

Outbreak of Heresy 86

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Deadline for next issue: **May 1st**

Still don't have **WAITING LISTS** as such, but all are welcome in any potentially-all-reader exercise (currently "**Narrow Way**"). Footie Management fans, see Tony Ross' playtest **back page**, this will be run independently of *OoH* but I'm happy to give it updates as per my own playtests and so an *OoH*/Floyd moniker: "**Pigs on the Wing**" (ho ho).

NK: Once again, hope you're all as well as you can be in the circumstances. Which, it would appear, have been improving within the UK and a few other places. But I did receive the sobering news that my earliest childhood friend David Perry (as distinct from *OoH*'s Dave Berry), with whom I'd regrettably lost all contact over recent years, had recently succumbed to Covid-19. Something to bear in mind next time I see a bus-stop sticker from the nutbars who believe that it's all a Conspiracy aimed at curtailing our liberties, etc.

My only doubt about Covid, early last year, was momentarily wondering if it was another Cry Wolf scenario – quickly dispelled, for (as said back then) being both SF&F and history buff I've long been well aware that this kind of thing not only could happen *but had happened before* (and worse), a bare century ago. Not that that would have been of any consolation to David, also an SF&F buff. Which is how I'd like to recall him, he had an even wider enthusiasm for these things, often communicating such to this Doubting Nicholas when I struggled with certain aspects of the genre, for example it was he who led me to appreciate the rough-hewn virtues of Howard/Burroughs. Which we'll get to later, along the lines of another old mate:

***W Marcus Arnold:** I cannot really remember Dave Perry that well, but he sadly is the first person I know or have known to have died from Covid. With the death of people known I feel if part of the past has lost its reality, become almost impersonal History. I have an image not of Dave P but another David who literally fainted at the sight of blood.*

NK: Definitely not Dave P then, a tough cookie, as he had to be given the risible racialism he occasionally endured (never amongst our crowd I'm happy to report).

***Marcus:** But there must have been a university vacation circa 1978-9: you, me and Dave drinking in the Virgin & Castle at Kenilworth. It was the first time I think I had seen him since school and the last.*

NK: This time almost certainly our Dave not the other one. He kept disappearing, often to London I think, then turning up in Coventry again, but last time I saw him was maybe fifteen, twenty years ago? And so now I wish I'd kept better tabs (I was and still am in a communications hobby for land's sake). I know that you and I have only relatively recently reconnected, thank the Cosmos for that; but it just goes to show how easy it is to lose touch when not doing so... might have mattered. // Actually I've felt a bit this way ever since the stroke and recovery thereof, providing much of the rationale for reviving *Outbreak of Heresy* as a 'public' zine in the first place. (This as opposed to a very limited private thing going to a few hardy souls long accustomed to me.) So here I more than welcome every old friend – and every new one, naturally.

***Colin Day:** Now had my first Covid jab. As for that whippersnapper Karen...*

***Karen Day:** Now had mine! So catching up with all you, er, sexagenarians. ((Can't possibly comment.))*

***Marcus:** I too, age commensurate with thee, have been Pfizered Mark One. I think Coventry is rather efficient. Rumour has it the centre at the Cricket Club had to slow down as they were getting too far ahead.*

NK: This last doesn't sound that likely. But certainly Cov seems to have been ahead of most of the game (my father's just had his second jab, etc).

still NK: Not to get too optimistic (amid these very mixed feelings anyway): in any case I'm one who holds that we can never quite go back to what once passed as 'normal' (and arguably shouldn't try). But there's scope for some cheer:

Marcus ((citing putative date for the easing of restrictions on outdoor activities)): *That may well be when I venture to regions beyond Warwickshire again if the trains still run as required. It only takes half an hour to Banbury, was one train a hour. As you leave the train station you hit the Oxford Canal which closely follows the course of the River Cherwell. Banbury itself is worth a visit with its buildings of honey-coloured Hornton stone and many public houses. Around and about many of the village churches have 16th Century tombstones carved with skulls and cherubim, fragments of medieval wall painting. The Civil War is all around you and a challenging walk to Edgehill site of the battle is worthwhile just for a pint of Hook Norton at The Castle, Saunderson Miller's folly perched on the Edge with a most amazing view from the garden. Dam it I want to go there again, torturing myself remembering the sun beating down on my head as a pint of Hookie slips down my throat...*

NK: Lorraine and I have stayed overnight (two nights in fact) at the Inn and can vouch for the views and the excellence of the Hookie, just hope it's all survived the pandemic. We did part of the Banbury walk the other way, having cheated by coming by car in the first place (even back then really strenuous hiking was getting beyond us). And dammit I want to go there again too.

Colin Evans: *Signs at Farmers' Market in Gloucester.*

Keep a Cow's Length Apart.

Keep your Muzzle on.

Don't Herd Together.

Keep Mooving.

NK: Very cud-dly sentiments. There have been quite a few local initiatives like Covid-precautioned Farmers' Markets. In one of Coventry's satellite villages the local pub threw open its grounds to an open-air Fruit & Veg market, which has worked well judging from what Lorraine's been able to bring back for the table (out-of-season strawberries definitely apart, another addition to the compost heap). I'd go shop there myself, fairly easy walk for me, except I'm back full-time at my Covid-precautioned Work!

Steve Borndale: *Last email you mentioned that you were back working full time again, I suppose I should be pleased for you but are you pleased for you? ((Could have done with working just four weekdays rather than all five, to be honest.)) Anyhow, nice to have the option! Me, even with the easing it'll mostly be back to the dread TV again. Been watching The Terror? Thought this one would have been right up your street.*

NK: On Lorraine's TV, yes we have, indeed it was she who drew it to my attention with exactly your words. Polar-region(-ish), genuine historical enigma (mid 19th Century disappearance or demise of the entire Franklin NorthWest Passage expedition) mixed with rationalized fantasy of a rather grim kind, with good acting and great direction (Ridley Scott). Dramatization based on some novel I think. Apparently it's a few years old now but, bearing in mind my usual obsession with Frozen Region things, I'd not previously come across it at all. (May have been first showing on British TV?)

The fantasy framework aside, sort-of rationalized as this was, actual historical detail in the dramatization (and so presumably the book) was fairly accurate so far as I can tell. This ranges from the lead poisoning from the food-tin solder (as deduced from later analysis) to the very attitude in which the frozen corpse of the expedition's first victim was (much later) uncovered – a genuinely eerie touch for anyone familiar with the image, as I happened to be.

One worth while getting on DVD, perhaps?

Marcus: *Steve B... re watching DVDs ((during Lockdown)). Tis amazing how many one decides one doesn't want to re-watch...*

NK: There are probably limits as to how many times one can re-watch even something like *Big Bang*.

Colin E: The Big Bang Theory: *Mayim Bialik, who played the neuroscientist Amy, holds a Ph.D in neuroscience, the only doctor in the series to really be a doctor. Prior to her joining the cast, in the episode The Bat Jar Conjecture, Raj suggests recruiting the real-life Bialik to their Physics Bowl team, saying "You know who's apparently very smart is the girl who played TV's Blossom. She got a Ph.D. in neuroscience or something." She is due to star in a TV series, Call Me Kat, which is based on UK's Miranda.*

NK: Must see – I loved Bialik's portrayal of Amy, as said before possibly my favourite *Big Bang* character. (I hadn't previously picked up on the Blossom connection, incidentally.) Even so, limits, limits, limits. Including for this Radio/TV/literary icon:

Marcus: *Colin E... there is only one HitchHikers Guide to the Galaxy (HHGG): the original radio series. All the subsequent forms of HHGG just get worse and worse. Douglas Adams, dare I say it, was perhaps a one-trick pony.*

NK: I myself am very much of the view that the original (& hilarious) radio series is the definitive *HHGG*. I understand that being partly co-written by John Lloyd was the immediate cause of it being varied and juggled with material from the (also pretty good) second radio series for the purpose of other media – notably the first two novel versions. But I think Adams' real difficulty was that what worked wonderfully for radio (in mind pictures) didn't translate so well to visual media (TV, stage and later film) or even the written word – a relative disappointment sometimes hard to convey to people who never got to hear the original at the time, or who have no patience with the radio medium, or who only know Adams' work through the written word anyway. And the later volumes not based on the radio series (instead later radio series were posthumously based on them) show the problem in reverse. Because the books themselves pursue the slightly awkward line established through the original adaptation, radio-to-written-narrative, much of the humour (when present at all) seems forced and often doesn't come over at all in pure audio...

...Sorry, Adams family! Though lest anyone get the wrong impression, it remains my view that DA gave us some of the great enduring wry references of Science Fiction, from the suspiciously convenient Babel Fish (see Colin's next-but-one para on this) through the universal usefulness of Towels to iconic number 42 itself.

Colin E: *StarTrek's The Chase* Yes the storyline is very implausible. Even if life on all these planets had the same origin (seed) they have clearly evolved (on Earth at least) to the point they cannot interbreed – my dog and daisy example. (nb I have a card from the ST CCG autographed by the actress who is portrayed as her character in this episode, the Cardassian Gul Ocett. This was Linda Thorson of The Avengers fame.)

NK: And so from convenience of material form (in on-screen SF) to convenience of the linguistic one...

Colin E: *A universal language is a common problem in TV and film. This is inevitable due to the time constraints – learning the language would become tedious if depicted in every film and TV episode where it should be necessary! This learning is depicted in the Star Gate film and, I think, in the first episode or two, but is soon dropped. Ingenious, if implausible, methods have been devised to get around the language barrier, or in fact to avoid depicting learning the language. Hitchhikers' Babel Fish, the Tardis in Dr Who etc. Translation machines, a more plausible device, are also used but wouldn't immediately work when meeting others for the first time.*

NK: Babel Fish being of course Adams' very knowing acknowledgement of, and wink towards, the said problem (with a joke about the existence or otherwise of God thrown in for good measure). Natch, where a scriptwriter or more often original author (Tolkien being foremost example but then Language was his job) has gone to the trouble of constructing or reconstructing other-species' tongues, a director can get away with this for considerable stretches of TV/film via subtitles (more often for dramatic or even comic effect than for authenticity). Alternatively, when characters of the same species are conversing amongst themselves we mentally assume they're using their own language but that it's being translated for the audience's benefit.

I don't think we need get too hung up on this, though. Especially when the TV/film dramatization happens to be a fantasy or science fantasy (uh-oh, here we go again).

Steve Jones: *Many thanks for OoH85 – a good read... ((but))*

...not sure what you mean by the Universe being “conditionally” deterministic. On small scales, the Universe is governed by quantum effects which are inherently random. Where a system is deterministic (on large scales) it also has a tendency to be chaotic, and by this I mean mathematical chaos – extreme sensitivity to initial conditions, and popularly known as the Butterfly Effect.

NK: As good an explanation of “conditional determinism” as I could come up with! With this corollary: absolute determinism is therefore an impossible condition, indeed a fantasy and a useless fantasy at that. Less uselessly we have our often entertaining tales with variations on the Time Travel / Alternative History theme (but they're still fantasy).

Colin Day: *ColinE: “Maybe one ‘sees’ the Multiverse.” NickK: “I... don’t know how to respond to that”. Not often you’re stuck for words, Nick! Or were you trying to sidestep another circular argument with Colin on Fantasy in Science Fiction?*

NK: Curses, rumbled.

Colin D: *I think what Colin was getting at was a science-fictional rationalisation of supposed phenomena like seeing into the future, seeing the most likely futures etc. After all isn't that exactly the SF justification behind Dune? Which I'm sure you regard as more SF than Fantasy?*

NK: Yes yes yes. Perhaps. Aside from the fact that it's another scenario with ‘instant’ interstellar travel! But you'll not catch me in an inconsistency. I concede the point, yet observe that the *Dune* series nowhere makes the mistake (as does the *Interstellar* film, or Anne McCaffrey in *Dragonflight* or Asimov himself in tacking on *The End of Eternity* to his Future History) in incorporating actual Time Travel whether physical or merely communicational, and thus its devastating implications for cause-and-effect. [Correct, John(R), Steve(B) ?] In fact, communicational Time Travel remains the weakest (though happily ignorable) feature of the otherwise SF classic *Last and First Men*. (Here resist the temptation to tackle me on Stapledon's pendant novel *Last Men in London*, which remains interesting as social observation but is nowadays rather implausible as a science fictional concept.) // Sorry, got a bit sidetracked there. As for what your namesake was getting at, I think you must be correct, as evidenced by side-comments like:

Colin E: *An interesting character in the ‘Andromeda’ TV series is Trance Gemini who can see all (?) possible futures (in an otherwise mostly mediocre series).*

NK: Once again I'm put in mind of that Moorcock tale where the Time visionary sees nothing in the Past (for it has annihilated itself) but is sent insane by seeing every possible Future. And so from alternative timelines to alternative worlds:

Colin E: *His Dark Materials etc. Marcus compared The Golden Compass etc with LOTR, especially in that it is less plausible. Perhaps this is a problem with chosen background. I think we can accept, and think we understand, Middle Earth for example (and maybe Gormenghast) as a stock Medieval world ((maybe medievally-descended in the case of Gormenghast, see on for Middle Earth)) with additional details added. A background is already there, or at least assumed and thought to be understood. However, the world of His Dark Materials is clearly different to that and to our own world, so more details of the background need to be described – apparently not convincingly. [I am not arguing that His Dark Materials are good books, I found the TV series ok at best.]*

NK: Fair point as far as *HDM* goes but I think there's more to it than that. *TLotR* comes over as more plausible (not only than *HDM* but practically every modern fantasy) because it isn't usually perceived as a stock medieval world but rather as our world, just of a supposedly forgotten past. This is not something that Tolkien's successors can get away with, usually. So they instead resort to parallel Earths, unexplained “Fantasylands” or outright fantastications (i.e of otherwise real places ranging from nearby out-islands to the planet Mars). In Pullman's case he chose a parallel Earth, made the more explicit by its links to our real Earth. Possible problem here, for some, is that the links are so close that the differences want explaining.

still NK: Now you may recall I was having difficulty recognizing where (or even if) our Marcus was being approving or disapproving of certain styles of Science Fiction/Fantasy, particularly from the “Golden Age”. Turns out it’s both at the same time as he, with fair accuracy, nails the cultural imperatives behind much SF:

Marcus: *Dearly beloved I say unto you SPACE the Final Frontier. No more fur trapping in Canada, stealing moonstones in India, searching for Eldorado in South America. Africa no longer hides She who must be obeyed and the Sauce of the Nile is blander than HP’s. Fu Manchu became Mao while men who would be Kings are not wise to travel in Afghanistan. Thibet is part of the Mandarin Cultural neo-imperial, communist in name but bogey-man country. The World was NOT ENOUGH, we needed new fields of adventure for Brits to play play up the game and Yankees to export Uncle Sam’s apple pie. Dan Dared to oppose RAF like the Mekon, Ming the Merciless was held back by Flash Gordon (both Biggles but in Space). Where could adventure go with France still sinking under the weight of First World War dead? War was not so glorious on Earth and the Great Depression of the 30s called for cheering up...*

Was there ever much actual Science in the science fiction of the “Golden Age”? No. Was there adventure? Yes. Aliens not Injuns, Space War not trench warfare. Ford’s Model T made by human robots on a production line, each car industrially drear, but not out in Space where men (never women) could still be Danny Boone, discover the forbidden Treasure Planet, be again Mowgli but adopted by alien Baloos (was The Jungle Book specist or Just So appropriated). Grey Green Greasy Limpopo canals of Mars called out for Lensmen to bring Law to the Wild West of Space...

NK: I’ll just interrupt briefly to note that the romantic if entirely fictitious canals are (even more briefly) referenced when we come to the “Narrow Way” guess-who/what/where-it-is game. You were saying:

Marcus: *...so, SPACE FICTION where White Men’s sexual urges could be sublimated with phallic spaceships and Dejah Thoris in skimpy leather harness. Lost Horizons had been rediscovered, out there Aliens not Angels inhabit the aether. ((CS Lewis partially excepted.)) Green-bloodied Slime Things of Arcturus vs Red-bloodied WASPs...*

NK: Going to interrupt again to remark that this puts me in mind of one of William Whyte’s best ever covers for NERTZ: [ON THE PLANET CYGNUS CLICHÉ a lone survivor is found by Space Marines: “You’re safe now, girlie... someone give the kid a rifle.”](#) (I paraphrase, but only very slightly.)

Marcus: *...the Horror, the Thrill, the Escape. And perhaps while you bought a two-dime copy of Amazing Weird Space Stories from a stereotypical drugstore rack next to a soda fountain, Gramps behind the counter in a pinstripe apron might wink and ask if you wanted a copy of Pin Ups from under the counter.*

NK: And what a let-down that would have been, not a patch on the mind’s eye conception of the conveniently oviparous Dejah Thoris.

Marcus: *The past is Fiction, the future is SCIENCE. How many vaccines to defeat a virus and how quick. A cure for cancer, anyone. Medicine, the new Final Frontier.*

NK: Well, precisely. And I know you’re over-stating for effect but... your doubts notwithstanding, there has always been a fair amount of ‘real’ science-of-the-day in much science fiction. To which you now refer, the thrills of the above more fantastic forms of SF also notwithstanding. (Perhaps too with reference to Dane and others when certain tales get, ah, *too detailed.*) (And we’re getting to Dane.)

Marcus: *Clarkian hard science fiction etc when that gives details of astrophysics, orbits, chemistry and so forth...I don’t read it and get on with the story. Too much “science” in science fiction is BORING. I mean, an historical novel about Black Death doesn’t involve discussion of bacteriology duzzit.*

NK: Wouldn’t be an historical novel if it did, but instead science fiction! And that’s the point. I’d agree that it does take real narrative skill to drop in real technical or scientific detail without fouling the storyline, but I say that some had just that skill. Clarke, mostly. Niven & Pournelle, arguably. Lem, definitely.

Marcus: *Well that's an un-prosaic purple-inked prose waffle lacking substance but sounding sort of plausible Talking Head superficial pseudo-deep/big thoughts out of the way. ((Great fun as always, Marcus)) But then Star Trek's intro Space the Final Frontier does have an iconic value in gauging the spirit of Science Fiction's historic spirit.*

NK: On the other hand:

Dane Maslen: *I've come to the conclusion that I'm getting much more picky about SF as I get older. Perhaps I'm of the opinion that (remaining) life's too short to waste it reading stuff that isn't interesting. Last night set something of a record. As part of working my way through all the books that have been sat on my shelves for decades without being read (or having been read so long ago that I have forgotten) I selected The Hugo Winners 1970-1972 for bed-time reading last night. A book that size would usually keep me occupied for a week or so (I don't spend particularly long reading in bed), but it got finished in one night...*

Ship of Shadows by Fritz Leiber: *read Isaac Asimov's amusing introduction, read first three pages of novella, decided it was crap, moved on.*

Ill Met in Lankhmar also by Fritz Leiber: *read Isaac Asimov's amusing introduction, read first two pages of novella, came to the conclusion that this was no better than his previous effort, moved on.*

Slow Sculpture by Theodore Sturgeon: *read Isaac Asimov's amusing introduction (so far these introductions were the only saving grace of the book), read first few pages of the short story, found that it had failed to engage my interest, moved on.*

The Queen of Air and Darkness by Poul Anderson: *read Isaac Asimov's introduction (only very slightly amusing this time), read first few pages of the novella, found again that it had failed to engage my interest, moved on.*

Inconstant Moon by Larry Niven: *read Isaac Asimov's boring introduction, got captivated by the short story by the end of the first page, recognising in the process that it was something I'd read before, became engrossed enough to read through to the end, thereby staying awake longer than intended.*

...If I'm lucky, I'll discover at some stage that I have Inconstant Moon in some other anthology, in which case I'll be able to consign The Hugo Winners 1970-1972 to the nearest charity shop.

P.S. Since writing the above I've updated the spreadsheet of SF that I've read. I discovered that (a) I've never read anything by Leiber or Sturgeon that I've rated as good, and (b) I once possessed Inconstant Moon in Niven's N-Space anthology of short stories, but rashly disposed of it when I was seeking to thin out my books several years ago. That anthology had three or four other good stories, so would now be a more welcome occupant of space on the shelves than the collection of Hugo winners.

NK: Read with a smile of recognition, and even though I myself actually rate Leiber's Fafhrd/Grey Mouser fantasies, which the *Ill-Met in Lankhmar* novella serves as a kind of Origin Tale and thus fitting finale of the first volume (*Swords and Deviltry*) of the F&GM series. Possibly it only reads well in context of that series as a whole, however? (And it's definitely Fantasy not Science Fiction, making the Hugo... questionable.)

Rather ironic that the only Hugo entry that engaged you was the one with the most tedious Asimov intro! Best collection to include "Inconstant Moon" is possibly Niven's own (rather than in an anthology of varying writers) with that as the title story, or is that the very volume you rashly jettisoned? Anyhow it also includes what to me are very interesting Niven tales (plus a couple of admittedly badly dated ones) such as the forever-frozen-on-Pluto "Wait It Out", the future mystery "Death by Ecstasy" and above all the first of Niven's rationalized fantasies "Not Long Before the End". (Sequelled by "What Good is a Glass Dagger?" in *The Flight of the Horse* collection and short novel *The Magic Goes Away*, these three could really do with being in one volume.) // More Niven shortly (and Leiber very shortly) but now we're on outright Fantasy:

Steve Borndale: *The sheer breadth of Fantasy and other genres as Fantasy, now here's something I can really get my teeth into...*

*What I think Colin E is thinking of, mainly, is what used to be called 'heroic' Fantasy. Much of this being the sub-Tolkien and sub-Howard stuff you both mentioned. With a lot of the sub-Howard being Marcus's "Sword & Sorcery", a term out of fashion now because that particular type (Moorcock's *Eternal Champion* and Leiber's *Fafhrd & Grey Mouser* to name the best examples) has run its course, agree? ((More or less.)) There was also a time when writers tried a kind of combination of both Tolkien and Howard, mixing what's really short-story adventure (sub-Howard) with a cod-epic canvas (sub-Tolkien). This too has basically run its course but it's worked its way into what's often marketed as science fiction. Examples, a lot of what Colin himself has recommended here! And, I think you'll find as you're now reading him, Iain M Banks.*

So I'm in agreement with you when you reckon that a lot of so-called science fiction is really science fantasy. If not outright fantasy (so Fantasy, big-F). And it does go way back to even before Howard and Tolkien, again to Edgar Rice Burroughs and all of his adventure story forerunners. That's probably the link between them all, adventure.

NK: This echoes what Marcus says (in a slightly different context) a bit earlier.

Steve B: *Though the adventure is not always 'outgoing' or physical adventure. What I think Colin's missing is all the fantasy that isn't descended from Tolkien or Howard or Burroughs. You've mentioned a few like Gormenghast and Jonathan Strange though I'm surprised you didn't add Dracula, a fantasy with what might be thought science fiction trappings. And while we're about it Frankenstein, a science fiction with fantasy trappings! So there's four famous examples but there's much more. Everything from Jeffrey Farnol's medieval nowhere-lands with nowt supernatural (yes, remember them now) to Phil Pullman's parallel Earth with rationalised magic. (And I like His Dark Materials even if you and Marcus don't, so there!)*

NK: To be fair to Colin's categorization he did think things that could be vaguely described as 'Horror', presumably including *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, could be included in his 'modern' fantasy. But agree that *HDM* is harder to shoehorn in and Farnol impossible, the latter an example of non-supernatural fantasy that just happens to be pre-modern even in Colin's reckoning.

Steve B: *And Westerns as Fantasy... right. The movies you mention particularly but I'd say the whole genre generally, written or filmed. Westerns are a 'romantic' if blinkered version of the great push West, very much from point of view of the colonialists or their descendants. Tales of strangeness or strife or derring-do against the hazards of the land including its native inhabitants or 'fellow' pioneers: supposed savages and Bad Men (occasionally Women). Thus folk or fairy tales, and like most folk or fairy tales not about fairies (cute versions or sinister or something else again) but instead what I just said. As such, Fantasy.*

NK: Bit more sweeping than I'd have put it but broadly Yes. Even, one might say especially, when genuine historical detail is thrown in, as with the Civil War backdrop of *The Good, The Bad & The Ugly* or the coming of the railroad in *Once Upon a Time in the West* – the very titles of which are massive hints as to their folk/fairytale antecedents, incidentally. Other Fantasy tropes are plain, as in the near-supernatural wandering or combat skills of the chief protagonists, or in their enigmatic character (Eastwood & Bronson only being nicknamed by only slightly less enigmatic types, etc). Or as some genre fiction analyst once discerningly put it (forget whether this was Aldiss or King or someone else completely), in the strange towns (often enough already ghost towns) with central streets as wide as modern freeways, or in the half-fantasized geography of desert or mountains where convenient to the plot. Hey Steve, I think we've made a case!

Going to expand here, with apologies to Steve as he might not endorse this or dreamed of taking it so far. But I think all this gives a clue as to why at sixty-odd I (and I think Steve, and Marcus, and Colin, and many another *OoHer*) still unabashedly enjoy much the same things as we did at around twenty (or even earlier). And why not.

We're thus moving onto movies but first a last blast on the written form (the link will become plain):

Mark Nelson: *Thanks for sending me OOH 85. I doubt that I'll get chance to read it before your deadline, but I flicked through it and there's a large number of hooks... // ...I saw that someone mentioned the Booker prize. Some time ago I decided that I'd work my way through the winners, having first worked my way through the winners of the Miles Franklin Award. So far I've downed thirty-one, which leaves quite a few handfuls. This initially started as an excuse to visit second-hand bookshops, though in truth no such excuse is needed. The existence of sites such as AbeBooks means, of course, that visits to second-hand bookshops are no longer required. Now although AbeBooks was very useful in tracking down a handful of winners of the Miles Franklin Award that I could not find in person, there is no 'thrill in the chase' in finding a book on a webpage. Strange as it may seem, it only occurred to me a month or so ago that the winners of the Booker prize are almost all certainly in print. That seems to be the case, at least for the ones I've not found yet. So I could just order the ones I am missing new. Not much in the way of thrill of the chase in that!*

NK: The chase always being one of the attractions of the second-hand bookshop (not forgetting the chance of picking up a touted title for a song though sometimes regretting even that). Have SH bookshops been very rife in Oz, incidentally? Sorry to report that they'd become a fading force in the UK even before Covid.

Mark: *The wonders of searching a PDF tells me that it was Colin ((Evans)) who mentioned the Booker Prize. I haven't read any yet that I'd class as either pretentious or unreadable. In fact the opposite, I was surprised by how many of them are very readable. Ones that I did not enjoy were The Inheritance of Loss (by K. Desai) and Vernon God Little (D.B.C. Pierre), though that's just because they did not appeal to me. I'm sure I would have enjoyed Possession (A.S. Byatt) more if I'd ever studied literary theory – though I did make the tactical move of skipping most of the recreated 19th century poetry. That is the one that I could see as being called pretentious/unreadable...*

...Now, it is possible that I've made the move of avoiding all the winners that I suspected would be pretentious, I'll know that in a few years when I've read them.

NK: You make a robust defence, sir, though to be fair to Colin (again, this is becoming a habit) he was only (for handy axe-grinding reasons) hooking onto a throwaway comment from Marcus re *The Satanic Verses*. Which, speaking purely for myself, isn't the only Salman Rushdie work I've found... just a little bit tedious (not mentioning *Grimus* in particular). But now you've had a chance to skim issues 83 & 84 as well:

Mark *Of course, my opinions are only based upon the winners that I've read. And I here I must confess that every second-hand bookshop that I visit does have copies of The Satanic Verses for sale which I have studiously avoided buying. I don't have any rational reasons for putting off reading this book until I've read all the rest, but that is what I am doing. It's not as if I've ever read any of Salman Rushdie's novels.*

NK: And of course there may be other exceptions that illustrate the rule:

Mark: *Two winners of the Miles Franklin Award that I really disliked are The Unknown Industrial Prisoner and A Woman of the Future – both by David Ireland. Looking the latter up on Wikipedia today I see that it was initially rejected for publication on the grounds that it was “too incomprehensible” and that one of the award judges described it “literary sewage”.*

NK: Double ouch!

Mark: *((but as said)) I've been surprised are how unpretentious, readable, and entertaining the books have been that have won the Booker Prize. I'd even describe “Wolf Hall” as a page turner – though I can also see that for those not interested in English history this would be a daunting read.*

NK: Though with advantage of pretty good TV adaptation? Thanks Mark, we'll see what Marcus & Colin make of that! // As it happened, Mark and I got back in contact because by coincidence he happened (in the *Obsidian* lettercol) to echo my *OoH85* comments on *Interstellar* and *Independence Day*. Bringing us more definitely to movies (and then on to history, English and otherwise):

Janey Cage: *Agree on Independence Day. Even more ludicrous from a woman's point of view. ((And this, as I'm sure Janey won't mind me mentioning, from a woman of action.))*

Karen Day: *I thought Independence Day was just silly. Like a lot of today's action movies, way way over the top, the violence of war and mass-destruction made almost comic (not really appropriate) and with a cringey patriot theme. Not sure I actually understood Interstellar. What it was getting at, that is.*

NK: That the vastness of the Cosmos and its significance, if any, can come down to a single and improbable (I would say impossible) time-loop somehow connecting parts remote to our modest suburb. And so there's another couple of Douglas Adams' comedy conceptions to acknowledge: (1) being forever connected to home by tiny quantum packets of Guilt; (2) The Total Perspective Vortex.

Karen: *Gravity I thought much better. It helped that the lead character was one of us girls! I'm told (mainly by Colin) that the science was mostly sound. There was the slightly silly hallucination sequence, but I suppose they had to work that in to give a bigger role for you-know-who.*

NK: I have a perhaps surprising tolerance for You-Know-Who ever since his excellent performance in the remake of *Solaris*.

Colin Day: *So what did you make of Europa Report?*

NK: Actually not bad. Indeed, quite good, making a not too implausible (and definitely gripping) drama of contemporary local system speculation (although it's very doubtful that European lifeforms, if any, would be macroscopic as opposed to microscopic). And in terms of the paradoxical claustrophobia of outer space exploration, spot on – much better in this regard than the outright Lovecraftian horror of *Event Horizon* (which I note no one's yet mentioned).

Colin Evans: *The Day the Earth Stood Still This was mentioned in OoH84 as 'One of the Best Films Ever'. The original may be (but only in the context of its time?) but the later Keanu Reeves version, I did not like. Superior aliens decide to totally eliminate mankind because we are damaging Earth. Come on, that is so unimaginative a solution. And don't we as a race warrant some rights? Superior aliens my arse, even I with my (supposedly) vastly inferior intelligence can think of alternatives to save the Earth without totally eliminating mankind (eliminating most of it maybe but not all of it). Also note that some of these aliens, in human form, decide to die with mankind because it has redeeming qualities. And the destroying aliens change their minds at the last minute. They don't seem superior to me. Is the original version better?*

NK: Can't say, haven't seen the remake and barely recall the original (itself based on a still earlier tale by Harry Bates). Given accuracy of your synopsis I would tend to agree but then again am arguably biased (being nominally HomSap myself). Not as a matter of rights, however.

Steve Jones: *Re Marcus' wish for Walter Miller's A Canticle for Leibowitz to be made into a film: it has, sort of. Near the end of the TV Sci-Fi series "Babylon Five", there are post-collapse scenes which are lifted virtually whole from Canticle.*

NK: Television space opera has form in this regard. Years upon years ago I remember a *Star Trek* TV animated episode which was such a direct lift from the long short story "The Soft Weapon" (from the *Neutron Star Known Space* collection) that they surely had to be paying Larry Niven writing royalties.

Marcus: *Before going off on a tangent, I would say tangent but it sounds a bit racy, I must admit I do rather conflate Brigitte Bardot and Raquel Welch etc, something to do with them being used archetypally as Sex Symbols, now that really is a dehumanising term.*

NK: And one reason why Fonda(J) later so disowned *Barbarella*. She in particular was such a competent actress (she too would not say actor) that she didn't see why she should be regarded as A Body by anyone, least of all a number of careless/thoughtless males in her line of work.

again, NK with a SHAUN ALERT, this time positively as we move onto **History** via a blatant link from:

again, W Marcus Arnold: *Oh the Star Date Raquel Welch or Irish, Wed Mar 17/21. Well here I am waiting for my sausage stew to stew, into a savoury, 'erby and nutritious sustenance/substance. The clock tells me it is Seven of the clock and The Jam play on my record-playing gramophone at approximately 33 and a third revolutions a minute. One every fifteen years or so was more than enough for Russia. Without Lenin and the "will to power" on the Eastern Front we (the Allies) may not have needed the "Noble Fighting Yank" to give up their children to slaughter...*

Tony Ross: *a response to Colin E (and NK's comment following): I believe you are both right. American involvement would have been enormous and decisive by attrition in the defeat of Germany in WWI. Germany would have run out of soldiers in the slaughterhouse of the western front. But American losses would have been terrible, and that in turn would have made them even more isolationist and determined to leave Europe completely alone when the arguably much more important war occurred 20 years later.*

{As an aside Roosevelt is to be congratulated for his deception of the American people in the '40 election! FDR lied to them & some journalists knowing that didn't expose him. FDR stood on an isolationist "ticket" when he wasn't, but had to as the Americans were still thinking their losses in WWI were unnecessary as they shouldn't have got involved in a purely European war. His opponent was even more isolationist and in my view had FDR lost then the Allies eventual victory (the war being won/lost on the Eastern Front) would have been a lot longer in coming. And Europe without a successful D-Day would have been very different. Where would the Iron Curtain have fallen then?}

*And yes, absolutely Nick, Central Power economic exhaustion, most particularly Germany, is what did for them in the end. I would say that the Royal Navy's blockade was decisive. Post-Jutland the technologically superior but numerically inferior German Navy did not again attempt to break that blockade. I would go so far as to say that that battle (Jutland, in which the leading English Admiral could indeed have "lost the war in a day"), considered little more than a footnote in a lot of histories of WWI, is a most important **non** decisive battle of the war. Afterwards the Germans feared the potential catastrophic economic loss of their fleet so much they didn't risk another encounter with the Royal Navy. All the more ironic that as one of the terms of Versailles they had to sail the fleet to Scapa Floe wherein they later scuttled it so it didn't fall into British hands!*

{Another aside: - why is WWI so called? Arguably the Seven Years war should be called WWI. It was fought across the globe & surely changed the world more than WWI.}

NK: ohh, a slightly questionable aside! Agree with the rest though. Including your first aside, notwithstanding that it puts Roosevelt (and therefore us for approving) on the dodgier slopes of political morality. (But, given what was at stake...)

Tony R: *I also agree with what Colin wrote a couple of paragraphs earlier re Armadas. The defeat of the Spanish Armada isn't quite as it is normally portrayed, victory at sea for the plucky little English Navy against impossible numbers. The Spanish were damaged by a running battle (losing I think just 1 ship captured) in the Channel and then in port by fire ships which were more effective than cannon fire. Thus panicked the Spanish went the long way home around Scotland and the west coast of Ireland to avoid any further naval action. The Spanish Armada was really defeated by bad weather and a lack of navigational charts and aids to navigation. And the defeat of the Armada was surely one of those history changing moments: the world would be a very different place had the Spanish been able to convoy A Hol to London, to put it in Dip terms.*

NK: Yes, so another for Colin's Alternate Histories, indeed I'd be amazed if no one has written on just that theme, though I can't bring any to mind at the moment. (Col? with apologies if you've already cited some.)

...The relative fortunes of the (nascent) English and (already burgeoning) Spanish spheres of influence are also major factors behind our next slice of the subject:

Marcus: *History and South America get a good look in this month's OoH.* So before I crash I shall set the constraints for the next section. Black back Penguin Classics (see Diversion below). First-hand memoirs give a flavour of the times, but... Example, those written in RAF memoirs of WW2 on: I have a few from wartime and the 50s/60s. The flavour changes slowly – the triumphalism alters and the reality of aircrews cracking under pressure begins to be admitted, perhaps as the authors get older. So even with first-hand accounts the “flavour” is over- or under-spiced.

((I trust I've interpreted that setting correctly, Marcus, as the actual books following are plainly more modern renditions of much older first-hand accounts.))

ZARATE: *The Discovery and Conquest of Peru* (L202). “A translation of Books I to IV of Augustin de Zarate's history of these events, supplemented by eye witness accounts of certain incidents.”

BERNAL DIAZ: *The Conquest of New Spain* (ISBN 014 0441239). He was the last survivor of the conquerors of Mexico, born 1492 and died aged 89.

EXQUEMELIN: *The Buccaneers of America.* (First published 1678.) An eye-witness account of “Pirates” including Sir Henry Morgan's sack of Panama. Read this and *Pirates of the Caribbean* comes over as sick humour...

“They strapadoed him until both his arms were entirely dislocated then knotted a cord so tight round the forehead that his eyes bulged out big as eggs. Still he would not admit where the coffer was... They strung him up by his male parts, while one struck him another sliced his nose...”

NOT VERY NICE!!

NK: Yes, I've come across that last extract before, in a volume about 16th-18th Century piracy that entirely dispels any romantic notions we might entertain of the practice. (As in too many feature films that therefore also qualify as Fantasy, see also my and SteveB's contention on Westerns.) So you can see what I mean about firm adherence to certain fundamentals below.

Marcus: *Diversion: HISTORY is the past, a record of the past, an interpretation of the past or an imagination of the past. Interpretation of the past implies bias, a record implies lists. The question to ask when reading/learning history is how accurate is it, how biased is it, what are its biases and why is it biased. Biases can include ignorance, false data, conformism, propagandism. Or just because you believe it is not evidence or that evidence is not proof. (All these things I hopefully take for granted.)*

NK: Agreed. And another bias, one I'll cheerfully admit to, is a firm adherence to certain fundamentals. I'm sometimes told that we can't judge past societies by supposedly modern standards. Disagree completely. Not only can we do so, we should do so, lest we feebly give way (as HomSap too often has this past century or so) to modern or lingering versions of old ghastly practices. This too I hopefully take for granted.

Colin Evans: *History* Marcus wrote that “At the present time a lot of history is being re-written from a non-White/male/European/Colonial perspective, and promises to be interesting, challenging and mostly worthwhile.” Perhaps more of a case of being revealed. There was recently a TV series, ‘Africa's Great Civilizations’ in 2018, describing proper kingdoms, not just a plethora of small tribes etc, which have been ignored by Westerners who believed it never had any. I would disagree, however, to the inclusion of Ancient Egypt as an African civilisation. Ethnically and geographically (though in the continent of Africa) it is Middle Eastern.

NK: My best source on these things, in particular the civilizations and other cultures of sub-Saharan Africa, is Felipe Fernandez-Armesto's *CIVILIZATIONS* (ISBN 0 330 48798 1).

Colin E: *There have been other TV series on non-Western civilisations. One described the discovery of the remains of kingdoms recently found in the Amazon and other areas in South America. Another, on the history of Iran, was called ‘The Art of Persia’. I thought this was more history than art, covering Iran's history from its very beginnings. Well worth watching.*

Marcus: *Steve J... right on. Race don't exist. Different cultures do. Them ignorant pseudoscientists who still claim "white" "races" are genetically more intelligent should be invited to lecture at every University, asked basic questions and laughed at. Such as (the not-so-hairy-as-it-was-top-of-my-head): define race. Define intelligence. Hey baby tell me what are the genes that cause intelligence. You mean like the genes controlling a few unimportant physical characteristics like hair, skin pigment, steatopygeality, facial characteristics are linked with the genes for intelligence? Do you agree with phrenology then? Etc.*

NK: Well-merited sarcasms that I'm sure Steve himself will echo.

Steve J: *On history, I have also read Ian Morris' Why the West Rules - for Now. A very interesting read, commendable particularly in attempting to put numbers into the story of the development of civilizations. I am not sure about the quantization of his four traits (energy capture, urbanisation, information technology and military power). Also, given the huge differences between the figures going into each trait between 2000AD and even a couple of hundred years prior, it might have been better to have used a logarithmic scale. But then, Morris is a historian, not a physicist!*

NK: Yet still a reasonable attempt at presenting history in scientific terms (Morris did give *caveat emptor* as to measuring his four traits and treating them with equal weight). And a log scale might have confused the issue when the West temporarily declined below the East. In fact, not using a log scale puts into perspective a key economic corollary: today's ordinary citizen is often materially better off than past kings.

Steve J: *I have recently been recording, and later watching, a series on Sky History channel called "Strangest Things". Each episode discusses various mysterious artefacts from museums around the world. The fourth episode, seen last night, talked about my absolutely favourite ancient artefact: the Antikythera Mechanism. Discovered by sponge divers off the coast of southern Greece in 1900, it was ignored until the 1960s when it was realised that it was an ancient device (circa first century BC) for simulating the movement of the heavens! It is a complex clockwork mechanism consisting of at least 30 meshing bronze gears which is believed to predict the movement of the sun, the five known planets and the moon through the night sky, and also has the capability of predicting solar eclipses. It is now recognised as the world's first analogue computer. What is astonishing about it is that, before it was discovered, we had absolutely no idea that the ancient Greeks were capable of building such a device. Its clockwork mechanism has no known parallel with any other device from the ancient world, and it would be fourteen hundred years before any comparable device would be built in the West (or anywhere else). Like the missing works in the Library of Alexandria and other ancient libraries, we have no idea of what other books or devices which the ancients knew of which are buried in some gravel pit, or even irretrievably lost. The existence of this device just blows one's mind! The latest findings about this device can be found in the following Guardian article: <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/mar/12/scientists-move-closer-to-solving-mystery-of-antikythera-mechanism>*

NK: ...showing that some of even my Science History may be obsolescent if not obsolete!

Colin E: *History taught: History is a huge area. Perhaps it is not surprising that we are taught so little of it in the one or two hours allocated to it in school. It is inevitably anglocentric but this could be improved. When I was at school we whizzed through history from the stone age to the 19th century, I don't think we reached the First World War by the end of my fifth year (before specialising in sciences for A Levels). I was interested in history by then but the 19th century history taught me was boring, seemingly entirely about British political parties. I think the Napoleonic Wars were ignored as was the revolutions in science and the expansion of the British Empire. Europe was ignored, even 1848, the year of revolutions, which occurred all over Europe. A revolution which we avoided only because of our electoral reforms earlier that century.*

...Was it Descartes who said 'Man won't be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest'. Change king to tyrant and that is still true today.

NK: Blimey Col, was with you all the way back there until you went all Marcus on me with that last quote. (Definitely in favour of less gruesome means of change, me.) My school experience wasn't so very different, I only 'caught up' because I chose to study Economic (and Science) History during my degree. Speaking of Marcus, he too has views on how we're educated. First though, a last history blast from Steve:

Mortal Error: the shot that killed JFK (by Bonar Menninger); **JFK: the smoking gun** (by Colin McLaren)
[reviewed by **Steve Jones**]

These two books are a fascinating look at what is probably the biggest mystery of the Twentieth Century - the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. I heard about the first book some years ago and borrowed it from the local library – it had to be fetched from the stacks! The second book inspired a documentary broadcast on Channel 4 a few years ago. I recently learnt that the first book had a second printing in 2013 (the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination), and so purchased both, the first because it is a very good book, and the second because I wanted to see what it has to say.

The Kennedy assassination has inspired thousands of books and spawned numerous conspiracy theories. These involve a wide spectrum from the Mafia, the CIA and FBI, a cabal of right wing businessmen, the KGB, Castro, anti-Castro Cubans, LBJ, Richard Nixon, American dynasties, Nazis, the Masons, Roswell aliens and numerology (this last is that, after 1820, every president elected in a year ending in zero died in office – this was killed off when G.W. Bush survived!), all of which are scarcely credible, or believable. However, these two books are in a league of their own because they both make a claim that appears to be consistent with the known facts and is not just wild speculation. Both books concern a remarkable man named Howard Donahue.

Bonar Menninger is a reporter who ghost wrote Howard Donahue's multi-decade investigation of the Kennedy assassination. Donahue is a WW2 veteran who ran a gun shop in the '60s and '70s, and was a ballistics expert who sometimes, as a side line, aided law enforcement in gun-related cases. He became involved in investigating the assassination of JFK almost by accident, and was astonished to discover that all the official investigations never made use of any ballistics expertise. He was able to establish that Kennedy was hit three times. Two of these were fired by Oswald, the first missing but ricocheting off the road (a fragment of which hit Kennedy) and the second so-called “magic” bullet that hit both Kennedy and Governor Connally. Donahue discovered what everybody else had missed, that Connally was not sitting directly in front of Kennedy but was actually seated six inches inboard of him; there was a direct straight line between where the two men were hit leading right back to Oswald's sniper position in the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository. The third shot was the fatal head shot and this was the real mystery. From the entry and exit points, Donahue could not connect the flight path of the bullet to Oswald's sniper position. Furthermore, the effects of this bullet were inconsistent with the type of ammunition used by Oswald's military rifle which consisted of full metal jacket bullets (hence the through-and-through nature of the so-called “magic” bullet); rather, it was more consistent with soft or hollow-nosed bullets. Eventually, after finding further evidence about the entry and exit points, Donahue was able to establish that this shot came from directly behind the presidential limousine, and from just above street level. He also discovered that one of the Secret Service agents in follow-up vehicle had an AR-15 automatic rifle which fired that exact type of ammunition. Knowing that accidents tend to occur around guns, Donahue came to a shocking conclusion: when the motorcade accelerated away, this agent probably lost his footing and the weapon discharged. Basically, Kennedy was accidentally shot and killed by his own Secret Service!

Colin McLaren is a retired Australian detective from Melbourne, my home city. He came across Menninger's book whilst in New York in 1992, and started his own investigation using the internet. He found the book convincing and the science sound, but as a detective, it was all ballistics, and what was missing was a forensic analysis of the testimonies in the case to support his premise. Using online sources from the official investigations and elsewhere, McLaren trawled through hundreds, indeed thousands, of depositions from all sorts of witnesses. Bottom line is that they corroborated what Donahue discovered. Furthermore, there is a high degree of probability that there was a cover-up by the Kennedy family and elements in the US government; it is not difficult to see why given Donahue's conclusion.

...If you have any interest at all in the assassination of JFK, I recommend that you read these two books. They are eye-openers in many ways.

NK: Very interesting. There is of course a tendency to shy away from this kind of thing because of the Conspiracy Theory obsession cited (usually in denial that the USA is a society where a mental defective with a mail-order rifle can blow away his President). But these books seem significantly different.

W Marcus Arnold ((still metaphorically out to lunch)): *And now to eat, perchance to dream, and in such dreams are both the past and the future(s). I have an age-related enjoyable nap an hour or so after eating a carbohydrate-rich dinner; one of life's little pleasures I would not have appreciated when I was longhaired hairbanded and beflared without a clue and no tattoos...*

NK: Personally I've destroyed all the images I have of myself at that age.

Marcus: *...At school we learnt what we have mostly forgotten, it seems such a waste of youth. Anyway, HERENDETH THE PROLOGUE THIRST PART.*

Aside... as we all know old Bill Shakespeare wrote The Forbidden Planet but they changed its name from The Tempest. Robbie the Robot reappeared in Lost in Space while Cov's own (whatsiz name, Bob ----??) re-wrote it as a comedy musical. Very versatile was old Bill Shakespeare.

Aside 2: "Dreams are more than are in your philosophy" (prob misquoted but the gist is definitely there) from HAMLET. Shakespeare disses school learning. His world was larger than the one he lived in, his plays are more than tales they are Jungian explorations of Archetypes from a collective unconscious. {Pseudiferation intellectura-mystic paragraph}

NK: If you say so. Presumably there's SOME reason why Brit education obstinately sticks with old Bill. As both his namesake Mr Bryson and the *Red Dwarf* sitcom wittily point out, he coined an astonishing number of terms and phrases that have passed into common currency. (I'm wondering if that last is one.)

Colin E: *More on word use. One does not 'grow' a business, one expands or enlarges it, though businesses do grow! Isn't English wonderful! Apparently the largest vocabulary of any language in the world.*

NK: Got a feeling I'm being set up here...

Colin E: ((more on)) *Poor Journalism.* *Almost every day I use the internet I read an article in which something has been misspelled, omitted, repeated or some other obvious error. What's the matter with these authors? One of the first things I learnt at school was to read through something one has just written in order to find obvious mistakes. It only takes a moment, instead of immediately submitting the article for publication. Possibly my most common mistake is to omit 'not' and totally reverse the intended meaning so it is very important to do a read through.*

I have just read through the above paragraph and it is alright...

NK: I promise you that this time I'm resisting the urge to over-edit.

W Marcus Arnold: *In retrospect I am reminded of Whence, a much unused word meaning From Where: "Melton Mowbray is a village whence pork pies originate", etc. Whence we can deduce that 'correct' English is not equivalent with 'good' English or 'Standard' English. "Whence came you" = Where did you come from / From where came you. Archa(ist)ic, but fun.*

NK: Here Marcus went off on a moderately scholarly examination of my *-ize/-ise* pleasantries in *OoH* 84. Only to reluctantly conclude that I was right, *-ize* isn't creeping Americanism but instead the more correct form, though (as above) emphasizing that this doesn't make it 'better'. With which I cheerfully agree! Amongst other things Marcus noted that despite an Oxford English Dictionary preference for *-ize*, his daily newspaper's house-style was *-ise*, and what was good enough for *The Times*...

Marcus: *Aside 3 ((talking as he was a little earlier of Jung)) the book I am reading now is An Introduction to Jung's Psychology, Frieda Fordham with an introduction by Jung himself (Pelican no. A27 first published 1953, my copy reprinted with revisions 1956). Rather fascinating.*

NK: Later you try to apply Jung to the reservations I have on my own field, but I'm going to resist that too.

Marcus: *This page is recyclable, do not discard, THE INK MAY BE A RADIATION HAZARD...*

NK: I have a notion that we've already drifted into the part of the lettercol devoted to random comments from Marcus and ColinE. So a few more from both and then we'll wrap up with some Hobby-related stuff.

Marcus: *Don't make me angry now. It gives me eczema.*

NK: Wouldn't dream of it, my old mate.

Marcus: *To correct OoH's unconscious bias against the visual dark arts... The Arts & Crafts movement were the bearded hipster in praise of artisan-made over the mass-production of the Victorian Era, and the mores morals and love of pseudo-Arthurian neo-medievalism prefigured middle class Hippydom.*

NK: And there was me thinking you were all in favour.

Colin E: *Knaves Over Queens and its sequel Three Kings edited by George R R Martin: Yes these are linked short stories / episodes (?) each in a single volume comprising some sort of novel. I don't know what the correct term for this is. Mosaic?*

NK: If the individual bits really are by different authors, why not?

Colin E: *The Quacks of Quedlinburg. I don't think I have thought about the **feel** of game components before. The ingredients (cardboard counters) for the players' cauldrons are placed in a bag and drawn at random so it is important that they all feel the same. They all start the same shape but some more common ingredients could conceivably become more worn and thus feel different. This can be solved by putting the counters in token cases, which some people have done. I have played it twice and have just purchased it from Amazon (about 20% off normal price). As always see Board Game Geek for details and reviews.*

NK: No idea where that one came from at all, but then *OoH* is supposed to be a Games Hobby zine so again why not? And speaking of typical *OoH* content:

Marcus: *No discontent or disconnect with the Contents barring the lack of poetry, Royal Family mania, horror scopes, socialist realism, sports or other marginal staples. Is this the new organised CyberNick in operation? New readers, enlarged reader base. CyberNick goes for World Domination.*

NK: well for obvious reasons I did send last issue to a few possibly-interested Dip/ex-Dip players/editors unfamiliar with *OoH* (response, largely from Colin Day at the moment, held over to next time) and despite your note on lack of sports I am sending this one to footie-management gamers to promote TonyR's playtest ("**Pigs on the Wing**" back page). As earlier, all contacts old and new most welcome, if they can stand it.

Mark Nelson: *When ((brother)) James decided it was time to GAFIA he did indeed gafiate and has never returned. Whereas when I burnt out I just went very quiet and mainly hung out in non-UK zines. The only exception was Dolchstoss, and when Richard folded there was a gap before I started to receive Obsidian. But now I am up to four UK zines (Obsidian, Quartz, Outbreak of Heresy, and Fury of the Northmen). A far cry from the 50 or so that I used to read (and that was only the UK zines!)*

NK: My tale is not so different, though *OoH* itself is on something like its sixth incarnation, having started as an occasional games-design forum (to keep my hand in, like) some time after I'd folded my old Dipzine *Zeeby* a.k.a 'Zine to be Believed (which, ah, you may remember all too well). I ended up donating most of my paper zine collection to Stephen Agar's then-burgeoning Zine Archive, though feel a bit guilty that the burdens of said archive may have contributed to Stephen's divorce. I have to say that Dane Maslen has been absolutely right in converting myself (and others) to a mostly-electronic output, not least in that it can readily reach those like yourself now in places far removed from the UK scene. Oh yes: can (do) you get *Fury of the Northmen* in e-form? (My other source on this, *Dane's Games* again, hints otherwise.) Colin(Bruce) is another I'd like to get back in contact with, but ironically paper *OoHs* are now difficult.

NK: Remember, anyone can join in any time to seek the GROUP answer (in fact there are now two of these, see ColinD below) plus an individual one for each participant.

Colin Evans: *Narrow Way Is it a place to do with water?*

NK: No, but see the following for what trains of thought your question of last time triggered for the group answer (not only justifying your initial victory point but doubling it).

Dave Berry: *So, it's a place and something vaguely to do with canals in a historical context. So I'm guessing it is a place on the planet Mars. Yes/No?*

NK: No, but...

Steve Borndale: *Looking at Marcus's bits mentioning the (or a) Moon so many times and you making encouraging oinks made me think the group answer has to do with the Moon itself. But then you threw a bladder in the works with your answer to ColinE, sort of historically suggestive of canals! And thus the old "canal fallacy" of Mars? (And we know you're a Martian of old.) SO, two thunderbirds with one boulder, is the answer something to do with Mars or the Moon?*

NK: Yes. Two points for you and one for Dave. And although he had the wrong world for understandable reasons, Dave's other speculations are not only of interest but also of some relevance:

Dave B, again: *If Yes, then is it related to a landing site for one of the missions that humans have sent to Mars? If Yes to that question, then I guess the Jezero crater, where Perseverance landed in February. If No to the last question but Yes to a place on Mars, then I guess Olympus Mons, just because its the most spectacular feature of Mars.*

NK: The last would have been technically disqualified anyway as a subject (and I think song title) on the *Trompe le Monde* album by The Pixies. Whereas, as per reply to Marcus last time, the actual group answer(s) has/have (so far as I know) never been commemorated in music, though I'd be happy to be corrected otherwise once finally revealed. Nevertheless, yet another victory point to Dave.

Colin Day: *The Narrow Way Is it actually a narrow way?*

NK: Hm, No but come to that I've just thought of an interesting alternative target where the answer would be Yes, for which players can also go (fewer vps than the real target). And so a victory point for you, Col.

Colin D: *As for your provocation of last time I'm guessing that the number of questions we ask must act as some sort of divisor/multiplier or tiebreaker. Though whether positively or negatively...*

NK: Yes. And so another victory point. As for efficiency of questions:

W Marcus Arnold: *Is it a Human Male? (This question covers both Who and What.)*

NK: Yes for your individual answer but No for either group answer (these having been revealed as places). Another victory point. Your "test questions" (specifically excluded from inclusion or publication) were interesting, not only leading to your actual submission but (given the others' speculations) avoiding wastage.

Karen Day: *So Marcus' individual answer isn't a "non-fictional person, alien or mythological creature"... On the dangerous assumption that this applies to all, I ask: is MY individual answer a fictional person?*

NK: Yes! Two victory points, putting you level in v.p terms with Marcus on four (he's asked 6 questions, Karen herself 4), Dave has three (from 3 relevant questions), both Colins and SteveB two (from 2 qs each).

((Oh dear, I missed ANOTHER Italian order from the typed adjudication, A(Ser)-Rum, though again it made no difference to scs etc and again the players were swiftly informed before even Colin could come back with his usual. Must concentrate! Used to be a lot better than this, honest.)) ((Just Spring this time.))

ENGLAND... F(NTH)sRusF(Edi), F(Hol)-Bel, F(Wal)-Lvp, F(IRI)sF(Wal)-Lvp,
(Neil Carson) F(MAO)-WMS, A(Spa)-Por, F(Tun)-ION, A(Tyl)-Ven, A(Gal)-War [fails].

RUSSIA... F(Edi)holds steady, F(Stp/nc)-Nwy [stood off], A(Mos)sA(War)-Ukr,
(Steve Borndale) A(War)-Ukr [fails], A(Sev)sA(War)-Ukr [cut], A(Arm)sA(Sev) [cut],
A(Tri)sF(Apu)-Ven, F(Apu)-Ven [fails, dislodged*].

ITALY... F(NWG)-Nwy [stood off], F(NAO)-NWG [fails], A(Cly)-Lvp [stood off by...
(Colin Day) ...superior force], A(Kie)-Den, A(Ber)-Sil, A(Bel)-Ruh, A(Par)-Bre,
F(Mar)-Spa/sc, F(TYS)-Tun, F(Nap)sA(Ven)-Apu, A(Rom)sA(Ven)-Apu,
A(Ven)-Apu, F(BLA)-Sev [fails], A(Ukr)sF(BLA)-Sev [cut],
A(Rum)sA(Ukr), F(Ank)-Arm [fails], F(Smy)-AEG.

*retreat phase: Russian F(Apu) to ADR.

((only Press this time is from me and:)) The Heretic shuts his trap! Except to say, so nearly, so nearly.

Winter 1901

FRANCE (Tony Hedges).. 16 credits: bids Eng 8, Rus 0, Tur 0, Ita 8. Controls nothing, 16 credits left.
GERMANY (Neil Carson).. 20 credits: bids Eng 8, **Rus** 11, Tur 1, Ita 0. Controls Russia, 9 credits left.
AUSTRIA-H (Paul Regan).. 20 credits: bids Eng 0, Rus 9, **Tur** 2, **Ita** 9. Contr Tur & Ita, 9 credits left.
[credits for Mercs: Eng 0, Rus 11, Tur 2, Ita 9]

Spring 1901 [England has F(Edi), F(Lon), A(Lvp) holding in Civil Disorder, of course]

FRANCE (TonyH): F(Bre)-MAO, A(Par)-Bur, A(Mar)sA(Par)-Bur

GERMANY (NeilC): F(Kie)-Den, A(Ber)-Sil, A(Mun)-Ruh.
...Russia... F(StP/sc)holds, A(War)-Lvn, A(Mos)-Ukr, F(Sev)-Arm

AUSTRIA-H (PaulRg): F(Tri)-Alb, A(Vie)-Tri, A(Bud)-Rum
...Turkey... F(Ank)-BLA, A(Smy)-Syr, A(Con)-Smy
...Italy... A(Ven)-Pie, A(Rom)-Nap, F(Nap)-TYS

Summer 1901

FRANCE (TonyH).. grants 1cr to Turkey, 15 credits left.
GERMANY (NeilC).. grants 1cr to Turkey, 8 credits left
AUSTRIA-H (PaulRg).. grants 1cr to England, 8 credits left.
[Merc credits then half, odd halves lost: Eng 0, Rus 5, Tur 2, Ita 4]

The Kinzett Shameless Pink Floyd Reminiscence Files (15): ONE SLIP. Outstanding piece on Floyd's 1986 comeback (if largely Gilmour supported by Mason and a bit of Wright) *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*, pity this was one where Mason gave way to a sessioner for the complex percussion parts! Excellent track all round though, fast picking guitar just enough in background to complement not overwhelm the keyboards and Gilmour cheerfully pronouncing *one slip and down the hole you go*, so there's fair warning for us all...

NK again: Bits of Hobby News: *To Win Just Once* is temporarily on hold while Paul (Evans) goes into hospital, though not for the usual reason of these times. Hope it all goes well, Paul. (I assume you can still receive *OoH* via your mobile or equivalent?)

Last Orders from Simon Langley-Evans was/is one respondent to the not-quite-Dip special that was *OoH85*, and *LO* itself (now on issue 18 and coming up 19) looks an excellent Dipzine with well-organized games (standard Diplomacy and Intimate plus potentially all-reader things like *By Popular Demand*) and lovely maps. (I still haven't worked out how I can do these for *OoH*, might compensate for or even stop me randomly omitting to print odd Colin Day orders in the printed adjudications.) Developing lettercol etc with not-too-different subjects to *OoH* (especially book reviews but wider, I note he's just trashed KSR's *Aurora*). Simon himself is just about to get an academic book-length text published, as he wryly remarks he probably won't be able to retire on the proceeds but it's satisfying all the same. LastOrdersDip@gmail.com

Colin Evans: *on possible book exchange at Manorcon etc* I suggest we all submit lists of books we wish to give away. These lists can be collected and sent out to all of us and we can say which ones we want. Via Nick if that is alright with him. We then bring all the books wanted to Manorcon to be collected, with other arrangements for non-participants. // Other books could possibly be brought (contributions to charity?) but I am a little wary of taking up valuable gaming space. This need not be limited to just SF books, history and science seem other popular subjects in OOH. We may acquire a few gems which we would not otherwise consider or are a bit too expensive to purchase, or try previously unread authors.

“PIGS ON THE WING” (*Aquarius* footie playtest)

Announcement

GM Tony Ross

NK: As per a number of *OoH* playtests (or actual email games) this will be run (by Tony, it's his project) independently of the zine but with occasional reports here for those interested. For anyone really interested *Aquarius* is a football management game, bit more tactical but less resource-managerial than most, a slight variant on Michael Parnaby's *Capricorn* which is itself a development of Tony Wilcock's *Gemini*. At some point in this evolution attention shifted from the more usual resource-management to tactics based around the old-style 2-3-5 formations, in fact I gather that it was Mike's intention for the design to have very much a football-in-the-Victorian-era flavour!

Anyhow, I've been intrigued enough to submit a sort of provisional team myself to Tony (see below). Methinks he has at least a dozen people already interested but could do with a few more, so I'm seizing this opportunity to send *OoH* to (amongst others) a few footie-management zine-editors or players, including a number of names from my Gaming Past, just in case they're interested. No worries if not (*OoH* won't be everyone's cup of char), indeed I emphasize that you won't need to 'subscribe' to *OoH* (free anyway) in order to play *Aquarius*, which Tony's already launched ('friendly' games at present) via an e-publication entitled ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA GAZETTE. It's just that I'm lending Tony the Pink Floyd game-title (Shameless Reminiscence below if I've space) and promoting it here. (tonyross746@btinternet.com)

My effort, by the way, is a revival of a *United* team I submitted for a game that never got started (the zine concerned folded) way back when I had time for these things, ironically that was virtually the end of my involvement in football-management games. (Subsequently going on to Dip-plus-heavy-boardgames *Zeeby* with Shaun Derrick and later Ian D Wilson.) Mainly I did it for the opportunity to submit awful puns as player-names, an aspect that I know some (including Mike) aren't all that keen on but gently tolerate. Forgotten most of the original **Irteam of Overham** but just to get the mood: Philip Uster, Castor Glance, Algie Braik, Ivor Nastyich, Daveed N'Konka, Garry Onsargent, Marcus Furlife, Eddie Fying, Eric Ashus, Chris Peneven, Robin Osplind, Nick Wantaslip, Bill Dusanarmie, Xavier Soles, Colin Oscopie and (I think) Frank Leopold (may have already donated some of these to another team, have to check).

The Kinzett Shameless Pink Floyd Reminiscence Files (16): PIGS ON THE WING. Framing track for the very-much-concept-album *Animals* (1977), bit of a throwaway acoustic by Waters but nicely setting off the powerful "Dogs" and especially "Sheep", and an absolutely irresistible choice for a football game title.