

English Language GM Interview (Translation)

Bartosz Rumińczyk: Being perfectly honest with you, I have to admit that I am neither an expert on your works, nor do I have a vast collection of your books on my bookshelf, but you were personally responsible for corrupting my mind when I was 16 years old.

Graham Masterton: That actually is the most interesting thing that happened to me in Poland. I came here for the first time in 1989 when *Manitou* was published and then my sex books were published as well. When I came here again and again over the years and particularly now, people very often say “Oh, I was brought up on your books”...

A lot of my friends were brought up on your books, and when I told them about this interview they were very impressed...

GM: It's really great for me to meet people who say that they were reading my books 20 years ago. Once I have met a young girl who told me that she bought one of my sex-books and hid it under her mattress and there was also here mother who said that she was going there and read the book as well.

That's very good news for you as a writer.

I have noticed that very often you claim that you do not read fiction a lot, particularly horrors. Actually it's not a good news for an interviewer, still I will try to talk with you for a minute or two about horrors. I'd like to ask you to go back in your memories, to 1970s, when you wrote your first horror – *Manitou* – and try to tell me what were your inspirations than?

GM: Actually my inspirations go back a lot further than 1970s because when I was 9 or 10 I discovered Edgar Allan Poe and I read his stories all over again - *The Cask of Amontillado*, *The Black Cat*, they were very gothic of course. After that, I read *Dracula*. I was also very keen on Jules Verne. There's a story, a very creepy story, by Jules Verne called *The Underground City*, about people who live in disused mine, under the ground. I was very attracted by the frightening nature of those writers, how they managed to create a sense of atmosphere and fear, so that's where my interests really started.

And what about Lovecraft?

GM: And obviously H.P. Lovecraft, after having discovered Poe and Stoker and things like that. Lovecraft wasn't published in England much at those days, it was quite hard to find his books. Of course he wrote a lot with, or a lot of his books were finished or written by, August Derleth. I definitely liked that gothic style.

Do you sometimes go back to your past masters?

GM: I don't really go back now, I read the books so often that I really don't need to, I could quote Lovecraft out of my head.

Do you think that those authors stand the test of time?

GM: I think they do, the ideas do, the atmosphere. Poe certainly does and Dracula – there is this strong vampire element, which is very popular today, e.g. *Twilight* and other horror stories.

Those authors are for sure gold mines of ideas, but very often I heard people accusing Poe of being a bore or Lovecraft of being a third rate writer. Do you think that our sensibility has changed?

GM: Oh yes, I think our perception of books changed but remember what happened in between now and the time those books were published. Now we got the Internet, we got TV, we do text messages, so obviously the way we look at things, the way we read books is quite different from when you were sitting by the fire in 1890.

Polish fantastic fiction writer, Andrzej Ziemiński once said that all of his characters are real, based on people he had met, shaped into a literary form. How is it with your characters?

GM: Very much the same in the way. Because I was trained as a newspaper reporter I look at the real people and then I use them as a basis for the people in my books. I want the characters to seem real, not only having problems with dealing with the demons, but also with their family of financial problems. That makes them more realistic and readers can identify with them much more strongly.

Can we find your alter ego in your novels? Apart from Harry Erskine, I know that you said that there is a lot of you in Harry.

GM: There is some, like his sense of humour. Yes occasionally – since you get a character who likes cooking and eating that would probably be me.

Well there are a lot of characters who like cooking and eating, very often while reading your books my mouth waters...

GM: Laughs

I have to ask you about one character from *Sleepless*, recently I came back to *Sleepless*, which is probably my favourite, and while reading I had the feeling that I know the name of one of the characters from somewhere, can you guess who am I thinking about?

GM: No I can't, you know, it was years when I wrote *Sleepless*...

There is a character called Victor Kuryłowicz...

GM: Oh yes!

And then the book was published by Alabartos which is owned by Mr. Kuryłowicz. Is it a coincidence?

GM: No. It's probably quite deliberate. I do give a name check to some of my friends. I also have an occasional competition on my web site and the prize is that you can get killed in my next book.

Have you talked with Mr. Kurylowicz about this?

GM: No, I just gave the name.

Sticking to writers workshop, I know that you work very methodologically, you have certain plan, you work from 9 to 5, so is your work really that regular, or maybe you have some superstitions connected with writing, some opening or closing rituals, for instance you always start with a cup of coffee before, and have a shot of chivas regal after...

GM: Laughs I'd love to...

...or is it just plain-plain work?

GM: Most of this is plain-plain work. I always do a crossword in the morning, it's like physical exercise for the brain. These days I don't work from 9 to 5 anymore, I do about 10 to 4. I go to talk to Wiescka, we probably go for a drive in the country, stop in the country pub or something, especially this time of the year. In our whereabouts it is very pretty and I like to see a bit of that before night falls.

Universe of Graham Masterton is swarmed with manifestation of supernatural. Do you treat your demons, ghosts, spirits personally, or are they only a tool used to tell a horrifying stories?

GM: I always think that demons, and ghosts and spirits are inventions of people who had no way of explaining – years ago – anything which went bad for them. If a whole village was wiped out by a flu or pneumonia, or there was some plague, or cattle died, or the weather was bad for a long time, or babies died in their carts, they didn't realize that it was a virus or some kind of crop disease and they would invent a terrible creature or a witch, or some other manifestation to explain it. That is I think what makes those demons, those figures so frightening. They are, well ignorant explanation of something terrible. What I like to do, is visit that great, powerful image on people of today and see how they would cope with them.

Have you ever had any sort of supernatural experience?

GM: I am not sure how much supernatural it is – but I saw my grandfather, long dead, in London zoo once. I went through the crowds to catch him, but he was gone. I don't know whether it was somebody who look much as him or whether it was him. Last place I have seen him alive was in London zoo, so maybe my imagination was working over time. I was also in a pub once, a very old one, where a woman died in a cellar many years ago and I felt a hand on my shoulder, I looked around and there was nobody at all within 20 ft. I don't know whether these things were real or not...

Wiescka: I had such an experience once, when my father died...

GM: That's right

W: Night before my father died, I heard a banging, a really banging on the bedroom door, I Got up to check it and this stopped and then actually my father died. And he (Graham Masterton) didn't hear anything !

GM: And you said that it was loud...

W: Yeah really loud...

My girlfriend told me to ask you whether you have nightmare after your work?

GM: No, I don't, because well... I am sometimes staggered how frightening some people find my stories. In any case I know that the evil will be vanquished in the end, or nearly vanquished, so no, they don't they scare me.

But once you said that after your work you are sometimes frightened...

GM: Well you can be, you can. Because I try very hard to be in a book rather than think that I'm just writing something. Actually I like to be in the place, that's why I try to give 3D descriptions of the environment, the place, the smell, as somebody once said to me, some writer, always try to remember that there is something behind you, the wind is on your back, you should be really in there. And I try to convey this feeling to a reader, so if there's a scary situation I try to imagine the fear the people feel.

I haven't noticed much of religion as an institution in your books, why is that?

GM: I'm not strongly religious, but I think there are moments in our life when we pray to God...

In Polish we have a saying "gdy trwoga to do Boga" when you fear you go to God...

GM: Yes... I'm not a regular church goer but I leave my options open, just in case.

Have you ever thought about focusing on religion a bit more, something like Dan Brown?

GM: I think if I could find a story that did include theological or religious background, I might. But of course there are some religious elements in my books...

Yes, but more often you focus on primal beliefs...

GM: I've read about Santeria, which is a quite complicated and organized religion, and there was quite a lot of that sort of religion in *Demons of DDay*, but I haven't yet thought about writing a Dan Brown sort of a book.

Well, think about it, it sells...

GM: (laughs) Oh yeah, I know it sells really good...

You have published about hundred novels – which are your favourites and which do you wish you have never written?

GM: Most of the time, the book I am writing is my favourite. I have a sentiment for *Trauma*, which is a story about the crime scene cleaner and for a *Mirror*, just yesterday I saw this film, *Mirrors* with Kiefer Sutherland which I found very interesting, it was quite close to what I've

written, I liked that book. And I wrote a book in Ireland *Katie Maguire*. These are some of my favourites. I can't think of a book I wish I haven't written. I obviously like some novels better than others, there are all a part of an ongoing process of development as a writer...

What about *Eric the Pie*?

GM: (laughs) What about *Eric the Pie*...?

I was reading the story today, while being on the train, and well I wasn't sure whether I want to finish it. It was a bit disgusting I must say...

GM: (laughs) It was disgusting. I set out twice on that issue, I wanted to write a story up to the edge of acceptable taste. *Eric the pie* as you know led to the closure of one of the short story magazines called The Frighteners...

Yeah, I also heard that while you were reading the story to some audience, people started leaving the room...

GM: And there is another story which I wrote for Cemetery Dance publications called *Sepsis* which was about couple, who form a very unhealthy attachment to each other and the boyfriend gives the girl a kitten, which dies...

And she eats the cat right?

GM: Right she eats the cat...

Well I have a cat and...

GM: (laughs) ...and you don't feel like eating him when he's dead. (laughs) Well, those stories were deliberately written just to see what people would accept and in case of *Eric the Pie* they didn't accept this...

Wiescka: Did they really close that magazine...?

GM: Yes, The Frighteners...

Actually, it's him, who close the magazine...

GM: (laughs) The first issue...

Oh, how nice...

Have you ever dropped a novel, fearing that it is too weak to publish?

GM: Yes that happens, there is always something to be omitted. In fact the book I am writing at the moment, well I was going to write a book about a woman, who deals with the recession and suddenly she finds that somebody had put a lot of money on her bank account and she doesn't know where it came from. That would be some kind of non-supernatural element...

Is it based on real event, because I read about such cases...

GM: No it wasn't based on any particular event, but such things really happen. The trouble was that it was so realistic, that it was boring, but I salvaged the character and she's in the background and I also salvaged the terrible pressure the recession has on characters, on families – I made this a part of the story.

Are there any lost Masterton novels, hidden somewhere in your drawers?

GM: In my drawers... there is no such novel, I wish there was, because when I was 14, I wrote 400 pages...

Yes, I was going to ask you, if we could ever find this novel... (400+ pages novel on vampires, which GM wrote as a teenager for his friends)

GM: No, no its lost forever...

What do you think... should such lost papers be published after the death of the author?

GM: This is interesting and in fact a very relevant question because I discovered not long ago, a novel, very avant-garde, which I've written with William Boroughs, when he lived in London in 1960s and he wrote an introduction to it which was never published. I sent it to Penguin books to see if they would be interested in it. One editor loved it, but in general they didn't think so, but I still got lots of interest in it. Whether it has some literary value or not it is for people to judge. But I think there are some things we shouldn't publish.

I always thought that if something is not published, it is not published because the author didn't want to do it, and when the author is no longer with us we decide, maybe against his will, to publish his works, on the other hand such things gives us a lot of insight into ones works...

GM: Certainly you do, you can see quite a lot from what I haven't published and from what I have. I was also writing a humorous story about a rock group set in the Midwest of America, and at page 25 I thought "what am I writing this for?" It was hilariously funny, but I just couldn't see the audience so I just left it. It's on my website.

I remember when I've read Strugatsky brothers for the first time, I was wondering how can you write a novel, which I always perceived as a very individual act of creation, with somebody. I know that you have written a novel, a *Taste of Heaven* together with your wife... right?

GM: (asking Wiescka): Do you remember when we wrote it?

Wiescka: Yeah...

GM: That was probably the longest period of argument we have ever had...

Yes, that's my point. Is it possible to write a good book and not to smash your marriage life while doing it?

GM (laughs) Well obviously it is...We emerged with hair sticking out, and smoke coming from us... I was very pleased the way the Wiescka gave strong romantic drive to a book whereas I did all the historic structures. It worked, but I am not sure I'll do it again

It for sure added a feminine touch to your book...

GM: Oh yeah...

...have you ever thought about engaging her to co-create a horror novel with you?

GM: I don't know if she wanted to do it. (asking Wiescka) Would you like to write a horror novel with me?

Wiescka: No

Why is that?

Wiescka: It frightens me. (laughs)

GM: Also, horror novels – they develop differently, when we wrote a *Taste of Heaven* we had a structure and we worked upon it, Wiescka contributed and I did my best. With horror novel, it changes, it's more like a detective story and you never know what's going to happen...

To certain extend it's masculine literature, but on the other hand we have Ann Rice...

GM: Yeah, Ann Rice, and there is Poppy Bright, both very good. When I did my charity collection, there were lots of good women writers, a lot of strong female horror writers, but they are writing completely different novels than me.

Who is Thomas Luke?

GM: Thomas Luke? It's me, with my youngest son's name backwards, his name is Luke Thomas...

Why have you used the pseudonym?

GM: Sometimes, because I was so prolific, because I wrote so many books, publisher was saying, "No, I can't publish your three books at one year", that's why I used pseudonyms, but in the end these books were republished under my own name.

So it's pragmatism, not that you wanted to hide something, pretend that it's not your story...?

GM: It's not an Allan Smithee, you know, the Hollywood thing, when directors want to hide themselves, when they don't like the ending.

Speaking about other works of yours, for instance literazations, we don't get them in Poland, why?

GM: I really don't know. I did *Phobia*, a Mike Glaser movie, I also did Richard Dreyfus movie *Inserts*. My publishers said, look we got a script, we got a movie, Warner Brothers want a book for next Wednesday and you're the only person we know who can write a novel in 5 days. I got the script, I saw a movie and I novelized it, but it was like...job, it was just a job and good money. I didn't write those books because I wanted.

Wiescka: And a lot of people preferred the book to the film...

GM: I had to do extras – extra background, extra psychology, because in the movie you can only be visual, and only suggest, you can't have long conversations, because it would be boring. And of course, in a book you can spend more time on the background.

Are you planning to go back to sexual guide books, or is it the end of this chapter?

GM: I think it's the end of the chapter. It's pissy in a way, because you can see anything sexual on the Internet...

But it's not necessary guiding...

GM: Yes, that's exactly what I am saying. At least when you read a book you got somebody saying when this happens – this happens, it's very erotic, and you may get very excited by the book and there is somebody to say this happens when you do this and that and these are the consequences of doing this or that, e.g it's not good idea to do this in context of relationship. And there's a mentor, it is not just watching this on the screen.

Do you think there is enough of guide books about sex today?

GM: Well, people don't want to read them, people rather watch a fat woman bouncing up and down, rather than read and imagine in their heads.

Any short stories anthology in your plans?

GM: I've quite a few short stories building up but it's not enough for a new collection. I don't know, maybe in 18 months or 2 years... Whenever I've got an idea I try to write a short story, it's a good exercise for the brain...

And it's a test for a writer...

GM: Yeah a big test...

A big test for a writer, are you able to compress a lot of, actually into, well I don't know 10-15 pages?

GM: Something like 20 pages. You have got to create the character that people will like...

And you have to give a lot of history, a lot of background, so the story stands on its own...

GM: That's right and then you have to have really good twist of action at the end.

What about poems, is it possible to see your name on the volume of poetry?

GM: There is a book published called Devil's Wine by Cemetery Dance, edited by Tom Piccirilli and it's poems by horror writers. Among Stephen King and Doug Bradley there is a section of poems by me.

But would you like to have your own, single volume of poetry?

GM: Most of the poetry I wrote, I wrote long ago, so it's like going back to the question should you publish early works of writers. Some of them I wrote when I was 17, I am not embarrassed by them, but I don't know whether it would be good idea to publish them.

Let's focus on *Basilisk* for a moment. Why there is so little of Krakow in this novel? I live in Krakow and for me it was not enough...

GM: No it's not enough of it yet, but there will be a sequel of that. The reason is that I wanted to attract the American audience, so the story starts in America but there will be sequels, there will be more Krakow and other Polish cities as well.

I was a bit disappointed, the blurb reveals about 80% of the action...

GM: Oh does it?

...so actually I was waiting only for Krakow, and when I got there, I got one restaurant, one hotel and two streets – I thought "Dude, where's my Krakow?"

GM: (laughs) Sorry about that. (laughs) Dude, where's my Krakow. (laughs)

Sex, violence, blood, demons, these are, or were, your trademarks. It happens that in *Basilisk* there are no references to carnal aspects of human life, maybe apart from the scene in which Patty is attacked by a hentai inspired tentacle monster. Half joking, are you getting older?

GM: Oh no, not at all. There will be plenty of sex and violence in the books that are coming out, like in *Far spirit* which is on the way. But the main thing is that I try not to put sex in a grotesque way, especially when it's not the motor of a plot and in *Basilisk* in fact we're dealing with a father-son situation which intrigued me. As I am father of three sons, I enjoyed having this conflict.

Yeah, a lot of attention is focused on teenage problems, I was going to ask you about this in the end but since we're speaking about this now – while depicting this teenage character, you proved to have some knowledge on really heavy metal underground. I'd like to ask you about your musical preferences, are they somehow connected to your writing?

GM: I actually know quite a lot about heavy metal, although I don't listen to it to much. I always think that people get stuck in musical generations, in which you grew up, in times when you met someone, you fell in love, the times when you were younger. I tend to be stuck in Rod Stewart, we listen to quite a lot of new music, the songs that were around when Wiescka and I were going out together. This is the sort of music we listen to when we're relaxing at the evening.

So you're not inspired by music, for instance music from horrors?

GM: No, no... I know that Iron Maiden are my fans, but I couldn't listen to Iron Maiden record while writing a book...

Though they would appreciate this for sure...

GM: (laughs)

Going back to Basilisk, the book is quite mild, maybe that's why some reviewers saw similarities to Rooks series. Basilisk is said to open a cycle - *Monster Catchers* – how do you plan to lead this cycle, more rookish or maybe switch to hardcore Masterton?

GM: I think as it goes on, the series is going to get more darker...

So, a twist to hardcore Masterton...

GM: I think it's going to be more hardcore. Now I wanted to set up the story, give the idea and get the characters going, like in the first Rook book.

Are we going to meet characters from Basilisk?

GM: Oh yes.

Will you visit Poland in next *Monster Catchers* book?

GM: Oh yes.

Speaking about cycles, in 2007 you have mentioned about continuing *Descendant*, are you going to work on it, and are you planning to continue other stories?

GM: I hope so. I've always wanted to write a vampire story which would be different than all the vampire stories...

I think you once said that the vampire genre is dead...

GM: No, obviously I don't think it is dead because, well look at *Twilight* and success of other stories...

But you found this genre very repetitive...

GM: Yeah exactly, even in *Twilight* there is this biting in the neck job, which I always found ridiculous, how can one be not dead after being bitten in the neck, and you have no sense until morning, when you see two spots in the mirror. You know, your whole neck would be bruised...

Are you planning to continue other cycles?

GM: Well, the trouble with all cycles is that everybody comes to the writer and says "Oh, I loved Rook, please write some more, than somebody would say I loved the Sissy Sawyer cycle...", the trouble is that there isn't so many hours in the day and so many months in a

year. I have to choose: A – what appeals to me as a writer and B – what appeals to the market, to the reader. I like all those characters and I like to go back to them eventually.

You're planning to finish *Manitou* – we're all waiting for *Manitou Armageddon* – can you reveal anything of the story?

GM: I'll tell you something about the story, the story started as it was going to be another disaster story, it was not meant to be about *Manitou* at all...

Disaster story, like for instance *Tengu*?

GM: More like *Plague*, you know a catastrophe with a famine, you know one of those...

Oh, I see...

GM: Everybody was going to be struck blind in America... everybody...lots of shuffling around...somehow I begun to wonder how this could happen...and perhaps *Misquamacus* could have something to do with it... and the story then sprang to life, and a disaster would become the disaster, with a meaning to the history of America... and suddenly, there was Harry Erskine down in Florida, reading fortunes for rich old ladies and I called him up and he said he'd love to be in it.

The legend has it that first *Manitou* novel was written in two weeks...

GM: The legend is wrong, it was written in five days...

Oh, I am wrong, the legend is probably right...

GM: I just had space between writing two sex books...

Do you still maintain this pace while working on *Manitous*, or was it just a single action?

GM: I couldn't do it anymore. It was 35 years ago and I couldn't write as fast as then, I don't think I could write even a movie adaptation in 5 days anymore, but I am still writing a lot. So that's how the *Armageddon* begun... one of the interesting things about the *Armageddon* is that I finished it on a very quiet note, just like at the end of the concert, few quiet piano notes and *Wiescka* read the ending and well, she liked it but she said that it was very anti-climax. So I said right, I sat and wrote another 20 pages adding a very apocalyptic ending and a personal confrontation between *Misquamacus* and Harry – they actually meet each other, face to face.

You have placed Harry Erskine also in *Djinn* – is it possible to meet him in other novel not connected with *Misquamacus*?

GM: Harry Erskin was in *Djinn*. Trouble is that he is very busy, telling forecasts to his women...

Well you have to earn money somehow, it's not like you save the world every day...

GM: ...and well he's actually quite lazy...

I see... (At this point I had an impression that Wiescka is having good fun, listening to two grown-up men speaking about Harry Erskine, as about an old friend)

Manitou was filmed. Rumour had it that *Ritual* was also going to be filmed – still the project was dropped why?

GM: Yes the *Manitou* was the only feature film. Tony Scott made 3 half an hour series for the *Hunger* series – a three of my short stories about erotic Chinese cook book. Jason Scott Lee was in it, and two other things for the *Hunger* series which are still around in TV. *Ritual*? The rights were bought by Mariano Bains - the Italian director who made *Dark Water*, not to be confused with *Dark Waters*, the Japanese film

You preferred the Japanese right?

GM: Yeah I preferred the Japanese, I didn't like the USA adaptation but...they paid me for film rights, it was going to be filmed in Macedonia – they've chosen the town, very climatic, they've chosen the setting things like that and as far as I am concerned it was going ahead. And... I never heard about it anymore, Mariano Bains vanished of the face of the earth and that's it. I tried calling him – but nothing.

Is there any particular novel you would like to see on the big screen?

GM: Oh, I'd like to see the *Ritual*, I'd like to see also *Family Portrait*. It was optioned by Gold Circle Films, then they made *White Noise* and then after the success of it, they put the money planned for *Family Portrait* into *White Noise 2* – and then they run out of money.

Speaking about adaptations of horror novels – do you think that in modern multi media world words printed on paper can scare anybody? Where in movies, I think everything was shown...

GM: Oh, I still think so, I think even more in a way. When you're reading a book on your own in your home or on the train, or wherever it's you who are reading it, the point is if you're good horror writer you can get right under the skin of what makes people frighten and get inside their mind. Whereas in films, it's more about suggestions and more explicit but I do think that there is still no problem with frightening people by a book.

How would you place horror as a genre in culture?

GM: I think it was always very underestimated in culture...

I think it's treated as a B class literature...

GM: It's treated like comic books. I think comic books are very valuable, don't think that I diminish comic books...

Well, I treat comic books as a separate genre...

GM: Yes, actually it's another genre of literature, you're right. And horror, I don't think it's even really a genre, because most of very powerful novels always contain some elements of

horror. It had to be categorized like that for the sake of book sellers, in order to put it on that shelf, but it doesn't mean that it is not possible to become mainstream literature because of the plot. Look at the vampire story I wrote – it's not really a vampire story, it's more a story of a family, how they descend, how the secret is passed from one generation to another. Those themes can be found also in the so-called perspective literature.

Do you think that horror – modern horror – needs its opus magnum?

GM: Oh yes. Well Stephen King have done a lot to popularization of horror and he writes very good books too. But I think it does need another absolutely groundbreaking, totally original book

Have you already written your personal opus magnum?

GM: No not yet. I don't think so, well I might have done, you never know, like if I was run over by a Polish bus, which nearly happened yesterday...

Polish writer Rafal A. Ziemkiewicz once said that in order to write a good book, one has to be always in the book, and be twice as much sensitive as other people. He argues that it is impossible not to finish the book, and not be bruised. Adding to this the notion of being constantly pregnant with ideas – do you consider being a writer a blessing or a curse?

GM: Well I think it's a blessing for me, I love it. I don't eat as much as I used to, so I don't feel pregnant, but yes the ideas are always buzzing in the back of my head. Well it's what I do and I don't feel bruised by the books. I feel satisfied, I feel that I have achieved something when I read the book which I am particularly pleased by. It's a satisfaction, not a fight, it's a creation...

But you have mentioned that you sometime quarrel with yourself, you make gestures, you have those techniques, are you not tired after such work?

GM: Well I wish I'd shut up sometimes (laughs) and so says Wiescka

Wiescka: (laughs)

GM: I got this technique from Walt Disney studios. Walter stood before the mirror and he was Donald Duck and he argued with himself. When I'm actually writing a book I don't do that as much as I used, but I do sometimes have an argument with myself because when you're saying something out loud, you can know whether it would look good on page. What is really number one for me, is a dialogue – you can't write a dialogue the way the people speak, on the page it would look terrible...

And it would be very boring...

GM: With a lot of "erms", and "well, I think" and stuff like that. So that is a very hard thing to do – to make the conversation sound naturally.

I think that in Poland we may speak about a sort of sf scene, we have various conventions, like the one you have been at in Wroclaw. Are you a member of such a society in UK?

GM: Of SF?

No, I mean of horror scene

GM: No, because although I write a lot of horrors, I don't consider myself to be a genre writer. I write also thrillers like *Chaos Theory* which came out yesterday. I'd rather think I could write anything I wanted to, even though obviously for the sake of living I work in a genre which is most profitable for me. It was great fun to go to Wroclaw and meet my fans, but I don't often go to such events

Have you met any writers there?

GM: (asking Wiescka) Have we met any writers? No, I don't think so.

Do you know any other writers from horror genre?

GM: Yes, I know James Herbert and Petty James who used to be a horror writer, but now turned more to detective fiction.

Any gossips, anecdotes?

GM: (asking Wiescka laughing) Any gossips? No, not really...

What are you working on now?

GM: On the book which is provisionally entitled *Fire Spirit* about arson investigator who comes across a series of unexplained nasty fatal fires. He has to find out what's causing them and what causes them – turns out to be quite apocalyptic.

Wiescka: Have you read the *Ghost Music*?

Erm, I got the copy of *Ghost Music* from Katarzyna Podhorska from the Albatros publishing house, well an hour ago...

GM: And you haven't read it yet?

The elevators are so fast here...

GM, Wiescka: (laughs)

Well, you mentioned those fires, which reminds me of *The Burning*. My friend, who introduced me into your novels, insisted on asking you about the flaming penis from *The Burning*...

GM: The burning penis...?

Yeah, there is a scene in which a girl takes a penis of her partner in her hand and sets it on fire...

GM: Oh yes, all right... Actually that came from a sexual study, where a woman actually put a lighter fluid on her boyfriend penis just when they were about to make love and lit it. Then they put out the fire by inserting the penis inside her...

And I thought your imagination was wild sometimes...

GM: You should have read the Penthouse letters...

Do you visit your fan websites?

GM: Yes I do, as often as I can, I got a message board on my webpage where anybody can add some links to join.

Before I ask you the final question, we still have some time so let's turn once again to *Basilisk*. You do a lot of research before you write a novel...

GM: No, not before – during...

...and you placed the story in Krakow, well at least there are bits of Krakow, where did you get this story of Basilisk form?

GM: I've known about this for a long time, I have a big book about monsters of the world, demons and legends and things like that. I've always been interested in an idea of demon or a creature which can struck you dead while just looking at you. I have know about the legend for quite a long time before I have visited Krakow.

Have you done any particular research in Krakow?

GM: I read the book before, to have some background about the Basilisk, but it's generally the atmosphere in Krakow, despite the fact that there are thousands of English tourists...

English, Italian...

GM: Yes, very loud, very drunk...

And they have those stag parties...

GM: Yeah, in hotel, in Wroclaw they had one, I was so embarrassed of being English that I just pretended not to be English...

Any last words for readers of Wojtek Bala's service?

GM: (thinking)

Profound moment...

GM: Yes it's very profound moment. Well, I like to say that I am very, very gratified by the response I have from my readers, readers of particularly this website and I am very pleased that you continue to be so enthusiastic and I'll try to make more contact on the website myself in future and good luck! You'll need it.

Thanks for your time

GM: That was a pleasure.

Warsaw, 18th May 2009

Interview by Bartosz Rumińczyk

Questions: Wojciech Bala and Bartosz Rumińczyk

Photographs: Bartosz Rumińczyk

Courtesy of Wydawnictwo Albatros.

Polish version of the interview: <http://masterton0wojtekb.blox.pl/2009/05/Wywiad-z-Grahamem-Mastertonem-Warszawa-2009.html>