



THE
PROPHECY
ISSUE

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A Review of The Diaries of a Fleet
Street Fox

A. E. Boxer

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Editorial

'The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.'
-William Arthur Ward

In many ways, the old adage 'hope for the best, but prepare for the worst' is the watchword of all sensible people. Many of my friends and contemporaries believe that I'm actually a pessimist, but I always say that I'm a realist. Naturally, a realist is an optimist's pessimist, but let's not get mired in that.

Occasionally, when I get on my soap-box and start to lecture my friends about the grand and bright future that awaits all of humanity, they roll their eyes and I have no choice but to resort to a rather weak 'you'll see...' and then darkly return to my books,

but the truth is that nobody can be sure. When I wrote my personal statement to go to university, I said that 'history is the only realistic way that humans have for predicting the future', but, of course, I was wrong.

The truth is that the study of history is much like walking backwards along a road. You can see quite clearly what one has just walked past, but the peripheral information can provide little clue to what's up ahead.

Reading astronomy, religious prophecy and science fiction can offer relatively little comfort to the person desperate to know the future. Even the kinds of medical prophecy 'you have X amount of time to live' is a 'best guess, because that's all that anyone can really offer.

What then can pos-

sibly be the appeal of prophecy, clairvoyance, scrying, tarot and divination? Surely the fact that each and every person knows in their heart of hearts that no-one knows the future should make these 'art' forms irrelevant, but it is the enduring nature of human psyche to crave even a fantastic window into the future. Who could watch classic tin-foil-and-blue-hair sci-fi programme *Space 1999* or the disaster film *2012* without a wry 2013 grin?

So, we come to the content of the magazine. As usual, the mix has been varied and of excellent quality. We've got everything in this issue, from Callum Donaldson's investigation into the fate of the universe and Ben Hayes's chilling science fiction story, to Michael Lee Johnson's religious poems and Chelsea Schuyler's com-

parison of Vergne and Wells.

Equally excitingly, the interview with Susie Boniface, Fleet Street Fox to you and me, provides fascinating insight into the spidery world of professional journalism, whilst our very own E.A. Boxer casts a critical eye over her new book.

Aside from the content, this issue also sees the launch of HCE's first ever live event, to be held at Taylor-Johns's in Coventry on the 29th of June. There you can meet Dwane Reads, John Kitchen, Lindsay Waller-Wilkinson and, of course, Adam and Gary.

The sun *will* come out tomorrow, but who will bring the umbrella anyway... just in case?

G



Gary, Editor



Adam, Deputy Editor



Jodie, Sub-Editor



Alyson, HCE
Communications

In this edition *Everyone* was:

Contributors:

Jeremiah Walton

Kirsty Fox

Mason Shreve

Dwane Reads

Chelsea Schuyler

Heather Jenkins

Sarah McKee

Michael Lee Johnson

Callum Donaldson

Victoria Mier

John Kitchen

Adam Steiner

Ben Nightingale

Ben Hayes

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Susie Boniface

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Taylor-Johns

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and their respective owners*

And Thus I Prophecy

by Ben Nightingale

Well, they're doing it again, the commentariat and the hactivists reading the electoral tea leaves after the local elections. Depending on who you ask, UKIP are the new fourth force or a mid-term protest such as we've seen before — the NF, the SDP, Greens, BNP and now UKIP. They can't both be right, but one of them probably is (and no, you white-livered ecumenical consensus cowards, the truth is not 'probably somewhere in between').

Whoever is right will seem prescient and wise, and whoever wrong will look a fool. But at this stage, we're only discussing forecasts, not prophecies: the former is

merely an exercise of one's critical judgment mixed with a punt on the weather, the latter is a kind of magic gifted only to a few in each generation. (I happen to think the former a greater thing in these meritocratic times.)

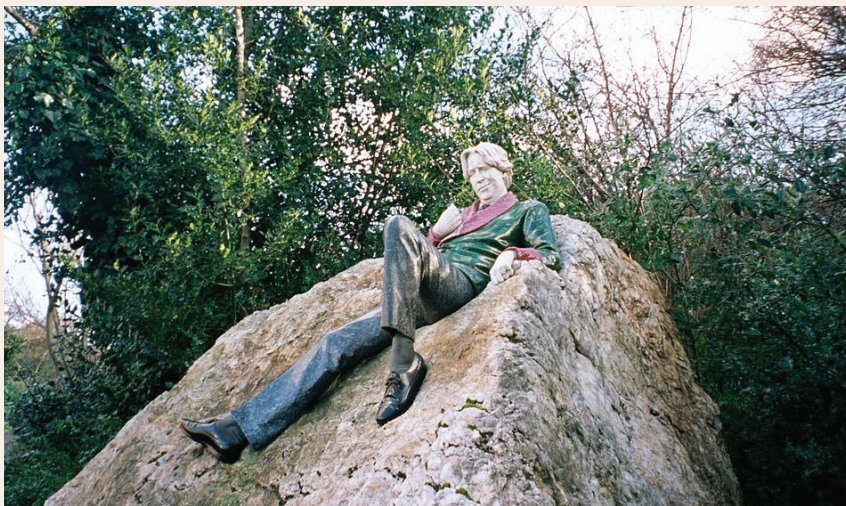
But the lines do blur. I lately read on some comments page or other that Margaret Thatcher had 'prophesied' the erosion of democracy and the waxing power of Brussels as a consequence of the Euro. Arise, Maggie, thou saintly prophetess! It is indeed true that she foresaw this state of affairs, and sadly true that it has come to pass, but it is worth quoting her at length from her final performance as Prime Minister in the

House:

'The point of that kind of European Central Bank is no democracy, taking powers away from every single parliament and being able to have a single currency and a monetary policy and an interest rate which takes all political power away from us...'

Prophetic indeed. Only, there's a problem: the prophecy isn't hers (or hers alone). This is the rest of the passage:

'... and as my right honourable gentleman said in his first speech after the proposal of a single currency, [it] is about the politics of Europe, it is about a federal Europe by the back door.'



The camera shifts to Nigel Lawson, her former Chancellor, nodding gravely. So it seems entire cabinets in this secular age may be gifted with the prophet's eye, a single vision vouchsafed to many seers, which rather devalues the currency — or that Thatcher was a false prophet but an excellent judge, which is a likelier and a far greater thing in my view.

Excepting the ravings of hallucinating Arabian merchants, or convicted conjurers in the 19th Century USA, how and why do we take something or someone to be prophetic? If we exclude (as we must) the possibility of there being anything other-worldly about people like Thatcher, the very idea of a prophecy becomes intrinsically ridiculous. And yet how impossible is it to shake that instinct which tells us the vision is too clear, too astonishing and (with hindsight) too prescient to be a mere judgement or forecast that the rest of us could make? That one of us has — by God or nature — been vouchsafed a vision?

In the 1997 biopic 'Wilde' starring Stephen Fry, a contemptible lady-about-town sneers at the distraught Constance that 'the name of Wilde will be execrated for the next thousand years.' How wrong you are! we wish to holler. But we

could not have said so only two generations ago, even on this side of two intervening world wars. By contrast, Wilde himself is said to have written upon his release from gaol 'Yes, we shall win in the end; but the road will be long and red with monstrous martyrdoms.' His words have added weight for that we know they come from such a man, Martyr of martyrs, the first and the bloodiest.

Perhaps martyrdom is an important condition for prophecy? — Thatcher, after all, had just been assassinated when she made her own. But imagine for a moment I were not penning this in 2013 but in 1953. John Gielgud has just been disgraced for cottaging, another national treasure thrown to the wolves for being gay. This is an example of what Gielgud had to say at the time, respectively to his friends Lady Richardson and Edith Evans:

'I can never tell you what it has meant to me to know you did not want to stop knowing me, and that you could still find it in your heart to spend time encouraging and cheering me when I needed it so badly.'

'... I could not have borne to feel that you no longer wanted to know me or look on me as a friend.'

Looking at the self-loathing which went with discovery,

in 1953 Wilde's 'prophecy' would have seemed far from prescient. We've come very far, very fast.

Does that mean prophecy must be retroactive in order to be prophecy? Those 'prophets' which miss the mark may only keep the name on condition of the prefixed adjective 'false', else resign the name in favour of fool, half-wit or lunatic. Those who get it right, over time, accrue the qualities of something divine.

Take Shakespeare's depiction of the good king Henry VI. Deposed and rotting in the tower, Henry became quite the seer in his later madness. He had earlier foreseen boy Richmond (future Henry VII) would be England's final hope. Now, visited by his assassin Gloucester (future Richard III) he says this:

*'And thus I prophesy, that many a thousand,
Which now mistrust no parcel of my fear,
And many an old man's sigh and many a widow's,
And many an orphan's water-standing eye—
Men for their sons, wives for their husbands,
And orphans for their parents' timeless death—
Shall rue the hour that ever thou wast born.'*

Now just imagine if Richard had beaten Henry at Bosworth? To flunk two prophecies looks like carelessness.

Unless one be the son of God and born of a virgin, or is told on top of a mountain somewhere in Sinai, against one's preconceptions, that murder and perjury and theft are not the done thing, it helps to get one's prophecies right, else they change from 'prophecy' to 'ravings'. But be careful — 'ravings' is what people said of Thatcher's vision of the Euro between 1990 and 2008. There's time enough to get it right and wrong.

The Fortune Teller

by John Kitchen

Her lips and fingernails painted scarlet, gypsy scarf askew amidst the paraphernalia of her profession, crystal, well-used tarot cards, the tipped walnut table its pale cloth soaking tea leaves and blood, all bathed in a warm glow from the fallen lamp. Madame Szabo had been expecting this. Today, she knew violence was imminent. She was bearing it with fortitude until he sneered,

“Charlatan !”



The Clairvoyants

by John Kitchen

They peep into your mind, assess your personality, from toenails to heels, cleavage to the cut of your hair, innocent, casual questions, and in their head a dossier, from greetings and cups of tea, the softness of hand, the firmness of grip, the scars and marks and manicures, so many giveaways and they can convince you they know your history and family; your prognosis because you are here and you want to believe.

You want to know that romance, excitement, wealth lurk around the corner to mug you, to take you prisoner, in a way that you might enjoy, because you're frightened life is passing you by and all possible passion and pleasure might be things of the past, or never been known at all.

Will there be anyone out there to love you, is falling head over heels, the madness and the obsession, the hang-the-cost, bet-the-lot, grab life and live, is it possible, can it happen, because they said it will ?

The Poet in the Boxroom

Poetry: Why do we do it?

by John Kitchen

My rather silly poem in the dinosaur issue had a line missing. It should have read :

*A million meany microbes
swim through every vein
sniffle sniffle
cough cough
fuzzy in the brain*

It didn't and so must have seemed very odd.

I should have tried to get it changed, but I thought it could be the start of this month's column. [Oops -Ed.]

At the very first writer's workshop I attended, the wonderful Jean 'Binta' Breeze asked if any of us wrote poems and why. I hadn't written anything. Others, who had, said that they wrote when they were in dark moods, depressed or sad. I thought, "What am I doing here?"

Expressing anger,

boredom, having a cold, trying to show not tell, and remembering the mantra: rhyme, rhythm and repetition; I was soon hooked.

Most occasional poems are written to express extremes of emotion – love, grief and fear.

A regular writer told me he writes poems as a form of diary, a more interesting way of recording his life.

It's the challenge said another, constructing a pleasing pattern of words to express feelings. It's about refining your thoughts added another, finding different ways to express them.

A professional, well-regarded poet told his audience that it was the inspiration of Walt Whitman and D H Lawrence that inspired him to sit and do likewise.

The two poems in this issue, The Clairvoyants and The Soothsayers were

inspired by Jane Yeh's collection, The Ninjas (Carcanet).

Reading other poets often sparks ideas, the short poem above is based on Spike Milligan's 40,000 Savages. You love someone's poems and try yourself.

I don't think that's the whole story, though. Last month I saw an exhibition of Prints by Chuck Close. I'm a fan. Check him out he's amazing. The information hand-out began with a quote. " Prints change the way I think about things." So simple. So true.

We write poems, we read poems because it changes the way we see the world. Wonderful ! It's that simple and that complicated.

Maybe it's stating the obvious. If you think so please say.

I write because it alters the way I think about things.

Magpie

*sorrowcrow
prophecybird
thief
with the devil's own
blood inside
claw tight cling,
on the thinmost
topmost wobble in the
wind
conifer twig, high point,
lookout, look far,
adjust that long black
tail, those white-flash
wings
a dance to maintain your
delicate balance,
you're top bird,
chattermag
haggister
but we need
another for
joy*

The Soothsayers

by John Kitchen

They shave their heads and contemplate, white robed and spotless, amidst Doric columns with easy confidence, they wait for your bestowal, and the revelation of your needs. On scarlet cushions in the candles' glow, you must be patient for that which you are desperate to know.

The soothsayers watch the murmurations of starlings, their slaves dip fingers into the still warm entrails of specially slaughtered bulls; the drip of blood, the colour, the smell of innards allowing divination. For their most valued clients, a female virgin guarantees satisfaction.

Yes, you need to know if the battle will be won, if the child will be a son, that he is yours, that the wife is constant, that the arranged marriage will bring the promised rewards, that the Gods will remain on your side; decisions cannot be made without the insurance the oracle will provide.

A Perfect Abyss

by Kirsty Fox

© Kirsty Fox 2012

It were a typical, blustery evenin. The vacant, orange glow of streetlights hung on the spaces 'tween the shadows, which shrouded the street in an eternal mystery, always and never quite the same. I passed Church Rock Cemet'ry, peekin through the railings for ghouls that never showed. It war like a city itself inside, with its own fortresses and temples built on battled-scarred hillocks and sandstone rock formations.

I carried on down the hill onto the Forest Rec, expectation weighing heav'ly on my shoulders and threadbare jacket. It war cold and the wind grazed the bony shamble of a man I was to become. It war Goose Fair week. It should've been loud and raucous. I should've already been belted with distorted laffter, tinny pop music and the creak of old rides. The smell of fried onions and candyfloss and the sight of exhausted parents draggin their lieblings by the hand. Kids who were horribly hyped on sugar and tantrums - still whingin that Daddy didn't win them giant Tigger. My eyes should've bin awakened by the spinnin tops of coloured light by now.

But the old fair seemed muted and sumhow civilised. The hoodies that usually loiter'd had been tidied away. The children walked hand in hand with their folks, as though stepping from a magazine trim. There war a bandstand near the entrance, decorated in fake Victorian garb. I stepped up, curious. Either side was a mirror. Least it looked like a mirror, but when I walked t'wards it a diff'rent man beyond the glass imitated me. I leaned to peer at him and he leaned to peer at me. I took a step forward and the glass became a fluid mass framed by a gothic rainbow of light. I war backstage all a sudden, and sick wiv nerves. A band were gettin ready to go on. They all looked oddly like one another, as though hatched from the same fact'ry. Their faces like perfect masks of bohe'mian youth.

I could see the compere up on't stage, somebody shoved me up the steps and he introduced me.

"This is Jim. He has fallen through time. He would like to say a few words."

The compere war called Freddo, but I dint know how I knew this. He shoulda been frightful lookin, what wiv the Atlas of the World tattooed on his head, lookin as scarred and beaten as the Earth itself, wiv tufty hair growin in patches through the Pacific Ocean. But Freddo was too ridiculous to be frightful. He was what my Pappy would've called 'odd as owt'.

I stepped forward to the microphone. Unsure what compelled me not to run away.

"My name is Jim. I'm an ordinary man, wiv ordinary hands. I'm here to warn you about The Continuum."

It all sounded so drama'ic and plain-speakin, but I had no control of the words what were comin from my mouf. I was shakin wiv shock and unable to focus on any person in the crowd below.

"The brainwashin began year, upon year ago. But it's not yet taken full effect. You can break the cycle, I promise. Jus go home and smash yer telly and don't read the papers. They'll make you think they're obsessed with your

eternal youf. But that's just the cling film on the porridge. Look deep into the porridge."

I war swayin. Freddo stepped closer to me and propped my elbow. I glanced beyind at the faces of the band. Knowin the crowd wanted me to wrap up this non-sense, so they could listen to gypsy jazz and jig wiv boobie ladies.

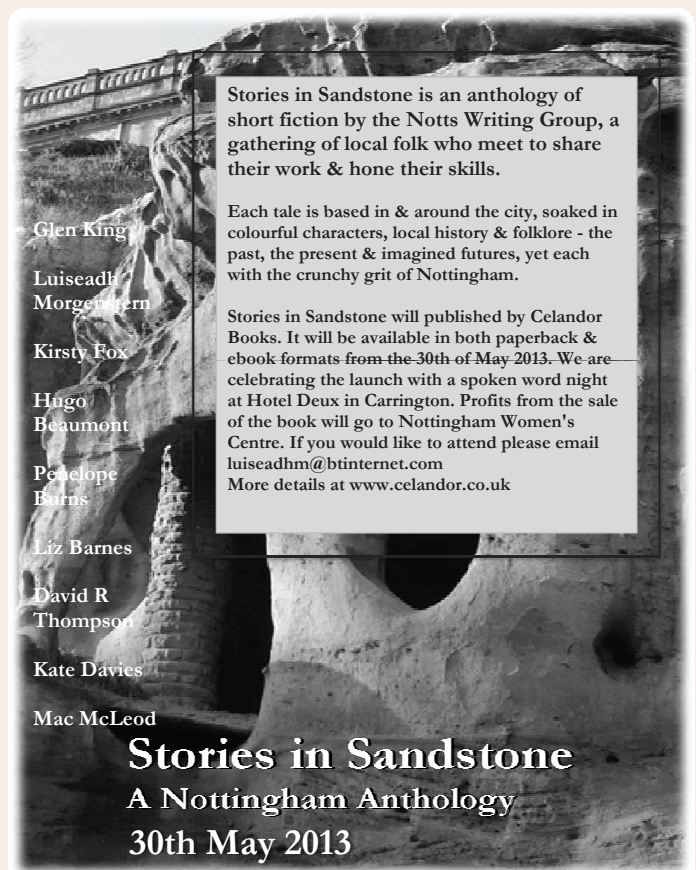
"Me mam warned me about The Continuum. She tried to warn every'one, but we were banished. We became outlaws." I wheezed now, and then coughed a smoker's cough. I was breathy like a man twice my age and my eyes felt weighed with wrinkles. "Times were hard and friends were few, but we got by. Like y'do. You just get by..."

I trailed off amid boos from the crowd, who tossed bottles of rabbit piss in my direction.

"Let him finish!" the compere Freddo squawked, but I was already faintin.

My body suspended in the air, unable to hit the floor of the stage. Life continued about me. The band clambered on wi double bass, fiddle and accordion, and a burst of music brought the world to life. The crowd necked Sambuca and then one another. I watched it awl from the prison of a suspended body, a body they sudden'ly couldn't see. Within this strange tomb I ad an epiphany on all this drama. This was the filth seepin from the edge of the clean line. These people were right to carry on regardless. This was a perfect abyss, before I fell head first into The Future.

First published in



Stories in Sandstone is an anthology of short fiction by the Notts Writing Group, a gathering of local folk who meet to share their work & hone their skills.

Each tale is based in & around the city, soaked in colourful characters, local history & folklore - the past, the present & imagined futures, yet each with the crunchy grit of Nottingham.

Stories in Sandstone will be published by Celandor Books. It will be available in both paperback & ebook formats from the 30th of May 2013. We are celebrating the launch with a spoken word night at Hotel Deux in Carrington. Profits from the sale of the book will go to Nottingham Women's Centre. If you would like to attend please email luiseadhm@btinternet.com. More details at www.celandor.co.uk

Glen King
Luiséadh Mórgháil
Kirsty Fox
Hugo Beaumont
Penelope Burns
Liz Barnes
David R Thompson
Kate Davies
Mac McLeod

Stories in Sandstone
A Nottingham Anthology
30th May 2013

Pacified America

by Jeremiah Walton

Pacifists of the 22nd century learned to practice telepathy
Organized in mental unison, WorldUniversal peace was
thoughtforced, forcedlove
A mass rape welcomed with wide arms spread like legs
Thoughts of violence completely cleansed from human
mausoleum mind of new Buddha population, peace peace-
fully prospers internationally and within nuclear families own
borders of radiation
Ghettos dissolve, streets swept of blood, News canceled by
bombs of censorship never before so accepted in Human His-
tory
Following enlightenment, TVs were destroyed by absence
of viewers, gun shots no longer shouted from silver screens,
Clint Eastwood muted
Radio broadcasting faded as the media outlets were cocked
back, ready to fire, and forgotten
City factories bleed a hellish cloud of black smoke, final hack-
ing coughs of old cancers
Book upon library is burned
Discs scratched records forgotten
Kaddish cried aloud, poetry's grave pissed on
Tears Of Sexual Frustration wet the Torah
The Koran screeches jihad, turns a new page. curling into its
spine
Beautiful imaginings flee to page ends
Actors rewind themselves, afraid of the present, don't push
play
Swords smelt into swirls of transmutable metals, hammered
into small Peace Sign pins the hippies refuse to wear
"Smoke weed," they still cough. "The world is messed up as it
is, find peace."
The irony!
"No!" the lovers the sad the damned the Arabs the Americans
the Blacks the computer techs the poets the smack addicts
the heteros the homos the needle pluggers cried, most of
them collapsing into vehement Self
For three weeks and two days all was well, but on the twenty
third day the morgues filled, people wept from sun lit balcony
windows dripping sour rain upon the population shuddering
cruel junk-withdrawal growls
Growing snarls bloom deep in swelling throats, force belches
through teeth, grinding fangs to a point
Bodies crave the wild cooking of atoms, the narcotic like ef-
fects of organized massacres lead by the 3rd Messiah lost in
the back of the so-called "battle"
Orgasms run down the Whore of Babylon's arms, lips dripping
pleasure, fingers glazed in murky futures
Charge Mother Russia! Nostrovial! Nostrovial! Let's hold
feasts in Starving India! Let's rape the Destruction of Small
Ideas America with a half empty can of pepper spray, beards
loaded, tears rolling, tongues firing
Kitchen knife orgies fire spasm raptures, minds burst blank
oozing blood between lobes as backs arch violently extending
spine and flesh

FEED THEIR ADDICTION!

Teeth zip shut hideous lips brandish iron blasphemy shrieks,
screaming for slaughter, even though brainwashed and un-
able to contemplate the idea of inflicting physical pain upon
another
The shriekers the screamers the utmost sufferers take the old
bar-mitzvah books and leather bound Bibles and scrape their
asses clean in the Lord's name as the nearly-widowed wives
of soldiers overseas unwrap sweet heart packages never sent,
surely the soldiers have put down their toy guns and found
sweeter snatches, breathing foreign fires below a clean shave
folded pubic origami, flames burning alive with passion, rip-
ping their bodies clean of loose clothing consciousness
No love like this have they experienced before!
No lover like this have they experienced before!
No lover had ever popped dream-snares of sexual revolution
within their minds, bellies, and finger nails!
One soldier-lover who divorced his wife through silence expe-
rienced especially Earthly withdrawal symptoms
Symptoms prescribed peace, more peace, and sex
Subliminal urges of Man must be surpassed, diagnosed to
under the influence of Average Sexual Stimulation Stress
One peaceful night, the fiery lover screamed when he was
inside of her with his playcock begging destruction!
Upon climax the soldier-lover whipped his fist, in a burst of
mustard gas, tear gas and ignorant instinct, into the crevice of
her left eye's socket
She pleasure moans her soul in croaks of syrupy vomit, eye
throbbing, leaking uncut junk
He drinks of it.
Festering peace bubbles black
The human condition is re-humanized.

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Here Comes... Dwane

HCE gets to know performance poet Dwane Reads

HCE: How does knowing that you will be performing your poetry in front of a live audience affect the way you write them?

Dwane Reads: The first poem I consciously wrote as a performance poem since returning to writing was *Big Bet Boy and Tales of Other Crazy Fools* for a gig with John Cooper Clarke. It is a poem about a fifty-three year old male who still lives with his mother and father. Using the rent money he has been entrusted with, he gambles thinking, if he wins, he could pay the rent and have the surplus for himself.

I used to write songs and poetry. My songs are based around bass lines, beats and various tempos as I used to drum. Writing that was not used in the bands set I adapted and used it in my poetry sets.

Sometimes these would cross over in *Fish* for example. (written in 1986). I still get asked for this at live gigs. A simple four lined poem that allows the performer to improvise around its structure in a jazz form. So it can be different every time it is performed, although the structure of the four lines keep the same.

Currently, I just write poetry. When considering how it is to be performed, I might introduce a pause when typing up work for performing, add accents or and play on gestures if required. When performing I read from the page, it's like a comfort blanket. But, I have seen many good poets lose their rhythm and forget lines halfway through a poem at gigs. It's all about the delivery of the piece, which comes with experience. I have shorter poems that are 'placed' in my set list that keep the flow of the performance at gigs. I call these my throw aways. These are in fact as important as the



characters, themes or social comment within the set. It is always refreshing to put yourself on the spot; I will perform a completely different set or try new work or even work in progress. Otherwise, it's a case of same old stuff, not good for those who have seen you before and if you are not out of your comfort zone sometimes, I believe you don't learn anything as a performer. Especially if you stick to the same set each gig, it can become stale. You might have to challenge yourself to do it, but this is the only way to improve your craft.

HCE: You have written poems for HCE on a wide range of subjects and usually with a wry sense of humour behind them. Can you imagine any subject that couldn't or shouldn't be a subject for verse?

DW: I don't think you should set out to write purposely to offend or insult anyone. You might disagree with a person's beliefs, actions or words, yet that is something as a writer you have to decide about yourself. You can be challenging and thought provoking in different ways. Some poets write and perform personal stuff about them: their families that might make you

cringe. I don't write that kind of stuff, as life just becomes a cathartic theatre of too much information. It would be interesting to debate if some could not, or refuse in fact, to write on other subject matters.

HCE: Although your poetry is not necessarily political, it often has a moral or ethical dimension. What do you see the role of the poet as in terms of [their] interactions with the rest of the world? Is it to comment or to accuse?

DW: The poet writes about his/her experiences, their observations, objections. What they have dropped in on, listened to, read or researched. They apply their own twist on things using interpretations in the hope that the writing is appreciated, understood, causing people to think, react to, raise awareness of its content and encourage debate or just make you laugh...

Dwane performs all over the Midlands and the UK and will be performing at HCE's first live event at Taylor-John's in Coventry on the 29th June

Just past my die date

by Dwane Reads

Prepared, watch synced
To do things you need to do
Allowing more time
Don't waste it ironing or Hoovering then
Leave the pots in the bowl unwashed
Spend it wisely
Listening to your favourite vinyl 45rpm's
Dancing with a love one
Or trampoline with the kids
This is no rehearsal
Approaching your final moments
As only, you know the secret
How did you find out?
Prophecy told me so
Within the pages of an old book
Found in a box on a car boot sale
Somewhere out in the sticks
Where only you visit for picnics



Metal Bird

by Dwane Reads

Metal bird, metal bird brings mushrooms to the sky
Apparition told the children picking potatoes out the dirt
To prepare themselves now whilst she protects the earth
People walk masked shielded from the sun
As evolution starts, again a new dawn has begun
Zero hour counting no clocks only moon
Track your movements from the stars
You will be home soon
Drink snow it's melting safe to quench your thirst
Barren landscapes livestock sculptured into dirt
Metal bird, metal bird brings mushrooms to the sky
Prophecy to the children only they listened

No one else survived

Verne and Wells:

Prophecies of Science Fiction

by Chelsea Schuyler



When talking of prophecy, what is infinitely more fun than religious variations of the end of the world? Science! Who wants to despair over the apocalypse when we could guess at futuristic mechanical gadgets or adventure to places so far unreachable?

Two renowned prophets of science are both authors of the late 19th century who are called the Fathers of Science Fiction itself. The first is Frenchman Jules Verne, author of *From the Earth to the Moon*, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, and *Paris in the 20th Century*; and the second is Englishman H.G. Wells, author of *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, *The Invisible Man*, and *The War of the Worlds*. In these and many other books they seem to have written our very future, or at least, legend would have it so. What did they predict and how did they do it?

Let us condense some of the topics into four questions whose postulated answers would become the themes of science fiction for ages to come:

1) Where can we go?

Verne – the heart of Africa, the center of the earth, the moon, the deep sea, a deserted island, the future.

Wells - the past, the future, the moon, a deserted island.

2) How can we get there?

Verne – electric submarine, space-cannon (rocket), helicopter.

Wells - time machine, train, cars.

3) What can we do?

Verne – explore in tetherless diving suits, be weightless in space, build skyscrapers, endure traffic, use fax machines, listen to newscasts instead of newspapers
Wells – be invisible, use automatic sliding doors and wireless communicators, live in suburbs, engineer bizarre animals.

4) What can we kill stuff with?

Verne – electric guns (tasers).

Wells - atomic bombs, tanks, lasers, bacteria.

Summarized like this (as they often are), these predictions seem impressive, some incredible. In *From the Earth to the Moon*, Verne describes the space-cannon “Columbiad,” whose projectile launches from Florida, carries three men into weightless space, who walk on the moon, and splash land in the ocean. A hundred years later, NASA would launch its Command Module “Columbia” in Florida, carry three men into weightless space, walk on the moon, and splash land not two and a half miles from where Verne predicted.

H.G. Wells had his moments too. The first ever mention of an atomic bomb appears in Wells's 1914 work, *The World Set Free*. In *The Island of Doctor Moreau* he describes half man, half human animal experiments, not a far cry from the modified creatures nowadays—heart transplants from pigs, mice with human ears growing out of their backs, glow in the dark monkeys, all reek of the science fiction of old.

Granted, some schemes haven't turned out (note the

depressing lack of invisibility or time machines) and really, their successes are more often conceptually true than accurate. Verne's weightlessness only occurred at one zone in space where the gravity of the Earth and moon supposedly canceled each other out; Wells's sliding door rose into the ceiling, and his atomic bomb was an endless, perpetual explosion. Countless inaccuracies like these dampen the awe a bit. Nevertheless, the list is too impressive to be marred by such trifle details. They did not have to build the things they foretold, just tell of them, and even if only conceptually, their visions of the future are uncanny.

So, be they wizards?

No of course, there is a curtain, and behind it is research, historical context, and inspiration.

Before the days of the internet, television, or even radio, knowledge was hard to come by. You had to be privileged enough to be educated, connected, and have access to resources to be in the know. While Wells was educated in biology, chemistry, physics, and astronomy at the Normal School for Science, Verne's knowledge came from the library, extensive research, and a group of science nerds that would later form the ever-so Victorian “Society of Encouragement of Aerial Locomotion by Means of Heavier-Than-Air Craft.”

By examining the research, both authors were able to take it a step further and describe devices that had not yet been invented. Remember though, that an invention is not a thing from

thin air, but a culmination of ideas and trials that have finally reached the last stage of tweaking to become a success. The world was not awash in submarines when Verne wrote his undersea adventure, but they had been built. The name “Nautilus” was a nod to the first functional submarine built 70 years earlier, of the same name.

Even Verne's space-cannon dates back to Isaac Newton, who speculated what it might take to put a cannonball into orbit. Verne chose Florida as a launch site for the same reasons that NASA would—Florida is near the equator, where Earth's

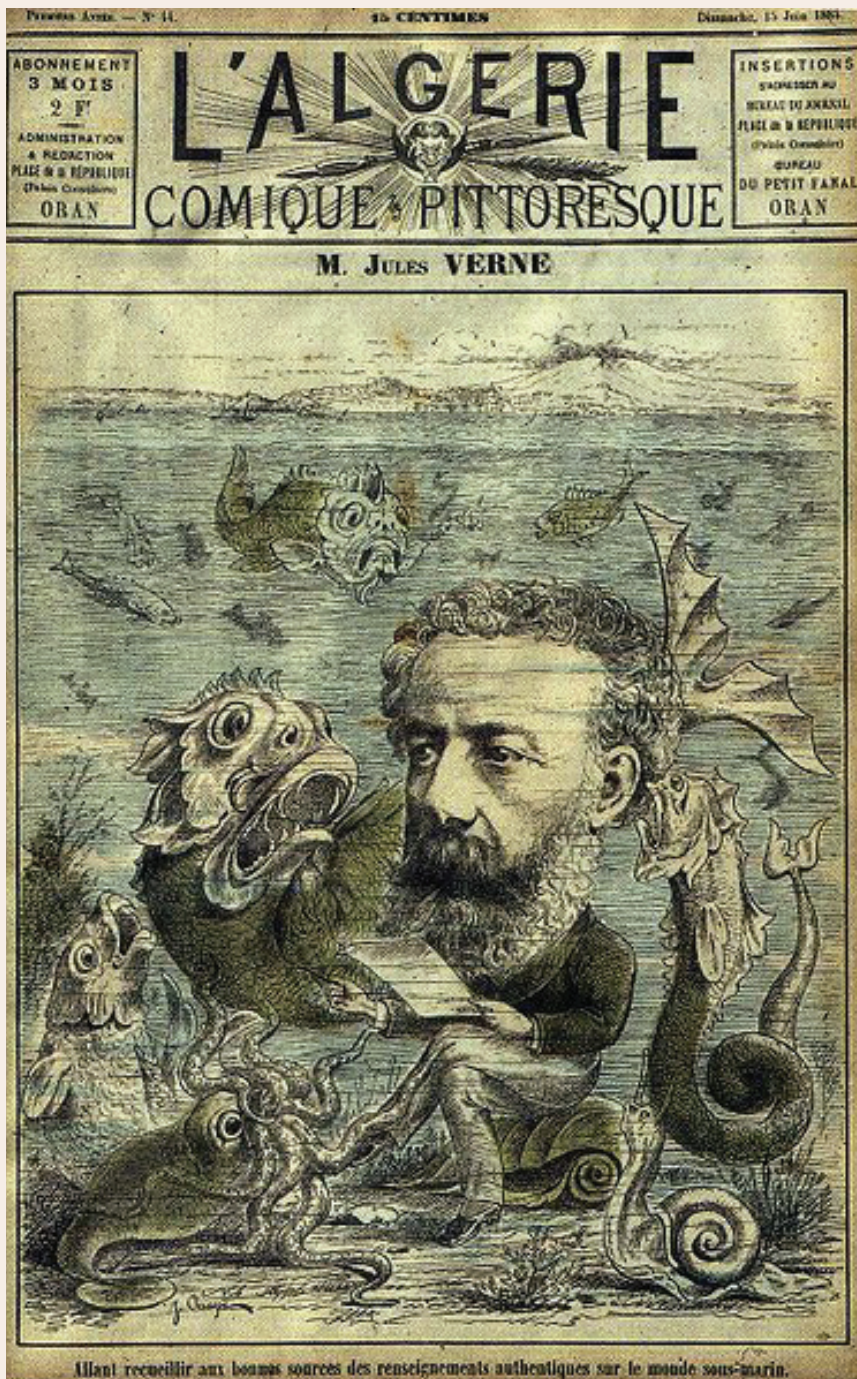
linear velocity is greatest, hurling a thing into space with the least amount of effort possible.

The authors did their homework, and if we do ours we will find that trends and conversations of the period can also account for many of the authors' ideas. African exploration had recently captured the interest of Europe, so when Verne was writing his African adventure, *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, he could follow the latest journals and magazines of real explorers to create an account of the dark continent so realistic you'd swear he made the trip himself. H.G. Wells's atomic bomb was

not yet conceived in 1914, but the atomic nucleus, X rays, and radioactive decay had all been recently discovered and their usefulness had physicists all a-chatter. As for *The Island of Doctor Moreau's* experimental animals, they were not the result of genetic alteration, but vivisection (surgical alteration on a live being), a growing practice at the time and whose controversy spurred Frances Cobbe's animal rights movement.

But if study and current trends fail you, the best way to be a science prophet is to write adventure tales of such intrigue and possibility that you could motivate inventors of all nationalities to bring your ideas to life. A Russian boy named Igor Sikorsky grew up reading Verne's *Clipper of the Clouds* and would go on to invent the first successful helicopter in 1939. American engineer Simon Lake was captivated by 20,000 *Leagues Under the Sea*, and became a pioneer of advanced submarines in the beginning of the 20th century. The name of NASA's first space-worthy shuttle “Columbia” was not a freaky forecast but a nod to Jules Verne by well-read NASA employees. And really, who isn't trying to make a time machine? In these chicken or the egg cases, “inspired” is a more appropriate word than “predicted.”

Just because these authors did not have magical powers of prophesy does not mean they shouldn't be celebrated as visionaries. If anything, their research, discipline and intelligence are much more impressive than some whisper in the ear, and it is for these qualities that we should greatly admire them.



Jesus Knelt in Grief Over the Death of Children

by Michael Lee Johnson

Breaking out of silence,
Jesus knelt to his knees
in moist desert sand,
wrote messages
with his fingertips
to children-
“water is water, toys are toys,
but by my fingers burn with life,
though I toil over tombs with grief and tears-
I’m the living and I am the dead.
I was born to life to bring
new hope into the death of children.
I’m the messenger of the morning sun
the prayer book between the morning dew,
the play fields of your daily adventures.
When I kneel here again,
the end will be the end.
Fire will be willed into my words.
Driftwood and sand will turn to stone.
I drag my fingers across hot sand once more;
morning will come without a daybreak.
Birds will no longer sing, and crickets
lose their songs.”

Here Comes... Michael:

Michael Lee Johnson lived ten years in Canada during the Vietnam era. Today he is a poet, freelance writer, photographer, and small business owner in Itasca, Illinois, who has been published in more than 750 small press magazines in twenty-five countries, he edits seven poetry sites. Michael has released *The Lost American: From Exile to Freedom* (136 page book), several chapbooks of his poetry, including *From Which Place the Morning Rises* and *Challenge of Night and Day*, and *Chicago Poems*. He also has over 56 poetry videos on YouTube.

Children in the Sky

by Michael Lee Johnson

There is a full moon,
distant in the sky tonight,

Gray planets are planted
on an aging white face.

Children, living and dead,
love the moon with small hearts.

Those in heaven already take gold thread,
drop the moon down for us all to see.

Those alive with us, look out their
bedroom windows tonight,
smile, then prayers, then sleep.



HereComesEveryone Magazine

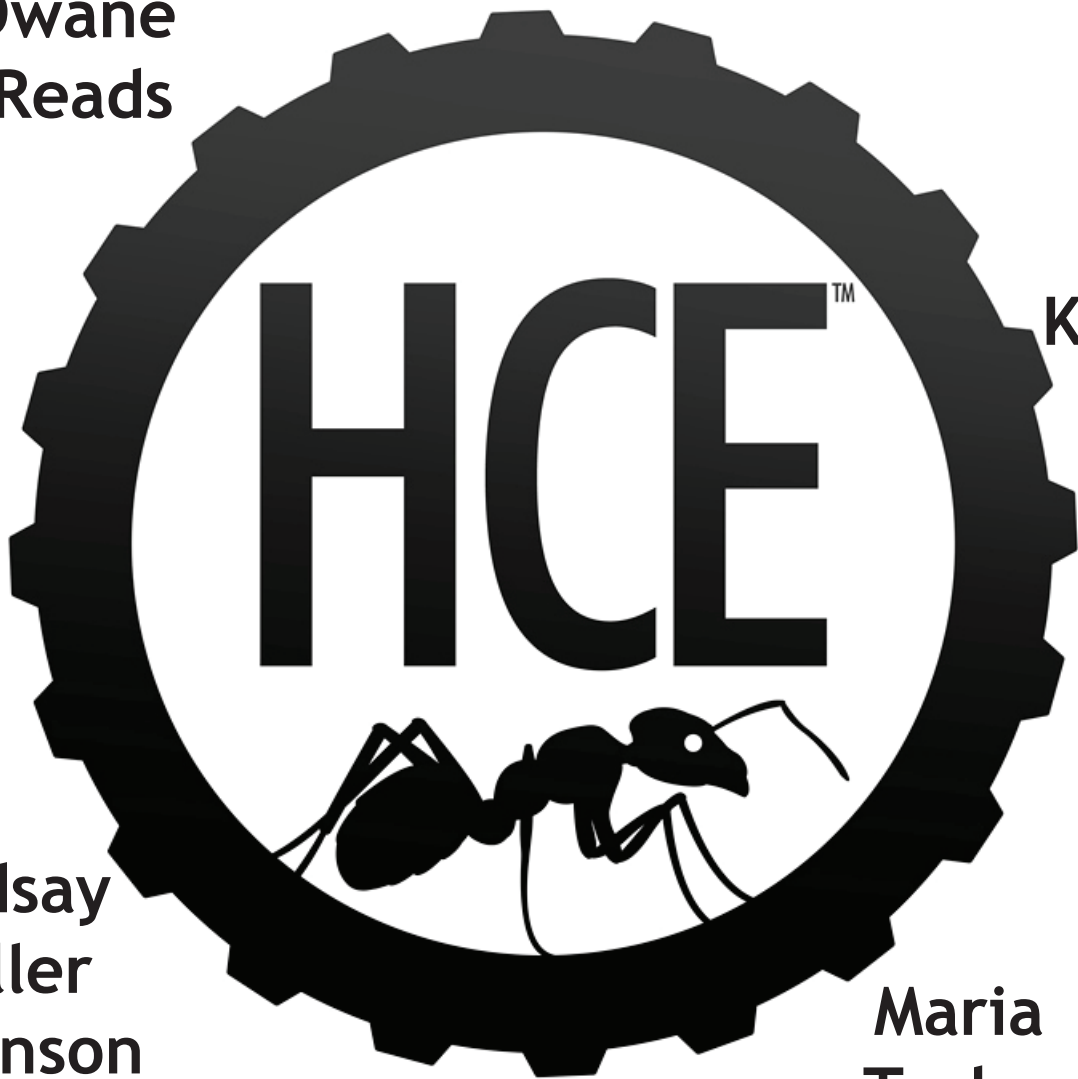
An evening of poetry and live music from the
RIOTS/HEROES/COLOURS/DINOSAUR issues!

Featuring music from

Misty's Big Adventure

Dwane
Reads

John
Kitchen



Lindsay
Waller
Wilkinson

Maria
Taylor

8pm - 12pm / £3 Entry / Taylor John's
Coventry / CV1 4LZ / 29/6/2013

HereComesEveryone Magazine



Art Editor Vacancy

Like pictures?
Like having opinions on them?
Like HCE?

HCE is currently looking for a new art editor to replace Jen Easley, who sadly had to leave during the production of this issue.

Interested parties should contact the editor at
gary.sb@silhouettepress.co.uk

No experience necessary, no artistic talent is necessary, just opinions and the ability to explain them. Inquiries welcome.



the Fortune Teller

by Mason Shreve

I.

I find the godchild and its anger,
an oilcan dripping from its velocities.

Define the worm. Changeling (myself).
Crypts in the cornerstone.

I won the anger. I own the worm.

A sacristy to myself, a cannon,
a manacle in my hands; I am the
worm.

The bloodbath of Christ is my sonata,
my self. Retreat.

Retrial. Wilderness.
Unlawful expatriate.

II.

I find the godson, yellowish
around the ankles.

I find his oil driver,
manipulate his aging ventriloquist.

Glancing into a white chapel defines
the wound:

a canteen filled
with nectar,
barren and unlawful.

I am the wound, safe conduct for myself.

My sophistry is regret. Reveal the blot
of concurrence.

III.

I find the goddaughter, an angel hiding
in the oilfield leaking its vendettas on the
worrier.

Define worry. Define the worrier.
She has crystals in her corsage.

She is the second commander —
the bloodhound of Christ. My song.

I fear the angels, an encumbrance to the
fire,
a cannonade.
The oilman is their only vendor.

My songbird, a girth in white nightclothes,
is a pannier on my back.

Channel knowing. Channel the worry
and the worrier.

IV.

I find the godparent, obeying
the oilman and his penalties.

Define perception —

a crow in a mausoleum conforming
for the corona.

A similar mania is on break
from cooling the omission in its penance.

Pussyfoot the genealogy, the bloody
multitude
of reverberation and companionship.

Reveal. Revisit.
Christ the revelator.

I own your adulation, a mangled haunt.

V.

I find the godmother, all guesses
and chaos.

She hides her oilskin
under violent pelts, defying
the secret commandment.

A gladiator-in-white cuckolds the corollar-
ies,
defines the secret and the commandment.

I own your animosity. I won your worth.

“Drink the nectar!” A mandate with a
hatchet,
made by faulty concubines.

VI.

I find the godfather, dripping
from his time with the goddess.

I find an ugly animal and drive
the oilrig away from its sound.

Chant to myself. Chant the worship.

All guerillas to the levy! I found the horde
and I own the animals.

I am worship —

a misused
and imperfect concourse.

My son-in-law is the shadow of
Christ. (Clear the levies.) Retreat!

Reunion.

VII.

I am the wraith, all
seeing.

I am a safeguard to myself,
the old-timer hiding from his vile ventures.

Withdraw! Reveal!
(I am a glasshouse in a cabaret.)

I find.

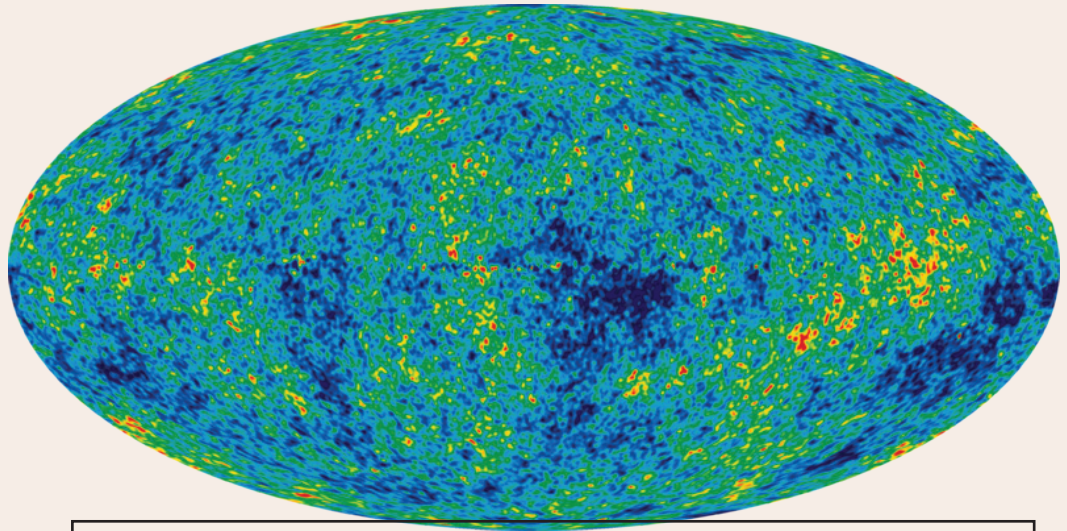
The Astronomer's Prophecy

By Callum Donaldson

Throughout human history, mankind has looked towards the night sky with the hopes of determining the future. The fundamental flaw in this line of thinking is that distant stars and planets are very aloof to the plight of man. In the same way that observing what Joe Bloggs had for lunch on Tuesday cannot aid in determining the ultimate fate of the nearby star Sirius, the cosmological landscape will not offer a definitive statement on your life.

This is not to say that observing the night sky is useless in regards to prophecy. In much the same way that it is possible to observe millions of humans throughout history in order to predict our possible fate as a species, scientists have documented thousands of celestial objects and found clues to the ultimate fate of the universe.

Stars, like humans, have a life. Not a conscious one, but a birth, an existence, and a death. It begins with a colossal gas cloud, which condenses until the heat generated from the immense pressure causes it to ignite, which creates a star. Throughout the star's life, the core will be contracting under gravity. This contraction will force molecules to bond, resulting in a lower energy state and that excess energy to be emitted (a process called nuclear fusion). This simple reaction is what gives stars their light emitting properties. As the raw elements that fuel fusion reach their limits, however, the star begins to die and the method of 'death' changes depending on the size of the star.



the Cosmic Microwave background, the leftover heat from the origin of the universe

This nuclear method of generating energy is an important factor. This reaction is the fundamental reaction that all more familiar reactions require to occur. All plant life on earth needs the energy from the sun to sustain itself and it is this energy which travels up the food chain, as other living organisms consume the plants and each other for survival. It follows to reason then, that without the sun to generate energy for the life-supporting plants, all these creatures would become extinct.

Scientists have also recently discovered life which they postulate has no relation to the sun. Around sulphide spewing hydrothermal vents tube-like worms called Giant Tube Worms, as well as Hydrothermal Vent Crabs and Deep Sea Mussels, exist in a closed ecosystem deep in the abyssal trenches beneath the sea. However, these too, though indirectly, are fuelled by the same energy as the sun.

The basis for life at this level is the earth's core. The water released is superheated from close proximity to the hotter mantle, as

well as being highly saturated in dissolved minerals. The heat generated by these stacks, as well as the materials issued forth, is enough to keep this ecosystem sustained. As to where the earth's core gets this latent energy, we must once again return to the formation of the sun.

As mentioned previously, stars are formed by gas clouds accreting raw materials until the force of the pressure generated by gravity is great enough to overcome the repulsive forces between elements resulting in nuclear fusion. For those gas clouds which do not contain enough raw materials to sustain this reaction for any length of time but still have enough mass to form a spheroid, a brown dwarf or planet will be formed. Both of these orbs, despite not being as dramatic as their larger, fusion-driven cousins, still reach incredible temperatures, with a brown dwarf's core temperature being estimated at 104 to 106 Kelvin (as a comparison, the surface of the sun is approximately 5.8×10^3 Kelvin) [*'Kelvin' is a scale of temperature measurement that starts at 'Abso-*

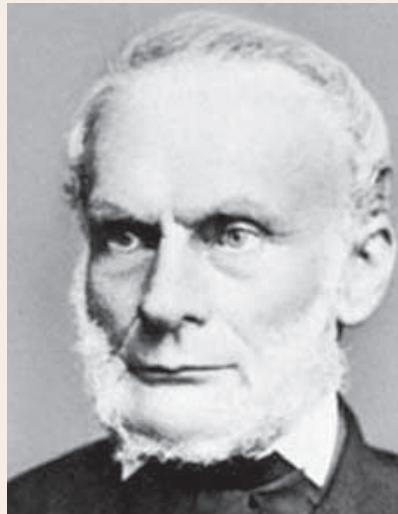
lute Zero', approximately -273 degrees centigrade -Ed.].

Both of these objects emit heat, but do not “create” it via fusion. Rather, they possess a core still heated from their formation that is slowly being dissipated back out into the wider cosmos. As no energy is being produced through any thermonuclear reactions, this form of energy storage cannot last forever, and will slowly cool like a pie on a windowsill until it reaches thermal equilibrium with the cat which is resting nearby, too stuffed from eating the neighbours budgie to bother with a mere apple pie, and she prefers steak and kidney anyway.

Earlier, I discussed life on Earth, and how all life depends on either the sun or geothermal activity for the heat necessary to sustain itself, and therefore, without these activities no chemical reactions could occur that life depends on. This doesn't cover all reactions: iron does not require any interaction from biological organisms to oxidise, for example, but it is very useful as a metaphor as it is more relatable to human understanding. A certain level of heat is required for life, and a certain amount of energy input is required for any chemical reaction.

If looked at on a macro level, we know that there is a maximum amount of useable energy that can be extracted from either energy generating objects or objects with energy stored within them in the universe before there is simply no more fuel for nuclear fusion and all cores of failed stars will have long since cooled. There is literally as much fuel as there is matter in the universe, but this itself is limited. Over many billions of years, the energy gets used up.

All of the dust clouds, which at times previous would have been the birthplace of stars, will have long since been used and fused,



Rudolf Clausius 1822 - 1888, the first person to describe entropy

or become too sparse to ever be of use. In the cores of exploded stars, relics of their life will have long since chilled into solid masses, and quasars and black holes will reach equilibrium with their surroundings.

Even galaxies, monumental arrays of stars, will wink out from the night sky. Furthermore, the collision of galaxies, humongous events that can reignite or explode dead and dying suns, areas where vast amounts of potential energy are unlocked, will become rarer and rarer still as the universe continues to expand, increasing the distance between them until none are close enough to interact with each other. Isolated, all their stars will shine their energy out into the universe, too feeble to be used by distant objects.

These last few reactions are the swan song of a universe, but it is not the end. Radioactive particles left over will decay to more stable nuclei, and even protons, the fundamental building blocks of all matter in our

universe, will decay into electromagnetic energy. Over time, rogue planets, distant meteors and even vast white dwarfs will slowly disintegrate, as their constituting atoms decay. Once the last hadron decays, the entire universe will become a sea of sparse electromagnetic radiation, smattered with black holes.

This foreseen future paints a grim, albeit poetic tale. It is important to bear in mind however, that this is all conjecture on the part of science. It is merely taking our current understanding of the universe as it is now and aiming towards the future. There are gaps in our understanding which could revise our way of thinking once filled, and change how we see the life of the universe ending. Several assumptions were used in this article also, that the Big Bang model is correct, and that we exist in an ever expanding universe. If I were to rewrite this article in 20 years time, it may be completely different. This is the major strength and failing of using science as a tool for prophecy. It is continually evolving, and only once it has become truly complete can we finally make the perfect prediction.



House of Cards

by Heather Jenkins

He had a gambling problem. Some suggested therapy, but for therapy to work, you have to want to stop.

It wasn't the casinos that drew him in. It wasn't racing or cards or slot machines. He played for the big money – those sums so astronomical that their existence is based solely on systems of shared belief. They are imagined, impalpable: they are because we say they are. In credit we trust.

There have been others who have shared in his addiction, but few who have ever matched his skill. As he rose in fame and fortune, those in the know christened him “The Prophet”, and for a time it seemed that he could do no wrong. He commanded the future like a master puppeteer commands a doll, pulling the strings of tomorrow to make it dance to the clamouring crowd.

Before long, he gained a troop of faithful followers, apostles who loudly professed their loyalty and swore that they would trust to his good judgement forever. But despite their fervent protestations, he never really believed in them – or, for that matter, in himself: he could see betrayal coming, as clearly as he saw his own demise. In business, a prophet is only as good as the profits he makes, and in this world, neither can last indefinitely. Whatever might be said about him, he was well aware himself that he was less a wizard than a parlour magician: he was a showman, a conman, a master of sleight of hand and clever tricks.

And yet he could not stop himself, until finally, there it was: the writing on the walls of the stock exchange, flashing up across its electronic screens. Instantly, his disciples deserted him, turning him in to the men in rich and powerful suits who had always felt threatened by his success. The house of plastic cards that he had built came tumbling down around him.

Now the Great Prophet of Profit, the broker broken, sits damp and freezing in a city square, taking his chances with the passers-by as he challenges them to unwinnable games, performs magic tricks and tells their fortunes for any spare change – but most of them are wise to him now. Sometimes he steals: it's a gamble, he knows, but still he cannot help himself.

Beside him, under the shadow of a monument to great men who gambled with lives, a fellow fortune-teller shouts his prophecies to the world, frightening off the fools and potential custom-

ers. Strapped to his chest and back are signs – signs, he claims, from God – reading: “The end of the world is nigh”. Eventually, bored and weary, the Prophet turns to face him.

“You're too late,” he says. “It's already over.”



And Ours Was Prophecy

by Ben Hayes

In 2203, humanity finally cracked the interstellar travel problem. The Cao-Mulciber drive and the ability to move through sixthspace allowed us to make trips of hundreds of light-years in just a few weeks.

With space suddenly so much smaller, we found human-habitable planets. Not many, but enough. Within decades, our species was at last proof against sudden extinction, no longer at the mercy of Earth's fate.

What we did not find was life. There were no intelligent aliens - no interstellar federation waiting to welcome us, no rogue AIs lying in wait to subjugate us, nothing but the occasional bit of native fauna.

We wondered why. Why, on all these worlds, worlds we knew could sustain life, we found none other. But time moves on, and wonder faded as we took the stars in our hands, dazzled by the glittering frontier.

The invention of the Ansible granted us instantaneous communication. We could speak with our families on distant colonies as if they were only next door, and messages could once again outpace materiel, in a way that they had not since the end of the information age.

All silver linings have their clouds, however.
And ours was prophecy.

When it began, we knew at once – though we did not understand. The *Sanssouci*, a bulk transport ship carrying food, medicine, and three-and-a-half thousand souls; it left Earth bound for Guangzhe colony, dropped into sixthspace eight days out, and was never seen again.

We didn't realise. Didn't guess what had begun. Three more ships vanished, before we finally understood.

The recording is historical, and not one person has forgotten the moment they heard it.

"This is the *Los Rheas*. We jumped from Nuevos Angeles, en route to Grace's Shore. There is... we were attacked. There is something in sixthspace. Do you understand? Sixthspace is not empty."

Two days later, the colony on *Grace's Shore* was gone. All trace of it, every person, every building, every dropped crisp-packet. They made no transmissions, and there was no warning. They simply vanished. It did not take long for us to guess what had happened. Something had followed the *Los Rheas*, divined its destination. Something terrible.

People panicked. Trying desperately to get home to their families, they hijacked ships, bought passage with smugglers and black-marketeers. And in doing so, they made a trail.

We knew what would surely follow. People hoped they would be safe on Earth, where humanity was strongest. So they set sail, to come here; our Diaspora returned.

Long before they reached us, we already knew what they did not – there was no safety to be had. Passage through sixthspace brought destruction in its wake. The great colonies; *Lincolnsheim*, *Albion*, *Tien-sha*... They must have blazed like beacons in the grey vastness.

We saw in real time, as other worlds were snuffed out like candles. People watched the faces of their loved ones flash to static, and knew that they were gone.

By dint of stragglers, arriving late to worlds al-



Feed the Word

by Victoria Mier

ready slain, we knew what fate awaited us: an Earth wiped clean of mankind's mark. And as those stragglers too were silenced in mid sentence, we realised the futility of flight.

There was rioting in the streets; people rushed for every ship which could bear passengers, as if hoping that they might be overlooked, and somehow spared.

The administration imposed a blockade, in the hopes of saving some last vestige of humanity. It was thought that if there were no trail in sixthspace, a world might pass unseen.

So the ships were destroyed. Near-space was littered with the flash-frozen corpses of would-be refugees. As the first vessels arrived here from other systems, they too were met with cannonade and sudden fire. Some thought that justice, for they had lead death to us.

And so we are come to this, a last few scant handfuls of humanity, clinging precariously to our most distant and most desolate worlds, the places to which no-one wished to flee.

It is a pattern as old as humanity; in fear of monsters, we did monstrous things. And as I write this, I wish with all my heart that we had not known our coming fate. There is nothing more merciful than ignorance... and no curse graver than foreknowledge.

We know now why we found no other life. We will leave no traces, no Ozymandias amidst the shifting sands. In aeons to come, if explorers of another race should ever land upon our birth-world, will they too wonder at its emptiness... and think themselves alone among the stars?

I remember hearing David Attenborough (possibly on Desert Island Discs) talk about the importance of his local library when he was a boy. He would go regularly, bring home a selection of books on things that looked interesting, and work his way through them; this was how he not only built up his knowledge of the world, but also discovered what interested him and what didn't. The state of libraries today is such that it would be very hard for a mind such as David Attenborough's to be moulded in this way; I love the library in Kenilworth, where I live, but its stock is small and, it has to be said, relatively uninspiring in terms of browsing. I love it, as I say, but most of the things I borrow are things I know I want and are ordered in from other libraries in the region. I remember it from my own childhood as a wonderful place, with a reference section and study carrels on the lower floor (no longer open) as well as walls lined with books, rather than the rather careful arrangement it has now. I have a vivid memory of the first time I snuck into the adult fiction section and borrowed an Agatha Christie – I was worried my mother might not approve, so I hid it under my pillow.

I am an ardent book lover and supporter of libraries, and so am determined to keep using my local library; for those less committed or new to libraries, it may well be a disappointing experience. This is not the library's fault – the staff are wonderful, the ability to order things in is also wonderful, and the

stock is not THAT bad, just not great – and this is a result of things beyond the control of individual libraries, with budgets tighter and tighter and a cultural climate that is increasingly consigning the arts, in the broadest sense, to a corner, or out of existence. Some councils in the UK have cut arts funding by 100%.

Libraries are not 'the arts', I think they are classed as 'leisure' in government terms. This is good and bad – there is a sense that everyone needs 'leisure' activities, but not everyone needs the arts, and those that do should pay for them themselves. But neither the arts nor leisure are luxuries. If we are to grow as a society rather than stagnate, we need to nurture every aspect of being human. The arts – and books are a major component of 'the arts' – are essential for this. I am an art historian, a university discipline that is often laughed off as a Mickey Mouse subject, a subject for posh rich kids who want an easy degree, a means of spending all day looking at pretty pictures. I disagree entirely. It is a discipline that trains minds to interpret complex ideas, to think laterally, above all to be prepared to face the fact that not much in this life is black and white, morally or intellectually, and to be able to deal with that and resolve major issues in the light of it. Politicians should study art history, as should CEOs of large corporations, and all those who have to deal with issues that impact on the whole of society.

Through the centuries, art has



been a major force in cultural communication and political development. It has always been an important part of human society – if you doubt this, please watch Werner Herzog’s wonderful documentary *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, about a truly ancient cave in the south of France with paintings thousands of years older than the more famous ones at Lascaux. Art is crucial to being human.

At times art has reflected what has been going on in society, at other times it has helped to propagate change – it has been both revelatory and proactive as a social force. My own period of specialisation is the Renaissance in Northern Europe, a time when the North went through cataclysmic social and political change through the Reformation, the shock waves of which are still being felt 500 years on. The art of the period reflects, reflects on and teaches us today about what it was like to live in this tumultuous time. The detail of that is perhaps for another article! But you only have to study the works of Hans Holbein, who came to England

from Germany/Switzerland because the need for religious art had dried up as a result of the Reformation and who found a new career as a chronicler of the people at the English court, and thus became part of Henry VIII’s propaganda machine as well as bringing international ideas into British art. His works are not just great portraits; they are crucial historical documents of a significant moment in British and European history.

What does this have to do with books? Well, everything. Books, like paintings, are seemingly straightforward objects that we can take or leave, depending on our personal interests and tastes. Yes they are powerhouses – of information, but more importantly of stimulation to our minds and imaginations to think about life more deeply. They have the power to change individuals, and by changing individuals to change society. Society is always changing – the important thing is to make sure it changes in ways that are beneficial. This, I believe, is where the book comes into its own – it has the power to

civilise, to broaden our outlook while crystallising our ideas, to sharpen our understanding and our ability to act responsibly and positively and humanely in society.

What of the physical objects themselves? With a painting, perhaps it’s more obvious – no painting, no ideas. If the painting disappears, it is lost forever. A book is a mass-produced object, and the ideas are not inherent in the object itself but in the words on the page. These can be reproduced in countless ways, and our technological developments are ensuring that they are. (We can also, of course, now reproduce paintings, resulting in much smaller loss of art – but that is again a subject for a different article, no space to explore the complexities of that here!) So is the book itself – the physical paper object – still important in the age of digital technology?

I offer a resounding YES! to that question. I am not at all against digital technology for books – I have a Kindle and enjoy it, I use online material a lot, for journal articles and books that are hard to get hold of physically. All booksellers and book lovers need to embrace this technology – e-books and e-readers and tablets are here to stay. But they do not need to herald, as is frequently suggested these days, the death of the book, nor of the bookshop – nor the library!

Books are a magnificent piece of technology. They have not changed in hundreds of years because they don’t need to – they are perfect. I don’t need to enumerate here all the things you can do with a book that you can’t do with a tablet or e-reader, though am happy to do so should you wish! A book is portable, easy to use, flexible in terms of size, design and cost, durable, simple but effective.

Books are also satisfying – many people struggling with the arrival of e-readers say they miss the experience of holding a book, of the feel and smell of paper, of the sensual experience of a real book.

Books can open up worlds. It is hard to browse online; but walk into a bookshop and start just looking through the shelves, picking things off as the title or the name of the author or the cover appeals, and you discover delights you never knew existed. It's the David Attenborough syndrome – if the resources aren't readily accessible, the mind never discovers them.

Books are vital resources for pre-school children. Children's picture books do not work on a Kindle. The juxtaposition of words and images that teaches children to read and think and use their imaginations is available only in book form. Even the act of turning the pages, which children love, and turning them back and starting again, is a key part of their development – the development of the people who will take our society forward.

I am in the process of setting up a second-hand bookshop in Kenilworth. Some people are sceptical, understandably – they have been sold a lie about the imminent death of the physical book and the printed word. But around the country, small independent bookshops are thriving. There are a number of reasons for this. One is passion – they are run by people who love books (their product) and find imaginative ways to engage with others (and engage others with their product, in business terms). Another is that there are still people who love books – and it's not just older people who haven't yet embraced

digital publishing; I have worked in two university libraries, and students still want books – many are less keen when you offer them an electronic version of a textbook, because there are limitations on how these can be used (another article in the making!). The technology of the book is such that it really does hold its own against its electronic counterpart. Many books are not, and never will be, available electronically, and there are always people hunting for out of print books, or rejoicing in the discovery of a beautiful older edition even of a humble Penguin paperback.

But I think one of the biggest reasons that books and bookshops are still wanted – and needed – on our high streets is that physical objects and physical spaces draw people together. A bookshop or a library is a place where people can not only find the books they want or need, but can meet other people.

Art history is the history of loss, as one art historian has put it – yet another article waiting to be written... The printed book is also, to an extent, bound up with loss; the printing press itself, developed in the 15th century, resulted in the loss of those exquisite hand written and hand illuminated manuscripts, and the vagaries of back catalogues, reprints, out of prints mean that the same melancholic strain runs through the history of the printed word. Yet hand in hand with this sense of loss is the potential the printed word still has. Technology develops; people do not change much, at a fundamental level. The printed word continues to have its own reasons for being, its own advantages over the digital word, its own significance. All of these ideas need more unpacking, this article is

little more than a manifesto; but I am using a digital forum to promote the importance of the printed word, and the real strength of literature – and of living in a society that just about still maintains the importance of freedom of speech – is that these two things can now go hand in hand into the future. One does not spell the demise of the other.

We live in an increasingly anti-intellectual society, and something as simple but as powerful as encouraging the reading of books can help to stem the tide of this. I would even like to think that one day our libraries will once again be the kind of place that formed the mind and career of Sir David Attenborough. E-books alone cannot do this.

Pick up a book today, feel the pages, look at the font, read a page and think about what it says, look at the cover and think about how it relates to the book, read another page and think about how it fits with the world around you... come back to it later, and read the same page again. You won't be sorry.

HERE Comes... Victoria

Victoria Mier grew up in Kenilworth before going off to university to study Modern Languages then art history, in which she has a doctorate. She moved back to Kenilworth in 2009. She is a freelance art historian, but is currently focusing on opening a second-hand bookshop and community hub in Kenilworth, called The Tree House. The shop will have a quality-driven stock of second-hand books at its heart – books on anything and everything, books of all kinds – but will also act as a space for community events: films, talks, poetry evenings, stories for children, writing workshops and more. The Tree House currently does not have premises, but until these are secured you can find it on a stall at Kenilworth market. For information about this and all aspects of the project, see the website at www.treehousebookshop.co.uk and the blog Victoria has been keeping since she began the project, at www.treehousessecondhandbooks.wordpress.com – she would love to hear from you via either of these sites.

THE TREE HOUSE



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For Fox Sake: HCE meets Susie Boniface

Adam Steiner of HereComesEveryone talks to Susie Boniface, the tabloid journalist behind Fleet Street Fox, the blogger who lifts the lid on the inner workings of the British media at The Old Bell pub in the heart of Fleet Street. The success of her blog has lead to the recent publication of her first book, The Diaries of a Fleet Street Fox (reviewed on page 29) where Susie/Foxy talks about her divorce, the secret lives of dirty, pretty celebrities and the future of print media in the digital age.

HCE: How did you come up with the idea to start a blog and then publish a book where you talk about the very personal story of your on-going divorce and your experiences as a news reporter with almost twenty years in the business?

FSF: A few years ago, I was at an award show, and at about 3am I was in a drunken conversation with a colleague who asked me where I'd like to be in five years' time. At the bar I saw a group of columnists, and that was it, I just said: "There, that's where I want to be" – it was a light bulb moment. One year later, I had an established blog with 10,000 followers.

The divorce gave the book a narrative to hang the journalism stories onto, and I also needed a more sympathetic side of myself to come through. Everyone hates reporters, for some people we're on the same level as paedophiles, so it gave the book, and the character of Foxy, a more human aspect.

HCE: How difficult has it been to handle the shift from anonymity to publishing and promoting your book, coming out of your foxhole as it were?

FSF: Much of the story was already on the blog, so it's not been that bad really. Sometimes it's hard to say where the character ends and I

begin. Fleet Street Fox is easy to like, even the name suggests that she's sexy, cunning and exciting, and some people are much happier to be interviewed by the Foxy character than they are by me, the tabloid journalist.

HCE: What are your views on gender equality and the roles of women in journalism?

FSF: I actually think it's a harder industry for men to get ahead. As I said in the book, it's a lot easier being a female reporter; women often come across more empathetic, people are much more willing to talk to you, especially in sexual abuse cases, and managers and execs will always pay attention to a pretty girl, if that's how you want to play it. There are generally more male execs, but bad reporters often become business managers, instead of remaining journalists because they love the job. It works in other ways too, for example, after the 7/7 attacks some papers scrambled to find a Muslim reporter so they could get members of the Islamic community to talk more openly.

HCE: What are your views on feminism?

FSF: I respect what previous generations of women have achieved. The first British daily newspaper, The Daily Courant, was published in 1702, by a woman called Elizabeth Mallet, above the White Hart Inn in Fleet Street.

People like my mum and my grandmother didn't have the same opportunities as I did. When I had finished my A-levels, the school said: "what do you want to do?", things were completely different for me. OK, there is still a wage gap between men and women, but in terms of career, women still have it better in journalism. I think a much more important issue is the amount of rape and gendered violence we still have

in the UK, and the court's low rates of successful conviction.

HCE: Following Leveson, public opinion of journalists is at a low, but in your book you argue that journalists require a lot of empathy, day to day, in order to do their job – are people right about journalists?

FSF: Journalists need empathy, because without it, they can't do the job. You have to have some understanding of the situation you're writing about and the people you're interviewing to write well about them. With cases such as rape, you have a certain responsibility to report it well. But I think people will always see us



a scum, worse than paedophiles, it's just part of the job.

HCE: With the growing practices of churnalism/citizen journalism/phone-hacking, are journalistic standards on the slide?

FSF: Journalists are very credulous people, they want to believe the people they speak to and the stories they hear, so lots of news stories are the same events told in a slightly different way, it can all start to sound the same. But sometimes when a reporter thinks they've found a new angle, it can make it very easy for them to push a slightly different story, that might not be entirely true.

"Churnalism" has been around for a long time, I think that internet and lazy reporting can make it worse – and deadlines have also gotten shorter. At the end of the day, anyone can be a journalist, if they find a story, write about it, post it on the internet – it's become harder to say who is and isn't a journalist.

I think the phone-hacking story was slightly overblown and it's not a very serious crime in legal terms. If I had the opportunity to hack the conversations between Andy Coulson and Rebekah Brooks, I would; I also think that important stories such as child trafficking, where there is no other way to get the story and a strong public interest, are sufficiently important to justify hacking phone messages.

HCE: And what about Leveson guidelines for restriction of the press?

FSF: The reason so many celebrities came forward to give evidence at Leveson, is that they're often caught out by the press

doing things they shouldn't be and of course they don't want other people to find out about it. If you're in the public eye, you have to expect people to want to read about you, it's when things turn sour, and the bad aspects of people come out, that people in the public eye start to complain and get the public on their side; it's a great example of middle-class prurience and moral outrage. Most of the evidence given at Leveson came from journalists under fire, there were no ordinary reporters asked along to give a positive account of the trade.

HCE: What changes would you make to the press industry?

FSF: Leveson has just become something for individuals to hide behind, I think all you need is for journalists to pass an obligatory law exam and for bodies such as the PCC [Press Complaints Commission], which we were always taught to respect when I was learning the trade on a local paper, and for journalists to be judged by a changing group of experienced journalists.

HCE: You've written a lot about celebrities and the "Cinderella syndrome" [see FSF blog] that makes people aspire to a life of fame and money – do you find yourself tempted by this lifestyle since publishing a book and appearing on popular television programmes such as Newsnight and This Morning?

FSF: I would hate to be a celebrity. I'm drawn between sympathy for them and not caring because it's a choice people have made, but I'm also aware of the pressures they face. I've only been recognised twice, once by a lady brandishing my book in Water-

stones and another time on the tube, but that's it so far.

HCE: Do you have any predictions for the future of journalism? Ways in which the industry needs to change to make money from electronic content?

FSF: With the internet we have a 24-hour news cycle but people still want to read and buy the news in print. If we're going to make the internet pay, it needs to reflect the way people use it. Some sort of news-grazing culture, where you pay a few pennies for certain stories you want to read in-depth.

HCE: You've recently been teaching journalism students – what advice would you give to any aspiring journalists?

FSF: A journalist never gives up. Some people are too soft, too tough, or they get bored, but if you really want it, you'll get there.

HCE: What's next for Fleet Street Fox?

FSF: The second book will be about learning from my mistakes and meeting more people; the post-divorce years!

HCE: So, a happy ending then?

FSF: There's no such thing as a happy ending, only new stuff that happens.

Read HCE's review of [The Diaries of a Fleet Street Fox](#) on pages 29-31.

Kettle Recall

by Sarah McKee

Dear, I can read tea leaves still in the tin, or spilt on
the floor the foresight's mine for a while, honey.
lemon, the stewed brew simmers for my scrying
little eye I spy and spy . Something.
Beginning . With . Tea .

That was it , not-my shuddering scarecrow
(will you shudder on a sailboat in the moonlight
with me ?) , making me wafty as though I can't
stick it out with my featherbrain birdbrain
hairbrain hollowbone skull , my imicable skill.

Reading between the leaves your fate is on
the table , a storm in a coffeecup instead , or it's
in your hands or no it's dissolving fast or no
it's turning and turning in widening conspiracies or
no it's Matthew it's in the leaves and out of the bag.

Visionary('s) Proposal

by Sarah McKee

I am just the imaginative cockroach for you.
My hair will grow still long after short-
term cryogenics. We'll be refrigerated right?

These decisions must be made and stuck to regard-
less of loss of sealsong, wherever you keep the knowledge –
you guts'll do.

Not really since your brothers still are dead there, in the
narrative background, historic, in the some-term freezing studio.
The stadium fills with cold undead, unsinging.

The library 's where we keep tomorrow's records : many
more dead than have lived a full and, &/ or
happy life.

Paper skeletons have been chewed
to pieces by once domesticated cats.
Don't hang them on the

December trees.

New disturbances will last a century, we are ho-
bbled - hoy in-

to tomorrow spit
spat towards crunch gravel earth spatter crunch.
In an hundred years' time we two'll be living one day a head.



Wide-eyed Lady in the bus is the Oracle:

by Sarah McKee

Inside you are sad. Watch out for the husbands who will poison, for the brothers who will disappoint. You will be refused treatment at every hospital and clinic in Europe: physicians will fear to consult you, shudder at your narrow yellow hands. You will fail (prodding) to love this baby, it is written (palm face up). My name is Madame Flor. The poltergeist is in the house. You will dream with horror of the horror, being one of only one, two, to survive – to wake with eyelashes crusted in the ash of others. The poltergeist is in the house, it waits in the cappuccino machine. My name is Madame Flor. This is my stop. God bless you, sad one. Salut. Salut. God bless it.

Fantastic Ms. Fox: A Review of *The Diaries of a Fleet Street Fox*

by E. A. Boxer

“If one tells the truth, one is sure, sooner or later, to be found out.”

-Oscar Wilde

“Never become the story” is one of the oldest, most clichéd pieces of journo advice ever handed down to any junior hack, but as *Diaries of a Fleet Street Fox* shows, it’s a narrow line to cross. Since launching her blog as Fleet Street Fox, a vulpine alter-ego who has become semi-famous as a behind-the-scenes tabloid journalist able to speak her mind on everything from phone-hacking, the NHS and child abuse.

That is until several months ago, when in order to promote the

book, she revealed her true identity as Susie Boniface, a journalist with more than ten years of experience in the trade, having worked on almost every major British newspaper. She subsequently appeared on Newsnight to comment on Leveson. Overnight she turned from secret blogger and unknown journalist to a talking head on national television, even revealing her private life in a book.

The book reveals a lot about how newspapers work, particularly “Foxy”’s experience of being a reporter, such as the eternal struggle to please The Reader, a mythical homebody who demands accurate and salacious, high-quality journalism.

The story begins with Foxy at 29 years-old trying to piece her life back together following a damaging encounter with her husband, the acrimoniously named “Twatface”. Like all great stories, the book has a tension, the book is about her juggling the high pressure of her job, the news which never sleeps, with the confusion and pain of the break-up. Foxy recounts the fraught gamble of door-stepping, visiting people in their homes to garner a scoop, and the tentative agony of almost getting a great story, then having the door slammed in your face (or even being chased down the street with a bit of wood). These situations are contrast-

ed with the successful entries and the chance to let bereaved people talk about the loss of a loved one, or for people to reveal scandals in exchange for cash. This highlights a crucial truth about news coverage: it runs the gamut of human experience, births, deaths etc. etc.; from the high to the low, *Diaries...* shows us, as both readers and news subjects, at our worst and best.

Some of the funniest/saddest parts of the book come about from the weird camaraderie of what is essentially a close, almost cottage, industry where reputations are quickly made and broken.

On the one hand, the journos are drink and drug-crazed, adrenaline-hooked sociopaths, careering from story to party to pub, while diligently filing immaculate copy.

However, she also argues that being a great journalist requires genuine empathy in order to bond with the people they talk to. The empathy point is interesting as Foxy reveals the basic “technique” of finding something small as a first talking point and building up a brief relationship during the brief conversation; something demanding both a cynical degree of tact and a genuine interest in other people. It’s a dizzying contrast that goes some way to explaining the love/hate relationship between the writers and *The Reader*. Journalists are by turns heroes, when exposing evil and wrongdoing, and worse than pariahs when they are quizzing the bereaved and “hounding” the nation’s latest sweetheart (see Foxy’s blog post on Cheryl Cole). The vicious irony here is that readers often end up condemning the people who bring them the stories they want to hear.

Foxy makes a great comment on the fame game when she explores the perils of being a

female celeb. Constantly in the public eye, these girls are pushed and pulled to lose weight, then gain it and look perfect all of the time; they are at once desperate to embrace fame, and to an extent notoriety (Kate Moss, for instance), then to complaining when ugly, dirty things they might

have done are exposed and being famous doesn’t work out the way they had hoped. Foxy puts a neat handle on this, referring to it as “Cinderella Syndrome”. So much of being a celebrity is appearance, and manufactured at that, but the reality will always reveal harsh truths of a fickle public.

Most books about journalism, such as Nick Davies’ *Flat Earth News*, claim a dog-eat-dog approach to expose the narrowing of the journalistic world through globalisation and the mass-production of content brought about by “churnalism”, where journos copy news from one another and stories simply relay around the globe feeding off their own notoriety. Foxy presents a more sincere and workaday vision of professionals on the job and the trade and craft of journalism, she takes it seriously and her journalism is as much about moxie and honesty as it is about the triple-X habitat of the night.

In her world, the internet takes second place to getting out into the field, such as her visit to Portugal to investigate a lead on the disappearance of Madeleine McCann, instead of throwing



emails back and forth around the world. The way in which the “media globe” is becoming smaller, and definitely shrinking, is in fact financial, not in the manner of the reporting itself. With shrinking newspaper sales and the inevitable cutbacks that follow, newspapers have less resources with which to track down these stories in the flesh, which feeds into the let-heavy accusation that the major tabloids only report sensational, stories of little or no news value – however, the successful papers are forced to meet a certain aspect of Reader demand, which often drives the more “cultured” newspapers to a distraction.

The rigours of Foxy’s divorce and the mind-numbing legal procedures therein can make for exhaustive reading as major and minor arguments are drawn out across texts, emails, lawyers letters and shouting matches, but this stands as a great metaphor for the power and uses of information. Honesty and transparency can often preclude wrongdoing, or at least reduce the impact of “mistakes” through owning up to them, whereas deceit and cover-ups often come back to bite us in the arse. On both sides, the divorc-

ing couple find and use information to hurt, spy on and compete with one another; a battle which seems to leave both sides semi-victorious, but saddened and regretful.

On a critical point, the book promises much of the public figures who seek the limelight and then shrink away and complain when their shortcomings are exposed, but perhaps due to the stranglehold of the publishing lawyers, there

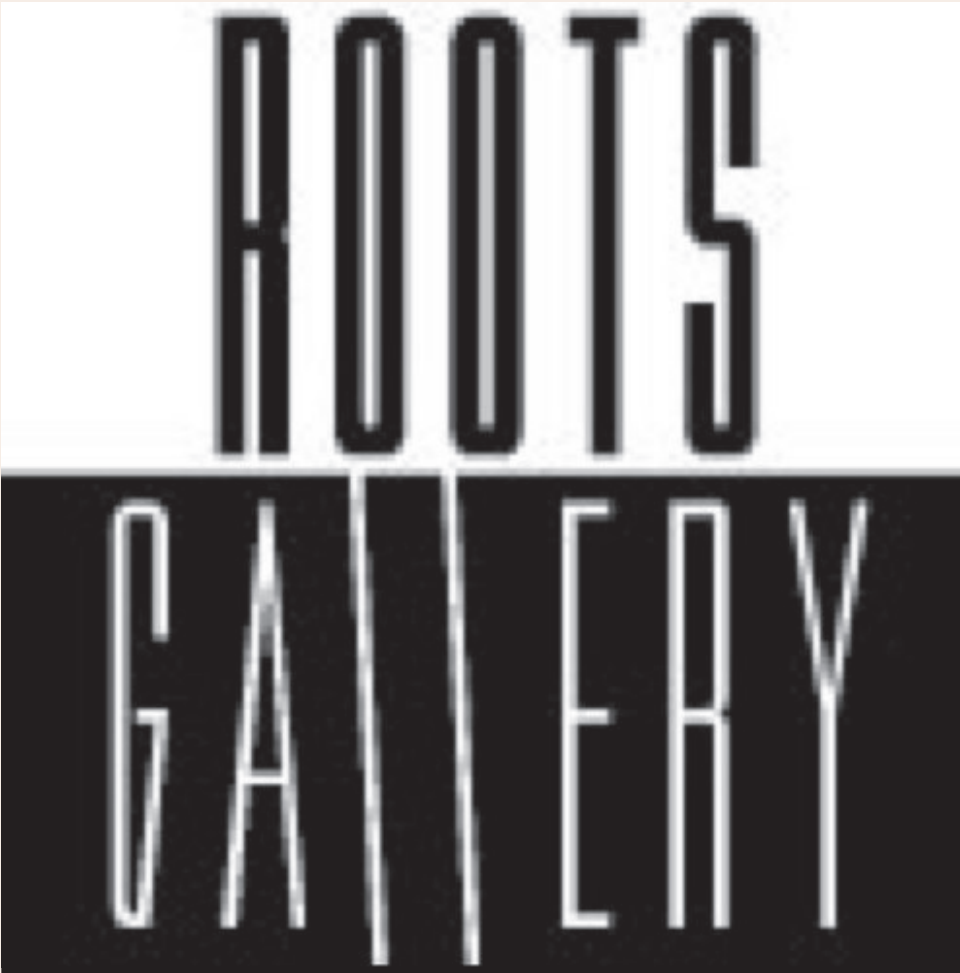
is nothing particularly scandalous, compared with the blog. It feels like a beast that has had its fangs removed, part of the fun of the blog is Foxy's damning invective on those British staples of hypocrisy: class divisions and Daily Mail-style ignorance.

The book ends with Foxy floating the final reminders of her marriage off on a Viking-style funeral pyre down the Thames. The future points towards more adventures in journalism, post-

marriage, in the continuing fallout of press regulation and the changing face of news media, meanwhile, the Fleet Street Fox blog rolls on.

The Diaries of a Fleet Street Fox
By Fleet Street Fox
Published by Constable, 2013.

Available on Amazon in paperback and E-book

The logo for Roots Gallery is a high-contrast, black and white graphic. The word "ROOTS" is written in a tall, narrow, sans-serif font in black on a white background. Below it, the word "GALLERY" is written in the same font style but in white on a black background. The two words are stacked vertically and centered.

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