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Issue # 15

JOURNEY PLANET



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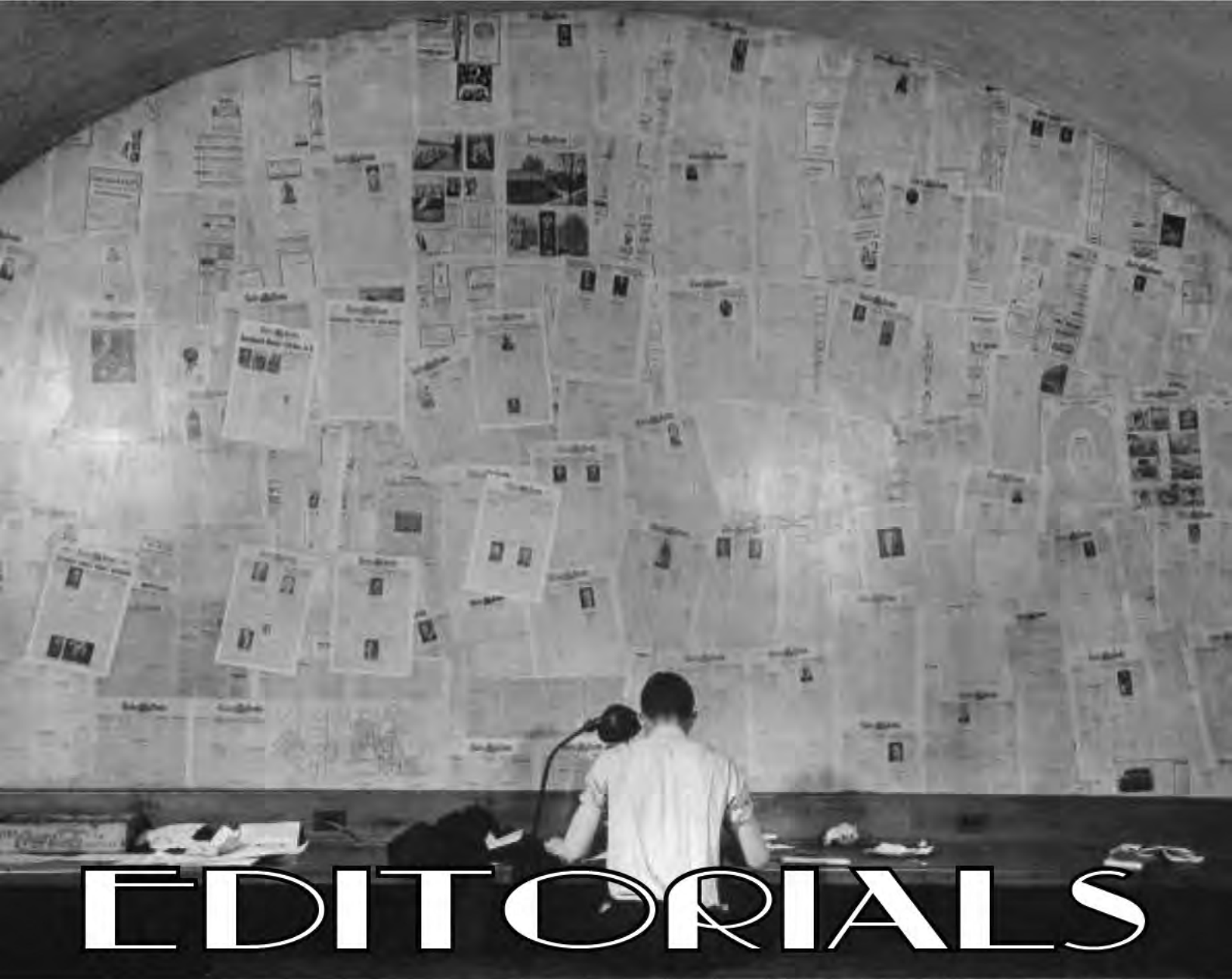
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EDITORS - JAMES BACON - CHRIS GARCIA
GUEST EDITOR - LYNDA E. RUCKER



I recently had a chance to meet up with one of my favorite authors in the Dealer's Room at a con. I always look forward to getting a brief chance to chat, since I'm all too often a whirling dervish through a convention hall. While we were talking, there was a gentleman I knew by reputation chatting with him and me.

And have you ever noticed that when people say they knew someone "by reputation," it's seldom a good thing.

He wandered off and author friend and I were left alone for a moment, at which time he asked, "Do you know anything about the gentleman who just walked off?"

I admitted I'd heard things.

"He's a snake," he answered.

"So I've heard."

In fact, I'd been looking to put together an anthology of stories a year or so ago, something that would have been a lot of fun. I put out a call for folks who might want to work with me and the gentleman had been on a list of folks one person had

recommended to me. A friend who had contacted me on various matters over the years asked to take a look at the list I put together. I shared the list of folks with her, and she basically said, "On the matter of <Mr. X>, if you want to get hosed, he's your guy."

Isn't it always the case?

I eventually scuttled the anthology idea (unless any of you wanna help edit *Wrestling with Science Fiction!*), and haven't been able to think about it since. These things happen.

Writers live a difficult life. I used to want to be one. I used to write fiction, almost at the rate I currently write my other stuff. I'd try to write a story a day, get it submitted. It was a pretty solid rate of work. And, as is always the case on the things I do a lot, I kept cranking and never got any better, got nowhere fast and never got published. These things happen. I ended up giving up on becoming a writer, started doing zines, writing for folks, doing what I could without having to deal with the troubles of submitting to magazines and the like. I'm so much happier just pumping out the crap I come up with

than trying to crack markets.

You see, writing is hustling, and if I'm gonna hustle, I'm gonna hustle much bigger than trying to get published.

When Lynda and James came up with this theme, well, I knew I wouldn't have too much to add. I'm not a writer; I'm a guy who writes. And writes. And writes. There's a lot more to being a writer than just writing. There's the obvious (editing, and when have I ever managed that?), and the less obvious (getting your name out, submitting) and a million little things that I would never be able to manage. It takes a certain mindset, and of course, it takes talent. These are things I just don't have. It's one of the reasons I hold writers in such high regard: they got what I ain't.

It's a tough world for a writer, one that I used to think would be cool. Not so much anymore. It's not that writers aren't cool, they are, but I guess I had an image of Fame and Fortune attached to the idea of being a writer, and that's just not the case, it turns out. What I wanted to do, it turns out, was tell stories. It doesn't make any difference whether I tell them to an audience of thousands or the five or six people who read *The Drink Tank*. I can never be a writer for one simple reason: I'm perfectly happy just telling my stories in my own pages. If you can be satisfied by less, then you probably shouldn't bother with the whole writer thing.

Besides, those who have read my fiction will tell you we're all the better for my giving up.

In other news, we're on the ballot! I believe, and with a preliminary search, no one has ever had two separate zines on the ballot in back to back years! Weird! We have to thank everyone who made it possible, and I'm so glad that the wonderful Emma King, Helen Montgomery, and Pete are on the ballot along with James and I! They're a HUGE part of why last year was so great for Journey Planet!

The Hugos are a big deal, and seeing Journey Planet on the list makes me a very happy guy. It's the zine that I put a lot into, but I've always thought that this is as much James' baby as *The Drink Tank* is mine, and I am so grateful to be along for the ride! Also, I really love that we've got so many wonderful folks on the ballot with us!

And we're gonna keep going! We're looking at Philip K. Dick in the next issue, and then... well, we're not sure yet. It's gonna be a good time! I hope y'all write somethin' for us, or at least send even the briefest of letters of comment to journeyplanet@gmail.com. Or art. Or baked goods. Take your pick!

~Chris Garcia

I am a fan of science fiction and comics. I pay good money for books and comics. I have done for some time, and it never really occurred to me that writers really have a shit time sometimes. John Whitbourn, who wrote *Popes and Phantoms*, an amazing book, was a GOH, and it struck me as odd that he still had a day job with the customs. Writing didn't pay enough, which I didn't really take in.

There are always the big authors, but it took a casual conversation about Tim Powers, another GOH, at another con, to really sink in. 'He worked in a pizza place, to make ends meet'. Really. Like really.

The industry of publishing is just that, an industry. Many people are making a living from it, from printers to booksellers to editors to the publishers' shareholders. And the end user pays a decent amount.

But do authors get treated decently? Where is the care and the living wage? I remember seeing a John Jarrold announcement, one of the nicest guys in SF, a really honest guy, and he announced with genuine enthusiasm and excitement, that one of his clients had signed a three book, two-year top end five-figure deal. Well, that could be at best, £33,000 pa.

"John Jarrold has concluded a three-book World Rights deal for Scottish-based Finnish SF writer Hannu Rajaniemi. Hannu's debut novel (presently untitled) plus two further books were pre-empted by Simon Spanton of Gollancz for a high five-figure sum, on the basis of one chapter."

Okay, so maybe the "high" part of the five-figure sum means £500,000 or more, but the truth is a lot of those six-figure multibook deals don't look nearly as lucrative when you start to break them down over the years it takes to write the books.

And I realised that I was paid at the time more than this. Now in England, people are shy about what they are paid, unless of course you are running a bank, and I have my own theory about these forced manners, and whose gain they really are to, and I was a little surprised. Upon further investigation, and looking at The Booksellers list of Gollancz announcements, six-figure deals abound, and Stephen Hunt and Alistair Reynolds seem to have had excellent deals that would seem like just reward for being successful writers.

Yet, are they the few out many? How many authors arrive, do a couple of books and then are gone? No matter the quality, the enjoyment, the uniqueness, they fail to capture the sales they need and are no more.

In my mind's eye, as a fan, I would never have imagined that I earn more than an author, or an editor, or an agent, but this is all feasible, I fear. And what about pensions and security, how can I have that, and

they not?

And that just seems wrong.

Yet it is worse when publishers are ropey with their authors. Press releases, public relations machines, point of sale material, pompous announcements, posts on Facebook all attempt to create a loyalty, a desire to read an author. And it works.

But I expect publishers to have a modicum of decency. To treat authors correctly, or if they cannot, to have a policy, deadlines, manage expectations. Is that too hard?

As a fan, it is my hobby to run conventions, write fanzines, and one does one's best, and frequently professionals may find elements below their expectations. That is fair enough. In my job, I am responsible for people. And to fall below expectations could lead to death. Therefore one doesn't, and chances are mitigated against. That is professionalism.

And I am sorry, but I expect professionalism, and have experienced considerable professionalism from publishers, have been pleased with their efficiency, interaction and hard work, and I suppose that is why it is good to hear about the other side. To hear about when things are not perfect. It puts into perspective, for fans, how hard it can be.

Then at Fantasycon last year, a lovely young lady who I had met at Eastercon was pleased her work had been published. Pleased that a pair of editors had chosen her work, and there it was.

I loved the idea, it was superb, and since I was running the dealer's room, knew I could find someone to sell the few she had. Then it went wrong. Really wrong.

First the price, seemed, well too much. But this was based on what she was paying the editor. How so, it was a print on demand book, maybe £2.50 at best, yet she was paying twice this. Was she paying and distributing the books, and was there a mark up for the editor(s)? It was now unclear.

Things all sounded wrong, and so I asked Steve Jones to have a quick look and chat. Steve slipped into professional mode, and listened. Listened carefully, then looked at the book. And gave some serious pointers. Really serious. And pointed out flaws. Issues.

And a writer **MUST ALWAYS READ THE CONTRACT.**

And I realised there and then, that I have not got a CLUE about it all. And that small, big, and unusual wrongs are perpetrated all the time, and sometimes, it is inexperience on everyone's part, well, when there is no benefit, and sometimes it seems that a pound of flesh must be paid for.

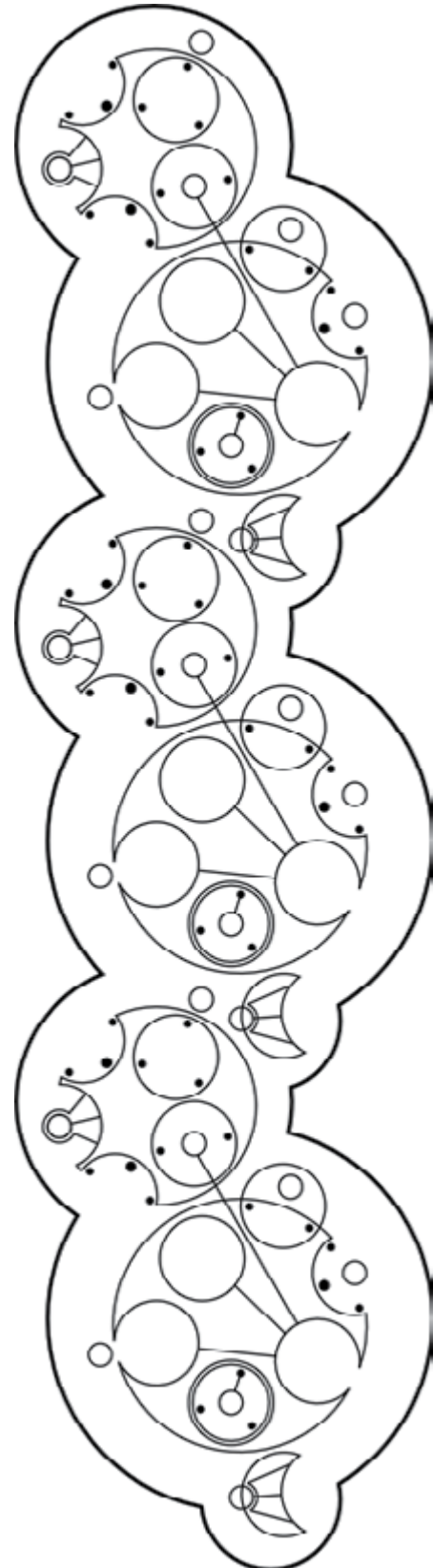
But it is not good enough just to be published.

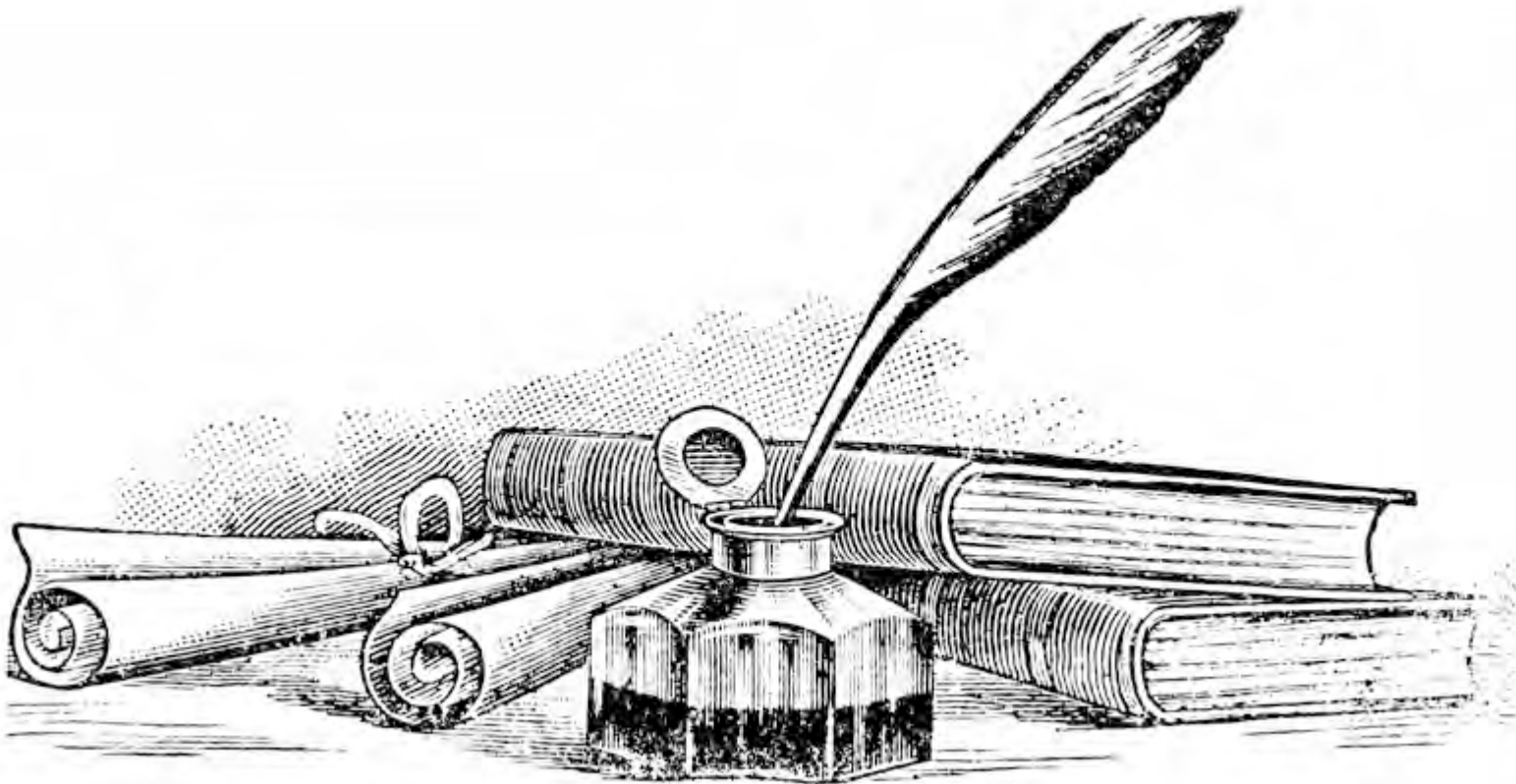
It must be done right.

And so, like a fan, I asked many amazing authors to write about writing, and I hope it is useful.

I have no imagination when it comes to literary stuff. Sure I can imagine, visualise Loncon 3 now, the thousands in the amazing venue, all enjoying themselves, but an original idea for a book no chance.

So, I hold authors, as many fans do, in high regard, and I am greatly appreciative to everyone who contributed to this issue.





THE LOC BOX

LETTERS FROM OUR GENTLER READERS

Blade Runner, James Bond, Other, we've got a lot of different territory to cover in these letters. We don't get a lot of response, which I think is required to be mentioned every time we do one of these columns, but we're dedicated to putting them up!

*In an issue dedicated to writers, writing, and the written word, it would be weird if we didn't have anything from our readers, and thus, here it is, edited gently by Chris, whose comments can be found in **easily readable bold italics!***

On JP 12 - *The Blade Runner* issue
Dear Chris, James and Pete:

Many thanks for a dark fanzine, *Journey Planet* 12. I think this will be a rather short letter, but if I don't attempt it, I'll never find out.

The reason I think it will be short is that I saw *Blade Runner* exactly twice. I saw it as a rather dystopian movie, with influences from the Dick novel, and some proof that Harrison Ford, at the time, could do more than play Han Solo. It was a confusing movie, with a general WTF? at the end. Was Deckard a replicant himself? Difficult to know at the first viewing, unless you were meant to take those questions with you when you left the theatre. Not every movie has to have its plot tied up in a pretty bow. I remember the Director's Cut, and not much more than that. The fact that there's been so much discussion about this movie and its iterations, shows that more people saw

more in the movie than I did.

I've got the movie font at home too, and if I were simply going to print up this loc and send it to you via the tender mercies of Canada Post, I'd use it.

The idea of the sequel...that's something I had not heard of anywhere. Seeing the movie was released in 1982, I think it would have to be re-released for a new generation to see before the new movie comes out. But then, look at the sequel to TRON...got that font, too.

The character of Roy Batty may have been Rutger Hauer's first roles in Hollywood, at least, first memorable role. I'd need a look at IMDB to confirm that.

I cannot add more to this...obviously, the movie didn't affect me the way it did so many others. Still, I was pleasantly reminded of some of the artwork used to promote it, and some artwork I'd never seen. Many thanks for this issue, and bring on

the next one.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Everyone has movies that either actively repel them, or that just deflect off the surface. It happens. Blade Runner is a difficult film for some. I have a friend who is a volunteer at the museum who told me “Blade Runner is a terrible SciFi movie, but it’s easily my favorite Noir.” I get that.

On JP 12 - The Blade Runner issue

Dear All

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of Journey Planet: The Blade Runner Issue. It looks very, very impressive. Unfortunately (or not -- it depends on your perspective) *Blade Runner* is a film for which I have next to no affection.

I have seen it twice -- once at the cinema on its original release and once on television, many years later, when it was shorn of its narrative voice-over. (I’ve no idea which of the later versions that might have been.) But although the film might be admirable as work of art, it left me emotionally cold: I could not engage with it, and thus could not manifest an interest in its plot, its characters, or its ideas. The only point of (mild) interest, for me, was its look, which I recall elicited a deal of excited comment at the time, about its world being a grungy, lived-in near future where the new existed cheek-by-jowl with the old -- which struck me as a curious comment to make, because new-next-to-old is routinely offered by almost all cities in the developed west. Additionally, a “grungy, lived-in” feel was exactly what was being offered by the then emerging sub-genre of cyberpunk, particularly in William Gibson’s stories of *The Sprawl*. (In an interview in an early issue of *Interzone*, in fact, he said of *Blade Runner* that it “looked so much like the inside of my head” -- he was working on *Neuromancer* at the time -- that he fled the cinema about halfway through.) In that sense, the film’s set designers were largely reflecting an emerging zeitgeist (some of them may even have been reading Gibson and Sterling), and the film critics who went bonkers over its look were displaying nothing more than their ignorance of contemporary science fiction literature.

(Indeed, many of these same film critics seem not to have spotted the precursors of this look in two previous films: 1979’s *Alien*, whose crewmembers did not wear shiny silver jumpsuits and spent much of their time in low-ceilinged, underlit spaces; and 1977’s *Star Wars (now Part IV: A New Hope)*, which had what J G Ballard described as “supertechnologies already beginning to rust around the edges, the pirate starship like an old tramp steamer, the dented robots with IQs higher than Einstein’s which resembled beat-up DeSotos in Athens or Havana with half-a-million miles on the clock” (“Hobbits in Space?” in *A User’s Guide to The Millennium: Essays and Reviews*, 1997).)

An additional strike against the film is its internal inconsistencies. For example, the information delivered near the start that six replicants have escaped but that one had already been caught and killed before Deckard’s arrival, leaving him four to hunt down -- but of course six minus one is five, not four. The explanation that the missing replicant must be Deckard himself seemed to me to be straining at a gnat, since there’s nothing in the film to suggest this. Another example: if the replicants have been genetically engineered to have shortened lifespans then of course the Deckard and Rachael characters will die just like the rest of them, so their escape from LA at the end of the film is without point. But the biggest internal inconsistency of all is that deliberately shortened lifespan: if replicants don’t live very long, then why do they need to be hunted down in the first place? All by itself, that last seems to me to render the film wholly without point or meaning.

Clearly, however, my view is a minority one, obviously not shared by many other people -- as this issue of Journey Planet shows, and as the film’s critical and public reception over the years has shown. That the words of Batty’s final speech have become so widely quoted in so many contexts, in either their original form or as parody (a version of them appeared in a spoof column written for *The Guardian* by the fictitious Malcolm Tucker in the weeks preceding the 2010 general election) indicates how deeply embedded in popular culture the film’s tropes and styles have become (even though the words are meaningless -- beams can’t glitter in a vacuum

because the dust they'll pass through is too thinly spread; the "shoulder" of Orion will appear so only when the constellation is seen from Earth). It might perhaps be said by some that my view of *Blade Runner* is not just a minority one, but wrong through and through!

Regards

Joseph Nicholas

None of that ever bothered me largely because I'd never have been able to know they were wrong as my science knowledge (or at least the ability to connect things to their scientific realities) is weaker than weak. I thought the look of LA in 2017 was just about the right look. I've hung out in the seedier parts of LA, and some of them already look like that... minus the glowing Umbrella stalks.

On JP 12 - The Parity issue

As always, Chris misses the point. You're not fucking mexican. You don't suffer what mexican-looking people deal with every day. Yes that reduces everything down to appearance but let's face it that's what most people think. If you looked like your dad do you think you'd have had all the options you've had? I know you play up your racial identity and that's fine but there's no way you're in the conversation of what race means to anyone today.

M Crasdan

First, ouch! I get it, I've never had to deal with the stuff my cousins have, but does that mean I can't stake it as my racial identity? That's the real question to me, who decides what we are or aren't? Am I Person of Color? Do I get to call myself such? Would my appearance in that PoC Safe Space at WisCon cause panic? These are the questions in my mind, and yeah, I've probably missed point, but when do I not?

On JP 12 - The James Bond issue

Lloyd Penney

Dear Chris and James:

Hapy New Year! I got the date and year right up above! And there's time for a fast loc on Journey Planet 14. Let's see what I can say about the James Bond films, seeing they were never my favourites...

The music for the Bond films was always grand, and the best artists composed and performed it. Yet, the main character, as you've written here,

seemed to care less about the world around him, too macho for his own good, vaguely abusive of alcohol and the unrealistic women around him. Almost too much happened, and there wasn't enough story, so James Bond, the super-secret agent, just didn't catch my attention much, even with the amazing cars and gadgets. I AM picky, aren't I?

I admit I liked Dame Judy Dench and John Cleese being involved with some of the Bond movies. Cleese was playing against his usual form, which may have puzzled some viewers, expecting him to break out in a cheesy French accent or something. Then again, he is getting on in years, and a role like this is probably his current speed. Best of all, Lois Maxwell played Moneypenny until she retired, and was known as that name until she died. After retiring, she wrote a regular column in the Toronto Sun, and sometimes would write about her experiences in the Bond movies.

And, I think I am done. Not what I wanted to do at all, but I am afraid that's all I can do about the Bond films. For the most part, they are outside my experience. I look forward to something a little more familiar in the next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

I tried to get an article on James Bond music, but alas, it didn't happen. I liked Judy Dench a lot in the Bond films, and wish Cleese had stayed around for more of the movies. Actually, I really like the kid they got playing Q now, too!

TALK TO US!

- By email to: journeyplanet@gmail.com
- By post in Europe (c/o James) to: 54 Bridge Road, Uxbridge UB8 2QP, UK
- By post in North America (c/o Chris) to: 1401 N Shoreline Blvd, Mountain View, CA 94043, USA
- By post from anywhere else in the world to whichever of those addresses you prefer



VIEWS OF CENSORSHIP

A LIBRARIAN RESPONDS TO CENSORSHIP OF A GRAPHIC NOVEL BY WAYNE DISHER

Remember all the doctors last year who refused to treat patients who they thought were “disgusting”? Remember when all those doctors wouldn’t give medicine to someone because they disagreed with that person’s political views? No? Me either! That’s because it didn’t happen! Most doctors follow standards set in an ancient pledge called the Hippocratic Oath. A vast majority of doctors still take that oral pledge to follow Hippocrates’ ethical standards—even though they are not legally required to do so. The closest thing a librarian has to the Hippocratic Oath is the “Library Bill of Rights” adopted by the American Library Association in 1939. While librarians do not take a pledge, every librarian in every library school in our nation has studied and is intimately familiar with the six intellectual freedom principles and “right to read” ideals prescribed therein. According to our “Library Bill of Rights”, simply put, it is the duty of EVERY librarian to “challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment”. So, when news

comes out like that which came out of Greenville, South Carolina late last year—that their Executive Director removed an award winning graphic novel from the library’s shelves because she thought it was disgusting—it ignites a fury in the hearts of our profession unlike any other fury (including the fury so many public librarians are facing in regards to budget cuts—but that’s another story).

Before going much further, let me introduce myself. My name is Wayne Disher. I am a librarian. In fact, I am a fellow library director. I am immediate past-President of the California Library Association. I have written two library science textbooks, and am an award winning educator of library graduate students at the California State University system. It is this last role in particular which I point to in writing this article. You see, every lesson in the selection of library material, every lesson in the study of library community analysis, and every lesson in developing library collections begins and ends with the principles set forth in the “Library Bill of Rights”. Every

librarian steadfastly believes that material should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of that material. So firmly held is that belief that librarians can—and many DO—lose their jobs or resign in refusing to break that principle.

Enter Beverly James, Executive Director Greenville County Library System. A patron complains to her staff about the content of a book called *Neonomicon* by Alan Moore (Avatar Press, 2011). As is common practice in the public library world, the Director assigns the responsibility of evaluating the complaint to a staff committee and then the library's Board recommends follow through on the complaint. In the Greenville case, the committee finds that *Neonomicon* is the latest graphic novel from Moore, a well-respected author with some pretty substantial credits under his belt such as *V for Vendetta*, *Watchmen*, and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. The committee likely recognizes that the novel's author has had a distinguished career and he had been awarded just about every award a comic book writer can win. Additionally, they note that the book in question deals with extremely relevant topics of interest such as rape, racism, and violence and had won the Bram Stoker award for Superior Achievement in a Graphic Novel. In responding to the patron complaint that *Neonomicon* was violent and disgusting, the committee would normally point out that deliberately disturbing depictions of violence are often included in books as a critical comment on how such subject matter is handled elsewhere. Perhaps they would state that children are often LIVING the very stories we wouldn't allow them to read. Finally, the committee would point to the fact that the book's critical acclaim testifies to its artistic value which is enhanced, not overshadowed, by its sexual content. This looks to be exactly what happened when the board properly recommended to Executive Director Beverly James to keep the book exactly where it was. Things looked perfect. Censorship had been thwarted. A huge sigh of relief could surely be heard in the halls of the American Library Association. The status quo had been preserved. And then it all went horribly wrong...

Ms. James actually opened *Neonomicon* and looked inside. Gasp! She personally found the rape scene disgusting (something which—by the way—I would agree with her about). Because she was disgusted, she overruled her own staff and board's recommendation and removed the book from her community's collection. Because of the disturbing material, she personally found the book inappropriate for the community she served and withdrew *Neonomicon* from the community's library. In the past, Ms. James seems to have made at least five similar decisions to remove objectionable items from the library's collection. Obviously she thinks that she is managing her own collection rather than the collection of the community she serves. Because of this, she has failed the test of librarianship. Ms. James, it is NOT your collection. It's theirs! Librarians should be steadfast partners and allies in the fight for the freedom to read. Ms. James has discredited us all by not supporting her staff and board and working to defend that right.

If there were a "card" to revoke for librarians who have disgraced the Library Bill of Rights, I would put Ms. James' at the top of that list. In her repeated attempts not to offend her community by removing library books she thinks are pernicious and offensive, she has placed herself in the role of a censor. This is a very dangerous thing in our profession. To paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, if all librarians were determined to provide only the things they thought were sure would offend nobody, there would be very little to provide! Look, we can all think of a book that disturbed or offended us so much that we hope no person ever picks it up. If Ms. James has the right to remove *Neonomicon* from the shelves because she was so offended, then you and I also have exactly that same right and so does everyone else in that community. Soon, there wouldn't be a book left on the shelf for any of us. As I teach my librarians, "In the words of George Bernard Shaw, 'censorship ends in logical completeness when nobody is allowed to read any books except the books that nobody reads.'"





CENSORSHIP & LIBRARIANSHIP BY LYNNE THOMAS

I read the article about Beverly James of the Greenville Public Library's decision to "deselect" Alan Moore's *Neonomicon* with great interest.

I remain baffled as to why she would go against the ruling of the committee of library professionals and community members that review challenges in her library. All of the appropriate library procedures were followed from acquiring the title based upon reviews and awards to restricting access to it as adults-only checkout to following the review process when a request for consideration was filed. The protest was filed by a parent after their child checked the book out with the card of "an adult male," a card that was not that of the parent filing the request for reconsideration, or the child.

The committee, after reading it, voted to retain the title, based on the award recognition, the reviews, and the fact that all of the appropriate safeguards were already in place to keep a kid from accidentally checking out a book meant for adults. Their policies state that ultimately, it is up to parents to determine what is and is not appropriate for their own children to read.

The established policy allows for Ms. James to overrule the committee, and she did so, simply based upon her own disgust with the title when she read it.

She opted to, as she put it, "de-select" the title, removing access to it, going against established

professional practice in libraries across the country, and denying thousands of adult patrons perfectly capable of making their own reading choices access to an award-winning title.

She determined that it was up to her, and her alone, to determine appropriate reading for adults. Not the adult patrons of her library, nor the other librarians and library staff that work there, and have charge for developing the collections that the patrons use.

It makes me sad, and it goes explicitly against one of the major tenets of our profession, which is intellectual freedom, the freedom to read. Proposition #4 in the Freedom to Read statement [<http://www.ala.org/offices/oif/statementspols/ftstatement/freedomreadstatement>] says it best:

"There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression."

Ms. James did her patrons, her colleagues, and her library a major disservice. I hope her patrons know how to use interlibrary loan to get hold of titles that the library doesn't hold. I hope that there

are colleagues in her library that have the security of position and the courage to ask her directly exactly why she decided to go against established professional practice in this case, especially given that if she's been a library director for any length of time, she has come across materials that she found offensive before.

We don't get to deny access to those titles to our patrons, just because we were offended. This is specifically why we have policies, so that one person cannot make choices for everyone else in the library system.

**“What is freedom of expression?
Without the freedom to offend,
it ceases to exist.”**

Salman Rushdie

One of my favorite slogans is that “A good library has something to offend everyone.” When you determine that you will collect a particular subset of materials to serve your community, the goal is to do so comprehensively, including materials that we may personally find objectionable. That's how it

works, because what one person finds objectionable, another does not. And vice versa.

Every librarian deals with materials that they find objectionable at some point in their career: books with too much (or not enough) sexual or religious content; books with politics the opposite of our own. Heck, books that we think are boring, or badly written, or not to our personal reading tastes. We handle too many things over the course of a career to not run across something that we find deeply offensive. This is why we have developed more objective professional selection criteria than “I like this” or “this offends me.” That's what professionals do: move beyond just our own opinions, and take into account the needs of our entire community, not just the subset of the community that we agree with.

Ms. James: you're doing it wrong. Perhaps you need a refresher workshop through the Office of Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association?

Lynne M. Thomas, MLS, MA





SCENARIOS OF CENSORSHIP.. OR NOT BY CHRIS GARCIA

Scenario 1 - The Greenville-Maru

A 14-year-old checks out a graphic novel by Alan Moore. His mother finds it, calls the librarian demanding that the novel be removed from the shelves. The librarian, perhaps pre-disposed towards disliking the form/author/content pulls the book, unapologetically.

My take - CENSORSHIP! FLOG THOSE RESPONSIBLE!!!!

Scenario 2 - The Kobayashi-Greenville

A 14-year-old checks out a graphic novel by Alan Moore. His mother finds out. She organizes a large-scale group to inundate the librarian with calls, letters, emails, and candlelight vigils. The librarian pulls the book from the shelves.

My take - Umm..... Community standards? Maybe? No... censor... wait. It's gotta be...

Scenario 3 - The Everyville Library System Matter

An acquisition committee meets and is considering what to bring into the collection. They consider a new graphic novel by Alan Moore. They choose to pass on it to purchase another three copies of Fifty Shades of Grey to ease the 200+ member waiting list for the novel.

My take - Well, you have to consider the needs of the community, and they seem to want Fifty, and...

Scenario 4 - The Worst Case Scenario

A librarian makes a list of books to dispose of to make room for new books. A list of 100 books is made, none of which have been checked out in at least two years. A graphic novel by Alan Moore is on the list. The list is approved and the book is scrapped.

My take - well, it wasn't moving...

The four above scenarios have played out in public and private libraries all over the world. More often in public than in private libraries, but it happens everywhere. And it's a problem with public institutions, for a number of reasons. The biggest one is that they are institutions of the public trust. They are serving the communities in which they are located and that's important to remember. You have to think about it like this: the libraries are spending public money, tax-payer money, and they must provide particular services. To many, a library has to provide books that will be used to school kids as educational materials, as well as books for the pleasure reading of the general public, and materials for individuals to use to advance themselves (ie. citizenship materials, books on the public codes, etc, etc), not to mention other materials and research services. Think about that, they have to provide all these services on a budget that is, all too often, being cut and cut and cut. It's difficult, and making decisions based on those parameters has to be hugely difficult.

The Greenville librarian made a MASSIVE

mistake. The book was brought into the collection, the book was available for check-out to patrons, a kid used an adults' card to check out a book that was under controlled circulation, and the mom flipped out. One mom. There's a Simpsons quote that really sticks with me: I guess that one person can make a difference, but most of the time, probably shouldn't. On the other hand, you can't say she censored the book beyond that one library. She didn't ban the book from within the city limits of Greenville, nor did she prevent the book from being sold in the local Borders (the economy did that!), but she pulled the book from one set of shelves. Still, it's a form of censorship.

But what happens if a movement forms? I know, I know, you've got an image of book-burnings and banning and High Chancellor Adam Sutler, but it does say something. How do you represent Community Standards and the desire of a movement to have x-or-y represented or removed? There have to be lines, and it depends on how big a portion of the community a movement represents. Even if a large group were to protest, would that make it censorship? That's not nearly as open-and-shut, at least in my eyes. What if the group that formed to get the book and others like it removed in order to increase the library's holdings in the area of foreign language books, or science texts, or historical holdings, or some other education-related works. Would that be censorship? They're still calling for the removal of material because of its content, but the content they'll objecting to is that it doesn't provide what the community needs. Then the water becomes much more murky.

Personally, I've got several conflicting opinions here. I don't think libraries should be supplying porn. It's not what the taxpayers' money should be spent on. Of course, my definition of porn is pretty high. Playboy has many redeeming qualities, including some fine fiction. I think. I've never really read anything beyond the centerfold stats, but flat porn is a no-no in my eyes. On the other hand, what about *Fifty Shades*?

It's smutty, no doubt, but it's not porn. The writing has little to praise, but it's hugely popular (that 200 person waiting list for *Fifty Shades* is an actual number from the library in SC a year or so ago!) and is that a reason to include it? I'd say yes. If it's what folks are wanting to read, that's something that should be made available to them. Now, how much importance do we put on that? That's the hard part, and it's all a part of the balancing act!

The worst case scenario, as I see it, is that books get ignored. It happens. Go to a library and so many have Friends of the Library book sales. They usually sell books that have been in the collection and are being sold, along with books that the community donate to be sold. You'll see many of the books that are there were checked out at one point and then it just stopped. That happens. If there's no interest, does it have to stay on the shelves? What role does popularity play? That's an important question to answer.

There's no question, the Greenville librarian done screwed up, they should probably be removed from their position, and that's that. On the other hand, we need to consider what it means to censor something today. Can anything really be censored today? Nothing is unavailable to the public these days. Even if something is governmentally censored, there are still locations on the web where things will be readable. That said, if something is decided to be worthy of inclusion in a library's collection, no individual should have the power to remove it with a good reason: ie. a large-scale change in the direction of the library's focus or if it's proven to be something that is not needed by the public for one reason or another. These matters have to be concerned. In the Best of All Possible Worlds, there's an unlimited amount of shelf space and money, and in those cases, to pull a book like this would be inexcusable in all cases, but in a world where that is not the case, it becomes something far more difficult.

Being a librarian must be a difficult, difficult thing.





THE TINTIN AU CONGO CONUNDRUM BY ZAINAB AKHTAR

It seems every year we get a debate over the status of *Tintin in the Congo*: whether it should be accessible to children, which section it should be shelved in bookstores and libraries, or if it should be available at all. I think it's important to begin with the assertion that the book is both racist and offensive. You'd be hard pressed to argue that page after page of grotesquely caricatured thick-lipped, 'savage' black people supplicating -quite literally- to a white man is anything other than immense stereotyping. The main and popular counter-argument against this is that the book is 'a product of its time' and reflective of the views of that time. This does not make the book less racist: essentially what's being said there is racism was more outwardly rife and acceptable in the 1920s and as the book permeates those ideologies (which we would hope no longer exist), all is well. That contextual distinction is perhaps fine for adults who are able to make it, but *Tintin* is a series aimed at children.

The debate stems, I believe, from the acknowledgement that the book IS racist, and one of the most frequently challenged books in libraries and stores around the world, which puts librarians, teachers and booksellers in a quandary as to what they should do with it. The discussion surrounding it is angled more towards the issue of censorship; both libraries and bookshops have attempted to resolve the matter by shelving the book in the adult section. When I bought my copy, it came with

a red paper band around it, with large bold letters pronouncing it a collector's volume. On the reverse of the band in much smaller text was that familiar refrain: 'This book is very much of its time. In his portrayal of the Belgian Congo, the young author reflects the colonial, paternalistic attitudes of his era. Some of today's readers may find his stereotypical portrayal of the African people offensive.'

“White man very great.
White mister is big juju
man”

Tintin in the Congo

Herge's regret over the book is fine, but generally pointed out so as to absolve the author of any negative connotations. Nor does Herge going back and editing a page here and there change anything: the book remains racist in its depictions. *Tintin* is practically an industry in Belgium and Herge one of the foremost comic figures in the world, so there's a vested interest in defending both. The issue, however, remains. There are two things I (and most people) am against: banning books and editing them in any way other than the author intended. So what, if anything, can be done with *Tintin in the Congo*?

In 2011 Professor Alan Gribben, a notable Twain scholar, released a revised edition of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. In the edited version, the word 'nigger' was substituted for 'slave' and the word 'injun' for 'Indian'. Gribben's reason for editing the book was well-intentioned: Twain's use of these terms had led to a significant decrease in classroom use in the US, with teachers uncomfortable with teaching the book and parents frequently challenging its use. *Huck Finn* is perhaps a different kettle of fish though- Twain's satire is about racism and not racist in itself. The repetition of the word 'nigger' -and Twain uses it a good 200+ times in the book- is supposed to provoke certain reactions, ideas, thoughts, and in censoring those words it removes Twain's intended language and diffuses the power of the book. Arguments about creative integrity aside, once you alter a text in any way, however small, it becomes just that: a changed text from what the author originally intended. Ironically, the practice of textual intervention



has been going on in an 'acceptable' manner for decades- most notably with literary classics, abridged versions, and I'm not sure that any students learn Shakespeare's plays in their original guise anymore.

But Tintin isn't a satire, nor does it feature archaic language. The option of 'editing' (whether you agree with it or not) isn't applicable here, as that would most likely constitute the whole book. The problem is the proposed audience of the book: young children.

The ruling by the Belgian courts in December last year that not only found the book not racist but exhibiting, apparently, 'a gentle and candid humour' was in response to a case bought in 2007 by Bienvenu Mbutu Mondondo, an immigrant from the Congo, and the Belgian Council of Black Associations. Their assertion was that "The negative stereotypes portrayed in this book are still read by a significant number of children. They have an impact on their behaviour." So the matter becomes one of the permeation of ideology and its effect; is it alright to make accessible to young children a racist book, when they may not understand the context in which

it was written? I didn't read *Tintin in the Congo* until a few years ago, so I can't say how it affected me as a child, or how aware I was of the representation of African people, but there's a case to be made, I think, for the potency and power in the visualisation of images exposed to children over words.

Context is the crucial factor. The book currently includes a short foreword that effectively repeats the 'preservation of history and social attitudes' line of the red band. It's not enough to simply softly say that the book and its representations are a product of their time: what's required is education. It should be made clear that that time was a less understanding, more intolerant and wrong time and that such views are unacceptable today, although how effective such a forwarding essay would be is anybody's guess. As for having the book available to children, my own view would be to shelve it in a designated 'parental guidance' section/shelf, so that parents can decide for themselves at what age they think their child would comprehend the context in which it was created. Until that time, Hergé wrote 23 other Tintin books which children and adults all around the globe have treasured for over 80 years.

“For the Congo as with *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets*, the fact was that I was fed on the prejudices of the bourgeois society in which I moved...

It was 1930. I only knew things about these countries that people said at the time: ‘Africans were great big children... Thank goodness for them that we were there!’ Etc. And I portrayed these Africans according to such criteria, in the purely paternalistic spirit which existed then in Belgium.”

Hergé

ORSON SCOTT CARD ENDER'S GAME

ENDER VS. HITLER - SYMPATHY FOR THE SUPERMAN BY ELAINE RADFORD

Let me tell you about a book I just read.

It's the story of a young boy who was dreadfully abused by the grown-ups who wanted to mold him into an exemplary citizen. Forced to suppress his own emotions in order to avoid being paralyzed by trauma, he directed his energy into duty rather than sex or love. In time, he came to believe that his primary duty was to wipe out a species of gifted but incomprehensible aliens who had devastated his kind in a previous war.

He found the idea of exterminating an entire race distasteful, of course. But since he believed it was required to save the people he defined as human, he put the entire weight of his formidable energy behind the effort to wipe out the aliens.

You've read it, you say? It's *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card, right?

Wrong. The aliens I'm talking about were the European Jews, blamed by many Germans for gearing up World War I for their own profit. The book is Robert G. L. Waite's *The Psychopathic God: Adolf Hitler*.

I don't know of any pair of novels that have been as consistently misinterpreted as Card's *Ender's Game* and *Speaker for the Dead*. Even a reader with a rudimentary knowledge of twentieth century history might be expected to guess that the character of Ender Wiggin, the near messianic superhero, is based on that of Adolf Hitler. Card himself is the "Speaker for the Dead" who seeks to understand and forgive the genocidal dictator's behavior by demonstrating that his intentions were good. Because Hitler/Ender committed genocide to preserve the existence and dignity of what he defined as human, he is not a monster but a true Superman who willingly shouldered the heavy responsibility thrust upon him.

For those who missed the point of what he was doing in *Ender's Game*, Card sums up the Speaker philosophy near the beginning of *Speaker for the Dead*. "Speakers for the Dead held as their only doctrine that good or evil exist entirely in human motive, and not at all in the act..." Toward the end, he has a child voice the inevitable corollary, "When you really know somebody, you can't hate them."

To which I can only say, “Bullshit.” You can easily hate someone you know very well -- ask a few people who have had to learn a great deal about their abusers in an effort to head off some of their attacks -- and, in any case, adults remain responsible for their actions no matter how good their intentions. Certainly, it isn't OK to kill somebody because you think he might try at some time in the future to kill you. Why then is it OK to wipeout whole races for the same reason? What in the world made responsible science fiction readers and writers embrace Ender Wiggin, a.k.a. Adolf Hitler, as a hero?

It isn't because the books are skillfully written. *Ender's Game* is plotted around the weariest cliché going, the game that becomes real. *Speaker for the Dead* is a preachy, tedious text that substitutes coincidence and the Superman's omniscience for plot drivers. The characters in both books, to quote a friend, are constructed of the highest grade cardboard. But since Norman Spinrad has already detailed Card's amazing lack of originality in plot and character construction, I won't indulge in a literary hack job here. I'll only say that I suspect that we take Ender/Hitler to our hearts because fascist ideals remain frighteningly alive in all of us. We would all like to believe that our suffering has made us special -- especially if it gives us a righteous reason to destroy our enemies.

Perhaps you feel that I exaggerate. I can hear you thinking: How could anyone equate that abused little boy with the Great Dictator? What kind of dirty mind does that Radford person have, anyway? In reply, I will now demonstrate that the Ender/Hitler connection is clearcut and central to the structure of both novels. I'll leave it to you to decide what it means that so many people found it so easy to identify with Ender Wiggin.

The Formative Years

To see what Card's up to, let's first look at Ender's formative years. Because eugenics works in his universe, Card grants the government the ability to predict the Wiggin children's genius from their parents' genes. Since the first two children are disqualified from Battle School on personality grounds, the parents are asked to try again -- producing Ender, whose early years are a nightmare of persecution because he's a Third child in an overpopulated world. His only friend is his sister Valentine, with whom he'll eventually wander about the galaxy in a quasi-incestuous relationship.

The reader is left with several questions that aren't easy to answer without comparing Ender's

background to Hitler's. Why invoke eugenics, at best a pseudo-science and at worst an excuse for controlling one's "inferiors?" Why is it so important that Ender be a Third, to the point that Card gives the word a capital T? And why, oh why, the unnecessary and offensive hints at incest with his sister, the only member of the family that Ender is close to?

Alan Bullock writes in *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, the following synopsis of Hitler's early years. "Adolf was the third child of Alois Hitler's third marriage. Gustav and Ida, both born before him, died in infancy...There were also, however, the two children of the second marriage with Franziska, Adolf Hitler's half-brother Alois, and his half-sister Angela. Angela was the only one of his relations with whom Hitler maintained any sort of friendship. She kept house for him at Berchtesgaden for a time, and it was her daughter, Geli Raubal, with whom Hitler fell in love."

It's all here, isn't it? Hitler was three times a third -- the third child of a third marriage, and, because his older siblings died in infancy, the third child actually present in the house. Since his mother didn't conceive again until Hitler was six, Hitler, like Ender, spent his formative years as the third of three children. Like Ender, he eventually grew away from all of his family except his older sister. The main difference is that it was her daughter, and not Angela herself, with whom he engaged in a chaste but emotionally compelling love affair.

(After Geli killed herself to escape her uncle's attentions, the doctor confirmed that she died a virgin. Likewise, Card makes us wait until well into the second novel before he tells us that Ender hasn't consummated his love for Valentine.)

Similarly, both children's lives were deformed by physical and emotional abuse. Ender escapes the abuse of his peers to join the Battle School -- where he is, of course, abused by adults. Hitler was literally treated like a dog by his father, who expected him to answer to his whistle and accept vicious beatings -- beatings which were all the more terrible to the boy because he had an undescended testicle and deeply feared losing the other. Both cases represented awful violations of a child's body and spirit in the attempt to mold the kind of character that adults decided the child should have.

The Logic of Misogyny

As an adult, it's in his relationships with women that Ender displays some of his most obvious parallels with Hitler. Indeed, as with the incest theme, some elements of *Speaker for the Dead* are inexplicable

unless you're aware of Hitler's dyed-in-the-wool misogyny. In a world where the Wiggin genes are "crying out for continuation," Ender's chastity until his marriage at the age of 37 is puzzling. But, again, when we look at the Hitler connection, all becomes clear. Probably because of his childhood trauma, Hitler remained chaste for an unusually long time. He isn't known to have felt love for any woman until -- are you ahead of me here? -- age 37.

Another bizarre element is the fact that Ender chooses a bitter, self-destructive woman for his mate. Why? I presume it's to remind us that Hitler too chose self-destructive women. Of the seven close to him, six killed themselves or made serious attempts to do so.

In his eagerness to help us understand Ender/Hitler, Card comes close to justifying misogyny. At the Speaking of Marcao, Ender says that Novinha solicited beatings from her deceased husband in order to atone for her adultery. Marcao wasn't really a violent person, you understand, since he never hit anyone but his wife. How false and ugly that seems to those of us aware of the truth about abusive behavior, which is that abusive people will take out their frustrations on anyone -- woman, child, dog, or elderly parent -- who doesn't have the power to fight back.

In this central chapter, meant to help us understand how speaking the truth heals a community, we see only a new lie traded for the old. Marcao may not have been the great guy we pretended he was, but hey, it was all his wife's fault.

Women have heard this tired story too many times before. It's called Blaming the Victim.

The author's contempt for women shows most clearly in his creation of Jane, a sentient supercomputer. Now there is no reason on God's green earth for Jane to present herself as female or even human. But Card knows that the reader would die laughing at the image of a neutered computer focusing on Ender like this. "And with all that vast activity, her unimaginable speed, the breadth and depth of her experience, fully half of the top ten levels of her attention were always, always [Card's emphasis] devoted to what came through the jewel in Ender Wiggin's ear." Hard to swallow, isn't it?

But Card expects us to understand when he depicts Jane as a woman in love. Surely the reader will recognize that a woman, no matter how intelligent, has nothing better to focus on than a man?

The Necessity of Genocide

The most explicit parallel between Hitler and

Ender is that they're both genocides. Hitler, of course, ordered the death of millions of Jews, Slavs, homosexuals, physically and mentally handicapped persons, and so on. Ender exterminated an entire intelligent species. Most people, I hope, agree that mass murder, much less genocide, is quite indefensible. Yet, as we follow Ender's life after he wipes out the Buggers, we're invited to understand and forgive his actions.

Why? How? Here are two answers.

"I would prefer not to see anyone suffer, not to do harm to anyone. But then I realize that the species is in danger..."

"I thought I was playing a game. I didn't know it was the real thing. But...if I had known the battle was real, I would have done the same thing. We thought they wanted to kill us."

The first words are Hitler's, the second Ender's. But the idea is the same, an appeal to good intentions. To save our people, we had to eliminate the threat presented by the existence of the stranger.

And that's a valid argument, if you're still a child and no one has ever told you what the road to Hell is paved with. It's a matter of historical record that Hitler honestly believed that the people he defined as human were in terrible danger from "inferior races." He did not merely use the threat to Nordic racial purity to become Fuhrer. Rather, he became Fuhrer because there was simply no other way to institute the sweeping racial programs his beliefs required. As Waite writes in *The Psychopathic God*: "The horror of Hitler was this: he meant what he said, he lived by his ideals, he practiced what he preached."

And this, precisely, is the horror of Ender the Xenocide. That's why Card lays such great stress on Valentine's silly "orders of forgiveness," which give the people in Speaker such a convenient vocabulary for their racism. Says a "brilliant" student in Speaker: "Through these Nordic [!] layers of forgiveness we can see that Ender was not a true Xenocide, for when he destroyed the Buggers, we knew them only as varelse [the truly alien]." To Hitler, of course, Jews, Blacks, and Slavs were equally alien, so by the same argument he is also innocent of genocide!

Forgiving Hitler

The most offensive thing about Ender is that he goes Hitler one better. Where the Fuhrer would have been content to kill everybody he thought might possibly one day represent a threat to his people, Ender does kill everybody -- and then proceeds to steal their heritage. Ender the Xenocide becomes the first Speaker for the Dead, writing the book that

will define what the Buggers are for three thousand years. It is as if Hitler not only exterminated the Jews, he then went on to write his own story of what the state of Israel might have been.

If there is anything uglier than silencing the voice of the alien because she is alien, it is then filling in the silence with your own version of what she was. Yet Card represents this act as Ender's redemption.

For the reader who isn't convinced that writing a book (no matter how highly acclaimed) makes up for exterminating a race, Card offers an alternative, albeit rather contradictory, excuse for his genocide's actions -- genetic determinism. Although this "science" has been shown to represent such an oversimplification that it's a downright distortion, Card makes it the foundation of the biology of his universe. From the very beginning, authorities can breed geniuses more easily than you or I could establish a strain of purebred blue budgies, and never mind that breeding for color and size involves at most a few genes, while breeding for intelligence would require a total understanding of the complicated interactions between whole chromosomes.

In Card's strange world, children can inherit advanced qualities like a talent for xenobiology -- a bizarre combination of genetic determinism and Lamarckianism since these characteristics were presumably artificially acquired at some point in the past. (Or does Card imagine that there is literally a gene for xenobiological talent that we can breed for? How could such a thing evolve? Surely our genes would have to be macroscopic to carry all the information he assumes they do.) In any case, his pseudo-science serves primarily as an excuse for ugly actions running the gamut from genocide to vivisection.

At the very beginning of *Speaker*, Card has the thirteen-year-old Novinha exclaim, "But you can't understand the piggies just by watching the way they behave! [Card's emphasis] They came out of a different evolution. You have to understand their genes, what's going on inside their cells." The reader may chuckle at the idea of understanding a race's psychology from its genes -- but Card plots later events so that Novinha's odd statement is entirely borne out. Environment (except for childhood traumas aimed at garnering reader sympathy) is nothing. Inheritance is all.

So what does this have to do with Ender/Hitler? Everything. Hitler, of course, believed in precisely this kind of oversimplified pseudo-scientific mishmash, and that's why he thought that applying the methods of the budgie breeder to human beings would work. Since there are no pet stores to accept

your culls when you're breeding people, he built the death camps. And if the world really worked that way, I suppose you could say he was justified. If intelligence and moral character were actually reducible to a couple of recessive genes just waiting to be cultivated, then you could breed a race of Supermen using Hitler's methods. Indeed, short of genetic manipulation on a level we haven't mastered yet, his methods would probably be the only way to breed Supermen.

(Perhaps Hitler should have asked some budgie breeders first. They could have told him that the culls often turn out to be the smartest, most personable birds -- because they're taken into people's homes and given personal attention. Beautiful show budgies who do nothing but preen and sire young don't say, "Look at the pretty bird." But Hitler -- and Card -- already know that intelligence is mainly inherited and easily correlated with other desirable traits, so why bother to see what actual breeders say?)

Ender, of course, is a Superman -- the greatest one. Breeding, not training, made him what he is. Remember, he brutally murdered a schoolboy for strategic reasons before he was accepted into Battle School. Although his training helped refine his talents as a killer genius, all the pre-arranged trauma and intensive schooling in the galaxy would have gone for naught had it not been for his superior genes. Card therefore speaks for Ender by saying that the boy killed for the noblest reasons and couldn't have done otherwise anyway. So why should we attach moral meaning to his actions?

This interpretation also explains the clunky ending to *Ender's Game*. Having saved the world just by being what he is, Ender proceeds to demonstrate his innate nobility by wallowing in his own guilt. Sure, he isn't to blame and he knows it -- but why not be a real Superman and prove how sensitive you are while saving the world?

Speaker's ending is even more ludicrous. Having spent most of two novels telling us why we can never understand the alien, Card has Ender pull a quick turnaround at the last minute so that Bugger, human, and piggie can live together in harmony. (This in a universe where tolerance is so rare that premarital sex is unthinkable and whole planets are chartered on the basis of narrow religious, racial, and national affiliations!) Just a little understanding and a quickie resurrection by our local Superman are enough to unravel the twisted knot of racially predetermined hatreds. Hitler's made it to Brazil to put what he's learned to use in the interest of racial harmony between European, Indian, and African. He's even brought a few Jews with him to lend the

Brazilians a hand!

I'm sorry, Card, but it doesn't wash. It's just too cheap. In the real world, the murdered don't rise from the dead when the Great Leader decides that the times are right for tolerance. Shakespeare, speaking of another figure oft-cited as the model Superman, said it better: "The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones..." So it was with Caesar, so it is with Hitler. All the understanding in the world doesn't change the fact that this man deformed the face of the twentieth century and that all of us are living with his destructive legacy. Perhaps you meant to focus on the good men do rather than their evil when you wrote: "Destroyed everything he touched -- that's a lie, that can't be truthfully said of any human being who ever lived." Perhaps you meant to help us enlarge the sphere of our capacity for forgiveness. No doubt, in any case, that you meant well.

But it doesn't really matter, does it? As long as people are struggling against anti-Semitism, misogyny, and all the other ways of oppressing the different, it seems inappropriate to focus overmuch on the delicate feelings of the oppressor. Look at the fact that the Fuhrer was sincere and re-define his life as dedicated rather than evil? Forgive Hitler? Card, from your privileged position as a white male American Christian, you have no right to ask us that.

* * * * *

Twenty years after this essay was written, in 2007, I wrote a brief postscript in my online diary, which is reprinted here in slightly edited form to reflect the differences in format:

I didn't expect the uproar caused by my analysis. I'm no longer certain that I was even confident that it would be published until Robert Collins, editor of Fantasy Review, mailed me some complimentary copies. I'm not a trained critic, and I do feel that my piece has since been outdated by John Kessel's fine essay, *Creating the Innocent Killer: Ender's Game, Intention, and Morality*, which at the time of this posting can be found as a free nonfiction offer on Kessel's webpage [http://www4.ncsu.edu/~tenshi/Killer_000.htm]. However, because of repeated requests, I've decided to go ahead and post my humble essay online where people can find it easily and make up their own minds.

If you really like this book and hate this essay, I don't have a problem with that. I believe in giving all sides to a story. In the original publication and in the first reprint, Card's rebuttal was printed alongside

my essay. However, I can't do that here, because I don't have the reprint rights to the portion that he wrote. So, to a certain extent, I feel like I now have to argue both sides of the question myself.

So, here we are, 20 years later...and, to this day, the most common response by Card fans to my essay is that they just don't see it. My goodness gracious, why should anyone imagine that hundreds of pages of meditation on genocide and forgiveness wasn't just pure science fiction, with nothing to say about the twentieth century or its most notorious genocide? To which I can only shrug and say, Hmm-kay, I start with the assumption that the guy is not a complete idiot and that he knows what he's doing.

I might not agree with it, but he did have something to say. The argument that he's an oblivious airhead is not particularly flattering to either you as a fan or Card as an author. If that's your argument, fine, but you'll have to forgive me if I think it's pathetic.

Very occasionally I get the question I expected in the first place: "So? What's wrong with that? Isn't it a perfectly valid enterprise to try to understand these monsters? What's wrong with using art to get into that kind of brain and figuring out how it works?"

Well, there you go. That's the answer. There's nothing wrong with that. Why do we read if not to get into other people's minds? I think Card took on a most ambitious project -- to see if he could get us into the mind of somebody that we would normally never dream of identifying with in a thousand years. The trouble is, I pulled his punchline by blabbing the "gotcha" before he put the third book out.

And instead of saying, "So? I was trying to experiment with enlarging the normal human capacity for forgiveness. You got a problem with that?" he freaked and called me a girl. ("Radical feminist" is the phrase he actually used, but yeah -- it means he freaked and called me a girl. Probably not too many guys get called "radical feminist" as an intended insult. And how 1980s is that anyway?)

And once he put his foot in his mouth, he couldn't quite figure out how to get it back out.

That's my take on it, anyway.

The line I would have taken is simple: Forgiveness, even to the very end, is a core belief of Christianity, and hence a core belief of large numbers of Americans. It is perfectly fair to see how far we can push the concept of forgiveness and who deserves to be forgiven. You don't like how far I went and who I forgave? Well, that's what makes horse-racing.

Hey, it's a more reasonable answer than spluttering, and I can actually respect the point of

view of the fans who suggested it.

Anyway, if I wanted to nutshell it, I'd say that my objection to *Ender's Game* is that our society already focuses too much on telling the powerless to forgive and forget. We've got entire religions devoted to it. We don't need more propaganda on the topic. It's a little cheap to tell me what I can get anywhere.

When you tell me a story, tell me something I don't know already. Surprise me. Boo hoo hoo, he was abused, so he killed everybody...It's been done. It's stale. It's ain't pining for the fjords. It's dead, Jim.

* * * * *

And what do I think today, in 2013? Well, I really can't say anything else about Card's SF. I didn't like it, so I stopped reading it. Since I don't read it, I don't have any further thoughts on it.

Yes, I was saddened to learn that, in recent years, Card has decided to "defend" marriage by poking his nose in other people's business. It certainly doesn't improve my opinion of his ethics.. I had forgotten how strongly I stated my case in this 1987 article, but I stand by it – I don't like what I've read of Card's work and I don't think I much like him as a human being either.

That doesn't mean that I object to him working for DC Comics or anybody else that wants to hire him. I believe in freedom of expression, and I'll express my freedom by spending my book-buying money somewhere else. What others choose to do is up to them.





STOCKING OSC'S SUPERMAN AT ILLUSIVE COMICS BY ANNA WARREN CEBRIAN

I've had two customers ask me to participate in the boycott, so I talked about this issue with a few other retailers before making my decision.

I will be stocking this comic for a few reasons:

The majority of my customers want to read this comic and I don't avoid ordering comics because some customers don't like the personal views of one of the creators. If I avoided ordering comics that offended a group of people, I would likely not have my Adult Section, most horror comics nor any comics with anything groups of people found offensive.

“Superman is not just a superhero. He's the superhero. He created the very concept of the superhero, and everything that's touched on that concept for the past 75 years”

Glen Weldon

This comic, itself, is not about the topic of Gay Marriage Rights. It's about Superman. That makes this issue less poignant for me.

Should DC have considered his widely

publicized political views before hiring him? I don't know. That's for their company to consider, as it reflects upon their company's values. My company policy is to be good to my customers, my staff and have a growing, thriving business. I don't see how I'm offending anyone by stocking a comic that many customers will want to buy. If we have a drop off of sales for this particular issue, I will not be surprised. It's up to consumers to boycott, and show their views to DC.

As a Gay Rights Advocate, as a Human Rights Advocate, do I have strong personal views about this writer? Yes. But I am a business woman, too. A business woman, who does have a “Safe Place” card in her store window and strives to make her shop extremely human friendly, regardless of customer's genders or sexual preferences. I have customers with myriad values and beliefs, and they have the right to buy product (or not), just as people who have values and beliefs that are not necessarily the same ones I hold, have the right to create product (or not).

We live in a country where we are allowed to think differently from each other. Shouldn't this issue come down to “does he do his job well?” Let's see if he did.





ORSON SCOTT CARD SUPERMAN STORY SPIKED AMID FUROR BY MIKE GLYER

DC Comics' new, digital-first Superman series was to launch in April powered by the name recognition of "acclaimed *Ender's Game* author Orson Scott Card," co-author of its initial story (with Aaron Johnston). But Card's brand has become as much identified with his conservative jeremiads as with his award-winning fiction. DC's Superman project soon attracted the wrath of those turned off by Card's anti-gay rhetoric.

Advocate.com turned its spotlight on the controversial views of the author:

"Unfortunately for DC Comics, Card is a well-known homophobe and anti-gay activist who in 2008 called for the overthrow of government if Prop 8 fails."

FrontiersLA.com ran its February 8 story under the headline, "DC Comics Hires Homophobe to Pen New Superman Series."

Petition website *Allout.org* started a petition calling for DC to drop Card that eventually topped 16,000 signatures.

Dominic Rushe detailed the furor for *The Guardian*, where he implicitly wondered about a creative decision seemingly at odds with the publisher's recent history: "DC, owned by Warner Bros, has been making attempts to include LGBT characters in its superhero universe recently. Last year the company announced that Alan Scott, Green Lantern, was gay. Batwoman has been a lesbian since 2006."

Not all Card detractors were comfortable with the campaign to run Card off *Superman*: "Dale Lazarov, a gay comic writer, said it was counterproductive to attack Card's appointment: 'I've known Orson Scott

Card is a raging homophobe since the early 90s. I refuse to buy or read his work. But asking that he be denied work because he is a raging homophobe is taking it too far. Asking for workplace discrimination for any reason is counterproductive for those who want to end discrimination on their own behalf."

Andrew Wheeler rationalized the tactic in his opinion piece for *The Guardian* a few days later:

"Card's involvement with the National Organization for Marriage makes him a deserving target for a collective boycott, because he's not just an artist with disagreeable views; he's an active participant on the wrong side of the struggle for civil rights. No one should be denied work because of what they think, but everyone should be held accountable for what they do. In allying with a group that directly campaigns for discrimination, Card was not holding an opinion; he was taking an action."

News writers seeking illustrations of Card's moral and political views found irresistible his 2008 *Deseret News* op-ed which ends emphatically: "How long before married people answer the dictators thus: Regardless of law, marriage has only one definition, and any government that attempts to change it is my mortal enemy. I will act to destroy that government and bring it down, so it can be replaced with a government that will respect and support marriage, and help me raise my children in a society where they will expect to marry in their turn."

"Biological imperatives trump laws. American government cannot fight against marriage and hope to endure. If the Constitution is defined in such a way as to destroy the privileged position of marriage, it is that insane Constitution, not marriage, that will die."

However, Wheeler, unlike many Card opponents, distinguished the artist's views from what Card's Superman story was likely to contain:

"Card's principles do not align with Superman's, though it's unlikely that Card will write a story about Superman spreading disinformation, robbing people of their rights or overthrowing the government. Yet, if DC Comics knew about Card's well-publicised views, why risk alienating parts of its audience by hiring him?"

DC Comics unsurprisingly felt people should not hold the company accountable for the unpopular views of its writers: "As content creators we steadfastly support freedom of expression, however the personal views of individuals associated with DC Comics are just that — personal views — and not those of the company itself."

The marketplace did not agree. Less than 10 days after DC's announcement broke *Robot 6* was tracking retail stores that had refused to stock the print edition of the comic — Zeus Comics (Dallas), Whatever Store (San Francisco), I Like Comics (Vancouver, WA), Ralph's Comic Corner (Ventura, CA), and Funny Business (Nyack, NY). Yet another store said it would sell the comic but donate the profits to a gay rights advocacy group.

The new Superman title is designed as an outlet for writers and artists to tell stories of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's Man of Steel outside the continuity established in DC's *New 52*. Art for Card's tale was to come from Chris Sprouse and Karl Story. However, on March 5, Chris Sprouse bailed on the project.

Sprouse explained in a statement quoted on *The Mary Sue*: "It took a lot of thought to come to this conclusion, but I've decided to step back as the artist on this story. The media surrounding this story reached the point where it took away from the actual work, and that's something I wasn't comfortable with. My relationship with DC Comics remains as strong as ever and I look forward to my next project with them." *The Mary Sue* provided additional cover for Sprouse's retreat by pointing to his work on *Midnighter*, a series featuring an out gay superhero who is currently a part of the DC Universe.

Sprouse's withdrawal forced DC's hand. *USA Today* reported Card's story will no longer appear in the first collected issue. "We fully support, understand and respect Chris's decision to step back from his Adventures of Superman assignment," the company announced. "Chris is a hugely talented artist, and we're excited to work with him on his next DC Comics project. In the meantime, we will re-solicit

the story at a later date when a new artist is hired."

Comics bloggers like Rich Johnston at *Bleeding Cool* took a victory lap and began setting their sights on a larger target: "This is quite clearly a success for those raising the issue, trying to get Orson banned from DC Comics. But it seems like it was only the warm up. Because next on the slate is the *Ender's Game* movie, with the likes of Harrison Ford and Ben Kingsley, based on the very positively reviewed novel by Card. If they can succeed with Warner Bros over a comic, can they succeed with Summit Entertainment and Lionsgate over a movie?"

At the other end of the spectrum, *LifeSiteNews.com*, a site which "emphasizes the social worth of traditional Judeo-Christian principles," agreed more protests are coming --

"Homosexual outcry over Card's views is expected to reach a fever pitch in the coming year as the film version of his classic 1985 novel 'Ender's Game' is released.

"The move toward blacklisting writers who fail to support homosexual causes has caused some controversy in speculative and licensed fiction circles. While many in the publishing industry support same-sex 'marriage,' some say they are uncomfortable with the idea of banning opposing thought outright.

"I think it is dangerous to support any blacklist of any creative for any reason,' John Ordovery, former editor of the Star Trek series at Pocket Books and open supporter of gay marriage, wrote on his Facebook page. 'It's validating the entire concept of blacklists. To oppose blacklists, we have to stand against blacklisting those whose opinions we find abhorrent as well as those we agree with.'"

The movie of *Ender's Game* is scheduled for a November release and *The Hollywood Reporter* says executives at Summit now question whether he should be part of its promotion, or represent the film on programs at the San Diego Comic-Con:

"Promoting *Ender's Game* without Card would be like trying to promote the first Harry Potter movie without J.K. Rowling. But having Card appear in the main ballroom in front of 6,500 fans could prove a liability if he's forced to tackle the issue head-on during the Q&A session.

"I don't think you take him to any fanboy event,' says one studio executive. 'This will definitely take away from their creative and their property.' Another executive sums up the general consensus: 'Keep him out of the limelight as much as possible.'"



I WRITE SELF-INDULGENT, UN-HELPFUL REVIEWS... AND YOU CAN TOO!

BY CHRIS GARCIA

At BASFA, we often have discussions. We'll talk books, argue movies, confuse ourselves with discussions of two and sometimes three different topics, each attempting to mingle with one another with none of the participants understanding that they're not even on the same topic. During one of these discussions, Adrienne Foster and I got into what the goal of a review is. Her reasoning - it should give you an idea of the style, of the plot, of the characters, and no spoilers. Chris says - it should tell you what it made the reviewer feel.

"Oh, I'm not at all interested in that." says Adrienne.

And I am croggled totally by that.

To me, there is nothing a reviewer can tell me ABOUT a book that'll make me think anything about a book. If you tell me how a book affects you, that is exactly what I need to know, need to understand. I don't read books for the plots, or the characters, or really for the style: I read a book to feel something. Not to understand or reconcile something (though those are often both side effects), but to be moved towards something. It's why I tend far more towards genre than mainstream. I want to be moved through emotion, and genre is the literature of differing emotions. That's why I read, and ultimately, that's the

kind of review I tend to write.

Sort of.

While you may read a bunch of my reviews and go, "Well, that was pointless" (and I've had several folks say that to me over the years), there is a philosophy behind them. They're not just me writing for the sake of writing (though, in the end, isn't that all I ever do?) but the way I look at books and reading and writing fully informs everything I review.

And now, I will pull back the curtain and teach you, yes YOU, how to write reviews just like me.

Books are objects that typically consist of an outer piece of paper surrounding other pages of paper. The outer parts usually have a picture on it, and some words. There are lots more words on the inside. Sometime there's more pictures on the inside. Boiled down to syrup, that's what a book is. Let's take Janet Edwards's *Earth Girl*. It's got a lovely image of a young, short-haired woman lazing against a globe. A lovely image, and it is designed to give off an idea of what the book is, but in this case, it does almost none of that. It does say that the main character is a young woman with an attachment to the world, perhaps even an affection. The description of the story on the back seems to contradict the emotional example of

the cover. Jarra is a young girl who is Handicapped. In this case, Handicapped is a term used by a future human race that has mostly abandoned Earth using a transport system. She is trapped on Earth while most of humanity has gone off to new systems. Putting the two parts together, I can see what the designer was going for with the cover, but it doesn't quite give the impression of the other.

So, what does a book do? It is a piece that people interact with. They put a portion of their lives on hold to take it in, to read and digest. A book is not a portal into a timeless place away from the rest of the world; it is something that exists in the world, interacts with it and with the lives of those who read it. I tend to not set aside time for reading. I don't have a living room with a fireplace and high-backed leather chair where I sit, swirling a snifter of brandy with one hand, a copy of Proust held open in the other. That's not realistic in my life, and I doubt in many other folks' lives either. One of the first things I did when I left college and headed out on my own was to learn how to fit things into my life. Reading has always been something I love to do, and I discovered that I had to place reading into my life in the areas where other things were already happening. Lunch became a place where I did almost all of my reading. Then while I was watching Evelyn, or sitting in a parking lot, or waiting for a movie to start. It's how I read, and the way in which you read a book is almost as important as the book itself. For *Earth Girl*, I had to read it mostly during lunches. Well, that means I read in small chunks, a chapter at a time usually, sometimes less. But sometimes, I'd be so into a section that I'd stretch it, read more, lengthening my lunch. That says something, that's important. That's exactly the kind of thing I want from a review. If a reviewer tells me "The prose is crisp, the plot engrossing, the character rich" it says "Yeah, this author's not a fuck-up." On the other hand, if an author writes "I was twenty minutes late for an important meeting because I couldn't stop reading," that's something that will inform my desire to read it.

Tell me how you fit a book into your life. If you had to force yourself to keep reading, I wanna know that. *Earth Girl* was a joy; it made me want to go forward, and it was largely because of how Edwards went through constructing a world that was so close to one that I would want to be a part of. A world of the future, with advanced technologies and a complex social structure that are so fully realized that I could see the blog posts that complain about the social inequities. It was a beautiful idea, and a large part of it dealt with the future students, of which Jarra is one,

going and doing archeological digs at the site of the once-great New York City. This, of course, is especially important to me because of my history background, but then how do you give that idea to the reader of any review you might write.

Well, that's the trick. It's kinda easy to just say "I'm a historian, and I liked the history in here because I'm a historian" in a fit of redundancy. You would be better off giving me a narrative of your life with the book. So, if I were writing about *Earth Girl*, I might say how I was sitting in front of the Babbage Engine at the museum, on the Cray I we've got in the back lobby for visitors to sit on, spending my lunch away from the pile of documents from Xerox PARC in the early 70s, digging through RFCs for information on how TCP influenced the developmental direction of the early internet. Then, I say how the strange connections between the text, where Jarra is the 'tag leader' in charge of the manual labor required to actually dig for artifacts, or how they find a stasis box holding paintings just moments after I found a set of early computer games on a tape listing which I had no idea existed until I opened a box. Background like that is what I want from a review: give me your life, or a slice of it, and how this work you're reviewing interacts with it: both passively and actively. Tell me what you did to make a place in your life to read it. That's how I write, and it's because that's what I'm looking to find in other reviews.

And sadly, it's so rare that I can find that.

Now, I want to know what the effect on you was emotionally. This can be tricky. For example, in *Earth Girl*, I found myself feeling that Jarra was something of the kind of whiner I fear I am. She's bitter that she was born Handicapped, and she lashes out. She applied to the pre-history specialty set-up on Earth instead of applying to Earth University, to prove a point, to weasel her way into their lives and then burst out and spray hot GOTCHA! over all of them. That's an awful character trait, and to open with that as a reason for a character to completely change their life is a good way to make me hate a character, and if she's utterly well-equipped for the world in which she lives, that's even worse. Jarra is the kind of character I am not: she knows what she's doing, she's exceptional at what she does, and she's bitter. I usually dislike these kinds of characters, but when you see how she questions herself, work through her anger in many ways, and even go off the rails, I started to like her, started to feel for her instead of withholding my approval of her.

And there's something that is important to me that isn't necessarily important to anyone else.

I need to have some sort of emotional connection with a character. I need to bond with them, not necessarily like them or care about them, but bond with them. I need to feel that there's a connection with the characters I'm reading about. If I can find a way into the character's emotional sweet spot, I can really enjoy the book. A few moments in *Earth Girl* made me feel like Jarra was a human who I could connect with.

But how do you get that idea across? How does a review get across the harder stuff? It's easy to give a sense of what happens in a novel, to give a hint at the plot, and yeah some of that is important, but that's not what I need as a reader, or try to impart as a reviewer. I want to understand how a reviewer takes in a book, what they need to enjoy a book. Within a review, the measure of what the review of weighing against must be present. A professor of mine once told me that every film is about what it means to be a film, and a review is always partly about how you review. That's difficult. It can weigh a review down, but it can also free it up. Fitting a review of some external thing, be it a novel, a play, a movie, or an album, into another work is one way to go. Like a piece considering the ways in which *Earth Girl* manages to put the idea of history as something for the excluded, that the closer you get to the normal, the mainstream, the further you get away from the importance of history. Jarra is Handicapped, and there is almost nothing that is as important to her as history, and the kids from the other sectors further out from Earth are there, but it doesn't mean as much to them. They all have other reasons and that concept completely jibes with my ideas as I see them in my regular life. Getting that info out is an important part, so my way of tackling it would likely be to write my article mostly about the world of history and bring in the review of *Earth Girl* into it. I would love to have that sort of article come in from someone.

Now, many of you who read *The Drink Tank* will notice that I don't get to run many reviews like the ones I'm describing. That's true, though you'll notice many of my reviews are exactly like I'm describing. I get that my love of these kinds of reviews may be solely with me. One thing that I always believe is that the author always needs to be in an article. No matter what kind of article, the author needs to put themselves in it. That's the only theory I have in *The Drink Tank*, and it's the personal articles that I love the best. There are some writers who desperately try to keep themselves out of the things they write. I can understand that, but you'll always find me in my pieces, especially in my reviews.

So, why is this kind of reviewing important? Because it says something about the relationship between the reader and the read. If you're just passively reading, powering through a read just to suck out the story or the characters or the prose or even the meaning, well that's cool. It's also not why I read. I read to feel something, to experience something, to give myself over to something and to have an experience. I'm not sure what the phrase is, but there's a thing that means the atmospheric conditions matching the action in an outdoor performance. I always called it Atmospheric Participation, but I'm not sure that's it. The environment in which you experience a book is important, because it can effect the emotional response. I was reading *Earth Girl* on a train trip, crowded shoulder to shoulder, three people sitting on two-person seating banks. I was reading, and reading, experiencing a chapter that had great emotional impact on Jarra, and I was finding myself emotional. Now yes, I know I'm an emotional guy, but even I can keep it in check while I'm surrounded by people who have no idea what's going in my head. But I was feeling it, I was getting that tinge of sorrow, that melancholy feeling, and barely staying on top of it. It was the sign that Edwards had managed to make me connect with Jarra, with her position and her feelings. I was so impressed that she could make me feel that in that position.

And my review of the piece would probably start with a story of how I have inappropriate reactions to literature in various modes of transportation. That's seemingly unrelated, but it's not, not at all. It's a story in which *Earth Girl* would be a character. Not Jarra from the novel, but the book itself. It plays a role, and ultimately that's what is really important to me. Books aren't just something to read and digest, they're something that I make important, that I give time to so I can get into them, bring them into my life. THAT'S what's essential to me about books, and I guess I want to know if a book is worth giving that sort of time and commitment to. I don't care if it's a story of a difficult and different young girl fighting through a system she thinks is unfair, or a story of a war between Texas and Israel, I want to know what the story made you feel, why it made you feel that, and if we've got a connection. I want to know as much about the reviewer as the reviewed. I want to know the opinion as it relates to a person, the text as it relates to an emotion.

Or maybe I'm just trying to justify the thousands of words I've expended in reviews that do no one any good!

A STEAMPUNK'S GUIDE TO



A STEAMPUNK'S GUIDE TO SEX - PROFESSOR CALAMITY, ALAN MOORE, LUNA CELESTE & OTHERS REVIEWED BY CHRIS GARCIA

**In the end, if Steampunk is about anything, it's sex.
- M Crasdan**

There is no question that if you're going to become a significant subculture, you've got to have sex. Not you personally, but it's got to be there, has to be among all the concepts, even if it's a river diverted underground like the Fleet under London. There's been a sexual component among all of steampunk since the beginning, it's even noted in *The Daily Bleach* (<http://dailybleach.com/what-is-steampunk/>): "Steampunk is a new sexual fetish that is sweeping across hipster groups in liberal urban areas."

Yes, I know it's comedy, but still, there's something to that.

You see, the Victorian Age was hypersexualized. I know, I know, you've always thought that it was a time of great repression, but that is nowhere near true. It was a time of sexuality under wraps, but there, and heavy, and real. *A Steampunk's Guide to Sex* covers that, but it goes so much further, providing amazing essays from an incredible cadre of writers, and some spectacular imagery.

Let us start with Alan Moore. That is a phrase I hear a lot of. He supplies some excellent essays, the one that made me take the most notice was *Murder & Prostitution in 19th Century London*. It's a wonderful essay, and it talks about the effect of the desperation and poverty of London, and a bit of Jack the Ripper. My belief has always been that Jack

the Ripper took prostitution off the streets (there was the idea of Tuppenny Upright, standing sex with a prostitute for tuppence) and into the houses. The idea of a streetwalker still existed, but they tended to walk better parts of town. And, as prostitution changed, it also grew the idea of the High Society Escort. His essays are excellent, and like everything in this book, they give a wonderful view of sexuality as it applies to our little subculture.

Perhaps the most informative essays are the teaching guides, as it were. One explores the roots of Modern Pornography, another is Professor Calamity's Five Steamy Reads, which is a great recommended reading list, but the best is a list of terms called Mettle in your Merkin: Victorian Sex Slang. It's an impressive list of phrases and it makes it possible for me to dig into more Victorian-set erotica. There's also Pleasure Devices & Moral Machines, which looks at historical sexual artifacts, giving us an idea of what those wacky Victorians were up to back in the day. In a way, I guess that's what I was looking for in this book: instructions.

If I see something listed as a 'guide' I want to get learnin' from it, and these are the essays that seem to do that the best!

There is a little oddness. I didn't see the application of O.M. Grey's (an author I love!) essay An Introduction to Polyamory, fitting in, perhaps because it applies no light to the Steampunk or Neo-Victorianism application of the concept. The same goes with How to Deal With, And Not Be, A Creep. I completely agree with the inclusion of it, but I wished it dealt with the matter in a more specific to the Steampunk lifestyle. Yes, I get that all of these are ideals that we should respect (and you should read it and take every note of it to heart!) but things like someone playing a flirty character who might interact with a regular attendee in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable has happened at a couple of cons I've been to, and almost always it's the person feels uncomfortable who is demonized. I wish there was some discussion of Steampunk-specific matters. But still, it's all good words that should be taken to heart. I understand that these two essays, and the Luna Celeste essay on BDSM, just don't seem to make the cut because they feel as if they could have been in any A _____'s Guide to Sex. These essays are good, information, and I understand that they're a part of The Steampunk Lifestyle for a lot of folks, but they're all kinda SubCulture 101: they don't give any view specific to Steampunk.

It's amazing fun and light reading. I made it through in less than a single night, but it is also the kind of reading that will lead you to more reading.

It's a gateway drug to Victorian erotica and porn, and what's kinda awesome is that I, something of a prude, read the entire thing without every feeling like I was reading smut. I was reading material that was enlightening, fun, fresh, and even educational! It wasn't academic at all (and academic writing about sexuality is my idea of hell!) and that alone made it well-worth going into.

Perhaps the best part of the books were the tintypes. Magpie Killjoy, the original editor of Steampunk Magazine, did the book's layout and created the tintypes used in the book. They're so great, set a tone that is exactly what I wanted to walk away from this book with: one of a historical encounter with modern sexual sensibilities. One image, a lovely piece of a woman in her underwear wearing a wrist spreader bar, really defines everything I wanted from this book. It is such a Steampunk image, right down to the under-sized hat, but that bar really does open things up to a new, sexualized world. That image, along with the others, set the tone, and it's wonderful.

A *Steampunk' Guide to Sex* is very good reading, and it's available from the good people at Combustion Books. It's great reading, and the size, like a slim manga, is perfect for slipping into an inner coat pocket or into a small pocketbook. And what Victorian lady or gentleman wouldn't like that?





AUGUST DERLETH & SOLAR PONS: WHO NEEDS A HARD BOILED DETECTIVE? BY BOB BYRNE

It's quite possible that you aren't familiar with Solar Pons, the 'Sherlock Holmes of Praed Street.' If that is so, a quick viewing of the [Solar Pons FAQ](http://www.solarpons.com/) page might help [<http://www.solarpons.com/>]. And if you're thinking Solar Pons is nothing more than a tired copy of the Baker Street sleuth, the first essay in the first issue of [The Solar Pons Gazette](http://www.solarpons.com/Gazette_2006_1.pdf) might change your mind [http://www.solarpons.com/Gazette_2006_1.pdf].

Welcome back. So, August Derleth was a born and raised Wisconsin boy, enamored with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's tales of the great Sherlock Holmes. He wasn't much different than an awful lot of American youths in the nineteen twenties. Except, the enterprising Derleth wrote to the author and asked if there would be any more stories, and if not, could he write some himself. Doyle, not the friendliest person in regards to his meal ticket, did have the courtesy to send back a reply, denying Derleth permission to continue the adventures.

Not discouraged at all, the nineteen year-old University of Wisconsin student made a note on his calendar, 'In re: Sherlock Holmes', as a reminder to write a story in imitation of Doyle's creation. The date is lost in the mists of time, but August Derleth did in fact sit down and produce *The Adventure of the Black Narcissus* in one afternoon, starring Solar Pons and Dr. Lyndon Parker. It appeared in the February, 1929 edition of *Dragnet* and Derleth would produce over seventy more tales before passing away in 1973. British author Basil Copper added over two dozen more Pons stories with the blessing of Derleth's Estate.

Derleth's Pons stories received praise and support from noted Holmes fans like Edgar W. Smith, Vincent Starrett, Anthony Boucher and the cousins jointly known as Ellery Queen. And it's safe to say that quite a few of today's Sherlock Holmes readers are familiar with and enjoy Solar Pons. However, Pons is not a major character in the history of detective

literature, nor are the books best sellers. But one unique aspect of the series, worthy of mention, is that Derleth was going against type.

As I stated in my essay [http://www.solarpons.com/BakerStreetEssays_3], [Hard Boiled Holmes](#), "The era of British detective fiction between the two World Wars is known as The Golden Age. This was the time of the country cozy and the locked room mystery." Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Morrison were replaced by Lord Peter Wimsey and Miss Marple. In America, Carroll John Daly, Raoul Whitfield, Dashiell Hammett and others were countering with the hard boiled school, in style far more than just an ocean away from the British mystery story.

But Derleth chose to create a new detective that wasn't a part of either school. Because of his love for the Sherlock Holmes stories, he spent the next fortyish years periodically writing stories that, while set in a London where cars had replaced hansom

cabs, immediately called to mind 221B Baker Street and all that went with it.

The start of the hard boiled school can be definitely traced to April and May of 1923 when *Black Mask* contained Carroll John Daly stories featuring, first, Three Gun Terry Mack and then the longer-lasting Race Williams. By the time Solar Pons made his first appearance, a fellow named Dashiell Hammett had published almost three dozen Continental Op stories in *Black Mask*. Heck, Sam Spade and Solar Pons both came into print in 1929. Hard to picture them solving a case together!

In 1934, Rex Stout introduced Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin, a pair that blended the hard boiled private eye with the armchair genius best personified by Mycroft Holmes. Stout was a well known Sherlockian and the Holmes stories exerted a great influence on the Wolfe books, which remain popular today. However, Stout was astute enough to know that pulp magazines set the style of American detective fiction and Wolfe and Goodwin very much read like contemporary mysteries, not throwbacks to gas lit London.

But Derleth continued to write new Pons tales while the British Golden Age came to an end and the

pulp magazines fell by the wayside. Pons was a hobby that he indulged in out of affection for his boyhood idol, Sherlock Holmes. He wasn't compelled to create a tough private eye or a gentleman thief to meet the demands of mystery readers. Brett Halliday and Michael Shayne; Raymond Chandler and Philip Marlowe; John D. MacDonald and Travis McGee; Ross MacDonald and Lew Archer: just a few of the popular detectives that American readers gobbled up while August Derleth kept writing about Sherlock Holmes' successor.

Solar Pons was a return to the earlier days of detective fiction at a time when his peers had left that era behind. Fortunately, August Derleth was a fine writer and the Holmes fan who has not yet discovered Solar Pons has a treasure chest ready to be opened.





THE WRITE STUFF



ON THE WRITE STUFF

AN EDITORIAL BY LYNDA RUCKER

It all started with Steph Swainston.

Back in the summer of 2011, the successful author very publically left her contract with Gollancz to train as a teacher. Swainston's reasons included the usual litany of author woes: a too-fast turnaround time expected for novels, pressure from fans, and a general disillusionment with the writing life. James sent me a link to the article (<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/steph-swainston-i-need-to-return-to-reality-2309804.html>) and asked me what I thought—which was, basically, that these were all pretty typical of the types of things that writers had to put up with, not particularly egregious horror stories as I'd sometimes heard—and then I shared a few I'd heard (and experienced myself). James asked if I'd be interested in guest editing an issue of *Journey Planet* looking at things from the writer's point of view and I declined. I didn't have time, and I'm not good at asking people to do things, and oh yes, I really didn't have time.

But what followed over the next year and a half was an off-and-on conversation between two people who had both loved the field of speculative fiction, film, and comics their entire lives but had come at it from a very different perspective, James as a fan and me as a writer. And what we kept finding

was almost like a cultural exchange program! Our experience and expectations of everything from conventions to ideas about the writing life differed quite a bit.

Not only that, but I'd been immersed in the writing side of things for so long it's hard for me to put myself back in the shoes of aspiring writers who still need guidance on basic business things like "don't pay people to publish you" and "why you need a contract" (except when you don't, but it is, as they say, complicated). I felt like I'd been able to figure all that stuff out in the pre-Internet days handily enough, and didn't people have loads more resources at their fingertips at this point, and surely those same old mistakes weren't being made? But maybe the Internet just muddles things, makes it even harder to figure out where to seek good information; at any rate, after James pointed me to examples of several aspiring writers getting burned before they were even out of the gate, I had to reconsider.

§

There's loads of advice out there about the creative side of writing, but much of the business side of things seems to be a well-kept secret. And

you know, there are reasons for that. The business of genre publishing is a small, close-knit one. People don't want to get reputations as troublemakers. There are also strong friendships even between people who may be in the midst of a conflict about the business side of things. So this is twofold: people don't want to get a bad reputation and they don't want to be assholes.

This attitude was borne out in the response we got from a *lot* of writers to our solicitations. In a lot of cases, we were asking people to write about a specific problem they'd had; almost everyone declined to go on the record.

This left us feeling a little bit like we were in a *Catch-22*. This reluctance to talk about the problems leading to ignorance among both writers and fans was the whole reason we'd wanted to put the zine together in the first place, but we were being stymied by that very reluctance.

This is why when people do speak up it's a very big deal. Liz Williams wrote about this in her blog in 2010 (<http://mevennen.livejournal.com/777134.html?page=1>) when she went public with the difficulties she was having with Nightshade Publishing. (Brief followup here: <http://mevennen.livejournal.com/777719.html>) This led to Nightshade's being put on probation by SFWA for one year; once Williams said something, lots of other people started talking

about problems they'd had too, but up that point, everyone was just sort of suffering in silence. (<http://www.sfwaworld.org/2010/07/a-note-to-sfwaworld-members-regarding-night-shade-books/>)

Needless to say, this creates a remarkably dysfunctional family sort of atmosphere where everyone's pretending that everything is A-OK when nothing could be further from the truth.

Even writers who've spoken up publicly about publishing frustrations aren't always eager to focus on those issues later, and the reasons are complicated. The extraordinarily gracious Ian Tregellis, for example, declined to have us reprint his piece (<http://www.iantregellis.com/index.cfm?blog=212>), explaining that he didn't mind if we included a link to it but that his relationship with TOR had greatly improved and he felt it would look like a bit of passive-aggressive rehashing of old wounds to authorize its reprint here. This is perfectly understandable and speaks, I think, to the fact that sometimes it's less about a conspiracy of silence than it is about the difficulties of human relationships.

Tregellis's piece is great, though, not because it's a poison pen to TOR and its editors (it isn't that at all), who are, like most of us, just doing the best they can. Forget the publisher, forget the author, forget any of the specifics of the piece; this could happen literally anywhere to anyone. The important part is that it

illustrates how badly things can go wrong for writers even when they have a good agent and a major publishing contract.

And without a good agent and a major publishing contract, the seas are swimming with sharks. We've tried to provide a number of different points of view and lots of advice from people at different stages in the process and trying out different approaches including self-publishing and, yes, we do include a bit of good old how-to-write advice here as well.

In the end, our hope is not to discourage but to inform. I've always liked the quote by the great Flannery O'Connor in response to a question as to whether universities discouraged writers: "I don't think it stifles enough of them! There's many a best seller that could have been



prevented by a good teacher.” But the truth is that it’s not in my nature to discourage (although some might argue that might be kinder when it comes to the horrors of the writing life!). What I think aspiring writers *must* do is separate the business self from the self who thinks of publishing a story or a book as the culmination of a long-held dream. It’s okay to feel every bit of that excitement and dream-come-trueness when an editor says “yes,” but then, to paraphrase my writing teacher Jeanne Cavelos from the Odyssey Writing Workshop, you have to take off that dreamy hat and put your business hat on. For lots of people, this is a day job; for others, it’s an opportunity to scam money or too many rights off those daydreams about the writing life. And then some people aren’t evil; they’re just incompetent, but the end results for you, the writer, who’s now got a butchered story in print or has signed away all rights or can’t even get contributors’ copies of the magazine you wrote for are the same regardless of the editors’ or publishers’ motives.

These things happen a *lot*. So much more than they should. Be vigilant.

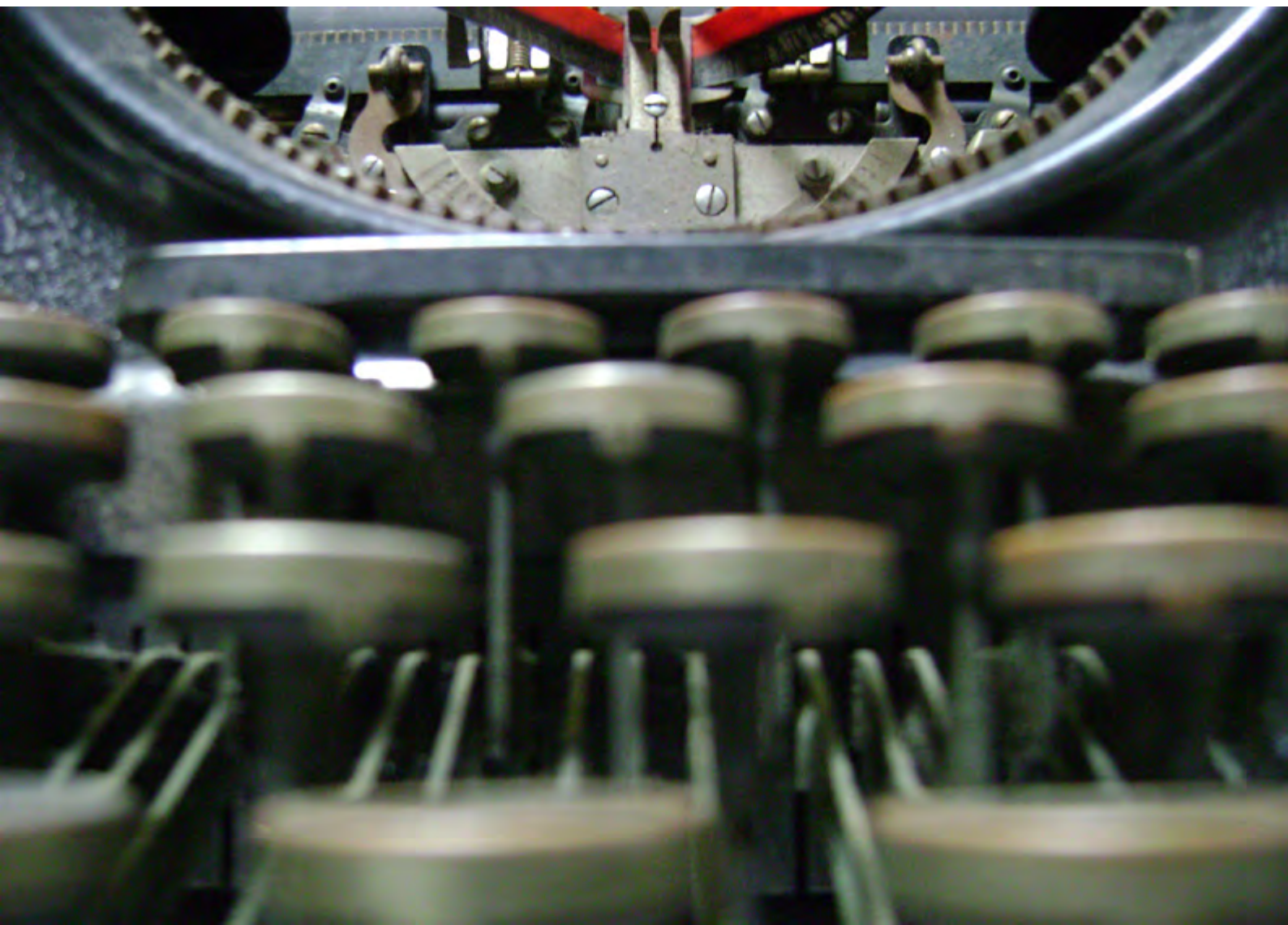
And yes, writing is above all a labor of love, too, for most people, and well it should be, but just as a relationship can’t always be just about the sex and

romance—at some point you’ve got to get out of bed, take a shower, eat something and go earn some money—the writing life will require you to remove the rose-colored glasses on a regular basis so you can read every single word of the fine print. And then read it again. And again.

Another advantage of educating yourself about these things is perspective. Shit happens to everybody in the writing life. Much of it is undeserved. When you begin to realize that this is the case, you’ll feel a lot less discouraged and take it a lot less personally when you hit your own set of doldrums.

Writing takes a lot of time to get good at and then still takes a lot of time after that and it isn’t very profitable. But we do it because we love it, or it’s a compulsion, or some combination of those two things. I hope that for those who aspire to move to a professional level with their writing, we’ve provided some useful pointers, and I hope this look at the wheels and cogs of the writing life is also interesting to fans and people with no interest in a professional publishing career at all.

Thanks to everyone who wrote for us and let us reprint their pieces, and thanks to James and Chris for asking me to work with them on this issue of *Journey Planet*.



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THE GLACIER BY ANDREA K. HOSTH

REPRINTED FROM [HTTPS://SITES.GOOGLE.COM/A/ANDREAKHOST.COM/THE-GLACIER/](https://sites.google.com/a/andreakhost.com/the-glacier/)

On 4 October 2000 I forwarded a manuscript called "The Silence of Medair" to the submissions editor of one of the "Big Few" publishers of science fiction and fantasy which still accept non-agented submissions. For the purpose of this saga I'll call them 'Glacier Publications'.

4 October 2000
MS forwarded by snailmail to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

May 16, 2001
Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi - in October last year I submitted a manuscript ("The Silence of Medair"), and about four months later sent a query letter with stamped postcard to make sure that it had arrived. Since this didn't come back, would it be possible to let me know whether or not the manuscript was ever received?

Thanks.

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Dear Ms Hosth,
Your ms has passed first reading, which is why it's still here. I don't know if your follow-up letter got here, I would have replied if it had.

Our senior editors are very backed up right now, and I can't even guess when they ([...] the only people here who can "buy" a book) will be able to look at your book. In the hopefully-not-too-long meantime, we deeply appreciate your patience and understanding.

11 July 2002
Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hello - again, just checking to see if "Medair" is still there. [I'm operating on the assumption that it is in a queue and will eventually be read - I try to check in every six months or so because I've had a reasonable amount of lost snailmail in the past.]

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Still here and waiting. Soon, hopefully, I'm going through all the "passed" ms's and picking the top 10%. Then I can return the rest.

14 March 2003

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hello, pestering again. Shall I send a niggling little reminder every month or so, or just accept that TSoM isn't going to make it through your slush pile?

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Your book is one of the next ones to be reviewed, but it is going more slowly than I had hoped.

All pestering perfectly acceptable!

20 May 2003

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi - checking in again. [Just re-read it actually, and am resisting the urge to split the thing into two novels. :)]

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

We have a new employee who will be able to help with second reading once she settles in, at which point we hope things will speed up.

31 October 2003

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi - pestering again. It's now three years since I submitted "Medair" to [Glacier]. Can you let me know if there's any real likelihood that I'll receive a response before, say, the end of the year?

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Hello--not before the end of the year, but your ms is with the next batch to be reviewed.

30 May 2004

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

We're now heading toward the four year mark of this ms' submission. Could you let me know if there is any likelihood of "The Silence of Medair" being reviewed in the near future? I really would like to clear this submission up one way or the other. If it is not suitable for your house, please let me know.

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Your ms is with the next bunch to be reviewed, so hopefully not too much longer.

21 January 2005

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi. Is this still in the queue at all?

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

It's #2 in the queue.

9 April 2005

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Four and a half years now on this submission. Is there any realistic end in sight?

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

You're next up. I asked our second reader when she would be able to review your book, and placed it on her shelf, so she knows just where it is. She said four to six weeks--six to be safe.

Thanks for being patient!

15 October 2005

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

October is the five-year anniversary of this submission.

So...shall we try for ten?

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Congratulations of a sort--of the last dozen or so books that have had a second reading, yours is the only one that is being passed up to a senior editor. Sorry I can't say when it will have a look, but you passed over a big bump.

Good luck, and thank you for your continued patience.

12 March 2007

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Just my six-monthly check in.

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

We will have a new employee who will do second reading. I'll have him read Silence as the one ms that has passed 2nd reading.

3 September 2007

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi - just checking in to see if this is still there.

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Still here--I had hoped he would have had time by now, but a bunch of emergencies arose--again--but you're still on the top of the heap.

13 February 2008

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Just checking in that this is still in the queue.

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Still is--I talked to the reader who had passed it up as well as the other second reader, and we decided it does not need another second reading before a senior editor takes a look. The question is, when will they have time for that? I know they're both way backed up. I will ask today. If I don't get back to you this week, please e-mail me.

[Next email had no reply.]

6 November 2008

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

I don't think I heard back to you on this one.

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Things are going slower than ever, [...]. Everyone is taking up the extra slack, we are all busier than ever. But I asked one of our senior editors (the official book buyers) if she will have time to look in the next six months, and she said yes. She specified January, so please send me an email then, and I'll see it's put on her desk.

Thanks for your continued patience!

9 January 2009

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Hi-she's not here today, PLEASE send me this note next Tuesday-I'm working the warehouse tomorrow & she's back on Tuesday--thanks!

13 January 2009

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Done.

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

[Senior Editor] said not this week, but she could look at your ms the last week of the month. Could you please send an email on the 27th?

Thanks!

[Next email had no response.]

14 April 2009

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi [Submissions Editor] - I'm guessing this ms is still on the to-do list somewhere. Let me know if it's no longer in the queue.

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Hi Andrea,

Actually, it's way beyond the to-do list, I passed it to [Senior Editor] a while back. She's been swamped, besides just getting back from vacation, but told me she would look at it in May. Thanks for being so patient! I'm sorry this is such a lengthy process.

6 July 2009

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Checking this is still in the queue. I'm not altogether sure what the etiquette is with such an old submission, but I'd really like to clear this one up.

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

She's in tomorrow, I'll remind her that she said she'd be looking at it. Please email me next Monday, so I can tell you what she said.

[The next couple of emails go unanswered.]

6 November 2009

Email from Me to Glacier Publications general email.

Hi-pleaseseebelowanemailfrom[SubmissionsEditor].

Back in October 2000 I submitted a MS to [Glacier], and since then have been regularly kept up to date by [Submissions Editor] as to the submission status as it moved through first and second readers, up to the editors, back down to the second readers and then up to the editors again. The below email was my last contact with [Submissions Editor], and further queries have had no response. [Possibly he made his last reply by snailmail. Since I have moved address five times in the last ten years, there's every chance such a letter would not reach me.]

Can you please check your records and let me know if this submission is still in open status with your group? While a ten-year submission makes a nice anecdote, I'd really like to finalise the status of this one before it reaches that stage.

Thanks

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Dear Ms Hoth,

Please accept my apologies for not getting back to you sooner. As I've mentioned, your book has passed second reading, and awaits the final step of review by [Senior Editors]. I've mentioned this to both of them on a number of occasions, but my timing has been consistently bad. They were always in the middle of project deadlines when I made my request. Unfortunately, it gets worse, but I'm working at a happy ending. After the first of your recent emails, I attempted to locate your ms. [Senior Editor] thought it was in [Senior Editor's] office, and vice-versa. I spent about five hours looking in both offices with no luck. So I humbly and with great apology, request that you send another copy. I will discuss with [Senior Editors] the fact that you have been waiting with saint-like patience since 2000, and will hound them until I get a commitment on when one of them will be able to review your book.

With extreme gratitude,

[Submissions Editor]

[Replacement manuscript sent 7 November 2009. Postage cost \$67AU this time, a mere \$17 increase in the past decade.]

18 January 2010

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi - did the replacement manuscript arrive?

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Yes!

6 March 2010

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi. Is there any tentative probable date for review of this ms?

[No reply]

17 March 2010

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi [Submissions Editor] - I'm afraid I might have missed any reply to this email. I normally wouldn't requery so soon, but the last time I didn't receive a reply the manuscript had gone MIA. Is "Medair" still with [Glacier]?

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Hi Ms Hoth,

In our last instalment, the big office move had occurred. [Senior Editor's] new office is a lot smaller, a lot of manuscripts are not unpacked, and will not be until places to put them are determined. The reader who passed your book filled [Senior Editor] in with some details about your book, and [Senior Editor] agrees that she wants to take a look. I truly feel terrible about the wait we're putting you through. Please email me in two weeks, if no unpacking has occurred, I will root through the boxes and find it for [Senior Editor].

31 March 2010

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi [Submissions Editor] - a two week reminder as requested (one day early as sending such emails on April Fool's Day strikes me as either inauspicious or perhaps too apposite).

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Hi

Ms

Hosth,

Located and put on [Senior Editor's] desk with a reminder. I know she's deeply busy right now, but it is a move forward. I would suggest getting back to me in a month. Thank you for your saint-like patience.

5 May 2010

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi [Submissions Editor] – checking back in again.

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

I know she has a number of books in production that she's reading right now, but I'll talk to her later today for an estimate.

24 May 2010

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi [Submissions Editor] – just checking in again. I'll be bugging you a lot more than usual this year since we'll hit the full ten-year mark in October and I've promised myself to try and get this submission cleared up before then.

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

Hi – will be out of the office until next week. Please bug me again after the 7th? Thanks!

8 June 2010

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi [Submissions Editor] – checking in again (plus new email address).

11 June 2010

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi [Submissions Editor] – re-sending in case this didn't go through. Will try from the old address next month if it looks like this address has been vanquished by the spam filters.

18 June 2010

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

It's being looked at this week.

1 July 2010

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi [Submissions Editor] - just this month's pester.

1 August 2010

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi [Submissions Editor] - just this month's pester.

4 August 2010

Email from Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications to Me.

[Senior Editor] gave your book to our managing editor to read a while ago. I just checked to see if he had been able to look yet, and he hadn't, but will soon.

4 October 2010

Email from Me to Submissions Editor, Glacier Publications.

Hi [Submissions Editor]

Ten years ago today I first sent Medair off to [Glacier]. Back when we hit the five year mark, I joked about trying for ten, but I never imagined we would reach this point. I find I lack the intestinal fortitude to push on for twenty.

Please mark this submission as withdrawn.

Thank you for replying to my endless number of queries over the years, and for passing the manuscript up in the first place - whatever else, I appreciated the compliment!

Yrs

Andrea K Hosth

These are around two-thirds of the emails sent to and from 'Glacier' over the decade of this submission, but the rest are a repetitive "Is it still there?" followed by "Yes" and so have been culled.

During the ten years while this manuscript was in (exclusive) submission I wrote other books which I submitted to other publishers, and sporadically queried agents. I spent a year amusing myself with a fiction blog, played three different MMO's, worked my day job, moved house a lot, and came up with many theories as to why it would take ten years to deal with one manuscript.

Although it did occur to me that this was some bizarre form of "Publisher's Chicken", and the submissions editor just wanted to see how long it

would take until I blinked, the more mundane and probable explanation is that publishers are very very (very!) busy people, and slush pile manuscripts are always the lowest of low priorities. It doesn't seem likely that mine was the only ms which made it past the first and second readers at 'Glacier' during the last decade, and I suspect that mine kept drifting to the bottom of the pile because it was overlong for a debut novel or perhaps was passed up with a note along the lines of "Will require some work to publish, but may be worth it" – or, worse, "Won't make money, but I liked it".

It constantly surprises me, when I read back over these emails, that I lasted so long. I doubt I would have if not for an earlier manuscript which spent two and a half years at a different publisher (until I withdrew it). That editor would never even answer queries so I had the greatest difficulty determining whether it was still with them. By contrast Glacier's submissions editor was almost always prompt answering my emails, and the content of his feedback was more than positive. And I'd learned from the earlier submission that no matter how many years they keep it, you don't gain anything by withdrawing it.

Though I must say I could have done without the email which began 'Congratulations of a sort' – there is only one kind of email beginning with 'congratulations' that a submissions editor should send to a slush pile author, and that was not it.

There is an essential powerlessness in the slush pile – you either wait, or you withdraw. [Indeed, there's a large portion of powerlessness served up to published authors as well, who are rarely given any say on questions of covers, let alone DRM.] When the manuscript went missing nearly nine years in, I considered simply letting the whole thing go, but figured that the second chunk of postage was not too great a cost, since the senior editors would surely be embarrassed at having lost it after such a long delay, and want to get the replacement off their desks as quickly as possible.

That didn't happen.

This page is a long-winded explanation of why I decided to self-publish. 'Glacier' wasn't the only reason: in some fifteen years of submissions the focus/style/quality of my novels evidently never passed the test with any publisher or agent. But they were the stories I wanted to tell. The ten-year mark on "Medair" did me the favour of forcing me to seriously consider what I wanted from my writing, and look at the other options which had opened in the decade since I mailed off that chunk of paper.

Self-publishing is not an ideal route for gaining readers. While it does mean you can have

input on the covers, and choose not to inflict DRM on the ebook versions, without the experience and connections of a publisher there is every likelihood of only selling copies to obliging friends and relatives. I don't recommend it as a path for anyone to rush down: having a talented agent and a well-established publisher is by far the better option for almost every author, and there is a lot of (non-writing) work and costs involved with self-publishing. And a good deal of automatic disdain from readers who state openly that they'd never read a self-published novel.

However, for all the massive advantages of gaining an agent/publisher, the submission process comes with not inconsiderable negatives - frankly, 'Glacier' made me feel like dirt and I don't want to go back to that. Self-publishing gave me my books on my shelves, and readers have a far better chance of discovering my stories now than they did when they were still buried on my hard drive. That makes me happy.

[That Medair went on to be short-listed for the 2010 Aurealis Awards of course makes me even happier.]





SEDUCTION AND PRODUCTION: HOW TO BECOME A PULP HACK IN TWENTY-FIVE EASY STEPS! BY JASON S. RIDLER

“Quantity is a kind of quality.” Soviet Proverb.

“Communism, like any other revealed religion, is largely made up of prophecies.”
H. L. Mencken

Lynda asked me to talk about my experience with self-publishing ebooks. I’ve tried hard to find something relevant and different to share. Most self-publishing advice is on how to maximize sales, usually via personal experience (since getting “numbers” on other people is tricky). Some advice is on the act of writing, but it’s skewed toward young writers who may need inspiration and, sadly, a lot of it comes off as self-help treacle (and since most self-help books prey on the desperate rather offer useful advice to stop being desperate, I’m not keen on this trend). But

most is on the biz.

I guess this is normal. A self-published writer is both the creator of the art and the business that sells the art: a new addition for most writers. So, most of the new dialog is on tricks and tips from promotion to production and 1001 other ways to maximize your numbers.

What I’d like to focus on is murkier territory. It’s about numbers, too. About how they can obscure as well as clarify, and impact the relationship between expectations, efforts, and the production of art. And, sadly, I’ll be using the personal essay, too, since my data is the only kind I can verify. But this will be a little bit different than the usual tale of getting the hang of ebooks. I hope so, anyway. Much of the self-publishing dialog is positivist (like most self-help stuff, you never go hungry selling optimism). But there’s also a flipside.

In my case, it was when the daydream of success and the hype about the ebook “revolution” ruined the joy of making fiction.

But, if you would prefer to read my list of all the contradictory publishing advice I’ve seen over the past three years, feel free to scroll down to the end of the essay. If not, read on.

YOU, TOO, MIGHT BE A MILLIONAIRE WRITER (MAYBE, I MEAN, IT COULD HAPPEN)!*

(*Note: I never actually said you would be a millionaire, and in fact made claims to the contrary beneath my inspiring remarks, so remember, all proclamations are puffery and there is no recipe for success, and since I told you this even while I was inspiring you to follow your dreams, don’t come crying to me when my advice doesn’t make you crazy-rich, because, after all, I never said it would, and, by the way, NO REFUNDS!)

In 2010-2011, I read a lot of articles and posts about ebooks. Amanda Hocking was fast-tracking to be a millionaire. John Locke was selling better than mainstream authors with big names and advances. Joe Konrath left traditional publishing to survive and then thrive on self-pubs alone. I read posts from friends and colleagues about their own successes. Some were making good money, others bar money. Not much was said about the fiction, but a lot was said about the numbers. Fine. We all want to make dough and be read. Cool beans.

So, I thought I would give ebooks a shot. Unlike a lot of self-published authors, I wasn’t a complete novice. I’d spent ten years writing and publishing short fiction, as well as academic work and popular non-fiction. I’d paid a lot of dues, learned a lot about creating stories, worked hard. I switched to writing novels fast and furiously in 2009, when ebooks started to catch fire. Thrillers seemed to be doing well. The audience wanted fast-paced novels, usually from an ongoing series. So, I took my punk rock thriller set in the world of pro wrestling (box office gold!), yanked it off the slush pile, and got it pretty and published and promoted as an ebook in 2011. I even wrote two more books in the series, as well as releasing a short story collection.

I told myself this was an experiment. I told myself that Hocking was an innovator at the cusp of a changing business, and not a model; that Konrath had years of traditional publishing momentum and fans to follow him; that Locke, for all his success, seemed to be writing pretty awful-sounding books I would not want to emulate in any way. I was doing this

experiment to learn. I’d try and sell as much as I could, but I wouldn’t get hung up if I wasn’t a millionaire in a year.

It didn’t work. Six months later, I was depressed about sales, lack of attention, failed marketing efforts, etc. I questioned the quality of my work, my methods, and what was wanted in the marketplace. Most of all, a part of me thought I’d failed because I wasn’t the next Hocking, Konrath, or Locke (despite the fact that I was a new novelist who wrote a pretty off-kilter thriller). It probably didn’t help that I had ten years of short-fiction “success” behind me, or that I was suffering some fatigue in the void after grad school, and a bunch of other junk.

With that cocktail of hang-ups, a poisoned seed rooted within my thinking. There was an ebook meme going around at that time: it’s the glorious revival of the pulp days of yore! The more novels you had out, the more chances you had to sell (see that Soviet proverb again). I became obsessed with production, which, for a recovering workaholic, is a slippery slope.

During my decade of short fiction, I became invested with the idea of “fast” writing, a school of thought that emphasizes quick completion of stories (usually one a week instead of a month or longer) as a means to develop your voice and get closer to the subconscious level of stories (Ray Bradbury is our godking). I consider myself a “fast writer”, with the caveat that I believe revisions are helpful; some “fast” writers loath revisions, and I wish many would change their minds. Nonetheless, I took the same approach when I started writing novels in 2009. But when ebooks boomed, I pushed myself harder. Instead of two novels a year, I’d write four, and planned on more. I constructed complex schedules for producing novel after novel, releasing them in short intervals: basically, making art on a treadmill. I would swarm the marketplace with my talent, see what survived, and soon receive fame, glory, and kudos made of cash.

I also forgot that, when I became a “fast” writer, I pushed myself to keep getting faster and faster until I tipped from learning, working and improving and nose-dived into a case of burnout that would mirror my attempts with novels. As they say, the most seductive liar of all is memory.

Now, I love the books I wrote during that time, and I think my heart was in the right place with all of them, but when I was done, the poisoned seed sprouted another idea. I’d only be “successful” (read “super-ass rich”) if I kept doing this regimen . . . forever.

But, after gunning it for four novels, I was

spent. The zest, the mojo, the kwan that I like to think I bring to the table, was dry. But I couldn't rest. In this brave new pulp world, that would be failing. Bramble thoughts bloomed hard and fast: "Well, you can't just wait until you're mana is back up, hero, you have to keep pushing, because that's how you succeed, and that narrow window before EVERYONE is writing ebooks is closing, so every minute other work is crowding you out, every minute you are not making new art and slapping it out there increases your obscurity, so you must become a hack to make it, writing shit you don't care about, doing it with zero enthusiasm; just get it done, just write junk and swamp everyone with garbage that will sell ... now get back to the computer, motherfucker, because you're slacking off!"

That voice was full of pure, 110%, Grade-A skunk shit. Yet, it was compelling. Nothing left in the tank, I pushed on. I started constructing a tawdry thriller series that I thought had much more marketability, full of sex and violence and designed to be written at an insane clip, a premise fit for a meth-fuelled production schedule ...

And I stopped cold. Just stabbed the breaks. Because somewhere down the road, at the corner of best intentions and secret desires, I'd fucked up. I didn't want to be a hack. For me, a hack was someone who wrote without enthusiasm, without trying to do their best work. Someone who only cared about the numbers, the metrics, the quantity, and some kind of fame or payday. Quality and writing the stories I was driven to tell had blurred out of the picture. Even if I was writing commercial fiction (which is most of what I do), full of action and adventure and, indeed, sex and violence, I had strived in my way to write about the "the human heart at war with itself." Writing stories only I could write had been my M.O.

But every idea I now had was drained of color, bled of joy. In my mind, I was writing stories to please everyone instead of finding the right way to create stories that I loved for as big an audience as I could steal. Believe it or not, those are different objectives. It was time to stop and rethink what the hell I was doing.

For six months, I untangled this messy thinking in my head. A mess rooted in poor management of expectations, of only listening to the advice that would punish me the most, of failing to see other avenues to take in art and business. Of dreaming about numbers, not art; quantity, not quality. So, I changed strategies.

The creative half of my life was exhausted, and needed mending and nourishment, from video games to comic books to Henry Miller's insane and inspirational ramblings on writing ("Why do lovely

faces haunt us so? Do extraordinary flowers have evil roots?"). I wrote "free verse" inspired by Japanese poetry and turned some of them into flash fiction. I wrote some of my best short stories yet. And I spent a lot of time thinking about what kind of novel I'd love to write. Not what would be most successful. That's fine, too. But not what I needed right then.

"My only other piece of advice would be this: Don't keep on trying to sell a book that no one wants, It doesn't matter how brilliant you might think it is, if it's not selling, put it away and write something else. And something else after that. I'm not saying give up after one or two rejections, but if, say ten agents and/or publishers (who you've carefully researched and who are currently representing/publishing the same type of book as the one you are selling) have passed outright on your project, it's time to move on."

Christa Faust

So I wrote a "monkey's paw" coming-of-age fantasy story about three kids in a punk band. It was an utter joy. It will likely never see the light of day. But sweet god, it was refreshing to write something without thinking how it fit in a production schedule, or if it should be a series, or if I had too much or too little genre elements to market it to X demographic, etc. The funny thing, though, was when I was done with that, I didn't mind thinking about commercial fiction again. I just had a rule: I had to love the idea. If I didn't get up each morning and want to drown myself in the story, then fuck it. I would explore until I did find a story that kicked out the jams in my skull. And that led to writing a book that I have high hopes for, one that was a joy to write and that may have a commercial payday. We'll see.

I also got re-jazzed about ebooks and released **BLOOD AND SAWDUST** (“Fight Club with a fat vampire!”) and began a more consistent effort at promoting it. It found a larger audience, likely because it fit the market better than my previous effort (though I still love my wrestling thriller). I’m debating on what to do next in the ebook space. But I’m not beating myself up about it. Life is tough enough without giving yourself a heartpunch for trying, falling, and picking your ass up.

I’ve been out of the doom and gloom for a year or so, just as the tides change again. Now, Hocking has a major publishing deal alongside her self-published empire. Locke’s success was tainted when it was discovered the majority of his positive reviews were bullshit, bought and paid for so that he could hijack Amazon’s algorithm for promoting successful work; thus garnering sales based on lies. Konrath joined Amazon’s new publishing arm while continuing his own self-pub stuff.

Hybrid careers are growing, including my own. I’m finding great opportunities in and outside the ebook boom. I get small dollops of fan mail and requests for a **BLOOD AND SAWDUST** sequel. I’ll do more ebooks, sure, but I also have a terrific agent and plan on selling via the traditional routes as well. I have historical projects that are ready to fly, both popular and academic. I still write fast, but I have healthier targets and a better gauge of when to pull back and relax (though my wife would disagree!). I still love short fiction and work on it whenever I can. I’ve had a blast writing novels again, and it’s coming through in the work. Hell, I might even warp that tawdry ebook series into something spectacular in the near abroad!

Instead of charging through a revolution, it seems I’m better equipped for evolution: because evolution favors those that can change to survive and then prosper in new environments for the long haul. I was too narrowly focused on production as a means of ebook success during what folks thought of as a “short window” to get rich quick, but that led to a creative dead end.

While there is lots of advice about planning your work schedule, on writing fast, even on the psychology and strategy of turning dreams into goals (ugh), experience is the best teacher. I learned a lot from publishing ebooks, I’m better for it, and resist hype. I’ll do what I do best. Write about all the crazy stuff I love, do it to the best of my ability and get better each time, all the while selling as much as I can without turning into a complete marketing shithook. Seems a good approach for now, anyway.

Shit. Was this actually inspiration in disguise?

And Now, Doc Ridler’s **25 Subjective Truths and Honest Lies about Publishing that Will Never Change, Until they Do!**

1. Writing is hard, except when it isn’t
2. It’s who you know, except when it isn’t
3. Talent rises to the top, no matter the odds!
4. Connections make you successful, no matter the odds!
5. Not giving a damn about the market always makes great art
6. Ignoring what readers like is a recipe for obscurity
7. The ebook boom is not a revolution, but since I don’t know what it is yet, I use the term “revolution.” A lot.
8. Revisions are for suckers
9. Most crap writing is a first draft + spellcheck
10. Hackwork is whatever I don’t like, AKA: what I hate about myself or my own work
11. The only writers who don’t daydream of being rich are liars or communists
12. Some liars and communists are rich writers!
13. Everyone wants literary respect, except weirdos and loners
14. Some weirdos and loners get crazy literary respect!
15. I have better ideas about art and design than professionals; now enjoy my photo-shopped cover of boobs and guns!

16. Study the business of writing more than the art, but always say you do it for the art!
17. Only your best work will get published!
18. Most of what gets published is crap!
19. I think for myself whenever a famous or self-published author tells me it's okay to do so.
20. You have total control of your career, so if your ebook sell peanuts it's because you suck, or you're a genius no one understands. Probably neither, but maybe not.
21. Ebooks are forever, unless you read your EULA and realize you're renting them!
22. Anything John Scalzi, Neil Gaiman or Joe Konrath says is true, especially if you're John Scalzi, Neil Gaiman or Joe Konrath
23. Always sign with a big publisher because they are looking out for you! Unless they lie, in which case they are evil!
24. Lying to get what you want never hurt anyone, and that's why sock puppet reviews for self-published books are awesome and life affirming and not evil!
25. Buy BLOOD AND SAWDUST if you enjoyed this article! And even if you didn't!

<http://www.amazon.com/Blood-and-Sawdust-ebook/dp/B009YNXP9W>





INSTANT FANZINE

COMPILED BY JAMES BACON

Lauren Beukes

What is the one piece of advice you would give an aspiring writer about the business side of writing?

Have reasonable expectations and don't rush into anything, whether it's sending out your manuscript before it's ready or signing a deal before you've done your homework.

What was the most surprising thing that you learned about the business side of writing?

What, no instant overnight success? It takes

a lot of patience and determination, dealing with rejection and rolling with the gut punches.

What the weirdest experience with a reader?

The woman who said to me, "I didn't really like your book, but can you help me publish mine?" Violating Lauren's Law #1: Be cheeky, but don't be an ass-hat.

What's your best reader experience and why?

Getting research advice on Twitter on unGoogle-able info, like "what's the best place to

dump a body in Johannesburg.” The most popular answer was Troyeville. Which fills me with equal parts worry and delight in my Twitter followers. Also: running Litmash as part of the Twitter fiction festival and seeing the amazing stories people came up that were way more clever and inventive than mine.

What’s the coolest thing you’ve gotten related to your works.?

A surprise faux sloth scarf my friends Rhoda Rutherford and Munki Groenewald made for me just before I flew off to the Arthur C Clarke Award in London. It was cute and fluffy and a little bit creepy. After *Zoo City* won, to celebrate, we raffled another one off to raise money for an amazing South African charity, Khulisa, that works with offenders and ex-offenders.

What was the worst thing an editor ever said or did to you and why?

“The writing reminds us of Bret Easton Ellis at his best, but we still don’t want it” It was too killing. There was also the agent who told me my novel was “like sex on a skateboard”. Apparently a bad thing.

What do you make of conventions and that lot (that’d be us, you know)?

I love cons, I love meeting other authors and going all fangirl, I love meeting readers, I love the programming which is often more challenging and interesting and plain weird than literary festivals, I love hanging out at the bar, I love the cosplay and sense of community of smart, interesting geeky people. It’s awesome.

What can comics achieve that books cannot?

It probably lends itself to going a lot weirder. The medium is necessarily tighter. You have to keep it snappy and moving (unless you’re Daniel Clowes or Charles Burns or Adrian Tomine). You can rely on the art to fill in the gaps in interesting

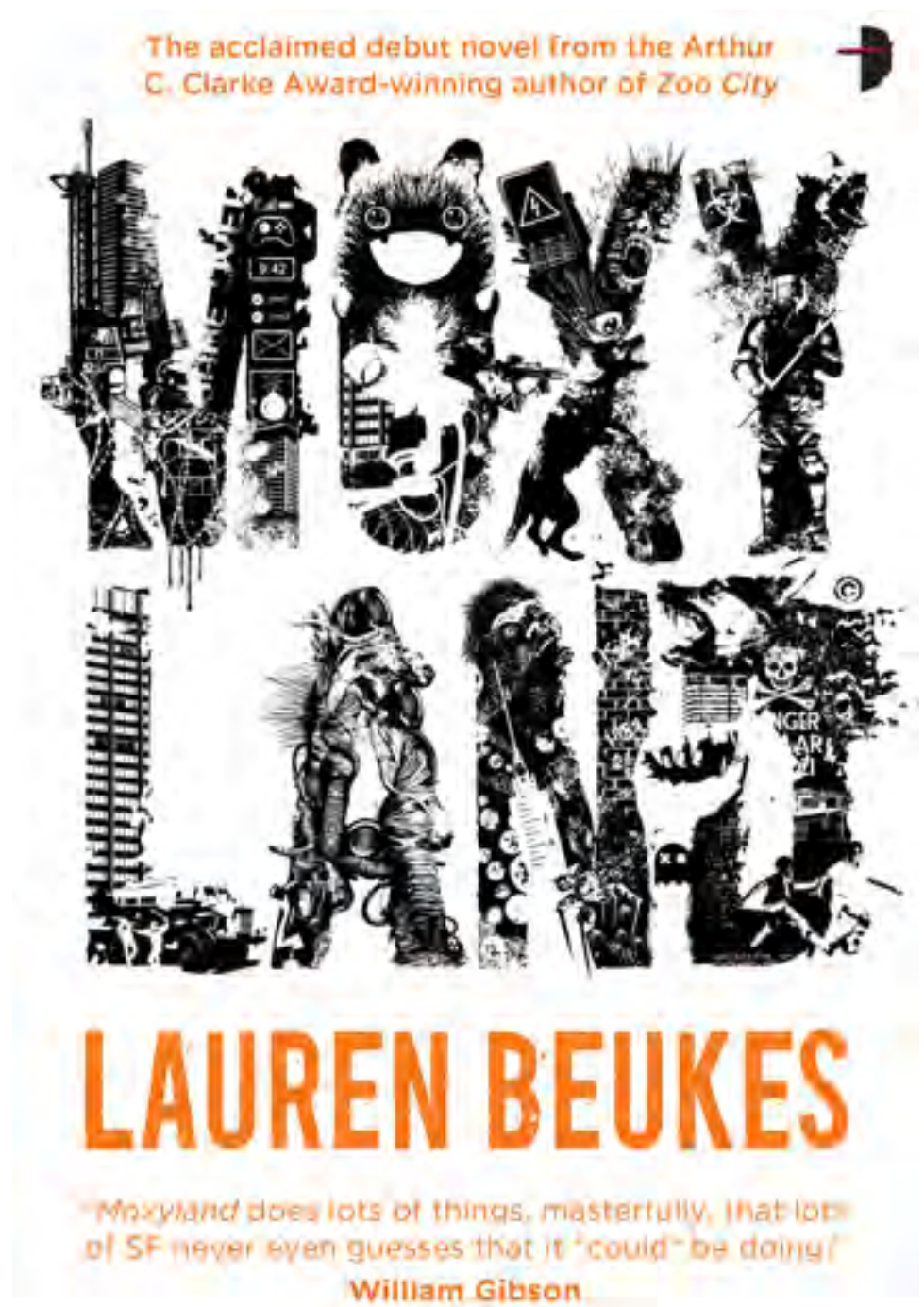
ways, to create the subtext.

Is there much difference between a comic script and a book manuscript?

Yep. I can’t do lots of dialogue, which physically hurts me. I had to learn to keep dialogue punchy, learn how panel layout can direct the pace and impact and still write long beautiful descriptions that Inaki Miranda could then take and interpret on the page in a way that was way cooler than I’d imagined. It’s about collaboration and that’s tremendously exciting.

Do you have a vision of your readers - who are they?

I write for myself – a story I’d like to read



and write. I imagine my readers are people like me in some way. People who want to read a surprising and inventive story that is challenging and hopefully says something about who we are in the world.

Who do you hate to be compared to and why?

So far no-one, but it does bug me when my characters are automatically compared to Liesbeth Salander as if she is the only model for a flawed heroine.

What was the most enjoyable research you have undertaken for a book?

I try to do a research trip to really get a feel for the setting. For *Zoo City*, that meant getting a reading from a sangoma consulting with the spirits of my ancestors, going to a refugee shelter in a church, walking round the supposedly big bad inner city suburb of Hillbrow talking to people. For *The Shining Girls*, it meant going on a murder playdate with my friend and her two year old daughter who were playing tour guide, having bacon bourbon cocktails with a police detective and going through old evidence boxes and exploring the creeeeeepy maintenance corridors of the Congress Hotel with a young historian/ghost tour guide. For *Broken Monsters* (the one I'm working on at the moment) it meant going into some very interesting places in Detroit.

What are the major pitfalls new writers should be aware of in terms of dealing with publishers, agents, and editors?

A book deal is probably not going to change your life. You're still going to have to work your butt off and more so on the marketing and publicity. You're going to have to put in a lot of effort. Build relationships. Learn to handle rejection. Keep in mind that people who give you editorial direction are trying to help you shape the best possible book you can. Don't be precious about your beloved mindbabies.

Do you think it's important for aspiring writers to attend conventions? Why or why not?

From my personal experience I'd say it's really important. You can connect with your readers and

also get a chance to hang out with your peers, kvetch about the business, share frustrations and successes and learn from how other people do things, and make great contacts. I got my first comics writing gig because I was hanging out at the bar with comics writers.

Why do you think that science fiction, fantasy, and horror genres have developed a culture of fanzines, conventions, blogs, community etc. more than any other genre?

I'd guess that SFFH fans are very passionate and very social around their passion. They want to share the goodness.

Have you found support within the writing community of fantasy, sf, and horror? If so, how do you think this differs from other genres of writing such as literary, crime, etc.?

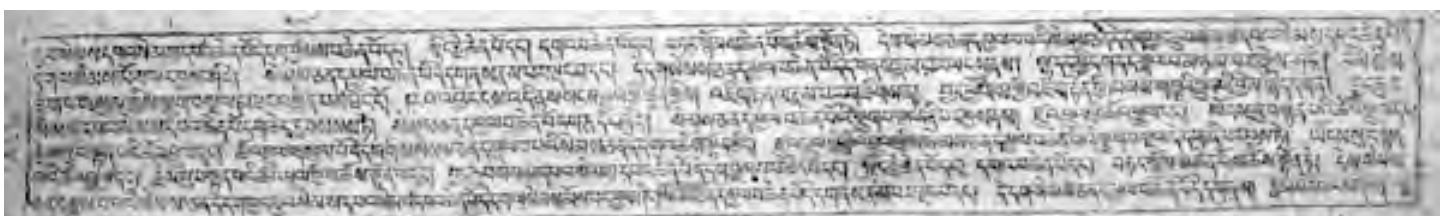
Definitely. And I don't really know. I think there are outspoken fans in a lot of genres.

What do you think of writing workshops?

Anything that can get you writing, get you to finish your stories or make you more serious about your work is a good thing. Maybe you get a crappy teacher, but can take something from how someone else in the workshop handled a scene or a bit of dialogue. But you have to be able to handle constructive criticism.

What is the hardest moment you've had in dealing with the public (signings where no one shows up, etc.)?

Ooof. Okay. *Moxyland* had just come out and no-one had even heard of it yet. I was at a big book trade fair in Cape Town where the focus was on discount books rather than writers. To do a reading, you sort of stood on the corner of your publisher's stand in a very big, very noisy convention centre, and shouted at the passers-by who weren't remotely interested. I gamely read one and a half pages to two of my friends and my husband as we all died excruciating deaths inside and then quickly skipped to the end.



Gail Carriger

What is the one piece of advice you would give an aspiring writer about the business side of writing?

Honestly and rather crudely? 1. Sit your arse in that chair and write. 2. When you're done writing only then do you get to edit. 3. Give it to three highly critical people to attack with red pens. 4. Fix it and submit it. 5. Let it go, sit your arse back down and write something else as different from the first as possible. 6. Wash and repeat.

What was the most surprising thing that you learned about the business side of writing?

Not a lot has surprised me, I eased into the industry slowly and I did my homework. I attended every panel and visited every website I could on how to get published in the SF/F genre and what it was like. I also hit most publishing problems I could in a rather convenient sideways manner through a stint in educational print in Australia. Fifteen years later, I still made some mistakes when the Call came, but fewer than most I hope.

What the weirdest experience with a reader?

I once met a young lady who actually couldn't speak when she was in my company. I rather ran out of conversational options at that juncture.

What's your best reader experience and why?

I've had some amazing letters from people in extraordinary situations ~ from donating bone marrow to trapped in riots in foreign cities. Each one dropped me a line to say the book made her laugh, or cheered her up, or kept her sane under trying circumstances. As a writer that's the most wonderful feeling.

What's the coolest thing you've gotten related to your works?

People give me remarkable handmade gifts, I love my hand painted octopus handkerchief, but it's challenging to pick a favorite.

What was the worst thing an editor ever said or did to you and why?

I've had some pretty brutal rewrites, but I guess the worst were those decades collecting a long



stream of no thank yous.

What do you make of conventions and that lot (that'd be us, you know)?

I love them.

Do you have a vision of your readers - who are they?

Well I like to say my readers are mostly outrageous ladies and kindly gentlemen.

Who do you hate to be compared to and why?

Anything wherein vampires sparkle for some other reason than because they are dripping in diamonds.

What was the most enjoyable research you have undertaken for a book?

Food, anything related to food makes me happy. I once cooked an entirely Victorian meal just to see if I could and what it would taste like.

What are the major pitfalls new writers should be aware of in terms of dealing with publishers, agents, and editors?

If you want to publish the old fashioned route? Money flows to the author. If someone wants you to pay them, be suspicious.

Do you think it's important for aspiring

writers to attend conventions? Why or why not?

Being involved in the community of a genre (mystery, romance or SF/F) can give aspiring writers a chance to avoid common pitfalls and debut mistakes. Conventions taught me everything from how to write a query letter to how to relate to agents and editors. They also gave an opportunity to observe author behavior and fan interaction on panels and at parties. In other words, I learned the type of author I wanted to be as a public figure, as well as a writer.

Why do you think that science fiction, fantasy, and horror genres have developed a culture of fanzines, conventions, blogs, community etc. more than any other genre?

I don't know. Perhaps it has something to do with being on the fringes of society.

Have you found support within the writing community of fantasy, sf, and horror? If so, how do you think this differs from other genres of writing such as literary, crime, etc.?

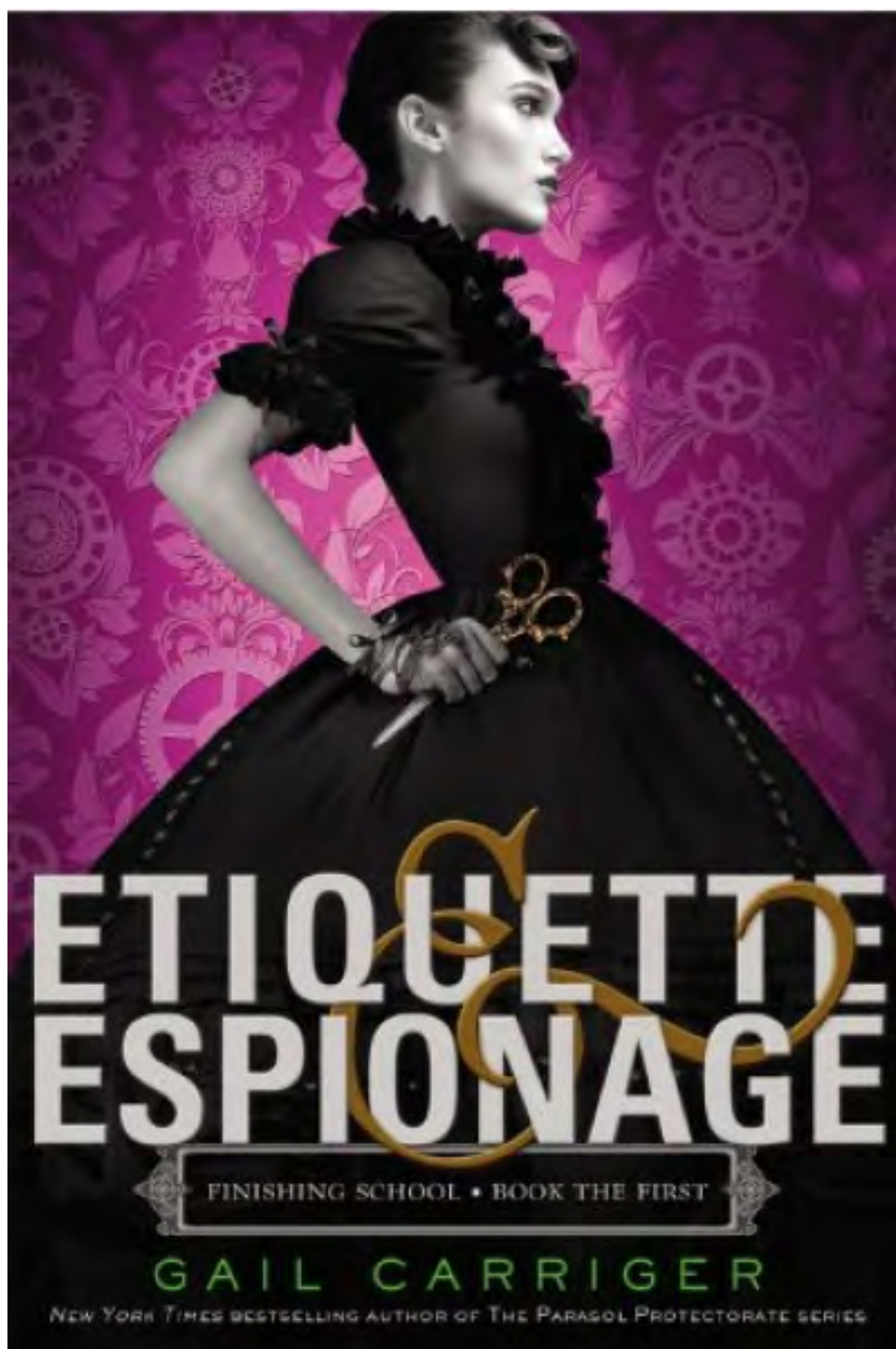
Conventions have given me author friends. Writing is very isolating and it is invaluable to have other authors to talk to, both about the craft and about the business. Many of these friends are on the same career path as me, so we can compare contract points, discuss our respective fan experiences, and generally help each other out. Authors outside of genre and convention circuits aren't always so lucky.

What do you think of writing workshops?

I haven't had much experience with them, I'm afraid.

What is the hardest moment you've had in dealing with the public (signings where no one shows up, etc.)?

I've had a few signings where no one showed up, and a few events where they were only a few people there. I try to make my own fun, after all, if one is stranded in a bookstore there is always reading...



Seanan McGuire

What is the one piece of advice you would give an aspiring writer about the business side of writing?

Read the submission guidelines. Read them carefully. Read them for content, not just for what you think they're saying. Read every word. And then meet them. Don't think you're so awesome that you can submit in the wrong font, or the wrong format, or send fantasy to a market that only takes science fiction. Those guidelines are there partially to make sure you can follow instructions and take direction. You need to follow them.

What was the most surprising thing that you learned about the business side of writing?

All writing income is subject to flat tax, and you need to be really, really careful about what you spend, because your tax bill is going to be harsher than you ever imagined it would be. They have not as yet named a highway after me. I'm starting to want one.

What the weirdest experience with a reader?

I had someone come up to me and go 'hey, do you know _____?' where _____ was someone who used to beat the shit out of me in high school. I said 'yes' and then looked at them blankly until they went away. I didn't know what else to do!

What's your best reader experience and why?

There are too many to count.

What's the coolest thing you've gotten related to your works.?

My Campbell Award.

What was the worst thing an editor ever said or did to you and why?

Usually, it has to do with timing. 'Hey, can you turn this copyedit around in four days' is a sentence that sort of makes me want to vomit, especially since I still work a day job!

What do you make of conventions and that lot (that'd be us, you know)?

I've been going to conventions since I was fourteen; I am a part of 'that lot.' Conventions are home. 'That lot' is my family. My big, sometimes distressing family that contains a lot of cousins I don't know, but still.

Do you have a vision of your readers - who are they?

They are wonderful people with a huge capacity for kindness and joy. They also like talking mice more than is strictly healthy.



Who do you hate to be compared to and why?

Anyone. I am me. I am not going to fit the hyperspace model you've constructed if you based it off your understanding of somebody else. I am nobody but myself, and I have never existed before, and I will never exist again.

What was the most enjoyable research you have undertaken for a book?

I watched all seven seasons of *The West Wing* to get my feeling for writing political dialog down. Oh, the agony.

What are the major pitfalls new writers should be aware of in terms of dealing with publishers, agents, and editors?

Just...don't be too eager. Get an agent you trust, and listen to them. Don't let anyone push you into anything that makes you uncomfortable. At the end of the day, no one is going to take care of your career with more passion than you are. Sometimes passion can blind us to reality. Make sure you have people around who will be honest with you.

Do you think it's important for aspiring writers to attend conventions? Why or why not?

I think it depends entirely on the writer. If you don't do well in crowds, if you don't like talking to people, don't go. Bad impressions of us as people can unfortunately color the way that readers will think about our work.

Why do you think that science fiction, fantasy, and horror genres have developed a culture of fanzines, conventions, blogs, community etc. more than any other genre?

We were marginalized for a long time, and so we colonized the margins. Romance and mystery actually have those cultural standards, too; we're just so wrapped up in our own beehive of traditions that we haven't checked to see what they're all doing.

Have you found support within the writing community of fantasy, sf, and horror? If so, how do you think this differs from other genres of writing such as literary, crime, etc.?

You know, I don't know? I haven't dealt with any of those other genres in that way.

What do you think of writing workshops?

I've never attended one, but I know a lot of people who've found them very helpful.

What is the hardest moment you've had in dealing with the public (signings where no one shows up, etc.)?

I try to be positive all the time, but I have some medical issues that I'm dealing with. A few years ago, I was trying to get from a panel to the bathroom to take my painkillers and cry until the hurting stopped, and someone literally followed me into the stall. That was...difficult, to say the least.



Robin Hobb

What is the one piece of advice you would give an aspiring writer about the business side of writing?

Begin as you mean to go on. Be a professional from the very first time you submit a piece of writing. That means your submission is the very best you can make it, that you keep a record of that submission, that you know the name of the editor you are submitting it to and you feel that your submission is a good fit for that market.

What was the most surprising thing that you learned about the business side of writing?

That you ARE a business. If you get a check for a book or story, chances are you will owe some entity taxes on that money. You need to keep records of your expenses, and file your taxes on time, and know what deductions you can take. I have a business license on the wall of my office. Writing can be an art until you get paid for what you do. Then you are a business, with all that entails.

What the weirdest experience with a reader?

I think I've finally succeeded in suppressing that memory.

What's your best reader experience and why?

Oh, too many to list! An after bookstore signing in Paris, where I adjourned afterwards with a group of readers from a newsgroup that I'd corresponded with on the Internet, and we went to a café and drank coffee and talked. The one in Paris comes to mind, and another in Texas, exactly the same situation. The best is when you are all just people talking about books and every one is taking notes about what book they should buy next. It's the connection.

What's the coolest thing you've gotten related to your works?

Hm. Over the years, I've received many small and thoughtful gifts, some hand-made and absolutely unique. A little red shoe. A sculpture of the Fool. Recently, I found a little brass dragon perched on the iron fence around my back yard. No note, nothing, just a little dragon. He's on top of my computer tower now, next to some stuffed sand dragons that traveled her from Martinique and Alaska.

What was the worst thing an editor ever said or did to you and why?

You may have to censor this to publish it. It was early in my career and all the more shattering. Your protagonist sounds as if he would fuck a rubber ducky. I don't even have to look up that quote. Sigh. See, you just made me relive a trauma.

What do you make of conventions and that lot (that'd be us, you know)?

When I go as a writer, they are a LOT Of work. When I go as a reader, they are a lot of fun. Sometimes, you can wear both hats, and have a day of fun and a day of hard work. When I go as a writer, I want to be prepared. I think about the panels I'm going to be on, I try to research ahead of time, and when possible, converse with fellow panelists before the panel. I really hope that I say something that a listener will find useful or inspiring.

Do you have a vision of your readers - who are they?

I've met enough of them in person that actual faces come to mind now. I write something and I know that a certain fellow will get that joke, and that someone else will recognize a really obscure and oblique literary reference. There are all sorts of things that a writer hides in books for that three percent of the readers who will go, I saw what you just did! I know what that means in the greater scheme of this world!

Who do you hate to be compared to and why?

Can't say that any comparisons bother me.

What was the most enjoyable research you have undertaken for a book?

Oh, all the research is good. I don't think I'd be writing about something if I wasn't interested in it before I started on the book. The best is when you are researching one thing, and find a little thread of information, follow it, and suddenly know that it's going to be a major force in your next plot line. That's the best!

What are the major pitfalls new writers should be aware of in terms of dealing with publishers, agents, and editors?

There are so many scams out there that target people who desperately want to be published. I think a new writer should visit *Writer Beware!*,

read it thoroughly, and come back often in the first two years of being published. There is a saying Money should flow toward the writer. Whenever someone tells you the opposite, that you must pay your publisher or your editor or your agent, stop. Research the whole situation VERY carefully.

Do you think it's important for aspiring writers to attend conventions? Why or why not?

I think writers should go to conventions because they are fun. And you meet people who love books and love the genres. Do conventions advance your career? Even now, I'm not sure of that. Unless you are a total boor, I don't think conventions can harm your career. But if you are going to conventions more than you are writing, well, it's time to rethink that.

Why do you think that science fiction, fantasy, and horror genres have developed a culture of fanzines, conventions, blogs, community etc. more than any other genre?

I think we are more adventurous people. We want to get out and talk about these big ideas, and cosplay some of our dreams and find like-minded people.

Have you found support within the writing community of fantasy, sf, and horror? If so, how do you think this differs from other genres of writing such as literary, crime, etc.?

I don't think I can do a valid comparison as I've only ever been a member of the fantasy/sf community. What do you think of writing workshops?

What do you think of writing workshops?

I think they are very good for some writers, and a bit destructive to others. If you are going to use a workshop, make sure you are going into a genre tolerant workshop.

What is the hardest moment you've had in dealing with the public (signings where no one shows up, etc.)?

When I've taken on more than I can do, and I don't deliver what is expected of me. I think of a conference I went to in France. It was my third trip across the water in less than a month, and on the last day of the conference, I simply could not keep my eyes open or even make sense. I was sure I'd made a

luncheon date with a friend who didn't actually arrive until the next day. But I was positive I'd seen her and talked to her. And on my last panel, to my great shame, I was trying so hard to stay awake that I could not pay attention to what was being said, first in French and then by the translator whispering next to me. That was the worst.



Mike Carey

What is the one piece of advice you would give an aspiring writer about the business side of writing?

The business side as opposed to the creative side? I'd stress the importance of really good, really professional communications. Stay formal unless invited to be matey. Use spell and grammar checks. Include your contact information on EVERYTHING. Be courteous with follow-up phone calls after you've pitched, and sensitive about how much of an editor's time you take up if you meet them face-to-face (at a convention, say). Generally make sure that you pass the "not a complete pain the arse" test.

What was the most surprising thing that you learned about the business side of writing?

How much it depends on personal relationships. You work very closely with individual editors, and you work well with some of them, come to really like them, come to know what they expect and what their foibles are. Those relationships will to some extent define your career, or at least your trajectory. They make some things very easy to do, some things almost impossible - and if you're writing

for a living, sometimes you'll do the projects that are easy to set up simply because you've got to live. So editors shape you, no doubt about it.

What the weirdest experience with a reader?

I was propositioned once - that felt pretty weird. The line was "Well the books I want you to sign are up in my room." And wow, that's a really bad line!!!

What's your best reader experience and why?

It's always great when people say "I got into reading X through your books." Like the readers who got into *Sandman* all back-to-front by reading *Lucifer* first. Or read *All His Engines* and then went away and read all the *Hellblazer* trades. But to strike a more personal note, sometimes when I read my short story "Iphigenia in Aulis" aloud, people in the audience cry. It's an awesome (I mean literally, it awes me) experience to move people to tears with something you've written.

What's the coolest thing you've gotten related to your works.?

The Inkpot award! It's a lifetime achievement award that they give out at San Diego Comic-Con. I know lifetime achievement awards are really just awards for not having died yet, but this one is so fucking beautiful! And they gave it to me when I was doing a retrospective panel with Shelly Bond, in front of a roomful of people. It came out of nowhere, and it was the coolest moment ever.

What was the worst thing an editor ever said or did to you and why?

Worst thing an editor has said to me: "Plot line unclear, characters undefined". It was on a form rejection slip from the Isaac Asimov sci-fi magazine - there were various boxes to tick and those were the two that had been ticked. Ow. It was true, too, so that really hurt. Worst thing an editor has done to me is give out script samples to aspiring artists from which my contact info - address, phone number, email - had not been erased.

What do you like about comics that books cannot achieve?

The way words and pictures can strike off at oblique angles from each other, so you have two narrative threads that weave in and out of each other. No other art form quite does that. In cinema, sound



and image are more tightly welded together.

Is there much difference between writing comics and books?

Enormous, endless difference. Pamphlet comics come in pre-set sizes (22 or 22 pages per episode, usually) and the lead times are short. You pitch, you write, you polish, and bam! It's gone off to the artist. You live with a novel for up to a year, and you're working on it throughout that time, often not in a sequential, page-by-page way. You write chapter 1, then you jump forward to chapter 20, then you insert something new at chapter 6, and so on. You're constantly changing and tinkering and expanding and re-inventing. You have vertical freedom with a novel. With comics, you're sending off these little story telegrams. Once they're out in the world, there's nothing you can do to change them even if you want to. A good example of that - in *Lucifer*, the characters of Lilith and Fenris were both crucial to the climax of the story but we introduced them very late. With a novel, I would have gone back and seeded their stories in the early chapters, then made sure they were a presence throughout.

What do you make of conventions and that lot (that'd be us, you know)?

I was talking to Mike Choi about this at London Comic-Con last weekend. He was saying how much he loves conventions, but how he's always a little melancholy after he gets home from one. I have exactly the same experience. They're intense, they're fun, they go by in a blur - and then you come back down into normal life and you experience a sort of withdrawal.

Do you have a vision of your readers - who are they?

No, I really don't. Or at least, it's a very amorphous vision. I don't write to fit specific niches (well, apart from the thrillers I wrote as Adam Blake).

Who do you hate to be compared to and why?

Jim Butcher. But not because I don't like Jim Butcher. Just because I've come across that comparison, between my Felix Castor and his Harry Dresden, so many times.

What was the most enjoyable research you have undertaken for a book?

Going to New Orleans for Mardi Gras when I was writing *Voodoo Child*. Absolutely unforgettable!

It was the first full Mardi Gras after Katrina, and it was like some city-wide Bacchanalian orgy. I've never experienced anything like it.

What are the major pitfalls new writers should be aware of in terms of dealing with publishers, agents, and editors?

Well, being asked to sign away ancillary rights is probably the biggest. Sometimes you grit your teeth and do it, but you shouldn't ever do it by default. It's getting very common now for publishers to ask for a SHARE of rights, and I think that's fine. They'll also often want to be your foreign sales agents, and again I have no problem with that - they know their markets and they'll do a better job of that than most creators can for themselves. But a share of copyright? Hmm. It's a comic book model that's now finding its way into the mainstream, and it needs to be approached with caution. Don't sign away copyright unless you have to. In comics, to be blunt, you'll usually have to - even creator-ownership deals are usually partnership deals these days, with the copyright split or else with caveats built in that make it hard for you to take the property anywhere else. But in prose publishing, it's still the exception and you should look hard at the specific terms.

Do you think it's important for aspiring writers to attend conventions? Why or why not?

I think it's very useful. It gives you a sense of the inter-relationships between readers and writers, allows you to meet up with editors and agents, get advice on pitching and so on. It exposes you to a wealth of vicarious experience. Also it energises you creatively (once you're over that withdrawal).

Why do you think that science fiction, fantasy, and horror genres have developed a culture of fanzines, conventions, blogs, community etc. more than any other genre?

I think it's ALL genre fiction, isn't it? There are crime conventions and romance conventions, too, and I'd be willing to bet that there are Western conventions and historical fiction conventions. Genres attract dedicated fans who are very clear and very vocal about their tastes - and the other things flow from that.

Have you found support within the writing community of fantasy, sf, and horror? If so, how do you think this differs from other genres of writing such as literary, crime, etc.?

I've found lots of support, lots of interest and enthusiasm and a willingness to share ideas. But I have

nothing to compare it to, because I've never been part of any of those other communities.

What do you think of writing workshops?

It depends who's running them. They can be great, but I'd be wary of spending out a lot of money on them. A workshop can kickstart you, and it can sensitise you to some aspects of your own style and approach. Peer review is probably more valuable in the long run. I mean, being part of a writing group, reading out your stuff to them, getting critiqued - honing your craft.

What is the hardest moment you've had in dealing with the public (signings where no one shows up, etc.)?

Yeah, the dead signing is a bad one, certainly. Or the dead message board thread, where you show

up to do a live Q&A and there are no Qs. You've got to harden yourself to it. Nobody owes you anything, and if they do show up for you it's a gift and a courtesy and a great thing. Oh, and it's hard to swallow negative reviews that you don't feel you've earned. Your instinct is to jump in and correct errors of fact, or explain what you were trying to do. But you can't. I mean you can, but it depends on the context. You can't come barging into message board threads and try to throw your weight around, as I've seen some comics writers do. You have to let your books speak for themselves, or wait until someone puts the question to you directly.





CHINA MIÉVILLE OFFERS HINTS OF HIS SHELVED SWAMP THING PLANS BY RICH HANDLEY WITH INTRO FROM LYNDR A E. RUCKER

You may be thinking that the frustrations of the writing life go away once you've reached a certain level, but that really isn't the case. This happened back in 2010; here's China Miéville with his account of how after a great deal of work, his run on a new Swamp Thing comic was cancelled before it ever even saw the light of day. Thanks to Rich Handley for allowing us to reprint this excerpt from his site Roots of the Swamp Thing. Full article can be found here: <http://www.swampthingroots.com/news/06-03-10-china-mieville-hints-at-his-swamp-thing-run.html>

Miéville's diplomacy in his discussion of DC after such a disappointing cancellation and his perseverance with the medium obviously paid off; he is currently writing Dial H for Hero for DC.

- Lynda Rucker

I chatted with China Miéville about his canceled Swamp Thing run, and though understandably reticent to discuss what would have been so soon

after learning of DC's decision, Mr. Miéville did offer the following juicy tidbits:

"My feelings at the moment can doubtless be intuited, though I have nothing but gratitude and respect for the people I worked directly with at DC, who were consummately professional and helpful. Some vague stuff:

- 1) It was an 'epic' arc, in terms of scale and stakes.
- 2) It comprised 15 issues, plus perhaps between 1 and 3 'standalone' issues within the arc.
- 3) At least one issue would have been longer than the standard 22 pages.
- 4) Five issues have been entirely written (though they'd need some editing).
- 5) It involved a couple of relatively neglected canon characters.
- 6) It introduced one totally new character, and reimagined and dramatically expanded the importance of another, hitherto throwaway one.
- 7) It was (unsurprisingly, I suppose) pretty political.
- 8) It wasn't, however, entirely straightforwardly traditional 'green' politics, IMO.

9) It was conceived of, at least in part, as a respectful argument with some of Alan Moore's formulations.

10) I did some pictures of ST, including a sketch of what would have been the series' keystone image."

Such hints make it even more disappointing that DC would choose to bin an extended storyline from such a noted author. An epic arc is just the

jumpstart that Swamp Thing needs, and with an intended run of 15 to 18 issues, it sounds like Miéville had some big plans in store. And to think we missed out on a chance to read "a respectful argument with some of Alan Moore's formulations"... frustrating, isn't it?

That he managed to script the first five issues before the series was scrapped is maddening—perhaps, one day, those stories will come to light.





ON THE WRITING LIFE BY LYNDA E. RUCKER

(This is a revision of a blog post that originally appeared here: <http://lyndaerucker.wordpress.com/2013/01/13/on-the-writing-life/>)

When you are just a young thing, in years or ambition or both, you hear writers grousing cynically about the art, the craft, the life. You read interviews with them or you go to talks by them. If you are interested in writing science fiction or fantasy or horror you might go to a convention to see them, and here you will especially hear some horror stories because writers in what used to be called the old pulp fields are especially hard done by, or maybe not, maybe it only seems that way because that's the world I know best. I've heard horror stories from the world of lit fic, and that on top of that they lack what we who toil in the genre trenches enjoy in a true embarrassment of riches: a sense of community, camaraderie and friendship that's really without equal.

But writing is a crapshoot. To go back to the convention thing, at the very first convention I ever went to, which was the World Horror Convention in Eugene, Oregon in 1996, I saw a writer on one

panel urge aspiring writers to look into writing video games and I saw a writer on another panel argue with Clive Barker who was waxing eloquently about Art and stuff that, basically, it was all very well and good for him because he was Clive Barker but the rest of us have to eat, you know, and that means doing work-for-hire and writing media tie-ins and doing whatever we can do to keep the wolf from the door.

I found all of that a bit depressing. Because when you're starting out, you believe you're going to be Clive Barker. Well, okay, not Clive Barker exactly (he's very good but he was never my favorite writer) but whoever — that model that you have in your head of the brilliant successful writer whose career you want to emulate. You think you're going to be one of the exceptions. Of course later on what you often find out is that despite the brilliant string of novels and awards, that one writer (not Barker, who seems to do just fine, but lots of other writers) has actually been broke most of their life and teaching or stacking grocery store shelves or living off a spouse and/or all the spouses left and/or is an alcoholic/drug-addled mess so on and on, ad infinitum. After David

Foster Wallace's suicide I was shocked to learn that he taught creative writing, had a day job just like all the rest of us mugs because I guess even David Foster Wallace couldn't find a way to squeeze a living wage out of the stone that is the fiction writing life.

The point being I have a lot more sympathy for all the (okay, maybe kinda angry and bitter, but can you blame them?) writers who tried to tell all the young ones, gently or harshly, "It's not going to be exactly what you think. You can believe in Art all you want but can you keep believing in it when nobody else cares? You can't eat Art. You can't pay your rent with Art. And you may think none of that matters right now, but someday it will."

To be willing to sort
of die in order to
move the reader,
somehow. Even now
I'm scared about how
sappy this'll look in
print, saying this.
David Foster Wallace

It's not just about eating or putting a roof over your head though. It's also about the wisdom of repeatedly bashing your head through a wall. Now writing-wise, I've had a pretty good year as these things go, but there have been a lot of bad years in between. In fact, I even quit writing for a few years, or "quit writing," I should say, round about 2004/2005. I had a particularly bad and frustrating experience in the world of Big Publishing which in retrospect is really more of a run-of-the-mill major disappointment that doesn't hold a candle to some of the horror stories I've heard, but that combined with the fact that I just felt like I wasn't making headway and was losing track of what I loved about writing in the first place plus, well, a bunch of other stuff, put me on retreat. I went back to school and studied Old and Middle English and wrote a bunch of lit crit (oddly enough, writing lit crit made me a much better and leaner writer, partly because I had a terrific professor and thesis adviser)

and poked at stories in my spare time but for 3 or 4 years I really didn't do very much at all as far as fiction-writing goes.

I felt like I had become too focused on trying for extrinsic rewards, and for a writer, that way lies madness, because they are so fickle and so unpredictable and so unconnected really to how hard someone works or how good they are — and at that time, the extrinsic rewards were extraordinarily few and far between. I mean, patience, talent, persistence, writing good story after good story, all that stuff is needed. And if you have that stuff and if you keep sending your stuff out there (that last bit is key; it's amazing how many people fail at that final hurdle) you *will* get published in good places (anyone can just "get published": aspiring writers, I beg of you, this alone is not something to strive for. Aim to get published *somewhere good*) and you *will* get some recognition but there is so much luck involved along the way as well.

A few years off did me good. When I was ready to start sending stories out again, I had a little bank of stuff I'd been noodling at over the last few years and I was a better writer and most importantly, I had fallen back in love with the work again.

§

I think for me writing, and art in general, holds the place that religion does for many. It's my rock. Writing is what sustains me when everything else is gone. When [Tom Piccirilli wrote in his remarkable essay on facing brain cancer](#) "Meeting the Black" about the terror of losing the words, of wondering what was left of him if the writing went, I could barely keep reading. It's the one thing that can't be taken from us, we think, except of course it can, through madness, through illness, through injury. I'll say it publicly here: someone please cart me off the to nice people at the Swiss suicide clinic if the words ever fail me.

I've been thinking about The Writing Life more than usual lately, and I woke up with this line in my head: *By the time you've figured out being a writer is a really bad idea, it's too late to stop.* The truth of course is that I love writing. I love it more than anything. All I've ever wanted to do for as long as I can remember is be a writer, and there's nothing quite like the satisfaction of finishing a story I think is really good or making a sale or getting an email from a reader who took out the time to say they love something by me that they read. I am, in fact, a more contented writer than most I know. I like writing, I like having written, and I like my stories after I've written them.

§

So. A few final words on the writing life. There are some writers who have a kind of working-class ethos approach to the whole thing, taking particular exception to the whole suffering-artist pose. I've always particularly appreciated the way one of my favorite writers, Graham Joyce, smacks down that kind of preciousness; hailing from a Midlands mining family, he points out that writing is not exactly being lowered down into the coal mines each day (and getting your lungs lined with carcinogens in the process). Indeed. Sometimes angst is all about perception, and let's face it, we writers can be a whiny lot. It's not the worst thing that's out there, but then, most things aren't, and they can still be difficult anyway.

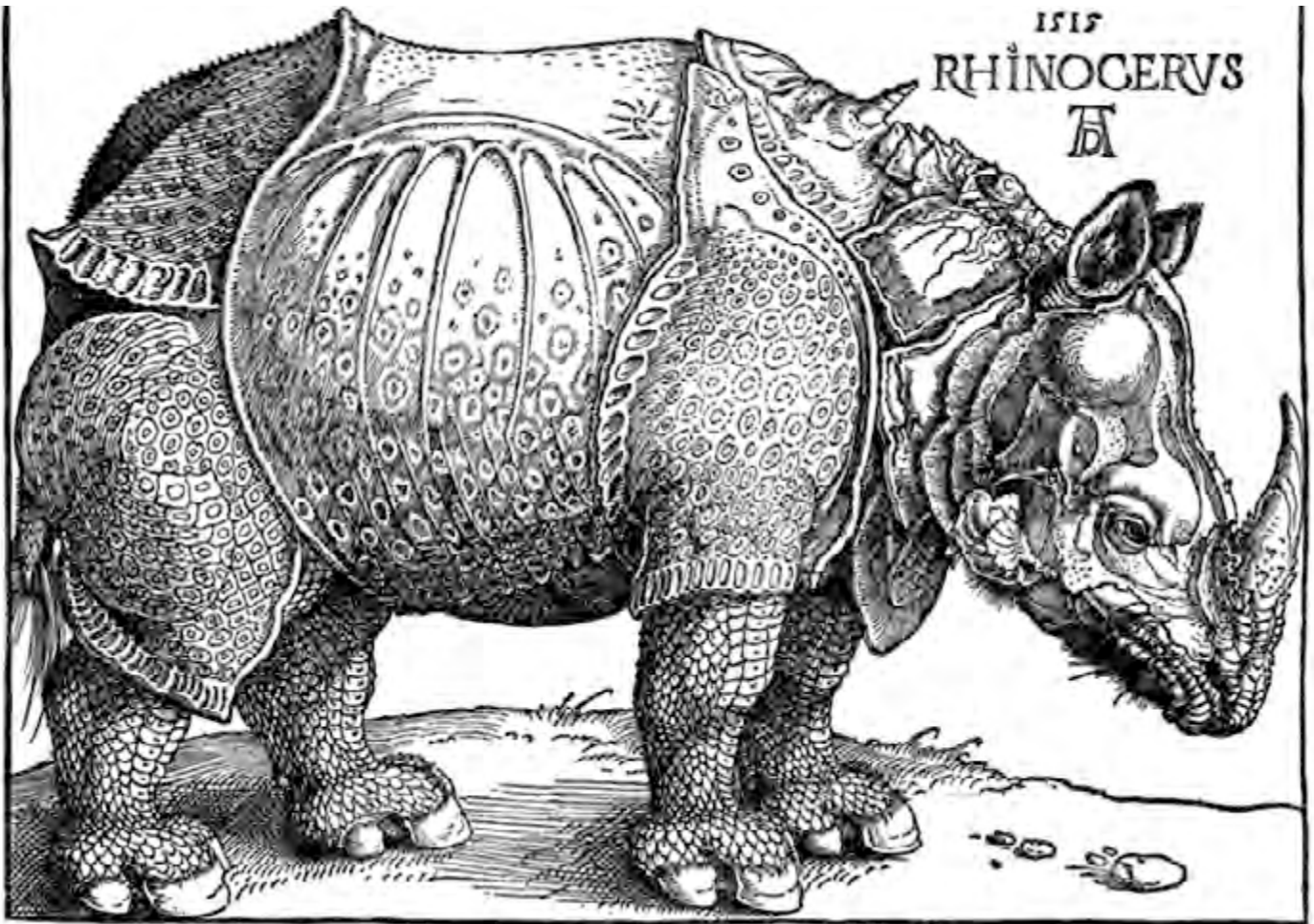
I think one of the real frustrations of writing is that it is so unpredictable. There's no clear correlation between effort and reward. Yes, you can work hard and get a reward; you can also work very hard and get no reward. I know people who do. You can be very good and toil in the trenches with that most dreaded label of all, the writer's writer (that means all the other writers *know* you kick ass but nobody who actually has the money to buy your books has figured it out yet).

But the fact of the matter is nobody holds a gun to your head and makes you write (unless you are poor old Paul Sheldon held captive by Annie Wilkes, and sometimes it certainly *feels* about that bad). You can quit anytime. There are plenty of more extrinsically rewarding things you can do. Pretty much everything offers more extrinsic rewards, in fact! I used to watch those crabby, bitter, angry, cynical writers on panels and I would tell myself if I ever got to that point I would stop. When there wasn't any joy any longer. When I didn't understand why I was still at it. When I couldn't think of anything good at all to say to a fresh-faced somebody who came up to me and said they wanted to be a writer. When it was all just pain and anger and stories about how I'd been screwed over and how bad everything was.

Of course I love it. Of course it brings me joy. It does more than that; it sustains me. I'd keep at it if I never published another word. Even in the years "off" I was still writing, always writing, maybe not every day, and I wasn't looking at or thinking about markets, but the stories were still growing and taking shape.

I don't know how to not be a writer.





DON'T SAVE THE RHINO BY DAVID GULLEN

How do you make a million in publishing? You start off with two million. Everyone knows there's no money in publishing. It must be true, everyone in publishing keeps saying so.

Among all the talk about the writer's life, its crapshoot nature, how we do it and why we stick with it, I think there's a rhinoceros in the room. Unlike Wittgenstein's imaginary ungulate, we all know it's there, we just don't mention it. I also think we're scared to do so, and that it stands behind some of the cynical grousing Lynda wrote about recently in her blog. I've never heard it said out loud, so I thought I'd say it here:

Publishers, editors and agents don't have day jobs.

Why don't we talk about it? Because if you do, you're speaking truth to the power that is the gatekeeper to everything that we want as writers. It's a buyer's market and we're selling. We don't want to get a reputation for being a pain in the arse so we keep our mouths shut.

I'm lucky, and so is my partner who also writes. We're in a situation where the day jobs are not overwhelming – I work three days a week, she's been able to take a year out. It might not last but we're making the most of it. Art – music, fine art, writing – has often depended on patronage or, like Van Gogh, struggled mightily without it. For us the day job and the rented flat are the sources of

that patronage. Publishers aren't patrons, they're commercial businesses, your book is worth only as much as they are prepared to pay you for it, which turns out to be not very much. We don't have to work with big publishing, but we want to because even as they suffer their death of a thousand cuts, diminish and go into the west (or maybe not, only time can tell) among the other benefits they offer are the things we want – good markets, audience, validation.

I'm talking about 'Big Publishing' here, still the route most of us novelists aspire to travel towards that world of independent means through writing (and probably still the most realistic one). To paraphrase Lynda, anyone can get published, but not everyone can get *Published*. If you do, as well as the things I mentioned above, it's also how most novelists get paid. And before you ask, yes please, I'd like some too. For me these things form a significant part of what I want and I think they are worth having.

It's a funny old world, and this particular part of it seems to be standing on its head. An entire industry of full-time paid professionals dependent in the main on the creative talent of part-time workers. Talented, gifted, and hard-working part-time workers. If there weren't so many negative connotations with the word, I'd call these creative types, these writers, amateurs – and I'd happily use that word to describe

myself - because so much writing is done for the sheer love of it. Writers want to write.

It's more than a little galling to go to cons and sit in panel audiences and hear time and again agents and editors set expectations as they say that writers shouldn't expect to earn a living through writing, that it's very difficult, that very few people ever manage it. Yet it's the very thing they do themselves.

Forget for a moment industry stories of hard-times and small margins. (Yet not so hard for Random House (US) as their recent \$5,000 bonus to 'several thousand' staff shows.) In fact, so what if times are hard? I don't really care, part of me - though only part of me - really does not care that big publishing is having a hard time.

To clarify, the rest of me really is very interested in publishing, why it's struggling, what's going to happen next. That's all for another time, but it is fascinating, important, and quite urgent. All I'll say now is that Jeff Bezos is playing a long game, he's innovative and proactive while the big publishers appear reactive. There's an excellent [interview here](http://blogs.hbr.org/ideacast/2013/01/jeff-bezos-on-leading-for-the.html) [http://blogs.hbr.org/ideacast/2013/01/jeff-bezos-on-leading-for-the.html].

So, publishers are not charities. I'm not a charity either, but sometimes I feel like I'm expected to be (times are hard, yada yada). Most novelists want to work with big publishers, it's a passionate process, one driven by both heart and mind on both sides, though unequally. It's a love affair, it's a marriage of convenience. A love affair of convenience.

So jump into bed and it seems most writers can't expect to earn a living - although everyone else involved does. Now I'm sounding like a stuck record (record, LP, vinyl - old tech, physical/hardcopy device used to store music; archaic but still has its fans).

These days there are more choices. The option isn't now simply 'which part of big publishing wants to engage with me?', before that we have 'do I want to engage with big publishing at all?' Of course this assumes they might be interested in you in the first place, and that depends on whether you're a good, indifferent, or bad writer of commercial fiction (and a single person can be all of those at different stages, natch) which should inform your opinion in the first place, assuming you have that level of self-awareness.

As writers perhaps we should spend more time thinking about 'what's best for me?' rather than simply trying to get a deal, any deal, anywhere. Often the case seems to be an after-the-event assessment of where you are to decide whether or not you feel you're in a good place, a better place, or halfway up a creek. Of course it's also often the case that the deal is the deal. For most first sales there's little or no choice and no negotiation.

So where does that leave us? A friend of mine recently said: '*...state of the nation addresses on*

this subject are very similar to complaining about the weather. You can do it all day, but it will change precisely nothing.' Absolutely true. But whatever you think of the weather on a particular day, you have to come to terms with it, and pretending it's not there won't make it go away. You're probably going to have to lump it, but I don't think silence the best response. *Qui tacet consentire* is not the way forwards.

Take another view - it's not reasonable to either expect or assume your first book, or indeed any book, will make you independently wealthy. In the same way, working with a small press or micro-press, neither should you expect advances, that they should keep funding the business from their day-job earnings. But is it too much to expect a living wage when you're working with full-time professionals? Answers on a postcard.

And again - nobody made us become writers. Maybe we didn't understand the risks when we took the mission, but we're all volunteers. Yes, these people in publishing are fans and enthusiasts, yes they love books and words, and their jobs, and they're good people in the main, and that is all great. If they're all that, then so are we writers in equal amount. Long hours, hard work, we're all in our own ways vocationalists. They love their jobs, we love our writing. There's still that rhino.

I'm peeved that things are as they are, but I'm not bitter (and this is by no means supposed to be a bitter rant, that's really not my point. What is my point? See Para 3). A labourer is worthy of his hire. You'd hope you would be paid enough to live on while you write the next book, but hour-for-hour you'll probably earn more flipping burgers.

The bottom line for me is, in this business where writers and publishers and agents all need each other quite badly in their synergistic relationship where no one role can survive without the others, there should not be things we can't talk about. Frankly, that's no way to have a love affair. There shouldn't be questions we're either afraid to, or feel we're expected not to, ask.

So writers write because they want to write. Just because you want to do something doesn't mean there's money in it, fair enough. Most days it's easier just to get on with the writing, (the fun bit) and forget about the money (the awkward bit), and hope you don't end up becoming some muttering, bitter middle-aged thing lurking at cons who stoppeth one of three like some third-division goalie or defective condom (the old git bit). Money after all is just one of the enablers that lets us writers do what we want to do, which is write.

And you can get money anywhere, such as the day job. Because, as everyone knows, there's no money in publishing. Except, as Mr Rhino knows, there is.

Fin.



ON THE BUSINESS OF WRITING, CREATIVITY, AND BURNOUT BY KAMERON HURLEY

Reprinted from <http://www.kameronhurley.com/on-the-business-of-writing-creativity-and-burnout/>

After today's kettle bell workout, I lay on the floor for awhile just staring at the fan and the whirling wooden dragon I have hanging from it. Not because I was all that physically tired, just because I didn't feel like thinking or doing anything else for awhile. I tried, in vain, to let my mind wander to a big day job project in the hopes that I would be magically inspired with a fantastic creative idea that I could bag up and get to my creative director on Monday.

Alas, no luck. Spinning dragons turned out to have no creative tie to the project that my weary head could make at that particular moment.

The first thing to get sidelined in September when I started piling up work for myself was regular workouts. This is not so surprising when you realize that I have to put in about 90-120 minutes a day to push down my weight. It's about 60 min a day to maintain. And 30 min a day to not be crazy with anxiety. Generally, I have to do 30 min a day to stay sane, but what I realized when I started piling up work is that I was burning off adrenaline pretty efficiently by focusing hard on deadlines. By using it all up to push out more work, I didn't have to invest it in working out. So I started fueling my life with extra coffee and more adrenaline.

There are a few reasons I took on all this work – the extra freelancing, the teaching, on top of the day job. Mostly, I was burned out and disillusioned

with writing novels. Finishing *Rapture* on deadline back in May just about broke me. I was writing twelve or fourteen hours a day at the end, and before that doing 3k to 5k and even 7k a day from January to April on top of the day job. That last 30 days before I turned it in, I didn't even know if what I'd written was any good. I handed it off to my partner and first readers and begged them to be blisteringly honest. I had lost all perspective on the book. I was working blind, flailing to tie up character arcs and ensure things made sense, working to end chapters on cliff hangers and broaden the world and give away enough but not too much. I was so focused there at the end that I could see the whole book mapped out, I could see what extra chapters I needed, and so I wrote them, but I didn't know if it was "good." Or "made sense."

Even when the first readers came back saying, overwhelmingly, that it was the best of the three books, I still couldn't see it for myself. This was actually really horrifying. I had to trust them. I got very little editing from the folks at my publisher, which meant I had to ensure going in that it was the best it could be before passing it off. Once it hit my publisher, it was down the rabbit hole, pushing hard for the publication deadline without much attention to structure or quality. Whatever I turned in was about 98% to what eventually got published.

It's not widely known that I actually held the draft of *Rapture* for 30 days waiting on outstanding payments from my publisher. I chose to hold it hostage because, you know, I was owed money, and it was my

last bit of leverage. So it sat for 30 days and then got rushed through the process, as the other books were. Today, once again, payments are late – by about three months – but I’ve got no leverage. So I sit here on my ass waiting to get payments contractually owed.

I mention this here because it’s a big reason of why I’ve gotten so disillusioned with publishing these last couple of years. It’s why the book I expect to be shopping at the end of last year never got finished. You expect when you sign on with a publisher that at the very least you’ll get paid, and if you’re lucky, get a lot of editing and marketing support. I didn’t get a lot of that. It was mostly just me flailing around, begging first readers to tell me what the hell I’d just written, and hoping me and the copyeditor could ensure that something passable got out at the end. I started insisting on doing a “final pass” to check edits so that fewer typos got out after cringing my way through the typos in *God’s War*. Doing that ensured much cleaner drafts, but I only had 24-48 hours or so to do those passes for *Infidel* and *Rapture*.

It’s frustrating to not get out the best possible book. It’s really frustrating. But that’s the business, or at least the one I experienced.

I love writing. I love making up worlds. I have wild characters. They are awesome. But there’s no greater killjoy in this business than...the actual business.

I hated publishing so much by July, when the final draft of *Rapture* was approved and went to printing, that I couldn’t bear to open a fucking manuscript. Oh, sure, I worked on things. I workshopped my fantasy novel at Wellspring, and put together a proposal for *Legion*, and started rewriting the fantasy novel in earnest in November. But then I started piling on other work. I started saying yes to freelancing projects. I agreed to teach a class I initially thought would eat 8-10 hours a week that turned out to eat 20-30 hrs – prime novel writing time.

I wanted to fill up my life with actual unhappy paying work so that novel writing became my pleasure work again, my escapist work, instead of some bloody angry thing I did that was basically like writing for free since the checks never came on time and I got so little bloody support with what I was doing. It was hard to hear from people that *GW* “should be doing better” when I had so little publisher support and just recently got improved distribution. Yes, I look forward to seeing how *GW* does overseas with a publisher with real financial backing and a real distribution network and hey, marketing! But I was so sick of the book and the bullshit of this business

by July that I didn’t want another fucking thing to do with it. I wanted to spend time making real money doing writing that actually fucking paid me for what I was doing.

I wanted to divorce my fiction writing from the expectation of payment. I didn’t want to work under contract, since “contract” meant exactly bullshit.

I remember, back before I published a book, hearing rants from “bitter midlisters” and you know, it was like, why are you so angry? Your book is published! Isn’t that great!? But then you start hearing the stories. You start seeing what happened to some great books that were left to die. Really, really great books. And though that certainly hasn’t happened to my books because some great folks have found them and loved them and continue to share them and talk about them (BLESS YOU ALL), I did get really disillusioned and angry really fast, and I knew that if I didn’t take a break and figure out what the fuck I was doing in this business in the first place, I was indeed going to become some bitter midlisters, anxious for any contract from anyone, upset and lacking in confidence about my work.

So I spent my time doing other stuff. I blog about taxes and send out press release templates and teach a copywriting class to students who, as most of us in college recall, would rather be doing something – ANYTHING – else. Much as I felt about writing fiction for that latter half of last year.

It’s only been the last couple of months, when I’m so drowned and exhausted with freelancing and day job work that I quite literally nearly burst into tears at work yesterday when the scope of a project was changed from “refresh” to “creative reposition” that fiction became my happy escape again. It was no longer the thing that caused me so much anger and pain and frustration, but the place I went to escape heavy churn work and exhaustion. Last week I was pushing out 5-6 creative projects a day. That’s totally different projects for different customer segments selling different things, in addition to freelance blogging in the early a.m. and late at night and class prep and grading.

My stolen moments – waiting at the Urgent Care with my partner, or an hour before bed when I didn’t have freelancing work to do – were spent doing a deep dive into a fantasy world where people called on asendant satellites to do specific types of magic – to unmake flesh or control plant life or rip open portals. And I got to recreate a whole culture as this polyamorous matriarchy, this people who

a thousand years before ruled the world and now only existed in a narrow sliver of the world as just a few tens of thousands of folks, and now the world is changing again, and we're headed toward massive war and genocide and armies bearing carnivorous plants and folks gaining powers through cannibalism, and it's like a fucking vacation again, instead of this long slog of work I'm doing that I'll do so somebody else makes money and I kick around angry about late checks and bullshit rush job deadlines. While not under deadline, I own these worlds again, and these people, and I have total freedom and control. It reminded me of why I love writing fiction so much.

And I found myself working to be better at it. I gnawed over a proposal and worked on an outline and suddenly realized while live-tweeting something about anger and violence and bullying what the character arc I was going for with one of my main protags really was. It was a lovely moment, a moment I owned. I had missed those moments.

I understand why people self-pub. I understand the allure of controlling the process. But I also know that just because things have been shit once doesn't mean they're shit everywhere. I know that letting somebody else steal your love and joy of a thing through sheer incompetence means the world wins, and you get broken on the rocks, and your voice dies, and you go silent. And that's some seriously fucked up catshit right there.

I needed the time off from my fiction. I needed to lose myself in massive amounts of other work. I needed to figure out, again, why I was writing fiction. No, it's not for the money. The money is shit, and doesn't come on time, for me. But I do need to learn how to own what I do. And be smarter about it. Because when I realize the sort of power I have, and I have the confidence in what I'm doing, I enjoy it a whole lot more.

I am glad to be writing substantial fiction again, yes, and I'll be even happier in two weeks when the worst of the deadlines are over and I will once again have those 30 hours a week back to do fiction, and on March 1st get back another 4+ hours for a total of 35 or so hours a week to dedicate once again to it. But I know now why I avoided it. I know why I pushed it away and cut everything down and burned it all up. Because I was so angry that I forgot why the fuck I was doing it in the first place. I wasn't just angry at others, but I was angry at myself for not being smarter about it. For not making better decisions and demanding what was mine.

I don't intend to make the same mistakes

again, it's true. But I also don't want to lose my way again. I don't rely on book money to make a living, and as angry as it may make me to not get what I'm owed when it's owed, it's no excuse to hate on my work. It's not the work's fault. It's the business. And there is a huge difference between the work and the business, one that sometimes gets all muddled up when you're angry and frustrated.

I took on too much work in September. I'm on hard churn and burn right now. I regret, right now, taking it on, but I suspect that in two weeks when the dust clears and it's all over and I take a harder look at these writing projects, I'll be glad I did it. It helped burn away the bullshit. It forced me to focus on what's important.

It's not the reviews, or the late book checks, or the scramble to get something to print, or the arguments and back-and-forth about covers, or the mispronounced words in the fucking goddamn audio books or the fucking complaints about typos because of the rush. It's about the work. It's about building worlds. It's the sheer joy and delight and huge rush I get from creating something that wasn't there before. It's writing the books I want to read, because nobody but me can write them.

That's what this is all about. If it was about the business shit, or the checks, I'd continue to load up on freelancing work. But it's about the creative work. It's building something from nothing.

I opened up a copy of *God's War* yesterday and cringed at some of the writing. It was like somebody took a shotgun filled with words and blasted them willy-nilly onto the page. My writing got better as I wrote the others books, thank Prime. I sat down later and read the last few chapters of *Rapture* and thought, "Holy shit I can't believe this book actually exists." Because it was a book I'd always wanted to read. It had everything I wanted. It was everything I'd yearned for as a reader – tough 80's apocalypse heroines with more interest in saving the world than courting romance, flawed people who fucked and cried and screamed and killed and lived spectacularly, without reservation or apology for what they were or what they'd done. And spectacular fucking worldbuilding. Some place really different. Very fucked up.

I wrote this. I made this. And I have a lot more to make and write. THAT's what this is about. I'm never going to be not angry, it's true, but I can be more focused. I can be clearer about the purpose of all of this, instead of getting lost in the churn of this often broken-down business.



FROM FAN TO CON-RUNNER TO WRITER- DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES OF CONVENTIONS BY MAURA MCHUGH

I grew up before the prevalence of the Internet so my burgeoning interest in a range of material - sf/fantasy/horror fiction and movies, comic books, and role playing - was not widely shared in my small town in Ireland. I had few people with whom to discuss my passion for genre works, so it was a solitary love-affair.

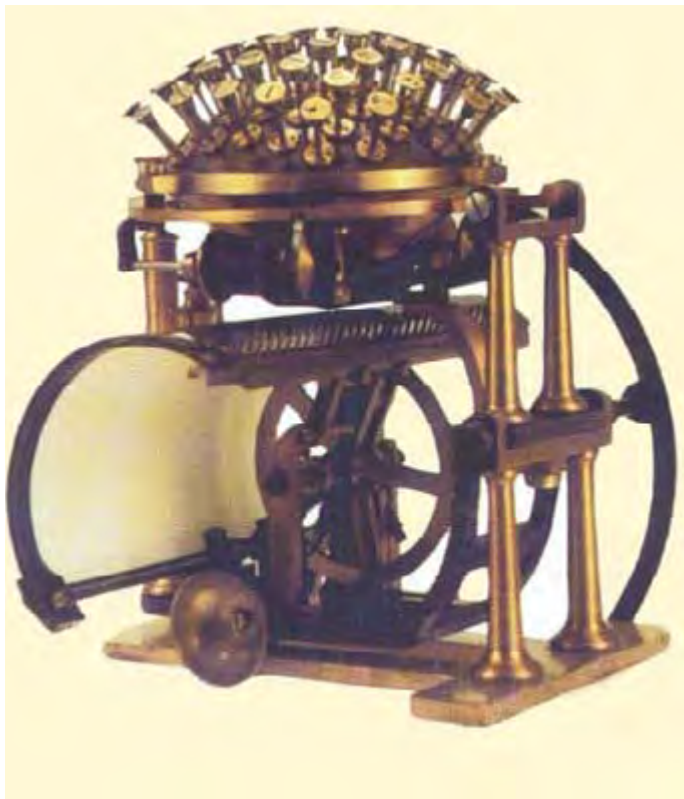
That all changed when I went to university and my first convention. That initial experience of finally meeting a group of like-minded people has forever coloured my view of going to any convention. Inside me is a nerdy girl who is delighted to meet other people who share her obsessions, and while my experiences at conventions has changed over the years I still get excited when the first day of a con dawns.

After a few years of going to cons I became involved in running one in Ireland with a great group of people, including the esteemed James Bacon. Our committee approached the task in a simple fashion: create an event where people would feel welcome, invite cool and interesting guests, and programme a fun weekend. That simple formula requires a lot of work - at least nine months for an annual Irish event

- with all of the organisers' spare time disappearing in the last six weeks before it occurs.

A con-runner sees the event from the prism of 'Is it working?' It's a tricky organisational challenge, and requires a wide variety of skills from the committee and their volunteers. Months of work disappear in a blurred weekend. You can't enjoy the convention the way the guests and fans do, but you can reap a great deal of satisfaction by proxy from happy guests and fans who are enjoying a memorable weekend your team created. There will always be obstacles and last minute emergencies, but overcoming them, and shielding those problems from the attendees so they only see a smooth operation brings a great sense of achievement.

After years of this stress I was happy to pass the convention baton to others, and return to attending cons as a fan. It was wonderful to relax and enjoy a holiday among kindred spirits. My con-running experience continues to colour my perception of conventions, of course. I appreciate the hard labour that goes on in the background, but equally I know when things can be done better. Although, it is always easier to critique an event than run it yourself.



Over the last few years I've been transitioning into another role at conventions - as a guest or a participating writer. Due to my background in con-running I've been taking part on panels for a long time. I understand how to moderate so that everyone gets a say, when to keep the discussion to theme (and when to deviate from it), and to ensure it sticks to its time deadline.

When I'm contributing on panels these days those prior skills continue to help, yet I have other considerations that come into play. If I'm asked to participate on panels in the capacity as a writer I consider it a professional contract. I never take it for granted. If the topic is something I'm not familiar with I do research, and prepare notes for each event. I generally don't drink alcohol before a panel, and if I've a morning event I take it easy the night before. Writers are part of the draw to a convention - some more than others - so they are expected to be entertaining on panels, and available to a certain extent to the attendees. This adds an element of performance that can be tiring.

Some events come with extra pressures - you can be asked to moderate at the last minute, you might have a difficult panellist or a rowdy audience member, or have a famous guest. No one wants to make a fool of themselves, and when you are attending a convention in a professional capacity that goes double. Now, with twitter and live-blogging, a misstep can be fed out to the world and people you've never met can have an opinion about what happened.

At times conventions can be awkward, lonely places. Making friends can be hard for anyone, be they guest, or fan. People naturally gravitate to their known circle, but when you are new to a particular convention that can seem like a hard wall to get through.

In quite a short time of being thrown together writers form friendships. When they attend conventions their aim is to do business - talk to agents and editors, promote their work, do book launches, signings, readings, panels, or workshops - and catch up with mates. As mentioned this can be construed as cliquy behaviour, but often it's the behaviour of busy people who wish to spend their limited time with pals.

A lot of writers pass the day alone. Even if they have families or other jobs there is a time when they must put distractions aside and focus on their internal vision. Conventions can be a relief from that enforced solitude, but they are also full of diversions, and madly intense. I spend most of my day at home on my own with my dog for company, so a convention is both a happy occasion and a social whirl that taxes my introverted nature.

Most writers are under some deadline so even when they are enjoying the occasion there is always a ticking clock in the back of their heads. Writers are essentially freelancers, and constantly scan the horizon looking for an opportunity to pitch their next project. That's how they earn their livelihood. If a convention doesn't tick all the boxes of being productive for work as well as fulfilling their social needs, the allure of a con can diminish.

This can be interpreted as a writer becoming aloof - or 'too full of herself' - when it's just a sign of a busy schedule and a tough economy. In Ireland most writers make less than €10,000 a year, so the cost of an event has to be justified against the expense and loss of time.

I don't think I'll ever lose touch with that nerdy girl who gets a kick out of being among people who are passionate about their interests. Even if I am physically and financially exhausted at the end of a con, I am usually inspired and uplifted by spending time with my friends and my talented colleagues who work in various creative fields.

And it is a pleasure to hear from someone who enjoyed your work - that is one of the reason writers write: to impart their strange vision to others.

It's good to know when you hit the mark, so you can draw and aim again.



CONTROL

BY JUSTIN HOWE

I'm going to assume you know what you're doing and aren't making sloppy mistakes like not using at least some acceptable version of proper manuscript format, or listing twenty for-the-love markets in your cover letter that no one's ever heard of let alone read. That's not you. That's someone else.

Now I'm not a fan of slushreaders going on about how they dream a story they select goes on to win a Nebula like they were right there writing the story beside the author. As if reading slush wasn't about being the equivalent of so much human baleen.

Bullshit on all that.

Truth is reading slush is a tedious and dull task. Whatever educational value it has pales in comparison to how disappointing it all is. Yet if there's one thing I've learned to recognize from reading slush, it's what separates the dynamic from the simply good.

People talk a lot about hooks and openings and grabbing the reader so they keep on reading. And yeah I use the word hook as well, but it's not about that. A hook's a misnomer at best. Other folks talk about establishing trust between reader and writer, and I agree with them but I've often wondered how that trust is gained. Then one day two stories arrived in the slush and I figured it out.

What it came down to was control.

One story was bloated beneath good writing. The other story shone like a jewel. Each word and sentence connected to the next word and sentence, and the whole thing made a pattern where there was nothing more you could subtract from it. That was

control.

What's not control is starting your story with a well-groomed hook and then piling on introspection, backstory, and setting details. What's not control is leaving nothing out, but throwing it all in there and hoping for the best.

Now you can do whatever you want in your story. Write it lush or transparent. Climb Freytag's pyramid or flip it on its peak and kick it in the rear. But every word must have its reason to be there. They can be ugly or oddly shaped words, but they have to fit into the story's overall pattern. Of course that pattern can be all freak-a-deak weird, but if they haven't earned their place there, your story would be better served by throwing them right out.

How you gain control is another matter. There's no magic word that can make you figure it out. None. The solution doesn't work like that. In reality you bang your head against the wall for as long as it takes. Don't get me wrong. Control can be learned. It just can't be transferred. It's more of an ecstatic revelation. The type of thing that makes inventors run naked in the streets. The only rule is anything goes as long as you're in control.

That's it. That's all I can tell you. Good luck. Write. Read. Pound your head against the wall. Succeed.



FREELANCER DOESN'T MEAN WORKING FOR FREE

BY SUSAN E. CONNOLLY

I'd love to be a full-time novelist, but it's not happening yet. I do, however, pay my bills with writing. I write press releases, blog posts, website content, top ten lists, white papers, magazine articles and more, on all kinds of topics, for all kinds of people. The bulk of my work comes from online job ads and referrals from clients I got through answering online job ads. Sadly, these ads are rife with outright scams and exploitative practices. This is what I have learned about being paid for the work that I do, which is a pretty basic part of making money.

Contracts - You're a Writer, So Write Things Down

Contracts don't need to be complicated. They're pretty simple things, at the heart of it. A contract basically covers two areas:

- What you are going to do.
- How you are going to be compensated.

You can read elsewhere about the specifics of what should be included in freelance contracts, but these are the basics. Never start a job unless you're clear on those elements. If a client starts adding on new requirements, point them back to this agreement. They may wish to renegotiate, and that's fine, but it's a negotiation, not something you need to simply accept. On the other hand, you can renegotiate as well. Find that the work is rolling in and you're getting better paid work elsewhere? Tell your client you're raising your rates at the end of the month. You're not locked in to eternal servitude forever once you take a job.

Pretend You Are An Electricity Company

You're a professional, and you're providing a valuable service. Anyone who keeps up with search engine marketing and online businesses knows that content is king. If electricity wasn't the electricity of the internet, then content would be.

All too often, people are worried about

scaring off employers by acting in a too formal way. "If I ask for a contract, they might go with someone else." "If I bother them about a late payment, they might stop sending me work." Does the electricity company worry about this? I think not.

If you're worried about how to deal with a client, ask yourself the following question: Is this something an electricity company would do?

- Would an electricity company want a clear delineation of services and compensation arrangements? YES
- Would an electricity company chase up payments? YES
- Would an electricity company provide further services without compensation? UNLIKELY

There's a simple principle at play here: Anyone who is scared off by you acting in a professional manner is someone who you do not want to work with.

Working for Free – The Myth of Exposure

I hate the exposure nonsense that permeates many writing advertisements. The idea generally is that you provide the work, and in exchange you get something that's worth far more than crass money – you get EXPOSURE, you get EXPERIENCE, you get PLATFORM. If the sarcasm isn't coming through here, let me be clear – you're most likely getting nothing. Let's take the very worst case scenario – you have no experience and you have no samples, but you think you can write. What should you do? It may be that working for free might help you, but that doesn't mean you should work for someone else. Go to WordPress and set up a free blog. Write posts. Put them on the blog. Congratulations, now you have samples. But you're still worried about the gatekeeper effect. If nobody else has yet thought your work is

good enough for them, won't people be turned off? This still doesn't mean you should respond to those solicitations for free labour. Instead, turn it on its head – where do you want your work displayed? Do you want to focus on small business writing? Go to your local coffee shop and offer to revamp their website content. Write up a few press releases for a local charity whose work you want to support. Approach a publication you like to read with an article that says something you want to say. Decide what benefits you want and hustle to make it happen.

Working for Free – Custom Samples

This issue is a more thorny one - the request in an advertisement for an original sample, without payment. In some ways, I'm sympathetic to those advertisers who ask for these. They may want a specific style or tone that isn't displayed in your other work. They may have experienced a somewhat common phenomenon, where provided samples are paragons of wonderful prose and information, only to find that the work turned in later is riddled with errors.

In general, I steer clear of advertisements that look for free samples, but that's because I now have an expansive body of work that demonstrates my skills and my abilities. So, how did I handle it when I

started out? If a job looked promising, and the sample wanted was not requiring an excessive amount of work, I would provide a sample and include the following little sentence in the email.

“Just so you know, I'm providing this sample for assessment, not transferring ownership. If you would like to use it then hopefully we can come to an agreement on compensation within the next 7 days. Otherwise I will be publishing it on my own blog as a sample of my work.”

More often than not, I was paid for my sample. In the cases where I was not, my portfolio was strengthened, and anyone who was hoping to get a free article was disappointed, as it was then published online, which would have messed with any boost in search engine rankings they were looking for.

Final Words

These exploitative practices are reminiscent of the nonsense put out by vanity presses – that they provide so much value that you should be grateful for the opportunity to gift them your words. If anyone wants your work, they should be happy to pay for it. Keep that in mind and you'll be well on your way to paying your non-metaphorical electricity bill with your words.





RESOURCES FOR FICTION WRITERS FROM LYNDA E. RUCKER

There are far too many excellent ones to name them all; in particular, look for the blogs of agents and editors who work for major companies (remember, anyone can call themselves an agent or editor or publisher).

The first three below are reliable resources that have been around forever in Internet years.

SFWA Writer Beware

On writing scams, and how to avoid them.

<http://www.sfwa.org/for-authors/writer-beware/>

Absolute Write

An excellent forum for learning your way around the business.

<http://www.absolutewrite.com/forums/>

Critters

Get your work critiqued and critique the work of others

<http://critters.org/>

From Tobias S. Buckell: a survey on typical novel advances from 2005 (but still very relevant today; certainly writers aren't getting paid more these days!)

<http://www.tobiasbuckell.com/2005/10/05/author-advance-survey-version-20/>

Workshops

The first three listed below are six-week programs; the remainder, with the exception of the popular fiction MFA, are shorter.

Clarion – the granddaddy (or grandmother?) of them all
<http://literature.ucsd.edu/affiliated-programs/clarion/index.html>

Clarion West
<http://www.clarionwest.org/>

Odyssey
Note that Odyssey also offers online classes for those who can't commit to a six-week residential program.
<http://www.sff.net/odyssey/>

Viable Paradise
A one-week workshop
<http://www.sff.net/paradise/>

Taos Toolbox
A two-week workshop.
<http://www.taostoolbox.com/>

Milford
A one-week workshop for established authors and relative newcomers.
<http://www.milfordsf.co.uk/>

Rainforest Writer's Retreat
A four- or five-day retreat for writers at most levels.
<http://rainforestwritersvillage.com/>

Shared Worlds
For teen writers
<http://www.wofford.edu/sharedworlds/>

Seton Hill University
Low-residency program; earn an MFA in Writing Popular Fiction
http://www.setonhill.edu/academics/graduate_programs/fiction

Find Places to Submit:

Ralan
<http://www.ralan.com/>

Duotrope (now subscription-based)
<https://duotrope.com/>

The Grinder
This site is working to step into the space left when Duotrope went subscription-only.
<http://thegrinder.diabolicalplots.com/>





BIOGRAPHIES

THE EDITORS

James Bacon

A Hugo-Winning Fanzine Editor and Writer of great stuff. He's on the ballot three times this year! Runs cons, drives trains, from Ireland, and has the voice of an Angel!

Chris Garcia

Do you REALLY need a biography of Chris?

Lynda E. Rucker

Lynda E. Rucker's fiction has appeared in such places as *F&SF*, *The Mammoth Book of Best New Horror*, *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror*, *Black Static*, etc. Her first collection, *The Moon Will Look Strange*, is due out later this year from Kar-shi Books.

THE WRITERS

Zainab Akhtar

Trainee librarian. Bibliophile. Ephemeraologist. I write about comics for Forbidden Planet International and The Beat. Because they let me.

Lauren Beukes

Lauren Beukes is a Arthur C. Clarke Award-winning author who books include *Moxyland* and *Zoo City*.

Bob Byrne

Dublin-based writer, artist, and publisher, Bob Byrne was nominated for the Eagle Award in 2007!

Mike Carey

Mike Carey is a writer of just about everything you can be a writer of! He was nominated for the Hugo for Best Graphic Story twice for his work on *The Unwritten*.

Gail Carriger

Gail's *Parasol Protectorate* books are New York Times Best Sellers and crackin' good reads! Her latest series, *Finishing School*, had the first book released in early 2013!

Susan E. Connolly

Susan is an author, a freelance writer, and a

damn fine cook. Any free time she has is spent being fabulous, which is harder than it looks. Susan lives in Ireland.

Wayne Disher

Wayne T. Disher is the former President of the California Library Association. He received his Master of Library and Information Science degree at San José State University in 1994, and worked at San José Public Library System for 22 years managing library branches and units. He's also Chris' Uncle

Craig Glassner

Long-time fan and photographer, Craig is also known as Ranger Craig as he's an honest-to-Ghods Ranger at Alcatraz!

Mike Glycer

The guy's got a raft of Hugos, both as Best Fan Writer and for Best Fanzine for *File 770*. File770.com, the blog version of the zine, is one of the best sources for fannish news and views.

David Gullen

David Gullen's SF and Fantasy has appeared in a variety of magazines. His first novel, 'Shopocalypse', will be published by [Clarion Publishing](http://ClarionPublishing.com) in May 2013. Find him online at www.davidgullen.com and on Twitter as @dergullen

Rich Handley

Rich Handley is the founder of Hasslein Books (hassleinbooks.com) and the author of three reference guides (*Timeline of the Planet of the Apes*, *Lexicon of the Planet of the Apes* and *The Back to the Future Lexicon*).

Robin Hobb

A Best-selling writer of TONS of novels, Robin Hobb will be one of Loncon's Guests of Honour in 2014!

Andrea K. Hosth

Andrea K. Hosth is an Australian novelist and short story writer. Her book *The Silence of Medair* was nominated for an Aurealis Award.

Justin Howe

Justin Howe's fiction and nonfiction has appeared in such places as *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, *Beware the Night* from Prime Books, *The Directory of World Cinema: Japan* and *The Internet Review of Science Fiction*. He reads slush for *Clarkesworld*.

Kameron Hurley

Kameron Hurley is the award winning author of *God's War*, *Infidel* and *Rapture*. She currently hacks out a living as a marketing and advertising writer in Ohio. She's lived in Fairbanks, Alaska; Durban, South Africa; and Chicago, but grew up in and around Washington State. Follow the fun at www.kameronhurley.com

Maura McHugh

Maura writes, prose, comic books, plays, and screenplays, and lives in the west of Ireland.

Seanan McGuire

Seanan writes fiction as both Seanan AND Mira Grant, and has multiple Hugo nomination under each name! A writer, musician, and one of the most fun people you'll ever meet!

Elaine Radford

Elaine Radford is New Orleans writer who chases hawks, eagles, and other rare birds around the world. She's currently reporting on science, health, and animal topics for [The Inquisitr](http://TheInquisitr.com). Her new blog, [Passages in the Void](http://PassagesintheVoid.com), is the official fan site for Roger Williams and *The Metamorphosis of Prime Intellect*.

Jason Ridler

Jason S. Ridler is a writer, historian, and former punk rock musician and cemetery groundskeeper. Check out his novels *BLOOD AND SAWDUST* and *DEATH MATCH* on Amazon, and keep up to date with his insane rambles at Ridlerville on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/Ridlerville>

Lynne M. Thomas

Two-time Hugo winner and all-around awesomeness, Lynne M. Thomas is the Curator of Rare Books and Special Collections at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL, where she is responsible for popular culture special collections. She's also the editor of *Apex Magazine* and a member of the SF Squeecast team (sfsqueecast.com)

Anna Warren Cebrian

Anna Warren Cebrian is the owner of Illusive Comics & Games, which celebrated its 5-year Anniversary in May 2012.



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