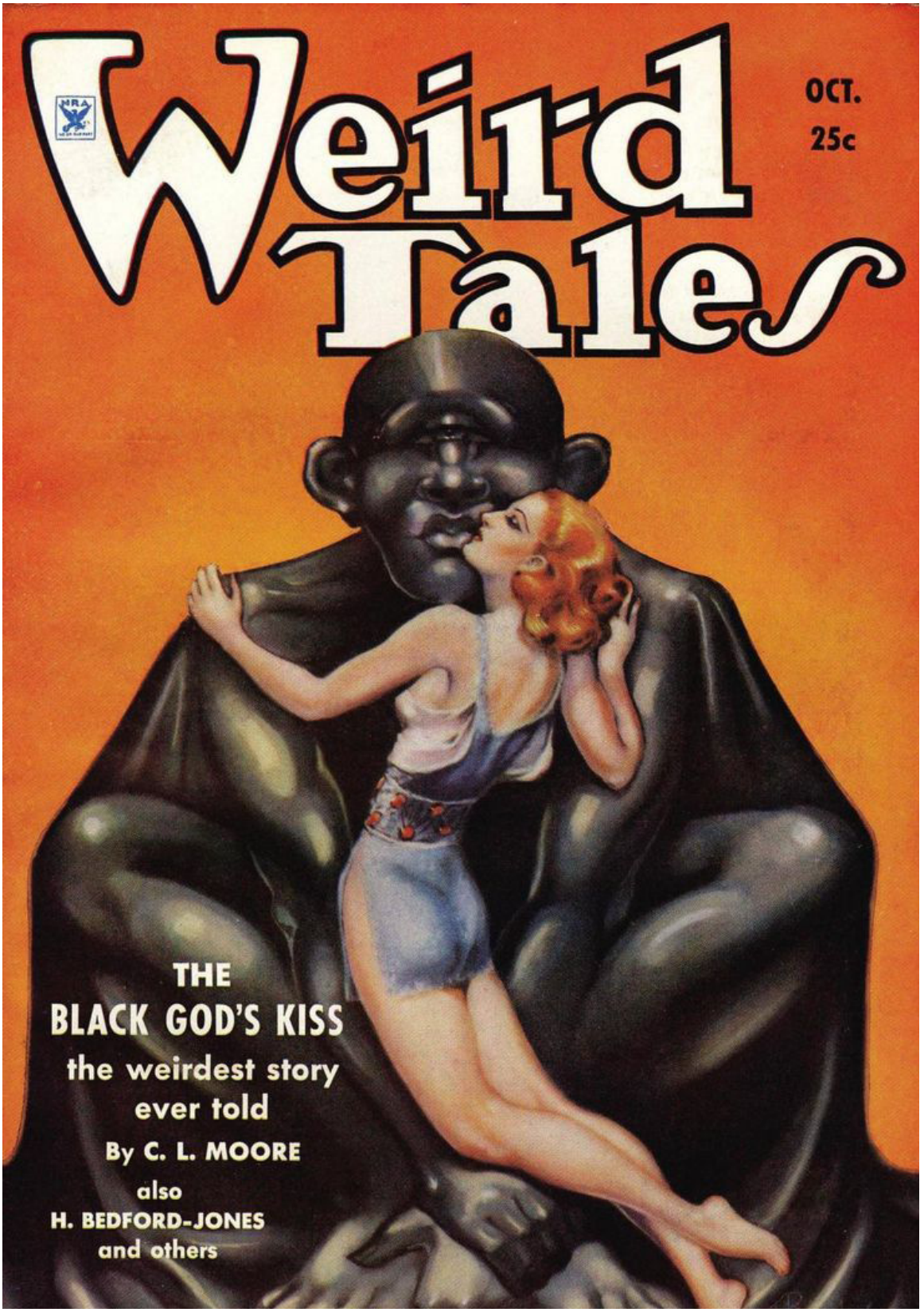


Weird Tales, October 1934. Margaret Brundage, artist

THE SCALE OF SWORD & SORCERY
(or Why Conan Doesn't Suck)

by G. W. Thomas

The Sword & Sorcery Genre has never been popular with critics, but is a perennial fan favorite.

There are those Fantasy writers and critics that accuse Robert E. Howard's Conan of lacking any depth because he just hacks his way out of trouble. In fact, I think it was Robert Bloch in his intro to *Wolfshead* (Bantam Books, 1979) who said it, qualifying his words with the fact that he preferred Howard's subtler characters such as Kull or Bran Mak Morn.

I would hate to disagree with such a wonderful writer as Bob Bloch but I think he kinda missed the point. We want to see Conan hack his way out. Just as people pay gobs of money to be ringside at a boxing match. Howard understood this, being a fight fan, and writing many tales about the sport. Like it or hate it, the bottom line is the contest between

two matched opponents fires us up. Hockey, wrestling, fencing, even golf, it doesn't matter. If there is a fierce competition between two skilled players, people watch.

It's why many of the top ten grossing films of all time are superhero movies. The comics, step-children of the Pulps, they get it too. You're there to see Wolverine slice guys up with those claws, Superman fight gigantic monsters, the Avengers stop an alien invasion. It's big, loud and splashy. Just like Conan. Some people confuse this for lunk-headedness. Not at all. Conan is the alpha male, a superhero with a sword. Like *Beowulf* before him, Conan is all about the fight.

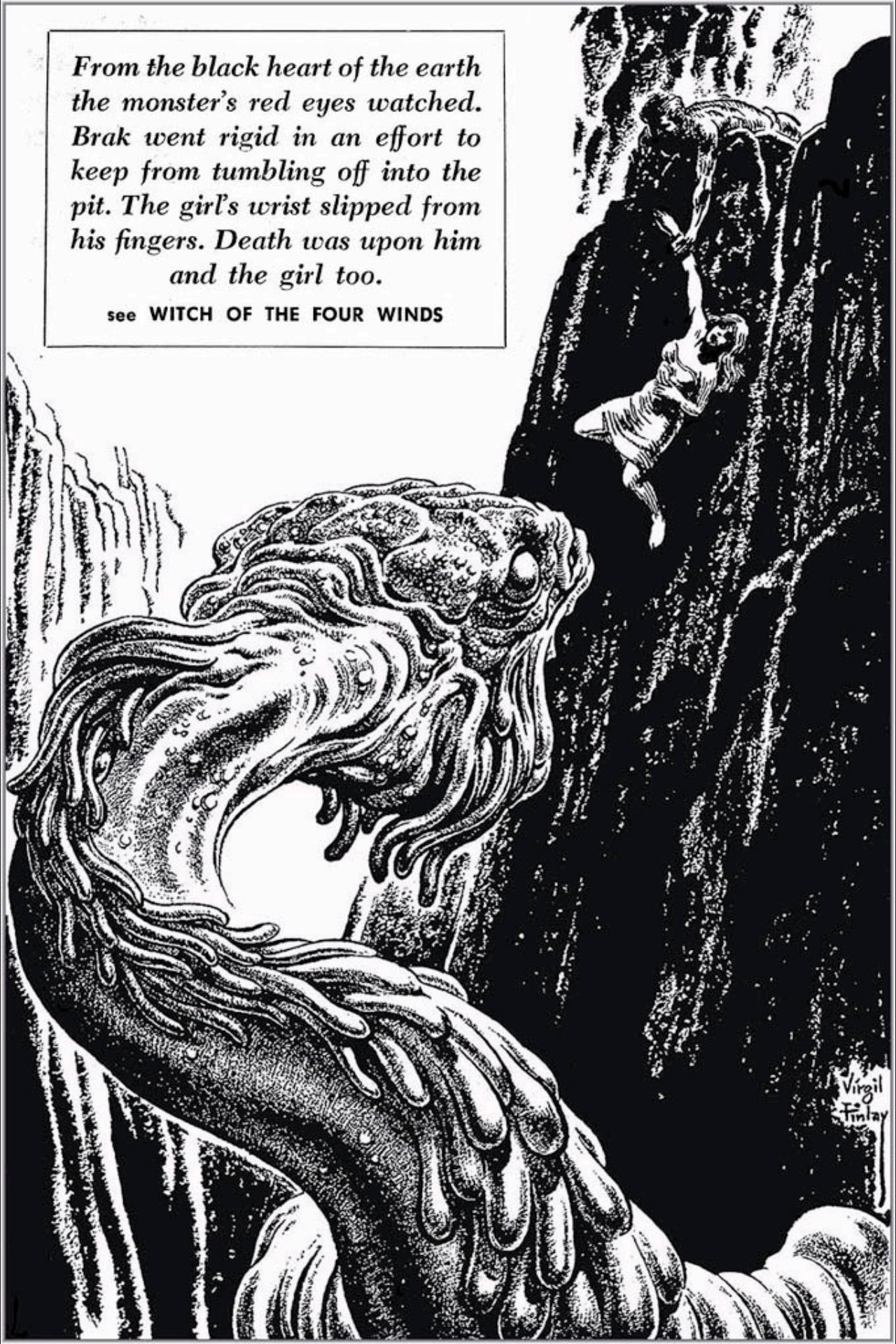
But that's not all Conan is. Howard's writing is rich in many ways, and dark. People forget how dark it is, how Gothic in tone it is. Stories like "Queen of the Black Coast", "Red Nails" and "The Devil in Iron" are all about the haunting past, evil lurking in stygian shadows, waiting to strike at humankind once more. You can run away screaming like a Lovecraftian bitch ("Oh, my brain is exploding!") or you can hunker-down, get that sword ready and fight. For as J. R. R. Tolkien explains in his masterpiece of scholarship "*Beowulf*: the Monsters and the Critics" (1936), the hero tale does more than just thrill us. It has a message as well about fighting on, fighting for what matters. Robert E. Howard, a man who committed suicide, might not be the poster child for that idea, but his character Conan is.

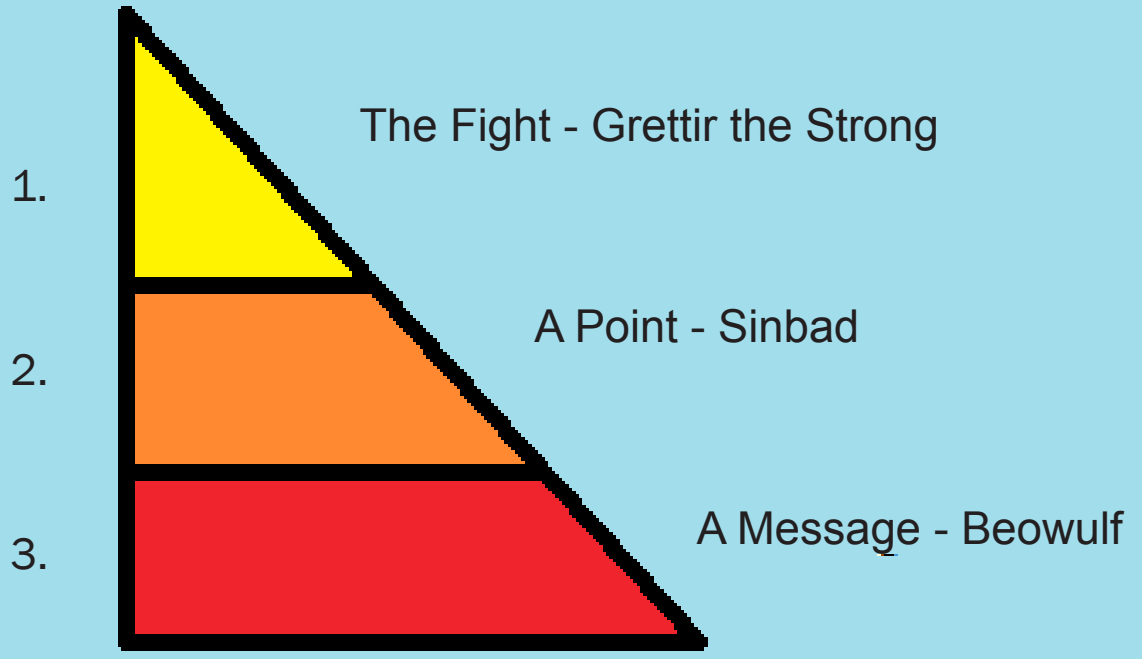
Ryan Harvey wrote a wonderful piece called "What If The Thirteen Year-Olds Are Right?" , identifying that teens love unreservedly what they love. I remember being an awkward teenager and loving Sword & Sorcery and the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Why? Some will call such readings nerdy "power fantasies" but that term seems unkind to me. Instead I would call them "empowering fantasies". Like *Beowulf* did centuries before, the tales of ERB and REH told me, no matter how banal, nasty and crappy my life was, heroes don't crumble. They fight on. Which would suggest that when one reaches the age of about twenty they should give up such silly stories and read Hemingway or Faulkner instead, the crutch no longer needed. I will admit for a time I put the barbarians and jungle lords aside and explored Science Fiction, Horror, Mystery, Westerns and - *gasp* - even mainstream stuff. But I always came back. Nostalgia? Not at all. Sword & Sorcery has much to offer those no longer thirteen as well. Ryan Harvey put it this way: "Reading tales of the fantastic transforms us back into dreaming children who love without reservation and can resist the grinding banality of the bureaucratized world where all that seems to matter is paying taxes and scraping together enough money to pay taxes again next year." More escape? Sure, but one that is such a basic part of human life that ancient Anglo-Saxons and modern cell-phone using people share it. The Fantastic makes us bigger than we are. When well done, it expands our minds and our hearts.

I have created a thematic scale for Sword & Sorcery (and it may apply outside the subgenre to all adventure fiction)*. It has three levels. The first is simply "The Fight", combat

** Adventure fiction using this same scale would include:*
Level One: H. R. Haggard's "The Tale of Three Lions". Level Two: Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island
Level Three: Talbot Mundy's "The Soul of a Regiment"
Sword & Sorcery is a type of adventure fiction and was originally created for Pulp magazines, so this doesn't really surprise me. GW

Witch of the Four Winds. Virgil Finlay, Artist


From the black heart of the earth the monster's red eyes watched. Brak went rigid in an effort to keep from tumbling off into the pit. The girl's wrist slipped from his fingers. Death was upon him and the girl too.
see WITCH OF THE FOUR WINDS
Virgil Finlay



The Scale of Sword & Sorcery

between two opponents. The second I call "The Point", or a fight story that has some other meaning. Not necessarily deep but it says something. And the third I call "The Message", or a deeper meaning that can employ the fullest of themes. All of these plots would qualify as "Defeating the Monster", one of Christopher Booker's seven basic plot types. In the case of S&S, it may be literally true.

Let's look at some examples: in the ancient texts of heroes this would be the stories of Grettir the Strong. Told in a bald style with little characterization, Grettir goes from challenge to challenge, defeating swordsman or ogre. Because of this sketchy style, Grettir is largely unknown except to specialists. In Sword & Sorcery, a tale that meets the barest of requirements would be the Kothar stories of Gardner F. Fox. Workman-like, they recycle the props of the Conan stories without any innovation. They read like adaptations of comic books, a medium Fox worked in for decades. (He was the first writer to create an actual S&S comic character, Crom the Barbarian in 1950. He also invented Hawkman, the most weapons-loaded superhero and Batman's utility belt.) The stories of Kothar are all about barbarian versus sorcerer, monster, or both. The Brak stories of John Jakes and many of the Conan pastiches are similar, meant only for fun.

At the second mark we have the tales of Sinbad the Sailor. Fantastic in nature, they supplied Ray Harryhausen with material for three films, are beloved as children's fairy tales. Despite this juvenile association, the stories of Sinbad are like those of Ullysses' wandering adventures that make a point about resourcefulness and courage. The point is there if you want to dwell upon it but it is up to you. The majority of S&S tales fall here, with stories like Keith Taylor's Bard series, "Demon Journey" by Poul Anderson, The Elak stories of Henry Kuttner or the Dilvish the Damned stories of Roger Zelazny.

The third level is reserved for the very special few, those tales that have something

Tablet V of the Epic of Gilgamesh. the Sulaymaniyah Museum, Iraq

to say, strongly. Of ancient texts I have already mentioned *Beowulf* but even before the Anglo-Saxon classic was the very first story ever recorded, the Babylonian myth of Gilgamesh. In *Gilgamesh* we get all the levels and more. We have the fight with Gilgamesh and Enkidu socking it out for days. They end up as friends afterwards in the most Marvel Comics superhero punch-up fashion (I mean Iron Man versus Thor, what else is going to happen?) Later they fight and kill Humbaba the monster, with a sad point to follow. And last, reaching the highest mark, the search for immortality, that ends in failure. In Sword & Sorcery annals this would include great tales like Emma Bull's "The Rending Dark", "Two Setting Suns" by Karl Edward Wagner, "The Demoness" (or just about anything) by Tanith Lee or "The Black God's Kiss" and its sequel "The Black God's Shadow" by C. L. Moore. I would even place "Queen of the Black Coast" by Robert E. Howard here, as his finest example.

When people criticize Sword & Sorcery they usually pick their examples from the first level. Yes, it's trite, commercial and does not expand the boundaries of the human experience. Why would it? It's entertainment, nothing else. (Unfortunately filmmakers often don't rise above this level either.) When you move up the pyramid they stop calling it Sword & Sorcery and use some euphemism like "Epic Fantasy". What else would it be? You can't get any more epic than S&S.

▲

Detail from the album sleeve. Thunderchild. Art by Michael Trim

Jeff Wayne's Musical version of The War of the Worlds

by Jack Mackenzie

Combining music and a classic Science Fiction story, Jeff Wayne's album found amazing success

In 1978, I was thirteen years old. *Star Wars* had been released the year previously. *Superman: The Movie* was just around the corner and there were more wonders waiting for me in the future.

But I was unaware of that and besides, I had discovered record albums.

Before getting heavily into soundtrack albums thanks to the original *Star Wars* soundtrack double album (which I bought before even seeing the movie) my musical tastes tended to be understandably juvenile. Early Beatles were about the extent of it.

But thanks to some friends who were older I was introduced to the musical movement

that defined the 1970`s – progressive rock.

Progressive rock (or prog rock) was a movement that was intent on fusing rock-and-roll with classical and eclectic influences. Prog rock albums eschewed 3 minute pop tunes and produced long and intricate albums which featured extended solos, fantasy lyrics and an obsessive dedication to technical skill. Pompous and overblown were words often used to describe this style of music by its critics.

1978 had seen the pinnacle of this musical style. These were the final years before the spectre of punk rock and New Wave was to frighten the last of it away. Bands like King Crimson, Yes and Jethro Tull were no longer the centre and the genre was fragmenting into sub genres.

Into this mileau came an album that caught my attention and the attention of a lot of kids my age. It was a double album – a concept album – heavily illustrated. Best of all, it was based on one of the best known works of Science Fiction ever written.

Jeff Wayne`s musical version of The War of the Worlds hit record stores in a very big way. It was the debut studio album from Jeff Wayne, an American-born naturalized British composer, musician and lyricist. Using narration and leitmotifs to carry the story, the two-disc album soon became a bestseller. It would go onto sell millions of records around the world and by 2009 it was the 40th best selling album of all time in the UK. It has since spawned multiple versions of the album, video games, DVDs, and live tours.

But back in 1978 this album was a revelation. It deftly combined my twin loves of music and Science Fiction. The album came packaged with a booklet that featured amazing artwork by Peter Goodfellow, Geoff Taylor and Michael Trim that illustrated the story. The music was a lush combination of classical pieces and overpowering prog-rock tracks interspersed with dialogue, singing and a narration by the incomparable Richard Burton.

So, how did it all come together? How was it that a musician who had previously composed little else other than advertising jingles and television show themes would go one to produce one of the best selling and most loved albums ever made?

Jeff Wayne

Jeff Wayne was born in Queens, New York in 1943. His father was an actor, singer and theatre producer. He spent a lot of his time in the UK with his family touring with various shows. Jeff grew up between London and New York. In 1966, he worked with his father on a West End stage musical at the Palace Theatre in London called *Two Cities* which was based on Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*.

While in the UK, Wayne became a record producer and helped record David Essex's album *Rock On*. That was the beginning of a very profitable run as David Essex's producer and arranger. "...but my composing side had diminished." Wayne once wrote. "My dad reminded me that I'd always wanted to write some sort of musical story, so the two of us started reading books of all shapes and sizes. He came across one by H. G. Wells about a Martian invasion of Earth. I was hooked."

Wayne envisioned his version of Wells' *The War of the World*s as an opera. "Story, leitmotifs, musical phrases, sounds and compositions that relate to the whole."

In 1976, Wayne began writing. He scribbled out notes about the script and handed

Jeff Wayne

them to his father's second wife, Doreen, who was a journalist and a novelist, to turn it into a script. Then Wayne started composing the score. It was January and, feeling that he worked better under pressure, he booked a studio for May – London's state of the art Advision Studios – which kept him focused. He wrote the first draft in six weeks.

It was during the composing period that he decided that the character of the Journalist should be the key character, the thread that ran through the entire thing. But he needed someone with a voice that was distinctive, powerful and would take the listener right inside the story. To his mind the only actor who could do that was Richard Burton.

Richard Burton

"In my view, Richard Burton's voice was like a musical instrument," he said. Indeed, Burton's resonate voice lends a huge amount of gravitas to the production.

As this was long before e-mails or Facebook, Wayne wrote a letter to the actor who was in New York, starring in Peter Shaffer's Tony award winning play *Equus*. While he was in New York Burton spent a lot of time reading. In a fortuitous happenstance one of the books that he had just finished happened to be Wells` *War of the Worlds*.

A few days later Burton's manager called him. Burton loved the idea.

Unfortunately, from New York, Burton was scheduled to go to California to shoot *Exorcist II: The Heretic*. So Wayne did the only thing he could do. He took his dad and David Essex and flew out to California to record with him.

RICHARD BURTON

The Journalist

Few dramatic actors have ever achieved the level of international recognition afforded to Richard Burton. Most recently, he played Dr. Martin Dysart in Peter Shaffer's "Equus." His performance won him nightly standing ovations on Broadway and critical raves for his recreation of the role on film.

Born Richard Jenkins into a South Wales family of 13 children, Richard's career began at 16 when he read for a part in "The Druid's Rest" and made his professional debut in the play. It ran for seven months in London and toured for three months. Upon turning professional, he changed his name to Richard Burton, out of gratitude to and admiration for a high school teacher named Philip Burton, whom Richard calls a "second father" and who had an enormous effect on his career.

After a year at Oxford and a stint with the R.A.F., Burton began his acting career in earnest—a career that now includes nearly 40 feature films and innumerable plays.

Burton's film debut came in 1949 with "The

Richard Burton's voice that constitutes his most distinguishing characteristic. In its rich magnificence it is immediately identifiable; on several occasions Burton has lent his voice to poetic and historical readings, both live and on record. In his role of narrator/journalist, Richard Burton's commanding voice adds tremendous excitement to *The War Of The Worlds*.

JULIE COVINGTON

—JULIE COVINGTON—

Beth

Julie Covington's first album, "The Beautiful Changes," led to her starring role in *Godspell* and the hit single "Day By Day." The singer/actress then showed her flair for comedy in "The Rocky Horror Show," followed by several successful dramatic appearances culminating in the award-winning TV presentation, "Rock Follies." In 1976 she became a National Theatre Player, a great honor, and shortly afterwards played the lead on the LP "Evita" with her worldwide hit single, "Don't Cry For Me, Argentina."

In 1977, Julie's career peaked with her winning three major awards:

Britannia Award—Best New Female Singer

David's was not, however, an overnight success story. He cut a few singles and did some work on television, but it wasn't until 1971 when he landed the part of Jesus Christ in *Godspell* that his career began taking form. David's performance was acclaimed to be "the best in London" by Britain's top drama critic Harold Hobson.

David Essex's first starring role in movies came during the *Godspell* success with his portrayal of Jim Maclaine in *That'll Be The Day*. One of 1973's top-ten

DAVID ESSEX

box office successes, David's role in the film won him the Variety Club Of Great Britain's "Most Promising Newcomer Of The Year" award.

When filming on *That'll Be The Day* was completed, David collaborated with producer Jeff Wayne on the recording of his self-penned song, "Rock On." A contract with CBS Records followed and "Rock On" shot to number one in Britain and went silver. In America, "Rock On" repeated the number one position, went gold, (as did David's first album of the same title) and received a Grammy Award nomination. David has since collected a string

those vast audiences who have attended the Moody Blues Concerts will have forgotten the plaintive, soaring quality of his voice or the crystal clear guitar solos.

Justin was the vocalist, lead guitarist and composer

JUSTIN HAYWARD

for the Moody Blues during an era that spanned ten years and sold twenty mil-

PHILIP LYNOTT

lion copies of seven phenomenal albums. He wrote their two-million seller, "Knights In White Satin," and earned the group gold records for his compositions, "Question" and "Tuesday Afternoon." An unprecedented succession of platinum, gold and silver records, as well as numerous awards, followed.

In 1974, Justin received an A.S.C.A.P. award for his

ott has long been in the public eye as front man for the British band, Thin Lizzy. Vocalist, writer, and bass player, Philip formed the group in 1970 and has taken it through the paces to numerous hit recordings and international recognition. Thin Lizzy's *Nightlife* LP in 1974 and *Fighting* in 1975 gained entry for the band to U.S. charts. By 1976, with a cut from *Jailbreak* called "The Boys Are Back In Town," Thin Lizzy simultaneously had a top-ten hit single and album. During their U.S.

JO PARTRIDGE

tour in 1976, Thin Lizzy received rave critical acclaim and ended up as nominees for Don Kirshner's "Best New Group of '76" award.

On his return to England (and despite an illness which cut the group's U.S. tour short) Philip Lynott recorded a half-hour documentary for Irish Television entitled "A Man And His Music" on which, in addition to singing, he read a selection of poems from his book *Songs For While I'm Away*.

As Thin Lizzy's leader, Philip Lynott is often described as possessing that rare quality that only stars are made of. He speaks

the U.S. with such artists as Steely Dan, the Beach Boys and Elton John, and recording the album "I've Got The Music In Me." When the band split in 1975, he went on to tour and record with David Essex, and then Steve Harley's Cockney Rebel.

CHRIS THOMPSON

During 1977 Jo was kept busy working with Jeff Wayne on the completion of the *War Of The Worlds* album, in addition to intermittent work with Steve Harley's Cockney Rebel. In August, Jo was invited to the U.S. to work with Elton John's backup band, China, culminating in a U.K. tour and Elton's farewell concert at Wembley, London.

—CHRIS THOMPSON—

After a varied career in New Zealand, Chris moved to England in 1974. He toured extensively and did numerous sessions before joining Manfred Mann's Earth Band.

Since becoming a member of the band, Chris has sung on international hits such as "Blinded By The Light," which reached No. 1 in the U.S. and earned the band a gold record.

The Earth Band spent

JEFF WAYNE

York, he went to Forest Hills High School and then graduated from college in California with a journalism degree, which was highlighted by an all-college award for his interview with the late Martin Luther King Jr. During his high school and college years he held various jobs, ranging from the assembly line in a rubber mat factory to teaching tennis and playing tournaments. It was during this period that he began writing and arranging songs for numerous artists.

In 1966 Jeff returned to England and enrolled at the Trinity College of Music. Since then, he has played keyboards and been musical director of various bands, as well as composing, arranging and producing music for numerous commercials, records, a West End musical, and documentary and feature films. His productions of his long-time friend, David Essex, gained for Jeff much recognition within the recording industry, as well as the New Musical Express award for "Rock On" as the Best Produced Pop Single of 1974.

"The War Of The Worlds" is the first in a series of works by Jeff, and has taken since late 1973

Liner notes from the album booklet

David Essex would play the part of an artillaryman who had several scenes with the Journalist. They recorded their shared scenes together in the studio. Then Burton recorded his narration on his own.

Jeff and David had done a lot of work to try to get the words timed right to fit with the music. However, Burton insisted that there be no music playing while he recorded the narration. He insisted that the music would put him off. Nevertheless, Burton poured his heart and soul into the work, frequently requesting retakes when Jeff was perfectly happy with the first effort.

Recording The War

The studio booking that Wayne had made for May was still scheduled. Beginning on the morning of May 18th, 1976, recording of the main album began. Jeff was a perfectionist, though and some songs took as many as 18 takes and eight solid hours of recording to get to the point where he was satisfied.

As the project progressed, musicians came and went. Justin Hayward (of the Moody Blues) sang "Forever Autumn" and "The Eve of the War" which were to be released as singles.

The song "Forever Autumn" – with its hook "Because you're not here" – actually started out as a jingle for a Lego commercial. "As I was writing *War of the Worlds*, I

reached the bit where the Journalist discovers his fiancée is missing" wrote Wayne. "and it reminded me of "Forever Autumn". It was all about loss. Although I was trying to write an original work, I kept thinking the song was a perfect fit. I had my own little battle with myself, but I went for it. It's the only piece on the album that pre-existed."

Phil Lynott (front man of Thin Lizzy) stepped in to play the role of the Parson opposite Julie Covington as his wife and the previously recorded voice of Richard Burton.

This was all recorded in analog format. Digital music was in its infancy and wouldn't become a major force in music for many years. Synthesisers, however, had been in use for quite a while.

"I wanted to use synthesisers to create the "*ooll-la*" sound the Martians make before they blast people with their heat ray," Wayne wrote. "But things were pretty primitive back then, and we could only do the "oo" and "ahh" sounds, not the "l". So we ended up having someone voice the sound, then treated it electronically, making it as dramatic as possible."

Artists showed up to record their parts when they were available, but the recording session stretched on and the budget for the project began to increase. CBS records, which had originally agreed to bankroll the project, were getting nervous. In order to complete the project, Jeff Wayne had to put up much of the money himself. While he was recording he did not stop with his other work of producing radio jingles. He would often nod off at the studio controls while he was recording.

In the end, the album ended up costing £240,000, which was a huge sum for an album in 1977. Previously Queen's album *A Night At The Opera* was the most expensive album made at a comparatively modest £45,000. If *The War of the Worlds* failed to recoup its cost, then Wayne would certainly have had to give up his home to pay off his creditors.

Album Drop

Wayne's contract with CBS didn't have any guarantees of acceptance. The contract didn't even guarantee a release date. Wayne handed CBS the final recording and they had 30 days to decide if they were going to release it.

CBS in the US turned the album down. They felt that it wouldn't work for American audiences. CBS in the UK however, were more enthusiastic. They committed to a launch in July 1978.

The release of the album in Britain proved an enormous smash, going on to spend an unprecedented 235 weeks in the UK charts and selling over 13 million copies. That success helped change CBS in the US to reconsider. They released the album in America, where it was a big success.

One of the main arguments against the album was that it was all one continuous recording which made extracting singles difficult. Singles were still the main selling tools for US albums. Fortunately, Wayne had an alternative version of the album which isolated all the songs and reduced them down to the traditional three or four minute lengths so they could play on the radio which was how most music reached people in the US.

"Forever Autumn" was the first single. "The Eve of the War" the second. That started the ball rolling. Over time, though, "The Eve of the War" – with the line "*The chances of*

anything coming from Mars are a million to one" – had become by far the bigger song, because it had so many club mixes.

Impact Of The War

The album was released into stores and it became a best seller. Wayne's reputation was made, his house was saved and we were all bowled over by the music and the story.

The album consists of two disks, which correspond roughly to the two "books" of Wells' novel. Disc One tells of the coming of the Martions. It begins with Richard Burton in the character of the Journalist who notes that in the late 19th century few people had even considered the possible existence of extraterrestrial life, and yet, planet Earth had in fact long been enviously observed by advanced beings.

"No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century, that human affairs were being watched from the timeless worlds of space . No one could have dreamed

"The album was released into stores and it became a best seller. Wayne's reputation was made."

that we were being scrutinized, as someone with a microscope studies creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. Few men even considered the possibility of life on other planets. And yet, across the gulf of space, minds immeasurably superior to ours regarded this Earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely they drew their plans against us."

From there the album takes the listener on a lush and exciting journey through the events of Wells' novel. Voices tell the story accompanied by music. The voices break into songs that advance the story and the themes of the piece. "Forever Autumn" speaks of the Journalists' fiancée, Carrie and echoes themes of loss and sadness. David Essex plays an artillaryman whom the journalist encounters. Together they witness a Martian attack in the harbour. The Martian attack on the navy's iron ships at the docks is recounted in the song "Thunderchild" which tells of a heroic but ultimately doomed last stand against the Martian invaders.

Disc Two chronicles the fate of the Earth under the Martians. The wandering Journalist discovers that red weed—the vegetation that gives Mars its colour—has taken root on Earth and spread rapidly across the landscape. The haunting theme of the red weed is chilling and unearthly. The journalist encounters a Parson, Nathaniel, who has been driven mad by the Martian Invasion. Phil Lynot and Julie Covington as his wife, sing a show stopping duet called "The Spirit of Man" which has drama and power and conveys the themes of the desperation of humanity in the face of its own destruction.

David Essex again plays the artillaryman whom Burton's journalist encounters again and Essex sings a rousiong number called "Brave New World" which presents a vision of utopia that can be built underground, away from the danger of the Martian invaders. Despite

the song's upbeat tone, the artillaryman's plans are revealed to be just an unobtainable fantasy.

As in Wells' novel, the Martian invaders eventually succumb, not through any human resistance, but rather due to a lack of it on the part of the Martians. The Journalist reports that the Martians were defeated by Earth's bacteria. As humanity recovers from the invasion, the Journalist is reunited with his fiancée, Carrie. But, he says, the question remains: is Earth now safe, or are the Martians learning from their failures and preparing a second invasion?

In a second epilogue set in the near future (and probably the most universally reviled piece on the album) a NASA mission to Mars flounders when the control centre loses contact with the craft. The controller sees a green flare erupt from Mars's surface.

Jeff Wayne's muscal version of the War of the Worlds is probably the pinnacle of the vinyl album listening experience. Prog rock took advantage of the longer medium of the vinyl album. This recording uses every aspect of the vinyl album medium -- the double album sleeve, the enclosed booklet with its lavish illustrations and liner notes, even the discs themselves – are part of the experience of listening to the album.

At the risk of sounding like a vinyl album romanticist, the experience of listening to a vinyl album was probably the most immersive experience one could have. The whole experience of putting on an album from sliding the disc out of the sleeve, to placing it carefully on a turntable, even turning the disc over once one side had played, is immersive and participatory. It is visual and tactile. The smell of the sleeve and the disc itself, the feeling of it as one carefully places the record needle into the groove. It was an experience and this album was one of the last to harness that experience in such a complete way.

The album was also released on casette tape. Very few of those likely survive intact. The wear and tear of playing the magnetic tape eventually diminishes the recording.

Singles were released, as was a single disc highlight version. Two Spanish versions of the album were released in 1978, one featuring Anthony Quinn in the role of the journalist. Since then several re-mixes have become available on CD. In 2005, the original album was re-released in two formats: a remastered 2-disc Super Audio CD and a 7-disc "Collector's Edition" featuring additional remixes, outtakes as well as a seventh disc, a DVD showing the making of the album.

Several live stageplay versions has made world tours. A video game version was released as well as a remake of the album featuring Liam Neeson in the role of the Journalist. You can buy the new version or the original version on CD or digital download. You can even catch some tracks on YouTube.

For as fantastic as these formats sound, and indeed, the quality of the sound is infinitely better with the newer digital releases than the vinyl, the whole experience is diminished with every new format. The project was designed specifically for the medium of vinyl and the medium informed and enhanced the experience. The medium is the message, as Marshal McLuhan observed and so it was with this project. Packaging and recording worked hand-in-hand to provide the experience of the album.

An experience that for the most part, has been lost in time.

▲

Fantastic, November, 1952. Barye W. Phillips, artist

THE VEILED WOMAN or Let Me Spillane it to Yah!

by G. W. Thomas

Best known for hard-boiled novels Mickey Spillane writes a fantastic mystery - or does he?

In a previous article I talked about how Robert Leslie Bellem had attempted to blend Science Fiction with a murder mystery before Isaac Asimov. In a different article I talked about how Mickey Spillane had written stories for the comics, some of them even Science Fiction. I guess it should be no surprise then that Spillane and Asimov should come up again. There were a number of writers who had tried to blend the two genres including Robert Bloch and Frank Belknap Long. That Mickey Spillane was another shouldn't be such a surprise, I suppose.

"The Veiled Woman" by Mickey Spillane appeared in *Fantastic* #3 (November-

December 1952). Like Bellem's attempt for *Fantastic Adventures*, the editor seems to have been involved in Sci-Fying things up an otherwise ordinary Mystery tale. This time it is Howard Browne, not Ray Palmer. Browne would edit the magazine until October 1956. Browne himself was no stranger to Mystery fiction, having written four novels about the Philip Marlowe-esque Paul Pine under the pseudonym, John Evans, including *Halo in Blood* (1946), *Halo For Satan* (1948), *Halo in Brass* (1949) and *The Taste of Ashes* (1957) as well as the non-Pine novel *Murder Wears a Halo* (1944). Browne would eventually go on to write 125 scripts for television.

Spillane's reputation as a maverick could be a problem for any magazine with something to lose. This intro tells it like it is: "No modern-day writer is more widely cussed and discussed than Mickey Spillane. Critics regard him as most of us regard the atom bomb, leading magazines dissect him with unloving care. Why? Because the Spillane emphasis is on sex and sadism, his milieu the boudoir and the underworld, his men ruthless, his women svelte, passionate and immoral. That's why everyone hates Spillane -- except his millions of readers and his banker! The editors of Fantastic take pride in presenting the first science-fiction story by Mr. Spillane."

That last bit is a lie, of course. Spillane wrote "The Man in the Moon" back in 1942 as well as other short two-pagers for the comics. I guess they don't count. And about that pride -- hm -- no cover mention. Yah, lots of pride. The only Mystery name to be blazoned on the cover is "Cornell Woolrich" who appeared in the same issue with "The Moon of Montezuma". This tale is more of a suspense piece set in modern Mexico, but haunted by the ancient past. Woolrich had no interest in becoming Isaac Asimov though he did write a couple of *Weird Tales* style stories such as "The Kiss of the Cobra" and "Dark Melody of Madness" for *Dime Detective Magazine*.

"The Veiled Lady" begins with Karl Terris waking from sleep because his wife has heard a burglar downstairs. You know these aren't ordinary folk when Spillane mentions the wife's name is Lodi and she grew up in the jungle. Naked, armed with a pistol, Karl goes downstairs to find a man trying to crack his safe. Terris has no compulsion about blowing the top of his head off. After the shot, he finds himslef surrounded by enemies, Russian spies who want the strange device he brought from Africa. Their leader is a beautiful blonde. Terris says there is no device but the spies knock him out and run off with his wife as hostage.

Terris is a rich businessman and he puts his staff to work searching for clues, unravelling the identity of the blond. Karl figures out she is Ann Fullerton, a woman supposedly killed in a warehouse fire. The Feds also want Terris's device and try to hold him. He won't be held and goes off in search of Lodi. No one will listen to Terris, that there is no device, but Spillane hints once or twice that Lodi always wears a veil. The secret lies there.

Clues take Terris to an importing business where he has a rough time with two thugs, the leader, Luke Ritter, and the fragile Communist, Nekko. After taking these men out, Terris has a clue that leads him to the old radio warehouse that had been burnt in a fire, the place where Ann Fullerton supposedly died. There Karl rescues Lodi with more shooting but gets picked up by the Feds as they leave.

We cut to an inquest where hostile government agents question the couple. Lodi begs

The Girl Hunters (1963) Mickey Spillane with Shirley Eaton

Karl to tell the truth. Terris tells how he had been in Africa doing an aerial survey when his plane crashed. He was found by a scout of a mysterious race that live in an underground city. The under-dwellers save Karl and he meets Lodi. They fall in love but Karl wants to return to civilization. Lodi's people rejuvenate themselves with cosmic radiation. The residue of this process had lead others to believe Karl had a cosmic energy machine. Karl then reveals that the under-dwellers are actually Martians who came to the Earth while humans were still primitives. He proves this by having Lodi take off her veil. Her green skin is all the proof they need.

After the Feds and the reporters are finished with them, Karl and Lodi return to their home. They are held at gun point by Sergei Porkov, the leader of the Russians, and the blond woman, Ann Fullerton. Sergei pumps them for information before cruelly shooting Lodi three times in the chest. Ann kills Porkov, then admits to Karl she is madly in love with him, has been ever since she saw him naked in the livingroom. Karl sleeps with her. When she gets out of the shower, he puts two slugs in her and watches her dies just like Mike Hammer does at the end of *I, the Jury*.

My reaction to "The Veiled Lady" is probably close to what readers of *Fantastic* might have been. This mixture of Noir and SF is a strange hybrid, best not repeated. And it wasn't. But questions remain. How much did Spillane write and how much Browne? While I read it I thought I noticed a difference of style when Karl Terris tells of the under-dwellers in Africa. I thought to myself, "Ah, here's Browne!" But as it turns out I was wrong.

Max Allan Collins, who worked with Mickey and his estate after Spillane's death, clears

The Veiled Woman, Fantastic, November - December 1952. Artist unknown

up the mystery in an online comment that says: The only other instance of ghost-writing in Spillane's case was one done by Howard Browne –"The Veiled Woman." Browne was editing *Fantastic*, where the story had been announced with much ballyhoo…then Mickey missed the deadline. Browne wrote the story as a Spillane pastiche essentially overnight, to get it to the printer. Mickey was furious, but understood he had put Browne in an untenable position, and decided not to sue. I got this from both Browne and Mickey.

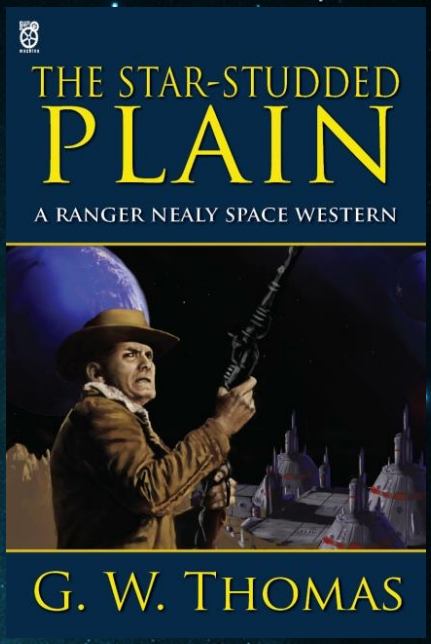
So it turns out Spillane only contributed the title, maybe a plot outline, and the style. Browne wrote the whole thing in what one online commentator called "almost a parody of Spillane's excesses". Did Howard Browne out-Spillane the master? You'll have to decide for yourself. You can read the story online at: https://nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/sffaudio-usa/usa-pdfs/TheVeiledWomanByMickeySpillane.pdf

Experience the Sense of wonder

Debt's Pledge

by Jack Mackenzie

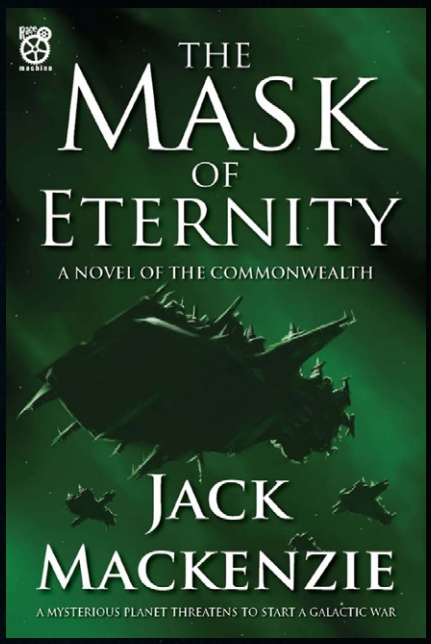
He was a soldier without a war, alone and unwanted, until he discovered an alien enemy... Stationed on a remote outpost, in charge of a platoon of hard cases and disciplinary problems Jefferson Odett is all that stands between a colony and an alien army of unspeakable power who will kill anything that gets in their way. Action-packed Science Fiction adventure!



The Star-Studded Plain

by G. W. Thomas

Three helpings of Space adventure on the planet Utukku, where the fine sands and constant winds making tracking impossible. Follow Ranger Neely as he chases bad guys and deals with the savage trogs with laser pistol in hand and his trusty crookback at his side. Science Fiction with a frontier flavor!



The Mask of Eternity

by Jack Mackenzie

Solis DeLacey, captain of the ACSC Boston, has been sent to a world rich in natural resources. But one ship and her crew has already gone missing while surveying the planet and the finger of suspicion is pointing to the Orion Hegemony, the ACSC`s sworn enemy. Now DeLacey must discover its secret and defeat her enemies before the galaxy is plunged into total war...

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Concept art entitled: Winter. Digitally painted for a personal project. Jason Horley

WINTER IS COMING

by M. D. Jackson

Depictions of Winter in Science Fiction and Fantasy are usually more symbolic than climate related

If you're a reader of Fantasy, particularly of George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones* (or you just watch the series on HBO), you've heard that phrase, usually said in long, Yorkshire tones by actors like Sean Bean and infused with much dread and despair. Winter is only one of four seasons but it can also be a feeling, a state of being.

There are a lot of fantasy and Science Fiction works set in winter environments. There are works where the winter is not just a climactic condition but an overall feeling or mood. Winter is much more than just the presence of snow and ice.

In some places, mostly in the south, winter is not a big deal. But in the north it's different. And if you live in the Great White North (a.k.a. Canada) as I do, then winter is more than just a season, it is a state of mind. Canadians identify with winter. Indeed, in some parts of our country, winter defines who we are as a people. In the province of Quebec, for instance, there is a song called *Mon Pays*, which was composed by Gilles Vigneault in 1964. The song became kind of an anthem for Quebec and for Canadians as

a whole to some extent. "*Mon pays ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver*" the lyrics say. "My country is not a country, it is winter."

In Fantasy and Science Fiction, winter is never usually just a setting. If there is winter it is usually symbolic. In George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Fire and Ice* series, winter, the season that always seems to be coming, represents a return of the fearsome supernatural creatures that once held sway in Westeros. They were defeated and held back by the wall, a huge barrier made of ice. The people of the north make a philosophy of being prepared, of guarding against their return. Indeed, in the land of Westeros, winter, when it comes, can last for hundreds of years. Winter in Martin's books is not merely a characteristic of the north. It threatens to claim the entire world.

Again, Martin's winter is not merely climatic. Winter in Westeros means a return to the dark age of superstition and terror and an end to a world built by reason and prosperity.

Another world where winter holds constant sway is Gethen, or Winter, as it is called by the citizens of the Ekumen in Ursula K. Le Guin's novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Gethen is a planet where it is constantly winter, but that's not merely a quirk of setting. The constant winter is symbolic of the state of the planet's inhabitants. Neither male nor female, Gethenians live in a state of asexuality, only adopting sexual difference during brief periods called kemmer. The climate of Gethen mirrors the sterile nature of the planet's inhabitants and society.

Le Guin doesn't just use winter as an interesting backdrop against which her novel's narrative can play out. The nature of Gethen's climate serves an important metaphorical purpose to the story.

Sometimes, though, an icy background is merely that—background. In the second *Star Wars* movie, *The Empire Strikes Back*, the ice planet of Hoth serves as a background for the rebels' battle against the Imperial armada. I suppose one could stretch the setting of Hoth to represent the frozen hopes of the rebellion against the might of the evil empire, but, as I said, it's a bit of a stretch. This is only *Star Wars*. One can't expect sophisticated metaphors.

The winter setting is visually stunning, however, particularly in regards to the planet's animal life. The tauntaun on which the rebels ride while patrolling, for instance, is an interesting creature. They are sort of a cross between a mountain goat and a kangaroo and seem relatively easy to domesticate for the rebels' purposes. Then, of course, there is the wampa, a huge, shaggy, deadly creature who captures Luke Skywalker and puts him on ice (pardon the pun) in preparation for eating him (we can only assume).

The wampa is kind of like another creature from the frozen north—the yeti.

The yeti are ape-like creatures that live in the frozen mountains. I have used the yeti in my own artwork. This image was featured on the cover of Issue 1 of *The Dreamquest Magazine*.

Or perhaps it is just a typical day in the Great White North? Naked yeti fighting is a popular Canadian activity. I am confident that it will soon be an official event at the Winter Olympics.

Winter as a setting for Science Fiction and Fantasy is usually more than just backdrop. It usually serves a greater thematic purpose. Winter can represent sterility, bleakness,


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2009

death, or worse. In real life there is some danger in the wintertime, but when you live in the northern part of the world, you adapt. You bundle up. You buy snow tires. You light a fire and sit back with a cup of hot cocoa and wait for it to be spring again.

Winter is coming. But it won't last forever.

How do we know when it's cold?

We feel it. We feel the cold on our skin, in our ears, in our lungs. But how can one see the cold? With your eyes alone you cannot tell how cold it is. Sometimes there isn't enough visual information to even let us know that it is cold. You can get clues, of course. When you exhale, can you see your breath? Can you see frost on outside surfaces? Is there ice on the water? Is there snow on the ground?

Okay, that last clue is pretty obvious, but the point is that there are ways that an artist can depict the cold that range from the subtle to the blatantly obvious.

But is that all you need? Visual cues? Not necessarily.

Howard Pyle was an American illustrator and author. He is most famous for his illustrations of the King Arthur legends well as for illustrating his own book *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, among others. He also founded his own school of art and illustration called the Brandywine school.

One frosty autumn day, Howard Pyle brought his illustration students outdoors to find some wild hickory nuts. After they had gathered up the fallen harvest from alongside the banks of a millstream, they noticed many more nuts resting on the stream bottom. "Well boys, there is only one way to get them," one of his students, Frank Schoonover, recalled him saying. Pyle removed his shoes and stockings and rolled up the sleeves of his sweater. He waded into the icy water, plunging his arms down to the stream bed to gather the remainder. Pyle did not allow the moment to pass without a lesson. "The poor soldiers at Valley Forge felt the cold, just as we feel the cold now," he said. "The ragged lot that marched against the Hessians at Trenton felt the icy water and the numbing cold and I don't believe it's possible to paint a picture of that sort within the four walls of your studio unless you feel the cold even as they did."

So there's more to depicting the cold than just painting snow on the ground and coloring skin blue. You have to know how it feels.

Let's take a look and see how Fantasy artists manage to depict the cold.

Frank Frazetta

Here's one you may have seen before. It's Frank Frazetta's illustration for Robert E. Howard's Conan story "The Frost Giant's Daughter". Here is snow and ice depicted, as expected, in hues of light blue and purple. White, of course, the white value of the blue… but notice the contrasts that he introduces against the blue of the snow: The fiery orange of the frost giant's hair, the orange and brown earth tones in their clothing, the warm colors of the skin of the giants and of Conan himself. Also the small but strong splash of deep red on the point of Conan's sword. Look below the figures to the left, the last place the eye goes to when assessing the image… Here the purple gives way to an angry red color.


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Keith Parkinson

Take a look at Keith Parkinson's painting of a man riding a dragon. Here the whites and blues surround a small island of greens and reds and browns, as if dragon and rider are the only life in the picture, contained within a small space, surrounded by the icy waste.

That there is wind is only indicated by the unfurled banner at the end of the warrior's staff and the fur trim of his helmet moved by what we can only assume is a chilly breeze. The dragon even seems to be snapping back at the biting cold. Note also the ruddy tones of the rocks in the distance suggesting the still warm earth that lies beneath.

Maciej Kuciara

Here's one by Maciej Kuciara. A woman stands in the snow holding two katanas. The color palette at first seems limited to white and black with the contrast being the woman's exposed skin which is given a subtle purple undertone to give it a feeling of reacting to the cold. It's enough to make you shiver involuntarily. But look again. Underneath the snowy white background is a rusty red color. Mud, perhaps? But look up near the top of the image, where the dark, dense woods are. There it is again. It suggests a fire in the distance, perhaps as if the woods are on fire. There is the contrast that gives extra emphasis to the cold and chilly parts of the image.


A. JONES

Jeffrey Catherine Jones

Here again is that warm orange skin tone contrasted with a dark and snowy surrounding. Jeff Jones' masterful painting from 1971 gives us a dense and compact area of warm tones surrounded by the white and blue of the ice. The contrast is pushed even further by the dense tree trunk behind the figure. It is a black mass with cold fingers branching off (literally) into the dark blue of the night sky. Down below, the figure casts long blue shadows and her feet literally disappear into the white of the snow making us wince in sympathetic pain and wondering how many toes this poor woman will lose to frostbite before the night is through.

Here is a detail from the piece at the beginning of this article. It's by digital artist Jason Horley. Here the overwhelming color is blue white and black with the magical blue light from her staff looking almost like an electric light, casting deep shadows and turning her red robe a dark, muted burgundy. The flying bats provide splashes of black against the pale blue. But look to the background. Behind the trees is a warm orange glow. Is it fire? Is it the warm glow of a dwelling? Who knows? But it intrigues. It suggests the there is something more behind the mere snow and ice. Maybe it's a way out?

When you are trying to get across the feeling of cold it is important to remember to give the viewer a contrast, a suggestion of the warmth that is lacking from the cold and snowy climate. Blues and purples and blacks alone will not do. An artist has to give the viewer a glimmer of the warmth that is missing from the scene. It is as if by showing just a bit of what is missing from the cold image, he or she makes the places where it is not: the snow, the ice, the cold blue of the sky, the bare black tree limbs, feel all the more cold in comparison.

Try to stay warm, my friends!

▲

Snow Queen, a.k.a., Winter and Snow Woman (c. 1971)