

The *Illuminata*

Delving Deep Into the Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

The Death of Science Fiction

Remember the glory days of science fiction, when everything and anything seemed like a possibility? When nothing was certain, and the future applications of scientific discovery seemed as ridiculously fanciful as...well, as fantasy? I'm not sure I do. Born in the mid-seventies, at the start of an exponential growth phase in science, it seems that every passing year has turned one more 'impossible fantasy' into a reality.

Less than a hundred and fifty years ago, Jules Verne wrote about exploration under the sea and to the moon. Now such things are common place. Old hat. Comfortable. Few people marvel at the wonder that is a submarine, and moon exploration (except, perhaps, for those few who believe the whole thing an elaborate conspiracy) lost its appeal soon after we realized we could do it.

Today, the 'laws' of nature are redefined constantly, and our understanding of what is possible changes as often as the tides. From Newtonian to Relativity to Quantum, physics underwent a drastic metamorphosis in the last century, pulling the other sciences along kicking and screaming. We take for granted what our grandparents and great-grandparents could do only in their wildest dreams, and technology currently on the horizon threatens many of the mainstays of science fiction.

Not until well into the 20th century did humanity know that DNA was the 'building block of life.' Now the code is cracked, the map drawn. The ability exists, not only to identify the sites that cause specific diseases and traits, but to alter those genes considered undesirable. Though

still in the early stages of development, genetic modification holds great promise, grave danger, and a very big knife to the throat of science *fiction*. As outlined in Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars series, nothing but time and a thin layer of ethics prevents mankind from splicing genes from other species into its own genome, allowing it access, a-la Dr. Moreau, to all the advantages of the animal and plant kingdoms. Along similar lines, what is to prevent a 'Eugenics War' like the one that created the infamous Kahn in *Star Trek*, or the development of a super soldier?

Cryonics is no longer a fiction, it's a reality, and more than a few people have had themselves frozen—thankfully, posthumously—until medical science can devise a cure for their conditions. Which might not take that long. New procedures and drugs are created daily, and some of last century's greatest killers are no longer a threat; others have been all but eradicated from the Earth. The average life span jumped by more than twenty years in the last century (in the U.S., at least) and other burgeoning technologies promise to revolutionize both medicine and the human condition.

In 2001, the first full, self-powered artificial hearts were transplanted into dying patients, many of whom lived far longer than expected. The age of the cyborg is upon us; it won't be long before artificial parts are used to replace our failing organic ones. At present, the need for an external power source makes the AbioCor heart less than comfortable, but an internal battery allows for a full half hour of independent action, and the development of fuel cell technology (another fiction rapidly turning into fact) and longer-lasting batteries may soon make the artificial heart a viable transplant option for the thousands who die each year from heart failure.

Next generation prosthetics will include computer chips and sensors that will measure nerve conduction and allow the limb to move as instructed; hydraulic technology is now in development to provide joint action in knees and elbows, and from there, attempts will be made to mimic the more

Con't on page 13

In This Edition

The Death of Science Fiction

RPG Corner (2.5)
Adding People

KeyCOMMENTary
Making Space a Family Place

Future Fashion (IV)
Accessories and Such

Defining Fantasy

Reviews:
The Fifth Ring
The Lord of Chaos
Galaxy Quest
Conquistador
Secret Knowledge

Plus:
Science Fiction Quiz
Illuminations Contest
And More

RPG Corner (v2.5): Adding People

by Doug >|< Roper of EPIC Gaming

You've spent a large amount of time creating this beautiful, pristine wilderness, ripe with animals and plants and all in total balance, and now it's time to put people there and blow it all to hell. Maybe that's a cynical view of the impact people can have on their environment, but history has shown us that introducing people into an area is tantamount to wiping the place out. As the GameMaster, you can always override this by creating a people that are more conscious of the land (such as the indigenous tribes of the Americas) instead of having a group of people that wreck their environment irrevocably as they expand through it and consume its resources.

So how do we go about adding people? Well just like with creating the environment, I don't recommend starting the night before the characters wake up in their beds. Give yourself some time to let the people build up, die off and expand through the landscape. The amount of time that you decide to go back is entirely up to you. If you prefer to create a detailed history, and plan on having the characters explore it, you may want to go all the way back to the beginning and document everything that happens over the course of thousands of years.

On the other hand, if you want the larger history of the region to be in the background as a nebulous *before* time, then I suggest starting around five generations (about 75-100 years) before you intend to begin the game. You can focus more on the immediate families and histories of the local people, and worry less about the broad, sweeping events that most people in your sleepy village will know nothing about, and end up saving some time.

If you do decide to chart a civilization from scratch, knowing the stages that a group of people goes through on the road to creating that civilization is a must. The steps from hunter/gatherer, to pastoral life, to full-blown civilization are many, but all great concentrations of people begin with a simple thing that we take for granted: food storage. Food storage is only possible with the advent of agriculture (since it's the dry grains that can be stored without refrigeration that will make up a bulk of the stored food), and agriculture is the cornerstone on which everything is built.

The organized, purposeful cultivation of crops requires the right mix of fertile fields, water, something to plant, and a lot of manpower. The fields must be irrigated, and that is incredibly labor inten-

sive. A single family does not have the numbers to properly cultivate the land in a manner that will lead to a good surplus of food. However, several villages together may be able to do this. What is happening with the occurrence of agriculture is that a large group of people is coming together, and someone (or a small group of someones) is directing the efforts of the whole community. So, if you want to cultivate effectively, and with as little work as possible (though it is still a lot of work per person), you need to create a community.

A surplus of food allows some of it to be stored, and allows some people to commit on a full time basis to activities other than harvesting edibles. Administrators, leaders, warriors, priests and masons are able to devote their time to their crafts, while the producers feed them and benefit from the services they provide. Food surplus = Food Storage and Individual Specialization = Civilization. We're still functioning on this system today, with major changes to the way food is grown and harvested, and that frees most of us up to specialize. As methods to produce and store food become more efficient, cities can grow larger and expand their territories, and more specialization among the people can occur.

After agriculture, it's just a matter of technological development and individual refinement that dictates where a civilization lies. The easiest thing to do is to develop a technology tree, and use a random selector (more commonly called a die) to see what innovations are made at what times. If you want more technology, you need an older civilization, or a much smarter one. For every hundred years of time or so, roll a few times on the technology tree to see what is developed and when. More rolls may be made, depending on the rate at which you want the people to advance, and this will give you a broad idea of what is occurring when. Once you have advanced your people to the desired level of technology, you can simply stop. That being done, it doesn't mean that you need to stop the history of your people, or start the game at that point (unless you want to). There are plenty of other events that can occur to keep things interesting, such as wars, famines, political changes and so on.

You can create civilizations easily with fantasy games, because they tend to hit a certain level of technology, and then just stop advancing. Fantasy books are a great example of this. Through thou-

Con't on page 11

KeyCOMMENTary Making Space A Family Place

by garrie keyman

Not since Irwin Allen's *Lost in Space* aired in the 1960's has space been the place for family; and while it seems logical that space exploration – and the sciences and skills necessary to support it – should remain the province of adults, the approach to families in outer space taken by *Star Trek TNG* also made sense: that, given the investment of time required to traverse the reaches of space, civilian family members might accompany an expedition.

The difference in the approaches of these shows was that with *Lost in Space*, the family did not merely accompany John Robinson (Guy Williams) but were (if only ad-hoc) members of his crew as well, individuals versed in some function of the ship and integral to the expedition. Shows such as *Star Trek: TNG* and *SeaQuest* did attempt to bring youth directly to their crew rosters, but inevitably such character types (Wil Wheaton's Wesley Crusher; Jonathan Brandis's Lucas Wolenczak) tend to be unrealistically precocious as opposed to the garden-variety, kid-next-door cadet I'd prefer to see.

So why do we (or more precisely, since this is my gripe, why do I) care? Three words: I like families. More than that, I like the practically unheard of *functional* family (see, I *told* you I was a fantasy writer). Why is it that space, whether in movies, books, or on TV, has so rarely been a family-friendly place? Contrary to what Gene Roddenberry would have had us believe, space, itself, is not the final frontier; the final frontier is the province of the writer who launches the first functional family since the Robinsons broke stratosphere aboard the Jupiter II. (This month's trivia prize to the buff that tells me – or makes up the best story about – whatever happened to the Jupiter II!)

Certainly SF&F is not alone in its dismissive attitude toward the family. Literature, as well as the entertainment industry, is almost wholly devoid of the nearly-forgotten intact family unit. Think about it. From *Oliver Twist* through *Tom Sawyer* to *Luke & Leia*, everyone who's anyone was abandoned, adopted, orphaned, or raised by an aunt and/or uncle. Hmm. So, what's up with that? I know, I know – even Romulus and Remus were raised by wolves (sorry Mowgli – you're no original).

Well, there's the set-up for next month's column when I plan to begin an exploration of ten major archetypes of fantasy (and other good) writing. First on the list we'll talk about Archetype One: The Waif. Till then, enlighten me if you can. What about the mysterious amalgam of kids and commitment is so anathema to plot and characterization? I'll be waiting to hear from you.

LAMENT

by garrie keyman

beseech thee not my numbed mind
for metered prose nor measured rhyme;
i'm too ensnared by Duty's Curse
to languish long or conjure verse

the crusted dishes stacked all beckon;
poets' thoughts don't wash, i reckon
with the broom and pail and duster.
this is life, this loss of luster?

laundry piled like ghostly garb or
stacked like crates by harvest's arbor
fill the rooms and draw the brows.
vex not my mind, iambic vows!

children whine and grex and bicker;
weeds of life with time grow thicker.
grievous lost the shining day
wherein my words held strength and sway

now i'm left to idly wonder –
watched, did i, life steal my thunder –
at what pitch the soul doth soar.
but i know not. i chose the chore

SMALL REVOLTS

by garrie keyman

they were the Ones:
the ones who ran wee revolutions
in the cob-webbed corners of life,
dressing not against fashion
but despite it;
dressing for comfort
whether others liked it or not --
and they usually didn't.
they walked a path apart,
through the veil of chaos,
unaware of their role,
conducting themselves
with quiet refinement
while riding the Vulgar Spiral
down which the World
had been cast,
and beyond Sight
the web of the matrix unraveled
as their small acts of defiance
spun an invisible net
that would catch creation
before it shattered
against the concrete
of conformity

Future Fashion (IV): Accessories and Such

by Terry Crotinger/montanasing

The final treatment to fashions in various media concern those subtle and incidental necessities we find in our own lives. As humans, we do care what we wear and how it is worn. As a writer/producer, including these items makes the work more believable and rich. Omitting these tend to make the finished work tedious. Let's look at a few examples.

Accessories and Essentials

Ever see a purse in the future? There has to be something to carry things in – no doubt shrunk or combined with other needs. The all purpose strap-on wrist device would contain communications equipment, access to your home/base processor as well as the personal security device—an absolute essential in the future. Who knows? It may even tell the time. So does the future science fiction character need a purse? Will anyone need to comb his or her hair, carry a weapon, cash or pen? The need for some kind of pouch or sling bag will always be with us, but in a form perfect for the necessities you just can't leave at home. What ever happened to good old pockets?

Other essentials exist, too, like personal communication, security, and enhancing implants. This might be worn on the wrist like Dick Tracy, hidden in clothing, disguised as a brooch or pin, or imbedded under the skin. Personal security devices – a must have – will be utilized in a similar way as communications. As for enhancements and implants, we the reader/viewer have seen those daunting and hard-to-miss projections protruding from the skin in the form of eye pieces (Dragos, Borg) to the more tasteful and, at least by appearances, more comfortable implements (Chekotay). Though the Borg win the prize for the 'How Much Equipment Can You Add Before A Person Dies?' category hands down...if that other device can be thought of as a hand?

Hair

Hair comes in many forms, textures and colors. We have seen casual and work styles such as: military short with no sideburns or well trimmed, long tail pulled back-traditional and Chinese-style top knot. Kinkier men's styles like *Andromeda's* Keith Hamilton Cobb and his cornrow/dreadlocks look great. We've also seen spiked hair on both sexes.

The late Persis Khambatta, in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, led the way for women to have a daring look with her well-shaped head (not just any shape can

pull this off) shaved smooth and pale. But long or short, today's styles are still reflected in various media: schoolgirl 'fluffy', beehive bouffant, teased and tangled, butchy/cropped, and braids will always be a standard.

But 'The Court Style', lots of hair in intricate designs (beautifully worn by Princess Leia and her mother, Princess Amydala) are reminiscent of the outrageous styles of the 16th through 18th century European royal courts. At that time, not only was hair teased and twisted, colored and pomped; but jewels, trinkets, feathers and hats were part of the 'look' that was interwoven with the sole purpose of outdoing each other. *Star Wars'* portrayal of elegance is blessedly understated yet still inspiring and graceful. The Centarui from *Babylon 5*, interestingly enough, have the opposite effect for royalty.

The question of coloring hair comes to mind. Any woman will tell you, if they've experimented with coloring or covering that matronly gray: no hair coloring product is really permanent. Unless science can genetically decode hair color, the same hair colors we see in our century will continue. The neon hues will eventually wear off just like traditional human colors, so chances are hair color will not be a memorable part of a book or movie other than for the shock value. It all washes out.

Hats

Hats are not seen on men or women unless they are in the military. Helmets (*Star Wars'* Storm troopers) are not the same as hats. Hats are for ornamentation or convenience while helmets are (duh) for protection. Helmets we see in science fiction; hats are far scarcer. This is unfortunate because head gear in one form or another will continue to be represented by humanity in the future. With the exception of the Minbari, from *Babylon 5*, who have elaborate head dressings that may be religious/political in nature, (Are those actually enhancements? Or do their heads grow that way?) hats or head gear are not represented in the media. Perhaps it is one of those items too subtle for writers/producers to deem important. Pity.

Footwear

Originally, our astronauts sported the one-piece suit-totally-enclosed with recycled air. Whew! If your feet sweat or stink you may faint from the fumes. Reality brought heated boots and socks. Has

Con't on page 12

Defining Fantasy

by Charles Gramlich

As a long-term reader who considers himself a collector of fantasy fiction, I've spent quite a few years thinking about how to categorize the works that fill my shelves. First, I don't collect *all* fantasy. The field is just too huge. What I collect is Heroic Fantasy, which is the term that I like for a type of fiction in which a heroic (usually bigger than life) figure uses either muscles or edged weapons (Swords, Axes, Spears) against bigger than life foes. The hero may be either male or female, but the focus is primarily on physical conflict. I divide Heroic Fantasy into the following four categories.

Sword & Sorcery:

The emphasis here is on personal conflict between the hero and supernatural forces such as gods, demons, or sorcerers, although a story might occasionally deal with a monster or some survivor of an elder race. *Most* of these stories could not exist if the supernatural elements were removed. In addition, the hero in Sword & Sorcery is usually of the "barbaric" type, although he or she may also possess sorcerous powers. The setting is most often a recognizable version of Earth, either in the distant past or the far future. Examples of Sword & Sorcery would include the Conan and Kull works of Robert E. Howard, the Kane stories of Karl Edward Wagner, the Brak tales of John Jakes, the Death Dealer books of James Silke, and the Kyrik and Kothar books of Gardner F. Fox. I would also include here the Elric, Corum, Hawkmoon, and Castle Brass series by Michael Moorcock, though they stretch the definition a little. Female variations include the Raven series by Richard Kirk (a pseudonym for more than one author), and the Red Sonja series by David C. Smith and Richard L. Tierney. Charles Saunders also wrote a notable series featuring a black hero named Imaro. Sword & Sorcery is not nearly as popular today as it was in the 1960s and 1970s.

Sword & Planet:

This category is more often called Interplanetary Adventure. The emphasis here is on an Earthman (never an Earth woman as far as I can tell) who is transported to another world where he must use his wits, his muscles, and his edged weapons (usually a sword) against a host of human and/or nonhuman

foes. Supernatural forces may be present but they generally play only a minor role. The hero is usually not a barbarian, and, in fact, is most often quite chivalrous. The setting is an exotic alien world, often with multiple suns or multiple moons, and is populated by a variety of strange plants, animals, and intelligent beings. Examples of Sword & Planet would include the John Carter of Mars and Carson Napier of Venus books by Edgar Rice Burroughs, the Michael Kane books by Michael Moorcock, the Dray Prescot books by Alan Burt Akers (Kenneth Bulmer), the Alan Morgan books by Gardner F. Fox, and the Kaldar stories of Edmond Hamilton. Lin Carter wrote a lot of these. I would also put Robert E. Howard's *Almuric* here. This is the category in which my own fantasy novels fall, *Swords of Talera*, *Wings Over Talera*, and *Witch of Talera*. This type of fantasy is virtually non-existent in today's market, though I'm personally aware of quite a few readers who still pine for such grand adventures.

High Fantasy:

The emphasis in this type of work is on a Mythic adventure, either a quest or a conflict between the powers of light and dark. The hero is usually *not* bigger than life. In fact, he is often rather small and weak physically, though he usually has a tight knit band of followers or friends who help him. He also generally grows in power across the tale. Supernatural forces are integral to the story, and there is much less individual physical combat than in the above two types. The setting is a mythic world, usually an ancient Earth, that is populated by elves, dwarves, dragons, goblins, or recognizable variants of these. Dragons seem a particularly indispensable part. Examples of High Fantasy include J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and Stephen R. Donaldson's *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*. Dennis L. McKiernan, Piers Anthony in his Xanth series, and our own Bret Funk's *Boundary's Fall* series would fall into this category. There is a larger percentage of women writers in this genre than in any other type of Heroic Fantasy. Patricia McKillip, Anne McCaffrey, Darlene Bolesny, and Margaret Weis are just *some* of the many women writers who have enriched the genre. This is currently the most popular form of Heroic Fantasy. Most fantasies published by the major publishers today fit into this category.

Con't on page 12

Reviews

The Fifth Ring Mitchell Graham



Eos, Feb 2003
\$7.50, Mass Market, 576 pgs
ISBN 0060506512
Review by Harriet Klausner

Over three millennium ago, the ancients were at the height of their power. They flew in metal vehicles and transported themselves from one place to another using the power of the mind. Each citizen at the age of twenty was given a rose gold ring to wear that gave its user unbelievable powers, but the scientists soon realized what they unleashed and destroyed all but eight of the rings. Unfortunately the damage was done and civilization collapsed. Even today there are places on the globe that are totally uninhabitable.

King Karas Duren, the ruler of Alor-Satar, is a powerful hungry megalomaniac. While excavating the palace grounds at Rocoli he stumbles across the rings and ancient manuscripts. He learns how to use the power of the ring and shares the secret of the ancients with his family, because he will need their help if he is going to start a war that will make him ruler of the world.

One of the soldiers working on the dig steals one of the rings, and it ends up as a prize in a fencing match in the town of Devondale in the land of Elgaria. Mathew Lewin wins the ring, but it comes into his possession after his friend dies. A rival who he bested in the match kills his father and in his anger, Mathew retaliates and kills his foe. The constable wants to take him into custody to answer to the king's justice.

Rather than submit, Mathew, with the help of Father Thomas, his girlfriend Lara, and some other friends,

escape. He hopes to make it to Bacora, where the church rule while containing powers to track down the rose ring. Mathew realizes that the ring grants him powers and he slowly learns to use it even though he fears what it can do.

Karas woos elves to his cause. Using the powerful Orlocks and that of the rings, he has an advantage that his enemies don't, and unless a miracle occurs, Karas will soon rule the world. Although it is never stated, the assumption is that the world Mathew lives in is Earth three thousand years in the future, on a technological stage similar to medieval England and France. The world is made up of several kingdoms that distrust one another but make alliances for the sake of power. Readers will believe this because it is very similar to the geo-political happenings of pre World War I Europe and to a degree present time.

Karas comes across as an Idi Amin, not caring who or what he destroys as long as he gets what he wants. While not fully explained, the rings seem to be tuned to the brain emanations of a single person who is the only one who can use it. The cataclysm that destroyed the world is totally believable because in our society we are on the brink of destruction if the leaders of the world use the instruments of mass destruction.

On the other side of the spectrum, Mathew is a golden light in a dark world. He wants to unlock the power of the ring, not to rule with it but to learn from the mistakes of the ancients. He's an honorable eighteen-year-old man who has the maturity and the foresight of a person three times his age.

There are many threads left dangling so it will be safe to assume that *The Fifth Ring* will have a sequel. Mitchell Graham has written an epic fantasy that will please who like the genre. He is a very descriptive writer so readers are easily to visualize the whole book in their mind's eye.

Farewell to Farscape

It brings me a great deal of sadness to report that, as of March 21, 2003, Farscape is no more. The best sci-fi on television, perhaps the best sci-fi in the last few decades, Farscape was groundbreaking, thought-provoking and funny. The finale, handled in true Farscape fashion, was phenomenal, with a cliff hanger ending (the crew was informed that Sci-Fi channel was breaking their contract for a fifth season five days before shooting of the last episode ended) so surprising that it has left many fans staring at the television screen in stupefied shock.

A glimmer of good news does exist for Farscape fans. It is generally believed that another network will pick up Farscape, either as a series or as a television movie or two, once the Sci-Fi channel loses its exclusive rights to the first 88 episodes. There are several ways for fans to help expedite this process, thus ensuring that Farscape has a long and prosperous future. For more information, please visit Farscapeworld.com and Savefarscape.com. Good sci-fi is so hard to come by, we at *The Illuminata* ask that you take the time to support the show.

Reviews

The Lord of Chaos Robert Jordan



Tor, Nov 1995
\$7.99, Mass Market, 1011
ISBN 0812513754

The Wheel of Time has turned for eternity, ending and beginning Ages innumerable; but now the Dark One's touch can be felt, and scorching heat blankets a world that should be nearing winter. The Dragon has been reborn, and the nations of man are in turmoil.

The climactic ending to *The Fires of Heaven* leaves Rand al'Thor in control of both Cairhien and Andor. But Andor is not just another conquered nation; it is the birthright of Elayne Trakand, the woman he loves, and Rand is determined to protect it from the civil war and political scheming that plague the other lands under his control.

The Lord of Chaos reunites readers with all of Jordan's main characters. While Rand firmly remains the center of the storyline (as he well should) a fair number of pages are devoted to Mat, Egwene, Elayne, and Nynaeve. Perrin (regrettably absent from *TFoH*) also makes a triumphant return. Now called 'Perrin Goldeneyes' and 'Lord of the Two Rivers' – titles he neither covets nor intends to keep – he is drawn back to Rand's side to aid in the fight against the Shadow.

Much of *TLoC* focuses around the repositioning of characters, and their reactions to the events that force them on their separate paths. Rand spends his time Traveling between Caemlyn and Cairhien, securing his claim to both lands and sending a massive army south toward Illian, where the Forsaken Sammael rules. Elayne and Nynaeve are with the rebelling Aes Sedai, where they learn of a lost *ter'angreal*, a bowl that has the power to set the weather right. Mat and his Band of the Red Hand are patrolling Cairhien, driving back the remnants of Rahvin's White Lions and slowly making their way south. Slowly, because once his force reaches Illian, Mat will lead the assault against Sammael, a responsibility he does not relish.

Along the way, though, Mat is diverted to Salidar, where the renegade Aes Sedai, those who may join themselves to Rand, are in hiding. Surprisingly, he finds Egwene there, too. Though she had been with the Wise Ones in Cairhein, she has been commanded to go to the Tower in Exile 'with all possible haste'.

For once, it's not the main storyline that is the most interesting; in *TLoC*, the background actions are the most entertaining. Already distrusting of the manipulative Aes Sedai, Rand finds himself surrounded by them when embassies from both sides of their conflict arrive to meet with him. Wary and uncertain (for any thirteen women could overwhelm him with their powers) his handling of them provides great insight into his rapidly changing character.

More interesting than the Aes Sedai is Rand's decision to build a Black Tower, a school for men who can channel. Run by Mazrim Taim, one time False Dragon, the Black Tower has one purpose: to create weapons to fight the Shadow. Though the taint on *saidin* ensures that these men will go insane and die, Rand knows that the last battle is on the horizon, and every sword at his side could make the difference between victory and defeat. And Lews Therin Telamon, the last Dragon, had awakened; Rand can hear Lews Therin's voice in his head, and even more shockingly, Lews Therin can hear Rand's.

The Lord of Chaos is far from flawless; the same problems noted in Jordan's earlier works still plague this one. Seemingly greater tracks of the story are told from secondary and tertiary perspectives, providing the reader with hints and scraps of information, but overall detracting from the pace. One can only hope that Morgase and company have some vital role to play in the future of the series; if not, then a fair portion of this book may end up becoming unnecessary. Numerous technical errors dot the work, but not so many as in the past, and it takes far greater effort to spot them. And with the main characters in so many different groups, the story occasionally bogs down between them, yet it seems unlikely that Jordan could capture the same grand, epic style if all of the characters were together.

Despite these concerns, *TLoC* has a real flow to it, and it draws readers in even more than the last few books do. At this point in the series, some of Jordan's plans are coming together; the reader can see patterns in the characters' actions, and details seemingly inconsequential in the past now prove themselves as harbingers of events to come. As usual, a slew of new characters are introduced, but from the military leader Davram Bashere to Loial's angry mother Covril, they are all intriguing in their own way. And the ending is one to be remembered, easily the best of the series so far. *The Lord of Chaos* deserves a place both in Jordan's series and in readers' libraries.

Reviews

Galaxy Quest Tim Allen, Sigourney Weaver



Dreamworks, 1999
Review by garrie keyman

I love this movie; everything about it smacks of gourmet cinema fare. I can count on my fingers the number of movies I would willingly watch over and over and *Galaxy Quest makes the grade*. If you are a fan of sci-fi, enjoy parody, and don't take your own passions too seriously, chances are you'll agree.

So, what makes this Spielberg Dreamworks video worth your time? Plenty. Let's start with the cast. For me, few actors (unless they happen to be named James Naughton) have sufficient draw of their own to prompt me to crack my wallet; there simply has to be more than an actor or two I've enjoyed in the past to captivate my interest in a movie. In this regard Tim Allen (*Home Improvement*, *The Santa Clause*), Sigourney Weaver (*Alien*, *Gorillas in the Mist*), Tony Shaloub (*Wings*, *Searching for Bobby Fisher*), nor Alan Rickman (*Sense & Sensibility*, *Harry Potter*) strayed from the mold. Yet in this hilarious and yet sometimes touching vehicle it is hard to imagine anyone better suited to their roles. This holds true for other cast members Sam Rockwell (*The Green Mile*), Enrico Colantoni (*Just Shoot Me*, *Stigmata*), and Justin Long, as well.

Welcome to the tale about a crew of has-been actors from a twenty-year-old television show trying to milk their fading fame for all it's worth. While attending a fan-filled sci-fi convention, the self-absorbed Jason Nesmith (Allen) is approached by a group of Theramian emissaries hailing from the Klatu Nebula. Nesmith, who played the Kirk-ish Commander Peter Quincy Taggart on the 70's-something TV show *Galaxy Quest*, understandably blows-off the alien visitors as just one more clutch of costumed groupies who have spent too many days in warp drive. The Theramians are not easily put off. They have modeled their spaceship – indeed, their entire society — after every detail garnered from the show under the mistaken belief that the transmissions of the old television series were in fact a collection of historical documents. Now, threatened with extinction by the evil Sarris (Robin Sachs) who wants the ever-smiling Theramians to surrender the mysterious Omega-13 device, Mathesar (Colantoni), leader of the surviving Theramians, together with his companions continues to appeal to their hero, Nesmith, for help.

The next day a hung-over Nesmith finally accompanies the Theramians to their ship — thinking it merely another campy gig where the spaceship is little more than a

highly impressive mock-up — and proceeds to open fire on Sarris. Only when he is encapsulated in gel and jettisoned home in the most hilarious wake-up call of sci-fi movie history does Nesmith realize the Theramians, and therefore the menacing Sarris, are real. Unfortunately, no one knows what the Omega-13 does; the series ended before that part was written into the script.

Sci-fi fans will readily recognize parody of various industry standards including Star Trek (Original Series, Next Generation Series, as well as some of the movies), Gremlins, Star Wars, and Flight of the Navigator. So if you find Beryllium Spheres are strangely reminiscent of Dilithium Crystals or that Sarris and his eye-patch remind you of the formidable character Christopher Plummer (*The Sound of Music*) portrayed in Star Trek VI, The Undiscovered Country, it's not coincidental. Yet while *Galaxy Quest* is a sort of ala-carte all-you-can-eat buffet of sci-fi fandom and cliché, don't err here; you needn't get the inside jokes to enjoy it. And with its PG rating, this is a movie meal the entire family can all sit down and devour together. Now *that's* good cookin' from Hollywood.

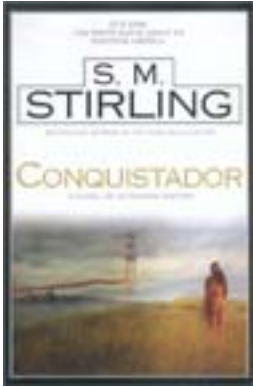
What makes *Galaxy Quest* above par is that it not only delivers on the laughs, it is well structured, well-directed (Dean Parisot), has a four-star apropos soundtrack (David Newman), and near-flawless top-drawer special effects (Stan Winston). What's more, it has the singular distinction of featuring my all-time favorite alien race. If foreign-exchange programs ever go inter-galactic, I'd pick a year with those endearingly innocent and gut-bustingly hilarious Theramians, hands-down. *Galaxy Quest* is precisely the kind of movie (should you stop by unannounced) that you are apt to find us re-enacting at home.

There is a lot more I would love to say about this movie and the apt portrayals of the cast – all of it good – but alas, space does not allow. Suffice it to say that through the course of the movie the crew of TV has-beens sets aside their well-entrenched habit of in-fighting to save the day, although not before enduring a harrowing series of stair-step crises which build to the expected triumphant climax (this is, after all, a comedy). Still, it isn't *all* silliness, and it is precisely that breed of subtle yet gripping artistry which graces the viewer here: that well-written smartly balanced blend of laughter and loss capable of propelling any would-be-winner of a movie to an enduring sell.

If you like to go *where no one has gone before* but prefer going with friends and having a great time en route, watch this movie. Then remember one thing: *Never give up; never surrender* (even when you've been reduced to signing autographs at the local Sci-fi convention).

Reviews

Conquistador S.M. Stirling



Roc, Feb 2003
\$23.95, Hardback, 448 pgs.
ISBN 0451459083
Review by Harriet Klausner

After being injured in combat during World War II, John Rolfe rents a home in Oakland California to recuperate and look for a job. While working with a short wave radio in his basement, an explosion occurs. A stunned John realizes the blast somehow opened a doorway into an alternate earth. In this world the Europeans never traveled to the New World so the equivalent of North America remains pristine and abundantly rich in gems, ores, and other natural resources that have been depleted over the centuries in John's birth orb. Over an extended period of time, John brings people he chooses for various reasons into the world he now calls New Virginia so they can have a viable population and become rich by exporting raw material into our world (First Side) without destroying the environment of his new found land.

In the year 2009, various law enforcement agencies raid a First Side warehouse in Los Angeles. The thirty families of New Virginia, who are the leaders of that world, are concerned because somebody smuggled items through the gate that could destroy what they have struggled to maintain over the last five plus decades. The group fears that enterprising government and big business officials will learn about and consequently abuse New Virginia if they do not

do damage control. Adrienne Rolfe, the granddaughter of the family who controls the gate is sent to First Side to discover who betrayed them. There she meets Tom Christiansen of the special operations unit of the Department of Fish and Game who is trying to track down who is responsible for the poaching that he saw before the warehouse blew up. Tom is attracted to Adrienne but that does not stop him from investigating her family's vast holdings and their relationship to those holdings of the other twenty-nine families. In the meantime, the head of the family responsible for the smuggling has gone rogue and is planning a *coup d'etat* to win control of the gate.

S.M. Stirling has written a fascinating work of alternate history. The founder of New Virginia has always had a vision that that his new home would be self-sustaining and not raped for personal wealth. He is a visionary and it is easy for readers to understand why people followed him into a New World. There is always a serpent in Eden and New Virginia's snake is both believable and frightening because the snake has every chance of succeeding. It is very interesting to watch Tom put the pieces of the puzzle together one by one. When they lead him to an improbable conclusion, he adopts a Holmes philosophy that shows that he has an open mind and is willing to believe the impossible. Tom and Adrienne should be on opposite sides but their respective belief systems, philosophies and mutual quest for justice make them allies. Their burgeoning romance is very believable and the audience will hope they finally make it together. *Conquistador* is alternate history at its very best.

SF Quiz - Test Your Knowledge

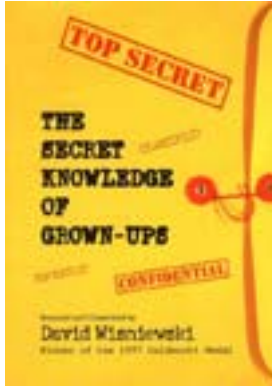
Are you a fantastic genius? Or maybe just a genius of the fantastic? Do you know the history of far worlds and of the strange beings that inhabit them? Can you at least match the authors on the left with the worlds they created on the right? The answers are on page xx. Twelve or more correct should make you preen like a barbarian who has just sacked Rome. Eight to eleven correct is an excellent showing but you took some wounds during the sacking. Four to seven correct means you've still got the wall to scale. Below four? I'm afraid the Romans have won and you're destined for the arena. Hope you like lions.
(answers on page 12)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Stephen R. Donaldson | ___ Kregen |
| 2. Edmond Hamilton | ___ Magira |
| 3. Gardner F. Fox | ___ Newhon |
| 4. Robert E. Howard | ___ Janus |
| 5. Jack Vance | ___ Ur |
| 6. Adrian Cole | ___ Amber |
| 7. Leigh Brackett | ___ Skaith |
| 8. Fritz Leiber | ___ Gor |
| 9. Alan Burt Akers | ___ Kaldar |
| 10. Edgar Rice Burroughs | ___ Tschai |
| 11. Andre Norton | ___ Almuric |
| 12. Roger Zelazny | ___ Barsoom |
| 13. Hugh Walker | ___ Llarn |
| 14. Del Dowdell | ___ The Land |
| 15. John Norman | ___ Ghandor |

Reviews

The Secret Knowledge of Grown-ups

David Wisniewski



Lorthrop, Lee & Shepard Books
\$16.95, Hardcover, 45 pgs illst'd
ISBN 0688153399

Review by garrie keyman

A Visit from the Truth Fairie

At last the truth has been revealed thanks to David Wisniewski, winner of the 1997 Caldecott Medal for excellence in children's literature. I *knew*

there had to be a better reason than "because I told you so!" In the clever vehicle of a top-secret file (even the cover is designed to look like one of those yellow intra-office manila folders), Wisniewski drives home his points with wry humor and fantastic photography of his cut-paper illustrations.

Peruse the pages of this wildly creative take on the hidden truth behind the rules grown-ups impose on children and you will find the answers to such conundrums as why kids are always being told to eat their vegetables (millions of years ago man-eating vegetables ruled the earth and eating them

became a necessary means of preventing vegetables from regaining power) and to drink their milk (doing so in fact stops atomic cows from exploding – read book for fascinating details!).

Other truths finally revealed include why kids are told not to blow bubbles in their milk, not to play with their food, not to jump on beds and not to bite their fingernails. A great addition to your home library (or borrow from the local public variety) if you have anyone under ninety-nine living in your house who has an imagination and likes to laugh.

When you're through reading Wisniewski's uncovered truths, you might want to do a little sleuthing of your own (and feel free to send me your discoveries). After all, I'm still waiting to have a few things explained to me, like why everyone constantly worries kids will spoil their appetite when they're always hungry anyway, and why picking up toys is so important since they just wind up right back on the floor the following day? And what about that washing-behind-the-ears thing? Who looks behind other people's ears? And how about eating the crust of your bread, and then how about – well, you get the idea.

Illuminations

A Speculative Fiction Writing Contest

As part of our ongoing campaign to promote quality works of science fiction and fantasy, *The Illuminata* is proud to present *Illuminations*, a speculative fiction writing contest sponsored by Tyrannosaurus Press. What is speculative fiction, you ask? Technically, it is defined as 'a fictional story in a world that has not happened'. That being said, speculative fiction is a general classification that encompasses science fiction, fantasy, horror, alternate reality and all of their respective subgenres.

There is an entry fee of \$10 per submission; first prize is currently \$100 (US), but prize amounts will increase if there is sufficient interest in the contest. First and second place winners will have their stories published in subsequent editions of *The Illuminata*; all other entries will be considered for publication as well, but there are no guarantees.

Guidelines for the contest are as follows:

- 1) All submissions must be 'speculative fiction'.
- 2) 3000 word limit
- 3) Formatted with 12-pt font, double spaced, 1" margins
- 4) Entries must be previously unpublished.
- 5) Multiple submissions acceptable, fee is per entry.
- 6) Deadline for entries is September 1, 2003

Mail entries to:

Illuminations
c/o garrie keyman
PO Box 431
Lititz, PA 17543-0431

Winners will be announced in the October 2003 edition of *The Illuminata*. For more information, please visit the *Illuminata* page at TyrannosaurusPress.com or e-mail us at Illuminations@TyrannosaurusPress.com

RPG Corner (con't)

sands of years of history, the men and elves and dwarves have never developed beyond swords and armor and wagons. In the real world, we went from rifles with bayonets to nuclear bombs in 80 years. You needn't keep this trend up in your world, but most fantasy settings have cultures that are idle as far as evolution and advancement of that culture are concerned. I'm not sure why this trend developed, or if there are really any reasons behind it except keeping the division between fantasy and science fiction as wide as possible. If you want thousands of years of history, and you still want sword fighting and chivalry, innovation and technological advancement must be sacrificed.

Popularly, the average level of technology is at a point near to where Europe was at the end of the Dark Ages. Steel is refined and strong, buildings can be made several stories in height, and bureaucracies exist alongside well-defined governments and religions. Taxes are levied and trade is common. Large cities are popping up more and more, and well-defined borders exist around kingdoms. The idea of a nation is just beginning to emerge, so one or two in your world would not be out of the ordinary.

There are lots of ways to acquire lists of technologies and other developments (from the web, for instance, or from a magical and wondrous place called a library, where old farts like me used to go to do research). Other places to get a general idea of the particular advancements you need for a particular technology are the Civilization™ games. Each version of the game comes with a branching technology tree, and while they are not overly specific, they to set up the general flow of technology very nicely.

If you choose to start only a few hundred years ago, you can arbitrarily decide at what mean level of technology the people will have available to them. If you are using this approach, you should still consider the larger background and history, just paint it with broader strokes than the recent activities. You can then move into designing the local populations. It is important to know what is going on in the bigger world, and attention must be paid to it, because sooner or later your characters are going to feel the itch to move on, and they'll move to new areas with access to more of the history of their world.

Mention should also be made about non-human civilizations. It can be a daunting task to attempt to create a new type of civilization, especially one that

will seem alien to your players. The steps that the different races employ to get to their current level of technology and culture can be as varied and strange as you care to make them, but what is often more effective than *totally alien*, is *eerily familiar*. The same things with new slants can make the other races seem closer to the players, while at the same time keeping them at arms length. It's also a good idea to pattern them after an obscure or extinct earth civilization. In my mind the Yanomamo Tribe, in the extremely remote jungles of Brazil and Venezuela, have a culture that just smacks resoundingly of Goblins in my mind. After seeing them once in a documentary, they instantly formed the pattern that my Goblins would follow. Watch a little late night Discovery Channel, and you'll be surprised at what interesting peoples have lived and still live in the world.

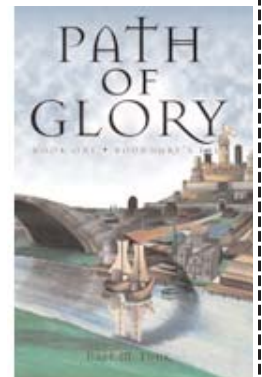
A whole series of columns can be devoted to developing just one non-human race, but since the main group of people in my example creation will be men, I'm tied to them for now. I may talk about Goblins a little later on, if I decide to place a small number of them on my peninsula.

In the next column, I intend to put forth two systems that will generate 1) broad historical events for regional histories, and 2) a method to develop family groups, and in turn, villages and small cities. Using these tools, I'll create some of the recent events that have shaped life on the peninsula, and design the local peoples that will make up the small farming community that will serve as the starting point for the game.

\$10.00 OFF **Coupon** **\$10.00 OFF**

Path of Glory

Book One • Boundary's Fall
by Bret M. Funk
ISBN: 0-9718819-1-X
\$19.95 (US)



"An entertaining epic and a deftly-written saga of hope, determination, and courage." – **Midwest Book Review**

"A memorable tale that belongs in most fantasy collections."

– **Library Journal**

"A good start to what should be a great career." – **Scifantastic**

Order your copy from Tyrannosaurus Press today!

Future Fashion (con't)

any science fiction or fantasy author mentioned the problem of foot fungus in space? That would be reality. There are numerous examples of barefoot characters, usually adapted for the planet or atmosphere. In fantasy we can believe the characters can get along without clothes or shoes. Hobbits can go barefoot, but it is unlikely astronauts in the future will go without shoes. In space, meaning the vacuum of space, in the vast distance between objects in the heavens, it's cold. Walking barefoot on cold decks seems silly, not to mention uncomfortable, and heating the decks would be a waste of energy. Shoes or boots (booty-socks?) make more sense. Go-Go Boots (still!) appear over the years in television for space cadets. Functional military boots will be with us forever. Socks would be optional. Sandals (with socks?) have never been typical galactic footwear.

Capes and Flying Necessities

Batman/Robin, Superman and various super hero types had to have their capes. Does the cape itself have flying power or the wearer? Commanders Gampu and Canarvin, (Jonathan Harris and James Doohan, respectively) had a shorter one with no powers at all in the *Space Academy/Jason of Star Command* series. Terry Lester, as Jonah in the now ancient *Ark II* series, had no cape but wore his own one-man flying machine jet pack strapped on. We've seen this before as astronauts tested this in our own NASA space program. Fashion? Probably not. But fun? Oh, yes.

Conclusion

It is the inclusion of fashion and accoutrements that make science fiction in its many forms enjoyable. We see or read about the event or character but when it becomes believable, or we care, it may be that it is because we can identify with the bad hair day, or the equipment malfunctioning on our costly implant. Detail. The rich fabric of our imaginations feeds on detail. May it always be so. (Does that come in red?)

SF Quiz Answers

(from page 9)

1. The Land,
2. Kaldar,
3. Llarn,
4. Almuric,
5. Tschai,
6. Ur,
7. Skaith,
8. Newhon,
9. Kregen,
10. Barsoom,
11. Janus,
12. Amber,
13. Magira,
14. Ghandor,
15. Gor.

Defining Fantasy (con't)

Heroic Historical:

This is probably the rarest type of Heroic Fantasy now (except in diluted fashion in some romance lines), though it was once much more popular. The emphasis is on a bigger than life hero who exists and fights within a recognizable period of history, such as the Greek, the Roman, or the Viking period. The main character is usually (though not always) fictional, but the historical period is generally drawn with some accuracy. In other words, you will usually not see anachronisms and will not be asked to accept the common existence of phenomena that violate what we know of the history of Earth. For example, there won't regularly be flying dragons, flying galleons, flying horses, or flying humans. Supernatural forces sometimes play a part but are usually not as important to the story as in Sword & Sorcery or High Fantasy. The setting is Earth during a well known historical period. Examples of Heroic Historical include *Rogue Sword* and *The Golden Slave* by Poul Anderson, The Vikings! series by Neil Langholm (house name), The Gladiator series by Andrew Quiller (house name), The Falcon series by Mark Ramsay, the Casca series by Barry Sadler (though not all of these involve edged weapons), and such books as *Ivanhoe* and *Captain Blood*. I would also include Howard's Black Vulmea stories in this category, though they push the definition a bit.

Of course, there are many books that don't fit neatly into the above categories, and that's a good thing. We wouldn't want our fantasies to get too predictable, to become paint-by-the-numbers fiction. Glen Cook's Black Company books, for example, seem to cross the border between Sword & Sorcery and High Fantasy, though I tend to put them more on the side of S & S. Or take John Norman's controversial Gor series. There we have an earthman transported to an exotic alien world, as in Sword & Planet, but the earthman certainly isn't chivalrous. And what is one to make of the Aldair books of Neal Barrett, Jr.? Aldair is an intelligent pig who lives on a future earth where beasts of various kinds have been raised—Dr. Moreau fashion—to a semblance of human form. There is even the Redwall series of Brian Jacques, which would clearly be High Fantasy to me if it weren't about...mice. Such books do not eliminate the drive in some of us to categorize the fiction we love. They just make the whole process more fun to argue over.

Death of SF (con't)

complex movements of the hand. Optical implants can now correct for a variety of eye dysfunctions, and research is underway on implants that feed directly into the optic nerve, bypassing the need for eyes altogether and allowing for the detection of wavelengths beyond the range of our simple, outdated human eyes.

Medical science is not the only discipline changing fiction into fact. Earlier this year, the U.S. army successfully tested its first anti-missile laser system, a building-sized laser that uses intense bursts of energy to detonate incoming missiles, mortars, and artillery shells. Smaller versions are being adapted for use on military humvees, and even more impressively, the military has announced plans to use a modified Boeing-747 to house a similar system. Just imagine, a mobile anti-ballistic missile platform, capable of triangulating on nearby projectiles and using its targeting system to disable the threat without detonating it. In similar news, the first successful test of a space-based laser took place earlier this year.

Not surprisingly, the armed forces are spear-heading other areas of scientific advancement as well. One military robotics expert claims that the army is only a few generations away from a viable adaptive artificial intelligence. In fact, there is only one final hurdle to overcome: three-dimensional spatial geometry. Apparently, today's robotic tanks are quite capable at navigating rocks and trees, but they have a tendency to drive off cliffs when nobody's paying attention. The navy is already designing a series of small, robotic submarines to replace the roles played by humanity's stalwart friend, the dolphin. These submarines will be used to set microscopic sonar buoys, provide reconnaissance within enemy waters, and seek out underwater mines (and unlike the dolphin, the robotic subs will be capable of defusing the mines!)

Several sources also claim that Professor Susumu Tachi, of Tokyo University—who debuted his 'invisibility cloak' earlier this month—has already received several generous offers from the United States military to help it develop adaptive camouflage for its troops and equipment.

A circuit one molecule large was designed this year. Computers smaller than a watch have more features than room-sized computers did a quarter century ago. Wireless communication is almost the standard. Carbon nanotubes—a substance both

strong and light enough for numerous 'science fiction' applications—are being produced at ever increasing rates, and some scientists believe that the completion of a space elevator might be something we see within a generation or two. It's no longer a question of whether cloning is possible, but rather *when* will one group defy the international consensus and actually do it. The European Union is designing the *International Tokamak Experimental Reactor* (ITER), the first fusion reactor designed to achieve ignition and sustained burn. And in Australia, a laser beam was successfully transported a whopping *one meter* away from its starting point. But let's give them a break; they *teleported* it!

I'm half expecting to hear that some scientist has discovered how to create stable wormholes, or that time travel is indeed possible.

Not to be pessimistic, but what does all this mean for science fiction? How long before we're shopping in the fiction section because all the science has been proven sound and the only things left to be invented are the characters and plot? It will never happen, you say? It's already happening, though perhaps undeservedly so. A book virtually *has* to take place in space to be considered science fiction, though by definition, deep sea exploration and futuristic medical novels should also find their way to the SF shelves. But you're more likely to find Michael Crichton in 'General Fiction' than 'Science Fiction' (though the last time I checked, we had neither successfully cloned dinosaurs from eons-old DNA nor traveled through time to an alternate Earth).

Conceivably, new horizons will appear to replace those we lose, new frontiers and possibilities will dominate the writing; but eventually, science will prove or disprove those things too, until there's nothing left to learn, and we're left with only space operas and alternate realities to satisfy our love of science fiction.

Perhaps this is a problem for the future, one that will never threaten me personally, but visions of that lifeless, futuristic world haunt me nonetheless. I want my children, and their children, and all generations till the end of time to know the awe of imagining the impossible and seeing it become reality.

Information for this article came from numerous sources, including news agencies, technology websites, *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics* magazines, and the web pages for the individual projects mentioned.