

Editorial – Wow – 100 issues! It's been a slow start to the year, but hopefully, this will help me to gain some momentum in getting new releases out...

I'm currently looking at submissions for **Awen** and **Bard**, then will be looking at stories for **Monomyth**. Next up will be a new volume of **The Dark Tower**, so why not send some tower-related poetry or flash fiction my way?

And, remember, online issues of **View From Atlantis** have been appearing regularly and haiku continue to be added to **The 5-7-5 Haiku Journal**. So, why not submit some haiku and check out what the next theme for **View** is...

Best,

DJ Tyrer,
Editor

The **Atlantean Publishing Blog** (including PDFs, prices and guidelines) is at :

<https://atlanteanpublishing.wordpress.com>

Visit the **wiki** at

<https://atlanteanpublishing.fandom.com>

Tigershark ezine

30 issues are available for free.

Submissions to issue 31 close at the end of the month!

To download the current issue or all previous issues for free, visit the website

<https://tigersharkpublishing.wordpress.com/home/issues-of-tigershark-ezine/>

DJ Tyrer's **One Vision** remains available!

Available now!

Journ-E

issue one

Over 250 pages celebrating pulp fiction, poetry and non-fiction in the categories of Adventure, Detection and Mystery, Fantasy, Horror and the Supernatural, and Science Fiction.

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<https://mindseye.us.com/JOURN-E/>

View From Atlantis

now has 45 issues of genre poetry online with more coming soon...

<https://viewfromatlantis.wordpress.com/>

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Submit upto 5 poems (<40 lines) to The Pen via post (include SSAE) or email.

<http://thepoetbandcompany.yolasite.com>
thepoetbandcompany.blogspot.com
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Sample: \$4 (USA) / \$8 (RoW)
PayPal: givemequality@yahoo.com
Cheque: Arthur C. Ford, P.O. Box 4725,
Pittsburgh, PA 15206-0725 (USA)

5-7-5 Haiku Journal

The new webzine from Atlantean Publishing, which celebrates the 5-7-5 syllable form of haiku. Submissions are welcome via the editorial email address with 5-7-5 Submission in the subject line.

<https://575haikujournal.wordpress.com/>

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Copies of **The Supplement** are available for a SAE in the UK and £2/€4 in Europe and £2.50/\$5 RoW.

Available as a PDF for **free** from the blog.

Please note that we take no liability for cash sent through the post. Sterling cheques and postal orders must be payable to **DJ Tyrer**.

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Available Now
From Atlantean Publishing

The Dark Tower Volume 8: Doomfall

Dominated by a wonderful, macabre fantasy poem by Harris Coverley, this volume features the title poem by Christopher Catt James, and other poems by Aeronwy Dafies, DS Davidson, AC Evans, and DJ Tyrer.

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In Appreciation of... Old-School Paperbacks

By Harris Coverley

I've never understood people's fascination with hardcover books as the absolute zenith of literary class. *First editions* I get, but just any old hardback? No—too tall, bulky. When reading in bed the bottom of their spine digs into your sternum like a dead man's angry thumb. They absorb dust which is then hard to flick or wipe away, stuck in hardened crevices.

No, hardbacks can bugger off, as can most contemporary paperbacks, with their unspirited, characterless washes of colours taken from the palette of those generic paintings you buy in furniture stores.

The great era of paperbacks, in Britain at least, both in art and production, runs from the close of World War Two through to the end of the 1980s. Corgi, New English Library, Fontana, Pan, Panther, Granada, Sphere, Grafton, Picador, and numerous others, including the various divisions of Penguin and Oxford University Press, produced an infinite number of incredible editions of works ranging from Homer and Ovid up to the New Wave of Speculative Fiction, modern thrillers, and the best of the Horror Boom, along with both classic and radically new monographs in history, sociology, philosophy, political theory, natural science, and virtually every other subject, not to mention collections of poetry and essays stretching back through the centuries. For as little as twenty pence a working individual could own a piece of ancient literature, or the selected verse of Pope, or Solzhenitsyn's account of his gulag trauma, or a cheap edition of the craziest science fiction coming out of the United States—whatever took their fancy. Self-education and self-enlightenment was never easier or more accessible to the masses.

Now, of course, there are many a great American paperback too—Avon, Four Square, the later Ace Books series, DAW, Del Ray, Ballantine naturally—and a number of the publishers I've mentioned in the previous paragraph were on both sides of the Atlantic, but

and I believe this is not just down to provincial chauvinism, British paperbacks one feels just have that little extra *edge* of character that American paperbacks do not. This is not a “scientific” analysis as much as it is a deep sentiment of the gut and the eye.

Today, often retailing for a pound or less in dusty bookholes, on market stalls, and the corners of charity shops (one place I know does *three for a quid*), these volumes remain tough suckers. They may have browned and yellowed with age, but at fifty or sixty years old, in what was supposed to be a disposable format, they have held up against decades sat on the shelves, gravity and air working away, being read and re-read, tossed from hand to hand, surviving countless wars, terrorist attacks, privatisations, re-nationalisations, pandemics, climate change, and England's perpetual inability to get anywhere in world football.

That lightly tart sweet smell, occasionally reminiscent of nicotine, is the absorption of history, not to mention the graffiti of previous owners. My Penguin edition in beautiful orange borders of G.K. Chesterton's *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* still has the dedication to its original owner in pencil, which reads: *Michael Atkins, July 1946*. Is this a mere declaration of ownership? Or is it the presentation of a gift? Or, maybe, the recording of one? Any which way, the book is a portal into the immortal universe of another man's life...what a voyeuristic (yet clean) joy!

These books exist as a culture *unto themselves*. They are as literature was supposed to be read by the masses. They are comfortable to be held, resilient to most things, and adorned with art that conveys the *soul* of the work within even if it is not exactly true to the plot or the subject matter.

Take for example the 1999 Vintage Books edition of Thomas M. Disch's *Camp Concentration*. It is a fair enough representation of the dehumanisation present within the novel, but conveys none of the wit, irony, and dark humour within, nor Disch's playfulness or depth of references. Contrast it with the wonderful 1969 Panther edition: a white, empty backdrop, and beneath stark black titles, the silhouette of a man filled with circuits and gears in a Rube Goldberg fashion. It perfectly conveys both the tragedy and comedy, hinting at the loss of freedom weighted against the profundity of the individual, while making it clear there is something quite farcical going on at the same time.

Most contemporary book covers often go for a stark emotive image, if they go for anything *humanistic* at all. One could argue that book artists in the sixties and seventies, even though they often worked under great pressure, took more time to truly *understand* the works they were assigned to embody.

Sometimes, the representation did not work, and we end up with something like the cover of the 1973 reprint of John Wyndham's collection *Jizzle* from New English Library—the absurd vision of a tram rolling into the horizon of a dirt desert, underneath what appears to be a red-orange mushroom cloud giving birth to a jawless skull. But even here, the sheer *bizarreness* transcends itself, and it becomes a hysterically kitsch depiction of inescapable doom. In being so ridiculous, it somehow becomes *serious* again with its nihilism and despondency.

It all makes me nostalgic for a past I never lived in. In the 2020s, there is still no better (or cheaper) way to read the great works—the online markets are full of them, as are the few remaining but still stuffed-to-the-brim second hand bookshops.

Get your spare change a-rattling, and indulge!

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Exploration

By Aeronwy Dafies

The explorer passes
Beyond the known world
Past the boundary of knowledge
Into the world of the Other
Unknown
Seeking the same
Seeking fame and fortune
Their name recorded
As an annotation on a map
A record
An indication
A vindication
Of their adventure
Replacing 'Here Be Dragons'
With 'Kilroy Was Here'

Originally published in *Tigershark*

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We want you articles, reviews,
information, opinions, and letter of
comment for future issues!

Letters of Comment

Dear DJ,

Congratulations on, and thanks for, the ninety-ninth edition of the always enjoyable and informative **Supplement**.

Paul Murphy's full page-length article on Sophie Taeuber-Arp was highly informative of a long-neglected artist. One wonders how many 'newly discovered artists' from the past await such rediscovery? The final paragraph is a poignant reminder that at all times we walk on the razor's edge of existence.

Your own *The Imperium, Right or Wrong* recalls the **Catcher in the Rye** phenomenon in the U.S. during the 1980's. Always controversial (mostly because of so-called 'harsh' language) and subject to censorship, J.D. Salinger's seminal fifties teen-angst novel came in for fresh criticism in the eighties when its hero, Holden Caulfield, was cited as 'inspiration' for the assassin of John Lennon and would-be assassin of President Ronald Reagan, as well as the murderer of actress Rebecca Schaeffer.

Reading the novel for the first time in the late eighties, I kept waiting for some great revelation that never came. There is simply nothing there that could inspire anyone with a grip on reality to commit any act of violence... let alone murder! Yet the taint of that long-ago controversy clings to the novel to this day. The writer/painter/director/creator cannot completely control, or be held accountable for, how the public (or individual members thereof) interprets or is inspired by their work.

Best Wishes,
David Edwards

The Editor Replies – I had much the same reaction to *The Catcher in the Rye*, a surprise disappointment given all the hype – although I would highly recommend **In Search of J.D. Salinger** by Ian Hamilton; the author proves a fascinating enigma, far more interesting (to me) than his novel.

Dear DJ,

Perusal of **T'Supplement #99** has provided more food for thought than the stick of chocolate lodged in an ice-cream that its name suggests. (This is just as well, given my recent diabetic

status.) Indeed, I may be on the verge of promulgating a theory.

Your *Imperium* piece had me thinking that nothing is effective against a fixed idea. Right-wing obsessives are so desperate to corroborate their views that no amount of disclaimers will dissuade them. It's the childhood attitude that if you can get enough people to agree with you, then what you say must be true. *Imperium* looks like it agrees with them, so any claims of 'satire' can be ignored, or simply taken as the games company covering itself. The right-wingers have already decided what they are going to believe, and that's that.

Jumping to AC Evans's mighty catalogue of *The Aftermath of Enlightenment*, his Jung quote that "all art intuitively apprehends coming changes in the collective unconscious" has me thinking of the new/emerging epoch in which social media plays such an influential part. One person's fixed idea can become the fixed idea of the many at the click of a mouse. The classic case of the schizophrenic who thinks aliens are communicating through the radio starts with something half-heard that suggests a vague idea. Then comes a coincidentally repeated word. Suddenly every other word broadcast is 'evidence' that the aliens are real. So with all these conspiracy theories. Someone goes online reporting that 'they' say the Covid vaccine will release nano-bots into the bloodstream. Someone else has heard 'them' say something else. Soon speculation is replaced by certainty and a fixed idea is gathering more and more 'evidence' like the proverbial giant snowball.

My theory, then, is that the collective unconscious is going to be split into a thin layer of rationality constantly shouted down by a thick insane mass totally committed to the paranoid imaginings of unaccountable social media addicts. If art hasn't 'intuitively apprehended' this, it's about time it did. Maybe the aliens already have. Stay tuned.

By contrast, Paul Murphy's *Sophie Taeuber-Arp* review was cool, calm and collected. I'm not sure how easy it would be for the artist to treat fine art and applied art as equally important. I think when you start signing things you're really treating them as fine art. The acid test would be remaining detached when your 'practical' artwork is allowed to suffer everyday wear-and-tear - dogs allowed on the embroidered cushions, for instance. I guess it depends on each

artist's temperament.

Harris Coverley's reviews were most engaging. I don't think I'd fancy the *Clinton Baptiste* experience, but reading about it was just fine. Conversely, I'd really have liked to be at the *Graham Gouldman* gig. Harris's enthusiasm is warmly infectious.

Here's to **T'Supplement** reaching its ton.

Yours, watching the madness congeal,

Neil K. Henderson.

The Editor Replies – It's great to have you both here for this milestone!

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A new offering from CRM Enterprises for 2022

Celine Rose Mariotti is offering **Zodiac** necklaces with either a silver plated pewter charm-flat-round with sign and symbol **or** antique gold-plated charm-flat-round with sign and symbol and name of the Zodiac sign spelled out with alphabet beads.

Also along with the necklace she will write a short story based on the Zodiac sign and will autograph the story for you.

Pricing:

Necklace and charm:

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Time spent writing	\$12.00
Sub-total:	\$28.50

Ct sales tax: \$1.80
(Only Ct residents pay sales tax)

Postage:

USA	\$4.50
UK	\$13.00

Total:

USA	\$33.00 (CT: \$34.80)
UK	\$41.50

If you have any questions or would like to place an order, please contact Celine at: celinem@aol.com

Sydney Poitier: In Memoriam, two films

By David Edwards

Academy Award-winning actor Sydney Poitier passed away on January 6, 2022 at the age of 94. In addition to his pioneering work in the arts (the first black man to win a Best Actor Oscar) Mr. Poitier will be remembered as a philanthropist, human rights activist, diplomat, and a gentleman who always presented himself in public with quiet dignity and grace.

He received many accolades over the years, in addition to two Academy Awards (one for Lifetime Achievement) including three Golden Globes, a Kennedy Center Honor, The US Presidential Medal of Freedom, Lifetime Achievement awards from the American Film Institute, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, and the Screen Actors Guild, as well as an Honorary Knighthood of the British Empire. But his greatest honour must be the universal respect and reverence with which he was held at his passing.

On screen he will always be remembered for his outstanding performances in a string of film classics: **Cry the Beloved Country, Blackboard Jungle, The Defiant Ones, A Raisin in the Sun, Lilies of the Field, A Patch of Blue, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?, In the Heat of the Night, and To Sir with Love.**

I encourage Supplement readers to take a look at two lesser-known Poitier films to get a fuller appreciation of his work: **The Bedford Incident** is a taut 1965 Cold War thriller filmed in stark black-and-white by director James B. Harris. A US Navy ship on patrol in the North Atlantic/Arctic plays a cat-and-mouse game with a Soviet submarine as visiting photo-journalist Poitier engages in an intellectual and moral battle of wills with the ship's nearly monomaniacal captain (played by Richard Widmark). As tension builds the ship's crew begins to crack. Hold on for the sudden, shocking climax.

Brother John is a 1971 James Goldstone- directed film best described as a Southern Gothic mystery/fantasy. Poitier plays the titular prodigal son returning, after many years absence, to his hometown for his sister's funeral. His presence seems to further unbalance the town's already shaky equilibrium, given the era's racially-charged atmosphere. Is he an outside agitator? A spy? A ghost? The Angel of Death? Or something else

entirely? Only the retired physician (played by Will Geer) who presided at his birth seems to grasp his real significance. The ending, with almost perfect abeyance, implies much yet reveals little.

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Fear of the Dark Some Thoughts by AC Evans

Fear of the Dark is a Modernistic tendency in culture and the arts that rejects subjectivist forms and movements such as Confessional Poetry, the workings of the Lyric Ego and Romantic Individualism more generally.

Fear of the Dark is a phobic fear of introversion and inwardness, sometimes disguised by would-be ascetics with moral arguments against 'self-indulgence', 'egotism', the 'worship of false gods' or 'ivory tower' aestheticism. In truth Fear of the Dark is a fear of the psychic depths, fear of the uncanny, fear of the Shadow and the shadow world, fear of the dark-side.

Anxious critics and commentators who suffer from Fear of the Dark tend to privilege the Apollonian over the Dionysian, the abstract over the figurative and to value the Classic over the Romantic. At the same time they promote high-brow ideas of 'elevated' taste, 'great' traditions and cultural superiority. This fear is sometimes projected onto the products of consumer society, of mass entertainment and mass production. Such products are often treated with disdain, defined as Kitsch, denigrated as 'decadence' or, even condemned as idolatry.

Radical nonconformists may well feel they are on an iconoclastic mission to cleanse the world of distracting images and the products of the imagination. However, as Jung says, the Shadow 'cannot be argued out of existence or rationalized into harmlessness'. Furthermore, this fear can also be transformed into hatred because it reminds us of our 'helplessness and ineffectuality' in the face of the unknown – hence the zealotry of puritans driven by a compulsive phobia – Fear of the Dark.

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Tell us what you think!

Review by Neal Wilgus

O These

By Wayne Hogan

33 poems and 9 drawings, plus cover art, 2019, \$12

I Would Also Like to Mention Biscuits and Gravy

By Carl Mayfield

19 poems, with drawings by Wayne Hogan, 2019, \$12

Both available from Carl Mayfield
PO Box 44472, Rio Rancho, NM 87124,
USA

Here are two poetry chapbooks that might leave you wondering. Wondering, for instance, why poet/artist Hogan tells us:

*There is no
way to know for
the time being, now.*

You might also wonder about Mayfield's observation in *Ike and Copper*:

*Names meant nothing to the horses.
They knew how long I would be seated.
When they looked at me there was
no distance between us,
no place to be someone else.*

Hogan's verse is haiku, both in the three-line format and in the thought it envelopes. Mayfield, in contrast, is a personal visit to his home state of Oklahoma in poems short on details, but full to the brim in memories and themes.

No wonder then that the poems quoted aren't meant to sum up what the poets have to say about life – there's so much more to tell. But, they are a hint of what you'll find if you decide to sample the work of two of the best poets you're likely to find these days. And, to top it all off, Hogan's unique and amusing drawings in both titles makes the thought of spending some time with these poets nearly irresistible.

It makes you wonder, doesn't it?

.....

Out Now

Lacerations

By Gary Beck

Lacerations is a poetry collection that looks at the many injuries we incur, mentally, emotionally and physically as we strive to do better in this difficult life.

104pp, pb, Cyberwit

ISBN:8182538993,

Available for \$15/£11.50 from [Amazon](#)

Reviews by Christine Despardes

A Poem for Jean Armour

By Cardinal Cox

Chydonax

By Cardinal Cox

The Folk Show 2:

A Tuppence for the Guy

By Cardinal Cox

For a copy of the each pamphlet while stocks last, send an SAE to him at 58

Pennington, Orton Goldhay,

Peterborough, PE2 5RB. You may also email him at cardinalcox@yahoo.co.uk

A Poem for Jean Armour is a dramatic piece written for theatrical production. The script is not long but neither is it flash drama.

The opening stage directions give permission for a great deal of flexibility.

This short drama consists of prose dialogue between four ladies (or fewer, if so desired by cast and crew) interspersed with four famous poems by Burns in their authentic Scots dialogue to be recited by a man on stage or off stage, if at all (per stage directions), which recitalist might or might not represent Burns himself.

The work can also be produced as a one-woman show with, hence, minimalised monologue, props and costumes.

From what I recall of Mr. Cox's cover letter to me – before I so maddeningly misplaced it – the script was originally intended as a one-woman recital by an associate of his, (possibly, unless I'm mistaken) Ms. Karen Westwood to whom he dedicates it.

My background research shows that the play's content is in agreement with the abundant historical documentation about Burns that is online. This work is no personal improvisation on a theme although ethereal subjects do insist themselves upon us throughout, like aural beauty and the power of love, family and respect.

Jean Armour was Robert Burns' wife and the love of his life, a mutual regard. Burns had infatuations (and a child) apart from Jean Armour. Where the characters discuss his infatuations, we observe that the 'other women' were

not near to Burns' heart and soul like Jean Armour was.

The old Scots dialect and its turns of phrase make the poems of Burns' a pleasure to read and re-read or, hear. They are *Love-Begotten Daughter*, *Highland Mary*, *Ae Fond Kiss* and *Of A' the Airts*.

Throughout the play, Burns says repeatedly to Jean, "I wrote a poem for you," a quiet, loving line to read and hear over and over.

Burns' lyrical gifts earned him the status of nearly a god, among the arts. He is everywhere, down to today, whose fame (and whose funeral) was so magnificent and so seriously taken that history will not allow us to ignore it.

We have a new work of quality and authenticity here, in search of recitalists or theatre groups who want to enhance their reputation by the quill of an author whose credibility is indisputable.

I awoke to a cooler day than the preceding ones, one week into fall. A sunbeam flashed through the windowpane to find me on my futon, stretching. It so warmed and energized me that my mind sought praise for it.

Lines I was reading two nights ago came to mind, from **Chydonax**, the closing couplet in the opening sonnet *Sun*,

*Noble globe fill our hours with gentle balm
Burnished heavenly disk receive our psalm.*

Chydonax is the druidic pseudonym William Stukeley (1687-1765) chose for himself, who inadvertently revived Roman era Druidry to modernity. English sonnets, terza rima, sestina and such balance this pamphlet's compact length nicely. Mr. Cox composes verse skilfully, ruthlessly, making mind and learning work, making quality amaze.

Here's the opening quatrain from *Sacrifices*:

*You have been judged by men, gods judge us all
Your life is forfeit, set by ancient law
If you have last words utter now your call
Before you leave life by a bloody door*

It's an ABAB rhyme scheme where *door* seems to rhyme better with *call* than *law*. Ingenious details like that abound, not to mention the unexpected images each verse 'paints'.

The pamphlet contains a non-fiction footnote under each verse that provides

confirmed facts about myth, ritual or the timeline of Druidry.

For example, *A priest arrayed in white vestments climbs the tree and, with a golden sickle, cuts down the mistletoe, which is caught in a white cloak*

With few exceptions, in each footnote, Mr. Cox counterposes a biographical note about William Stukeley's druidic activities to a note about what writers in antiquity have reported about druids, writers like Aristotle, Gaius Julius Caesar and Pliny.

Towards the end of the pamphlet, we come upon 'Initiation', a three-character flash verse drama in which two druids of rank guide a young initiate through vows that will culminate in his ascension to a higher rank.

The dialogue here is metered, made of accentual four-beat rhymed couplets, which gives more sacerdotal conviction than would conversational prose.

The oaths and prayerful protocol described in 'Initiation' exude strength and unfold in the reader's imagination like a live event.

In **Chydonax**, verses soar, even against Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, that I have playing quietly in the background.

We've met William Stukeley previously, in Cardinal's **Sack of Midnight** (2002), to whom the oeuvre is partly dedicated. We also meet him in **From the Hercynian Forest** (2019) that includes *Mid-Summer Morning* – a resplendent Italian sonnet of Druidic incantation – and the sonnet *William Stukeley*.

The cover drawing on **A Tuppence for the Guy** is captioned "REMEMBER REMEMBER" (the drawing of a... could that be a Straw Bear, from the Cardinal's Pennies in a Battered Hat fame!).

Well, this pamphlet of mostly verse may be a remembrance for the author, but this reader finds herself navigating the dimension of time-space in an otherworldly – possibly not entirely imagined – way.

Personalities who populate its sonnets and other verse forms are explained in the footnotes to be musicians Mr. Cox has seen perform, is a fan of, or has known personally and worked with in the Peterborough vicinity, like Nic Jones

and Billy Bragg.

A **Tuppence for the Guy** also contains *The Three Keys* and *The Three Daughters*, two short prose stories very suitable for reading aloud to an audience

I enjoy how varying the fixed form verse with prose makes the pamphlet a cosier, even more desirable possession.

The Folk Show 2 is like hand-held camera reportage of musical events across significant and numerous career experiences of Mr. Cox's (musician as well as literary artist) in the vicinity of Peterborough.

Ekphrasis describes a visual artwork verbally.

Mr. Cox renders a musical microcosm verbally here. We move in and out of a folk, folk rock and fusion timeframe through a variety of flashbacks.

The skill of verse composition gives precision and nuance that is quietly startling

For example:

*In the moonlight the road starts to
glisten is ominous and personal.
In an alcove where the shadows hang
black*

is information about an historical feat.

Such touches provide a frame of reference from which we can look at events that become important to us as readers, looking not from the outside in, but from the inside out.

That alcove line brings me to mention *A Sinti Band in Ruritania*, which I wasn't quite prepared for. It's four ABAB quatrains and my favourite piece in the pamphlet – partly because of the fact-checking journey it took me on through modern history.

*Here in the old square, when the Nazis came
They gathered all the Sinti they could find
...
The drunk cobbler kept a fiddle hidden
...
After the war returned it unbidden
...
Let it gather dust through Soviet years
...*

In the closing lines, tourists come to the old square now, where peasants play tunes on that violin,

Still no one wants them for where they have been.

I'm reading Norman Davies' **Vanished Kingdoms** and saw the word Ruritania in it, discovering that the place has never existed except for in the movie *The Prisoner of Zenda*.

One expects such magical ingenuity from Mr. Cox.

Several of his pamphlets are based on other worlds indeed, but this one – like others – is facts-based, where the magic lies more in skilled, outside-the-box verse composition than content.

Significantly, **The Folk Show 2** is dedicated to Ms. Viv Foster (who passed away in January 2021), the main organizer of the ongoing Peterborough and Fenland Poets United performance venue. Mr. Cox is the contact person for that monthly performance event.

Finally, I want to thank Cardinal for using an excerpt from my review of **Idylls of the Poet** on the back cover of this new pamphlet. It's such an honor to find review copies from him in the mail!

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The 'Game' goes on...

By Harris Coverley

It took two rounds of editing and a lot of tricky word and character-fiddling, but it at last reached its very much worthwhile conclusion: my short story "The Hour of Plywood Dreams" was accepted by the editor Robert Boucheron for the third issue of [Rivanna Review](#), publishing out of Charlottesville, Virginia, for March of this year—and I managed to keep my original title and all the British spellings to boot!

Not only is it yet another *paid* publication, but a cool \$100, my largest fee *ever* for any piece of written work, is coming my way...so why right now do I feel so *dispassioned*? I'm very grateful to Boucheron for working and being patient with me (also very grateful to the author and critic Scott Bradfield who recommended it on his vlog), and **Rivanna Review** is a fine looking journal – and I won't lie, the money sure will be nice. It is the archetypical excuse of the New York girlfriend: *it's not them, it's me...*

I can remember it clearly the first time I broke through the ceiling and was offered payment for a piece of fiction: it was May 2019, and Kevin Frost accepted my Victorian gothic horror story *The Instant* for **Curiosities**, at four cents

American a word, which at 2000 words exactly made for a grand total of \$80. I was exuberant – Sammy Hagar's *Winner Takes It All (Over the Top)* rang throughout the house.

In an interview with Jason Bougger of **Theme of Absence** done a month later I told him proudly of my achievement, followed immediately by Bougger's paid acceptance of *The Whistler* for his own site. I said my short term goal was a steady stream of further paid acceptances culminating hopefully with an honourable mention in one of the best-of anthologies, possibly even a reprinting.

Indeed, paid acceptances came, but not at the level of what Frost had paid. \$20 here, \$10 there, but many more were even smaller token, or straight up *pro bono*, for the 'exposure' they like to say.

My bibliography has swelled to more than seventy short stories published or scheduled to be so, but it all feels very hollow.

To be true, I like being paid – an editor actually parting with money shows that someone outside of myself has a level of faith in the work. However, two and a half years since *The Instant* was accepted, it feels as though I've already peaked.

I aim high, or even to the medium, and what I have almost always gets thrown back.

I have long said that my favourite piece of writing advice comes from Harlan Ellison: "Stop writing shit!" It figures that a lack of high-level acceptances must be in some way down to a weak prose style, poor self-editing, and a lack of characters that are interesting or relatable, as well as a forsaking of regular practice of the craft itself. This last point is a certain issue for me: I may often go two or three weeks between periods of writing any prose of any type. To quote another late and great, Ray Bradbury compared not writing for a writer to a pianist not practicing the piano: for the first day of not practicing, he notices a deterioration of skill; for the second day, his critics notice; for the third day, the audience notices (and he may very well be *done for* if he cannot properly recover).

Of course, in writing this very article, I am at least practicing some kind of prose writing. The problem is though that I am first and foremost a *fictionist*, and even this is a distraction based less on story-telling and emotion-forging than on the broadcasting of information and

opinion.

The most major failing to myself however must be that it is now the beginning of yet *another* year and I have *still* not written my first novel. I think if my May 2019 self met my February 2022 self he would be happy that I have kept the weight off, upset about the continued loss of hair, but would absolutely slap me for a lack of progress on this.

My new year's resolution for 2021 was to begin the annum with writing at least a short novella of say twenty- to thirty-thousand words, but not only did this not occur, my overall production of short fiction went down compared to previous year, and at least half a dozen stories remain uncompleted (even though each has their respective plots planned out thoroughly). On New Year's Day 2022, I did not even dare insult others or myself with a repeat offence.

Maybe this is the key? Even a failed novel is better than a further downward drop into a total dearth of productivity.

A lack of will is also a possibility – what's the point of trying to go on to greater heights when there is so much politicised conflict and witch-hunting within contemporary genre and literary fiction? But perhaps this is in itself just another excuse? One has heard a lot of horror stories though...

You can tell yourself the old tales: it took Charles Bukowski some three decades of writing before he could leave the soul-killing wage labour behind him. John Kennedy Toole killed himself because he could not get **A Confederacy of Dunces** published – when it finally was it won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Philip K. Dick ate dog food so he could avoid a 'proper job' and continue to write stories for the dying pulps (although Tom Disch insisted that Dick did such a thing as a performative, self-pitying, *woe-is-me* act). Knut Hamsun did not even have dog food money – he ended up eating his own flesh so he could continue to write in the most abject destitution, before even having to give that up to work as a deckhand on cargo ships.

Any which way, there are people who had it worse than you and who struggled for so long before finding any level of success. The suffering is part of the game. The only thing you can do is carry on, and be endlessly thankful to those

who believe in your work enough to give you any amount of cash for it.

The Carnival of the Absurd

A Note on James Ensor

By AC Evans

Throughout the *fin de siècle* period James Ensor, a founder member of the group *Les Vingt* (1883), produced a body of work revealing the problems of a mind preoccupied by a need to explore the mystical properties of light but haunted by an acute sense of personal outrage and persecution. In the mystical category are works like *Adam et Eve Chasses du Paradis* (1887) utilizing a loose 'broken colour' style derived from Impressionist *pleinairism*. In *Les Aureoles du Christ* (c1887) Ensor pursued the same theme and style in the medium of drawing.

Other works employed a caricatural, linear style derived from Rowlandson, Jaques Callot and Daumier. Many of these pictures appeared to constitute a critique of contemporary social injustices: *Les Bons Juges* (1891) exposed the corruption of the law, while *Les Gendarmes* (1892) appears to be an outspoken protest against military brutality. These examples were related to early Naturalist paintings like *Les Pochards (The Drunkards)* (1883), *Le Rameur* (1883) and *Femme en Detresse* (1882). However fantastic Ensor's style was to become it was firmly rooted in a documentary realism that implied a radical exposure or critique of social evils.

But such caricatures as *Au Conservatoire* and *Les Cuisiniers Dangereux (Dangerous Cooks)* (1896) were aimed in outrage against the critical establishment. In the latter picture one pompous 'cuisiner' is serving up the head of Ensor himself on a platter like John the Baptist with a notice reading 'Art Ensor' fixed to the top. In *Au Conservatoire* a group of amateur operatic singers are ruthlessly lampooned as they try to sing the *Hojotoho!* scene from Wagner's *Die Walkure*. The composer himself appears in a portrait suspended above the singers, fingers in ears. One feels that such satires were ultimately derived more from a sense of personal harassment and victimization

than from any balanced objective sense of 'social conscience'. This view is confirmed by other works of the same period such as *Demons Teasing Me* (1895) a portrait of the artist surrounded, like Saint Anthony, by demonic tormentors – the demon masters of initiation, horrific denizens of his own unconscious – poisonous growths engendered by his own overheated imagination.

One modern critic's observation that Ensor's 'sense of harassment was the product of a man menaced as much by his own psyche as by external forces' is confirmed by those works which retain the caricature mode but which cease to relate to any specific real (or imagined) enemies. These fantasies, where nightmare horror is mingled with a grotesque *guignol* humour, centered on recurring images of masks and skeletons. The masks probably signified the alienation of bourgeois society while the skeletons may be representations of the artist himself – images of his inner self: armored, emaciated and, ultimately, death-fixed. In a series of drawings called *L'Artiste Decompose* (c1886) he depicted himself with a skull head. The self-identification is reinforced by the well-known macabre caprice *Mon Portrait en 1960* (1880) which depicted a rotting corpse. In other pictures these skeletons engage in any number of urbane entertainments and diversions such as smoking cigars, studying chinoiseries, playing the flute and painting pictures. Some are shown consorting with masked Pierrots.

Ensor's definitive statement depicted the entire world as an absurd carnival. This was the monumental *Entry of Christ Into Brussels* (1888), a synthesis of mysticism and caricature, which he also produced as an etching in 1898. In this work, which depicts a procession of masked figures escorting Jesus beneath a red banner carrying the slogan '*Vive la Sociale*', Ensor concentrated a set of contradictory ideas. The picture contains a mass of 'clues', which, whilst referring to contemporary sociopolitical themes, serve to obscure rather than clarify the

meaning. Marchers carry banners with enigmatic slogans such as ‘Colmans Must Art’, ‘Phalange Wagner Fracassant’ or ‘Les Vivesecteurs Belges Insensibles’. These are no help to the observer in his quest for interpretation.

Some critics like John David Farmer have asserted the impossibility of assigning consistent or positive meanings to this painting. The caricature mask-faces, the gangling figures with their absurd slogans, costumes and postures, the anachronism of the theme endow the image with a demonic power. It is an image of non-signification – a chaos of semiotic excess – the nightmare vision of a world where meaning is undercut by the absurd – a world behind the mask of normality – a world which Austin Spare termed ‘the inferno of the normal’.

The *Entry of Christ Into Brussels*, which the artist (who was eventually made a baron) used as the backdrop for an official photographic portrait of himself, remains an accurately observed rendition of a particular ‘twilight zone’ of the mind. A zone where the objective universe of order and culture implodes into a bizarre hallucination, where persecution, blasphemy and confusion reign supreme and where Naturalism becomes Anti-Naturalism in conformity with the principle of enantiodromian transformation. A style rooted in veristic normality slides into fantasy. This is the fantasy of the uncanny; the experience of a domain which borders on an area of disjunction between sign and meaning.

Bibliography

Farmer, John David. *Ensor*. George Braziller, 1976
Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. Methuen, 1981

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The Supplement will return in June – so make sure you send us your letters of comment and other contributions!

Agents of V.A.L.V.E.

By Cardinal Cox

Available for SAE from 58 Pennington, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5RB

This pamphlet from Cardinal Cox takes us into a gothic steampunk world filled with occult mystery that riffs off Jules Verne, Vincent Price, M. P. Shiels, and more.

As usual, Cox perfectly captures the style of the genre he is borrowing from and reworking, creating yet another excellent poetry collection that all fans of genre poetry will want to get their hands on. Highly recommended.

Starlight

La Luce delle Stelle

By Jane Stuart

Translated by Giovanni Campisi

2019, Edizioni Universum

Contact: edizioni.universum@hotmail.it

This booklet takes several of Jane Stuart’s wonderful poems, including the titular *Starlight* and prints them opposite an Italian translation.

Probably, this collection is most of interest to Italian readers, who will have a chance to appreciate her poetry in translation, but the poems are all good and seeing them translated may be of interest, albeit more of a curiosity, for her English-language fans.

A fine collection and, although I’m not qualified to comment on the translation, the Italian versions certainly had a pleasing sound when read aloud! Recommended.

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Another Turn to the Right:

Tekumel and Nazism

By DJ Tyrer

One of the most-interesting classic fantasy settings is Tekumel, the first roleplaying published setting, in the form of **The Empire of the Petal Throne**, as well as the setting for several more games, as well as some passable novels by its creator M.A.R. Barker.

A fantastic world inspired by Asian and Mayan culture and steeped in the

tradition of sword and planet fiction of the Pulp era, it was never that popular, being too exotic for players weaned on the pseudo-medieval, sub-Tolkien worlds more commonly deployed for **Dungeons and Dragons**, as well as highly detailed and complex for those who might have taken the chance.

But, it was influential.

Sadly, it has been revealed that its creator, M.A.R. Barker’s beliefs turned towards Nazism later in life and the writing of a neo-Nazi novel under a pseudonym, leading to shock amongst fans, especially as he was a tolerant and erudite man in many ways.

Thus, genre fans again find themselves in yet another debate about separating art and the artist and whether a property should be cancelled. Unlike Warhammer 40,000, this isn’t a case of fans not getting the parody – Barker was a neo-Nazi or, at least, a fellow traveller with similar views – and, unlike Lovecraft, he has neither the excuse of being from an earlier time where such views were more common (he died this century) nor any indication that he moderated his views (quite the opposite, they seem to have shifted later in life) or that an early death robbed him of the chance to potentially revise them further (unlike Lovecraft, Barker lived a long life; too long, perhaps).

On the other hand, the conception of Tekumel and much of the work done by Barker in its creation, as opposed to more recent work by others to present it as a roleplaying setting, seems to go back before his views shifted. Indeed, its initial conception occurred in childhood. Nor is the setting obviously ‘Nazi’ in nature, indeed probably antithetical in many ways. Whether Barker had any early inklings of Nazism – discussion is still ongoing – it seems the world was largely or entirely conceived before his views lurched in that direction.

Although some worry it may attract Neo-Nazis into the fanbase, I don’t see that as likely – it’s *not* a Nazi *fantasy* in that sense – and I see nothing Nazi-like in it that deserves for it to be stricken. It’s a shame that Barker’s legacy has become tarnished, but Tekumel remains a testament to what can be achieved by fantasy and we should look to that and not the negatives of a dead man’s later days.