

EARTH • MARS • PLUTO



Matthew Appleton
Georges Dodds
Richard Horton
Howard Andrew Jones
Fred Lerner
James D. Nicoll
John O'Neill
Mike Resnick
Peter Sands
Steven H Silver
Allen Steele
Michael D. Thomas

Sheryl Birkhead
Brad Foster
Deb Kosiba
Rotsler
Taral Wayne

2007: ISSUE 7



3.00 OR THE USUAL

From the Mine

Last year's issue was published on Christmas Eve. This year, it looks like I'll get it out earlier, but not by much since I'm writing this, which is the last piece, on December 17.

What isn't in this issue is the mock section. It has always been the most difficult section to put together and I just couldn't get enough pieces to make it happen this issue. All my fault, not the fault of those who sent me submissions. The mock section may return in the 2008 issue, or it may not. I have found something else I think might be its replacement, which appears before the letter column rather than after it.

That something is ArgentusCon. This is a panel discussion held via e-mail between a variety of participants, much like a science fiction panel, although without the audience to ask questions. The topic for the first issue was a look at utopian and dystopian literature over the last decade. The panelists included Matthew Appleton, James Nicoll, Peter Sands, and Allen Steele. As moderator, my task was to launch the discussion and later edit all the e-mails into a readable form, often when the discussions were anything but linear.

Since I started from the last item in the issue, I'll work my way forward.

Mike Resnick offered me an article detailing his run in with one of the more interesting cult leaders of the late twentieth century...Anton LaVey, who founded the Church of Satan, getting many into a tizzy.

Michael Thomas takes a look at some of the many continuity problems which resulted by more than three decades of producing Doctor Who, many of which were done without the writers being fully cognizant of an overarching background that hadn't been created yet. Of course, even today, Doctor Who tends to ignore continuity in favor of a story idea.

James Nicoll make two appearances in *Argentus*, as mentioned above, as part of ArgentusCon, but also as he looks at how an author's personal beliefs can affect his reading of their work, or his desire to read their work.

Lately, the *Chicago Tribune* has begun running a small feature on Sundays in which they find the earliest reference to something in their pages and write about it. I decided to follow suit, looking up earliest references to some science fictional terms and authors. Although the phrase "science fiction" turns up as early as 1900, it wasn't until 1943 that it actually appears as a reference to science fiction (as opposed to the words science and fiction separated by commas in a list). It is possible that I'll be lengthening this article for publication elsewhere at some point.

Fred Lerner takes us on a literary journey to Portugal, as he prepared for his own journey to the old Roman province of Lusitania. He looks at the writing of two Portuguese authors who are practically unknown to the Anglophonic world.

And just as the ArgentusCon had four panelists discussing a single topic, the first four articles are also on the same topic, although the authors tackled them separately (mostly). I asked Rich Horton, John O'Neill, Georges Dodds, and Howard Andrew Jones to compile a list of ten books each that are out of print and should be brought back into print. When I asked, knowing something of their proclivities, I had a feeling I'd know what types of books would show up, if not the specifics. I had several surprises in store for me. And if these writers didn't always stick strictly within the guidelines I sent them, well, that's what writers do.

This year, I wound up changing jobs. I had been working for my old employer for just over seven years, but was getting less and less happy about it. I enjoyed the company and most of my co-workers, but I had been hired to work as a technical writer. Two years ago, they decided they didn't need technical writers so they had me testing software, which is not what I wanted to do. I'm now working for a different company (from home), where I am writing proactive bid proposals. My team at the company is brand new and I was the first person on-board after my manager.

And so we end 2007 in a very different place that it was begun and looking forward to what 2008 will bring.



Table of Contents

From the Mine	1
Table of Contents	1
The Top Ten Out-of-Print SF & Fantasy Books	2
Five Neglected Works of Imaginative Fiction	4
The Top Ten Out-of-Print SF & Fantasy Books	9
Ten Forgotten Tales	12
Sagas From the Portuguese	16
First Appearances.....	17
1963 and All That: A Look at Doctor Who Continuity.....	18
My Reactions to Writer's Politics	21
Me and The High Priest	22
ArgentusCon: Panel Discussion: Dystopia v. Utopia	23
Letters of Comment	33

Art:
Sheryl Birkhead: 30, 36, 38
Brad Foster: 1, 18, 28
Deb Kosiba: Cover
Rotsler: 19, 38
Taral Wayne: 31, 33

The Top Ten Out-of-Print SF & Fantasy Books

or

Bertelsmann, Ye Have Much to Answer For
John O'Neill

It used to be easy to assign blame when treasured classics went out of print. Come on, we all knew who was responsible: evil Publishers. Soulless computers deep in the catacombs of Bertelsmann corporation—owner of Random House, Doubleday, the Book of the Month Club, Del Rey, BMG music, Napster, and God knows what else—ticked over the quarterly sales numbers, and wham. All the remaining copies of *Bridge of Birds* are pulled and pulped, and suddenly my favorite fantasy novel is out of print.

But then I became a publisher, and discovered a horrifying fact: publishers aren't malicious. We're just idiots. We make huge mistakes. We buy the wrong book while recovering from a hangover, and when we can't break the contract we publish it with no marketing budget and a horrible cover, and hope no one notices it. And then it's met with rave reviews and huge sales, while the brilliant masterwork we've been lovingly shepherding to market for the last six months lands with a thud and quickly dies.

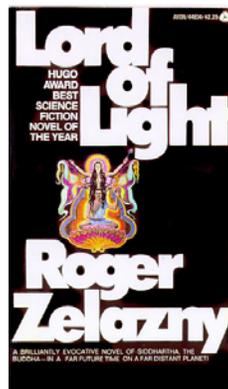
The chilling truth? It's not our fault. It's the buying public's fault. Books go out of print because people don't buy them.

It's your fault. No, I'm not speaking in the abstract. I mean you personally. What were you thinking?

So here's my Top Ten reasons for you to lose sleep. Ten dark sins on your immortal soul. While you should have been buying and talking about these books, you were sitting on your couch, engrossed in *The Secret*. The \$40 limited hardcover. Dude, you suck.

1) *Lord of Light*, Roger Zelazny (originally published 1967; 1968 Hugo Award winner). Might as well get the big one out of the way first. This is my favorite novel, a wholly original science fantasy about an epic battle between the gods of the Hindu pantheon on a far-future planet...or more accurately, the survivors and descendants of a colony ship who have set themselves up as gods, suppressing technology and ruling the rest of the populace as it slowly sinks into a new dark age.

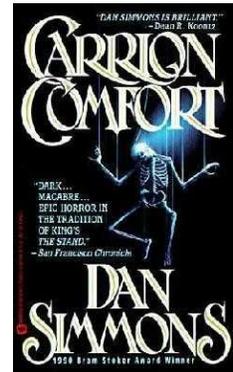
When "Star Wars" was released a decade later *Lord of Light* was one of the first books in the SF canon it was compared to, and by 1979 a \$50 million film version was announced—with concept art by Jack Kirby. The sets



were to remain intact to create a gigantic SF theme park in Denver.

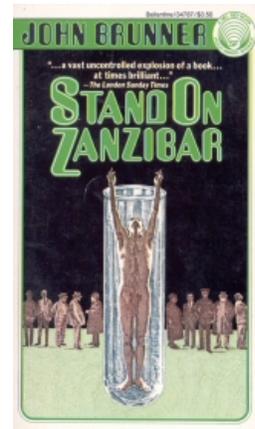
Never happened. And I know you're somehow to blame for that too. You can't hide from me.

2) *Carrion Comfort*, Dan Simmons (1989, Bram Stoker Award). This is the book that really cemented Dan Simmons' reputation, proving *Song of Kali*, his World Fantasy Award winning first novel, wasn't just a flash in the pan. It's a massive and ambitious horror novel of the kind that only Stephen King seemed really capable of—at least until Simmons showed up. It features vampires, Nazis, Hollywood producers, the Israeli Secret Police, and a whole lot more.



How can any book with vampires and Nazis be out of print? I'm telling you, there's something seriously wrong with this country.

3) *Stand on Zanzibar*, John Brunner (1968; 1969 Hugo winner). This is the book that first demonstrated to me that there's more to literature than just plot, theme, and the other elements of the literary food pyramid taught in high school. There's also, say, setting and structure. And when you're as brilliantly innovative as Brunner was in *Stand on Zanzibar*, structure can elevate your work to the rank of masterpiece.



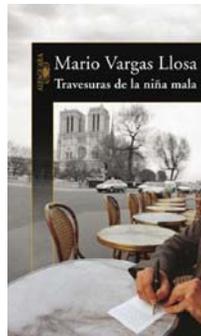
Zanzibar tells two parallel but separate near-future tales in alternating chapters: Norman House, 26-year-old Vice President at General Technics, is blackmailed to smuggle seeds of a new strain of legal marijuana out of his labs, while spy Donald Hogan is struggling to uncover the secrets behind the odd behavior of an A.I. tasked with African re-development. Between these chapters we're treated to a rich series of unrelated vignettes and news stories. While the plot is fascinating, it's these that give the novel its mesmerizing power, as they gradually paint a detailed and frequently chilling portrait of a world being slowly choked by overpopulation.

Oh, and its set in 2100. Read it now while it's still technically science fiction.

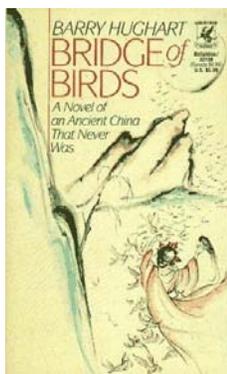
4) *The War of the End of the World*, Mario Vargas Llosa (1981; too good for awards). Speaking of brilliant structure.. only one novel I've read since *Stand on Zanzibar* has surpassed it in sheer ambition and originality of conception: Vargas Llosa's novel of impending apocalypse in Brazil, *The War of the End of the World*.

Like Brunner, Vargas Llosa relies exclusively on short, taut chapters to tell his story. The central conceit is almost breathtaking in its audacity and simplicity: each chapter is told from the point of view of a different character. Soldiers, prophets, thieves, politicians—over a hundred in total, bringing a literally unrivaled breadth to the tale. Every novel I read for months afterward seemed pale and thin in comparison.

OK, it takes a certain generousness of spirit to consider this science fiction. After all, it's based on true events surrounding Canudos, the remote village in the interior of Brazil that was annihilated by the Brazilian army in 1897, and O Conselheiro, the mad prophet who induced the villagers to rebel. But with its apocalyptic tone and compelling portrayal of a culture in the grip of prophecy, it's far more fantastical than most SF or fantasy you'll come across. Trust me.



5) *Bridge of Birds*, Barry Hughart (1984; 1985 World Fantasy Award). Top Ten lists are a lot like the Oscars—comedies get no respect. Well, here's my nod to books



that can make you laugh out loud: Hughart's hilarious novel of an ancient China that never was (but should have been). The aged scholar Master Kao Li and his faithful companion Lu Yu, usually called Number Ten Ox, race against time to find a cure for the poison that has stricken the children of Lu's village—and in the process stumble across an ancient and potent mystery that will take them across the

landscape of ancient China, to the court of the Emperor and places more marvelous yet.

[Note: while the paperback has not been reprinted in over a decade, Amazon is still listing copies of the 1984 Del Rey edition—probably sold through a warehouse. If you move fast, you might be able to get a copy.]

6) *The Runaway Robot*, Lester del Rey (1965). Boy, I miss this book. It was the first science fiction novel I remember reading, offered through Scholastic Books, and I ordered and devoured it in Junior High. Paul is a young

boy living on Ganymede who learns his family is finally returning to Earth—but without Rex, his robot companion. So Rex and Paul run off, living a life of adventure on the run across the solar system. I guess today it would be called Young Adult, though in those days we called them juveniles.



When my sons (aged 9 & 11) started showing an interest in SF, this is the book I wanted to give them first—not that “Transformers” novelization they were eyeing in Borders. *Feh*. Six weeks and \$30 on eBay later, I finally had a copy. If there were any justice in the world, it would still be in print—and I wouldn't have had to tide them over with “Starcraft” and “Warhammer” books.

At least they liked it. But then they asked when the movie and the computer game were coming out. Explain that to me.

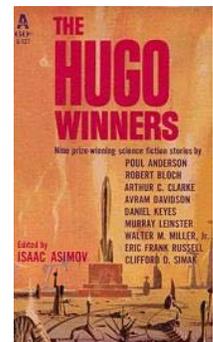
7) *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Volumes I-IV*, edited by Robert Silverberg *et al.* (1970 and later). Alright, technically, this list is supposed to concern itself with novels, and this isn't a novel. It's an anthology (or four anthologies, if you're going to be picky.) Not that I noticed when I first picked up Volume I at age twelve. Talk about innovative story structure—I thought I'd stumbled across a novel whose chapters had absolutely nothing to do with each other.

I eventually figured it out. And for many years this wonderful book—containing the best SF stories and novellas of all time, as selected by the Science Fiction Writers of America—was my first true introduction to the writers of SF's Golden Age. The first two volumes alone included a treasure trove of now-neglected classics—John Campbell's “Who Goes There?”, Blish's “Earthman, Come Home,” James H. Schmitz's “The Witches of Karres,” and dozens of others. These stories are the bedrock on which modern science fiction was built. More than that, they're still genuinely entertaining today.

It's worth tracking down all four volumes, including the much rarer third and fourth—if you can find them. Good luck.

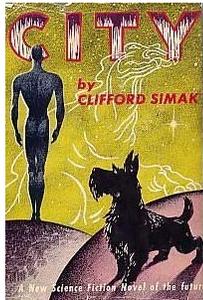
8) *The Hugo Winners, Volume I & II*, edited by Isaac Asimov (1962 & 1971). As long as I'm ignoring Steven Silver's instructions to stick to novels, I might as well be blatant about it.

Why in God's name are these books out of print? I mean, seriously. This is a tragedy. For nearly three decades the single volume Science Fiction Book Club edition was the virtual textbook for Science Fiction 101. It



was prominently displayed on the back of every SF magazine since about 1972. You know the ad I'm talking about. Just the thought that this book is no longer available in any form makes me shake my head, settle back in my recliner, and ponder the approaching Dark Ages. Kids, don't bother Dad. He's in one of his moods again.

9) Anything by Clifford D. Simak, Clifford D. Simak. In my first draft of this list, half the books were by Clifford D. Simak. Every time I revised it, I kept changing the titles. Well, the hell with it. I'll just list them all, and see how many Steven lets me get away with. *Way Station. The Werewolf Principle. Enchanted Pilgrimage. City. The Goblin Reservation.* (Hey Steven—I am getting paid by the word, right?)



Simak was a wonderful and always reliable writer, whose books reflected a sense of wonder I sometimes think our genre has lost forever. If you've read any of his books, you know what I'm talking about. If not, then seek them out.

10) *Before the Golden Age*, edited by Isaac Asimov (1974). It's fitting to end with this book. If the first one on the list—Zelazny's *Lord of Light*—is my favorite novel, this is my favorite book. No, it's not the best book I've ever read. Truthfully, it's not even the one I recommend most often. But it's the one that holds the best memories for me, and to which I return even today with real pleasure.

Asimov's *Before the Golden Age* is a massive volume collecting some of the finest SF from the early pulp era—roughly 1931 to 1938—before the so-called “Golden Age” of Science Fiction, when legendary *Astounding* editor John W. Campbell re-invented the genre with the help of the authors he discovered and nurtured, including Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, A.E. van Vogt, and many others. The SF of that era is nicely encapsulated in the *Science Fiction Hall of Fame* volumes above.

Before Campbell, science fiction was filled with blatant impossibilities—back yard time machines, the monster-filled swamps of Venus, conquering aliens with death rays, civilizations in a grain of sand. It was fast paced, colorful, and beautiful in its gleeful lack of restraint. Asimov was filled with a fierce love for the fiction of the era, and in this book he presented over 900 pages of true vintage SF, featuring racing starships, mad robots, brain stealers from Mars, and far more. They truly don't make 'em like this any more. And that's a shame.

Well, there you have it. I'll probably slap my head next week and think, “Why didn't I add...?” But then I'd had to pull one of the books above off the list, and I'd hate to do that.

Or more likely, another great book will go out of print. And I'll want to do a lot more than slap my head.

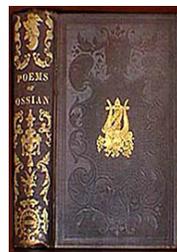
Because I haven't forgotten whose fault all this is. So shape up, you. Because I know where you live.

Five Neglected Works of Imaginative Fiction

Georges T. Dodds

Given the boom in small publishers, the proliferation of the most obscure works as image- or text-form e-texts, and the availability—at least in institutions of higher learning—of services like Early English Books Online (EEBO), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, etc. it is increasingly difficult to find works that are truly out of print—hence my designation of the works I will cover as ‘neglected.’ Of course what is ‘neglected’ to some is the ‘common’ of someone else, so pardon me my own particular idiosyncrasies of neglect. I have included works in both English and French, some of which I know of first hand, others which I know of only by reputation, their rarity or cost of acquisition precluding a reading. I have given bibliographical details and indicated the availability of e-texts or recent editions as endnotes.

1) James Macpherson. *The Poems of Ossian* (original publication 1760s)¹



The prose poems which make up *The Poems of Ossian* were hugely popular upon their release in the 1760s, very influential, and frequently reprinted in the 19th century, but by the time Lin Carter published an excerpt of “Fingal” in the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series anthology *Dragons, Elves and Heroes* (1969) they were largely forgotten. Besides relatively recent postings of the e-text of *The Poems of Ossian*, the only modern edition of the poems is a critical edition (i.e. one designed for academics) from the University of Edinburgh Press;² the poems have never been reprinted for their own merit, in the context a fantasy reprint series.

So what doomed *The Poems of Ossian*? Well, mainly the fact that they were most likely a literary hoax, albeit a brilliant one. In 1760 James Macpherson (10/27/1736–2/17/1796) began publishing, in English translation, ancient Scots Gaelic poems, allegedly collected by himself in the Scottish Highlands and which he attributed to the 3rd century bard Ossian (the Oisín of Irish myth). The critics raved, the Scottish nationalists rejoiced, the

¹ Macpherson, James. 1851. *The Poems of Ossian; Translated by James Macpherson, Esq. to Which Are Prefixed a Preliminary Discourse and Dissertation on the Æra and Poems of Ossian.* Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Company. (original ed. 1773)

² Macpherson, James. 1996. *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works.* (Howard Gaskill, ed.) Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

British who had recently subdued the Scots wished to discredit anything which might raise Scottish nationalist fervour, the Irish screamed usurpation of their mythology, and the cantankerous skeptic Samuel Johnson said “show us your sources.” Macpherson replied: “If you can’t take my gentleman’s word of honour that they are genuine, then I’ll have nothing to do with you (and not cooperate with any commission of enquiry).” Since then reams and reams of material have been written on both sides of the controversy: Hugh Blair’s 1763 pro-Macpherson *Critical Dissertation on The Poems of Ossian*,³ eight volumes of *A Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, Appointed to Inquire Into the Nature and Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian* (1805), which largely concluded the poems a hoax; and Derick S. Thomson’s *The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson’s Ossian* (1952), which takes the middle-ground position that Macpherson adapted to modern tastes actual Gaelic sources. As recently as 1991 a conference proceedings presents scholarly works on both sides of the controversy,⁴ and Ossian’s authorship continues to be discussed today.⁵

So why should a plain old non-academic fantasy aficionado run to get their hands on a copy of *The Poems of Ossian*? Mostly because, unlike William Henry Ireland’s roughly contemporaneous Shakespeare play forgeries,⁶ Macpherson’s creations, however tainted in origin, are among the most brilliant heroic fiction ever written, in my opinion well on par, if distinctly different, from anything this generation’s darling, J.R.R. Tolkien, ever wrote.

I first learned of *The Poems of Ossian* through a second hand copy of Lin Carter’s Adult Fantasy Series anthology, but in the early 1980s there was no Internet with e-texts, and while copies were undoubtedly available in libraries, this was a book I had to have my own copy of. On one of my first visits to the late Charles Garvin’s bookstore, then housed on the top floor of the old Ithaca Clock Factory in Ithaca, NY, I first saw a copy of *Ossian*, an 1856 edition which I still cherish today. As a graduate student it took me a couple of weeks to get the \$25 together, hoping against hope that nobody would buy it in the interim. I ran back to Mr. Garvin, a man who, incidentally, I credit for a great deal of my knowledge of the field, and lay my money down. I had my precious!

A veteran of William Morris, E.R. Eddison, Lord Dunsany, James Branch Cabell and J.R.R. Tolkien, amongst many others, I was already largely disillusioned not to say bored by more modern fantasy. I began reading *Ossian*, it wasn’t easy to read—it still isn’t—but what a revelation! I suppose what strikes one first is how very short the sentences are, terse, yet so evocative. Read aloud, they lead to a staccato delivery of short facts which concatenate into an unduplicated kind of tragic narrative.

There are both wonderfully evocative scenes of single combat between powerful heroes, the young hero Carthon

and the older Clessámmor, whom the latter doesn’t know is his father:

from *Carthon*

Carthon stood on a rock: he saw the hero rushing on. He loved the dreadful joy of his face: his strength in the locks of age! “Shall I lift that spear,” he said, “that never strikes but once a foe? Or shall I, with the words of peace, preserve the warrior’s life? Stately are his steps of age! lovely the remnant of his years! Perhaps it is the husband of Moira, the father of car-borne Carthon. Often have I heard that he dwelt at the echoing stream of Lora.”

Such were his words when Clessámmor came, and lifted high his spear. The youth received it on his shield, and spoke the words of peace. “Warrior of the aged locks! is there no youth to lift the spear? Hast thou no son to raise the shield before his father to meet the arm of youth? Is the spouse of thy love no more? or weeps she over the tombs of thy sons? Art thou of the kings of men? What will be the fame of my sword shouldst thou fall?”

It will be great, thou son of pride! begun the tall Clessámmor. I have been renowned in battle, but I never told my name to a foe. Yield to me, son of the wave, then shalt thou know that the mark of my sword is in many a field. “I never yielded, king of spears!” replied the noble pride of Carthon: “I have also fought in war, I behold my future fame. Despise me not, thou chief of men! my arm, my spear is strong. Retire among thy friends; let younger heroes fight.” Why dost thou wound my soul? replied Clessámmor, with a tear. Age does not tremble on my hand. I still can lift the sword. Shall I fly in Final’s sight, in the sight of him I love? Son of the sea! I never fled: exalt thy pointed spear.

They fought like two contending winds, that strive to roil the wave. Carthon bade his spear to err: he still thought that the foe was the spouse of Moira. He broke Clessámmor’s beamy spear in twain: he seized his shining sword. But as Carthon was binding the chief, the chief drew the dagger of his fathers. He saw the foe’s uncovered side, and opened there a wound.

Fingal saw Clessámmor low: he moved in the sound of his steel. The host stood silent in his presence: they turned their eyes to the king. He came like the sullen noise of a storm before the winds arise: the hunter hears it in the vale, and retires to the cave of the rock. Carthon stood in his place, the blood is rushing down his side: he saw the coming down of the king, his hopes of fame arose, but pale was his cheek: his hair flew loose, his helmet shook on high: the force of Carthon failed, but his sword was strong.

Fingal beheld the hero’s blood; he stopt the uplifted spear. “Yield, king of swords!” said Comhal’s son, “I behold thy blood; thou hast been mighty in battle, and thy fame shall never fade.” Art thou the king so far renowned? replied the car-borne Carthon: art thou that light of death, that frightens the kings of the world? But why should Carthon ask? for he is like the stream of his hills, strong as a river in his course, swift as the eagle of heaven. O that I had fought with the king, that my fame might be great in song! that the hunter, beholding my tomb, might say, he fought with the mighty Fingal. But Carthon dies unknown: he has poured out his force on the weak.

“But thou shalt not die unknown, replied the king of woody Morven: my bards are many, O Carthon! their songs descend to future times. The children of years to come shall hear the fame of Carthon, when they sit round the burning oak, and the night is spent in songs of old. The hunter, sitting in the heath, shall hear the rustling blast, and raising his eyes, behold the rock where Carthon fell. He shall turn to his son, and show the place where the mighty fought: There the king of Balclutha fought, like the strength of a thousand streams.”

³ <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/ossian/oss06.htm>

⁴ Gaskill, Howard (ed.), 1991. *Ossian Revisited*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press

⁵ Lynch, Jack. 1995. “Authorizing Ossian” at <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Papers/ossian.html>

⁶ <http://www.museumhoaxes.com/ireland.html>

Joy rose in Carthon's face; he lifted his heavy eyes. He gave his sword to Fingal, to lie within his hall, that the memory of Balclutha's king might remain in Morven. The battle ceased along the field, the bard had sung the song of peace. The chiefs gathered round the falling Carthon; they heard his words with sighs. Silent they leaned on their spears, while Balclutha's hero spoke. His hair sighed in the wind, and his voice was sad and low.

But there are also lovely passages of women seeing portents of the death of the objects of their love in natural events.

from *Comala*:

Melilcoma. Night comes on apace, thou blue-eyed maid! gray night grows dim along the plain, I saw deer at Crona's stream; a mossy bank he seemed through the gloom, but soon he bounded away. A meteor played round his branching horns; the awful faces of other times looked from the clouds of Crona.

Dersagrena. These are the signs of Fingal's death. The king of shields is fallen! and Caracul prevails. Rise, Comala, from thy rock; daughter of Sarno, rise in tears. The youth of thy love is low; his ghost is on our hills.

Melilcoma. There Comala sits forlorn! two gray dogs near shake their rough ears, and catch the flying breeze. Her red cheek rests on her arm, the mountain wind is in her hair. She turns her blue eyes towards the fields of his promise. Where art thou, O Fingal? The night is gathering around.

Comala. O Carun of the streams! why do I behold thy waters rolling in blood? Has the noise of the battle been heard; and sleeps the king of Morven? Rise, moon, thou daughter of the sky! look from between thy clouds; rise, that I may behold the gleam of his steel on the field of his promise. Or rather let the meteor, that lights our fathers through the night, come with its red beam, to show me the way to my fallen hero. Who will defend me from sorrow? Who from the love of Hilladan? Long shall Comala look before she can behold Fingal in the midst of his host; bright as the coming forth of the morning in the cloud of an early shower.

The *Poems of Ossian* are not an easy read, I must admit to having had to read over many passages to decipher their full import, but then part of their draw is that they aren't the same tired watered-down pabulum that now passes for fantasy—they are challenging. As the first quote above illustrates, the lack of quotation marks and resultant run-on text can make for difficulty in figuring out who said or did what. Still the poems are, to me, the epitome of what modern heroic fantasy should be. They are also one of the few works of fantasy which I can reread fairly frequently and always discover new layers of meaning.

Another thing that has always impressed me about the Ossian poems is the relative simplicity of the language used. While many modern fantasy readers might balk at the 'purple' prose of the likes of A. Merritt, M.P. Shiel, or Clark Ashton Smith, the prose Macpherson uses, while eminently poetic and evocative, doesn't send one scrambling to the dictionary. Little inclusions, like "two gray dogs near shake their rough ears, and catch the flying breeze" in Melilcoma's speech above, give a certain verisimilitude and ground the tale in a certain internal realism. Similarly, perhaps due to its origins in an established mythology, one doesn't have the sometimes

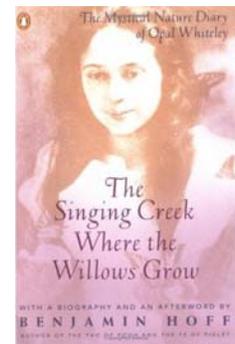
ridiculous naming of people (no characters with three apostrophes in their name) and places which occurs in much modern fantasy. Beyond this, Macpherson, while he may have reworked early Scots Gaelic works, steers clear of the urge to Christianize the material, as has been done with much of the Arthurian cycle. This lends the poems an atmosphere of otherworldliness that is much more akin to *The Mabinogion* than to Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Certainly *The Poems of Ossian* deserves an unedited, unabridged and non-academic reprinting in some fantasy classics series or other.

2) Opal, Whiteley. *The Story of Opal* (1920)—rpt. as *The Singing Creek Where the Willows Grow* (Benjamin Hoff, ed.)

Like *The Poems of Ossian*, some will tell you that *The Story of Opal*⁷, the mystical Nature diary of an eight year old girl, raised harshly in turn-of-the-century Oregon lumber country, is a fabrication by an attention-hungry manipulator⁸, while others will suggest that Opal was a misunderstood and awkward child prodigy⁹. The biographies of Opal Whiteley by Beck and Hoff, give widely divergent views of Opal Whiteley, and I suspect that the truth lies somewhere in between. I refer you to these for an in depth discussion of the controversy as to when Opal may have written her diary. In this case, as with Macpherson, it isn't the origin of the text that matters so much as its intrinsic beauty.

But wait, you say, I can understand how epic fantasy can fit into a review of neglected works of the imagination, but *non-fiction* written by a mere child (or at best an awkward 20 year old)? First one should understand that at the time of *The Story of Opal*'s publication, American fiction relating to children's discovery and interaction with nature, exemplified in Gene Stratton Porter's *Freckles* (1904), and *The Girl of the Limberlost* (1909), were extremely popular, *The Story of Opal* was in some ways simply a first person expression of the themes redolent in Porter's works, indeed I believe Beck's rather caustic biography suggests that Whiteley was largely inspired by Porter's works.

When you read Richard Jefferies' *Wood Magic* (1894), or W.H. Hudson's *Green Mansions* (1904), you get a sense that the author has a true sense of the awesomeness of Nature, even if it is couched in Christian terms, gained from intimate contact with it and a quasi-mystical reverence of its power. A more modern example might be Megan Lindholm's *Cloven Hooves* (rpt. 2002).



7 e-text available at <http://intersect.uoregon.edu/opal/>

8 Beck, Kathrine. 2004. *Opal. A Life of Enchantment, Mystery and Madness*. New York: Penguin.

9 Hoff, Benjamin. 1995. "Magical Opal Whiteley." p. 1-78, In *The Singing Creek Where the Willows Grow*. New York: Penguin.

While I'm a fervently materialistic fellow, I still have a sense of the wonder and awesomeness of Nature (I just don't worship it or postulate a supernatural creator for it). To someone who doesn't "get it," I might try describe it as primordial atmosphere, but there are always those to whom the sound of the wind in pine trees reminds them of the sound of a distant expressway—they, sadly, haven't a clue. Opal Whiteley, was a young woman who was, for the lack of a better word, attuned to Nature, and its spiritual implications.

So why do I see *The Story of Opal* as a stunningly beautiful non-fiction biographical fantasy? Well, I could argue that if Opal wrote the diary when she was 20, that she was indeed living the fantasy in writing it, and this more so because she many years later sank into schizophrenia, and some claim that early signs of this could be detected when she was much younger. Conversely, if I argued that the diary was indeed written when she 8 or 9, then its pet animals named after famous people, its depiction of the Oregon forest as a place of magic and fairies, and its population with very good (her human friends) and very bad (her abusive mother) characters, lends the work all the ingredients of fantasy, all the atmosphere of fantasy, even a non-standard language of narration...for Opal wrote in a very idiosyncratic idiom. Thus all that really separates it from fantasy is that it was real, or at least real as seen through the eyes of child who was in many way an 'unreal' outsider to those she lived amongst.

Some scenes, like the slaughtering of Opal's pet pig, Peter Paul Rubens, are incredibly sad:

We had not gone far when we heard an awful squeal—so different from the way pigs squeal when they want their supper. I felt cold all over. Then I did have knowings why the mamma had let me start away to the woods without scolding. And I ran a quick run to save my dear Peter Paul Rubens but already he was dying—and he died with his head in my lap. I sat there feeling dead, too, until my knees were all wet with blood from the throat of my dear Peter Paul Rubens.

After I changed my clothes and put the bloody ones in the rain-barrel, I did go to the woods to look for the soul of Peter Paul Rubens. I didn't find it, but I think when comes the spring I will find it among the flowers—probably in the blossom of faon lily or in the top of a fir tree. Today, when Brave Horatius and I went through the woods, we did feel its presence near. When I was come back from the woods, they made me grind sausage, and every time I did turn the handle I could hear that little pain squeal Peter Paul Rubens always gave when he did want me to come where he was at once.

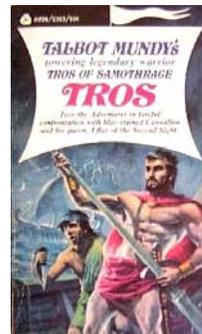
while others are quite humorous:

Today in the morning, when the mamma was in the other room, I did take down from its hook the papa's big coat. I did put it onto me and it did trail away out behind. I like to wear the papa's big coat. Jenny Strong, who comes to visit us, says the reason I like to wear the papa's big coat is because it makes me more grown-up. She's wrong. The reason I like to wear the papa's big coat is because it has pockets in it—big ones—nice ones to put toads and mice and caterpillars and beetles in. That's why I like to wear the papa's coat. Why, when I go walking in the papa's big coat, nearly the whole nursery can go along. This morning, just as I was making a start out the door to the nursery, the mamma came into the

kitchen. She did hurry to the door and I did hurry out. But she caught me by the end of the coat. She did get that coat off of me in a quick way. She hung it back on its nail. When it was hung on its nail in the proper way, she gave to me a shoulder-shake. And I did go to feed the chickens.

Opal Whiteley's work is something that one doesn't need to be Wiccan or ascribe to 'new-age' beliefs to appreciate. Some certainly will find the work childish and saccharine, and find reasons in the authenticity controversy to discount it as a fraud, but others will relish the wide-eyed innocence, yet profound understanding of the young narratrix—those are the ones that will see fantasy in it.

3) Talbot Mundy. *Tros of Samothrace* (1934; compiled from 5 serials published in *Adventure* 1925-26) To me Talbot Mundy¹⁰ was the most intelligent writer



of adventure fiction to grace the 20th century, not the most productive (that laurel might go to H. Bedford-Jones), nor the most imaginative (I'd give that laurel to Burroughs), nor the most popular, but the one who best understood human nature. While I've irked Robert E. Howard fans with this remark before, I'll repeat it here for posterity: the character of Tros of

Samothrace, a 1st century B.C. ship's captain and adventurer who fights imperialist Rome and in particular Julius Cæsar, is heads above the heroes of Burroughs, Howard, and the like, in terms of depth of characterisation and intelligence of the character himself. While other pulp heroes of the early 20th century were able to win through sword play and an Earth-adapted physique (John Carter) or sheer brawn and determination (Conan), Tros generally only resorts to violence when diplomacy and subterfuge have failed—then he's a damn good fighter, but it's not his first choice. As a result, some have noted or complained that *Tros of Samothrace* has very few scenes of battle and general mayhem, or at least few compared to the typical pulp heroes of the era. Worse still, to some readers, Tros is also a mystic, a 'philosopher-hero' as some have described him; his father, held hostage by Cæsar, is a full adept of the ancient mysteries of Samothrace. Certainly *Tros of Samothrace* isn't as steeped in mystical (i.e. Theosophical) beliefs as *Om. The Secret of Ahbor Valley* or the more overtly mystical *Old Ugly Face*, but the character of Tros does have a well developed moral and spiritual grounding.

Tros first appeared in a series of 1925-26 stories in *Adventure* ("The Enemy of Rome," "Prisoners of War," "Admiral of Caesar's Fleet," "The Dancing Girls of Gades," and "A Messenger of Destiny") which were

10 for details on Mundy's life see: Taves, Brian. 2005. *Talbot Mundy, Philosopher of Adventure: A Critical Biography* McFarland & Company. also: <http://www.talbotmundy.com/> several of his works are available as e-texts at: <http://arthursclassiconovels.com/arthurs/mundy.html>

collected and linked for its 1934, single volume, 949 page book publication. Besides an early 1960s Gnome Press one volume reissue, it took until 1967 for Avon Books to reprint *Tros of Samothrace* in paperback, in four volumes: *Tros*, *Helma*, *Liafail*, and *Helene*. Then just to confuse things, in 1976 Zebra Books reissued *Tros* in three poorly printed, and worse edited paperbacks *Lud of Lunden*, *Avenging Liafail*, and *The Praetor's Dungeon*. Recently (May 2007) yet another multi-volume reprinting has begun, from Leonaur Ltd., with the titles *Wolves of the Tiber*, *Dragons of the North*, *Serpent of the Waves*, and *City of the Eagles*. Any confusion on the titles yet? Oh did I mention there are two sequels, *Queen Cleopatra* (1929) and *The Purple Pirate* (1935), but that while Avon reprinted these in 1971, the 1977 Zebra book editions misnumbered these 5 and 4 in the *Tros* series? Do you now see why, even though it is 'in print,' someone might be daunted trying to find, let alone read all of *Tros of Samothrace*?

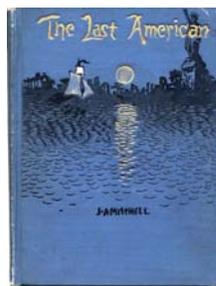
Tros of Samothrace tells of the adventures of *Tros*, a sea-captain and adventurer, who befriends and counsels the Britons, partly to get at Julius Cæsar who holds his father captive, partly for his own dreams of creating a super-ship to explore beyond the known world. The story ranges from Britain to Gaul, to Rome, to Egypt (in the sequels) and involves such historical luminaries as Cæsar and Cleopatra. Its author, Talbot Mundy, spent many years as a fairly successful confidence man, womanizer and general rogue (not to say worse) in southern Africa, India, and a number of other places, prior to moving to the United States in 1909 and becoming a successful author. It is this knowledge of intrigue, manipulation, diplomacy, subterfuge and physical violence—and when best to apply each—gained by necessity in such an avocation, as well as Mundy's later-developed interests in the mystical, that inform the multi-faceted character of *Tros*. Another important aspect of *Tros of Samothrace* is its very anti-colonial, anti-imperialist stance; certainly Mundy's views diverged to a great extent from the likes of Kipling (to whom he was compared early in his career) and other contemporaneous adventure writers of British origin. Upon their publication in *Adventure*, Mundy's *Tros* stories were vehemently criticised for their depiction of Julius Cæsar as a ruthless blood-thirsty imperialist despot, something the adulating classical view of Cæsar was at odds with. Unlike Burroughs and his tigers in Africa fiasco,¹¹ Mundy was able to lucidly and effectively defend his point of view in *Adventure's* letter columns.

All this makes *Tros of Samothrace* sound rather more worthy of academic interest than causal reading. Nonetheless, *Tros of Samothrace* is the sort of sweeping historical novel—there are actually very few elements of pure fantasy in it, and the use of technical innovations in ship design and the manufacture of modified versions of historical weapons like "Greek fire"¹² could almost qualify it as science-fiction—that it can be reread for its depth and breadth—even for its action sequences. The action

sequences may be farther apart than in *Doc Savage*, but scenes of Britons mowing down the Romans with their scythe-equipped chariots, and of piratical ship boardings are as lively and bloody as anything written in the day.

4) Mitchell, J.A. 1889. *The Last American. A Fragment from the Journal of Khan-Li, Prince of Dimp-Yoo-Chur and Admiral in the Persian Navy*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co.

The Last American,¹² by John Ames Mitchell, founder and editor of *Life* magazine, pictured here in the 1899 edition is a classic of humorous science fiction. I read the book in its 1902 "Edition De Luxe" which has over twice as many pages as the original.



The year is 2951, whether this is in the Christian or Muslim calendar isn't clear. A Persian exploration vessel is skirting the coast of the quasi-mythical land of Mehrika. Landing in New York they find the city in ruins, recognize the stock exchange building, and some other 19th century landmarks—the Statue of Liberty still stands, but barely.

They move on to Washington D.C., where on the 4th of July they find the last Mehrikan, who dies defending the last Mehrikan-ess from a cultural misunderstanding. They eventually return to Teheran with the last artefacts of Mehrika, including a 1957 half-dollar.

I first read *The Last American* in the era of Iran's Islamic revolution, but it remains remarkably topical even today, almost 120 years after its first publication. At its demise in 1957 Mehrika is ruled by a dictator, it's demise attributed to immigration and the consequences of global warming—I'll leave you to draw the parallels:

There were silver coins of different sizes and two small pieces of copper. Nōfūhl studied them closely.

"The latest date is 1957," he said; "a little less than a thousand years ago; but the piece may have been in circulation some years before this woman died; also it may have been coined the very year of her death. It bears the head of Dennis, the last of the Hy-Burnyan dictators. The race is supposed to have become extinct before 1990 of their era."

I then said:

"Thou hast never told us, O Nōfūhl! the cause of their disappearance."

"There were many causes," he answered. "The Mehrikans themselves were of English origin, but people from all parts of Europe came here in vast numbers. Although the original comers were vigorous and hardy the effect of climate upon succeeding generations was fatal. They became flat-chested and thin, with scanty hair, fragile teeth, and weak digestions. Nervous diseases unknown to us wrought deadly havoc. Children were reared with difficulty. Between 1945 and 1960, the last census of which any record remains, the population decreased from ninety millions to less than twelve

¹¹ see <http://www.erblast.com/erblast/origin.htm> and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabor_\(Tarzan\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabor_(Tarzan))

¹² Text available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/lsmrc10.txt> original 1889 edition in image form:

http://www.childrensbooksonline.org/Last_American/index.htm and at <http://books.google.com> republished in book form (1902 ed.): http://www.murdockmedia.com/biography/bio_mitchell_john.htm

millions. Climatic changes, the like of which no other land ever experienced, began at that period, and finished in less than ten years a work made easy by nervous natures and rapid lives. The temperature would skip in a single day from burning heat to winter's cold. No constitution could withstand it, and this vast continent became once more an empty wilderness.

This clearly isn't a plot-driven book, and the humour of pseudo-Persian names like Grip-til-lah, Nōfūhl, Ad-el-pate, and Lev-el-Hedyd (amongst others) is a bit over-the-top at times, though overall many of the author's satirical pokes at American society hold true, even today. What makes the 1902 edition—profusely illustrated by the author and two other artists—interesting is that it almost becomes a sort of graphic novel, its many illustrations of the ruins of New York and Washington giving one an insight as to how early 20th New Yorkers and Washingtonians saw their cities. While ruins of New York City might be sensitive material to some people, besides the Statue of Liberty there's not much to recognize in *The Last American*.

5) de Richaud, André. (1944). *La nuit aveuglante*. (expanded rpt. 1966, 1972 (Verviers, Belgium: Marabout), and 1996)



To the best of my knowledge, de Richaud's nightmarish dark fantasy of the consequences of alcoholism and the mocking of religious authority has never been translated into English. If you can imagine Cornell Woolrich writing dark fantasy with elements of insanity, you'll have some idea of the writing of this French author.

Interestingly both de Richaud and Woolrich began writing in the late 1920s, were at their peak in the 1940s, and died in poverty and squalor in the late 1960s. de Richaud, after a period of popularity and critical acclaim which extended through WWII, sank into obscurity, alcoholism, and finally, after a brief resurgence in the 1960s, died penniless of tuberculosis in 1968.

La nuit aveuglante (*The Blinding Night*) tells the story of a rebellious teenager who frightens and scatters a Christian religious procession by donning a hideous devil mask, but what is his surprise when the mask becomes permanently affixed to his face! He is then exiled to a remote villa, where he obsesses about an unopened door, and is tortured by thirst (representing in a twisted way the author's guilt of alcoholism) in the presence of a faucet that only supplies wine, but no water—or is this all the creation of his guilt-ridden mind? The novel is partly his diary and retrospective view of events that led to his banishment, and partly a chronicle of his descent into isolation and madness. This certainly isn't a happy book, and its horror isn't one of blood and gore, or of the supernatural, but one of psychological breakdown seen from both the inside and the outside.

The French have a long standing tradition of including masks as important elements in horror stories, including Jean Lorrain's *Histoires de masques* (c. 1900) and Marcel Schwob's *Le roi au masque d'or* (1892), where they either poorly hide or fully expose hidden degeneration, disease, or immorality. What's perhaps the most unsettling about the narrator's permanent disfiguration, by what was seemingly a simple Mardi Gras mask, and his subsequent ordeal, is that it is never made clear what forces (if they aren't his own mind) are behind his ordeal and the subsequent self(?)-torture he undergoes—there's no specific person or thing to attribute it to, or to mentally beg, as a reader, to give the poor guy a break; the story is unremittingly bleak, typical of many French writers—well at least it doesn't have a Hollywood happy ending.

The Top Ten Out-of-Print SF & Fantasy Books

Howard Andrew Jones

I really ought to know better. I've spent the last eight or ten years tracking down rare old manuscripts so I know how easy it is for good fiction to become unavailable. As a result, you'd think I'd have been less surprised when John O'Neill told me *Lord of Light* had slipped out of print. I thought he was joking. Could something so excellent, so lauded, and so recent actually *not* be available from bookstore shelves? I thought I'd heard him wrong. But then it's easy for us to lose track of our favorites—just because we saw something on the bookstore shelves a few years back doesn't mean it's there now.

John showed me his list, and a fine list it is. My own isn't meant to supplant it; indeed, if he hadn't already listed *Lord of Light* you could bet it would be here, along with a number of his other choices. I can't speak to *Bridge of Birds*, but John's been talking that up so much in the last few years (over and over) that I've finally ordered a copy so I can see for myself. Consider my list a supplement to his own.

1) *The High House*, James Stoddard

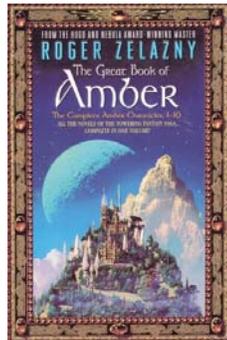
Many years ago I heard about this a great series of books set in a crumbling, fantastic mansion which was a world unto itself, peopled with strange and bizarre characters. I wasn't actually disappointed when I read *Titus Groan* and *Gormenghast*, but what I was really wanting was *this* book, *The High House*. It just hadn't been written yet. *The High House* may very well be the mansion of God, or the framework of reality, or even unified field theory. The forces of chaos are scheming to control the mansion, and its steward, the long exiled Carter Anderson, who strives to stop them and unravel the mystery of the house itself,



all while searching for his missing father, the previous master of the house. The prose is beautiful, the imagination almost peerless, the characters well drawn and the places they visit evocative and wonderful. Many of the scenes are unexpectedly moving. As an added bonus, the book contains subtle references to classic books and scenes from the famed Ballantine fantasy series. It's not necessary to have read or even to be familiar with that acclaimed series of books to enjoy this one, but anyone who is will find additional pleasures. I've recently been reading *The High House* aloud to one of my children. He's just as engrossed in the story as I am, and the prose, incidentally, sounds lovely when spoken, one of the truest tests of a good story. This book ought never to be out of print, and belongs upon the shelf of any fantasy lover, right alongside *Watership Down*. It's that good.

2) *The Chronicles of Amber*, Roger Zelazny

Sure, *Lord of Light* may be the classic Zelazny work, but this is one of my very favorites. I always hear about people reading and re-reading the *Lord of the Rings*. A great work, that, but I tend to get bored and skip long passages. This is the set of books I read and re-read in my formative youth. I don't mean the entire series, but the original five books, as narrated by Corwin, starting with *Nine Princes in Amber*. All five would probably fit within one of those doorstep fantasy books they publish today, so I'm going to go ahead and count it as one book. It's layered with action, wild imagination, and mystery upon mystery –murders, disappearances, lost memories, and conspiracies that shake the foundation of reality. Each book unwraps another layer, leading up to the greatest cliffhanger I've yet read, at the end of book four. It's not without flaws—many of the female characters now feel dated (some of them are, indeed, powerful and resourceful, but most of what they do takes place off stage) and book five, despite being the shortest of all, feels stretched. But I'll take the flaws of *The Chronicles of Amber* over the flaws in *Lord of the Rings*. It never really slows down, and it's full of surprises, fascinating characters, and eye-popping settings.



[ed. note: This is actually in print in one volume that contains all ten Amber novels]

3) *The Dying Earth*, Jack Vance

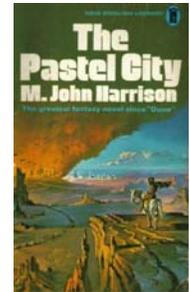
The Dying Earth simply should not be out of print. Surely it will not remain so for long. I can't speak to the rest of the series, which I've never gotten around to



finishing, but I can certainly speak to the first short book, originally published in the 1950s. Lin Carter called it a puzzle box of interweaved stories, each building upon the past. Vance's world building and splendid imagination constantly surprises and delights. He's a more-accessible Clark Ashton Smith. If his characters are drawn in broad strokes, the world is so compelling that one can forgive him. Complete unto itself, original, spellbinding... it's just a gem of a book, as I was told for years. I wish I'd listened sooner and tracked it down.

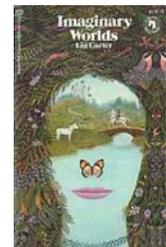
4) *The Pastel City*, M. John Harrison

If you're going to read one sword-and-sorcery novel from the 70s, this is the one to pick. *The Pastel City* is a small masterpiece; a heroic fantasy decorated with rococo space opera finish. Characters that would be clichéd in the hands of anyone else transcend their archetypes and seize hold of your imagination. The action is driving, the characters flawed and wonderful, the world fascinating. Harrison didn't need a series to tell his tale, or a long book. He hooks you in, the tale surges forward over turnabouts, betrayals, and conflict, then resolves wonderfully. Afterward, Harrison walked away from adventure fiction, endearing his later work to many but losing my interest.



5) *Imaginary Worlds*, Lin Carter

Lin Carter is best known today as the editor of the Ballantine Adult Fantasy series, published in the late 60s and early 70s. And what a series that was. Lin, aided by Betty Ballantine, brought shelves full of forgotten fantasy works to the public for a half-dozen years, building upon the success of the *Lord of the Rings*. The Gormenghast books. Lord Dunsany. Clark Ashton Smith. G.K. Chesterton. William Morris. William Hope Hodgson and dozens and dozens of other authors were re-introduced to the public via this series, and most especially Carter's amazing introductions. I tracked down most of my Ballantines from online book searches, and as I would receive a new one and turn to read Lin's words it was almost as though I was taking a correspondence course on the history of fantasy from a kindly professor: they are scholarly, friendly, and completely accessible. James Stoddard has remarked that the introductions have such a personal quality that it feels as though Carter is talking directly to you, the reader.



Mid-way through the Ballantines Carter authored a book on the history of fantasy fiction, *Imaginary Worlds*, written in the same style as all of his marvelous introductions. It's a fine, fine work, and one that has been out of print for far too long. In an ideal world, it would be

reprinted with the rest of the essays Carter composed to introduce the books of the Ballantine line and perhaps other books as well. I've never read a more friendly and accessible set of works upon the history of fantasy fiction.

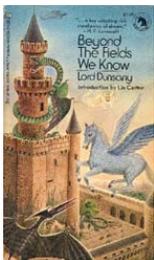
Speaking of Carter, I'd love to see a volume collecting some of his short fiction and a few of his short novels. Though never known for his innovation, he could write a cracking good tale, and some, like the marvelous Dunsanian short "Zingazar," deserve to be far better known.

6) *Detour to Otherness*, Henry Kuttner and C.L. Moore

In recent years we've seen a few nice collections of these talented writers, and word is that Planet Stories will not only be releasing Moore's *Jirel of Joiry* and Northwest Smith fiction, but Kuttner's *Elak* and Prince Raynor stories as well. I applaud that, and I would like to see further reprints of their work, most especially some of the science fantasy that they wrote together. This nice hardback is already out of print, and it seemed to me only a shot across the bow—I wanted more. It's time for a systemized collection of the work of these two very gifted yet often underappreciated writers.

7) *Beyond the Fields We Know*, Lord Dunsany

This is the title of the first Dunsany collection Lin Carter put together for the Ballantine Adult Fantasy line, and a fine assortment of tales it was. You can find Lord Dunsany's fantasy work collected here and there by various publishers, but there's story overlap. It's hard to know, from the titles, if you need this volume, or already have part of that volume, or what have you. What Dunsany really needs is a systemized collection. Night Shade produced a wonderful three volume set of Dunsany's



Jorkens stories—can't someone collect all of Dunsany's short fantasy stories and fantasy novels in a matched set of hardback books? Surely we can do better for one of the greatest fantasy writers in the history of the English language. I can't imagine it would take more than three or four volumes. Those short story collections of his were pretty slim.

8) *The Book of Skaith* Leigh Brackett

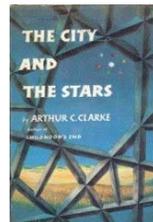
Leigh Brackett's among my top three favorite writers and until recently has been neglected. But these days she seems to be pretty well taken care of by Haffner Press and a new series of reprints coming forth from Planet Stories. We're seeing all of her short fiction brought into print in some really nice volumes. But it's not enough—I'd like to see her novels of Eric John



Stark available again. Some decades ago all three were collected in a nice hardback titled *The Book of Skaith*. Okay, sure, the last one always read to me less like the end of the story (book two seals things nicely) and more like a contractual obligation, but these are her last adventures, and her world-building is lovely, her prose crackling good. The plotting is more Burroughsian frying pan to fire than Brackett usually wrote, but I still have a soft spot for these books, her swan song.

9) *The City and the Stars*, Arthur C. Clarke

I loved this book as a juvenile, and when I re-read it as a young adult, it still enthralled me. It always amazes me that no one mentions Clarke when discussions of virtual reality come up—the opening pages of this novel were the first time I ever saw a writer use virtual reality. A fine



adventure tale, and so short. Only a few decades ago science fiction and fantasy came in much shorter form, and it's my sense that it was a lot easier to introduce it to younger readers in that format than to toss them a phone book sized tome that's only the first part of a multi-volume

epic. (I'll stop now before I begin one of my rants). The Earth is dying and man lives on in great cities, living lives of great luxury, with every need met. But one man is born who yearns for something more, and with him we learn the secrets of the ancient city, the builders who crafted it, and the world and universe beyond.

10) *The Complete etc.* Collections that ought to be but aren't...

I'd originally planned to conclude this list by mentioning how the best work of Michael Moorcock seems to have slipped out of print again...but I have faith that it, like the *Lankmar* work of Fritz Leiber, will likely be between pages and available very soon. Instead, I'll close out my reprint wish list by mentioning two authors whose work ought to be handled differently.

Robert E. Howard: The *Del Rey* volumes are finally restoring some of Robert E. Howard's texts and presenting them with scholarly introductions, and the *Wildside* books are collecting everything "weird" in public domain, but the prolific Howard still isn't being treated quite right. Is it so hard to envision a matched set of books that will see all of his characters and stories into print? Here's a writer in the vein of a Jack London or an American Alexander Dumas; he's an American original. Let's stop averting our eyes because he was an adventure writer and treat his work properly so that it is all collected in easy-to-access volumes rather than scattered in repetitive and often confusing collections that somehow continue to leave out some of his most interesting work.

Ray Bradbury: Like many, I was first introduced to Bradbury in grade school. He seems to be absent from the story collections my own children are reading in school, though, and it took me ages to track down a beat-up copy of some Bradbury paperbacks so I could show my kids

both “The Fog Horn” and “The Blue Bottle.” Look, he’s one of the best speculative fiction writers we’ve ever had— isn’t it time we get all of his work between hardback covers? Sure, you can pick up a copy of *The Martian Chronicles*, but what about the haunting Martian stories that aren’t in that volume, not to mention classics like “Golden Apples of the Sun” and “The Sound of Thunder” and “The Pedestrian...” For the sake of brevity I’ll stop, but I’m sure most of you reading this list could continue in this vein and easily rattle off at least a dozen more great Bradbury titles. They shouldn’t be so hard to find.

I’m afraid I’ve cheated by wandering off into the field of “how it oughta’ be done if I were the editor king of the world,” but that’s my take on at least ten books I’d like to see on the bookstore shelves. I hope you have half as much fun putting your own lists together.

Ten Forgotten Tales

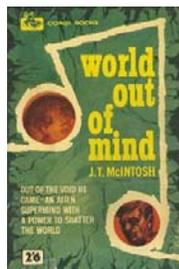
Rich Horton

Much has been written in recent years about the decline of the midlist. To some extent this has been accompanied by a decline of the backlist. That is, it does not seem so easy to find old novels in print as it was when I was a teen, in the mid-70s. To be sure some of this is simply because there are so many novels published now. The many new novels take up some slots once available for older books. And new novels published now—or ten years ago—inevitably mean that in coming years there will be more old novels vying for bookstore space. And of course there are glaring exceptions—the novels of Philip Dick, to cite perhaps the most prominent example, are very easy to find in lovely trade paperback editions these days.

Well, then, if we can’t find old novels in print so easily nowadays, what are we missing? Here’s a list of ten interesting old SF novels that are very hard to find, but that are well worth digging up, if you can.

1) *World Out of Mind*, J. T. M’Intosh (1953)

J. T. M’Intosh (perhaps more often called J. T. McIntosh) is the pseudonym used for his SF of the Scottish writer James MacGregor, born 1925. He was an extremely prolific contributor to both American and British SF magazines in the 1950s, slowing down somewhat in the 1970s and up to 1980. He has published almost nothing since then. I first read *One in Three Hundred*, his third novel, when I was new to SF, and I enjoyed it but even then found it a bit dated. In recent years I’ve read a great deal of his early short fiction, with a considerable amount of pleasure tempered by occasional frustration with his tics, notably the sometimes odd view of women

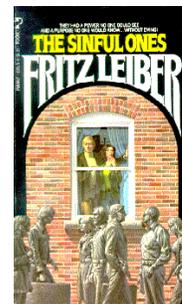


and his habit of focusing on one SFnal aspect in a way that makes his future societies seem underfurnished.

I could have picked any of several early M’Intosh novels that I quite enjoyed—*Born Leader* and *One in Three Hundred* come to mind. But I decided to go with his first novel, *World Out of Mind*. This is about a mysterious man in a society in which everyone is classified in categories like “White Star”, “Purple Cross”, and so on, according to intelligence tests they take. This man, Eldin Raigmore, has refused to take the tests. Of course he will prove to have a greater destiny—involving other planets and the secret behind the tests, and of course freedom from the tyranny of the tests. It’s certainly an old-fashioned story, rather creaky and silly in some ways, but it remains fun to read.

2) *The Sinful Ones*, Fritz Leiber (1953, revised 1980)

Again a writer for whom I could cite multiple candidates for unfortunately out of print books. Leiber (1910-1992) is of course an SFWA Grand Master, and very well known for any number of stories, most obviously the *Fafhrd* and the *Gray Mouser* series. He is best remembered these days for his fantasy and horror, but he was equally at home writing SF—and one of my favorite Leiber novels is *A Spectre is Haunting Texas* (1969), pure SF about an inhabitant of an orbital colony visiting Earth. That would have been a good choice for this column—it is indeed out of print—but I chose instead another favorite of mine, *The Sinful Ones*, which has aspects of Science Fiction (the film “*Dark City*” reminded me strongly of *The Sinful Ones*), Urban Fantasy (before there was such a thing), and even Horror. *The Sinful Ones* was actually first conceived as a novella for *Unknown* in the early 1940s, but never finished because *Unknown* died. This original novella was turned into a novel by 1950. *Fantastic Adventures* published a shorter version, “You’re All Alone”, that year. (Leiber described his process of cutting the novel as “imagining himself back in the early 1940s and rewriting it as originally conceived”.) The full novel was published in a rather sleazy double paperback in 1953, including some sex scenes added by the publisher. Leiber revised it in 1980, rewriting the sex scenes to his own standards—a great improvement, I am sure (Leiber was very good at such scenes, in my opinion—certainly the scenes in later version of *The Sinful Ones* are effective).



It’s about a man stuck in a rut, with his ambitious girlfriend pushing him to get a better job, who one day meets a strange, scared, young woman. Something about this encounter kicks him out of his rut, and he realizes in essence that he and only a few other people, including Jane Gregg, the girl, are truly “alive”. As long as he is out of his “routine”, nobody else perceives him. The novel is spooky, and sexy, and thought-provoking, and scary. It’s

a real good read, and the portrayal of Chicago is also fascinating.

3) *Times Without Number*, by John Brunner (1962, revised 1969)

John Brunner (1934-1995) was one of those writers, like Robert Silverberg, who was very prolific early in his career, and slowed down somewhat later to produce more mature, more “serious” novels. In Brunner’s case those later novels included such celebrated works as the Hugo winner *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968), *The Jagged Orbit* (1971) and *The Shockwave Rider* (1975). And these are indeed worthy novels. But I recently discovered many of his earlier novels, published in the pulps and other lower end SF magazines in the 1950s, or in Ace Doubles in the 1960s—certainly more rapidly and carelessly written than his later work, often ending quite abruptly. But, it turns out, also often a great deal of fun, and usually with decent and intelligent ideas and a bit of a serious meaning among the pulpy fun.

One of my favorites among his earlier novels is *Times Without Number*. This is composed on three novellas published in the UK magazine *Science Fiction Adventures* in 1962. They were combined as an Ace Double in the same year. Then in 1969 Brunner revised the novel—something he did with quite a



few of his early novels around that time. The revision left the plot and characters unchanged, but smoothed the prose throughout, and added a few scenes of explanation or additional depth. This version had a few editions, the latest I know of a Del Rey paperback in 1983.

The novel is set in 1988/1989 as part of an alternate history in which the Spanish Armada succeeded, and Spain rules most of Europe, while a Mohawk nation rules in North America. Don Miguel Navarro, the hero, is part of the Society of Time, which attempts to control time travel technology such that history is not altered. The three parts are increasingly serious, at first dealing with a simple mystery of theft from the past, the next an attempt to stop a war by creating a closed loop in time (and in the process interesting exploring time paradoxes), and the finale, a first rate novella in its own right (“The Fullness of Time”), telling of apparent attempts to alter history, even to the point of interfering with the Armada’s mission. It comes to a brilliant, logical, and profoundly moving conclusion.

4) *Simulacron-3*, by Daniel F. Galouye (1963)

Galouye is perhaps a near-miss SF writer. He was born in New Orleans in 1920, and died there in 1976, at the young age of 56. He published a fair quantity of stories in the magazines in the 1950s and 1960s, mostly in second-tier magazines such as *Imagination* and *If*. These stories showed an impressive and original imaginative gift, not always successfully harnessed. His first novel was the well-regarded *Dark Universe* (1961), and *Simulacron-3*, published in 1963, was his second novel.

(It was once reprinted under the title *Counterfeit World*.) It has been well-treated in other media: the famous German director Rainer Maria Fassbinder made it into a 1973 television serial, “*Welt am Draht*,” and Josef Rusnak made it into the 1999 movie “The Thirteenth Floor.”

It is a virtual world story. The hero works on a simulated world used to evaluate reactions to advertising and suchlike. Then he learns that his “world” might also be such a simulation. In the course of the story he travels both “down”, to his simulated world, and “up”, to the “real” world. The ideas presented here are nice, well explored, though the characters are pretty stock and the plot resolution is a tad too convenient. I can also recommend at least “The Thirteenth Floor”—a very fine, underrated SF film, much superior to “The Matrix,” which appeared the same year and which shared some thematic content.



5) *The Adventures of Alyx*, by Joanna Russ (stories from 1967 through 1970, collection assembled in 1976)

Here I cite an omnibus of linked stories by one of the great feminist SF writers and critics. Joanna Russ (born 1937) has published little in the past few decades due to serious health problems, but in the 1960s and 1970s she published brilliant story after brilliant story. My favorite single story might be “Nobody’s Home” (1972), but I also loved a series of stories about a decidedly non-conventional adventure heroine named Alyx. Russ

deliberately played with Alyx’s identity, and in various stories she was a time traveler, a tour guide to alien planets, and a heroine of historical fantasies.



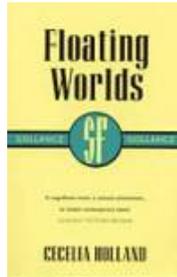
These stories (and one novel, *Picnic on Paradise* (1968)) were eventually assembled together as *The Adventures of Alyx* from Gregg Press in 1976 (with 1980s editions from The Women’s Press in the UK

and Baen Books in the US). The stories besides *Picnic on Paradise* are “Bluestocking”, “I Thought She Was Afear’d Until She Stroked My Beard”, “The Barbarian”, and “The Second Inquisition”. This last in particular is thoroughly wonderful—if “Nobody’s Home” isn’t my favorite Russ story, “The Second Inquisition” is. I admit I never recognized the lead character in that story is Alyx—we only have Russ’s testimony for that (as she included the story in this book)—at any rate, the voice is that of Alyx, and the character is a time traveler visiting a present day girl. All of these stories are great fun, and adding the great “Second Inquisition” makes the book utterly essential. But as far as I know, it has been out of print for two decades.

6) *Floating Worlds*, by Cecelia Holland (1975)

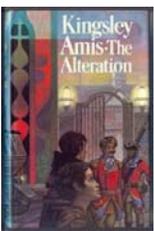
Back in the mid-70s when I was first devouring adult SF I was also an eager reader of historical fiction. (For that matter, I still am!) One of the great contemporary writers of historical fiction was then (and for that matter, still is!) Cecelia Holland (born 1943). I adored her novels like *The Earl and Rakossy*. Imagine my delight when, in 1976, she published a Science Fiction novel. And a very good one: *Floating Worlds*.

Floating Worlds manages to do as if a writer like Cecelia Holland, centuries in the future of the novel's action, had written an historical novel. The story concerns conflicts between the genetically modified colonists of the outer solar system, the Styth, and the more "normal" humans of the inner system. Paula Mendoza is a diplomat from anarchist Earth, attempting to mediate in this conflict. She becomes part of the Styth leader's harem, and then falls in love with his son, while also dealing with the complex political intrigues of the time. I found it fascinating science-fictionally (though the actual science doesn't hold up all that well), and sexy, and gripping. It was popular at the time, and nominated for the Nebula (though the nomination was withdrawn—supposedly in favor of the paperback edition as the rules allowed at that time, though SF ghetto paranoia makes some wonder if the withdrawal was actually to avoid too much association with the genre). It has gone in and out of print since then, most recently in a Gollancz SF Masterworks series reprint in the UK in 2002, but it's out of print now.



7) *The Alteration*, by Kingsley Amis (1976)

Kingsley Amis (1922-1995) was one of the great British novelists of the 20th Century. He was best known for social comedy, as exemplified by his first novel, *Lucky Jim*. But he was great fan of Science Fiction (and of other genres such as the thriller and the spy novel). His collection of lectures, *New Maps of Hell* (1960), is justly famous as one of the first serious treatments of SF by a "mainstream" academic. He also wrote several novels that can be classified as SF or Fantasy: *The Anti-Death League* (1966), *The Green Man* (1969), *The Alteration* (1976), and *Russian Hide & Seek* (1980). (He also published several SF stories, one of which appeared in a Best of the Year book edited by Harry Harrison and Brian Aldiss.)

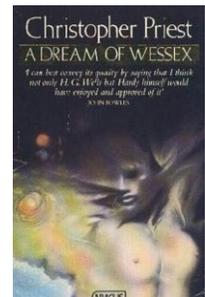


At least the first three listed of those are among Amis' best work. The most SFnal is *The Alteration*, which was certainly recognized within the field: it won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for Best Novel. It is Alternate History. The Reformation never happened—Martin Luther

returned to the Catholic fold, and eventually became Pope. At the time of the novel the Catholic Church is the dominant force in the Western World. The story centers around a young boy, a brilliant singer, who is pressured by the churchly authorities to be castrated before his voice changes. In classic AH fashion, his personal story—well told, well resolved—is also a vehicle for displaying the different nature of this world. Amis also gets in some cute references to such Alternate History classics as *Pavane* and *The Man in the High Castle* (though not *Times Without Number*, which would along with *Pavane* shares (in a very rough sense) a background with *The Alteration*).

8) *A Dream of Wessex*, by Christopher Priest (1977)

Christopher Priest (born 1943) has received plenty of admiring notice both within the SF genre, for such novels as *The Inverted World* and such stories as "An Infinite Summer"; and outside the genre (he was chosen as one of the twenty most promising young novelists in the UK in a 1983 issue of *Granta*, and his novel *The Prestige* was just last year made into a very prominent (and very fine) film). But his novels have had difficulty staying in print, or even getting into print, especially in the US. (Though his excellent Alternate History *The Separation* (2002) was notoriously maltreated by its original publisher in the UK.)



I am particularly fond of his early novel *A Dream of Wessex*, which was first printed in the US as *The Perfect Lover*. This is a virtual reality novel (a theme to which he has returned). In a grim future a group of British scientists set up an experiment whereby their minds are linked and they create a virtual utopia. This virtual world, set on part of Great Britain now separated from the mainland and called Wessex, is lovingly described, while the experiment in the "real" world is increasingly threatened. A wonderfully bittersweet novel. It has most recently been reprinted in the UK in 1999, paired with *The Space Machine* in an omnibus edition, now out of print.

9) *Hard Landing*, by Algis Budrys (1992)

Algis Budrys (born 1931) is one of the more influential figures in SF history, yet he is much less well known than he might be. He did significant work as an editor (as an assistant to the likes of H. L. Gold in the 1950s, and as editor of his own magazine, *Tomorrow*, in the 1990s). He was a major critic and reviewer, mostly for *Galaxy* and *F&SF*—and indeed he is the 2007 Pilgrim Award winner for lifetime achievement in SF criticism. And he also wrote a fair amount of really excellent SF. The problem is that while he was prolific in the 1950s—up to about 1960 when he published *Rogue Moon*, one of the great novels in SF history, since then he has not published much fiction at all—only one more novel in the

1960s (*The Amsirs and the Iron Thorn*), one in the 1970s (*Michaelmas*), and finally one in 1992: *Hard Landing*.



All of these—even *Rogue Moon*—are out of print, which is shocking. I’m listing *Hard Landing* instead of *Rogue Moon* here for two reasons: *Rogue Moon* is available in a very fine shorter version in *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame*; and while *Rogue Moon* is very well known (as it should be), *Hard Landing* is hardly talked of at all. But it is

outstanding work. It first appeared as a complete novel in a single issue of *F&SF* (October-November 1992). It has had a paperback edition and an SFBC edition and that’s been it. But it is gripping work. A spaceship crashed in New Jersey’s pine barrens. The four aliens in the ship are just humanoid enough to pass among us—and they have no way of repairing their ship or calling for help. So over decades they make lives for themselves, of some influence, good and ill—and of moving personal significance. It is uncompromising honest work, familiar in basic setup but original in resolution.

10) *The Scarlet Fig*, by Avram Davidson (2005)

This entry is a bit of an oddball on a list of “out of print” books. How can a novel first published in 2005 fit? Well, it was published 15 years after the author’s death in

a very small edition from the now defunct British small press The Rose Press. There may be a few more copies of that edition available, at very high prices, but the book is practically speaking, at least, out of print.

It’s a wonderful book by a wonderful writer. Indeed, much of Davidson’s work had gone out of print, but is happily now again available. For instance, his glorious collection of essays about myths and legends and odd creatures, *Adventures in Unhistory*, was recently reissued by Tor. And many of his early novels are available from Wildside. But many fewer people have seen *The Scarlet Fig*. This third of Davidson’s “Vergil” sequence concerns Vergil’s travels after he is accused of having interfered with a Vestal Virgin. He visits such strange lands as Corsica, Tingitayne, the Region called Huldah (and its beautiful eponymous ruler), the island of the Lotophageans, and finally the Land of Stone in North Africa. We witness much magic and many wonders - all reflecting the altered Rome of Davidson’s Vergil Magus, a Rome based on the legends that accumulated in the Middle Ages: so, gloriously grotesque satyrs, victims of the cockatrix, the dogs of the Guaramanty, etc. I enjoyed it greatly, particularly the character of Vergil and the mix of darkness and strangeness throughout. The Rose Press edition is also beautifully presented: a large handsome hardcover, with beautiful illustrations, and much excellent additional material to the novel. Some of these qualities may be lost in further editions, but the core of the novel will remain a treasure.

On my LiveJournal, I commented that one of my favorite overlooked actors was a man named **Phil Leeds**, perhaps most widely seen as the aged monk who introduced Mel Brooks’s Torquemada in “History of the World, Part I.” I asked people to recommend other character actors who are more deserving of recognition than they receive and here post those actors cited. Interestingly, almost all were men. A few years ago, I imagine **John C. Reilly**’s name would have been mentioned, although he’s become more well known since his Oscar nomination for “Chicago.”

Danny Dayton, played Rusty Charlie in “Guys and Dolls” and “Fast Freddie,” a comedian, in an episode of MASH
Brian Dennehy, not really all that unknown, you know him as the sheriff in “Silverado” and the alien leader in “Cocoon”
Jack Gilford, he played the doctor in “Catch-22” and Hysterium in “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum”

Graham Greene, the go-to guy for American Indians, he had a great role in the film “Maverick”

John Gries, perhaps best known for his role as Uncle Rico in “Napoleon Dynamite,” he was also in “The Astronaut Farmer”

Charles Lane, almost 350 film and television credits, when I see him, I see Jimmy Stewart attacking him in “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.”

Al Leong, his career dates back to 1983 when he had an unnamed role in “The Twilight Zone Movie,” but he later played Genghis Khan in “Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure.”

Mako, has made a career of playing Asians, having portrayed at least four Chinese/Koreans in the television show “MASH.”

Strother Martin, appearances on “Gunsmoke,” “Bonanza,” “The Rockford Files,” and “Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid”

Agnes Moorehead, As a member of Mercury Theatre, probably doesn’t belong on the list, but later known as Endora on “Bewitched”

Burt Mustin, played Grandpa Jenson on “Petticoat Junction” and Gus the Fireman on “Leave it to Beaver”

Charlie Rocket, best known for swearing on “Saturday Night Live”

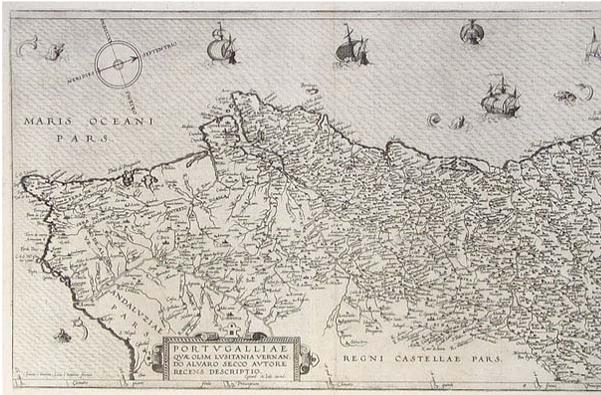
Sara Rue, she made it big, relatively, with the show “Less Than Perfect”

Vincent Schiavelli, who know him from “The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai”

Stephen Tobolowsky, appeared as Bill Murray’s schoolmate in “Groundhog Day”

Sagas From the Portuguese

Fred Lerner



In 1497 Vasco da Gama set sail from Lisbon, opening the sea route to the East that transformed Portugal from an Iberian backwater to a world power. In 1875, Afonso da Maia and his grandson Carlos settled into Ramalhete, an elegant villa in the Janelas Verdes district of Lisbon. From these two events were shaped two masterpieces of Portuguese literature.

The Hungarian writer András Török once observed that “the art of a small country is always a private affair, and this is especially true of the art of the past”. The literature of a small country is almost as private as its art. Sometimes a book will break out into the wider world—print is more mobile than painting—but even the best-read of Americans is unlikely to know anything of Belgian or Bulgarian or Belarusian literature. Apart from Kazantzakis, what modern Greek writer can an American name? Who knows a Danish novel other than *Smilla’s Sense of Snow*? (And how many have read it, not just seen its film adaptation?)

Before traveling through Estonia I read *The Czar’s Madman*, Jan Kross’s tale of the Germans who dominated the Baltic lands of the Russian empire in tsarist times and the Estonian peasantry they exploited. I learned more about Estonia from that novel than from the historians and journalists I also read. So with a trip to Portugal on the horizon I decided to do a little homework. My travel guides recommended two books as essential introductions to Portuguese literature: *The Lusiads*, by Luiz de Camões, published in 1572, and *The Maias*, by José Maria Eça de Queiroz, which first appeared in 1888.

The theme of *The Lusiads* is Vasco da Gama’s expedition to India. In 1497 he sailed from Lisbon, following in the traces of the Portuguese explorers who had been coasting West Africa for decades. With the aid of an Arab pilot da Gama crossed the Indian Ocean and made landfall on the Cochin coast. Camões recounts his journey in 1102 eight-lined stanzas of rhymed hexameter. Knowing no Portuguese, I read *The Lusiads* in Leonard Bacon’s translation.

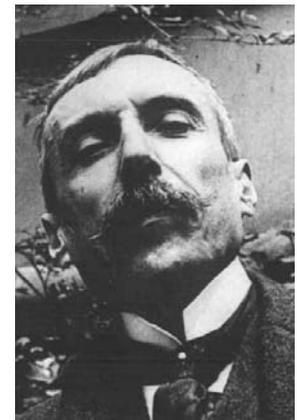
As an epic poet Camões poses no challenge to Homer or Vergil. *The Lusiads* jumps back and forth through history, as da Gama interrupts his voyage to regale native leaders with tales of Portuguese heroes. These worthies fight beneath the cross and are aided by the saints, while the events surrounding da Gama’s voyage are manipulated by the pagan gods of classical antiquity. The two schemes of divinity don’t work well together.

A rigid rhyme scheme can strengthen the impact of lyric verse, but when rhyme is imposed upon a long verse narrative the results can be unfortunate. Bacon retains the ABABABCC rhyme scheme of the original, and I was all too aware of the awkward expedients to which he resorted to maintain it. His substitution of pentameter for hexameter reinforced his version’s brittleness.

That doesn’t really matter. I wasn’t reading *The Lusiads* for its literary power. I’m going to be spending twelve days in a country whose national anthem is “*Heróis del Mar*” (“Heroes of the Sea”), whose national hero is Vasco da Gama. Portugal’s greatest art and architecture dates from his era, and knowing something of that period and how it was celebrated by the greatest of Portuguese poets will add something to my appreciation of what I see. And I will do myself no harm among the Portuguese I encounter by claiming some acquaintance with Luiz de Camões.



Luiz de Camões



José Maria Eça de Queiroz

By the end of the 19th century Portugal had descended into a national somnolence, which the poet, novelist, and diplomat Eça de Queiroz portrayed in his best-known book. *The Maias* tells the story of the venerable country gentleman Afonso da Maia, his grandson Carlos, and the circle of aristocrats, dilettantes, and courtesans among whom they while away their days and nights. Though most of the story takes place in and around Lisbon, we are frequently reminded of the rural roots of Portugal’s great families, and the foreign connections and travels that relieve the provincialism of Portuguese life. *The Maias* traces the rise of young Carlos from an idyllic, unfettered childhood on his grandfather’s country estate, through his university years in Coimbra, to his emergence into Lisbon society as a novice physician and apprentice adulterer.

Carlos discovers the true love of his life—and the tragic outcome of that affair. And we discover a society whose futility and stupidity rival Chekhov’s Russia.

Unlike *The Lusiads*, which often became tedious, *The Maias* held my interest throughout its 631 pages. (I read the English translation by Patricia McGowan Pinheiro and Ann Stevens.) It gave me what I look for in science fiction: a glimpse into a well-constructed, fully-rounded society whose inhabitants act and think differently but whose essential motivations are still within my grasp. Like the world portrayed in Georgette Heyer’s Regency romances, it has one advantage over Allen Steele’s Clarke County or Kim Stanley Robinson’s Mars: for the price of a plane ticket I can stroll at my leisure through its remains.

When we return from Portugal I’ve got a little mystery to solve. A minor character in *The Maias*, the Finnish ambassador Steinbroken, represents the King of Finland in Portugal. (It’s not a translator’s error, as I had surmised: the word used in is “*rei da Finlândia*”.) Now, there never was a king of Finland—the country was part of the Russian Empire in the 19th century, and the best they could manage was a Grand Duke. As a professional diplomat Eça de Queiroz would have been well aware of Finland’s status. So why did he bestow a king upon the hapless Finns?

Once I’m back home I shall wander through the stacks at Baker/Berry Library in search of some explanation. There is more to the literature of small countries than first meets the eye.

First Appearances

Steven H Silver

The *Chicago Tribune*, my local paper, is not known for being sympathetic to science fiction. So I decided to do a search for some terms and names associated with science fiction to discover when they first received notice in the newspaper. After several false starts for the phrase “science fiction,” I came up with the first legitimate hit, although as it happens, science fiction was mentioned twice on that day in two separate articles.

Science Fiction: June 27, 1943

“Admirers of T.S. Stribling, the Tennessee realist, a Pulitzer prize winner of 1932 who is usually regarded as a ‘serious’ novelist, may be surprised to learn that he began his career in the pulp magazines, writing fantastic stories of mystery and adventure. One of the best of these, “The Green Splotches,” previously unknown to me, has been resurrected and given place in Donald Wollheim’s anthology, “The Pocket Book of Science-Fiction,” where it holds its own with weird masterpieces by Ambrose Bierce, John Collier, H.G. Wells and other specialists in the macabre. It is a horripilating tale of peril and portent in Peru, told with great plausibility and ingenuity. Mr. Stribling has a nice touch on the typewriter in matters ‘delicate and dark,’ and I wish he would forget his small

town realism and give s more stories like this one. I will bet \$4 that “The Green Splotches”—now that it has been unearthed—will last longer than his novel, “The Store,” with which he won a Pulitzer award.

“Mr. Wollheim’s anthology is a good job of editing and his book is the first gathering of tales in the field of pseudo-science, I think, in this country. There should be more of them, for there is a large group of readers whose philosophy might be expressed in Ralph Hodgson’s famous lines:

*Reason has moons, but moons not here
Lie mirror’d on her sea,
Confounding her astronomers,
But, O! delighting me.”*

The other reference from that date includes the first reference to Heinlein, although it would be three more years, on August 25, 1946, in an article written by August Derleth, that the *Tribune* would get Heinlein’s name correct.

“If you want an amusing and fantastic story about modern architecture, try “And He Built a Crooked House,” by Richard [sic] A. Heinlein, in the *Pocketbook of Science-Fiction*. This tale, a satire in Hollywood trends in home building, was originally published in a pulp paper magazine, but it has qualities that H.G. Wells, also represented in this booklet, would admire.”

Derleth’s article, a review of Raymond Healy & J. Francis McComas’s *Adventures in Time and Space*, is also the first mentioned of A.E. van Vogt.

Isaac Asimov doesn’t appear until September 18, 1949 when he is mentioned in a review of Everett F. Bleiler & T.E. Dikty’s anthology *The Best Science Fiction Stories: 1949*. The reviewer, who would write a series of reviews for the *Tribune* over the years, was Fritz Leiber, Jr.

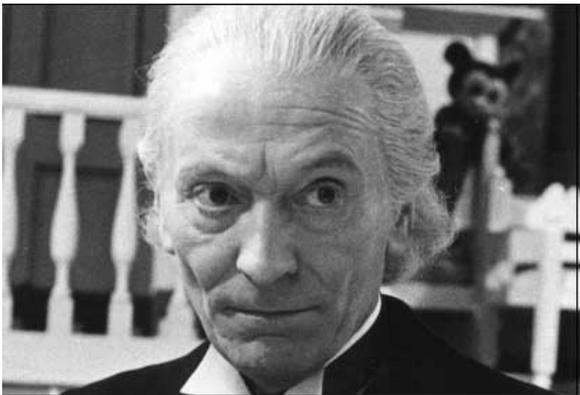
Although the second Worldcon was held in Chicago in 1940, the first mentioned of the event in Chicago didn’t occur until August 31, 1952, when Mark Reinsberg wrote an article about TASFiC: “Avid Science, Fiction Fans Meet in City.” The Worldcon itself was first mentioned, however, in Vincent Starrett’s September 26, 1948 book review column when he notes that August Derleth was elected president of Associated Fantasy Publishers at the sixth Worldcon in Toronto. The same article notes that Chicagoan Melvin Korshak of Shasta Press was elected executive secretary of the same organization. Starrett then went on to review books published by Derleth’s Arkham House and Korshak’s Shasta Press.

Although the first reference to the Hugo Award appeared in 1961, that was to the *Prix Victor Hugo*, awarded by the French Academy of Arts. The first reference to our Hugo Award was on October 3, 1965 when Starrett congratulated fellow Chicagoan Fritz Leiber on winning the award for *The Wanderer*.

1963 and All That: A Look at Doctor Who Continuity

Michael Thomas

Doctor Who is a show with a unique history and format, a glorious tangle that spans decades; its continuity should be a nightmare. Doctor Who was created by committee in 1963 at the BBC by Sydney Newman, Donald Wilson, C. E. “Bunny” Webber, Verity Lambert, Anthony Coburn, David Whitaker, Waris Hussein, and probably some of the janitorial staff. There was nothing approaching a series “bible;” it was a series of memos and good intentions to have a family show on Saturdays that would teach a bit of science and history. At the time, few envisioned it airing more than 14 weeks, let alone for 26 seasons from 1963-1989, a television movie in 1996, another continuing series going from 2005 to at least 2010 that will encompass 5 seasons and a few specials, over 250 original novels, dozens of short story collections, and over a hundred audio plays. Doctor Who is a British institution and an SF television success story. There is no other television property that is even remotely comparable.



Doctor Who has been handled by dozens of production teams, writers, and directors who each took the series in a different direction. The truly amazing thing about the show is that there is any continuity at all, especially when one takes into account that few production teams saw many of the previous episodes. As the years went on, even that became impossible; many of the sixties’ episodes were wiped from the BBC archives. Only a filing cabinet filled with old scripts and pictures kept the series on track. In the words of script editor and writer Terrance Dicks, in the foreword to *The Discontinuity Guide*, “Who Continuity was rather like the *1066 And All That* definition of history—What You Can Remember. It was what I could remember of my predecessor’s shows, what my successors could remember of mine.” The phenomenal thing about Doctor Who is that even with its longevity and continuity-indifferent production staffs, the vast majority of its continuity holds together nicely with only a few pesky

major contradictions that can be fixed with enough imagination.

Doctor Who has some advantages from its format that keeps the continuity problems from getting too out of hand. One plus is the nature of each story being so self-contained. Though there are often many internal continuity problems, rarely does a story contradict the series’ continuity as a whole; the place, time, and characters are almost always unique to that story. Only during the Pertwee era, with the Doctor’s exile to Earth, and the current era with the Doctor’s visits with Rose’s and Martha’s families, have there been truly recurring characters. This makes for a show with a much tighter continuity than expected. When Chris Boucher wrote “The Robots of Death,” he really didn’t need to know what happened in “The Time Monster” a few seasons before, since he had a completely different setting and set of characters.

Another advantage for limiting continuity errors is that the character of the Doctor and the workings of his TARDIS are meant to be enigmas, thus the show name of Doctor Who (heavy-handedly driven home in the eighties by all of the Doctor’s question-marked apparel). Since we are only getting brief tidbits of information, major contradictions have mostly been avoided. Errors that have cropped up have barely been noticed by anybody but the fans. An example of this was the introduction in “Spearhead From Space” of the concept of the Doctor having two hearts. While this concept didn’t openly contradict anything previously stated in the series, there were examples of characters examining the Doctor previously and not hearing a double heartbeat, such as when his companion Ian Chesterton listened to his chest in the story “The Edge of Destruction.” This is one of those errors that fans easily rectify with theories. Some suggest that Ian doesn’t notice two heartbeats due to his lack of medical training and thus comments that the Doctor’s heart (singular) is all right. Some fans have made the suggestion that the Doctor only received a secondary circulatory system after his first regeneration. This theory was even folded into the First Doctor Novel *The Empire of Glass*, by Andy Lane—only to be contradicted in the First Doctor Novel *Salvation* by Steve Lyons. Still, this is a fairly small problem. It’s not as though the Doctor claims to be from Gallifrey in one story and Skaro in another.

The Doctor has had a couple of other bigger character continuity issues through the years. One of them was his medical degree. The Second Doctor, Patrick Troughton, claimed to have one from Glasgow during “The Moonbase,” but two seasons later he told his companions unequivocally that he didn’t have a medical degree in “The Krotons.” Troughton’s Doctor presented bigger problems as



well: when he returned to the series during the eighties in multi-Doctor celebrations, he started to have some impossible knowledge and behaviors. In “The Five Doctors,” he outwitted two illusionary companions (Jamie and Zoë) by pointing out that they couldn’t remember him because the Time Lords had wiped the memories of their adventures after his trial in “The War Games.” This is problematic because the Second Doctor was supposed to be regenerated and exiled to Earth immediately after those events, which would have made it impossible for him to be present as the second doctor in “The Five Doctors” unless that adventure somehow happened in the fleeting moments between Jamie and Zoë’s minds being wiped and his regeneration. Likewise, in “The Two Doctors,” Troughton’s Doctor and Jamie are on a mission for the Time Lords, an adventure that must occur before “The War Games,” when Jamie has his mind wiped, yet, in “The War Games” Jamie has no knowledge of the Time Lords until they captured the Doctor and his companions.

In comes fan theory again. Doctor Who novelists (and later new series writer) Paul Cornell, Martin Day, and Keith Topping proposed in their book *The Discontinuity Guide* a Season 6B where after the Doctor’s trial he ran around on secret missions for the Time Lords. Once those missions were completed, his memory was wiped, he’s regenerated, and then exiled as we see on screen in “Spearhead From Space”. This theory became so popular that writer Terrance Dicks incorporated it into his novel *World Game*. Terrance Dicks happened to also be the writer and script editor of “The War Games” giving this fan continuity fix some extra verisimilitude.

The Pertwee era, however, led to one of the biggest Doctor Who continuity tangles. The Third Doctor had been exiled to Earth and became the Scientific Advisor for UNIT (United Nations Intelligence Task Force). It was the intention of the production teams to place these stories in the near future. Circumstantial onscreen evidence, however, goes both ways. No on-screen date is given to those stories until Sarah Jane Smith stated that she was from 1980 in the 1975 story “Pyramids of Mars,” set right after Sarah’s visit with UNIT’s leader Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart and UNIT in “Terror of the Zygons.” This would seem to place the stories in the near future



until the story “Mawdryn Undead” aired in 1983. One of the primary plot elements involved the Brigadier in 1977 after he has retired from UNIT, which only works if the stories were set at the time of transmission. There is no easy way to rectify this, and fans have brawled for years trying to find a solution.

For the most part, the only recurring characters other than the Doctor have been the companions. Until recently, these characters were short-lived, undeveloped ciphers that in many ways were as enigmatic as the Doctor. Sarah Jane, for instance, doesn’t contradict her own continuity

because there was just so little to remember. She is one of the longest serving companions, yet everything we ever learned about her can almost be summed up in one sentence: “Sarah Jane Smith is a reporter from South Croydon, London, whose Aunt Lavinia is a renowned virologist, and she travels with the Doctor and sometimes Harry Sullivan through space and time.” We never learn about her schooling, her parents, her loves, or anything that has ever happened to her other than the adventures we see. It’s hard to get her continuity wrong when there is so little known.

Where the show has gotten into major continuity snafus has almost always been with its recurring monsters, beginning with the first time that the production team decided to make a monster return. The end of “The Daleks” has all of the Daleks unequivocally dead, a race trapped in their own city by the static electricity in the floors that power them, and a need for radiation to survive. When the Doctor cut that power, they were destroyed—at least until they became massively popular. Suddenly, they were alive again, and able to travel through space to conquer a future Earth, in “The Dalek Invasion of Earth.” This is not the last time that the first Dalek story is contradicted. The origin of the Daleks, as presented in “The Daleks,” was that the Daleks were scientists who were mutated by a one-day neutronic war and went into their machines to survive. By the story “Genesis of the Daleks,” the origin has changed so that Davros created the Daleks, evolving the Kaled race into their final evolutionary form after a thousand year war with the Thals. He then removed their positive emotions and placed them into the Dalek machines. All of these stories were written by Dalek creator Terry Nation.



Cyberman continuity is also fairly confusing. In “The Tenth Planet,” the Cybermen are a race of humanoids from Earth’s wandering twin planet Mondas. In 1986, Mondas attacked Earth and attempted to drain our planet of energy, which then destroys Mondas and the Cybermen. This story was then followed by a series of stories where more advanced Cybermen attacked the Earth in the future (“The Moonbase” and “The Wheel in Space”), seemingly based on a planet called Telos in the far future (“Tomb of the Cybermen”). To confuse things even more, these Cybermen attacked a contemporary Earth (late 1960s or early 1970s depending on UNIT dating) in “The Invasion.” No mention was made of them having an ability to time travel. By the 1980s, it became so tangled that the story “Attack of the Cybermen” that took place in 1986 and in the future on Telos and tried unsuccessfully to patch up the continuity in a haphazard fashion. Whole books have been dedicated to just trying to make sense of the Cybermen and their continuity (*Doctor Who: Cybermen* by Cyberleader actor David Banks). It is no wonder that the new series threw this all

out and decided to just have their Cybermen come from an alternate Earth.

The new series has an advantage over the old series; it is created by people who were in Doctor Who fandom and have an encyclopedic knowledge of the past series. Still, it only took until “The End of the World” for the new series to contradict the original series, showing a very different destruction of Earth than the classic story “The Ark.” The new series, however, has also provided a magic wand for fixing continuity problems, with the concept of the Time War. Series writer Paul Cornell, for instance, is a big advocate of using it to rectify any continuity errors, since it is impossible to know how badly timelines were affected by the war. That works for the old series, but it doesn’t solve new series continuity problems. A glaring error is the episode “Dalek” that took place in 2012, and



was built around the idea that nobody knew what a Dalek was, even though the Daleks had a very public outing in London during 2007’s Battle of Canary Wharf as seen in “Doomsday.”

In the final analysis, telling a good story is more important than keeping this wild continuity together; it doesn’t matter that “Doomsday” contradicts “Dalek,” because both are excellent tales. Of course, SF fans relish continuity challenges. Continuity is the cornerstone of the world building, giving our fictional worlds substance and believability. When we find the errors, we find ways to rectify the mistakes, a game we play in the waning hours of conventions, at the pub, or in Internet chatrooms. Some begin with the complaints; others rush in with wonderfully elaborate theories. Doctor Who is no exception, having even spawned a cottage industry of books and fanzines articles on the subject. The continuity errors in Doctor Who have inspired a process that promotes fan interaction and collective storytelling. With some creativity, just about anything can be made to fit. As long as the show remains excellent and vaguely consistent, fandom can find ways to make the whole thing make sense. In fact, we look forward to it.

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My Reactions to Writer's Politics

James Nicoll

This isn't intended as a polemic on how people should react to writers' politics but merely as an account of how I react.

I read a lot of SF and since I have a particular political model-in-progress that I work from (it really doesn't matter which one) and most authors are not of that particular tendency, I end up reading a lot of material written by people whose basic politics are quite different from mine. Quite often the issues we differ over are ones that are important to me and this makes the differences stand out that much more, at least for me. I don't make any particular effort to limit the SF I read to SF whose basic politics match mine, in part because that kind of political cloistering can lead to deplorable mental habits and in part because frankly, there are no SF authors that I am aware of whose politics are a perfect fit for mine. If I am going to read SF at all, I need to be able to deal with the fact that other people have different political beliefs than I do.

My position is somewhat complicated by the fact that I review books for a living and my responsibilities do not include acting as a political gatekeeper for the people who most often send me work. If I tried to act as a political gatekeeper, it is my belief that I would stop getting work. Note that I have not actually verified this.

As it happens, the only two cases where I specifically ask not to be sent work by particular authors are because of their real-world politics (as expressed online) and not because of the politics in their fiction. James P. Hogan, for example, includes in his wide assortment of eccentricities close ties to the Holocaust denial community, as seen in his 22 February 2006 essay *Free-speech Hypocrisy*¹³. There's absolutely no way I would give a book by Hogan a fair hearing so I don't look at his books at all. It happens that I had previously decided that his writing had gone downhill (as shown by my review of *Cradle of Saturn*) but there's no particular reason to expect that every person whose personal views are intensely repellent to me is going to be considerate enough to write crap.

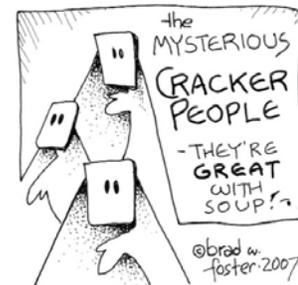
In fact, it's possible for me to think an author is completely out to lunch politically and still like their books. A quick check of Google groups will show that Will Shetterly and I do not agree on much but I would recommend most of his books. I like the fiction of H. Beam Piper (Except for *Space Viking*) but I do not therefore feel compelled to reject the idea of comparative advantage. When I want a well-crafted tale of political hijinks, I turn to self-confessed Thatcherite Michael Dobbs. I own most of James Blish's SF despite the fact that that he was a non-Hilterian Fascist¹⁴. In most of these

cases, their personal politics do not intrude into the fiction in a way that distracts and annoys me¹⁵ and so I can enjoy the spectacle of Francis Urquhart putting Drano into someone's cocaine without wondering where exactly Dobbs stood on the poll tax question.

What will drive me up the wall fairly consistently is if the primary method the author uses to show the error inherent in views that disagree with theirs is to portray the people who disagree with the author as villains or idiots (Or worse, as villains and idiots). Anyone can win an argument if the other side is a bunch of slack-jawed imbeciles and arranging a fictional disagreement so that opposing points of view are represented by said slack-jawed imbeciles is playing with the net down.¹⁶ This is fairly insensitive to the flavour of politics being favoured; Norman Spinrad managed to make me feel sorry for record companies due to his ham-fisted writing in *Little Heroes* and my personal suspicion is that most record company executives would not be allowed into Hell because they would drag the moral tone down too far.

What also irritates me greatly is when the author loses sight of the difference between things that matter to the author and things that matter to his or her characters. This can be political (As shown by L. Neil Smith's *The American Zone*, whose snipes at Hillary Clinton ignore the fact that the protagonist shares neither a universe of origin nor a universe of residence with her) but it doesn't have to be (as shown by L. Neil Smith's *The American Zone* and its diatribe about modern professional baseball). I will admit that I see more of this sort of thing in right-wing SF than in left-wing SF but I think that is simply because at the moment there is more right-wing SF than left-wing.

In fact, I would argue that reading SF written from a variety of political standpoints is not only largely unavoidable but part of the fun, if only for the exercise I get from rolling my eyes. I do wish that there was more variety than I see at the moment but I assume that this may be due to the US's domination of SF in the past and the somewhat limited political choice available in the US at this time. We see more and more non-Americans dominating the field as time goes by and it seems reasonable to me that this should also be accompanied by a greater variety of viewpoints.



¹³ <http://web.archive.org/web/20060503084516/http://www.jamesphogan.com/jphcommentarchive.shtml>

¹⁴ If I refused to read every SF author who favoured top-down governments and who saw the vast majority of humans as meat-bag place-holders, I would not read very much science fiction at all.

¹⁵ In fact, Shetterly's most political book that I have read, *Chimera*, is also the book of his that I enjoy the least but I would argue that most of the problems that I have with the book come down to the protagonist being a moron surrounded by a vast expanse of idiot plot.

¹⁶ Unless one of the people whose views you are distorting is Pope Urban VIII, in which case you are boned. This very nearly never happens.

Me and The High Priest

Mike Resnick

I first met Anton LaVey, the founder and High Priest of the Church of Satan, back in August of 1968, long before I was a full-time science fiction writer. I'd sold a pair of pretty awful Edgar Rice Burroughs pastiches, but basically I was just a kid starting out, editing a couple of men's magazines and tabloid called *The National Insider*, which was like *The National Enquirer* only worse. The Worldcon was in Berkeley that year, and of course we planned to go.

Carol and I had never been to the Bay area, so I decided we'd go a few days early, spend them in San Francisco, and I'd line up a story or an interview each day to cover the expenses. During those four days I interviewed Carol Doda (the first topless dancer), the Low Moan Spectacular (a brilliant comedy group), and Anton.

I still remember taking a cab to his house, which was an old Victorian monstrosity painted black from top to bottom. There was a hearse parked in front of it, a lion roaming the back yard, and Anton answered the door dressed exactly like a priest, with one exception—instead of a cross, he was wearing a tiny coffin on a chain around his neck.

For some reason we hit it off. He had a huge collection of Arkham House books. I'd read a batch of them, and had actually known a handful of the authors, so we had something to talk about besides Satanism. After awhile I pulled out my camera, one of the girls shed her clothes, and Anton presided over a black mass.

It was dull as dishwater, and it's really difficult to be dull when you're chanting obscene spells over a gorgeous naked girl on a makeshift altar. I explained that the *Malleus Malicifarum* and the *Compendium Malificarum* were fine text books, but he was sitting on hundreds of wonderful (and occasionally Satanic) poems by Robert E.

Howard, Clark Ashton Smith and H. P. Lovecraft in his Arkham collection, poems that had beat and meter—and eventually he did incorporate some of them into his ceremonies.

He was our guest at Baycon's masquerade, and I commissioned a regular column from him for the *Insider*. We became friends, in spite of the fact that I used to drive him crazy by calling him Anthony Levy (which seemed more likely to be his real name) and he was our house guest whenever a book-plugging tour brought him to our area.

Do I believe in Satanism? Of course not, no more than I believe in anything else. But let me tell you a little story, which happens to be true.

I used to phone him from the office whenever one of his columns came in, just to go over changes and corrections (this was many years before faxes, scans, and e-mails), and once I phoned him just after lunch on December 24. He mentioned that he'd forgotten to buy me a Christmas present (said the Satanist to the Jewish atheist), and was there anything he could get me? I said that it was starting to snow, and I'd sure love for him to use his Satanic connections to get me the hell out of there in the next ten minutes, since the city figured to be in gridlock by quitting time. It was just a thing to say, honest. I

never expected what came next.

He mumbled some incomprehensible chant in an unknown language and told me it was taken care of, and I could go home in ten minutes. Then he hung up.

And 30 seconds later the power went off, and when it didn't come on again in five minutes, the publisher sent everyone home and closed up shop for the day.

Was it Anton? I sure as hell doubt it. Did it happen? Absolutely. Can I prove that it wasn't Anton? Nope. Did he take full credit for it for the next ten years? Of course. Could he do it again? I don't know; I decided never to ask for another favor. I mean, hell, if I was wrong and he did shut off the power from 3,000 miles away, I knew what church I definitely did not want to be beholden to.

Anton died a few years ago. We'd lost touch with each other by the late 1970s, and in truth we were never very close friends. But when I think back on all the colorful people I've known, he ranks right up there near the top.



ArgentusCon: Panel Discussion: Dystopia v. Utopia

Not sure if this will become an annual feature or not. I came up with a panel topic such as one would find at a typical science fiction convention and invited a collection of authors, academics, and fans to participate in the discussion, which I then cobbled into a readable form.

Dystopian futures seem to outnumber utopian ones significantly. Is it because a utopia offers a limited supply of conflict? Does it mirror an unspoken pessimism about our future in the seemingly optimistic genre? Do novels and stories of utopian futures continue to be written but fail to make any appreciable impact on the field. Panelists are asked to look at novels and stories from 1990 through the present, paying particular attention to the change of the millennium.

Matthew Appleton, James D. Nicoll, Peter Sands, Allen Steele. Moderator: Steven H Silver

We'll start out with a brief introduction of our panelists. Matthew Appleton is the publisher of *Some Fantastic*, a fanzine given to sercon, book and movie reviews. James D. Nicoll has made a name for himself in usenet groups and is a reader for the Science Fiction Book Club. Allen Steele is the author of numerous science fiction novels, most recently *Spindrift* and *The River Horses*, and has won the Hugo Award for "Where Angels Fear to Tread" and "The Death of Captain Future." Peter Sands teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where he indulges his interest in utopian literature.

JN: Could I get a definition of what you mean by utopian?

PS: I generally work off a conventional definition that utopias are imagined, prescriptive, normative alternatives to already existing social organizations. They are expressions of what Lyman Tower Sargent calls "social dreaming"; most of us toiling in utopian studies I think would agree to some form of that definition. On the other hand, there is a bit of a mania for definitional work in both science fiction and utopian scholarship, creating ever-finer distinctions among utopia, dystopia, critical utopia/dystopia, anti-utopia, and so on...turtles all the way down.

AS: Well, if you leave aside the classic definition of "utopia"—i.e. "nowhere," or at least as Thomas More defined it—and apply the usual science-fictional definition, then what you're really talking about is a society that works. That is to say, it's a place—a city, or a county, a world or perhaps even an entire interstellar civilization—that has a social structure which functions to the benefit of all its inhabitants. The Galactic Empire of Asimov's "Foundation" novels is such a society on a very large scale (except, of course, that the series is predicated

on the notion that the Empire has become decadent and will soon lapse into barbarism). A more recent example might be the Mars of Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars trilogy, which is an ecotopia that has come into being after that planet has been terraformed.

MA: As you point out, KSR's "Mars" trilogy is an ecotopia that has come into being after terraforming, but even there humanity's contentious nature causes strife and ultimately brings a kind of end to it. Just as interesting, and in direct contrast, was the dystopia that Earth had become. While the colonists on Mars were fighting amongst themselves over the proper management of the planet, back on Earth the cumulative effects of global climate change were in full force and the global mega-nationals—which were now more powerful than any Terran government—showed an almost utter indifference to the carnage taking place.

JN: That's American exceptionalism applied to space colonies. You see the same thing in Varley's recent series, where the good decent people move to the frontier, leaving Earth to wallow in squalor.

Robinson is wildly inconsistent about how useful technology is, based on its proximity to Earth. The Martians have prodigious energy production and enough industrial strength to reshape a world. Earth seems to lack this.

JN: There's also KSR's *Pacific Shore*, which manages to fit in a conflict by screwing up a part of the protagonist's life that is unrelated to the utopian elements of the society.

F. Paul Wilson had a demi-utopia on one planet contrasted against less utopian settings (but mostly not actual dystopias) on all the other human worlds because when the LaNague Federation was set up, only the planet Tolive bought into LaNague's greater political ideas.

Thought of another one: the writer cannot imagine a positive outcome whose ultimate outcome is not extinction for humans. It's either the Singularity, in which case we get assimilated by our garage door openers, or it's global climate change and resource depletion, in which case we get to fight it out over the last can of dog food.

PS: And, in any case, there's reason to argue that the positive outcome is itself dependent on the contradictory impulse toward dictatorship. That's what J. L. Talmon argued back in the 1950s: that in order to achieve utopian consensus you have to have coercion.

So, maybe not extinction, but some would say fascism and/or stagnation. At least with the Singularity, there movement and change!

JN: That's really not a consensus so much as it's forcing people to do what they are told, regardless of their actual feelings on the matter.

I can think of utopias where there is an actual consensus but there it seems to be because the author cannot imagine people honestly disagreeing with them. Edward Bellamy, for example, explains anarchists away as agents of Big Business. Almost everyone in Ecotopia buys into the Ecotopian ideals aside from the blacks, who have their own separate but equal territory, and a handful of discredited malcontents (The outsider protagonist is almost immediately converted to right though). Of course, the Ecotopians also have people who will come around to talk to you very firmly if they think you are a political deviant or might be talking to them, so maybe it shouldn't count.

PS: True enough. In any case, Talmon was writing about utopianism in actual political life, rather utopian fiction. But I don't think it is terribly hard to show that in utopian novels there is a conflict between individuals and social cohesion. People simply don't agree on everything all of the time.

In Bellamy's Boston, the issue of consensus is glossed over—people are assumed to have just accepted a more rational way of living. But there are cracks in the surface, such as the implication that failure to assimilate to the new ways is viewed as criminal atavism.

Le Guin is particularly good in *The Dispossessed* at addressing the problem of consensus, showing how much work it takes on a societal and individual level.

AS: While there's certainly far more dystopian futures in current SF than utopian ones, the scenarios aren't necessarily limited to extremes. Robert Sawyer's recent novel *Rollover*, for example, depicts a near-future Canada which—while perhaps not being entirely utopian—seems to work pretty well. And in all modesty, I might point to my own short story “World Without End, Amen” (published last year in “Asimov's”) which depicts a near-future in which we've had a Singularity of sorts—the emergence of a global computer intelligence—and the world has become a much better place for it.

JN: Sawyer's Canadian and for Canadians of his particular political tendency, ever with the current placeholder government in power, there's reason to be guardedly optimistic. Our government is reasonably solvent despite ReformaTory tendencies to spend like a drunken ethnic stereotype, the long term trend is towards more civil liberties, not fewer and Michael Ignatieff is not leader of the Liberal Party. Social mobility could be better but is reasonably high for an industrialized nation and our gini index has not risen in ages. While we're in Afghanistan until at least 2009 (Assuming we avoid an Elphinstone scenario), the costs of this to Canada are

much less than the Iraq situation is to the US and there are not the same popularity issues.

Even better, even in a worst case scenario concerning global climate change (Greenland thaws), most Canadians are well above the high water mark. Even the cities out on the coasts tend to have steep inclines, meaning that relatively little land is lost to rising sea levels.

The US, on the other hand, has a high gini index and low social mobility, so not only is there a greater relative disparity between rich and poor, people born poor are more likely to stay poor. The party that has held the Presidency most often since 1980 sells a story where the USA of 1953 was a better place than the US of today and the people in the other party seem to be torn between preferring the economic consequences of Peak Oil and the ecological consequences of global climate as agents of collapse in the USA. Americans have been told for at least a generation that they missed the good times but that things can only get worse.

In a worst case scenario concerning sea levels, millions of Americans would have to be relocated. This is because many of the Gulf states have relatively shallow coastal slopes, so a small rise in sea level eats up a lot of shore (14 meters—which is admittedly unlikely—eats up Florida up to Lake Okeechobee. A meter or so does in NoLa and Galveston).

AS: On the whole, though, we see tend to see utopias in SF movies more often than we do in current SF literature. I'm taking a summer sabbatical between novels, so instead of writing in the evening, I've been re-watching a few movies, and one thing that I've noticed is that Hollywood is more willing to imagine bright and shiny futures than SF writers are. Amok robots aside, the urban landscape of *I, Robot* is one that even a country boy like myself wouldn't mind living in.

JN: I just watched that. Part of the reason the setting is the way it is, is so that the writers can then knock it down with the way the Three Laws play out.

AS: The movie version of *Starship Troopers* is rather crypto-fascist, but nonetheless it shows a Rio de Janeiro as a clean and well-lit place (or at least it's clobbered by an asteroid).

JN: I wonder if that's meant as a variation on getting the trains to run on time (Which I am apparently compelled to point out the Italian fascists never managed).

Rico is fairly well off and while I can't speak about the South America of today, when I lived there 37 years ago there were definitely neighborhoods just as nice as Rico's. It's true that in some towns you didn't need to go far to find a slum but parts of Porto Alegre, for example, could be plunked down in West Germany without standing out.

MA: Is SF cinema really that much more upbeat? I really don't know, but the end of A.I. we find that the human race is extinct and that New York City, with the exception of its tallest buildings, is buried under a glacier. *12 Monkeys* shows us a future where over 99% of the human race is dead. In *Dark City*, we don't know if the humans represent just a isolated remnant of humanity or what's left of it. Although set in the present, *The Arrival* leaves much doubt about our future chances in surviving a surreptitious alien attempt to eliminate the human species. If we expand the scope to include television offerings, *Battlestar Galactica* shows a rather bleak version of humanity (although admittedly we don't know what things look like on Earth). Mind you, some of these aren't meant as dystopic futures, but thanks to movies like *Dark Star*, *Alien* and *Blade Runner* the future is no longer the hi-tech gleaming one we were shown in *2001: A Space Odyssey* or the original *Star Trek*.

AS: And even in a relatively older film like *Back to the Future II*, we see a Hill Valley of 2016 with flying cars, picaresque town squares, and police officers so friendly that they're willing to take home a young woman found unconscious in an alley without charging her with vagrancy. Certainly, there's bleak futures as well—both *Children Of Men* and *V For Vendetta* show near-future Englands that are as nasty as nasty can be—but on the whole, SF cinema is remarkably upbeat, or at least in comparison to the preponderance of SF novels.

PS: In film, as someone has pointed out this morning, there are good examples of both eutopia and dystopia. But I think that dystopia is more common – there is more potential for conflict and resolution in a dystopian world, and there is certainly more potential for dynamic spectacle, action, violence, loud booms.

AS: I was about to mention A.I. in my previous comments, but decided not to because of the very image you mention: the scenes of New York inundated by rising sea levels. On second thought, though, when you look at the movie as a whole, you also see aspects of this particular vision—Kubrick by way of Spielberg, Brian Aldiss rewritten by Ian Watson—that are positively utopian. An upper middle class that is comfortably suburban, complete with backyard swimming pools and lovely office buildings. A city that looks like a cross between the Las Vegas strip and Epcot Center. Android gigolos and children, ready-made for either service or play. Downright refreshing, so long as you don't go into the woods and meet the rednecks who like to torture robots for fun.

You see the same sort of thing in another recent Spielberg SF movie, *Minority Report*. You see lovely, well-manicured subdivisions coexisting side-by-side with ultramodern cities where, thanks for computer-controlled traffic, gridlock is at thing of the past. But stay away the

grimy side of town, because the slums are even worse than they are now.

Bladerunner was possibly the most influential SF movie of the last twenty-five years. Its mark was felt on everything from *Twelve Monkeys* to *Dark City* to Gibson's *Neuromancer* and much of cyperpunk that followed it. But watch the movie again, and note that even this future is close to becoming obsolete. It takes place in 2019, and I have a hard time believing that Los Angeles will look like that in twelve years...or that we'll soon have pissed-off androids coming home from offworld colonies.

JN: While we're compare and contrast genres and media, the mainstream books that I get sent by the Quality Book Club and the mysteries from the Mystery Guild tend to be more upbeat and optimistic than the SF that I read.

This year's Best SF Collections were particularly dreary, significantly more grim than the previous year's.

JN: Wild assertions on my part, with no supporting proof.

I can see a number of reasons to pick dystopia over utopia:

1: A broken world gives the protagonist more things to struggle against. If it's the sort of world where reform is impossible or very nearly impossible, there's more room for sequels.

2: Utopian movements have a bad reputation at the moment. Everyone, minus a few wingnuts, remembers the millions of people put into the ground by would-be social perfectors, from Nasty Mr Moustache to Pol Pot. The reforms that were made that didn't involve mass murder (extending the franchise, say, or reducing the amount of uninformed involuntary medical experimentation committed on minorities) are now such a part of how things are that many people don't think about the process that led to them. In some cases, the reforms are such that they probably don't apply to the average SF writer (There are not a lot of black authors in SF, so the civil right reforms made in the 1960s don't have quite the same relevance they might to someone whose family was directly affected and there are even fewer First Nations writers, so the Canadian aboriginal populations getting the vote in 1960 isn't likely to have affected anyone that they know).

3: If there's no prospect of things getting better in the future, there's no reason to struggle (as I understand Greg Egan does) to make things better now.

4: Demonstrating how bad things could become if we do nothing is a fine incentive to do something now.

AS: No question, dystopias present more opportunity for conflict. It's more difficult to plot a story in a setting where society itself operates smoothly. And history itself demonstrates that utopias can have very dark sides. Nazi Germany of the 30's was an utopia for everyone except Jews, gypsies, gays, racial minorities, dissidents, intellectuals, and just about anyone else who didn't meet the Aryan ideal.

JN: A lot of utopian thinking from a century ago has unspoken assumptions than many modern people would find distasteful. H.G. Wells, for example, was quite comfortable with the idea of negative eugenics and Jack London once lovingly described the total extermination of the Chinese to open up Asia for European and American settlement.

AS: But even SF dystopias have lately gained an undercurrent that I myself find unsettling. Over the last decade, the genre has become increasingly militant, with mass conflict as the dominant motif. Whether this is a reaction to 9/11 and the Iraq war, or SF writers simply feeding off one another, I'm not sure, but nonetheless SF has gradually become blood-soaked and bullet-ridden. The overall message seems to be that there's nothing wrong with the future that can't be fixed by a plasma beam weapon.

JN: I'm very tempted to blame Jim Baen for this. He liked MilSF, found a way to sell it and Baen Books is a reasonably large publisher.

PS: But not all current SFnal utopian novels rely on militarism to express dark visions. This spring, I taught Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, Ford's *The Physiognomy* and Mieville's *Perdido Street Station*, as well as part of the "Pacific Coast" trilogy in a course on SF and utopia.

In their ways, each of those address ecological disaster, scientific hubris, and the sheer difficulty of social organization and cohesion on large scales without resorting (solely) to militaristic conflict.

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As an aside, where these and other utopian novels present some form of hope, they argue for smaller-scale development and political organization. Both Piercy in *He, She and It* and Le Guin in *The Dispossessed* (I violate the 1990-and-on rule!) present successful social organization based on principles of anarchism. I would say that Robinson does this to some extent in the "Pacific Coast" trilogy, in contrast to his exploration of constitutionalism in the "Mars" books.

MA: Initially, I was ready to argue Allen's point that SF has become blood-soaked and bullet-ridden since 9/11, but the more I think about it the more I think he's onto something. Although I tend not to read much SF marketed

as part of the military subgenre, it does seem that the military is playing larger roles in the books I do read. John Scalzi's "Old Man's" books, Karen Traviss's "Wess'har" series and Elizabeth Bear's "Jenny Casey" trilogy all immediately come to mind as books with a high body count. However, in each of them a strong attempt is made to find some sort of peaceful resolution. In fact, when Scalzi's and Bear's works conclude, some sort of peaceful resolution is finally found; Traviss's Wess'har series is not yet finished, but it wouldn't surprise me to see an ending that involves negotiations and some sort of peaceful truce. The answers are not necessary found at the end of a super hi-tech energy discharging weapon, and I think there's some cause for optimism. Nonetheless, one of the many things 9/11 showed us is that a large percentage of our species is too contentious, dogmatic in their beliefs and ready to take up arms to defend them for any sort of utopian version of humankind basically existing peacefully.

Pulling back to take a wider view, the much more dystopian view of the future doesn't surprise me. The New Wave and cyberpunk movements did a lot to eradicate the rosy view of the future so common during SF's Golden Age, and rightly so. In many different ways, we as a species tend to be short-sighted and engage in an amazing amount of convoluted logic to convince ourselves that we are somehow on the right path. In the process, we frequently overlook and/or downplay the serious problems facing us until they reach a critical mass that can no longer be ignored. Peak oil/alternative energy sources, global warming, clean water and population growth are all issues that really need to be addressed now, but there are currently too many forces in play fighting or stalling the significant changes needed. As James mentions in his fourth point, the need for dystopias increases in such an environment because we need to see how bad things can possibly get.

(Quick side note: I realize that the drum for curtailing population growth has been beating for decades now—both Harry Harrison's *Make Room, Make Room* and John Brunner's *Stand and Zanzibar* were written before I was born—but many of the other problems we're now facing stem directly from continuing population growth that shows no signs of subsiding anytime soon.)

JN: Have you read *Make Room, Make Room* lately? It has not aged well.

In fact, the whole population bomb thing is interesting. I mean, it's not hard to go back to see where the alarmist thought we'd be by now (Paul Ehrlich predicted mass famines and a truncated lifespan for Americans by the 1980s and 1990s, for example). As it turned out, birth rates declined by themselves with no particular need to force people to have fewer kids and our ability to feed ourselves grew faster than the population did. In fact, the tendency of richer populations to have lower birth-rates is

discussed in *The Challenge of Man's Future*, itself mostly based on research from 1950 or before¹⁷, so this should not have come as a surprise.

In fact, if you look at the total amount of animal biomass on the planet, we could have astonishingly high human populations around and still leave most of the biomass to be invested in other species. The real constraint turns out to be heat: a trillion humans is only 5% of the animal mass on the planet¹⁸ but if they each consumed energy at the rate of a first worlder and this energy was not merely intercepted sunlight that would have hit the Earth anyway, the additional heat generated is enough that we'd have to worry about tipping the planet into a runaway greenhouse effect of the kind that sterilized Venus. Sterilizing the planet is arguably undesirable.

Mind you, the appearance of social insects and flowers has been very good for diversity on Earth. Ever since that particular partnership began, the number of genera has been steadily rising, whereas before it was a zero-sum game. Even the K/T only made a short term reduction. Humans have not as yet managed to diversify ecosystems that they interact with (leaving out introducing new species, since that is just moving existing species around).

MA: It's been 15 years since I read *Make Room, Make Room*, but it was already badly dated when I read it then and I'm certain it's only gotten more so since. The book is certainly a wonderful example of one of the problems of writing dystopias (or any SF for that matter): at any time, one or more the underlying assumptions can be horribly wrong. Unfortunately, when that happens—even though the overlying concern remains valid—a sort of “the boy who cried wolf” syndrome occurs.

JN: The scenario didn't come true because the fundamental assumptions that it relied on were wrong.

An interesting thing about *Make Room, Make Room* (aside from how eagerly Harrison dips into the well of ethnic stereotypes) is that aside from a new kind of barbed wire, no technological advancement has been made at all between the date when the book was written and the date when it was set.

MA: However, that doesn't change the fact that global overpopulation is still a concern. As you nicely illustrate, we as a species do not consume just enough energy and biomass to live—just think of all of the energy we're consuming using our computers and our internet connections as we engage in this particular discussion.

¹⁷ There's an interesting bit in *The Challenge of Man's Future* where Brown manages to work out from first principles how the Pill will work when it is invented.

¹⁸ As an example of how a particular sort of animal can dominate the biosphere while still leaving lots of room for others, ants and other social insects make up to a quarter of the animal biomass in the tropics. When humans look at those landscapes, we don't see a landscape blighted by the domination of the insects.

AS: That both the Brunner and Harrison novels now seem dated is a demonstration of one of the pitfalls of writing near-future SF of any kind, utopian or dystopian: what today may appear to be prescient and even cutting-edge may tomorrow look like something reprinted from a 30's issue of *Amazing*. Diesel-powered starships, anyone?

But that's the not-so-secret nature of science fiction as a whole. Once you get past that which is pure escapism for the hell of it, what is allegedly a literature about the future is very often a critique of our present condition. Overpopulation was an overriding concern of the late 60's and early 70's, so a lot of SF written during that period reflected this. The coming of the digital revolution, and the uncertainty of what this brings about, was a major issue of the 80's, and so we got cyberpunk. Now we're dealing with the aftermath of 9/11 and a war that's being waged in its name, and so we've got a boatload of military SF.

JN: I think the timing is wrong on that one: MilSF started to gel as a defined subgenre in the 1970s because of people like Parnell and Baen. I'd call it more of a reaction to social changes of the 1960s and 1970s and to the US losing the Vietnam War.

9/11 may have given it a big shot in the arm but it was definitely established by then.

I've seen some material that was clearly inspired by 9/11. *Pixel-Eye*, for example, and its thesis that we need shadowy bands of unmonitored intelligence agents to save us from the deadly threat of weaponized squirrel brains. Oh, and I can't be certain but I think Dan Simmons only started writing about the menace of the Moslem hordes after 9/11.

Orson Scott Card chastised Salman Rushdie for having written *The Satanic Verses* back in 1989 but in a recent Ender novel argued that Islam isn't a real religion. He's another one I'd say has experienced a change in views thanks to 9/11.

AS: Likewise, global warming has become the latest elephant in the parlor. It's becoming difficult to write a serious SF story now without acknowledging it, if only tangentially, and I have little doubt that it will influence and inform a lot of science fiction for some time to come. In my own work, for example, I had to factor this into the last two novels of the Coyote trilogy—*Coyote Rising* and *Coyote Frontier*—and now that I intend to continue the series, it will likely play a part in future stories as well.

JN: From the point of view of people a few centuries from now, whatever happens in the next century might well be seen as tragic but beneficial in the end, since it led to them. One sees similar ideas about the Black Death: sure it killed a lot of people but it was instrumental in creating the conditions that led to us.

JN: Screw “just enough to survive.” The ants have had their day. I want to see a human-dominated ecosystem. I want to see cities become as important a biome as reefs (only less horrible than reefs, which tend to be a Darwinian nightmare) and I want to see them last long enough to turn up in the fossil record.

Dyson has some interesting ideas about what we might do with biotech

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/20370>

It’s one of the few scenarios that I’ve seen that suggests humans could reverse the decline in diversity the last ten thousand years has seen. In fact, we might even address the disparity (the decline in variation of blauplans) that we’ve seen since the end of Cambrian. Nature is highly defective in many respects and we should fix it.

One obvious place to work if we want to support high populations and a diverse ecosystem is how we feed ourselves. A human metabolism needs about one hundred watts in various chemical compounds to function. This is the power intercepted by (once you take into account albedo, nightfall and the fact that Earth is round) about a square meter of land on Earth, so if our processes were highly efficient, we could feed 6.5 billion people on a patch of land very roughly one hundred kilometers on an edge. In fact, a surprisingly high percentage of the land surface of Earth is devoted to inefficient agricultural methods. Clearly there is a lot of room for us to improve here.

Plants have inherent limits (Even CAM and C4 plants are only about 7% efficient at turning sunlight into useful chemicals) so whatever the answer is probably isn’t in biology as it currently exists.

JN: For an SFnal example, what we see happening in George Turner’s *The Sea and Summer*, *Brain Child* and *The Destiny Makers* is pretty bad but the people living in the world that grew out of the destruction of ours see their society as pretty good, if *The Genetic Soldier* is any guide.

We get to see the details of how that world got from an overpopulated, poor world to the later one in *Down There in Darkness* and as usual, the people with grand plans for the world are will to accept a high body count. Those wacky utopians.

AS: Last night, trying to find something on TV worth watching, I clicked the “On Demand” button on my remote and pulled up a SF movie I hadn’t seen before, *The Island*. After about a half-hour or so, I found myself wishing I’d picked the History Channel instead, for this turned out to be your typical Michael Bay action flick: lots of running and jumping and screaming and shooting

and punching and car chasing and stuff blowing up. On the other hand, though, it did contain—at least at the beginning—one of the hoariest SF plots, the city-in-the-dome story.

Everyone knows this story. Sometime in the future, after some sort of apocalypse, the surviving members of the human race live in a domed city (a variation is an underground city). Everyone there wears white jumpsuits, and live in featureless white rooms, and eat tasteless white food, and abide by pointless rules which are enforced by guys in black uniforms, but nonetheless they’re reasonably happy and content because they’ve been told that the world outside is an uninhabitable wasteland while, in here at least, they’re safe and well fed. But then one person—it’s always a good-looking young guy, sometimes accompanied by a reluctant girlfriend—begins to question this existence, so he manages to find the escape hatch, and when he goes outside, he discovers...

Right. Like I said, you’ve seen this before. But even as I was watching Version #357, I found myself recalling the previous versions, ranging from the good (*Logan’s Run* by William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson, later made into a bad-but-fun movie) to the somewhat interesting (the film *THX-1138*) to the mediocre (*Eight Against Utopia* by Douglas Mason). I have no doubt that, if I were to comb through my library, I could come up with a few more examples. I’m sure the rest of you could, too.

So this has led me to wonder—in the context of this discussion—whether the main reason why the utopian story has vanished from the genre is that It’s Been Done, just as no one can write a post-nuclear war survival story, or an alien invasion story, or a first man on the Moon story. In other words, this may be something that has been written into the ground, and there’s no real point in going back there again.

Or is it? Back around 1990, you could have said that the mission-to-Mars story was also a dead issue. But then, in 1992, a whole spate of Mars novels—*Red Mars* by Kim Stanley Robinson, *Mars* by Ben Bova, *Beachhead* by Jack Williamson, and my own *Labyrinth of Night*—appeared at once, and were soon followed by a half-dozen or so others. Since then, Mars has again become a principal setting for SF, and no one really remembers when it had once been written off as Been There, Done That.

So...is the utopian novel really dead? Or could a clever writer (or two, or three) bring it back and make it seem new again?

JN: A clever author can get away with almost everything.

Come to think of it, someone may have. John C. Wright’s “Golden Age” trilogy could be seen as a utopia of sorts.

I thought of a dystopian style that seems to have died off, or at least I can't think of a solid example from recent years: the so-called Garbage Man Story, where some trend of today is extended well past plausibility for satirical purposes. An example would be Pohl and Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants*, where ad men rule the world.

AS: You may be on to something there. If the utopian novel can't be done straight-faced any longer, then perhaps it can be satirized, as Pohl and Kornbluth did (more than once, as I recall).

MA: I can think of a couple examples. Max Berry's *Jennifer Government*, which was a finalist for the 2004 John W. Campbell Memorial Award, shows a future where people take the name of their employer as their last name and the mega-national corporations wield far more power than the figurehead governments throughout most of the world. Guerrilla marketing is taken to its extreme: in order to gain street cred for their product, Nike executives actually hire assassins to kill inner city youths wearing their shoes. Barry adds a nice little touch to the novel by having one of the characters read a few pages of *The Space Merchants* and dismissing it as a "a sly, anti-free market statement."

And while we tend to think of it more as later cyberpunk, Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* shares a very similar dystopian view of the future in that the corporations are now pretty much in control and the U.S. government is little more than a very inefficient regulator.

As I think more about this, it seems that much like global warming, the rise of the meta-national corporation has become the other elephant in the parlor that needs to be addressed, even if only tangentially. It shows up in the previously mentioned KSM's "Mars" novels and Travis's "Wess'har" series. Although I haven't yet read the second or third books in the series, Tony Ballentyne's "Recursion" series shows another bleak future where the consumer state is nearly as oppressive as the former Soviet Union.

JN: It's probably a no-brainer that the one modern utopia that I thought of is a libertarian/transhumanist one. Vanguardism is somewhat out of style.

Huh, where are the neocon utopias? They have a concrete agenda that lends itself to fiction.

For that matter, why didn't writers fall on Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History* with little bleats of glee?

It's not really genre but the End of Days types are common enough to support a healthy post-rapture survivalist genre. Guyatt's *Have a Nice Doomsday: Why Millions of Americans Are Looking Forward to the End of the World* provides a nice overview of the kinds of people (and there's more than one sort) involved.

JN: Admittedly, the futures where the US is absorbed by a benevolent worldstate (like Niven's UN (1)) are intended, I think, as a good end for the US. I think the US is one of the major states in those settings so SFnal acceptance of it is kind of like how it isn't generally the English who complain about the Acts of Union.

Oh, and although it never gets past the year 2000, *The Tomorrow File* has an America that has changed its name to "Us" and is clearly planning on annexing the entire planet, one nation-state at a time. That one is very dystopic but not because of the assimilationist aspect.

Come to think of it, Joe and Jack Haldeman have the US surviving into the *Confederacion* period, whose dates I don't offhand recall. The US isn't a major power anymore and very few people outside it speak English but it's still around and doesn't seem much worse as a place to live than the US of today.

JN: It's not utopian as such but the new Doctor Who series is an example of SFnal optimism (carried out in as unimaginative a way as possible). There's a quotation from the Ninth Doctor (from the show about the end of the Earth, I think) that goes:

"You lot. You spend all your time thinking about dying, like you're going to get killed by eggs, or beef, or global warming, or asteroids. But you never take time to imagine the impossible. That maybe you survive."

In that story, we learn that humans survived at least five billion years.

MA: I think that's one of the best things about SF as a whole—at least there is a future. At times, I can be as much a pessimist as anyone, but the implicit agreement in SF is that we do have a future. In many ways that premise by itself can be very comforting.

AS: Here's something from off the top of my head: geeks take over the world. The richest man in the U.S. is a major-league geek, and so is the most powerful man in Hollywood. So what if someone of that persuasion were to successfully run for President? Or better yet, he becomes sort of a benign Ernst Stavro Blofeld, quietly pulling the strings while remaining behind the scenes.

To take it further...perhaps this uber geek brings about an end to war through having all conflicts settled by real-time interactive computer games, with the losing countries having money subtracted from their national treasuries. Since these MUDs are open to the public, millions of people are participating on an hourly basis, working out their differences in a wildly complex network of plots, subplots, and stratagems. Who needs to maintain costly nuclear arsenals when you can flatten an

opponent's virtual capitol with your virtual cruise missiles?

Sure, this is an absurd scenario...but in the right hands, someone could have a blast with it. I'm not going to do anything with this idea, so if any of our readers care to take a whack at it, go right ahead.

MA: After getting home last night and looking over the DVD collection, there's another television series I wanted to point out: *Firefly*. Again, not a great picture of the future. Central government is oppressive, slavery (under the guise of indentured servitude) is alive and well, and individuals run entire moons like their own little independent kingdom without any regard for what we would consider human rights. Then, in the feature film, we find out that the government is far more than just oppressive; it's attempt to find a chemical solution to permanently pacify the masses killed a whole world and created a roving band of psychotic killers who attack whatever is in their path. Furthermore, they employ their own amoral hitmen to take care of enemies of the state.

At the risk of returning to the Hollywood-produced stuff, I'd like to bring up *Firefly* again. We're never told exactly how the oppressive, meddling and all-watching future government formed, but it appears to be some sort of Chinese-American merger that carries (at this time, anyway) a certain scary plausibility to it. It's interesting to me in that many aspects of the Big Brother government in Orwell's *1984* are present, but for most of the people living under it in the central worlds (forgive me if I'm getting my terminology wrong), life looks and feels very utopia-like. It's only out on the frontier worlds and moons—where most of the action takes place—where life is a struggle.

JN: That's because it's a basic rule in all Joss Whedon universes that large organizations, but particularly the government, are corrupt at the core, even if they seem benevolent.

but it appears to be some sort of Chinese-American merger that carries (at this time, anyway) a certain scary plausibility to it.

What, like the US/SU merger in the CoDominium :) ?

The amazing thing about *Firefly* is that for a place supposedly heavily influenced by the Chinese, there are very few people of Chinese origin around (And no, Inara maybe being Buddhist does not, as one person online argued, make her an honorary Chinese woman).

I didn't find "Earth got used up" explanation very plausible so I preferred to think that what we were seeing was settled by Earth's B-Ark, which was stocked using a Poyais-style con-game run by the Chinese (The Superpower that dominated America, clearly). The system

looks like the Old West because when the B-Ark was sent out, the Hong Kong movie industry was having a Western revival. The other B-Ark was sent out by India and is a simulation of Victorian England as imagined by Bollywood.

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Life in the core is a struggle too. It's clear that it doesn't take much to start sliding down the social scale and that recovery is unlikely. The Tams are terrified of losing their comfortable spot in society.

PS: I very much agree about *Firefly*—that center v. periphery stuff, with each episode presenting variants on frontier or urban social/political organization, all under the loose framework of a larger empire.

Very much like the way Delany envisions the problem of large-scale—galactic—political organization in *Stars in My Pockets Like Grains of Sand*, a novel rife with utopian/dystopian themes.

JN: I thought of another utopian-ish novel from the mid-1980s: *Islands In The Net*, where the pressing problems of the 20th Century have been solved. As I recall it, although the characters are fairly smug about how obvious the solutions were, they never say what those solutions actually were.

George Turner's *Beloved Son* has the crew of a relativistic starship return to a transformed Earth, one that believes itself to be if not utopian then at least more ethical and more stable than what it replaced. This state of affairs lasts until the first major crisis, which turns out to be the return of the crew.

(Come to think of it, that's a little like the situation in Heinlein's *Methuselah's Children*: the appearance of immortals causes the supposedly advanced society to abandon any pretensions of civil liberties pretty darn fast.)

Pamela Sargent's Habbars (From her Venus series) clearly enjoy lives that are materially better than the ones Terrans have but she keeps their society off-stage for the most part and I think by the end of the third book they've vanished from the solar system.

That's another series where Earth is assumed to be by definition doomed to be poor while the spacers are assumed to be relatively well-off. Sometime I'd like to see a series where Earth is the wealthy world while bodies like asteroids are like Caribbean islands: sources of

fortunes for a few but in general poorer than nations on larger bodies of land. I should make a lame analogy using island biogeography at this point or at least mention “Growth, innovation, scaling and the pace of life in cities”. 19

Is Brian Stableford’s “Emortality” series utopian? Or are our modified descendents just deluding themselves when they brag about being ever so much more advanced than the subspecies of human that they replaced?

PS: *Islands in the Net* is a really good example of a utopian novel. Another one that goes into near-future, cybertopian/anarchism is Rebecca Ore’s *Outlaw School* (also a just-plain-fun read).

Here’s another (two, actually) I’ve been thinking about: Octavia Butler’s dystich *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*. She tackles the problem of alternative social organization, but cops out with the hoary argument that only by leaving the planet will problems be solved. That’s one reading of her earlier series packaged as *Lilith’s Brood*, too.

But I suppose that that is in keeping with a strain of utopian thinking that locates eutopia “over there”—Atlantis, Utopia/New World, etc. In Bellamy that becomes American exceptionalism/eutopia right here...

I really like the Jeffrey Ford novels about the Well-Built City, as well as the Miéville novels about New Crobuzon, for slipstream/fantasy utopianism.

James mentions that “I’d like to see a series where Earth is the wealthy world while bodies like asteroids are like Caribbean islands: sources of fortunes for a few but in general poorer than nations on larger bodies of land.”

I’ll have to dig it out, but didn’t John Varley do a couple stories along those lines, republished in the *Reader*?

PS: Did he? I’ve read that (I’m pretty much a Varley completist) but I don’t recall those stories.

Geoffrey Landis makes reference in “Into the Blue Abyss” to a space colony that is very slowly dying out but that’s because it declared independence in a way that stuck it in a Cuba/US relationship with Earth. If it had trade, it might prosper. Without trade, it’s too small to maintain itself.

Wil McCarthy’s “Queendom of Sol” series starts off looking pretty good, aside from their habit of building

things with “destroy all life” failure modes. That gets junked in the final trilogy, as the QoS is doomed by some extremely bad policy decisions²⁰ and some very implausible and inconsistent resource issues. The extra-solar colonies turn out to be classic examples of premature interstellarism for the most part, doomed to decline to a low level of economic productivity.

Well...now that I think about it, the “Eight Worlds” stories of Varley that I’m thinking of (which he called “semi-utopian” in the *John Varley Reader*) present first a rapidly advancing Earth civilization, owing to infusions of alien technology, and then a destroyed Earth and humanity dispersed through the solar system.

So. How about the *opposite* of what you were talking about? <doh>

JN: As I recall, most of the first cycle of 8W stories are set well after the Invaders took Earth. For the kids in “Picnic on Nearside”, it is as relevant to them as a Gen-Yer listening to someone bitch about the Vietnam War and for most of the characters, it’s as relevant as the expulsion of the United Empire Loyalists is to some kid in Oakville.

Of course, that cycle ends with Varley burning down the set.

PS: And the one that was triggering my faulty memory is “Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance,” which takes place on Janus...

JN: Speaking of unused opportunities: total fertility rates are dropping around the world (Unevenly, of course and TFRs can increase). Wolfgang Lutz has proposed that that it might be difficult to recover if TFRs fall below about 1.5. If this low fertility trap exists, nations subject to it not only see their populations decline in relative and absolute terms but there are negative economic results as well (and we can see the early stages of this in nations like Russia²¹, which also has the problem of more emigrants than immigrants).

Canada compensates for its low TFR by encouraging immigration, with the result that about one in five of us were born abroad.

What happens if everyone gets caught in that low TFR trap simultaneously? I can see all kinds of very unpleasant possibilities (Starting with a Romanian-esque policies mandating high birth rates and I am sure we all remember how that turned out) but as far as I can tell, no SF author has used that for a dystopia (*Children of Man* doesn’t count because it wasn’t caused by the phenomenon I am



19 <http://www.pnas.org/cgi/content/abstract/0610172104v1>

20 Best summed up by “Crown prince to immortal monarchs”. That can only end well.

21 In fact, it was the latest round of Russian ass-battery that made me think of this: with their TFR and migration numbers, all we have to do is contain them until they collapse from lack of working age people.

talking about). That's kind of odd, because it has been clear that this was a possibility for some time. *The United Nations Expert Meeting on World Population In 2300* is handy plot fodder, at both ends of the scale.²²

MA: Now that you've brought it up, I seem to recall that Nancy Kress did handle a situation very similar to this in *Maximum Light*, which she wrote about 10 years ago. It's set about 30 years from now, and at that time endocrine-disrupting chemical pollutants have caused TFRs to collapse. Worse still, there's a high rate of genetic defects and autism among those children who are born. She touched upon the negative economic results, the social and political disruptions, and some of the disturbing solutions people grasp for to satiate their need for a child. It was also something rare these days in that it was (comparatively speaking) a rather short novel; if I recall correctly, no more than 250 pages or so.

JN: That's environmental and I had in mind a simple behavioral trap that we appear to be seeing right now (Japan, for example, is declining in population thanks to low TFR and non-existent immigrant). SF had no problem coming up with all kinds of nightmarish scenarios based on high TFRs. Where are the low natural TFR books?

Edward Llewellyn had an Earth that is nearly depopulated in the 21st century by the widespread use of a very useful chemical that turns out to sterilize girls whose mothers were exposed to the chemical while pregnant. Most of his SF was set in the world (although the crisis has not struck in the period that *Salvage and Destroy* is set in).

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Speaking of economics, I can imagine genetic enhancement companies making the same decision about IP that they did about crops and ensuring that all of the kids born with the new modifications will require active intervention to breed, thus protecting the genetic IP from unsanctioned distribution.

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Actually, the trend in SF is back towards no more than 120K words. In 2003, the major chains announced that they would no longer take long mid-list SF because it doesn't sell (Established best-sellers and fantasy are different stories). This is why there was a flurry of duologies about then, as longer books were cut in two.

MA: I see. When I thought of *Maximum Light*, I was just taking a more expansive view of TFR falling dangerously for any reason whatsoever. Regardless, you are right about the relative dearth of TFR books. I know previously I stated that the continuing growth of the global human population remains an issue that's not properly addressed, but concern for a potentially worldwide, environmental cause for TFR is not misplaced either.

Speaking of economics, I can imagine genetic enhancement companies making the same decision about IP that they did about crops and ensuring that all of the kids born with the new modifications will require active intervention to breed, thus protecting the genetic IP from unsanctioned distribution.

There's a scary thought. It's almost frightening how IP law—and by extension the fervency with which movie and record industries are hacking away at commonly accepted fair use practices in regards to their product—is becoming almost draconian in its enforcement. I believe (but am not certain) that Cory Doctorow has written a story or two where this sort of law enforcement is taken to its extreme, but I haven't read any of them. We could probably use more stories exploring the dark side of where all this is potentially leading.

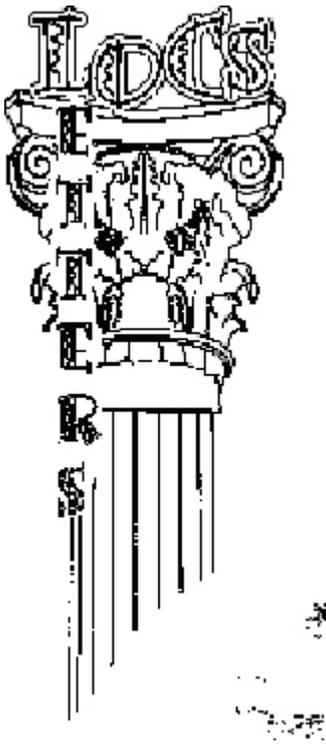
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I do recall that news about the chains a few years ago, and now that you mention it, novel length is certainly decreasing. I think in some ways my memory of the massive, brick-like tomes of the '80s and '90 is still getting the better of me. Of course, David G. Hartwell and Tor are still bucking the smaller book trend by putting out a 1,000-page reprint anthology approximately every 2-3 years.

However, it still seems rare for an author to write a standalone novel as short as *Maximum Light*. I can't recall even roughly what the word count on it was, but it wouldn't surprise me to find out that the book actually was slightly less than 120K words. It's certainly possible that Kress has written another short story or two within that universe, but if so I haven't encountered it.

²² <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/longrange2/longrange2.htm>

Letters of Comment



Dear Argentines,

I can't blame this late missive on my inability to type (unless that is an excuse you would be willing to accept??) and I still have not learned the workings of this now/old laptop, but I keep slugging away. What this has done is make me wish I had the \$\$\$ to purchase one of the new(er) *Apple* laptops—this one is heavy and unwieldy (with an old, but still functional for a short period of time, battery)—with a small memory and that severely limits the system I can install and pretty much rules out much in the way of *Internet* connecting. But, back to the subject at hand...

Have you seen "An Inconvenient Truth"? I only mention it to push my suggestion that if you want to see *Antarctica* it might be a good idea to plan for a trip sooner rather than later...just a suggestion.

Congratulations on cable internet—I still consider dial-up a luxury that

can be cut from the budget at any time—so cable (in any guise) is not likely to happen soon. Aside from a new laptop (see above) another item on the want list is either converters for the TVs to HD or winning enough money to pay for buying new sets. No matter their ages, if the converter boxes are "relatively" inexpensive, that will be my solution rather than scrap a perfectly good (in all respects except HD reception) television. At that point, so the media says, I'll have cable quality on the public channels. Since I already get about 20 channels, I'll eye some shows with greed— but settle for hearing about them.

When I was at *Penn State*, *Philip Klass* was the advisor to the SF club— so he came and chatted with us several times. The group only put out one issue of a fanzine (uh...er... actually a crudzine by most standards, I'd guess)—called *Hostigos*— going back to the name of the area in *William Tenn's* writings, if I remember correctly.

[*Actually, Hostigos is the name of the area in the writing of H. Beam Piper.*]

The thing I found the most irritating about a con badge (way back when I went to a con...) was wearing it so that it was consistently visible for identification/entry purposes Thank you for running the images of some of the badges. You are right in that the most complaints I remember about the preprinted badges were about the size of the name—make it legible at more than 18 inches!

While I have not attended a con in mumble mumble years, I do take out a supporting Worldcon membership. It is interesting to speculate on what supporting members will (or will not) get for that membership fee. I am far too lazy to check, but I think one (or maybe two) Worldcons have sent along a badge with the program

book, but it is by no means *de rigueur*—so I have no memento of what the badges looked like in those years. I grant you that a supporting member has no need for a badge—presuming you do not decide to convert and attend...but it would be nice...

Hmm— dubious distinction—I have not seen any episodes of any of the shows mentioned in the *DVD-TV Revolution*. My best bet at seeing them would be through Netflix...if they *did* exist on DVD—but I guess I am out of luck.

Add *Lee Hoffman* to the list of those we have lost.

Sheryl Birkhead

Greetings Steven~

I just flipped through the new issue of *Argentus* three times and could find nothing listing your address, either email or physical, to send a loc too—oops! I pulled out the copies of past correspondence, and started this by typing in the *shsilver@att.net* we had been using...then for some reason I wondered if you had anything on line about it.

Glad I checked! While there wasn't any further info with the actual issue #6 on line, rummaging around through the site came across your note of the change of email. ta-Dah, success! (Or I hope so.)

Oh, by the by, on your *Argentus* links page at <http://www.sfsite.com/~silverag/argentus.html> the cover image doesn't come up, and it looks like the title you have for issue #6 just repeats the one for issue #5. FYI (—and another question, what are the little asterisk link icons after some names for? They all just seem to drop to the bottom of the page,

but no clear reason WHY we are being led down there.)

[The page has been fixed. At the bottom of the page there is an explanation that one asterisk is for a Hugo nominee, two asterisks is for a Hugo winner.]

To the issue at hand:
Liked Kevin Standlee's overview of the troubles with convention badges. Someone made the comment one time that the biggest bit of information on most badges is the one that none of us really need to know: the name of the event we are at. The bit of information we are MOST interested in, the persons name, is usually the hardest to read without having to almost pluck it from their shirt and put it up in front of your face. Whenever I have had the opportunity to design badges, leaving plenty of space for the name was always my number one priority. Of course, leaving space and having the convention actually use it is another. Oh, and loved your own samples, especially the BayCon one with the "S" name line! I trust that you were given a correct one to replace that? Or did you simply attend as the mysterious "Mr. S" for the rest of the convention?

[The Baycon badge wasn't mine. I have yet to make it to a West Coast con. I believe the furthest west I've attended a con in Con-Troll in Houston in the mid-1990s. Of course I do know of at least one registration person who's stated goal was to give him the chance to stare at women's breasts when trying to read their name tags. He didn't last long enough in the position to actually design a badge.]

I was pleased to see you had the wonderful "Doctor Doctor" series on your DVD wish list. I remember loving every episode of that, laughing like mad, and enjoying the deepening of characters as it continued, only to have it vanish

much too soon from the air. This article also got me to do a net search for my own dimly recalled series of the past: "[W.O.G.: World of Giants](#)". I just remember this as an odd short lived series in my youth of a guy shrunken to six inches, and working as a spy—lived in a little house behind a wall picture! Found it on Internet Movie Database and was amazed to find out how far back it was, 1959, when I was only four years old. Certainly did make an impact though. I've never found anyone else who even remembers this, or they tend to think I am talking about the "Land of the Giants" series. I wonder if anything survived of this one. Would definitely make a nice odd little DVD set.

And, as usual, you have stuff in the Mock Section that I really wish was true! All those people spending their lives writing huge fan-fiction tales around the Star Trek and Star Wars characters, when they could be taking a clue from such great ideas as are presented here...it's just a shame.

stay happy~
Brad



2/8/07

Dear Mr. Silver:

By the way, can I call you "Steven"? I realize we're not personally acquainted, and therefore a certain aura of formal courtesy hangs over the interaction. On the other hand, you've sent me numerous issues of your fanzine, so I'm willing to notch it down to a more informal level if you are.

[My feeling is that in fandom, informality should reign. Feel free to call me Steven. Now, if you were a telemarketer, trying to call me by my first name, that would be a different matter completely.]

"Membership Badge Issues": Somewhere I have a big old beach towel with badges dating back to the 1980's pinned on it. Under various names, as the "badge name" question has seemed to me, what the person wants—at the 2000 Worldcon, the last I went to, I simply announced myself by "Frohvet", an assumed pen name, and Registration gave me my badge without hesitation. On my past con experience, I would have thought the purpose of badges were "ticket" first, "identity" second (which raises the question of putting the con's name in big letters, and the person's name in teeny small print), and anything else of small concern. As for the group that seeks to impose sense, my experience was that once you change Chairbeings, even at the same con, all previous rules go out the window, and the Chair does anything however she/he fancies.

If memory is accurate, I met Philip Klass once at a con in Pennsylvania.

Of your listing of TV shows that ought to be released on DVD, I can recall watching only one of them. Certainly many fine TV shows have been cancelled before their time, but I don't think any of these fall into that category.

[Never said they were cancelled before their time (although I do feel

that way about "Doctor, Doctor," merely that I would like to have them available on DVD.]

To Alexander von Thorn, I say: Thank you. "Just because a story includes spaceships doesn't make it science fiction." Exactly, a point I have made repeatedly concerning, e.g., *The Sparrow*. Similarly, "Someone in the story has to act like a scientist or engineer" allows me to include in the SF umbrella Bujold's *A Civil Campaign*, whose SF credentials are otherwise shaky.

I share with Frank Wu a respect for accountants, who perform a vital function in any society more advanced than "I'll trade you this flint knife for that haunch of mastodon." I just do not want the accountants to set policy, because everything then becomes a question of bottom-line profit statements. Which is no basis on which to run a society.

Clearly, part of the problem with Pluto is that the solar system is a much more complex place than the technology of 1930 could reveal. I am inclined to agree with SP3; I just wonder if that's a reasoned decision, or mere habit of thought.

A momentary diversion here, but: Aside from Laurie Mann's few paragraphs, all of the articles, and all but two of the LOC's, are from male writers. Had you observed that, and have you anything to say about that? I bring it up only because back in the Stone Age of my late fanzine, I prided myself on including many female fans.

[I hadn't noticed it, but will note that Mock Section contributor Alethea Kontis is also female. When I was working on the Chicago in 2008 bid, I pushed a proposal to have the first all-female GoH slate for a Worldcon.]

James Nicoll has a good idea here, and unfortunately has not developed it adequately. This piece

would be more informative at greater length and with more specificity.

If Steve Sneyd ever visits the U.S., I will gladly show him E.A. Poe's grave in a churchyard in Baltimore. Maryland is very big on Mr. Poe (note the name of the professional football team) though his principal connection to the area is having died here.

The fifth and last of Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt's "Enchanter" stories was set in Ireland. I know it originally had a separate title, but offhand I can't place it, as I have it in the Dell paperback of *Wall of Serpents*, where it is presented merely as a continuation of that title.

John Flynn argues that "classic" films, some of which could be defined as SF, should not be remade; he would prefer great existing novels be made into films. Won't work, for two reasons. (1) The audiences are totally different. Films, in general, are for people who *don't* read for pleasure. (2) Film directors may be classed as those who don't have any originality, and know it, and therefore rehash the work of their betters; and those who don't have any originality and don't know it, and are determined to make their own works. The first group explains *Mars Attacks*, and the second group explains *Starship Troopers*.

Confusion to the enemy,

"E.B. Frohvet"

12/26/06

Dear Steven:

Excellent! I'm glad to see I'm not the only one putting up zines on Christmas!

Great cover. I love Frank's stuff and that's one of my faves. It's just a spectacular piece from a spectacular artist!

Ah, Kevin Standlee! Or, as we call him around here, Tall Kevin. It's good to see him in more and more fanzines...now if I could just get him to write an article for *The Drink Tank!* I love badges and I keep most of mine. One of the saddest losses in my fannish life was that of my CorFlucisco badge with a picture that Frank Wu drew on the back. It's interesting that I know they're of incredible usefulness if properly laid-out, but really, I've almost never recognized anyone by their badge. I've never used a Fan Name, though my Dad never used the same name twice on badges. One of his fannish frauds was Sir Reginald Coxswain. I'm still not sure why anyone would believe that a pudgy six foot Mexican in a Maui 80 shirt would be named Reginald Coxswain. As always, Kevin makes good points. My opinion: do it right, and by right, I mean the way I like it.

I saw Phil Klass read at Loscon a few weeks ago. I've read a little of his stuff and I genuinely enjoyed it. I'm always glad to see people saying thank you to big names in zines. Ted White carries that moment with Klass very closely, much like my encounter with filmmaker Jean Marc Barr at Cinequest in 2002. It's one of those moments that you hold onto for as long as you can. Laurie's talk of Phil was just as strong. That story about saving Flowers for Algernon, one of the three greatest science fiction stories ever, just makes me love the man that much more.

TV on DVD: a subject I could talk about for days. "Doctor, Doctor" was a fine show and Matt Frewer is one of those comedic actors who doesn't get the attention he deserves. I watched every episode first run and it's been years since

I've seen it but I can clearly remember the opening segment. "Doctor, Doctor" is a great choice for DVD. "AfterMASH" was crap. I know there are people who love it, especially the characters, but it wasn't "MASH" and it wasn't ever entertaining TV. If I remember correctly, there was a notice on one of the DVD release sites for "AfterMASH" in the middle of next year. "Voyagers" and "Best in the West" I was a little young for, though I have a slight memory of "Voyagers." I want to see "Salvage One." Sounds like a damn fine series. There's a group called Brilliant but Cancelled and it certainly sounds like they'd want to release it. I can remember a Timecon showing every episode of "When Things Were Rotten."

[There is a group of devoted "Salvage One" fans who have managed to compile a complete collection of the show on DVD. Sometimes it shows up on e-Bay. The time I met Mel Brooks, I complimented him on "When Things Were Rotten," although I got the name slightly wrong. He graciously corrected me.]

The idea of a lot of Science Fiction as Westerns makes sense. I can remember a serious debate with two of my film school friends about whether "Blade Runner" was Noir or Science Fiction. I still maintain that it's SF, but they could not be swayed. The argument also went into the realm where no SF fan wants it to: that science fiction isn't a genre but a setting. That's a tough road, and there are a few films and books that I can think of that you could call nothing but science fiction. *Flatland*, for instance.

More Frank Wu. There's a lot of us BAreans in this issue! I too love Peter Cushing as Dr. Frankenstein, but for different reasons. He always managed to make his doctor seem so reasonable. Brannagh's Frankenstein was a braggart idiot whose every suggestion is an obvious failure in waiting.

Cushing's Doc was a genius who just made little mistakes that no one could ever have seen coming. I should also mention that I hate Heart of Darkness. I just hate it. King Leopold's Ghost, on the other hand, is magnificent. I have to agree that the accountant is always the one who has to bring both the good and bad news, and more often than not, at least in mob stories, is the one who takes the fall.

I love Obiwan. I really do. Mark's article will now make me forever question if my love was baked in a crust of lies! I once wrote an article about Luke as the bastard who turned his back on the agriculture of his home planet to go out for glory and who, in fact, brought down greater pain on all those around him for it.

You're a lucky man to have gotten a chance to correspond and meet Dr. Tombaugh. I've gotten to know some of the true pioneers of computers (mostly the folks responsible for video games like SpaceWar and Pong) but a personality as impressive as Dr. Tombaugh I've never had the chance. I understand that Lick Observatory played some part in the discovery as well, though I don't remember what. The Little One, Evelyn, and her class did a project around the Pluto demotion. They had the kids locate several objects around the room and classify them, first while everyone was standing at one end of the room, then they got a little closer and reclassified everything and then again when they could get even closer. The results were very interesting. Evelyn firmly believes that there are only three planets now because of the exercise.

I've not read nearly enough Poe, which is funny because I went as Poe two Halloweens running and once at a Dead Man's Party where everyone had to dress as a Dead Person. I had the hair for the part.

Hey, I've read some F.M. Allen!

It's entirely too rare that someone talks about old science fiction works that I've actually managed to read! *The Voyage of The Ark* is certainly the better of the two and much reminded me of works from thirty years later when the whole thing we call SF had gelled more thoroughly.

Mr. Romm's journey sounds incredible. I've never seen a penguin in the wild, but I've studied them to the point that I could actually construct a penguin species that was adaptable to any climate using examples from real penguins. It was one of the best months in Biology when I had to do that project. There's a theory that penguin calls are more pronounced the further south you go. You can easily tell the difference between an Antarctic penguin and any other bird, though one that lives closer to the equator will sound more like other birds that occur in common space. An interesting theory.



I kinda like the Wells Time Machine. There was an interesting heart to the movie. I've no love for Spielberg's War of the Worlds, or most of his movies. The Planet of the Apes remake had two problems: Tim Burton didn't get to be Tim Burton (which was what made Charlie & The Chocolate Factory from 2005 such a pleasure for me) and they insisted on using that stupid ending. Lost in Space was a waste of everything. The 76 King Kong was only good for how hot Jessica Lange was.

[I'm still trying to figure out why they named Jessica's character Dwan.]

I thought that "Mars Attacks!" was brilliant. OK, brilliant is the wrong word, but it let Burton be Burton and still show that he loved the material he was working with. I wished he had done the dinosaur rampage movie instead, but he did a reasonable job with good acting and some neat effects. It was just a really fun movie. Plus, I love me some Slim Whitman.

Here's my take on remakes: they need to be done every twenty or thirty years with some films. There's no way an audience can relate after that long. Now, no one has tried to remake "Wizard of Oz" (other than "The Wiz") because it still works, but try showing a kid of today "Forbidden Planet" or even "WestWorld." It just doesn't work. Yes, there are films that should never be remade ("Song of the South," "Gone With the Wind" and "Triumph of the Will" all come to mind) but there are others that are begging for it. We need another "Day The Earth Stood Still" so that today's audiences can finally get it. I know that's not a popular take (unless you're a studio exec), but it's true. I've noticed it when I've tried to introduce films to Evelyn over the years. She did take to the "Godfather" films, though. Plus, ever since Georges Melies started remaking his own films when he had a new trick that he could incorporate it's been a tradition.

There are also films that equal or improve on their sources. The graphic novel of *V for Vendetta* was brilliant, but the slightly updated 2006 version was a near-masterpiece of 21st century film. The play "Everybody Comes" to Rick's was crap compared to "Casablanca." John Carpenter's "The Thing" beat out Hawks' 1950s snoozer. "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" got better when they remade it, as did "The Incredible Shrinking Man" (as the "Incredible

Shrinking Woman" with Lily Tomlin).

Once again, a great mock section. Hell, I even thought that my piece was readable! I love the idea of Pratchett and Stephenson writing together. It just makes sense. Matt Appleton is a mad man with his article. I'd give anything to see that book. Dammit!

Yours,

Christopher Garcia

12/27/06

Excellent article Kevin. I must say that I agree with you.

Will be passing the article on to the registration people I work with so they can gain some insight.

I wasn't too crazy about the ConJose badge holder, since I already have a badge holder of my own with my other buttons and badges. It created even more clutter (like that is possible with my stuff). But it was a Nice Idea and Moose still uses his as a badge holder. And I even have mine for times when the Mucky Crazy badge holder is not appropriate. But warning they can and do shed ribbons.

As the Chairman of Westercon 40, who had to put up with the 24 pt rule before the neat and nifty inkjet/laser printers we have now. Let me tell you, it was a challenge. Plus doing all the other items you noted in your article. And it was more annoying when after meeting the challenge I saw future Westercons ignore it.

Badge name vs Real Name. Let me introduce you to Fuzzy Pink Niven, who because of her husband is in America's Who's Who social register, ie well known in Fandom and the mundane world. She is

completely annoyed with Real Name Nazis who insist she use the mundane name in fandom. And I know she's not the only one. And I know the stalking problem you mentioned. That is real folks. *sigh*

MythCon luckily doesn't have the Fan Name problem. We accept Real Names, the Usual nicknames, and Pen Names, and know most members, so whatever they want on the badge is fine by us. CC26 has a spot for Badge Name in our Registration Program. Real names will not be printed on the badge. So choose your badge name carefully.

I am currently working on making a Return Address sticker with all my important NickNames to be stuck near my Real Name on my Badge. It solves the problem of which name someone knows me by. There are too many. And it also solves the problem of We Want Real Name Nazis. And if it covers up the artwork, *sigh* the problems of fame.

:P

And we have shoe boxes filled with badges and badges all over the house. I like to keep them if they are in any way nice. And that's the truth.

lisa_marli aka Auntie M aka Lisa Deutsch Harrigan

Dear Steven,

Brad Foster's letter in *Argentus 6* recalled the great Nabokov remark that the difference between things cosmic aspect and their comic aspect is a single sibilant.

BARTCon as reported by Chris Garcia seems to've had the usual quarrels with site personnel, brought on partly by wild fans' being too extreme for mundanes

they collided with, and partly by not having checked out what the site authorities required.

At first I thought a NESFA version would go better, but then I began to hear a voice, "Is that you, Charlie?"

Thank Roscoe, the touchstone of science fiction is not the presence of an explainer.

[But see Ghughle, whose role in the Fannish pantheon is as explainer.]

John Hertz

12/28/06

Dear Steven:

Feeling Badgered?: Kevin Standlee forgets the most common form of badge name confusion: badges that have only a first name. I had formed a theory that this was a way for gamers to identify each other, from observing how that worked at ConGlomeration, our new local con, run by the gaming crew from RiverCon, our former local con. Then when I signed up for the latest one, they gave me a badge that just said "JOSEPH", and no one spoke gamer to me.

There's also the habit of wearing the badge on the belt. (Somehow, saying "at waist level" doesn't go with some fans.) So you have to intrude into personal space to read the badge name. And then you find you've met Stanley From Beneath The Earth (a badge name that came up in connection with the MidAmeriCon badge matter).

And the "Why would you *want* to know other members' names?" attitude Kevin mentions, which is a symptom of the transition to professional cons. Where, as he points out, the point is getting into the dealers' room and then getting into the autograph session for the

Guest of Honor, the actor who played Nonspeaking Role Klingon #6 . . .

Some of those "persona" name badge problems have other solutions. I recall a RiverCon that was overrun by *ElfQuest* fans. The Pinis' *ElfQuest* seems to have been that year's thing; it was Doctor Whos one year and so on and next year they were all gone. They had two name badges; the one for RiverCon with their "real" name on it and an *ElfQuest* name badge with their elf name on it.

Whither the DVD-TV Revolution?: Patricia Barnstable and her husband host the Barnstable-Brown Derby Eve Gala every year in Louisville. (I didn't mention it because attending costs \$\$\$\$, even if it goes for diabetes research, which I don't object to one bit.) So that's what she's been doing since *Quark*. Which had some pretty funny moments—the show, not the gala.

[You mentioned the Barnstable-Brown Derby Eve Gala in the article you sent me back in Argentus 4 (2004): "Things to Do in Louisville When You're Dead (er, Here for the Derby)," still available on the [Argentus website](#).]

Starship Westerns Versus Science Fiction: Does anyone remember the "You'll Never See This In *Galaxy!*" piece with Marshal Bat Durston?

Best Birthday Present Ever: Technically, Graham Land is part of the Antarctic Peninsula, "the area of the continent that looks like a tail". The British discoverers called the peninsula the "Graham Peninsula" after the sponsor of their expedition; the American discoverers called it the "Palmer Peninsula" after the captain of the discovering ship. They eventually compromised.

As everyone who has read *Grumbles From the Grave* will recall, Robert & Virginia Heinlein

took a Lindblad cruise down to the continent. From the brief description in that book, it seems to have been happier overall than the one they took as described in *Tramp Royale*.

Letters of Comment: Ned Brooks: *Scheissen und Schiessen*—Does a bear shoot in the woods?

Chris Garcia: Ah, another Marxist! Have you seen the movie with Harpo's only speaking role? (Explanation later)

[Somewhere on one of my computers, I have a short clip of Harpo Marx speaking. When I track it down, I'll post it here.]

Shakespeare and Lovecraft: What a beautifully squamous and rugose play! I'm waiting for "The Two Shoggoths of Verona", "The Merry Wives of Leng", "The Taming of the Cthonian", "Nyarlathotep, Prince of Khem", and other blasphemous masterpieces!

Namarie
Joseph T. Major

The movie is "Too Many Kisses" (1925)—a silent movie!

12/30/06

Steven,

It's a good thing I added your name to my "friends" list on my livejournal account. The link on your name guided me to your homepage so I could find your active e-mail address.

Herewith, therefore, and all that rot with introductory clauses for opening paragraphs, here's the loc I attempted to send to your "dead" address.

John

Steven,

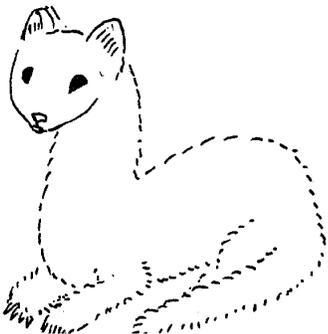
It is a good thing that the latest *File 770* was posted to efanazines today, otherwise I wouldn't have had such easy access for finding your e-mail address. Shame on you for not including it in your zine! But I forgive you, mainly because this is such a fine issue.

[Actually, my e-mail address is listed in the introductory editorial. I need to send Mike Glyer an e-mail correcting my e-mail address in his record so he doesn't propagate my "dead" address.]

Love the cover art! Frank Wu does wonderful work, and seeing stuff like this in fanzines more regularly sounds like a great idea to me. His winning the Fan Artist Hugo is justified, In My Humble Opinion. Some day I hope to meet that BAreal.

So you were on the Chicago in '08 WorldCon bid. Sorry you folks lost out, but Denver is closer to me in terms of driving distance. Were you likewise at Windycons in the late 70s and the 80s? I used to attend Windycon on a fairly regular basis up until 1985, so if you were there, then we might have run into each other at one of them. I am just curious, that's all.

[I started attending Windycons in 1986, so chances are we didn't run into each other.]



Speaking of conventions, it just seems natural that the first article is about convention badges. The badges you pictured in Kevin Standlee's article show the typical range that con badges run. Sometimes they can be very artistic and eye-catching, like the Windycon 30 and Baycon 2006 badges pictured, or simply utilitarian like that Wiscon 28 one (which is a one-day only badge, explaining why it's rather simple and thus useful for handwriting someone's name onto it). Using silly badge names can be a lot of fun, especially for those who know your nickname - such as "Filthy Pierre" or "David Escargot" - and even more mind-bending for those who don't know who you really are. One time - it was Minicon 24 - I didn't use my real name on the name badge, instead opting for "Bangweulu Editor" (the name of the zine I was pubbing at the time). Those who knew me had no trouble with that; but there were some mighty funny faces made by those who stopped me and asked "What the fuck is a 'Bangweulu'?" or something like that. I had fun with it.

But badges can give a con a certain feel and attitude, contribute to the ambiance of the event. Kathy Marschall, Reed Waller, Ken Fletcher, and Kara Dalkey used to produce some of the best Minicon badge art. Such talented artists. How I miss them!

Ted White's appreciation of Phil Klass was both enjoyable and informative. Whenever a fan writer - or any writer, for that matter - can blend history with personality and humor, it just makes for an article that I like to return to as a reference. Awesome photo of Mr. Klass, too, I have to say. Ted's expression of thanks is highly appreciated by me. Also, thank you for the short listing of works at the end. I remember reading *Of Men*

and Monsters years ago. A good book. I will have to check out that collection of essays, *Dancing Naked*. Sounds interesting.

Those DVD series collections certainly bring back memories. I kind of liked AfterMASH when it was first aired, and it lacked the spark of the original series. I am very surprised that it lasted as long as it did. I thought that When Things Were Rotten was simply a lot of fun, and ahead of its time (obviously). Then again, I have always been a big fan of Mel Brooks. Quark deserved its quick death; it had no spark to it, sad to say. Fun premise, though.

"Starship Westerns Versus Science Fiction" is an interesting article that asks and attempts to answer that old question we sometimes ask ourselves: "what is (or isn't) science fiction?" To me, it could be anything. For example, Firefly qualifies as science fiction because it deals with themes familiar to SF, like human reaction/adaptation to changes in society, and/or technology. Science Fiction doesn't need to be set in outer space with rockets blasting alien ships out of the ether or saving the Known Universe in order to be called Science Fiction. After all, like Alexander von Thorn recalls that the original Star Trek series was described as something like "Wagon Train to the Stars." My favorite type of SF is when people have to deal with changes of some sort, especially when they had to adapt and accept the repercussions of their actions. These are very effective and memorable stories. This is why "City on the Edge of Forever" consistently ranks as one of Star Trek's greatest all-time episodes. Even the Next Generation's Borg War episodes were powerful. However, there are times when I love a good, old-fashioned shoot-'em-up at the Cygnus 4-B Corral. Sometimes you just want to read about saving the damned galaxy.

I'm gonna pass on a couple of articles to get to that Pluto article mainly because I have seen a t-shirt for sale that says, "In my day, Pluto was a planet." Must get one. Really good article, Steven, and that picture of you and Clyde Tombaugh is something else. Oh, my, you were such a young pup! Do you think that Pluto-Charon will be designated a double planet due to their barycenter being a mathematical point between them?

[I don't think anything will happen with Pluto's designation until the IAU meets in 2012. That will be their meeting after New Horizons visits the planet.]

Hey, James Nicoll, I'll tell you what's really depressing: what passes as "science fiction" on that so-called "Sci-Fi Channel." (Pronounce it "skiffy," if you would, please.) There are times when I want to read something depressing - like the local newspaper. But that's not depressing because of the news, which can be very depressing, but because of the terrible editing and proof-reading.

Chris Garcia is writing about holding a con on a car on the BART system, complete with an Art Show and panels. I can't believe that I'm actually serious about sharing a room with this guy at Corflu. What in the name of the Wild World of Sports am I getting myself into? Nice illo!

Earlier this year, I had asked Dave Romm for an article based on the photos he took of his Antarctic birthday trip. He may yet write it up for a future issue of my zine. It won't be a trip report, of that I can assure you. Hopefully we can get this worked out Real Soon Now.

I always like the original book and/or movie better than the film version or the remake. My wife and I have this running commentary that the reason why Hollywood

keeps remaking old movies and television series is because they've run out of original ideas. But the articles you've included, complete with lists, are well done and bound to garner lots of replies from the cineholics in your reading audience. Get ready for lots of unsolicited lists.

Over-all, a fine, fine issue, Steven. I am glad I finally got a chance to read this and get somewhat of a loc off to you. If you're at Corflu, let's get together and chat. I am looking forward to this con more than any other con I've ever attended in my life. Wonder why?

In any event, thanks for the issue, and I'm looking forward to the next one.

All the best,

John Purcell

12/26/06

Hey Steven

Kevin Standlee has fallen into the usual trap when discussing convention badge names. Your name is not your identity, names cannot be used as identities, and identities cannot be used as names—especially in the UK and many other jurisdictions where your name is whatever you say it is and you can change it at any time with no paperwork. Also in the UK, very few people carry around official identity documents of any kind, and so it is in any case pretty futile to attempt to ensure that badge names match legal names. If you want to use a badge in order to identify people, then you need to actually put a link to their identity on the badge—generally speaking, a con membership number will handle this nicely without being found offensive or intrusive. The "name" element of the badge

should thus always contain the name that a person actually wants to be addressed by at the convention, regardless of whether or not the member has any paperwork to back up the name, and since we've established that the name can't and shouldn't be used to identify the member then there should be no objection to this. If you don't have membership numbers, it is reasonable although probably unpopular to require that all badge names be unique so that they can be used as links to the member's actual identity—but this applies to two "John Smith"s, both of whom have legal papers in that name, as much as it does to two "Nylarthotep The Unlikely"s.

At a large con, you will naturally want to check that the identity of the person collecting the badge matches the identity of the person who has paid for the membership, but once again, the name is pretty useless for this purpose.

Mike Scott

Dear Steven,

Dear Steven,

Thanks for #6 with my article.

Found this issue thoroughly interesting tho paradoxically find hard to loc—rather like good wine needs no bush, good content needs no comment!

Particularly enjoyed the mocks—clearly am in second childhood. Cthulhu Shakespeare much more widely applicable to the concept—Caliban surely a stooge of Cthulhu, and Marina's melodramatic story arc in Pericles must've taken her to R'lyeh somewhere along the Inie, while much of Lear's behavior surely down to reading the *Necronomicon* during dull moments in his serially daughter-mistreated/abused retirement.

(Thought this illo appropriate to talk of the mocks—C'mell being fobbed off by a mover and shaker in Norstrilia sequel to *Bonfire of the Vanities*.)

As a marginal addition to the very interested Northern Ireland-linked SF Article, as I recall (11 years since read) Anthony Burgess's *The Haunted Seed* has Celts as one of the rival factions.

Ha, so German "gallows S" has a posh name—read somewhere they abolished it, but is making a nostalgic comeback.

Soupy Sales mustn't've made to Brit kids' tv—I'm sure'd've remembered that daft name. Sam Snead got me that nickname all thru school—could've been a lot worse! Still, put me off trying golf forever.

[No, Soupy wouldn't have made it over to Britain. He was suspended from his role on kids' tv after telling his audience to go into his parents' room, taking the pieces of paper with pictures of presidents on them, and send them to him. Many kids did.]

Best Wishes,

Steve Sneyd

Dear Steven,

E. B. Frohvet can put me among those who liked Palmer's *Emergence*. It cried out for a sequel, to my mind. According to Wikipedia, he has only published two books.

I appreciated the articles about William Tenn (Phil Klass). He was last year's Loscon guest of honour, and he was an exceedingly entertaining guest. I have purchased the three volumes of his works published by NESFA, and I look forward to reading them.

I don't really agree with your article about the short-lived series that have yet to appear on DVD. For one thing, I didn't see most of them. Even for the ones I did see, I'm not sure I liked them well enough to buy them on DVD. On the other hand, time can do strange things. My husband, for instance, has recently purchased seasons of "Perry Mason," "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea," and "The Wild, Wild West." While I don't think I would have purchased them myself, I do watch them with him and have enjoyed them, sometimes a lot more than I expected and sometimes more than I expect I enjoyed them originally. I was young when I saw them the first time around and probably missed a lot of nuances. I have a new appreciation for the early "Perry Mason" episodes. Having watched them, I appreciate "Boston Legal" even more than I was, for example.

I wouldn't have done very well on your photo quiz.



Alexander von Thorn's article, "Starship Westerns versus Science Fiction", was interesting, though I can't say I agree with him on all his points.

Mark Leeper brings up some good points in "Lies My Jedi Told Me". There is a fine line between truth and lies. I am by nature very honest and have a tendency to blurt out the raw, unvarnished truth. This has gotten me into trouble more than once. At my first professional job as a librarian, I had to learn to tell white lies. I was responsible for interlibrary loans. We had three kinds of users: scientists, engineers, and business types. I could tell the whole truth to scientists. Engineers wanted an exact answer even if it wasn't exactly true. When they asked how long it would take to get

a book, they didn't want to hear "it could be a few days or more than a year". So I told them it took an average of two weeks; that seemed to satisfy them. The business types didn't really care; whenever it came would be later than they wanted. I once had a heated discussions with a friend about whether what I told the engineers was a lie.

Christopher Garcia's recounting of the BARTcon was very entertaining.

I enjoyed Baron Dave Romm's story about his trip to Antarctica, mostly because I hope to make a similar trip one day. Antarctica is on the top of my list of places I'd like to visit.

While I agree with most of the movies on Bob Blackwood's list of cinematic disappointments (I haven't seen a couple of movies on his list), I have some disagreement with John Flynn's list. Specifically I disagree totally with his assessment of "Mars Attacks" and "Independence Day." "Mars Attacks" is entertaining. In fact at my last job, it was chosen as the first movie for our lunchtime movie sessions.

Thanks for sending your zine. I hope you'll keep me on your mailing list.

R-Laurraine Tutihasi

