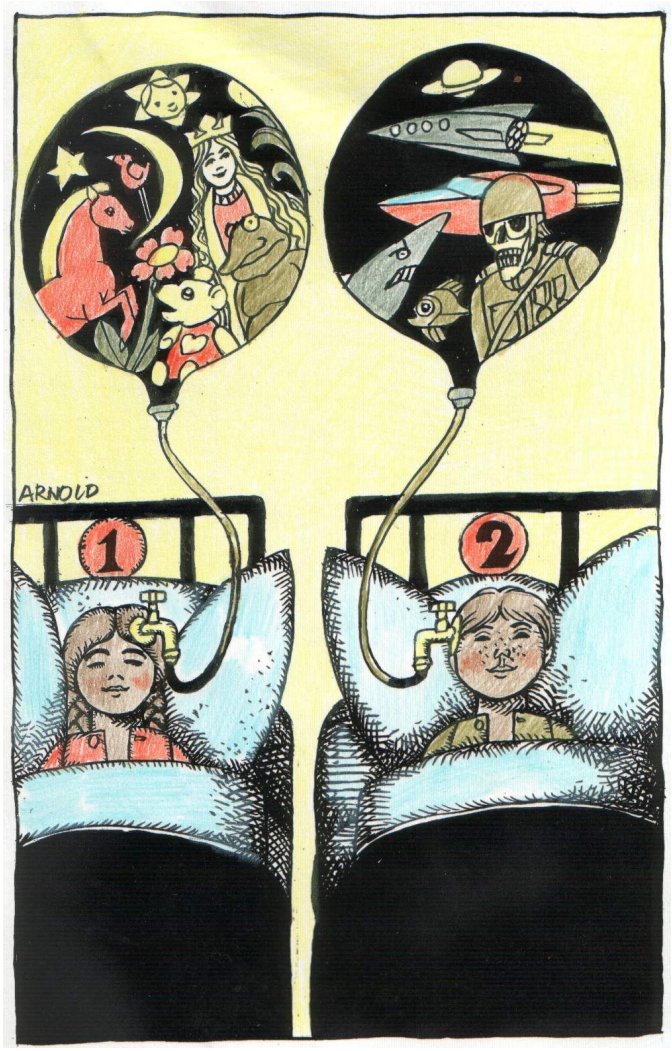
COUNTERCLOCK

ISSUE # 9 2001 - 2008

An random fanzine produced by Wolf von Witting, Via Dei Banduzzi 6/4, 33050 Bagnaria Arsa (Ud), Italy -



Illustrations page 1, 3-4 by Hans Arnold.

INTRODUCTION

The years 2001 until 2008 were not very productive years on my account. Most of the material which I intended to publish in this issue has been lying around in drawers since the year 2001. Fortunately, some things don't get outdated no matter how much time they spend in a drawer. The only problem is actually *finding* them, when they are needed.

Through the years, my friend and former colleague Sidney W Hage, who in the meantime has translated and published *"Clemence of Alexandria's STROMATA",* in Swedish (a whopper of 500 pages providing insight into the mind of one of the founding fathers of the Christian Church), used to hand me photo-copies of interesting passages from ancient Greek writings.

If I, for example asked him a question like:"Listen, Sid, if there was a time when people actually believed in the existence of dragons… Had there been any such sighting, would they not have reported it somewhere in *a matter of fact* fashion?"

Then I only had to wait a couple of months until Sid handed me a new photo-copy. This one was from a guy named STRABO, who lived 44 B.C. His writings *have been* translated into English. On page 261 and 263 (the page 262 contains the original Greek version), we can read under the GEOGRAPHY header the following passage: "As for the plains, the first, beginning at the sea, is called Macras, or Macra-Plain. Here, as reported by Poseidonius, was seen the fallen dragon (Sid pencil marked this with a comment; in 80 B.C.), the corpse of which was about a plethrum (100 feet) in length, and so bulky that horsemen standing by it on either side could not see one another; and its jaws were large enough to admit a man on horseback, and each flake of its horny scales exceeded an oblong shield in length."

Also UFO-sightings go as far back as 2000 years and more. In PLUTARCH'S LIVES about LUCULLUS, (74 B.C.) volume VIII, page 497 of the English translation Sid found: "…with no apparent change of weather, but all on a sudden, the sky burst asunder, and a huge, flame-like body was seen to fall between the two armies. In shape, it was most like a wine-jar and in colour, like molten silver. Both sides were astonished at the sight, and separated. This marvel, as they say, occurred in Phrygia, at a place called Otryae."

No further analysis of the event is delivered. It is only mentioned as a *matter of fact*. Reported as such, but without the intent to cause any speculation about it.

SENECA asks in his work NATURAL QUESTIONS, volume I (5 A.D) about unusual light occurrences:"When do Boards occur, or Shields (like the one seen in 100 B.C., PLINY II), or the shapes of vast fires?"

PLINY reports in his NATURAL HISTORY (7 A.D.), book II, "In the consulship of Lucius Valerius and Gaius Marius a burning shield scattering sparks ran across the sky at sunset, from west to east."

And "In the consulship of Gnaeus Octavius and Gaius Scribonius (66 B.C.) a spark was seen to fall from a star and increase in size as it approached the earth, and after becoming as large as the moon it diffused a sort of cloudy daylight, and then returning to the sky changed into a torch; this is the only record of this occurring. It was seen by the proconsul Silanus and his suite."

What was it? A comet?

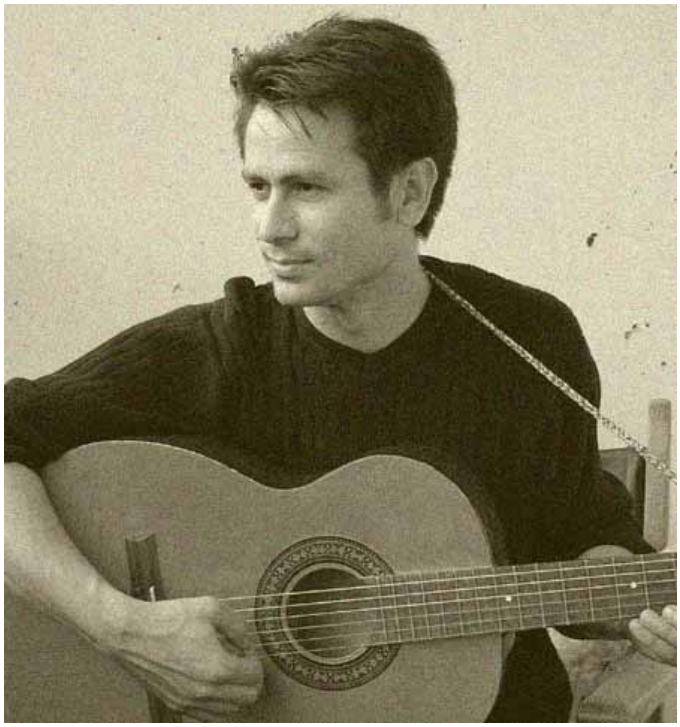
Some light phenomenon were absolutely singular in their occurrence. Could have been passing asteroides, comets, meteors and such. The night sky was never polluted by city lights, so all strange phenomena must have been far more spectacular than they ever can be today.

THE MOONBOW

Early in november 2003 I had a morning shift in traffic control, Neglinge station (Stockholm). At 04:00 in the morning I was on my way to work. Over a distance I could see something which looked like a black rainbow. One other difference from a normal rainbow, was that this one was stationary, and I was walking towards it. Better still, as I came closer to Neglinge I came to walk in under it. From below, looking straight up, it resembled a purple nebula. There was no visible source of light. Near my location were two signal-workers from the

railway, Tomas Larsson and Thomas Lundström. They confirmed, having made the same observation. Later at work, another driver colleague, Fatih Samanci confirmed having seen this black rainbow from a distance. But if I hadn't mentioned it, he would have kept quiet, because he was sure no one would have believed him. Later, the same day, Peter Nilsson, another train driver came into the station and said; "Now there's a ring around the full moon!"
"Well, that's called a halo, I've seen those before…" then it occurred to me, that I only seen it once or twice before… so maybe it wasn't such a common thing to be completely omitted from the context. The newspapers reported only that there had been *northern lights* over Stockholm that night. Well, I have seen northern lights before and this was nothing like it.
I have no explanation for what I saw, I can only report it as I saw it, what other unusual occurrences surrounded it (northern lights and lunar halo), but what I believe is, it was an unusual light effect.

I googled it (black rainbow) 9 years ago without any result. Now I googled it again.
There is a phenomenon called *MOONBOW*, which has been observed as black rainbows. They are mostly very faint and far more rare than rainbows. A black rainbow sighting was reported in Kahuku, Hawaii. *Two fishermen reported seeing what looked like a black rainbow arching from the mountain to the ocean at 9:00 p.m.*
Then it says: "Moonbows coincide with a full moon and are the result of light refracting through water droplets in the atmosphere. If the water vapor is in the right place and if the sky is clear, a bright full moon acts like the sun and you will se a rainbow at night. The rainbow may appear black, but the colours are there. It's just that there is no blue sky to paint it against. Note: This is not a common occurrence. The clear skies and moist air of the Hawaiian islands make this location one of the few places where a moonbow can be seen.



Fatih Samanci saw a moonbow once, but was worried to tell anyone about it, because he thought people would think he is crazy.

"Moonbows only appear to be black", June Watanabe, Honolulu, Star Bulletin, August 17th 1999.
(from Factoids Part 5, http://www.colormatters.com /fun-color-facts/factoids-part-5)

Finally… 9 years later. Light phenomenon explained. It was a full moon that night. It was in the opposite part of the sky from the moon (no visible source of light). Moonbows have been mentioned at least since Aristotle's *Meteorology* (circa 350 BC) (*Wikipedia)*

Moonbow viewing

Moonbows are most easily viewed when the moon is near to full (when it is brightest). For true moonbows, other than those produced by waterfalls or sprays, the moon must be low in the sky (less than 42 degrees and preferably lower) and the sky must be dark. And, of course, there must be rain falling opposite the moon. This combination of requirements makes moonbows much more rare than rainbows produced by the sun.

As I promised in COUNTERCLOCK # 5, 13 years ago, I would wait until Waldemar Kumming has had his chance to publish Sam J Lundwall's speech at Trinity in MUNICH ROUND UP. He probably did so, 12 years ago. MRU is not likely to be available online any time soon, so in its own right, it still makes sense to publish it here:

"THE HOUSE OF SCIENCE FICTION"
Sam J Lundwall's speech in Dortmund 1999

Liebe Freunde, In my first book about science fiction, published in the US 30 years ago as "Science Fiction – What It's All About", which was a title promising a lot more than I or anyone could deliver, of course, I had a chapter in which I described the science fiction community as a club room in which the various gangs were hanging around in their own little groups, detesting each other, while the sort of people known in the field as academics crawled around on the floor, making notes and being kicked at by everyone. Since then, Brian Aldiss has done his own version of this as the SF State, which probably is a better description of the community. However, I'll stick to my own version.
I suggested then, and I suggest ot now again, that the science fiction community is like a select club – but not too select, mind you, things are no longer like in the good old days when science fiction – and I quote my only friend Brian Aldiss - *was written by Englishmen and Americans, and not by foreigners and women* – it is like a club, then, where the venerable old men in the reading room have sat and slept in their mouldering easy-chairs since the early twenties, with **Amazing Stories** and **Astounding Science Fiction** over their white heads and with big mahogany-coloured drinks close by; this is the Old Guard, which reads their science fiction with the emphasis on **science**, expecting nothing in the way of purely literary merits and, consequently, getting nothing of the sort. Every deviation from the rule of scientific, or pseudo-scientific accuracy is a sin against all decency. The lovers of space opera are huddled beyond enormous piles of publications with garish covers and titles like **Mushroom Men of Mars**, **Kapitän Mors and**

His Strato-Blasters etc, and follow with glowing eyes the latest super-scientific adventures of the glonous space fleet in the Crab Nebula, where green monsters of the most atrocious sort are plotting against the American Way of Life. Atomic blasters blast, heroines cry, aliens die horribly by their billions and space ships leap in and out of hyperspace like frightened hens.

Right by, one can discern the horror lovers with their blood-curdling **Weird Tales** and **Tales from the Crypt** and H P Lovecraft. European visitors to this group might be more fond of E.T.A Hoffmann. They are a small and persecuted minority, far from loved by others in the club.



The Fantasy and Sword & Sorcery groups are crowded together in a small room behind the reading room, from which they look spitefully out at the sleeping gentlemen, thoughtfully fingering their gleaming broadswords. They used to be a minority, but are now a rapidly growing group in search of **lebensraum**; look out for them. Formerly a massive male chauvinist pig group, they have lately attracted ladies who write a lot about thinking dragons and charming princes and fatherly magicians and the like. The princess always end up marrying her prince, or occasionally the magician, or both, but not until at least ten fat volumes of the series have sold in huge numbers. All these ladies are charming and beautiful and look exactly like Tanith Lee, which is regarded as very unfair by members outside this particular group.

The group of social reformers sit by the window looking at the outer world, exchanging views on future over-population, the food crisis, pollution, Where and Whence etc, anxiously watched by the H G Wells phalanx which stands somewhere between the reading room and the windows and doesn't know exactly where they belong.

The New Wave advocates keep themselves company out in the cloakroom. This is a collection of bearded and long-haired persons who experiment with new literary forms; they are loud and bothersome and do not have deference for anything, not even for the founder of the club, old Uncle Gernsback, a gentleman from Luxemburg who saved European science fiction by exporting all the worst parts of it to North America and making it stay there, and they are regarded with deep distrust by all other members of the club except by the young ladies who write about thinking dragons and charming princes. Some of them are said to be supported financially by the Establishment. The members of the science fiction community are deeply worried.

Now, this is a game if you will, a joke; but like all jokes there is something else to it. I could add that all the members in the club described above are colonists, like the Europeans in South Africa or America who barged in with their guns and drove the inhabitants away in order to take things for themselves. Things have now got so far that anthologies modestly are calling themselves "The World's Best Science Fiction", which would seem to imply some pretentions to international selections, can and must only contain stories by Anglo-American writers, and "World Science Fiction Conventions" are an exclusive North American thing, very occasionally taking a brief trip to foreign W.A.S.P. cousins.

This club, then, which now is an exclusive White Anglo-Saxon Protestant enclave, once upon a time had other members, and the house itself was very different. Other languages were spoken in the reading room, and other works were being read and admired. Other heroes were toasted by other people. In short, the science fiction club is not quite what it used to be. Maybe it never was; maybe it is a much better club now, livelier and more interesting; maybe the old club was not very active when it existed, only an occasional shape crept through its halls and corridors in the good old days, an occasional Cyrano de Bergerac or Kurd Lasswitz or Camille Flammarion or Maurus Jokai or Jules Verne, nothing like the boisterous life of today. I think it is only fair to point out that the glories of the old club were few and far between, and many of its members were people we would not care to be seen with today. Let's face it: the club was dying on its feet, the new Yankee tenants got it going again.

However, like in South Africa, and Israel, and America, the original population, the aborigines as it were, are not quite exterminated; they are still around somewhere out there, although of course not in the exuivalents of Shatila or Suweto, or the various American Indian reservations. Although I must say that the natives have been given the equivalent of the American smallpox blankets, in the form of American space opera. On the other hand, they have retaliated, and terribly so, with Perry Rhodan, the Jackhammer of the Universe. They are not persecuted, they are mostly ignored, but most kindly so, and sometimes favoured natives are let into the WASP reading room, to entertain and astound, and to drink with the best of them, as I once was. They have their own wing in the club building, which actually is much bigger than the Anglo-American part, although of rather bad repute and very badly kept. Let me tell you a little about

this wing, for which I have a natural fondness, being one of its native inhabitants.

What was not mentioned in the US edition of my book, was this European wing of the House of Science Fiction. That was a pity, since this European wing, although somewhat rundown, a pale shadow of its former glory, is now being renovated, with new furniture, nice hangings, light fittings in solid gold and portraits of local heroes, known only to the members of this illustrious wing. People like Antonio Sant'Elia, Maurus Jokai, Kurd Lasswitz, Otto Witt, the Rosny brothers, Ingeniere Silvestri, Kapitän Mors, Miroslav Krleza and Adrian Rogoz, even a small portrait, covered with flyspecks, of a former European hero, a Luzemburgian emigrée named Otto Gernsback, which no one toasts these days. I might add that there is one more portrait, hanging in the men's room, of Clark Darlton, probably the most widely read sf author in the world; and the walls of this cosy room are all covered with uncountable thousands of his books.

Now, the European wing is a strange little place, full of winding corridors that sometimes lead nowhere, sometimes to strange rooms, some of which have been forgotten for hundreds of years, for the best of reasons, like the Albanian room, about which people sometimes whispered but to which no one seemed to know the way until Brian Aldiss visited it a few years ago after which everything changed rapidly and the place is now run by NATO. Some of these rooms smell, some offer pleasures for the flesh tasted only by those who are in the know. These are the sort of rooms where you knock three times on the door and whisper the password: **Restif de la Bretonne**, or **Tommaso Marinetti**, or maybe **High Heels Space Boot Lovers of the World, Unite!** Very few foreigners know about these strange little nooks and crannies, except maybe Forry Ackerman, who knows everything and occasionally can be seen in dim and mouldy corridors, staggering under the weight of dim and mouldy books filled with dim and mouldy ideas, and Harry Harrison, who is at home everywhere and simultaneously and who as a matter of fact with Brian Aldiss has added a Chinese wing to the building, where mao tais are served by the local headmaster, Wang Fenzheng. There are lofty towers and balconies where Finns and Armenians and Bulgarians breathe the clear, crisp air without ever being visited by anyone, and there are dank, dripping dungeons where nameless writers sit chained to the walls, churning out nameless science fiction novels that are mercifully forgotten as soon as they have been published. We have a Greek room, which is run by the Americans, of course, at the moment Judy Blish; and the Turkish room, which is run by an army general, and the Polish room, which is a labyrinth run by everyone and his brother. There is the Spanish room, which has been turned into a Playboy club, and the Portugese room, very depraved and interesting, and the Belgian room, not very depraved, where it always rains and reisstafl is served at all times. There is the Belorussian room, from which jeans-clad figures occasionally emerge, take a terrified look around and withdraw again, and the Swedish room, far away in a corner, where people sit on the stone floor watching old Bergman films and talking about death and where liquor is so expensive not even the science fiction authors can afford to get drunk. One should tread carefully in this part of the wing, for it is a treacherous land, with unexpected trapdoors and staircases which might, or might not, bear your weight, especially not after having spent some time in the well-lighted and air-conditioned Anglo-American part of the building, where one tends to get fat and drunk and oblivious to one's surroundings.

What we have here, in short, is a labyrinth of long disused rooms, mostly in bad repair, inhabited by people who sometimes also are in bad repair. Some parts are in better shape than others, though, like the Jug Bar, manned day and night by Krsto Mazuranic and his bearded Sfera friends, now a bit rundown for lack of funds, serving things you don't want to know too much about. Close to this room, but with carefully locked doors, is the French room, shaped like a French letter, or a Chapeau Noir, as it is known there. No one knows very much what is going on in there, except the French look very smug and self-satisfied when they occasionally venture out. It is known that they have a Jules Verne suite, filled with innumerable French editions of the master's works, but no translations; and a Pierre Versins suite, to which there is no door at all.



There is also the Russian room, of course, with portraits of Konstantin Tsiolkovsky and the Strugatsky brothers, and stocked with innumerable vodka bottles; and the Czech room, which is actually the Capek room, but which I understand is now slowly being taken over by the young turks who are attempting to change it to the Zelazny room, much to the consternation of the older members. Close by is the Lem room, which is actually a small closet with a trapdoor for floor, manned by Franz Rottensteiner who never lets anyone in and, if one

should get in nevertheless, never lets him out again. I understand that Stanislaw Lem himself recently ventured in there, never to be seen alive again. Somewhere in the basement is the Hungarian room, also known as the Batman's Cave, after the Dynamic Duo, Peter and Peter, which resides there.

There is of course also the Italian room, which is a dining room, formerly down on its heels, a true dump, but now renovated, serving only the best Grappa and the best Montalcino wines. Singing and dancing is heard there at night, and portly men in black frocks are serving under the stern eye of the inscrutable maitre'd, signor Niccolazzini, who lately has become maitre'd of the general part of the building as well. The food is excellent, and the book cases are filled with **Fumetti par adulti**, which are much in demand by the guests.

However, and I am sorry I cannot tell you about all the fascinating rooms and closets in this strange house, the most frequented room in the house lately has been the German room, also fondly known as the Great Hall of the Teutonic Knights, or simply Der Bierkeller, with suits of armour around the walls, and gleaming rayguns, and portraits of Perry Rhodan and Atlan and all their friends. You might occasionally see a number of men with big black slouch hats running around defacing these noble portraits; they are the people of the German Science Fiction Times, plotting revolution. For the rest there is very little to see in this room, no other portraits, and not much memorabilia, in fact very little furniture at all except for the Heyne reading chairs, popular among the locals, this being a room where you either stand and drink, or lie flat on your face, thinking of the universe; only an enormous bar, the longest in the House of Science Fiction, behind which lurks things you have only dreamt of in your most uncompromising dreams.

I first came into contact with this fascinating corner of the House of Science Fiction more than 40 years ago, when I became a member of the SFCD, the Science Fiction Club Deutschland, whose pin I still proudly wear. It was a mighty serious place then, the members spent their evenings discussing space travel and the betterment of mankind, and giving stamp of approval to sf books published by equally serious publishers. Perry Rhodan was not yet the hero he was destined to become, and in a dark corner right by the door to the men's room was a small door unknown to most people, to which only Herr Doktor Herbert Franke had a key, leading to the DDR room, which in its turn led to a bewildering array of rooms completely unknown to the rest of the building – the Soviet, the Romanian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Polish, Cuban, Chinese et cetera rooms. As you may have noticed, things are a bit different now which pleases everyone and particularly the local members. I am happy to be here, among friends that I, in some cases, have known for far more years than I care to count and have learned to admire and respect; some beautiful, like Josef Nesvadba; some intelligent and famous, like Terry Pratchett; some both, like Tom Schlück and Wolfgang Jeschke; some who stand in a class of their own and can only be compared to themselves, like Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison. I have enjoyed this visit to the Bierkeller immensely, and it is not over yet. And besides, we'll be back. My German friends, you have made a marvellous addition to the House of Science Fiction. Thank you so much.

– Sam J Lundwall –

William M◔y Russell 1925-2006

I only had the privilege of running into Bill Russell once, over dinner with Jane and Brian Stableford in their home, in Reading, April 2001, but as some people do, he left a lasting impression. As an author he is widely unknown to the genre, but he did publish one novel: *The Barber of Aldebaran* which he wrote in 1954-55, but it wasn't published until 40 years later. Bill was many things, which you all can read about here in this excellent biography about him by Michael Balls, who knew him far better than I did: *http://altweb.jhsph.edu/wc6/paper1.pdf*

His most important contribution to this world, was perhaps *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique (1959) co*-written with Rex Burch and already published the year I was born.

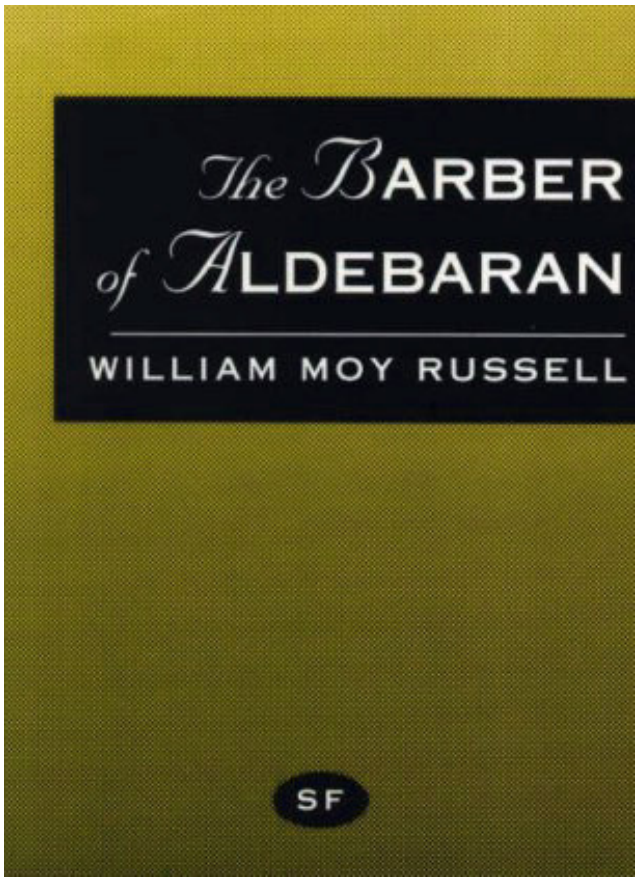


Bill 2006. There are many William Russells on wikipedia, but the one I care to remember… his article is yet to be written.

His ideas on how to reduce the amount of pain and distress suffered by animals didn't come true until many, many years later.

As I write this, more than a decade has passed. Bill is re-united with his wife Claire, who passed away two years before we met. I still remember him filking *Lili Marlene:*

"Underneath the arc light in the port of Mars,
Waiting to embark for the journey through the stars.
How can I bear to say goodbye?
Tomorrow I must do or die.
My own Lili Marlene,
Goodbye, Lili Marlene."
(W.M.S. Russell, in Reading, UK 13/4-2001)



THE BARBER OF ALDEBARAN

JANUS PUBLISHING COMPANY, ISBN 1 85756 129 5

This month's selection is the Barber of Aldebaran by William Moy Russell. A comic romance in the narrative style with flourishes of English wit and good tension between fantasy, fear and the grotesque. So, you can leave your serotonin uptake inhibitors in the drawer. Amusingly, the book's characters are often ideograms à la William S. You will understand what I mean when you see the psychiatrist is named Acastus (unstable) and the Herculean bully is Benz Edrin from a substance listed under sympathomimetics in your pharmacopoeia.

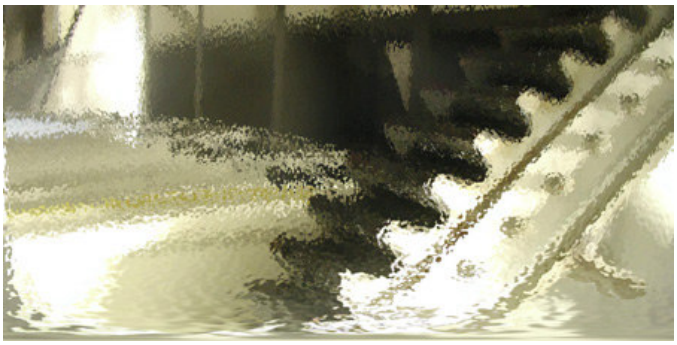
At first inspection I had dire expectations of yet another variant on the 'android finds his soul' theme, but was pleasingly disappointed in the lack of cliché and rhetoric. The title, reminiscent of Beaumarchais' Barber of Seville and the Marriage of Figaro, has little to do with the book. Russell's Figaro is not one of the innumerable scoundrelly valets you meet with going all the way back to Plautus and Aristophanes. Thankfully, we are spared the usual social comment. However, laudation is due for the explicitness of the moonshine mythology of Western civilization.

What went missing here is regrettably the 'eternal feminine'. The women portrayed are two-dimensional and hardly more than names. An author of Russell's erudition should be mindful that every forest of Arden needs a Rosalind, or at least a Beatrice.

On the whole a promising first attempt. Written some years ago "par amusement" or as the youthful author of Arcadia once said:"but a trifle… looking for no better stuff than, as in a haberdasher's shop…"

I look forward to latter efforts with great interest.

- Sidney W Hage -



Artwork: Wolf von Witting

EMBRYOLOGICAL SONG

W.M.S. Russell June 1947

(from the musical LIBERTY LAB, by Eric Crafts and W.M.S.Russell, performed in the DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY AND COMPARATIVE ANATOMY, Oxford)

Hear me unfold the substance of a dream;
Trailing its clouds of academic glory.
Attend to me, ontogeny's my theme:
Amphibians are the object of my story.

When the luckiest sperm has got into the germ
And the vitelline membrane is lifted,
The grey crescent in Rana could not make it plainer
That something or other has shifted.

'Neath the surface so placid the nuclear acid,
Combined with –SH groups essential,
And with proteins no doubt, is about to break out
Into morphogenetic potential.

Now as Dalcq has revealed there's a cortical field
And a gradient joins in the frolic,
But they are, be it noted, as Spemann once voted,
Particulate, not metabolic.

And the microsomes may be, if Spiegelman's baby
Need not be considered heretical,
In a serious grub strait competing for substrate
As plasmagenes – all hypothetical.

Now, these fancies ethereal would make a good serial,
But nothing I'm sure could be commoner,
So we'll drop speculation and take gastrulation
With all its attendant phenomena.

We'll pass over the labours of Vogt and his neighbours,
Whose patience was almost seraphical,
In construction fate-maps – I might mention perhaps
That their value is just topographical.

Gastrulation in fact is produced by the act
Of cell movement and not cell-division
And the main ones defined, though in nature combined,
Can be analysed out with precision.

But the timing and gears have evolved with the years,
So we find to our rapture and merriment
We can take them to pieces comparing the species
As well as, of course, by experiment;

For example the system in newt or Amblystom
Leaves mesoderm separate wholly
At first penetration, since invagination
Spreads down to the ventral lip slowly,

But in the Anura it starts prematurer,
  And all the plate mesoderm has to pour
To the endoderm tacked, in a bundle compact,
  Round the lateral lips of the blastopore.

But it's time to return to the questions that burn
  And approach the conundrum terrific,
If it's open to proof, in the early gut roof
  Is or ain't there a factor specific?

Something must penetrate the medullary plate
  And it may, vide Waddington, trickle back:
Now it's clear from the facts that tissue reacts
  To the liver or heart of the stickle-back:

There are other things too out of Holtfreter's brew,
  The old embryological wizard,
Such as grubs of Vanessa, whose action is lesser,
  Boiled earthworms and kidney of lizard,

And besides all the beasts we can even use yeasts –
  But the method has one limitation;
When the cells become nervous, it really won't serve us
  We never get organization.

So in spite of our list, if it doesn't exist,
  An inductor must needs be invented,
And we now concentrate on the neurula's fate –
  Purely formally here represented:

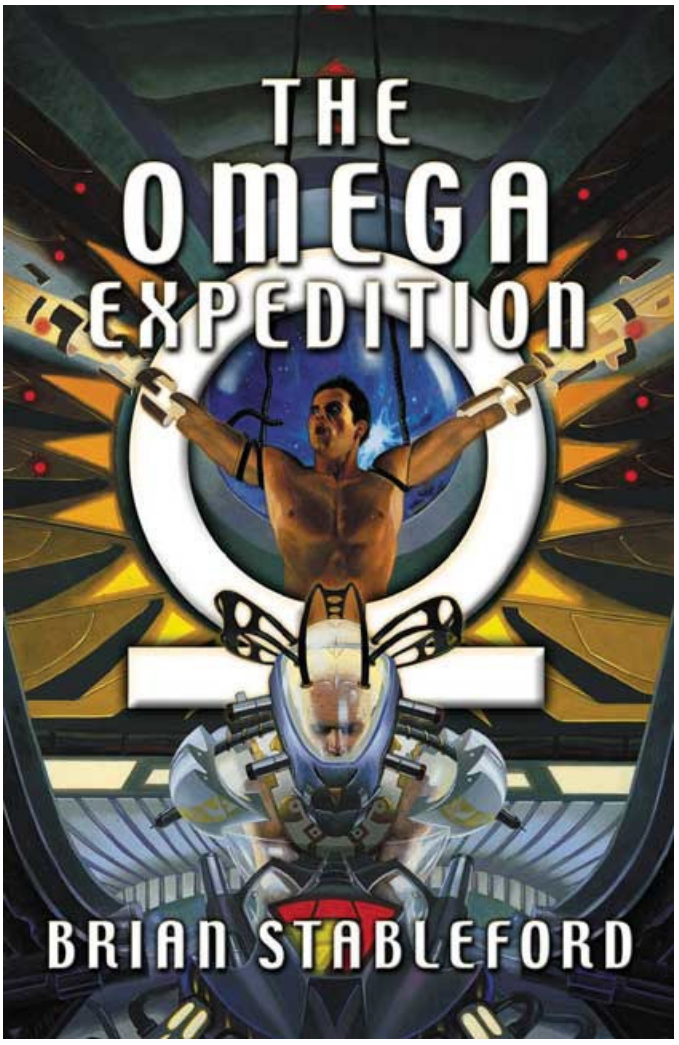
Well, to sketch out the parts organogeny starts;
For the notochord splits up the tail-bud in bits,
And the walls of the gut 'neath the notocord shut,
And the somites begin to form muscle and skin,
And the coelom is cleft on the right and the left,
And the brain bulges out, and the vesicles sprout,

But it must be confessed that the cells of the crest
Have forgotten what Hackel intended.
But the embryo's past, and it's larval at last,
And the way has been long, ditto ditto my song,
And, thank goodness, they're both of them ended!

- W.M.S. Russell -

We parted that evening in Reading after having tasted some of the most delicious ice cream I ever ingested in all my life made by Jane Stableford (and I can say this even after having been living in Italy for nearly five years). Bill died end of July in 2006. After it the Solar System was no longer the same. *The good guys* on this planet we call Earth had been reduced by one man, and immediately (in August) the local star system was reduced to only 8 planets. Now with 5 new dwarf planets instead (one of which previously had been an asteroid, Ceres).

And the Years Roll by
2001 – September 11th , no comment
2002 – June 4th – The planetoid Quaoar is discovered orbiting the Sun in the Kuiper belt.
2003 – May 28th – Prometea, the first horse cloned by Italian scientists, is born.
2004 – January 4th. NASA's MER-A (*Spirit*) lands on Mars at 04:35 UTC.
2005 – January 5th, Discovery of ERIS.
2006 – August 24th. Solar System redefined.
2007 – September 7th CoClock-Editor moving to Italy.
2008 – March 19th Arthur C Clarke goes beyond the rim.



THE OMEGA EXPEDITION by Brian Stableford
Tor Books ISBN 0-765-30169-5

With three out of the five previous books in Stableford's Emortality saga in the shelf, *Inherit the Earth, Architects of Emortality and The Cassandra Complex* (missing book 3 and 5, The Fountain of Youth, Dark Ararat), I still had a fair chance to successfully absorb the final and to me most interesting installment.
In the year 2000 I translated Brian Stableford's short story AND HE NOT BUSY BEING BORN into Swedish. It was my best translation ever, because I loved the story. At the time, I had no idea that this particular story from the *SEXUAL CHEMISTRY* collection marked a new era in Brian's writing. I also had no idea that it would become part of the grand finale to this very long tale.
In the Acknowledgments, page 7 in the hardcover edition I was practically *challenged* by Brian who believed I would *approve of the ending for all the wrong reasons*.
Well… challenge accepted. I read the book. It was a rather heavy task. Not only because my eyesight no longer is what it used to be... I was grabbed by the story, I have to admit that. But then things got a bit more complicated and I have to confess that some of it was above my horizon of understanding. And when I had finished the book, I was just as confused as Brian likes me to be. Problem is, I can't say that I disapprove of the ending, because I do not. It is hard for me to have an opinion, when I feel that my brain has been short circuited, which the Omega Expedition did to me.

So, I have to conclude that I am simply not intelligent enough. I know I am not a complete idiot, but I also have to recognise that I am not half as clever as I thought I was. Well, ok… maybe half. But not bright enough.
Sorry, Brian, but I didn't get it.
I therefore have to pass on the challenge to YOU, my dear reader. If you have the feeling that your mind is well trained, then it probably is. Help me out here. Give me a good reason to disapprove of the ending.

It's not that I have given up on the Emortality books. When I have my new glasses, I might give it (all of it) a second go, because on the whole I do enjoy reading Brian's work a lot. I like his characters and his ideas.
Maybe I was just tired or confused by life in general. But I still wear that sheepish look on my face: "What!?"

MY VERY OWN LACK OF PROGRESS

When I think about the book I have been trying to write, my mind is *sicklied o'er with the* pale *cast of thought*. And I stare at **The Blank Pages** (latest working title) of my novel, almost amused over the accuracy of its title. And my *enterprise of great pitch and moment, with this regard their currents turn awry, and lose the name of action.*
I know exactly what I want it to be. I know exactly how the story begins, what comes in the middle and how it ends. I had to think about the ending for half a year before I found an acceptable, and not only acceptable but satisfying end. It was going to take off like Kafka and come down like Stanislaw Lem (in my personal feeling about these authors, not in the quality of their writing).
I have written and rewritten it over and over. I just don't seem to get it right.
At some point I actually gave up. Ironically, it was exactly in the *wrong* moment I decided to give up. If there is such a thing as right or wrong moments. I gave up when I had *the most time* to make progress. Instead I wasted my time having a good life and not worrying at all. On the other hand, maybe I needed this time to wash my brain. I need an audience. I need feedback. So Counterclock is the perfect battleground for all my doubts.
From the bottom of the pit, there is only one way to go.
Then I recalled all the wise words I collected, to aid me in this task. *"THE WAY TO WRITE SF"* by the master himself; Brian Stableford, or *"A professional writer is an amateur who didn't quit!"* (Richard Bach) The wise words spoken by Edward James at Conversation in Stockholm, when he quoted Robert Heinlein on how to become a successful writer: *"Finish the book!"*
Or the most recent discoveries of wisdom on writing: *"I believe you need to write a million words of crap before you get it right."* by screenwriter Simon Moore and finally what pushed me over the most recent cliffs of inertia, when Roberto Quaglia said: *"Writing is a balance act between self-deception and self-criticism. You have to tell yourself you are working on a masterpiece, while you are fully aware that it is not."*
So, if you ask me, how is it proceeding with my book? I just would like to say, do me a favour and read CoClock instead. Because as long as I am sitting here, typing, it means I am working on it. I finish one issue and then I take on the next task. And the next. I'm not ready yet, but I hope I will be. Some day. – Wolf von Witting –



The things we leave behind. *Photo by Wolf von Witting, contemplating at Narva in 2001.*

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