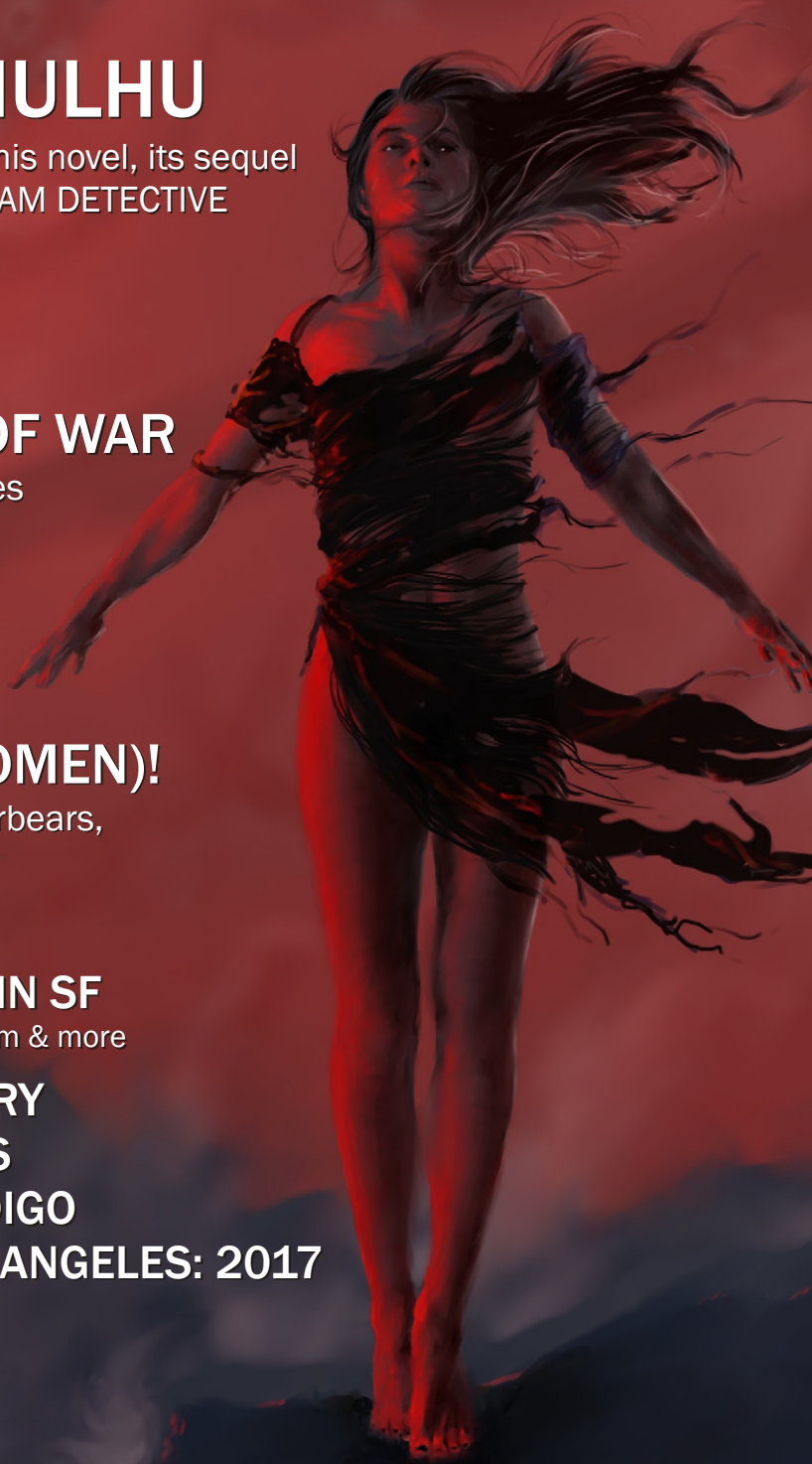
Rage Machine Books presents

DARKWORLDS

FALL 2017 THE CULTURE OF SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY & HORROR QUARTERLY



CRY OF CTHULHU

BYRON CRAFT talks about his novel, its sequel SHOGGOTH and THE ARKHAM DETECTIVE

M.D. Jackson

PLUS!

BOLOS: RELICS OF WAR

Keith Laumer's BOLO stories are unearthed

G. W. THOMAS

PLUS!

CAVE MEN (& WOMEN)!

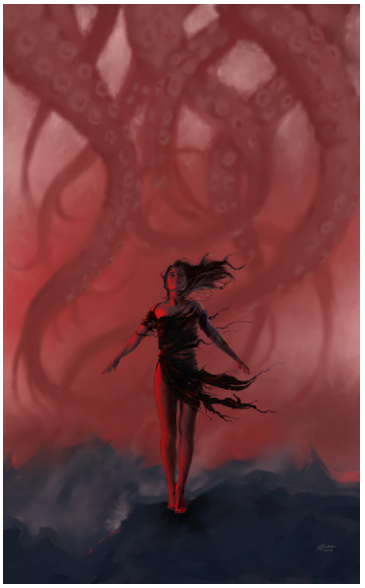
Depictions of mankind's forbears, from the serious to the silly

PLUS!

SOCIAL RELEVANCE IN SF

- David Gerrold, Daniel Abraham & more

THE SF OF TOM CURRY
BIG BRAINED ALIENS
ITHAQUA: THE WENDIGO
PHILIP WYLIE'S LOS ANGELES: 2017
AND MORE!



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DARK WORLDS QUARTERLY

THE CULTURE OF SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY & HORROR FALL 2017

Contents

EDITORIAL: Why Are We Free?

by M. D. Jackson

A legitimate question often asked in the face of something that seems too good to be true

DARK WORLDS QUARTERLY is a completely free magazine. Anyone can download our .pdf file. There is no obligation. We do not ask for your email address in order to put you on a sales list. There are literally no strings attached. We keep track of how many times the file is downloaded but we do not keep track of who is downloading the file, whether they read all of it, some of it or none of it at all.

There is absolutely no requirements, conditions or expectations from our readers.

The obvious question is, why do we do this? Why do we put so much effort and care and attention and time into something for which we get no obvious reward. (Some days I wonder the same thing, to be honest).

But the absolute truth of the matter is this: We do this because we love to do this.

Let me go back in time. Back to when we were kids in school. I was one of those kids

We know exactly who the kids from Netflix's STRANGER THINGS are - we *were* those kids!

whose love for all things science fiction, fantasy and horror verged on mania. Surrounded by my peers whose only interests seemed to be cars, hockey and country music, sharing my passion was something that I did not do very often. I'm sure that a lot of you reading this can relate.

So, finding a fellow traveler, another kid whose interests coincided with mine, was like a small miracle. Having someone to share these obsessions, someone who was able to introduce you to other authors, titles and genres you would never have found on your own, was like a lifeline. So what do two kids obsessed with science fiction and fantasy do with their spare time? Start a magazine, of course.

Because when those who share your interests are few and far between, fellow travelers are worth their weight in gold and reaching out to them becomes most important. Plus, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

This is what we have done since we were kids. When our first magazine, HYPERSPCE (yes, that was a typo on our first issue, and is now a running joke) came out we sold it to kids in the neighbourhood for 75 cents each. We produced it using a combination of photocopies and a hand-cranked gestetner machine (thanks to the son of an Anglican minister, another fellow traveller). The money we made barely covered our costs and was, sadly, insufficient to fund a second issue.

But we learned as we did. And we connected with others. We created a network of fellow travelers.

Fast forward to today, and the internet has turned the world into a giant neighbourhood. And we are still looking for fellow travelers. We are still trying to connect with others who share our interests. And so we do what we love to do, what we have always loved to do. We put out a magazine.

Now, don`t get me wrong. We`re not completely altruistic. We do run a business. Rage Machine Books publishes science fiction, fantasy and horror both in e-book as well as print editions. It is a for-profit venture. So how does giving away a free magazine square with that?

Think of it like this: *gwthomas.org* is the website of G. W. Thomas, author and co-publisher of the magazine. Imagine that website is a building. Now imagine that building has a pub on its ground floor. That's like our bookstore: ragemachinebooks.gwthomas.org. We want potential customers to come in and look around and buy something if you are interested.

Now imagine that pub books a band or a singer every weekend. It's entertainment, ostensibly free (providing there is no cover charge) that encourages people to come into the pub and buy a few drinks or appies while they listen.

Dark Worlds Quarterly is kind of like the band. It's free entertainment. We don't have a cover charge. You don't even have to come into the store to enjoy the music. Just come close and listen.

But, hey, while you're here, why not come in? You visited the website in order to download the magazine you're reading. If you enjoy this magazine, why not go back to that website,darkworldsquarterly.gwthomas.org and click the link to the bookstore? Why not peruse the shelves and see if there is anything that interests you? Maybe buy something? We'd be pleased beyond words if you did.

We don't have a problem if you just want to come and listen to the music. If you're just here for Dark Worlds Quarterly, that's awesome! Download and enjoy! If you enjoy, tell others about it. But if you have time, please do feel free to go back to the website and explore the bookstore: ragemachinebooks.gwthomas.org.

You are under absolutely no obligation, we won't even know you're there unless you tug at our sleeve and ask a question. And we are always happy to talk to a fellow traveler. So please, leave a comment. Let us know who you are. Let us know that you are a fellow traveler and understand where we are coming from. Tell us about yourself. Join in the fun.

We hope you enjoy Dark Worlds Quarterly. It is truly a labour of love.

But we also hope you will explore the other products we have to offer. And, as always, we would love to hear from you!

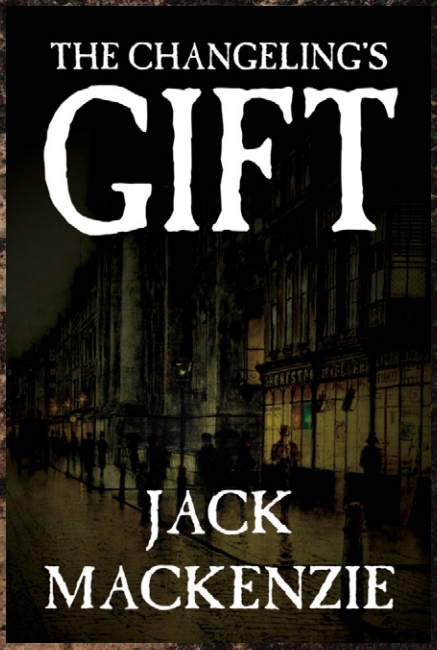
▲

Don't expect to sleep tonight...

The Book of the Black Sun

by G. W. Thomas

The Book of the Black Sun is thirty-two Lovecraftian tales of terror arranged in eight sections, each containing a micro, a flash, shorter story and a longer story. Motifs of strange books, evil creatures and spinning disks that form doorways to other realms are woven throughout the tales, making the final product a creepy, self-referential mandala in itself.



The Changeling's Gift

by Jack Mackenzie

Arthur Freeborn was not like other people. The people of England, persecuted him for his gifts. That was until someone began killing women in the streets of London. Was Freeborn the spring-heeled knifeman or was he the one to catch him? Jack Mackenzie offers up his fantastic version of Victorian London filled with magic, mystery and murder.

The Book of the Black Sun II: The Book Collector

by G. W. Thomas

The tales of the Book Collector are fast-paced Noir Mysteries as well as horror stories. The Book Collector works for a mysterious figure who rents arcane tomes to the wealthy. When those books don't come back the Book Collector has 24 hours to retrieve them. The book in question... The Book of the Black Sun.

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Rage machine

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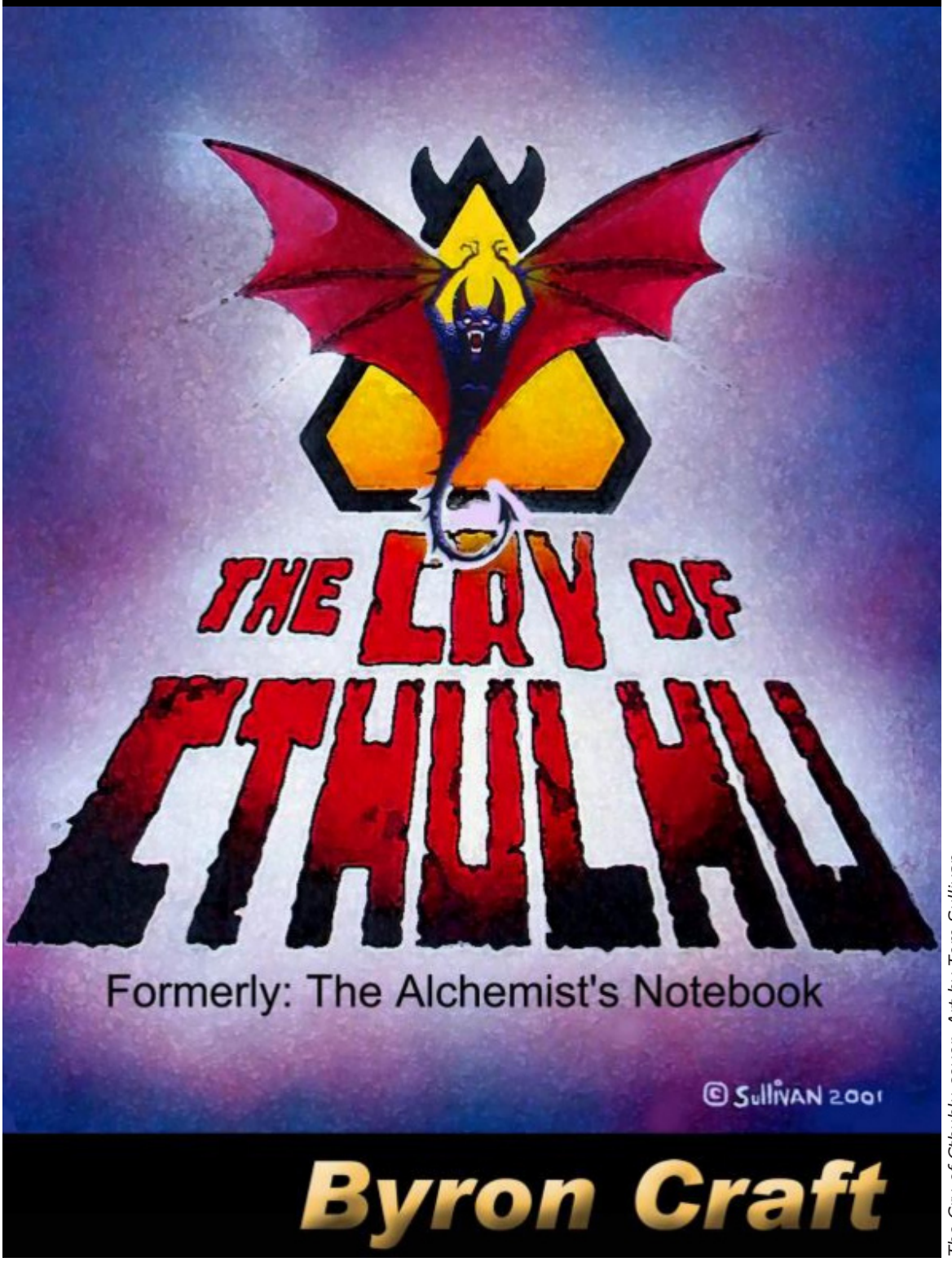


The Cry of Cthuhlu cover. Art by Tom Sullivan

Byron Craft: The Cry of Cthulhu Interview

by M. D. Jackson

Byron Craft's novels of strange, Lovecraftian horror had their start in the weirdest of places: Hollywood

Byron Craft writes Lovecraftian horror fiction. That is to say, he utilizes the *Cthulhu Mythos*, the shared fictional universe, based on the work of American horror writer Howard Phillips Lovecraft. But Craft's novels are a bit different. Not only because they were written with the full knowledge and the full blessing of April Derleth-Jacobs (daughter of Lovecraft collaborator August Derleth) and her publishing company, Arkham House, but because they started out as a screenplay for a film that, had it ever been made, promised to be "...as if H. P. Lovecraft stood behind the camera."

In fact, the film's production artist, Tom Sullivan, has called Craft's screenplay, THE

CRY Of CTHULHU, "one of the coolest movies never made."

I talked to Byron Craft about his books and the screenplays from which they came and the long strange journey they took through the weird lands of Hollywood.

DARK WORLDS QUARTERLY: *A lot of us remember an article from* Starlog Magazine *way back in 1979 written by Frederick King about a movie that was going to be made called* The Cry of Cthulhu*. Personally, we were very excited about it. Take me back to that point. How did that all come about?*

BYRON CRAFT: Well, I was involved with filmmaking all the way back in my college days when I worked with the Skotak brothers, if you've ever heard of them – Bob and Dennis Skotak*. We made some amateur films together and wrote a few screenplays. This was at a junior college called Schoolcraft Junior College. That was where I met Bob Skotak. We had so much in common and he was the one who turned me on to H. P. Lovecraft. He was the guilty party on that one. I wrote a couple of screenplays that Bob and I worked on and we actually made an amateur film... well, semi-professional film... that never got out of the can. We were in Michigan at the time but then (Bob & Dennis) moved to California.

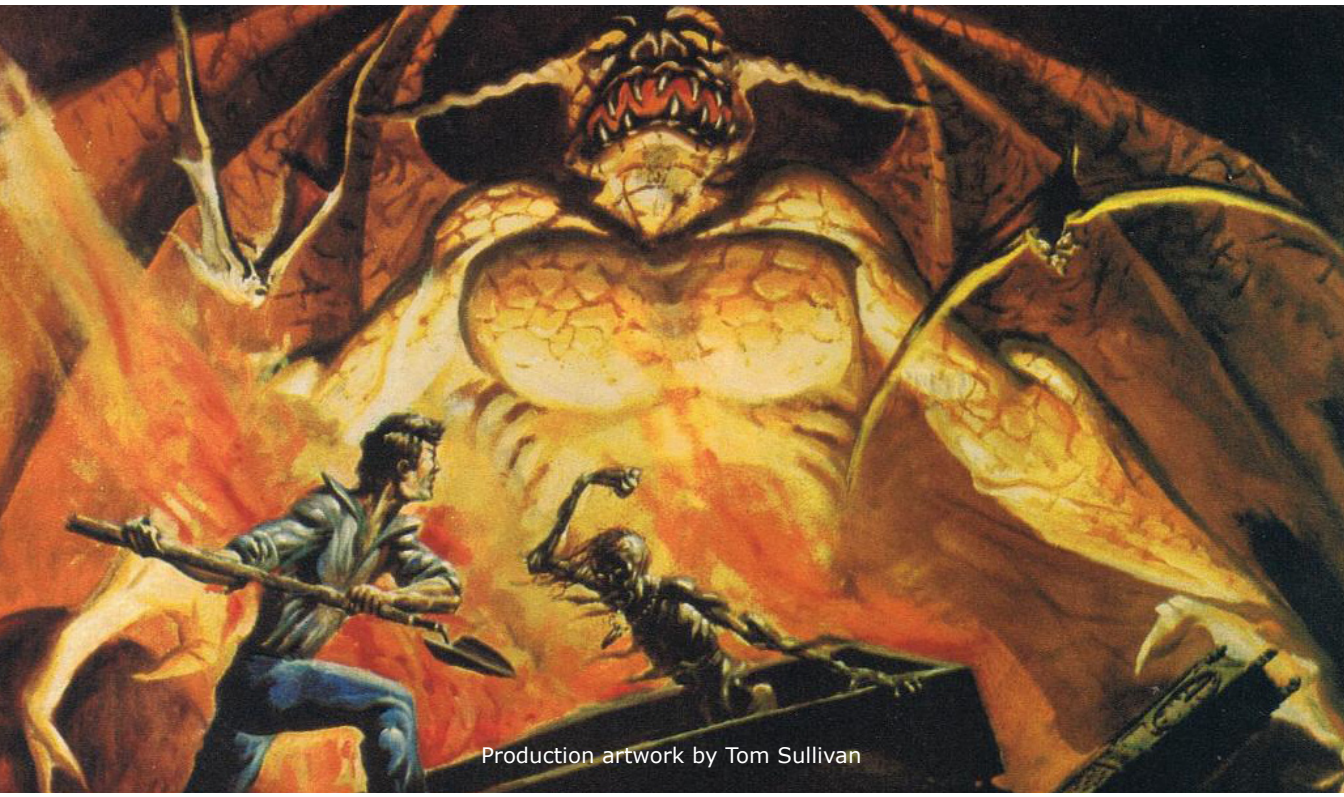
"We met everybody from Jeffrey Katzenberg, Gene Roddenberry to Dino De Laurentiis."

I had this screenplay that I wrote called *The Cry of Cthulhu*. I had a partner then, Bill Baetz, a fine, fine gentleman. We were co-producers of the film and we went to California and spent a lot of time trying to sell the project. We met everybody from Jeffrey Katzenberg, Gene Roddenberry to Dino De Laurentiis. We spent a lot of time with American International pictures. Quite frankly, we just ran out of patience, and money (especially) and needed to go back and take care of our families.

DWQ: *So you shopped the hell out of the project.*

BC: Oh, yeah. This was in the late seventies when Hollywood was going through some real big economic crisis. We got so frustrated. We would work our way up through junior Vice Presidents of studios -- we spent a lot of time with Paramount Pictures -- we worked

* *Robert Skotak is an Academy Award winning special effects artist who won for his work on* Aliens *and* Terminator 2*. He is also a noted film historian who has written dozens of articles for* Famous Monsters, Filmfax *and is the author of a biography of science fiction writer/director Ib Melchior. His brother Dennis also worked on* Aliens *and* Teminator 2 *as well as* Titanic*. Dennis is currently married to* Star Trek *scribe, D. C. Fontana.*



Production artwork by Tom Sullivan

our way up and everything looked good and then we would come back in two weeks and Paramount had fired everybody! And there was a whole new staff of junior Vice Presidents and we had to go all over again. It just got to be frustrating.

Back in the days before PowerPoint we had a wonderful slide presentation and we were fortunate enough to work with the young fellow by the name of Tom Sullivan. Tom did many, many paintings depicting different sequences from the film. Tom went on to became very well known and ended up doing artwork, model making, special effects and animation for the Evil Dead movies. Tom and I have been friends ever since. When I published *The Cry of Cthulhu*, he and I worked out a deal. That particular novel has about twelve paintings and illustrations in it depicting different sequences in the film... or in the book, in this case.

DWQ: *When was the book first published?*

BC: It was first published in February of 2014.

DWQ: *That was quite a jump in time.*

BC: Yes, it was. There was a time when I went through different agents and publishers and it got frustrating. I shelved the project for a while. I'm a retired general contractor. I

was very successful in Naples, Florida as a contractor. Twelve years ago, I started writing for a magazine in Las Vegas by the name of StripLV Magazine. I wrote over a hundred articles for them. I also wrote for a lot of website content, that type of thing. Finally I just thought: "Well, I'm going to dust this old novel off and do a rewrite on it and get it published." And that's what happened.

DWQ*: Right. But when it was initially released it had a different title, didn't it?*

BC: Yeah. And that was a mistake. That was a bit of my naiveté... my inexperience in the publishing industry. I thought at that time that the novel needed a more mainstream title so I published it as *The Alchemist's Notebook*.

There was a couple of errors that I made on that. Number one: I didn't do enough research. I found out later on that there were two other books with the same title. One was a cookbook and the other was a book of poetry. I realized then, that when you're writing within the Lovecraft Cthulhu Mythos, it is what's called a *niche* market. I got encouraged by a lot of people - through my website, through Facebook - they said: "You know, Byron, you need to release the book under its original title." So that's what I did.

"When I first published about 80% of my sales were paperback... Nowadays it's turned completely around."

DWQ*: How successful has the book been? I don't want to pry. I'm not asking about numbers or anything like that. But for you personally... has it done what you expected it to do?*

BC: It's been very successful. I've really enjoyed the new indie market for books. When I first published about 80% of my sales were paperback -- soft covers is the term I like to use, because it's not a little paperback. It's a book the size of a hardcover but it's a soft cover – it was about 80% paperback/softcover and 20% Kindle sales. Nowadays it's turned completely around. About 80% of my sales are Kindle sales.

At one time I was with... oh, I don't know... over a dozen different publishing houses. It turns out that Amazon is the best place to go. (The book's) done really well. It's surprising. It did very well as *The Alchemist Notebook* and it's done extremely well as *The Cry of Cthulhu*. And that was my first novel. I've written several books since then.

DWQ: *The second novel in the series is* Shoggoth?

BC: Yes sir. That's correct.

Shoggoth cover. Art by Eric Lofgren

DWQ: *And that is available from Amazon?*

BC: Yes. It's available in paperback and Kindle.

DWQ: *It's part of a larger planned series, though, is that right?*

BC: Yeah. *The Cry of Cthulhu* and *Shoggoth* are all part of a five book series. I'm currently working on the sequel to *Shoggoth*, which is called *Shoggoth 2: The Rise of the Elders*. But in the interim I have written a four-part series that I that is called *The Arkham Detective*. But right now I'm working on the sequel to *Shoggoth*.

DWQ: *Tell me about* Shoggoth.

BC: *Shoggoth* is a very, very interesting novel. It is also based on a screenplay that I wrote by the same name. It is about a group of scientists in the Mojave Desert in a place that's called the NWC – the Naval Weapons Center – which actually exists. It's right next to Ridgecrest, California in the Mojave Desert. It occupies over 1.1 million acres and it's where the Navy tests different ordinances – experimental shells, weapons, bombs and that type of thing. I spent a lot of time in the area when I researched the novel. It is about a group of scientists – along with the military – that discover a network of tunnels beneath the Mojave Desert that date back millions of years. The next thing they discover is that there's something alive in the tunnels... and it's hungry. Did I do a good job with that one? What do you think?

DWQ*: That sounds great. You say that the Cthulhu market is a niche market but, still, there are a lot of people who are huge fans of Lovecraft and his work. What was it about Lovecraft that first attracted you?*

BC: Wow. Well the first thing I ever read by H. P. Lovecraft was *The Color Out of Space*, which I enjoyed very much, but it wasn't my favorite. I think my favorites are *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, Shadow Out of Time*, and *The Whisperer in the Darkness*.

Lovecraft was a great spinner of tall tales and he always had a great hook at the end. Of all of his stories, Lovecraft used to say – unrelated as they may seem – they all had the same theme to them, about Elder Creatures from a time long-forgotten that are trying to regain a foothold onto our planet. I always found that to be very fascinating. When I wrote the screenplay for *The Cry of Cthulhu* my main goal was... you have to understand, this was the late 70's... there was some really terrible films based on H. P. Lovecraft's stories then... I wanted to make a film that would be as if H. P. Lovecraft stood behind the camera. So when I write my books today I try to make it as if H. P. Lovecraft was alive in the 21st century.

When we worked on these projects back in the late 70's it was with full approval of Arkham House Publishers. We worked directly with the attorney for Arkham House and

August Derleth`s daughter, April Derleth-Jacobs. And even though we knew at the time that all of H. P. Lovecraft's works were public domain we had such a great respect for his works and for what the Derleth family had done with Arkham House Publishers that we wanted to make sure that we always had their blessing.

In fact, there's one part in *The Cry of Cthulhu* that has – I think it's two or three paragraphs – that are right out of The Dunwich Horror. I wanted to do this as two separate translations from The Necronomicon that were compared in the story, I was allowed to reprint those, by way of April Derleth-Jacobs. She loved our screenplay. They were very much behind the film. Unfortunately it never came to fruition.

DWQ: *That's one of the things that excited me when I read about the film way back then. I'd seen a lot of the bad H. P. Lovecraft movies, like you mentioned, but this one looked like it was going to be the definitive one. The respect you had for the source material was very evident.*

"(De Laurentiis) had a hissy fit. Big time. He actually jumped on the top of his desk and jumped up and down!"

BC: Well, you have to understand that the genre was totally created by H. P. Lovecraft – I mean, of course, he was inspired by people like Lord Dunsany and that type of thing, nobody's totally original – but he was as original as I think any human being could be within that genre.

There's a very interesting story that we tell. My partner, Bill Baetz, and I, in the late 70's, had an appointment to go see Dino De Laurentiis. We had an agent by the name of Jerry Loeb. At that time Jerry was a retired Vice President from United Artists. He was a wonderful agent. Now, because of prior communications with April Derleth-Jacobs, Arkham House Publishing didn't want to have anything to do with Dino De Laurentiis. De Laurentiis was knocking on the door wanting to purchase the rights to one of the Lovecraft stories to make his own movie. Arkham House was very familiar with his horrendous film, *King Kong* and they didn't want anything to do with him. Plus, they'd already been burned by movies like *Die, Monster, Die* and *The Dunwich Horror* – which we always say you go to see the movie just to see Sandra Dee's hips undulate – so they were they were really gun-shy about having anything to do with them.

When we were contacted through our agent by Dino De Laurentiis, we actually turned him down. But we were told: "Oh, no... no... no... no... Mr. Laurentiis doesn't want to buy the rights to your project, He wants to put up the money while you produce it." Well, we knew that there were occasions where Dino De Laurentiis had films made where he put up the money as executive producer and really had nothing to do with making the film. But

his name was on it. Well, fair enough, so we thought. We went to see him and he offers us a hundred thousand dollars for the project with absolutely no rights for sequels, prequels spin-offs, novelization rights or anything. We turned him down.

He had a hissy fit. Big time. He actually jumped on the top of his desk and jumped up and down. He said: "I don't need you! I will make my own Lovecraft film!" Well, Bill Baetz was a little more ballsy than I was. He turned around he says; "No, you won't. We've already talked to Arkham House and they won't sell you the rights to film." That's when we went out the door. I mean, he was absolutely was red-faced and exploded!

The irony of this was that Dino De Laurentiis did not know that Lovecraft was public domain. He could have made any kind of Lovecraft movie he wanted, but he was not aware that even though Arkham House published the stories they had no actual rights to them.

DWQ*: That`s funny! Ignorance is bliss but not for Dino De Laurentiis!*

BC: Oh, we had fun with American International Pictures. In those days AIP was owned by James R. Nicholson and Samuel Z. Arkov. They equally owned it. James R Nicholson was known for saying things like: "We're not artsy-fartsy around here!" But it was a very profitable low-budget, D-film studio. They made good money. By the way, James R. Nicholson was the uncle of Jack Nicholson. Now, you know how Jack Nicholson got his start...

DWQ: *I didn't know that! I know who both of them are but I did not know that was their relationship.*

BC: Oh, yeah. Jack Nicholson was in the original *Little Shop of Horrors*. He plays the masochist that has all his teeth pulled out. That was his first part. I mean, he went all the way up through... I think it was *Easy Rider* that really catapulted him to fame and movies like *Five Easy Pieces* and stuff like. Anyway, James R. Nicholson passed away in the late '70s and Samuel Z Arkoff was now totally running the studio. Now, Arkoff was so enamored with the movie *Star Wars* that he decided that he was going to make his own *Star Wars* movie. He made a film, which I think was shot in Italy, for millions of dollars called *Starcrash*.

Now, we were very, very close to making a deal with AIP. But they went... they didn't go Chapter 11, they went Chapter 7. They went totally out of business because they put everything they had into *Starcrash*. The movie was laughable. It was a big bomb. And that was the end of AIP, which was a shame because people like Roger Corman made that studio. So that was pretty much the end of us pitching it in Hollywood. Since then – it's kind of an interesting -- what happened was that I had an epiphany. In *The Cry of Cthulhu* there are these creatures called Pilot Demons They're creepy little creatures. They're incidental creatures. They're not the main creature, but are minions. They're about the size of a two or three month old baby. They're legless and they walk around on their hands and they've got sharp fangs and teeth and fur in the back of their hands.

I thought that they really deserved their own story and so, thus came the first *Arkham Detective* book, which ended up becoming *Cthulhu's Minions*. *The Arkham Detective* stories take place in the early 1930s with a hard-boiled police detective. I write it as if H. P. Lovecraft and Raymond Chandler did a collaboration. It was so successful that it spawned three more books in the series. All three books are now published. The sequel was called *The Innsmouth Look* and the sequel to that one is called *The Devil Came to Arkham*. The fourth one was just published yesterday and it is called *The Dunwich Dungeon*.

There's an artist that does my book covers, He is a gentleman out of Vancouver, British Columbia, by the name of Eric Lofgren. He's a great Lovecraftian artist and he's been doing my covers. He's currently doing another cover for me, which will be a all four of the *Arkham Detective* stories published as a collection.

DWQ*: That's great.*

BC: I live on my ranch in Nevada – up in the middle of Nowhere, Nevada. I have many, many acres. But I have a good friend who's also a Lovecraftian author by the name of Sean Hoade. He and I will be at the *H.P. Lovecraft Film Festival and Cthulhucon* in Portland, Oregon, on October 6th to 8th. We will be there and for all three days, if people want to come and see us. My website is *byroncraftbooks.com*. You can search my name on Amazon and all my books will pop up.

DWQ: *So, you've gone through Hollywood, you've ended up publishing the book on your own. What will you do if it comes full circle and Hollywood comes to call?*

BC: My answer to that would be they need to talk and I will listen. My books are very successful, they're paying very well. I am not in a personal or financial situation where I would just give the whole thing away. As I said, this is part of a five book series. I have two of the five written and I'm working on the third one now. So I have to be cautious. It depends on what kind of deal they offer.

Also, later on this year there is a documentary coming out which I'll be part of. It's done by the screenwriter and producer Stephen Scarlata (*Jodorowski's Dune, Final Girl*) They've already shot my sequence and that'll be coming out. It's a documentary about novelizations of screenplays. Mine's the unique one because it's a novelization of a screenplay of a film that was never made. The great special effects artist Tom Sullivan always referred to us as the greatest film never made.

DWQ: *It certainly is that. But if anyone wants to know what it was all about they can go to* www.byroncraftbooks.com *and they can they read* The Cry of Cthulhu *and all your other books. It's been such a pleasure talking to you Byron. I really enjoyed this.*

BC: Thank you it's been my pleasure too.

Artwork by Margaret Brundage, Weird Tales, June 1936

ETHERIDGE & PETERS: Supernatural Policemen

by G. W. Thomas

Commissioner Etheridge and Police Detective Peters, crime fighters who come face-to-face with terror!

Thorp McClusky (1906-1975) was of that breed of *Weird Tales* writer who gained a small audience during the time of the magazine's publication, but fell into obscurity after 1954. Like Carl Jacobi, Grey La Spina and Dorothy Quick, McClusky was anthologized after the Pulps were gone but remains little known except by a cult following. This is probably largely due to McClusky not writing novels that could cement his works in the age of the paperback.

Thorp McClusky was a Pulpster who wrote for the Westerns, Mystery and primarily is remembered as a Horror writer. He worked as the editor of *Motor*, as well as writing books for children and about chiropractics. He studied music at Syracuse University. After his Pulp career, he lived and died in New Jersey. That he is remembered at all today is partly due to his straight forward storytelling. Though he never created a memorable horror icon, he

told his stories economically and in a way horror fans enjoy.

Of McClusky's two dozen fantastic stories, all but seven appeared in "The Unique Magazine". Amongst the weird appearances there is one series, five stories revolving around two investigators, Commissioner Etheridge and Police Detective Peters, two city crime fighters who have no reason to come face-to-face with terror. They do so, and with pluck and the occasional drink of whiskey to calm their nerves, they meet it head-on.

The Loot of the Vampire

"The Loot of the Vampire" was a two-parter (June and July 1936) in *Weird Tales* and perhaps is McClusky's closest attempt at a novel. A jeweller named Eichelmann is murdered and a precious pearl necklace is stolen. At first the cops think it was Eichelmann's assistant, Segel, but when the dead man's body disappears from the morgue then turns up quite alive, Eichelmann kicks the police out of his shop. Later the dead-alive man is found again, quite dead with a silver knife in his heart. The coroner is stumped because the body clearly shows that the man had been dead for thirty-six hours.

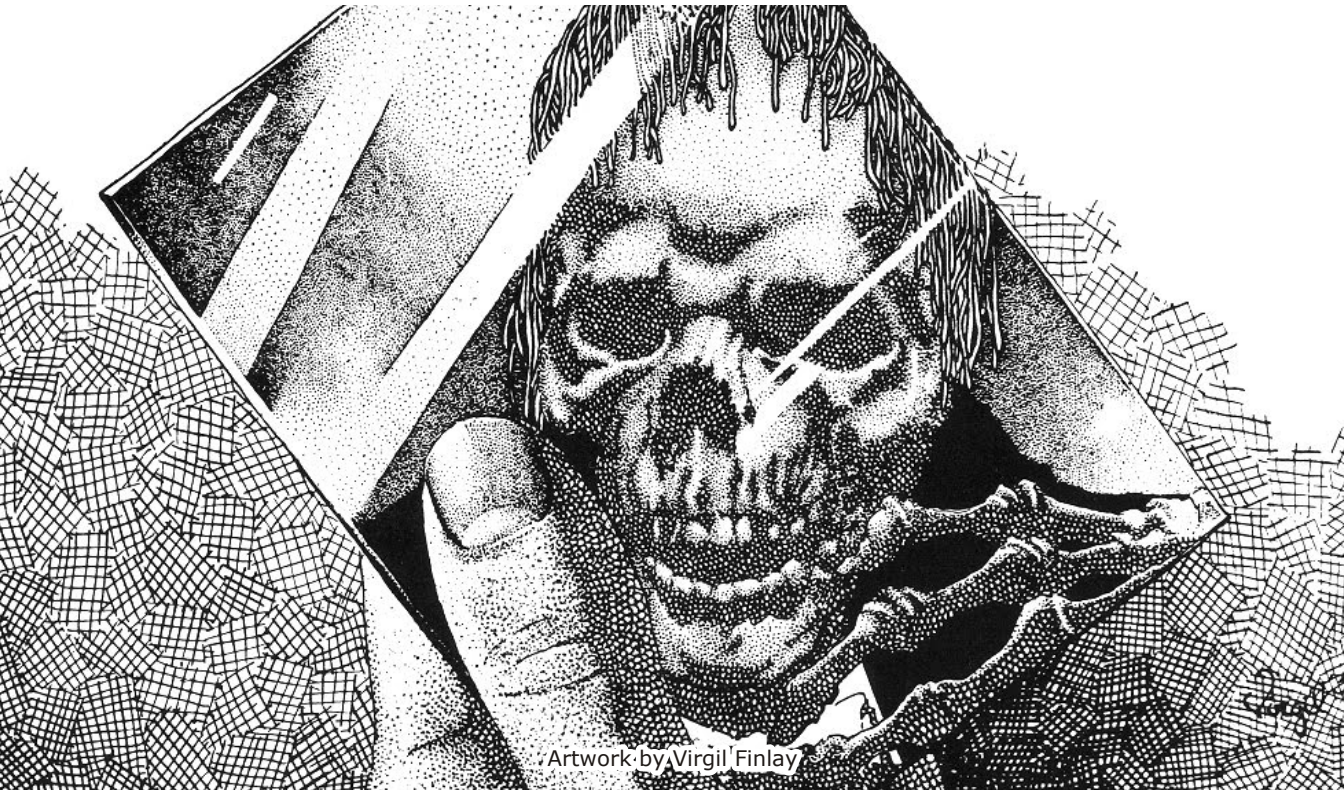
""The Loot of the Vampire" was a two-parter... in Weird Tales and perhaps is McClusky's closest attempt at a novel."

Etheridge uses good police work to track down the real culprit, a nobleman who drives a Rolls-Royce and spoke to Eichelmann in German. This is Count Woerz, a tall Satanically handsome playboy with a reputation as a lady chaser. His last girl friend, Katharine Grant, had died of a wasting disease. Woerz is familiar in fact with Etheridge's fiancée, Miss Mary Roberts. When the commissioner goes to Woerz's house and openly accuses him, the Count warns him to be careful, for Mary's sake. To make his point, the Count invites Mary to a charity bazaar where he is doing a mind-reading act. While there, he not only hypnotizes Mary, he also meets with his fence for the pearls. Detective Peters confronts him with a mirror that Woerz smashes, but not before Peters can see what is shown there.

Etheridge and Peters regroup. It is now that Peters explains his "crazy" idea that Count Woerz is a vampire. Vampire lore was only a hobby to Peters but now it seems deadly serious. He has a theory he has been working on for a while, that where there is smoke there is fire. Some of the vampire lore must be true. While he is trying to convince Etheridge, Mary goes missing, victim to the hypnotic command of the vampire.

The two men go to Woerz's house, breaking in illegally and finding a woman lying on a desk in a dark room. They also find Count Woerz in a similar state. He has pinned a message onto his lapel. It tells Etheridge that Mary is under a hypnotic command and only Woerz can remove it. If the cops kill him, Mary dies too. Etheridge waits for dark when the Count awakens. Both men are overcome by the woman from the other room and the Count.

When they come to, they find that the vampires have fled and taken Mary with them. Etheridge does some deduction and figures they have fled on the yacht, *The Cynthia*. The



commissioner gets a daring young pilot to take a float plane and fly in a wide circle to locate them. When he does, they crash the plane in front of the ship and get picked up by Captain Halliday. Even though they have no authority on the high seas, the captain allows them to try and arrest Woerz and his companions including Beniati, a human criminal and watchdog.

After taking out Beniati and the idiot that guards the vampires by day, the policemen encounter Woerz and Katharine Grant, and the sun has set! Mary appears freed from her hypnotic spell but the vampires laugh at the policemen and their guns. Etheridge stabs the Count with a silver knife while Peters shoots Katharine Grant and kills her. He has melted down his wife's prize silver so the ballistic boys at the station could make him silver bullets. With the unexplainable bodies thrown overboard and the stolen goods recovered, they return to the city, promising that no one ever speak about the truth. Etheridge and his sweetheart can't wait to get home and get married.

The plot is lengthy, with many clichéd incidents (and some poor logic – why doesn't Woerz kill Etheridge and Peters after he knocks them out?) but it all hangs together fairly well because of McClusky action-oriented style and dual narrative. While we can see the supernatural happening, the characters don't and Etheridge and Peters have to work pretty hard to believe they are actually encountering the unnatural. If they had non-chalantly accepted the existence of vampires, the story would not have worked so well.

The Woman in Room 607

"The Woman in Room 607" (*Weird Tales*, January 1937) begins with Etheridge walking


Artwork by Hannes Bok

down the street when he is met by a beautiful woman, Marilyn Des Lys. She takes him to the seedy Northrup Hotel and the Room 607 of the title. There, under a weird spell that makes him forget Mary Roberts, the woman tries to seduce him. Etheridge breaks free of the spell and flees. The next day he hears about a drug ring working out of Room 607 and that Marilyn Des Lys has been dead for a week. Later, Etheridge goes to the room, following a weird mist that eventually becomes a strange slime. This ectoplasm is the spirit of Marilyn, who has been feeding on men and becoming more substantial. Etheridge fails to stop her from leaving, falling under her depredations.

The now solid-appearing Marilyn goes to the home of the night clerk of the hotel, Nicky Gallicchio, and explains how she and her cult members were able to pull her spirit from her dead body. All week Marilyn has been feeding, an act that sucks the flesh from the bones and drives men mad. Nicky tells her that he loves her, but Marilyn cruelly discards him, wanting only Etheridge. Nicky leaves and tells all to the two policemen, who decide they must kill Marilyn Des Lys. Peters chooses a silver letter opener as the weapon for the deed.

Etheridge and Peters go to Nicky's apartment and confront Marilyn. The woman's power to fascinate is stronger than ever. She draws the sickly Etheridge to her. Peters, who at first was also entranced, stabs her and she falls to the floor, bleeding. But Marilyn is not finished yet. Her spirit draws Etheridge to her and begins to suck the flesh from his bones. Peters is powerless to stop her but he knows who might. He has the landlady call for Mary Roberts, Etheridge's fiancée. Mary is able to break the monster's hold. Not able to feed, Marilyn Des Lys dissolves into a puddle of goo. Moving ectoplasm or slime would become McClusky's trademark in stories like "The Crawling Horror" (*Weird Tales*, November

1936).

One thing that strikes me about this story and the series as a whole is McClusky's modern-edged sense of vice. *Weird Tales* writers like H. P. Lovecraft, H. Russell Wakefield or August Derleth look back to an earlier time when a writer could suggest the presence of the lurid side of life but never really explore it, when the female character might "meet a fate worse than death" but never really go into details. McClusky, perhaps because he wrote for magazines like *Thrilling Mystery*, is no such lightweight. "The Woman in Room 609" is a prostitute. The people who frequent her floor of the hotel are drug addicts. When Nicky Gallicchio declares his love for the resurrected Marilyn, she calls him a "wop" and says "Fool, you were just the rent!" This is a hard-boiled moll despite her incredible beauty and powerful spirit. Racism was not unfamiliar in *Weird Tales* but at least in this story we feel it is Marilyn Des Lys's racism and not the author's, as McClusky ends the story with Gallicchio's suicide and a note of sadness.

"In "The Thing on the Floor" (Weird Tales, March 1938) McKlusky returns to the idea of hypnotism"

The Thing on the Floor

In his next Etheridge and Peters tale, "The Thing on the Floor" (*Weird Tales*, March 1938), McKlusky returns to the idea of hypnotism that he used in "The Loot of the Vampire". This time it is the immensely fat Dmitri Vassilievitch who takes control of Mary Roberts, using her to lure her many rich friends to his Thursday night performances, where for large sums of money he would perform faith healing. The cops stake out one of Dmitri's meetings and hear Dmitri's theory that there is no reality, only that which is created by the mind. He demonstrates the power of this philosophy by hypnotizing his assistant, the diminutive Stepan, to believe he is impenetrable. Dmitri burns his face with a blowtorch and even shoots bullets into his face. Stepan is unharmed.

When Etheridge becomes convinced that his fiancée has stolen Priscilla Luce's jewels under the hypnotic command of Dmitri, the two policemen try to strong-arm the hypnotist into releasing Mary from his service. Etheridge must wrestle Stepan to the floor and hold him, for bullets won't hurt him. Dmitri proves duplicitous and tells Mary, instead of being free, that she is writhing in the greatest agony ever. The policemen will submit to Dmitri and allow him to continue his crime spree. Etheridge is powerless as he watches Mary crawling on the floor in pain. Peters throws himself on Dmitri, forcing a pill down his throat. It tastes like bitter almonds. Peters tells him it is cyanide. Dmitri dies a terrible death, and Peters' gambit works. Once Mary sees that Dmitri is dead, the spell is broken and she stops writhing. It also has a similar effect on Stepan, who converts to the thing on the floor of the title. All the burning and shooting demonstrations take their toll and he turns into a charred and bloody corpse.

Monstrosity of Evolution

"Monstrosity of Evolution" is the odd-man-out here, appearing not in the *Weird Tales* but in Ray Palmer's *Amazing Stories*, November 1938. The story takes place after the Etheridges are married. The couple meet an old friend, Dr. Raymond Trafforn at the train. Dr. Ray, as he is called, seems distant after their two years apart. He has with him an old woman in a wheelchair, who he calls his Aunt Hermione. When Etheridge tries to help the workers lower her from the train he sees her eyes, which do not look human, and then feels a mental blast of utter hate.

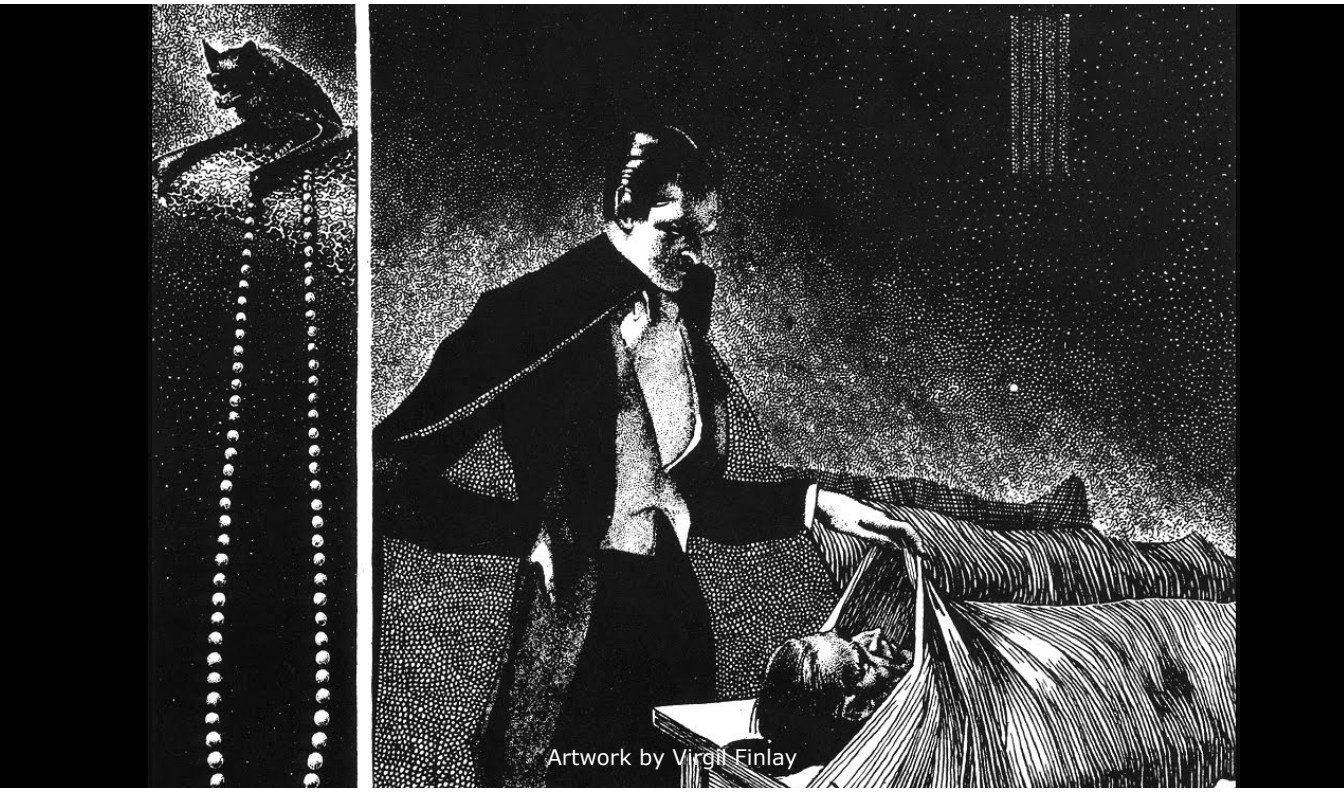
Months later, after Dr. Ray has bought a house, the Etheridges don't see him again. Mary admits to Charles that she too had felt the blast of hate from Aunt Hermione. She has done a little research and found Trafforn has no such relative. She has also been collecting newspaper clippings about missing women, all of which began disappearing only three weeks after Trafforn bought his house.

Etheridge discloses the evidence to Peters. He plans to visit Trafforn, but will leave the door unlocked for Peters to sneak into the house. Peters is, of course, captured and Etheridge himself walks into the villain's lair and is likewise taken over. What he finds is Aunt Hermoine is actually a small creature that wears a costume to assume the old woman's form. The thing is actually an evolved man, a


Artwork by Virgil Finlay

Canadian trapper named Pierre Brunelle, that Dr. Ray has engineered. The creature and Ray take Etheridge upstairs to the lab, which is filled with seven-foot glass tubes where naked bodies float as they evolve. The plan is to evolve Peters and Etheridge just enough to make them willing accomplices. Etheridge has left Mary at home with a mission to bring the cavalry. But like all Pulp darlings she walks into the house with a gun and is the third one to join the soon-to-be-evolved.

Mary's plan to stop the evolution machines is to convince Dr. Ray he is mistaken. She does this by showing him that the evolved creature is a falsehood. That since it did not evolve as the world changed, it really isn't more advanced, only an anomaly. She goes on like a scientist for some while, as Ray Palmer adds his two-cents in editorial comments. Her ploy works, with Dr. Ray telling his master that the experiments will stop. The evolved man laughs and uses his immense mental powers to drive all three humans to the evolving tubes. Only the police arriving with screaming sirens stops him. Turning its attention to the police, Dr. Ray regains his power of movement and shoots the creature dead with Mary's gun. Everything is hushed up, the kidnapped girls each dropped off in a motel with a hundred dollars in their purse. Dr. Ray is not arrested but allowed to live with his sister in his old age. Etheridge is happy to be alone with his wife again, and he is also glad she told the police to come at eleven and not twelve as instructed.



The story is a pretty typical mad scientist story and borrows heavily from one of the earlier masters of this type of tale, Edmond Hamilton. Hamilton wrote "Evolution Island (*Weird Tales*, March 1927) as well as the classic "The Man Who Evolved" (*Wonder Stories*, April 1931) and others like "Devolution" (*Amazing Stories*, December 1936). McClusky is adding nothing new to these previous tales and Farnsworth Wright, as the editor who published "Evolution Island" may not have felt inclined to go there again.

Slaves of the Gray Mold

"Slaves of the Gray Mold" (*Weird Tales*, March 1940) takes place before the Etheridges' marriage, so it chronologically comes before "The Monstrosity of Evolution". Perhaps McClusky offered Farnsworth Wright all three but he only took two of them. Ray Palmer snapped up the odd man out and published it first. Whatever the facts, this story was published last. Unlike "The Monstrosity of Evolution" it is science fictional but seems much fresher and more Lovecraftian.

It begins when Detective Peters is out on a walk and he sees a man with a briefcase stop suddenly and leave the important documents for a derelict. Intrigued, he follows the bum to the offices of Page, Dean & Wentworth, where the derelict receives a cash reward. Peters confronts the man only to find himself at home, with

little memory of what happened. Later Etheridge sees the bum, Jimmie Dunn, at the track where he wins repeatedly on long shots, making $83,000. When a reporter tries to pull him by the arm, the man falls dead of a heart attack.

Later the police are involved when Jimmie Dunn is found dead in the home of Paul Caldwell, a man Etheridge dislikes because he is an old suitor of Mary Roberts. Peters is suspicious because Caldwell's butler, Morency, changes his story about Mr. Dunn's arrival. He had, in fact, snuck into the house and confronted Mr. Caldwell. Etheridge doesn't share Peters' suspicions until he receives a note from Mary, saying she is leaving Etheridge for Paul and going away to his cabin at Big Bear Mountain.

Etheridge is now ready to believe Peters' theory that whatever resided inside Jimmie Dunn had the power of mind control, and has transferred to Paul Caldwell's body. Peters claims this form of mind control is even worse than mere hypnotism because Jimmie Dunn had been able to control race horses as well as people. The two men go to Big Bear and Etheridge goes to the cabin alone to talk to Mary. She repeats her claim she loves Paul but her eyes seem distant. When Etheridge finds a severed head covered in gray mold in a cupboard he is knocked unconscious.

Etheridge flees the cabin, driving fast with little memory of what has happened. Peters stops him, recognizing the symptoms of mind control. The two men sneak

back to the cabin that night equipped with Peters' impromptu gear, plastic sheeting to cover the head and lead-lined goggles to protect the eyes. They enter the cabin and find a secret room filled with weird blue light and a strange alien device. Paul Caldwell, now covered in mold, is opening a doorway to another dimension, where mold-covered slug creatures are about to claim Mary and then invade the world. Etheridge fights with Caldwell but when his head gear is torn off he is knocked unconscious. It is up to Peters to draw his pistol and shoot the machine to bits. He fights with Caldwell, shooting him twice in the face. The alien mold and the body are thrown into the rapidly shrinking gate. With the mold gone, everyone returns to normal. The detectives once more are faced with covering up the truth, and enlist Morency the butler in this.

"Slaves of the Gray Mold" is a better story than "Monstrosity of Evolution", probably taking some of its inspiration from A. Conan Doyle's "The Parasite" (1894), a story much closer to "The Thing on the Floor", with McClusky taking that title literally. William Hope Hodgson's "The Voice in the Night" is another obvious precursor, with its slowly growing gray mold. McClusky's descriptions of mold-covered eyes and creepy transference between hosts is far ahead of its time. It is common today to see this in movies like *The Hidden* (1987) or on television shows like *The Strain* (2014-2016), but back in 1940 it is pretty fresh. It predates Hal Clement's *Needle* (1950), the most famous example of this idea, by ten years.

Mind Control

The one theme that ties all five stories together is mind control. Whether by a vampire, a ghost, a hypnotist, an evolved psychic human or an alien fungus, all the baddies have the ability to control those around them. This is often Mary Roberts, but in the case of "The Woman in Room 607", it is Etheridge himself. McClusky is using the threat of mind control to build the tension between Mary and Charles. In each story, one or the other is controlled and the other must fight to save them. (Though oddly, there is never any mention of previous mind control in later stories. Peters never says anything like: "Mind control? Just like that pesty vampire used on Mary!" Each story stands alone.) The bond is strong enough to pull Etheridge from Marilyn de Lys's control but it takes bullets and bravery to rescue Mary from repeated enemies.

He let the series lapse after 1940, probably because it was beginning to wear thin if "The Monstrosity of Evolution" is any example. It is too bad he didn't try to use Peters and Etheridge in another kind of story, perhaps one without mind control elements. They were a great ghostbreaking team that were uniquely positioned to face the outré.

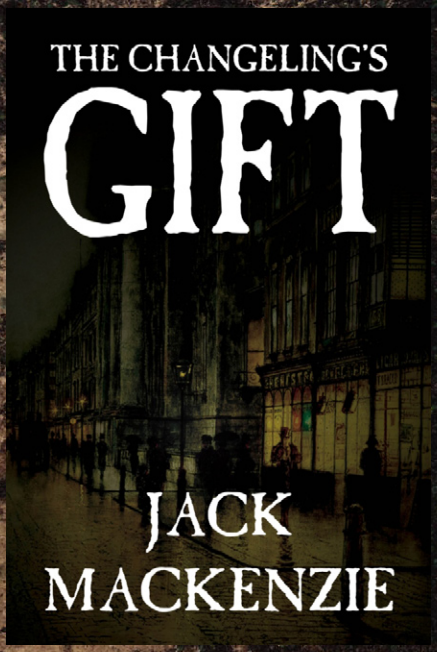
▲

Don't expect to sleep tonight...

The Book of the Black Sun

by G. W. Thomas

The Book of the Black Sun is thirty-two Lovecraftian tales of terror arranged in eight sections, each containing a micro, a flash, shorter story and a longer story. Motifs of strange books, evil creatures and spinning disks that form doorways to other realms are woven throughout the tales, making the final product a creepy, self-referential mandala in itself.



The Changeling's Gift

by Jack Mackenzie

Arthur Freeborn was not like other people. The people of England, persecuted him for his gifts. That was until someone began killing women in the streets of London. Was Freeborn the spring-heeled knifeman or was he the one to catch him? Jack Mackenzie offers up his fantastic version of Victorian London filled with magic, mystery and murder.

The Book of the Black Sun II: The Book Collector

by G. W. Thomas

The tales of the Book Collector are fast-paced Noir Mysteries as well as horror stories. The Book Collector works for a mysterious figure who rents arcane tomes to the wealthy. When those books don't come back the Book Collector has 24 hours to retrieve them. The book in question... The Book of the Black Sun.

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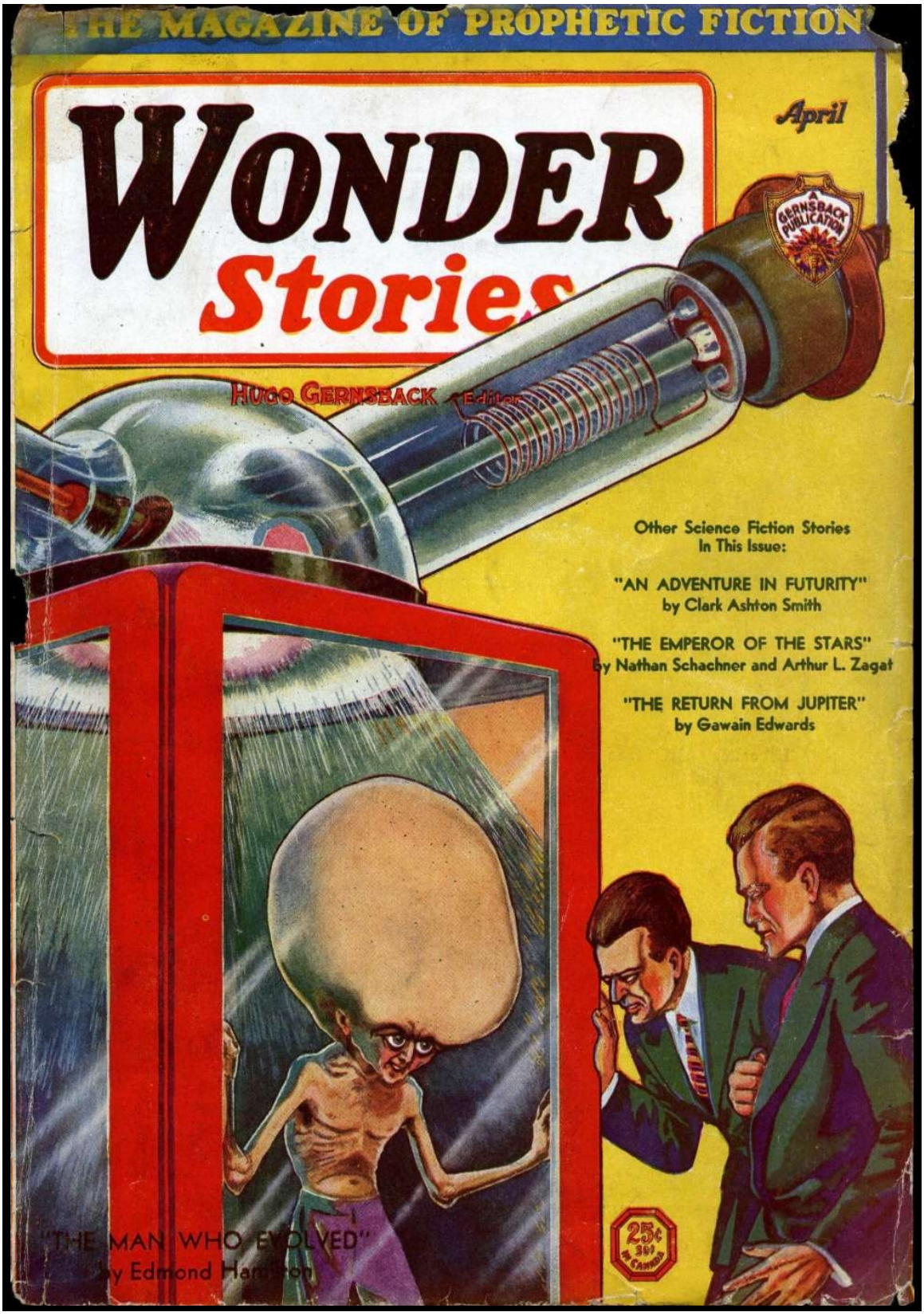


Woner Stories, April 1931

BIG BRAIN ALIENS

by Jack Mackenzie

Aliens have big heads. Big heads mean big brains. Makes sense, right? Or does it?

With the increase in understanding of our ancestral roots, we take a look the other way and wonder what humankind might look like after millions of years. From our cavemen ancestors we have evolved. What will the course of evolution bring us in the future? Science fiction's answer usually seems to be big brains.

Let's run with that thought, shall we… evolution, that is. If our ancestors had small brains and we have larger ones, it's not much of a stretch to imagine that our descendants will have even larger brains. By extension, then, if aliens are so much more advanced than us it makes sense that they would have big heads, right?

Therefore aliens have big heads. Bigger brains mean bigger heads. Makes sense.

So, let's look at some big brain aliens.

In Literature.

Examples from early pulp magazines are few and far between. Aliens as depicted by early science fiction illustrators were somewhat lacking in the cranium department, which

Invasion of the Saucer Men - American International Pictures, 1957

is kind of surprising. After all, the granddaddy of alien invaders was H. G. Wells' Martians from *The War of the Worlds* (1898). They were all head and feeble tentacles. Massive intelligences from across the gulf of space who had regarded our earth with envious eyes and came to conquer. Too bad they didn't bring any immunologists with them. That pesky common cold did them in.

After Wells, the premiere example of this idea of the massive brained, super-evolved creature, comes from Space Opera writer, Edmond Hamilton. In the April 1931 issue of *Wonder Stories*, Hamilton presented the quintessential version of this idea in "The Man Who Evolved". Doctor John Pollard creates a machine that will progress his evolution in jumps. Obsessed with discovering the ultimate end of humankind, he evolves again and again until he is the typical massive big-brained alien, remorseless, conquering and evil. Unfortunately for Pollard, he goes one step too far and returns to the beginning, a mere living slime.

At the Movies and on TV

Big brain aliens, rare on the covers of science fiction magazines, are plentiful in film and television, which is odd, considering that the mediums are considered by some to be somewhat lowbrow. Maybe big brains are more frightening to people who don't have an abundance of them.

Aliens invade in a lot of old science fiction movies. Those crazy big-headed bug-eyed monsters find their way to our little blue marble with astonishing regularity. Clearly we have something that they want bad enough to travel millions of miles for. Is it the water? Is it

Star Trek: The Cage - NBC 1965

our women? Is it slaves to build their pyramids for them? Whatever it is, their big brains have not been able to manufacture it at home so they have to go out to get it.

But it's not always aliens. Remember that classic Outer Limits episode *The Sixth Finger* where David McCallum plays a simple Welsh coal miner who has his evolution speeded up until he becomes an big headed, arrogant snob who is made "…ill and angry." by common human ignorance. Instead of just starting his own software company, McCallum's character goes on a rampage of petulant destruction in a tantrum that rivals that of a teenager who can't access the wi-fi.

But why would we assume that our brains, or indeed, that aliens' brains would get better as they got bigger? Look at the aliens from *This Island Earth*. If they are so smart, why are the denizens of Metaluna all such big-headed pricks? And why do their muu-tants, the designer servants specifically made to have the intellectual capacity of an ant, have such big brains that they are threatening to spill right out of their skulls?

Why do the big-brained aliens from the *Star Trek* episode "The Cage" not understand that they can't tempt Christopher Pike with women, either beautiful, intelligent, or youthful? Did it not occur to them to try making the unfortunate Vina resemble a strapping young Enterprise crewman?

What? Don't tell me you didn't think that too! There's only one reason that I could think of that Pike passed on the green Orion girl, and it had nothing to do with the moral dilemma of trading in slaves.

Or maybe that's just me.

Brains and Sex

Well, look at that. I started talking about brains and somehow ended up on the topic of sex. I guess evolution hasn't really brought us all that far, has it? We still have those animal urges lurking beneath our cerebrums, the unreasoning desire for pleasure, that chemical carrot on a stick that prods our primitive brains to do what's good for the continuation of the species, the barely controlled ape-part of our brains that has unreasoning wants from copulation to chocolate cake.

Can increasing our cerebrum take us further away from those basic instincts? Will having bigger brains make us more able to resist the temptations that our animal instincts spur us to? If so, then why do bigger brained species always look to conquer? Why do their desires seem to be completely consistent with a species who is not all that far removed from the man in the cave?

Does our imagination let us down? Or are we just not interested in a villain who listens to soft jazz and discusses Proust? We want a villain who marches in lockstep, rants, raves, hits, folds, spindles, mutilates and eats us so we can justify the nuclear missile we will inevitably stuff up their spaceship's tailpipe.

I have seen the science fiction enemy, and, underneath those big brains, the enemy is us.

Well, that's enough ruminating for me. I think I'll go to a museum and talk knowledgably about art. Maybe while I'm listening to some soft jazz or reading some Proust.

Or maybe I'll just go hunting for some… chocolate cake.

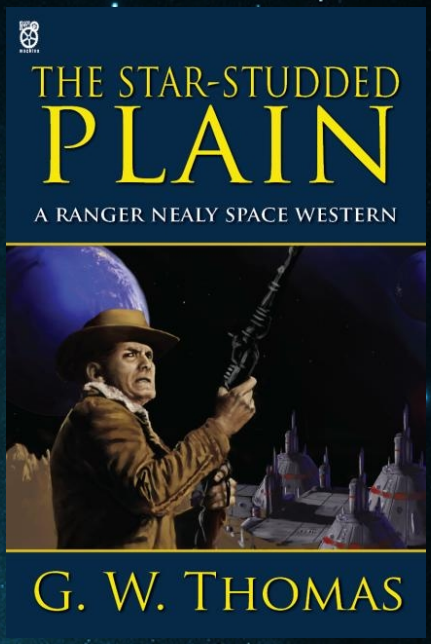
▲

Experience the Sense of wonder

Debt's Pledge

by Jack Mackenzie

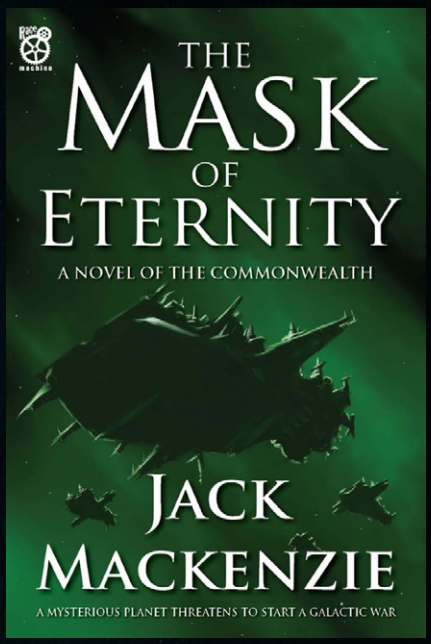
He was a soldier without a war, alone and unwanted, until he discovered an alien enemy... Stationed on a remote outpost, in charge of a platoon of hard cases and disciplinary problems Jefferson Odett is all that stands between a colony and an alien army of unspeakable power who will kill anything that gets in their way. Action-packed Science Fiction adventure!



The Star-Studded Plain

by G. W. Thomas

Three helpings of Space adventure on the planet Utukku, where the fine sands and constant winds making tracking impossible. Follow Ranger Neely as he chases bad guys and deals with the savage trogs with laser pistol in hand and his trusty crookback at his side. Science Fiction with a frontier flavor!



The Mask of Eternity

by Jack Mackenzie

Solis DeLacey, captain of the ACSC Boston, has been sent to a world rich in natural resources. But one ship and her crew has already gone missing while surveying the planet and the finger of suspicion is pointing to the Orion Hegemony, the ACSC`s sworn enemy. Now DeLacey must discover its secret and defeat her enemies before the galaxy is plunged into total war...

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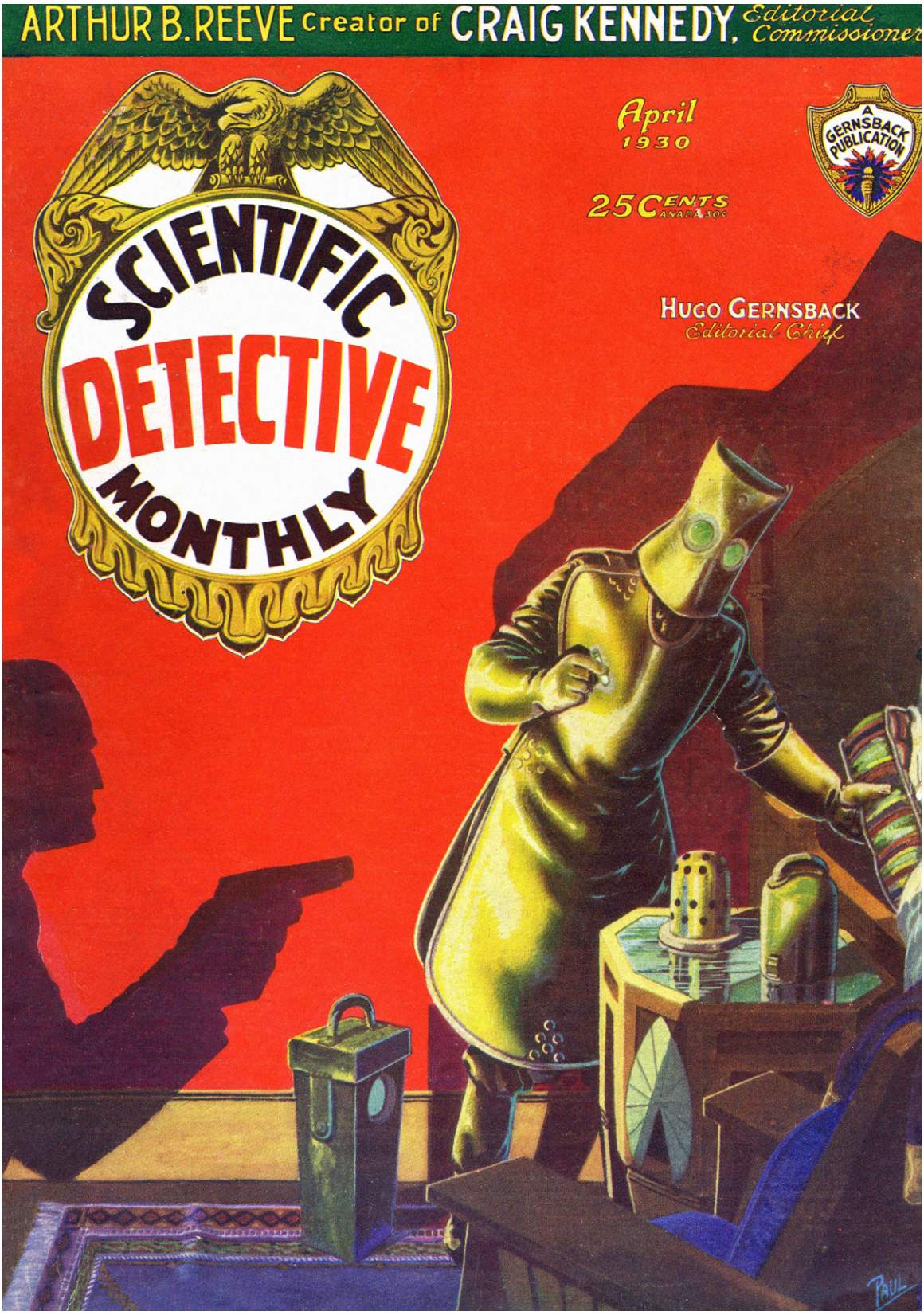


Scientific Detective Monthly, April 1930

HELPING OUT A FRIEND: The Science Fiction of Tom Curry

by G. W. Thomas

Tom Curry was a writer of Western pulps who only wrote science fiction tales on the side

Tom Curry (1900-1976) has won his place in the Pulps as a Western writer, the main author of the *Rio Kid Magazine* stories as well as one of the detective story writers in the early days of *Black Mask*, alongside Dashiell Hammett and Erle Stanley Gardner. What may not be so well known is Tom Curry tried his hand at Science Fiction for a year or so back in 1930.

Unlike many horse opera writers, Curry was qualified to write early Science Fiction because he, like E. E. "Doc" Smith, studied Chemical Engineering, at Columbia. Success at Adventure and Western stories found him working in journalism instead of the food industry. The crime beat supplied him with plenty of material for detective stories, which he sold to *Black Mask* in the 1920s. By 1930, he was selling them to the Clayton chain's *All-*

Star Detective and Clues.

It was here he would write for Harry Bates, the editor who created *Astounding Stories of Super-Science* (better known as the Clayton *Astounding* today). Bates struggled at first to fill his new SF pulp as he didn't have a stable of pros he could turn to. Where he did go was to the writers who filled his other magazines with tales of crooks, ghosts and adventurers such as Hugh Cave, Arthur J. Burks and Victor Rousseau. Tom Curry was another.

Curry's first attempt at Science Fiction was "Rays of Death" for Hugo Gernsback's *Scientific Detective Monthly*, April-May 1930, a magazine specializing in Mystery stories with scientific detectives, but he really got his start with "The Soul Snatcher" (*Astounding*, April 1930). A young doctor named Allen Baker is facing the death sentence so his mother seeks out Dr. Ramsey Burr, Allen's old mentor, to try and save her son. Allen is charged with murdering Burr's assistant, Smith, but in truth Burr has disintegrated him in a failed experiment. The unsympathetic doctor declares Smith (and Allen too) a martyr to Science.

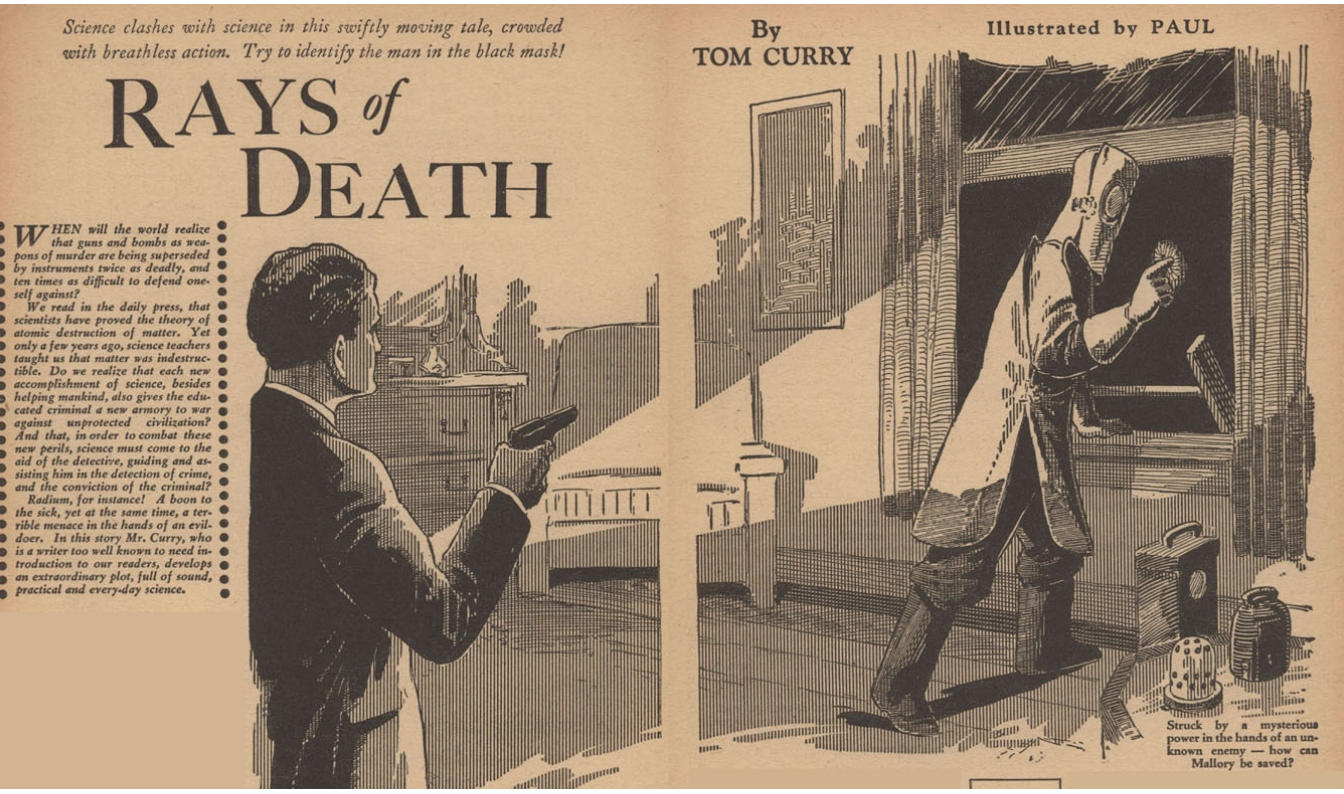
"Curry's first attempt at Science Fiction was "Rays of Death" for Hugo Gernsback's Scientific Detective Monthly"

Mrs. Baker begs Burr to tell the police. Instead he suggests another plan since he has now perfected the machine that killed Smith. He will trade places with Allen via radio, as Burr has been working on a form of matter transmission. Mrs. Baker supports the plan by smuggling the necessary equipment into her son. Step one of the process works, transferring Allen's mind into Dr. Burr's body but an unscheduled execution by electric chair stops the experiment before completion. Allen Baker, now looking like Burr, declares the poor doctor a martyr to Science. Everyone is surprised at how much kinder and gentler Burr has become, taking care of Mrs. Baker.

Curry's concept of "soul" or mind transfer is not new in 1930. Edgar Rice Burroughs had used it in *The Mastermind of Mars* (*Amazing Stories Annual*, 1927) and H. G. Wells before him in "The Story of Mr. Elvesham" in 1896. The idea has became one of the clichés of Science Fiction devolving down to TV shows like *Gilligan's Island*'s "The Friendly Physician" (April 7, 1966) where Gilligan and Mr. Howell and the Professor and Mrs. Howell trade bodies.

"Giants of the Ray" (*Astounding*, June 1930) puts Curry in more familiar territory, with two bad hats, Durkin and Maget, who plan to follow an expedition into the Mato Grosso to rob a mine filled with valuable material. Juan, one of the peons, works as their "inside man", leaving them food along the trail. They instruct Juan to steal a sample of the valuable material, thinking it gold or diamonds. When they next encounter the peon he has opened the sample and been stricken with a horrible form of death.

When the thieves get to the mine, they see Professor Gurlone and his son, and a blind man named Espinoza, the mine's owner, have a large group of peons caged up nearby. They see a strange outbuilding as well, heavily padlocked. Gurlone and his men go into the mine armed with heavy arms, fighting what turns out to be a gigantic frog and tadpole. Maget comes to the professor's rescue with some good shooting, while Durkin kills himself by



Science clashes with science in this swiftly moving tale, crowded with breathless action. Try to identify the man in the black mask!

By TOM CURRY

Illustrated by PAUL

RAYS of DEATH

WHEN will the world realize that guns and bombs as weapons of murder are being superseded by instruments twice as deadly, and ten times as difficult to defend oneself against?

We read in the daily press, that scientists have proved the theory of atomic destruction of matter. Yet only a few years ago, science teachers taught us that matter was indestructible. Do we realize that each new accomplishment of science, besides helping mankind, also gives the educated criminal a new armory to war against unprotected civilization? And that, in order to combat these new perils, science must come to the aid of the detective, guiding and assisting him in the detection of crime, and the conviction of the criminal?

Radium, for instance! A boon to the sick, yet at the same time, a terrible menace in the hands of an evildoer. In this story Mr. Curry, who is a writer too well known to need introduction to our readers, develops an extraordinary plot, full of sound, practical and every-day science.

Struck by a mysterious power in the hands of an unknown enemy — how can Mallory be saved?

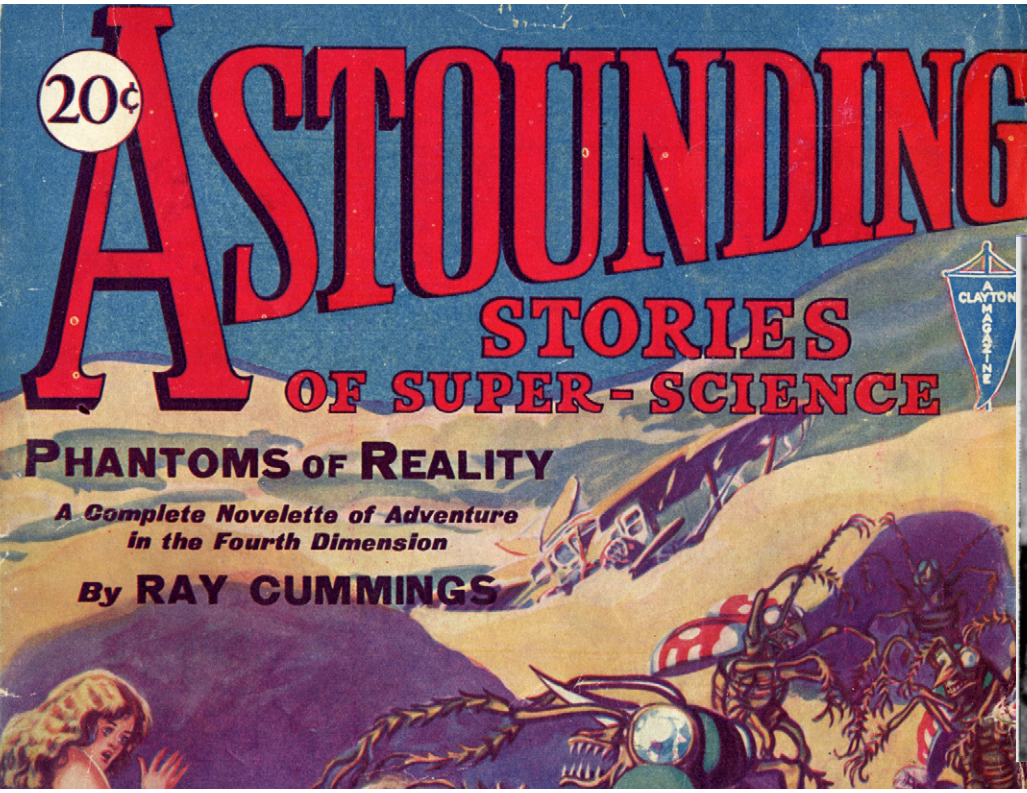
sneaking into the lead-lined hut.

Maget joins the expedition, agreeing to face the horrors of another foray of the mine. With dynamite and guns, the men plan to blow up an opening inside the mountain that is allowing gigantic creatures: bats, insects, centipedes, frogs access to the outside world. The professor explains that the radioactivity of the radium in the mountain has caused the animals to grow to such large size.

The raid goes badly, not blocking the opening but enlarging it. A multitude of giant vermin pours out of the mine, killing all the trapped peons. The expedition flees into the jungle. Professor Gurlone tells Maget it is alright. The cannibalistic giants will eat each other and the few remaining survivors can be killed with guns. Curry ends the tale with Maget proudly joining the scientists and sharing their new wealth. He has reformed himself from being a thief and a drunkard. Sadly, Curry makes no comment on Professor Gurlone, who callously allowed a number of locals to died so he could have his radium mine.

"From an Amber Block" (*Astounding*, July 1930) sees Curry change genres from jungle adventure to monster horror. The Museum of Natural History receives several immense blocks of amber. Professor Young and his beautiful daughter, Betty, are assisted by Dr. Walter Marable in removing fossils from the stone. Betty and Walter both believe they see a set of weird eyes moving inside a black liquid spot inside one of the blocks. After a day of chipping and recording, the scientists leave, with trusted guard, Rooney, left to watch over the new treasures.

Next morning the guard is dead and Marable and Betty's fears are realized. The floor is covered in a black inky liquid from inside the amber and Rooney has had all his blood



sucked out of him. Later the horror attacks again, by generating a thick black cloud. The millionaire philanthropist and sponsor of the amber research, Andrew Leffler, is drained this time.

The third and final attack finds Marable in the thick of the cloud. It is Betty who comes to the rescue, using one of the guard's guns to smash out some windows and clear the air. Marable uncovers the block in which the monster is hiding, revealing its ancient, weird form:

> *"Betty Young screamed. At last she had a sight of the terrible creature which her imagination had painted in loathing and horror. A flash of brilliant scarlet, dabbed with black patches, was her impression of the beast. A head flat and reptilian, long, tubular, with movable nostrils and antennae at the end, framed two eyes which were familiar enough to her, for they were the orbs which had stared from the inside of the amber block. She had dreamed of those eyes. But the reptile moved like a flash of red light, though she knew its bulk was great; it sprayed forth black mist from the appendages at the end of its nose, and the crumpling of canvas reached her ears as the beast endeavored to conceal itself on the opposite side of the block"*

Marable sees the creature and hesitates. As a scientist he doesn't want to kill such a rare specimen. This pause allows the monster to go after Betty. Marable pumps bullets into it. Betty, the real hero once again, gives him her gun then gets Walter a fire ax. Marable chops the monster to death.

The story ends with Professor Young explaining the creature was a missing link between the elasmosaurus and other dinosaurs. He chides Marable for killing the thing. Marable says he doesn't care and proposes to Betty on the spot, who fervently says yes. It has taken this weird scenario for Marable to see what is really important to him.

"From an Amber Block" is interesting on several levels. As a monster tale it is perfectly effective. Tales of this sort date back to H. G. Wells and A. Conan Doyle, but Curry creates an interesting creature and doesn't reveal it too soon, though I doubt today's reader could buy a dinosaur that produces smoke clouds. The idea of a terror escaping from a scientific specimen will appear again in the horror film, *Horror Express* (1972) with Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. The concept of resurrecting dinosaurs from amber was revived by Michael Crichton for *Jurassic Park* (1990) and its many movie sequels.

More interesting is the similarities between this story and the first half of Frank Belknap Long's "The Horror From the Hills" (*Weird Tales*, January-February/March, 1931) which appeared six months after Curry's tale. Again we have the acquisition of a strange object by museum, a blood-drinking monster and a dead security guard. The similarities are striking

"The idea of a terror escaping from a scientific specimen will appear again in the film, Horror Express (1972)"

though Long only uses this as a set-up for a much longer, weirder story of inter-dimensional beings. Of all of Long's horror tales, it is one of the most Science Fictional. FBL did not appear in the Clayton *Astounding* but would appear years later during John W. Campbell's Golden Age.

"Hell's Dimension" (*Astounding*, April 1931) goes back to the ideas in "The Soul Snatcher", with a scientist being charged with murder because of an experiment gone wrong. This time Curry has the good sense to start the story with the police waiting to arrest the hero, not after the fact. The cops want to know what has happened to Professor Lambert's sweetheart, Madge Crawford. The scientist convinces one of the officers, Phillips, to allow him to finish his experiment with sound, for Madge's disappearance is directly related to this. Lambert fails again and again until he twigs into a small error. His sound projection machine is now ready.

Lambert crosses over into another dimension in search of his lost love. In this other world he encounters ghostly forms that are hostile to humans but unable to directly hurt them. Lambert finds Madge only to have both of them overwhelmed and then thrown into a vague sort of pit where they fall and fall. There is a terrible snap and then the two humans are back in our dimension, horribly thirsty and hungry. Lambert sees his old mentor, Dr. Morgan, has shown up and affected their escape. Safe once again, having escaped the Hell dimension, the two lovers are in heaven with their impending nuptials.

"Hell's Dimension" shares a common theme with many of the stories written for early magazine Science Fiction, in which a stalwart scientist crosses a barrier of some sort to find a weird world on the other side. Ray Cummings may have been one of the first in his Golden Atom series (*All-Story*, 1919), where a machine that shrinks you does this. He was followed

by S. P. Meek's Submicroscopic series (*Amazing Stories*, August 1931). In the Clayton *Astounding*, Murray Leinster wrote "The Fifth Dimensional Catapult" (January 1931) and Clifford D. Simak had "Hellhounds of the Cosmos"(June 1932). Leinster would try again in "The Fourth Dimensional Demonstrator" in the Tremaine *Astounding*, in 1935. Curry isn't the innovator here but he was one of the earlier users of the idea. Curry was most likely inspired by H. G. Wells' "The Plattner Story" (*The New Review*, April 1896) where a man is pressed into another dimension through the explosion of a mysterious substance. In this other realm, perhaps the place where souls go after death, he sees malignant forms trying to influence the living. He escapes torn and bruised and with his physique strangely reversed.

The Science Fiction of Tom Curry, like that of editor Harry Bates who penned the Hawk Carse tales as Anthony Gilmore, have a genre flavor to them, whether it is Adventure with a tale about haunted mines, Mystery, with men facing a death sentence as a consequence of their scientific work, or Horror, as might have appeared in *Weird Tales*. Tom Curry was no innovator but he helped out an editor that needed stories to fill a new type of magazine. Though Curry's reputation will remain with Western fiction, with 175 novels and hundreds of stories, he may have been memorialized in DC Comics, like editor Ray Palmer, as a character, Tom Curry, Aquaman's adoptive father. Aquaman was created by Mort Weisinger in 1941. (I can't prove this is the case but Weisinger worked for Standard Magazines who published *Thrilling Western* and *Thrilling Adventure*, two of Curry's markets.).

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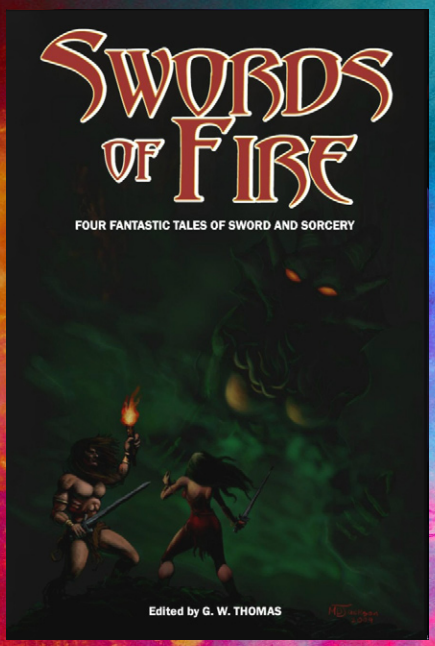
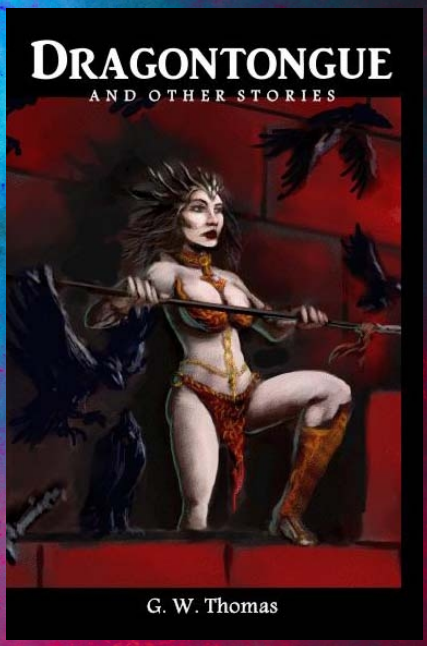
EXPERIENCE THE FANTASTIC





Swords of Fire

edited by G. W. Thomas

Four novellas of Heroic Fantasy. David A. Hardy's *Temple of the Rakshasas* follows Godarz the mercenary. *Two Fools For the Price of One* by C. J. Burch continues his Addux and Kouer series. *Pieces in a Game* by Jack Mackenzie reunites Sirtago and Poet and *The Deathmaster's Folly* by G. W. Thomas *introduces* the necromancer Fauston and his servant Ramid. Fully Illustrated by M. D. Jackson.

The Green Beast

by Jack Mackenzie

Something is rotten in the castle of Baron Ogmund. Sirtago, the lusty Ka of the realm of Trigassa, and his sensitive companion, Poet, are onto a mystery involving a terrible green beast. The creature is killing the fishermen of the local village and the truth is so strange it will call into question everything, even the faithfulness of Ka Sirtago's own mother the Empress of Trigassa!

Dragontongue and Other Stories

by G. W. Thomas

Enter the world of the Six Cities. Strange folk dwell in these lands from the clever but mousy Manthorn the magician, the brave swordsman Torel the Gelt, Luantishee the Silver Princess and the mysterious four-armed wizard known only as the Rainbow Man plus many others. G. W. Thomas presents 18 tales of the fantastic and the mysterious!

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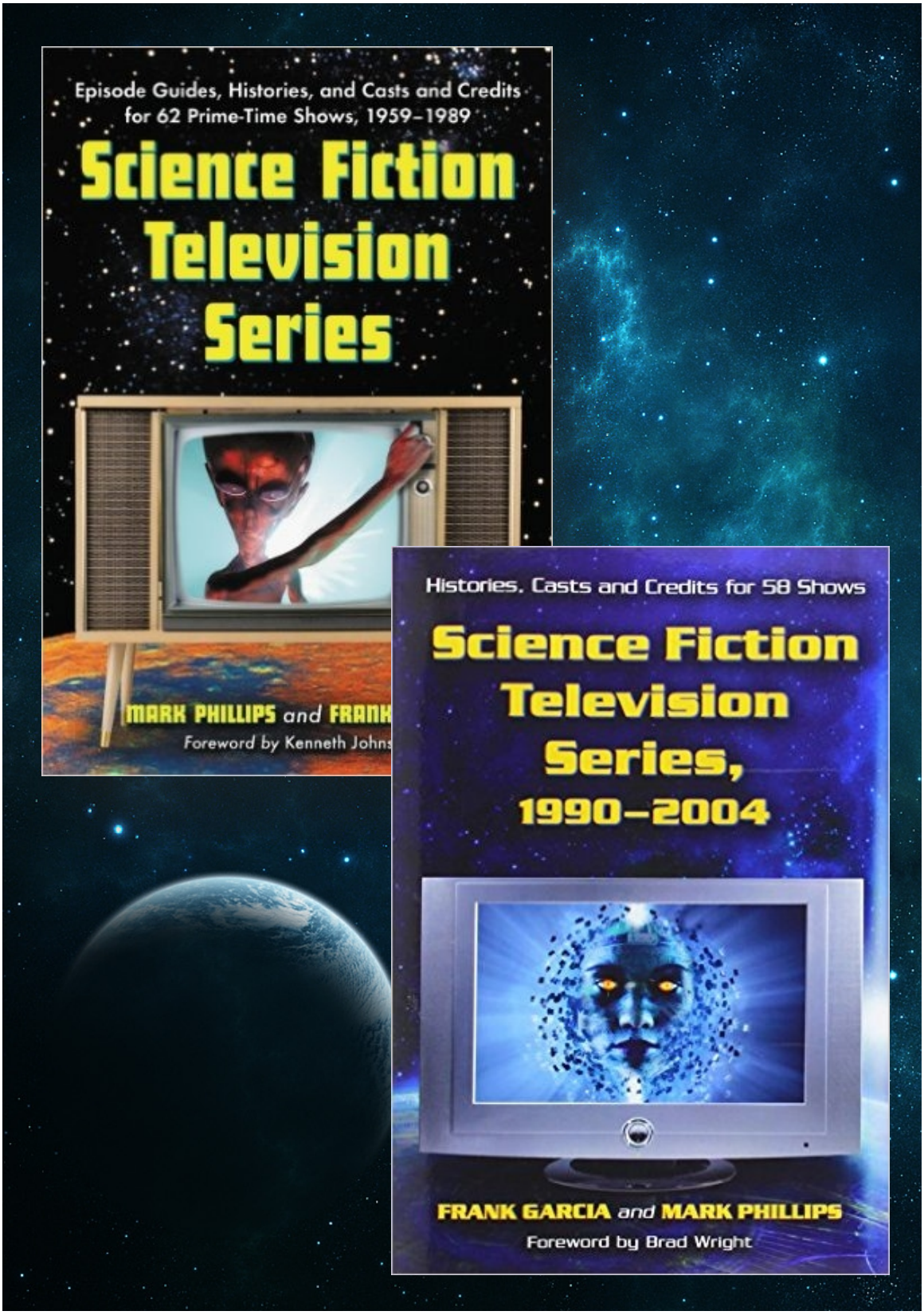

Episode Guides, Histories, and Casts and Credits for 62 Prime-Time Shows, 1959–1989
Science Fiction Television Series
MARK PHILLIPS and FRANK
Foreword by Kenneth Johns
Histories, Casts and Credits for 58 Shows
Science Fiction Television Series, 1990–2004
FRANK GARCIA and MARK PHILLIPS
Foreword by Brad Wright

SCIENCE FICTION TELEVISION SERIES VOLUMES 1 & 2

review by M. D. Jackson

You like science fiction. But do you like science fiction when it's on TV?

Science fiction series on television have had a real hit-and-miss history. There are some that are classics and that stand the test of time. In this era of dvd collections, Netflix and other streaming services or Youtube, older science fiction television series are popping up all over the place.

But how do you make sense of it all?

That's where Frank Garcia and Mark Phillips come in. They have written *Science Fiction Television Series*, a comprehensive reference book in two volumes that covers science fiction television series from its earliest beginnings up to 2004.

From *Alien Nation* to *World of Giants*, Volume one of this reference work provides comprehensive episode guides and cast and production credits for 62 science fiction series

that were aired from 1959 through 1989. For each episode, a brief synopsis is given, along with the writer and director of the show and the guest cast. Using extensive research and interviews with writers, directors, actors, stuntmen and many of the show's creators, an essay about each of the shows is also provided, covering such issues as its genesis and its network and syndication histories.

Volume Two is a detailed examination of 58 science fiction television series produced between 1990 and 2004, from the popular *The X-File*s to the many worlds of *Star Trek* (*The Next Generation* onward), as well as *Andromeda, Babylon 5, Firefly, Quantum Leap, Stargate Atlantis* and *Stargate SG-1*, among others.

And these volumes are massive. The first book covers sixty two separate science fiction television shows and clocks in at a whopping 691 pages in hardcover (the trade softcover was split into two volumes). The second book covers fifty nine shows and is 421 pages. And the information in the book is equally impressive.

"You won't find much of the information in these chapters anywhere else, even in the age of Google."

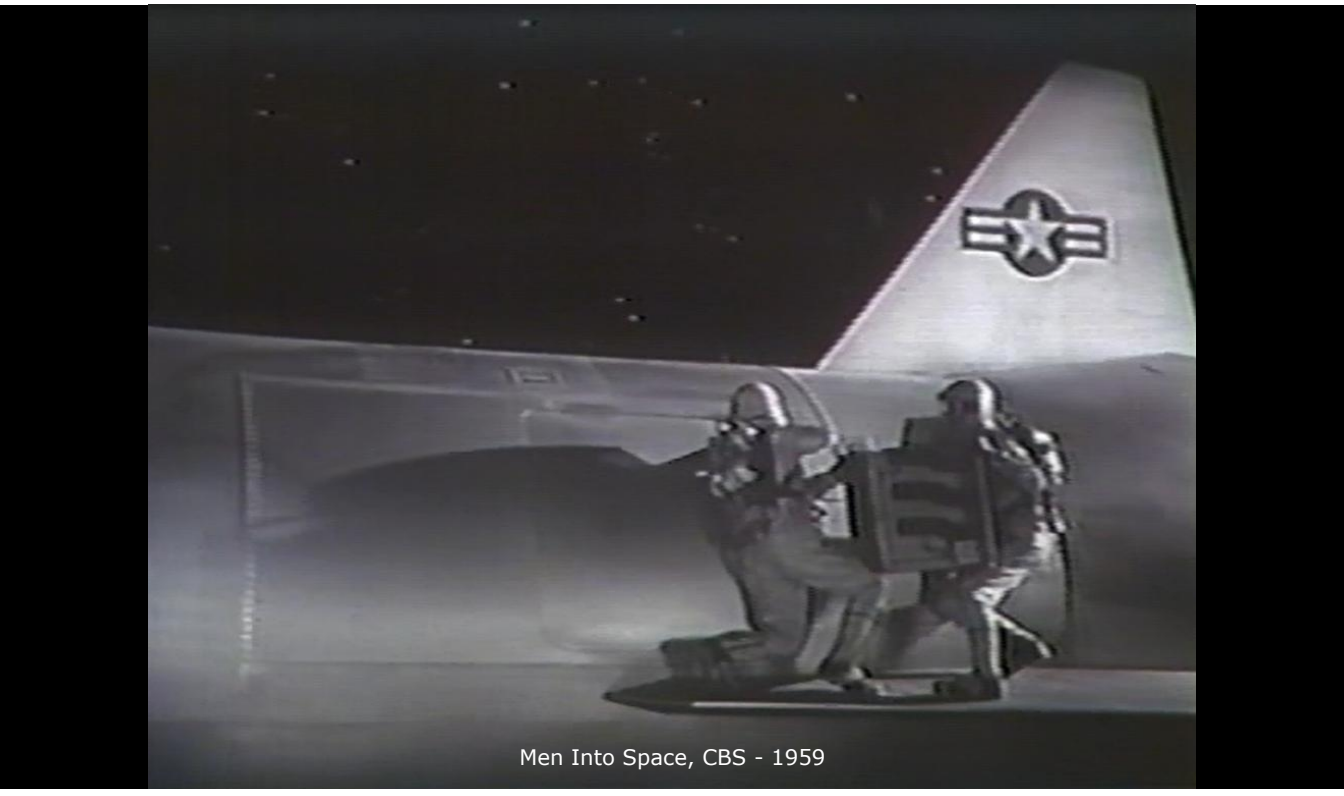
Each series gets its own chapter and each chapter includes essential production information; a history of the series; critical commentary; and amusing, often provocative interviews with more than 150 of the show's creators, actors, writers and directors. The book also offers updates on each series' regular cast members, along with several photographs and a bibliography. This is all information gathered specifically for this volume. You won't find much of the information in these chapters anywhere else, even in the age of Google. The work that has gone into these books is staggering.

The books were written by Mark Phillips who has written for *Cinefantastique, Filmfax, Outre* and Britain's *TV Zone* and lives in Victoria, British Columbia; and Frank Garcia, a science fiction media journalist whose work has appeared in *Cinefantastique, Filmfax, Starlog, Video Watchdog* and other publications. Frank lives in Vancouver, British Columbia.

What made these two Canadian writers decide to do this?

For Mark Phillips it had to do with truly wanting to document these shows that have played such an important part in pop culture. "In seeing how listless and inaccurate many of the studio press kits were for 1960s/1970s shows, I wanted to dig deeper, correct the errors and find the real stories," Mark says. "As well as to speak with so many TV heroes and heroines of my childhood. I was driven by a true interest in the making of these shows, so it was never work, it was really a series of awe-inspiring revelations for me."

For Frank Garcia it was a desire to cover all these "old forgotten SFTV shows" that often did not get documented. "We knew there were a lot of untold stories and that they were not "collected". Sure we had Starlog and CFQ and all those other magazines but the information was all scattered. We also knew that it would be a massive effort. We just didn't know (reality bites!) how long or how much of an effort it would take!"



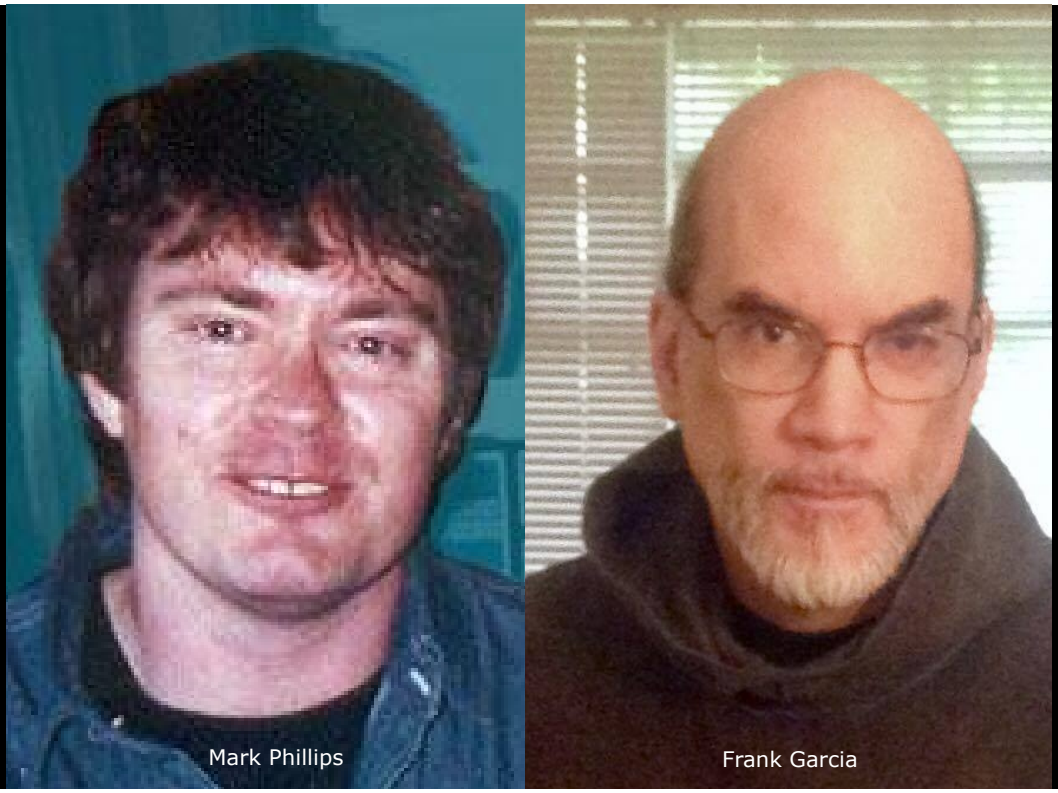
Men Into Space, CBS - 1959

And they were right about untold stories. "That's one of the major things we accomplished with the books," Frank explains. "We were able to spotlight the cast and crew's experiences in making those SFTV shows and they were very generous in giving us their stories. I still think I'm the only guy to go back and talk to the stuntman Fred Waugh, who did all the wall-crawling stunts for the *Spiderman* TV series. Same with Nick Hammond, who is rarely heard from about his work on the show. And I got to solicit Stan Lee's comments about the show! With Mark being the expert on the Irwin Allen series, HE was able to snag a lot of different people from that era and older forgotten shows like *Men Into Space*."

The two volumes are exhaustive and compiling them took a lot of the writers' time, more than they realized it would when they started out. "It ended up being a 5-year journey," Frank says. "We ended up spending 9 years of our life doing the work. Book 1 took about 5 years to produce, Book 2 took about 4 years (+ Internet and book experience, and no episode guides!) to produce."

If they had known it was going to take so long, would they have even begun the project?

"It's always cheating to go into 'hindsight' questions," Frank says. "None of us ever really knows what will happen. But if magically we were given this information it would certainly give me pause. We both agree that we were VERY naive when we took on the project – 'Yeah, we can do this!' – and we gave ourselves a very big mountain to climb when you consider the number of shows we decided to document. It was really balancing real life and the project for so long. A lot of people in our lives were caught up in that – 'When are you guys going to finish that thing?' – and it was hard to explain why it took so long. but we



ended up also having to give ourselves limits of how many interviews per chapter to tackle in order to contain the project.

"Many times, I may have wanted to give up, but at the same time we were productive and we saw the potential of what we were building. Passion was an essential element to continuing the project. We divided up the series titles according to the ones we were interested in, or had knowledge of. We were driven by a desire to talk to this or that person connected to a show. Being *Starlog* writers gave us the confidence and experience to know that we could write and create.

"In the early days I was so excited about what we were doing that I'd frequently call Mark long distance and say, 'Hey! (Big name star!) said yes to an interview! Yay!' But as the project progressed, and despite good responses to interview requests, it became routine to just write, 'Yeah, this big name person said yes!' And those names were people we KNEW had not been interviewed about their old, dormant series because no one else cared. We cared and wanted to hear what they had to say. And many shows were half-seasons, or 5 or 6 episodes only seasons. It was a gold mine, to us, to hear about those shows because we wanted to know why did the show work out that way? What were the stories behind the cameras? Sometimes the stories behind the series (ie., network politics, etc.) were more interesting than the show itself!"

"One aspect of collaboration is that two authors don't necessary always see things the same way," says Mark. "But whatever difficulties Frank and I may have had on occasion with the book projects, we resolved them well – I would not have done this book with anybody other than Frank. He understood journalistic ethics well and we were a team when

facing outside problems relating to the book.

"I think Frank would agree, I was more interested in the subject matter (for book 1) from a personal aspect than he was – there were long-standing questions I had about, say, *Star Trek, Twilight Zone* or *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, that I wanted to solve, and I was genuinely interested in shows like *Planet of the Apes* and *Fantastic Journey*, so discovering new stories and speaking with cast members of these shows was a joy. There wasn't a time when I wanted to quit with book one, even though I had a lot of other things happening in my life. The content reflected my interest. And for some reason, I can still zero in on the fun, strange or bizarre events that happened with practically every interview I did (actor Roy Thinnes letting my phone ring over 20 times before I could get to it at 5:00 am; providing producer Aaron Spelling with a rare copy of his 1969 *New People* pilot; and DeForest Kelley unexpectedly telling me all about his old turtle, Myrtle).

"We also had many interesting times, like sitting with *Starlost* director Ed Richardson as

"...there were long-standing questions I had about, say, Star Trek, Twilight Zone or Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, that I wanted to solve."

he watched one of his *Starlost* episodes in person at his Vancouver office, seeing this episode for the first time in 20 years. His comments were priceless.

"On the other hand, book two was NOT an easy task – I personally wasn't that interested in the shows and it seemed like an uphill battle all the way, despite having Internet access, which I didn't have for book one."

Frank concurs. "What's great and what really made the project work was that our show interests rarely overlapped. He was the 1950s-60s guy and I was the 1970s-80s guy. We covered those eras and it made the project bigger with better coverage – and we swapped interview quotes whenever we got interviews that covered different titles."

After such a massive undertaking, it might be tempting to retire from writing.

"Mark is still writing, but I'm very retired," Frank says. "The last thing I wrote was a CFQ website story on the Raiders Adaptation kids and a Harlan Ellison retrospective essay that was published in a program book for a convention in Madison, Wisconsin. I got a t-shirt out of that!"

So there's no chance of a third volume?

"Oh we're VERY done!," Frank says. "Though if anyone else wants to carry it on we're okay with that!"

Science Fiction Television Series, both volumes one and two, are available to order from McFarland Books at www.mcfarland.com

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Illustration by Norman Nodel

BOLOS: Relics of War

by G.W. Thomas

Keith Laumer's stories of autonomous, artificially intelligent tanks are remembered fondly

Keith Laumer (1925-1993) holds an unusual place in the history of science fiction. During his life he never received the laurels that he deserved, never winning either the Hugo or Nebula. Despite this his work was popular with readers. A diplomat, he was uniquely positioned to write the Retief series with a verisimilitude that most of us could never hope to find.

His military SF is also well-informed, having served in the Air Force. In the 21st century his Bolo series has found new fans as the tales of the robotic tanks have been reprinted by Baen Books and expanded upon by authors like William Keith and Eric Flint.

What I wanted to do here does not include these pastiches, but looks at the original Bolo tales and in the order they were written, with the hope of gleaming some idea of the evolution the idea has taken. All Laumer's original work appeared in *The Compleat Bolo*

(1990). This is a nice collection because it is Laumer's alone. Taken, along with the novel *A Plague of Demons* (1964) it forms the core of the Bolo canon.

Early Bolo Stories

"Combat Unit" (*F&SF*, November 1960) was the first Bolo tale, and in it we can see Laumer has begun at the end, creating much of what is to come later, meaning the Dinochrome Brigade, self-aware super-tanks, their history, methods and abilities.

The story begins when a damaged tank awakens, works it way back to full consciousness. Laumer gives this process as a series of choppy improvements that allows the reader to experience the awakening as the Mark XXXIII series tank does. This arty technique, as much as the intelligence of the tank that sits waiting for rescue, while it listens to classical music, studies stars and contemplates the meaning of life and death, explains why this story appeared in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*. It's not an action story so much as the tale of a survivor and the success of his positive mind-set.

"Courier" (aka "The Frozen Planet") (*IF*, September 1961) ties the Bolo series to Laumer's most famous creation, Retief, the galactic agent. The Bolo has only a brief cameo when Retief makes his way to the frozen planet of Jorgenson's World. He must warn the mind-reading Scandinavian descendants of an incoming invasion by the Soetti. Retief and his companion Chip are threatened by a "… a Bolo *Resartus*, Model M. Built mebbe two hundred years ago in Concordiat times" which they disable by hacking its controls.

"Laumer never really ever shows us the early days of the Bolos, but prefers the days after their glory."

Bolo production ended at the time of "Combat Unit", with the Mark XXXIII being the last of the super-tanks. Ultimately, the Soetti are turned aside and the Bolo's appearance is noteworthy but not of any real importance.

"Night of the Trolls" (*Worlds of Tomorrow*, October 1963) is Laumer's major opus of Bolos, with the timeline returning closer to the beginning. Laumer never really ever shows us the early days of the Bolos, but prefers the days after their glory.

After a holocaust, Jackson, a scientist and Bolo technician, wakes up from hyb-sleep to find his world replaced by death and barbarism. He quickly learns that a "Baron" has taken charge, with armed soldiers combing the ruins for wealth and survivors to enslave or kill. This man turns out to be Jackson's old colleague Mallon, now eighty years older.

Two Bolos are in the mix, with each guarding a different location, a Mark I protects the underground complex where Jackson wakes and the Mark III protects a spaceship, *Prometheus*, filled with sleeping voyagers. Playing a dangerous game with the power-hungry Mallon, Jackson disarms the Mark III Bolo but lays a trap of his own. Jackson escapes to the Mark I and lures Mallon and the Mark III into an empty missile silo. Despite the Mark I being older, more inferior tech, and having no missile to fire, Jackson wins out.

A tank trap is a tank trap, even in the near future. Both the Mark I and III are not self-

BOLO - Illustration by Norman Nodel

aware but able to be programmed to do certain tasks such as perimeter duty.

Laumer shows his best talents in this story, making the action exciting but also plucking at our heart strings with the character of the old man who saves Jackson twice, and firing our sense of revenge with the insidious Mallon. By setting one model of Bolo against another we learn much about their respective abilities and weaknesses.

Laumer would expand this story (padded really) into the novel *The Stars Must Wait* (1990) but changes the ending to a less satisfying conclusion.

Plague of Demons

Plague of Demons (aka "The Hounds of Hell", *IF*, November-December 1964) is not wholly a novella about Bolos but ends with tanks similar to them.

John Bravais discovers the presence of shape-shifting aliens and is kidnapped by them to fight in an intergalactic war. When he dies, he finds his brain has been transplanted into a cybernetic tank, much as the Yugoothian Migos in H. P. Lovecraft place brains in jars in "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1931). The alien Demons are in for a surprise when the slave gets unchained and brings his full munitions against them. The tanks, and the way the author describes the mind of a working tank is right out of the Bolo tales, but since the tanks belong to aliens, they aren't technically Bolos.

"The Last Command" (*Analog*, January 1967) has Laumer using both modes of narration, with a buried Bolo Denny telling of its experiences first hand, while we see the humans who are building a new spacesport third hand. The tank is trying to accomplish its final command to attack the enemy. An unhappy veteran named Lt. James Sanders leaves

his dreary life to assist the engineers who have failed to stop the tank from approaching a populated area. Sanders knows that the massive radiation from the tank will be fatal but doesn't care, getting one last chance to ride a Bolo before dying. The abandonment of the tanks because of the cost of repair is a nice analogy for the cultural disinterest for veterans.

"A Relic of War" (*Analog*, October 1969) has another old tank, this time called Bobby, by the townsfolk who look at it as a mascot. When Concordiat agent Crewe shows up to destroy the Bolo the townsfolk revolt, claiming Bobby as salvage and off limits. Crewe's presence activates one of the ancient enemies buried in the same battlefield that Bobby had fought in. The Bolo saves the town but receives only death as a reward. Crewe comes to Bobby after the battle, the Bolo accepting death bravely as a soldier should.

"A Short History of the Bolo Fighting Machines" (1976) was an introduction Laumer prepared for the first collection of Bolo stories from Berkley, simply called *Bolo*. It nicely lays out the history of the tank from modern history and then extrapolates the different improvements that see the automated Mark III become the sentient Mark XX and onward. Strangely it is placed at the end of *The Complete Bolo* when it would have served better that the beginning.

"A Short History of the Bolo Fighting Machines" was an introduction for the first collection of Bolo stories"

Later Bolo Stories

In 1971, Keith Laumer suffered a stroke from which he came back. His writing afterwards does not seem quite as sharp or fresh to some critics. This may be the case with "Field Test" (*Analog*, March 1976) that uses a stylistic departure for Laumer.

He tells the story of Denny (DNE) from "The Last Command" in a series of memos, letters and conversations, building up the story of Cold City and how it has to evacuate when the Peoples' Republic attacks. The new, untested Bolo, the first to receive AI chips, confronts the approaching enemy, is bombarded with nukes and the military observers know it will retreat to save its own existence. This doesn't happen. Denny advances, breaking the PR line and throwing them back. Before Denny dies from the radiation, the project manager is able to find out why the machine did not pull back. The final line of the story is one that we will hear again in the title of pastiche books, *"For the honor of the regiment."*

The stylistic choice that Laumer makes in "Field Test" and *Rogue Bolo* may have been in response to the New Wave of the 1960s attitude that suggested that Science Fiction, especially adventure SF, was passé. Laumer uses a technique that John Brunner used in *The Sheep Look Up* (1972), which in turn was borrowed from John Dos Passos.

Or it may have been the work of a man who had suffered a stroke. The effect of jumping from character to character does allow us to see the many facets of an invasion and its repulsion but it also lacks the full emotional punch that earlier stories had. Laumer expanded the story into the novel, *Rogue Bolo* (1986), written ten years since the last Bolo

BOLO - Illustration by Norman Nodel

story. At novel-length, the same jumping narrative technique becomes tiresome quickly.

"Final Mission" (1986) is appropriately the final Bolo tale. Though it offers nothing new, it is a well-written tale of a small boy nick-named Dub, who becomes the commander of a Bolo known as JNA – or Johnny.

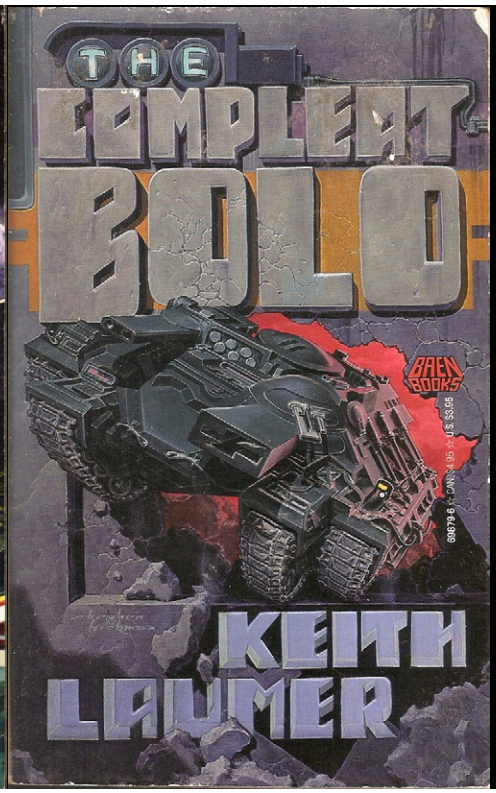
The backwater planet of Spivey's ---- is under invasion again by the spodders, spider-like aliens called the Deng. Dub and his older friend Mick sneak into a ramshackle shed called the war museum, and accidentally activate the Bolo.

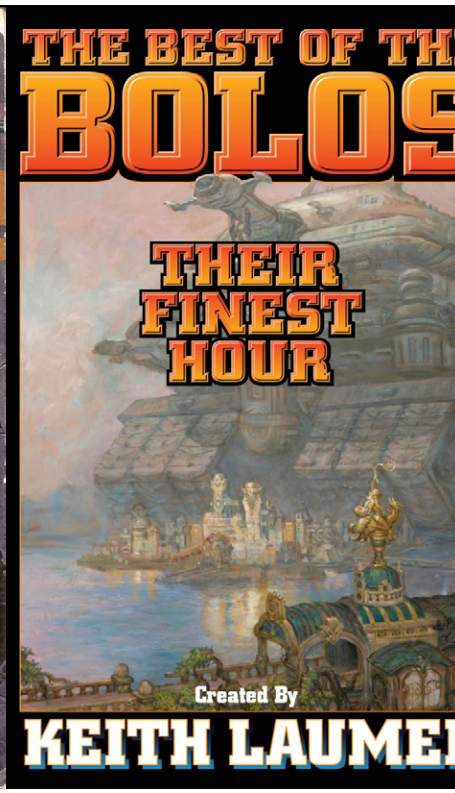
The ansible-like intergalactic radio called a SWIFT powers up the machine (again by accident) so that the boys, their teacher and an old derelict, who turns out to be General Henry, a forgotten hero who fell out of power when he refused to burn out the reactors in the Bolo regiments after a war.

As to pattern, the Bolo saves everyone despite the humans best efforts to fill their own pockets. Unlike previous tales, Johnny gets a happy ending, receiving honors, time with Dup and a chance to work on his translation of Gilgamesh, an intelligent soldier waiting for his next combat. Laumer has taken us back to where that first Bolo tale ends.

Critics may have felt Laumer was past his prime after his stroke but this story shows him in all his glory. We gasp when the old bum turns out to be a master military strategist; we cry when the boy who loves the Bolo loses his friend; we cheer when the evil spiders are defeated by a lone war machine.

This is Laumer doing what he does best: making a tale of war a human, emotional narrative with a message about bravery and loyalty and honor. It may not be everybody's





cup-of-tea but if you like that in your military SF, no one does it better than Keith Laumer in his Bolo tales.

The Nostalgic Approach

The Bolo stories almost entirely take place after the great tanks have become relics. Unlike the *Hammer's Slammers* series of David Drake, an obvious disciple of the Bolos, Laumer wasn't interested in telling the early stories of the Bolos. He chose to make them reminders of an age long gone.

This nostalgic approach is hard to explain, as he could have written many current tales of tank warfare but chose not to. This may have been because he saw them from a distance of twenty years, having been a young man during World War II. By 1960, when he wrote the first Bolo story, he may have felt that the age of nuclear bomb had drawn the curtain on the tank's greatest days. Certainly tanks were still around and more sophisticated than ever, but ultimately small potatoes compare to ICBMs carrying nukes.

His fondness for the armored vehicles is obvious at the same time that he saw them as relics of another time, when tanks broke the lines in World War I and drove the battlefields of World War II.

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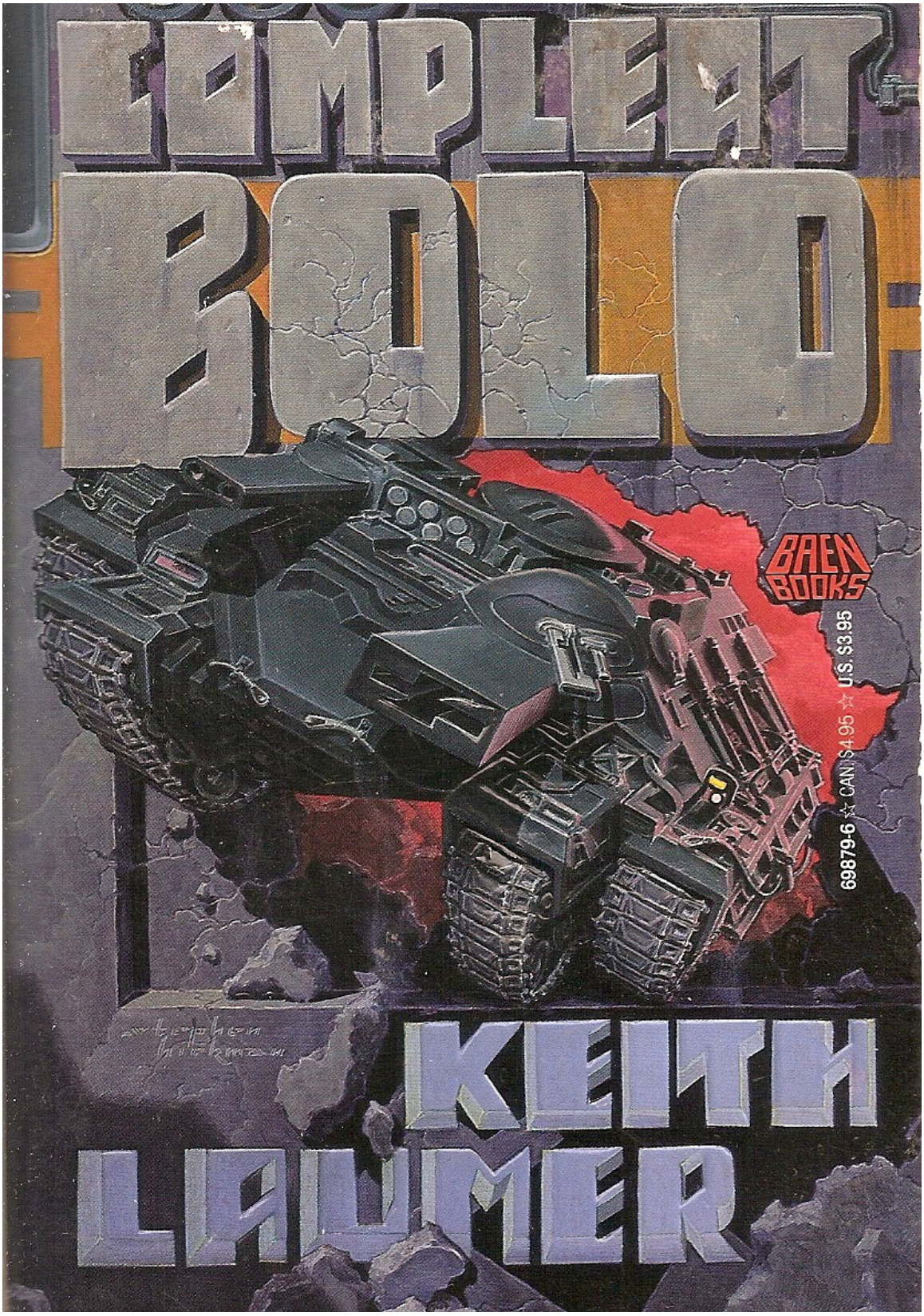


The Compleat BOLO. Baen Books 1990. Cover art by Stephen Hickman

Artwork by J. Allen St. John for The Cave Girl by Edgar Rice Burroughs - McClurg: March 21, 1925

Cave Men (and Women) & Dinosaurs

by M. D. Jackson & G. W. Thomas

From skin-clad pin-up girls to serious depictions of our ancestors from the prehistoric past

Researchers have discovered a brand new species of human ancestor buried deep inside a South African cave system. The fossils uncovered included fifteen partial skeletons, making it the biggest single discovery of its kind in Africa. This newly discovered human ancestor, named *Homo naledi*, may have been one of the first members of our genus, and may change our understanding of human evolution forever.

Now while that is exciting scientific news, it made us think of the different depictions of our distant ancestors from Fantasy and Science Fiction.

The word "caveman" conjures up a number of images immediately. Some see skin-clad beauties living in caves and battling dinosaurs or saber-toothed tigers. The monsters are animated in a jerky Ray Harryhausen style. This has been Hollywood's take on our ancient past. Others see it differently. Depictions of cavemen in art range from the serious and

Cro-Magnon artists painting in Font de Gaume, Charles R. Knight - 1920

scientific to the whimsical and silly. We'll try and include a little bit of both, but I guess we should start with the cavemen themselves. Art has been with the human race almost as long as weapons have. Cave paintings, like the ones found in caves in Lascaux, France, can be found all over the world, wherever early human beings settled. The earliest date back as much as 40,000 years.

Cave art depicts animals and the hunt for them, important activities for early mankind. They also depict early self portraits… after a fashion. Outlines of the cave people's hands are etched into the walls of some caves. It's the earliest way that human beings had to say "We were here" to future generations. Little did they know that those group hand portraits would echo thousands and thousands of years into the future.

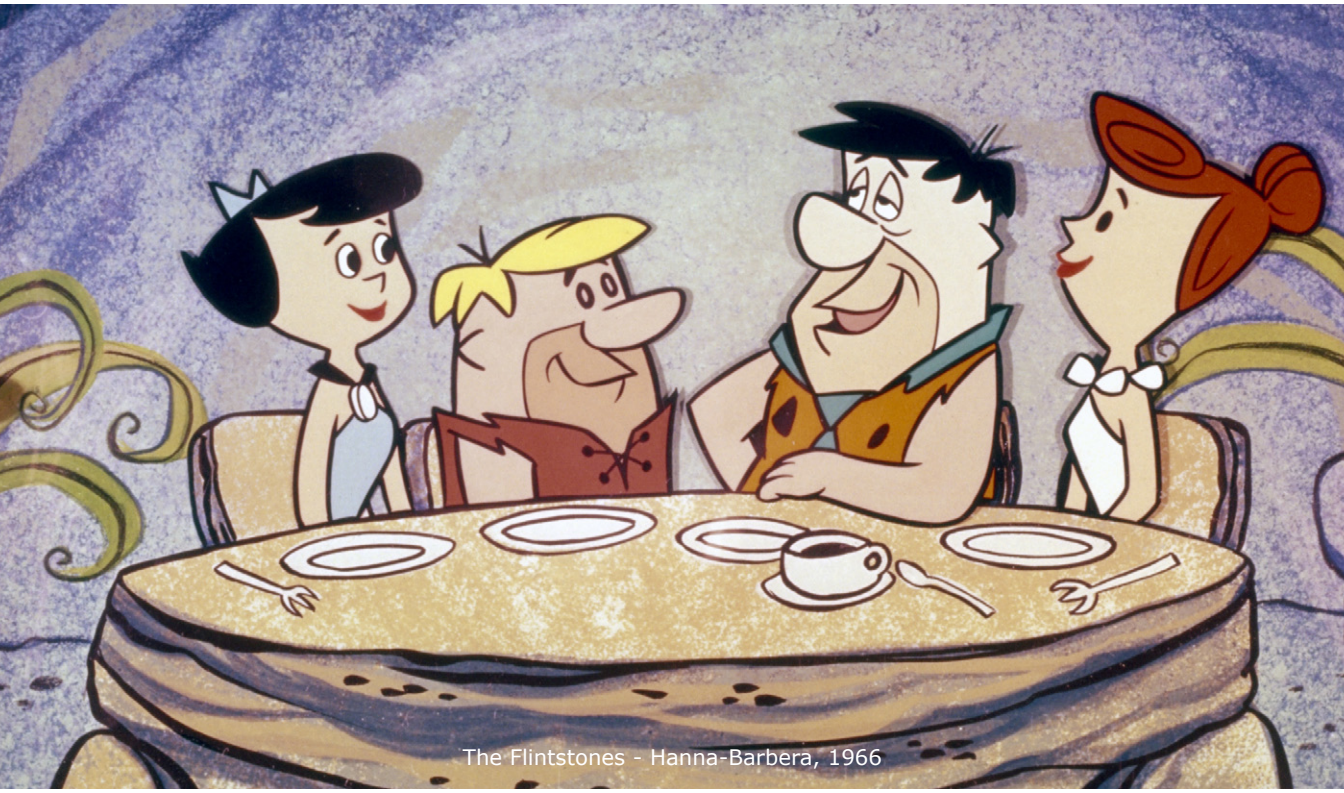
Charles R. Knight was a serious artist whose paintings of prehistoric animals made him most famous and most sought after. Knight was a frequent contributor to *National Geographic Magazine*. His portrait of Cro-Magnon artists painting in Font-de-Gaume was created in 1920, shows the act of creating cave paintings with all the majesty and significance that Knight can muster. The prehistoric artist here is depicted as heroically as any depiction of a great historical figure.

Just about as long as there has been Science delving into human prehistory, there has been fiction trying to recreate those ancient days. The first piece of prehistoric fiction was Pierre Boitard's *Etudes antédeluviennes - Paris avant les hommes. L'Homme fossile…* (*Antedeluvian Studies: Paris before Man. Fossil man…*) (1861). The first English tale was Sir Arthur Helps' *Realmah* (1868). These books followed the discovery of Neanderthal Man in Germany in 1856. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859. Old Chuck

would really stir the caveman controversy with his follow-up, *The Descent of Man* in 1871. Fiction was glad to help with Andrew Lang's "The Romance of the First Radical" (1886), the novels of J.-H. Rosny and a host of others including Henry Curwen, Samuel Page Widnall, Charles C. Dail and Marcel . H. G. Wells wrote two with a serial called "A Story of the Stone Age" (1897) and a standalone tale in which Cro-Magnon men encounter their Neander cousins in "The Grisly Folk" as late as 1921. (This one inspired Manly Wade Wellman's Hok Saga and Robert E. Howard's premiere in "Spear and Fang" (*Weird Tales*, July 1925) along with many other Pulpsters.

The same year that that Piltdown Man was discovered in England (later found to be a hoax), Arthur Conan Doyle changed caveman fiction forever with a staggering innovation, in *The Lost World* (1912), in which a group of explorers, lead by the eccentric Professor Challenger, go to South America and find a world that is inhabited by cavemen and--you guessed it--*dinosaurs*. Professional scientists might curse the day the book was published, for the lay public's idea of prehistoric times was instantly and permanently marred. Dinosaurs and prehistoric man were separated by 65,000,000 years but Doyle brought them together for the first time. And nothing was the same again. (Jules Verne almost took us there before Doyle with *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864) but his inner world featured only dinosaurs. The lone apeman, the *Ape Gigans*, in the story turns out to be a dream and no more. Verne wasn't convinced of Darwin's ideas.)

And Doyle had instant imitators. Edgar Rice Burroughs was probably the best and most prolific. He conjured up prehistoric worlds starting in 1913 with Pellucidar, Caspak and even in Tarzan's jungle with Pal-U-Don. John Charles Beecham wrote "Out of the


The Flintstones - Hanna-Barbera, 1966

Miocene" (*The Popular Magazine*, September 15, 1914), editor Howard C. Browne penned "Warrior of the Dawn" (*Amazing Stories*, January 1943) and "The Return of Tharn" (*Amazing Stories*, October-November-December 1948) to mention three of the more popular.

But then, not all depictions of cavemen were meant to be taken seriously. *Alley-Ooop*, for example, was a comic book caveman in a syndicated comic strip, created in 1932 by American cartoonist V. T. Hamlin. The strip was extremely popular and ran for four decades. Alley Oop rode his pet dinosaur, Dinny, carried a stone war hammer and wore nothing but a fur loincloth.

Alley Oop was eventually supplanted by *The Flintstones*, the modern stone-age family. Hanna-Barbera can boast that they created the second most successful prime-time animated television show (after *The Simpsons*), however *The Flintstones'* imagery has become part of the Twentieth Century's popular culture. In popular media such as cartoons, Porky Pig rode a dinosaur in "Prehistoric Porky" (1940) while Elmer Fudd followed in "Prehysterical Hare" in 1958. In 1966 Rachel Welch would don her fur bikini in *One Million Years BC* (with dinos by Ray Harryhausen), a film that was wonderfully parodied in 1981's *Caveman*, starring Ringo Star. ("Atouk alunda Lana"). Ray and his dinos would return for *Valley of the Gwangi* in 1969.

Some of Frank Frazetta's most well known paintings are of cavemen (and women), which is not surprising as he was one of the primary illustrators of the fiction of Edgar Rice Burroughs, whose books regularly featured prehistoric settings. Like J. Allen St. John decades before Frazetta, his Burroughs illustrations featured more than their fair share of

Savage Pellucidar - Artwork by Frank Frazetta 1974

cave folk.

Now, we'll be honest. We understand the Science. We even have a vague idea of what 65,000,000 years means on the geological scale. Despite that, we grew up in Pellucidar, roaming the wild jungles with David Innes and Abner Perry, as they encountered everything from sabertooths to pterodactyls. We went with Bowen Tyler in a submarine to a Land That Time Forgot and saw cavemen who evolve as individuals instead of species. And we followed Tarzan (who was Terrible indeed) to Pal-U-Don where men have tails and captives are locked in an arena with a raging triceratops. We're hopeless.

It's no wonder movies like *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth* (1970) to *Jurassic Park* (1993) come along, we're there. Popcorn in hand and ready for dino-human conflict. The spirit of Conan Doyle excites our imagination in a way that Jean M. Auel's excellent *Earth's Children* (1980-2011) series cannot. (I imagine Doyle and Auel (with her handy time machine) sitting together bitching about the terrible movie adaptations of their work. Doyle says, "Jean, my dear, it isn't that an individual movie is so badly done, it is the fact that they keep trying…" Her response is, "Yes, but at least you had John Rhys Davies…")

To conclude, we'll take our Jack Kirby *Devil Dinosaur* comics, Disney's *Dinosaur*, and even "Daffy and the Dinosaur" (1939) and leave the real deal for the purists. "Ugh, we alunda cavemen and dinosaurs." For more prehistoric fun go to http://www.trussel.com/f_prehis.htm

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Weird Tales, September 1941

ITHAQUA: The Wendigo and the Walker on the Winds

by G.W. Thomas

From Algernon Blackwood`s 1910 tale, August Derleth gave new life to the legend of the Wendigo

August Derleth has been praised or reviled as an editor and posthumous collaborator of H. P. Lovecraft but I think Mythos fans often forget he was also a collaborator on the Mythos, creating his share of new books, monsters and ideas. One of these ideas was the Walker on the Winds, Ithaqua. Like HPL before him, he looked to the stories of yesteryear for inspiration and found it in "The Wendigo" by Algernon Blackwood. This tale appeared in his collection *The Lost Valley and Other Stories* (1910). Twenty-three years later, Derleth would write a sequel to Blackwood's story, mentioning the author.

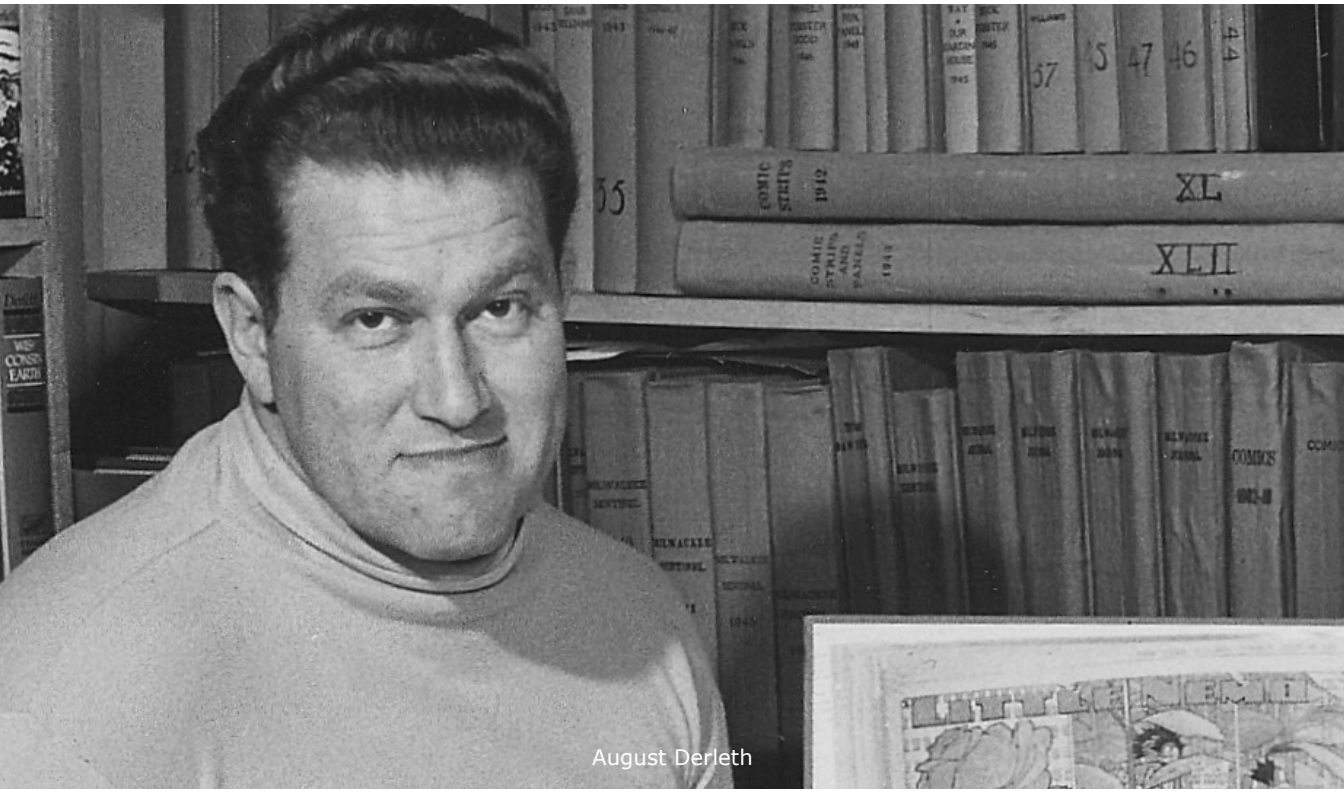
"The Wendigo" follows Simpson, a neophyte to the Bush, on a moose hunt with Dr. Cathcart and their hired guides. Simpson is paired with Defago, a French Canadien who

blanches when Cathcart decides he should take Simpson to Fifty Mile Lake. Once the two men arrive at the lake, the guide becomes even more nervous. The reason becomes clear to Simpson when he finds the man sleeping with his feet sticking out of the tent and whimpering in his sleep. A great wind rises, calling the man, who plunges off into the wilderness, leaving Simpson alone. The hunter tries to find his guide but only finds impossible tracks that get wider and wider apart. He also hears Defago's voice on the wind cry in esctacy about his burning feet. Simpson returns to the other camp and gets Carthcart and his guide, Hank. They return to the spot where Defago disappeared. The wind monster reappears, shaking Cathcart's scientific philosophy. When Simpson yells at the wind to return Defago he appears. The man is horribly changed, his flesh hanging like a mask and his feet weirdly misshapened as if by fire. The wind takes him again and the three men return to their first camp. When they arrive, they find Defago already there, his mind blasted. He dies shortly after for he has "seen the Wendigo".

But before Derleth would do this, another writer would pen a tale for Hugo Gernsback that played an important intermediary step. This was "The Thing From -- Outside" by George Allan England. England was a Science Fiction writer best known for his trilogy *Darkness and Dawn* (1912-14). This story appeared first in Gernsback's *Science and Invention* (April 1923), a magazine devoted to non-fiction with one or two stories in it, but was reprinted in the very first issue of *Amazing Stories* (April 1926), the first Science Fiction magazine ever. A. Merritt, H. P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, Manly Wade Wellman, Lilith Lorraine, Kenneth Sterling, Frank Belknap Long, even Derleth himself, would all be published by Gernsback in the decade to come.

"The Thing From -- Outside" follows a group of five people who are traveling in the wilderness. Their native guides abandon them when they see a strange circular footprint in a rock. Their death screams are a prophecy of what is to come. The party finds the strange tracks around their camp. The monster is following them. When water is placed in the track it freezes and can't be remelted. The first victim is Professor Thorburn's wife. She dies of a paralysis, with fear-filled eyes. They bury her body and continue to flee. The men argue as to the nature of the monster but can't agree. The birds and the black flies can no longer be found. The leaves on the trees fall off. The party finds an old cabin and hide there for a while. Jandron the geologist wakes up to find the professor dead, like his wife, and Marr and Vivian missing. The ground is covered in snow despite it being summer. All sources of heat no longer work. There is a love triangle of sorts between Marr, Vivian and Jandron. Jandron wants to flee with the girl but Marr goes crazy. Marr tries to shoot Jandron but his bullets won't ignite. Marr returns to the cabin where the thing tortures him. Jandron manages to get the injured man and the girl into a canoe and heads out into Lake Moosawamkeag. They are rescued. Marr is dead but Jandron and Vivian escape. Vivian has no memory of what happened. Jandron lies and tells her that the others died in a boat capsizing. They marry but Jandron can never wear a ring as he has an aversion to all things ring-shaped.

It is easy to see how England's story inspired Derleth's version of the Wendigo. Where Blackwood is ethereal and vague, England is far more brutal if just as unclear. You can feel the terror that the captives are suffering, the weird paralysis, the fear of the unknown. Derleth borrows this version of a thing from outside our reality for his wind-walker. In many ways his story is more frightening than most Lovecraft tales because of its directness. Lovecraft worked hard to use M. R. Jamesian indirection in the forms of journals and letters in his stories. England does none of this, just tells it directly. Only the weak ending of "The Thing From -- Outside" marrs it as a masterpiece of horror. Strangely, I hadn't heard of this



August Derleth

story until recently. It seems an odd story to find in *Science and Invention*.

"The Thing that Walked on the Wind" (*Strange Tales*, January 1933) is Derleth's first attempt at using the Ithaqua monster. A Mountie named Dalhousie reports about a strange case at Navissa Camp, Manitoba and the town of Stillwater, where everyone mysteriously disappeared. The local doctor discovers three bodies that fall from the sky. The first, a woman, has been frozen solid. The other two are men and still alive. One wakes and mumbles of the terrible things he has seen while on his aerial travels with Ithaqua. Both men die from the warmth of the room, their bodies now conditioned to live in extreme cold. From the pieces, Dalhousie figures the two men were strangers who had come to Stillwater. The woman had come to them for help since the townsfolk planned to sacrifice her to Ithaqua, the Wind-Walker. While the three escaped they were taken by the monster, who took all the townsfolk as well in retaliation. When the Mountie looks into these terrible details he sees the creature, a weird purplish snow cloud with burning eyes. After that he feels something is watching him and he must escape. The report ends there.

This first installment in the Ithaqua story features some details that will be in later stories. First off, if you see Ithaqua he will come back and get you. This is Derleth's version of "seeing the Wendigo", though less subtle than Blackwood's manic esctacy. Secondly, he uses the Lovecraftian format of a report filled with Mythos references and tidbits from the Tcho-Tcho people of Leng to Cthulhu in R'yleh. This story and those that follow have some creepy ideas but suffer from over-exposure. Where Blackwood and England leave things largely unseen, Derleth describes to his detriment.

"Ithaqua" (*Strange Stories*, February 1941) returns to the same area along the Olassie

Trail. Another Mountie reports of a man who has disappeared, Henry Lucas, leaving some mystifying tracks behind. The man walked out of door*s* and virtually disappeared. Constable French investigates. The local priest directs him to the hinted at altars and fires in the woods. He finds three strange circular stone altars and evidence of large bonfires. He also sees Ithaqua before fleeing back to the town of Cold Harbour.

It's strange to think only the last Ithaqua story, "Beyond the Threshold" appeared in *Weird Tales* (September 1941), the place where the majority of the Mythos was born. This tale begins like a Deep One story then gradually changes into an Ithaqua tale. Because of this, it is structurally different than the two previous Derleth tales. Anthony Alwyn comes to the home of his grandfather at his cousin Frolin's behest. It seems the old man has been acting strangely and weird music has been emanating from the study. The two cousins slowly learn that their grandfather has discovered old evidence from their ancestor Leander Alwyn that tells of Ithaqua and a hidden "threshold" that the old man wants to cross. When he finally does, he ends up like all those who see Ithaqua, carried off and frozen to death, dropped mysteriously far away from home. The tale adds little to the Ithaqua idea except describing the Great Old Ones as elementals such as air elementals, Ithaqua, Lloigor and Hastur, water elementals like Cthulhu, etc. This would be the branch of the Mythos that Brian Lumley would exploit when he created his Titus Crow novels. Like Derleth, Lumley over-explains, over-exposes all the horror that Blackwood and England created, making the wind-walker more rounded but far less frightening.

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Illustration for Algernon Blackwood's The Wendigo by Matt Fox

Startling Stories, June 1952 - Cover art by Earl Bergey

LOVING THE ALIEN

by M.D. Jackson

Our attitudes towards the alien tells us more about ourselves than almost any aspect of Science Fiction

Human beings have always had a fear of, and at the same time, a fascination with the "other". Almost as soon as humans were able to make art on cave walls, depictions of strange and bizarre creatures began showing up amongst images of their fellows and animals. The stone walls of ancient Egypt were rife with depictions of gods with human bodies and the heads of jackals, eagles or snakes.

In modern times, when gods were replaced with aliens, depictions of beings from other planets have ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Before the 20th century a number of Victorian illustrators, chief among them French illustrator Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard (who was generally known by the pseudonym of Jean-Jacques or J. J. Grandville), were adept at creating menageries full of wild and outrageous creatures. Most of these early illustrations took the form of political satire, but divorced from their cultural meanings as they are today they are wonderful examples of

imaginative illustration.

It wasn't until the 20th century with the rise of the Science Fiction pulps, that alien creatures really took center stage.

J. Allen St. John was an American author, artist and illustrator. He is considered by many to be 'The Godfather of Modern Fantasy Art'. Although he illustrated works of many types, St. John had the enviable opportunity to be one of the first to illustrate the fantastic tales of Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Although mostly remembered as the author who created Tarzan, Burroughs also wrote planetary romances set on the Moon, Mars, Venus and even at the Earth's core. Burroughs' books contain a menagerie of alien creatures that were ably depicted by St. John. From Martian Thoats to lunar Kalkars, St. John's versions inspired the imaginations of readers beginning with the A. C. McClurg publication of *The Return of Tarzan* (1915) until the *Amazing Stories* illos for Ray Palmer in the 1940s.

The Science Fiction magazine *Amazing Stories* was, of course, no stranger to alien creatures. The pages of that pulp magazine were chock-full of all manner of odd and bizarre

"Amazing Stories was no stranger to alien creatures. The pages of that pulp magazine were chock-full of all manner of odd and bizarre beings"

beings. The chief artist of the magazine was Frank R. Paul. Frank Rudolph Paul was a discovery of editor Hugo Gernsback. Paul was influential in defining the look of both cover art and interior illustrations in the nascent Science Fiction pulps of the 1920s. And he depicted his fair share of extraterrestrial creatures. As adept as Paul was at depicting architecture and futuristic machinery, his skill left a little bit to be desired when it came to human anatomy. His aliens were rendered in a similarly clumsy fashion. An artist needs to be fully conversant in human and animal anatomy before he or she can successfully subvert the form in such a manner. Paul did try and his alien creatures are suitably outre if not entirely believable.

One of the ways he would work around that shortcoming was to suit his aliens up in metal suits. As in his 1940 illustration for "Life on Uranus" (insert sophomoric joke here) Paul depicts a frog-like alien but only its face is visible through the front plate of a helmet. The rest of the structure is merely suggested by the configuration of the metal suit.

Of course, Paul is famous for one of the earliest depictions of a well-known alien — the Martians from H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. (He was also the first artist to draw a space station and a flying saucer.) Paul naturally chose to depict only the Martian's tripod walking machines and not the biological creatures themselves on the cover of *Amazing Stories*, August 1927.

Another workaround by early artists was to render a multitude of tentacles, as with an illustration by Leo Morey of the flying star-fish for "Dragons of Space" in *Amazing Stories Quarterly* in Spring 1930, which depicts a hapless cow being hauled up into the sky by such a collection of cephalopod-like protuberances. The first depiction of the fabled "cattle

mutilation" perhaps?

As the century moved on strange things began to be observed in the skies above North America. Beginning with Kenneth Arnold's sighting of craft that he described as "saucer-like", to the infamous Roswell Incident, the late 40's and early 50's were ripe for an invasion from another planet, even if only in the paranoia fueled imaginations of a generation brought up with the realities of war on a massive scale and a growing Communist menace.

Aliens were often described as the "little green men". No little green man was ever painted as well as by Frank Kelly Freas, who was an American Science Fiction and Fantasy artist with a career spanning more than fifty years. He was known as the "Dean of Science Fiction Artists" and he was the second artist inducted by the Science Fiction Hall of Fame. His cover for September 1954's *Astounding Science Fiction* depicting a pointy-eared Martian illustrated Fredric Brown's classic story *Martians Go Home*. The story was a comic Science Fiction tale but the painting, as whimsical as it is, is not cartoony at all. The Martian's mischievous grin is clearly grounded in reality.

Out of this confluence of fear and suspicion came arguably one of the most iconic aliens

"Aliens were no longer out to kill us or steal our stuff. Aliens now represented the allure of the new and exotic"

that has ever been committed to print: Topps' Martian invaders from their *MARS ATTACKS!* series of bubble gum cards. Released in 1962, the cards feature artwork by veteran artists Wallace Wood and Norman Saunders. The cards form a story arc, which tell of the invasion of Earth by cruel, hideous Martians, under the command of a corrupt Martian government who conceal the fact from the Martian populace that Mars is doomed to explode and therefore proposes a colonization of Earth. The cards depict futuristic battle scenes and bizarre methods of Martian attack, torture and slaughter, as well as various Earth nations being attacked.

The cards proved popular with children, but depictions of explicit gore and implied sexual content caused an outcry, leading the company to halt production. Saunders and Wood's depiction of the hideous, skull-like, large-brained Martians undoubtedly invaded many a nightmare of American schoolchildren through the early 1960's.

Eventually the paranoid attitude of the fifties gave way to the peace and love of the sixties and attitudes about the "other" softened considerably. Aliens were no longer out to kill us or steal our stuff. Aliens now represented the allur*e* of the new and exotic and the open-minded youth culture embraced the alien as never before. With big selling novels such as Robert A. Heinlein's *A Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) and Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965), Science Fiction (and Fantasy, with the paperback release of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*) had brought the alien to a whole new generation. Indeed, this generation of "peace and love" gave us aliens that were oddly attractive in ways that they hadn't been before. Some aliens were even sexy. This was the time of the green skinned women in silver

Playing God, artwork by Stephen Youll

bikinis on *Star Trek*.

Aliens tend to be more successfully depicted when the artist has a firm grasp of anatomy and biology. There are many very talented artists painting covers for Science Fiction books today and there are various and sundry depictions of aliens. One really good and relatively recent example is one from artist Steven Youll.

Youll painted the cover art for *Playing God* by Sarah Zettel. The whole painting is a Science Fiction tour-de-force, but the alien him(her?)self is tall, serene, stately and completely believable despite a resemblance to something you would find on your plate at a seafood restaurant.

Another great artist who has been knocking out covers for several decades is Michael Whelan. Whelan probably deserves to have a whole article dedicated to his work alone (and I will likely get around to doing just that before too long) but his artwork is so striking and his grasp of anatomy so clearly evident in the way that he depicts non-human creatures.

There is no better example of this than a series of covers he did for a re-issue of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Mars books. His grasp of anatomy makes the weird creatures of Burroughs' Mars — the Thoats and the Tharks — seem perfectly believable. The viewer would have no trouble buying into the idea of these creatures as real beings that could walk off the page and interact with us in reality.

So, like J. Allen St. John almost 100 years before him, Whelan helps to bring the wonder of Burroughs' alien worlds to life.

The "Other". The alien. The aliens in Science Fiction are not just props to populate the otherworldly landscapes. These are symbols. They are a fantastical manifestation of the

The Gods of Mars, artwork by Michael Whelan

ways in which our understanding of our humanity grows through encounters with the non-human. They are metaphors for the way we deal with the world. From physical, nightmarish manifestations of rampant xenophobia, to a wondrous illustration of what it means to expand our minds and understand other cultures, other concepts, the Science Fiction alien is a stand-in for our own personal "other".

Whether it is us learning to deal with people whose skins are a different color from ours or whether it is us learning to understand new cultures or even new conceptions of the universe, the Alien represents our attitude towards that. It is an illustration of our own attitudes to the world around us and those with whom we share that world.

Our attitudes towards the alien tells us more about ourselves than almost any other aspect of Science Fiction literature.

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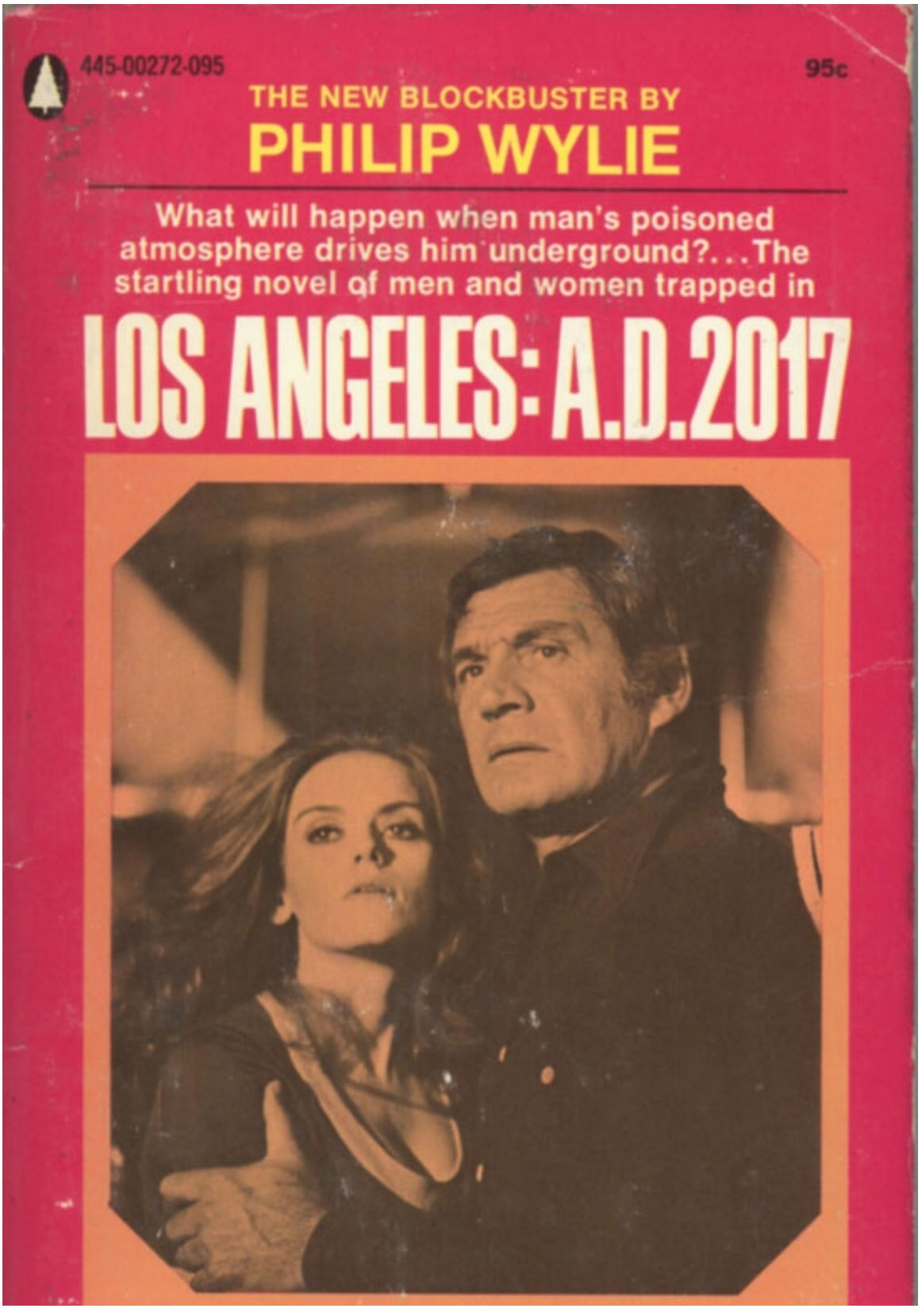

The novelization of Los Angeles: AD 2017 with photocover Copyright Universal Television

Philip Wylie and the End Of The World

by G. W. Thomas

Are Philip Wylie's prediction about our present time seriously dated or eerily prescient?

This June I had a lot of fun writing about George Allan England's "June 6, 2016" (www.michaelmayadventureblog.com/2016/06/june-6-2016-predictions-and.html). In that piece I compared England's version of that date with June 6, 1916, around when he wrote the story. Well, I'm at it again. The story this time is actually a novelization. As a general rule I look at novelizations as marketing by-products generally not worth the time it takes to read them. Television and movies lack the richness of a novel and to have some hack transcribe the screenplay into a readable version is an exercise doomed to fail.

I made an exception in this case for two reasons: one, the person who wrote the screenplay also turned it into a novel. And two, the television episode that the novel is based on is not readily available. There are tantalizing bits as well as a trailer on Youtube but that's

all. The seventy-six minute program was recently released on DVD but to little fanfare. (You'll see why I say that in a minute.)

The novel/novelization in question is Philip Wylie's *Los Angeles 2017 A.D.* from 1971. It was the last book published during Wylie's life and the second last he had published. Now Wylie is a very interesting fellow. His early work helped inspire Superman (*Gladiator*, 1930), Doc Savage (*The Savage Gentleman*, 1932), Flash Gordon (*When Worlds Collide*, 1932) before he moved onto writing about nuclear destruction (*The Paradise Crater*, 1945 and others). His early guesses about nuclear bombs got him arrested by the government just before the creating of the atomic bomb. Later he was instrumental in the creation of the Atomic Regulatory Commission. After this he wrote detective novels but also an early examination of feminism, and finally, the last theme that dominated his life, ecological disaster. *Los Angeles 2017 A.D*. is one of these works.

Los Angeles 2017 A.D. was not a TV movie, but an episode of the anthology show, *Name of the Game*. In a dream, a present-day scientist goes into the future to see how the world is destroyed by human greed. The human race has been driven underground to escape the poisoned atmosphere, and is ruled by a totalitarian corporation. The episode was directed by a twenty-four-year old named Steven Spielberg. (Who probably never wanted this show to appear again.) It starred Gene Barry, Barry Sullivan, Edmond O'Brien, Sharon Farrell with a cameo by Joan Crawford. Now I haven't seen this show but if the book based on it is any indication, the program was over-long, talky and heavy-handed. The trailer for the

"Los Angeles 2017 A.D. *was not a TV movie, but an episode of the anthology show,* Name of the Game."

episode is funky, psychedelic and just plain weird. This was 1971 after all. (Wylie has taken a page from Orwell's book *1984*, which was written in 1948. He simply reversed two numbers. Wylie has done this too but also like England, advanced the date a century as well, to arrive at 2017.)

But let's stick with the book since we have the entire story here before us. The novel begins with a group of millionaires and scientists gathering to discuss environmental impacts. Wylie delivers the facts in strident lectures. Chapter One alone has two lengthy rants, one on who billionaire-business men really are and another on sexuality. These are not two or three paragraphs but run for pages. The first third of the book concerns describing the players, their host, Rafe Cooper, and his sexy, willing cadre of girls. Wylie gives the modern reader plenty of Harold Robbins-worthy dirt, perhaps hoping to appeal to non-Science Fiction fans(?) I suspect none of this was in the TV show since it's hard to imagine Gene Barry and Sharon Farrell getting naked and nasty. (Maybe this why Spielberg has lots of scenes of people running down corridors?) The scientists and the businessmen (no women, no non-white, non-English-speaking millionaires) come to loggerheads. The eggheads flee to parting shots about how the ecological collapse is coming. The billionaires rally to decide how they will shut the scientists up. (As I write this President Trump has

The Execution Chamber

pulled out of the Paris Accord on Climate Change. Hmm….)

It is at this point we really see who the main character is, Glenn Howard (Gene Barry), head of a huge media empire. He is actually pretending to side with big business, so that he can prepare a report for the President of the United States, a man who was not invited to be part of the secret cabal. Howard leaves the failed conference and stops to prepare some tape recordings when he falls asleep in his car. He wakes to find himself in 2017! (This device is lame by SF standards, but it was necessary for the format of *Name of the Game*, which wasn't usually an SF show.)

Howard is rescued from the unbreathable air by an outside patrol, men driving an air-tight van and using sealed suits. He is taken to an underground complex, all that remains of the livable area of L.A., and is educated in the history of the last four and a half decades. He learns that the earth produced killer spores in an attempt to kill off humankind, acid rain that ate the skin off of its victims, killer cold with no summer for three years (shades of Roland Emmerich's *The Day After Tomorrow*) , and finally poisoned air and killer winds have reduced the human population to a mere fraction of what it had once been.

The rest of the book shies away from ecology and focuses on the lives of these future humans, especially in terms of sex. The free-loving attitude of Rafe Cooper has become the norm with everyone being available to all others. Reproduction is controlled by a computer containing all genetic analysis so having babies is no longer the focus. The future people throw woman after woman at Howard, trying to harvest his valuable genetics but he refuses them (the most antisocial act imaginable). To change his perspective they take him to a school where he sees children being trained in this new philosophy. Here Wylie crosses

The Decadent Inhabitants of Los Angles 2017

several current taboos, logically but distastefully following this idea to it conclusion.

Sex isn't the only target. Wylie also attacks current social trends such as hippies and rock 'n roll. The young rebels of the 1960s, those who knew "where it is at" no longer know. They hang out in dark clubs where the elderly dance to very loud, two-tone music without any real tune. Here we can see Wylie, who was born in 1902 and almost seventy years old, reacting to the social activism and rebellion of the counter-culture. Of all the soap-boxing in the book, this one seems least objective. While he can use scientific facts to back his ecological statements, this rant sounds like an older generation simply not understanding the newer. It would be interesting to know how Steven Spielberg felt about this, being only twenty-four and part of that new culture. He did film it because the trailer features many shots of old guys and girls getting down and funky.

The book's last act has Glenn Howard siding with a rebel faction within Los Angeles. After seeing the spying, Big Brother tactics, the euthanasia chamber, the sex school and all the rest, he plays double agent inside the ruling council, leading a *sub rosa* organization of people who plan to leave the underground complexes now that the secret is out: *the atmosphere is no longer poisonous*. The corporate goons who rule don't want to lose their slaves in USA Inc. Howard leads them to escape but all the rebels are killed or captured and their leader wakes up from his dream. The book ends with Glenn Howard driving back to L. A., a city he literally hears screaming with coming disaster.

Much of what I've said here makes it sound like Wylie is a bad writer. Considering how talky the book is I still had little problem reading the entire thing despite its flaws. I think this is because Wylie is capable of some really good writing as well as the long diatribes. For

instance, his description of a lethal gas released in India:

> "...The result was the usual one in a panic. Mere numbers and crowd compression, frenzied ruthlessness and utterly selfish effort, made the great mob slow down. Glenn saw, as the front of the multitude came nearer, a horrible thing. There were palms on both sides of the street, wide walks, and then buildings shops and stores and offices, most of them white and flat façaded. The human pressure began to sway, then slant and finally topple the palm trees, which meant human bodies in hundreds were being shattered against the rough trunks. And then, here and there, he saw the white fronts of buildings turning-red. Which, again, meant only one thing: crushed human beings on the sides of this route were being hauled against the walls until they burst and became paintbrushes, swept along by the masses, and recoloring the walls with their blood."

Los Angles 2017 A.D. is similar to George Allan England's "June 6, 2016" in that it is largely a comment on present society, not the future. Wylie takes shots at what he sees as the ills of 1971. These include corporations domineering governments, the specialization of Science so that new discoveries don't take into consideration of other branches (such as a new metal process that causes greater amounts of pollution), social unrest and the counter-culture, sexual hang-ups and the coming of the Disco Era's philosophy of the "Me Generation". Also like England, Wylie can't quite see how the future will change. England's 2016 had equality for women but didn't really treat women equally. For Wylie it is race and sexuality. He can't conceive that future America isn't going to be white. He has little reference to Hispanics, African-Americans or Asians. His new free-love world doesn't include gay men. In his own way, Wylie is still stuck in 1932.

Where Wylie scores over England, is many of the ideas he has are currently coming to fruition. The concern for global warming and its effects on the earth and how industry and governments are not really dealing with it, are spot on. Wylie also has the mapping of the genome, though we haven't used it to create a eugenics system (yet). He predicts viagra, though we haven't used it as method of controlling the populace. He also successfully brings the reader to the realization that the sexed up, corporate-manipulated world of 2017 is already here in 1971, that we are equally slaves to corporations, dumbed down with sex and unable to stop the rape of the earth. Food for thought, hmm... Despite his clumsy, rant-filled book, the message succeeds in coming through in the end. And what more can you ask of a prophetic Science Fiction novel than that?

Recent filmmaker, Roland Emmerich, has mined the ideas of Philip Wylie and ecological disaster in *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) in which global warming causes killer cold to change the Northern Hemisphere and *2012* (2012) which takes it even further with global-wide flooding, sending us all back to the Ark. Philip Wylie would have approved.

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Detail, *The Magicianh's Birthday* art by Roger Dean for the album by Uriah Heap, 1972

SCIENCE FICTION RECORD ALBUMS

by M. D. Jackson

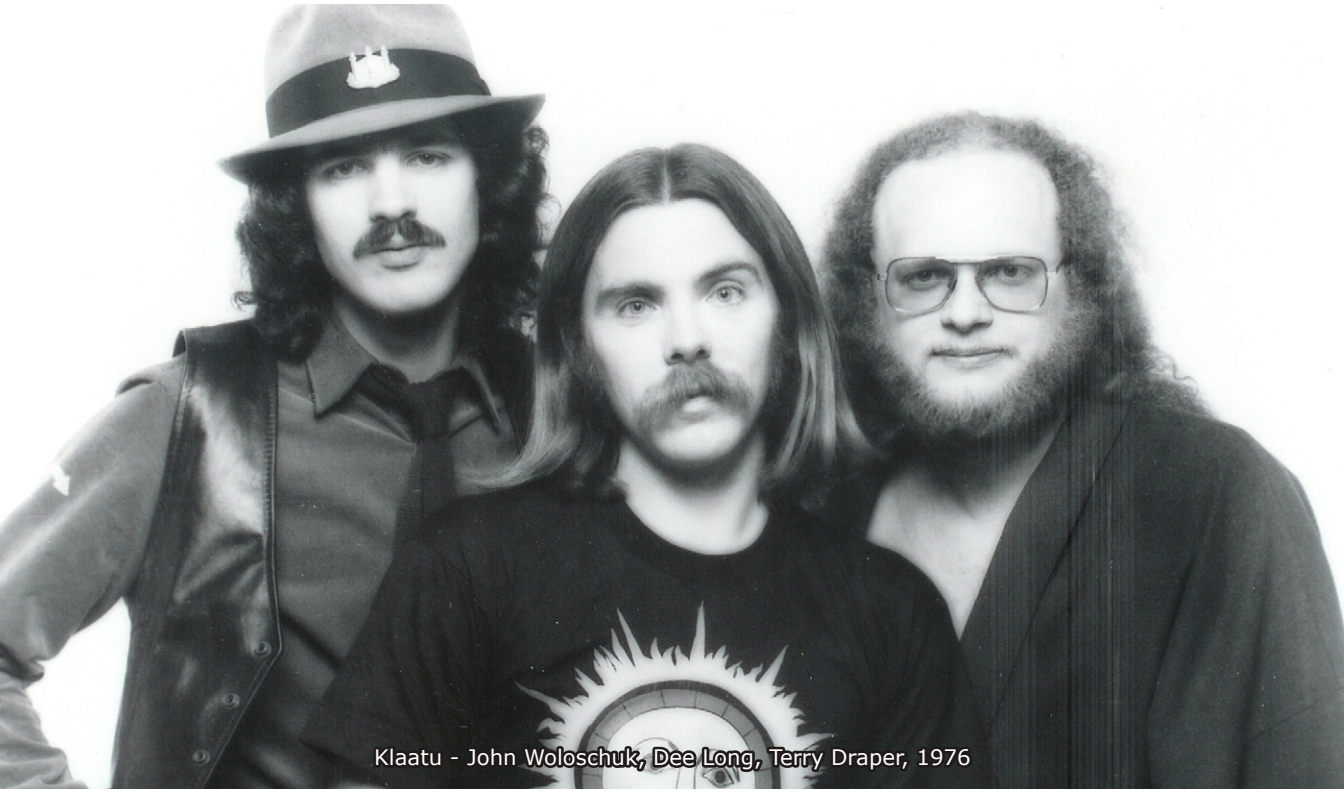
A loving look back at the era of the vinyl record album and the rare ones that had an SF theme

Let's travel back in time, you and I. Let's go back to a time before music was delivered in packets of data. Let's travel back to a time of bell bottoms, long hair and muscle cars.

Let's go back to the 1970's!

The idea of music imprinted on vinyl discs may seem like a Science Fiction (or perhaps Steampunk) idea to kids today used to music coming from the same place as their texts, tweets and tumblr images, but to those of us of a certain age, the era of the vinyl album is redolent with nostalgia. But the biggest difference with the vinyl album and an .mp3? Room – *lots* of room – for cover art!

Vinyl albums were HUGE and the sleeves in which they came had to be decorated with artwork in order to attract buyers. Sometimes pictures of the artists were enough,


Klaatu - John Woloschuk, Dee Long, Terry Draper, 1976

sometimes albums called for a little more than that.

Let's talk about two bands who had a fantasy or SF angle to them, not just in their cover art, but in their music as well.

Klaatu

KLAATU was a Canadian band from the seventies and early eighties. A trio from Ontario: John Woloschuk, Dee Long and Terry Draper formed the band that went on to release five studio albums of what was at the time labeled "progressive rock". The name Klaatu (Taken from 1951 film *The Day The Earth Stood Still*) is not the only Science Fiction connection for the band. Many of their tunes, particularly from their first two albums, have many SF and Fantasy references. For a fan-boy growing up in the seventies the band's first album was an amazing discovery.

Their first album, *3:47 E.S.T.*, was released in 1976. Probably the best known cut off that album is track 1: "Calling Occupants of Interplanetary Craft". Most people know it because of the cover version that was released by The Carpenters in 1977, but the song was originally written by band member John Woloschuk. The idea for this track was suggested by an actual event that is described in "*The Flying Saucer Reader*", a book by Jay David published in 1967. In March 1953, an organization known as the "International Flying Saucer Bureau" sent a bulletin to all its members urging them to participate in an experiment termed "World Contact Day" whereby, at a predetermined date and time, they would attempt to collectively send out a telepathic message to visitors from outer space. The message began with the words…"Calling occupants of interplanetary craft!"

3:47 EST - 1976

HOPE - 1977

The album contains some great songs, a few of which are overtly Science Fiction or Fantasy oriented, notably the tracks "Anus of Uranus", "Doctor Marvello", "Sir Bodsworth Rugglesby III", and "Little Neutrino".

The band's second album, *Hope* was released in 1977. It was a concept album, recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra, about the sole survivor of an arrogant race of beings, who warns space travelers of hazards in the last days of his life. Many fans and critics consider *Hope* to be the most creative of the Klaatu's albums.

The first two albums had a sound that was somewhat reminiscent of The Beatles and this was commented upon by a number of music reviewers. This, coupled with the lack of biographical details offered up by Klaatu, helped inspire a rumor concocted by *Providence Journal* reviewer Steve Smith in February 1977 that the album might be an anonymous project by The Beatles themselves. The rumor turned into a global phenomenon with Beatle fans being fed "clues" by radio stations and print media alike.

While all this was happening, Klaatu was in England, recording their second album. They were somewhat aware of the situation, but didn't take them entirely seriously—possibly because the UK's *New Musical Express* famously published an article on the Beatles-as-Klaatu theory under the title "Deaf Idiot Journalist Starts Beatle Rumour". Capitol Records, meanwhile, tried to make as much capital out of the rumors as possible, by issuing ambiguously worded statements that failed to make the band's identity entirely clear. The rumor was soon disproved when Dwight Douglas, program director at WWDC in Washington, D.C., checked the records at the U.S. Copyright Office and uncovered the band members' real names.

Sir Army Suit - 1978

Endangered Species - 1980

Sir Army Suit, Klaatu's third album is notable for the track "Silly Boys," which contains the entire lyrical portion of "Anus of Uranus" – a song from their first album – backwards-masked interspersed between the "Silly Boys" lyrics. For both these releases, the band continued their policy of not including any individual names of band members in the credits, nor did they play any live shows or make any public appearances to promote these albums.

Upon the release of their fourth studio album *Endangered Species* in 1980, the band for the first time included their individual names in the album package, making it clear that there was no musical connection to any former Beatle. As well, songs were now credited to their individual writers, rather than the "All songs written by Klaatu" credit of old. (Subsequent re-issues of earlier Klaatu material, as well as newly published Klaatu sheet music, also gave credit to the actual songwriters of each track, rather than a collective credit.)

Although forced by Capitol to record *Endangered Species* in Los Angeles using established studio musicians to shore up the group's commercial chances, the album was a critical and commercial flop. The album's poor showing resulted in Capitol Records dropping the group.

Eventually signed by Capitol's Canadian division, Klaatu released their final album, *Magentalane*, in Canada in 1981. This album saw the group returning to their brand of Beatles-influenced pop/rock. Standout cuts from this album include the title song, "Magentalane" as well as the whimsical "Mrs. Toad's Cookies".

As a contractual obligation to Capitol-EMI in Canada, the band were forced to play their

first ever live dates and tour most of Canada to promote the *Magentalane* album. From November 1981, the group expanded to a sextet, using members of Max Webster and Nightwind for live performances. However, in April 1982 Dee Long – never all that fond of performing live in the first place by most accounts – quit the group. Although Woloschuk and Draper carried on performing for a few more months, Klaatu officially disbanded in August of the same year.

Listening to the albums always brings back a lot of good memories for me. The music has a positive quality and a whimsy that few other bands have. There are a few websites devoted to the band. Klaatu.org is Dave Bradley's website about the band and it contains a wealth of information and ephemera. The band's official website is at www.klaatu.org and you can buy their albums directly from them via this site.

Hawkwind

HAWKWIND are an English rock band, one of the earliest space rock groups. Their lyrics favor urban and Science Fiction themes. They are also a noted precursor to punk rock and now are considered a link between the hippie and punk cultures.

Formed in November 1969 by singer-songwriter and guitarist Dave Brock, Hawkwind have gone through many incarnations and styles of music. Critic Jim Green describes their trademark sound as characterized by "that gargantuan and impenetrable pre-metal/hardcore drone, those great riffs, that inexorable drive to destinations unknown". Dozens of musicians have worked with the group but the addition of bassist Ian "Lemmy"

Space Ritual - 1973

Hall of the Mountain Grill - 1974

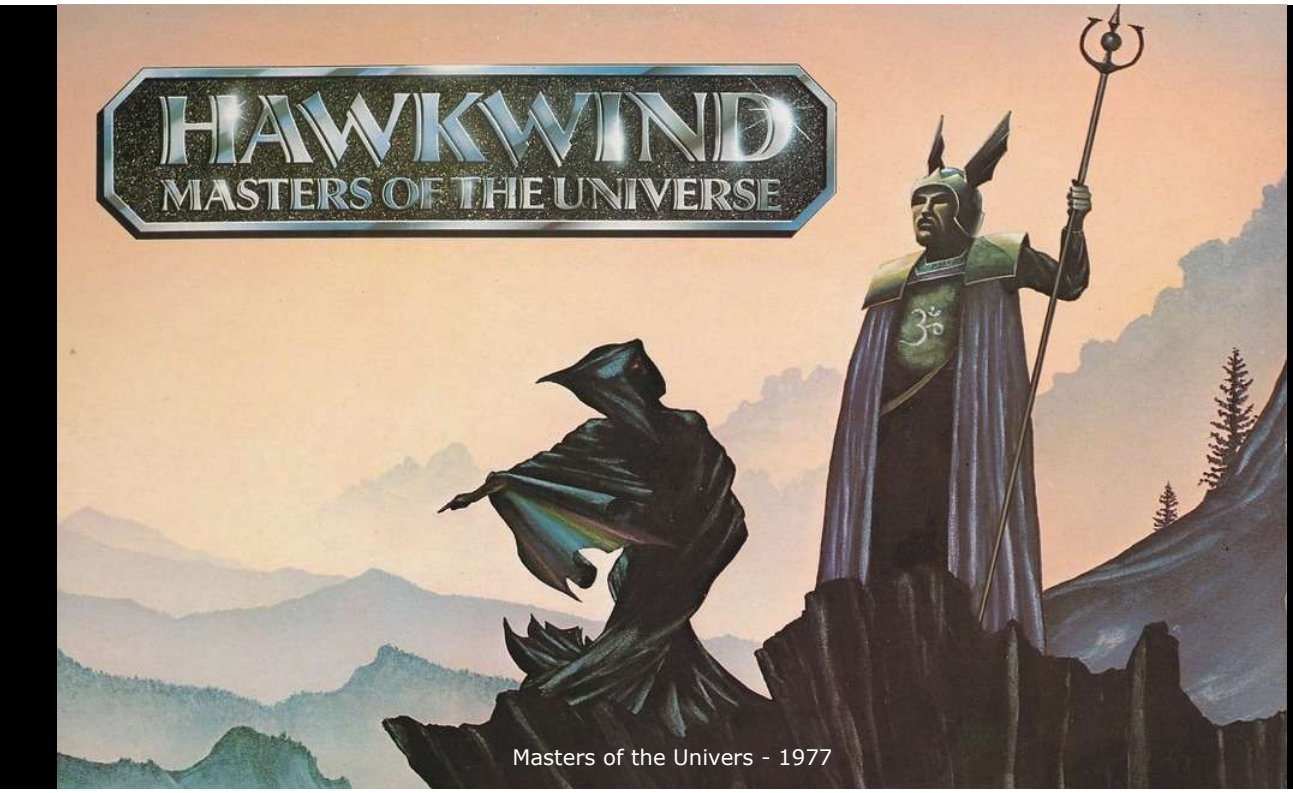
Kilmister and drummer Simon King propelled the band to greater heights.

As well, Fantasy and Science Fiction writer Michael Moorcock was an occasional collaborator. At the beginning of 1975, the band recorded *Warrior on the Edge of Time*, their fifth studio album. It reached #13 on the UK album charts and was their third and last album to make the US Billboard chart, where it peaked at #150. Many of the lyrics are by Michael Moorcock and the album is loosely based on the concept of Moorcock's Eternal Champion.

According to Michael Moorcock: "*Warrior On The Edge Of Time* was a concept of mine. What Dave tends to do is he says 'Do us a concept' or 'I've got this rough concept, can you work it out?' I do it, then Dave has a different idea and the whole thing shifts away, so that's the way it works. It's a perfectly good way of working – it tends to give Dave a bit of a start or whatever. I was doing a lot of my 'Eternal Champion' stuff on stage, so it seemed automatic to do that because there were so many numbers I could fit into that. I was only in the studio about an hour to do the stuff I did, and it was one of those weird things I didn't get the session fee either."

"Assault and Battery" lyrics quote from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Psalm Of Life". The song is a popular live number, being performed occasionally over the years, and has appeared on numerous live albums, sometimes under the title "Lives of Great Men". It was included as part of the live show for *The Chronicle of the Black Sword* concept, appearing on the album *Live Chronicles*.

"The Golden Void" segues from "Assault and Battery", and the two songs are often performed live as a pair as on the albums *Palace Springs* (1991) and *Canterbury Fayre*



Masters of the Univers - 1977

2001. The song is a popular live number, being performed occasionally over the years, and has appeared on numerous live albums, sometimes under the title "Void of Golden Light", as on 1994's *The Business Trip*.

"The Wizard Blew His Horn", "Standing at the Edge" and "Warriors" are Michael Moorcock poems based on his Eternal Champion literary figure. The poems are recited to atmospheric soundscapes provided by Simon House, and the percussionists Simon King and Alan Powell. The band had been performing them on stage during 1974, versions appearing on the 1999 *Party* live album. "The Wizard Blew His Horn" was parodied by Jim Steinman (of *Bat Out of Hell* fame) on his 1981 solo album, *Bad For Good* in "Love and Death and an American Guitar".

"Opa-Loka" is an instrumental that features a motorik rhythm and is strongly influenced by the music of Neu!, the title possibly being a reference to Opa-locka, Florida. It was performed live, but when Robert Calvert joined the band at the beginning of 1976, he would recite the poem "Vikings on Mars" over the top of it, the song evolving into "Uncle Sam's on Mars" on the 1979 album *PXR5*.

The lyrics of "Magnu" are based upon Percy Shelley's poem "Hymn of Apollo". The song is a popular live number, being performed occasionally over the years, versions on the albums *Choose Your Masques: Collectors Series Volume* 2 (1982), *The Friday Rock Show Sessions* (1986) and *Canterbury Fayre 2001*.

"Spiral Galaxy 28948" is a Simon House instrumental, the title being his date of birth (28 September 1948). It was performed live in 1975 after the release of the album, and again


Cultosaurus Erectus - 1980

during 2001 when House had temporarily rejoined the band, a version appearing on the album *Canterbury Fayre 2001*.

During a North America tour in support of the album, Lemmy was caught in possession of amphetamine crossing the border from the USA into Canada. The border police mistook the powder for cocaine and he was jailed, forcing the band to cancel some shows. Fed up with his erratic behavior, the band fired the bass player replacing him with their long standing friend and former Pink Fairies guitarist, Paul Rudolph. Lemmy then teamed up with another Pink Fairies guitarist, Larry Wallis, to form Motörhead, named after the last song he had written for Hawkwind.

The band is still alive and playing. They are touring this year with *The Spring Warrior* tour in the UK, which launched in March and includes a full performance of the *Warrior on the Edge of Time* album to coincide with the re-release on the Cherry Red label.

Blue Oyster Cult

Blue Oyster Cult is a band that has had a close association with Fantasy as far as their album covers are concerned but also lyrically. Their iconic hit "Don't Fear the Reaper" is a mainstay song in Horror pictures. Its theme of death and love readily lends itself to the unsettling atmosphere needed for the modern slasher film. But they have other Fantasy and Science Fiction themed songs as well. Their song "Godzilla" is a paean to the Japanese giant monster movie, and "Black Blade" is a song about Michael Moorcock's Sword and Sorcery hero, Elric of Melnibone. Later they would collaborate with Moorcock when he

Out of the Blue - Electric Light Orchestra, 1977

wrote the lyrics for their song "Veteran of the Psychic Wars".

Other Bands

Other bands that have Fantasy themed artwork (although not necessarily Fantasy themed music) include Electric Light Orchestra with their spaceship-like logo and their Maxfield Parrish/Arabian Nights inspired imagery, Boston with their iconic UFO logo, Molly Hackett using familiar Frank Frazetta covers, and the early paintings of Frank's wife's nephew, Ken Kelly for the band KISS, Rodney Matthews for Nazareth, Magnus and Asia and the list goes on.

The heavy metal band, Iron Maiden's covers feature a character dubbed "Eddie". A zombie or mummy or cyborg, Eddie began life as a paper mache mask that was displayed onstage behind the band during their early live gigs. The mask was then incorporated into the cover art for their albums and "Eddie" has been the band's mascot ever since.

Roger Dean

No discussion of album art would be complete without Roger Dean. Roger Dean is an English artist, designer, architect, and publisher. He began painting album covers in the late 1960s. His first album cover work was in 1968 for *The Gun*. He also did the artwork for Atomic Rooster's album *In Hearing of...* This album cover hinted at the inimitable style for which he would later become famous.

Roger Dean Art - Yes, Relayer - 1974

In the same year, Dean produced the cover for the first album by the African/Caribbean band Osibisa, which featured a hybrid insect/elephant. This was much closer to Dean's work as we came to know it and it attracted widespread attention. Later that year, he began the partnership with the progressive rock bands Yes (and Asia) for which he is best known. His first design for the band was for their album *Fragile*. Dean designed the now-classic Yes "bubble" logo, which first appeared on the album *Close to the Edge*, and continued to create covers for the band until as recently as 2011.

Known primarily for the dreamy, other-worldly scenes he has created for Yes, Budgie, Uriah Heep, Gentle Giant and other bands, Dean has said, "I don't really think of myself as a fantasy artist but as a landscape painter." Characteristic landscapes show graceful stone arches or floating islands, while many paintings show organic appearing habitats.

Album art is not the same anymore because there is no longer a physical album. Even when music delivery moved from the larger vinyl albums to smaller compact discs, album art suffered. The smaller physical space meant that images had to have a tighter focus and made a different impact upon the buyer. Now there is no more album. Music is streamed electronically. Artwork, it seems, has little place in selling music except as a thumbnail image. While our experience of music has been, in many ways, enhanced by the new methods of delivery some aspects have been lost and this is one of them.

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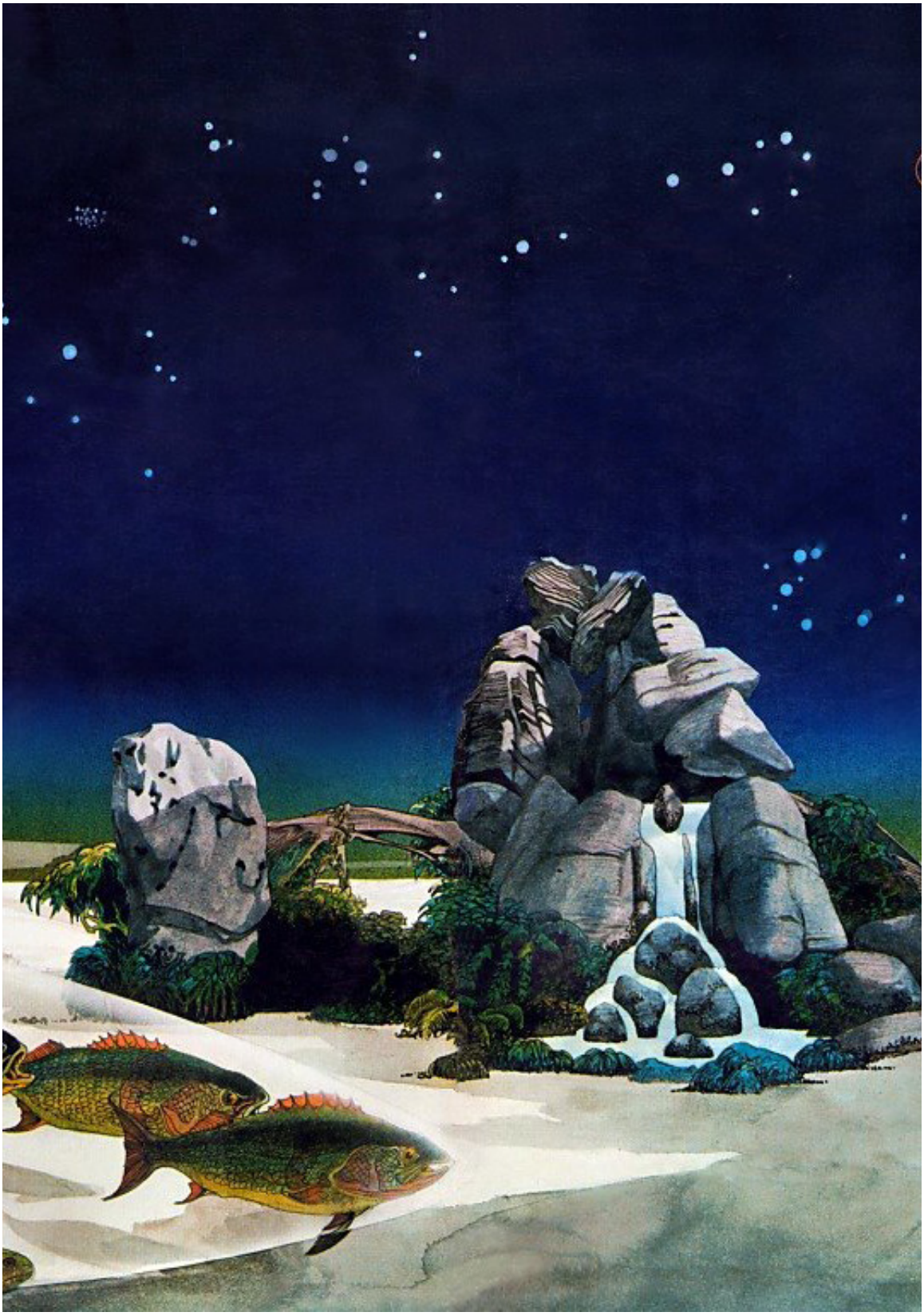
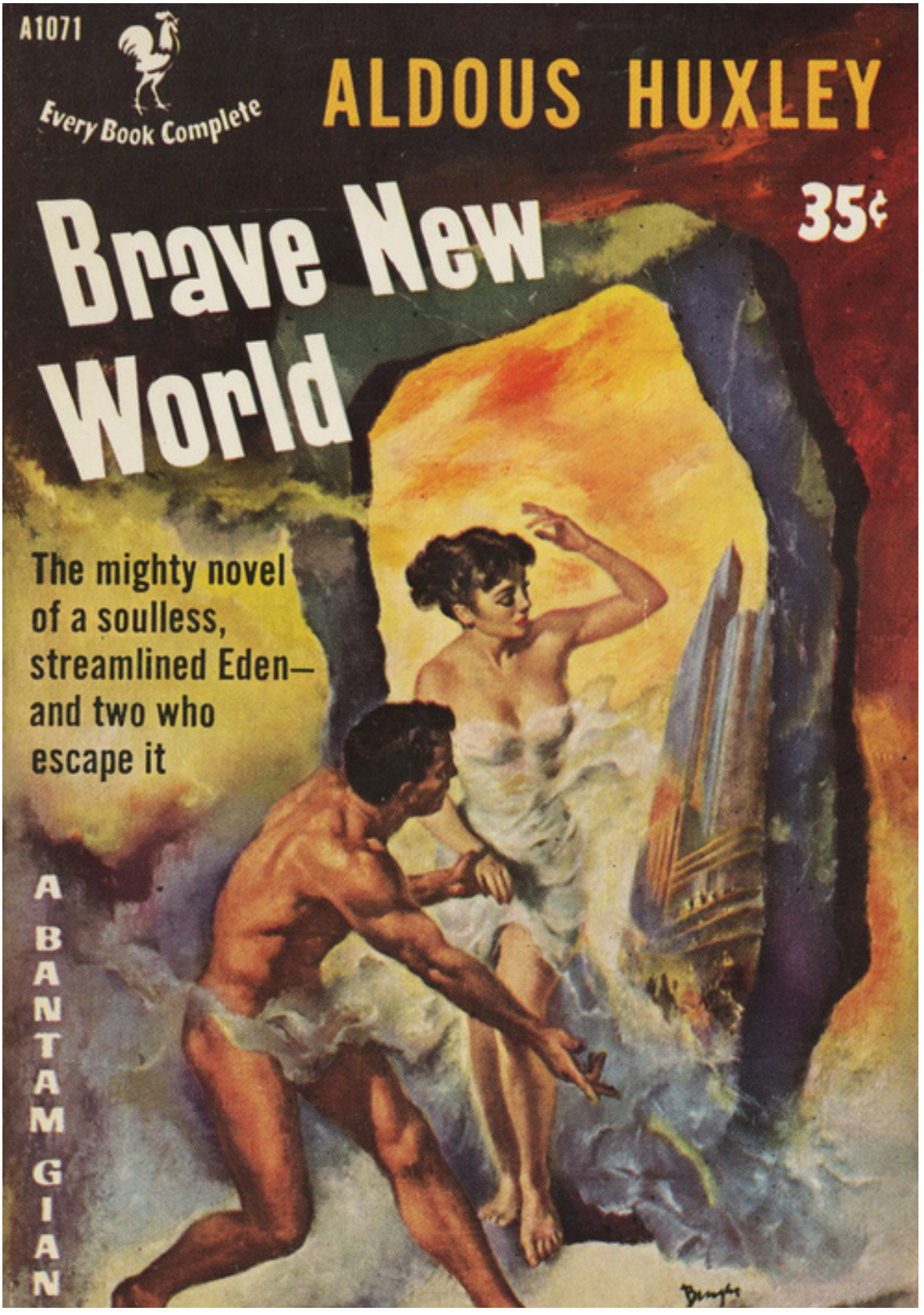


Tales From Topographic Oceans (detail) Roger Dean 1973



Brave New World, Bantam Books 1952. Charles Bingham artwork

SCIENCE FICTION AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY

by Jack Mackenzie

Despite its far flung settings and futuristic subjects, the best SF still has ties to the here and now

The very best science fiction, whether it be literature or in the movies or on television, the kinds of science fiction that resonates most strongly with the readers and viewers, is not the science fiction that merely shows us the wonders of the world of tomorrow, but the science fiction that comments on the world of today.

Despite a recent loud and disruptive movement within science fiction fan circles that proclaimed that science fiction should only focus on rocketships and rayguns, robots and whiz-bang action and decried any other type as propaganda from rabid leftist social justice warriors, science fiction and social commentary go hand in hand. It has done from the very beginning.

From the fantastic adventures of Lemuel Gulliver in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in 1735 to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to today's fiction in print and on movie screens

and television, science fiction that reflects and comments on current events usually has a more profound impact. Indeed, some will argue that is the very purpose of science fiction, to illuminate aspects of our world and our lives today. Science fiction holds it up to a funhouse mirror, distorts it, stretches it, and then examines it in ways that cannot be done without current cultural biases interfering. By couching a subject in the language of the rockets, rayguns and whiz-bang action, greater insights can be wrung from certain subjects and issues that are too "hot button" to talk about directly.

But how much of this is deliberate? As the aforementioned loud and noisy movement has accused the establishment of science fiction of doing so, how much of this "message" is deliberately inserted into modern science fiction as a form of "propaganda" and how much of it occurs naturally, an unavoidable by-product of writers who are keenly aware of our contemporary society's ills and wish to provide commentary on such, if not prescribing their so-called SJW remedies?

This, it turns out, is not a new discussion. Nor is science fiction's penchant for presenting social commentary disguised as fantastical adventures.

SOCIAL COMMENTARY

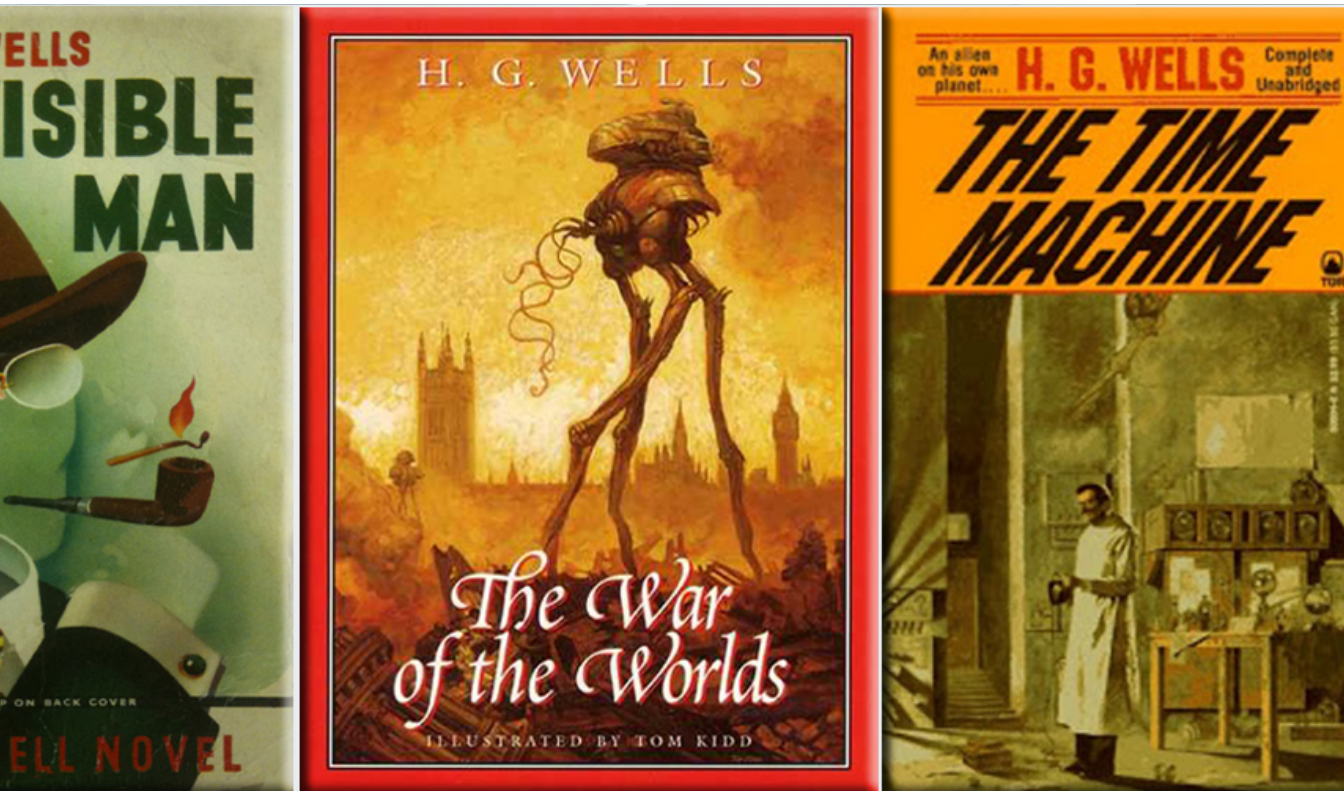
I mentioned Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* earlier. Anyone who has taken a literature course in high school or college knows that Swift's fanciful adventure was not merely a rousing tale of a hapless traveler in far flung lands. Swift constructed his fantasy world of Lilliputians, Brobdingnagans and Houyhnhnms not as a mere distraction, but to make pointed observations about contemporary European society. He did this deliberately. Indeed, Swift himself is quoted as saying that he wrote *Gulliver's Travels* "to vex the world rather than divert it".

His criticisms of contemporary society did not impinge upon the book's sales, fortunately. Indeed, the book became popular as soon as it was published. John Gay wrote in a 1726 letter to Swift that "It is universally read, from the cabinet council to the nursery."

Mary Shelley's debut novel, *Frankenstein*, is considered to be one of the first science fiction stories. The English science fiction writer Brian Aldiss has argued that it should be considered the first true science fiction story because, in contrast to previous stories with fantastical elements resembling those of later science fiction, the central character "makes a deliberate decision" and "turns to modern experiments in the laboratory" to achieve fantastic results.

But what does *Frankenstein* say about society? Shelley says that the world is cruel and monsters will not be tolerated but shhe also asks how will technology change us? The character of Victor Frankenstein is modern man, poised on the cusp of great discoveries that will challenge God, but also poised at the point at which we become the monsters. Victor rejects his creation, goes back to a world that does not embrace change. But change, in the form of Adam, has other ideas.

This battle with change will define the next two giants of Science Fiction: Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. Verne portrays scientific change as a wondrous process that will bring adventure. He often does not show how this will affect human lives. (Captain Nemo is perhaps the closest he comes to it.) Wells rejects Verne's naiveté and returns to Shelley's



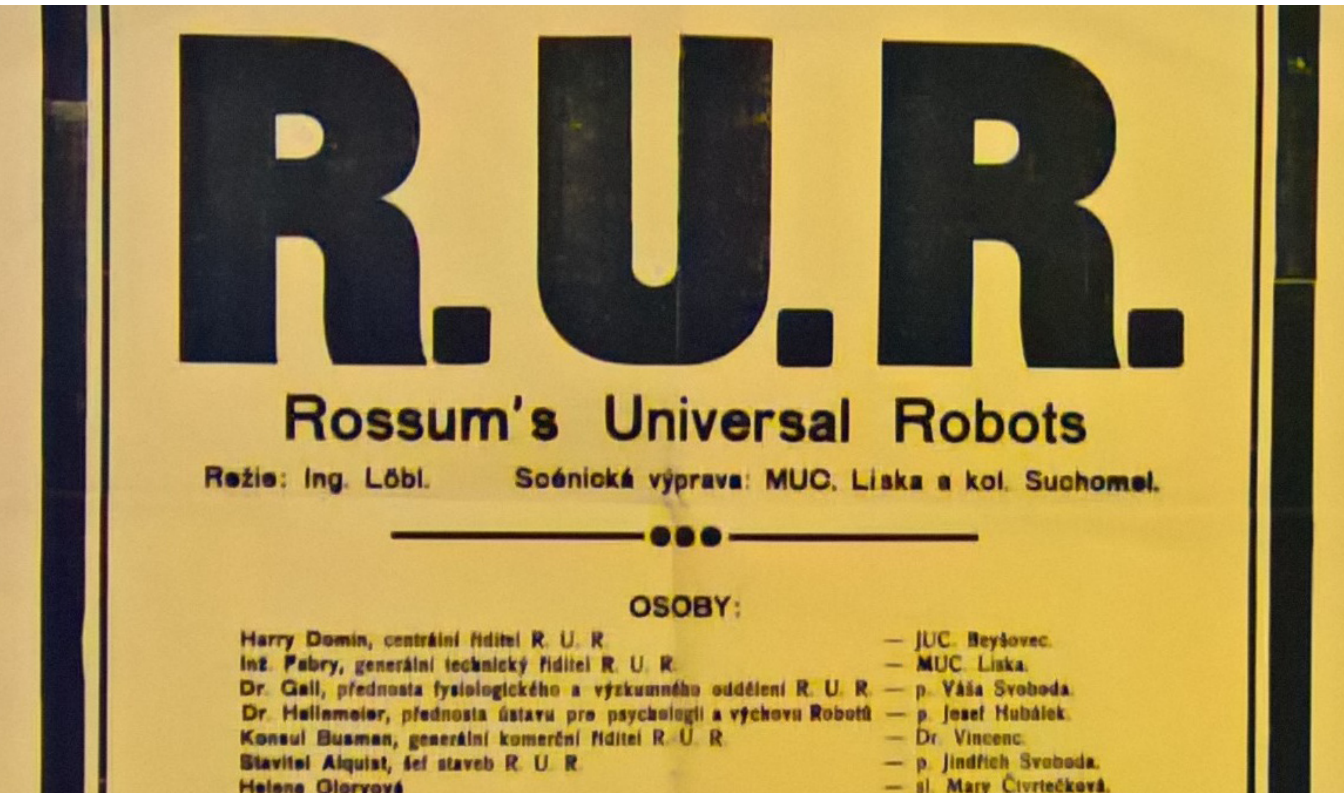
grim view. Change will be painful. Traveling in time, becoming invisible, alien invasion, giant monsters, all will be terrible. Wells is not afraid to make social commentary, in fact, did nothing else at the same time that he predicted tank warfare, aerial bombing and other future realities. His novel, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, for instance, was written as a fundraiser to stop animal vivisection. Wells moved away from narrative as he progressed, abandoning the Science Fiction adventure for proselytizing novels and non-fiction.

In the wake of World War I, society as a whole began to change in earnest. Mechanical inventions had been seen on the battlefields of Europe and now, in peacetime, they were making their way into people's homes. Certainly the early twentieth century was not devoid of social criticism, but in the aftermath of the Great War, it was mostly in the purview of art and culture movements. The surrealists, the Dada-ists, the Bauhous movement. These were, for the most part, intellectuals talking to other intellectuals, and not making many inroads into popular culture. Indeed, that these movements set themselves aside from and opposed to popular culture was a point of pride.

But in 1920 a unique stage production in Russia was about to change all that.

ROSSUM'S UNIVERSAL ROBOTS

R.U.R. is a 1920 science fiction play by the Czech writer, Karel Čapek. R.U.R. stands for Rossumovi Univerzální Roboti (Rossum's Universal Robots). It premiered on January 25, 1921 and introduced the word "robot" to science fiction and to most of our languages



in general.

The word "robot", which displaced older words such as "automaton" or "android" in languages around the world would itself become a trope that would offer science fiction writers copious opportunities to play, poke fun at, or otherwise satirize a host of society's foibles, not the least of which, mankind's desire for institutionalized slavery. Indeed, in Czech, *robota* means forced labour of the kind that serfs had to perform on their masters' lands and is derived from the word *rab*, meaning "slave".

The name Rossum is an allusion to the Czech word rozum, meaning "reason", "wisdom", "intellect" or "common-sense". It has been suggested that the allusion might be preserved by translating "Rossum" as "Reason" but only the Majer/Porter version translates the word as "Reason". *R.U.R* becomes one of the first examples of science fiction using a new technology and a fantastical future world to say something profound about the contemporary society from which it sprang.

The play begins in a factory that makes artificial people, called *roboti* (robots), from synthetic organic matter. They are not exactly robots by the current definition of the term: they are living flesh and blood creatures rather than machinery and are closer to the modern idea of clones. They may be mistaken for humans and can think for themselves. They seem happy to work for humans at first, but a robot rebellion leads to the extinction of the human race.

Again, the social commentary does not hurt *R.U.R.*'s public reception. The play was

successful in its day in both Europe and North America. *R.U.R.* quickly became famous and was influential early in the history of its publication. By 1923, it had been translated into thirty languages.

Perhaps by today's standards using a play about mechanical creations to send the message that slavery is bad may not seem like a very controversial move. It's pretty well de rigueur today. If you have robots or artificial people in your story, at some point you're going to have to talk about slavery and how it is bad and how all sentient beings should be free to make their own choices, etc., etc. That message can be found in at least one episode of any of the various *Star Trek* iterations.

But, of course, the using of science fiction to comment on society would not end with *R.U.R.*

Thought Provoking

There is a phrase that always seems to accompany science fiction of this type. "Thought provoking". That was always kind of a code phrase that the science fiction you are about to read or see, which may have all the cool, whiz-bang trappings of science fiction that fans love, will also have a "message"

Science fiction that was described as "though provoking" could also be synonymous with "heavy handed" or worse, "boring".

As L. W. Michaelson observed in his article for *The Antioch Review* in 1954, "Social Criticism in Science Fiction": "What better way to reach the adolescent mind than with a glorious action story filled with blasters and super-rockets and energizers and what not and then carefully sandwiched in between the action, some little gems of information that will impart a perspective on our society as a whole?"

There are obvious works that can be described as "message" fiction. Orwell's *1984* is an obvious warning against totalitarianism. Huxley's *Brave New World* is a warning about the dangers of utopia.

This is in contrast to the science fiction published in popular magazines. From Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* magazine and to the many others that popped up in its wake, science fiction was a venue for telling fantastic stories of brave industrialists who overcame society's indifference or disbelief, and built powerful rocket ships to travel into the far reaches of space. Early science fiction tales were rightfully disregarded as little more than chewing gum for juvenile imaginations.

The Post War Era

But that began to change. In the post war era of the 1950's, science fiction writers had transformed from happy-go-lucky champions of technology to gloomy prophets of doom. Indeed, in the nuclear era the "Frankenstein's Monster" of the day was the atom bomb. It was a powerful and terrible weapon with devastating consequences that raised moral concerns among even the most hawkish of writers.

In this post-war era many science fiction writers felt compelled to include a healthy serving of social commentary along with the aliens, robots and ray-guns. Indeed, it was

argued that science fiction was one of the few genres that could do this without too much fear of public censure.

L. W. Michaelson in his essay for "Social Criticism in Science Fiction", makes plain that the use of science fiction as a cloak or a disguise in order to more freely speak about subjects which were not generally brought up in polite society is a deliberate and an inherent feature of the genre:

"The channeling of man's critical sense, via science fiction, from the currently inhospitable field of the present to a more secure area of the distant future or past, is due in part to the increasing sensitivity of Americans to criticism of any kind. Al Capp, the cartoonist, noted this in his article in *Life* (March 31, 1952) and concluded that his comic strip, *Lil' Abner*, would have to eliminate social satire entirely and concentrate upon "trivialities" and/or the matrimonial difficulties of his hero.

In regard to this sensitivity, perhaps we feel our way of life is engaged in some ceaseless competition, or is continually on trial before the eyes of an indifferent or hostile world. Thus, if the science-fiction Gulliver mentions the year 2186, or better still 3547, this sensitivity is correspondingly dulled. In other words, there is an inverse ratio to our dislike of criticism; the farther away in time and space the criticism seems to lodge, the less the irritation or concern."

In the 1950's science fiction had become so caught up in moralizing and philosophizing about society, that in 1951, editor Raymond J. Healy felt compelled to publish a collection of science fiction tales, *New Tales of Time and Space*, that were deliberately more positive and light-hearted than the majority of what had become the "message" fiction of the day. In the introduction to the book, magazine editor Anthony Boucher noted about the stories in the collection: "For all their positiveness you'll find many of these stories markedly critical of the present state of man's world – many of the authors markedly unconvinced that contemporary American culture is the ultimate and unchangeable Way of Life."

The criticism of society as a whole from science fiction writers was so obvious that in 1953 conservative editor, Thomas. P. McDonnel, wrote an article for *Catholic World Magazine* on "The Cult of Science Fiction". In that essay, he complains that "liberals in general are now using science fiction as a kind of intellectual underground communication system or as a semi-secret club lecture platform."

And you thought that loud and disruptive movement was a new thing.

Puppies Both Sad and Rabid

Pundits rail against the politicized science fiction as if it is a new movement. There are claims that the science fiction community is divided amongst those who are political writers who disguise their prose in the trappings of science fiction and those who just want old-fashioned space adventure. But anyone who thinks that is fooling themselves. Science fiction has always been political. It is designed specifically to be political. By its very nature, the literature of ideas is meant to question the status quo and to examine new and different ways of being human and existing in the universe.

Anyone who thinks otherwise is being deliberately obtuse, hiding their heads ostrich-like in the sand of social media. Yes, we love the trappings of science fiction. We love the

spaceships and the ray guns and the robots, but if that is all you have, if you don't have the core nutrition of a science fiction story – the little gems of information, as L. W. Michaelson refers to it – then you are not truly experiencing what it is that science fiction does. You are supping at fast food and ignoring the rich banquet that is laid out before you.

Anyone who has been to college or university – even some quality high schools – knows that there are science fiction novels that are designed specifically to send a MESSAGE. Books like Orwell's *1984* or Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* are specifically designed to convey a message to readers about society. The science fiction veneer is a thin disguise for what is essentially a political or societal diatribe. We have all struggled to read these kinds of books, tried to find some entertainment value in them amongst the monolithic social commentary. Many of us would much prefer to read plain-old for-fun type science fiction.

But what is that? Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*? Scratch the surface of that and you will find that the prototypical Military Science Fiction novel is lousy with political and social commentary. Bradbury's *Farenheit 451*? Oh, please. The book is practically a manifesto. Even his *Martian Chronicles* have ruminations about politics and society.

Well, what about science fiction on television? Surely that is as divorced from social commentary as you can get. Televised science fiction is like a western but with rayguns. No social commentary and no politics. Something like *Star Trek*?

If you are under the misapprehension that the original *Star Trek* series was merely a

"Western in Space" if you fell for Gene Rodenberry's bait-and-switch description of the show to Network executives as a "*Wagon Train* to the Stars", then you are in for a rude awakening.

As David Gerrold explained on his own Facebook Page:

"I was there. I know what Gene Roddenberry envisioned. He went on at length about it in almost every meeting. He wasn't about technology, he was about envisioning a world that works for everyone, with no one and nothing left out. Gene Roddenberry was one of the great Social Justice Warriors. You don't get to claim him or his show as a shield of virtue for a cause he would have disdained."

"Most of the stories we wrote were about social justice. "The Cloud Minders," "A Taste Of Armageddon," "Errand Of Mercy," "The Apple," "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield," and so many more. We did stories that were about exploring the universe not just because we could build starships, but because we wanted to know who was out there, what was our place in the universe, and what could we learn from the other races out there?"

"*Star Trek* was about social justice from day one-- the stories were about the human pursuit for a better world, a better way of being, the next step up the ladder of sentience. The stories weren't about who we were going to fight, but who we were going to make friends with. It wasn't about defining an enemy -- it was about creating a new partnership. That's why when Next Gen came along, we had a Klingon on the bridge."

By then, of course, printed science fiction was taking it even further with the New

Wave science fiction of the 1960s which emphasized stylistic experimentation and literary merit over scientific accuracy or prediction. It was conceived as a deliberate break from the traditions of pulp SF, which many of the writers involved considered irrelevant and unambitious. Writers like Harlan Ellison, Robert Silverberg, Norman Spinrad, Michael Moorcock, Brian Aldiss and Roger Zelazny among others brought a new sensibility to science fiction, one that reflected and added to the growing cultural change in the wider world that was going on at the time during the 1960's and 1970's.

Books like Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War*, which on the surface is a military SF novel--but in reality is a way for Haldeman to process his experiences in the Vietnam War and to examine the changes that society was experiencing--made a huge impact and garnered praise from old school science fiction writers, chief among them, Robert Heinlein, as well as winning a Nebula award.

At the movies science fiction was the cinema of social examination with films like *Planet of the Apes, Silent Running, Soylent Green, A Clockwork Orange* and *Logan's Run* addressing issues in a not-so subtle way while presenting futuristic setting, clothing and spaceships.

Even after *Star Wars* ushered in an era of science fiction cinema being mostly popcorn fare for the "don't want to think too much" crowd, there are still films that deal with social issues. 1997's *Gattaca*, for instance, or 2006's *Children of Men*.

On television, the Star Trek franchise continued the examination of social issues, particularly *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* thanks to writers like Ronald. D. Moore, who would bring that same sensibility to his rebooted version of *Battlestar Galactica*.

And it still continues today. Even with what has long been mistakenly considered to be a children's show, *Doctor Who*, presents social issues within the science fiction adventure in a meaningful and impactful way. One has to be considerably dim to miss the political overtones of a recent episode of *Doctor Who*, "The Zygon Invasion".

As Conner Johnston writing at doctorwhotv.co.uk puts it:

"However subtle it may have been in the past, *Doctor Who* (particularly in the 21st Century), has always been used as a tool to make commentary on social matters. With "The Zygon Invasion" we are presented with an episode that is inescapable of political parallels, specifically in its tackling of such robust and relevant themes such as cultural division, racial based paranoia and the threat of growing radicalism. While such content could have had the ability to burden an episode... (the) narrative is instead propelled by it. It's a story with a strong narrative structure and a social relevance that isn't shoe-horned in, but rather compliments the plot seamlessly giving the episode real substance."

And currently in North America one of the highest profile television shows, *The Expanse*, does not shy away from reflecting current events.

Although not as obvious or direct as *Star Trek* in tackling issues, *The Expanse* feels very current and relevant and making comment about current political and social events without actually having specific parallels. How much of that is intentional?

According to Daniel Abraham, one half of the writing duo "James S. A. Corey", the author of *The Expanse* novels and executive producer of the television show, it's not nearly as deliberate as it may seem.

"So the thing that I think gets missed in this conversation is lag time," Abraham says. "So much of what we wrote about in the books, and hence the show, we wrote years ago. We do have some things that feel very current, but it seems to me that that's equal parts being alive in the time we are now and having that access to the zeitgeist that we all share and reading enough history to draw from situations -- refugee crises, social and economic inequality, multivalent political struggles -- that are kind of evergreen."

"What we focus on in the show is trying to keep to the spirit of the books with the new toolbox of film. There's no conversation about trying to make any of it topical. That some of it is speaks more to the zeitgeist than to any intentionality on our part."

Yet at the same time, merely by using the trappings of science fiction, by donning its clothes, so to speak, a story becomes easily more able to talk about relevant and current issues than any other genre. In fact, one has to work fairly hard to write any kind of science fiction that doesn't make at least a passing comment about the world around us.

As L. W. Michealson observed: "Perhaps some day reading or writing science fiction may be considered a subversive activity, but when that sorry day arrives reading itself will be looked upon with suspicion and only the illiterate will enjoy complete political clearance."

Even when it's not trying, science fiction makes a pointed comment about the world.

▲

NEXT ISSUE

Our WINTER 2017 issue will feature in interview with science fiction writer and screenwriter MARC SCOTT ZICREE. Zicree talks TWILIGHT ZONE, STAR TREK and his upcoming tv series SPACE PATROL.

We will also have a feature about depictions of Winter in science Fiction and Fantasy as well as a history of comic book art.

Our third issue will be chock-full of the usual collection of articles, essays, reviews and opinions.

Look for our Winter issue in December of 2017.

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