



Flight

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Reprinting Cerebus Issues 151-162

The counterpoint to the impressive foundation of the two-volume, 1,200-page *Church & State* is the equally impressive, equally complex *Mothers & Daughters*, the first volume of which is *Flight*. This graphic novel concerns the fight between the newly established matriarchy and the opposing "daughterarchy." Cerebus, trying to regain the power he lost when the matriarchal Cirinists took over, heads down a fateful, blood-soaked path. Dave Sim is often reviled as a misogynist because of the radical politics and philosophy laid down in his books, the groundwork of which begins here and builds toward the climax of *Mothers & Daughters*, which was so explosive that when it was initially released it cost Sim several close friends.

Flight Details

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Felix says

After an initial Cerebus-gone-berserk-on-Cirinists bloodbath, which constitutes a welcome fast-paced straightforward action sequence after the excruciatingly slow-motion of "Melmoth", the plot fragments into many alternating threads that don't connect very well. There is Cerbus ascending through several spheres and playing chess with what I believe is supposed to be Tarim; there's comic-relief in the panels concerned with a sexually repressed Punisher-Roach and Elrod, there's a religious conflict between pigts; there's great Cirin, Thatcher and others being concerned with some spherical construction; and several other threads that I cannot quite identify nor describe.

Yeah, uhm, well... I don't really get what this is all about, but what the heck... I'll read on to see where this weird stuff is heading...

Gordon McAlpin says

At some point here or shortly thereafter, Dave Sim basically lost his shit. He lost a lot of interest in drawing comics, too, judging from the interminable, self-indulgent prose pieces that he began to increasingly overuse in his books.

I kept hoping the series would return to the glory of High Society and Church & State. It never did.

Alex Greenblatt says

idk why I'm reading these

Andrew Barnett says

This is where Cerebus began to be hard to read for me. I loved Cerebus up until this book. There is nothing like Cerebus, the books are funnier and more thought provoking than I ever expected. I'll probably forget how weird this book made me feel at times and read the next one in a year or so, based off of my nostalgia for the earlier books. But hopefully I read this review first, and then go and read something else, and remember Cerebus for the good times we had, and not descend into the isolated, misogynistic, mystical, masochistic dungeon where Sim trapped his mind in these later years.

Rex Hurst says

We start the second half of Cerebus with this volume, which binds together issues 151-162. In this text, we get back to the main conflicts of the Cerebus series. Some say that the story finally starts again, after being

dragged down by Jaka's Story and Melmoth, and I can see there point. Church and State I & II, while great, gave us more questions than answers and offered a whole host of odd occurrences that hadn't been addressed up until this point. People invested in a series want answers and a three year tease is quite enough.

This is the first book in the Mother's and Daughters arc, which will encompass the next three volumes as well, essentially ending most of the action in the series. But what a ride it will be.

An aspect that is brought out here and mentioned in the previous volume Melmoth, is the shared hivemind of the Cirinist and their ability to communicate telepathically. This seems a deliberate spin on the communist collective element present in many radicalized leftist organizations. The idea that you must either "believe in every idea we have or you are our enemy" is very present in this mental communication. It is expressed in a very similar method as "sending" is in Elfquest.

The Cirinists have run wild, executing anyone that stands in their way. We discover what has happened to all of the gold collected by Cerebus during his tenure as Pope. Cirin plans to melt and pour it together in a huge sphere, so that she may have her own ascension, similar to the one Cerebus had at the end of Church and State.

We see a general wrapping up of characters and concepts that appeared in the first volume of the series, in some of the first issues even. He begins to tie them all together in what is termed the "great change" that is to come. The succubi from issue 2 dissipates into nothing; the character of Death which may or may not have been Tarim, known for his cowled pure black figure and an hourglass dangling before him, has his life force drained away by the chaos gems; the Pigts of Northland kill each other off; two versions of the Judge appear and begin arguing etc etc.

The odd events surrounding Cerebus are reminiscent of those in Church and State, indicating a cosmic event will soon occur. Miniature Cerebus's appear around people, threatening them. People disappear at Cerebus's command, as did Astoria just before she murdered the Eastern Pontiff. Vision of Gods appear on Earth and dreams, things change, fall apart, and cannot hold together. The Roach, now Punisherroach, has accidentally shifted his consciousness to a higher plane and begins reading people's minds and gains insight into the higher spheres of existence. This seems to be mostly due to his mental illness.

These random causations, are a result of Cerebus's eventual ascension to the eighth sphere, and are act of wills and enlightenment. The sphere's referenced here are representative of the planets, in this case it is Neptune. it is so far away and so stressful a journey that only a mental construct of Cerebus's can be projected there. This eventually causes (I'm extrapolating here, none of it is explicitly explained) the ripple effect of visions and tiny Cerebi appearing.

In his journey, he is given an alternate vision of his future one where he eventually defeats the Cirinists and becomes the toast of the Iest once again. Cerebus rejects this, because of what the Judge states, but as we will see all visions of his future are true, just not true at the same time.

As you may have noted, at the time this was written there were nine spheres, Pluto was still considered a planet (and it still is to me, dammit!). But what is there? That will be revealed in volume 10, Minds.

Cerebus's next ascension, this time a mental rather than physical one, leads to a chess game with the third Aardvark, Suenteus Po, shown here as an ethereal construct, barely outlined. This is the culmination of Suenteus Po's various lives, possibly an oversoul collecting the experiences and knowledge of his various incarnations. It appears that all of the other conversations with this character (in the Mind Games I-VI issues) were aspects of his consciousness or temporal shifts in the other spheres, resulting in him talking to a previous incarnation of the Suenteus Po.

The Po placed here has previously been incarnated as some of the most significant innovators and revolutionaries in the continent's history. And in every case his revolutions has descended into vice, corruption, decay, and collapsed. Then he is reincarnated again to start to the entire process over. So in this life, and due to the "magnifier" effect that Aardvarks have upon the world (more on that in future posts), he has opted out in this life, living in complete seclusion with no friends or family. His only indulgence is a chessboard. He will not interfere, because he sees that it leads nowhere.

This encounter leads to my first real negative criticism of the Cerebus storyline. There are simply too times that Cerebus accidentally bumps into an omnipresent being who knows everything and fills in our uncaring anti-hero on a much of major plot points and background detail. This has happened twice so far (the Judge and Suenteus Po) and will occur three more times during the course of the series. What these characters have to say and their perspectives is fascinating and well-written, but such a device begins to wear thin when their main purpose is to disseminate information.

Sean Samonas says

Here we start to see the plot re-emerge from the brief biography of Oscar Wilde. There isn't a whole lot to say about this one...things start to get interesting again because things are happening with Cerebus.

It's a pretty simple formula, but one that seems to elude Dave Sims throughout the series. I bought the book because the title was "Cerebus". If you show me Cerebus doing things, I will be happy. Because that is why I bought the book.

However, Dave seems more and more obsessed with making sure that the audience "gets" his philosophy. Now, I have nothing against authors having weird philosophies that I may find offensive. Several very good authors, in fact, have well known offensive philosophies. The problem I have with Dave's approach is that he sacrifices the narrative in order to argue his philosophy in the book.

He continues to simply make broad caricatures out of the feminist movement by showing how utterly bad life is under the matriarchal ruling of the Cirinists. Handled slightly differently, this could be a compelling story. I would love to read a version where the argument made isn't that things are bad simply because someone without a penis is in charge.

That aside, we finally start to see some pay-off for the series and the beginnings of a climax for the story that began way back in Church and State 1.

Hamish says

Part 1 of the Mothers & Daughters story (Flight, Women, Reads and Minds make up the whole thing). This was supposed to be the big one that tied up all the loose ends and mysteries in the series (spoiler: it doesn't) and paved the way for the final 100 issues.

This particular volume in of itself is quite good, it's just hard re-reading it, knowing that it's all going to crash and burn in the next three volumes. Dave Sim said in an interview that each volume of this story should clear up the mysteries in a corresponding earlier volume (Flight for Cerebus, Women for High Society, Reads for Church & State, Minds for Jaka's Story/Melmoth). It doesn't. It brings up some mysteries from that volume,

but doesn't resolve any of them and in fact creates even more. But since it's the first part of a larger story, you kind of write it off and think "oh don't worry, it'll get cleared up soon". You end up disappointed. But when you're just reading this volume, it's involving and exciting and there's such a rising action and the promise of an epic conclusion tying together a huge number of plot threads. Sim is really good at bring in all of these out of left field mind fucks that get you so intrigued, but then never adequately resolves them (this is a big issue in Church & State too). It's one giant tease.

But just for now it all works really well. If you don't think about how let down you're going to be, this is a strong read. Also I love the image of full-on barbarian Cerebus with his sword in one hand and clutching Missy in the other. A low 4.

Jason says

I decided to give Cerebus a re-read, but rather than start from the beginning I thought I'd start at volume 7. I've read the first 6 volumes several times, but I always stop at Melmoth. The ensuing volumes become increasingly challenging in a variety of ways.

I recall thinking I was really lost at some point in the latter stories and carried on due in most part to inertia and determination.

Someday I would really like to do an extended analysis of the themes and symbolism in these works. Mostly because I think I'll have to just to be able to understand it all myself, even on a basic level. So many thematic elements converge in this series that it's sometimes difficult to know which subject Sim is exploring.

Political systems, gender tensions, the traditional vs. the progressive, intellectualism, religious systems, popular culture: literary culture, comics culture, film, mysticism, systems of law, relationships, childhood, psychology, repression oppression.....

And given the length of these books he doesn't just touch on the issues and move on, he dissects them to an almost claustrophobic degree. Take for example his examination of the desperate sexually repressed male in the figure of Pud Withers, a man who through many pages of internal dialogue with himself and others, forces us, the audience, to confront the realities of the relentless external pressures which lead Withers to contemplate the rape of Jaka.

It is an artistic achievement nearly on par with Toni Morrison's performance in 'The Bluest Eye'.

Sim gets a lot of criticism for being a misogynist. I'm not really knowledgeable about the work or the accusations enough to have an opinion, but I do know that LOTS of writers have problematic opinions that are reflected in their work. Who doesn't?

Maybe after this reading, if I make it, I'll be better able to understand both sides.

Update:

A wonderful book. Very dense, but rewarding. Thus far I've found nothing objectionable about Sim's themes. We'll see if that holds true in the ensuing volumes.

Ratiocination says

Starts a four-book arc that is in many ways the best and the worst of Cerebus. I'm a completist, so I can't help but read the text portions along with the comics. The latter are among the best in the thirty-year, three hundred issue series. The former are distinctly uncomfortable. This is where Dave Sim starts to lay out the misogynist philosophy that eventually took over the later parts of Cerebus. It's ugly, and written with enough

coherence to be particularly unsettling.

What's bizarre is that Sim had written, and in volumes 7-10 was continuing to write, strong, nuanced female characters. They don't really vanish until much later, though when they do it's abrupt (volume 15, Latter Days.) I can't really reconcile this. I have no idea how Sim did. I'm never quite sure what to say about the series as a result.

Sud666 says

Cerebus is a monumental work. It touches on a variety of issues from politics to religion. It is also laced with humor and is a parody of sword and sorcery comics.

It is also a series best read in order. I randomly picked this volume to read and have paid the price. Some of the story makes little sense and what does tends to be on the tedious side. A strange Margaret Thatcher, touchy religious people and Punisheroach make up the cast of this out there story. Honestly, I was lost.

There is still that dry humor but lacking context the story failed to draw me in. Perhaps this is one I may revisit after reading the rest of the series, but it is not high on my list of things to read.

Ed Erwin says

The story begins to pick up again after the very static previous volume. Some of the many loose ends from earlier volumes begin to come together, but many more mysteries remain. (From what I've heard, most never will be really resolved.) Some parts leave me scratching my head too much, but the parts that take place down in the city states (rather than in some heavenly realm) are still quite interesting.

Pablo Martinez says

This begins "Mothers & Daughters", the second longest arc if I'm not mistaken. First story without and "in-between" issue. Cerebus has snapped out of his catatonic-state and finds himself caught in the tangle of the ensuing events on the Cirinist-ruled Iest, this time taking a more active role. The secuencial-narrative is superb.

John says

As others have said, this volume brings mixed feelings for those of us who have read all the way to the end. Reading it month on month (when the release schedule allowed) this felt like a return to form, much more like C & S than the previous two volumes.

it is pacy, exciting and witty in ways that gave me great hope for the later volumes.

Sadly however it also contains the seeds of weaknesses that mar the later books.

Sim still writes interesting stories about women and creates great female characters, but the text sections of

the book show a different side to the author's psyche. They are always thought provoking and cogent but increasingly one wonders about Sim's mental health as he reveals concerns about the emasculation of men as women become more strident in their feminism.

The_Mad_Swede says

Collecting issues # 151–162 of Dave Sim's 300 issues limited series *Cerebus the Aardvark* and being the first part of four in the *Mothers & Daughters* story arc, this volume returns to main action once more. The political intrigues in the Cirinist state and the opposition brewing under the surface all come back to the foreground. Cerebus' himself returns as does a lot of the supporting cast of recurrent characters, including the Cockroach. All in all, a very promising opening to this four part story arc and move back to the amazing for Sim's ongoing narrative.

Luc says

Much better than Melmoth, this book unfortunately ushers in golden age of Sim's asshatery. In the foreword, Sim claims that his views on feminism means that his average relationships only last 3 months. I'm sure it's just his views an not being a borderline schizophrenic.

So Sim "enlightens" us with his views on feminism. Basically, a feminist is big telepathic bull dyke that thinks "penis" is a curse word and OR is a parody of a living politician (Thatcher and Cops). Men don't get it much better being either incompetents.

We do get some great exposition to Suentus Po who seems like he's a very interesting character. Also Cerebus's "vengeance for the living Tarim" speech is pretty badass
