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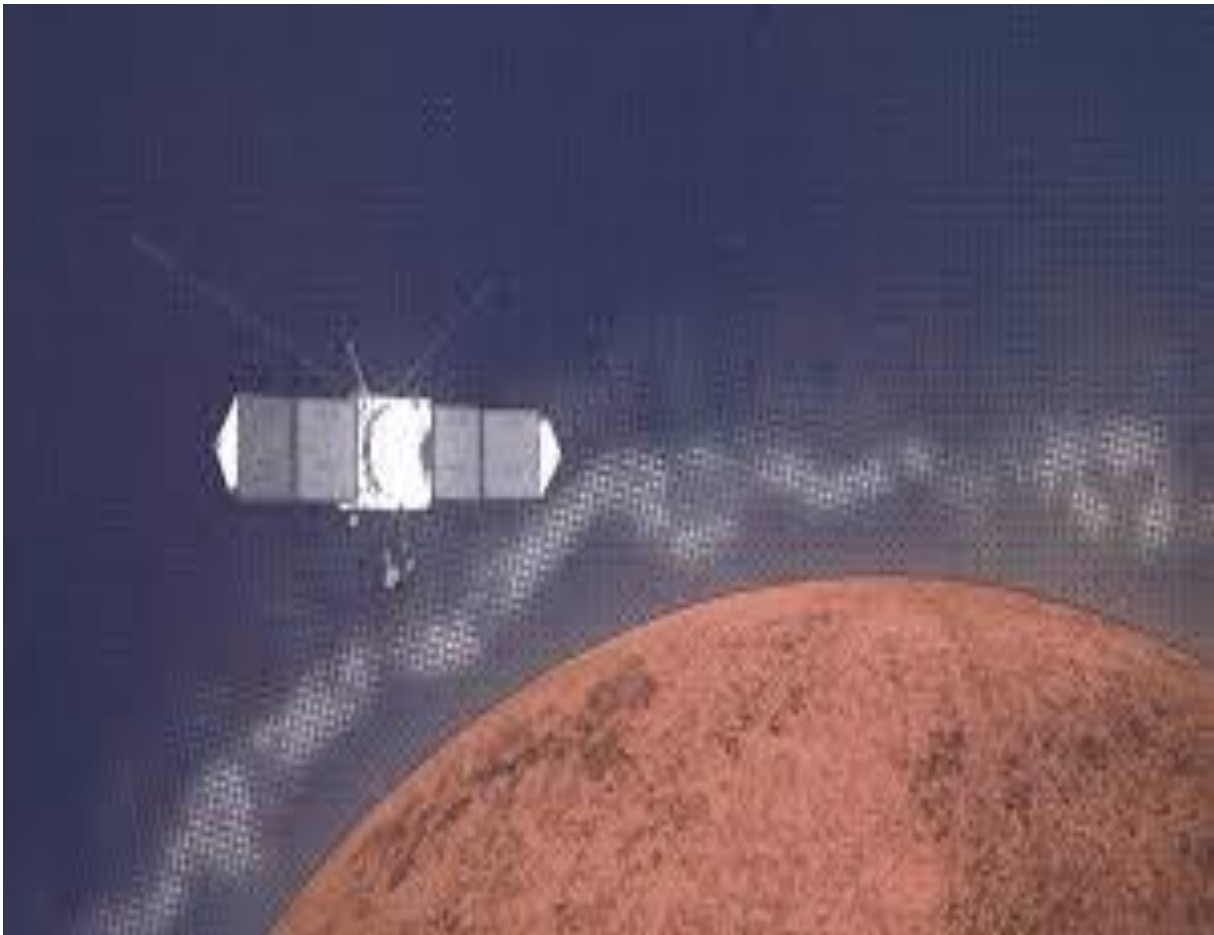
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Ionosphere—Maven detects sporadic layers. Photo by Scinews.

EDITORIAL



What Will This Year Bring? by John Thiel

As we cross into a new year there is speculation about what the new year will bring; will there be big changes over the course of that year? Last year saw plenty of changes over the year before then—it was the year of the Covid Virus, a year of Pandemic, one which involved the entire world and caused emergency measures to be taken everywhere. Will this year be a continuation of the conditions forced upon us by that virus?

This year commenced here with the announcement that Covid inoculations were being brought in and made available. We are hoping this will be a step toward overcoming the virus conditions.

In terms of science fiction this is highly relevant, because life was becoming something resembling a science fiction story; one is reminded of John Christopher's *NO BLADE OF GRASS*, Wilson Tucker's *THE LONG LOUD SILENCE*, Fredrick Pohl's *A PLAGUE OF PYTHONS*, perhaps John Wyndham's *DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS*, and numerous other books about society interrupted by plague conditions. One might remember also H.G. Wells' ending of *WAR OF THE WORLDS* about the Martian invaders being killed by a virus.

I'd like to offer the opinion that the new year will be what we make it; I think that here in the National Fantasy Fan Federation we should be striving for an increase in science fiction interests and working at reconstruction, which is the same thing that people in general might be doing in terms of the plague, a reconstruction of all the damages wrought by the plague. Always following a war there is reconstruction, and I would like it if we would all be in on this aspect of post-disaster conditions. Why not work to reconstruct the damage done to science fiction by the modern conditions in which two wars called World Wars were followed up by warfare going on everywhere, which may finally abate due to the plague situation having interrupted warfare as well as the normal functioning of society. Once warfare is interrupted there is some consideration given to whether it should continue, and this, it seems to me, may be the case in the coming year. For one thing, epidemics could be considered the by-products of warfare conditions. Perhaps both should come to a halt, played out. What should not be played out is the will toward reconstruction.

It's forward we should be moving, not regression due to the blockades there have been against progress. These blockades lessen when they are not blockading the progress of warfare. I am hoping that science fiction writers will be coming up with answers to the questions they have been raising, as a more and more clear look is taken at the meaning of the present-day crises. Why not strive for what is good, rather than wasting our time in ceaseless argumentation and conflict? Some might say that good doesn't require being striven for, but reconstruction is a good that does take some striving. I feel much better, myself, when I am working toward some goal that I consider it worthwhile to achieve, than I feel bemoaning the wretchedness of modern conditions.

Will any good be brought to us, or will we HAVE to bring the good about strictly by ourselves? It seems that if no good comes freely, there is no incentive to work toward good, because even if we accomplish some minor achievements the rest of what goes on about us is still as bad as ever. Well, if we begin making out in our own milieu, we have found better surroundings for ourselves, and might be able to discover the same thing happening where there are other instances, as destruction does beget the will toward improvement and finding better things. Any impulse we have toward making things better does not come from nowhere, and I suggest that we follow such impulses.

Let's look toward having a better year in the National Fantasy Fan Federation, anyway. We might be surprised at how good that could make us feel. Who's the man who says otherwise?

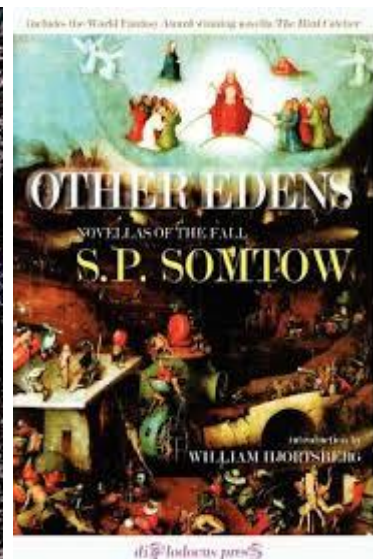
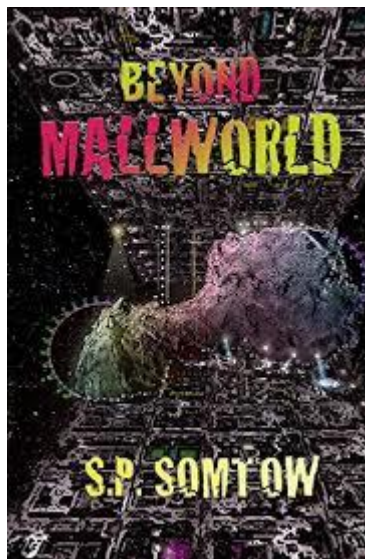
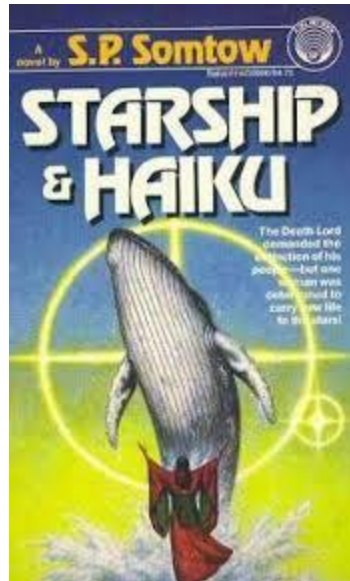
Interview with Somtow Sucharitkul by John Thiel



Somtow Sucharitkul, first interviewed in Ionisphere by Jim Allen in the 1980s, was not long into science fiction at that time. His first novel, *STARSHIP AND HAIKU*, winner of the Campbell Award for best new writer, was published in 1981. His first publications were in the late 1970s in Asimov's and Analog. He also wrote under the name S.P. Somtow. He's also been known for works in art and music. His approach to writing is sportive, artistic and off-trail, and he has been described as having "dazzling talents and acerbic wit". He won the World Fantasy Award for best novel in 2002 for *THE BIRD CATCHER*.

He was born in Bangkok, Thailand, moved in 1953 at the age of six months to England, where he received his education at Cambridge. He returned to Thailand in the early 1960s for five years, where he learned the ways of Thailand.

He may be found on the net at <https://www.somtow.com> with SOMTOW'S WORLD and has a Facebook page at www.facebook.com.somtow . His email address is Somtow@mindspring.com .



IO: Somtow, long time no see. You were in Ionisphere in our earlier issues and now Ionisphere has jumped to the present times and been re-established as a National Fantasy Fan Federation publication, as before. I'm pleased to have the chance to interview you. After all, did you not write an essay called "Reinventing Oneself as a Southeast Asian Writer"? Here we get to re-interview you after a long passage of time. Here are some things we'd like to ask you about, now that we are more familiar with your writing than we were at our first interview.

First, did the displacement you experienced in your childhood have any effect or influence on your writing? I refer to positive effects, such as the fancifulness I see in your attitudes, as well as to problems with writing or adjustment in the ways of being a writer.

But perhaps it also gave you a different view of the world than is found more standardly.

SS: Any effect? I would say it is the MAIN effect. Encountering half a dozen different cultures before the age of seven, and living in each, made me realize very early on that no way of life is to be taken as normative. I was able to close my eyes and wish myself into a different thought. I've often been a fly on the wall at events where the fates of planets (or at least a country or two) was decided.

IO: To what extent do you try to introduce attitudes of Thailand into your writings?

SS: In the 1970s, my father was ambassador to Japan, and *STARSHIP AND HAIKU*, one of my very first novels, shows the beginning of my fascination with a culture far more weird and alien to what I was familiar with than any Thai or Western environment.

Nevertheless, people keep thinking that because I'm Asian, I must have some kind of native understanding of Japanese culture. This is one of those "they all look alike" problems I encountered at first, since I was once pretty much the only Asian working in the American science fiction milieu. (The German edition of this book stated I was a Korean who grew up in Egypt. Korean because they didn't bother to ask which kind of Asian I was and Egypt because the book had been finished in Alexandria...Virginia!)

In my early writings I avoided being directly "ethnic" because I was worried about being branded as an "ethnic" writer. No matter how brilliant certain writers are, they can get typecast in a certain culture, whether it's V.S. Naipaul or Salman Rushdie. Science fiction has an infinitude of settings and you shouldn't limit how the audience perceives you. It was Fred Pohl who talked me into doing my first "Thai" story. After that, whenever I wrote stories perceived as "Thai" I'd get World Fantasy Awards nominations and what have you, but much less attention for stories in other settings. It was a double-edged sword.

IO: Are you trying to introduce the Thailanders to Western thoughts and traditions?

SS: I've been a sort of "explainer" all my life, I suppose. I've premiered many important works of Western art in Thailand—I was the first to do the complete Mahler symphonies here for instance. I have a series of clips on Youtube explaining Western music to Thais—commissioned by our ministry of culture. But in fact Western thought has been here for hundreds of years. In the 16th Century, the kingdom of Ayathaya was one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world: European visitors called it "larger than London, cleaner than Paris". There were all sorts of districts in the capitol city with big immigrant populations of Dutch, Portuguese, and so on. It's probably that Western ideas are more familiar to Thais than the reverse.

IO: How did you first become acquainted with science fiction?

SS: There was a shelf of books in my class library when I was about ten, living in Bangkok. I went to an extraordinary school—an English language school—in which a brilliant teacher, daughter of a Thai prince, allowed us to study whatever we wanted to. We would ransack the storeroom for whatever textbooks there were and she didn't care about "talking down" to us—we read Shakespeare, I wrote a rather silly fake Greek Tragedy which our class mounted, and so on. This elementary school class was full of people who became over-reachers. V.S. Ramachandran, the neuroscientist, was in the class. He and I had a lab in one of the disused rooms in the old servants' quarters of his house. I brought dead kittens to school once, and our science teacher, instead of screaming, said, Oh wonderful! Let's dissect them! Kwon Ping Ho, now one of Asia's most influential hoteliers, was in the class; his sister, now an award-winning novelist, was, too. The class was a wild adventure.

So...this shelf of books...someone had donated a lot of S.F. to it. I remember the first stories I read almost verbatim. Some Heinlein, a Theodore Sturgeon story, Blish's A Case of Conscience, much more.

IO: What things are you primarily trying to put across to readers in your writing?

SS: That would require a really long answer, but it's been said that my primary theme is compassion. This makes teller, in a sense, Buddhist stories.

IO: Did you attend science fiction conventions or fantasy conventions at which your awards were given?

SS: I attended conventions religiously for a decade—losing dozens of awards including two Hugos. I attended every World Fantasy convention I was nominated but after four or five I didn't think I'd ever win, so I didn't go to the one where I won the World Fantasy Award—indeed, I read about it in Locus!

IO: What influence do you think science fiction has on the world of literature? What place do you find science fiction and fantasy to have in the world?

SS: Science fiction is our world's common mythology.

IO: Thank you for an educative interview.

WHO AM I? A short course in reinventing oneself as a Southeast Asian Writer by Somtow Sucharitkul

This is a speech given by Sucharitkul under the name S.P. Somtow. It was sent by the author, who gave his permission to print the speech here.

May it please our beloved Royal Highnesses,
Your Excellencies;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I must begin this speech by confessing myself a total failure. When I was contacted by the awards committee, only a few days ago, I thought it would not be too difficult to perform the task of impersonating one of the most well-known Nobel prize winning authors in the world. After all, most of you have never seen him.

But, though I pulled my Yoruba dictionary off the shelf (don't laugh—I have two of them) and stood in front of a mirror for hours trying to replicate the cadence and body language of a great Nigerian playwright, I think you will have already noticed, if you look at the name on the back of your invitation card and if you look very closely at my face, that I am not he.

Look again! Not even close.

I studied our guest of honor's beautiful prose with great care, read his interviews, and tried to imagine what such a penetrating world-class intellect, such a passionate advocate for human rights as he would have to say to you, the men and women who have been honored as Southeast Asia's most creative minds.

As I thought about it, however, my unease and my insecurity was gradually replaced by another, all too human, feeling—indignation. I thought:

What gives this person from the world beyond, who has never experienced what we have experienced, who has never known what it is like to be a Southeast Asian, the right to tell me that I am not free? Why is it that these people so far away, who have never breathed our Southeast Asian air, never felt the burning Southeast Asian sun on their faces, always presume to know so much about what we think, feel, are?

So I must begin by informing our absent guest of honor tonight that I am proud to stand here, in front of my prince, my peers, and my compatriots, and tell the world that right here, in this place and time, I have never felt more free. And that is because I have

finally come home.

I want to say tonight that we who have collectively dreamt into being our vision of Southeast Asia, are not here to have the world teach us who we are. The world has changed. We are here to teach *them*. But to do this, we must first dare to know ourselves.

This daring is at the very heart of what we do. And it's the very heart of what I want to talk about this evening.

I won't be offering you any pearls of wisdom from the Olympian viewpoint of a Nobel prize winner. Instead, I will be speaking as one of you. I think it's about time someone did that.

When I was six months old, I left Thailand. I'm afraid I had little choice in the matter. In my childhood I drifted from culture to culture, country to country. I was a perpetual stranger. Being an outsider was the greatest gift I ever received as a novelist and as a composer, because it enabled me to see things in people's lives that they had often hidden from themselves. It is because of this gift of peregrination, bestowed on me by my parents, that I acquired a reputation for being able to write novels from the perspective of people utterly different from myself—women, Native Americans, vampires, aliens, even, in one case, whales.

Today, more than half a century later, I have returned home. I've seen the world as an American, and I've seen it as a Southeast Asian. I would like to share with you a few episodes from this journey. I think it is a journey which all of us take, on one level or another, when we say to the world, *I am an artist*, and *I am a Southeast Asian*. Perhaps some of you did not have to travel the globe for fifty years to reach the precarious ledge place I now stand on, halfway up the hill with the ultimate goal still glimmering in the distance. But it is OUR journey and no one else's.

What is an artist...and what is a Southeast Asian...and where do these two areas intersect? This is a perplexing question and in my life it was first asked when at the age of eleven I wrote a certain poem which was published in the Bangkok **Post**.

It was a rather silly poem, really. It was about the wind, and about a rather alienated child—myself, no doubt—who felt more kinship with the wind than with the human beings around him. The author was a self-important young brat. Some of my words were awkwardly chosen. Indeed, my only recollection of the poem for years was that in it, I had managed to use the word *quasitangible*.

Now, by one of those monumentally novelistic coincidences that statistically cannot

happen, the well-known actress Shirley MacLaine was in Bangkok and happened to read the **Post** that day.

The fractured cadences of youth spoke to her in a different voice—like one of those stilted pseudo-oriental voices that you might hear in a western movie...perhaps like James Mason in LOST HORIZON. And the line “I am not a man”, written because I was a child, spoke to her, perhaps, in feminist terms.

Years later, when I was in late adolescence, I discovered that this poem had been reprinted as the epigraph to Shirley MacLaine’s autobiography and New Age manifesto, DON’T FALL OFF THE MOUNTAIN.

I had written a rather silly and childish sort of poem. But to someone from a completely different perspective, it had become a jewel of ancient oriental wisdom. Its ingenious phrases, stripped of their context, had become a sort of intellectual fortune cookie.

When I was eleven years old, I couldn’t speak a word of Thai. Now, from the other side of the world, someone had heard my voice—but I couldn’t recognize the voice she had heard. I had become one of the mysteries of the east.

Out of this bizarre case of mistaken identity was born a kind of career.

You see, my feelings were ambiguous to say the least. A seventeen year old is bound to be embarrassed to see something he dashed off at eleven on the front page of a best seller. It was a writer friend of my parents, the mystery writer Patricia Moyes, who said to me, “Don’t get mad. Get money.”

I found an agent and pretty soon a check for five hundred dollars, minus ten percent, popped into my mailbox. I learned very young that words can pay the bills.

It is still the most per word I have ever been paid, so in a sense my career has been on a downward spiral ever since.

I tell this story to illustrate a very important truth about what we do. The western world has some curious ideas about who we are. And they’re a lot louder than we are, so some of us can perhaps be forgiven when we start believing that we are who THEY say we are.

I know this for a fact because, I confess, I am guilty of it too.

In my twenties, with my shiny British classical education still clinging to my swelled head, I returned to Thailand for the first time since childhood. Of course, I had grand ambitions. I knew that I was going to breeze into the kingdom of smiles and change the arts forever.

I lasted eighteen months.

It was a wild eighteen months. I and my fellow artists upturned many carts. We had this idea that we throw together all the sonorities of western and Southeast Asian music and come up with exciting new sounds, new avenues of creation. Everybody hated us.

I think that perhaps the turning point for me came when my friends and I, in 1978, organized a huge Asian composers' conference in Thailand. We wanted to break down all the walls that separated east from west. At the climactic event of the conference, a concert was to take place at the National Theater, with the premiere of a startling new work for Thai and western instruments.

A few hours before the concert, the piano mysteriously disappeared from the theater. I was having a tantrum at the podium when an official of the Fine Arts Department appeared. He told me that it had been scientifically determined that this modern music would destroy the strings of the piano, and that it had therefore been removed from the theater for its own protection.

Western cavalry came to the rescue in the form of the piano belonging to the director of the German Cultural Institute. The concert got rave reviews in the international press. But the hall was virtually empty. My cultural revolution was a flop.

I was crushed. I had opened the doors and seen for a few tantalizing moments what could happen when cultures met, collided, cross-fertilized each other. Then the doors had all slammed in my face.

In that dark moment—I was only twenty-five years old at the time—I came to the conclusion that it was not in fact possible to be both an artist and a Southeast Asian.

I stopped talking to my friends. I was hurt, and I hurt others. I ran away to America. After a long and painful musical block, I returned to writing stories as a sort of therapy, and when the books and stories began to sell, and the money started to come, I became convinced I would never come back.

There was nothing Southeast Asian about any of the novels and short stories I published in the 1980s. Indeed, if you go to the Library of Congress in Washington and look up how my books are classified, you will see simply fiction, comma, American.

If there was anything I feared about my American career, it was the idea that I would somehow be branded as an "ethnic" writer. I knew that such writers inhabited a ghetto, or perhaps a gilded cage, that they could be admired, but that they were somehow not part of the real universe. Indeed, my publishers told me that if I made my name less ethnic, they'd make me a star.

I believed them. I found it curiously funny to read the odd fan letter written from the assumption that, with "ow" at the end of my name, I must be a Russian.

Then, after ten years in which I had already had many books out and a reasonable fan base, my carefully constructed, racially invisible persona began to disintegrate.

I began thinking of Thailand, you see. About the little things mostly. Like the idea that you could spend the night in a cemetery and receive a winning lottery number in a dream. Or about those hilarious live movie dubbers who used to improvise the dialogue in Thai movie theaters. I started to do the odd story about these things and suddenly a whole new group of critics began to take me seriously. I was beginning to fit the preconceived idea of what a Southeast Asian artist is supposed to be. That's when the award nominations started and my work started appearing in Asian Lit courses at American universities.

Here, then, was the irony: nobody in Thailand knew that I even existed, but in the west, I had become the voice of Thailand.

I think that the story that best illustrates this is when a Thai motion picture company asked me to write the screenplay for a film about Thailand's most notorious serial killer. They had this idea of a breakthrough picture that could capture the imaginations of western audiences. So I said, I'll put a take on this story that will totally knock their socks off. They read the treatment, gave me the go ahead, and when I handed in the script, they resoundingly rejected it. Why? It felt too foreign, they said. It wasn't really Thai. I said, "But you asked for a version that would appeal in the west." They said, "It doesn't feel authentic."

I recast the script as a novella and it was published in the United States, where it won the World Fantasy Award—which, for those of you unfamiliar with the world of fantastic literature, is about as high as you can get. Why did it win? "It feels so authentic," the judges said.

And so it was that though I left Thailand charged with the certainty of youth, I entered middle age in a state of confusion. Ten thousand miles from Southeast Asia, I was beginning to transform into a Southeast Asian artist, only I had no clue what species of animal that was.

In America I had a very close friend named Judy, and she and I raised a child together. He was not my biological son, but I was the only father he truly knew. When Judy died and left a note asking me to take care of her child, I began a new journey into a darkness I never knew existed in America. On the day of Judy's funeral, the boy's

relatives, who came from a place far outside the tolerant and artistic circles in which I had always moved, began a series of astonishing legal proceedings in order to protect this innocent child from the Yellow Peril.

It was an epic battle that lasted for years and depleted all my financial resources. I am proud to say that we won this battle, and the courts did in fact finally honor the wishes of the mother and child. But on the way I came to face to face with an ugly and virulent prejudice that I had only read about or seen on television. I will never forget reading, in the first legal document that was served to me, "The defendant is from Thailand, and therefore we are afraid of him."

It was then that I learned a very important truth. Twenty years of sitting in Starbucks is not going to turn you into a white person.

I should have guessed it when only my stories about Southeast Asia ever got nominated for awards. The message was clear: we'll praise you. We'll buy your books. But stay at the back of the bus. Don't try to be more than a cute, safe, ethnic, token oriental.

After twenty years, I finally understood this strange uneasy thing that had been gnawing at the periphery of my consciousness. I was homesick. And so it was that, one day in 2001, driving down the freeway from San Francisco to Los Angeles, at a moment in which I seemed to be reaching a new pinnacle in my career, I suddenly realized that I had to walk away from it all...the movie deals in the making, the nice house, the money. The urge to take this leap was like a thunderbolt from on high. The next morning I took a plane back to Thailand, and within days I had entered a monastery. Twenty-five years too late, I was taking the step that every Thai youth takes across the threshold of manhood.

So, if you will just bear with me for a few more minutes, I want to tell you something about the journey home, and about some lessons I have been able to draw from it all.

The first thing I learned is that I was wrong to believe that the big artistic revolution of the 1970s had been a failure. My friends and I had been laughed at for trying to find new combinations of Thai and Western sounds, but now, twenty years later, the seed we planted was everywhere...in film scores, in television commercials. It was so much part of popular culture that people had forgotten what a struggle it had been to put it there.

This is the first lesson. Do what is right, and don't worry about changing the world. You have already changed it. The changes become evident in their own time, not in yours.

During the time that I was a Buddhist monk, I had an abbot who made us meditate almost every waking hour of the day. Turning myself inward, I began to see and hear things. There was a night that I woke up to a brilliant blast of music. The music was like a blinding light. It was a huge chord that seemed to contain every note in the chromatic scale at the same time...and yet the effect was one of a profound, an absolute harmony. It was so overwhelming that I thought everyone in the monastery must be running out to see what it was, but as it slowly faded I realized that it had been a kind of aural vision.

Such a chord cannot logically exist, and yet for those fleeting moments, I am sure that I heard it. And from this came another lesson: I learned that I come from a country where impossible things happen, a land that bridges the territories of reality and dream. Here we are still close to the source of magic.

In my new opera, *AYODHYA*, which some of you I hope will see next month, you will hear this sound—as close as I can reproduce it—when at the end the heavens open up and Sita and Rama ascend into the sky. It's a magical opera in which gods walk the earth and animals are the soldiers of the dharma. In squeezing our entire national epic, the Ramayana, into a single evening in a brand new medium, I'm of course paying a special tribute to our beloved king. It is also my personal gift to Thailand of everything that I have experienced in my fifty year journey—the anguish and the terror, the torment and the exaltation, and finally, the joy of homecoming.

But is it Thai? We go back to the question that has haunted me for my entire creative life.

Tonight, with pride, I will answer the question: Of course it's Thai. A Thai wrote it. Nobody other than a Thai could have written it. And only in Thailand could this Thai have found the artistic freedom to create this work.

And this brings me to the last lesson I would like to share with you, my fellow artists.

When you ask yourself the question, "Who am I?", never allow others to set limits on who you are, or who you can be. I want to tell you that if you want to write about our myths, our folktales, or sociologies, that is of course wonderful. These things belong to us. But don't let anyone tell you that you can't draw from Shakespeare or Euripides. The world's rich past belongs to all of us. You will not magically turn into a western writer by taking their most cherished artifacts and revealing new truths about them. You are always going to be a Southeast Asian artist. It is your right to define what that means...not the right of some academic in the American Midwest.

You are everything that has gone into you, everything that you have read, lived, and

dreamed. Don't deny yourself any of your inheritance just because someone else claims it too.

If you are lucky, it won't take you fifty years to learn this.

As Southeast Asians, we stand at the very epicenter of a new cultural tempest that is sweeping the world. People who live here don't even know it yet. There's still this underlying nervous feeling that west knows best. But it doesn't. And the west knows it, and the west is waiting to hear what we have to say. The west has lost its way. It is up to us to lead.

Yes, in the west you can see outrageous opera productions with nude prima donnas, or watch films brimming with shocking images, but the audience has been asleep for years. Yet here in Southeast Asia, new works of art can still enrage, inflame, fill ordinary people with passion, truly make them think. That is why it is so exciting to be home at last. That is why, despite the struggles, the fighting, the lack of funds, there is so much creativity going on. In Southeast Asia, anything can happen. And you are the ones to make it happen.

It is not easy, what any of you are doing. To be creative is often to fight against the tide. As artists, you have all experienced backstabbing, the difficulty of raising funds for our projects, the frustration of explaining a vision that is ahead of its time. Yet, I can tell you from my own experience that you will prevail.

To all of you who are receiving your SEA Write Awards tonight, I want to say this. Never, never, never lose heart. Your destiny is to look unflinchingly into the hearts of men, and to tell the world the truth that you find there. If it's dark, know that it's okay to be afraid...if you were at war, in a huge army, there would be many people fighting and dying beside you. But when you create a work of art, you are completely alone. Be afraid, if you must. But conquer that fear, because you know that you are the only person who can say the thing that must be said.

If your eyes are to gaze on the face of God, your feet must be firmly planted in the earth.

In conclusion, I would like to quote to you the words of our absent guest of honor. "The truth, to me, is freedom". I do not think there is anyone in this room who would argue with that.

Yet may we not go further and ask: What is truth? Are there not as many answers as there are artists? May we not be allowed to differ in the way we choose to apprehend the ultimate?

Let us then, my fellow artists, in love, together, celebrate these many answers. For the truth is a jigsaw puzzle with a billion pieces. Most of us are lucky just to find one. Yet all of us seem to know that there is a way to fit the pieces together. We don't know how they fit, but we just know they do. And we will never stop searching for the next piece.

In the end, that is why we are here.

Your Royal Highnesses, Excellencies, my fellow Journeyers, thank you for hearing me out.



Ionosphere during a total solar eclipse

AN INFORMAL HISTORY OF FAN-PRO RELATIONS by John Thiel

Some background on the relation of fans to professional writers is needed when we are attempting to improve these relations.

Going back to the beginning is a good start, since there has never been much discussion of how fans and writers get along together, aside from mention of it being made by fans when they have met with writers. It is a natural tendency of fans to want to see those whose works they are reading; the normal reader doesn't care about this so much, but the enthusiastic readers want to find out more about where their reading comes from. Fandom was ready to evolve from the magazines in the beginning, and at that time the enthusiasts were appearing in the letter column of *Amazing Stories*, the first science fiction magazine. Their letters were also interesting, like the stories, and some of the letter writers began corresponding with one another. These correspondences were mentioned in the letter columns and got the interest of editor Hugo Gernsback, who reached out to those corresponding with some correspondence of his own. Also some writers would write to those appearing in the letter columns who had written about their stories, and would discuss their viewpoints with them; writers also appeared in the letter columns answering comments about their stories.

Gernsback (some refer to him as Ghu) helped these correspondents form fan groups where it seemed possible, such as when there were many of them in the same town or city; also some fan groups were organized by mail, and some early fanzines appeared. This activity was talked about in the magazines by editors proud of the amount of reaction their magazines had stirred up. *Amazing* was joined by *Astounding* and *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, all of them interested in reader reaction, and *Weird Tales* also showed awareness of this.

The fanzines had discussions of stories which were too long and elaborate for the letter columns of the magazines, and were the principal focus of discussion of the stories. These were printed on machines which would not print enough copies to have a really large circulation, and writers would be aware of them only when something was called to their attention. Later, fandom became more elaborate, with amateur press associations and national organizations such as the National Fantasy Fan Federation, which is what we here are in.

What more could be wanted? Here were fanzines, fan organizations, correspondence groups, all of this receiving occasional comment in the magazines. Yet when people have something, they want more of it. The more fans were in such contact, the more they wanted personal contact, yet they were separated by great distances, and personal meetings were the subject of eulogies in fanzines. When conventions got started, these made personal contacts more frequent, and local conclaves evolved around them. Still, it was difficult to get to a convention coming from all around the country, and the conclaves seated only a certain number of people, and the rest of fandom was in the lurch as far as personal contact was concerned.

That sounds good enough, but there was no real management of it, and contact remained

sporadic in terms of the Big Picture. Organization begets further organization, and everything became still more organized, until in the 1950s there were traditions involved and ways of doing things promoted. There were fanzines aimed at unification and growth, and promoting doings among fans.

It was in this spirit that Irvin Koch, of the N3F, brought about the Fan-Pro Coordinating Activity, as it was then called. He assigned this activity to me, and I accumulated a small staff. I would promote fan-pro relations at conventions when I attended them. But I considered fandom to have become very discursive, due to the science fiction boom of the sixties, which sent things stfictional in all directions and got fans involved in far-flung pursuits.

I recall discussions in the Cult of how sequestered the professional writers were, how aloof from fandom, and how far away they were from real contactability. Also some of the cultists were wanting to become professional writers, and sought discussions with other writers about this. They found no easy routes to progress for science fiction fandom and were seeking these out. They were wanting fandom to become something more than it was then.

The purpose of the Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau is to further this quest for a united fandom, and to bring science fiction writing closer to being one of the realities of life. We reach out to the professional writers via interviews, and find out more about them. We would like it if the writers wanted to find out more about us, and we are striving to awaken this interest in fandom among them. One way of doing this is to give them something to be interested in, and I am making this attempt in Ionisphere. I also hope to stimulate such activity elsewhere; here in the N3F we have the reviews fanzine, and this is exactly what is needed; I would like it if those whose works are reviewed received copies of this to see if their interest would be aroused thereby. It is an example of the way fanzines used to be, and the interest they used to have for the professionals.

Some authors appear on Facebook on the science fiction sites including those which replaced the forums, where there were also professional writers after they came out of hiding. In the forums and on the Facebook replacements were found intercommunication between fans and pros, although it was not signified as such. That is where I found interview opportunities, so these Facebook pages did have some value of the type I was looking for. However, real communication between fans and writers has not as yet been found, for it has not developed any more than the letter columns developed before they had overseeing help from Gernsback. We need people to focalize these occurrences of meeting and give them significance, and register them as having occurred. I wonder if that can be found on the Internet, or whether we would have to revert to paper.

This, I think, outlines the significance, aims and objectives of the Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau better than I have done before. I hope as people catch on to this activity that we can have more come of it, and get greater relations going. I hope I have interested the membership.

BEHIND THE SCENES by Jeffrey Redmond

Analyzing a Science Fiction Film



*What goes into the making of them? How do the makers relate to their fans?
What things does film making involve? Where does it leave reality?*



Learning how to analyze a science fiction film requires suspension of disbelief and a sense of imagination.

We like to time travel, so we love science fiction. Unlike other genres of film, science fiction warrants its own criteria to be effectively evaluated. First, like any film, we measure a movie for its entertainment value: cinematography, acting, and plot (the basics). Science fiction cinema has an extra step. Audiences have to ask, is this good science fiction? The most important thing to realize when learning how to analyze a science fiction film is that qualifying as sci-fi takes more than putting actors on a stage set in space. Plenty of films purport to be science fiction but fall flat under analysis, because they fall back on fantasy or rely on absurd logic.

Imagine there's an isolated planet covered in sand dunes, where no crop can grow, but it is billowing with civilization. Where do these people draw water from if it never rains? What food do they eat? Inconsistent universes fall apart, torn apart by the scrutiny of a black hole. Once one fallacy is discovered the rest fall in place. The genre is a proposition of what can happen, or it depicts possibilities in our universe based on the current limitations of science. INTERSTELLAR's black hole is an amazing rendering of what an actual black hole may look like.

Christopher Nolan employed the help of physicist Kip Thorne to help him build a world from the ground up. It was considered one of the best space travel movies, and the work that went into making it believable largely contributed to that. Thorne's book THE SCIENCE OF INTERSTELLAR elaborates on just how much number-crunching was done to ensure that the film can withstand scientific scrutiny. Science fiction is meant to be the meetings of two titans of human endeavor, science and art.

Bad science fiction can still win Oscars and Academy Awards, to the resounding applause of audiences around the world...such as GRAVITY. The film, starring Sandra Bullock and George Clooney, not only lacked a coherent plot (a personal analysis not to be explored here), but failed to meet any form of scientific fact checking. What kind of astronaut insists on conversing with a colleague whose suit is quickly draining of oxygen? Answer: one who is not a real astronaut. There is also a heartfelt scene where Bullock weeps and her tears dreamily float away. There is a principle known as surface tension that causes tears to stick to your face like remnants of a sandwich in space. Yet, Gravity was called "One of the best science fiction movies in years."

Ray Bradbury said, "I define science fiction as the art of the possible. Fantasy is the art of the impossible. Science fiction, again, is the history of ideas, and they're always ideas that work themselves out and become real and happen in the world." When the elements of a purported science fiction film fail to meet the current understanding of science, the film makers do a disservice to audiences everywhere. They misrepresent reality due to their laziness. The label "science fiction" ought to be held to a standard of realism that inspires audiences to learn more after seeing the film. Do not call your film science fiction because it employs time travel, and then fails to hold to any consistent logic.

Science fiction films are tied to their visual effects. While not every sci-fi film has to be a spectacle (MOON or THE MAN FROM EARTH) many of them push the boundaries of special effects and cinematic possibilities. Space battles make frequent appearances

in sci-fi films and can trace their routes back to the “future war” novels of the 19th Century. Many such stories were written prior to the outbreak of World War I. George Griffith’s *THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION* (1892) featured “terrorists” armed with then non-existent arms and armor and things such as airships, submarines, and high explosives. The inclusion of yet-nonexistent technology became a standard part of the genre.

Fictional space warfare tends to borrow elements from naval warfare. David Weber’s *HONORVERSE* series of novels portrays several “space navies” such as the Royal Manticoran Navy, which initiates themes from Napoleonic era naval warfare. The Federation Starfleet (*STAR TREK*), Imperial Navy (*STAR WARS*), and Earthforce (*BABYLON 5*) also use a naval-style rank structure and hierarchy. The former is based on the United States Navy and the Royal Navy. Naval ship classes such as frigate or destroyer sometimes serve as marker to show how the craft are assembled and their designed purpose.

Sci-fi horror is its own unique genre that is particularly interesting to analyze. If you are a sci-fi fan that loves a good scare and want somewhere to start learning how to analyze a science fiction film, take a look at the scariest sci-fi movies of the 90s. The US government reported that there were more alien invasions in the 1990s than any other decade. Of course, this was only in the movies. When it comes to the ten most terrifying sci-fi horror movies of the 1990s, fans enjoyed them because they were both frightening and satisfying.

The combination of fear and science fiction proved to do well in the box office, but what did it do to our minds? Movies like *DEEP BLUE SEA* made our wariness of sharks even greater, while the 1990 film *HARDWARE* made us second guess all of the ever-evolving technology that is all around us. Sci-fi horror movies have a way of making us wonder, “Could this happen to us?” which is sometimes the most terrifying of all.

If you are more of a television fanatic than a movie watcher, there is still plenty of sci-fi out there for you to analyze and enjoy. Sci-fi anime TV shows, in particular, are a growing genre that has found a fanatic fan base. Animation is a fantastic medium to portray unrealistic scenarios, so science-fiction anime is only limited by the artist and his imagination. Since World War II Japan has become one of the most scientific and technologically capable nations in the world. It only makes sense that they would produce anime which explored many of the concepts found in science fiction. Often, the film serves as a backdrop for opening a discussion on difficult topics, such as the nature

of consciousness, "war", or "artificial intelligence". Beautifully crafted worlds explore daunting philosophical issues.

The bridge between imagination and technological advancement, where the dreamer's vision predicts change, and foreshadows a futuristic reality. Science fiction has the ability to become "science reality".

From Arthur C. Clarke to Douglas Adams, Isaac Asimov, and beyond, science fiction has surpassed the boundaries of the typical "genre". With visionary predictions, technological advancements have transcended the fictional boundaries of imagination and have materialized into our daily lives. The fruition of change first starts as a simple idea, formulated in the style of a question: "What if I could fly?" "What if robots ruled the world?" "What if our world is merely a dream?" For it is man's innate quest for knowledge that makes him ask "Why?" and "What if?" With our inquisitive and curious nature, we crave to experience the unknown and the unimaginable, until we ourselves can make it imaginable—thanks to science fiction.

We encourage you to keep asking "Why?" and "What if?" Our world would not exist as it is today without the innovative minds of dreamers and scientists alike. Throughout the years, science fiction has predicted the future; maybe your idea is next. As William Shakespeare said, "We are such stuff as dreams are made on". Let us continue to dream.

Isaac Asimov, the man behind *I, ROBOT*, *BICENTENNIAL MAN*, and countless other works, published an essay in 1964, imagining the world in 2014 where he predicted that appliances will not have electric cords, "for they will be powered by long-lived batteries running on radioisotopes". In a world where everyone was plugged in for energy, Asimov simply asked the question "What if we didn't have to be plugged in?" to create a futuristic one. Significant technology is the byproduct of science bringing science fiction to reality.

One of the many predictions Star Wars offered us was the promise of a "speeder bike", *aka* the hover bike. Even the United States Army has voiced interest in including a hover bike into their artillery, as it would be "a way to get soldiers away from ground threats by giving them a 3-D capability". Also, they could fly. Now the hover bike is a feasible reality, thanks to Aero-X, which makes low-altitude flight realistic and affordable. It rides like a motorcycle, with one main difference—it can fly! Not only does this hover bike have "fun" applications (you can race your friends in the air), but it can be used for more practical applications, such as crop dusting, herd management, infrastructure mapping, and search and rescue. Aero-X has created a visionary craft

usable in all fields and professions.

In STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, viewers were introduced to smooth, flat, touch-based control panels throughout the Enterprise-D. This touch interface was not only used in the ship's design, but also for numerous handheld portable devices known as PADDs, or Personal Access Display Devices. The PADD is a mobile computing terminal that perhaps inspired Apple's iPad, among other tablets. Not only that, but now the iPad features finger scanning. James Bond, anyone?

In Edward Bellamy's 1888 utopia LOOKING BACKWARD, the protagonist falls asleep in 1887 and wakes up in 2000 to find that cards are used as money. Today, credit cards are ubiquitous, and in American society, cards are preferred to cash. One of the great things about science fiction becoming reality is that there are no limits. What comes after the card? In recent years, implanted chips have been gaining momentum in replacing credit cards, as they would be attached to your body. We're not sure if we're ready for a future like that just yet, but we can imagine it.

Seeing loved ones through a screen is marvel, but it seemed like a distant future to Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke in 1968. Even though 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY doesn't feature any personal mobile communication devices, it does feature the "video phone booth", where, with the correct number (to be physically dialed) you can call your loved ones back on Earth. Branded as a "Picturephone", Dr. Heywood R. Floyd calls it a "telephone", and pulls out a credit card (like the ones we have today) for his payment. Today, video calls are ubiquitous, thanks to Skype and Facetime. Next stop, teleportation.

A Philip K. Dick book to film adaptation, THE MINORITY REPORT's depiction of touch screen technology is being made into a reality. With many prototypes out there, and countless working virtual keyboards, many prototypes generate a private air-touch display that does not need voice activation or a physical keyboard or screen for input. As of now, goggles are needed to create the virtual display. Variations of the air touch technology are starting to appear as well, most commonly linked to the Google Glass.

Not only did the Jetsons predict the robot vacuum, but they also paved the way for automated food machine and a robotic maid. Robotic assistants were prevalent in the Jetsons' society; who's to say our world won't become that one day? The Jetsons predicted a string of changes that have already occurred, personifying the concept of science fiction becoming a reality. From everyday needs to occasional luxuries, mechanical counterparts are constantly depicted in aiding mankind.

HAL 9000 represents an artificial intelligence helper who turns to the dark side. In 2001: A Space Odyssey, HAL (Heuristically Programmed Algorithmic Computer) is a sentient computer that (or should we say, who) controls the systems of the Discovery One spacecraft. HAL speaks in a soft, calm voice, and a conversational manner. The closer the ship comes to the obelisk, the more HAL malfunctions. AI helpers have haunted the realm of science fiction, typically depicting negative scenarios. Thanks to Apple's Siri, we now have a real-life HAL—well, almost. Mankind's biggest fear in the science fiction world is the rebellion of the very machines we created (see TERMINATOR or I, ROBOT). For now, Siri seems harmless. For now...



Gravity



Interstellar



I, Robot



2001: A Space Odyssey

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPROVING AND BUILDING UP THE FAN- PRO COORDINATING BUREAU by John Thiel

One improvement at the outset is having an internal discussion of this bureau, and by this means presenting bureau activity in Ionisphere. We need inter-functioning, and Ionisphere is a good place to do it; I think an inter-bureau publication added to Ionisphere would not be successful. By that I mean that we wouldn't want our inter-bureau discussion outlet to be an additional publication to Ionisphere, but rather a feature presented in Ionisphere. So this article is itself an improvement in the bureau, something more like what the bureau should have than just an output. I mean to discuss what the bureau should have but does not have. The first thing we lack is a stated concept of bureau order. The second thing we need is a better formulation and description of what we should be doing, and a better reportage of what has been done, existing here in the bureau publication for the members of the bureau to read. These would all be suggestions rather than any form of requirement, which certainly could not be imposed on bureau staffers even if I wanted to. But suggestions should be made and registered as possibilities. In other words, I wouldn't be telling the bureau staffers what to do, but just discussing what we might do.

So we want to make the bureau more active and have more discussions of possibilities for the improvement and augmentation of fan-pro relations, and then go on to thinking about how these things could be accomplished, how feasible and viable such and such a step might be. I have some interchange with the bureau members outside the bureau, but not very much within the bureau. Thereby we lack focus upon bureau matters. What we might do is propose things within a column or whatnot in Ionisphere, and then get written discussion back from the others, similarly presented in Ionisphere. Part of what we need is bureau building, before we go fully into bureau projects. So far we have not been suggesting much what the bureau should do, and our only real success is with interviews, and making contact with those interviewed available. This might go out from the bureau and have results, but these results do not come back to the bureau. We lack feedback, and might want to find ways to get feedback to occur. Otherwise we are talking about getting contacts going without much contact with one another going on within the bureau. This is a point that could be commented on by emailing me, and the comment, or bureau member reaction to the thought about making feedback possible, could be printed in this new bureau feature existing within

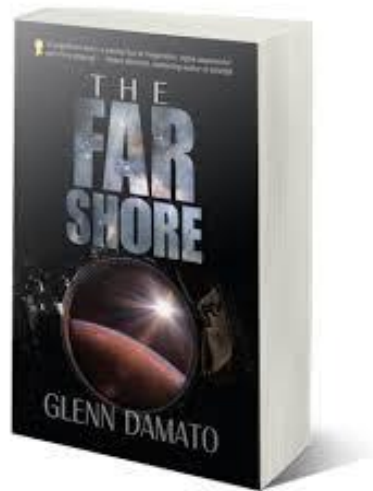
Ionisphere, and thereby publicly discussed by myself, the bureau member making the comment, and anyone else who then might follow up with further comments. There exists the idea that this would be compulsory bureau activity. Not so, but hopefully some such interchange might get started following this suggestion being made. I would look for a desire on the part of others in the bureau to be interchanging thoughts about what we are doing and how we might go about doing it. That, then, would be bureau activity. I do think the bureau ought to be built up further. If bureau members are doing what the bureau is supposed to do on their own, it would be good if they would describe their individual activities of this nature, reporting it back to the rest of the bureau and to those who read Ionisphere. This may be an innovation, but it sounds like a good path to follow to me. Of course, this is just an idea.

Another thing I am thinking of doing is making studies of the communications systems and possibilities in use, meaning mainly the internet system of communications. I would want to make a study of the way the computer system functions. At one time I had a minor in communications (and a major in English) while going to Purdue University. I studied telecommunications, the media including the press, and so on, and later my brother, attending the same university, took courses in computer science and operation. So I might be able to compile information on this subject. Fandom is a structure based on communications. It exists largely in the mail communications system and is grounded in fan organizations where those exist, and then there are conventions and conclaves, and news reporting of such events in such publications as Locus. (We would want to make information about such publications as Locus more available.)

In the earlier Ionisphere I published listings of the addresses of writers of science fiction and fantasy, which I was obtaining from volumes of the Who's Who and a few other sources of such information, which I found at the library. Probably those authors' addresses are outdated by now. I wonder if anyone would like to undertake a similar compilation of addresses—I'm speaking of mailing addresses; I've been publishing email addresses here, but I would like it if we got a similar stockpile of the mailing addresses of science fiction authors now. At present I am too busy with what I am doing here to do it myself. We might also want discussion of the feasibility of doing this.

This is my outlook on the bureau and its activities which I have at the present time. I would be glad to hear from other bureau members on the things I've brought up here. This may be considered a start at adding to the functioning of the bureau.

Interview with Glenn Damato by Tamara Wilhite



I had the opportunity to review Glenn Damato’s libertarian science fiction novel THE FAR SHORE when it came out in 2019. Cristina Flores lost her scientist father to the regime, but she treasured her father’s history books about the NASA space program. When she tells the truth at a Soviet style youth march, she’s marked and made to disappear. However, she’s not the only one who remembers, and she finds herself with a group seeking refuge on that far shore, far from the oppressive regime that controls Earth. When I found out Glenn was working on a sequel, I decided to interview him.

TW: What is your professional background?

GD: I’ve held some occupational positions that I believe help me empathize with my characters, particularly their fears and motivations as human beings. I served as a crew member on a Navy attack submarine, and I’ve worked as a private investigator, or salesman, debt collector, and software instructor. I also studied physics and astronomy in college, which I believe helps me write interplanetary adventures in a believable manner.

TW: What are the greatest influences on your writing?

GD: From my teenage years, I remember reading books I wished would never end. These included both fiction and non-fiction. Their common denominator was they took me into another world and showed me what was possible for humans to achieve. Just as importantly, they were credible to me—they were crafted by writers with a science or engineering background of some kind—Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov,

Robert Forward, and Stanley Schmidt were a few of my favorites. Because there was no “magic” or other elements of fantasy in these stories or non-fiction works, they struck me as something that could happen to me—really happen, in the real world. That increases my mental involvement and sense of awe.

TW: And what led you to write *THE FAR SHORE*?

GD: I was pleased with reader feedback from my sailing memoir *BREAKING SEAS*, especially when people said it made them feel as if they had been on an ocean voyage. I wanted to try to do the same with fiction, and with a space voyage. Realism, the sense that “this is actually happening”, is important to me. At the same time, the story itself needed to transcend the science and engineering aspects. I decided to write about one of the greatest adventures on which humans can embark, the risk of life itself in the pursuit of liberty and individual autonomy. This allowed me to imagine a space adventure off the beaten trail of government-trained astronauts, or space miners, or simply people who are forced to escape Earth due to alien invasion or ecological catastrophe. I wanted my characters to *CHOOSE* their departure voluntarily. They reject a safe and comfortable form of slavery in exchange for the dangers and miseries of freedom.

TW: The scoring system in *The Far Shore* reminds me of China’s Sesame Credit System. Is that what inspired it?

GD: The “Trust Score” social credit system implemented by the totalitarian world government in the first act in *The Far Shore* is indeed similar to China’s Sesame Credit system, but I had heard about the basic idea at least eight years ago, before China’s system was publicized. It’s not a new idea—what’s new is the realization of the software communication technology and “big data” techniques required to implement it in practice. Sadly, I believe the idea of “scoring” people based on their behavior and speech—and then rationing the things they need and want based on that score—would be an irresistible tool of oppression for totalitarian governments of the future. Mao and Stalin would love it. **THIS** is one of the reasons it’s so important we avoid relying on government as our source of what we need and want, such as medical care, food, housing and education.

TW: How much of the surveillance state technology we see in the novel do you think is realistic in the near-term?

GD: Cristina laments she is “constantly supervised” by “infinite microscopic devices” she cannot see. Unfortunately, the technology is not far in the future. The government

may try to justify it as “necessary” for public health and safety. I fear a world, just a few decades hence, where young people consider it normal that everything they do and say is monitored by intelligent software and continuously analyzed for “dangerous” words or actions—the offense of doing or saying the wrong thing would be brought to the attention of a human authority, who would have the power to penalize you—hurt you in some way, keep you from getting what you want—as a punishment for doing what the rulers believe is wrong.

TW: Cristina and her small group find themselves struggling to survive on that Far Shore of Mars. I like the fact that it isn’t an easy win, and there are no Mary Sue characters. How do you find that balance?

GD: Freedom is never easy! Therefore, I won’t allow perfectly competent characters who can solve all problems. Cristina and her fellow colonists must earn their freedom, and that not only involves solving technical disasters, but dealing with ordinary human weaknesses, including our uncanny ability to lie to ourselves. In an unforgiving environment such as Mars, self-deceit can be a death sentence. In a military system or with government or corporate-trained astronauts, the official hierarchy contains checks to minimize the possibility of self-deceit, complacency, and other forms of human frailty. None of the characters in *The Far Shore* are trained astronauts or military personnel, so they must reach inside themselves and find the grit and backbone to overcome their natural flaws.

TW: I’ve written about the likely health checklist people would need to meet to go to Mars, using the requirements people had to meet to go to Antarctica. You take it one step farther by involving colonists on a one-way mission. Beyond fertility, what checklist did they have to meet?

GD: Besides excellent health, no genetic diseases to pass on to offspring, and superb intelligence, the pool of Mars colonists was selected with three other criteria in mind:

1. Some of the tests Cristina had to suffer through were designed to measure character, not just intelligence or knowledge. For example, being cooped up in a tiny, uncomfortable room with strangers, without food, without privacy or easy hygiene—how does she react? Withdrawal? Hostility? Can she “hold it together” under physically adverse conditions that last for days?

2. A natural affinity for individual autonomy—the ability to operate independently and without instructions—a powerful RESENTMENT of being under the authority of strangers who can manipulate you for their own ends, ends you have no means to

change, and

3. The willingness to make the informed CHOICE to travel to Mars, with the knowledge there will be no means to return and no “support network” (Mission Control) to assist you with problems.

Cristina doesn't HAVE to leave Earth—this is not a matter of physical survival. Just as the rest of the colonists, they could have lived a comfortable and secure life on Earth if they simply kept their mouths shut and accepted the unfettered authority of a totalitarian regime. But they won't do that—they are the types of people who willingly accept a high likelihood of death in exchange for the chance to be captains of their own destinies. Such people exist—we've seen this all through history—so The Far Shore is a future history in that respect.

TW: Do you think that children born and raised off Earth could be healthy? What could we do to make up for the different environment?

GD: Medical experts have pondered this question, and the truth is no one will know until children are born and raised on Mars. The gravity is 39% of Earth, and that will have an impact on their growth and development. Although future colonists will have a choice in this matter, the pressurized living quarters in The Far Shore are kept around one third of an Earth atmosphere—around thirty-five kilopascals—with a high percentage of oxygen so we can function normally. We know that astronauts can be healthy in this environment for months—but what will the effect be after years? How about children who do not experience full atmospheric pressure at all? We just don't know.

These issues are tackled in the upcoming sequel to The Far Shore. There are some surprises—as there will be in real life. We have something going for us: historically, since humans began venturing into space almost sixty years ago, we've discovered that most (if not all) of our dire adverse health predictions have been wrong—or greatly exaggerated. For example, sixty years ago, NASA flight surgeons speculated that astronauts in zero-G for more than a few seconds would be unable to swallow or digest food. They also might experience such severe cardiovascular or respiratory difficulties that they would be unable to survive beyond a few minutes or hours. They also worried about the psychological effects of not having an “up and down”, and about unknown radiation hazards. All of these theoretical dangers were discredited one by one—not to say that space or other planets are safe or the healthiest places for us—but we CAN live there, if we try. My gut tells me we were meant to explore and settle these places.

TW: When do you think the sequel to *The Far Shore* will come out?

GD: I confess that writing the sequel to *The Far Shore* is taking me a bit longer than I anticipated. I am wrestling with big ideas and a general plot line quite different from the first book. I believe the sequel—title to be announced—will be available for pre-order sometime in July 2020.

TW: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

GD: I would like to thank my readers—both present and future—for their helpful feedback and their positive support. Thanks for taking the chance to read a novel that doesn't fit neatly into one of the popular categories, such as space opera or military sci-fi. And thank you, everyone, for your patience in waiting for the sequel. Finally, thank you, Tamara, for this chance to sound off!

TW: Thank you for speaking with me.



Ionosphere, NASA solar system research

Entertainment
Creative Writings

Culture Clash by Jeffrey Redmond



More from the three-mooned planet. Do things go well for people?

From the ancient Er-Dan manuscripts (Codex 6475), as translated by Ed-Mon

On the three mooned planet, after the loss of the army in the coldest wastes and seas of the northern polar region, the Eastern Continent was in great turmoil. Almost all of the inhabitants had lost fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons, and the society began to become fragmented and at odds with itself. In the coastal region, in the south of that continent, there was the large port of Alish-Kandar, ruled by the imperial appointed administrator, Or-Estes. He followed the new emperor's instructions, and he kept order and stability in the city as best he could. But it was an extremely difficult task.

The populace began to slowly but surely lose its original cohesion and sense of

permanence. New arrivals from other locations brought many sudden changes in the local area, and the citizens began to feel disenfranchised. Factions began to form and compete for wealth, jobs, power, dwellings, and influence in the communities. The original temples to the old deities even began to lose many of their supporters, and the priestesses were worried about what the future would hold for everyone.

A new religious group began to form, led by a rogue male priest named Cyr-II. He held assemblies out in the open places of the city, and he would loudly proclaim his benefits in the one true faith. He said, repeatedly, that the solar star had only one deity in its essence, that this was a male one, and that it was the only such intangible entity in existence. All of the other so-called "deities", both males and females, of the winds, skies, waters, lands, moons, and stars, were all false ones, he claimed. These others had never really existed at all, in his belief, and he told this repeatedly to anyone who came to listen.

Most of the citizens, especially in the former time of peace and prosperity, thought of Cyr-II as being a fool or even crazed. But then, in the times of turmoil and unsettling changes, more and more of them came to hear his speeches. They began to give him donations, and even an unused building for his own permanent temple. He immediately began to organize his followers on a larger scale than ever before.

Cyr-II calculated, quite cleverly, that he would need to make his new religion different from the other ones, in order to convince his followers that it was indeed the "better" one. So he began to make his announcements to them from the highest position within his new temple hall. And he told them that the male Solar Star deity was the only one, that all males were superior and dominant to females on the planet, and that all of the priestesses of the other temples were evil and wicked females who would lie and do great harm to them. Cyr-II continued on and on in this way for a number of seasons, and eventually more and more of the citizens began to believe him. The new faith finally had one third of the inhabitants of the city, and Cyr-II was very pleased.

Among the other residents of Alish-Kandar, a third of them were usually not all that religious, and were just loyal followers of the imperial administrator, Or-Estes. They, like he, preferred law, order, and the old stable culture and traditions. The other third of the inhabitants were faithful to all of the deities, and they continued to worship these in the temples as before. The temples' priestesses were led in a benign and positive way by the high priestess of the main temple. She was a wise and talented female named Hy-Pata, and she was herself the daughter of a priestess. She knew how to read and write, and

she taught these skills to the other priestesses. She made sure that one of their important duties was to learn and copy the old scrolls and manuscripts of knowledge and wisdom, in order to preserve these for future generations. The documents were amassed and kept safely in the main temple archives, and they were a source of great education and information for all of the administrators, scholars, temple priests and priestesses, and learned others. But Cyr-Il then began to tell his followers, most of whom could not read or write themselves, that these were the false and evil works of the elite who oppressed them. And too many of them began to believe him.

The imperial administrator liked Hy-Pata, and he visited her frequently. His own wife had died, and he enjoyed the company of this articulate and intelligent female. He sought her useful advice on a number of occasions, and he found that he got better results from his dealings with many other officials and dignitaries because of this. Or-Estes and Hy-Pata were good friends, and they helped and supported each other as much as they could. He would give her gifts and invite her to all of his formal banquets, and she in turn did the same for him.

But Cyr-Il began to say that the imperial administrator was corrupt and dishonest, and that the high priestess was merely a prostitute who manipulated him. Cyr-Il had never been married himself, and probably never desired to. He viewed his female followers only as being easier to dominate and control, and merely as being useful tools to help him convince the males to remain with him and do his bidding.

Or-Estes and Hy-Pata decided that, out of necessity, they would have to form an alliance to protect themselves against this demagogue priest and his increasing element of blindly loyal followers. But public speaking was a freedom everyone in Alish-Kandar had always enjoyed, and neither of them thought to have any kind of attack against Cyr-Il himself. But the new religion priest made many plans and preparations against both of them, and he began to constantly exhort his followers to do his biddings. First they began having street demonstrations, protesting against the false religions they were in competition with. Then they began attacking others in the streets, and finally surrounding the other temples in order to block access to them.

Cyr-Il's next move was very bold, but he felt he had enough political power and support to do so. He then preached against the city main temple archives as being a storehouse of lies and deceit, and he bade his followers to surround it as well. Hy-Pata came to it as she always had done, and she tried to get into the building, but she then found it blocked. When she and her assistants tried to boldly go through the crowd,

they began to attack her and her group. After a brief scuffle, Hy-Pata was knocked to the ground, and her assistants began to strike back at the angry mob. This made them even wilder, and they fell upon the little group and killed them. Hy-Pata made an attempt to escape, but they held her down and beat her until the life left her body forever.

The mob then turned and stormed the building, and they began ransacking and looting it. One of them knocked over a lit reading lamp, and the fire ignited some of the manuscripts. The flames then spread quickly among the row of documents, and soon the entire archive area was ablaze.

Cyr-II denied to the imperial administrator that he was personally responsible for Hy-Pata's death, but he was then extremely pleased with the situation. And he well realized that, beyond any of his previous wildest hopes, he was now of co-equal power with Or-Estes. And, soon after, Cyr-II even began to preach against the imperial "non-believer" as being a mere "tool" of the "corrupt" central government. At this time the old emperor died, and the new one was his very young and inexperienced grandson. Or-Estes soon found himself without support in either the port or the capitol, and he was eventually recalled. In the capitol he was "promoted" to a meaningless position on the new imperial staff. His replacement was a younger and inexperienced one, whom Cyr-II quickly befriended and greatly influenced with flattering praise and gifts.

Eventually Cyr-II and his followers took over complete control of Alish-Kandar, and they made new laws only for their own benefit. Only believers in the male solar deity alone, and members of Cyr-II's temple itself, could then serve in the city administration, vote, own property, and hold work positions above common laborer. Finally the females were all forbidden to vote, own property, work, or even go outside of their homes without related male escorts. No new priestesses were allowed into the other temples' clergies, and the older ones eventually died out without any younger ones replacing them. Females were also forbidden from marrying without their fathers' consents, from wearing revealing or provocative clothing, from any and all public performances, and from initiating divorces.

Females, in time, all became the sexually repressed and neurotic nothings Cyr-II had always secretly wished them to be. They remained terribly frustrated, repressed, confused, and ever-fearful of their guilt from the ostracisms of others. They were raised to remain helpless and ever-dependent upon the males, and they were never again permitted to behave as if they enjoyed sex or being females. Theirs was only to be a

function of reproduction, the raising of offspring, and the maintaining of homes. And the males were kept well-disciplined with ever harsher public punishments to remain obedient to their religious authorities.

Cyr-II then ruled his followers and most of the city as an all-powerful religious and political leader. He used his policy of guilt and fear to keep the inhabitants obedient and subdued. They were also afraid of his new police units, of his new system of paid informers, of his lesser priests and their humiliating of those who did not regularly attend the temple rituals, and of his preachings about how the male solar deity would punish them after death if they were not humble and obedient in life. The younger offspring were especially influenced as they grew up with this new system, and they became the ones who steadfastly believed in Cyr-II's tenet that theirs was the only world of sentient beings, and that there was no such life on any other planet.

And just before he died, Cyr-II was the most pleased with his permanent creation. He had defeated all of his rivals, reorganized almost everyone to follow just himself alone, and he had left behind him a legacy of his permanent system. His followers all grieved at his death, and they put his body in a vault in the temple, and they worshipped it as well from then on.

It is, of course, not known what the deities thought or felt about Cyr-II's spirit, or of what the solar deities themselves decided to do or not do about it. But it is known that Cyr-II's followers maintained an all-powerful religious rule on the city for a long number of seasons. His personally-chosen heirs held absolute authority over almost everyone there. They felt themselves superior and invincible to all others, and they even began to realize that since the only deity was a male one, females probably had no spirits to exist with after death. Cyr-II's heirs challenged and defied the emperors with trade embargoes, and they maintained their powerful fishing and merchant fleets without sending any of their tax dues to the capitol.

However, not too long after this, raiders from the Southern Continent began to attack their ships, and later even the coastal areas around Alish-Kandar itself. The new emperor decided not to offer or give any military assistance to the rebellious and arrogant inhabitants of the port. In the end a large and more organized force of raiders attacked the city, and they looted much and destroyed more. Cyr-II's tomb and temple building was especially a target for all of the precious items in and around it. And his body disappeared completely in the fires and general destruction. Many of the inhabitants were killed or enslaved, and their offspring were taken away with the raiders

to be raised in the raiders' own ways and religions.

In later eras, the scholars often blamed the sea raiders for destroying so much of the knowledge and cultural heritage of the city, and especially of such losses as the main temple archives. But, at least in this case, all that was original and of heritage in Alish-Kandar was really lost due to the fanatical ravings of the priest Cyr-II, and of his angry mob of blind followers, doing his bidding to destroy everything in the name of his "one true faith". We can only hope and pray, to all of the deities, that the scholars of today keep the original and preserved texts carefully and safely, for the benefit of all of the future generations.



portrayal of destruction from classical art. Goya?

3 CARDS by Will Mayo

Time, death and eternity.

What have we here

but **3** cards of Fate.

Play them as you will.

You will come out the same

A living body in a dead world.

