

# The *Illuminata*

Delving Deep Into the Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

## SCI-Faux pas

by Bret M. Funk

Early last month, I found myself caught on the fringe of controversy, drawn inexorably toward a swirling maelstrom of high-strung emotional turmoil, semantics, and condescension. To my inexpressible shame, I made a grave mistake, a error so heinous that, to some, it not only besmirched my good name as an author, but cheapened the very body of my work. In my ignorance, I referred to literary science fiction, not as SF, but as sci-fi.

I've been a fan of science fiction—in all its many and varied forms—since my early childhood, but I was a recluse even by the standards of my SF brethren. I shied away from conventions, attended neither reading nor support groups, and avoided nonfiction articles—even ones with an SF spin!—like the plague. Consequently, I was unaware that a controversy existed, let alone that I had contributed to it, and fell neatly into the trap set for me by Hollywood and the power-hungry media.

I was not alone in my transgression. In an unrelated incident, Tyrannosaurus Press was brought to

task for using the dreaded word. Of course, their notice came in the form of a polite and professional e-mail, the criticism neatly ensconced between kind comments. When they addressed the issue and sent a response, they received a pat on the back for making an effort.

I, on the other hand, received a scathing, defamatory letter written with all the verbiage of a seasoned wordsmith and all the passion of a zealot. My commitment to writing, my lineage, and even my love of science fiction were called into question. I read the letter with the callous-

ness I extend to all fanatics, whether political, religious, or literary. Nevertheless, the accusations hurt, and I jotted off a short, but apologetic, response.

And what did my goodwill earn me? A second diatribe, one that included a list of shortcomings long enough to make my mother proud.

Though angry, I was also intrigued. I wanted to know why this was an issue, why such a simple thing evoked such strong emotions in fans of SF. And I wanted to know what the words really meant, since they obviously couldn't be used interchangeably.

My quest before me, I went in search of knowledge. This is what I found:

Science fiction, according to Webster, is 'fiction that imaginatively uses scientific fact and speculation to create a fantastic situation.' By this definition, Jules Verne would be a science fiction writer, as would Arthur C. Clark, Issac Asimov, Kim Stanley Robinson, and a host of others; drama- and humor-oriented writers, such as Weis & Hickman, Timothy Zahn, and Douglas Adams would not make the list.

SF is an abbreviation used for two similar, but not identical terms: science fiction and speculative fiction. In either case—to the best of my knowledge—when SF is used, it refers specifically to *literary* science (or speculative) fiction. Though the terms are often used interchangeably, even by those disgusted by 'sci-fi,' they, too, have disparate meanings.

The definition of science fiction was discussed above, but speculative fiction goes a step further. It is broader in scope, covering not only traditional science fiction, but also fantasy and other genres. Which other genres, though, I'm not quite sure. Despite reading numerous articles, I was unable to find a consensus. Alternate history was generally considered speculative fiction, but historical fiction that fits neatly into Earth's documented timeline was not. Some definitions included horror, others did not. The best explanation I found defined speculative fiction as being 'set in a *world* that has not happened.' This clearly separates it from general fiction, which only requires that the *events* have not happened.

### In This Edition

SCI-Faux pas

Flights of Fancy III  
Future of Air Transportation

James Kirk: An Analysis

The RPG Corner v1.3  
Types of RPGs

Reviews  
Fall of Kings  
Ghosts of Mars  
Return to Wolfenstein  
Coyote  
The Eye of the World

Sci-Fi Buzz

# Flights of Fancy (Part III): Air Transportation

by Brian Otridge

In nearly a hundred years of aviation, how far have we come? December 17th 1903, the Wright Brothers made their first powered flight in Kitty Hawk. World War One accelerated the development of the aircraft from a rich man's toy into a working machine. Between the wars, the quest for absolute speed pushed the performance of piston-engined aircraft up to 500 mph, and World War Two spawned the jet engine, helicopter and large bomber/transport aircraft. The emergence of consumerism led to the introduction of jet passenger aircraft in the early 1950s, capable of flying at nearly 600 mph over the Atlantic and elsewhere.

But in the last 50 years how far have we come? Most passenger aircraft still fly at the same speed, although they are bigger, driven by the commercial need for economy of scale. A few military jets fly at over Mach 2. Concorde, the only civil aircraft capable of flying at that speed, has been the sole commercially applied example of such a craft (remember the SST and TU-144?).

The reason for this history lesson is to illustrate the fit and starts with which technology proceeds. What drives those developments? Is it the availability of the technology? No, as two world wars have proven, necessity is the mother of invention: it is need that drives development. In addition to war, commercial need is the other driver. At the moment, there are not enough people who want to fly faster round the world, or who could afford it, to make a faster aircraft commercially viable.

So, where does aviation go in the future? In technology terms the ideas and capabilities are all there. The hypersonic jet is a practical possibility. Flying at around Mach 5 (3500 mph) and over 65,000 feet (12 miles), this aircraft would be a real earth-shrinker. It would not be viable for short legs, but existing flights of between four and twelve hours could drop to between one and a half and three hours - allowing for take-off, acceleration and landing. Propulsion at hypersonic speeds would be by surface burning - at that speed it is not necessary to have a compression chamber - a bubble on the wing would provide sufficient compression to burn fuel from its trailing edge, like a one-sided ramjet. But, the aircraft's structure would need to withstand enormous temperatures.

Initially, Concorde transatlantic tickets will seem like economy excursions compared to the price of flying in one of these beasts. But, a time will come when there are enough wealthy people, entertainers and business executives who want to get from New York to Singapore in a few hours (or other similar journeys), whatever the price. Economies of scale will then ensure that the price drops.

The next quantum leap is sub-orbital. Essentially a spacecraft, such a vehicle could be built today, blasting off from the Florida coast atop millions of pounds of liquid oxygen, coasting in a partial orbit, to parachute down in the Kalgoorie Desert of Australia - not very practical and damned expensive. Spacecraft have got to find a cheaper (i.e. more fuel-efficient) way of getting into orbit. I believe that the hybrid aircraft is the solution - hypersonic initially (as described above), and then the rockets kick in for a brief sub-orbital jaunt at around 12000 to 15000 mph, with a shallow re-entry and return to a normal aircraft. Such a trip might then be possible, airport to airport, in around an hour, assuming no 'stack' over the airport. However, the cost would still be astronomic compared to the hypersonic aircraft, the time gains minimal. I suggest that it is a non-starter, the stuff of science fiction!

There is another development that would go in the opposite direction in terms of speed, but enhance weight-carrying ability. The cube-square law ensures that on our planet that bigger aircraft just cannot be built - the bigger the wings to provide the lift, the far greater the weight to lift. The Jumbo is almost at the limit, although the European double-deck Airbus is attempting to go one small step further - and that will be it. For freight, ships would remain the most cost-effective carriers of most consumer goods worldwide.

However, all manufacturers are constantly attempting to reduce the cost of 'work in progress': the goods in the no-mans-land between bought-in material and the customer's pocket book. It costs a lot of money to have 1000 automobiles sat on a ship for 60 days: \$20 million of stock tied up for 2 months costs around \$500,000. So, is there a way of transporting these 1000 cars by air? You might get 60-70 of them, two abreast, two deep in a Jumbo or Airbus. The 15 return flights would cost you more than the ship transport plus the work in progress costs. But, there is a solution: the airship. **Con't on page 11**

# The Heroic Character of James T. Kirk

by Charles Gramlich

For the United Federation of Planets in the 23rd and 24th centuries, it is an age of exploration and discovery. It is an age much like that seen on old Earth during the 15th through the 18th centuries. Like the sailing ships before them, the starships go out in search of new worlds and new peoples. Some find what they are seeking. Others never return.

Earth's earlier age of discovery was funded by powerful governments of the time and was fueled by dreams of wealth and trade. The Federation controls the coffers for exploration in the Star Trek universe, but the human race has matured over the centuries. The Federation's main quest is for knowledge rather than wealth. Starfleet is its exploratory arm.

## Captains And Explorers:

Starfleet's captains—men and women such as James T. Kirk, Jean-Luc Picard, Benjamin Sisko, and Kathryn Janeway—are the heroes for this new age of discovery. They can be compared to historical figures like Vasco da Gama, Christopher Columbus, and Ferdinand Magellan. Or perhaps they would be better matched with fictional seafarers like James Clavell's John Blackthorne and C. S. Forester's Horatio Hornblower. Some writers have compared James Kirk to Hornblower, in particular.

Though these comparisons seem accurate for Picard, Sisko, and Janeway, they don't capture the complete Kirk. There's an older quality to James Kirk, a mythic quality. He isn't Horatio Hornblower. He's more like the Greek Odysseus or, especially, Beowulf—the Scandinavian hero who slew Grendel.

Picard and Janeway, and Sisko to a lesser extent, are the products of civilization and are themselves civilized. Kirk isn't truly civilized. Like Beowulf, he usually serves civilization rather than pillaging it. But beneath the skin he's still a barbarian, a savage. He is not driven by rational reasons like the need for trade or the search for knowledge. His motives are emotional, the awe of discovery, the adrenaline rush that accompanies danger, the glory and honor of great deeds.

## Kirk The Savage:

Kirk's savage nature is illustrated especially well in two of the better known episodes from Classic Trek. These are "Mirror, Mirror" and "The Enemy Within." In "Mirror, Mirror," Kirk, McCoy, Scott, and Uhura are accidentally transported into a parallel

universe where the Federation is an empire founded on violence. Their sadistic counterparts from the other universe end up on our Enterprise, where they are promptly thrown in the brig by Spock because they are unable to "act" civilized.

The counterpart Kirk is violent, ambitious, lustful, a cunning and savage megalomaniac. But he is not our Kirk's opposite. Mirrors don't change black to white. They reverse things from side to side. In both universes, the Enterprise is in orbit around the "peaceful" planet of the Halkans. The Halkans apparently have no reverse side, no dark spot on their souls. Kirk does, and it shows up in his counterpart from the mirror universe. That Kirk's savage streak is so strong that it has made him Captain through the assassination of his predecessor. And it's clear that his ambition is to go even higher.

"The Enemy Within" shows our Kirk's savage side even more clearly. Kirk is split into two Kirks by a transporter malfunction. One is kindly and gentle, too gentle. He doesn't have the strength of will to command the Enterprise. The other Kirk is an animal. He drains a bottle of brandy for the sheer sensation of it. He attacks Yeoman Janice Rand, intent first on seduction, then on rape. At tale's end the gentle Kirk has to take the savage one back into himself. He needs his barbarian side. It's too important a part of him to live without.

Even when Kirk is fully himself he is capable of raw and primitive violence, perhaps even attracted to it. In "Obsession," Kirk pursues and kills with single-minded intent a cloud-like energy vampire. He risks his crew, some of whom are drained by the vampire. And he risks the lives of many more on the planet Theta Seven, where he is supposed to be delivering needed vaccine. Though he rationalizes his decision to chase the creature at all costs, his pure motive seems to be vengeance. Twelve years earlier the same being had destroyed the Captain and half the crew of the U.S.S. Farragut. James Kirk was a Lieutenant aboard that ship at the time.

Was Kirk justified in hunting down and destroying the energy vampire? Perhaps. But a last point to remember is that the creature appeared to be the only one of its kind, and it was about to reproduce. Can you imagine Picard or Janeway, or even Sisko with his temper, deciding unilaterally to wipe out a species? It seems unlikely. Con't on page 8

# The RPG Corner (v1.3): Types of RPGs

by Doug <!> Roper of Epic Gaming

Over the past couple of months, I have talked about what a Role Playing Game is, and given some reasons for why people play them. The reasons that I gave last month for why people play RPG's (Recreation, Hobby, Acting, Immersive, and Internal Exploration) can also be used to describe styles of the games themselves. The games that people play in are often tailored to the style with which they play. To do anything else would mean unhappy players and unhappy storytellers, and unhappiness with either of those groups means a bad game.

## What to Play?

So, knowing that the style of gaming is flexible and adaptive to the players, how does one decide what kind of RPG one would like to play in? The different kinds of RPG's are as varied and different as books in a bookstore. There are literally as many kinds of games as there are people that run them. However, they can be broken into categories that will make explanations of them easier. Avid sci-fi fans may notice similarities between these categories and the genres of books and movies they love so much.

The first is the fantasy game. This is probably the most common, and widely played of all the different types. The first RPG was developed from a tabletop miniatures wargame. Basically it was two armies fighting one another, with rules for weapons fire, range, damage to units, etc., etc.. During one of these games, a couple of guys wondered what would happen if they added magic to the standard combat rules. From this grew the most famous of all the RPG's, Dungeons & Dragons™ and later, Advanced Dungeons & Dragons™. These games deal with fantastic settings and creatures such as elves and orcs and of course, dragons. They use magic and combat to create drama and are for the most part, the door through which almost all gamers pass to arrive at the world of gaming. D&DTM is the first game for a vast majority of people, and while some never leave, the exposure from it will often open up the eyes of gamers to all of the other types of games out there.

Fantasy games have countless variations. In some games magic is rare and coveted, while others are steeped in it. The truest defining factor for fantasy games is the level of technology in the game. For an overwhelming majority of games, the most compli-

cated weapon available is the crossbow, and the largest cities of the realm still have castles at their hearts. Other fantasy games prefer more technology, such as steam engines and railroads, but they are more rare than the low technology games.

The second big category is, of course, science fiction. Games that take place in space or in worlds with what I call super-technology are common. There are games in this vein based on popular books and television shows (and in fact, a lot of RPG's are based on other media sources). While the science fiction game may include a lot of fantasy elements (Star Trek™ anyone?), their level of science and technology sets them apart. If you have at any time wanted to slip into a space fighter, or explore the deep reaches of space, or find babies in Jupiter, then this would be the type of game best suited for you.

There is a notable percentage of science fiction that falls just outside of the classic defining characteristics. While I do not consider it to be a whole category in itself (more like a subcategory) it is nonetheless large enough to deserve a nod. The games to which I refer are collectively known as cyberpunk games. In this niche of games, science fiction and fantasy elements exist in almost equal portions, though some of the fantasy elements may sometimes only be effects of super technology. If science fiction games deal with noble pursuits and exploration and betterment of mankind, where technology is a tool, then cyberpunk is the opposite, where the people are either victims of technology, or are desperate to have it, and where noble pursuits are replaced by basic needs and greedy desires. The classic example of the cyberpunk genre is a game called Shadowrun™, where technology and fantasy elements such as elves and dwarves exists side by side, and the characters that people play are more often than not high profile thieves.

Horror games have recently enjoyed a surge in popularity, which is something I attribute to maturing gamers in search of meatier issues to deal with. Horror games are perfectly suited to these issues and are fast becoming a large category themselves. The most famous horror RPG is based on the works of H. P. Lovecraft, and takes its name from one of his most famous short stories, Call of Cthulhu. Horror games vary widely. There are games that mimic classic horror films, such as knife wielding maniacs in claustrophobic settings, while others

Con't on page 11

# Reviews

## The Fall of Kings

Ellen Kushner & Delia Sherman



Bantam, Nov 2002  
\$13.95, Trade Paper, 496  
ISBN 0553381849

Review by Harriet Klausner

Five hundred years ago, the Northern King led his mighty army, buttressed by the fifteen powerful wizards, to the Kingdom of the South for a marriage that obligated the two rival nations to merge into one country. As the years past, nobles wanting more power kill the king and his cadre of wizards. Replacing the monarchy with the Council of Lords, this select aristocracy rules the land without opposition for two centuries, censoring any discussions about wizards or magic and anyone if caught would be found guilty of treason, the penalty execution.

Perhaps it is complacency on the part of the council, or just the simple thirst for knowledge, but for the first time in the two hundred year reign of the noble council, rumors abound that, shortly, the magic will return. The Council acts quickly to end any real or imagined threat to their power by the restoration of the monarchy. They send spies to the University to ascertain if anyone is committing sedition; if the answer is yes they can eliminate the treat before it takes seed. The undercover investigation leads to History Professor Basis St. Cloud, a firm believer that the magic of the wizards was real and not a flimflam game to fool kings. He believes proof lies with finding the lost Book of the King's Wizards. The other potential troublemaker is a traitor to the nobles as he is one of their own, Thereon Campion, heir to the Duchy of Tremontaine.

Are these two men the forerunners of a new age of reason based on a monarchy or just idle fools fated to die if remote evidence proves they are heretics? Either way, neither one will find life remaining as they know it.

*The Fall of Kings* looks like medieval Europe with a twist or two besides the obvious question of whether magic once existed. For instance, the nobles do not just eke out a Magna Carter from the king, but eliminate the monarchy by killing the ruler. In the king's place, the Council establishes a form of oligopoly that applies censorship to insure no one even whispers words of wizardry or magic without dying. Still with this powerfully vivid background, the story line belongs to a deep three dimensional cast. The professor is not heroic material, but just a man of learning trying to prove his theory on wizards using magic and not trickery. He sort of reminds the audience of the scientists in Planet of the Apes seeking the truth though the opposition will do anything to silence them or in this case him. Thereon is caught between two worlds as he is clearly a product of his times as part the nobility, but the monarchy, if he lives long enough, seems within his grasp, like King James just prior to Culloden. Finally, the nobles will do anything, including kill innocents, to remain in power.

With that ensemble coming together in an epic story line, Ellen Kushner and Della Sherman eases the tension with political infighting at the university that reflects the greater society of a place in which no one, including the in-crowd, dare step out of their preordained role if they want to live. *The Fall of Kings* is a triumphant fantasy that feels so real one must wonder if these writers are social science professors at that Northern University.

## Ghosts of Mars DVD

Natasha Henstridge, Ice Cube  
John Carpenter (Director)  
\$14.97 (DeepDiscountDVD)



No doubt you've seen the premise before: a fractured, arguing group of people trapped in an isolated and impossible to escape location with a terrifying evil presence hell-bent on killing them. Of course, I could be talking about any John Carpenter movie.

In this installment, the fractured, arguing group of people are a mismatched group of crooks and

cops (cop played by Henstridge, crook by Cube), the impossible-to-escape location is Mars, and a recently-freed alien presence plays the part of the malevolent bad-die. The aliens, either spirits or a sentient mist-I found it impossible to tell which-are capable of possessing the bodies of Mars' poor colonists, causing them to mutilate themselves and their neighbors with startling brutality.

*Ghosts of Mars*, while an intriguing premise, fell short of Carpenter's earlier works. The acting was mediocre, with some of the better performances going to the supporting cast, and the story itself contained a few too many unexplained plot holes. Special effects were good, not great, but a better CG decapitation doesn't exist, not even in *Starship Troopers*. Die-hard fans of Carpenter might want to risk a viewing, but in general, this is a film best relegated to the 'I'll catch it on TNT pile.'

# Reviews

## Return to Castle Wolfenstein Activision, \$29.99



The Nazis have been accused of a great many things over the years, but necromancy was never one of them. Until now.

Welcome to Wolfenstein. Or rather, welcome back to Wolfenstein. The nigh-on-inescapable castle has returned, bigger and more visually stunning than ever, and once again, we find ourselves a prisoner in its vaulted halls.

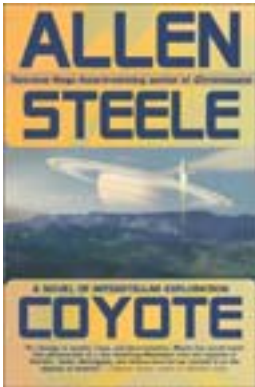
Our first goal: to escape. Getting out of the cell is easy; it's getting out of the castle that proves difficult. Armed with only a trusty knife and hatred of fascism, we're forced to fight our way through the castle's well-guarded corridors.

Our reward for a successful escape? A first-class ticket back to Wolfenstein, where we get to fight zombies, mutants, and a resurrected God.

This incarnation of Wolfenstein, produced by Activision, is a vast improvement over its predecessors. Visually, it's a masterpiece, with stunning graphics and numerous details. The AI, however, could use a little work. While NPCs react to noises, grow suspicious when they come across a dead body, and even call for backup, there are still a few bugs. For instance, an entire garrison will investigate a fallen body one soldier at a time.

The controls have been vastly improved. The character runs, walks, creeps, crouches, jumps and leans (a particularly useful skill as it allows you to peek around corners without being spotted). A warning: there have been reports of motion sickness associated with the character's bobbing run, but all in all, it's a worthwhile game and a worthy addition to the franchise.

## Coyote Allen Steele



Ace, Nov 2002  
\$23.95, Hardcover, 400 p.  
ISBN 0441009743  
Review by Harriet Klausner

By the twenty-third century, the once proud land of the free no longer exists. The United States of America has split apart into several nations with the two coasts seceding into the new countries of Pacifica and New England, respectively. The hinterland has

become the United Republic of America, a fascist right wing country ruled with an iron fist by the Liberty Party. Dissension is unacceptable with dissidents arrested and placed in reeducation camps where their heretic ideas of freedom are cleansed away. To control the future, the Liberty Party also strongly encourages the young to join youth hostels where they are brainwashed to believe the ruling elite's message as the only truth. The Liberty party is everywhere in charge of every aspect of life from central planning to the grassroots of everyday living.

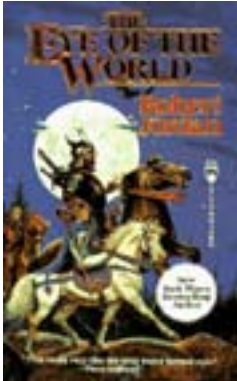
To show its superiority to the world, especially to its own masses, and allegedly as a testimony to the magnificence of the nation under their rule, the Liberty Party funds the construction of a starship, the Alabama. The party leadership believes this one hundred billion dollar propaganda gimmick will pay tremendous dividends in terms of patriotism and a symbolic show of strength. The space ship will traverse to another orb where one hundred

party faithful will set up a colony. However, instead of the glory expected from this coup, dissidents do the unthinkable by accomplishing the impossible. They skyjack the Alabama with plans to form a new union based on the radical principle of individual rights and freedoms far from the domineering thumb of the Liberty party.

George Orwell's ominous 1984 looks like George Burns' TV set when compared to the control of every aspect of life in the United Republic of America as described in depth in *Coyote*. As such, the story line paints a bleak future for an America in which the Bill of Rights have been trashed by Nazi-like leaders who use technology to eradicate any dissent and some of the successful tools employed by Hitler's elite to garner support. Following Alan Steel's portrait of a dim world so darkened by subjugation that freedom's light seems invisible, champions arise willing to risk everything for freedom. Thus *Coyote* turns from dismal environs into a tale of hope as revolutionaries seek a new beginning on a new planet several light years away from the oppression they have lived under all their lives. The Liberty Party's prime characters seem real in a Nazi sort of way. They include fanatics and pragmatists working to keep freedom interred as a failure of the past. However the feel of genuineness accorded to the party's key players occur due to the incredible layers described by Mr. Steel of the tertiary slugs of the party. Quite contrary is the revolutionaries, a daring group whose successful hijacking actually seems believable in spite of the awesome force of the totalitarian government that wants to crush them. The bottom line is Mr. Steel has written an exciting, complex tale of people desperate in their need to escape a police state willing to flee to an unknown world in a thirst for freedom.

# Reviews

## The Eye of the World Robert Jordan



Tor, 1993  
Wheel of Time, 1  
ISBN: 0812511816  
Mass Market, 841p.

In honor of the upcoming release of Jordan's next book (which I noted today had been pushed back to January 2003), I have decided to start reviewing the books of *The Wheel of Time*. At one book a month, Book 11 should almost be out by the time I finish.

Creating a fantasy world requires more than imagination. For a universe to be real, it must contain believable people, varying locales, and a vivid history. For it to be exciting, it must be populated with noble heroes, fearsome monsters, and exotic races. The attention to detail given to even the most cursory fantasy realm is mind-boggling, and great credit must be given to anyone who attempts such a momentous task. But every once in a while, an author creates a world so detailed, so intricate, that it raises the standard.

Robert Jordan is one such author, and his *Wheel of Time* series, started with the best-selling novel *The Eye of the World*, is a fantasy that will stand the test of time.

The story opens in the Two Rivers, where Rand al'Thor, Matrim Cauthon, and Perrin Aybara, three young friends of modest origins, find themselves the targets of the Dark One, an ancient evil long thought imprisoned. When their village is attacked by Trollocs, the trio is forced into the company of Moiraine, an Aes Sedai, one of the mysterious and mistrusted women who can touch the One Power,

and her Warder, Lan, a stoic and battle-hardened warrior. Joined by the adventurous Egwene, the tempestuous Nynaeve, and a curious, white-haired gleeman, the group departs for Tar Valon, stronghold of the Aes Sedai, where Moiraine hopes to uncover the reason behind the Dark One's interest in the three young men. Pursued and attacked along the way, the band is separated, and their individual travels take them to strange places and introduce them to stranger beings.

Jordan's greatest strength is his intricate and well-thought-out world. Every character has a unique personality, each nation its own identity, and the world itself a history that spans millennia. Though the book focuses on Rand, Mat and Perrin, the secondary characters (and even a few tertiary ones) play vital roles as well. This is a strong point, in my opinion, as the Light's eventual victory is the result of a combined effort, and not due to the actions of any one 'super-being.'

Critics of Jordan often comment on his writing style, his clichéd phrases, and his occasionally amateurish word choice, and I cannot argue with their comments. Jordan's writing, at least in this case, could stand some improvement on a technical level. But on a conceptual level, it is a masterpiece. Though slow at times, *The Eye of the World* is action-packed and suspenseful enough that most readers will find themselves hooked long before the dramatic conclusion.

Even separated from its series, which is fast becoming a work of encyclopedic proportions, *The Eye of the World*, at over seven hundred pages, can be a daunting read. Nevertheless, I found it to be a masterful tale, flawlessly weaving an army of characters into an intricate world. It is a strong start to what has proven to be a grand epic of Tolkienesque proportions.

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## Have Something to Say? Write for *The Illuminata*!

*The Illuminata* is looking for talented writers and opinionated fans to write for our monthly newsletter. In the months to come, we are hoping to expand our content to include more articles and reviews, and starting in the new year, we have plans to include original fiction and the occasional SF&F related artwork

All submissions are welcome, so long as they have an SF&F spin, with the following exception: we will not publish anything that is unnecessarily defamatory. While we encourage controversial commentary and want our reviews to accurately reflect the

reviewer's opinion, we will only include material that maintains a certain level of professionalism.

Article topics are left to the discretion of the writer, and reviews may cover any SF&F format (books, movies, television, comics, etc.) Original fiction should not exceed 5,000 words without express permission from *The Illuminata*'s staff. We reserve the right to include or not include material at our discretion, and unfortunately, at this time we are unable to pay for submissions. Interested parties should fill out the Staff Writer form at [TyrannosaurusPress.com](http://TyrannosaurusPress.com)

### **Kirk (con't)**

Kirk did something similar in "The Lights of Zetar." He destroyed the life forces of the last one hundred Zetarans, who had abandoned their planet centuries earlier to take up a nomadic, non-corporeal existence in space. True, the Zetarans had attacked a Federation world and were trying to possess a human woman, but it didn't seem to bother Kirk very much to "snuff" them out. Picard, Janeway, or Sisko would have felt guilty and would have second-guessed their decision. Their basic rationality would have tormented them with thoughts of "what if." Kirk simply acted, and was at peace with himself for those actions.

Kirk's violent nature even saves the Enterprise in "This Side of Paradise." Kirk and a landing party beam down to the colony world of Omicron Ceti III. No progress has been made by the colony because its members have been "infected" by alien spores that grant perfect health and happiness but don't allow for creativity or challenge. Kirk is hit by the spores too, but fights and overcomes their effects. It is the violence of his emotions that destroy the spores. No one else on the Enterprise is able to resist, including Spock, whose very lack of emotion makes him susceptible.

### **The Joy Of Conflict:**

Besides acting out of emotion rather than reason, the barbarian also revels in physical pleasures and the joy of conflict. Kirk tries hard to repress this side of himself, but often fails. In "Shore Leave," he takes joy out of beating up a replica of Finnegan, an upperclassman at Starfleet Academy who once delighted in teasing the younger Kirk.

Fortunately for Kirk, his role as Captain of the Enterprise gives him ample opportunity to vent his aggression. In much the same way, Beowulf's role as hero always let him be in the forefront of the fighting, exactly where he wanted to be. It's no accident that Kirk insists on joining any landing party beaming down to a dangerous site, despite Spock's repeated reminders that it's not a good idea for a Captain to risk himself. Kirk likes the danger. Picard and Janeway seldom take such risks. Sisko does occasionally, but there is a little of the barbarian in him as well.

Sometimes, Kirk doesn't have a choice about beaming into peril. This doesn't keep him from reveling in the danger, though. In "The Savage Curtain,"

Kirk and Spock are lured to the surface of a world where Abraham Lincoln has appeared. Surak, the father of Vulcan logic, also turns up. A powerful being named Yarnek pits the four of them, as "good," against four historical figures of evil, including Genghis Khan and a Klingon tyrant. Kirk tries to avoid fighting at first, but when the fight is forced on him he reacts with instinctive aggression. He attacks. He kills with his bare hands. As Lincoln says, they match their enemy's evil.

In "Arena," a powerful race named the Metrons transport Kirk and the Captain of a Gorn ship to an artificial asteroid where they are told to fight or have their ships destroyed. The Enterprise had been pursuing the Gorn ship for attacking a Federation outpost. Kirk's first encounter with the Gorn Captain is a violent one. They try to kill each other. The Gorn is much stronger than Kirk, though, who flees for his life.

Kirk tries to negotiate a truce with the Gorn, but when that fails he begins to use his wits. This is important, because it shows that when Kirk's instinctive savagery is blocked he is still capable of rational thought. The Gorn is even more of a barbarian than Kirk and has reverted to the simplest level-kill or be killed. Kirk constructs a makeshift cannon from materials on the asteroid. He badly wounds the Gorn, but then refuses to murder his helpless enemy. The Metrons, surprised by Kirk's show of mercy, release both ships.

### **Of Duty And Friends:**

Kirk is a savage. But he's also more than just a savage. He is capable of mercy, as in "Arena." He is tremendously devoted to duty, a civilized concept. In "The Doomsday Machine," Kirk rides the wreck of the U.S.S. Constellation right into the mouth of a robot planet-killer. He hopes that detonating the ship's reactor core will destroy the machine. On his side is a faulty transporter that might or might not beam him out at the last second. Kirk's war with the machine is not the individual physical combat that the barbarian craves. It is the hero going up against the monster to save civilization.

James Kirk has many other heroic qualities as well. He is loyal to his friends. When "Spock's Brain" is stolen Kirk pursues and recovers it from the thieves who took it. In "Where No Man Has Gone Before," Kirk is forced to kill Gary Mitchell, an old friend who has developed incredible mental

Con't on page 10

### Sci-faux pas (cont't)

But what of sci-fi? Where does it fit in? Sci-fi (pronounced skiffy by its opponents) is currently in a unique position: it has two distinctly different definitions. By hardcore fans of literary SF, it is a term of derision, a word that encompasses all that's wrong with today's view of science fiction. The mere mention conjures images of '50s B-movies, foam-rubber monsters, and Star Trek pseudoscience. Sci-fi is a Hollywood creation, a collection of unoriginal and often silly movies, television shows, and ideas. It is science fiction without the science; it doesn't care that there is no sound in a vacuum, that insects can't grow to giant sizes, or that the odds of all sentient life in the universe being human-shaped is a near impossibility. Sci-fi is not concerned with extrapolation of science fact; it is a tool of the entertainment industry.

While speculative fiction should have little problem with sci-fi (alluding to the definition above, a world in which sound exists in a vacuum is certainly a world that has not existed), one can immediately see the rift between sci-fi and science fiction. One reveres science, the other ignores it.

Though to the elite of literary SF, sci-fi is anathema, Hollywood and the media have taken up the gauntlet. Using the billions at their disposal, they gave sci-fi its own television channel, plugged it shamelessly in news media and magazines, and quickly made it synonymous with anything science fiction. In doing so, they have created an alternate definition. In the minds of millions, sci-fi is not a term of contempt; it is a word as all-encompassing as speculative fiction, a term that includes not only true science fiction, but horror, fantasy and a handful of other genres besides.

Which definition will ultimately dominate is anyone's guess. The Hollywood definition is supported by the media's fortunes, and its reach is far greater than that of the literary community. But fans of science fiction are as fanatic as they come, and unlike other extremist groups, the vast majority are highly intelligent. In the end, their faith and single-minded determination may persevere, and sci-fi may return to its ignominious origins.

To me, it makes little difference which definition wins. As I said at the beginning of this article, I am a fan of science fiction in all its varied forms. I appreciate the science fact behind a well-crafted SF tale, yet I also enjoy the drama and excitement of space

operas like *Star Wars* and *Farscape*. For my part, I will endeavor to use the terms more appropriately: SF for literary science fiction, sci-fi for the Hollywood creation, and speculative fiction for the whole shebang. If I never get another ego-bruising letter on the subject, I'll consider my mission a success.

I find this a fascinating topic, one worthy of further investigation. I encourage you to submit your thoughts on this SF/sci-fi controversy to [Illuminata@TyrannosaurusPress.com](mailto:Illuminata@TyrannosaurusPress.com), subject heading sci-fi. Your letters will be posted in a future edition of *The Illuminata*.

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## Tyrannosaurus Press News

*Path of Glory* has received reviews (all positive) from the following publications: Midwest Book Review, Library Journal, SciFantastic, Baryon Magazine, Quantum Muse, and SFRevue. The reviews are available at our website. Sales have been steadily climbing since August.

On November 16th and 17th, author Bret M. Funk will be attending CoastCon Jr.

December 7th, author Bret M. Funk will be appearing as a guest at the Louisiana Literary Marketplace in Baton Rouge, LA.

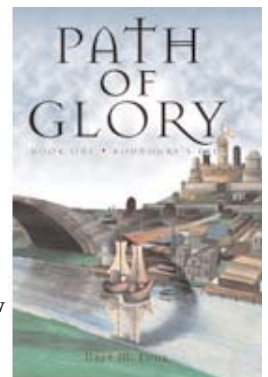
*Sword of Honor*, the eagerly-awaited sequel to *Path of Glory*, is entering its final edit and revision. A release date between April and July is planned, with copies on hand at Tyrannosaurus Press several months before the actual release.

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### Kirk (con't)

powers and gone dangerously insane. At episode's end, though, Kirk notes in his official log that Gary Mitchell gave his life in performance of his duty. It is at best a half-truth, but Kirk wants to protect Gary's service record. Even after their deaths Kirk is loyal to his friends.

### Kirk And Women:

Kirk also possesses a natural chivalry toward women. This is despite his position and physical attractiveness, which would undoubtedly allow him to break more than a few hearts. His reaction to the accusations of Jame Finney, daughter of a man that Kirk has apparently murdered in "Court Martial," is an example. So is his genuine concern over the fate of Dr. Janice Lester, who ruthlessly took over his body and tried to kill him in "Turnabout Intruder."

This doesn't mean Kirk is celibate. Far from it. In "Wolf in the Fold," he tells Bones that he knows a spot "where the women are so..." He never finishes the sentence, but it's doubtful that chivalry was on his mind. He also uses his physical attractiveness to gain information or as a weapon against women in episodes like "Wink of an Eye" and "The Gamesters of Triskelion." And, of course, we find out in Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan that Kirk has a son named David Marcus. Kirk's physical passions are completely alive beneath the charm of his exterior.

### The True Hero:

Like the true hero, though, Kirk is able to transcend his weaknesses. Beowulf was able to overcome pride and his own savagery to later rule his people wisely as king. Kirk shows the same qualities. In "Day of the Dove," an entity that lives on violent emotions invades the Enterprise and sets up a private war between the Federation crew and a

group of captured Klingons. The being turns phasers to swords and heals the wounded to fight again. It manipulates Human and Klingon memories to create hatred.

The entity wants to bring out all the savage impulses in the two crews. Chekov tries to rape a female Klingon. Doctor McCoy calls the Klingons "butchers" and "murderers." He wants them all dead. Even Spock experiences a moment of ferocious rage in which he nearly injures Scotty. Kirk, the most savage of them all, is the best able to resist. He won't be manipulated by another being, even though his own aggressive nature must have ached to take part in the violence.

Kirk's best moment comes in the episode "Plato's Stepchildren." He gives up the chance to be a god. The Enterprise receives a distress signal while in orbit around an uncharted world. Kirk, Spock, and McCoy beam down to find a group of people who have modeled themselves after the Greek ideals of Plato. One difference is that the "Platonians" possess incredible psychokinetic powers. And they enjoy using their powers to hurt and humiliate others.

The Platonian leader, Parmen, is ill, which is why they sent the distress call. After McCoy cures him, Parmen decides that the doctor should stay on in case anyone else gets sick. Kirk refuses to allow it, and a battle of wills follows. Kirk and Spock are humiliated for the pleasure of the Platonians. Later, Uhura and Nurse Chapel are also brought to the surface to be used for fun and games.

But Kirk and Spock have figured out how the Platonians got their power, from a chemical source in the local food called "kironide." They inject themselves with a higher dose of kironide, and Kirk then defeats Parmen in a psychokinetic battle. At that moment Kirk has the power of a god. He knows a secret that only a few others, Spock and McCoy among them, know. Given his position as a Starfleet Captain and his own innate abilities, Kirk has to realize that he can probably make himself ruler of the Federation if he chooses to. He turns his back on the chance.

James T. Kirk is the perfect Starfleet Captain for the Federation's age of discovery. If he were less aggressive, less willful, he wouldn't have the strength to face and defeat the monsters that confront the United Federation of Planets. If he were less merciful, less compassionate, he would use his talents to make himself a tyrant. Instead, he is a hero of legend.

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### Flights of Fancy (con't)

Older than aircraft, the airship offers enormous possibilities for freight transportation and more leisurely passenger travel. They have suffered a bad press that has lasted for nearly 70 years from the Hindenburg and R-101 disasters, but with modern gases and designs, there is no reason why a large, safe airship cannot be built. There would be no effective limit on its size - the bigger the bag, the greater the weight and bulk it could carry - the cube-cube law applies. If the Eiffel Tower can stand at 300 meters high, then an airship that size could be built. The fuel cost would be lot lower than an equivalent jet aircraft, and the carrying capacities would be greater. Speeds would be lower, yes, 100 mph at most. But 36 hours to cross the Atlantic would be nothing compared to 20 days in a freight ship. There's only one little tricky problem with airships - that's landing them. But necessity is the mother of invention...

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### RPG Corner (con't)

deal with matters of larger scope that can be just as terrifying. Horror games have even tackled classic monsters and given them new life as tragic heroes (or anti-heroes), and made them available to play as characters.

The last of the major categories is what I call the simulation game. This is a game that has absolutely no fantastic elements whatsoever. It is basically a life-simulator. Often times, the setting is different than your normal everyday life, but that is the only exception. An example would be playing a Japanese American in 1940, or a feudal peasant in England in 1400. While these two examples seem tragic, or angst heavy, not all settings need be, but tense and sympathetic situations often generate the best dramatic moments. The character has no superpowers, no secret laser blaster in the basement, no magic lamps; he is just a person trying to get by. This type of game is for the immersive types almost exclusively, since the chance of combat is next to none (c'mon, how many people have you arbitrarily whopped with a club today because they were evil?), and the challenges faced by the characters tend to seem mundane when compared to a rampaging dragon, malfunctioning cyborg, or sinister vampire. The simulation game draws its drama and conflict from plausible sources, and relies heavily on role-playing to bring out the dramatic moments.

Of course, at one time or another all of these genres blend a little (the least blending probably occurs in the simulation game). Without that taste of the other side, the classic genres of games could grow monochromatic. Likewise, each of the styles or models of play can find a home in any of these types of games with ease. Selecting the game that you would like to play in is simply a matter of choice.

This is about it for the first volume of the RPG Corner. The introduction is basically complete. My next series of columns will be a look at some of the processes involved in creating an original role-playing game, from the ground up. In doing this I'll be able to get everyone more familiar with how the games operate.

## Sci-fi Buzz

### Movie Premieres (Week of:)

Nov 11: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets  
Nov 29: Solaris (Remake)  
Treasure Planet

### DVD Releases

Nov 12: Highlander Season 1  
Attack of the Clones  
Lord of the Rings Collector's Edition  
Nov 19: The Phantom Planet  
Sailor Moon Pegasus Collection  
Reign of Fire  
The Cat From Outer Space  
Teenage Zombies  
The Snow Creature  
Nov 26: Men in Black 2 Special Edition  
Solaris (Criterion Edition)

### November SF&F Book Releases

Night Watch (Terry Pratchett)  
Explorer (C. J. Cherryh)  
Prey: A Novel (Michael Crichton)  
Ruled Britannia (Harry Turtledove)  
The Pillars of Creation (Terry Goodkind)  
Defender (C. J. Cherryh)  
The Master of Disguise (Jude Watson)  
Sorcerer (Troy Denning)  
Tapping the Dream Tree (Charles de Lint)  
A Fistful of Sky (Nina Kiriki Hoffman)  
Coyote: A Novel of Interstellar Exploration (Allen M. Steele)  
Rayvn's Flight (Patti O'Shea)  
The Fathomless Caves (Kate Forsyth)  
Up In a Heaval (Piers Anthony)