



## Science Fiction and Society

By

Michael McCollum

Whenever I go out on the lecture circuit, I invariably get asked the following question: "Just how did you get involved in writing scifi, Mr. McCollum?" Often this question can be translated "What in hell is a grown man doing writing that trash, anyway?"

A good question, and for the record, I first encountered science fiction at the tender age of ten years. Having recently learned the joys of the school library, I was vociferously reading everything that interested me. My school librarian, knowing that I was a Cub Scout, suggested that I read a book called *Spaceship under the Apple Tree*, by Louis Slobovnik. The book is about a Cub Scout and his friends who find an alien whose ship is hidden in an apple orchard. The alien has lost his fuel and the Cub Scout and his friends help him find it so he can fly home again.

Many of you may have noted how similar this plot is to another science fiction work: Stephen Spielberg's *E.T., The Extraterrestrial*. Interestingly, Stephen Spielberg went through school two years behind me and only about eight miles away. Presumably, his grade school library was stocked from the same central warehouse as was mine. The natural question arises: Did Spielberg ever read *Spaceship under the Apple Tree* and derive some germ of the plot for *E.T.* from it? I doubt we will ever know, but it is interesting to speculate. Nor am I the only member of the current crop of science fiction writers who were hooked by Slobovnik's book. There are half a dozen of us for whom that was our first exposure to SF.

Having told this story to my daughter, she surprised me a few years ago by bringing a copy of *Spaceship* home from her grade school library. Apparently, it is either still in print, or else the Phoenix-area schools are harder up for money than I thought. I perused it with interest, more to gauge how much I have changed in 40 years than to judge it as a literary work. The book stands the test of time well, although it isn't nearly as magical as I remember it. But then, not many things have the same effect on me now as they did when I was ten.

(My wife may care to argue that last point!)

Having been exposed to this new form of literature, I read every science fiction work in the school library in about two years. And when I went to high school, I had a new, bigger library to explore. Soon I was walking the 1.2 miles between my school and the Phoenix Public Library (being tall, I could cover the distance in 15 minutes). What then was it about SF that caused this reaction in my youthful self, and which causes the same reaction in adolescent males (and to a lesser extent, adolescent females) to this very day?

As we have discussed before, the technical term for that quality which draws people to science fiction is "Sense of Wonder." Like a fledgling addict introduced to his first taste

of heroin, that younger Michael McCollum reacted powerfully to the adventures of a group of cub scouts and an irascible alien who had misplaced his supply of spaceship fuel. It was as though the walls of my life had suddenly collapsed outward, revealing to me a wider world that I had not dreamed of before. The physiological reaction was even more memorable. Anyone who has ever experienced the sense of wonder can testify that it is like nothing else our bodies experience. Skin temperature seems to drop as a delicious chill comes over you. This generalized cooling is accompanied by a hypersensitivity at the base of the skull, a prickling that makes it feel as though the hair on the back of your neck is standing on end. It is akin to the startled reaction that overcomes you when the monster jumps unexpectedly at the screen during a horror movie. However, the sense of wonder lasts much longer. There have been times when I've nursed the feeling for as long as a day and a half.

I find wonderment to be the most pleasurable of all emotions, possibly even more so than love. How else do you explain my lifelong search to repeat the experience, even to the point of writing my own "wonder stories" when the supply ran sparse in the early 1970s? Then again, perhaps the supply was the same as it had always been. Perhaps I had merely built up a tolerance to my drug of choice and was forced to manufacture it in a more personal, concentrated form in order to sustain the effect.

Science fiction is not the only form of literature that evokes a sense of wonder, of course. To some extent, every great literary or cinematic work must deliver wonderment in order to be considered successful. Science fiction is, however, the only genre that consciously sets out to provoke this particular reaction each and every time. We don't always succeed, but we always try.

Judging by the number of science fiction enthusiasts in the world, I suspect that my own reaction is more typical than not. But is that all there is to it? Is science fiction merely a different method for manipulating your body's hormone supply for purposes of nihilistic pleasure? Or is there something more to it?

To answer that question, let us use as our mental model the image of a stone thrown into the still water of a pond. At the point of entry is the individual reader, perhaps a ten-year-old red headed boy who has just learned the pleasure of the printed word. Ranging outward in both space and time are ripples of influence. For that ten year old boy will eventually grow into manhood, and just possibly, choose his profession based on childhood impressions gained through his sense of wonder.

And what of all the people who have become addicted to this particular brand of literature? How does it affect their daily lives? To answer that question, we need to discuss the world of science fiction, which like Gaul, is divided into three parts.

### **The Science Fiction Subculture**

The world of science fiction can be neatly divided into the pros, the fans, and the readers. Pros are the professionals — the writers, artists, publishers, agents, publicists, and various hangers-on who make their living through the production of science fiction works. It is they who are primarily concerned with the craft and business of fiction, especially the part where money changes hands. If you are reading this, then you are either a professional or would like to become one. By consensus, the professional writers are at the top of the

pecking order in the world of science fiction. We are always noticed, often fawned over, and sometimes even adulated. Occasionally, we even deserve it.

Fans are the organized enthusiasts, the people who live a good part of their lives within the science fiction subculture. Fandom, as it is called, has its own language, culture, mores, and gatherings. If you so desire, you can attend a science fiction convention every weekend of the year. In fact, you can usually find several going on simultaneously. Fandom distinguishes itself from the general public by referring to the uninitiated as “mundanes,” much as carnival people refer to their customers as “rubes.” It is a mechanism whereby “we” are distinguished from “them.”

Science fiction fandom can be further subdivided into a series of interest groups. There are Trekkies, *Dr. Who* enthusiasts, dragon people, even the Society for Creative Anachronism. Some fans are devoted to science fiction books, others to SF art, others to the space exploration aspects of the field. Some fans’ interests include the planning, construction and wearing of elaborate costumes inspired by their favorite books. The larger conventions include costume contests on Saturday night where contestants vie for the honor of best costume. Sometimes quite a lot of skin is displayed in these contests, which probably explains my fondness for them.

Being a science fiction fan means a great deal more than merely getting together with a few friends to discuss the latest book you have read. For many it is an all-consuming passion. In fact, there is a long running debate in fandom regarding just how much emphasis science fiction should be given in a person’s life. The argument can be summed up in the typically *fannish* shorthand statement: FIAWOL vs. FIJAGDH! (*Fandom Is A Way of Life* versus *Fandom Is Just A Goddamned Hobby!*)

Despite their devotion to the art, the fans are not the largest or most influential group in the world of science fiction. That honor goes to the unorganized enthusiasts, those who enjoy SF novels without ever attending a science fiction convention. There is no official name for these people, so I just call them “the readers.” To judge the influence of the readers, consider the relative size of the three groups: There are but a few thousand professional science fiction people in the entire world, including all the writers, artists, editors, and agents. The fans number several tens of thousands, but the reader’s number in the millions. It is this vast silent majority that is the engine of science fiction. No matter how popular a book is among the fans, there just aren’t enough of them to make it a commercial success. To be successful, a writer needs to excite the imagination of the vast multitude for which the reading of science fiction is an act done in private.

So other than providing people with a few escapist pleasures, does science fiction have any use in real life? Does it affect society as a whole, or are its benefits limited to only the subclass of people who read it? To answer that question, we need to look farther afield. We need to ride the expanding ripples in our imaginary pond.

## **Individuals and Science Fiction**

As was noted above, I came to science fiction while I was still in the fourth grade. Most people who read SF began as children or teenagers. It is this appeal to adolescents that has shaped the field from the days when Jules Verne sold his first story to a magazine catering to young boys. And while this appeal to youth has its positive aspects, some of the effects have been decidedly negative.

For as long as they have been an identifiable class in the world of literature, science fiction writers have been denied the legitimacy accorded writers of mainstream fiction. To much of the general public, science fiction has a stature only slightly above that of comic books. To many, SF is something one reads as a kid and then outgrows as they mature. It is this lack of status that causes even SF people to refer to science fiction as being a literary ghetto.

You can see this caste system at work in any bookstore in the world. There are people who walk in and make a beeline for the science fiction shelves (I'm one of them), and others who wouldn't be caught dead looking at that "trash" in the back of the store. You are more likely see a nun in full habit leafing through *Playboy* magazine than you are of finding most people in the science fiction section. Nor is this discrimination against SF limited to bookstores. It has only been the last twenty years that science fiction classes have been taught in universities, and many of these concentrate on writers the literati have anointed as the "real" writers of science fiction rather than those who achieve commercial success in the field.

However, being a literature appealing to the young has positive benefits as well. For one thing, people come to science fiction before their personalities are fully formed. This gives science fiction writers a unique opportunity to mold young minds. Once again, take my own case:

I don't remember in what year I discovered the works of Robert Anson Heinlein, although I do remember that it was after I had read just about everything that Lester Del Rey had written. Since I confined my reading to books I could obtain from my school library, I first read Heinlein's juvenile series (*Starman Jones; Red Planet; Time for the Stars; Have Spacesuit, Will Travel*). Later, I obtained his adult works from the public library and read them as well (*Door into Summer, Double Star, Fifth Column*). While I still read a lot of different authors, I decided that Robert Heinlein was my favorite.

Many of you will be crinkling up your faces and making strangling sounds at that statement because you can't stand Heinlein. That's all right. Tastes vary. Most people who don't like him consider his fiction to be pedantic and preachy. It was, but more so in later life than when I first began reading him. Still, he was a writer with strong opinions with which he suffused his work. Guess what? Since I was still forming my own opinions at the time, I decided that I agreed with many of his attitudes about life and adopted them as my own. Here I am some 35 years later and I still believe many of the things he preached!

Psychologists refer to this as "socialization," the process by which people, especially children, learn to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable behavior in a given environment. Just as parents pass their beliefs and biases down to their children, Robert Heinlein passed his beliefs of right and wrong to me and to millions of other young readers. Some would say that he brainwashed us, and they would be right. It's a dirty job, but someone has to do it.

In 1959, Robert Heinlein wrote his first truly preachy novel. It was a coming of age story in which he laid out much of what he thought about society and the individual in scenes that were thinly veiled sociological tracts. Oh, yes. There was also a subplot regarding a war with some bugs.

I am referring, of course, to *Starship Troopers*, which is a major new movie release at the time I am writing this. (I saw the movie less than 48 hours ago. I don't

offer movie reviews, but I can tell you that *Starship Troopers* has the most spectacular special effects I have ever seen. I can also tell you that I didn't like it. As is often the case with science fiction books, Hollywood was unable to transfer the complexity of the characters and their situation to the big screen, leaving us with characters and plot cut from cardboard. One benefit of the movie, however, is that once you have seen it, you will be able to watch *The Surgery Channel* without flinching. There are more body parts in *S.T.* than any movie I have ever seen. But enough carping on the inadequacies of Hollywood, and back to our subject...)

I'm not suggesting that I believe everything Robert Heinlein ever preached. However, my own philosophy parallels Heinlein's far more closely than it does the philosophy of say, Hugh Hefner, whose publications I also read extensively in my younger days.

There is a saying among science fiction authors to the effect that one way to build your audience is to "catch them young and wait for them to grow up." There is a lot of truth in this, and because of it, the influence of science fiction writers on society is far stronger than either their numbers or outward trappings of power would suggest.

### **Society and Science Fiction**

The effect science fiction has on society, then, is through the SF writer's ability to mold opinions and attitudes in individual members of society. We plant the seeds of an idea and wait for them to germinate and grow strong a few decades later. There is no better example of this process than an international competition that began on October 4, 1957, and continued unabated for the next dozen years. I refer, of course, to the Space Race.

I was 11 years old in 1957 and still remember the utter shock of the news that the Russians had orbited Sputnik 1, an 83-kg (184 lb.) artificial satellite. We in the United States, who planned to orbit a satellite as part of the International Geophysical Year (IGY), were absolutely mortified that we had been beaten into space. That one small orbiting satellite caused a crisis of confidence unlike any other I have ever witnessed in my life. There followed considerable beating of breasts, tearing out of hair, and much soul searching to see where we had gone wrong. Novels written during that period were universally pessimistic about whether western civilization would survive its clash with the communist east. The entire educational establishment was revamped to increase the supply of scientists and engineers. I know because I was a product of that new science-oriented educational system.

As is often the case with past historical events, all of this seems a little silly to those of us who watched the collapse of communism and the dismantling of the Soviet Union. Worrying about the rising red tide and the possibility that we wouldn't live to see the dawn all seems a little quaint. Let me assure you, however, that it was all quite real at the time. The U.S. psyche was battered by the launch of Sputnik 1. It didn't help that the Russians were able to orbit Laika, the dog, in Sputnik 2 a month after, or that they launched Yuri Gagarin into orbit three years later. All of these humbling events propelled the United States to furious activity to wipe out the shame of the Russians' space achievements.

What has all of this to do with science fiction? Quite a lot. For although the shock that went through the nation following the launch of Sputnik had more to do with the Russian satellite launcher being a development version of an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM), our response was firmly rooted in decades of quiet work by Robert Heinlein, Arthur C. Clarke, Isaac Asimov, and their colleagues. Instead of building up our Olympic Team or launching a new program for artists and sculptors to demonstrate the superiority of American culture, we challenged the Russians to a race to the moon.

Why the moon, for God's sake?

Like all major historical events, the initiation of the Apollo program had a complex ancestry. In addition to having been humiliated in space, the United States had just suffered through the fiasco at the Bay of Pigs and John Kennedy was looking for some way to take people's minds off the blunder. With the Cold War at its height and nuclear war seemingly imminent, it was important that we demonstrate the superiority of US technology over that of the Soviet Union. Finally, Kennedy was looking for a method for restoring American confidence. He chose a moon landing as a goal because that was the first space feat that his advisors believed we could perform before the Russians beat us to it.

The space race was on, and it was wildly popular with the taxpaying public. Why? Because it was sold as a grand adventure, a leap into the unknown, a way to advance the level of human knowledge. It was all of that, but why did it resonate so well with a fearful and uncertain public?

I submit that the seeds of the Space Race were planted in the thirties and forties with the coming of age of science fiction. By 1960, a generation raised on "astounding stories of super science" and "wonder stories of space and time" had been infected with the science fiction writers' vision of the future. Nor was that vision confined only to the people who actually read SF. By 1960 it had percolated through the general public in the form of magazine articles, movies and television shows. By that time it had become conventional wisdom that space exploration was a good thing, a belief so deeply imbedded in our culture that no one bothered to ask where that belief had come from.

The belief was so firmly entrenched that when the president called for a race to the moon, the public responded "Yeah!", "About time!", and "Of course!" rather than "Are you crazy?" People had been conditioned to think of travel through an airless, frigid vacuum as somehow adventurous and exciting. Suddenly the idea of spending billions of dollars to reach a lifeless orb that could not have any possible value for the conceivable future seemed the only thing to do. And who do you suppose it was that conditioned them to think that way? Science fiction writers, of course.

This is not to suggest that science fiction alone was responsible for the Space Race. The sudden end the atom bomb had brought to World War II had caused many people to have a faith in science that has never been equaled. Being mortified over the Russians beating us at our own game also helped. But without the constant bombardment of the public by science fiction concepts over the previous thirty years, it is unlikely that there would have been a tidal wave of public enthusiasm for going to the moon. And, in fact, I believe that the collapse of the public consensus for space that followed the first moon landing is an indication that the enthusiasm, while real, was rooted in myth. As we began to pile up firsts in space on almost a monthly basis, people started to ask themselves "Is this all there is?" Reality could not live up to the dream, and as is often

the case, disillusionment set in following the great triumph. It is a disillusionment that is still with us.

Having succeeded at the most difficult task human beings have ever set for themselves, the public sighed and began to tell itself that it hadn't been such a big deal after all. You began to hear the statement, "If we can go to the moon, why can't we \_\_\_\_\_?" Naturally, the "blank" in that statement referred to some need more pressing than funding NASA, and so the magnificent organization that got us to the moon turned into just another government bureaucracy more interested in protecting its appropriation than dreaming dreams of greatness.

The end of the Space Race also tells us something about the limits of the power flowing out of myth. We can create myths that trigger great events, but sustaining our gains requires more. You still hear commentators talking about the great adventure of exploring Mars, or the wonders of the universe brought home by the Hubble Space Telescope, but the message no longer resonates. The era when romance sold space exploration is over. Now we need to build a solid, economically viable basis for continuing to go into space, and that, unfortunately, is something that science fiction writers can't help with. We are spinners of dreams, not balancers of account sheets.

### **The Human Race's Department of Prognostication**

So other than brainwashing the young and inciting the expenditure of billions of dollars on projects that have no immediate payback potential, does science fiction have any use? I believe it does. For as Jerry Pournelle and others have often stated, science fiction predicts the future. No, that isn't precisely correct. Science fiction predicts *all possible futures*. We are the human race's de facto Department of Prognostication. It is our function to take every possible future problem, explore its ramifications, and have a range of solutions ready to go long before the problem actually exists. We perform this service without the benefit of government funding, and for the most part, for modest personal gain.

Remember the public flap over surrogate motherhood brought about by the Mary Beth Whitehead case several years ago? For those who don't remember it, Ms. Whitehead had contracted to have another woman's baby, then decided to keep it for her own. For months there were learned talking heads all over television discussing the morality of a woman carrying another woman's baby to term, and whether a contractual arrangement could be made with regard to such a personal matter. There was debate everywhere except in the science fiction community. Surrogate motherhood is a concept that goes back forty years in SF stories, and one with which we are all comfortable. That's because we've had time to think through the ramifications: "The surrogate mother doesn't want to give up the baby? Did she sign a contract? Then what's the big deal? She's in breach of contract. Award the baby to the real parents!"

One thing that reading and writing science fiction does for you is give you a longer range view of life than is common for most people living at the end of the twentieth century. While government and the public are hyperventilating over global warming and the ozone layer, many of us SF-types are yawning and pointing out that compared to some of the changes this old planet has seen in the past, these are fairly minor events (if they are events at all). In a comfortable age in which change is viewed

with alarm, we look forward to it. “It’s not a crisis, it’s an adventure!” is our unspoken creed.

Worried about some ten-kilometer rock like the one that killed the dinosaurs smashing into the Earth and killing the whole human race? Don’t sweat it. Those of us who read and write science fiction have the whole problem scoped out. We started our study with an article on “Giant Meteor Impact,” published in *Analog* science fiction magazine, back in 1964. We’ve run hundreds of scenarios ever since. Global warming, global cooling, ice ages, melted polar ice caps, overpopulation, nuclear war, plague, pestilence, invading aliens ... It’s all the same to us. We’ve fought the imaginary battles of the future a million times or more. We’ve run the probability studies, done the math, worked out the scenarios. Should any or all of these come to pass, we’re ready! Have a worry? Don’t let it get you down. Just consult the human race’s Department of Prognostication. If we don’t have the answer just now, we’ll be glad to study the problem while you wait. Not only that, we’ll entertain you while we do it.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the primary service that science fiction provides to society. We point out the possibilities for the future. Whether it be good or bad, so long as science fiction is around, the future won’t be unknown. Not bad for a literature held in only slightly higher public esteem than comic books. Who knows? In the future we may even work ourselves up to an equal status with romance writers!

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### **NOVELS**

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#### **1. Life Probe - <sup>US</sup>\$5.00**

The Makers searched for the secret to faster-than-light travel for 100,000 years. Their chosen instruments were the Life Probes, which they launched in every direction to seek out advanced civilizations among the stars. One such machine searching for intelligent life encounters 21st century Earth. It isn't sure that it has found any...

#### **2. Procyon's Promise - <sup>US</sup>\$5.00**

Three hundred years after humanity made its deal with the Life Probe to search out the secret of faster-than-light travel, the descendants of the original expedition return to Earth in a starship. They find a world that has forgotten the ancient contract. No matter. The colonists have overcome far greater obstacles in their single-minded drive to redeem a promise made before any of them were born...

### **3. Antares Dawn - US\$5.00**

When the super giant star Antares exploded in 2512, the human colony on Alta found their pathway to the stars gone, isolating them from the rest of human space for more than a century. Then one day, a powerful warship materialized in the system without warning. Alarmed by the sudden appearance of such a behemoth, the commanders of the Altan Space Navy dispatched one of their most powerful ships to investigate. What ASNS Discovery finds when they finally catch the intruder is a battered hulk manned by a dead crew.

That is disturbing news for the Altans. For the dead battleship could easily have defeated the whole of the Altan navy. If it could find Alta, then so could whomever it was that beat it. Something must be done...

### **4. Antares Passage - US\$5.00**

After more than a century of isolation, the paths between stars are again open and the people of Alta in contact with their sister colony on Sandar. The opening of the foldlines has not been the unmixed blessing the Altans had supposed, however.

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\$7.00**

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\$6.00**

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\$5.00

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\$5.00

*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 — \$6.00

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 — \$7.00

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. Gridlock and Other Stories - US\$5.00**

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

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### **12. 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.

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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.

### **14. 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.

### **15. 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.

## **16. 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.