



# The Illuminata

## Delving Deep Into The Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

### Book Review: Swords of Talera

By Bret Funk

Recent years have seen a drastic decrease in the free time I once abused. Work obligations, home obligations, and the far more enjoyable family obligations each take their toll, and my children demand my attention most during the times previously reserved for reading and writing. The day-long reading marathons I once took pleasure in are a distant memory. The bulk of my "reading" is done via tape or CD during my commute, and the few minutes of actual book reading grabbed here and there as circumstances permit makes me far more discriminate in my choice of book.

It's always with a certain amount of trepidation that I agree to read a book from a friend (perhaps colleague is a better term). They're all great people, but sometimes their writing styles don't work for me, and worse,

I have the habit of being honest when what someone is really looking for is affirmation.

With Charles Gramlich's new book, *Swords of Talera*, I had no such reservations. I'd read his earlier novel, *Cold in the Light*, and thoroughly enjoyed it, and I was curious to see how he fared in a pure fantasy world rather than in the more horrific environments in which I imagine he is most comfortable.

This is what I have to say about *Swords of Talera*:

It's rare for a book to start in the author's house, with the author claiming kinship to the protagonist. It's rarer still for the protagonist in a fantasy adventure to be a steamer captain from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (who is coincidentally an amateur swordsman with a flair for languages) to be magically transported to a world with dozens of humanoid alien species and a strange balance of low-tech, high tech and magical influences, and where hand-to-hand fighting remains the primary means of combat

It made for an awkward, uncertain start, but the revelation that the hero, Ruenn Maclang, was a merchant captain who frequented Japanese ports (where sword skill was still admired in 1914) offered a plausible, if still convenient, explanation for his particular skill set. Attention to detail (and the avoidance of glaring continuity gaps) are crucial to writing convincing fiction, and Gramlich provides enough justification for the critical reader to suspend his disbelief and immerse himself in the tale.

Once begun, *Swords of Talera* rarely slows long enough for the reader to catch up. Sucked through a portal to the world of Talera, Maclang finds himself enslaved by the Klar, reptilian humanoids with a strict hierarchical society. He frees himself only to get enslaved again, then progresses through an almost comical cycle of freedom and slavery, culminating in his ascension to a leading role in a great rebellion.

Along the way Maclang meets an array of interesting characters, no three of which seem to share the same heritage. Talera is peopled with humanoid versions of practically every type of creature, so many different types that keeping all the names, races, and characters straight proved difficult at times. Fortunately, it rarely mattered if the character you envisioned looked like a bird or a baboon, as long as you remembered who the good guys were.

### In This Edition

**Book Review:**  
**Swords of Talera**

**Successful Horror**

**University of Sci-FI**  
**Acting As If**

**The Legend of Atlantis**

**The Writer's Block**  
**Expand Your Mind**

### REVIEWS

**Devices and Desires**  
**The Awakened Mage**  
**Josy**  
**Pathogen**

# Successful Horror

by Doug >|< Roper of EPIC Gaming

It being October again, my thoughts naturally run towards my favorite holiday of the year, Halloween. It is difficult to forget the fact that the powers that be (meaning tyrannical, hyper-conservative and ignorant individuals frightened of the idea of choice and free thought) have castrated my favorite holiday. Fewer and fewer traditions associated with All Hallows Eve have been tolerated over the years, and this year (to my own personal horror and incredible frustration) Halloween has been cancelled at a number of public schools. *Cancelled!* The reasons behind these actions are varied and in most cases, ridiculous. That a small minority could exercise such control over the national traditions of our country makes me shiver at night, and weep for the future of my own personal freedom.

One of the freedoms lost to me already is the ability to go out on one night of the year and frighten people. Some cities have done away with trick or treating all together, for reasons of safety (justifiable) and reasons of religious persecution or the corruption of youth (ridiculous). I'm not saying that the world hasn't grown darker and more dangerous as I've aged; of course it has. I'm just saying that I miss the old days, and the old ways which are being taken away from me while I can only watch and wonder when it was exactly that we became so pathetically frightened of what the other people will think that we would rather give up long running and beloved traditions than cause a fuss.

Rant over (for now).

So having Halloween no longer, much of my desire to creep people out and possibly even elicit a gasp or a scream or two has been transplanted into my writing. I like creating horror and tension, and I enjoy making people uncomfortable (for a little while anyway). Horror, like romantic love, is a very hard thing to accomplish well in writing intended for consumption by a wide audience. Quite simply, what scares me may not scare you. So how can a writer overcome these obstacles? The trick is to go slowly, and let your readers scare themselves as much as you can.

For real horror to be successful, I think it has to be grown. You can shock readers with gore and sudden death or sudden jeopardy, but these things are much more successful in visual mediums than in writing. Scaring your audience with words requires something more than shocks and base descriptions of violence. Real horror depends on the slow build of tension and suspense and the lurking, creeping dread of what will happen next. Horror flourishes best when the reader slowly begins to suspect that something isn't right in the world created by the author. This belief, the disquiet or unease, is the first step to horror. If you have the reader wondering why such a detail is mentioned, they're usually hooked and the hardest part is done.

Much of the early groundwork for good horror lies in careful description. Consistency is important, however, because a sudden focus on details or seemingly trivial bits of information in a generally mildly descriptive narrative form makes these bits and pieces stand out like stop signs. Working the dubious stranger in the shadows, or the strange car down the block into the story smoothly is a must. The build up of tensions and unease should be almost painfully slow through the first sections of the piece.

For the reveal at the end to be as powerful as it can be, the writer must take care not to give away too much about what he is planning for the simplest (and most manipulative) or reasons. By keeping the source of the horror obfuscated, the reader will begin to supply his or her own boogeyman. The darkest terrors of the reader's own psyche will assert themselves and make the journey more terrifying, because it has become slightly personal.

When you get specific, you begin to venture into the realm of personal taste and preference, and that can potentially disengage an audience. To keep them with you, employ something that would spook anyone out. I feel that there are such things. The best and easiest to use is simply the unknown. Most people are instinctively fearful of what we can't see or understand. Using that fear is

Con't on page 8

October—a wonderful time for students at the University of Science Fiction. Extroverts emerge with gusto. Introverts emerge and shed inhibition like butterflies—caution thrown to the wind—save face, be damned. It is my favorite time of year. Science Fiction fans attending conventions in drag—uh, I mean, in character—are no strangers to dress-up. Cosplay prepares them for this month, or the other way around. Whichever it is, the fun begins as leaves blow across the lawns and jackets get dusted off.

What devilish conundrum allows us to be Leisure-Suit-Larrys for most of the year yet abandon propriety and don masks, make-up and machetes for one or two nights? (Or daggers, swords, magic wands, tricky lights.) Is it the 'live as if' syndrome? Live as if you are Einstein, Beethoven, or Tiger Woods—take on the persona and play act. Costumes are grown up ways to role-play. Again. Role-play served us in our youth as we experiment with mom/dad responsibilities/roles like going to work in the morning or mom ragging on dad when he gets home because he got to 'play' at work all day while she is loaded with dishes, laundry and snot-nosed children... Okay, I'm projecting a bit. Whatever play-acting you and your siblings or friends did, insert that here \_\_\_\_\_.

Role-play prepared us to try adult roles and see if we like them. It's a form of reality testing. So, why *wouldn't* adults do this as well? I know for a fact, they do. I've spent many mornings driving to work and talking heatedly to no one but me in the car. I'm trying out a new way to approach a co-worker about a problem or testing how an argument sounds if I say it this way or that. I get a lot of distance from drivers who witness a maniac woman talking (singing, screaming, crying) to herself. I time-manage my angst while driving. Some road-rage. I angst. Actually, I'm role-playing. Just not in costume, which would be a lot more fun. Look around at the next stop light and see who else is engaged in a similar activity—some of those earbuds aren't plugged in to anything.

What about role-playing games and

LARPing—live action role-play? Isn't this just an adult version of the childhood task of exploring various kinds of occupations or dealing with other people? It's testing reality and looking at outcomes and options. We only lose hit points if we blow up the vault *and* the treasure, not our jobs. We gain, usually through error, a broader understanding of social skills without having our tires slashed.

Halloween gives us a way to try social skills *and* costumery. Last year, the urchins banging at my door simply threw cavernous bags at me and yelled something. Most of the time it was not the traditional greeting. Since I am an Equal Opportunity Employer, nothing gets nothing. I inspect costumes, make-up, and attitude. If it looks like it's store bought or thrown together in 15 minutes—tiny loot. Real ideas and homemade look gets rewarded—big loot. A creepy, bawdy song or joke at the door gets more loot (more ingenuity), more respect, and likely, loot.

Older youth and adults who dress up? They get the real stuff—jumbo candy bars, beer, pretzels, gift cards (kidding!). It is refreshing to see someone my age in costume—unless they're greedier than the small fry. Somehow, I know the difference.

I'm inspired by it all, the costumes, the gallons of candy and the mystery of who comes as what. Last year, a huge sandwich came to the door—yeah, mom helped with the outfit, but it had lettuce and mustard coming out of the sides... the meat and entitled kid inside was baloney, but the costume was creative!

When my girls were very little, Rainbow Brite came to the door—Skittles outfit, stripy socks, *hair perfectly Rainbow* and apple cheeks. Rainbow's mom had obviously done her costume, but it was surreal to see a live person in it. I just had to invite her in so my preschoolers could have nightmares. The girls just stared, mesmerized at this cartoon-come-to-life towering over them *outside* the TV.

I always wanted to be a ballerina. Viola! Role-play and don appropriate accoutrements, and no matter how pink-elephantish I look in tulle and tutu, I can get laughed at without pain or embarrassment. One night a year—it's *almost* the

# The Legend of Atlantis

by Joe Vadalma

One of the staples of fantasy fiction is the ancient civilization which existed before recorded history and which somehow disappeared without a trace. We know that such civilizations have existed through archeology, for example, the Mayans and Minoans. The most intriguing of these is Atlantis, which may have existed or may be simply a myth propagated by writers throughout the ages.

The first to mention Atlantis was the Greek philosopher, Plato, in 360 B.C.E. In his *Timaeus* and *Critias* dialogues he goes into great detail about a lost civilization that existed 9000 years earlier. Many people believe the tale to be complete fiction, the creation of a philosopher's imagination, used to illustrate an argument. Others think that the story was inspired by catastrophic events which may have destroyed the Minoan civilization on Crete and Thera. Still others maintain that the story is an accurate representation of a long lost and almost completely forgotten land.

In his dialogue with *Timaeus*, *Timaeus* says "... there was an island situated in front of the straits which are by you called the Pillars of Heracles; the island was larger than Libya and Asia put together, ... Now in this island of Atlantis there was a great and wonderful empire which had rule over the whole island and several others, and over parts of the continent, and, furthermore, the men of Atlantis had subjected the parts of Libya within the columns of Heracles as far as Egypt, and of Europe as far as Tyrrhenia..." Later in the dialogue he describes its destruction. "But afterwards there occurred violent earthquakes and floods; and in a single day and night of misfortune all your warlike men in a body sank into the earth, and the island of Atlantis in like manner disappeared in the depths of the sea. For which reason the sea in those parts is impassable and impenetrable, because there is a shoal of mud in the way; and this was caused by the subsidence of the island."

Other Greek and Roman writers such as Aristotle, Plutarch, Homer, Marcellinus, Theophrastus and Marcellus wrote about the existence of such an island, sometimes calling it Atlantis, sometimes giving it other names.

Interest in Atlantis waned until the Nineteenth Century. In 1882, Ignatius Donnelly wrote a book called *Atlantis, the Antediluvian World*. Since then many writers, mainly psychics and other persons interested in the paranormal and fantasists, have written about this marvelous ancient civilization.

Edgar Cayce claimed that in a trance state he learned about Atlantis. According to him it was the size of Europe, existed in 15,600 B.C.E. and that the Atlantean refugees fled to Egypt to found that civilization.

Gordon Scallion said that he had learned through psychic vision that Atlantis lasted 250,000 years and that there was another lost civilization called Lemuria. He claimed that the great pyramid in Giza, Egypt is a time capsule and fortells the fate of people in the Twentieth Century.

Madame Blavatsky mentioned Atlantis in *\*Isis Unveiled\** in 1877. She gave more details about the Atlanteans in *\*The Secret Doctrine\**. She claimed that the Atlanteans had flying machines.

Did Atlantis really exist? Some people have come up with evidence that such an island lies below the waters of the Atlantic. Recent satellite photos of southern Spain reveal features that appear to match Plato's descriptions. Dr. Rainer Kuehne thinks that it was not an island at all, but a region of the southern Spanish coast which was destroyed between 800 B.C.E. and 500 B.C.E.

In 1970 Dr. Ray Brown explored a pyramid on the sea floor off the Bahamas. Brown was accompanied by divers who also found roads, domes, rectangular buildings, unidentified metallic instruments, and a statue holding a "mysterious" crystal containing miniature pyramids. The metal devices and crystals were taken to Florida for analysis. The crystal amplified energy that passed through it.

In 1977, a mysterious discovery was made on the floor of the Atlantic concerning an unknown technology. A 650-foot pyramid was mysteriously lit up, with sparkling white water surrounding it that turned deep green, a shocking contrast to the dark black waters at that depth. The discovery was photographed by Arl Marahall's expedition off Cay Sal.

Con't on page 9

# Expand Your Mind

by Charles Gramlich

Now that I've gotten your attention with a spurious drug reference, let me make haste to state that your personal vices are no business of mine. I'm not talking about LSD or mushrooms here, or Timothy Leary's suggestion to "turn on, tune in, drop out." I'm talking about expanding your *writing* mind.

Everyone who writes will eventually find themselves getting into a rut. They'll do a new project the same way they did an old project. Because it's easy. And pretty much every human, including me, is lazy.

A couple of years ago I had an assignment to do forty short biographies of writers for a reference source. The first two or three were hard because I was feeling my way through them. My guidelines from the project were pretty vague so I not only had to decide what to include, but how best to present it. But after the first three pieces, the articles began to flow faster and faster. I had developed a template to follow. The next fifteen articles went like lightning. And then suddenly I started to slow down again. I began to struggle. It took me a while to realize that I was... bored.

Anytime you do something the same way repeatedly it's going to *get* boring. Psychologists know that it's human nature to seek out new sensations, new experiences. Once I figured out what the problem was with the biographies I deliberately altered my approach. I changed the physical location of my computer in the Austin apartment where I was living and working after Hurricane Katrina. I changed the time of day when I sat down to write. Most importantly, I changed the way I actually researched and wrote the articles, altering the format I was using and even the style.

It took me a while to find a new pattern that I was comfortable with; again I struggled through a few articles. But before long I'd discovered a process I liked and the pieces were rolling out of the computer again. When I got bored with *that* process I switched back to the original pattern and was happy to find that I was no longer bored with *it*. Soon the work was done and on its way to the publisher.

I wondered why I'd never had this problem with my short stories and I think I've finally figured out the answer. One, for me, writing fiction more strongly engages my emotions and that insulates me against boredom. Second, I've never tried to write more than a few stories in a row in the same genre. I might do a horror tale or two, then pen a fantasy or a western. And although I like to think there are some stylistic factors common to all my work, my style changes pretty dramatically depending on the genre I'm working in. I never have a chance to get bored with any specific tactic.

Writing novels is different, of course. You may spend half a year or several years living in the *same* world, with the *same* characters and the same style. Since I also work full-time as a teacher I don't get unbroken strings of time to write and don't suffer a lot of boredom in the so called "sagging" middle of a manuscript. Professional novelists that I know *do* suffer from occasional boredom, though, and the secret for them, too, has been to spice their routine with variation.

One novelist I know takes periodic breaks from her computer to write longhand at a house she and her husband own on a lake. Another takes her laptop to various coffee houses around the city, changing her venue as routine starts to creep in and stifle her creativity. Yet another author I know switches between genres as he writes multiple novels.

If you find yourself flagging in your production even though the effort is there, or if you find it harder and harder to drive yourself to your writing desk each day, then consider the possibility that you're just a little bored. Shake things up. Bring in music, or take music away. Work on a laptop instead of a desktop, and move from room to room or even go to a public place. Try writing longhand or recording your prose into a tape player while you walk in the park or in your own back yard. Better yet, if you're a novelist take a stab at a short story; if you usually write in third person try changing it to first.

Stay flexible, stay sharp. Change is good for the writer's soul.

## Reviews

### Devices and Desires

**K.J. Parker**

Orbit, Oct 2007, \$12.99

ISBN: 9780316003384

Review by Harriet Klausner

Due to its incredible industrial base with advanced technology, the Mezentine Republic is the superpower. Two neighboring people, the Vadani and the Eremians resent their superiority. Whereas the Vandai leadership uses guile in its dealing with the powerful Republic, the Eremians invade only to be slaughtered by their foes due to superior technological weaponry, especially the mechanical Scorpions.

However, in the ruins of the slaughter, opportunity arises. Guild foreman and engineer Ziani Vaatzes has fled the Republic to avoid execution for breaking the rules. He offers the Eremians his knowledge of weaponry for safety and the opportunity to see his beloved wife and daughter one last time. However, Mezentines realizing that Ziani may sell them out and attack the Eremians to insure they remain the sole superpower.

The first book of the Engineer Trilogy is a fascinating look at power mostly through the machinations of the scheming lying Ziani, who manipulates people as he climbs the social pyramid to get the support to meet his obsessed goal. He does this with the backdrop of nations selling violence and control as the key to regional ownership of a global economy. Although the antihero Ziani's skills are incredible, luck and coincidence helps him stay alive while his plausibility index is somewhere over Everest and his ethics somewhere in hell as he sacrifices innocent people to further his cause. Still this is an entertaining tale of one man who to achieve his quest requires him to be Machiavelli and Rove.

**Fiction is the truth inside the lie.**

— Stephen King

The difference between sentiment and being sentimental is the following: Sentiment is when a driver swerves out of the way to avoid hitting a rabbit on the road. Being sentimental is when the same driver, when swerving away from the rabbit, hits a pedestrian.

— Frank Herbert

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### The Awakened Mage

**Karen Miller**

Orbit, Oct 2007, \$6.99

ISBN:9780316067812

Review by Harriet Klausner

In the capital city of Dorana in the Kingdom of Lur, malevolent mage Morg has kill the Doranen royals except for pathetic Prince Gar, who is no threat as he has no magic skills. Morg has also taken possession of the body of the prime successor to the weather controlling throne Conroyd Jarralt.

Gar believes he is the last hope to prevent the catastrophe that Morg's assent will bring, but he lacks magic. He turns to his best friend and assistant Asher the Olken, who are not supposed to be able to wield magic. Gar pleads with Asher to perform weather magic as the ancient prophesy predicted that an Olken mage will save the kingdom Doranen with weather magic.

The conclusion to the delightful *The Innocent Mage* is a fabulous fantasy thriller because the title hero Asher has a chance to win against a superior foe only if he can control the anger caused by being a victim of stereotyping racism. Olkens are considered inferior because they allegedly cannot perform weather magic so he has to hide his skills if he wants to survive yet now he must use his skills if his country wants to survive. He may be destiny's darling, but will he attempt to save a kingdom that treats him at best as a second class citizen? Karen Miller provides a fabulous finish to her saga.

## Reviews

### **Josy: A Sci Fi/Fantasy Romance**

**Victoria Rose**

Outskirts Press, 2005

\$9.95, Trade Paper, 163 pages

ISBN:1-59800-165-5

Review by Sharyna WolfCat

The planet Gareth is being destroyed as the Rose sisters prepare to leave. They agree to travel in one body—Christina's. She takes the souls of Toni and Josy into herself, reduces her body physics to light waves, and travels at the speed of light through space. She arrives in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado via sunbeam and materializes on the naked back of sunbathing Mac Dakota. Her second problem—after food, clothing, and shelter—is to find bodies for her sisters. In this third romance novel in the Rose Sisters Trilogy, Josy finds her man in Sheriff Thomas Day. She agrees to marry him but with one contingency.

But there's more—much more!! Josy tells us of her culture: Their focus on the well-being of the planet and community, concepts of education, means of exchange, extended family, and the use of hydrogen as their source of energy.

A fun lighthearted attempt at SF/Fantasy. I say attempt because it reads on a fourth grade level. But it is definitely not for kids! Every other page is a sex act and though the author tries to keep it monogamous, there is reference to male on male sex. I would recommend this book to struggling writers who need hope and readers who want a quick read. Perfect for planes and beaches; it's a good book. Not a must read but a good book.

From my close observation of writers...they fall into two groups: 1) those who bleed copiously and visibly at any bad review, and 2) those who bleed copiously and secretly at any bad review.

— Issac Asimov

Science Fiction is that class of prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is hypothesized on the basis of some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-technology, whether human or extra-terrestrial in origin.

— Kingsley Amis

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### **Pathogen**

**By John P. Matsis**

2007 Epress-Online

ISBN:978-1-934258-05-7

\$14.99 in print/\$5.99 E-Book

Review by Sharyna WolfCat

In the wet, warm ecosystem of the Costa Rican rainforest, a deadly amphibian pathogen lies in wait for the unwary, as well as the cunning.

Years earlier, this pathogen infected and decimated frog populations. Now, silently, the mutated microorganism allows amphibian-to-human transmission.

Brightly colored imported frogs, sold as pets, enter the United States. An abused wife, her heart set on revenge, purchases a vial of powder, whispered to have magical powers: an aphrodisiac if only a tiny amount is used; a larger dose results in the bleeding death.

Experts at the Center for Disease Control identify the Pathogen, but is it too late?

Has it already made the leap to human-to-human transfer?

What happens when the impending peril reaches high into the U.S. political scene, all the way to the President of the United States?

I loved this book! It has short, concise chapters that really hold your attention. The whole premise is interesting. And incredibly possible. I did find that instead of playing out the story, the author chose an Epilogue ending. Rushing closing bits of information at us but not fully answering all the whys. Still a good read and available as an e-book.

### Successful Horror (con't)

crucial to creating a wide reaching horrific effect. Don't describe what is making the bushes tremble, just describe the trembling bushes at the end of the dimly lit driveway, and let the imagination of the reader go wild.

Details that contribute the buildup of unease are myriad. Small things that seem out of place, slightly eccentric or secretive characters or strange dialogue are good ways to establish things as unusual. As always in writing, never tell the reader what is happening if there is any way to avoid it. Show readers what is going on and let them draw their own conclusions, or miss the details entirely. When they go back and re-read the story, they will catch what they missed the first time, and the writer will look that much cleverer for having hidden those details so well.

Once the story gets going, it really helps to be relentless with the tension. Don't wuss out and let the reader (or your characters!) enjoy any kind of respite. Keep the audience engaged by raising the stakes at every turn of dialogue or plot. Beware repeating the same types of tension builders too often, though. Mysterious winds blowing trash around an ally or knowing, weighty glances from the *femme fatale* on the other side of the coffee shop work fine once or twice, but overusing them (without an explanation for them) leads the reader to lessen the importance of the event, since it doesn't have any obvious or immediate consequences or impacts on the protagonists.

Or one could do just the opposite. Getting the reveal out of the way as soon as you can, letting the reader know exactly what the monster under the bed is creates another way to build tension that doesn't rely on revealing the big monster at the end (which is sometimes incredibly daunting. I've scrapped a lot of work because I was never satisfied when the antagonist appeared because it didn't live up to the dread that I had established throughout the story). Using the knowledge of what the bad guy is creates tension and dread as the reader watches helplessly while the characters (who probably don't know as much as the reader) are stalked by Mr. Nasty McEvil. I can't say which

method is better or easier...it's a matter of personal preference, and the needs of the story.

Happy Halloween everyone, and don't worry about that attic access string swinging in the hallway. Must have brushed it with your shoulder when you walked by.

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### USF (con't)

most fun I've ever had as a grown-up. I believe the stuffy ones who look down their tanning-bed noses at my attempts at fun secretly wish they could come along.

Play. Humanity needs to play. USF students play more *completely* than any group I've ever encountered. The criticism that they cross the shadow-lands to permanent fantasy is rather unfounded. As a therapist, I find people of all demographics who cross over. Audio/visual hallucinations are part of a diagnosis, not a game or temporary relax from daily stress and problems. If a USF student crosses over to permanent fantasy-land, there's likely something else in play, not a conscious abandonment of reality. I was around when the D&D crowd was hounded as leading people to be mentally imbalanced and evil. Same for Wizards and Warriors and Harry Potter. It's play—whimsical and engaging and brings us together. It's not mental illness or demonic.

Well... there are those USF students who take things too far. Lapse of judgment, perhaps? Admittedly, "I get to be the vampire, this time" is not something I grew up with as being acceptable play. If it's well done and has a reason for blood and guts, has a line of ethics or right and wrong, I can live with that, and have embraced a few good authors/shows. Gothic is okay, now. Wish I could go to work like that sometimes. emo, I'm still having a hard time with, even the all lower case letters creeps me. This borders on depression and other dark things. emo is a life-style, play-acting at it's extreme. A Google search led me to [www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com). Taglines for emo: scene goth punk gay hardcore myspace music poser fag emo kid screamo emotional indie prep rock loser scenester chav... USF students can be extreme.

Who'd've foreseen the jump from Frankenstein to emo?

Give me Halloween in any form. With our without posers. This holiday should come at least twice a year. Not the hoopla and commercialism necessarily but the okay-ness to come out of the box and allow self-expression that is fairly non-judgmental and safe. (I am a mom, after all). Give me fun—kids of all ages, playing and tickling each other with big smiles and out-of-breath laughing heard frequently. I need the opportunity to peek my head out of the office once in awhile, don my pointy-green slippers and dance with the elves or paste on my protruding forehead and sing Klingon opera with a stein of ale at my chest. Halloween is part of my mental health and I milk it for every drop o' loot I can muster. My fellow students, party on!

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#### Atlantis (con't)

Dr. William Bell's 1958 photos taken on the bottom of the Atlantic showed a six-foot spire protruding from a couple of circular gear-like bases with peculiar light emanations from the bottom of the shaft.

More underwater pyramids were found off Central America, Yucatan, and Louisiana, where domes were found in the Straits of Florida. A marble Greek style building was found between Florida and Cuba.

One of the most amazing finds on the bottom of the Atlantic was reported by Captain Reyes Miraga's crew on the salvage ship Talia from Spain. They video-taped miles of pillared temples, buildings, and statues and wide curving boulevards, with smaller avenues branching out from the center like spokes in a wheel, with majestic temples and pyramids. Much of this city, as well as the city found off Spain by Dr. Maxine Asher's expedition and later by Professor Akayonove's expedition (all photographed), show a startling similarity to Plato's description of Atlantis.

A Russian expedition led by Boris Asturua discovered a sunken city about 400 miles off Portugal with buildings made of extremely

strong concrete and plastics. He said "the remains of streets suggests the use of monorails for transportation".

Note that not all of these claims have been substantiated. Nonetheless, the legend may be true.

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#### Swords of Talera (con't)

Yet the tight, action-oriented focus that is the story's greatest strength is also one of its weaknesses. A world as well conceived as Talera, one populated with such an array of memorable species, demands to have its history and that of its people revealed in full. By the conclusion, few of Talera's secrets are revealed. The only consolation to readers is that two more volumes are forthcoming, and one can only hope to see more of Talera's complexity as the Cycle continues.

Fast paced but not frenetic, action-packed yet far from mindlessly violent, *Swords of Talera* strikes a good balance between the thought-provoking fiction readers need, and the old fashioned good versus evil smack-em-up that readers demand. The cover copy calls it "A grand adventure in the tradition of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Robert E. Howard." *Swords of Talera* more than lives up to that claim.

It was for books like *Swords of Talera* that I founded Tyrannosaurus Press. Too many good authors are skipped over because of politics, deadlines, editorial preferences, or simple frustration with the process. I regret that circumstances gave Borgo Press the opportunity to publish Charles' books before T-Press could do it, but I wish him the best and want to help him in any way I can.

To that end, I'm asking for your support. For most of us, writing is a love first and only after that a hobby we hope to one day turn into a career. Charles Gramlich is more successful than most of the writers I've had the pleasure of meeting, but writing is still not his profession (or at least not his first profession). *Swords of Talera* (ISBN: 978-1-4344-0081-9) is available for order at most booksellers. I encourage you to buy a copy for yourself. And one for a friend.

Who knows, if you ask me nicely ([Info@TyrannosaurusPress.com](mailto:Info@TyrannosaurusPress.com)) I might even be able to get an autographed copy for you.