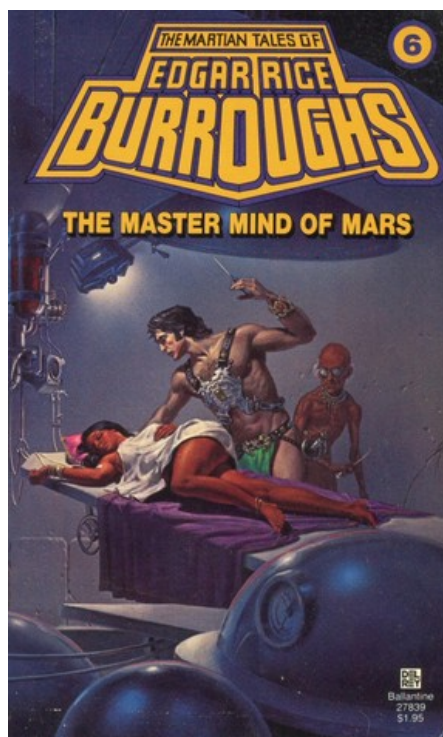




The Master Mind of Mars

Edgar Rice Burroughs

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The Master Mind of Mars Details

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From Reader Review The Master Mind of Mars for online ebook

Hannah Russell says

This book is proof that no matter how bad a series is, it is entirely possible to jump the shark.

I mean, the main character is morally questionable, there's no other way to say it. I understand why we needed a new earthling, and though I appreciate what Burroughs was trying to do with Ulysses Paxton...

The entire plot is stupid...I don't know what to say.

Jeremy Michael Gallen says

In this tale of Barsoom, author Edgar Rice Burroughs shifts perspectives again, this time focusing on a newcomer to the franchise named Ulysses Paxton, who became acquainted with John Carter in the autumn of 1917. While on the battlefields of the First World War, with maimed legs, Paxton becomes drawn by the scarlet glow of Mars, where he becomes whole again. Paxton first meets an old man on Barsoom, whose life he saves, after which the elder leads him to a cave where he conducts sundry experiments upon Martians, his name being Ras Thavas, the titular Master Mind.

Paxton receives the Martian name Vad Varo, and sees Thavas transplant a brain from the aged despotic Jeddara of Phundahl, Xaxa, to the body of a younger girl named Valla Dia, and in turn places the younger girl's mind into the old woman's head. Thavas himself receives a brain transplant, having lived over a millennium, to a younger body, with Paxton, along with characters serving as Thavas' other experiments named Dar Tarus, Gor Hajus, and the ape with a human mind Hovan Du, fleeing in search of Valla Dia's rightful body, with Paxton having fallen in love with her upon conversing with her antediluvian body.

The party flies to Phundahl and gains access to Xaxa's palace thanks to the exhibition of Hovan Du, with several complexities arising involving the religious followers of the god Tur, and eventual conclusion with a few marriages of major characters and appearance by John Carter. Overall, this is another enjoyable yarn of Barsoom, and includes a smidgeon of commentary on religious fundamentalism, controversial in the book's time of publication in the first half of the twentieth century, although there are some occasional plot points that are somewhat unclear. Even so, a good read.

An Odd1 says

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Fun body switches. Do you love the person inside? Or does outside / inside influence other side?

Ulysses Paxton narrates death in Civil War, waking naked on Mars, apprenticeship to transplant expert ancient Ras Thavas of Toonol, who calls him 'Vad Varo'. Ras does good, giving arm to worker whose own was crushed, new brain to "demented child .. from violent deaths" p 394

Into lovely body, they put brain of Xaxa, old ruler of Phundahlia although "She is an ignorant, arrogant, selfish, stupid, cruel virago, yet" p 390, keeps throne because descends from jeddaks.

Vad suggests waking young brain now in old body. She was bought in group of war prisoners ten years ago alive, "preserved" p 391 till customer could afford beauty. Valla Dia is sweet as her outside was, not like harsh voice now. Vad decides to give her back young body.

Half-human brain in white ape body "ten or fifteen feet tall" p 395 struggles to verbalize without vocal apparatus. He lay on "ersite slab" p 396 12 years. Ras orders put back to sleep. Vad promises to revive him again.

Ras has "lived more than a thousand years .. passed the allotted natural span" p 399. If he and Vad transplant brains into young bodies, both can be immortal. He is "young, in love, and reckless of consequences" p 405. When he tries to blackmail Ras before transferring his brain to a young body, Ras orders Valla taken away and killed. Vad has to hide her asleep.

Vad wants three cases with him on trip for Valla's original body. First is Dar Tarus, large red man angrily attacked Ras on Vad's first day. Xaxa had Dar's handsome young body killed for saggy Phundahl noble to woo young woman. Second is Hovan Du, man half-brain in white ape (new part grows, stimulated by transplant). Third is Gor Hajus, notorious Toolian assassin, who "never struck down a woman or a good man .. [or] from behind" and loyal to friends p 406, there "six years" p 411. Vad works late nights for secrecy, notes work in case caught.

"Young blood changed Ras Thavas" p 409. He wanders nights. Vad suggests exercise, that Ras call for Vad, so Vad will not be caught unawares. To escape island in vast marshes, Vad must steal flyer.

Pilot Bal Zak is indebted to Gor, who refused to kill his father, helps, suggests individual flying motors. Vad, inexperienced, suddenly turns "upside down" p 417. Dar fixes. Gor guides to friend Mu Tel. Air patrol flyer blows whistle. (view spoiler)

In Phundahl, Dar borrows gold from Gor to worship at temple of Tur. "Toonalians are atheists" p 426. "Tur is Tur" reverses to opposite. Are rituals to make fun of Earth religions? Dar has to stay behind; noble Sag Or stole his body. (view spoiler)

Typos

p 48 oftentimes may be often times?

p 65 "I had never been sorrier that I had lots them" lots is lost

p 72 "able o make them" o is to

p 116 ofsTario is "of Tario"

p 231 "cut him t o the quick" is "cut him to"

p 287 "insert my tenacles" tenacles is tentacles

"superior to the anth" anth is banth
p 292 "killed f it seems the logical thing" is "killed if it seems"
p 298 pefectly is perfectly
p 307 "slim brown hand" brown is red
p 308 paragraph "To the red man .. inhabited" delete paragraph that repeats
p 331 gorgious is gorgeous
p 336 "to fair trail" trail is trial
p 348 "on his fae" fae is face
p 349 "know to the art of fence" is known to the art of fencing
p 363 "seventh zodeßin" is "seventh zode in"
p 364 "andlittle" is "and little"
p 371 "be of you the story" is "beg of you"
p 392 "Speel-bound" is spell-bound
p 427 "not four against us" is "now four"
p 433 "Any why would you" is "And why .."

Stephen Brooke says

Although Burroughs's earlier Barsoom novels are nominally science fiction thanks to their setting, 'The Mastermind of Mars' moves closer to true SF and away from the fantastical romances of its predecessors. They still, however, have a lot in common including many of the same basic plot elements ERB recycled throughout his writing career.

All in all, I find it a lesser effort. The sense of wonder and adventure we enjoyed in the previous novels is downplayed in favor of a slower pace and a smaller space. Indeed, this novel need not have been set on Barsoom at all, so little do we see of that unique world.

Once again, Burroughs has his bit of somewhat tongue-in-cheek social commentary, this time via the cities of Toonol and Phundahl whose inhabitants are, respectively, ultra-rational, self-serving atheists (they would probably love Ayn Rand) and extraordinarily superstitious believers (who bear a bit of resemblance to old-school Catholics). Unlike his earlier forays into this sort of thing, this one doesn't really do much to further or add to the plot.

The Barsoomian scientist – the 'mastermind' – Ras Thavas is introduced as a character and, as I remember, appears again in a later novel. He has a certain interest as the amoral experimenter who, although not a naturally malicious person, has a knack for causing evil in the tradition of Frankenstein and Moreau. Not a new idea, by any means, but a staple of science fiction.

'The Mastermind of Mars' is a decent enough read. There is enough action to keep one interested through most of the novel and if the science fiction elements are dated and not overly original, they are still done reasonably well.

Sandy says

"The Master Mind of Mars" is book #6 of 11 John Carter adventures that Edgar Rice Burroughs gave to the world. It first appeared in the magazine "Amazing Stories Annual" in July 1927, and John Carter himself only puts in a cameo appearance near the book's end. Instead, our hero is another Earthman, Ulysses Paxton,

who mysteriously gets transported to Barsoom (Mars) after being critically wounded on the battlefields of WW1. Paxton becomes an apprentice of the eponymous mastermind Ras Thavas, and from him learns all manner of surgical miracles, including brain transplantation. Paxton falls in love with a young woman, Valla Dia, whose body has been sold to an old empress, so that that empress can now live on in her new hotty body. Paxton vows to travel across Mars, kidnap the empress, and restore his beloved's body to her. He enlists the aid of some of Ras Thavas' medical subjects: a Barsoomian white ape with a half-human mind; a professional assassin; and another Martian who has had his body bought/stolen by another.

This is a short but extremely entertaining and fast-moving fantasy novel. In it, Burroughs gives us some interesting philosophy on the correlation of mind and body (as he did with the kaldanes in "Chessmen of Mars"), as well as some interesting speculations on the necessity of war in any culture. He also pokes fun at the mumbo-jumbo aspects of organized religion. So there is some actual food for thought, in addition to the fun. And that equilibrimotor chase and scene in the Temple of Tur ARE very much fun! The heart, lung and other assorted transplants that Ras Thavas is engaged in must have seemed like real sci-fi improbabilities back in 1927, although these things are fairly commonplace today. The brain transplants are another matter, of course. (Perhaps one day...)

"Master Mind" seems to be slightly better written than some of the earlier Barsoomian novels; Burroughs DID improve with age, at least as far as technique is concerned. Still, there are the usual inconsistencies that crop up. For example, in one scene Thavas complains of the new young blood in his new young body, when it has been established that recipients of new bodies receive their old blood back. I was confused by this. In another scene, the 15-foot-tall ape/man puts on the leather harness of a regular-sized man. Does this seem possible? Clouds are said to obscure the moon in another scene, yet in earlier books, Burroughs has told us that clouds exist on Barsoom only at the poles. A body of a dozen Toonolian soldiers at one point mysteriously turns into 20, and the great scarlet tower of Lesser Helium, which was destroyed in "Chessmen," is inexplicably back again in this book. (I grant that it may have been rebuilt, but Burroughs might have said something to this effect.) The surprise regarding Valla Dia at the book's conclusion was one that was so obvious to me that I don't even think it was really meant to be a surprise after all. And here's another quibble: Paxton falls in love with Valla Dia only after he has seen what her actual body looks like. It might have been more effective had he fallen in love with her only AFTER she was trapped in the haggish body of the empress. A young, strapping American male falling in love with an old ugly woman, based solely on her gracious personality. Now THAT would have been a REAL fantasy!

Mary Catelli says

Ulysses Paxton, fighting in World War I, finds himself transported to Mars with no more reason than John Carter -- though this goes more briskly than in Princess. He finds himself in the lair of Ras Thavas, a slightly mad scientist who transplants organs, including brains, and can often revive the dead. He has room after room of bodies suspended as if time did not pass.

He trains Paxton, thinking that a man with nowhere to go is the most trustworthy he can find, and knowing he needs someone to transplant his own.

But Paxton finds him aiding both the injured and the corrupt -- in particular, selling the body of a stunning young woman to a ugly old jeddaka -- in stunning indifference to cruelty, kindness, money, and anything else but knowledge. When Paxton revives the ugly old jeddaka with the young woman's mind, she can cope with the change, observing that her beauty had its upside and its downside, and even refuses transplantation into a body that is younger and healthier, because Ras Thavas might sell it. But when Paxton demands, as a price of operating on him, that he restore her if Paxton brings back her original body, he finds that Ras

Thavas ordered her death, and he restores her to suspension.

But he has his task before him. The rest of the tale involves launching an unmanned flyer, a young man assassinated so that a court favorite could woo his love, a jeddak's popular nephew, an apparent white ape that can talk and read, an empty idol, a promise technically fulfilled, someone who aids him while believing his plan mad, and much more.

Rob says

Another great addition to the Warlord of Mars series. Unlike the other books in the series, this story delved into more science fiction aspects such as false gods and crazy medical experimentation. There was a mix of mailicious political intrigue and manipulation with some of the Mars rulers as a result of those "gods" and experiments which the main protagonist faced in his efforts throughout the book.

Allen Perry says

A much better story then the last several books on the series. They should be read in order though. A quick but fun read.

Steven says

John Carter is not the only one who travels to Mars. Enter Captain Ulysses Paxton, US Army. While on the fields of battle in the Great War, Paxton suddenly mortally wounded and fixes his gaze on the twinkling red planet in the dark night sky. He stretches out his arms toward this sparkling light and in almost a blink of an eye finds himself laying flat on his back gazing up into a bright sun-lit sky. Standing over him is Ras Thavas, Barsoom's greatest scientist. Thus begins the adventures of another earthling gone to Mars. A quick and entertaining read.

Joseph says

Probably more like a 4.5 or 4.75 . . .

For this volume we're back to first-person narration, but it's not John Carter -- it's Ulysses Paxton, another Earth man who makes his way to Barsoom from the trenches of WWI-era Europe. Paxton already has a basic familiarity with Barsoom because he's read ERB's previous books, although he thought they were fiction. (Burroughs was meta before meta was a thing.)

This is an interesting installment -- it has much more of a science fictional feel to it than other volumes (well, a 1920's SF feel), what with elaborate medical procedures up to and including brain transplants. There's also relatively little swordplay. As always, though, there's more adventure, intrigue, and True Love at First Sight than you can shake a stick at.

Jamie_fl says

I'm a fan of the entire ERB Mars series. Downloading again to reread and share with my grandson.

Dave says

“The Master Mind of Mars” by Edgar Rice Burroughs is the sixth book in the Barsoom series. Burroughs moves further away from John Carter by introducing a new hero, Ulysses Paxton, who uses his Martian name Vad Varo for most of the book. Ulysses is a much different hero than John Carter, or for that matter Cathoris or Thuvia from “Thuvia Maid of Mars” or Gahan of Gathol or Tara of Helium from “The Chessmen of Mars”. Ulysses’s connection with John Carter is that when on Earth he read the stories of John Carter and believed them to be real. The difference is that unlike those who came before, Ulysses/Vlad does not have the skill in hand-to-hand combat that they possessed. This was a very smart move by Burroughs, for what would be the point of making yet another great warrior to repeat the epic adventures which already exist in the series? Instead, the story has a much different feel, smaller in scope, and yet just as absorbing.

Ulysses is a soldier in World War I, and when he becomes wounded and stranded on the battlefield, he uses the force of his mind to transport himself to Mars. Not surprisingly, though severely wounded as Ulysses on Earth, Vad finds his body whole and healthy on Mars. The first person Vad meets on Mars is Ras Thavas, a.k.a “The Master Mind”. When circumstances result in Vad’s saving Ras, he is taken on as a trusted servant and bodyguard. Ras shows Vad medical techniques far in advanced of those which exist on Earth, and Vad learns quickly. One key difference though is that Ras has no moral conscience, though he often does very good things, he is just as willing to do horrible things, and when one of the horrible things is to give the body of Valla Dia to the evil Xaxa, Vad realizes that he needs to do something.

Through the course of the adventure, Vad gains allies to work with, and he is resolved to capture Xaxa and force the return of Valla Dia’s body. Because of the help he has provided them in escaping from the sleeping storage of Ras’ lab, his allies are willing to help, and of course Vad is keen to help them achieve their goals as well. Unlike the previous adventures, there is no great evil in this story, though Xaxa is fairly close to it. Vad is not trying to kill those who oppose him, but rather set things right with the woman he has fallen in love with, as well as help his allies regain their lives. John Carter is referred to in the letter which opens the story, and he shows up in the last chapter, so Burroughs maintains the connection to the rest of the series well.

This book ranks fairly high in the series for me. I would consider “The Chessmen of Mars” which comes right before it to be superior, but this one would rank very close to “A Princess of Mars” which opens the series. Because of the key role “A Princess of Mars” plays in the series I would rank that one above “The Master Mind of Mars” as well, but only slightly, and I feel that this story is better than the rest. While “The Gods of Mars” and “The Warlord of Mars” are good, they do become a bit repetitious and neither one of them are complete in and of themselves. “The Master Mind of Mars” does not have that problem as it can stand on its own, as long as you are familiar with the setting of the series as a whole.

Peveril says

On of the good potboilers. Introduces Ulysses Paxton to Barsoom and takes us to a couple of new cities.

The real new introduction is mad scientist/surgeon Ras Thavas, whose person and lab are the best part of the first half but sadly disappear from the second. Body-swap plotting, swipes at religion, some derring-do and lots of posturing nobility. A fun read

Emily Catherine says

It's picking up again. There are more layers and better story-telling. I think we may have moved past some of the (I want to say lower-level descriptions and plot developments) hang-ups the previous two books seemed to have. And I am looking forward to the next!

Ailish says

This book introduces a new hero, Ulysses Paxton, a young soldier who finds himself on Mars after having his legs blown off in the trenches of WWI.

Ulysses finds himself working for a scientist in the business of buying beautiful bodies and performing brain transplants for the discontented rich. Ulysses falls in love with a beautiful young girl whose body has unfortunately been sold to an evil ugly Empress, and so he sets out to recover it for her and swap the two brains back into their rightful bodies. He revives and enlists as allies other 3 victims - for strategy, a daring assassin with a heart of gold; for inside knowledge, a warrior whose body has been assumed by the Empress's best friend, and for muscle, the body of a 4-armed great white ape with half a human brain. Together they escape from the laboratory and have plenty of adventures together which end happily for everyone, as well as giving Edgar Rice Burroughs another opportunity to explore the mind-body relationship as he did in *The Chessman of Mars*, and for his usual religion-bashing.

Entertaining, if a bit ghoulish.

James Troxell says

The mad scientist stuff is pretty fun. As is the satire of militant atheists and religious fanatics. But it's adventure aspect is a bit boring and predictable even if his comrades are interesting. The later Barsoom books seem more like a cash in and lack the power of the earlier entries.

Curtiss says

This story follows the adventures of an unrelated hero, Ulysses Paxton, an Earthman. Like John Carter, Paxton arrives on Mars via astral projection and ends up being trained by mad scientist Ras Thavas, the titular Mastermind of Mars, in the techniques of mind-body transfer. Paxton uses these techniques to restore his beloved Valla Dia's brain into her own beautiful body after her brain had been swapped with that of the hideous Xaxa of Phundahl.

These stories are not high art, or even good sci-fi/fantasy; but they are terrific yarns with exotic Barsoomian locales, fantastic beasts, flamboyant princesses, dastardly villains, and cliff-hanging adventures in which the hero gets the girl and the bad guy meets his (or her) just deserts.

I've read and re-read these stories over the years, and even recorded them onto DVD for the local radio station for blind and reading-impaired listeners.

JJ Hill says

JJ Hill
J Campbell
6th Period honors English
8-6-17

I thoroughly enjoyed *The Master Mind of Mars* by Edgar Rice Burroughs. The exiting adventure of Ulysses Paxton, or Vad Varo, joined by one of the weirdest groups of people imaginable, a resurrected assassin, a guy in someone else's body, and a 10 foot tall Martian ape with half a human brain, was to retrieve the stolen body of his love, who was killed and became a test subject and was resurrected in the body of a shriveled old lady. They traveled through two hostile cities and back, how I cannot tell you. The journey was exiting and I had a very hard time stopping reading. I would suggest this book to any sci-fi readers, or anyone in search of a good book.

Linda says

Another earthman makes it to Mars where he becomes involved in organ transplants that include brains. He falls for one of the girls and seeks to get her body back. Although written in the 20's, there is an interesting reference to wireless telephones and cameras.

Kathryn says

The Master Mind of Mars completes the little mini-arc of philosophy I've described. In *Thuvia, Maid of Mars*, we meet a city of realists and etherealists, the latter of whom believe that none of us exist but both of whom are so focused on the creations of their minds as to ignore reality; in *The Chessmen of Mars*, we meet a race of Martians who have developed into all brain (the kaldanes) and all body (the rykors), neither of whom enjoys the fullest pleasures of life; and in *The Master Mind of Mars*, we meet two cities, one that is wholly rational and one that is wholly spiritual.

The Master Mind of Mars opens with Ulysses Paxton, a soldier in WWI, sustaining severe injuries and, through the same tremendous effort of will that transported John Carter in *A Princess of Mars*, transporting himself to Barsoom. (Ulysses Paxton has read *A Princess of Mars* and therefore knows all about John Carter; this sort of metahumor is a literary tradition going back to the second half of *Don Quixote*.)

Paxton finds himself in a new, unexplored part of Mars (OF COURSE...did you expect anything different?) and promptly proceeds to find employment and friendship...and love (again, OF COURSE). He is working

for the titular mastermind, Ras Thavas. The interesting thing about Paxton is that even though he's a warrior, he doesn't accomplish everything through feats of arms like the preceding heroes in this series. Instead, he is clever and works obliquely, forming a talented team and using them well. (John Carter, in contrast, is a lone wolf rather than a true team player despite his loyalty and love.)

Back to the rationalist/spiritualist thing. Paxton starts out up against the rationalists, like Ras Thavas. They are, of course, an extreme; Ras Thavas does not trust Paxton, but he does believe that Paxton will always act in his own self-interest and that he is therefore predictable. Paxton tries to explain the value of friendship, but is unsuccessful. Later in the book, Paxton travels to the city of spiritualists, the opposite extreme. He finds their religious rites to be silly, and he discovers (through a convenient coincidence, OF COURSE) that a large statue of their god can be opened and that its eyes and mouth can be controlled, allowing him to make religious pronouncements to the people.

(Sadly, Burroughs misses an opportunity here; one of the members of Paxton's party is a devout follower of the religion, and we never hear how he reacts to learning that the high priests have been controlling the statue. In fact, at the end of the book, that guy ends up becoming the new high priest and making his own pronouncements from the statue. So I guess he dealt with his disillusionment "off camera".) (Really, did no one ever notice that the high priest is always conveniently absent when the statue is talking?)

At the end of the book, Ulysses Paxton has fixed everything, demonstrated the importance of balancing rationalism and spiritualism, won his lady's love, won some new friends, and met John Carter in a brief cameo. Everyone lives happily ever after (and I do mean ever, because Barsoomians are effectively immortal. Speaking of Burroughs's missed opportunities).

If I were to rank the Barsoom books I've read (#1-7), this one would probably come in around the middle. It's not bad and has some nice changes from the others, but it's not quite as good as the two immediately preceding.
