



Point of View

By
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One of the most basic and misunderstood aspects of writing is that of Point of View (or POV, for short). At its most basic, point of view refers to the simple problem of whose eyes the reader is looking through while observing the story unfold on paper. At its most complex, point of view is wrapped up in such matters as tension, pacing, emotional intensity, the degree to which the reader is aware of important plot points, and well ... just about everything having to do with a story.

"What do you mean, 'whose eyes do I look through when I read the story?' I look through my own eyes."

Sorry, *Mon Ami*, but that answer is incorrect. If you looked through your own eyes when you are reading, you would notice that you are holding a rectangular sheaf of papers that have been smudged with black ink, sandwiched between two pieces of cardboard, and then glued at the edges with some quick-setting hot adhesive. In fact, if you look at a book as merely an object, you see something entirely different than when you are reading. (I know. Having recently gone into the book printing business, I have spent a lot of time lately staring at the glue joint where the back cover meets the book block.)

When you are reading, you do not see the book at all. You see a sailing ship with her acres of white canvas stretched taut as her bow cuts through blue-green waves topped by white foam. You see an automobile with tires squealing and death stalking its every turn. You see a beautiful woman sigh as she is folded into the embrace of a rugged hero. You see and feel the pain of the teenage boy who nearly dies from embarrassment when he stammers in front of the prettiest girl in class.

As we have noted before in this series, reading is an act of self-hypnosis in which the reader subordinates his or her will to that of the author. Essentially, the reader's mind turns off their external senses and begins instead to play an interior movie based on the words they read. Assuming the writer knows his or her craft, the trancelike state in which the reader reads can become very deep, so much so that the reader becomes oblivious to the world around them.

To say that you view the story through your own eyes is just not true. The story is viewed from a vantage point that was pre-selected by the author, and the selection of that vantage point is one of the most important decisions in writing.

The Three Basic Points of View

Point of View is one of the subjects covered by all texts on writing. However, much of the time it is treated rather perfunctorily, as merely as a simple mechanical detail of writing. Nothing could be further from the truth. Choosing the wrong POV can cause you to write yourself into a corner, destroy all suspense in your story, or leave it an unintelligible mishmash of words. Worse, choosing the wrong POV can irritate your reader, which might end your writing career.

So, what exactly is point of view?

Simply put, all stories are told by narrators and point of view refers to how the plot is viewed by the reader when looking through the eyes of the narrator. At the highest level of abstraction, there are three basic points of view. These are first-person, second-person, and third-person narration. Their characteristics are as follows:

First-person

First-person stories are told by a narrator to whom the story is actually happening. They utilize the word *I* a great deal and are especially suitable for new writers because first-person is the easiest point of view from which to write. Because the protagonist is often the narrator, the reader easily slips into the story, adopting the persona of the protagonist-narrator. While easy to write, first-person narration is more limited than third-person (but not nearly as limited as second-person).

Second-person

The second-person POV is almost never used — thank God! In second-person narration, the narrator is someone other than the protagonist and the reader is explicitly assigned the protagonist role. In second-person, the operative word is *you*, as in “You feel the cool wind on your neck as you inch your way into the dark, fetid cave, conscious of the fresh bear spoor you spied in the mud left over from last night’s rain.” The reason that second-person point of view is rarely used is because most readers find it tedious and will tend to stop reading after only a short passage of second-person narration.

Third-person

Third-person narrative is the POV where the narrator is not the protagonist, and indeed, may not be one of the characters at all. Nor is the reader explicitly made into a character, as in the case of second-person narration. Both the narrator and the reader view the action from a vantage point somewhere outside the story, and characters are referred to as *he* or *she*. Third-person is the primary narration mode of most novels and most authors use it almost exclusively after they have gained experience as storytellers.

Some writers fear that if the readers view the action from outside the story, then they will not become involved with it. While it is true that engaging the readers is more difficult in a third-person narrative, a skilled writer need not fear excessive detachment on the part of the readers. The human mind has a way of insinuating itself into a story if

that story is well told. Readers quickly lose their detachment to the point where the *he*'s and *she*'s are instinctively transformed into *me*'s and *I*'s within a few pages.

Seems simple, doesn't it? Choose whether you want to call your main character *I*, *you*, or *he* when you are not referring to him by name, and you have your point of view. No, I am afraid it is not that simple. Not nearly that simple!

Author's Persona and Narrative Voice

When you read a story, that story has a narrator, either explicit or implied. Somewhere on screen or off, there is a human being relating a story to you just as storytellers have done for thousands of years. It has always been so. Whether squatting around a desert campfire, or standing on an overturned soapbox in a village square, storytellers *tell stories*. They manipulate the language to introduce us to heroes and villains, love and hate, greed and selflessness. They tug at our heartstrings and assault our senses with loud noises, even while speaking barely above a whisper.

When someone actually tells you a story — which was the dominant form of the art until quite recently, by the way, at least in historical terms — the author's persona is obvious. It is the storyteller. The chances are that he did not actually write the story, and if he did, that he wrote it sometime in the past. Thus, he is not creating the story so much as recreating it. He has probably told the story hundreds of times, and has long since learned where to pause, where to raise his voice, and where to lower it for maximum effect.

When telling a story that has been memorized, a storyteller effectively becomes the author's mouthpiece. Even if he is not himself the author, he acts as the playback device for the author's words. He becomes the persona of the author. When telling a story that he himself wrote, then the storyteller becomes the persona of his past self. For it is a rare storyteller who can make up an entertaining yarn on the fly without at least some past inking as to what it will be about beforehand.

In telling the story, the storyteller chooses his words and actions carefully, always striving for maximum effect on his listeners. As he speaks, he weaves a spell over his audience, using combinations of words, gestures, and expressions to move the plot along. The words he chooses to present the story have a distinctive style to them, one that can be recognized by their emotional content and the way in which they stir the listeners' reactions. The technical term for this stylistic effect is "narrative voice." Each storyteller, acting as the author's persona, chooses a particular narrative voice in which to relate a story.

People have little trouble understanding the need for a narrator when the story is presented orally, and in accepting that the narrator is doubling for the author, and thus becomes the author's persona. They can accept this because they can see and hear (and no doubt smell) the narrator as he unreels his yarn. Listeners also understand narrative voice intuitively because they can hear the storyteller's spoken words as they continuously translate the story's narrative into pictures inside their brains.

Things are not quite that obvious with books. That is because the storyteller is not physically present when you read a book, which is not to say that he is not there at all. In fact, the author is always nearby when you are reading. He is an invisible wraith

hovering somewhere close behind the reader. He is looking over your shoulder as you turn the pages and reading the words in a voice that is more sensed than heard.

When reading, the author's persona and narrative voice depend not on who he (or she) is, but rather, the way in which the author chooses to say things in print.

Because the author is in full control of the story, or ought to be, the author's persona can be changed at will. The author can choose to tell the story in a matter-of-fact way, sort of like an old *Dragnet* episode, with the protagonist handling the narration. The author can build a stylistically complex tale in which the narrator is an unseen voice from above, and the words are embellished with hyperbole and simile much as an 18th century rococo ceiling is embellished with golden cherubs.

When choosing a narrator to perform the function of author's persona and the narrative voice with which the story will be imbued, the writer must carefully consider the needs of his story. He must settle on the mood he wants to convey to the reader. He must decide how much information he would like to impart (and at what point in the plot), whether to explicitly tell the reader which of the characters he or she should be rooting for, and generally, just how fast to move the plot toward the moment of climax.

When the writer has figured out all of these things, at least subconsciously, then he is ready to select a point of view. To understand how POV relates to persona and voice, let us look more closely at the three common forms that point of view can take.

First-Person Narrative (The Ubiquitous "I")

As previously discussed, when writing a first-person narrative, you make one of the characters the viewpoint character and they recount the story. The reader looks at everything through that character's eyes, and in so doing, quickly comes to identify with the narrator-character. They cannot help identifying with that particular character because that person is calling himself or herself "I", which is the same thing we call ourselves.

First-person, protagonist-narrator is the easiest method for new writers to compose their stories. The reason for this is simple. It is the way we all look at the world. We are all the stars of the private movies that continuously play inside our heads, and because of this, we tend to be self-centered. Nothing wrong with that, mind you. It is just the way we are. Therefore, when a writer is composing a new story, if he chooses a character and views events through that character's eyes, it does not take long before the writer is living the story. "I ran up the hill. I puffed for breath. I gasped as I saw the beautiful woman. I ducked at the sound of the shot, too late not to hear the angry-wasp noise of the bullet as it ripped the air three inches from my ear."

Writing first-person protagonist-narrator stories is called first-person subjective. That is because all observations are from the viewpoint of the protagonist and not only can the reader see whatever it is that the protagonist sees, the reader can also read the protagonist's thoughts. Since the reader is used to listening to his or her own private thoughts, reading the private thoughts of the protagonist seems natural.

Of course, there are some negatives to this simple, straightforward approach to storytelling. One of these is that the reader can only see what the protagonist sees, hear what the protagonist hears, and know what the protagonist has been told. Thus, it is often difficult to impart knowledge that the protagonist does not (or should not) know.

A minor difficulty is also encountered when describing the protagonist. Does he say, “I am a six-foot tall, muscled Adonis of a man, with a full head of blond hair that makes all of the women swoon”? While the author can say that about a character in the third-person and not cause a stir, when the character describes himself that way, the readers’ natural reaction is to think him a jerk.

The limitation on only being able to know what the narrator-character knows can be overcome by changing narrator-characters when you change the scene. Perhaps you have a scene where the hero is creeping up on the villain’s lair and the last thing he senses is when his head explodes in a shower of shooting stars as a blackjack descends at the base of his skull. In the next scene, the beautiful heroine can be made the viewpoint character and still use first-person narration. She continues the story by telling us how the hero has been dragged into the lonely mountain cabin where she is being held captive, tied to a chair. The villain drops the hero’s unconscious body on the floor. There is blood streaming down his face as he lies unconscious at her feet.

Changing first-person viewpoint characters is a time honored literary technique that works well. It has the immediacy of first-person protagonist narration while not limiting the reader to the narrow POV of a single character. However, it is important if you choose this technique that you not change POVs in the middle of the scene. Only when the scene has played itself out and you jump to a new scene, as indicated by a blank line with perhaps a pound sign (#) in the middle, can you change the point of view.

Even then, you risk the reader becoming disoriented as his or her brain sorts out whom this new “I” is and what happened to the previous one. Occasionally, writers use this disorientation, as in telling a story from the first-person point of view of a character who was killed earlier in the story. I do not recommend it, but I have seen it done effectively.

There are other ways of using first-person narrative, of course; some of which are quite sophisticated. These include:

- Observer-Narrator

First-person narrative can be used by an observer-narrator, a character who observes the story from afar. The observer learns of the story or witnesses it, but does not interact with the main characters or the plot. This is the sort of thing that begins, “The first time I heard about the brave stand Davy Crocket and Jim Bowie made at the Alamo, I was on my way to join Sam Houston’s army. Only little by little did I hear the whole of the tale, and when I did, it made me even more proud to be a Texican!”

- Detached Autobiographical

Another use for first-person narrative is the detached autobiographical approach. In this case, the story is told from the viewpoint of one of the characters, but years after the fact. Even though that character was an integral part of the story, the intervening years have given it perspective and lessened its immediacy. The audience knows that however much trouble the narrator-character gets into in the story, he will survive long enough to look back on events from the vantage point of the far future. I just

saw *Phantom of the Opera* for the first time and it is essentially a detached autobiographical story. This is obvious from the opening paragraphs of Gaston Leroux's novel on which the musical is based:

“When I began to ransack the archives of the National Academy of Music, I was at once struck by the surprising coincidences between the phenomena ascribed to 'the ghost' and the most extraordinary and fantastic tragedy that ever excited the minds of the Paris upper classes; and I was soon led to think that this tragedy might reasonably be explained by the phenomena in question. The events do not date more than thirty years back; and it would not be difficult to find at the present day, in the foyer of the ballet itself, old men of high repute, men upon whose word one could absolutely rely - who would remember as though they happened yesterday the mysterious and dramatic conditions that attended the kidnapping of Christine Daae, the disappearance of the Vicomte de Chagny and the death of his elder brother, Count Philippe, whose body was found on the bank of the lake that exists in the lower cellars of the Opera on the Rue Scribe side. But none of these witnesses had until that day thought that there was any reason for connecting the more or less legendary figure of the Opera ghost with that terrible story ...

- Interior Monologue

In the interior monologue form of first-person narration, the narrator recounts the story as a memory. In effect, all of the action takes place in the narrator's head, allowing him to comment on things that might have been impossible to know at the time, but which he has learned subsequently. This approach solves the limited knowledge problem by making the narrator something of a minor god, at least insofar that he can plausibly know everything there is to know about the story.

While working on my website, I often have my new satellite TV system playing, and happened to catch part of the remake of *Lolita* the other night. The 14-year-old Lolita is played by 15-year-old Dominique Swain and Humbert Humbert is played by Jeremy Irons. The story is told with a voice-over as though Irons is speaking to a jury, and is in the style of a first-person, interior monologue narration. I don't know whether the movie is good or not, but it does have the effect of making your skin crawl, which is what both author and director intended, so I suppose it is effective. In addition, I thought Lolita was far too beautiful to be a mere fifteen years old. It is surprising that the climate of the times did not get the whole cast and crew thrown into jail for child molesting (which is probably why they waited two years to release the movie, to give Dominique time to grow up).

An extreme form of interior monologue narration is the stream-of-consciousness story, where the author seemingly writes down every word the character thinks.

- Dramatic Monologue

Since books are merely the written version of stories told aloud, one method of first-person narration is simply to have the narrator tell you the story as though he

is standing before you (as opposed to having the author tell you the story directly). This technique lends itself to the “framed story” in which we are introduced to a character (frequently in a bar) who then spins the tale that is the real story. British science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke used a variation of this approach in a series of short stories that have been collected into the *Tales from the White Heart*.

- Letters or Diary

Finally, a narrator can tell the story not by telling it, but by writing it down. I remember in my high school days there was a grim little book in the library called *Level 7* by Mordecai Roshwald. It is a story about a defense facility in an unnamed country where the servicemen and women have been sealed into an underground bunker, ready to retaliate with nuclear weapons should anyone attack them. Of course, someone does and the world is destroyed, with only the people in the deep bunker (and their enemy counterparts) surviving. There are a series of these bunkers, each buried more deeply, with Level 7 being the deepest. As the book progresses, the people in Level 7 lose contact with each of the shallower levels in turn, as radiation seeps into the shelters.

The story is told in the form of a missile control officer writing in his diary, and it does not take long to realize why. At the end of the book, when everyone is dead except those in the Level 7 shelter, it becomes obvious that they aren't going to make it either. It turns out that what we have been reading is the diary of a dead man.

Level 7 was written in 1959 during the very scariest days of the cold war, and like *On the Beach*, is intended to be an anti-nuclear war cautionary tale.

Second-Person Narrative (The Irritating “You”)

Having treated first-person narration at length, we ought to spend some time talking about second-person narrative, if only to explain why it is hardly ever used. Second-person narrative uses a narrator that is removed from the story, but assigns the reader explicitly to the role of one of the characters. To make matters worse, it is often written in present tense. It goes something like this:

“You wake up in the morning and have a cup of coffee before getting into your car and driving to work, where your boss is waiting to yell at you. Seems you forgot to lock the door the previous night and when the boss arrived this morning, he was afraid to go in until the janitor arrived, lest some robber be waiting inside to mug him and get the combination to the safe. You are bummed out for the rest of the morning, and decide to cheer yourself up by visiting Sheila at home during your lunch hour. Your mood isn't helped when you notice the brand-new Cadillac in the driveway and hear the sounds of rhythmic feminine moans emanating from the open bedroom window ...”

About the only place I have seen second-person narrative used is in the occasional amateur-written erotic story where “you” is the object of amorous affection by some member of the opposite (usually) sex. [Not that I read that sort of thing, you understand.] Some writers also use it to prove how smart they are as writers. It is the equivalent of

trying to write a three-thousand-word short story consisting of only six sentences. It can be done, but all that is really going on is that the writer is showing off.

I am not sure why it is that readers do not take to second-person narration, whether in present or past tense. Perhaps it is the unfamiliarity of it all. However, I suspect that it is the reader's inability to get into the story when the author keeps saying "you." After all, it is one thing to assume the identity of some fictional character while you are reading, and quite another to assume that character's function while wearing your own identity. I don't know about you, but there are just some things that happen in novels that I would not want to do as myself. As someone else, yes; as myself, no. Therefore, reading anything written in second-person narrative quickly makes me uncomfortable and it becomes a real chore to plow through the whole thing.

So, when you feel the need to write your book in second-person narration, take two aspirins and lie down for a while. You are almost certainly making a serious mistake.

Third-Person Narrative (The Much Used "He" and "She")

When I graduated from short stories to novels, I wrote my first novel (which was actually a collection of related novelettes cleverly disguised as a novel) in first-person narration. After Judy-Lynn Del Rey purchased the book and asked for another, she made sure that my agent passed along the message that all future books were to be in third-person. Third-person narration is the most used POV in literature and it is usually told in past tense.

Some people think that past tense lacks immediacy, but they are wrong. While the events of the story happen in the past when using third-person past-tense narration, that "past" may only be a millisecond or so earlier. In fact, people are so used to reading third-person past-tense narration that they are largely unconscious of the fact that you are saying, "he ran" rather than "I run."

About the only problem writers have when writing in third-person is when they move into flashback and the verbs change from "I ran" to "I had run." It does not take much of that to get old in a hurry, so a convention has developed that once you have established the flashback, you return to simple past tense verbs and remove all of the "had" words from the manuscript.

Like first-person narration, third-person comes in a number of varieties, each of which has its uses and its defects. These include:

- **Third-Person Limited/Subjective**

Third-person limited narration is essentially the same as first-person subjective, except that the pronoun "I" is transformed into the pronouns "he" or "she." Like first-person, point of view is limited to a single character. The reader can see what that character sees and hear what that character thinks, except the reader is not explicitly assigned the role of the character. Because of the way the human mind works, it is not necessary to assign that role to the reader. The reader will take it anyway.

The books of Tom Clancy are a good example of what I am talking about. Over the past 15 years, we have tracked Clancy's Jack Ryan through at least six books. We have seen him on the submarine *Red October*, we have watched him save a long-time American agent in Moscow in *The Cardinal of the Kremlin*, we have seen him battle Irish terrorists and Columbian drug lords. He has even prevented a full-scale nuclear war with the Soviet Union (in the days when there was such a thing) and won a war with the Japanese (no, another war). At the end of that war, he managed to get himself sworn in as president and in that position he fought an Iranian plague. Throughout all of these books of daring-do, Jack Ryan has been ... Jack Ryan. He is always he, him, Jack, Ryan, or daddy. He is never "I" or "me," except, of course, when he his talking about himself.

Despite this, most people who like Tom Clancy novels have come to identify with Jack Ryan. It is not so much that he is us. Rather, we are *him* when we are reading his adventures. His problems are our problems, his labors are our labors, his heartbreaks and triumphs affect us just as greatly as they affect him.

Based on Tom Clancy's sales figures (he sells more books in an hour than I have in a lifetime), this third-person narrative stuff really works. When the POV is third-person limited, the author's persona is represented by the single character through whose eyes we witness the story. Readers like this point of view because they know in whom they are expected to invest their emotions.

- Third-Person Limited/Episodic

Just as in first-person narration, third-person does not have to stick to a single viewpoint character all of the time. You can jump between characters whose thoughts the readers can see in order to give them different perspectives in different scenes. This is the narrative style of most of my novels. One scene is centered on one character in which we gain that character's viewpoint, and in the next scene, we have the viewpoint of some other character. The advantage of this approach is that the readers can become intimate with a number of characters, yet always keep straight whom it is they should identify with.

Shifting among a few main characters is a good technique for a long novel. It has the advantage that the readers can learn details of the plot much more quickly than the characters. This is especially true if two of the POVs are that of the hero and the villain.

As in first-person episodic narration, the point of view should remain constant in each scene, with jumps in POV taking place only between the scenes. Some authors have violated this rule, of course; but violate it too much and you will have transformed your narration into a different form altogether. You also risk confusing the readers.

- Third-person Objective

In third-person objective narration, the author observes the story from outside the characters. This technique is the primary POV in movies (except for movies with voice-overs, like the *Lolita* example discussed above). In a movie, we seldom hear the characters thinking. All we see is what they do and say.

In third-person objective, the readers have no access to the characters' thoughts. Like a movie patron, they must learn the story by observing it, and if there is a vital piece of information they need, it must be given to them by means of a character speaking the words. Third-person objective involves the author describing the scene without emotion or editorializing. The author merely records what the characters say and do.

In third-person objective narration, the author's persona is almost absent. As a result, readers may have a difficult time figuring out which character is the one they are supposed to root for. This lack of author direction can have a powerful effect on readers because choosing sides requires the readers to supply the emotions that the author has omitted. The work of Ernest Hemingway is largely written in third-person objective style. He supposedly was influenced by reading the Norse sagas of Iceland.

- Third-Person Omniscient

At the opposite end of the spectrum from third-person objective is third-person omniscient. That is where the author takes a godlike view of everything and everyone. We not only hear the thoughts of the viewpoint character of third-person limited narration, we hear *everyone's* thoughts. This form is used for complex plots where the reader must be fed a great deal of information in order to keep things straight. Its defect is the other side of its advantage, namely that it does not differentiate the characters concerning which one we invest emotion in. In this respect, it has the same problem as third-person objective. If a writer is going to skip from one viewpoint to another a great deal in a story, then he or she should begin early. That way, the reader does not have time to identify fully with a character before the POV begins to jump.

- Miscellaneous Third-Person Forms

Because it is so popular, third-person narration has been experimented with more than any other. Authors are generally loath to copy other writers too closely, so they try something new. Sometimes it works. More often, it does not.

One of the miscellaneous forms is the "occasional interrupter narrator," in which the author will sometimes intrude into the action to present information directly to the reader in his persona *as the author*. One of the most blatant cases of this that I can remember was by Joe Haldeman in his science fiction novel *Worlds*. Every so often, he will insert a brief interlude titled "What They Did Not Know." In these short

passages, he talks to us as the author, much as you sometimes see a character in a movie face the screen and talk directly to the audience.

A variation on this theme is the “editorial commentator narrator,” or as I refer to it, the “smart-ass author” style. In this narrative form, the author is a frequent participant in the story, offering comments with a distinct attitude toward the characters, situations, and events of the story. Sometimes the author assumes the form of a character that lectures the reader on what it is the author wants them to know (especially if the work is a propaganda or heavy-handed persuasion piece). My favorite author, Robert Heinlein, was heavily into author-preachiness in his later books and often had a character mouth his own words for him. However, other authors prefer to get their messages across by dispensing with the character go-between, and lecturing the readers directly.

Occasionally, editorial commentators (characters, that is) report the narrative of someone else about events involving still other people. Readers have to be careful of editorial commentators, as they are not always reliable. They can lie or misunderstand what is going on, and pass that incorrect information on to the reader as a means of misdirection. If done skillfully, readers appreciate this sort of thing (as in the movie, *The Sting*). If done poorly, it just tends to irritate them.

Conclusion

There you have it, the three points of view you can use to write a story, along with their 27 sub-variations, 106 special cases, 2000 exceptions ... well, you get the idea. The truth is that storytelling is so complex because very smart people have been working on making it that way for at least 50,000 years. If you are a young author determined to find a new way to tell a story, then you are bound to be disappointed. Every conceivable approach has been tried, not once, but millions of times. The ones that remain are the ones that work.

So, rather than find a different way to establish an author’s persona, a point of view, and a narrative voice, why not learn the ways that other authors have found to be successful and use them? It is not original, I grant you; but it has the advantage that it will put bread on your table.

Besides, it just might cause you to write a pretty good book!

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The End

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For the reestablishment of interstellar travel has brought with it news of the Ryall, an alien race whose goal is the extermination of humanity. If they are to avoid defeat at the hands of the aliens, Alta must seek out the military might of Earth. However, to reach Earth requires them to dive into the heart of a supernova.

5. Antares Victory – First Time in Print – US\$7.50

After a century of warfare, humanity finally discovered the Achilles heel of the Ryall, their xenophobic reptilian foe. Spica – Alpha Virginis – is the key star system in enemy space. It is the hub through which all Ryall starships must pass, and if humanity can only capture and hold it, they will strangle the Ryall war machine and end their threat to humankind forever.

It all seemed so simple in the computer simulations: Advance by stealth, attack without warning, strike swiftly with overwhelming power. Unfortunately, conquering the Ryall proves the easy part. With the key to victory in hand, Richard and Bethany Drake discover that they must also conquer human nature if they are to bring down the alien foe ...

6. Thunderstrike! - US\$7.50

The new comet found near Jupiter was an incredible treasure trove of water ice and rock. Immediately, the water-starved Luna Republic and the Sierra Corporation, a leader in asteroid mining, were squabbling over rights to the new resource. However, all thoughts of profit and fame were abandoned when a scientific expedition discovered that the comet's trajectory placed it on a collision course with Earth!

As scientists struggled to find a way to alter the comet's course, world leaders tried desperately to restrain mass panic, and two lovers quarreled over the direction the comet was to take, all Earth waited to see if humanity had any future at all...

7. The Clouds of Saturn - US\$7.50

When the sun flared out of control and boiled Earth's oceans, humanity took refuge in a place that few would have predicted. In the greatest migration in history, the entire human race took up residence among the towering clouds and deep clear-air canyons of Saturn's upper atmosphere. Having survived the traitor star, they returned to the all-too-human tradition of internecine strife. The new city-states of Saturn began to resemble those of ancient Greece, with one group of cities taking on the role of militaristic Sparta...

8. The Sails of Tau Ceti – US\$7.50

Starhopper was humanity's first interstellar probe. It was designed to search for intelligent life beyond the solar system. Before it could be launched, however, intelligent life found Earth. The discovery of an alien light sail inbound at the edge of the solar system generated considerable excitement in scientific circles. With the interstellar probe nearing completion, it gave scientists the opportunity to launch an expedition to meet the aliens while they were still in space. The second surprise came when *Starhopper's* crew boarded the alien craft. They found beings that, despite their alien physiques, were surprisingly compatible with humans. That two species so similar could have evolved a mere twelve light years from one another seemed too coincidental to be true.

One human being soon discovered that coincidence had nothing to do with it...

9. Gibraltar Earth – First Time in Print — \$7.50

It is the 24th Century and humanity is just gaining a toehold out among the stars. Stellar Survey Starship *Magellan* is exploring the New Eden system when they encounter two alien spacecraft. When the encounter is over, the score is one human scout ship and one alien aggressor destroyed. In exploring the wreck of the second alien ship, spacers discover a survivor with a fantastic story.

The alien comes from a million-star Galactic Empire ruled over by a mysterious race known as the Broa. These overlords are the masters of this region of the galaxy and they allow no competitors. This news presents Earth's rulers with a problem. As yet, the Broa are ignorant of humanity's existence. Does the human race retreat to its one small world, quaking in fear that the Broa will eventually discover Earth? Or do they take a more aggressive approach?

Whatever they do, they must do it quickly! Time is running out for the human race...

10. Gibraltar Sun – First Time in Print — \$7.50

The expedition to the Crab Nebula has returned to Earth and the news is not good. Out among the stars, a million systems have fallen under Broan domination, the fate awaiting Earth should the Broa ever learn of its existence. The problem would seem to allow but three responses: submit meekly to slavery, fight and risk extermination, or hide and pray the Broa remain ignorant of humankind for at least a few more generations. Are the hairless apes of Sol III finally faced with a problem for which there is no acceptable solution?

While politicians argue, Mark Rykand and Lisa Arden risk everything to spy on the all-powerful enemy that is beginning to wonder at the appearance of mysterious bipeds in their midst...

11. Gibraltar Stars – First Time in Print — US\$7.50

The great debate is over. The human race has rejected the idea of pulling back from the stars and hiding on Earth in the hope the Broa will overlook us for a few more generations. Instead, the World Parliament, by a vote of 60-40, has decided to throw the dice and go for a win. Parliament Hall resounds with brave words as members declare victory inevitable.

With the balance of forces a million to one against *Homo sapiens Terra*, those who must turn patriotic speeches into hard-won reality have their work cut out for them. They must expand humanity's foothold in Broan space while contending with a supply line that is 7000 light-years long.

If the sheer magnitude of the task isn't enough, Mark and Lisa Rykand discover they are in a race against two very different antagonists. The Broa are beginning to wonder at the strange two-legged interlopers in their domain; while back on Earth, those who lost the great debate are eager to try again.

Whoever wins the race will determine the future of the human species... or, indeed, whether it has one.

12. Gridlock and Other Stories - US\$6.00

Where would you visit if you invented a time machine, but could not steer it? What if you went out for a six-pack of beer and never came back? If you think nuclear power is dangerous, you should try black holes as an energy source — or even scarier, solar energy! Visit the many worlds of Michael McCollum. I guarantee that you will be surprised!

Non-Fiction Books

13. The Art of Writing, Volume I - US\$10.00

Have you missed any of the articles in the Art of Writing Series? No problem. The first sixteen articles (October, 1996-December, 1997) have been collected into a book-length work of more than 72,000 words. Now you can learn about character, conflict, plot, pacing, dialogue, and the business of writing, all in one document.

14. The Art of Writing, Volume II - US\$10.00

This collection covers the Art of Writing articles published during 1998. The book is 62,000 words in length and builds on the foundation of knowledge provided by Volume I of this popular series.

15. The Art of Science Fiction, Volume I - US\$10.00

Have you missed any of the articles in the Art of Science Fiction Series? No problem. The first sixteen articles (October, 1996-December, 1997) have been collected into a book-length work of more than 70,000 words. Learn about science fiction techniques and technologies, including starships, time machines, and rocket propulsion. Tour the Solar System and learn astronomy from the science fiction writer's viewpoint. We don't care where the stars appear in the terrestrial sky. We want to know their true positions in space. If you are planning to write an interstellar romance, brushing up on your astronomy may be just what you need.

16. The Art of Science Fiction, Volume II - US\$10.00

This collection covers the *Art of Science Fiction* articles published during 1998. The book is 67,000 words in length and builds on the foundation of knowledge provided by Volume I of this popular series.

17. The Astrogator's Handbook – Expanded Edition and Deluxe Editions

The Astrogator's Handbook has been very popular on Sci Fi – Arizona. The handbook has star maps that show science fiction writers where the stars are located in space rather than where they are located in Earth's sky. Because of the popularity, we are expanding the handbook to show nine times as much space and more than ten times as many stars. The expanded handbook includes the positions of 3500 stars as viewed from Polaris on 63 maps. This handbook is a useful resource for every science fiction writer and will appeal to anyone with an interest in astronomy.