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When a review of our hardback collection *Echoes Of Darkness* was mentioned to us we read it hoping as always for positive praise. What we read was an essay of depth and insight that seemed so accurately to embody our intentions when writing our supernatural fiction that it was uncanny.

We thanked the reviewer and he asked whether we would undertake an in depth interview. We agreed and the first half, dealing with Enigmatic Press, was published in two parts in *Hellnotes*. The second, and longer interview is included here. It contains our thoughts on the genre and because we are reacting to questions posed to us it allows us to ‘speak’ about a variety of subjects.

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The interviewer is -

A part time teacher, William P. Simmons earned a dual honors degree in World Literature and Writing from Suco College At Oneonta with the help of 2,000 cups of coffee and old Bugs Bunny cartoons. After learning that degrees made fantastic wallpaper, he began writing. He is currently the head editor of *The Earwig Flesh Factory*, a small magazine of dark surrealism and horror fiction published by *Eraserhead Press*. He has also served as a first manuscript reader for *The Harrow* magazine and as a creative consultant and assistant editor for *Gathering Darkness*. Specializing in horror, fantasy, and mythology, William has taught courses in creative writing and genre fiction, and offers criticism on the genre regularly. Contributing frequent articles and retrospectives on literature and film to *Gothic.Net*, he also pens “*Folk Fears*,” a monthly column on dark folklore for *Twilight Showcase*, and writes “*Digging Up Bones*,” a semi-regular review column exploring classical genre fiction for *HellNotes*, the award winning newsletter. He also writes “*Savoring Darkness*,” a continuing book and cinema review column for *Horrorfind.com*, and is a regular literary reviewer for *Green Man* and *Project Pulp*. His various non-fictions have also appeared in such publications as *Dark Echo*, *Haunted*, *The Shallow End Of Infinity*, *Gathering Darkness*, and *Dark Matter Chronicles*. Living in the wasteland of the United States, William hides with his wife Valarie and Bonnie, their one year old baby. Currently he has a collection of folklore searching for a publisher, is developing a series of supernatural anthologies, and writing a novel (who isn’t?). When he isn’t writing, he searches for an authentic flying monkey. He and the monkey would make each other very happy, flying over the rooftops of sleeping villages and defecating on moral censors. He can be harassed at [wsimmons@northnet.org](mailto:wsimmons@northnet.org).

*His review of Echoes Of Darkness can be read at [www.maynard-sims.com](http://www.maynard-sims.com) and originally at <http://www.home.rica.net/gconn/review4.htm> Twilight Showcase*

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For twenty-five years, Maynard and Sims have been visiting shadows. To the delight and appreciation of readers, they bring back souvenirs. Like gentleman peddlers selling dark miracles, this long-time duet crafts fiction that reads like the secret geography of nightmare. With the subtle, undeniable persuasiveness of cold air slipping beneath the door, their supernatural stories display a subversive ability to stealthily chip away at those flimsy walls of logic and rationalization that the human animal uses to form illusions of control and safety; barriers that Maynard and Sims delight in crossing.

Renaissance men of the macabre, it's hard to find a nuance of the genre they haven't made their own. Authors, columnists, reviewers, publishers and editors, their even, sharply polished voices whisper strange truths by firelight. Possessing a sureness of voice and eye for detail lacking in much modern fiction, a night spent with a Maynard and Sims story is the equivalent of locking yourself in a small, claustrophobic room with only your fears and insecurities for company. Writing fiction together since 1972, their themes, characters, and intricate plots evoke the atmosphere of traditional supernatural literature without resorting to the cliché story lines or stock characterizations that so often alienate modern audiences. Maynard and Sims have a story to tell, and they do so with a grace of technique and sureness of voice that wrings the fears and phobias of reading audiences with the deceptively gentle but unyielding fingers of a night prowler.

Lately, their journeys into darkness have become more prolific. Seeing the revised publication of their first collection *Shadows At Midnight* in 1999, Maynard and Sims have since borne into the unsuspecting reading public *Echoes Of Darkness*, a second, more mature collection of modern supernatural fiction, and are awaiting the publication of their third collection, *The Business Of Barbarians*. Between working full time jobs and raising families, the two somehow managed to create *Enigmatic Press*, a publishing imprint of quality supernatural fiction and dark fantasy that interwove the tradition of the macabre tale with innovative voices and technique. Adding the notch of editors and publishers to their belts, the two have also become active in non-fiction, penning reviews and continuing columns focusing on the traditions of macabre literature for *At The World's End* and the *Masters Of Terror* website. Oh, yea, and sometimes they manage to eat and sleep.

It was my great fortune to stumble into Maynard and Sims the other side of midnight. Working on new short fictions, a mainstream crime novel, a young adult novel and with a collection of young adult horror stories waiting publication, the authors graciously agreed to grant me an interview, a chat in the dark.

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W.S

1 - You've been writing together since the early seventies. What influenced your decision to do so?

## **M&S**

*The decision to begin writing as an outlet for thoughts and ideas was a natural one that evolved from school days, when essays and English lessons were favourites. We can both clearly recall from early childhood making up stories and playing them over in our head in a way that we now realize was plot formation, narrative creation and simple story telling.*

*We have both always felt more comfortable putting thoughts onto paper rather than conversing, although we are quite articulate when the muse takes hold or the beer is flowing. The opportunity to express the thought or idea in written form is something that is as natural to us as breathing.*

*In the early seventies we had both left the school where we met when we were eleven years old. Strangely we weren't friends at school, neither much caring for the other a great deal. It was only when we had a mutual girlfriend and were suffering temporary broken hearts that we began chatting and went for a walk when the pub shut - a walk that lasted until 4.30 that morning - that we realized we had a friendship that was to endure.*

*So, aged around eighteen, nineteen, one of us wrote a story and showed it to the other. Not to be outdone - there was a lot of friendly rivalry in those early days - the process was reversed. And so it went on, until one of us started a story, but couldn't finish it, so the other one did. That became the trend.*

*It was soon clear that the joint work was better than anything we could achieve individually, so we amalgamated. So the decision to write as a partnership was reached quite early on, and was an easy one to make. We argued about single words and sentences for hours some times, and again if we had a common aim the argument was more constructive and led to a better story being produced.*

## **W.S**

2 - Writing is a very individualistic process. What conflicts of voice or topic did you have when you began? How did you get over them? What is the biggest joy or agitation of working together?

## **M&S**

*The joy of our arrangement - now celebrating thirty years of production - is that we both give full rein to our own individualistic artistic creativity but harnessed within a joint structure.*

*When we began the stories were very different in style, with Len sometimes producing a basic horror idea and Mick an arty style piece, neither of which was wholly successful. We offered up our work to the other for criticism but then argued when that criticism was raised. Hours could be spent in fruitless silence and grudging conversation before, very often, a compromise was reached. It was a good decision to write under our joint names. It soon led to a Maynard & Sims style as we were writing with one purpose.*

*In the early days so many writers influenced us that it took some years to develop a single style that worked. Our main conflict once we had agreed a common aim was to write in one genre, and with one style. Often story ideas lend themselves to one particular literary style, but just as often an idea can be told in a variety of ways. We had to have an overall goal in mind, for example to achieve a story collection, so that the stories had a common feel to them.*

*We always give one of the two of us the responsibility of overall control over a story. That means that even if Len begins a story and Mick finishes it, that Len then has the final say over the editing and revising so that the one common voice prevails. This prevents any conflict of voice and with the joint style now very much developed there are never any awkward changes of pace in the stories.*

*There are no agitations at all now. At the beginning there were teething problems, but no more so than there would have been had we continued to write separately. The joys are innumerable. The writing is an integral part of our friendship, though secondary to it. It enhances our relationship, and allows each of us to reach far higher plains in creativity than if we wrote in isolation. The joy of shared success, and consolation in failure. The joy of discussing and embellishing ideas so stories became far better than they could ever be if one voice spoke them.*

*Interestingly enough this joint authorship issue only seems to raise its head with prose writers. Many films are co scripted. Most popular US TV comedies are written by several authors, and in the UK it has been standard practice in comedy writing for many years with teams such as Clement and LeFrenais, Galton and Simpson, Muir and Norden etcetera. They write together quite happily, and never seem to be asked how they do it. And in music also, writing partnerships are commonplace, Lennon and McCartney and so on. Probably because of the creative spark such teamwork generates. The ego takes second place to the story.*

### **W.S**

3 - Could you describe for us your writing process? What are your individual strengths or weaknesses?

### **M&S**

*Nowadays we are much more confident than when we started. Generally now one of us writes a story, shows the other one who edits and revises very little, and then gives it back to the writer. The story is then placed into our current collection listing, sent off for sale, and filed.*

*The stories where one of us has an idea but is not sure how to write it get dealt with slightly differently. We share the idea, adding to it in the discussion. The actual writing is then allocated to the one who didn't think it up and the one who had the original idea carries out the revision.*

*It used to be that Len wrote long pieces and Mick short ones. Len was good at page turning action and Mick stylish flourishes. Len was good at character, but wrote slow scenes, Mick was good at description and atmosphere but his scenes were quick ones. As we have developed and matured, our styles have leaned towards each other so that they are now joined at the hip and there are no discernible joins at all.*

*The great benefit is that one has an idea and shares it with the other, who adds so much more to it in the bouncing off of thoughts stage. A typical example of that is the idea Mick raised in the hour and half car journey to Fantasycon recently. The idea was originally for a short story, but almost casually Len said it was a novel idea. In the discussion a mainstream novel of about 180,000 words was roughly mapped out.*

*The clarity of vision of one of us is usually better than the other one at any given time so that there is little time wasted in fruitless planning or on worthless projects. With longer stories, *Moths* or *The Seminar*, we usually let one of us write but with regular reviews so that the plot and narrative is on track.*

*The partnership has been going for so long now, and gives us so much pleasure, that even though we are both quite capable of writing individual - and effectively that is what we do now - it makes every sense to remain as what has been described as "that two headed beast known as Maynard & Sims."*

**W.S**

4 - In your introduction, you mention how a dreary atmosphere during holiday found it's way into "*At The End Of The Pier*." Do you often translate your own life into your fictions?

**M&S**

*No matter how 'invented' the fiction is, as a writer you are always drawing from real life, even though it may be subconscious. Characters you meet in everyday life have a habit of appearing on the page; likewise with situations.*

*With "At The End Of The Pier," it was a classic example of the surroundings giving birth to the story. The holiday, taken as a child, to an out of season, and slightly seedy seaside town, had lodged in the subconscious, and during the writing it was like being transported back there.*

*The theme of loss also permeates out into stories. Or more to the point, the horror of having something taken from you, such as your youth (*Border End*) or talent (*Moths*) or even the treasured memory of someone you have loved (*An Office In The Grays Inn Road*). Now whether that stems from us both losing parents when we were at an impressionable age, we'll leave to the analysts to decide.*

*With our latest work, there are very definite elements of autobiography in there, but the thoughts and memories add to as well as form the focus of the supernatural theme.*

**W.S**

5 - What conditions led to your first collection, **Shadows At Midnight**, being revised and republished by **Sarob Press**? Did you notice a change in your writing style or choice of content looking back at the work?

### **M&S**

*The idea to revise **Shadows** came in 1997. We had been out of circulation as far as the genre was concerned for many years. Work, families and various other distractions meant that our writing had been put on the back burner. **Shadows At Midnight** had become something of an albatross around our necks, as we felt we were destined to remain 'one-book-authors'. In '97 suddenly we decided to write seriously again, and it seemed logical to us to revise **Shadows**, using the talent we had learned over the years to improve the stories. It was really to kick-start us back into writing.*

*Obviously when we completed it and **Sarob Press** offered to publish it, we were delighted. But with the next book **Echoes of Darkness** there was a distinct maturing of styles. Also the themes of the stories were more mature. Even with the rewrite, **Shadows** remains very much of its time. Our newer writing is more satisfying. **Shadows** was as much homage to the writers such as RH Malden, Andrew Caldecott, ANL Munby, as it was our own interpretation of the supernatural feelings and inspirations we had experienced since boyhood.*

### **W.S**

6 - You suggested in your introduction to **Echoes Of Darkness** that your early works were very much examples of traditional ghost stories while your later works are more modern. Could you explain this in more detail?

### **M&S**

***Shadows** had taken as its models the type of ghost stories written by H.Russell Wakefield, ANL Munby and LTC Rolt - not, as many people have suggested, MR James, whom we have never wholly enjoyed. They were written to evoke a feeling of times past, a slower, more relaxed world. We chose the language and settings very carefully to achieve that effect. The ideas in the stories are traditional as well, but they were selected to reflect the style in which the stories are written.*

*The modern stories are more contemporary in style and content. Mostly they are set in a recognizable present day, and the characters are very much 21<sup>st</sup> century, with modern values and mores. A story like *Coming Home* would not have fitted into **Shadows At Midnight** simply because of the sexual nature of the theme. The stories in **Echoes**, whilst being told in a classical manner, in that they for the most part have beginning middle and end, and the characters are recognizable and the dialogue is realistic, are very much modern in tone, setting and style.*

### **W.S.**

7 - In general, what would you suggest was the biggest difference between the themes and tones of classic and contemporary supernatural fiction?

### **M&S**

*There are not many differences in what scared us then and what scares us now. Fear of the unknown still makes up a large percentage of what really frightens us. The stories that were written sixty years ago can still scare us today, in fact Charles Birkin and other authors were*

*writing stories back in the nineteen thirties that would be deemed outrageous were the same stories written today. Basically nothing really has changed, apart from setting and language. We are still children scared of the boogiemán lurking under the bed.*

*The style of language has clearly changed and we write now to reflect that fact. The ideas and the fear factors remain as valid today as they have always been. The themes today may appear harder edged sometimes but that is primarily an illusion. We are fed a constant diet of horror through TV, newspapers and radio, so the ability to provoke fear through fiction today is possibly harder.*

**W.S.**

8 - Here it is, a cliché question, but one that everyone (including myself) likes to ask writers. What authors or works influenced you to write supernatural horror fiction? What about them did you appreciate?

**M&S**

*We once asked that question of John W. Wall; also known as Sarban, whose book Ringstones was a definite influence, perhaps not in content, but certainly in feeling. His reply was, 'read the books and see for yourself.' which we considered quite churlish at the time. But perhaps he was right. It's very hard to see influences in ones own work. In the early days Len was reading mainly American writers like Robert Bloch and Richard Matheson, but obviously the stories in Shadows show none of those influences. Sarban, as we said, had an effect, as did the writers we mentioned before, Wakefield, Munby etc.*

*These days we read very little in the way of horror fiction, apart from the thousand or so stories we read when Enigmatic Tales was in production.*

*As far as influences now are concerned we would have to cite Ed McBain and Jack Higgins, Robert Goddard, Ian St James, and a host of others, none of which are 'supernatural' writers, but all of whom can tell a damned good story. And that's really all we want to do.*

*Shadows was influenced by the English traditional ghost stories writers. We have always loved Wakefield, but the book was really influenced by the atmosphere of a darkened room, where the drift of cigar smoke lingers, and where the port decanter vies with the chessboard in front of a roaring log fire. Echoes if it has any direct influence was born from a desire to expand our style and open our vein of story ideas so that the arena was larger for the narrative.*

*Our third collection is much more up to date even than **Echoes** and brings in all kinds of strands of influence from high school teachers, to parents; from holiday experiences to marital ones. Highly personal ones that have been crafted into hopefully effective modern supernatural stories.*

**W.S**

9 - Similar to the protagonist of Le Fanu's "Green Tea," many of your characters find themselves attacked or thrown into dangerous, supernatural situations through no fault of their own. Do you feel that this makes the narratives more disturbing?

**M&S**

*On the whole yes. The slaughter of the innocents is a very powerful theme from literary through the centuries. The thought of a friend or family member being haunted or worse merely because they have been in the wrong place at the wrong time is quite frightening. It is the loss or lack of control over one's own life that is so hard to handle. Sometimes though the protagonists become embroiled in the supernatural through curiosity or sheer meddling. Others become involved through a lack of moral fibre, a character flaw that leads them to mistreat the wrong person and bring down all kinds of wrath upon them. These latter two scenarios are equally frightening.*

**W.S.**

10 - Many of your stories summon tension through suggestion and implied threat rather than through graphic violence. In which ways do you think a whisper is more disturbing than a scream, shadow more dangerous than dripping grue?

**M&S**

*There is a huge element of real horror in the gruesome \_ a road accident, a brutal murder or beating. They are valid themes and ways of expressing a scream for humanity that we all share. The more difficult task, and therefore possibly more interesting is the scare evoked through suggestion. How much more frightening is the thought that someone might be behind the window glass if you pull back the curtains, than the actual face itself? How much more terrifying is the whisper from what should be a deserted room than the blood dripping corpse that might be emitting the whisper? True terror can only be achieved if we care about the characters and that is one reason we work so hard to create believable characters with realistic dialogue.*

*Through the creation of people we can relate or at least care about, we can suggest to the reader that they can be truly frightened when things begin to happen to their new friends. The imagination is the most powerful tool available to the author and it is a pity when genre writers choose to eschew it.*

**W.S**

11 - I am always struck by the masterful use of place in your fictions. Your settings often live with the vibrancy and intimacy of your living characters. How important is a sense of "place" to your fictions?

**M&S**

*The settings are very important. Nearly as important as the characters, and in some stories equally important, as the places become one of the characters. An old story A Whining is a typical example of this where the setting of a seaside hotel in Wales, and the cliffs and hills are 75% of the telling of the story, a murder story as it happens. In the Echoes stories there are various settings, an Indian Ocean island, a London office, a seaside town, all of which have a*



*vital role in building the atmosphere and mood of the story. Without the setting, the developed tension of place and time, the subtlety of the narrative drive would be lessened. Certainly that was the case with "At The End Of The Pier." Without the setting there really would not have been a story. That was a prime example of the characters, the story and the haunting all stemmed from the location.*

**W.S**

12 - Earlier you commented that aspects of one's life couldn't help but inspire one's writing. When you created the "Tashkai" of the novella *Moths*, did you also find yourself influenced by folklore? If so, what belief or legend did you borrow from?

**M&S**

*Frankly none. Len is an atheist and Mick a sporadic church attendee, increasing in support of his young daughter. We both grew up reading fantasy and fairy tales, but positively dislike Fantasy fiction. We believe in spirits or ghosts because it is such a negative condition to totally disbelieve in a supernatural reality around us. In a moonlit garden at night with trees whispering in the wind, stars blinking, an owl or bat hovering, and silence prevailing, it is hard not to feel a presence around us. Mick was with his mother when she died and will never forget the experience of seeing her essence ascend from her body and drift to the ceiling of the room. There are no legends or myths though that we follow. We prefer, as with "Moths" and the Kumari in "Ashushma" to create our own.*

**W.S.**

13 - You also write young adult fiction, crime, and mainstream works. When you create under these genres do you approach your stories with a different attitude than when penning supernatural fiction? Do your styles and voices change when you strap on different skins?

**M&S**

*As we concentrate on character driven fiction the answer would be no, the attitude is the same. The trick is to think differently so that the idea is told in a different way. There are ideas that could be told in supernatural, crime, or mainstream style and we have to decide which suits the idea best.*

*With supernatural we are working on the whole to an ending where the supernatural element is revealed and the reason behind what occurs has some logic. In the crime stories there is often a looser way of structuring the story as the plot can be very important, or in some crime stories, the plot is irrelevant, and it is the characters that are the key drivers. Mainstream often relies on strength of idea to succeed. The characters are important, but it is their interaction with one another that can be more interesting than the action taking place.*

**W.S.**

14 - In such stories as "Mattie" and "A Country Garden," the commonplace world of normalcy is captured before placing characters into threatening circumstances. Do you feel creating some sense of the normal or realistic is crucial in making readers believe in the fantastic?

**M&S**

*Not crucial, no. It really depends upon the story. In some tales the establishment of a sense of normality is key to the story and its successful ending. In other stories the creation of unreality from the beginning works much better. If from page one we think we are reading about a normal situation but unease or something that jars is introduced we are alert for the unusual happening. That can work extremely well as long as the 'fantastic' can be sustained throughout the story. Often we read a story, which starts well with an atmospheric beginning, unreal situations being explored, but the ending lets it all down. This is because the writer has only the thread of an idea, an impression if you like. The stories that work have to have believability factor or else they are just too incredible to work as horror stories.*

**W.S.**

15 - In your introduction to *Echoes Of Darkness*, you say that "with the new millennium now a reality we are duty bound to preserve the classic emotions." Could you expound on this further? The term "preserve" indicates that such ancient feelings may be in danger of becoming extinct. Do you believe this? If so, how do your fictions combat it?

**M&S**

*The classic supernatural story is always in danger of becoming extinct. We live in a materialistic world, and one where sensations are available at the click of a computer keyboard. The supernatural story transports the reader into another world where all their safe assumptions become suspect. The problem is that as time rolls on and we become more sophisticated and inured to the spiritual and paranormal, we are in danger of losing the primeval fears that have been ingrained in us and make us what we are. Will the humble ghost story still be able to scare us in a hundred years time? Well, that will depend on whether ghosts have been pinned down by a rapidly advancing science.*

*In the past hundred years such huge leaps in science and technology have been made that we are running out of surprises. We would like to think that the stories of Benson, James, Aickman will still be read in the next century and not just as some dry academic study, but with their powers still intact to frighten and delight. We will continue to write a modern form of this kind of story, and just live in the hope that we can still raise the hairs on peoples' necks a hundred years from now.*

**W.S**

16 - Could you share with us some of your future plans? Are there any new collections or novels due out soon? What do they concentrate on?

**M&S**

*Where to start? We are incapable of sitting still. Now that much of the **Enigmatic Press** work has ceased, we are concentrating much more on our own projects. The first thing we did was to relocate the website to [www.maynard-sims.com](http://www.maynard-sims.com). The whole thing has been redesigned with more emphasis being placed on our own writing. It is in effect our shop window. We have just finished a novel for young adults, as well as a short story collection with the youth market in mind. We have finished an adult short story collection and we have been jotting down a few story ideas for a well-known TV series. Next we will be working on two crime novels, again for the young adult market, and after that a mainstream novel. In between we'll be writing a few more short supernatural stories with the view of compiling another collection. We are writing the monthly column for Mark Chadbourn's **At The Worlds End** site, and a regular column at Andy Fairclough's **Masters of Terror** site, as well as book reviews and other articles.*

*All the detail, titles and so forth, are on the new website.*

*As far as **Enigmatic Press** is concerned, we have a number of ideas in the pipeline, but a lot will depend on finance.*

**W.S.**

17 - What major ambitions do you harbor? What literary directions do you see yourself moving in?

**M&S**

*Obviously it would be nice if we could be writing full time. With normal work taking up as much as twelve hours a day, time is always at a premium. To be able to make a living from the writing would be quite liberating! As far as literary direction, it really depends on where the muse leads us.*

*Crime fiction is an obvious interest, as is young adult fiction. We are looking into the possibilities of screen writing, but at the moment our options are really broadening. The love of the supernatural tale will always remain, and a successful novel in that genre - a rare thing in our view - would be lovely.*

**W.S.**

18 - What is the most important thing you want readers to get from reading a Maynard and Sims work?

**M&S**

*A sense of atmosphere and story. We have never been interested in writing stories that were simply an excuse for supernatural incident or special effects, although those are important factors. Our characters are, we hope, believable, and they live believable lives, and lives that the average person can identify and empathize with. We try to create in our stories a sense of the everyday in which the supernatural intrudes. Also we would like to think that the stories will stay with the reader for a while after he has closed the book. A sense of true pleasure from the reading, and a realization of the craftsmanship and care that has gone into the writing.*

**W.S.**

19 - In America, increasing media, political, and religious hostility is lodged against supernatural, fantasy, and horror fiction and film in claims that such art influences people to acts of violence and negativity. What is the environment of such sentiments in your neck of the world? How do you interpret societies unease and paranoia towards dark art and fiction, and does it effect you?

**M&S**

*It's basically a knee-jerk reaction that is the just the same on this side of the pond. The problems with society are not the result of fiction. If only it could be so easily explained away. The human animal is a violent, avaricious and spiteful creature. There has been violence and negativity in the world since man first learned to walk upright. Of course social commentators are going to look for reasons for mindless acts of violence, whether it is the abduction and murder of a small child, an armed juvenile going berserk in a school, or one race performing acts of genocide on another. Unfortunately they are quick to blame a film or book for inciting the incidents. It's an easy answer. It doesn't require much thought. Once again it's the way society has come to expect everything spoon-fed to them. Much supernatural fiction is very moral, a battle against good and evil. Usually good triumphs; sometimes the supernatural element is the victor, but there are usually good reasons hidden in the text for this to be the case.*

*As to whether it affects us, well of course it does. When we were editing **Enigmatic Tales**, we were accused of sympathizing with fascism, paedophilia and Satanism. All complete rubbish of course, but people are looking for scapegoats for the ills of society, and supernatural fiction, because it deals in issues concerning good and evil is an easy target. It's a shame, because people put as much effort into defining the real causes instead of pillorying a perfectly legitimate form of literary expression, the problems might be on the road to being solved.*

**W.S.**

20 - Does your writing help you cope with internal fears in any way? If so, how?

**M&S**

*That is a very hard question, and one that would take several sessions of deep analysis to answer comprehensively, but if there is one internal fear that drives us, it is the fear of underachieving and wasting time. As one gets older one is very aware of the clock ticking, and that there is no longer as much time to do the things we set out to do when we were younger. That is why we work so hard and give so many hours to our fiction.*

*Very often our story ideas have a base in situations, or events that have happened to us, and thus in the writing we are helping to cauterise old wounds. There are primal fears that haunt both of us and it does help to put them down as storylines. It helps to lessen our internal fear and it also adds a personal authority to our characters actions.*

**W.S**

21 - What advice, if any, would you feel comfortable offering to new authors?

## **M&S**

*Believe in yourself. Writing is grinding hard work and an absolute delight. It takes you from the heights of acceptance to the crushing despair of rejection. Unfortunately the latter is more common. But nothing compares with finishing a story and then seeing it accepted for publication. The thought that other people are going to read your story is an ultimate high. Read, read, and read. You can't expect to write compelling, literate fiction unless you understand the nuts and bolts of plot construction, creating characters, and storytelling. And for heaven's sake read widely - don't just limit yourself to your preferred genre. And beware of literary snobbery.*

*There is as much to learn from Dick Francis and Ed McBain as there is from John Fowles and John Barth.*

*Be strong so that rejection is taken as an accepted part of the job. Never take it personally, always realize it is based on subjective opinion. Be tenacious so that if you believe in a story keep sending it out until it is accepted.*

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THE END

William Simmons & Maynard & Sims  
2000.