



Making It Up As You Go Along

By
Michael McCollum



*What 's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.*

William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Scene 2

#

And speaking of The Bard...

My wife went back to school after a twenty-year absence and obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Literature. I saw more plays in the four years she pursued her degree than at any time since high school. We saw *As You Like It* performed by the Mesa Community College Players, Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* at a sneak preview and Mel Gibson's *Hamlet* while it was in theatrical release. If we could not go to see the plays on stage or at the local movie theater, then we rented them at the video store.

In addition to accompanying my wife to the theater, I acted as proofreader for various treatises she wrote throughout her career. In this way, I learned a great deal more about English Literature than I really wanted to know. I read long, technical papers on the work of Spenser (*The Faerie Queen*) and Marlowe; learned that there were dozens of legends concerning Robin Hood, none of which bore much of a resemblance to Errol Flynn; and found myself deeply immersed in all manner of Shakespearean lore. My favorite paper of hers was one that was only marginally connected to English Literature, but which had the advantage of being fun to read. It was a study of contemporary bumper stickers titled "Dial 1-800-EAT-SHIT!"

"A professional writer who isn't interested in the majesty and history of the English language?" you ask. "How can that be?"

"Easy," I reply, "especially the way such courses are often taught in college." Besides, the College of Engineering does not devote as much time to Shakespeare as, say, the College of Liberal Arts. The reason for this is that very little can be learned about mathematics from reading Shakespeare's plays, and engineering curricula are so crammed with technical subjects that there is very little time left over for "non-essentials." This is the reason why an engineering education often leaves students unsure as to where to find the subject and verb in a sentence. (More on that later!)

One of the reasons that Shakespeare's plays are still performed nearly 400 years after his death is that he did not confine himself to the language as he found it. He saw no need to wear the straitjacket of grammar and punctuation if it didn't suit his purpose.

Whenever he felt that the limitations of the language prevented him from saying what he wanted to say, he invented new words and ways to use the language to convey his precise meaning. In fact, several of the words and standard constructions in use today did not exist before William Shakespeare.

As modern writers, we need hold the language in no more regard than did he. If we find that the words we need are not in the dictionary, we are free to make up new words, or to use old words in a new way. After all, that is how an Elizabethan playwright who occupied the same ecological niche as the modern Hollywood hack ended up being regarded as the greatest writer who has ever practiced in the English language.

However, before we modify the mother tongue handed down to us by our forefathers, perhaps we should learn why things are the way they are. For while English is a living construct that is forever growing and changing, there are rules to the game, rules that a writer violates in ignorance at his or her peril.

Therefore, before we begin our efforts at evolving English, before we study conventions for naming characters or coining slang, we need to review some of the reasons why the language is structured the way it is. And one of the best ways to study your own language is to study someone else's.

As I have noted previously in this series, a few years ago I learned Russian for a project my corporation is working on. The amazing thing about learning a language as "foreign" as Russian is that it makes you appreciate English even more. One simple example: The obvious thing that the Russian language lacks are articles, those pesky little words (the, a, an) that pepper virtually every English sentence. This lack of articles is one of the reasons why people who speak Russian as their primary language are so distinctive when speaking English. Native Russian speakers tend to drop all of the articles from their speech. Thus, they construct sentences like, "What time does train go to city today?" rather than "What time does the train go to the city today?"

The other reason why Russian sounds the way it does is that "e" is pronounced "ye" in Russian. Any word with an "e" in the middle of it has an extra "y" inserted. A common bathroom fixture, the name of which is virtually the same in both languages, best illustrates this. In English, we call it a "toilet," but in Russian, it is a "toil-yet." And since there are no words in English where a "ye" sound occurs in the middle of the word (at least none that I can think of), Russian accents sound very distinctive to English-speakers' ears. Presumably, the converse is also true.

Instead of articles, Russians use word endings to specify the precise function of a word. The endings classify a word by gender and case, give it tense, and even mark whether or not it is the direct object of some other word. To an English speaker, this practice makes Russian a difficult language to learn. The way you translate a sentence into Russian is that you think up the sentence; diagram it in your head; pick out the subject, verb, the direct object, and any possessives; directly translate the individual words from English to Russian; then figure out what endings go with each word. If you are a poor neophyte like me, by the time you've finished this process, you've forgotten what it was that you wanted to say anyway.

Having learned why Russian doesn't require articles, it suddenly occurred to me to wonder why English does! Why do we clutter up our language with all of those *the*, *a*, and *an* words if they don't do anything? Unfortunately, the question occurred to me while I was in Perm, Russia, in the Ural Mountains. Being naturally curious, I turned to

A Linguistic History Lesson

Those of us who write in English are extremely fortunate in that our language has over the centuries been honed into a very powerful communications tool. Thanks to the efforts of people like William the Conqueror, English has been largely released from the tyrannies of gender, case, and declension. With its flexibility and relatively simple structure, it is one of the easier languages to learn, although our penchant for having an exception for every rule and a rule for every exception makes true mastery of the language relatively difficult. In addition, the spelling can be a bit erratic in spots, as can the few irregular tenses that continue to clutter up our speech (go, went, have gone).

Despite these little idiosyncrasies, however, English has the possibility for developing into a common human tongue, the language that science fiction writers refer to as "Standard" in their futuristic novels. The widespread use of mass communications and the development of the INTERNET have catapulted English into the position that Latin held in the Middle Ages and French occupied in nineteenth century Europe.

my traveling companions in the hope that they would enlighten me. Being mostly technical people themselves, they didn't have a clue.

The person who did know was a wonderful lady named Sonia, the Russian translator who worked for our hosts. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union she was a Senior Professor of English Language at Perm State Technical University. After the collapse, it was far more lucrative for her to hire out to the local aerospace company as a translator than to continue her academic career. And being newly introduced to capitalism, that is precisely what she did.

Sonia pointed out that articles have a very important function in my native tongue. In English, it turns out; virtually any word can be used as either a noun or a verb. "This is my *face*," and "I *face* the music," are both perfectly good English sentences. In the first one, the word "face" refers to an object (and not a pretty one) located on the front of my skull. In the second sentence, "face" denotes an action. How do we tell whether we are using a word as a noun or a verb if it can be either? The answer is in our use of articles. The article is a marker word, a signal to the reader or listener that the word immediately following is being used as a noun.

"Interesting," you say, "but what has all of this to do with my writing a book?"

The art of writing is the art of manipulating language. Of necessity, to become good at his or her craft, a writer must develop an inherent understanding of the structure and limitations of the language. The above example is offered as a means to get you thinking about the structure of words and sentences, to delve deeper than merely thinking about the meaning of the words. For it is at the structural level that you must think when you begin using the language in non-standard ways.

Where is all of this taking us? Hopefully, to an understanding of how the human brain processes the information it receives in the form of language, and from there, to a few helpful hints as to how you can make up your own words without causing the reader to stumble over your sentences. Before we get there, however, we need to make one more stop along the way. To aid you in your study of English structure, let's consider the differences between positional and non-positional languages. In other words, let's once again compare English to Russian.

English is basically a positional language. When you write a sentence in English, the position of the word in that sentence is important to understanding the meaning of the sentence. In English, you can change the meaning of the sentence merely by moving one

word. The sentence, “Mary divorced John,” is subtly different than “John divorced Mary.” In the first sentence, John is the direct object of the action, probably because Mary found him in bed with a twenty-year-old buxom blonde. In the second, it was Mary who was caught *en flagrante delicto*.

As noted above, the meaning of Russian words are determined not by their positions, but rather by their endings. In fact, word order in Russian sentences is largely arbitrary. And just as Russian speakers have their distinctive accent when speaking English, so too do English speakers when speaking Russian. That is because we insist on constructing Russian sentences in the same word order as their English counterparts. Often we translate things much too literally and therefore order our words in ways that sound funny to Russian ears. The same thing happens when a Japanese speaker translates “Domo Arigato,” which he invariably pronounces as the single word, “*thankyouverymuch!*”

Latin is another language in which the endings determine the meaning of the words rather than their position in a sentence. In Latin classes, they tell a story, probably apocryphal, about Julius Caesar. Supposedly he needed to send a message to one of his generals in Gaul, but did not have any parchment handy on which to write. Instead, he scribed the message on the back of some handy clamshells, using one shell for each word. He then gave the shells to a messenger who poured them into a leather pouch. After riding twenty kilometers, the messenger arrived at the general’s tent, poured the shells out on a table, and the general read the message! Try that trick with anything other than the simplest sentence in English and you will end up with a defeated army.

Since the position of words in an English sentence is important, it behooves the writer to pay special attention to word placement, especially the placement of the subject and verb. For, despite our belief that we read sentences one word at a time, in fact, the human brain evaluates sentences as a whole. In order to understand the sentence, it is necessary for the brain to find the subject first, then search for the verb, followed by the direct object. For writers who are proud of their erudition, this often means placing the subject at the front of the sentence and the verb at the end, with the two separated by twenty or so adjectives, adverbs, prepositional clauses, and other linguistic clutter. The result of this attempt at sophistication, what I call the “Something wicked this way comes” syndrome, is that your sentences are very difficult to read. Which brings us to the first rule of language construction:

Keep your sentences simple, but not monotonous!

We are all familiar with those grammar checker programs that have become popular in recent years. They check your writing and tell you how easy it will be for people to read your work. In fact, having just upgraded my system to the latest Microsoft Word, I was just experimenting with the grammar checker on this chapter. My rating on the Fleisch scale is 62.1 and my grade level is 9.2. This means that people with a 9th grade education should be able to comprehend what I am writing here.

In grammar checking, as in golf, a low score is more desirable than a high score. If you write something and your grammar checker gives you a grade level of 17, it doesn’t mean that your writing is so erudite that it is suitable for the post-doctoral level.

It means that your writing is so complex that the reader *requires* a Ph.D. in order to figure out what it is that you are trying to say!

In essence, then, a computerized grammar checker evaluates the relative difficulty of reading your work. The algorithm that does the calculation is complex, but essentially what a grammar checker determines is how straightforward your sentences are.

While variety is the spice of life (and writing), try to keep the majority of your sentences structurally simple. Place the subject in the front part of the sentence and the verb not too many words away. That way the reader won't have to keep the subject in active memory while he or she searches for the action word that goes with it. The sentence "Mary had a little lamb, it's fleece was white as snow," is much preferable to "A lamb of small stature with wool the shade of a snowcapped peak was possessed by Mary."

The first sentence flows smoothly through the brain, making hardly a ripple as it causes synapses to spark and brain cells to percolate. The second sentence must be held in short term storage for long seconds while the brain goes into overdrive in its attempt to extract meaning from the mishmash of syllables. By placing this verbal roadblock in the readers' way, the writer risks having them give up in frustration. And one thing you never want to do is give the reader an opportunity to put down your book. For having put it down in frustration, they may never pick it up again.

Manufactured Words

Let us look at one of the most important tasks facing a writer, namely the need to occasionally create our own words. The need to expand the language can overtake you at any time. You may be describing a night scene, and having run out of synonyms for the color black, you say, "While overhead the ebon vault was sprinkled with the blue-white diamonds that are the winter stars."

According to my *Webster's College Dictionary*, there is no such word as "ebon." However, the word is obviously derived from "ebony," and therefore its meaning in context is clear. Why not just say "ebony vault?" No reason, except that I don't think it sounds right. To my ears, "ebon" is closer to the effect I am trying to achieve, and having no word with which to accomplish my goals, I have coined one.

We science fiction writers are especially practiced at inventing our own words and languages. That is because we have the luxury of writing about life in the future. Who among us can say that "ebon" won't eventually find its way into the lexicon, especially once a majority of the Earth's population finally gets around to reading this article? Nor is any other coined word or phrase out of the question, so long as the question is asked at some time in the future.

By coming up with a futuristic dialect, a science fiction writer can evoke a sense that time has passed. One writer, John Varley, has penned a series of stories about vast underground amusement areas where Luna's inhabitants have attempted to reproduce Earthlike scenes such as the great savannas of Africa. He calls these places *disneylands*. In a related story, a murder occurs in a religious cult where every member is surgically altered to look like every other member. The blueprint for what is acceptable physical appearance for a cult member bears a striking resemblance to a popular twentieth century doll. Not surprisingly, these cultists have become known as *the barbies*. The story is

about the problems a police investigator has in finding the killer among thousands of outwardly identical barbies. Robert Heinlein has his futuristic people refer to establishments where you rent a bed for the night as *hiltens*.

But you don't have to be a science fiction writer to coin your own terms. The most successful radio talk show in the United States at the moment belongs to Rush Limbaugh (who people either love or hate, there being no middle ground). If you are to believe his statistics, one-tenth of the U.S. population tunes in for at least 15 minutes each week. One of Limbaugh's pet peeves is the modern feminist movement, and he coined a term to demonstrate his disdain for Betty Friedan, Gloria Allred, and Gloria Steinam. He calls them *feminazis*. While the term infuriates liberals and feminists, it has struck a chord among conservatives and seems to have gained some minor acceptance in the popular culture.

There are other reasons for manufacturing language than science fiction and political propaganda. If you are writing an adventure in some far off *Shangri-La*, then you may have a need to pepper your peoples' speech with vaguely foreign sounding words and phrases. Nor is it necessary to purchase a dictionary of the local language in order to achieve such an effect. You need merely insert terms that evoke the emotion that you are looking for. The readers' brains will do the rest.

If you must invent a word, however, there are some rules you should follow. Mostly, they should be simple and easy to read. The reason for this is the same as the reason you place the subject and verb in the first part of most of your sentences. It's important that the readers not stumble over the words as they try to read them. For a stumble may cause them to fall right out of that hypnotic state in which we, the writers, have placed them.

Character Names

One of the most common tasks facing a writer is naming the characters in a story. Some writers find it easy to think up names, while others struggle with it. And though some may make it look easy, coming up with just the right character name is often a daunting task. For, like all the other words in a story, the character name is intended to perform a function deeper than just identifying the person who will be referred to as "he" or "she" for the next dozen pages or so. Character names can set the mood of a scene, or be an integral part of the plot. They should be approached with the same care with which you assign a name to your book.

"But how difficult can it be?" you ask.

More difficult than most people realize. For one thing, there is a certain amount of experience required before the proper name pops into your head the instant you command it to do so. Until you have enough practice, it is sometimes necessary to concentrate to the point that little droplets of blood pop out on your forehead.

Think back to when you were ten or eleven years old and you were asked to write a letter to someone, say a pen pal in another country. Such letters have a certain uniformity about them. They typically say, "Hello, my name is Scott. I live here in America. Things are fine here. How are things where you live? What do you do for fun?" Such letters are characterized by their simple, short, strained sentences in which the young writer tries to say something interesting and fails utterly. This is not due to a

lack of articulation on their part. Most ten and twelve year olds have extensive vocabularies, much of which they hide from their parents to avoid getting their mouths washed out with soap. Their writing is stilted only because they lack experience in expressing themselves on paper.

Similarly, a new writer can often be spotted by the names he or she gives to the characters. As you are reading along you encounter John, Joan, James, Joanne, and Judy in the space of 100 pages. It isn't that the neophyte writer lacks imagination, they merely have a brain stuck in the "j" section of the dictionary. Unfortunately, the human brain being as fallible as it is, all of those different character names starting with the letter "j" quickly become confused in the reader's head. Like watching a Japanese *Godzilla* movie, you soon lose track of just exactly who it is that you are rooting for.

The most important principle in naming characters is that you should choose names that will allow the readers to keep all of the characters straight in their minds. This means that the character names need to be memorable, diverse, and easy to read.

The way I handle this problem is by keeping a name list. Each time I need a new character, I write the name down, then search the list for similar names. If I find another character with a similar name, I change the character name to something else. Thus, I don't end up with Jones, Johnson, and Johansen in the same story. As a goal, I try to make sure that no two main character names begin with the same first letter and that none of the minor character names use the same letters as the major names.

The second important principle in naming characters is that the names must be readable. Too often you read stories in which the writer has hung a moniker on someone that is virtually unpronounceable — the name "Hieronymous" comes to mind. This problem is especially acute in science fiction. People are always coming up with convoluted names for aliens or for futuristic humans, names like prilopithicalra and aerchononimor. While they may denote a certain alien quality, such long-winded non-words just make it very hard for someone to read. Think of them as speed bumps on the literary highway. Every time you encounter one, you have to slow down to sound out the word. Before long, your lips get tired!

A character name, especially one that you encounter numerous times in the text, should be relatively short — one, two, or at most, three syllables — and should have enough vowels in it that it is easy to pronounce. This is, of course, an easy thing to do if you stick with standard names like Arnold, Bob, Catherine, Denise, Esther, Frank, Gary, Harrison, Ida, John, Kathleen, Lisa, Mary, Nancy, Oliver, Patricia, Quentin, Richard, Sally, Tom, Ulysses, Vonda, Wayne, Xavier, Yale, or Zelda.

Note how each of these names rolls lightly off the tongue, with one phoneme following smoothly after another. Furthermore, being familiar names, we don't have to stop and learn them when we encounter them. They are already in our memory banks waiting to be spooled up as our eyes encounter that familiar pattern of black splotches on white paper.

But what if your story doesn't allow you to use familiar names. What if it is set in an alien culture or the future? What if the plot you establish doesn't include an Anglo-Saxon, Latin, and Greek heritage? What do you do then?

Actually, I learned about the importance of creating names in essentially this way.

In the late 1970s, I was publishing regularly in *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact* magazine. While writing for them, I did a series of alternate universe stories. If you have ever seen the TV program *Sliders*, you will know what I am talking about.

The plot of the story has the hero threatened by villains from another, parallel Earth. In fact, there are thousands of alternate realities, and he becomes embroiled in a war between two powerful factions from realities other than our own. Having embarked on writing this technologically advanced epic, it suddenly occurred to me that I had a major problem with the character names. Because of the plot I had developed, I had foreclosed the use of all common male and female names. Why? Because the people from the alternate realities have a history entirely separate from our own. While “Mary” is a very common female name in our universe, how was I going to explain the heroine being named Mary when she was from an alternate universe with no historical ties to the one we inhabit?

So having written myself into a corner, I was forced to reject any character name that I had ever heard of and make up words that bore no relation to common words, yet were still easy to read and pronounce. I found myself coming up with names like Soufilcar Jouniel and Haret Ryland. This is not too difficult for a couple of character names, but consider the effort of doing fifty or more!

Advanced Techniques for Character Names

Is that all there is to it? You just have to think up a nonsense word that is easy to read and pronounce and you have a valid character name? If only it were that easy. Unfortunately, making a character’s name easy to read is only the kindergarten level of this particular writing technique. For in addition to not being a stumbling block to reading, a character name has one additional function to perform. It needs to reflect something about the character.

Consider the names in Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*. We have Captain Ahab; Ishmael; Queequeg; the mates Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask; the harpooners Daggoo, and Tashtego; and the ship’s boy Pip. Each of these characters is strongly drawn and highly memorable. Ahab is the ruthless captain on the doomed quest. Ishmael is the young seaman who is the sole survivor and the narrator of the piece, and Queequeg is a skilled South Seas Islander harpooner whose fatalism provides one of the most important subtexts of the book.

Now consider what the effect would be if Ahab, Ishmael, and Queequeg had been named Smith, Jimmy, and Tonto, respectively. The effect would not be quite the same, would it? In *Moby Dick*, Captain Ahab’s name is as much a part of his personality as his wooden leg and his passion for hunting down the great white whale. There is a harshness to the sound of “Ahab,” a biblical quality that tells the reader that this is a man whose fate is sealed from the very first moment we hear that wooden leg thumping on the pier in the fog.

Or take a more modern writer, Clive Cussler. It is my understanding that Mr. Cussler lives only a few miles from me, although we have never met. He is the author of a number of popular novels, most notably *Raise the Titanic*, and many of his novels feature a secret agent hero by the name of Dirk Pitt. Let the name roll around your mouth and slide off your tongue a few times. DIRK PITT! It sounds like the slide on a pistol

being pulled back and then released, doesn't it? As soon as you hear the name, you visualize a virile, two-fisted hero.

There are other notable heroes with equally notable names. There is Indiana Jones, whose real name is Henry Jones, Jr., although it takes three movies before we discover that fact. What better name for a swashbuckling, 1930s archeologist? There is Jack Ryan, an Irish descendent who is proud of his heritage, but more proud to be an American. There is Sherlock Holmes, a cocaine sampling, violin playing, Victorian genius, and Doctor Watson, his bookish, medical sidekick. All of these people have names that fit their characters. Their creators made them memorable; which is, of course, why we remember them.

Manufactured Slang

Another thing we science fiction writers get more practice at than do mainstream writers is the manufacture of slang. Once again, writing in the future, we can modify the language any way we choose. One of the most enjoyable parts of manufacturing futuristic slang is, of course, in coming up with future obscenities. Larry Niven has TANJ (there ain't no justice) and Robert Heinlein has TANSTAAFL (There ain't no such thing as a free lunch), both of which have evolved into powerful curses in their future universes.

Nor has this always been the purview of science fiction writers. There was a time when censorship restrictions caused writers of contemporary fiction to wrack their brains looking for acceptable ways of delivering the punch of the "F" word, without actually saying it. There is the story Norman Mailer tells of a Hollywood party he attended during the filming of his 1948 novel, *The Naked and the Dead*. Because the literary standards of the 1940s were far more straitlaced than currently, he was forced to substitute "fug" whenever his soldiers cursed. At the party, he met a famous actress (Jennifer Jones, I believe) and introduced himself as the author of the novel. She shook his hand, smiled, and said, "Ah, yes. You're the young man who doesn't know how to spell 'fuck!'"

The rules for making up slang are essentially the same as for coining words and inventing character names. Make it easy to read and pronounce. If your slang is also obscene, then it should be a short word — preferably one or two syllables — and harsh. I have used *frappin'* and *skinking* as mild future obscenities in some of my novels. You, of course, can invent your own words.

Conclusion

The English language is one of the great inventions of the human race. Through an historic accident, namely William the Conqueror's victory at the Battle of Hastings, English has been stripped of much of the linguistic complexity that clutters other languages. It lacks the ending complexity of Russian and Latin, and most of the gender complexity of German and French. Unlike Chinese, it is sufficiently complex that there is no danger of running out of sound combinations for new words, yet it still retains an inherent core simplicity.

But English is not static. It is a growing, evolving construct. Unlike France, where there is a commission dedicated to the purity of the French language (they really hate *le supermarket*), nowhere in the English speaking world is there a government bureaucracy that controls how we speak.

What we English speaking authors have is the freedom to experiment. If you can't think of precisely the right thing to say, then manufacture words that will get across your meaning. If, like *e.e. cummings*, you decide that capitalizing the personal pronoun "I" is conceited, then don't capitalize it. You have in your keyboard the power to make it up as you go along. Just be careful doing it.

Whether a coined word or phrase, a new character's name, or made-up slang, any words you invent must be understood by the reading public. After all, what good is your book if only you can read it? Straying too far off the accepted linguistic highway will cause you to become lost in the wilderness, but experimentation in moderation is good for the soul. It's a free country and getting to be a much more free world. That can only be good for purveyors of the written word.

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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\$7.00

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 ...

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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

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.

13. 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.

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.