CHALLENGER

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Cover by AL SIROIS

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"We are all interested in the future, because that is where we are going to spend the rest of our lives."
Criswell, *Plan 9 from Outer Space*

what FUTURE?

Fifty years ago, as a blushing youth of 14, I read the first volume of *The Hugo Winners* – a series I fervently wish some publisher would revive. Within, no less an authority than Isaac Asimov heaped praise on a novel originally published in 1939, *Sinister Barrier* by Erik Frank Russell. In subsequent years I never got around to reading the book until, aground in Florida in forced retirement, I thought to correct this lifelong lapse and ordered a cheap reading copy from eBay.

Alas, I didn't really enjoy the book. I couldn't find any characters worth believing in and the concept guiding the plot didn't capture my interest. One thing did tickle me, though: its setting in time. The events in *Sinister Barrier* happen *next May*. May 30, 2015 was the ridiculously far future when the book was written – but in the real world, falls only a couple of seasons from now. Also, the story mentions picture phones and, on page 68 of this particular pb edition, a commercial jet disappears without a trace. (Where *is* that Malaysian airliner?) Cue *TZ* theme.

Speaking of themes, I could have done much more with this "future" theme. I could have polled fan editors about the future of traditional zines in the coming age of blogs. Asked writers of my acquaintance to name what they fear most about what is to be – and what they hope the most to happen. I'm aghast that I have showed so little resolve, initiative and imagination. Perhaps it's odd to theme a zine on "Da Foo-chure" when a man my age – 65 last Moonday – would only recently have been considered zany for even using the term. However, with age less of a consideration in this enlightened era (bless you, EEOC; bless you, Viagra), the future is something I do consider … and, through wiser eyes, try to look on in this *Challenger*. Those wiser eyes belong to our buddy Greg Benford, cinematic aficionado Jim Ivers ... and would have been Al Gore's, had I done enough with Gore's amazing – and important – volume by that name. I am embarrassed to admit that though I have a superb illustration (by Randy Cleary) for a piece on Gore's *The Future*, and have made substantial headway in wrestling its prose and its concepts to the turf, I have only the shallowest thoughts thereon to relay at this time. Therefore I shall commit to *The Future* in just that: the future.

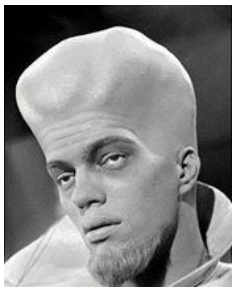
As a result, this *Challenger* comes to you rather half-baked. In a time in life as convoluted and complicated as this, I'm lucky to have scraped together this much.

What's here, however, is very good fanzine stuff. Al Sirois' whimsical cover to this *Challenger* is simply brilliant – and on theme. I love Jim Ivers' article on the future as seen through movies, some of which are awesome (*Metropolis*, for an obvious instance), some of which are awful (Jim is forcing me to view *Creation of the Humanoids* through fresh eyes). Joe Green's articles on our genre's founders are reprints from earlier *Challenger*s, but fit right in with our theme. Mike Resnick, oh may his sales increase, doesn't yap about times to come, but provides two pieces about times that *were* – his marvelous Guest of Honor speech from Chicon 7 and a *funny* account of Baycon '68. (Special thanks to Kurt Erichsen for underscoring the humor of one of SFdom's greatest moments of misery.) Greg Benford's account of Loncon 3 is purposefully less amusing, and I look forward to printing responses thereto in *Spartacus*, my zine of opinion.

To Rosy's great friend Frankie McDonald and her brother and nephew John and John Jr., our thanks for access to their Merritt Island FL home – and the wonders therein. Who spots my pun in the logo to "A Most *Marvelous* House"? Taral Wayne and his pal Wentz bring laughs a'plenty. Laughter is the perverted point of Joe Major's continuing – and deepening – Joker series, featuring artwork by that most popular of fanzine artists, Robert Ripough. Speaking of art, Southern stalwart Charlie Williams donates illos that charm and delight. You know, I took the photo of JoAnn Montalbano (see "The *Challenger* Tribute") Charlie used as model for his portrait of our "Sugar Magnolia" (her SFPAzine title), but Charlie brought out something in it I'd never much noted, despite knowing JoAnn for 35 years …

I also want to thank Sandra Bond for letting me use the William Rotsler illo that adorns our contents page (originally in one of her pubs) … and, of course and forever, *la belle* Rose-Marie for making life bearable and rewarding minute to minute, day to day, week to week, month to month, year to year. And for tweaking Al's cover to maximum beauty and teaching me once again how to number my pages.

So what's "the future" of *Challenger*? Seated behind me as I type, Rose-Marie goes through stacks of family photos – which, for her family, consists not only of snapshots of the kids at Disney World, but the whole family of science fiction gathered at Apollo launches and at conventions. Her article based on these pictures will be central to *Challenger* no. 39, themed on **The Family of and in Science Fiction**, and on that theme – or anything else you want to write or draw about! – I humbly solicit contributions. With publications for Sasquan pending in the new year, I hope to put forth *Challenger* no. 39 by Christmas.

IN MEMORIAM

Arlene Martel and **Richard Kiel**, who brought science fiction to life, and **Frank Robinson** and **Jay Lake**, two of the genre's, and the world's, great men.

Says cover artist **Al Sirois**, when asked for a paragraph about himself … "Soitenly! I live in Bucks County PA, with my gorgeous, talented wife and occasional collaborator, novelist Grace Marcus. I discovered fandom the same year I sold my first short story – 1973. I gafiated sometime in the mid 1980s but am un-gafiating now, in the 2010s. Prize-winning author – Decent drummer – Paints pretty well – Not a bad cook, either.
www.alsirois.com / Friend me on Facebook - http://www.facebook.com/al.sirois / Twitter - http://twitter.com/alsirois"

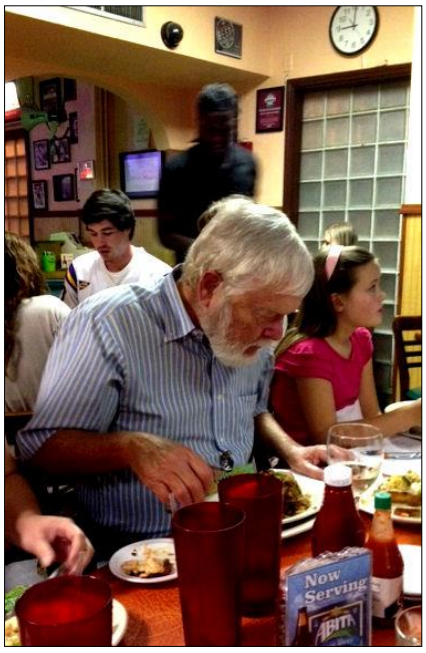
And to find frequent *Chall* Pal and prolific fan writer and fan artist **Taral Wayne**, the e-dress is **Taral@bell.net**. "For a gallery of my art: **-- http://www.furaffinity.net/user/saara/**
-- http://taralwayne.deviantart.com/
To download my fanzines: **-- http://efanzines.com/Taral/index.htm**
-- http://fanac.org/fanzines/BrokenToys/".

Says Taral about the author of "Zeppelin Terror": "A fan of the old pulp magazines, history, sci-fi, comic strips and cartoon art, **Walt Wentz** is a retired magazine editor. He still engages in proofreading, criticism, humorous writing, parody, poetry and various other literary offenses. He is 72 years old and not dead yet."

I WAS AT CONTRAFLOW,

an exceptional regional convention in Kenner, Louisiana, put on by the noble souls bidding for New Orleans in 2018. I was righteously pleased to attend and boogie down with the krewe.

My interview with Greg Benford was designed to introduce the Guest of Honor to newer SFers – but was scheduled for the *last morning of the con.* Fun time, though. Thanks to Randy Cleary for the photo.



Also fun, and fattening, our dinners out at signature New Orleans restaurants – Jaeger's for classic seafood and Liuzza's (here) for the best Italian in the city. Here Greg chows down with Gracie Molloy to his left. See the window beneath the clock? The floodwaters of Katrina reached the top row of windowpanes. Liuzza's owners cleaned the place up, replaced the gear ruined by the flood, and opened before any other restaurant in that part of the city. Great people, *great* foodies.

Cosplayers abounded at Contraflow, many steampunk-oriented, like the deepsea-diving Hamlet to right. At the far right, testing the tensile strength of her suspenders and outclassing Mira Jovovich from *The Fifth Element*, an orange-haired conventioneer returns the photographer's favor. Contraflow hosts DeepSouthCon in 2015! Rosy and I will see you there!

Greg's latest fiction is his best-selling two-part collaboration with Larry Niven, ***Bowl of Heaven*** *and* ***Shipstar****.*

Our Old Future

A musing by

Gregory Benford

Our time is not the end of history, just the end of old illusions about our journey through history. What we had thought of as our future did not arrive with the dawn of a new millennium. Whether religious, ideological, or merely pragmatic, all the old systems of futurist thought have become irrelevant, disposable, confusing more than helpful, Procrustean more than enlightening.

Some have reacted with vicious negation to this loss of illusion, from Islamic radicals to Biblical fundamentalists to neo-Marxist academics. For such people, clinging to a fossilized set of beliefs is crucial to their psychological health.

We can feel sorry for them, while fending off their assaults on our cities, our universities, and our culture with a steadfastness that should grow more obdurate as the obvious futility of their cause becomes clear. They are the cultural dinosaurs of our time, still destructive in their death throes, but as irrelevant to our future as Jove was in the early centuries of the first millennium A.D. Islamic radicals will be killing people by the thousands well into the 21st century. Our new future is too much for them.

In OECD countries, most people have simply given up on ideology. They are bombarded with the fading rhetoric of the media, the edicts of bureaucrats, the spittle of Texas preachers, and the fulminations of antique radicals from Ralph Nader to Noam Chomsky. College students swim in the fetid sewage of political correctness during the day, but at night they will dance to misogynist hip-hop, play gratuitously violent video games, and get ripped on alcohol or drugs before fumbling toward ill-considered sex. They party to forget the day.

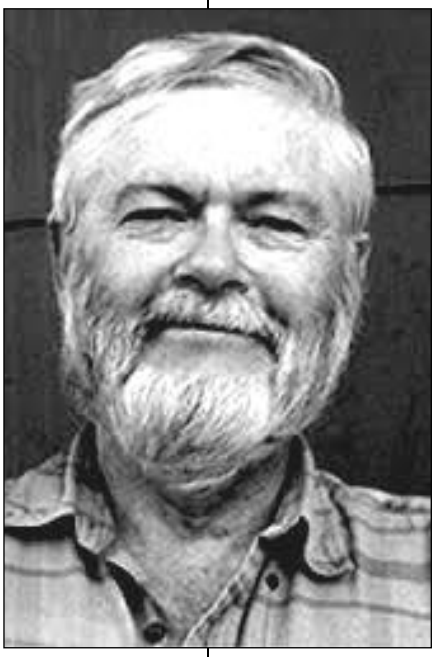
Given the confusions and irrelevance of their professors, it is hard to criticize their opportunistic alternation between careerism and hedonism. Their parents have generally given up on all but the small satisfactions of middle-age, having lost the hormonal surges of youth and the need or ability to prove themselves in new careers. Their world is adrift.

It wasn't supposed to be like this, "In the future," as we always used to say. In the future, we would all wear the same clothes and have some mythic figure to lead us, whether benign or malign, a new Gandhi or another Big Brother. The future, as imagined from 1848 to 1989, was supposed to be some kind of collective transcendence.

The paragon of the collectivist vision was the brief Khmer Rouge rule of Cambodia from 1975 to 1980. In that brief spasm, Rousseau, Thoreau, and Marx received their ultimate homage in the creation of a society that lacked almost any trace of freedom, civilization, or humanity. The Khmer Rouge suppressed education, destroyed medical care, demolished transportation infrastructure, and banished currency. Instead, they sent everyone to countryside collectives to lead lives uncorrupted by capitalism – lives of starvation, indoctrination,

malaria, torture, and dysentery. Everyone who could have contributed medical or technological expertise they killed outright.

All to escape modernity, to escape from freedom. Soviet-style communism was thin gruel compared to this grand celebration of the pernicious ideologies that descended from Rousseau and Marx. So it was natural that another scorpion in the bottle of post-American southeast Asia, Vietnam, destroyed the Khmer Rouge. The Maoist killers of Cambodia were too perfect to last. As the French intellectuals (particularly Sartre) announced in 1975, the revolution supplied by the Khmer Rouge was the purest of all communist revolutions.



The moral and intellectual bankruptcy of the Left is now complete. Only university faculty in Europe or the United States have the fatuity to believe in that ideological nightmare.

While for many on the Right this collapse seems to make way for the triumph of the God-fearing faithful, their collective vision too is but an ugly echo of history. The most successful theocracy of modern times is that of Iran, where the mullahs wield ultimate power. There we have religious thought-police and dress codes. Yet the younger people, some of them now in middle-age, lead lives of sexual promiscuity and drug abuse. Once the great mass of the Iranian people was delighted with their religious leaders. Certainly they were in 1980. Now they are mostly weary and cynical.

The only thing that keeps the Religious Right in the United States from the same fate is the fact that they don't get to run the country in quite the manner that they want, George W. Bush, John Ashcroft, and the Patriot Act notwithstanding. We can all thank James Madison's Constitution for that.

Ironically, even science fiction perpetuated the old myth of the future, the utopian vision. From Ursula K. LeGuin's anarchist fantasy in *The Dispossessed* to Aldous Huxley's dystopian *Brave New World*, the future of science fiction often involved collectives of one kind or another. There might be a few renegades bravely fighting against the collective machinery of society, but that collective machinery was usually there. The shadows of Rousseau, Marx, Lenin, Hitler, and Mao have been too long, blocking out the vision even of the writers who were professional visionaries.

Cracks in the Edifice

No matter how many people the revolutionaries of the Left or the Right kill, no matter how mightily the politically correct universities and publishers suppress the news about the new world being born, the Old Future is dead.

Life at the start of the 21st Century is messy. People want the freedom to consume what they like, to sell their services at the highest price they can get, to say what they like in private, and to brandish their opinions on the internet. Regardless of the fascinations and fashions of religious fanatics, academics, journalists, or commercial writers, the lives of ordinary people have pursued similar goals throughout history. Most people want a happy family life, material comfort, and the opportunity to do what they like.

These goals often conflict, most obviously for the indulged youth of the West and the Middle East. For them, choice and its conflicts often confuse. In turn this provokes the comforting abdication of freedom that political or religious zealotry provides. It feels so good to stop thinking, choosing, deciding!

Notably, alienated youth often become pragmatic parents and retirees. An exception is university faculty – among the most temperamentally youthful, not to say petulant and self-indulgent, of the middle-aged.

None of the pragmatism of the "silent majority" should be confused with virtue, civic or otherwise. The heroic and the altruistic appear in large human populations, but they are exceptional.

For every gentile who harbored Jews at the peak of the Third Reich, there were hundreds and thousands who did not. Many disapproved of Hitler's holocaust, but were unwilling to risk their lives, families, or position to save even a few of the millions destined for extermination. We do not wish to idealize everyday pragmatism; it can be frighteningly callous.

But fierce ideologies and intemperate faiths do not purchase the loyalty of the great mass for very long. Perhaps the most obvious sign of the decay of ideology is that most people are now tired of it. They only want peace, affluence, and fun.

While Marxism is still the state religion of the People's Republic of China, just as Shiite Islam is the monolithic doctrine of revolutionary Iran, the Shanghai apparatchiks and Tehran mullahs are cutting deals on the side. Not only do most Chinese and Iranians just want to be better off, the cynicism of their rulers is also palpable.

Only North Korea remains as a monumental Inferno of ideology. If it weren't for the risks inherent in its acquisition of atomic weapons and the vast suffering of its victims, it might be worth preserving it as a museum exhibit of the follies of collectivism. Not the least of its charms lies in its conversion to monarchical despotism, with the son of the previous ruler inheriting absolute power.

Journalists deplore the corrupt leaders of such regimes, missing the point that corruption is one of the most positive features of such societies. Violation of rigid ideals can mitigate the intimidation of the absolute state. The Khmer people of Cambodia knew that their rulers had feet of clay when the Khmer Rouge elite started to wear Rolex watches and fine silk scarves along with their revolutionary black garb. At that point, the fall of the Khmer Rouge from power was only months away.

But now these small cracks have widened, bringing down (in the case of the Soviet Empire) or radically compromising (in the case of the PRC) most of the significant collectivist regimes. The sullen demeanor of ideologues, East and West, is now palpable. Perhaps the only substantial redoubt of insanely absolute faith is among Islamic terrorists.

Ironically, their tradition of assassination and religious bloodshed is entirely authentic, dating back before the Christian Crusades. The term assassin itself is Arab in it origins, alluding to crazed fanatics who purportedly used hashish to fuel their deadly work. [A dubious notion, given the pacifying effects of hashish, but inappropriate derivation is common in etymology.]

Whether modern nation-states will have to continue killing these people, or educational reform will cause them to wither away, is not decidable at present. Islamic terrorists seem to aspire to become the most rabid vermin of modern civilization, so perhaps they deserve little more than extermination. In any case, they hardly have the cachet that communists and anarchists had on the Left Bank or in faculty clubs, where morally bankrupt intellectuals used to sing the praises of one or another collectivist monster in order to impress, and often to bed, the young and impressionable.

The Countervailing Tradition

There is a thoughtful tradition that has long opposed the powerful and the ideological. It is associated with Socrates, although it should be remembered that Socrates accepted the judgment of an intolerant Athens. Then his foremost student, Plato, only perpetuated Greek tendencies to absolutism. Aristotle, Plato's abandoned protégé, is perhaps a better candidate as a progenitor of the opposition to collectivism, though more in his generally empirical curiosity than his specific political proposals.

George Orwell was the 20th Century's most generally accepted intellectual opponent of totalitarianism, particularly in *1984* and *Animal Farm*. Still, he harbored some collectivist ideas. After all, Orwell was a man of the Left, and fought alongside the communists and anarchists in the Spanish civil war.

Our view is that the clearest, and historically most important, expression of this tradition came out of the Scottish Enlightenment: David Hume, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, among others. This tradition emphasizes indirect effects, the futility of government attempts to control markets and international trade, the value of enterprise, and the limits to the benign effects of concerted action.

This tradition had its most visible success with James Madison's Constitution for the new

American republic, the vastly successful state that replaced the loose confederation of colonies who started the American rebellion against the English Crown. Madison was perhaps the greatest practical student of the Scottish Enlightenment, and certainly the person who most effectively set about implementing its precepts. His design for the new state was one exquisitely, and indeed laboriously designed – see his *Notes on the Constitutional Convention*, contrived to prevent the imposition of domestic despotism on the American people. [Of course George Washington preeminently guaranteed the American freedom from external despotism, but that is another story.] The United States of America has since shown both the value and the limitations of political and economic freedom for modern civilization. It certainly produces economic creativity and debate, with the crass and the tawdry as perhaps inevitable accompaniments.

In the 20th Century, the themes of the Scottish Enlightenment were taken up again by such figures as Friedrich von Hayek, Karl Popper, and Michael Oakeshott, some of the most reviled authors in late 20th Century British and American universities. Their books, such as *The Road to Serfdom*, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, and *Rationalism in Politics*, respectively, are among the foundation stones of an alternative tradition within the humanities and social sciences. Of course this tradition enjoys the marked hostility of the dominant traditions of contemporary critical theory, structuralism, deconstructionism, and the other nihilistic systems of thought in modern Western universities and colleges. For this reason, the very names of these titanic figures are often known among young people as little more than targets for passing abuse. Their names serve to wind up their professors in the advanced seminars that these pillars of mediocrity give to their benighted acolytes.

In the natural sciences and related fields the thinking of Aristotle, Hume, and Popper has enjoyed the greatest influence. Indeed, one might point to the entire edifice of modern technology as the fruition of this tradition of thought. Its empiricism and cautious speculation provide the cultural matrix for much of Western science. Charles Darwin, for example, can be seen as a child of this tradition, and indeed much of his thinking is an overt use (in his use of Malthus) or implicit appropriation (employing Hume's careful materialistic reasoning, for example) of themes and methods from the Scottish Enlightenment. From Darwin, 20th Century biology derived almost all of its intellectually cogent framework, which then enabled Anglo-American, reductionist, molecular and cell biologists to pursue the details of biological mechanism untrammeled by religious, idealist, or Hegelian clap-trap.

What are we about here?

We wish to recruit new adherents. Our agenda is simply the view that solutions to political and cultural difficulties can be found in the deliberate cultivation of the empirical, individualistic, skeptical Western tradition. Put another way: We wish to drive a stake through the heart of the dominant cultural traditions of piety, correctness, ideology, and faith. Then we would like to dance on their graves.

Western civilization used to be palpably great. Now it is too often mediocre, with enclaves of greatness: the military, the computer business, and scientific research. We're sure that you have your favorites. But it is more notable that we have been failing regularly in areas we used to dominate: spying, making cars, education, economic growth – pick your debacle.

We want the West to have another resurgence of greatness, to be seen once again as the standard against which all other societies can be judged. We make no apology for ethnocentrism: "the West" is a cultural ideal, not a form of genetic differentiation.

The cellist Yo-yo Ma is a paragon of Western civilization as much as Mikhail Rostropovich, the great Japanese geneticist Motoo Kimura as much as Gregor Mendel. And by this standard, Adolf Hitler chose to be as much an enemy of the West as Cambodia's Pol Pot did.

"The West" is an idea, a cultural tradition, an aspiration. It has survived through good and bad times since Periclean Athens. It has been the best hope for the entire species in our known history.

Let us hope that we do not lose it as we stumble out of the dark charnel house that was the 20th Century, into the light of our new future. For we have a great future, if we will but seize it.

"I Never Repeat a Joke - Unless it Builds!"

An odd juxtaposition by

Joseph T. Major

… A few minutes later Bonasera recognized the sound of a heavy ambulance coming through the narrow driveway. Then Clemenza appeared in the doorway followed by two men carrying a stretcher. And Amerigo Bonasera's worst fears were realized. On the stretcher was a corpse swaddled in a gray blanket with bare yellow feet sticking out the end.

Clemenza motioned the stretcher bearers into the embalming room. And then from the blackness of the yard another man stepped into the lighted office room. It was Don Corleone.

The Don had lost weight during his illness and moved with a curious stiffness. He was holding his hat in his hands and his hair seemed thin over his massive skull. He looked older, more shrunken than when Bonasera had seen him at the wedding, but he still radiated power. Holding his hat against his chest, he said to Bonasera, "Well, old friend, are you ready to do me this service?"

Bonasera nodded. The Don followed the stretcher into the embalming room and Bonasera trailed after him. The corpse was on one of the guttered tables. Don Corleone made a tiny gesture with his hat and the other men left the room.

Bonasera whispered, "What do you wish me to do?"

Don Corleone was staring at the table. "I want you to use all your powers, all your skill, as you love me," he said. "I do not wish his mother to see him like this." He went to the table and

drew down the gray blanket. Amerigo Bonasera against all his will, against all his years of training and experience, let out a gasp of horror. On the embalming table was the bullet-smashed face of Sonny Corleone. The left eye drowned in blood had a star fracture in its lens. The bridge of the nose and left cheekbone were hammered into pulp.

For one fraction of a second the Don put out his hand to support himself against Bonasera's body. "See how they have massacred my son," he said.

"Some jokes just aren't funny."

Bonasera turned at the sound of the voice, a light mocking sound with a darker undertone. The man who had spoken was silhouetted against the light from the office, a figure in a long coat and a broad-brimmed hat. Then he stepped forward, removing the hat with one smooth motion.

He was more horrifying than the dead man. His face was riven with scars, drawing up his red-rimmed mouth in a perpetual smile. But it was the skin of his face that was most frightening, for it was an unnatural white, paler than that of a long-dead man. His coat and hat were purple in the spotlight of the embalming room, and for a big man he moved silently, with a sinister fluidity about him.

The Don turned and looked at him. "Why are you here?" he said, his voice weak and yet surprised.

"Why Vito! Mi cosa nostra es su cosa nostra. Just paying respects to the dishonored dead."

"Why have you come here? To boast? Can you find the killers of my son?"

For answer the sinister pale man laughed, a crazed, powerful laugh. Then he said, "Have I ever failed? But it will cost you. I always say, if you're good at something, never do it for free."

"For what payment will you do this?"

"I don't know! I haven't thought of it yet!"

Don Corleone almost flinched at the words. If this man could strike fear into the Godfather . . . and then the man looked at Bonasera. "Now be sure and put a little grin on those ruby lips that all the girls kissed. If you gotta go, go with a smile!"

He turned away, laughing that bone-chilling laugh, put his hat back on, and was gone out the door, leaving a terrifying silence. Bonasera forced himself to speak. "Who is that man?"

Don Corleone gathered his strength. "That is il Burlone. No one knows his real name, or where he came from, or why he looks as he does. He has worked, a time or two, for the Falcone Family in Gotham.

"Those who have killed my son will die, grotesquely, painfully. That is how he is."

* * *

"Michaele. Do you renounce the devil and all his works?"

"I do," Michael Corleone said.

A torrent of insane, unbridled laughter filled the church. Kay turned to rebuke the interloper and gasped.

The man coming up between the pews drew off his great broad-brimmed purple hat and said, "I hope that's not personal. A man in your position can't afford to alienate any friends."

Michael Corleone turned to see and a wave of terror filled his body. Before he died, the Godfather had told him of the promise he had made to il Burlone, the man of terror. After the Godfather's death, Michael had spoken to Amerigo Bonasera, the undertaker, who had confirmed that dreadful night when il Burlone had promised to kill the murderers of Sonny Corleone, and in return had received a gift from the Godfather, to be called for some day.

Now il Burlone stood there, his unnaturally pale skin lit in the candles around the altar, his perpetual red-rimmed smile more lively than ever.

"What are you doing interrupting a sacred rite of the church?" the priest cried.

"Just business. Michael's dear departed father asked me for a favor. It took too long for me to get it arranged — I have ever so much trouble with bats." He laughed again. "This is the first chance I have to let him know it's done."

Michael found some inner resource. "Now that you've told us, please leave. This is family business."

The man laughed. "Why Michaele! Mi cosa nostra es su cosa nostra."

* * *

In a room in a little chalet-style motel out on Sunrise Highway, Philip Tattaglia, seventy years old and naked as a baby, stood over a bed on which lay a young girl. She looked up into his face, then shrieked. A moment later, Tattaglia fell on her, his face drawn up in a terrifying smile, dead. She struggled to push the corpse off her.

* * *

Don Barzini and his two bodyguards came down the steps of the Plaza Building. "What the hell is wrong now?"

The driver of his limousine who was remonstrating with the cop about to write a ticket said, "I'm getting a ticket, no sweat. This guy must be new in the precinct."

But Albert Neri did not draw his pistol to shoot Barzini and his two men, as he had intended. For Barzini had fallen curiously silent, shoulders shaking as if with laughter. The driver shouted, "My God!", slammed the car into gear, and pulled away with a squeal of tires.

Neri turned and saw what had so terrified the driver. Barzini toppled, not with a bullet in him, but a great smile on his dead face. Thinking quickly he said to the bodyguards, "Look after him, while I go call this in." Then he quickly walked away, towards the getaway car. When he had been a policeman, once, he had spoken with a fellow officer who had described the acts of a notorious criminal in Gotham. Neri had known who il Burlone was, and was somewhat surprised that the officer called him by a name in English.

* * *

"Hell, I'll get the door!"

Carlo Rizzi was at the family compound, getting ready to go on this trip to Vegas, but he had to go out make a call to his mistress. But there was this knocking on the back door and he jerked the door open. "What the hell do you want! Is this goddamn Halloween!" he said to the lithe young woman in the tight red and black outfit, her face made up in white, with black rings around her eyes.

A moment later, she dragged him outside. "So you're the guy who likes beatin' up women!" she said. And she hit him, with an amazingly large wooden mallet. Carlo fell to his knees, hands up, moaning. "How do you like it when the shoe's on the other foot!" She hit him again, caving in the side of his face.

He screamed. "Ain't so funny now, is it!" the woman said as she brought down her mallet in one final blow. Blood spattered the ground and the wall.

* * *

The christening had been upsetting, and Michael had returned to the mall to meet with Hagen. "Are Tessio and Clemenza on the mall?"

Hagen nodded. Michael finished the brandy in the glass. "Send Clemenza in to me. I'll instruct him personally. I don't want to see Tessio at all. Just tell him I'll be ready to go to the Barzini meeting with him in about half an hour. Clemenza's people will take care of him after that."

Hagen went to the door, then paused. "There was one thing."

"What?"

"Something Lampone said. A woman showed up about half an hour ago, said she had your permission. He let her in. He said she was dressed strangely. She was wearing an overcoat and very tight red and black stockings. She went over to Carlo's house and when she got out of the car she was carrying something in a big box, and she went around back."

Tessio was waiting in the kitchen of the old Don's house and was sipping at a cup of coffee when Tom Hagen came to him. "Mike is ready for you now," Hagen said. "You better make your call to Barzini and tell him to start on the way."

Tessio rose and went out to the wall phone. He dialed Barzini's office in New York and said curtly, "We're on our way to Brooklyn." He hung up and smiled at Hagen. "Hope Mike can get us a good deal tonight."

Hagen said gravely, "I'm sure he will." He escorted Tessio out of the kitchen and onto the mall.

As they walked towards Michael's house, Tessio said, casually, "I hear il Burlone invited himself to the christening. I hadn't known he had left Gotham."

"Mike was a little upset."

At the door they were stopped by one of the bodyguards. "The boss says he'll come in a separate car. He says for you two to go ahead."

Tessio frowned and turned to Hagen. "Hell, that must have been upsetting. I thought he was a big boy. He can't do that, it screws up all my arrangements."

At that moment three more bodyguards materialized around then. Hagen said gently, "I can't go with you either."

Tessio looked from one to the other. He began giggling, uncontrollably. The giggles turned to wild laughter, and he fell over, laughing and convulsing. His face drew up in a huge, ghastly smile as he laughed.

Inside the house, Michael was confronting Clemenza and Rocco Lampone. The older caporegime said, "Why the hell did you let la Arlecchina in?"

"I didn't know what the hell the woman was. I thought she was Carlo's latest cugette. That dumb-blonde look, that voice —"

Michael said, "Stop. Clemenza, what happened?"

"It was a cugette all right, la Arlecchina, the cugette of il Burlone. She beat Carlo to death with that big mallet she uses."

Michael stared from one to the other. A woman had killed Carlo?

Then he saw a bigger problem. Now that il Burlone had done him a favor, he would have to return the favor.

THE CHALLENGER TRIBUTE

Joann Montalbano

"Greetings, fellow babies!"

Our *Sugar Magnolia*, the first female Official Editor of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance and founder and mistress of "the SFPA Pit," the tough guy who bawled at *The Phantom of the Opera* and tapped her feet from her seat at *42nd Street*, teacher, actress, poet, spirit of the Mississippi and dahlin' of New Orleans fandom, here's to JoAnn!

Jules Verne and H.G. Wells are generally regarded as SF's founders. They got the spirit right … but how about specifics?

The Predictions of Jules Verne

Joseph L. Green

Several years ago I did a study on the accuracy of science-fiction predictions by four acknowledged masters of the field, two older (Verne and Wells) and two modern (Heinlein and Clarke). That scholarly study appears elsewhere. This is a condensed and abridged version of the article on Verne. The fine detail in the numerous notes accompanying the original has been either omitted or incorporated within the text. The articles on Clarke and Heinlein have already appeared in *Challenger*, and the one on Wells will follow.

Jules Verne is generally acknowledged to be one of the two major influences that shaped modern science fiction. He published over fifty novels, as well as some non-fiction. Most, though popular in their day, have not fared well over time. Dozens of movies were made from his works, One of those, "Le Voyage dans la Lune" (1902) was a very early feature film. For modern viewers his novels often acquired a type of 'period charm' on the movie screen, partially accounting for their popularity. Several, including *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, and *Around the World in 80 Days* (not science fiction), have been big financial successes.

Only four of Verne's better known and enduring science fiction novels were analyzed for this study.

Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea is typical of Verne's best work. At one point the central protagonist, Captain Nemo, in a lengthy explanation to the book's viewpoint character, Professor Aronnax, explains the principles behind the operation of his marvelous submarine, the *Nautilus*. The story is set in 1866. Verne has the vessel operating on electricity, a clear 'hit' in prediction — early submarines were indeed powered by batteries and diesel/electric generators. The *Nautilus* is so large and powerful, however, that in operation it more nearly resembles a modern atomic-powered vessel.

Captain Nemo quotes real scientists and real new discoveries to make his claims of superior technology more believable. Several of the ways in which he uses electricity, for heat, light, and engine power, have come true. But he also describes an electrically-charged bullet that still cannot be produced today. And while he correctly uses electricity to provide heat, the idea of air conditioning never seems to have occurred to him. The crew suffers when moving through the (in the story) volcano-heated waters around the Greek island of Santorini.

On another occasion Captain Nemo speculates on the future of mankind in the sea. He foresees the day when whole towns will exist on the ocean floor, in clusters of submarine houses that rise to the surface once a day to change their air. The idea of extracting oxygen by breaking apart water molecules, actually a much more practical idea, was apparently not considered a future possibility.

In a prediction of his own, Professor Aronnax foresees the day when the great whales will have been hunted to extinction, due to the greed of professional whalers — a forecast that very nearly came true before recent preservation efforts began to have an effect.

Overall, perhaps the most important predictions found in this book are in the *concepts* of electricity as a powerful, versatile, and useful servant, and of massive armed submarines capable of ranging widely over the seas of the world without surface support. Both have come true, though not in the fashions Verne envisioned.

A Journey to the Center of the Earth contains an unbelievable premise, namely, that a vast hollow space exists below the surface of our planet. This book contains a host of scientific errors. It is, in fact, basically unbelievable. But it does have one outstanding example of shrewd speculation. Verne describes the appearance of ball lightning, a phenomenon stoutly proclaimed by reputable scientists as impossible until a few decades ago — despite the fact the physical presence of ball lightning had been recorded many times by reliable witnesses.

This was a good action-adventure novel, filled with Verne's usual scientific facts (including some then believed to be true which in fact are not) and interesting geographical data. As science fiction, including predictions for the future, it is rather bad.

From the Earth to The Moon and *A Trip Around It* are two short novels combined within a single volume. These books are noteworthy because Verne, for unknown reasons, had his fictional characters build the gigantic gun that was to shoot a manned capsule to the Moon in Florida. It was located very close to the same latitude as the actual launch site of the Apollo/Saturn vehicles that did indeed carry men to the Moon. It's difficult to credit this to anything but the wildest of coincidences.

Some of the premises in this book are so ridiculous it is difficult to take them seriously. But Verne did do his math, calculating that an initial velocity of 12,000 meters per second would provide adequate speed. This translates to about 22,500 miles per hour, and the actual figure for an Earth escape velocity is roughly 24,600 miles per hour (less to reach the Moon, because of the attraction of its gravity). But then, once the decision is made to launch a conical shell with humans inside, Verne has his three adventurers shield themselves from acceleration forces by water cushions. In actual fact they would have been squashed into jelly by such G forces, with the water cushions beneath them becoming as hard as concrete.

In essence, Verne wrote action-adventure books, strongly leavened with scientific fact and conjecture. But regardless of his shortcomings as a writer ~- and they were many — Verne had the great virtue of originality of concept. Many of his ideas were apparently original with him. In other cases, he was the first to take little-used or explored ideas and work them out in full-length novels. He crossed easily from the realm of then physically possible adventures, such as balloon flights or trips around the world, to marvelous scientific discoveries not yet made. Verne could make one seem almost as believable as the other to the reader of his day.

Verne also suffered from a major shortcoming, one evident in the work of many of his imitators down through the years. He tended to project into the future in a straight linear fashion, with little allowance for

side turns or totally new discoveries. Hence his idea of a flying battleship consisted of balloons providing lift to a regular ship equipped with several propellers. He sent people to the moon by building the largest and longest cannon then imaginable. Verne paid no attention to the concept of the fixed wing aircraft, or the possibility of equipping a passenger capsule with its own propulsion capability instead of firing it from a cannon.

This tendency toward linear extrapolation is one of the worst traps awaiting the science fiction writer, of any time period. Totally new discoveries, by their very nature, are extremely difficult to predict. Sometimes wild imagination can be more accurate than a reasoned forecast, if the subject area is little unexplored. It was logical, in the 1850s, to project faster or larger horses, not the automobile and the truck. To look at an abacus and predict the adding machine would have been an act of creative imagination; to foresee the computer would have been sheer genius. The last is a very rare quality.

The unfortunate result of linear extrapolation was that Verne made far more 'misses' than 'hits' in his fictional predictions. Some projections were insightful and astute; for each of these, there were twenty that were simply wrong. But the readers of his day, even the scientifically educated ones, would have found it very difficult to determine which of his projections were likely to be accurate. Scientists, in fact, suffered from the extra handicap of 'knowing to be true' many things which were in fact wrong. Not infrequently they held strongly conservative views, these severely limited by the amount of knowledge then available in a given field.

Overall, it seems clear that Verne used scientific projection as an adjunct to the main task of telling a good story. Some were insightful, and later became a part of modern life. These are also the ones best remembered; inaccurate predictions seem to fairly quickly fade from public consciousness.

Overall, it seems fair to conclude Verne fully earned his place in science fiction as the acknowledged first master of the scientific adventure. His shortcomings pale before this achievement.

Verne and Wells – A Short Comparison

Verne far exceeded H. G. Wells, a contemporary after the publication of the latter's first science fiction novel in 1895, in his grasp of basic physics. Apparently he chose to avoid the subject of speculative biology, a favorite of Wells. His books were far more educational than those of Wells, and often more entertaining, despite the noticeably lower quality of the writing.

Verne wrote essentially action-adventure books strongly leavened with scientific fact or conjecture. He fed the reader long lectures or needed background in much too obvious a fashion. He strived to be entertaining, often overwhelming the reader with 'sense of wonder' ideas to the detriment of believability. One can understand, after comparing the two, why Wells is often considered the superior and more influential writer — despite the fact his science is even less believable than that of Verne!

Regardless of his shortcomings, Verne had the great virtue of originality of concept. But so did Wells, so comparing one set of speculative predictions to the other is probably a fruitless task. Verne also resembled many early science fiction writers of the modern era in one respect, in that the stories he told were often far superior to the characters in them. The story, the adventure, dominated, and the people involved were frequently stock figures cut from whole cloth. Also, many of his characters tended to repeat themselves from book to book, under new names.

Verne never received the respect accorded to Wells, either in his day or the history books. Wells became a recognized scholar, a savant, who wrote acclaimed books such as his *The Outline of History* and *The Shape of Things to Come*. He consorted with presidents and kings, had a notorious affair with a grand dame of letters, and lived to see some of his works made into influential movies. Verne lived the quiet life of the country gentleman, apparently desiring no more than to entertain his readers and make lots of money. He did both. Overall, he fully earned his place in science fiction as the acknowledged first master of the scientific adventure, one of the basic categories the genre is usually divided into today. A second, the detailed examination of the possible effects of new technology or discoveries on society, acknowledges Wells as the founding father and guiding spirit. Both have a secure place in history.

The Predictions of H.G. Wells

H. G. Wells has been, and remains, one of the two seminal figures in modern science fiction. He achieved this distinction by being the first major science fiction writer to explore, in fictional extrapolations, the effects of scientific discovery and technological innovation on society; a mainstay of the genre in the 20th century. His means sometimes seemed unlikely, but the ends he achieved were penetrating and insightful comments on Man and society (more specifically, the English society of his day).

Wells was a very different writer from Jules Verne, who produced wonderful imaginary inventions but seldom attempted to explore in any detail the social changes these would engender. Wells was fully aware that his society was in a state of flux, inspired by recurring technological breakthroughs. He wanted to help shape and form the new social order he saw emerging from the ferment.

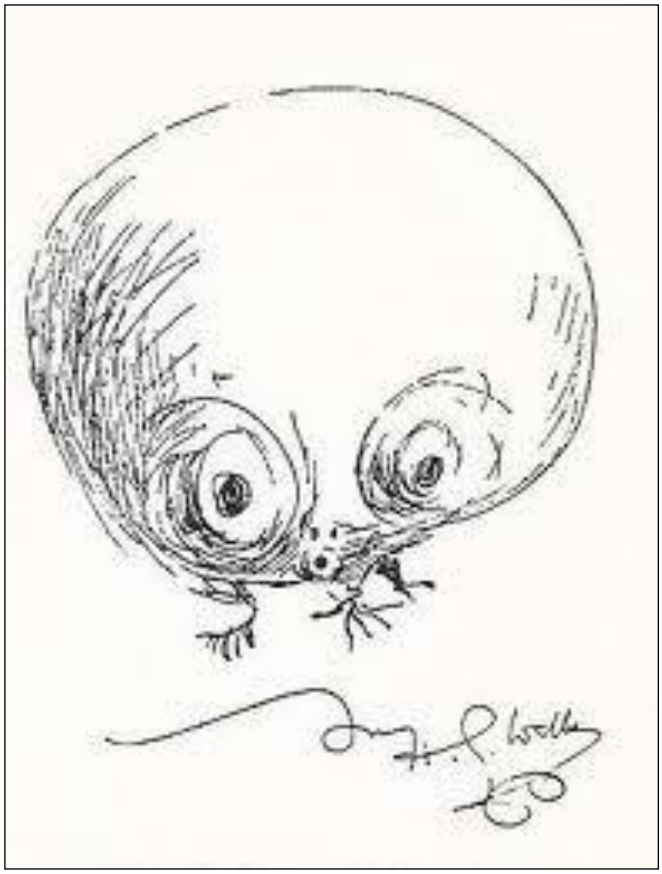
The MacMillan edition of *The Shape of Things to Come* specifically separates the "Books by H.G. Wells" front-matter page into "Novels", "Fantastic and Imaginative Romances", "Short Stories Collected Under the Following Titles", and "Books on Social, Religious and Political Questions". It was customary, when this book was published in 1933, to separate so-called "serious works" from lightweight fancies such as science fiction or fantasy novels. Yet today it is clear that Wells' lasting works were the so-called romances, while the novels thought of as serious works have been largely forgotten. It's ironic that his attempts to be influential through semi-factual books were generally ineffective, while his fictional romances influenced untold millions of people; though perhaps in subtle and not easily provable ways. An examination of the accuracy of the fictional predictions in seven of his "scientific romances" follows.

The Time Machine, Wells' first full-length science fiction novel, is an excellent work of speculative fiction, but not very scientific in either its presentation or conclusions. Wells provides no actual explanation of the principles underlying time travel. None of its projections have come true, or are likely to do so in the foreseeable future. It has the virtue of mental stimulation, of opening up the mind to new possibilities, but has little to offer in the way of future predictions that can be checked for accuracy today.

Wells' second scientific romance, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, is equally unscientific, but interesting for its concepts. The essence of the story is that the title character sets out to change animals into human analogues by means of drugs (unspecified) and surgery. He succeeds to a remarkable degree, including having most animals develop the ability to speak. After he is eventually killed by one of his creations, the numerous animals he changed start reverting to their original state, including surgically altered bones returning to their pre-operation configuration (an unlikely prospect).

This novel has just a touch of scientific underpinning, not enough to convince a high school student of its credibility. The idea of selective breeding obviously occurred to Wells, but must have been discarded due to the lengths of time involved. He did not foresee genetic manipulation, which would have been a good intuitive leap forward and much more convincing.

Still, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* has the virtue of an important concept, the idea that scientific intervention can quickly change the basic characteristics of an animal's form (including the human one). The beneficial aspects of such a capability are only beginning to emerge today. Despite its scientific implausibility this book has had, and continues to have, an impact on the public. It has been made into a movie several times. The prejudice this book, the movies, and their many imitators have created in the mind of the public is an unmeasured but very real handicap to serious biological researchers who must use animals in their work



In *The Invisible Man*, Wells again shirks the scientific discovery needed to explain his invention, and instead substitutes an examination of how such a person might actually function in the society of Wells' day. There are no predictions worth mentioning, and the reactions of the English public to an invisible man roaming around are fairly obvious. This novel is far better as literature than as science fiction.

The War of the Worlds follows Wells' usual pattern, with interesting concepts and little real science. The Martians reach Earth riding inside huge shells fired from guns on Mars, a ridiculous idea perhaps stolen from Verne. Once here the Martians use miraculous weapons which are deadly against English armies circa 1900. One of these bears a strong resemblance to the modern laser, a good hit. But the book contains few other predictions that have come true. As a novel it is quite well done, and very effective as a work of literature. It too has had several movie incarnations, one fairly recently.

The First Hen in the Moon features an interesting science fiction concept which has been used many times since, the discovery of a material called Cavorite which is impervious to gravity. Unfortunately, this idea has yet to be translated into reality, and there seems no prospect of a breakthrough in this region of physics for the foreseeable future. The exact means by which the material is made opaque to gravity is not, of course, explained in detail.

Wells provided several speculations in this book which time has proven fairly accurate. One was that the stars would shine with supernal brightness if seen from above the atmosphere. Another was that the one-sixth gravity of the moon's surface would make humans extremely strong there, able to leap high, carry immense weights, etc. But he also predicted lunar craters filled with air which could grow plants during the sunlit hours, underground caverns where Selenites lived and were well supplied with air, a lunar civilization, etc., all of which were never plausible. In smaller details, he thought that being in zero gravity would decrease appetite, causing people to eat much less. We now know it takes as many if not more calories to sustain a person in zero G as on the ground.

The Food of the Gods is one of the most interesting of Wells' books, in addition to speculating in areas where real science has now made some major advances. The essential idea is that two scientists discover a food which makes any creature that eats it grow to a tremendous size. We now have growth hormones which can increase the size of livestock, and others which can correct genetic deficiencies and make (some) stunted human children grow to the normal expected size.

This novel is told in two parts, each essentially complete within itself. In the first the new discovery, Boomfood, is invented and through carelessness allowed to reach animals. Three types, rats, chickens, and hornets, are affected. All three grow to eight or ten times normal size. (Wells makes no allowance for the fact a hornet could not fly with that much weight and the same proportional wingspan.) The first book ends when all the animals have been captured or killed. This part of the novel has since inspired a thousand imitations, most of which appeared before the public as very poor movies.

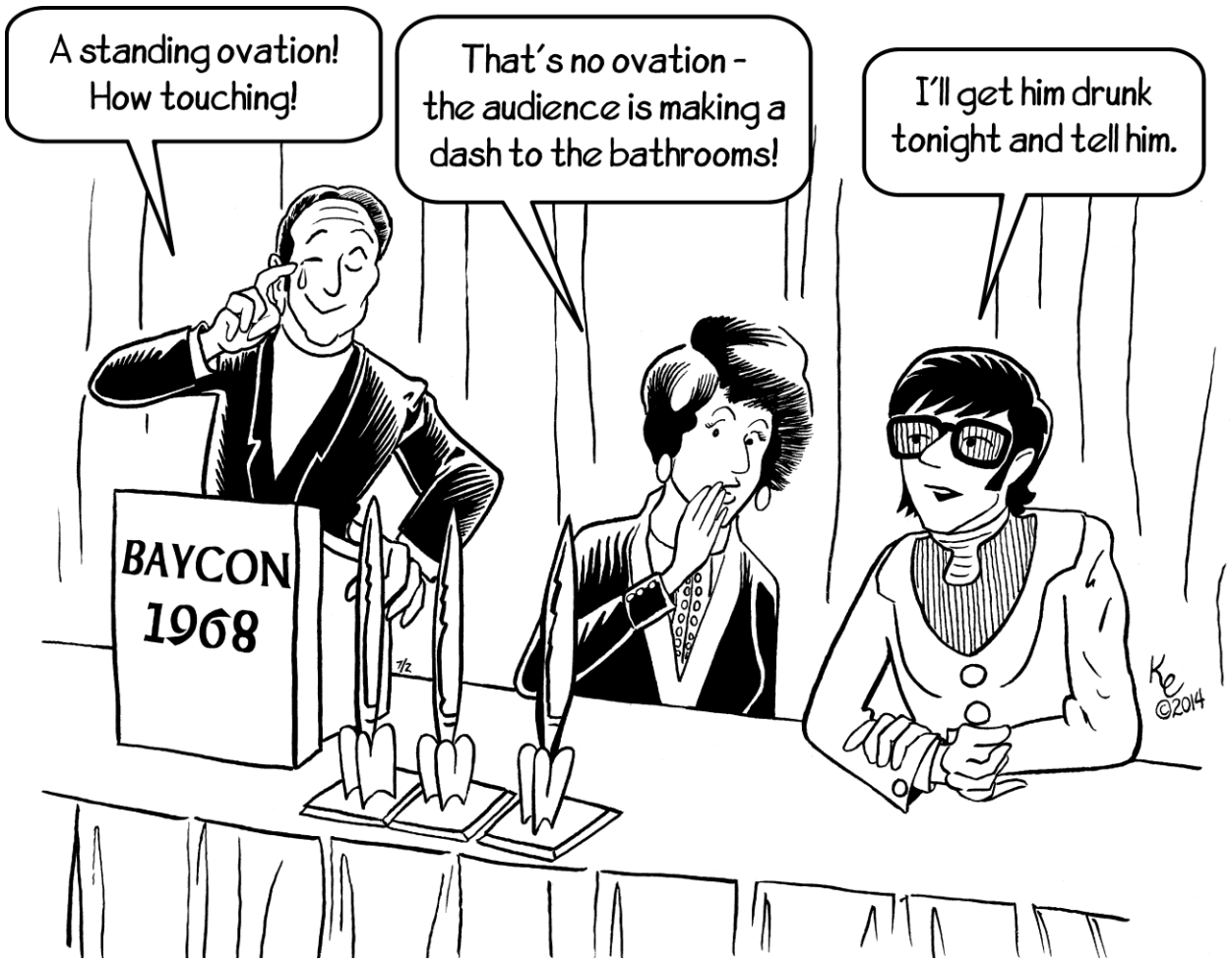
In Books Two and Three the reader learns that Boomfood has been fed to a few human children as well, and this causes social complications. Children cannot simply be killed and forgotten. Wells does a very effective job of comparing the raising of such children to the human norm. (One idea, of more literary than scientific merit, is that any creature which eats Boomfood while young will die if the food is later taken away. Some such literary device is needed to make the story logic hang together.) He provides a fairly detailed description of how to raise a child to maximize its intelligence, one that sounds as if it came from modern child psychology books. For example, the affected babies were provided a stimulating environment, including educational toys, picture frames designed to have their contents changed at regular intervals, structural toys to be assembled, etc.

This book ends with the giant, highly intelligent children having reached young adulthood and come into serious conflict with the normal humans around them -- as one would expect. The issue of who will conquer is not resolved. The details of the growth of the children, their development into competent adults, and the final break with normal humans are convincingly worked out. Great physical growth without compensating structural change is poor biology, but as usual with Wells, the reader has no difficulty suspending disbelief for the sake of the story. The social interaction between the giant children and the society around them are the heart of the novel, and this is very well handled.

In the Days of the Comet is a very bad book indeed. The essential idea is that a comet passes near the Earth, immersing our planet in a gas which changes everybody into creatures of sweetness and light. The novel is long, boring, scientifically unbelievable, and with endless discursions on the evils of English society of the early 1900s. This book is best forgotten, if you like Wells.

Most of Wells' nonfiction works dealt with current social problems that have since passed from the scene. *The Shape of Things to Come* was his last major work; science fiction with most of the trappings of fiction removed. The book was published in 1933, and in it Wells accurately predicted World War II. He even had Japan enter the war on the Axis side. But after those two "hits" the "misses" dominate, and when the book moves into developments after the war it is far, far off from what actually happened.

Wells was best at opening up the mind to new possibilities, inspiring optimism toward the process of change, and creating an acceptance of science as a means of improving the world. He had one of the most fertile imaginations of his day, and a writing skill that usually exceeded that of his contemporaries. Most important of all, he was *first!* He explored most of the major concepts of modern science fiction, with the exception of interstellar travel, moving between dimensions, and a few others. He is justly called the father of sociological science fiction, the dominant preoccupation of most practicing writers in the genre today. His place in literature in general, and science fiction in particular, is secure.



The Infamous Baycon

A fond reminiscence by **Mike Resnick**

The 1968 Worldcon, known as Baycon, was held the same week as the Democratic National Convention – the one where the original Mayor Daley, who in a prior act of compassion had ordered the police to shoot to main, not to kill, now assured the public on national television that "The police aren't here to create disorder; the police are here to preserve disorder."

So what does that have to do with Baycon?

Bear with me.

Worldcon was in the process of getting larger each year. In 1967 the Trekkies discovered us during the New York Worldcon. This year, since we were in the Bay area, the hippies and the druggies discovered us. We were booked into the

Claremont Hotel in the Berkeley Hills, a hotel that has become known in fannish legend as the Transylvania Hilton. It was much too small to accommodate the 1400+ members…so most of us stayed in ugly, uncomfortable, downtown Berkeley hotels. (There were, at that time at least, no attractive, comfortable hotels in downtown Berkeley.)

So we all get there, and television sets all over the nation are turned in to the Democratic convention – and suddenly, to protest Chicago police brutality, the local Hell's Angels go out and shoot a Berkeley cop.

Well, they *think* it was a Hell's Angel, but they're not sure, so every convention member staying in the downtown hotels – which means most of us – has to run a police cordon every time he drives up the hill to the Claremont.

And there was another little problem. We were undergoing what the weathermen called the second-worst heat wave of the century – and because it's usually so pleasant in the Bay area, *none* of the hotels were air-conditioned. I remember one night it was so hot I decided to walk a block to a little all-night soda fountain and get some ice cream cones for Carol and myself. (Silly notion. Hers melted before I got back.) Anyway, I walked out the door of the hotel, underwent five minutes of questioning by some of the cops posted there, and then got an armed police escort while I got our ice cream cones.

As you can imagine, those of us not staying at the Claremont didn't feel like commuting back and forth more than once a day – running police gauntlets is for Clint Eastwood, not for fans and writers – so most of us found friends who *were* in the Claremont and left our book and fanzine purchases and whatever else we picked up in their rooms, loading them into the car only when we'd had enough of the night's parties.

The friends whose room we used to stash our goods were Jon and Joni Stopa (later to be Fan Guests of Honor at Chicon V, the 1991 Worldcon), and we began to realize that staying at the Claremont wasn't quite the advantage it at first seemed to be. Joni took a bath on Thursday; on Sunday she was still waiting for the water to drain out of the tub.

Still, outside of sweating to death and driving (or walking) three miles up and down that damned hill from one unacceptable hotel to another, the con was without incident – until Saturday night, the night of the masquerade.

The Claremont wasn't big enough to have a presidium stage, and this was before the time when Worldcon got so large it required a convention center...so they held it in the biggest room the hotel had. The audience was seated at long tables, and the masquerade committee, lacking a stage for contestants to walk across, decided to create a walkway of tables that wended its way through the audience in a very crooked line. And to make sure everyone had a good time, they imported a rock band.

They realized that if they kept all the lights on, the way they would for a panel or a speech, it would lack a certain dramatic effect – so they doused all the lights except one spotlight, that shone on – and frequently blinded – the costumers, who were having a hard enough time just maneuvering across the twisting, turning route atop the tables. A couple didn't quite make it, but there were no fatalities, or even any broken bones.

There was a *lot* of noise. Seems the rock band had a state-of-the-art sound system (for which read: absolutely deafening). It got so bad that after the costumers finished their first run-through, a bunch of fans walked up to con chairman J. Ben Stark and begged him to send the band home, explaining that it was so painfully loud that they couldn't stay if the band kept playing. Stark agreed that they had a point, went over to the band, told them they'd done a fine job but they weren't needed any longer, and paid them off.

And the band decided they were having such a good time they'd stay and play for free.

Not a lot of people stuck around to see who won.

Move the clock ahead to 6:00 PM Sunday, the start of the Hugo banquet. Back in those days, we were a lot more formal for these functions. The men wore suits, or at least sports jackets and ties, and the women wore the equivalent – which was probably not the best thing to wear when the interior of the banquet room was in the mid-90s. They served dinner. I don't remember what it was; some kind of meat – but I remember dessert. It was Baked Alaska, and it hadn't been on the tables for 30 seconds before

it began melting and running down the tablecloths into everyone's laps.

Comes 8:00 and Toastmaster Bob Silverberg climbs up on the stage, and every waiter in the place vanishes. They had strict orders not to distract from the Hugo ceremony, and for the next few hours we sat there, surrounded by meat that began stinking like, well, very dead cows, and the watery remains of dessert drip-drip-dripping onto the floor from just about every table.

Bob does what he can to distract everyone with some jokes, then the Fan Guest of Honor gives his speech, and then comes one of the two highlights of the annual Hugo banquet – the Guest of Honor speech, (The other, of course, is the Hugos themselves, but the speech is always given first, on the not-unreasonable assumption that half the people will not stay for the speech if the Hugos have already been awarded.)

Anyway, Philip Jose Farmer walks up to the podium and begins talking, though no one is quite sure what he's talking *about*. He wants us to storm some barricades, but whether they're literary barricades or the ones the cops have put up all over the hill remains unclear to this day.

Still, no one worries much about it. These things usually got for 20 to 30 minutes, and then he'll be done and we can get to the awards and get out of this foul-smelling steambath.

But Phil is feeling talkative. No one has figured out what he's talking about yet, but they've all figured out that he's gone over an hour and hasn't shown any signs of slowing down.

We were all sitting at tables that held eight diners. And suddenly a *lot* of the diners started sneaking off to the rest rooms. Carol and I were sitting with three other couples … and suddenly the four men were alone at the table, and it would have been just too damned rude for us to go hide in the men's room.

Phil keeps talking, the meat keeps rotting, what little dessert remains is entirely on the floor – and then, more than an hour and a half into the speech, Phil pauses for a moment to take a sip of water. We give him a standing ovation in the hope that he'll think he's done. He doesn't – but 300 people who hear the applause come racing out of the bathrooms because *they* think he's done.

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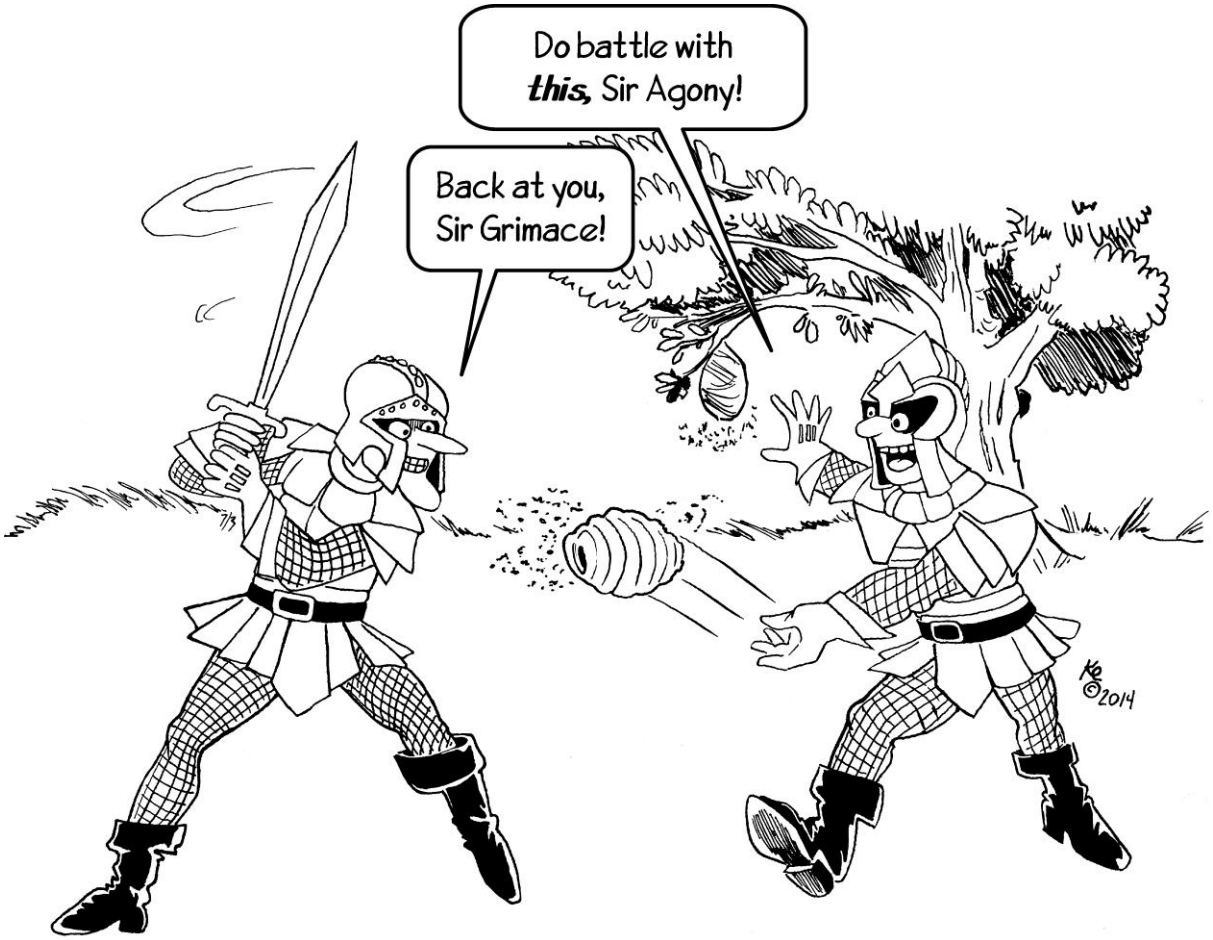


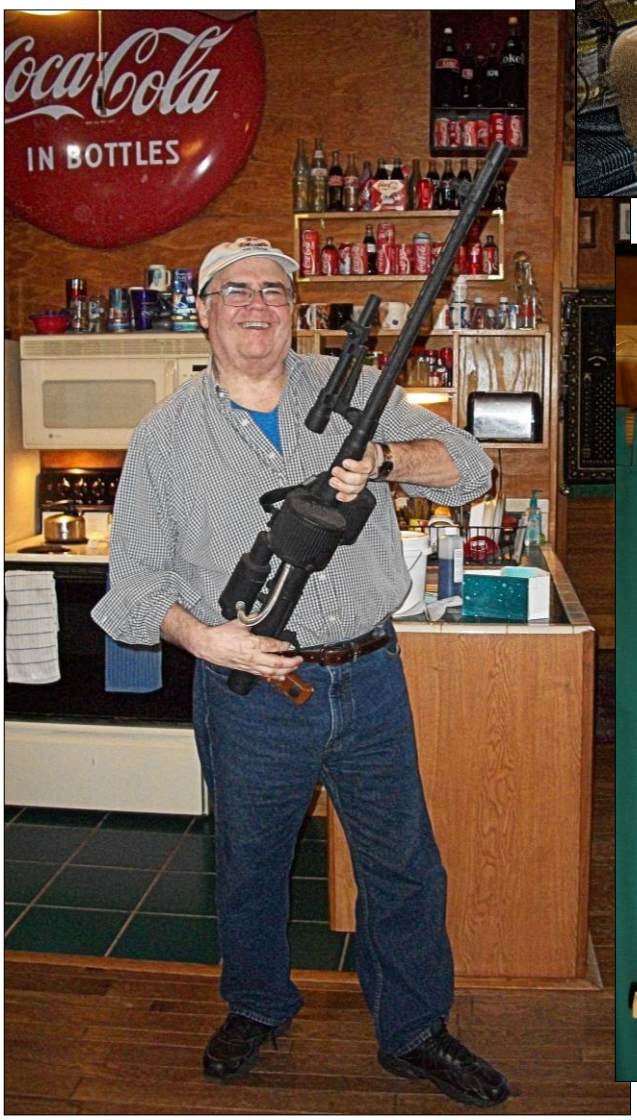
A MOST *MARVELOUS* HOUSE

Guy Lillian

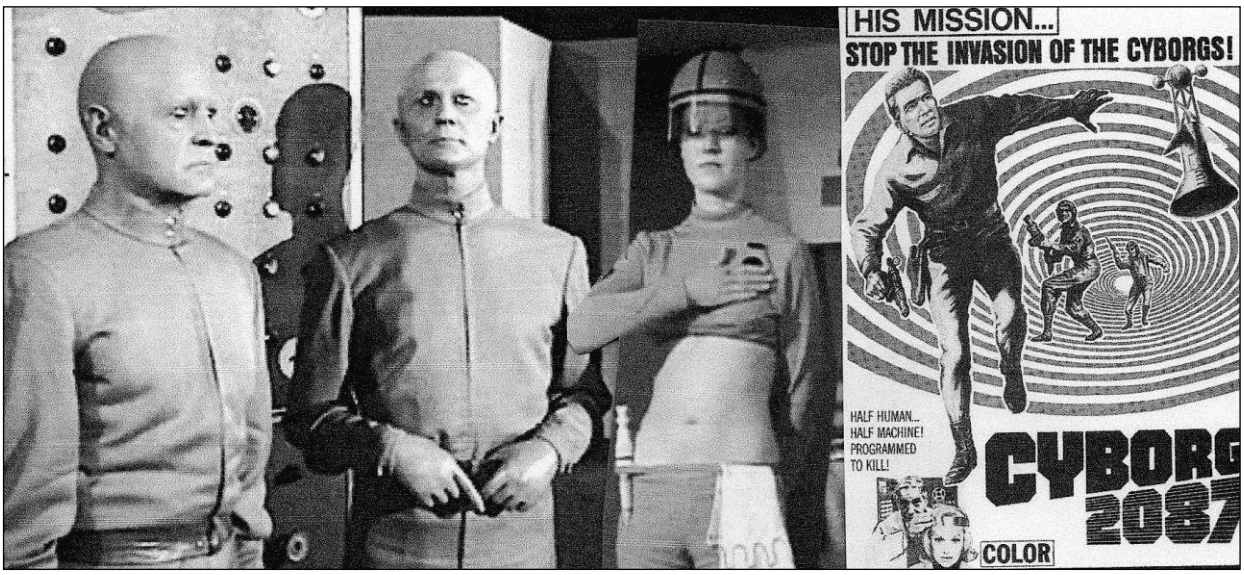
John Junior, above, photographs a prop atop the deck. See the porpoises on the rail? To right, John Senior demonstrates a molding technique in their workshop.

The house stands behind a stand of trees, overlooking Florida's Banana River ... but it might as well be the Black Lagoon. Here John McDonald and John McDonald Junior create props and costumes for convention cosplay, taking inspiration from great horror films and SF television – and the richness of their own imaginations, which have filled their home with wonderful weirdness and delight and won awards at DragonCon and elsewhere. John Sr.'s sister is Rose-Marie's BFF Frankie McDonald, and our deathless gratitude to her and the boys for letting us watch them at work.

To right, John Jr. helps a novice cosplayer add sheen to a Bat-helmet. In lower right, a spiffy skiffy prop from *Venture Bros.*, one of the McDonalds' favorite inspirations. Lower left, who let that turkey have a rifle?



La belle Rose-Marie with the headpiece from the McDonalds' spectacular Creature from the Black Lagoon costume. Below, the Gill Man, as recreated by the McDonalds, rising from the depths. "Johnnyhavoc"'s account of the making of this classic can be found on YouTube. Check out https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZYcz8eNSYU and prepare to be amazed.



*(This article was originally published in Bill Kobb's apazine **The Kobb Log** for the Southern Fandom Press Alliance.)*

A Brief (cinematic) History of the Future

Jim Ivers

To coin a phrase, the future isn't what it used to be. Although few critics seem to notice or care, science fiction films that predict the world of tomorrow do a pretty good (if unintentional) job of reflecting contemporary issues. There is usually a subtext, and a style, that links these films to the era in which they were conceived. Each generation envisions a future that's mostly a streamlined makeover of today's society (a.k.a. "fifteen minutes into the future").

The energetic, can-do attitude of Buster Crabbe's *Flash Gordon* – and its contemporary films and serials set in the future – are firmly fixed in the 1930s. The fanciful settings, flamboyant costumes, and art deco stylings looked quaint by the forties (a sombre decade that ignored science fiction). Hollywood films in the fifties introduced more realistic industrial design and stark, minimalist fashions. In this future people wear generic unisex jumpsuits (with silver boots and a wide belt) that seem to reflect the drab conformity of the Eisenhower era. Serious, science-based yarns centered on the hardware of space travel, the awe of discovery, and terror of the unknown. Many stories grimly exploited our fears about the future: nuclear war, dehumanizing technology, and communist expansion (represented by godless, merciless invading aliens).

Meanwhile, across the pond, a long series of anxiety-ridden postwar films – from *1984* (1956, remade in 1984) all the way up to *V for Vendetta* (2005) – documented Britain's perennial fear of the collapse of their polite, well-ordered society resulting in a brutal (and, worst of all, terribly ill-mannered) totalitarian state.

In the sixties, JFK's New Frontier optimism put a positive spin on future space exploration. This idealism was exemplified by the utopian hopefulness and racial equality seen in Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek*. By mid-decade, futurism had adopted a cool, swinging-sixties exuberance expressed by colorful mod designs influenced by Pop Art and mind-expanding psychedelia. For a few short years the doorway to a bright, exciting future seemed to be wide open. And then the door slammed shut.

Sadly, the massive bummer that was the seventies created a general malaise that snuffed out everything positive from the previous decade. A series of depressing social, economic, political, and environmental disasters created an atmosphere of cynicism and despair. (It's no coincidence that disaster movies dominated the box office throughout the decade.) Science fiction films turned darkly fatalistic. The future was now seen as an ugly, nightmarish world of over-crowding, a depleted environment, post-nuclear wastelands, barbarism, plagues, totalitarian states, soulless hedonism, and societies that worship violence. Even Roddenberry pandered to the trend with two failed series pilots (*Genesis II, Planet Earth* 1973-74) reworking the *Buck Rogers* concept in a dreary post-nuclear world.

No one would want to live in the miserable future depicted in such films as *The Omega Man, THX 1138, Soylent Green, The Andromeda Strain, Silent Running, A Boy and His Dog, Logan's Run, Colossus: The Forbin Project, Rollerball, Death Race 2000, Demon Seed,* and *Mad Max*. And then there's *Capricorn One* (1978), an audacious conspiracy thriller that turns our beloved NASA space program into a hoax. An idea that would have been unthinkable a decade earlier.

The general attitude of pessimism and paranoid mistrust of scientific progress is our sad legacy from the seventies that persists, in various forms, to the present day. One recent example is the newly-cancelled J.J. Abrams TV series, *Almost Human*. Set in the high-tech world of 2048, this explores our fear of science and technology run amuck. The stories are simply extensions of present day issues. There are episodes about the dangers of social media and online dating, plastic surgery addiction, dangerous recreational super-drugs, genetic engineering, and the loss of privacy. Sound familiar? The slick production is first class and the overall design looks great. Still, I wonder if this will seem quaint in a few years.

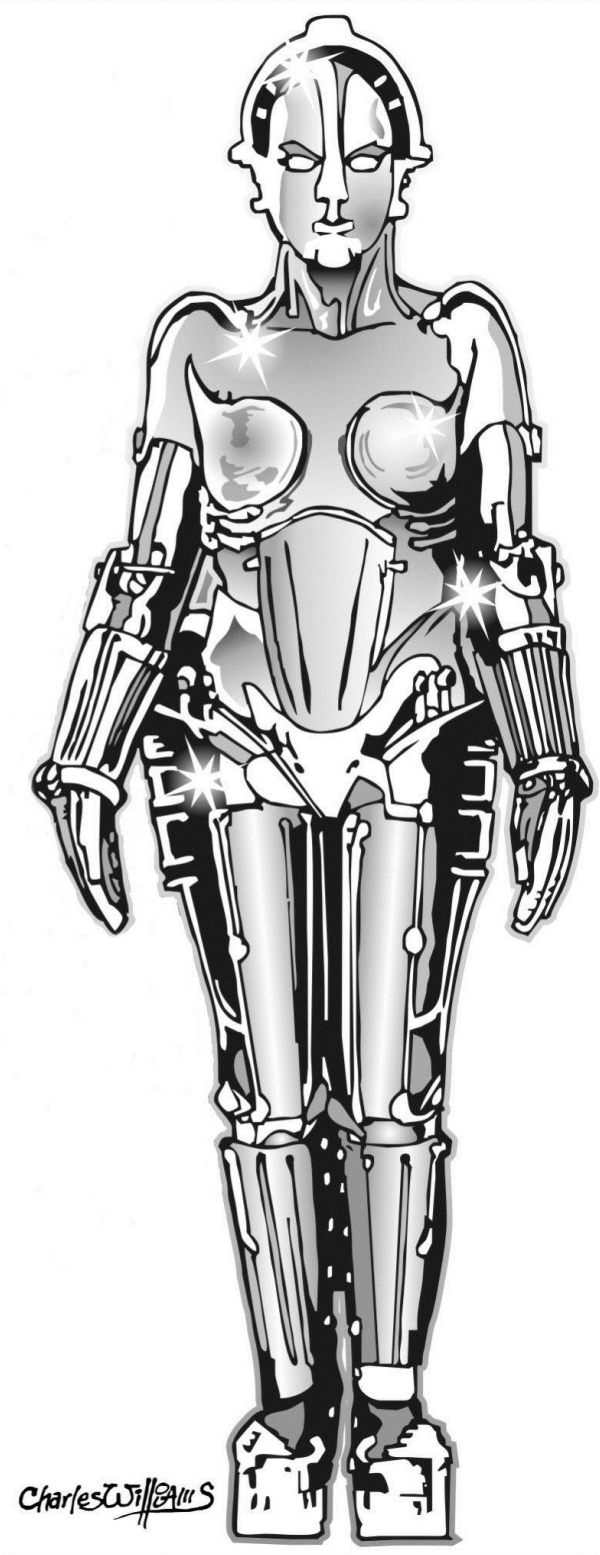
Earth-bound tales that depict our culture in the future are always intriguing. But there's little to be gained, and not much enjoyment to be had, from all the grim, nearly identical tales of post-apocalyptic doom and gloom. The aim of this study is to look at the films that show the future in a positive light – or at least offer a ray of hope. (This turns out to be a surprisingly small group.) The emphasis here, besides a general review, is noting the changing styles, attitudes, and adding some historical context.

The Twenties and Thirties

Metropolis (1927) - German expressionist epic directed by Fritz Lang, written by his wife Thea von Harbou. The granddaddy of futuristic films and science fiction cinema. Packed with still-impressive imagery, Biblical symbolism, a cool female robot (the first fembot), towering sets and detailed miniatures, this was a sensation. The *Star Wars* of the silent era, it played for years, raking in a fortune.

Inspired by New York's skyscrapers, everything in this monumental city of the future is overwhelmingly huge and intimidating; progress has created a modern Tower of Babel (seen through the disorienting prism of Cubist painting). Some claim this film also helped popularize art deco architecture. The story distorts and exploits modernism in order to make a point about social injustice. An elite aristocracy lives in splendid high-rise towers while droves of dehumanized workers toil in hellish power plants beneath the city. In truth, the drudgery depicted here would have been eliminated, not created, by automation.

A cautionary tale of greed, materialism, and heedless modernism of the Roaring Twenties. Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels praised the film in a 1928 speech for sticking it to "the political bourgeoisie" of the Weimar Republic that was about to "leave the stage of history." You tell'em, Joe.



Outside of Germany the earnest, heavy-handed social message was probably lost on audiences who came to be dazzled by the film's amazing visual display. Lang went on to write and direct *Woman in the Moon* (1929), considered the first "serious" space travel film. His wife joined the Nazi Party in 1933. The Langs divorced the following year.

The ground-breaking film was too grandiose in scale to be copied. It stood alone in monolithic triumph for three years, closing out the silent era. Although never remade (*Blade Runner* comes the closest), the basic plot appears in other films and TV shows such as *The Mole People* (1956) and David Gerrold's teleplay "The Cloud Minders" (*Star Trek*, 1969). Gerrold's story depicts a cultured society of arty, Nordic-looking elitists living in a luxurious cloud city while an "inferior" dark-haired race of laborers toils in the mines on the planet below.

Just Imagine (1930) - The old Fox Film Corporation (before it became 20th Century Fox) was the first studio to make a sci-fi talkie. They took a conventional comedy-drama musical and placed it in the fabulous future world of 1980. A charming curio that not only presents an amusing vision of the future, but also reveals the preoccupations of Herbert Hoover's Depression era America.

Narrated scenes describe the slow-paced, tranquil life on New York's 5th Avenue in 1880. Then, jumping forward 50 years to 1930, the same street is now choked with noisy traffic. We then cut to 50 years later, 1980. Cars have been replaced by small hover-planes that look surprisingly aerodynamic. (The opening hover-plane sequence reminded me of similar scenes from *Star Wars: Episode II - Attack of the Clones*, 2002). Looking a bit like *Metropolis*, the skyline is dominated by towering art deco skyscrapers. The striking aerial views of the city are most impressive. (Many films would steal footage from these scenes, including the 1950s Buck Rogers serials.)

In this 1980, people have numbers instead of names, pills instead of food, and government-arranged marriages have replaced love. One memorable gag shows a young couple selecting a baby from a vending machine as if they were buying a candy bar. The standard love story plot involves J-21 or J (John Garrick) who can't get permission from the marriage tribunal to wed LN-18 (a young, willowy Maureen O'Sullivan) because, as an ordinary trans-continental zeppelin pilot, he isn't "distinguished" enough. He lives in a fabulous streamlined art deco apartment that has a wall-mounted viewscreen phone. Men wear wrap-around suit coats that button on the side and have no lapels or pockets. Short-brim Alpine-type hats are the style. Women have reversible outfits for day and evening wear. At a fancy party a women in a conservative black gown turns around to reveal most of her backside is exposed via huge cutouts.

Meanwhile, a scientific experiment revives a man who was killed by lightning in 1930; he renames himself "Single-O". This character, most likely inspired by Buck Rogers, is played by Swedish vaudeville comedian El Brendel. He represents the audience's point of view and provides much unfunny comic relief. Although popular in the '30s, his dated, tiresome schtick mostly falls flat. J befriends Single-O and shows him the new world. They go to a "cafe" – a sidewalk vending machine – where a three-course meal comes in a single pill.

Prohibition still exists with bootleg liquor, also in pill form, sold in tiny bottles. There are sarcastic remarks about the "noble experiment" of the Volstead Act and the government's failed promise that beer and light wine will be available "in a year or two". This must have gotten a big laugh in 1930. There's even a pointed jab at the famously anti-Semitic Henry Ford. We see no cars on the streets; the few autos that remain, we are told, are confined to an upper level. Instead everyone flies small planes manufactured by companies named Rosenblad, Tenenbaum, and Goldfarb. Single-O jokes: "Looks like someone got even with Henry Ford."

J-21 is recruited by Z-4, a brilliant maverick scientist who wants him to pilot the first ship to Mars. J-21, his friend, and stowaway Single-O take off in a bullet-shaped rocket that looks like a prototype for the Buck Rogers/Flash Gordon serials to come. In an apparent homage to George Melies' *A Trip to the Moon*, the red planet is populated by chorus girls in skimpy two-piece silver outfits. Inside their crystal palace the women perform some impressive pre-Busby Berkeley dance numbers. The only man is a burly co-ruler or prime minister character who gets awfully grabby with his new pal Single-O and is rather insistent that the newcomers disrobe for a ritual bath. Some critics have joked that this is the screen's first overtly gay character. The subsequent scene with a group of girls dancing seductively for the bathing astronauts reminds us this is a pre-Code film.

Although the songs are tedious, the imaginative set design is worth seeing and the light-hearted view of the future is amusing. It is funny to note that time and technology has not changed social behavior in this story. People act like it's still 1930. And no one protests against the

authoritarian government with its harsh restrictions on marriage. Viewing this in 2014, it is a strange feeling to see a vision of a fantastic future that is now 34 years in the past. (Where the hell is my flying car?) New York remains grid-locked with horrific traffic while the elevated trains are long gone. This was filmed before the Empire State and Chrysler buildings were erected, yet its vision of a skyline crowded with towering structures is surprisingly accurate.

The only other major futuristic film of the thirties is *Things to Come* (UK, 1936). Sorry to admit I could never get through this long, oh-so-serious epic. Its rather cold, aloof style was off-putting. Besides, the takeaway here is really the fabulous set designs. The giant, curving art deco interiors remind me of New York's Guggenheim museum. (Fun fact: Betty Guggenheim hated the museum, saying it looked like a parking garage, while Frank Lloyd Wright hated the modern art for which it was built. But I digress...)

The Forties and Fifties

The forties is a dark, problematic decade. The austerity of the war years made once-popular SF/fantasy films appear frivolous and out of step. Critics even found the jaunty Indian adventure *Gunga Din* (1939) in poor taste for celebrating British colonialism at a time of Nazi expansion and impending global conflict. Escapism reverted to mostly down-to-earth adventures (such as jungle films) that frequently referenced the war. What little SF remained – mostly in cheap serials – often featured Nazi-type scientists threatening the world with death-rays, robots, and other technological weapons. In keeping with the times, in the final Flash Gordon serial, *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe* (1940), Ming the Merciless is changed from a devilish Fu Manchu type to a military dictator.

Horror movies also got dragged into the war. In *The Mad Monster* (PRC, 1942), George Zucco's traditional mad scientist now has absurd Hitlerian ambitions for world conquest (using werewolves!). Universal's *Invisible Agent* (1942), fourth in the series which began in 1933, is routine wartime propaganda with the titular agent spying on the Nazis. Most surprising is how horror all but vanished after Universal ended its classic monster cycle in 1945. Besides *Mighty Joe Young* and *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein*, memorable horror/sci-fi films are conspicuously absent from 1946 to 1949.

World Without End (1956) - After *Things to Come*, we must jump ahead 20 years to find a futuristic story that isn't a total downer. The first SF film shot in widescreen CinemaScope Technicolor, this was part of a brief, failed attempt to find a wide audience for big-budget "prestige" space travel movies. This, along with Universal's costly *This Island Earth* (1955) and MGM's literate *Forbidden Planet* (1956) were box-office duds. Their failure meant science fiction would remain mostly low-budget drive-in schlock for the next decade.

Hugh Marlowe, from the excellent *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (1956), stars along with Rod Taylor. Marlowe and his fellow astronauts returning from a trip around Mars in 1957 accelerate to incredible velocities creating a "time dilation." They crash-land on Earth in the year 2508. All signs of civilization were wiped out by atomic war in 2188, but nature has rebounded over the ensuing four centuries. They are attacked by hideous, mutant cavemen. Inside a cavern they find a stainless steel door – the entrance to a small underground city. It's populated by descendants of survivors who fled there during the war. This society is sophisticated but stagnant. The women are beautiful and wear provocative outfits (in the future, the low-cut mini-dress is the universal standard). But the men lack vitality and are nearly sterile. This anemic, ivory-tower society resembles the Sumerians in *The Mole People*. The men wear retro-looking Medieval-type tunics, tights, and shiny skullcaps. The pastel-colored interiors have a pristine, geometric design with triangular hallways and doors (which slide open automatically, a la *Star Trek*).

The world appears to be fertile again and a new generation of non-mutant cave people are emerging, yet this underground society remains firmly isolationist. There is some routine conflict, tedious court intrigue, and Rod Taylor showing off his muscular physique to the future-babes in Kirk-like fashion. Marlowe's team rigs up a

makeshift bazooka and blows away some bothersome cavemen. This display of technical superiority convinces the reluctant subterraneans to finally return to the surface. There they will start a new life and educate (and assimilate) the non-mutant cave people – and exterminate more crazy mutants should they become a nuisance. The tale ends on a hopeful note. Taylor, of course, would star in *The Time Machine* (1960), a bleak vision of the future that predicts a world war in 1966. (We really dodged a bullet on that one.)

Writer-producer Gene L. Coon's much-ridiculed "Spock's Brain" teleplay (*Star Trek*, 1968) appears to be filched from *World*. His story has a harsh planet inhabited by fur-clad cavemen and a near-identical cave entrance to a high-tech but lifeless underground world with hot babes in purple vinyl outfits. In the end, everyone must begin a new life on the surface. The futuristic interior design for this episode (and *Trek*'s "For the World is Hollow and I Have Touched the Sky") appear to be directly inspired by this film.

The Sixties: Cyborgs, Humanoids and Time Travelers

Beyond the Time Barrier (1960) - This low-budget black and white AIP quickie was strategically released one month before MGM's highly-publicized *The Time Machine*. This benefits from a good director, Edgar G. Ulmer, and Arthur C. Pierce's best script. Although that's faint praise considering the cheap schlock Pierce hacked out such as *Mutiny in Outer Space*, *The Human Duplicators* (1965), *Women of the Prehistoric Planet* (1966), *et al.*

Air Force test pilot Bill Allison (Robert Clarke) busts the titular barrier in his sub-orbital delta-wing jet and returns to the deserted, desolate world of 2024. He walks toward a very fake matte painting of a modern city and is attacked by insane bald mutants. He ends up in The Citadel, an underground enclave of civilization. Men wear the standard jumpsuits and boots while women wear (what else?) mini-skirts, mini-dresses, and high heels. The sparse decor is based on the triangle with triangular doors, mirrors, viewscreens, and lots of giant inverted pyramids. (All this came cheap as filming was done inside an exhibit of futuristic design at the 1959 Texas State Fair in Dallas.)

All but two leaders are deaf mutes (the first stage of impending mutation) and the men are sterile. The leader's telepathic granddaughter, Princess Trirene, is a babe and inevitable love interest. For a change, nuclear testing, not atomic war, is to blame for destroying life on earth. Radioactive dust in the atmosphere destroyed the protective (ozone) layer and deadly cosmic rays bombarded the planet, somehow causing a global plague in 1971. There are three other accidental time travelers who came from 1973 and 1994. We learn that after man landed on the moon, the world united in the conquest of space. Colonies on Mars and Venus were established in 1970 and survivors of the plague evacuated to Mars in 1973.

Allison must return to 1960 so he can prevent the plague from happening. This has an eerie *Twilight Zone* type twist ending. Not a bad film considering its tight budget and quick production.

The Creation of the Humanoids (1960, released 1962) - Is there another vintage science fiction film devoid of the usual gimmicks and gadgets (space ships, ray-guns, time travel, aliens, mutant monsters)? This unique, largely overlooked gem has a remarkably literate and provocative script. Like the best episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, this is a thinly-disguised think-piece that not only references touchy social issues, but questions our very definition of humanity.

Narrated file footage of atomic explosions shows us a future where 92 percent of the earth's population has perished in a third world war. As the birth rate is extremely low, industrial labor is now dominated by increasingly sophisticated robots. There are one billion robots on earth. An amusing montage of dated science class film-strips shows the evolution of this technology. (Among images of clunky box-headed robots is a shot of the robot-like alien from *Earth vs the Flying Saucers* painted silver.) Anticipating today's microprocessors, a Magnetic Integrator Neuron Duplicator (M.I.N.D.) which is "one-hundredth the size of a golf ball," simulates human brain functions in the more advanced models.

The R-21 to R-70 series are humanoid-looking with bald heads, gray-green skin, and unnervingly blank, glittering eyes (achieved with silver contact lenses). They're all outfitted in generic gray jumpsuits and silver boots and speak in a flat, emotionless tone that's quite effective.

Not everyone is comfortable around these human-like robots or "clickers" – a derogatory term used like a racial slur. Craigis (Don Megowan) is a leading member of The Order of Flesh and Blood, a radical human rights group that believes the robots are planning to take over. Indeed, the humanoids are up to something rather shady. Their recharging station has been converted into a quasi-religious temple where no humans are allowed. Inside they create perfect duplicates of recently deceased humans and transfer their memories into the new artificial bodies. This is an illegal R-96 model (just 4 points from being human). In a dispassionate voice, their leader announces: "He will learn how to laugh, how to cry, be afraid, how to hate. To become an R-96 is a real sacrifice." His lack of emotional inflection gives this speech a chilling resonance.

Craigis is outraged to learn his sister Esme (Francis McCann) is living "in rapport" with a humanoid named Pax. In the equivalent of an arranged marriage, the rapport process links Pax's mind to hers so he can anticipate her wishes. He is a devoted companion with an almost human range of emotions. The parallels to inter-racial marriage is obvious, and it's interesting to see how this is handled. (The name Esme might be a reference to Esmeralda from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dam*e.)

To Craigis, the humanoids are "soulless, godless imitations of man." But the humanoids challenge our concepts of life, death, immortality, and spirituality with their belief that "Mankind is a state of mind." The story may be overly talky and lacking in action, but the conversations are all intelligent and worth hearing. This is a thinking man's science fiction film that was probably too cerebral for its own good when it was finally released in 1962. It played on TV in the '60s before lapsing into obscurity.

Although produced on a limited budget, the color photography breathes some life into the rather static surroundings. Mostly simple sets with a flat backdrop showing a *Jetsons*-like modern city. The overall design is streamlined futurism with sleek, Danish modern decor.

The story reminded me of the 1967 *Star Trek* episode "Return to Tomorrow" in which disembodied entities temporarily inhabit humans while new android bodies are constructed. Gene Roddenberry, who co-wrote the story, created a sympathetic human-like android in *The Questor Tapes* (1973). This served as the prototype for the "Data" character on Star Trek: The Next Generation.

Screenwriter Jay Simms wrote *Panic in Year Zero* (1962), a grim drama about a family surviving in a post-nuclear world. He also did a pair of standard cheesy sci-fi/horror scripts: *The Giant Gila Monster* (1959), *The Killer Shrews* (1959), and the smartly-written *The Resurrection of Zachary Wheele*r (1971).

This was the last film by makeup legend Jack Pierce. He created all the classic monsters at Universal in the '30s and '40s. After being dumped by the studio in 1947, Pierce worked on various B-movies including *Beyond the Time Barrier*, and *The Brain from Planet Arous* (1957).

The Time Travelers (1964) - Although this has a downbeat story, it deserves mention for being more or less a high-class color remake of *Beyond the Time Barrier*. Written and directed by Ib Melchoir. Scientists invent the first flat-screen TV

to view the future and are astonished to discover it's also a two-way time portal.

Trapped in the desolate post-nuclear world of 2071, they are chased by the now-standard band of insane bald mutants. They find sanctuary in the last bastion of civilization living underground led by Dr. Vano (John Hoyt). Of course, everyone wears unisex jumpsuits. They have lots of cool technology plus an army of mute weird-looking worker androids who also fight off mutant attacks. Loved this as a kid, but seems pretty dated today. (I especially liked the way the androids kept on fighting the mutants, even after being torn to pieces.) The set designs and practical effects influenced both *Star Trek* and *Lost in Space*. John Hoyt was the doctor in *Trek*'s pilot episode, "The Cage" (1964). Horror publisher Forrest J Ackerman has a cameo appearance.

Wild Planet (Italy, 1965) - Unlike the depressing futurism of the seventies up to today's totalitarian *Hunger Games*/*Divergent* societies, here is a brave new world that doesn't totally suck ass. Space travel is commonplace, people live in gleaming geometric cities (created via unrealistic forced perspective models) and zip around in cool little electric cars with plexiglass bubble tops. The sleek, colorful interior design, Pop Art furnishings and fashions are all sixties Euro-mod taken to the next level. And, of course, loads of beautiful women in snazzy vinyl outfits and go-go boots. What's not to like? The ever-stylish Italians know how to do the future right.

On the donut-shaped space station Gamma One, Commander Mike Halstead (Tony Russell) is a bit wary of Dr. Nurmi (Massimo Serato). Perhaps it's his typical mad scientist goatee. Nurmi is using questionable eugenics cloning to grow human organs under glass domes in his lab. He works for mega-corporation Chem-BioMed (CBM). Everyone talks about "the corporations" as if they were more powerful than the government. The doctor is also making the moves on the commander's main squeeze, Lt. Connie Gomez (Lisa Gastoni). At a party featuring bad fruging to terrible electro-pop music (the one thing that blows in this future), a tipsy Connie makes an amusingly anti-feminist complaint. Tired of being treated "like an equal" and "a buddy," she longs to be seen "as a woman" and rashly accepts Nurmi's suspicious offer to visit CBM's artificial planet Delphus.

Back on Earth, dozens of VIPs are disappearing daily. Halstead is called down to head up a military police force to investigate. Attractive women accompanied by odd-looking genetically engineered henchmen (i.e., goons) are going around abducting people. All the goons are bald and wear sunglasses, caps, and black plastic raincoats. They envelope each victim in their coats, causing them to vanish. (Eventually we learn the abductees are reduced to doll size and carried off in a travel bag.) This gang of women (we'll call them the Doll Squad) has the power to kill people by simply touching them. When a Doll Squad girl or a goon assistant is killed, they simply vanish, leaving behind a pile of clothes. When Halstead and two officers try to arrest three of them, the judo-trained girls put up a hell of a fight, kicking the crap out of the guys before being subdued. Why not use their death-grip ability? That is not explained. In fact, this story is full of things that make no damn sense at all.

This is essentially a futuristic detective story with weird, isolated events that gradually add up to a large-scale conspiracy. The story held my interest due to the mystery format which moves along at a reasonable pace. Originally conceived as a low-budget made-for-TV movie, they had to make do with scale models of cities and space ships that look like something from *Fireball XL5* and *Thunderbirds*. During a chase scene with actual cars, there's a match-cut to a tiny model car crashing that is so fake it's LOL funny. Still, the crude old-school effects give this film a quirky charm.

There are many loose ends and unanswered questions. Why do the goons have cat-like eyes and four arms? With the powers the Doll Squad has, why are the goons needed at all? Why can't the women shrink people? Why do they disintegrate when killed? Why didn't the one dead goon the police find disintegrate? How are the people reduced to doll-size? How could Dr. Nurmi keep his operations secret? Was CBM funding him or unaware of his evil scheme? Why does he want to merge with Connie Gomez into a

single body?

Director Antonio Margheriti is best known for his atmospheric gothic horror films. Like many commercial Italian directors in the '60s, he also did peplum, spaghetti westerns, and spy thrillers. *Wild Wild Planet* was the first, and best, in the Gamma One series of four films cranked out in just three months for MGM. Followed by the disappointing *War of the Planets, War Between the Planets* and *Snow Devils*. The loosely-related *The Green Slime* (1968) is a camp classic by another director.

Cyborg 2087 *(*1966) - When *The Terminator* was released in 1984, James Cameron joked to reporters that the idea came from watching too many late-night sci-fi flicks and *The Outer Limits*. Harlan Ellison saw the film and claimed the basic plot had been lifted from his *Outer Limits* script, "Soldier" (1964). Ellison demanded, and got, credit in the film's title crawl. Ellison's story follows Qarlo, a bred-for-battle infantryman from the war-ravaged year 3000 who's accidentally time-warped back to 1964. An enemy combatant, also brought back from the future, eventually catches up with him in the story's violent climax.

Cyborg 2087 – also possibly influenced by "Soldier" – appears to be the main inspiration for *The Terminator*. Somehow this obscure, low-budget indie slipped under the radar and was forgotten.

The story opens in 2087 with a matte painting of a futuristic city. This society is a totalitarian police state that uses a form of high-tech mind control on its people. The classy Michael Rennie is Garth A7, the titular cyborg. He is sent back in time by freedom fighters in order to change history. State police thugs break into their secret lab just as Garth is transported back to 1966 inside a barrel-shaped chamber. Unfortunately, that's all we get to see of 2087.

Garth's mission is to prevent a scientist, Prof. Sigmund Marx (what a name!), from demonstrating a breakthrough radio telepathy device to the military that will have dire consequences in the future. As in the *Terminator* films, Garth needs suitable clothes to blend in. His fashion-forward jumpsuit, silver boots, and silver ray-gun belt are a tad conspicuous in 1966. He breaks into a clothing store (crushing the door-knob with his bionic hand) and steals an overcoat and fedora. Prof. Marx works at a research lab called (get this) Future Industries. (In the *Terminator* series the company is SkyNet.) Marx is in the same position as SkyNet's Miles Dyson (Joe Morton) in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*.

Garth arrives a bit too late. Marx has just left town. Garth seems to almost give up at this point. He gets involved with his attractive assistant Dr. Sharon Mason (Karen Steele). He has a tiny homing beacon in his chest that must be removed so, she takes him to her colleague/love interest Dr. Carl Zellar (Warren Stevens).

Meanwhile, two cyborg "Tracers" are sent back in time to kill Garth. Their high-tech tracking device is a simple wrist compass. Wearing odd police-like uniforms and helmets, they don't bother to blend in, nor do they steal a car as Garth did. Instead they simply scamper about on foot, looking rather ridiculous running through the city streets at night. Being cyborgs, they have super-human strength and never tire.

For added drive-in youth appeal, a hot-rod comes roaring into the picture delivering a gang of rambunctious, but clean-cut, teenagers – Zellar's daughter and her pals. As Garth is being operated on to remove the tracking device, the kids all dance to generic rock music in the den. Only a high-voltage jolt can destroy the tracking capsule, so Garth breaks into a power station. Why can't he just throw it away or flush it down the drain? He hangs onto it for so long the tracers catch up with him at the power station. (Duh!) An extended cat-and-mouse chase and surprisingly dull fight scene ensues.

The story begins and ends with long sequences shot in an old western ghost town for no particular reason. Most likely this location was available at little or no cost so they shoe-horned it in. There's even a cliché old timer prospector type introduced then dropped from the story. Like an impoverished made-for-TV movie of the week, everything about this film looks cheap. Nothing was spent on special effects or stunts. Garth's

paralyzing ray gun is only given a weak sound effect. The fight scenes between the super-human cyborgs could have been exciting show-stoppers. Instead, the stuntmen flail about and trash a few breakaway props. The basic story is not bad, it's the limp, unimaginative direction and cheap-jack production that makes this just a historical curio for diehard SF fans.

Michael Rennie introduced the world to intelligent SF cinema with *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). By the '60s he was doing decidedly less classy material such as *Lost in Space*, *The Time Tunnel* and *The Invaders*. Karen Steele is best remembered for the 1966 *Star Trek* episode "Mudd's Women".

Fahrenheit 451 (UK, 1966) - Someone thought it would be a great idea to film this classic 1953 American novel in England with a German star, a British cast, and a French director (Francois Truffaut, no less). All talented people, but something is missing. Much like *Blow Up* (the other European "message" movie of 1966), interesting on an intellectual level but overly reserved and lacking in emotional impact. An all-too-common flaw in European cinema. The fifteen-minutes-into-the-future story (set in the postwar 1990s) depicts an oppressive, anti-individual police state with drab practical locations and conservative '60s fashions and decor. Similar in spirit to *1984*, minus the defeatism, with state-enforced book burnings (talk about Kindle Fire) that parallel the Nazi rallies of the '30s. Casting Oskar Werner, with his thick German accent, classic Aryan looks, and black stormtrooper-type uniform, seems a bit too obvious. Another fireman even holds up a copy of *Mein Kampf* to be burned. Okay, we get it.

Truffaut, a fine director of sensitive French dramas about French people dealing with French problems (like having too many mistresses), was all wrong for this story and setting. Similar to Michelangelo Antonioni's failure to understand swinging London in *Blow Up* and America's radical youth in the pretentious, hopelessly European *Zabriskie Point.* (Antonioni specialized in brilliant studies of isolated, miserable Italians with disintegrating marriages in an industrialized, postwar Italy.) All three films are classic examples of good directors losing their bearings and failing to connect with a foreign culture.

Way Out (1966) - Limp, unfunny comedy, even by Jerry Lewis standards, set in the 1990s. The only funny thing is that no attempt was made to create futuristic sets or clothes (besides the moon base where most of the story occurs). On Earth everyone dresses in conservative 1966 business-wear. The irony is that by doing nothing they actually came closer to the actual look of the '90s than most other films that tried to predict future

fashions. Two astronaut couples, Russians and Americans, on the moon engage in a tepid "swinging sixties" sex comedy. The two women wear typically mod '60s outfits. Lewis watches vintage films, including *Frankenstein*, on an extra-wide monitor that resembles today's huge flat-screen TVs.

Moon Zero Two (Hammer Films, 1969) - Directed by Roy Ward Baker, this stars James Olson, Catherine Schell (from *Space 1999*), and Warren Mitchell. Hammer reinvented itself with *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955) and *Quatermass II: Enemy from Space* (1957). Their success bankrolled the studio's relaunch as a gothic horror powerhouse. SF fell by the wayside except for 1967's *Five Million Years to Earth* (also directed by Baker). These were all Earth-bound tales of alien horrors with avuncular scientists in tweed suits explaining all the

technical stuff. Outer space tales were never Hammer's forte. They made only one early attempt with *Spaceways* (1953), a less-then-gripping murder mystery with special effects lifted from *Rocketship X-M*.

This movie rides on the coat-tails of mega-hit *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Considering that the first moon landing was in July of '69, this may also have been knocked out to capitalize on that awe-inspiring event. Unfortunately, Hammer producer Michael Carreras wrote the mediocre screenplay. He penned some of Hammer's lesser scripts (*One Million Years B.C., Prehistoric Women, The Lost Continent*). Roy Ward Baker is a capable horror director, but was ill-suited for this genre.

The film opens with a corny animated title sequence that looks like a Saturday morning cartoon – and resembles the opening to *Way Way Out*. Is this a wacky comedy? No, it's a dry, listless "space western" with a few touches of tongue in cheek humor. In the year 2021 the moon has a large dome-enclosed settlement, Moon City, and a smattering of small mining outposts. As in the Old West, prospectors stake claims and dig mines searching for valuable minerals. Moon City has a Western-themed bar with saloon girls doing awkward modern dance performances in wild wigs – and comically oversized cowboy hats. The type of entertainment one would expect to see on a downscale cruise ship.

Besides the Western trappings, the simple plot comes straight out of an old film noir crime drama. A cynical, down-on-his-luck guy is conned into accepting a sketchy job offer from a shady, aristocratic villain. Throw in a big goon henchman, a damsel-in-distress love interest, zero-gravity hijinks, and some totally predictable plot twists and you have yourself a movie.

James Olson is likable enough as Capt. Bill Kemp, a former astronaut hero (and first man on Mars) reduced to retrieving damaged satellites and other space junk for a living. His aging ship (which looks identical to the Apollo Lunar Module that landed on the moon) is the titular Moon Zero Two. He's hired by wealthy eccentric J.J. Hubbard (Warren Mitchell) to intercept a bus-sized asteroid loaded with priceless sapphires. His task is to install rocket engines on the orbiting asteroid in order to force it to land on the dark side of the moon. He also meets Clementine Taplin (Catherine Schell) who enlists him to find her missing brother, a minor working a claim on the remote dark side.

The story has some dull space sequences with stuntmen swinging around on wires, an unexciting lunar shootout, and a semi-comic low-gravity barroom brawl. Kemp hits a "plot convenience" wall switch that turns off – or at least reduces – the gravity (why would they have such a switch?) just as a fight breaks out and everyone floats around in slow motion. The only entertainment comes from the art direction and Warren Mitchell's underwritten Hubbard character. Sporting a campy monocle, goatee, and purple dressing gown, he's like a discount Bond villain with a bit of Sidney Greenstreet tossed in. He lives in lavish style with two exotic but dumb space-babes who wear provocative outfits and crazy wigs. One amusing touch is a glimpse of this trio playing "Moonopoly", an update of Monopoly, on a circular board. More clever details like that would have elevated this mundane script. The only other worthwhile sights are the futuristic sets and fashions. Moon City copies the gleaming white-on-white minimalist look of Kubrick's *2001* with bits of colorful modern furnishings. The absurd '60s fashions and metallic wigs are very similar to Gerry Anderson's *UFO* series and *Journey to the Far Side of the Sun*. To add a western touch, some guys even wear plaid shirts made of vinyl.

The basic elements for an entertaining movie are here; it's too bad Carreras and Baker lacked the vision and energy to make it work. The serious story fails to mesh with the whimsical, semi-parody bits, making it neither fun nor exciting. There is a handful of realistic, well-designed elements (the moon vehicles, spacesuits, explosions) lost among many clumsy scenes with bad special effects and indifferent direction. Roger Ebert's critique of *The Illustrated Man* also applies here: "... the film finally doesn't work for the same reason that comic Westerns usually fail: Because it's risky to fool around with a genre unless you know what you're doing."

With a then-lavish budget of $1.5 million, this was Hammer's most expensive production – the first in a proposed series of science fiction adventures. The magazine *Castle of Frankenstein* reported in 1970 that Hammer was developing *Disaster in Space, In the Sun,* and *The Day the Earth Cracked Open*. *Moon Zero Two* must have disappointed at the box office as all of these projects evaporated. Hammer returned to cranking out movies about vampires, monsters, and dinosaurs until they folded in 1979.

The Seventies and Beyond

Cinematography in science fiction films also changed and evolved. For years after *2001*, countless films and shows (*Space: 1999, Buck Rogers, Battlestar Galactic*a, et al.) copied Kubrick's stark, hospital/airport lounge look with every inch of set flooded in blinding light. Eliminating shadows and color creates a cold, flat effect. (This only works for the deliberately antiseptic world of *THX 1138*.) No one followed the examples of Mario Bava's *Planet of the Vampires* (1965) and *Star Trek* which used deep-shadow film noir techniques and strategic color-gel spotlights to create atmosphere and drama.

In 1977 *Star Wars* cleverly contrasted the sterile, forbidding look of its evil Empire trappings with the warm tones of the rag-tag rebel alliance. And (for the first time ever) futuristic hardware had a realistic, well-worn appearance. The trilogy, which had nothing to do with our world, also resurrected the fast-paced style, flamboyant visuals, and over-the-top action of the old *Flash Gordon* serials.

By contrast, *Alien* (1979) marks the introduction of gritty, industrial realism to science fiction. Ridley Scott's grimy, working-class ship – with woefully inadequate lighting – became the standard much-imitated look of the future. Almost overnight, space ships and planetary outposts started looking more like dark, dirty oil rigs than the immaculate, light-flooded enclosures (with blinking control panels) from past films.

Alien was partly a remake of *It! The Terror from Beyond Space* (1958); both films use selective, low-key lighting to create a tense mood. (Despite similarities to *Planet of the Vampires,* Scott claims he had not seen that film.) The dark look of *Alien* even seems to foreshadow the film noir revival of the eighties (aka neo-noir).

Blade Runner (1982) - Ridley Scott's follow-up film is a bleak but visually stunning update of the forties detective genre that spawned the term "future noir". Set in Los Angeles in 2019, urban dystopia never looked so good. The film has nothing positive to say about our future, but deserves mention on the strength of its magnificent design – which has influenced almost every film and video game set in the future since its release.

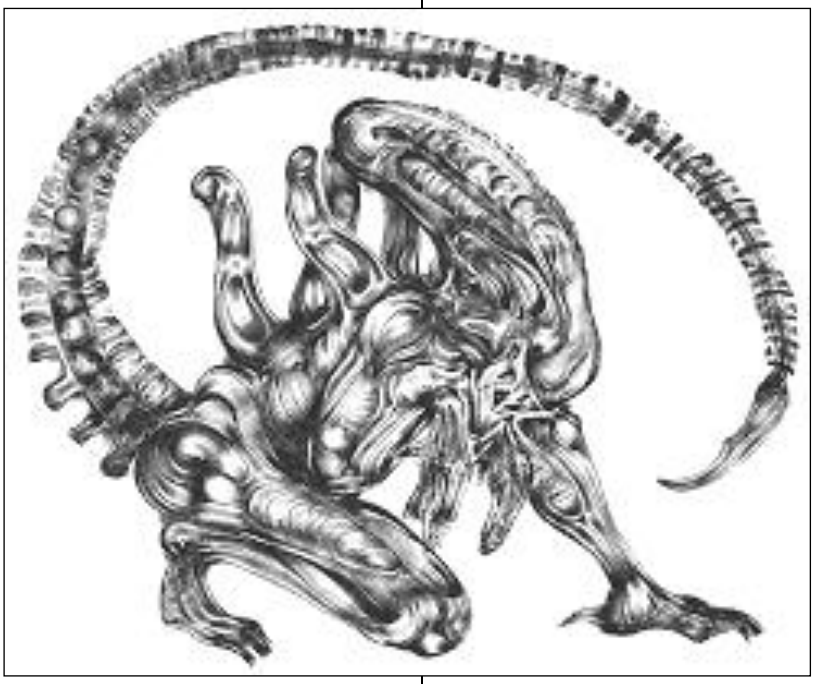
The setting harkens back to *Metropolis*. Once again, the wealthy live in mammoth high-rises that dominate the skyline. The upper classes affect a future-retro forties style with old-fashioned hairdos and big shoulder pads (which had a comeback in the '80s). In fact, the costumes, art direction, and venetian-blind lighting effects went a bit overboard in recreating the vintage film noir ambience.

On the street level, L.A. has degenerated into a murky, pan-cultural sprawl. The over-crowded, polluted city is a garish blend of futuristic Tokyo and Times Square, slowing crumbling in a constant acid rain. A decaying neon jungle inhabited by the dregs of society. Creepy punk rocker types with spiky hairdos and latex overcoats (inspired by the then-current New Wave trend) prowl the streets.

The central plot element is pretty much *The Creation of the Humanoids* taken to a nightmarish and decadent extreme. Instead of "clickers," we have "skin jobs" (human-like robots called replicants) that challenge our concept of humanity. But the narrative, which has all kinds of flaws, is largely lost amid the overwhelming visuals.

This movie is a monumental triumph of innovative set design, art direction, and effects. Scott's preoccupation with visual imagery dominates every other element of the film. Its city of the future is so vividly imagined and

compulsively detailed that it transcends everything else, mesmerizing audiences into believing they were watching a truly great, even classic, science fiction masterpiece. A critical and box-office flop when released, this film is remarkably weak on plot continuity and characterization. Almost nothing is explained coherently as the story awkwardly lurches along in tedious fits and starts. Harrison Ford was never more cold and wooden, displaying no charisma or internal conflict. His dull, lifeless performance as Deckard is the ultimate expression of Hollywood he-man emptiness. (Imagine how Bogart or even Dick Powell could have humanized this role.) Great set design can be a wonderful distraction for a while, but it can't carry a film that has neither strong characters nor a strong story.



This film is also clouded by controversy. Warner Bros. forced Ford to record Chandleresque voice-over narration (which he and Scott both hated) and tacked on a happy ending to soften the depressing, pessimistic story. As a result, there are now umpteen alternate versions of this film (special editions, director's cuts, etc.) to choose from.

In 2008 a *New Yorker* interview with PayPal co-creator Peter Thiel made a few points about our perception of the future that are especially applicable here. "One way you can describe the collapse of the idea of the future is the collapse of science fiction," Thiel said. "Now it's either about technology that doesn't work or about technology that's used in bad ways. The anthology of the top twenty-five sci-fi stories in 1970 was, like, 'Me and my friend the robot went for a walk on the moon,' and in 2008 it was, like, 'The galaxy is run by a fundamentalist Islamic confederacy, and there are people who are hunting planets and killing them for fun.'"

Our expectations for tomorrow have been scaled down as a reaction to current events. *2001: A Space Odyssey* showed commercial space travel on Pan Am (the airline went bust in 1991) and predicted advances in exploration we've failed to realize – even in the sequel, *2010*. (It also had product placement for now-defunct Bell Telephone and Howard Johnson's.) Fortunately, there was no robot war in 2004 as seen in the *Terminator* movies. Next year we will not be seeing the high-tech society of flying cars of Back to the Future II (set in 2015). And the urban nightmare of *Blade Runner* is only five years away.

Unlike the past, our once limitless, soaring vision of the future has become surprisingly limited as we settle for decidedly lesser victories. As Thiel says: "We wanted flying cars; instead we got 140 characters."

Jim Ivers is an artist and occasional writer/copy editor for publishers that have a nasty habit of going out of business. He lives on the precarious, hurricane-menaced coast of Connecticut and currently writes about genre films for an upcoming horror-SF-fantasy genre-zine called ***Mostly Retro Film Journal.***

THE CHORUS LINES

Editorial note: These letters deal not only with our previous issue but other GHLIII publications, *The Zine Dump*, my zine about zines, and my report on the last Worldcon, *The Emphatic Route*. *Spartacus*, my pub of editorial bloviation (I love that word), runs its own lettercol. All can be found on eFanzines.com. In addition, we start with a response to our *current* theme.

Alexis Gilliland
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Thank you for the latest issues of *Challenger* and *Spartacus*, splendid examples of an obsolete -- if not yet extinct – species, the hard copy fanzine. Your note with the former asks if Morrie the Critic might have any thoughts on "da future" to which the answer is yes, but … Morrie and I are far less optimistic than when the Rosinante trilogy was written 35 years ago.

About what am I pessimistic? That fan writers who blog without hard copy seem to be the wave of the future, of course, but also about colonizing space. Nor am I optimistic about civilization's prospects for enduring here on Earth.

Space first: Our robot probes have shown that none of the local planets are suitable for habitation, and the investment necessary to build a habitat on the moon seems prohibitively expensive. The more we learn, the less colonization of space seems to be possible.

Earth second: The short version is that since the start of the industrial revolution we have burned enough fossil fuel to increase atmospheric carbon dioxide by 40 percent, the highest level in nearly a million years, and are already well over the tipping point for climate change. One effect is that the glaciers of western Antarctica are now thought to be irreversibly melting, albeit in a leisurely 200 to 900 years, but there are other effects as well, such as the melting of the Arctic ice cap (which is expected to be totally gone by 2020) and the acidification of the ocean by carbonic acid. Given that we are committed to the use of fossil fuel the level of atmospheric CO2 is going to keep on rising.

Why? About a third of fossil fuel is used for growing, transporting, and storing the food necessary to feed 7 billion people, a population expected to grow to 9 billion by mid-century. No action to prevent a long term catastrophe will be possible if it produces a short term catastrophe, such as a famine. How much fossil fuel are we talking about? Since the beginning of the industrial revolution we have burned 0.5 trillion tons of carbon out of total reserves estimated at 3.0 trillion tons, so we aren't going to run out of coal, oil and natural gas in time to save the environment.

And on that happy note, on to responses to ***Challenger*** *37.*

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Thanks for the dead tree copy of *Challenger* 37. Next time you ask about heroes, I'll write about Don Knuth, or Tony Hoare, or Ed Tufte, or Dalton Trumbo, or Pete Seeger.

While I've read Dennis Dolbear's piece about Katrina several times before, "Of all our angels, I hold these dearest ..." never fails to choke me up.

I look forward to more installments of John Nielsen-Hall's "Startling Accountancy Stories!"

You hear the man, John?

But mostly I wanted to take a moment to praise Rose-Marie's lovely piece about her stepfather. I've heard, read, and edited similar stories of derring-do in the skies over Fortress Europe – including my favorite, in which a stroke of luck allowed my father to live and me to be born. However, Rosy manages to weave Harold's dream existence of a lifetime ago in with the indignities of surviving to remember it. A wonderful tribute to one of a generation of men made extraordinary by routine acts of courage.

On this Memorial Day, thank you to Rosy for writing it, and to Harold for doing it.

*Harold enjoyed a very successful life and career after the war and is comfortable now. He simply has Alzheimer's. Perhaps it isn't how well a man remembers, but how well he **is** remembered, and I doubt Harold will have any problems on that score.*

Gregory Benford
c/o *Challenger*

An unusually fine issue.

Taral Wayne makes a pungent case for the rise of the USA South in culture & politics. It's long held sway in literature. Between 1930 and 1967, the era marking science fiction's rise, the South had twenty-one Pulitzer Prize winners, eight of the twenty-four New York Drama Critics' Circle winners, nine of thirty-two National Book Award winners in poetry and fiction, and of course William Faulkner won the Nobel Prize.

*Faulkner's "That Evening Sun" is the best short story I have ever read, and one of those Southern Pulitzer winners, **All the King's Men**, is in my judgment the best American novel of the 20th century. Of playwrights, only Eugene O'Neill stands above Southerner Tennessee Williams in the American pantheon; both Williams and Robert Penn Warren should have copped Nobels too.*

Politically, somehow, in the minds of millions, the Southern cause – the War of Southern Succession – was not only undefiled by defeat, but the colossal bloodbath actually sanctified the values and ideals of the Old South. And all this was done by the people themselves, not by Nawth'n meddling or falsified history. Scratch a Southerner and you'll find a history buff, a military history buff. We peer backward, almost reflexively. Look away, Dixie land.

America has a unique quality among nations, in that it is a union of disparate societies and their stories. The West has its own culture, likewise the immigrant Northeast, and ours in the South is redolent with bravery and guilt and the brunt of America's racial sin, the regional story most amenable to critical thought and art. The worst of America, slavery, was afforded amazing courage and sacrifice after the foolishness of secession – and from that horror came the country's most significant change: our identity as one nation that survived and continues yet.

I liked Rose-Marie's piece best. I can use some of it in an alternate history I'm writing now with Harry Turtledove.

*Turtledove's alternate history tales **The Guns of the South** and "Must and Shall" blew me away. Pardon me while I reel Rosy down from the ceiling where she's drifted …*

Your own piece on Lillian Hellman was fine as well. Too bad you didn't keep trying to write fiction! You have all the skills.

*As Mr. Heinlein once said when someone asked about a sequel to **Starship Troopers**, "I'm old, not dead!" I'm writing. Slowly, and nervously, but I'm writing.*

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Just finished reading #37 on a laptop screen, picked off from **efanzines.com**, where my zine *Opuntia* will appear from now on. On 2014-03-31, Canada Post raised postage rates to breathtaking heights, which is what killed the print version of *Opuntia*. I have always been a

strong supporter of the Papernet, but not if it pauperizes me.

The expense of paper publishing has become exorbitant, so I too must rely on Bill Burns' magnificent site for most of my distribution. As is obvious, this costs ***Chall*** *in terms of reader response, because for some reason we feel less obligation to LOC an e-zine than a paper one.*

In *Challenger* #37, I can't find anything to comment on regarding heroes because I've never believed in them or worshipped them the way most people seem to need to. What caught my eye was the article on the tax accounting escapades with British Inland Revenue. It suddenly reminded me of my father's last few years before he died in 1996.

Dad was a livestock veterinarian with a successful practice. Self-employed professionals are always an attractive target for Revenue Canada. Dad used a paper-only system set up in 1951 when he started his practice, and still used it in the 1990s. Since he was planning to retire soon, the expense of a computer system wouldn't pay for itself. The bright-eyed young revenue agent sent to audit Dad showed up with a laptop, expecting to be able to download a spreadsheet.

Instead he had to spend several weeks setting up data on his laptop from thousands of slips of paper. He was given a cubbyhole to work in. Dad was usually out on farm calls, so the agent had to ask the secretary/bookkeeper for information. She always brought her German Shepherd to work, who fiercely guarded Marge's office and wouldn't let the agent near her. The agent had to stand at the far end of the corridor and shout for requests. The clinic had several mousing cats, who would visit him just to be friendly and attempt to nest in the masses of papers. The audit revealed my father owed about $90. That was the last time he was audited.

What do you mean you don't believe in heroes? That German Shepherd was a hero! An ancestor no doubt of Rin Tin Tin.

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This will sound strange, and perhaps a little too personal, but I haven't been able to write much of anything other than a few simple poems for more than a month and it's driving me nuts because hey, I am not if I'm not putting my manic mental meanderings to paper in a form that people may be able to read at some point in the future, then what good am I, right?

The reasons for the block? Well, I guess they're easy to note – life realizations about job, housing, money, health, leading to a sudden and all-too-painful break-up with the woman I've dated for most of a decade. Then, a sudden meeting and coming together, and a whirlwind, and a trip and fall, and commitment and on and on and on. It's all a bit much really, my sleep has suffered, though I wouldn't take back any of the lost hours, I'd say. It's hard to see yourself stumble, and then find that you can pick yourself up, only to stumble again and have someone else catch you, and again and again in an orbital cycle, but in one of those trips the words fell out of my pocket and I can't seem to find them to give them away. That's the hard part, you know. I am not someone who can write for himself, I have to put what I work up out into the world somehow, but I

write as my form of coping/celebrating. My darkest times – thousands of words on my failings and flaws. In my brightest hours – thousands of words of how I am not worthy and/or the magic I've managed to touch. I kept Linda up half the night after the Hugo win writing the articles explaining how it felt, and after our break-up...

Nothing.

No words. Not a one. I'd sit up, late into the California morning, and nothing would happen to give me rest, but when I'd take up my computer, there were no words. When the world tries to reconstruct the full story of my life, there will be a lacuna directly at the age of 39. A couple

of Facebook messages, a poem about a dog, a response to *SF Signal*, and this Letter of Comment and/or Article, whatever you choose to read it as. That's all the evidence I've left at the scene of the last 40 or so days. I haven't read much either, though that's not unusual these days. I've watched movies, television, sat and had long conversations, and eaten when I can. I've also lost nearly 30 pounds, have gone Gluten-Free, and am managing to find a little extra work to make a little extra money to afford a little extra rent on a place that provides a little extra comfort.

Like I said, my life's weird right now, and painful sometimes while joyous the next. Something simple, like telling stories of Forry to someone who knows little of fandom other than our local convention, can set me off emotional. at the same time, whether out of shame or timing or the fact that I'm just so damn tired, I've retreated from my friends in local fandom, brooding on my own a lot. I'm just peeking my head out into the world now, tonight I've a dinner planned with Chuck Serface – The King of Men, and maybe that's my return to the world as far as I'm concerned. I'm tender now, I guess, and that is likely why things are hitting so hard when I take the time to encounter them.

I got the new *Challenger*, Guy. How the hell do you do it?

I've been at this fanzine thing for almost a decade (August 2004 was my first LOC to *eI*, my first article at *Peregrine Nations* was that October, the first *Drink Tank* the following January) and I've never managed to put out a single issue with half the flair and style of even an average *Challenger*, and here's one that I would rank as well above-average. The writing is fluid, fascinating. The layout is impressive, though never overly showy (something I am, at times, guilty of) and it all reads so easily, flows so well, fits so neatly into my headspace that it managed to unbind me, even just a little, and I can type what is the longest piece of prose writing I've done since the month of February.

Unless this counts as a prose poem. I'm never sure ...

Reading *Challenger* is always a joy, and when I got to "Herself", likely the finest bit of writing I've read by you, or anyone else for that matter, in ages, I felt a strange sense of disquiet. It's a remarkable document of... well, I'm not sure. That's what amazed me, got me to re-read, and then re-re-read. It wasn't just a "Hey, I happen to have studied with the third finest writer of theatre in the 20th Century" (behind only August Wilson and Sondheim, in my eyes) but it conveyed something else that I had so much trouble putting my finger on. It was a record of a time, one that I missed, though I can still see where the debris it scattered all over Berkeley to this day. It was a record of you as a person, of the GIANT OF LETTERS as a person, and of so much more. I fell in love with this piece, and I've just re-re-re-read it, marveling again at the last three lines, wondering if I have ever been paid so high a compliment for anything I've done by someone I respected nearly so much. I often say I am a lucky, lucky little boy. You're one up on me, Guy.

Taral writes like a wizard asked for a love potion, but who has forgotten his spellbook and has to improvise. There's always magic to it, but it's never what you think it'll be. I love that about his work and why I feel so honored to have been able to run so much of it. This one is a personal favorite. Just so solid.

Chris Barkley, a human being I respect so highly (despite having beaten him for TAFF!) and a writer whose words are brilliantly chosen, gives a look at John Glenn, and though astronauts were never my heroes (Jacques Cousteau, Peter Throckmorton, Robert Ballard, you know, the biggies in the Deep...) but Chris hits the nail on the head with that piece. The Mayhew art with it were just as wonderful, and I am always saddened by the fact that I never got a piece from him, having arrived at the party after he'd already taken his coat and headed out the door. Same with Rotsler, whose works in this issue are so well used.

Dammit, Guy, Lillian was right. "Good" is the word I'd use to describe this issue if I were a man of less adjectives.

Rose-Marie's piece that closes things out is a wonderful moment of ending, and allowed me to close the document the first time feeling ... well, I instantly went to the internet-enabled machine and began this LOCticle for you, should you think it deserves to see the light of day, and began with words I later deleted – "Guy, I've watched *Challenger* 37 take-off and land. And I shall do so again as soon as I find words."

And it looks like I have finally done so.

A unique and powerful letter, Chris. I was loath to interrupt it, so I'll make my point or two now. ***Challenger*** *no. 37 was on the burner for more than a year, during which time I started work on it, stopped, started again, endured wretched distractions, suffered ADHD, thought I'd never get done and never do another issue. Thanks to Rose-Marie, I got over it and the zine finally came to be. I agree with your third-place status for Hellman among 20th Century playwrights, but I'd list Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams as #s 1 and 2. Complete agreement about the articles you mention ... and Joe Mayhew, a good man, great artist, and true believer.*

Lloyd Penney
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Thank you for another huge zine, *Challenger* 37. Amazing cover, looks like he's fresh from Area 51. I hope I can write up a decent LOC, for while I know the name, I really have no first-hand knowledge of Hopalong Cassidy. That's right outside of my own Canadian childhood experience. But, it sure looks like something many American kids grew up with. Hoppy seemed to be the positive example for kids back then; if only we had such positive examples now. The examples kids follow today are horrific, and they explain so much about the world today.

Your brother lives north of Buffalo … hmmm, Tonawanda? North Tonawanda? Niagara Falls, Queenston or even Youngstown? I may be going to an event in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario this coming September, and it is right across the river from Youngstown.

You're close!

Yvonne and I sat down and had a good look at our finances. I haven't worked since a couple of weeks marking Grade 10 literacy tests, and Yvonne was laid off, with her job going to Chilicothe, Ohio. She's at her second interview of the day as I write, and I am waiting for word from a great interview I had. We could put the whole thing on the credit card, but we are trying to pay them off. So, our decision is … no London Worldcon for us. We've cancelled our hotel room, and we are on the brink of selling our memberships. Once again, we will have to live vicariously through others. Some have said, hey, now you can come to Detcon 1. Nope, that's not affordable either. We've got to save some money and replenish the bank accounts.

I didn't know Lynn Hickman well, but we did correspond here and there, and we met at a Midwestcon, if I recall correctly. He gave me a few of his apazines, and I LOCced them, and we exchanged zines and LOCs until he passed away.

I've certainly followed books on fanhistory, and I've got my copies on the shelf beside me, but I tried watching *The Big Bang Theory* … yawn, like most television these days. The one episode I watched (or part of it…I changed the channel after about 15 minutes) I found vaguely offensive. Haven't seen any of it since.

You're not the only one who's been put off by ***BBT****; a close friend* ***refuses*** *to watch it. He's a Cal Tech grad and I got the feeling he thinks it offensive to people with brains. I don't watch it. I really liked Williams' article about it, though.*

John Glenn served many as a hero figure when he was launched into space, but I know that hero status took a tarnishing when he went into politics. Going back into space that one time allowed him to polish the reputation again, and become a hero once more. How much of that was done to get public interest in the shuttles going again, and how much to restore Glenn's lustre?

Stephen Hawking's hanging on to life and still making momentous discoveries and thinking the newest ideas has been a great boon for all of us; I just hope he can keep it up. He's lived much longer than anyone expected, probably even him. I wish he could spend time with student groups, and with us, too, but I certainly understand how busy he is. While I certainly understand how Edgar Rice Burroughs would be a hero to Mike Resnick, I have nothing to say about Lillian Hellman.

After all the reports on Worldcon, and seeing what bids are coming up, I know I will miss London, and all the things that will happen there. But, we have truly become local fans, with no out of town travel at all, so just local cons (and Saturday only), and, hate to say it, no more Worldcons. Just too expensive for us. New Orleans in 2018? Have fun, everyone!

Yvonne is not an accountant, but is a master at accounts payable. She's had her share of adventures when it comes to paying the

company's bills. One thing she does say to others who say that accounts receivable brings in the money is that AP pays the bills on time, and is therefore the guardian of the credit rating. I can count on the fingers of one hand how many companies know that…

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In *Challenger* #37, the JFK conspiracy that is mentioned seems very familiar. I think I saw the movie. It was called "The Boys from Harvard." A Demented Democrat gains control of the Harvard cloning lab. Nobody suspects anything sinister is going on until a spunky girl reporter becomes suspicious of the Demented Democrat and his 112 identical nephews.

I never met Lynn Hickman. I thought *Pulp Era* was a very fine publication. I don't know whether issues of *Pulp Era* are available on line, but they should be.

I remember Hopalong Cassidy as an image. When I was a little kid I watched Hopalong Cassidy movies every weekend. I don't remember any of the details of those movies. My mother commented that William Boyd had been a

matinee idol in his younger days. She also said he was almost too old to get on a horse by the time he made the Hopalong Cassidy movies. She has seen William Boyd's movies in theaters, and didn't seem to like the progression from matinee idol to cowpoke.

In an issue on heroes, Hawking and Feinman are scientists as sorcerers. They're in the same league with Dr. Zarkov. Both men seemed to have active senses of humor. The fact that they thought of funny-peculiar things for a living might have something to do with it. They had to be able to free associate ideas as part of their job. While free associating, they inevitably came across things that were funny-amusing. We might have a whole new universe if we hired comedy writing teams to do physics.

The effect of Edgar Rice Burroughs was something like Dorothy arriving in Oz. It's as if the real world is in black and white and Burroughs' world is in Technicolor. In a Burroughs story, you would never think you were in Kansas.

Somehow, I always knew that storytellers routinely claimed their stories were true. On thinking about it, I have no idea how I knew it. I read the some of the Shaver Mystery stories before I read Burroughs. Unlike the fans of the period, I didn't worry about Shaver's claims for even a moment. It was only later that I figured out Shaver was entirely out of his mind.

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When all else fails, resort to the Internet Movie Database. Hoppy's loyal sidekick *[that's Hopalong Cassidy]* was Edgar Buchanan, later of *Petticoat Junction*. Somehow a guy who runs a place out in the country called "Shady Rest" and has three young women who bathe evidently without anything seems a little … suspicious ... these days. But as you pointed out, the others got all the girls.

The IMDB has an almost draining list of people who appeared on the show. One was Hugh Beaumont, he of *Leave It to Beaver.* Incidentally, he was an ordained minister (and Edgar Buchanan got started as a dentist). Another guest star later appeared in his own show. Clayton Moore.

Robert Mitchum earned his first movie credit as a "henchman" in a Hopalong Cassidy movie, ***Hoppy Serves a Writ*** *(strange title). George Reeves was in it too.*

And now we get into what is becoming all too often a big part of fanzines these days. You talk about "dead fanzines walking," what is it when every zine seems to feature obituaries? I remember that hotel where that ConCave was,

though I wasn't at that particular ConCave where he busted the roast. The hotel was glad to get the business; it meant a full building during the slow season. Even if we had to hoist Annette Carrico up a flight of stairs by hand (no elevator, and Annette had had polio and was wheelchair bound, while the con suite she ran so well was on the second floor).

You never get over a death, but you come to terms with it.

As the kid who got the teacher to bring a TV set to second grade so we could watch the *Friendship 7* launch, I can understand Chris Barkley's position on Senator Glenn perfectly. You do know that ever since the death of Gherman Titov, he is the Senior Person In Space? And still going, sixteen years after that last flight Chris was commemorating.

Hawking's another one still going, and with an even more improbable success. In fact, I am beginning to wonder if he was misdiagnosed. Or is he one of those genetic rarities who just doesn't react the same as the rest of us? As one of the few people to play himself on Star Trek, he has an additional notoriety.

Given that apo'strophes are one of the hall'marks of a certain brand of fantasy, perhaps Mich'el W'ard might have wanted to reconsider …

That bit about ERB writing himself into the story is also remarked on by Richard Lupoff in *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure*. It connected the story to the reader's world. You do know that ERB was a veteran of the Seventh Cavalry, and tried to get into the Rough Riders but was turned down?

He seems to have started doing research after it was pointed out to him that there aren't any tigers in Africa. For example, the Napier family was a famous British-Indian military clan, so it makes sense that a young heir would marry a Yank with the ready, and then, their nipper would go about with the natives.

Milt Stevens has a good time at parties. I was more than a little surprised to hear some friends of Lisa's talk about how InConJunction didn't have any parties. It seemed somehow sad. Then, this year, our con, ConGlomeration, didn't have any parties.

But I have grown less capable of parties of late. Somehow, the ones I encounter seem to feature black lights and loud music, so anyone under 18 can still get drinks and not be caught at it. What has fannish partying come to? Maybe, in its way, the same thing as fanzines.

Martin Morse Wooster should remember that line from "The Advent on Channel Twelve": "whereinto men enter with their children, their silver and their wits, and wherefrom they go out with their children only." Kornbluth was so sharp you bled.

Lloyd Penney says that it was never so easy to contact people as it is today. And you end up talking to their voice mail, too.

And here's another lost one, Dennis Dolbear; survived Hurricane Katrina only to pass away. Let us sit upon the ground and tell sad stories of the death of fen.

There's a moderately well-known picture of a B-17 flying along held together by only the floor. The fuselage is completely broken through. Those planes were overdesigned; one of those modern planes made of ultra-modern composites, stressed to the limit, would have no reserve strength, as it were.

For those who want to find out more about *Bad Time, Inc*. and the rest of the 457th Bombardment Group (Heavy), they have a web page: **http://www.457thbombgroup.org/**

Their successor unit, the 457th Air Expeditionary Force, was temporarily activated in 1993 and again in 2003.

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Many thanks for *Challenger* 37. Guy, I've been writing LOCs to *Challenger* for 20 years, and I first met you in 1988, when you led a breakfast expedition to Commander Brennan's. I had no idea you had an MFA and were that committed to fiction writing. I never went for the MFA because when I was at Beliot College I realized I did not have the aptitude for fiction. (I joke that Kristine Kathryn Rusch, who attended Beliot for one year when I was there, decided to become a novelist at the moment I decided not to be one.) So congratulations for having the persistence to go to graduate school.

I thought your profile of Lillian Hellman was interesting. Hellman's commandment that

"writers steal" is not quite right. What is more accurate to say is literary inspiration can come from anywhere. Bill Patterson's Heinlein biography says that one winter day in 1956 the Heinleins kept opening the door but Pixie the cat didn't want to go out into the snow. "Oh, she must be looking for the door into summer," Virginia Heinlein said, and Robert A. Heinlein said, "Hold that thought," and started writing like mad, and had the novel *The Door into Summer* finished in record time. (*Stranger in a Strange Land* was *much* harder to write.)

As for "Bartleby the Scrivener" Katie Boyer has a very good novella in the May/June *Fantasy & Science Fiction* called "Bartleby the Scavenger" which began when she misheard the title of Melville's story and decided to play with a different theme. I don't know the Melville story, but I gather the only point of connection is that both stories have a character named Bartleby who is a slacker. The novellas in *F&SF* are to my mind the best stories and Boyer's variation on Melville's theme is well worth reading.

I know Dennis Dolbear was a close friend of yours and although I didn't know him, I'm glad you reprinted the memoir he wrote for an earlier issue. When I was in New Orleans in 2010 everyone had Katrina stories. The cabbie that took me to Union Station, for example, transported people to Houston during Katrina. But what Dolbear did was admirable and people need to remember his story. I would hope sometime you would write a lengthier reminiscence of your friend.

I enjoyed learning from David B. Williams' piece that John Michel was booted from the Communist Party for poor attendance. I of course have read many stories of thinkers who were expelled from the Party for various deviationist heresies. But Michel is the first person I ever heard of to be expelled by Commie truant officers! (However, Communism would be the sort of faith that attracts hall proctor types!)

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Outstanding front cover by Ron Sanders. The alien gentleman depicted reminds me of classic *Star Trek*: "The Empath" and "The Menagerie". Oh, and also the Martians in *Mars Attacks!* (A brief aside: why is it that artists give aliens gigantic craniums? Are their brains that much bigger than ours? Does brain size matter in terms of intelligence? Now back to the artwork under discussion.) Sanders has created a dark and foreboding presence, and the old man's face appears very sad. I take it he's been using that orb to watch the news reports coming out of Washington, D.C. lately. If he's smart, he'd turn that ship around fast and get out of this solar system. Either that or do the best thing possible: fire up their Explosive Immodium Q-36 Space Modulator gun and blow up planet Earth. After all, it is blocking their view of Venus.

The theme of heroes in this issue is a good one, and there are certainly many good heroes mentioned herein. I have my heroes, too, notably all astronauts and baseball players.

In fact, growing up in suburban Minneapolis, Minnesota, I was a big Twins fan and went to many a ballgame with my family at Metropolitan Stadium, now long gone and the site of the Mall of America. Fast forward to July, 2004. I am walking out of Minute Maid Park in downtown Houston, Texas, with my 8 year old son Daniel, who is wearing his Minnesota Twins little league uniform, and spy an older gentleman

standing in front of the hotel we're walking towards (our van was parked nearby somewhere, I knew, just couldn't remember exactly where that was) and he looked familiar.

As Daniel and I got closer, my suspicions were confirmed: it really *was* Hall of Famer Harmon Killebrew, one of my boyhood Twins heroes. When we were about ten feet from him, he looked at us, smiled kindly at Dan in his uniform, and I tried to say as calmly as I could, "Good evening, Mr. Killebrew." He responded in kind, saying, "Hey, I like your uniform, young man," to Daniel. At that point I told Dan that when I was a kid I used to watch Harmon Killebrew smash baseballs out of the park. A lot.

Killebrew asked me, "Say, do you know Houston very well?" Sadly, I didn't, telling him, "No, my family lives in College Station, but I'm from Minneapolis originally."

That got his attention. So for the next fifteen minutes we walked and chatted while he tried hailing a cab – for some reason, they were scarce that night – and I tried locating our van. At one point we were discussing the fact that Miguel Tejada had won that night's *Home Run Derby* (the All Star Game that year was being held at Minute Maid Park), and Harmon commented how surprised he was by Tejada's power display. "Didn't see that one coming," he added.

"Neither did I," I replied. "But baseball is funny that way. Heck, I'm still astonished that you were traded to Kansas City."

Killebrew whirled, and exclaimed, "So was I!? We laughed, talked some more, and finally he corralled a taxi and went off to meet some friends – other Hall of Famers, I'm sure – for a late dinner, and Dan and I located our vehicle and went home. In an issue of *In a Prior Lifetime* there is a photo I took of Killebrew with my son. I shall locate that and forward that picture to you.

Of all the heroes in this issue, I have to admit that after reading your tribute to Dennis Dolbear, I certainly agree with you: he is a hero in my book, too, dealing with Katrina's aftermath and getting his mother and himself out of New Orleans alive. An epic tale. I am glad I finally had the chance to meet him at DeepSouthCon 49. What a gentle man! He is still missed by many.

Dennis "gentle"? Well, let's just say he was a soft touch and leave it at that. It's been more than a year since we lost him; none of his many many friends can believe it.

Lots of great articles in here, too. The stand-outs, in my humble opinion, were by Greg Benford, Dennis Dolbear, Mike Resnick, and Curt Phillips. Taral Wayne's article was interesting reading, too, and I most definitely hope he's wrong in his prediction of how the USA will end up. A scary slippery slope scenario, that's for sure.

All in all, a fine, fine issue, my friend, and I thank you for sending it my way.

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What an issue! Unusual circumstances meant I actually got to *read* this one, and it's fascinating, fun, and alive to the point of making me think it must be your best yet [which may just mean I now know what I've been missing]. Anyway, good for you, and here's an overlong LOC.

Hopalong Cassidy has reappeared on a station of old TV shows, letting me see the TV version, as I hadn't before, having met him through a short film (16mm) my grandfather had. The station [COZI-TV, I think] also has *Roy Rogers*, *The Lone Ranger* [John Hart – before, I'd only seen Clayton Moore episodes], *Maverick* [hooray!], and *The Avengers* [only Tara King so far, alas, but one hopes …]. There are now enough such channels that "everything old is new again."

Greg Benford's article was fascinating, provoking (besides envy) two comments. By the way – the book he kindly autographed for me long

ago was among the 5000+ lost in "the wreck of the *Hesperus*" (when my Atlanta place was ransacked and burned out while I was caregiving here), so if it turns up anywhere (a) I did *not* part with it voluntarily, and (b) I want it back.

The first comment is that the "bubbles" of tiny [to us] universes offer a good explanation of H. Beam Piper's "paratime." Each choice generates a bubble that lasts (and grows) as long as the choice's consequences are meaningfully different from the one in which it was created; hence, the full alternate timestreams Piper sketched and the long continuation of any major bubble [such as ours]. Of course this entails bubbles *having* bubbles, but that really poses no problem. Piper's race of Paratimers would have found/developed a transporter to follow wormholes between the bubbles related to their main bubble. [And I *still* want to adapt that book for the screen someday.]

The other comment relates to the accelerating expansion of the universe, which I'm pleased to see confirmed (my former sources weren't as reliable). With accelerating expansion, "dark matter" falls to Ockham's razor: we no longer need it to explain the phenomena that lead to positing it. Anything that accelerates long enough [and a lot of the universe's contents have had long enough], no matter how slow the rate of acceleration, must eventually reach and exceed lightspeed [widely-accepted theories to the contrary notwithstanding]. In fact, it probably isn't even necessary to attain transluminosity to see the effect that leads to positing "dark matter." In the Ground Observer Corps, in days with many prop planes, we learned that we could see a prop plane by looking where its sound was, but had to look "ahead" of a jet's sound to see the plane. Since many of the jets in question weren't supersonic, there may be a comparable state for objects that haven't yet crossed the light barrier; but the transluminous case makes it easiest for people to see that an object can "outrun" its light, as a supersonic aircraft "outruns" its sound. The point is, "dark matter" would simply be the *actual* locations [centers of gravitational attraction, so probably centers of mass] of objects which have "outrun" their light-signatures. From their light-signatures, we should be able to calculate, by trajectories and rates of acceleration, where they "really" are and, with care, distinguish celestial objects that have "outrun" their light from those whose light-signatures still coincide with their centers of mass. It would take access to data on starfields and notable areas of "dark matter" to do it – plus computing power to winnow gravitational patterns, as well as doing the trajectory and acceleration calculations for candidates – but should be pretty straightforward for anybody who has those tools. [Needless to say, I'd like a cut when you (or a pal) get(s) a Nobel for finding the first one, since seeing that accelerating expansion makes Ockham's razor applicable should count for *something*.]

MIB seems to have had quite a few adventures since we met briefly at a Halloween party at Toni Weisskopf's house. I'm interested to learn Steve and Suzanne have a friend named BearBear, since a Mib-sized gentleman named BearBear keeps Gally company [Leo-9, property of Gwaihir, my Rx-7, who eventually admitted he was Gally-Leo-9]. The Dunadan [my dark-green Ranger, hence the name] is guarded by Bruno [a bear who's also a backpack] and XatCat [a Mib-sized tiger who joined the family after ZumZum, a Mib-sized and highly adventurous hedgehog, somehow made a complete getaway (may he be safe and well, wherever he is)].

Mike Resnick's ERB article explained a lot to somebody who'd read little Burroughs. It's a tactic I saw used well when I finally read *Lost Horizons* (as in Shangri-La); but I hadn't realized it was as much part of Burroughs' style as "the Burroughsian coincidence."

Lillian Hellman sounds like quite a person and I envy you the chance to become so well acquainted with her. I wonder what she would have made of **the Accountancy story**. . . .

Thanks for **the Dolbear survival account**, which I hadn't seen before – and R.I.P. I didn't know him as well as you did, but definitely enjoyed his zines and the occasions I saw him at cons.

Is **Charlie Williams** (illos) the one I swapped guitar-noises with at a long-ago DSC on the coast of Georgia?

*Maybe – **three** Charlies Williams were active in Southern fandom for many years, including one beautiful lady (Charlotte).*

Taral Wayne's 24 Hours mentions the desirability (and rarity) of "an educated, unselfish vote" but doesn't mention the "information costs"

that face the average citizen who wants data from sources that don't have a stake in the outcome. It takes time to average out "spin" and to escape the "groupthink" effect of associates whose agreement makes even mistaken views look unquestionable.

Ancient gold coins may bring a reasonable return, but friends whose gold did *not* have numismatic and antiquity value report that reputable jewelers only give 50% of the gold weight value [lest the price shift before they melt/sell it] and less reputable gold buyers have false scales and offer even less.

Taral's remarks on anti-Toronto-ism remind me of the German [scholar? officer?] met at the National Defense University who remarked that, from what he'd seen, Canada wasn't a country but an NGO [non-governmental organization]. Of course, no NGO would have Rob Ford as CEO …

Bad Time, Inc. is *excellent* – and I should expatiate further on that comment except I just saw how Long this is [or *Why It's a Good Thing I Rarely Read/Comment Zines* – which also explains why I'm not in apas anymore: mailing comments that exhaust readers, me, and printing supplies before there's any Substance in a zine. Sigh.] I trust Guy will edit this – or just not bother with it – but it was fun getting to actually *read* a zine again.

We've shared fandom since we both joined the Southern Fandom Press Alliance in January 1970, and I've always been a Bink-fan. I don't see enough of you or your writing these days, so … I'm printing the whole thing!

Concluding with a LOC on my Worldcon report, ***The Emphatic Route*** *…*

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I read your LoneStarCon report, and enjoyed it. I have a few comments.

Your praise for this Kauffman person is fulsome and perhaps overblown. He has a name almost the same as mine – interesting. I spell "Kaufman" with only one "f," while he spells it with two of them.

You should meet him. He's not a bad guy.

Did you also see his wife, Suzanne Tompkins, aka Suzle?

Did indeed, and was dizzied with delight. Too much so to record her presence, obviously. (I rudely failed to mention seeing her in my report.)

FYI, we now get our paper from Costco, where we also get the copying done.

An explanation. Jerry's excellent perzine, ***Littlebrook****, is printed on an attractive brownish paper on which I've often commented.*

I barely saw any of the Guests of Honor – not their interviews, speeches, or panels, except for Leslie Fish's performance during the Masquerade. And she's not at all to my taste.

I saw Lezli Robyn's interview of Jay Lake. By that time, her voice was so poorly that it was almost like watching Jay interview himself.

Paolo Baciagalupi is perhaps my favorite new writer of the past five years. I've read *Wind-up Girl* and the short story collection, *Pump House Six*. Both brilliant and disturbing.

Alas, the author's recent ***Zombie Baseball Beatdown*** *failed to live up to his previous work – in a way, I would have been disappointed if it had.*

Your notes are worthless, all right. "Fandom in its Jammies" was my breezy suggestion for our panel, referring to the idea that we could all work, shop, and perform fanac at home, dressed any way we wanted – in our pajamas, underwear, whatever. We were supposed to be talking about the Internet's effects on fandom, and I thought we were skewed too old. The original line-up didn't have any women in it, so Spike added Jeanne Mealy. We did a lot of bloviating on the subject.

Your next panel was moderated by Terry Floyd of the Bay Area.

Any time you want to vote in the FAAN Awards and make them less cliquish, you can do so, and so can Rich Lynch.

I always vote in the FAANs, and even named a winner or two in this past balloting.

The moments I remember from the Hugos were less transcendent, like Tom Veal looking at what was supposed to be his Big Heart Award and realizing it was something else. And Chris Garcia hugging nearly every Hugo or other award winner as they went by him. And Bob Silverberg doing his usual "I'm not going to delay handing out this award" shtick – and still I laughed.

As did I. Bob is the most skillful MC/speaker in SFdom.

Backing to the Masquerade, did you know that the centauress was costumed as a character from an independent comic book of a few years ago that featured a family of German centaurs? Donna Barr was the artist and writer. As for Janice Gelb's group of *Star Trek* redshirts singing and dancing about all the ways a redshirted character could die, I didn't hear all the lyrics, but I got the over-all joke. I'm not sure if your comment that "her skit was an in-joke among Australian fans" was your own straight-faced joke or not.

I got the impression that the gag parodied a public service message seen on Melbourne TV, but it was funny no matter what its source.

WAHFle House: Jason Burnett

Resnick on Baycon

Continued from p. 22

He finally does finish after another half hour, and Bob hands out the Hugos and we all head for the showers (literally), and think, well, we've lived through *that;* what else could possibly go wrong?

(Well, we were young and naive.)

The committee had been expecting a con maybe half the size of what Baycon actually became, and they had almost no programming planned for Labor Day/ But this was the year that not only the hippies and the druggies discovered us, but SCA also decided to attend. (For the uninitiated, SCA is the Society for Creative Anachronists, a club of medievalists.) And SCA came to the con's rescue. Don't worry about programming, they said; we'll hold a joust on the lawn Monday morning.

So, about nine hours after Phil Farmer stopped speaking, just about everyone at the con was out on the lawn to watch the first match. And because of the heat, and the fact that fans aren't always the neatest people in the world, the maids opened all the doors and windows to air the rooms out.

The first match was between a couple of burley swordsmen, each carrying a huge sword that looked just like Conan's, only heavier. And because it was already over one hundred degrees, they decided to have their match in the shade of an old tree that had some lovely low-hanging branches.

The referee (or whatever one calls him) gives the signal to begin, the first guy lifts his huge sword over his head prior to charging his opponent – and the blade knocks a couple of wasp nests off a branch. The wasps, considerably brighter than the fans, instantly race out of the sunlight into the open rooms, and five seconds later maids and late sleepers run screaming out of the hotel.

Carol turns to me and says, "Let's go to the airport."

I say, "But our flight doesn't leave for another five or six hours."

She says, "Where would you rather be – there or here?"

We go to the airport.

Bob Silverberg and I were reminiscing about Baycon awhile back. One thing neither of us could understand was why, if it was your first convention, you ever attended another.

Greg's report first appeared in his brother Jim's FAPAzine, and appears by permission of the author.

GB, Brian Aldiss, Bob Silverberg

AFOOT AT LONCON…

Gregory Benford

Contested Ground

Strolling the streets before Loncon, I saw how the London world works: Autocratic hypercapitalism (Russia, China, some of southeast Asia) without Western checks and balances produces new elites whose dream is then an American or British lifestyle, with education for their children. Having made it big in autocratic countries with corrupt legal systems (if that), a cowed press and rampant corruption, oligarchs and crony capitalists wake up one day and find that they like nothing as much as democratic systems under the rule of law held accountable by an independent press.

They know how their own capricious systems really work, so they buy into the rule of law by acquiring real estate in London, NYC, LA, Paris--driving up prices in prime markets so those with incomes stagnant or falling get pushed aside, unless they already own. American debt bought by Asian governments, notably the Chinese, gives Asians access to credit-fueled American markets and consumers so Asians lend America money to police the world. Balance depends on American-underwritten stability. They know it, so surface conflict often masks inextricable links. China blusters about their neighbors over worthless islands, but won't tip any scales.

So London streets abound in foreign accents returning money to our economies. Women in saris, business suits and skimpy summer dresses blend with those in full chador—whom I still find creepy. Many long-term Londoners resent the foreign money and rising costs. The virtues of the big-city West are a contested ground, much envied.

John and Judith Clute now find themselves surrounded by a pricey neighborhood, they said, as we were getting into the crowded

elevator at the Loncon center. Noting the German manufacturer, I said, "So … this is Schindler's lift?" Everyone laughed, the Germans a little uneasily.

Pros & Cons

It was a diffuse, crowded worldcon. I avoided the Hugos and found many friends in restaurants doing the same. The tenor of fandom and prodom alike in the last few years has been odd, with many politically correct factions vying, playing Capture the Flag for victimhood status. The worldcon-com's instant decision to dump its already invited Hugo host--in a sort of PC panic, because some thought he might make non-PC jokes--led many to avoid the whole thing – including Neil Gaiman, who got them the invitation.

"What kind of jokes will you use?" I asked one of the co-hosts, Geoff Ryman. "None," he said. Reports say it was dull indeed. At least the closing-ceremony audience singing "Happy Birthday to You" to Brian Aldiss, who was 89 that day, was a fitting end.

In Loncon's aftermath, the internet journalists piled on. Especially grating was http://www.dailydot.com/opinion/growing-generation-gap-changing-face-fandom.

The *Daily Dot* held that *"Worldcon is like a family reunion," said longtime convention-goer and fanzine writer Curt Phillips, at a panel about the history of Worldcon. After a few days, I could only agree. It was indeed like being at a family reunion, in that it felt like you were spending your time with elderly relatives. You might want to talk to them and listen to their stories, but you'll have to tolerate some offensive and outdated opinions along the way.*

On 8-10 August there had been a Nine Worlds Con—"about gaming, film, cosplay, fandom, literature, science, geek culture, meeting people and having a really big party." An agreeing *Daily Dot* reader said, "A media con, Nine Worlds went out of its way to be as accepting and safe as humanly possible, distributing color-coded lapel clips to indicate your level of comfort when interacting with strangers. A red clip meant "leave me alone." A green clip, and you'd soon be making friends. You could also wear a badge with your preferred gender pronouns, and there were jugs of ice water in all the hallways in case anyone got dehydrated."

A fan, Eric Penner, answered, "To a certain extent, Worldcon's size is a barrier to this kind of inclusivity. A 10,000 person behemoth may not be able to implement gender pronoun badges or a color-coded social interaction system, not just because of the sheer volume of people, but because half of them would dismiss it as politically correct nonsense."

Another fan added, "Yeah, because those badges ARE politically correct nonsense. The system was developed for people with autism. They don't pick up on social cues very well, so it would be of benefit to them."

Another fan differed: "If you were a newcomer attending Worldcon by yourself, or if you were used to the kind of fandom that focuses on things like racebent fanart, slash fanfic, and intelligent pop-culture critique, then you weren't going to have much fun.

A counter view: "They were informed about issues of discrimination in fandom and were capable of having public discussions about racism and rape culture without having to field noisy interruptions from their peers."

Mike Kerpan said in retort: "It seems to me that the whole screed from the *Daily Dot* can be summed up as 'I can't have fun when 'old people' are in the same building as me and enjoying themselves.'"

Another said: "What I suspect is really the problem in this article is not so much a generation gap as a "media gap". Journalism has been consistently been getting more shallow, vulgar, sensationalistic, and celebrity driven. It's clear from reading output from any but the more elite forms of the media that increasingly "journalists" are not well read and sadly, from a less distinguished pool of people who are not all that bright and not very well educated. The same people who are making the decisions to get rid of book reviews in newspapers and are incapable of understanding any kind of historical reference from before their teen years are the same kind of bozos who would not appreciate a focus on conventions with a literary focus. And aren't the writers and editors of the Daily Dot lucky that they will never grow old?"

Then David Gerrold chimed in: " Mostly, if you look around at the crowds, at the audiences

in the room, if you look at all the various gatherings, the masquerades, the gaming rooms, the media rooms — if you look and see who's just sitting around and chatting with who, you'll more often see groups that are age-blind. You don't see that in a lot of other places — but you do see it in fandom, where people of all different ages interact without age being a judgment on ability or insight."

Very sound comments, I thought. Some media fan areas are declining, too. I've even noticed among younger fan friends how the superhero motif has dried up for them. . The dispersal of interest groups affects other cons, too. An sf pro friend sent me this comment after guesting at DragonCon,

"Just got home from DragonCon in Atlanta, feeling trampled and a bit dejected. The attendance figure I heard for this megacon was 75,000; it was spread out over four large convention hotels and just about took over the entire downtown area. But if there were more a dozen or so people who'd ever heard of me or my work, they kept themselves hidden. And the ones I met were mainly 50 and older. I'm seriously considering writing space opera for my next novel … that seems to be the closest to traditional SF that the younger readers want to get. Still, it was an all-expense paid trip, so I can't complain (much)."

Hating Lovecraft

Amid this busy August Daniel José Older launched a petition on Change.org <www.change.org/the-world-fantasy-award-make-octavia-butler-the-wfa-statue-instead-of-lovecraft>

As Kevin J. Maroney – speaking for himself as editor of *NYRSF* – said, "This is to request that the World Fantasy Award administrators replace the current award statuette, a (haunting, grotesque, lovely) Gahan Wilson bust of H. P. Lovecraft, with a statuette of Octavia Butler. N.K. Jamison says as of today, the petition has just short of 1400 signatures, including mine. I signed it because it identifies a serious problem; I signed it with reluctance because the proposed solution is not the right one.

"Older's petition offers a threefold argument: First, that Octavia Butler was an exemplary writer 'across the imaginative genres from science fiction to historical fantasy to horror.' Second, that Lovecraft was an avowed racist and that his image on the award is deeply discomforting to recipients, especially those who are among the races that Lovecraft held in particular contempt (i.e., any skin color other than white). Third, that Lovecraft was a terrible wordsmith."

Kevin concludes: "I urge the World Fantasy Convention to decide quickly on a replacement that can fairly represent all of fantasy and all of its audience and creators, whether it be an iconic creature such as a dragon or chimera (Mamatas' suggestion); a map (my own preference) or a book; or something more abstract still. HPL's head should be retired as soon as possible, not out of disrespect for Lovecraft as a writer or as a central figure in fantasy, but as a courtesy to generations of writers whom the WFA hopes to honor."

But … as Nick Mamatas put it: "This is a ridiculous petition for several reasons. The one non-ridiculous reason is that H.P. Lovecraft's racism stains his legacy and upsets many people, as well it should. Granted. With that out of the way, let's discuss the reasons.

"1. Octavia Butler was not known as a fantasist, did not write fantasy for the most part, and did not primarily identify as a fantasist. The one big exception is *Kindred*, which she declared a 'grim fantasy,' even as critics have suggested that it is SF about genetics and evolutionary psychology.

"2. She's a well-loved figure though, which means that there's a lot of enthusiasm for the petition *right now*. It also potentially makes a heavy brickbat for anyone who comes out against the petition. A few years ago, some people tried to rally HWA to get the Bram Stoker First Novel category named after Charles Grant...who had little to do with first novels other than having published one himself. (He did cultivate new authors via short stories.) When some objected to the name change, there were all sorts of quivering lips and lamentations that garsh too bad people don't care that Charlie is moldering in the ground, alone and forgotten sniff ... So, you were either in favor of the name change, or in favor of digging Grant up and shitting on his corpse, you meanie. Or, shorter: it is always a bad idea to make a

person into a prize, since the prize is then tied to the reputation of the person. (Sometimes prizes are designed to rehabilitate a reputation, a la the Nobel.) With writers, whose works are always up for reappraisal, this is especially fraught. The Lovecraft/World Fantasy issue is an example of that. Is Butler's reputation so fully bulletproof, forever? Don't count on it.

"3. The petition also claims that Lovecraft was 'a terrible wordsmith.' Wrong. Lovecraft was a superior writer. As I put it on Twitter, 'he had a pretty clear aesthetic and used polyphony well to build authority for the ineffable.'"

Noting this, Baron Groznik said, "It's interesting to see two factions fight over a trophy, and both totally missing the point of HP Lovecraft, the man. The Lovecraftian apologists pooh-pooh Lovecraft's undeniable racism with the 'product of his times' or 'sheltered childhood' brush-offs, too terrified of speaking to their idol's bald-faced bigotry. The other faction criminalizes him as some such KKK hoodlum with a seething hatred of any non-WASP. But if this debate is truly about busts and honoring writers, let's not forget this trophy isn't for some humanitarian award or the Nobel Peace Prize. It's about writers who have demonstrated exceptional skill in their craft of weird fantasy. In that sense, we're not honoring any saints here. I imagine if we unpacked the psychological closets of most of the WFA winners, it wouldn't be a pretty sight. What I'm picking up here is not so much the latest round of Lovecraft bashing (which is nothing new) as much as deifying Octavia Butler as a more saintly and appropriate choice."

Interestingly, there's an older set of awards named for John W. Campbell, Jr., who held views some would claim were racist, and got snookered by pseudo-science like Dianetics (Scientology) and the Dean Drive. Both JWC awards started in 1973: for the best novel in the JWC tradition, a jury award, and for best new writer, a fan vote attached to the Hugos. The World Fantasy Award started in 1975. Woe be to the JWCs if they get attacked for the views of JWC, who died in 1971.

Positions

Few seem to notice that this petition, promoted by a black woman fantasy writer, wants to put a black woman SF writer in place of Lovecraft. Self-promotion often looks that way: grab an asset developed by others, make it your own.

So be it real estate, crowd attention, or undermining the former great, the con and indeed, fandom, has acquired the air of a contested ground. Think of it as a compliment: SF and fandom are important enough to steal. Some didn't like the feel of Loncon. Robert Silverberg referred to the media emphasis as a "moron fandom" and Mike Resnick remarked to me, "I think you and I should consider ourselves lucky that we were GOHs when these things were still relatively fun and relatively peaceful."

James Cambias remarked, "Meanwhile the younger, more diverse — and vastly larger — cohort of fans are going to Comic-Cons in New York, San Diego, or Salt Lake City. They're going to DragonCon and PAX and GenCon. Hundreds of thousands of them are going. They enjoy science fiction movies, TV shows, comics, computer games, webcomics, tabletop games, card games, fan fiction, anime, LARPs, and probably some enormous hobbies I don't even know about. They're having fun doing what they enjoy. And what they *don't* enjoy are serious-minded panels about the need for more diversity. Instead of worrying about making SF more diverse, we should focus on making SF more fun again. Bring the fun and the diversity will follow."

These currents I saw at Loncon: social commentary, inept economics preached by Marxists (!), announcements that some special complaints were somehow privileged. Yet Loncon wasn't really supposed to be about grievances at all. It was about our manifest, burgeoning future. You know, that old one, with technology opening new doors to prospects vast and strange.

That's the sort of future that interests me. I'd like more of it, especially at worldcons.

Illustration by TARAL WAYNE

ZEPPELIN TERROR

W. Jas. Wentz

Reprinted from ***Spicy Zeppelin Stories,*** *October 1928*

Grey fog shrouded the gently heaving surface of the English Channel. The creak of rigging sounded faintly in the muffling mists as a tiny fishing smack – stolen from the harbor at Ostend amid a hail of Hun bullets – pitched gently on the swell. For this was the autumn of 1916, and the Great War raged in all its fury.

British secret agent G-9, otherwise known as Lady Beverly de Vere, beautiful young socialite, aviatrix and member of the peerage, sat at the tiller of the small boat, her even white teeth gleaming in a broad smile, her blue eyes alight with glee, a few curls of her golden hair escaping the confines of a German garrison cap. The stolen uniform of an officer of the German Imperial Flying Service seemed only to accentuate the contours of her lithe figure. Only hours before, she had made a daring escape under the very noses of the Boche guards of the harbor, in company with Professor Otto Dachs, a brilliant European scientist who held secrets of inestimable value to England – secrets of the terrible Zeppelin super-weapon which was being unleashed against defenseless London.

A dense fog and a favoring breeze had aided their escape, although their patched sail bore the traces of many Mauser bullets.

Her passenger, Professor Dachs, sat against the base of the mast, regarding his beauteous rescuer with bemused admiration, his greyish whiskers twitching with suppressed emotion, his shiny eyeglasses twinkling.

With a light laugh, Lady Beverly arose, relinquishing the tiller. Stepping past her portly charge, she said, "Here, luv, take the helm while I stretch my legs. Hold this course, and we'll be in Dover in half a tick."

She smiled at the Professor's earnest attempts to hold the small craft on an even course, then turned to the bows to peer inquiringly into the curling mists, alert for any glimpse of land or ship. Abruptly, her slim form stiffened. Dimly appearing through the grey murk was an incredible sight!

Hovering in midair, just above the water a few yards ahead, was an object that looked like an egg, five or six feet long. As the mists thinned between them, Lady Beverly saw that the thing resembled a fat aerial bomb, with fins at one end and a rounded nose at the other, hanging horizontal and motionless. Closer still, and she saw that it was attached to a thin cable that stretched up into the sky, until it disappeared into the encompassing fog.

On the top surface of the thing was a small cockpit with a celluloid windshield, and she saw a leather-helmeted head moving as the occupant peered about – in the opposite direction, fortunately.

"Crickey!" Lady Beverly breathed. "That's the sub-cloud car of a bloomin' Zeppelin!"

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Gefreiter Bruno Klopp, airshipman of the Imperial German Navy, was a rotund, chinless and benevolently-peering sort, singularly mole-like in appearance and demeanor. This resemblance was heightened at present due to the fact that his thick eyeglasses had fallen over the side while his observation nacelle was being lowered from the mighty Zeppelin LZ-45, as it hovered above the cloudbanks. Still, imbued with the unthinking Teutonic concept of duty, Klopp

squinted nearsightedly through a rickety telescope as he reported his observations into the trumpet-shaped mouthpiece of a telephonic apparatus strapped to his leather helmet.

"Ja, dis ist *Gefreiter* Klopp," he said cheerfully. "Ich ben looking at der famous White Cliffs uf Dover – der colors ist magnificent!" Actually he was scrutinizing the colored label of a fruit crate, which was floating on the choppy sea just a few feet away.

"Ja, ja," crackled the reply in his earpieces, "Enuf mit der travelog already, Klopp – you seeing yet der port uf Dover, vot ve ist supposed to be bombing?"

Peering straight down at the sea heaving just below him, where a small sardine was staring puzzledly back, Klopp reported, "Ich ben seeing far below ein huge-ish Britisher battleship, probly der *Invincible* or der *Irascible* or der *Interminable*, mit all der sailors on der deck…"

******

Lady Beverly, perched precariously in the bow backstays as high as she could climb, held her breath as her little sailboat, quartering slowly, crept up behind the dangling cloud-car. As the waves first lifted, then dropped the bows beneath her, she strained every nerve toward the hunched figure in the nacelle's cockpit … when would he turn, see her and shout an alarm?

Falling into the trough of a swell, the boat's stubby bows slid directly beneath the dangling nacelle. As the next wave lifted her up, up, up, Lady Beverly heard the observer rambling on: "Dis ist Klopp again … vun very important thing vich I got to report is –" KLOPP! Lady Beverly whanged him over the ear with a spanner as the peak of the wave brought them level.

Then, as her boat fell away again, Lady Beverly, her voluptuous form stretched between her frantic grip on the nacelle's cockpit rim and her toes hooked in the boat's rigging, hissed urgently to her quaking steersman, "Hold her steady, Prof! I've got to investigate this…"

It was the work of but an instant for her to swarm atop the nacelle. Inside the cockpit occupied by the slumped form of the unconscious observer, the headphones were squawking, "Klopp? Klopp? Vas ist dot 'klopp,' Klopp?"

As the little sailboat slowly overhauled her precarious perch, Lady Beverly hastily tumbled the unconscious Klopp to the deck below, whispering, "Quick, tie this blighter up, Prof! Then hold your course for Dover and alert the Royal Flying Corps – I've got to see what these Heinies are up to – " and she slid lithely into the snug confines of the cockpit.

Startled and apprehensive, the Professor bumbled, "But – But –" The dislodged telephonic apparatus, dangling by its wires, was still squawking, "Vas macht dot 'klopp,' Klopp? Schtop mit der geffoodling around already, und find dem Britisher naval bases zo ve can kaputz dem!"

As the sailboat coasted past the dangling nacelle, the Professor stretched his hands helplessly over the stern. Lady Beverly soothed him, "Not to worry, Prof, hold the course and you'll be right – it's been lovely, but duty calls – Maybe we'll meet after the war – Toodles!"

"But – But – " he persisted hopelessly as her pretty face faded in the mist astern.

As the sailboat vanished into the fog, the dangling headphones bellowed, "KLOPP!! VOT DER BUNG-FOODLED…"

Lady Beverly hastily took up the telephone, and, accomplished as she was in all European languages, replied in German, in a fair approximation of Klopp's muffled tones, "Yes … Er, Ja … dis ist Klopp … Zo vot ist?"

"Zo vot ain't it!" raged the unseen other. "Vat ist you seeing now?"

Lady Beverly stared at the all-encompassing fog, suddenly aware of her utter helplessness.

"Ich ben seeing nothing much," she said. "Der fog ist suddenlich zo thick Ich can't see der face in front from der hand."

For an instant nothing happened; then she felt a quivering in the cable that supported the nacelle, and the grey waves began sinking away below her, even as her heart sank within her. Gazing dubiously downward as the damp mists thickened below, Lady Beverly mused, "Crickey, I wonder if this was such a good idea …"

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Two thousand feet above, the sun shone brightly on a dazzling white plain of cloud, the top of the fog-bank above which floated the vast, looming hulk of the Imperial Navy Zeppelin LZ-45, the sinister Iron Cross gleaming below her black-painted bow. A thin spiderweb-strand of cable stretched from one of her central engine gondolas down into the cloud layer; presently, a tiny dot appeared at the end of the cable, trailing a wisp of mist as it was pulled into view. A moment more, and the dot approached an open hatch in the floor of the gondola.

As the great sky-ship loomed ever more vast above her, Lady Beverly gazed open-mouthed at the looming black colossus, her courage shaken as never before by its overshadowing mass, and gasped, awestricken, "Oh, crums…" But then her little round chin set bravely, and her blue eyes flashed defiance. For King and Country!

******

Far forward, in the control gondola hanging below the airship' hull, *Korvettenkapitan* Erich von Snideheim barked, "Achtung! Der observer ist back aboard! All engines, full speed!"

"Jawohl, mein Kapitan," rapped out *Oberleutnant* Hermann von Henchmann, thrusting forward the engine telegraphs, and the great Maybach engines in their separate gondolas coughed and roared to life, moving the vast length of the sky-ship with increasing speed. *Korvettenkapitan* von Snideheim, tall, ramrod-straight, darkly handsome, monocled, scar-faced and an unmitigated cad, twirled his upturned mustache in sinister satisfaction as his great airship swept toward its unsuspecting target. Inside the cavernous bomb-bay hung a cargo of fiery destruction, ready to rain down upon English soil at his command.

As the observer's sub-cloud car was drawn up through the floor of the central engine gondola, the muscular power winch operator turned from his motor with a grunt of satisfaction; then, as his eye rested on the slim, lithe figure swarming from the cockpit, his square jaw dropped in astonishment. "Vait a minute!" he shouted. "You ain't –" KLOPP! Lady Beverly felled him with a savage kick to the jaw even as his massive arms reached for her.

Another Hun, seated before a telephonic apparatus, shouted a startled alarm as Lady Beverly sprang to the ladder that led through the roof of the gondola, across the space between gondola and hull, and into the interior of the airship. As she emerged into the open air, a great wind rushed about her and she heard the roar of the mighty engines running at speed. Then she was through the hatch into the great hull, crashing full tilt into a rout of confused airshipmen, her feet and fists flying as she broke through them.

Ahead of her stretched the long, curved vista of the keel gangway, a triangular latticed passageway running the length of the ship; the walkway at the base of it was barely a foot wide, with nothing below it but the fabric envelope of the ship, while above and on both sides bulged the huge, taut masses of the hydrogen cells, fully inflated at this altitude.

Battling through her attackers, Lady Beverly raced forward, acutely aware that the slightest misstep from the narrow walkway would send her plunging through the fabric envelope and into empty space. The pursuing Huns had no guns, for obvious reasons – The ship's great cells being filled with explosive hydrogen – yet only the narrow footing of the battleground kept Lady Beverly from being overwhelmed by sheer numbers as she fought her way toward the bows.

Inside the control gondola, *Korvettenkapitan* von Snideheim dimly heard the uproar overhead and barked, "Vot der Teufel ist dot horsen-geplaying in der gangway? Macht schnell und putten der kibosh on!"

"Jawohl," replied the servile von Henchmann, springing to the tube that led up to the hull – but, as he set his foot to the ladder, a

plummeting mass flattened him to the deck – Lady Beverly, in the apish clutches of a big Prussian sailor, pummeling him in the face with one fist as her other hand clutched his hairy throat. More airshipmen leapt or fell down the ladder as the girl spy and her assailant rolled off the unconscious von Henchmann, and knocked down the staring elevator man as he handled his wheel at the port windows of the gondola. That unfortunate crewman was trampled impartially as the desperate struggle surged back and forth over his prostrate form – Lady Beverly, surrounded by a ravening pack of Huns, leaping and striking in all directions with fists and feet. Yet there could be only one outcome to such a one-sided battle; soon Lady Beverly's slim wrists were twisted cruelly behind her by bestial hands.

A momentary stillness fell over the control gondola, as the great airship drove ahead at full speed and the abandoned elevator wheel swung loosely. Pinioned in her captor's cruel grip, Lady Beverly stood defiantly erect, raging in her helplessness, her glorious blonde tresses disheveled, her blue eyes blazing, her heaving white bosom half-revealed by the shredded remains of her German tunic.

Korvettenkapitan von Snideheim contemplated her voluptuous form insolently as he polished his monocle on a silken handkerchief. "Donnervetter, ein Englisher schpy!" he drawled leeringly. "Und ge-stacked like ein brick bierstube, also! Things ist ge-looking up vor der long, boring flight home!"

"You unmitigated cad!" Lady Beverly cried. The oafish crewman gripping her wrists seemed momentarily distracted, perhaps by the enticing view beneath Lady Beverly's torn collar; she leapt swiftly back against him, and her sharp boot-heel slammed down atop his instep. With a howl of anguish, the burly scoundrel released his grip and clutched at the injured member. Leaping free before the gaping Huns could grasp her, Lady Beverly sprang to the sill of the broad gondola window. The recording barograph, a massive, square instrument, hung on springs at the top of the window; in an instant she tore it from its supports and flung the heavy missile at von Snideheim's sleek head. Coward that he was, he dodged; but a shower of strain gauges, thermometers and other instruments followed as Lady Beverly's heels thudded into the Boches who grasped frantically at her lithe form, striving to drag her from her elevated position.

Snatching for something else to throw, Lady Beverly's slim hand encountered the ballast control panel, and half a dozen of the control toggles were ripped loose by her desperate fingers. Far up in the nose of the titanic ship, the forward ballast bags, huge water pouches controlled by those toggles, opened their valves. From the bows of the speeding airship, a misty cascade of water roared out into the gale.

Suddenly light by the bows, the speeding Zeppelin, her elevator wheel still swinging untended amid the struggle, began to angle upward in her flight. In the chaos of the control gondola, no one realized the danger as the deck began to slope more and more sharply. Lady Beverly, her clothing in flying tatters about her lithe white form, clung desperately to the frame of the broken windows, lashing out with one boot at the rascal tugging on her other ankle; other Huns rolled and clambered over one another in their eagerness to return to the fray.

But up in the belly of the ship, other crewmen clung frantically to girders as the great ship tilted more sharply upward. Tools and other heavy objects slid suddenly down the sloping walkway and plummeted out through the fabric skin of the hull; oil tanks tore loose from their bindings and followed them; and in the bomb bay the bomb shackles, never designed to work at this angle, released their deadly iron eggs, which tore through the thin duralumin of the bomb doors and plummeted seaward.

Suddenly tons lighter, all her engines howling as the mechanics in the engine gondolas struggled vainly to stand erect, the vast ship pointed her bows at the zenith and soared skyward. Her huge gas cells, expanding rapidly in the reduced atmospheric pressure, strained at the bursting point despite the flood of hydrogen that roared through the relief valves. Prostrate upon the rear wall of the control gondola with his dazed crewmen piled atop him, *Korvettenkapitan* von Snideheim shouted in abject, white-faced terror, "Gottenhimmel! Ve are going through der pressure height too fast! Der verblunget gas cells

vill rupture und break der hull!"

Frantically, some of the battered crewmen attempted to climb up the near-vertical deck to reach the controls, but slid back helplessly with nothing to grasp. Already, they were at a dizzy altitude where the thin air made them gasp for breath. Meanwhile, up inside the hull, some of the watch officers scrambled monkey-like amid the forest of thin girders and bracing wires, open clasp-knives clenched in their teeth, ready to slash the straining gas cells – a last resort to halt their mad climb.

Too late! With a titanic screech and crash of rending girders, the top of the hull burst outward near the bows. Two of the sixteen vast gas cells had ruptured under the strain, breaking the frail duralumin girders and taut fabric cover of the hull.

For a moment the great sky-ship hung almost level, as the torn cells ran empty forward and yet more lifting gas whistled through the relief valves of the cells astern; the mechanics in their engine gondolas scrambled to shut down the roaring Maybachs, lest a stray spark turn the escaping hydrogen into a raging inferno.

Then the Zeppelin's bows sagged downward, and the great ship began to fall. The gas blown off by the overpressurized cells, and the loss of two of the larger ones, had resulted in a fatal loss of lift. Her bows pointing ever more sharply down, the ragged hole atop her hull trailing great streamers of torn fabric, LZ-45 plummeted with increasing speed toward the shining white floor of distant clouds, and the cold sea beneath.

In the control gondola, Lady Beverly, clinging desperately to the frames of the shattered windows, saw the tangled mass of crewmen and officers roll from the aft end of the cabin all the way forward, where they piled up beneath the steersman's rudder wheel. Icy wind whistled through the broken windows, plastering the tattered shreds of her uniform against her taut form. "Lord!" she gasped, "This monster's dropping like a stone!"

The great ship, bending slowly upward at the break and shedding vast strips of torn fabric, plunged headlong toward certain doom.

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The perceptive reader who has repaired a blowout on the old Model T – and who has not? – will have noticed that as the patched tire is pumped up, the brass barrel of the tire-pump will become hot. This phenomenon is not due to friction, however, but to the scientific principle that any gas, when strongly compressed, will become heated. With an ordinary automobile tire, of course, this makes little difference; but in an airship, the amounts of gas involved are so vast that this adiabatic heating, as it is termed, can heat, expand and thus increase the lift of the gas in the cells. Airship captains have, in fact, taken advantage of this phenomenon in order to make a fast descent and a tricky landing of a "heavy" ship with the benefit of this transient, additional lift.

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As LZ-45 plunged through the grey mists above the sea, her surviving gas cells, formerly full and taut at height, shrank rapidly under the pressure of the lower atmosphere. Farther hurtled the stricken airship, and heavier grew the foggy air whistling through the broken windows of the control gondola. Inside the broken hull, millions of cubic yards of hydrogen, compressed swiftly in the shrinking cells, began to warm slightly. The headlong plunge of the Zeppelin slackened.

Still, the bows struck the choppy waves with great force, flattening instantly and throwing up a huge sheet of spray. With a great crunching of girders and rending of fabric, the vast body of the ship slowly settled onto the grey waves. Gondolas broke loose from their struts and hung by wires as mechanics and crewmen leapt from them and swam toward floating bits of wreckage. As the control gondola splashed into the waves, Lady Beverly dove into the sea, graceful as a Naiad, just ahead of her erstwhile captors. But while the Huns were content with hauling themselves onto the nearest floating oil-tank or wooden crate, Lady Beverly swam with swift strokes toward the tail of the wrecked airship, jutting high above the water like a slanting tower. She had survived the crash – yet how could she hope to live for long in the chill waters of the Channel? Lady Beverly paused,, treading water as she shook the wet blonde curls away from her

face, and glanced about. The fog was lifting; a weak sunlight specked the waves with silver and outlined her voluptuous form, with the rags of her uniform clinging wetly to her. All around the vast wreck of the Zeppelin, the horizon stretched grey and featureless – yet, *what was that?*

Off in the distance shone a patched triangular sail, with a small stubby hull beneath it, steering unerringly toward the huge, towering tail of the Zeppelin. As the boat drew closer, Lady Beverly saw the portly form of Professor Dachs at the helm, his mouth set in a stubborn line, and at the bow the rotund *Gefreiter* Klopp, his head swathed in white bandages, holding a life-ring poised to throw.

"Ahoy, Prof!" she hailed happily. "Didn't I say we'd meet again? Pour me out a tot of brandy, luv, and then it's off to Dover harbor, and we'll send some tugs to tow this German rag-bag home to England!"

The Cap'n's Log

Cap'n Billy Answers Letters from Our Readers

Dear Cap'n Billy:

Spicy Zeppelin Stories is a crackerjack magazine, and usually I think every story is top-notch! However, Wirtz's story, "Zeppelin Peril," was full of silly mistakes. In it he said the LZ-45 was a naval airship. But the German navy used the letter "L" on its airships, and the German army used "LZ." So LZ-45 would have to be an *army* airship!

Seth Wilberforce
Buzzard's Bosom, Arizona

Dear Seth:
So what?
Cap'n Billy

Dear Cap'n Billy:

I really enjoy *Spicy Zeppelin Stories!* But you printed a clunker when you ran Winston's stupid story, "Zeppelin Tedium." Obviously he has never studied his subject. He writes the LZ-45 had only 16 gas cells, but a Zeppelin of that class has at least 18 cells!

Wilbur Snodgrass
Gopher Soup, Idaho

Dear Wilbur:
Who cares?
Cap'n Billy

Dear Cap'n Billy:

I must take exception to Winger's idiotic story, "Zeppelin Lust," in the current issue of *Spicy Zeppelin Stories.* Not only is the story sadly lacking in "spicy" interest, but all the German characters are treated most disrespectfully, and the plot is totally unbelievable. Even if the incredible imbecilities of a Zeppelin making a bombing raid in daylight and using a blind observer were granted, still there is the insurmountable idiocy of a supposedly clever spy blithely climbing into the observer's sub-cloud car of a hostile airship! Who could *possibly* be that *stupid??*

Otto Fenstermacher
Chicago

Possibly the same person who would go ahead and read a story like that! Gawan, geddada here, ya bratty snot-nosed kids! Scram!

Cap'n Billy

Mike Resnick

Guest of Honor Speech – Chicon VII

(transcribed by David Hebert)

As usual I don't quite know what to talk about because I never use prepared texts. So, I went to the SFWA suite and sought some input after I tossed out some possibilities. One of them was why Gardner denies that George R.R. Martin is his illegitimate son. Another was Eric Flint as an international sex symbol. A third was the Cincinnati Bengals' no-huddle offense. And a fourth was why Nancy Kress refuses to admit her overwhelming lust for me.

Everybody wrote down their votes. Two people corrected me and said that no, Gardner was George Martin's illegitimate son. Four people asked who was Eric Flint? Somebody else pointed out that by virtue of using the words "Bengals" and "offense" in the same sentence was fantasy and not science fiction. And Nancy Kress tore her ballot into tiny pieces and stomped on it. So I'm just going to have to talk to you about me.

I was born about ten miles south of here at the University of Chicago's Billings Hospital. I still remember the day. I was having a pleasant nap, not bothering anyone. Then somebody grabbed my legs, and pulled. I kept saying "God, make him put me back," and there was no response. I figured maybe God was out on the golf course and couldn't be bothered, and I decided that agnosticism was looking very reasonable.

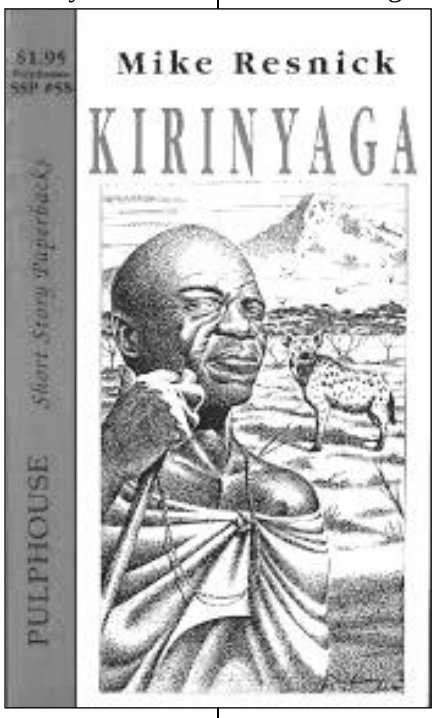
They turned me upside down and they slapped my bottom, and it was a very unpleasant day. Then, about a week later, I'm lying in my crib, minding my own business, and I look down the hall at two guys coming toward me. One of them is wearing a suit and tie, and a hat, and a prayer shawl, and carrying a Bible. The other one is one of the staff, and as he passes under a light I can see it shine off his scalpel. And at that point I became an atheist.

It's probably a good thing that I did, because if I was religious, I would try to imagine Moses standing atop Mount Sinai, having a conversation with God, and saying, "Now let me get this straight. The Arabs get all the oil, and we cut the end of our *what*?"

Eventually they took me home from the hospital. My father was a Young Communist. Well, by the time I started speaking and walking he was a middle-aged communist. Had he grown up in New York there's no doubt in my mind he would have joined the Futurians, feuded with Don Wollheim, collaborated with Fred Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth, and had affairs with Virginia Kidd and Judy Merrill. But, he didn't. He lived in Chicago,

and I know that when I was four or five, all my babysitters – I'm not kidding – had thick glasses, wild eyes, heavy beards, spoke with thick Slavic accents, and thought the only way to amuse a four- or five-year-old was either to play chess with him or read *Das Kapital* at him.

Anyway, my father was also a fanatical White Sox fan, and we lived on the South Side. Back then, they weren't much to cheer about. I saw perhaps a hundred double headers by the time I was nine years old, which means I saw Luke Appling and the White Sox lose about a hundred and eighty-five games.



When I was seventeen I went to the University of Chicago, where I majored in absenteeism. You didn't have to attend classes back then, and at the end of the year, you could take what they called the "comp exam" for your grade for the year. And if you didn't like your grade, you could pay ten bucks and take it again. And it didn't help. Because, for example, my freshman year, the test for an entire year's grade was, "Why did Cordelia die? And bring in all the music and art and everything else you've studied." You could take that test three dozen times, and the closest you could come to being right was saying, "Stoppage of the heart."

I had a professor in my humanities course who one day tried to explain to us what we were doing there. And he said that someday we would be at a cocktail party, and somebody would walk up to us and mention that a certain structure was an example of Gothic Baptist architecture, and we would say, "Aha! There is no such thing!" And that was his whole reason for anybody ever going to the University of Chicago.

People ask me if I ever use anything I ever learned in college in my work, and the answer is Yes. For fifty years, every time I have described a church or a castle, I have described it as an exemplary piece of Gothic Baptist architecture. To this day, not a single critic has called me on it. Clearly they didn't go to the University of Chicago.

I was on the fencing team, and I won a number of letters there. The dividing point of the University, and indeed of the whole South Side, is the Midway, which is a strip of grass a couple of miles long, a block wide, and about ten feet below the rest of the street and ground level; You'd walk down to it, cross it, and go back up the other side. It was a dangerous area back when I was there, and the only university buildings on the south side of the Midway were the men's dormitories. And the only students who didn't get mugged or robbed the entire first year I was there when I lived in the dormitories were the members of the fencing team, because we would walk across with our sabers, and some kid would walk up to us with a switchblade and ask for our money, and we would show our sabers, and say, in typical John Wayne or Clint Eastwood fashion, "Mine's bigger than yours." Usually they turned around and ran like hell.

While I was there, I had a radio show my second year, in which I did a kind of Mort Sahl-type commentary. I'd: pick up a copy of the *Sun-Times*, or the *Tribune*, I'd mark it up, and then I'd try to make funny comments on the air. While I was doing this show, one of my closest friends broke up with his fiancé. The station manager was also a second year student such as myself. She had come from the southern suburb of Oak Lawn, and she said there was a girl she knew who was a freshman, who had gone to the same high school, who wasn't dating anyone, and maybe we could get them together. So I said, "Great, bring her to my apartment" – I'd graduated from the dorm to a slum apartment – "and maybe they'll hit it off. He can take her out to dinner while they get better acquainted."

Well, something delayed him, and she showed up first, and I had talked to her for about four minutes when I decided she was much too good for him. So, I took her out to dinner myself, and the next night I took her to the theatre, and the

night after that I took her somewhere else, and a week later we were engaged, and a few months after that we were married, and that was almost 51 years ago, and Carol's still letting me hang around.

We were married in 1961. In early 1962 Ace Books started – I'm not allowed to use the word "pirating" – started *buccaneering* the Edgar Rice Burroughs titles. I picked up a copy one day and looked on the inside front cover and there was a blurb by a guy named Camille Cazedessus, the editor of *ERBdom.* You don't have to be a genius to figure that the ERB in *ERBdom* meant Edgar Rice Burroughs. Clearly this was a science fiction magazine I had somehow overlooked. So I haunted all the major magazine stores in Chicago – this was long before things like Barnes & Noble existed. I searched for weeks, and when I still couldn't find it I wrote to the editor care of Don Wollheim at Ace, and a couple of weeks later I received in the mail the very first fanzines I had ever seen – a few back issues of *ERBdom.* Within two more weeks I had written four or five articles for it, and was the Assistant Editor. I started corresponding with Caz, and he told me that the Worldcon – a word I had never heard before – was going to be in Chicago on Labor Day weekend, and that we should go. We didn't have any money. We'd been married just under a year – and we couldn't have afforded a room, but back then, the subway only cost twenty-five cents. So I figured, well, we'll ride down there, we'll pay the dollar dues or whatever it was back then, we'll hang around and meet some of our heroes, and go back home.

I had really counted on doing that. And about a week before the Worldcon, Carol decided to have a baby. And I got really annoyed, and I said, "Why couldn't you have had it in December?" And she said, "Well, it was your fault, too." And I said, "No, it can't be – *I* didn't have the baby, *you* did." So she gave me a biology textbook. But everybody who's read my stuff even today knows there's no science in it. I don't write hard science, I don't write soft science, I write *limp* science.

So I decided I was never going to speak to either of them ever again. That lasted about ten minutes, and then I had to ask Carol where I could find my socks. As for Laura, our daughter, to show what a truly forgiving guy I am, what a wonderful father: thirty years later, when she won her Campbell Award, I walked up, introduced myself, shook her hand, and congratulated her.

Okay, that's a little bit fictitious. Actually, when she won her Campbell she was – I've never been quite clear on this – either *chasing* a herd of elephants in South Africa, or *being chased* by a herd of elephants. So I walked up onstage and accepted it for her, and as I was returning to my seat, some fanzine editor – I think it might have been Mike Glyer – asked me for a comment. I thought for a moment, and said, "My stud fee just tripled."

Well, everybody laughed at that except one guy. I am currently editing the Stellar Guild series, in which an established superstar teams up with a beginner. The next book coming out is by Harry Turtledove and his daughter Rachel. *He* listened. And I expect Rachel to win the Campbell Award next year. And I'm sure Harry's counting on it for any number of reasons.

Anyway, along with learning about fandom and Worldcons and such, it happened that we would look out our window – we were living in a subterranean penthouse, otherwise known as a basement apartment – at the corner of North Shore and Greenview on the North side of the city, We'd look out our window, and right across the street from us, about every two or three or four weeks, we would see a bunch of people, most of the guys weighing 300 pounds and sporting beards, most of the girls wearing jeans when all women wore skirts back then, and they were all carrying tomes under their arms. Given the era, which was 1962 and 1963, we were sure that they were members of SNCC and CORE, and the books under their arms were ledgers listing all the draft dodgers they planned to smuggle into Canada. We had to go all the way to Washington D.C. in 1963 to the Worldcon to meet them and find out that they were Chicago fandom, and they had been meeting across the street from our apartment for years.

Discon I was a wonderful first experience. The train let us off in the basement of the hotel, and we registered, and got our badges, put our stuff in our room, and started wandering around. We didn't know what to do, and then a kindly old guy, with white hair and a twinkle in his eye, walked up and said that it looked like we were newcomers, and he would be happy to show us around. We said sure, and he took us to the

dealer's room, which back then only had books and magazines, and the art show, and he actually bought us coffee. Finally he looks at his watch and says, "I gotta go off to a ceremony. Want to come along?" We said sure. We didn't know who he was, because he'd neglected to put on his convention badge. At the ceremony, he gets up on the stage, and they give him the first ever First Fandom Hall of Fame Award, and we *still* don't know who he is. Then somebody from the audience yells out, "Are you ever going to write again?" And he says, "Yes, I just handed in *Skylark DuQuesne*." And only then did we realize that we'd been with Doc Smith for the first three hours of our Worldcon.

Doc had told us there would be parties, and they were at night. He didn't tell us when or where. So that evening we started walking down one corridor, couldn't find any, walked up a flight, and walked down another corridor. The Worldcon then was a lot smaller than it is now – everybody in this room probably constitutes the entire population of that Worldcon, maybe four or five hundred people. Finally a door opens, and two really strange-looking faces peek out at us, and ask if we want to come to a party. We think, "Oh-oh! We're 21 years old and 1500 miles from home, and who *are* these people?" We finally say yeah, so we go in, and it turns out they were Lester Del Ray and Jim Blish, and there were no such thing as private pro parties or private fan parties. It just wasn't big enough to have any kind of private party. We went in there, and we met Isaac Asimov, and Leigh Brackett, and Ed Hamilton, and Sam Moscowitz (who was whispering, which meant the walls were shaking), There was another young guy there – I was 21, and Jack Chalker, who became a lifelong friend, was 19 – and finally somebody asked the two of us what we wanted to do with our lives. We both said we want to write science fiction. Now I don't know about Jack, but with me, that was the first time in my life I said that and nobody laughed or snickered. And one gentleman, Jack Williamson, came by and talked to me for a while and explained that was a pretty noble ambition and he would help me any way that he could – and over the years he did. And when I left that room that night, I knew that I was going to keep coming back to Worldcon fir the rest of my life – that these were the kind of people I wanted to spend my life with, and the kind of people I wanted to write for. And I've been doing it ever since.

Anyway, we went to that Worldcon – we took a train from Chicago to Washington DC and back, spent five nights in the convention hotel, bought our memberships, bought fifteen meals each, and we bought a couple of things in the huckster room – and we did it all on a $91.00 tax refund. The world has changed. Considerably.

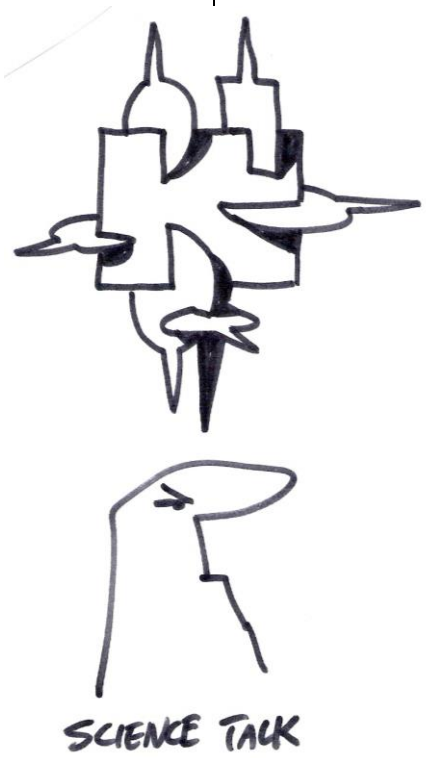
Anyway, while I was doing all that, and wanting to be a science fiction writer, I had to go out and earn a living. The only job available in publishing anywhere in the city of Chicago was at 2717 North Pulaski, about seven miles northwest of here, and I was hired to work on – and within months to edit – *The National Insider* and *The National Tattler,* which are precisely like *The National Enquirer,* only much worse. 23 years old, and I'm editing the *Insider,* a tabloid that prints 400,000 copies a week and sells about three-quarters of them. I think our best-selling paper during the years I had it ran a headline that read: "Raped by Seven Dwarfs!" I will not swear to the veracity of some of our stories.

You can't tell it to look at me now, but I was once a ravishing blonde. In fact, I was twice a ravishing blonde. Once I was Jayne Mansfield, and once I was Mamie Van Doren. I ghosted their columns in our papers for better than a year. Really. I didn't ghost Sydney Omarr's astrology column, but it came in so sub-literate I used to re-write large parts of it – and I made him famous, because in 1968 I had Sydney predict that the Republican nominee for the Presidency would have an initial R – and sure enough, it was Richard Nixon, and Sydney became famous. Nobody seems to remember that he beat Reagan, Romney, and Rockefeller.

We did do the occasional legit story, and one day there was an Indian girl called Wendy who swore she was a Mescalero Apache princess, who applied for a job, and I hired her. Then I tried to figure out what to give her, and I looked in the newspaper to see if there was anything I could send her out on, and they were auditioning for nude parts in *Hair* for a road company that was being formed downtown in Chicago. So I told her, go down and say you want to audition for it. Now, keep your clothes on, you don't have to do anything like that, but just write a nice, salacious article about what it's like. She said sure, she went

– and I didn't hear from her again. A week passes, two weeks pass, and I figure, well, she found a better job, she didn't like working for a tabloid. Then one day I get a phone call from her, in Nebraska – she got the part, and she's touring with the company.

There's one other guy I wanted to tell you about – Anton LaVey. When we went out to California for the BayCon, the 1968 Worldcon, I convinced my publisher to pay my way for an extra three or four days in San Francisco, which we'd never been to, provided that I bring him back a story a day. One of the stories I decided to bring him was Anton LaVey, who was the High Priest of the Church of Satan. I took a cab to his house, an old Victorian mansion that was painted black. There was a hearse parked in front, and he had a lion chained to a dog house in the back yard. He comes out, and he's wearing a priest's garment, with a turned-around collar, but instead of a cross hanging down on a chain, he has a coffin. I knew right away I was going to get along with him. I started calling him "Anthony Levy".



Anyway, he goes through a whole Black Mass for me, which is pretty dull despite the naked women, and I look at his bookcases and he's got a complete run of *Weird Tales* s and all the Arkham House titles. So I tell him that the Black Mass was a bit boring, and suggest it might be interesting to spruce it up with items from his collection. You know, Robert E. Howard wrote a *lot* of poetry with a good beat, and Lovecraft at least wrote "The Fungi from Yuggoth". And about four years later, he does a record, it still exists, called *The Satanic Mass*, and if you listen carefully, you'll find that some of it came right out of *Weird Tales.*

Anyway, Anton was our guest one night at the Convention, for the masquerade – (Forry Ackerman knew him, of course.) And I suggested that he might want to do a column for the *Insider*, and he agreed. Now, this was before the days of faxes or the Internet, so he would mail the column, and I would make such changes as had to be made, and then I would call him and read the changes, and he'd approve it, or we'd argue it, and then it could go to press. And one day, on December 24th, 1968, he calls me up and says, "I want to wish you a Merry Christmas" – says the Satanist to the Atheist Jew. So I thank him, and he says, "Is there anything I can give you for Christmas? Anything at all?" And just for the hell of it, I tell him "Anton, they're predicting a horrible blizzard to hit Chicago about 3 this afternoon. It's one o'clock now. I would love to go home before it hits. I live in the exurbs. If I can go now I'll be home in half an hour otherwise it'll take me five hours. Do something." And Anton mutters a little chant and says, "Okay, it's taken care of." And he hangs up the phone – and so help me, five minutes later all the power goes out in our building, and they send us home. I don't think there was any connection between the two, but I never asked another favor from him, because just in case it *was* his doing, I know who I didn't want to be beholden to.

Anyway, I also edited three men's magazines, where along with editing them I became the "redeeming social value" the Supreme Court said you had to have. And that's where I sold my first few science fiction stories, all under pseudonyms, of course. There would be a photo spread of a naked lady, then a science fiction story by me under a phony name, then another photo spread, then another science fiction story and so on. It wasn't a bad way to learn my eventual trade.

One other place I learned my trade, and so did a lot of us, was the "adult book" field. There has always been a field of American letters where if you were fast and facile, and willing to work under a pseudonym, you could make a handsome living while you were learning how to write. And there was a lot of talent learning how to write in the sex book field back in the 1960s. Earl Kemp

was the chairman of the 1962 Worldcon held right here in Chicago, but chairmen don't make any money, and what he did for a living was he worked for William Hamling. Hamling had edited *Amazing Stories*, then became a publisher; He started by publishing science fiction magazines, worked his way up to *Rogue*, which was a quality *Playboy* imitator, and finally created Greenleaf Classics, which was the biggest sex publisher in the country. They did like six hundred books a year. And, Earl tells me – I was talking to him just last week – that in a single month, in early 1967, he received manuscripts from: me, now with five Hugos and a Worldcon Guest of Honor; Bob Silverberg, five Hugos and a Worldcon Guest of Honor; Donald E. Westlake, three Edgars, screenwriter, and a Mystery Writers Grand Master, and Lawrence Block, four Edgars and a Mystery Writers Grand Master; Also, Marion Zimmer Bradley. We weren't sexist about that. Anybody could write this stuff – the only thing we cared about is that our names never appeared anywhere except on the check.

I also did screenplays for Herschell Gordon Lewis, who was voted the second worst director of all time in the Golden Turkey Awards, behind only Ed Wood. I'd like to think my screenplays had something to do with that, because I never spent as much as six hours on one.

The way I got the assignment was that he had put some advertisements in the tabloids, and they were badly photocopied; t just couldn't read them. He worked out of Chicago, so I drive over, and while I'm waiting in his outer office, I see that he's a director, and I go in and we start talking, and I ask about it, and he says, "Yeah, I make movies. Have you ever written a screenplay?" I tell him I'm the best screenwriter he's ever met. This is on a Friday. He says, "Okay, have a screenplay on my desk on Monday." And I say, "Uh … which Monday are you talking about?" He says, "Next one. We work fast around here." So I go home and read a book about how to write screenplays. Then I contact some people to learn how to do a real low-budget screenplay. One of the rules is that you never have a dog or a child actor because they cost too much. Another one is that you never have any music that isn't public domain, which is why so many Russ Meyer-type films have Beethoven or Verdi in the background. The third one is that it should take place – regardless of the plot – in an upper middle class suburban home, because that's almost certainly where the producer/director lives, and he won't have to buy any props or dress any sets. And the fourth one was that most of these guys, back then at least, couldn't afford a top-notch sound motion picture camera, so they got the best Ampex sound system they could, and the best silent camera they could, and they would do lip-sync in the lab. So you would do a lot of two-shots from far away, and you would do backs of heads, anything where they didn't have to lip-sync so you could save them a few costly days in the lab.

And when I would do a script for Herschell, I would hand it to him on a Monday, he would shoot it the next week, and it would be in the theatres – he only owned six theatres, but that was enough for a profit for him – it would be in the theatres three or four weeks after I sat down to write it. Makes you wonder about some of these zillion-dollar Hollywood epics, doesn't it?

All right. I can tell you a little more about sex before we move on to something less interesting. After I went full-time freelance, I packaged some men's mags and tabloids out of my house for a guy named Reuben Sturman, who was the kingpin of the sex field. He worked out of Cleveland, because Cleveland had no extradition agreements anywhere in the country except for capital crimes, and what he was doing wasn't a capital crime, it was just a crime of incredibly bad taste.

One day, long after I was writing science fiction full-time, I heard that he had gone to jail. The government got him on tax evasion, the way they get every criminal – Al Capone, Reuben Sturman, everyone – and the next thing I heard, he had sued his lawyer because his lawyer had said that there was a juror they could bribe for half a million bucks, and Reuben gave him the half million and he was found guilty anyway. Are you ready for the wild part? Reuben won his case. He didn't get out – he was guilty as sin, you should pardon the expression – but the lawyer wound up down in the cell block from him.

Okay, I'll tell you one last story about the sex trade. I'm even going to give you one title I used, because the last time I looked, this paperback that originally sold for a buck and a

half is going for over three hundred bucks, and I assume nobody here is dumb enough to buy it. The guy I liked writing best for was a fellow called Dave Zentnor. He was Bee-Line Books; and the reason I liked it was because he never read a word of anything, and if his copyeditor told him there were enough sex scenes, he bought it – and that meant we could do humor. That was something to keep us amused during the drudgery, and I would often collaborate with a guy called Paul Neimark, who later wrote the bestseller *She Lives!*

At the beginning of each book, we would flip a coin; the loser had to do the twenty percent sex scenes, and the winner got to do the eighty percent with character and plot and all the other stuff that was of absolutely no interest to our targeted readership. We did a series of five or six James Bond parodies that were really, really quite funny. One of them where I got to do the funny parts was called *Boldfinger*.

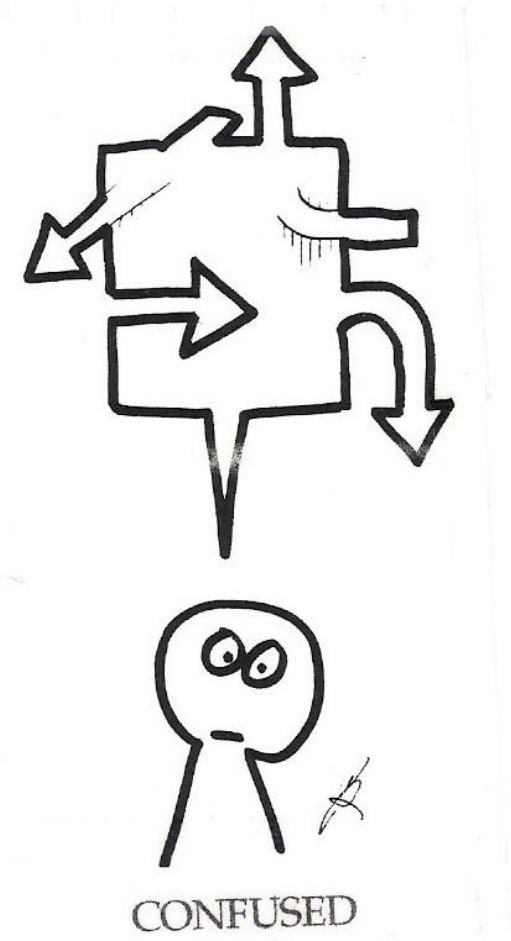
We wrote it in one single day – and he got mad at me because I took an hour off to watch Damascus win the 1967 Preakness and he didn't like to stay up too late. My half of it paid for me and Carol to go to the 1967 Worldcon. Paid for our plane fare, our hotel, our meals, even a couple of Broadway plays.

Now move the clock ahead twenty-five years. I am long out of the sex field. Marvin Kaye comes up with an anthology called *The Resurrected Holmes*. The conceit is that Watson has died in 1929; they open his safe, and they find all the notes for all the cases he's only referred to, like the Giant Rat of Sumatra, and Vanberry the Wine Merchant, and they farm them out to the leading writers of the Twenties – so you get a Sherlock Holmes as written by Hemingway, one as written by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and so on. Of course, I chose to be Thorne Smith – and months later I get a nudge from Marvin about three days before it's due. I had totally forgotten about it. I needed a plot in a hurry – and then I remembered *Boldfinger*. There's a scene in it where James Bond must take a gorgeous, nude, female corpse, dressed only in a trench coat that keeps falling open, on a double-decker bus across London – and every passenger engages in Thorne-Smithian conversation and commentary with Bond about this. I changed his name from Bond to Sherlock Holmes, I wrote a new opening page and a new closing page, I changed nothing else – and from that day to this, that story has never gotten a bad review. That's how funny *my* dirty books were.

Anyway, we went to the 1963 Worldcon, then we went to the 1966 Worldcon. We missed a couple in between because we were busy, we were starting a family, and mostly we didn't have any money. In 1966 I was the Assistant Editor of *ERBdom* when it won the Hugo.

It was an interesting Worldcon. Back in those days we weren't big enough to take over an entire hotel, and in 1966 we had to share the hotel with a convention of bagpipers, who got drunk and marched up and down the halls all night long playing their pipes. It was the only time in history that science fiction fans complained to the hotel that the mundanes were making too much noise.

I also did something else at that Worldcon. I sold my first science fiction book. It was a Burroughs pastiche – I wouldn't tell you the name, except it's probably in your damned program book. It was titled *The Goddess of Ganymede*, and I should have listened to the first ten or twelve editors who said "No." I sold it to Don Grant as a hardcover, and then the next year I sold it in paperback, and I sold a sequel as a paperback original. I also sold one called *Redbeard* at Nycon III in 1967. I had been writing some Doctor/Nurse books – sex books without the sex – under pseudonyms for Walter Zacharias of Lancer, and I went to his office during the Worldcon, and said, "Please please can't I write a science fiction book for you?" And he shocks the hell out of me by saying, "Yeah, you can, because we bought up these five or six old hardcovers that never went anywhere, had horrible sales, were out of print for a decade – and damned if they haven't been the bestselling books we have. I want a barbarian hero." The books he was talking about were the Conan books. So I gave him a barbarian hero. Since he *was* a barbarian, he didn't fare very well against intelligent people.



The next time I went up to New York looking for assignments, I had lunch with Lin Carter, who was an old friend, as well as a science fiction writer and editor – a truly fine editor, in fact. He was telling me what he was working on. Last week he had done an Edgar Rice Burroughs book, and now he was doing a Leigh Brackett book, and two months from now he was going to be doing a Robert E. Howard book. The man was a literary chameleon. I finally asked him, "When are you going to do a Lin Carter book?" He looked at me like he didn't understand the question, and in the instant I realized that I didn't want to grow up to be Lin Carter. I didn't want to spend my life doing Howard and Burroughs pastiches. So, I got out of the field – as a writer, not a fan – and I stayed out for eleven years, giving everybody a chance to forget <*points at a fan holding up one of the Ganymede books*> and you can see how well *that* worked.

I needed another source of income.. We had been breeding collies – breeding and exhibiting them for the show ring. There's a photo of a couple of them in the program book. We named almost all of them after science fiction stories and characters. The winningest collies in the country in 1974, 1976, and 1979 were champions Gully Foyle, The Grey Lensman, and Paradox Lost. And the leading brood bitch of 1977 was Bob Silverberg's favorite, Nightwings.

One day, more than 200 anonymous books into my career, I turned to Carol in 1975 and said, "If I write one more four-day book, or one more six-hour screenplay, my brain is surely going to turn to porridge and run out of my ear. What else can we do? More to the point, what do we know *how* to do?" And we figured out that, well, if the two of us could care for fifteen dogs and I had time left over to write even bad books, think of what a staff of twenty or so could do. So we spent about a year looking for the best boarding kennel we could find, and in 1976 we wound up buying the Briarwood Pet Motel in Cincinnati, which was the second-biggest luxury boarding and grooming kennel in the country – and we kept it for seventeen years. On any given day, we could be boarding two hundred dogs, fifty or sixty cats, and we'd be grooming thirty or forty dogs. We had a staff of twenty young ladies, It turned out that they were much, much better self-starters, neater, tougher; they could count (none of the guys could, and every now and again somebody had to make change). After four years the place was practically running itself, and I was finally able to start writing again. And this time I wrote the kind of things I had always wanted to write.

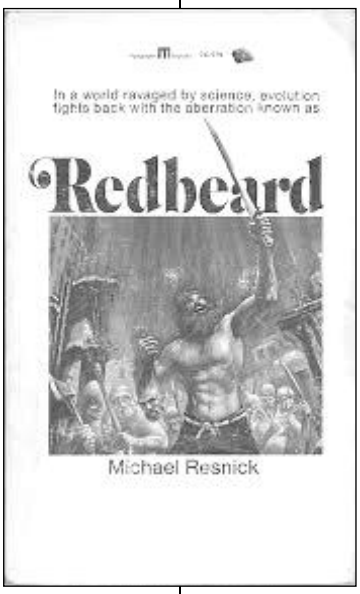
The first one I did was called *The Soul Eater*. I still remember – *Analog* called it a work of art, which startled even me, and Dick Geis in *Science Fiction Review*, which was quite major back then, claimed it was the strangest and most beautiful love story he'd ever read.

I was off and running. I sold a few more books, and I was selling maybe three a year to Signet, and while I got great reviews my career didn't seem to be getting anywhere. Everyone agreed that I was writing good books, and I was certainly enjoying myself for a change – but I wasn't making any money to speak of, nobody but Signet seemed to want to publish me, and Jack Chalker finally convinced me that the problem was probably my agent.

I then made the most brilliant move I had made in my career. I fired that agent, and I hired the best agent in the industry. She was then, she is

now, and she's right there – Eleanor Wood <*points to her*>. Once a year I write Eleanor a friendship card stating that she is not allowed to die or retire before I do.

And just for the record, the first book of mine Eleanor sold got me three times what I had been making; I had sold one book overseas in the four years prior to that, and Eleanor made twenty-six foreign sales in the first two years I was in her stable. Then things got *really* busy. All because of her.



Just about the time I got Eleanor, some critic decided that, because people were starting to notice me, he would tell you everything you needed to know about me, and do it in two sentences. This is the exact quote, from some prozine <*reads*>. "The Heinlein hero, seeing a problem, will engineer a solution to it. The Resnick hero, faced with the same problem, will bribe, bully, or flim-flam the Heinlein hero into solving it for him."

In the early eighties, we went to a movie called *Alice's Restaurant.* I hated it. In fact, about an hour into it, I start muttering, "Why am I watching this? I could be home, writing the future history of the human race or something like that." And Carol whispers in my ear, "Okay, let's go do it."

So that night I plotted out a novel called *Birthright: The Book of Man*, which we sold, and into that future I have set something like thirty-five novels and twenty short stories, and I really should write a note thanking the producers of *Alice's Restaurant.*

I did something else – again, just about the time I met Eleanor. I gave up watching television series. I was tired of having my intellect offended by every last one of them. And, I figured, well, if I watch two hours a night, that's ten hours a week I could be writing, and fifty hours a month, and five hundred hours a year, and even at m slower current speed it comes to an extra book a year. I have not watched a television episode since 1982 – I still watch sports and news. I figure I've probably written 35 more books because of that, and somehow I do not feel culturally deprived.

I was reading *Space Chantey*, a fine book by the late R.A. Lafferty, and it begins with this quote, which to me was incredibly evocative: <*reads*> "Will there be a mythology of the future," they used to ask, "after all has become science? Will high deeds be told in epic, or only in computer code?" And I decided that I wanted to find out and answer that. So I wanted to do a myth of the far future. But having decided that, I didn't know what the hell to write about.

While I was writing something else one night, Carol saw a movie on television, and the next day she went out and rented it. She skimmed ahead to the spot she wanted me to watch. The movie was *Duck, You Sucker!*" a Sergio Leone film that has been re-titled *A Fistful of Dynamite.* In it, James Coburn plays a disillusioned Irish revolutionary, an explosives expert who's been betrayed by his friends and his enemies and everybody else, and these days he's selling his expertise and fighting for Maximilian in Mexico.

Carol doesn't want me to watch the whole film – just this one thirty-five second speech. In it, Coburn basically says that once upon a time he believed in God, and truth, and justice, and loyalty, and the IRA – and now all he believes in is the dynamite.

She says, "What do you think of it?" I tell her that it's a hell of a speech. And she says, "Okay, you wanted a lead character. Now write the story." And it became *Santiago*, my all-time bestseller, which stayed in print for twenty-five years.

The next really interesting thing I wrote was probably a story called "Kirinyaga". Orson Scott Card had asked me to write for an anthology he was doing called *Eutopia*. Basically, these are different Utopian societies being set up on a series of planetoids, and there were a couple of interesting Catch-22s: first, the story had to be told by an insider who believed in the experiment; it couldn't be a wonder tour by somebody who was just visiting. The second thing was that if

anybody didn't like the society, they could go to a certain place on the planet called Haven, and a ship would pick them up and take them away within an hour – which meant no revolutions against a real or imagined Big Brother.

It struck me that the thing to do was find the most heinous tradition of the Kikuyu people, which is who I had chosen to write about – and then defend it. And, to me, the tradition is that, even today, any baby born feet-first is a demon and must be put to death.

I showed the story to Carol, as I do with everything I write. I had written it in the first person of the baby's father. She said, "Well, that's pretty good, but the only interesting character is the witch doctor, and he's only in it for half a page. Why don't you try it with him as the narrator?" So I did, and I won my first Hugo.

I don't know why Carol lets me hang around, but I hope by now you know why *I* let Carol hang around.

I also started editing anthologies. I'm still not quite sure how. One day, at the 1989 Worldcon in Boston, I'm sitting down having lunch with my friend Marty Greenberg, who is an anthology machine. Marty asks, "What are you working on?" I reply that I am working on a novella, which later was a Hugo and Nebula nominee, titled "Bully!", an alternate history about Theodore Roosevelt. Then we talked about the Green Bay Packers, which was his passion, and a whole bunch of other stuff. And then we get up from lunch, and he says, "Okay, I'll go sell our anthology now." And I say, "What anthology, Marty? What the hell are you talking about?" He says, "You know – Teddy Roosevelt? *Alternate Presidents*?" And I say, "We never mentioned that." He says, "Believe me, that's a great anthology idea. If I sell it, will you edit it?

I figure I can stand there arguing for twenty minutes, or I can just say, "Sure, Marty, go hawk your dumb idea and leave me alone." Which is what I said.

Two hours later, he comes up and says, "I sold it to Tor. You're editing it."

That's how it began. It went for, Marty tells me, the highest auction price ever paid for an anthology by the Science Fiction Book Club, which is not that high a price, but higher than they'd done before. Then he started selling every flavor of "Alternate" you can imagine. There were *Alternate Kennedys*, and *Tyrants*, and *Outlaws*, and this and that.

Then one day, we're sitting around at the 1993 Worldcon, ConFrancisco – such an awful convention it later became known in fannish tradition as "ConFiasco." We're sitting in the CFG suite – that's the Cincinnati Fantasy Group, my home club – and we're talking about the convention. Nobody is very happy with it. One of the bids that San Francisco beat to win he convention was Zagreb, in Yugoslavia. That particular day, bombs were falling in Zagreb, and somebody, trying to find a sunny spot when everyone else was knocking the convention, said, "Well, it could be worse. It could be in Zagreb." Somebody else, being fannish, put up a really strong argument that, even with the bombs, Zagreb would be a better venue

I hear this, and I think, "Damn! I've got an anthology!" Dean Wesley Smith walks into the room, and in two minutes, I have sold him *Alternate Worldcons.* He printed it, and it came out in 1994, one year later, at the Winnipeg Worldcon. He had printed a thousand copies; and shipped about five hundred up there. It sold out by Friday. By Saturday, people were offering sixty, eighty, ninety dollars for the thing, even though they know they could order it from Dean and get it a week later. So, based on that, we thought we'd better do another one. It was going to be called *Son of Alternate Worldcons,* and then our printer came up with a better title: *Again, Alternate Worldcons*

I never planned to do a third one, but now I have an excuse, because anytime anybody asks me, I just answer that we'll do *The Last Alternate*

Worldcons the year after *The Last Dangerous Visions* hits the bookstores.

All right, have I got anything else to say? Yeah, I do. One of the things the anthologies let me do was buy from a number of talented beginners. This is not an easy field – no field is easy to break into. For a dozen years I did a column, called "Ask Bwana" for one of the semi-prozines, and I would answer questions about the business – not about how to write. I'd address ten or fifteen questions an issue. And one day, somebody said, "What are the odds of coming out of the slush pile?"

I didn't know. So, I called Gardner Dozois, who was editing *Asimov's*, and asked: "How many slush stories a year do you buy?" He said, "Three." I asked, "How many do you get?" He said, "A thousand a month." I called Kris Rusch, who was editing *F&SF* back then. The odds there were a little better. Gardner's were four-thousand-to-one; Kris Rusch's were about eight-hundred-to-one. Those are terrible odds, and there are some very, very talented people out there. And if you sell to a magazine, they usually have to put your name on the cover. They only buy four or five stories a month, and name value counts for a lot. With anthologies, it's not that vital. I need ten or twelve or fifteen names that I can give the sales force to go push and put on the cover, but I can usually buy twenty to twenty-five stories for an anthology, and that allows me to buy from a number of talented beginners who would otherwise have a much, much harder time selling.

And you find beginners everywhere. You get them at workshops, you see them online, they're recommended to you by other people, they walk up to me at the Worldcon, get on their knees, and say, "How do I sell you?" It's just not that hard to find them.

During the 1990s, my anthologies ran more first stories than all three digests put together – the three that exist now. I also started helping some of these writers because once they sold to me, they wanted to sell to someone else (of course).

It began with Nick DiChario, who gave me a story for *Alternate Kennedys* that was just brilliant. He shouldn't have sent it to me, because it was a closed anthology – which is to say, it was by invitation only. But Nancy Kress knew about it and she had read the story and thought it would fit. Three pages into it, I knew nothing could keep it off the Hugo ballot, and indeed nothing did. It was a Hugo nominee, and a World Fantasy nominee, and Nick himself was a Campbell nominee.

When I finally met him the next year at the Orlando Worldcon, I asked him why he had sent it to me, because at that time, the magazines had about three times the circulation. He was much more likely to make a ballot from a magazine. His answer was that every magazine in the field had given him a form rejection. Which meant to me that the slushpile readers were assholes, because no editor could read that story and reject it.

About a year later, he sends me a novella called "Unto the Land of Day-Glo", and says he was having the same problem with this – nobody wanted it. Could I tell him what was wrong with it?

The only thing wrong with it was that it was by Nick instead of Isaac or Robert or Arthur. It was as good as the short story, and I managed to get it into one of Piers Anthony's anthologies. And it occurred to me that if we treated him like this much longer, he was going to go write mysteries or espionage or Westerns, and the field was going to lose a really remarkable talent.

I get about eight or ten invitations every year to write for anthologies. They are, essentially assignments. The editors are not going to turn them down. I invited Nick to write two or three with me, just to get him in print, and get him encouraged and keep him in this field.

And I started doing that with a lot of other writers. Over the years now, I have collaborated with about twenty-five new writers, and I have bought from them for my anthologies, and I have introduced them to editors and to other writers and to agents. Maureen McHugh calls them "Mike's Writer Children." I am incredibly proud of them. Between them, they have been nominated for nine Campbells, they've been on a number of Hugo ballots; and one of them – Toby Buckell – made the *New York Times* bestseller list just a couple of years ago.

Some of these guys would have made it just as easily without me. But I know that not all of them would, and I'm very, very proud of doing that. That's why I keep editing anthologies – you don't make any money on them, I guarantee that.

I suppose I should tell you some stories about Chicon. In 1991, I won my second Hugo when I was at Chicon V. That was the year they experimented and made it a plastic Hugo instead of a metal one. The Hugo since then is always the same – always metal – and the bases are what differ. Anyway, I won it, and a couple of fanzine editors interviewed me and asked what I thought of it. I said, with absolute honesty, that it looked exactly like a rectal thermometer for an elephant. I probably said that in four or five fanzine interviews, and then a committee member from a Worldcon (it wasn't Chicon), who asked me never to reveal his name, sent me a metal Hugo, and the screws to put it in the base, and said, "*Now* will you shut the hell up?" From that day to this, which is about twenty years, I have shut the hell up.

In 1995, I won a Hugo in Glasgow. We put it in our luggage and we flew from Glasgow to Edinburgh. When we got off the plane there, it set off every alarm in the airport. We had to take it out. It looks just like a rocket – hell, it *is* a rocket – but it looks like a much more dangerous one. We took it out so they could read the base, and I had to show them the program book to educate them concerning what a Hugo was. We put it back in the carry-on; we get to Heathrow. Sets off every alarm in the airport. Go through the whole rigmarole again. Put it back in. Fly to Kennedy Airport in New York. Walk right out with it. That's when I knew I was really glad to live a thousand miles inland.

What is my proudest achievement in science fiction? I'm going to offend at least one or two of you, and maybe quite a few, by telling you what it is, but it really *was* my proudest. And it goes back to the fact that I don't want to write Edgar Rice Burroughs books, I don't want to write Robert E. Howard books, I want to write Mike Resnick books.

My proudest achievement was that in calendar year 1994, I turned down both a lucrative *Trek* book and an even more lucrative *Star Wars* trilogy. To this day I've never regretted it.

I suppose I should tell you a little bit about Hollywood. How are we doing on time? Okay.

This gentleman here <*points*>, Harry Kloor, is collaborating with me on a screenplay, but he's not a real Hollywood type. For one thing, he has two PhD's in two different sciences, and for another, he reads science fiction. But, most of them don't. In fact, most of them don't read anything. They'll come up to you and say, "You know, I love your work! I've read a synopsis of every book you've ever written!"

You go to story conferences with these guys, and sooner or later one of these young geniuses who's probably making eight hundred thousand bucks a year, comes up with a question: "Why *can't* one of the twins be black?" Or, "Yeah, we could do the Katharine Hepburn Story, but let's have a Katharine with hooters."

Anyway, I really don't like working with them – but they pay so much money, they play with Monopoly money, so when they offer it, I take it, but it drives me crazy. Carol and I had sold *Santiago* there. They still haven't made the movie – it's still under option – but they paid us to do a screenplay. And there's this scene, some of you may remember, in which there's a cyborg spaceship that doesn't want to be a cyborg. He had crashed on some planet that had never seen a man before, they put him together as a ship, and he has a directive that he can't kill himself. But he wants to end this miserable existence, so he offers a deal to the hero – he will take him anywhere, do him a service, if then the hero will order him to fly into a star.

It's a reasonably sad scene in the book, and it was a beautifully sad scene in the movie. And we're sitting around the table in this story conference, Carol and I, and the producer says, "There won't be a dry eye in the house." Director says, "This will be the scene they will all

remember!" Special effects guy says, "I can do it in an afternoon." Goes around the table and everybody loves it. Then we come to the last guy in line. He's the marketing director, and he says, "We can't have that scene. If we have that scene, I can't sell two million of those toy ships in the stores." Eleven guys snap their fingers, turn to Carol and me, and say, "Kill the scene." That's one of the things I really don't like about Hollywood.

One of the things I *do* like, as I say, is that they play with Monopoly money. And I'll tell you one more story about it. While we were doing *Santiago*, they had hired a new team – a young director, and his special effects guy, and his cinematographer. At the time, *Santiago* was going to be their second film. Their first film was being made for Miramax. Eventually Miramax asked these guys, "What is this Santiago that you're doing for Capella?" And they showed them our script. And they phoned me and said, "We love your script, and we want to have lunch with you."

Now, Miramax was headquartered in New York. They could have called us and talked about it –we're in Cincinnati. But they don't do Hollywood business in Cincinnati. They could have flown us to New York, which is a very short trip. But they don't do Hollywood business in New York. They waited until we flew out for our next story conference in Hollywood, and then they flew two executives out to have breakfast with us, and then flew them right back to New York.

The executives said, "We love your work, and we want to buy one of your books and have you do the screenplay." Which is a nice way to have breakfast. So I said, "Sure, I'll go home and find some stuff that's not under option and send it to you." I sent them ten or twelve books. They wrote back and said, "Sorry, we don't want any of 'em." I thought, well, at least we got a nice breakfast out of it.

But that week, a book of mine called *The Widowmaker* comes out from Bantam. It's their lead title that month, and they take a full-page ad in *Locus*, and the top three-quarters of the page is for *The Widowmaker*. The bottom quarter of the page is for a book by Chris Claremont, taken from like a two-page outline by George Lucas, but because they had Lucas's name, they gave him co-author credit. So just for the hell of it, I Xeroxed the ad, sent it to Miramax, and said, "Okay. *You* may not want me, but in *my* field I'm three times as important as George Lucas."

Two days later, I get a call from Miramax. They say, "We want to buy *The Widowmaker*." I say, "It's not even out yet. Don't you want to read it?" They say, "Nah, you're three times as important as George Lucas. We're buying it."

So we go out there – they can't talk to us where we live and they can't fly us to New York. They fly Carol and me out to California, first class, on one day's notice (so they didn't get a discount) and we're going to meet the director they've hired, Peter Hyams, who has done *End of Days, 2010,* whatever – and they fly out five guys from Miramax. We all have dinner together, and it turns out Carol and I are the only ones who have read the book. But Peter knows how he wants the story to go, and he tells me. I say, "Well, you *can* do that if you want, but the guy you think is the villain is actually the hero. This is a trilogy." He says, "*This* is the film I'm making." And we could see from the expression on everybody's faces that screenwriters are every bit as interchangeable as they ever were, and if we don't give them what they want, somebody else will, so we say, "Okay, we'll do it your way." They tell us they're probably going to film it in August. (This is back in February,) We say fine, we'll do what we have to do.

We go home, and we write a synopsis (which they call a treatment out there), and Peter tells us one or two changes he wants to make. But they pay us for the synopsis. In fact, they pay us more than I used to get from Signet for complete novels. Ten pages, And all I can do is wonder: How long has this been going on? I make three little changes, which take about five minutes, send it off, Peter approves it, and they send us *another* check, same size.

Then we don't hear from them for a few months. I call Peter in, I guess it must have been about June, and I say, "Peter, if you guys are going to start in August, shouldn't someone tell me to start working on the screenplay? Doesn't anybody want to talk to me?" He said, "Kid" – I'm ten years older than him, but he's been in the industry longer – "Kid, you don't do anything until the Weinstein brothers (who own Miramax) pass on it."

Sure enough, two days later, I get a really unhappy call from a vice president – one of the

guys who keeps flying out to eat with us – saying, that their first science fiction film came out, a sequel to *The Crow*, and it bombed, and Bob Weinstein didn't really understand science fiction anyway, and they're going to kill *The Widowmaker* project. I was disappointed, but they'd bought an option, paid us for two treatments, and gave us a couple of meals, so what the hell.

About eight weeks later I hear from my attorney. Now, in Hollywood, you don't need an agent – it's nice to have, but they're not essential. You *must* have an attorney. Once an agent gets you a contract, it immediately goes over to the attorney anyway. Book contracts usually run four, five, or six pages, whereas the smallest movie contract I've ever seen is eighty-five pages. My lawyer calls after eight weeks and says, "It's time to bill them for the script." I say, "Didn't we tell you? They killed the project." She says, "Yeah?" I say, "Ah! We *didn't* tell you that we didn't write the script." And she says, "Yeah?" And I say, "What part of 'We didn't write the script' don't you understand?" And she says, "This is Hollywood. They bought your exclusive time for eight weeks, and if they didn't choose to make use of it, tough shit. We're billing them for the script." I say, "Look – we're Midwesterners; we have his work ethic." And she say, "We're billing them for the script," and hangs up.

Two days later, I got what remains, to this day, the biggest single check I've gotten as a writer – for not writing that script.

I'm not done. Six weeks after that, she calls and says, "Time to bill them for revisions." We got another check.

Those constitute the kind of dealings I have with Hollywood. Other people clearly have better ones, such as Harry. Do we have the poster here? <*Harry shakes his head.*> Too bad. Harry is also going to be producing a graphic novel of *The Widowmaker*, now that Miramax doesn't want it.

What else? Let me just get up to date. Starting in 1989, I've been nominated for one or more Hugos every year except for two – 1999 and 2003. I've had fan mail from Arthur C. Clarke. Heroes of mine like Poul Anderson and Sprague de Camp, have sent me their manuscripts and asked for comments; Isaac Asimov and Jack Williamson invited me to use their characters in their tribute volumes, and I am still to this day in awe of all these guys These are the ones I grew up worshipping, and a little part of me thinks this has got to be a dream, that they didn't really want me to do anything for them, and they didn't want to write me fan letters. It has been a wonderful, wonderful career, and a wonderful life.

Also I did want to note that over the course of my career I have been blessed with the best damned artists anyone has ever had. I made a list of them, so I don't leave anyone out. My first artist was Jeffrey Jones. My second was Kelly Freas, who I had a few more times. Since then I have had Ed Emshwiller, Michael Whalen three times, Boris Vallejo, six by Bob Eggleton, Jim Burns five times, six by John Picacio, Dan Dos Santos twice, Donato Giancola five times, Seamus Gallagher, Don Maitz, and Stephane Martiniere. The only one I never had, and he was an old friend of mine, was Vincent DiFate – and I begged for him on this *Win Some, Loose Some* book that the Committee published, and I got him – so I have had just magnificent, magnificent artists. If you were to ask any journeyman writer what's more important to sell the product – the way it looks, or the way it reads – it's the way it looks. These guys have helped build my house and pay my bills.

I've also been privileged to work with some of the finest editors in the field. There are three in particular who have bought ten or more books each from me – Sheila Gilbert, Beth Meacham, and Lou Anders. And there are a number of others who have bought double-digit stories from me: Gardner Dozois, Bill Schafer, Marty Greenberg (who may have bought over a hundred new and reprint), Sheila Williams, and Kristine Kathryn Rusch.

Anyway, all I ever wanted to be was a writer, and to me, the highest accolade a writer can have in his career in this field is to be a Worldcon Guest of Honor. I'm only 70, and I don't plan to stop. So I needed another goal. And it was my dear friend Jack Williamson who gave it to me. Shortly before he died, after he turned 98, he dedicated his very last book to me. So now I have a new goal. When I'm 99, I promise to dedicate a book to somebody in this audience – and I promise it will be a good one.

<prolonged standing ovation

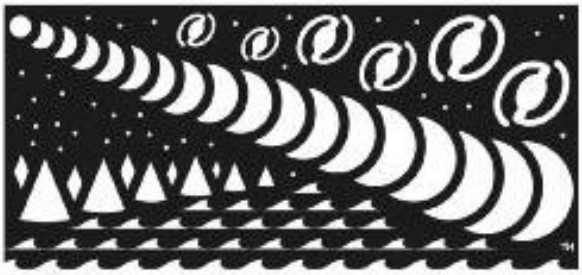
The Ultimate Meaning of Life

by David Thayer

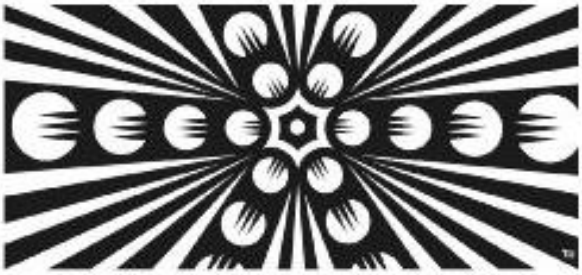
God releases energy sublime
Creating the universe space time
Big bang in all directions scatter
Coalescing parts into matter
With no design beyond entropy
Until weak strong forces gravity
Elements unite another rules
Life animates atoms molecules

Life survives thrives grows diverse complex
Senses surroundings and exudes sex
Divides creating new life the same
Different dispersing space to claim
Algae fungi minnows sharks ants bees
Men apes mice doves eagles grasses trees
Intelligent clever moving still
Large small vital niches fitter fill

Life vanishes if it fails to tame
Extreme heat cold whatever to blame
Falling comets to weather undone
Storms volcanoes earthquakes dying sun
Life that kills ideas not its own
Stifles learning any known unknown
Harms precious innocence at random
Like those it persecutes dead become



Life wants seeks gains knowledge mind body
Shares keen touches sights smells sounds key
Symbols over time space transmitting
Lifetimes together future building
Life moves from one molecule to seas
Mountains planets moons stars galaxies
Takes all light dark matter energy
Extrapolates exponentially



Entire universe in control
Life ends predator prey beast plant role
Accelerates new species evolving
Transcends birth death pain suffering
Burning bright frames perfect symmetry
Embodies good truth immortal beauty
Parallel new worlds discovering
Keeps time space from fire ice ending