



# The Illuminata

Delving Deep Into The Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

## Read With Passion; Write With Fire

By Bret Funk

There have been a number of times since starting this ezine when I wondered whether it was worth the effort, whether the time I put into it (let alone the *pro bono* time put into it by my panel of editors) is justifiable. After all, free time is at a premium now, I am not as young as I used to be, and insert any of a number of other excuses not to publish this ezine here...

Every now and then, though, there comes a payoff, something that makes me feel not only like I am doing something worthwhile, but that the forum I have provided here has actually benefited someone.

Such an event recently occurred, when Illuminata columnist Charles Gramlich contacted me with great news: a number of his essays on writing, including more than a few that had been written specifically for the Illuminata, were going to be published in a book about writing.

No doubt Charles was more excited by the news than I was, but only by a little. To think that my obscure little ezine actually contributed to someone's writing career! I can't pretend that I had anything to do with making Charles a successful writer, but I can pretend that, without the Illuminata, this particular book might never have existed.

Of course, Charles then asked if I'd review his book, and I'll admit to a little hesitation; I've read and reviewed books on writing in the past, but

never by someone I know, and never by someone whose commitment to the craft I had witnessed firsthand. What if I didn't agree with what he said? Would that be a criticism of him, or of me? At this stage of our writing careers I know that Charles is more dedicated, more polished, more published, and far more experienced, so the thought of walking away from his book without enjoying it, or worse, without learning from it, gave me a chill.

Charles might like that. His first love is horror.

In the end, not only did I enjoy the book, not only did I learn from it, but I was also able to use it as a mirror to view my own writing and writing habits, and to (hopefully) improve both.

Below is a copy of my review of *Write With Fire*. For any of you looking to improve your own writing, or who just want to support independent presses (in this case, Borgo Press) and hungry writers, you may purchase your own copies [here](#).

### A Review of *Write With Fire*, by Charles Gramlich Review by Bret Funk

When first approached to review *Write With Fire*, I wondered at what I might be able to say about it. As an author and publisher, I read books about writing frequently, and while I like some more than others, few offer any unique perspectives into the craft. Even more importantly, none have provided me with a cheat sheet for becoming a success. So readers be warned: *Write With Fire* contains no revolutionary insights into the use of the semicolon, no grammar mnemonic to take the place of years of persistence and rigorous practice, and no list of important contacts who will slingshot an aspiring author to fame with

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# Endorse This!

by Terry Crotinger/montanasing

An endorsement from famous people facilitates sales. This is no secret. Audiences, viewers, readers, and shopping moms are influenced by what others think, buy, personally use, and “endorse”. As this is true for great shopping and political lobbyists, science fiction fandom are caught in this social exhibit/experiment of subtle manipulation. It is intentionally provided and screamed at us in various ways, but uncover the trappings and at the heart of the intent is to manipulate us to do something behavioral. Like buy.

A. Christopher Drown’s, *A Mage of None Magic, Heart of the Sisters* is endorsed by notable person, award winning writer and seller of many successful series—Joel Rosenburg. The cover tastefully proclaims that the work has a great writer’s attention and notes his anticipation for more. Will it increase sales? I’m sure that was *one* intent of putting the endorsement on the front cover. But an endorsement also lends confidence: This is worthy. It is worth your time and cash. You can depend on this endorsement.

But, it depends on the endorser. Mr. Rosenberg is not an Isaac Asimov or Robert Heinlein, but he’s not on the Sham-Wow level, either. Point: there are levels of endorsement, so make sure it’s a good one. In the endorsement arena, Mr. Drown’s book gets a second look because Mr. Rosenberg is no slouch in science fiction circles.

In the publishing business, the standard practice is to find several notables in the field to endorse a work. They also use, splashed liberally on covers—front and back—the “Award” method to help readers know this book is Award-Winning-Approved for reading.

Most authors would feel disrespected that anyone would think the only reason they seek to earn an award is to generate sales. Nay, they want others to know that they were found worthy by award-winning judges, and that their writing is so superb that the story must be experienced. These awards are not giveaways. With stringent qualifications and rules, They-Are-Earned. If won, you/your work just got The Seal of Approval. (And it likely isn’t hurting sales.)

A plethora of award categories abound, and in science fiction/speculative fiction circles some standouts are: Hugo, Nebula, Bradbury and James Tiptree Jr. Literary Awards. There are many more, nationally and internationally.

A Caldecott Award/science fiction category would be a nice feather, a nice “endorsement” for an author. One librarian was overheard that she reads every single Caldecott winner to see if it would be appropriate for the library she worked with. Librarians have quite the pipeline of their own; a librarian endorsement is nothing to ignore. It is unwise to underestimate your local librarian!

Awards come from publishers, organizations and from well-established conventions. Worldcon and Comic-Con, being two of the most recognizable conventions, give awards for everything from print to art to music and other media. These don’t get much national media coverage, so winners tend to be word-of-mouth endorsements spread in blogs, text and Twitter posts.

Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America sponsor the Nebula and Bradbury Awards. Hugos come from WorldCon. The James Tiptree Jr. Literary Award comes from the Council of the same name.

There are media awards of all kinds: Saturn (film), Golden Gob Award (B movies), Television Critics Association Award, Audie Awards (audio books), Kodansha Awards (manga authors), Scribe Awards (International Association of Media Tie-in Writers)... There is a podcast award, computer graphics (CGI Society) awards, and even a Twitter award (Shorty Awards) for 140-character content.

With so many awards lauding authors, artists and others, the resulting endorsements, implicating quality, don’t seem to make headlines unless it gets one of the BIG national awards or the work is on the New York Times book list. However, the serious writer must find ways to advertise their achievements. Getting that endorsement or award icon on the cover of your book is a good start to validate the quality of your writing. So, Mr. Drown, congratulations on your Joel Rosenburg endorsement. His endorsement is well-founded. (And just darn smart advertising.)

# Is Time Travel Possible?

by Joe Vadalma

Here is what Carl Sagan in an interview on NOVA said:

NOVA: Do you think that backwards time travel will ever be possible?

Sagan: Such questions are purely a matter of evidence, and if the evidence is inconsistent or insufficient, then we withhold judgment until there is better evidence. Right now we're in one of those classic, wonderfully evocative moments in science when we don't know, when there are those on both sides of the debate, and when what is at stake is very mystifying and very profound.

If we could travel into the past, it's mind-boggling what would be possible. For one thing, history would become an experimental science, which it certainly isn't today. The possible insights into our own past and nature and origins would be dazzling. For another, we would be facing the deep paradoxes of interfering with the scheme of causality that has led to our own time and ourselves. I have no idea whether it's possible, but it's certainly worth exploring.

Sagan seems to be implying that it might be possible. Of course this interview was in 2000. In the next nine years there have been other theoretical ideas put forth by physicists, cosmologists and mathematicians.

Here is an excerpt from an article in *How Stuff Works.Com*

According to Einstein's theory of relativity, time slows as an object approaches the speed of light. This leads many scientists to believe that traveling faster than the speed of light could open up the possibility of time travel to the past as well as to the future. The problem is that the speed of light is believed to be the highest speed at which something can travel, so it is unlikely that we will be able to travel into the past. As an object nears the speed of light, its mass increases until, at the speed of light, it becomes infinite. Accelerating an infinite mass any faster than that is impossible, or at least it seems to be right now.

My question is what happens as our spaceship

nears infinite mass. It is still traveling towards its original destination at near light speed. At that point, from the viewpoint of the observers on the spaceship, everything else in the universe has near infinite mass. Would it start accelerating even faster by the pull of gravity of the nearest large object, possibly its destination star? Or would it be torn apart by near infinite forces of gravity pulling in several directions at once? If the former, it would accelerate past the speed of light and travel into the past.

Another method of traveling back in time involves black holes. Here is what *HowStuffWorks.Com* describes one method using a special type of black hole:

Another type of black hole, called a Kerr hole, is also theoretically possible. Kerr holes are rotating black holes that could be used as portals for time travel or travel to parallel universes. In 1963, New Zealand mathematician Roy Kerr proposed the first realistic theory for a rotating black hole. In his theory, dying stars would collapse into a rotating ring of neutrons that would produce sufficient centrifugal force to prevent the formation of a singularity. Since the black hole would not have a singularity, Kerr believed it would be safe to enter it without being crushed by the infinite gravitational force at its center.

If Kerr holes do exist, it might be possible to pass through them and exit out of a "white" hole. A white hole would have the reverse action of a black hole. So, instead of pulling everything into its gravitational force, it would use some sort of exotic matter with negative energy to push everything out and away from it. These white holes would be our way to enter other times or other worlds.

The problem here is that we don't really know where the bottom of a black hole would lead. Would we exist in another part of our universe? Another universe? Somewhere else in time? Only experiments will tell, that is if it is actually possible to build a rotating black hole and travel through it. I'm sure that someone will try someday.

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# Bogus: The Sleazy Scam of Psychics

by Katie Picone

Why are so many professional psychics successful? Most people, in my observation, thoroughly enjoy believing in the supernatural. They delight in the idea that human beings have the potential to transcend our “normal” parameters. And most successful psychics *do* transcend some of those norms. They have abilities beyond those of the general public. But the catch is, their special powers are not supernatural at all, which becomes apparent when observed through the lens of skeptical, critical thinking.

Since 1996 the stage magician and noted skeptic James Randi has had laid out on the table a million-dollar prize to anyone who can - under controlled testing conditions agreed upon by both parties - prove that they have paranormal abilities. And over a dozen years and hundreds of applicants later no one has been able to claim the prize or even progress through the screening process to the formal testing stage. The famous psychic and television personality Sylvia Browne won't even take the test. She claimed for a while that the money's not there and the contest is a farce, but Randi attests that the money exists in the form of bonds with Goldman Sachs and that the documentation is available to anyone who requests it. Eventually, on Larry King's show, she finally agreed to take it, but in the years (a little over eight years now) after making that public statement she has continued to waffle and won't commit to it. In such a public debate, if she really can do what she says she can, would it be so much effort to take the test simply to authenticate her psychic abilities and to prove The Amazing Randi (a man who is all but a sworn enemy) wrong? Could it possibly be that she knows that under controlled testing her “powers” would prove to be nothing more than a bit of observation and conjecture and a willingness to lie to desperate people for monetary gain? I'll let you readers make your minds up about that.

Most psychics have never been formally tested in controlled situations. And of the ones who have, I have never been able to find an instance where they do much better than what would be expected

by random chance. In the lack of evidence, the only way to convince people that they're genuine is by employing techniques often used by stage magicians and mentalists. They read people, not tea leaves.

Probably the most powerful tool in a psychic's bag (other than the gullibility of his or her mark) is the technique of cold reading. Mentalists, psychics, mediums, con artists and hucksters of all stripes have found great value in cold reading. Cold reading is a method of making educated guesses by asking leading questions. The psychic might say, “I'm hearing a sound like the letter J. Are you close with someone whose name starts with J?” The odds are in favor of that being the case so the person sitting for the reading will usually volunteer who “J” is. Maybe a brother, at which point the psychic can say, “I'm sensing that you've had some problems in the past but that you now have a pretty good relationship with your brother.” And on and on, using leading questions to narrow down the possibilities, each question prompting the client to reveal more and more of the truth. All the psychic has to do is be able to choose the right questions and make a couple good guesses. To someone who doesn't know they're being read this technique can be very convincing.

Hot reading is even better, but it's more complicated because it requires an accomplice or some other means of surveillance to provide the psychic with information about the person they will be reading. All it takes to pull this off is a little imagination and subtlety.

Professional psychics prey on the vulnerable. Most people who go to psychics are unprepared to deal with a practiced manipulator. They enter the situation with hope and a degree of trust, a trust that is reinforced and bolstered by the performance of the psychic. A couple hits and a reassuring attitude go a long way. Some psychics use the client's fears and superstitions against them. They may tell someone that a family member has put a curse on them, and that to lift that curse it will cost more money. In other circumstances they may groom someone, manipulating the

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# The Writer's Block: GEMS

by Charles Gramlich

So, let me tell you about GEMS, which stands for GOAL, EFFORT, MOTIVATION, SKILL. I'm a mild mannered professor by day, and *usually* by night. And I'm always looking to help my students think about their education. As a writer too, everything ends up adapted for my own struggles with story, as well. That's how GEMS developed, and here's how I apply it to writing.

Most writers start with one GOAL, to get published. I did. But after you've seen your name in print that first goal is superseded and new goals must be set. It wasn't until recently, however, that I realized the need to interweave my goals to produce the greatest effect. Specifically, I needed to set both long-term and short-term goals, and had to understand the difference between primary and secondary goals.

A primary goal is the highest level and I believe a writer should have only one. Everything else will be secondary, although that doesn't mean unimportant. These days, *my* primary goal is to "advance my writing career." Any other goals I set should work toward that purpose. Some "secondary" goals will be short-term: setting up a signing, improving a website, or even reading a book on writing. Other secondary goals are long-term. Eventually, I want to write a more ambitious book than I have so far, one appealing to a wider audience.

GOALS cannot be met without EFFORT, and the key is "sustained" rather than "acute" effort. Almost everyone "rises to the occasion" when a deadline is due. Such "acute" effort is often necessary in a literary career, but it won't get a novel written. Sustained effort means doing the work every day; it means making continual progress toward a goal. Many novelists have a set page number or word count they strive to reach every day. That's sustained effort. At times, when school overwhelms me, I've been reduced to, "just one paragraph a day." But paragraphs lead to pages, and pages to stories. Push forward, and you'll get there.

An individual's effort level is affected by what psychologists call "locus of control." People with an "internal" locus of control believe their own

actions control the events of their lives. People with an "external" locus believe chance or "others" control their fates. Writers with an internal locus hold themselves responsible for their success or lack thereof, while authors with an external locus might say they were merely lucky or unlucky. Certainly, both internal and external factors impact a writer's career. Research shows, however, that people with an internal locus typically work harder toward their goals. They believe effort is directly related to success or failure. From an "effort" standpoint, writers should *try* to feel in control of their careers, even if that isn't always the case.

MOTIVATION is the third facet of GEMS, and it comes from two sources, "intrinsic" and "extrinsic." Intrinsic motivations come from *within*. I'm proud of myself when I write hard and make progress. I feel guilty when I don't. No external force applies these judgments to me. The pride and guilt come from inside. Extrinsic motivations come from outside. Rewards like money and praise are examples.

Most writers have both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. I enjoy money myself, and I beam when someone compliments my work. But I also write because it engages my emotions. *Intrinsic* motivations make careers for writers. *Extrinsic* motivations actually lose their value over time. Would you have been thrilled to earn a few thousand dollars on your first book? What about on your tenth? When behaviors are controlled solely by extrinsic motivations, the payoff has to grow over time or the behaviors stop.

Extrinsic motivations also *diminish* intrinsic ones. Many writers write their first novel for love. They write their second for love and money. They write their third for money and love. See where the trend is headed? Love decreases; money increases. When it becomes all about money, many writers quit. To maintain long careers as writers, authors need to keep the love, even if that means changing genres or reinventing themselves.

Finally, we come to SKILL. When I started I had a good vocabulary, good visualization abilities, and had read enough to acquire a sense

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# The Inimitable, Lovable Zombie

by Rachel V. Olivier

Recently I was on a chat forum with some other writers. It had been set up for readers and writers to interact, talk about questions readers might have about upcoming works, but this lazy Sunday afternoon it ended up being just writers. Some were watching football while on the chat. Some had put their kids down for a nap and were sneaking online for some peaceful time. And some were just wiling away a Sunday afternoon.

For the most part, these were all scifi/fantasy/horror writers of various subgenres. And when it came to doing what we do best—chatting about this, that and the other—we ended up where we always end up—zombies. Funny how that happens with speculative fiction writers. Yes, we might begin by discussing how to build tension in a narrative or the religio-politico-socio-economic messages we may be sending our readers or even whether what we write is truly fiction or nonfiction, but we always end up discussing zombies. In fact, during our chat, with the interspersing of sports talk (from the football watchers) into the conversation, we even began to talk about zombies and sports.

This got me to thinking, what is it about zombies that gives us the warm fuzzies? It's not just zombie movies. I know several people who can't stand zombie movies, but will gladly discuss zombies. And it's not other zombie stories that people like. Frequently, people could care less about reading or watching zombie stories. They just seem to have a soft spot for zombies. I even know a writer who hates historic romance and zombie stories, yet couldn't wait to read *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009) by Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith.

As we enter that most holy of holies for the speculative fiction writer—Halloween—I've still got to wonder: What is it with zombies?

I brought this question to some of my social network friends on Tribe.net and Facebook and came up with a number of answers. Of course there was the required "Brains! Must have brains!" as well as how shuffling at a snail's pace isn't a bad way to go through life. Others couldn't resist talking about their favorite zombie movies

like *Night of the Living Dead* (1968 or 1990 if you watched the remake) or *Shaun of the Dead* (2004). And of course with the coming of fall came the release of *Zombieland* (2009). Though I have not seen it yet and am not a zombie movie fan, I do plan on seeing it soon. And I want to see it because it sounds like fun.

I think there are a couple of reasons zombies give us the wiggly warm fuzzies. One is that they are a metaphor for the human condition. Vampires and werewolves are also metaphors for the human condition. Both are about the passion inside or our animal instinct taking over our humanity. The super strength of these creatures conquers the human side and can wreck havoc and destroy lives. Vampires and werewolves are serious business. Even when you've got Angel and Spike trading pithy remarks whilst fighting over Buffy, or Oz making cute remarks to Willow (on the TV series *Angel* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* respectively), it's still serious business.

As a metaphor, zombies are still humans, but dead humans, who can't stay dead for some odd reason (can't keep a good one down...). They're not sexy. They're ugly, stupid and move very slow and become one with the hive mind. They are the quintessential human on a bad day. They are us. Or we. Or, well... you know.

Plus, zombies are fun. I mean really. You can shoot and hack at them all you want. You're not committing murder, because they're already dead! They move slow and are stupid, so as long as you don't have a mass converging on you, you can make fun of them, run circles around them and generally be the ass others were to you in grade school. Not so with vampires or werewolves who seem to have a particular connection to teenage angst that we'd all like to leave behind eventually. No, zombies are more fun than that. With zombies, you can let all that angst go. With zombies, you can kill the inner (or outer) dead person and move on!

So, this Halloween, as you see all the ghosties and ghoulies traipse through your yard or your party or office or wherever, remember the zombie.

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## Reviews

### Consider Phlebas

Iain M. Banks

Orbit, 1987

Trade paperback, \$12.99, 527 pages

ISBN 978-0-316-00538-8

Review by D. L. Parker

Any of you in the mood to straddle one of the giant red Chinese firecrackers, light the fuse behind your behind and roar through giant spaceships in a *Millennium Falcon* through the *Death Star* riff (blasting to shreds bystanders and police pursuit vessels en route)? Or, how about a hand-to-hand fight to the death between pirates, with all the gasps, crotch-slams, wrenched limbs, and slips in attendant blood? *Too tame?* How about an escape from a grossly fat cannibal who shreds his living victims using shark-like artificial fangs? *Now* are you in the mood?

Don't, as I did, finish Bank's *Consider Phlebas* just before bedtime. The story is not conducive to rest. Not to mention everyone, except a couple minor characters, dies a gory death, so you won't go to bed happy. The book's got a train wreck in it (I speak literally), and it is, more or less, a lengthy, prolonged train wreck of a story.

Horza, the shape-changing humanoid assassin used by the alien Idirans against the mostly human/A. I. Culture, careens from one tooth-and-nail struggle to the next. The anti-hero's on the side of the bad guys, but to give Banks due credit, he made me care enough about his villain to keep reading. At 500+ pages and late at night, that was quite an accomplishment. Of course I said there's a *real* train wreck at the end—so don't get too attached to any of the characters.

One of the Culture's fabulous A. I. Minds has taken refuge after a battle on an alien world protected by a super-advanced non-corporeal species. These particular aliens aren't involved in the human-Idiran war, but neither combatant particularly wants to tick them off.

But the chance to grab a Culture Mind is too much temptation for the Idirans. Horza is dispatched, runs into serious difficulties, spends

most of the story blasting right and left en route, and finally gets to his target to find out the Idirans sent in a team already—and the fanatic A team on the spot wasn't told Horza was their ally.

You can read this book purely for the bam, slam, bash, crash, and explosions, which Banks does a fine job with, for the most part. It's easy to sneer at action adventure but hard to write it *well*: I should know, I've tried. And Banks manages to keep Horza a real character during the joyride. Not many writers could do that.

There's some deeper stuff in here for those who catch their breath enough to pay attention. The Idirans resemble, to a wincing degree, Islam at the height of its militaristic, religion-fueled expansion.

The Culture, on the other hand, too much resembles touchy-feely, pleasure-seeking, self-actualizing, American melting-pot inclusiveness (without religion, which is simply considered ridiculous. Banks doesn't miss a chance to make that point). Oh wow, *somebody* admires us. Baptists, Pentecostals, and Catholics removed, that is.

A few aspects of this story irritated me exceedingly. The egregious incident with the repellent cannibal, self-made god of his little island and his starving sick slaves, was the worst. This trumped-up gory digression hit us once again with Banks' religion-is-nuts theme. (We got that point already, thanks). Nor was I fond of the ending. Be warned: some of you will chuck the book across the room.

The best advice is to enjoy the ride. What a wild ride it is! You'll be out of breath trying to keep up. Just skip the cannibal, and enjoy the explosions.

Any road followed precisely to its end leads precisely nowhere. Climb the mountain just a little bit to test it's a mountain. From the top of the mountain, you cannot see the mountain.

— Frank Herbert

## Reviews

### The Prefect

Alastair Reynolds

Ace, 2007

Trade paperback, \$12.99, 563 pages

ISBN 978-0-441-01722-5

Review by D. L. Parker

When I read 500+ pages at a single setting, I can guarantee the book's interesting enough to be worth a significant eyestrain headache. I've been on a Brit kick since discovering Neal Asher and his Bond-in-space Cormac novels. Banks was the second I sampled, and Alastair Reynolds, my lucky third. Ow! This *headache*, though...

"*The Prefect*" starts as a detective story and expands into a space opera thriller with lashings of super technology. Tom Dreyfus is the Prefect, in other words a cop. For the most part, his department's business is stamping out election fraud. He and his fellow officers of the Panoply police a huge artificial environment called the Glitter Band.

The Glitter Band is full of hundreds of independent self-governing "habitats", which can do what they like, so long as it's by majority vote. Plenty of habitats have voted their citizens into self-destruction, but that's okay by the Panoply, so long as the vote was clean.

Of course the folks we have to look out for the most are those who intend to save us from ourselves. Here in the US, we remember the Great Mistake that masqueraded as the noble effort to Fight Demon Alcohol. Organized crime never had a better deal.

Dreyfus too has a superior officer—Super Prefect Gaffney—determined to save the citizens from themselves. All Gaffney needs to inspire him is a superhuman benevolence to keep everyone in line. When Gaffney meets his goddess-in-the-machine, he's found his cause. He's not sure who or what Aurora really *is*, but he firmly believes those deluded clichés (you know, *The End Justifies the Means*, *I Know What's Best for You*, etc.). Ah, if only he had a sense of humor.

The story begins with young Thalia, a protégé of Dreyfus, out fixing a fairly routine case of

electoral fraud with some software patches. Dreyfus himself is diverted into a more serious investigation. The Ultras, outer-space-dwelling cyborgs none of the baseline humans particularly like, revenged a business deal gone sour by nuking one of the habitats and its nine hundred plus human inhabitants.

Only nothing is as it seems on the surface. Thalia's simple job turns into the means of destroying the Glitter Band, and the made-for-it-villains, the Ultras, turn out to be victims too. Pretty soon the detective investigation escalates into a war. The past Dreyfus shut away crawls back to bite him, and two monsters of a time no one wants to remember rear their ugly heads. One of them is Super Prefect Gaffney's goddess-in-the-machine, and the other, the mad machine that killed Dreyfus' wife...

For the most part this was a great book. Where it failed was in the detective thread. Tom Dreyfus, old and smart and experienced, is too dumb and slow to catch on to clues that hit the reader over the head (i.e., the existence of a traitor in their midst). He fails to catch on until Gaffney has him trussed up like the dunce he is. Similarly, his boss Jane fails to see the light until the smack of the bar's making stars in her eyes and it's too late. But wince over the occasional logical lapses (a few in the techno babble too, as reviewer on Amazon rightly points out) and keep going.

That's not hard. There's enough thriller in this story to carry you to the climax. Just have a bottle of aspirin and some cold drinks on hand to alleviate the eyestrain of five hundred pages at one sitting. Enjoy!

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Science Fiction is literature about the future, telling stories of the marvels we hope to see--or for our descendants to see--tomorrow, in the next century, or in the limitless duration of time.

— Terry Carr

# Reviews

## CORRECTION - By Terry Crotinger

Several years ago, I wrote articles featuring Anthony Marks, computer graphics wizard, who contributed his work on several science fiction movies. Recently, he has informed me that some of the information is incorrect. Corrections will be listed on two websites. When that information becomes available, I'll let readers know how to find it. I offer my apologies, Anthony, for this inconvenience.

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### Writer's Block (con't)

of story. That was it. I was a dialogue virgin, had no idea what a "scene" was, and used atrocious grammar. I could handle periods, but other than some haphazardly placed commas, I had only a nodding acquaintance with other punctuation. I hadn't the faintest idea of submission format. These were skills I lacked. Yet, I sold a few stories (in the small press), all of which had vivid descriptions, interesting vocabulary terms, and periods. There were only two lines of dialogue in the first four stories I sold. There wasn't a dash or semicolon anywhere. Fortunately, I *knew* what skills I lacked and found books to help me develop them. Unfortunately, they're all *still* under construction.

Many of my students, and many writers, constantly play to their strengths. As a result, their strengths become crutches. We shouldn't ignore our strengths, but improving weaknesses often brings the biggest advances in careers.

One weakness I've ignored is developing a business sense. I see others doing the same. I *hate* the business side of writing. I couldn't sell slop to a hog. I'm not a good people person. I don't smooze well. But I need to work on these issues if I really hope to expand my audience.

Now, it's off to check my goals, increase my effort, and find some love in the story I'm working on. I might even read a book on selling. Anybody know a good one?

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## T-Press on the Web

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### Lovable Zombie (con't)

Remember the many mornings you've shuffled thoughtlessly to get that first cup of caffeine, muttering "caffeine, must have caffeine." Think of the autopilot you are on as you dress, go to work, go shopping, or get dragged into some inane argument online or talked into passing along some inaccurate piece of information only to be discounted by Snopes. Think of your own inner zombie.

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### Bogus (con't)

client into relying on them for advice in even the most trivial decisions in his or her life. There have been many cases where the client has become so dependent on this advice that they are willing to give all they can afford and more. It's often far too late by the time someone realizes they were being scammed all along. Sometimes they go to the police, sometimes they don't.

And then there are the "mediums." They prey on the grief-stricken. Many of the people who use the services of mediums are suffering an emotional instability and devastation that they may not have ever known before. It must be very easy for someone with the right skills and dishonorable intentions to swoop in and tell them all the things they want to hear... for a price, of course. John Edward has made millions of dollars by convincing people that he can talk to the dead. I've seen his television show and I can understand why, to a believer, it's extremely compelling. But the broadcast version is edited to show the hits and not the misses. An unedited viewing would shine a truer light on his accuracy. He uses cold reading extensively, which is blatantly obvious to anyone who can recognize it, but it's likely that he uses hot reading as well. A *Time* article reported that his aides made conversation with the crowd as they were being admitted to the studio and that there was a long delay before Edward came out, during which people in the audience were conversing with one another about the people they hoped to make contact with. It would have been easy for him to listen in on these confidences and use them to his advantage in the show.

Aside from the financial and/or psychological

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harm a psychic might do to a client, there are also unintended consequences. Innocent bystanders get caught in the crossfire. False accusations can be taken as truth by a believer and can cause emotional trauma, among other problems, for the accused. In one case, a school counselor went to a psychic who told her that a student with the first initial "V" was being sexually abused. The counselor believed she knew which child it was and brought her assumption to the school administration. The child's single mother was accused of the crime and had to suffer through a horrible ordeal to prove herself innocent. Had the psychic not been so careless as to make such a wild guess, or had the the counselor not been so gullible as to believe it, an already burdened family (the child is autistic) could have been spared further pain.

The bottom line is this: psychics can't do anything better than the tricks that stage mentalists use, and mentalists will at least tell you it's all a show. They may be very talented in their art but that doesn't make it supernatural. If someone does manage to win Randi's million there might be cause to take a closer look. Until then, save your money - and your trust - for those who deserve it.

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#### Read With Passion (con't)

a simple 'Charles wanted you to see this'. What *Write With Fire* does offer is a series of well-thought-out essays about writing and the world of writers, some reflections on the craft by a hard-working wordsmith, and some tough-love advice for would-be authors.

Two things make *Write With Fire* stand out. First of all, despite having numerous publications—both fiction and non-fiction—to his credit, Gramlich is not a household name, nor do his books sell a million copies in pre-order (yet!). Like most authors, he does not have so large a readership that he can dispense with a day job; writing is a beloved task that must be squeezed in between the demands of life. He is like most authors. Nevertheless, he is both prolific and successful; successful, that is, if an

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author's success is judged by the quality and quantity of his works and not by the paycheck he earns from them. He neither condescends about the innate ability that propelled him to success far beyond that of the average writer nor does he wallow in faux-humility, accusing luck and fate of providing him with every opportunity. While inherent talent and luck certainly can affect an author's fortunes, I find that the hard work, perseverance, and commitment Gramlich cites as the keys to success are far more in tune with my own perspective on writing.

Secondly, since the incorporated essays were produced over a lifetime of writing—some for other publications, some written or updated specifically for the book—*Write With Fire* shows in vivid detail the evolution of a writer. From a youth on a farm in the Ozarks to the dark months following Katrina that stole the will to write from those of us who lived through it, readers get a personal tour through the events that shaped Gramlich as an author, and can see how he used those events to his advantage. His sound advice reflects years of near-daily writing and constant submission, the understanding that success at getting published first and foremost means putting your writing out there and bracing yourself for the inevitable rejections to come. The wisdom he shares, if not always what a writer wants to hear, reflects the realities of the publishing world. Anyone considering a career in writing—or even anyone with aspirations of publication—would do well to have a copy of *Write With Fire* in their personal library.

In the end, like all other writing guides, Gramlich's words alone will prove insufficient to turn a writer into a millionaire, or even into a famous-but-not-well-paid author. But reading *Write With Fire* did force me to reevaluate my own writing habits and adjust how I utilize the little bits of spare time I am provided. As a result, my own writing has improved—possibly in quality, and certainly in quantity—since I first picked it up. What better endorsement for a book on writing can there be?

## Is Time Travel Possible? (con't)

So how does all of this relate to time travel? As we discussed earlier, the theory of relativity states that as the velocity of an object nears the speed of light, time slows down. Scientists have discovered that even at the speeds of the shuttle, astronauts can travel a few nanoseconds into the future. To understand this, picture two people, person A and person B. Person A stays on Earth, while person B takes off in a spacecraft. At takeoff, their watches are in perfect sync. The closer person B's spacecraft travels to the speed of light, the slower time will pass for person B (relative to person A). If person B travels for just a few hours at 50 percent the speed of light and returns to Earth, it will be obvious to both people that person A has aged much faster than person B. This difference in aging is because time passed much faster for person A than person B, who was traveling closer to the speed of light. Many years might have passed for person A, while person B experienced a time lapse of just a few hours.

The problem I've always had with this well-known explanation of the *Theory of Relativity* is that if a spaceship is accelerating away from the earth, is it not also true that from the viewpoint of the people aboard the ship, the earth is accelerating away from the ship. I believe Einstein indicated that there is no special frame of reference for events in time. Special relativity considers that observers in inertial reference frame, which are in uniform motion relative to one another, cannot perform any experiment to determine which one of them is "stationary". This is known as the principle of relativity. So has A or B aged faster? If someone can explain this to me, I would be very happy. I must be missing something.

*How Stuff Works dot com* also has this to say about time travel:

If wormholes could be discovered, it might allow us to travel to the past as well as the future.

Here's how it would work: Let's say the mouth of the wormhole is portable. Then person B in the example above, who traveled at 50 percent of light speed into space for a few hours, could carry one wormhole mouth into space, while the mouth

at the opposite end of the wormhole would stay with person A on Earth. The two people would continue to see one another as person B traveled into space. When person B returned to Earth a few hours later, a few years may have passed for person A. Now, when person A looks through the wormhole that traveled into space, that person will see him or herself at a younger age, the age he or she was when person B launched into space. The cool thing about it is that the older person A would be able to step into the past by entering the wormhole, while the younger person B could step into the future.

A wormhole may be the fountain of youth, I guess. Now all we need to do is find a wormhole, or build one. The latest theory on the nature of the universe is called "string theory." I've read several articles on string theory in *Scientific American*, but still don't quite get it. But, I'm not exactly a nuclear physicist. Here is what *How Stuff Works* has to say about using "strings" to travel in time:

Yet another theory for how we might travel back and forth through time uses the idea of cosmic strings, proposed by Princeton physicist J. Richard Gott in 1991. These are – as their name suggests – string-like objects that some scientists believe were formed in the early universe. These strings may line the entire length of the universe and are under immense pressure – millions upon millions of tons.

These cosmic strings, which are thinner than an atom, would generate an enormous amount of gravitational pull on any objects that pass near them. Objects attached to a cosmic string could travel at incredible speeds, and because their gravitational force distorts spacetime, they could be used for time travel. By pulling two cosmic strings close together, or one string close to a black hole, it might be possible to warp spacetime enough to create closed time-like curves.

A spacecraft could be turned into a time machine by using the gravity produced by the two cosmic strings, or the string and black hole, to propel itself into the past. To do this, it would

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loop around the cosmic strings. However, there is still much speculation as to whether these strings exist, and if they do, in what form. Gott himself said that in order to travel back in time even one year, it would take a loop of string that contained half the mass-energy of an entire galaxy. And, as with any time machine, you couldn't go back farther than the point at which the time machine was created.

One of the problems with traveling to the past is the concept of creating a paradox. The idea of creating a paradox through time travel has been a staple of time travel fiction for many years. It is also an argument against the possibility of time travel. Here is what *How Stuff Works* has to say on the subject:

If we are ever able to develop a workable theory for time travel, we would open up the ability to create very complicated problems called paradoxes.

A paradox is defined as something that contradicts itself. Here are two common examples:

1) Let's say, for the sake of argument, that you could travel back to a time before you were born. The mere fact that you could exist in a time before you were born creates a paradox. If you were born in 1960, how could you exist in 1955?

2) Possibly the most famous paradox is the grandfather paradox. What would happen if a time traveler went back and killed one of his or her ancestors before the traveler was born? If the person killed his or her grandfather, then how could that person be alive to go back and kill his or her grandfather? If we could change the past, it would create an infinite number of paradoxes.

Another theory regarding time travel brings up the idea of parallel universes, or alternative histories. Let's say that you do travel back to meet your grandfather when he was a boy. In the theory of parallel universes, you may have traveled to another universe, one that is similar to ours, but has a different succession of events. For instance, if you were to travel back in time and kill one of your ancestors, you've only killed that person in

one universe, which is no longer the universe that you exist in. And if you then try to travel back to your own time, you may end up in another parallel universe and never be able to get back to the universe you started in.

The idea here is that every action causes the creation of a new universe, and that there are an infinite number of universes that exist. When you killed your ancestor, you created a new universe, a universe that was identical to your own up until the time you changed the original succession of events.

*Time Travel for Beginners*, has this to say about the possibility of time travel:

This is the latest twist in a story that began in the late 1980s, when Kip Thorne and colleagues at the California Institute of Technology suggested that although there might be considerable practical difficulties in constructing a time machine, there is nothing in the laws of physics as understood at present to forbid this.

Other researchers tried to find flaws in the arguments of the CalTech team, and pointed in particular to problems in satisfying a requirement known as the "weak energy condition", which says that any real observer should always measure energy distributions that are positive. This rules out some kinds of theoretical time machines, which involve traveling through black holes held open by negative energy stuff.

There are also problems with time machines that involve so-called singularities, points where space and time are crushed out of existence and the laws of physics break down. But Ori has found mathematical descriptions, within the framework of the general theory of relativity, of spacetimes which loop back upon themselves in time, but in which no singularity appears early enough to interfere with the time travel, and the weak energy condition is satisfied (Physical Review Letters, vol. 71 p 2517). "At present," he says, "one should not completely rule out the possibility of constructing a time machine from materials with positive energy densities."

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## Is Time Travel Possible? (con't)

Just because we perceive time flowing in one direction, does that mean there “really is” a difference between the past and future? The old philosophical question has been reexamined by Huw Price, of the University of Sydney, in the context of quantum mechanics. He concludes that the idea that the past is not influenced by the future is an anthropocentric illusion, a “projection of our own temporal asymmetry”. By allowing signals from the future to play a part in determining the outcome of quantum experiments, he can resolve all the puzzles and paradoxes of the quantum world.

For those with less hidebound imaginations, there are two remaining problems – to find a way to make a wormhole large enough for people (and spaceships) to travel through, and to keep the exotic matter out of contact with any such spacefarers. Any prospect of building such a device is far beyond our present capabilities. But, as Morris and Thorne stress, it is not impossible and “we correspondingly cannot now rule out traversable wormholes.” It seems to me that there’s an analogy here that sets the work of such dreamers as Thorne and Visser in a context that is both helpful and intriguing. Almost exactly 500 years ago, Leonardo da Vinci speculated about the possibility of flying machines. He designed both helicopters and aircraft with wings, and modern aeronautical engineers say that aircraft built to his designs probably could have flown if Leonardo had had modern engines with which to power them – even though there was no way in which any engineer of his time could have constructed a powered flying machine capable of carrying a human up into the air. Leonardo could not even dream about the possibilities of jet engines and routine passenger flights at supersonic speeds. Yet Concorde and the jumbo jets operate on the same basic physical principles as the flying machines he designed. In just half a millennium, all his wildest dreams have not only come true, but have been surpassed.

It might take even more than half a millennium for designs for a traversable wormhole to leave the drawing board; but the laws of physics say that it is possible – and as Sagan speculates, something

like it may already have been done by a civilization more advanced than our own.

In *Wikipedia*, the following is given as a possible method for building a time machine:

Another approach involves a cylinder. If a cylinder is long, and dense, and spins fast enough about its long axis, then a spaceship flying around the cylinder on a spiral path could travel back in time (or forward, depending on the direction of its spiral). However, the density and speed required is so great that ordinary matter is not strong enough to construct it. A similar device might be built from cosmic strings, but none are known to exist, and it does not seem to be possible to create a new cosmic string.

Physicists noted that a naïve application of general relativity to quantum mechanics suggests another way to build a time machine. A heavy atomic nucleus in a strong field would elongate into a cylinder, whose density and “spin” are enough to build a time machine. Gamma rays projected at it might allow information (not matter) to be sent back in time. However, he pointed out that until we have a single theory combining relativity and quantum mechanics, we will have no idea whether such speculations are nonsense.

My belief is that time travel is possible. Someone sometime will invent a time machine. Right now, when it comes to the idea of time travel, we are like people in the nineteenth century who poo-pooed as fantasy the idea of flying to the moon or flying with heavier-than-air craft or computers or radio or TV. People assume that UFOs, if they exist, are alien spacecraft, but why they could just as easily be time travelers from the future who wish to observe us but do not wish to contact for fear of changing their present or creating paradoxes.

Science-fiction and fantasy are full of time travel stories. I have written a few myself. My personal favorite is *The Sands of Time*, which is the lead story of my anthology, *The Sands of Time*. Also, in my novel, *The Bagod*, the protagonist goes to the far future by simple expedient of having himself frozen.