



Mind Over Ship

David Marusek

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The year is 2135, and the international program to seed the galaxy with human colonies has stalled as greedy, immoral powerbrokers park their starships in Earth's orbit and begin to convert them into space condos. Ellen Starke's head, rescued from the fiery crash that killed her mother, struggles to regrow a new body in time to restore her dead mother's financial empire. And Pre-Singularity AIs conspire to join the human race just as human clones, such as Mary Skarland and her sisters, want nothing more than to leave it.

Welcome to *Mind Over Ship*, the sequel to Marusek's stunning debut novel, *Counting Heads*, which *Publishers Weekly* called "ferociously smart, simultaneously horrific and funny."

Mind Over Ship Details

Date : Published January 8th 2008 by Tor Books

ISBN : 9780765317490

Author : David Marusek

Format : Hardcover 320 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Cyberpunk

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From Reader Review Mind Over Ship for online ebook

Shaun Duke says

To say that Marusek's follow-up novel to *Counting Heads* is high-concept, complex science fiction would be an understatement. Any attempt to describe the intricacies of his futuristic vision would take at least a dozen blog posts, because one cannot possibly understand how detailed his world is without actually reading the books and being immersed in it. That said, *Mind Over Ship* is the answer to all those that think science fiction has run out of ideas, because Marusek sure as hell is not short on them at all.

Having said that, I am going to use the blurb from the jacket of the book to describe *Mind Over Ship*, because I can't describe the book any better without going on for a week:

The year is 2135, and the international program to seed the galaxy with human colonies has stalled as greedy immortal power brokers park their starships in Earth's orbit and begin to convert them into space condos. Ellen Starke's head, rescued from the fiery crash that killed her mother, struggles to re-grow a new body in time to restore her dead mother's financial empire. And pre-Singularity AIs conspire to join the human race just as human clones, such as Mary Skarland and her evangeline sisters, want nothing more than to leave it.

Marusek has earned his place in my book of amazing science fiction writers with this piece. While *Mind Over Ship* is not an easy read, once you get past the initial "culture shock" it is truly gorgeous in its design. The story itself is remarkable in how it can be both insanely complex, but yet approachable and fascinating. The characters, each of them with unique plot arcs, all woven together like a fine carpet, are each equally interesting. Many of them are actually clones, a fact that seems to complicate every inch of the story as they deal with issues of "clone fatigue" or "flaws." The way Marusek weaves all of this together is indicative of his talent as a novelist. Less skilled writers would end up with a garbled mess of jumping POVs and confusing futuristic nonsense.

Perhaps the only issue with *Mind Over Ship* is that for casual science fiction fans it may be too difficult to get into. For seasoned readers, or readers with tastes for complicated and unique universes, Marusek's novel is a welcome retreat from the perceived death of science fiction as an ideas-genre. *Mind Over Ship* is what I would call a contemporary answer to *Dune*. Once you grasp the way Marusek's world works, it's not all that hard to follow him to the end of the story.

Having said all of the above, I'd recommend this novel to anyone interested in high-concept, complex, far-future science fiction. If you're looking for amazing ideas and unique perspectives on our future, then you need not go farther than Marusek's *Mind Over Ship*. It's brilliant in its complexities and one of the few novels that does everything that good, serious science fiction is supposed to do. You can take that term "serious" however you like.

Peter Goodman says

"Mind over Ship," by David Marusek (Tor, 2009). The sequel to "Counting Heads," and a good thing I had read the earlier book. This time Marusek does not bother explaining the different types of clones, or the diseases, or the Darwinian struggles. There is indeed a fleet of ships being built to take humans to other

planetary systems---because humanity will die out if it is forced to stay on earth. But there is a plot to turn the OShips into space condos, and to overthrow the dominant corporations. I didn't mind the complications this time. Ellen, who was murdered except that her head survived and is being regrown. Eleanor, her mother, who was in fact murdered, except that her consciousness survives in thousands of fish in hundreds of fish ponds. I don't feel like describing all the strange things that happen. It's fun.

http://www.marusek.com/Cabin_in_the_W...

Sean says

I can't wait for the next installment, for whatever that's worth. Page-turning, super-smart. Hyper-AI, clones, nanotech spybots, tissue regeneration, hiveminds, interstellar seafaring, smart cars (not the tiny cars, but cars that are actually smart). Great science fiction that doesn't read like it was written by a fat kid who hasn't been out of his basement in twenty years.

Herb Mallette says

My rating for this book is sort of an average between the caliber of the writing and the degree to which I enjoyed it. Marusek is a visionary author ... his vision just isn't one that pleases me, and since the vision really didn't change from *Counting Heads*, the most notable things about this book compared to the former one were its looser plot and abrupt, cliff-hanger ending. If the next sequel were already out there waiting to be bought and read, I might get it just to find out what happens and whether the author is actually going anywhere with this story, or if he just likes writing about how completely powerless most nice, normal people are in a world controlled by the ruthless mega-rich and their corporations. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately), Marusek has left the story unresolved for over five years now, and it doesn't appear there will be any more to it soon.

Michael says

This was just as good as the first one! I wish I had read them closer together in time, though. Thankfully the first one was quite memorable...which, considering how many books I'd read in the interim, says volumes! I almost liked this one better since I already had the general world and characters assimilated in my mind. His technique of quite short vignettes moving the story along was very effective, in terms of plot movement. Once I settled into this pattern, I was no longer confused or frustrated because I knew they would pull together. This structure may initially frustrate some readers.

Abbey says

Abrupt ending and obviously a cliffhanger for the next book. It was good up to that point.

Bill Hayes says

Couldn't wait to get this follow up to 'Counting Heads', and I wasn't disappointed. I hope there are more on the way.

Haris says

David Marusek's MIND OVER SHIP is the best novel I've read in a long time. A mashup of Philip K. Dick, Aldous Huxley, William Gibson, and, of course, the author's own signature spry, satirical, occasionally beautiful, and frequently off-the-hook literary touch, MIND OVER SHIP is a stunning literary and intellectual feat. While it's difficult to rival the sheer power of the first third of MIND OVER SHIP's predecessor, his powerful debut COUNTING HEADS (borrowed from his acclaimed novella "We Were Out of Our Minds With Joy"), this sequel makes up for COUNTING HEADS's occasional irregularity of tone and pace while maintaining the intricate world-building and eccentric cast of characters which made COUNTING HEADS such a pleasure for the mind and spirit. MIND OVER SHIP delves deep into everything from genetics, clones, transgenic animals, bioethics, artificial intelligence, the singularity, the Other, economics, corporate takeovers, legal disputes, social hierarchies, psychological colonization, biological and cultural evolution, identity, the nature of consciousness, and reality versus perception. In its final acts, the novel even flirts with space opera, generation ships, deep-space colonization, socialist rebels, extraterrestrial life, environmental disaster, and the nature of life (human and otherwise) itself.

While it's easy to think of Marusek's novel as merely dabbling in a plethora of ideas, the reality is contrary: Marusek has developed a world (begun in COUNTING HEADS) which is vastly complex and real, and probably the most full-realized future I've encountered since Asimov's FOUNDATION novels or Frank Herbert's DUNE. What Asimov did for the fall of the Roman Empire, what Herbert did for the modern Middle East, Marusek has done for our modern social hierarchies and economy.

The first 100 pages or so start off well, but gradually Marusek's novel develops into something unimaginably deep and intricate. It may tax readers with its intellectual rigor and juggled plots, but those who apply themselves will reap the benefits. It's well worth reading COUNTING HEADS -- which on its own is incredible -- in order to enjoy this superior sequel.

Marusek has a way not only with words and characters, but with the power of speculation. He's developed a world where corporate juggernauts manipulate the masses; invasion of privacy is an inevitable invasion of body, mind, and identity; AIs and clones suffer existential crises; obedience is a matter of genetics and computer code; death and birth are meaningless anomalies; and everyone has spies and secrets. His motley crew of characters struggle with increasing difficulty to remain human, to remain alive, in a world crumbling around them. It's a wild ride to MIND OVER SHIP's finale, which is -- for all the social, political, technological, and moral upheaval of its story -- a surprisingly elegant testament to the endurance and beauty of human (and "other") life.

Science fiction at its best: speculative, allegorical, and undeniably human at its core.

<http://www.amazon.com/Mind-Over-Ship-...>

Bruce says

Disappointing.

"we were out of our minds with joy" the short story was great. Made into a novel counting heads was interesting and somewhat enjoyable, though it quickly veered into a dark and sometimes silly universe. Good action rescue sequence though.

But this book, what was the point? It's a close sequel, and has near zero closure. There is even an epilogue full of more plot teasers just in case you didn't notice the book really didn't end.

There is very little action in this book. Characters are taken to a caricatured extreme. There is little feeling or warmth or sympathy anywhere in this book.

If you have nothing better to do with your time, you might be well enough entertained, but the amount of interesting content would only fill a short story.

Danyel Lawson says

Future shock magnified when those who have been keeping up or are part of the problem begin to feel left behind.

blake says

Yeah, this is one of those books where I wonder "How did I even get this?" But I think what had happened was that a very talented friend of mine had set up a review website for books and movies and so on, and had received just tons of review materials. So a few got sent my way and this was one of them.

It's not my kind of thing. People know I've read a lot of science-fiction and end up thinking of me as a sci-fi guy but I'm not *per se*. (Where "per se" means "I learned all my Latin from 1st Edition D&D books".) It might be irony but, when I was younger, speculative fiction (sci fi, fantasy, horror) seemed in fairly short supply and I could be counted on to have some base level of interest, 'cause it's nice to get out of the "reality" thing once in a while. But in a world inundated with the stuff—this world—my bar has gotten a lot higher. In other words, Sturgeon was an optimist.

Anyway, Marusek can write, and that's a good thing. He hits you with a bunch of terms he never defines—I see this might be an unofficial sequel to something?—and that, well, that's an old SF trick which sometimes works and sometimes doesn't. Here, I found it sometimes worked and sometimes didn't, as I puzzled through the opening pages wondering what I was dealing with between the clones and the AIs and the "free rangers" and so on.

The plot, if I can recall it, involves a clone who does something un-clone-like that gets him sent to jail and made a pariah, and his struggle to survive in a world where corporate giants machinate against each other to

sometimes murky ends.

If you find that a common weakness of authors is their inability to really create vibrant, different characters, try reading a book where many of the principal characters are *clones*. Marusek does pretty well there, though I did have trouble in places keeping things straight.

Probably the worst part, for me, was the realization that (a la mode) the author was going to make it *really* morally dubious. We have a hero, he has goals, but he's basically a pawn for another person, with her own goals, and those goals are...well, the author throws us a bone to suggest that they aren't the most evil, and may even be the lesser of two evils.

The best part for me, was the realization that, as a writer, this isn't what I want to write. I don't mean that as snark: "World-building" as they call it, is in vogue, and I have a tendency to do that, and it is a serious two-edge sword. I feel like Tolkien is to blame for it, but Tolkien was pretty ruthless (or his editors were) in *The Hobbit* *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. It's only the (oft-excised) Tom Bombadil section in LOTR, e.g., that sticks out as "this suggests history that you will not learn from this book".

The double-edged sword here is that as a reader you at least know that the author has thought things through and actually *has* an idea of what's going on beyond just throwing random clutter from his head to the page (cf. *Ready Player One*). The downside is that the author, carrying that baggage, must either slow things down to explain them (Marusek doesn't) or trust in your willingness to go along for the ride (I wasn't).

Also, the underlying philosophy seems to be that a person—an identity—is just a collection of neurological patterns with memories laid on top. Meh. Of course that's the prevailing view, I suppose, but it doesn't make for great literature, in this reader's humble opinion.

So, I dunno. Like I said: Well enough written. (The sex seemed creepy, partly due to the nature of the world, and partly due to sex in science-fiction almost always being a bad idea.) The characters were sometimes quite good and the author showed himself equal to the impressive challenge he set for himself. Just, really, not my cuppa.

Andrew says

I was so excited to read this sequel to 'Counting Heads', but was left sorely disappointed. This sequel does seem planned, but it's so loose and dare I say, sloppy, that nothing really sticks. Most of the protagonists feel tired by the end, and the book seems largely devoid of the sparkling imagination from the first. I might have given it less stars had it not been standing on the shoulders of such a great book. It's set up for yet another sequel, and hopefully Marusek will inject some new life into the series.

Alan says

A sequel to *Counting Heads*, which I read a couple of years ago, and to my mind an improvement on its predecessor—the prose is tighter and more focused, and the world as a whole feels even richer and more detailed than in the first book. There's a lot going on here, but Marusek makes it look easy, as he extrapolates the plausible consequences of ubiquitous cloning and mind-copying technologies. File this one along with

Alastair Reynolds' *House of Suns* (which I also recently reviewed). Charles Stross (particularly *Accelerando*) might also be a touchstone, at least in terms of sheer information density.

Marusek's world is a remarkably fluid milieu, where identity is arbitrary and the integrity of one's personality is something to be defended by software protocols. Characters constantly create duplicates of themselves—they "cast sims" or establish proxies to do work for them, or to stand in for them when doing tedious functions... there's a complex hierarchy of personalities which includes both "affs" (short for... affluent, I think) and their copies as well as, beneath them, a host of generic and function-specific clones named after the individual from whom they were made, like "russ" and "evangeline".

The meaning of identity in such an environment is a central concern of the book. For example: I found the very beginning almost too disturbing to continue reading, as a resurrected Ellen Starke (we met her in *Counting Heads*) has her memories therapeutically edited for her, by her well-meaning but not well-informed caretakers. Starke turns out to have been right, and her caretakers wrong, about her mother... but I did not at all expect the *way* in which Ellen's proven right.

There's also at least one diabolical concept that I hope *doesn't* catch on in the real world, and that is the "trust engine," an innocuous name for a for-profit corporate entity whose sole purpose is to buy up real estate in some category (played-out mines, or decaying urban cores) with the goal of shutting human beings out of land ownership (unless they are, of course, the people involved in setting up the engine to begin with). Based on what some nonprofits do piecemeal in the real world in order to preserve wilderness or purchase land for wildlife habitat, in Marusek's world these trust engines are powerful automated processes, used primarily by plutocrats to establish personal estates and encourage others to emigrate to other star systems.

Oh, yeah, as if there weren't enough going on in the Solar System, there's also an interstellar diaspora in the works, or at least the beginnings of one... the human race is building generation starships, intended to colonize the planets of nearby star systems using displaced and dissatisfied populations. Problem is, starships are *expensive*—and there are a lot of people who would very much like to turn those expensive starships into high-end inner-system habitats for the super-rich instead, and leave those would-be colonists in cryogenic suspension until they get freezer burn...

Marusek's world is complex, at times seeming nearly as complex as the real world, and while the situations may seem outrageous at first, he always has solid underpinnings for his extrapolation. This is good science fiction (emphasis equal on all three words).

Aubrey says

io9.com says:

“Marusek is famous for writing novels of ideas, and if you're looking for intricate, solid worldbuilding you won't be disappointed in *Mind Over Ship*. But what this novel truly excels at is creating a psychological mood, a feeling of futuristic neurosis that would certainly haunt anyone whose entire body and consciousness had been engineered by a company.”

They also call the book “a rare literary look at neurosis in the context of a fully-realized speculative future scenario,” and add “If you've ever wanted to mash up Philip Roth with Philip K. Dick and read the results,

then David Marusek is your man.”

The full review can be found here: <http://io9.com/5148570/mind-over-ship...>

Nicholas Whyte says

<https://nwwhyte.livejournal.com/3036653.html>

Mind Over Ship is quite closely linked to the first book - the combined sequence of events takes place over a short period of time, and the reader is banged right into the action. But if you can catch your breath, there are a lot of great ideas here - the collective and individual politics of clones, the manipulation of the launch of generation starships, the character whose severed head is attached to a slowly growing new body, another character whose consciousness has been transferred to a swarm of fish. And yet the plot doesn't quite resolve, and some years later we are still waiting for the third volume of what feels like a trilogy. Maybe when that emerges we'll see the form of the whole more clearly.

eldaldo says

Looking back over the books I've read in the past year or so, Counting Heads was my favorite. It has been a long time since I've read a Sci-fi book that was so good on so many levels. This is the sequel. Like so many sequels it cannot be judged on its own but rather only on how it continues the storyline of its predecessor. To me it did a great job. I enjoyed reading it the whole time. I feel like it spent a little too much time focusing on Fred Londestane for me, but the story was good. The only thing is that it didn't really resolve anything. I kept feeling the momentum of the book pick up and was waiting for a climax or finale, but there was none. It was a book that set up a massive conflict but ended just before the conflict happened. I want more. I want to know what happens. If there is a third book in the series, this ending makes sense. If not . . . I am disappointed.

Mary-Marcia says

Enjoyed the previous book, Counting Heads! Marvelous sneaky humor all those little cultural drop-ins, they continue in Mind Over Ship culminating in the fight with the donalds! "... one of the new spacer types, a donald. His head seemed a little smallish for the breadth of his shoulders, and he was bald except for a triangular patch of wispy auburn hair on his forehead. He didn't say anything, but just glowered... "

Bradley says

I'm impressed! This novel reads much more regularly than the previous one, sacrificing opportunities to World-Build in favor of character exploration and cool plot, so in the end it reads like a fascinating adventure of clones and the beginning stages of interstellar space exploration.

Of course, this wouldn't have been possible without all the stage-setting of the population-theme-based novel that preceded it, so I'm very happy to have read both very close together. It might even have been better to bill both these novels together as one long one, possibly, although the whole sequence of Sam would have just seemed like a long sidenote to the mother's and the daughter's stories.

As it is, I should say that the great idea-pace of the novel didn't really quit or stall in this one, either, but just continued along the kinds of paths and cool sidebars that a bit of creative thought could take it.

Memory and clones and the implications were extremely interesting, of course, building functional immortality quite separate from the kinds already found in this future earth, and perfectly in line with House of Suns from the PoV of very early days. :) I don't want to give away too much, but it really puts mother and daughter in a whole new category of interesting. And longevity. With fish. :)

As for space colonization, this novel is just as interesting, the driving forces to get our eggs out of one basket butting heads with politics, economics, and pure spite. Lots of intrigue and manipulations going on here, too, and this novel goes well beyond the kinds of social considerations and themes of the previous, and firmly into strong plot territory.

I really can't say anything bad about it at all. Parts were reminiscent of Cyteen, parts of House of Suns, some was propelling the spirit of Asimov's robot novels, and parts were almost PKD in the paranoia. :)

Very fun stuff. :)

Andrea says

How psyched am I that this is the second in what seems obviously to be a trilogy? I can't say how much I loved COUNTING HEADS so so much, and MIND OVER SHIP more than held up. Honestly, Marusek is for my money the most interesting voice in science fiction today. (Wasn't that a grand pronouncement?)

My one beef is with what seems to be the author's bonkers social darwinist worldview (that biological men evolved to be attracted to children and that nature just hasn't caught up with culture yet. Or something.). This is a fairly minor plot point that comes almost 300 pages in, with a few little fake forshadowings earlier. Still, not recommended for people who are understandably traumatized by that sort of wrong-headed justification of abuse.

mark monday says

clones! poor misunderstood clones!

Marusek's follow-up to his lauded, nightmarishly dystopic, drily comic Counting Heads is just as enjoyable as its predecessor. it is also far less complicated, so folks who appreciated the almost swarming effect of constant information and constantly strange characters popping up all over the place may be disappointed. the change certainly makes the action easier to follow. many characters have been simply eliminated - a ruthless decision, as they were all intriguing and amusing creations. but fortunately their absence allows focus on the most fascinating characters - the clone couple Fred and Mary.

here in san francisco, we have what are known as "Castro Clones". these are gay gents who shop, carouse, and often live in the predominately gay neighborhood The Castro...and they often have an eerie similarity to each other. perfect hair. sculpted bods. the freshest of clothing labels. bitchy commentary. an entitled attitude. needless to say, the label is pejorative, much like "hipster" is when referred to a certain kind of 20- or 30-something. personally, i find Castro Clones to be a mixed bag and not entirely negative. there is strength in numbers! and there is community in numbers as well. i can't help but think that there is something pleasant and enjoyable in looking around a neighborhood or bar or restaurant and seeing versions of yourself everywhere. it must be a very safe feeling. i may mock these so-called clones, but i understand their motivations, their desire to band together and their need to be instantly recognizable to each other.

in the novel, Fred the clone is a "russ" - a clone that is based originally on an extremely loyal presidential security guard, uncomplicated and unquestioning and prone to writing lists to organize his thoughts. Mary the clone is an "evangeline" - a dreamy, wispy sort of clone, emotional, innately supportive, originally designed as the ideal companion for rich old dowager types. i find these two clone personalities to be, in a word, adorable. if only the real world was full of such clones! in *Mind Over Ship*, the narrative itself is fast & furious adventure, but the real story is about how Fred and Mary start moving beyond their clone templates. this is fascinating, but i couldn't help but wonder - are their original clone templates really so bad? i admired Fred and Mary's ability to change, but it was hard for me to view their original personalities negatively - and impossible for me to condemn their fellow clones' need to stick together, clone to clone. the evangelines and russes did not just enjoy safety in numbers but had genuine pride in their culture. russes are predictable but highly trustworthy. evangelines are weepy but incredibly empathetic. these are not bad things.

a few times a year i facilitate a training on "Peer Support". it is a part of my job, one of my favorite parts. during the long weekend of the training, there is a module on "Cultural Competency". during the intro to this module, i track the history of Cultural Competency and its two primary models.

classic Cultural Competency is about understanding that different cultures have different ways of expressing themselves and different ways of living their lives - different from the local majority population, that is. classic Cultural Competency says that because different cultures have unique cultural norms, a person may be able to improve communication and show support by understanding those norms - or, at the very least, respecting those norms regardless of understanding. a positive outcome of this is respect for things outside of our comfort zone. a negative outcome is the idea that "Blacks act his way... gays act that way... etc"

new school Cultural Competency has a very different point of view: each individual is a silo of completely different things. each characteristic (race, class, gender, orientation, education, and the like) is treated as separate things that come together and create a whole person, and so trying to understand this person does not hinge on any single characteristic. a person is many things, and those things may change over time. the positive side is that this allows every facet of the person to have importance. the negative is a bit more intangible, but it is there nonetheless: it subtracts from that feeling of community that so many people desire.

i thought about these models all throughout reading *Mind Over Ship*. i admired Fred and Mary's slow movement towards complete individuality. i see myself in them, as was intended by the author. individuality is always a treasured thing. yet i also couldn't help but see the positive side of the clone culture as well. it is not like all the clone russes and evangelines were completely interchangeable - they have their own personality variations - but there was a strength and beauty and resilience to the clone culture's need to be true to their basic clone nature, to stick together, to form a community that protected itself from the mad, bad world around them.

anyway: this is a very enjoyable book, a fast-paced adventure, and it certainly got me thinking in different directions beyond what i first expected.
