

Tightbeam 378

March 2026



New Worlds By Tiffanie Gray

Tightbeam 378

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What is Tightbeam? We are the N3F literary fanzine, not the novel and anthology fanzine, but the fanzine that tries to cover all tastes in fandom, such as anime, comics, cosplay, films, novels, biographies, poetry, music, short stories, food, ...

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Letter to the Editor

Editors:

We are now proud members of our first cineclube, Cineclube Guimarães. (<https://cineclube.guimaraes.org>) Cineclubes are more common in Europe than they are in the United States, where the closest comparison might be film societies, which seem to be few and far between. Microcinemas such as the Don't Talk About It Outside Cinema Club or Side Room Cinematheque in Madison, Wis., come close. The basic idea of cineclubes is that participants join as members. There's a moderate membership fee (€3.50) and a moderate monthly fee (€3.50). As a member, you can attend as many screenings during a month in which your membership is current. The cineclube's screening schedule is determined by a board of directors or other group of leaders, and screenings are held in auditoriums and other venues rather than movie theaters. (There are also movie theaters in Portugal, of course.) So far, we've gone to two screenings: *Marty Supreme* and *Song Sung Blue*.

The former movie, applying a certain interpretation, could be considered a fantasy—or fantastic—flick. Near the end of the movie, one of the protagonist's patrons, albeit fleeting, says, "I was born in 1601. I'm a vampire. I've been around forever." It's largely a throwaway line and isn't referred to or built on after its delivery, but what... if... . It would be in the spirit of the film entirely if that character is a vampire—and if the protagonist became a vampire. Checking out fan fiction online, while there is *Marty Supreme* fanfic, I haven't located any vampiric takes on the flick and its characters yet. Besides, who knows, given how ethereally beautiful Timothée Chalamet is, he could actually be a vampire himself.

Lloyd Penney's loc in *Tightbeam* #375 in part inspired my writing this missive. Even though I enjoyed the anime, book, and game reviews, I especially appreciated Jon D. Swartz's "George Zebrowski Bio- Bibliography"—enough to pull my copy of George Zembrowski's *The Star Web* (Laser, 1975) to read immediately. When I lived in the Boston area, I spent time with a group of friends that had largely gone to the State University of New York in Binghamton, so I was intrigued by that connection. The reproduction of Kelly Freas's cover for *The Star Web* in the clubzine also struck a chord because I'd recently unpacked a box of Laser paperbacks. I was unfamiliar with Crown's Classics of Modern Science Fiction series.

If you haven't explored the Laser Books series, it's worth checking out. Published by Harlequin in 1975-1977, the series, edited by Roger Elwood, ended up including almost 60 books, all featuring a consistently composed Freas cover. Three titles were published monthly, and the books were available via subscription as well as retail, similar to the Gold Eagle line of Mack Bolan and other men's adventure series books. Critical consideration and authorial opinion of the books in the series varies, but with each book limited to 50,000-60,000 words (about 200 pages), the novels could only do so much.

Zebrowski's *The Star Web* is an excellent example. As published, it's a relatively brief and breathless action adventure yarn. But the ideas in the book, had they been addressed in a longer work, could have had quite a bit of impact. Apparently his second novel, the book touches on "strangely patterned radio signals," alien technology—a spacecraft!—hidden underneath polar ice, interstellar travel, and a network of Stargate-like transportation nodes. That's a lot of scale and scope crammed into 200 measly pages. The book even has a Portugal connection. At the

end of the novel, characters return to Earth, arriving in the jungles of South America. “Someone shouted at him in Portuguese,” Zebrowski writes.

In turn, I shout to fellow Neffers: Hello!

Putting it on a tight beam,
Blasted Heath Row

Anime

Irodoku: The World in Colors Review by Jessi Silver

Set in the city of Nagasaki, the story takes place in a world where a miniscule amount of magic remains in everyday life. Hitomi Tsukishiro is a 17-year-old descendant of a witch family who grew up with stale emotions, as she lost her sense of color at a very young age. Feeling sorry for her granddaughter’s future, Kohaku, a great witch, sends Hitomi to past, the year 2018. Through exchanges with her 17-year-old grandmother and her club members, the story follows Hitomi’s growth as a person. – MAL



Episode Summary: At some point in her life, Hitomi lost her ability to see color. As a member of a family of mages, this seems to have dulled her magical abilities and has left her feeling depressed and disconnected from the world. Even the festival fireworks, something she loved to watch as a child, don’t reveal their true beauty when Hitomi is watching them. Hitomi’s grandmother, a powerful mage, surprises her the evening of the fireworks with a time-turning device that she’s been bathing in the light of the moon for 60 years. She’s decided to send Hitomi 60 years in the past to 2018, and Hitomi has no time to resist before her grandmother wishes her goodbye and completes the spell.



Hitomi arrives in an unfamiliar room that clearly belongs to a young man – he arrives to change his clothes as she hides underneath the bed. As she crawls out the window, several students her age bear witness to the escape and start the rumor mill running – who’s the mysterious (and beautiful) girl that Aoi was keeping in his bedroom? When the members of the photography club discover that Hitomi is well and truly lost, they take her under their wing and bring her to her family’s magic shop, atop the hill as it always has been. Though her grandmother (her age in this time period) is off studying magic in England, once the rest of the proprietors realize that Hitomi is family, they invite her to stay in their spare room. The next day, as Hitomi searches for a lost item, she encounters Aoi who’s spending his free time drawing. Amazingly enough, the drawing appears to Hitomi in vivid color. Could there be some way to restore color to her world, and bring her magic back?

Impressions: It’s no secret that I’m a sucker for stories about witches and magic-users, especially when the magical effects are more benign and practical rather than flashy and weaponized. If you’re not sure what I mean by that, go watch *Flying Witch* – it’s one of the best examples and one of my favorite recent anime series. It makes me happy whenever there’s another anime series to add to this very specific sub-genre, not only because it scratches a very specific itch for me, but because these series so often include the kind of fulfilling relationships that I hunger to see portrayed – positive and nurturing ones between women. Though this series wasn’t really on my radar going into the season, I’m feeling optimistic that it might be a worthwhile pickup.



Hitomi’s world has lost its color.

Considering that I spent quite a few paragraphs criticizing *Bunny Girl Senpai* for its bad-attitude protagonist, I feel like I may get some flack for turning around and praising this series for featuring a character with some similar emotional issues, but try to hear me out. I think one of the things people tend to misunderstand about depression is how it manifests. Even now, depictions of it seem to focus on the overbearing sadness of the illness – its rock-bottom moments.

Watching characters fall to the ground and weep, or goodness-forbid, attempt suicide, probably makes for more exciting TV drama (especially for people who aren’t as intimately affected by the issue). Speaking as someone whose life is impacted by depression, its manifestation is rarely the kind of melodrama that people expect it to be. Often it’s better described as the absence of joy, a lack of motivation, or a simple inability to be interested in doing anything. Unfortunately, that inability to participate in life often gets misinterpreted as laziness, just due to the fact that it’s a legitimate but highly misunderstood expression of something that’s already stigmatized.

I think that Hitomi’s inability to see color is a very good metaphor for the way that I’ve experienced depression. It’s not as if the world itself is somehow fundamentally different between



Hitomi's grandmother wishes
Hitomi goodbye.

people, but Hitomi's perception of it clearly is; it's as if she's become separated from the very things that other people seem to take such easy joy in doing. The show does a very good job of demonstrating this by making the scenes that are in color mesmerizing in their beauty and vividness. The sugary glisten of the candied apples at the festival, the sparkling fireworks, and the jars upon jars of magical powders and potions at the magic shop are both beautiful and cruelly taunting, because we realize early on that our protagonist is unable to experience them in this same way.

I like to think that this is something that even those whose lives aren't directly affected by mental illness can understand and appreciate.

It also makes the scene during which Hitomi sees the color in Aoi's drawing all the more poignant, because, however briefly, she gets the opportunity to experience pure joy. I love how the visuals represent this; it's as if the world transforms into a digital painting. While many of the scenes to this point were depicted realistically with an extra bump of color, this scene in particular is entirely different, depicted with stippled brush strokes and rich, painterly hues. I love the effect and it makes me happy that we live in an age where TV animation can look like this.

The little bit of apprehension I have revolves around the potential interrelationship between Hitomi's eventual happiness and Aoi's presence and art. It would be disappointing to me if Hitomi's evolution and her ability to cope with her depression were predicated on her interactions with a boy, especially if the boy is depicted as some naturally-talented prodigy with an innate magical ability. I feel that this cheapens Hitomi's story, because it positions her to be "rescued" rather than allowing her to develop on her own and into her own power as a mage and as a person.

There's one line that Hitomi says early on in the episode that really stuck with me. I'm paraphrasing, but she mentions as part of her inner monologue that she's sometimes thought that continuing to insist to herself that she's "okay" and saying it repeatedly inside her own mind, might someday make it become reality. That it's become like a sort of modest protective magic. I think this is a sentiment with which many of us can sympathize, and I know I've used it as a tool these last couple of weeks as the world has done its best to convince me that I'm both not okay and that my experiences don't matter. But it's also a stop-gap measure that does little to address the source of one's pain – like a band-aid, it might stop the bleeding, but it won't heal the wound. I truly hope that Hitomi's story is one of self-discovery and healing; that in itself is a magic potion that would be worth its weight in gold.

Pros: The use of color (and its absence) do a great job of representing what depression can feel like. Hitomi's reverie at the end of the episode is beautifully-imagined. There are several women and their relationships seem likely to be important to the story.

Cons: I worry that the heroine's story will be too dependent on the actions of a boy.

Grade: B+

Rascal Does Not Dream of Bunny Girl Senpai

Review by Jessi Silver

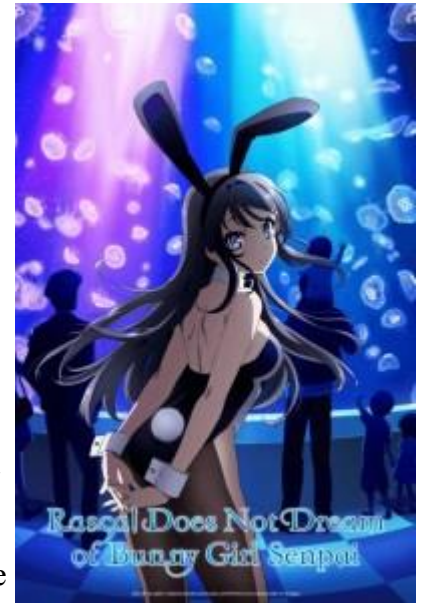
There's a rumor about a mysterious phenomenon call "puberty syndrome." For example, Sakuta Azusagawa is a high school student who suddenly sees a bunny girl appear in front of him. The girl is Mai Sakurajima, Sakuta's upperclassman and also a famous actress who has gone on hiatus from the entertainment industry. For some reason, the people around Mai cannot see her bunny-girl figure. Sakuta sets out to solve this mystery, and as he spends time with Mai, he learns her secret feelings. Other heroines who have "puberty syndrome" start to appear in front of Sakuta. – [ANN](#)

Streaming: [Crunchyroll](#) and [Funimation](#)

Episodes: TBA

Source: [Light Novel](#)

Episode Summary: Sakuta Azusagawa is a bit of a loner. A misunderstanding that morphed into a rumor turned him into something of a pariah among his classmates, so he has very few friends and spends most of his days on his own. One day when he's in the library, he sees something entirely out of the ordinary – former child star Mai Sakurajima, now one of Sakuta's upperclassmen, dressed in a bunny suit. None of the other patrons seem to see what he's seeing. Once Mai realizes that Sakuta is aware of her presence, she orders him to forget everything and leave her alone.



Life doesn't work out that way, however; the two keep encountering one-another around town. Mai eventually reveals that, since going on hiatus from her acting work, she's noticed that more and more people are unable to see her. Sakuta even witnesses firsthand when a bakery employee acts as though Mai isn't there at all. He believes that this might be a case of an urban legend called "Adolescence Syndrome," if only because he and his sister are also victims – she was bullied and the painful words hurled at her manifested as physical wounds, and Sakuta woke up one day with huge gashes on his chest. Whatever the cause, Sakuta and Mai start to recognize one-another as kindred spirits.



I feel like that too, Mai.

Impressions: After just one episode, I feel like I'm standing at a fork in the road with this show. To the left is a more thoughtful anime series, one which blends the psychological roller-coaster of adolescence with a sprinkling of fantasy elements and a unique relationship between its protagonists. One which is sensitive to the concerns of misfit teens and has something to say about the effects of bullying. To the right is something more cynical and self-indulgent, which hides behind snappy dialog and deadpan humor to tell yet

another story of an isolated (or self-isolating) teenage boy who's "too good" to participate in society with those *other* bozos. An anime series that uses its heroine's snarky attitude to distract from the fact that she's yet another manic pixie dream girl provided so that the hero can learn something and become a superficially better man.

I don't know which direction we're traveling, which isn't an uncommon experience when reviewing first episodes and doesn't normally concern me too much. However, I tend to have trouble with anime series that take this snide tone from the get-go. Honestly, I have a very low tolerance for cynicism or the illusion of it, and I'm not generally on board with teenage boy characters whose primary identifiable trait is being too smart and too dispassionate for the world around them. It's not that it's unrealistic, because I think taking an uninterested attitude is a self-defense mechanism that a lot of people employ when they're at an age and in an environment where they feel isolated. But I do think it's used too much as a fallback in cases where depression, anxiety, and their related disorders are considered too difficult or complicated to portray, and I find that annoying.

I'm reminded of Kyou from *Haruhi* (the comedic version of this character type) or better yet, the high-school mystery series *Hyouka* which stars a similar protagonist – a teenage guy named Hotaro whose M.O. is to utilize the least amount of energy possible in his every day life. The thing about *Hyouka* (and also *Haruhi*, which I don't like nearly as much) is that it has an ensemble cast of characters with their own social problems, but who also offset the protagonist's sullen attitude and who eventually convince him that certain aspects of life and some amount of effort can be rewarding rather than an inconvenience. We meet a few other characters throughout this episode of *Bunny Girl Senpai*, and aside from another male acquaintance (who's quickly isolated from Sakuta by his insufferable, overbearing girlfriend) they seem to be cut from the same cloth to some extent. Mai seems beaten down similarly disengaged due to her experiences as a child star on hiatus and the continued spread of people's inability to see her. To be honest, I'd probably feel the same way (only with some more depression thrown in for good measure) – but this “misery loves company” scenario that's compounded when Sakuta's sister Kaede joins the mix doesn't, in my opinion, do the overall atmosphere any favors.



Where did those injuries come from?

(not that they should have to). Though I can accept when an anime series isn't aimed at me, I'm not a big fan of media that serves to perpetuate subtle (and not-so-subtle) sexism.

Though I don't mean to dwell on it, this episode does take some misogynist low-blows that made me cringe a little. Sakuta doesn't create any sympathy for himself when he asks a girl who's angry with him whether she's “on her period.” You want to know how to make *me* angry? By delegitimizing a girl's feelings and attributing them to a biological function out of her control. Mai is the “cool girl” who's sexually available but not too much so. She occupies that position between “desirable” and “slutty” which seems to be roughly impossible for women to navigate in real life

What's kept me from writing the show off completely is the fact that there genuinely seems to be something supernatural at play, which gives some weight to the show it might not otherwise have. I can absolutely tolerate reliving the trials and tribulations of adolescence if, in doing so, there's the potential for examining them in a genuine and interesting way. That's the kicker, though – “interesting” might not be as high a bar to clear as “genuine” is. Take away Sakuta's claw mark scars and he's just another romanticized picture of teenage boyhood, sullen and self-congratulatory. One that, as many other reviewers have already observed, is informed by Holden Caulfield but which misses the point of *A Catcher in the Rye*. Holden Caulfield wasn't creat-

ed to be a model of behavior to which people should aspire, and yet so many people seem to do so anyway. What I'm trying to say is that it's a disingenuous ideal that will have to be addressed through the narrative and resolved in some way, whether we go down a psychological rabbit hole or not.

I'd also like to make note of the show's key art, which implies a level of fanservice that isn't present in the show. I think Mai's choice of outfit is interesting, because it's not only flashy but has the added angle of being sexy and fetishized – definitely something that ought to get people's attention if they were actually able to see her. I like how the framing of the episode doesn't even pull the "I'm strong and I *choose* to wear this because *titties bounce for the camera* it's just what I feel comfortable in!" garbage line of justification. The scene in the library where Mai makes her first appearance is very matter-of-fact. So at least the show has that going for it.

Does the anime have to be heavy for me to take it seriously? No, absolutely not. But in order to fulfill the promise of its own uniqueness it really has to put in the work to push its characters past their frustrating teenage stereotypes. I would also be happy if, considering the gender balance of its characters, it ended up being less about one guy and the other damaged young women that surround/enable him and more a story of mutual growth. I hope that isn't an unrealistic desire.

Pros: The episode isn't fanservicey like it might appear to be. There's the germ of an interesting examination of adolescent psychology here.

Cons: The main characters seem to perpetuate this sense of idealized/damaged adolescent "too good for this world" psychology, especially Sakuta.

Grade: C

Books

Heroes Fall by Morgon Newquist A Book Review by Jim McCoy

So yup, I'm reviewing two superhero novels in a row. But sometimes that's a good thing. One of the weirdest things about being a book reviewer is the mental shifts I go through between books. I mean, I read the entire *Honor Harrington* series up to *At All Costs* in one fell swoop and only stopped there because that was the last book that was available at that time. I read through *The Dragoonlance Chronicles* straight through and then *Dragonlance Legends* starting the next day. But when I'm reading things in an order that goes SF Comedy, Space Opera, Urban Fantasy, Superhero novel, etc. it gets a little weird sometimes. As soon as I come down from the last book I read and its universe I end up in a completely different one. At least this time they were similar and my poor, abused brain didn't have to suffer as much. Come to think of it, I didn't suffer at all because *Heroes Fall* is a **really** good book.

Don't get me wrong. *Heroes Fall* starts quickly but you don't really get a full taste of what's to come right up front. This novel is a slow burn and a long build. I liked that about it. As you're reading pay attention to what is going on. It will be important later and that includes some of



the stuff that you're convinced doesn't matter. The stakes keep on increasing right up until the end.

Victoria Westdale is our heroine. She goes by her actual, real name. I found that a bit strange in a superhero novel. I mean, I had thought that I was going to get someone with named after a power or a bird or something but nope. She's Victoria and she rocks. Victoria spends her time using her superpowers to bust small time crooks and working in a gas station. She's about the most unpretentious superhero I've ever heard of. In a weird way, her lack of pretense is what makes the whole story work.

Look, I like heroes in the Superman mold and I think Green Lanterns in general, and Hal Jordan in particular, are the greatest things that ever happened to the Superhero genre. I love watching those guys fly off to save an entire star system that's at war with itself armed only with their powers and a plucky attitude. I really do. That's not Victoria though. She doesn't set out to save the entire world. She starts out the novel trying to save one girl from

a gang of thugs. That's the single biggest reason that *Heroes Unleashed* makes sense.

Victoria is a small time hero that gets caught up into something she hadn't anticipated. I like this approach because it allows her to learn what is going on. While she is learning what the problem is, so are we. We're not dealing with long bouts of exposition while someone takes us by the hand and walks us through the problem. We're actively learning about the world that we've been dropped in and we're not being talked down to. I really liked this approach.

Now that I think about it (Don't tell my mom I was thinking. She'll tell you it always gets me in trouble.) Victoria is pretty much the answer to anyone who has a problem with the "strong female protagonist" movement, and not just because super strength is her superpower. While it is true that Victoria is quite the asskicker, there's more than just that to her. One of the strong themes of *Heroes Unleashed* is Victoria's caring nature. She's not just a woman with lots of muscle, she's a woman that wants to help. The superhero culture in the work is one of crass commercialism and Victoria rejects that, deciding instead to work someplace where she can make a real difference. I don't want to spoil too much, but she remembers her roots and works really hard to protect those who are like she once was. I have a lot of respect for this chick and I don't say that about too many people, real or fictional.

Any superhero novel is going to include a number of fight scenes and Newquist has done her job splendidly. Not only are the fight scenes fast paced and exciting, but she groks that which lies at the core of a superhero fight: A battle between the participants and their powers. When characters in *Heroes Fall* go up against each other, it feels right because they're taking advantage of everything they can, using both their powers and the way they interact with the environment around them. Newquist could teach a class entitled "Superhero Battles and How to Write Them." I'd probably sign up.

Of course someone out there is going to consider my praise for the battles as being a condemnation of the plot. They're wrong. I've mentioned the slow burn aspect of *Heroes Fall* previously and that's a big part of it. There's more to it than just that though. There is a lot of backstory here and it is woven into the plot seamlessly and in a way that makes it not just relevant, but important. There isn't a wasted page here. What is here makes sense though. It moves quickly and we're constantly trying to keep up, but it is about as logical and entertaining as is humanly possible. This is one of those books where I knew you had to go to work and that meant I should've been in the shower ten minutes ago, but let's fact face it, I'm a Lyft driver and I don't have a schedule so I can go ahead and read this next chapter and... uhhh... I was supposed to leave half an hour ago and I'm still in my pajamas. It's a good thing I don't have a boss.

I can't quite believe that I'm just now mentioning this, but *Heroes Fall* is the first in a new series. I believe it's going to be a magnum opus with multiple contributors along the lines of Chris Kennedy Publishing's Four Horseman Universe. I hope I'm right because the *Heroes Fall* universe is one with a lot of potential and more authors means I get new books faster. I'm Mr. Greedy Fan. I like that.

Bottom Line: 4.75 out of 5 Thrown Vehicles

SerCon

Thomas N. Scortia Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian



Thomas Nicholas Scortia (August 29, 1926 – April 29, 1986) was a science fiction author. He was the son of Thomas Scortia (a real estate agent) and Estella Lee Byerley, and was born in Alton, Illinois. He attended Washington University in St. Louis, where he earned a degree in chemistry in 1949 (and did graduate work in 1950).

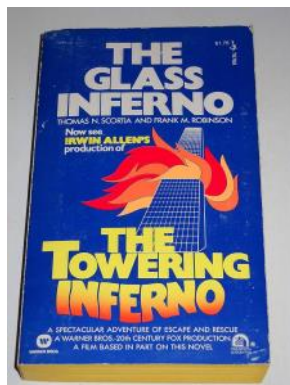
Later Life/Work

After service in the U. S. infantry during World War II (1944 – 1946), and the U. S. chemical corps during the Korean War (1951 – 1953), he worked for a number of aerospace companies during the 1950s – 1960s, including Union Starch and Refining Company (Grannit City, Illinois), Chromalloy (Edwardsville, Illinois), Celanese Corporation (Asheville, North Carolina), and United Technology Corporation (Sunnyvale, California).

He married Irene Baron in 1960, and they had several children together before they divorced in 1968.

Scortia had been writing in his spare time while still working in the aerospace field. When the industry began to see increased unemployment in the early 1970s, he decided to try his hand at full-time writing.

Major Novels



What Mad Oracle (1961)
 Artery of Fire (1972)
 Earthwreck! (1974)
 Prometheus Crisis (1975) [with Frank M. Robinson]
 The Nightmare Factor (1978 [with Robinson]
 The Gold Crew (1980) [with Robinson]
 Blowout! (1987) [with Robinson -- aka Blowout (1988), as by Robinson & Scortia]
 He also collaborated with Dalton Trumbo on the novel *The Endangered Species*.

Collection

Scortia's short fiction was collected in *Caution! Inflammable!* (1975).

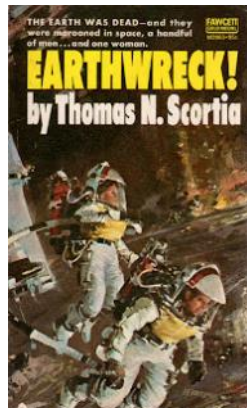
Edited Genre Publications

Strange Bedfellows, 1972.

Two Views of Wonder, 1973. [with Chelsea Quinn Yarbro]

Human Machines, 1975. [with George Zebrowski]

Notable Short Fiction

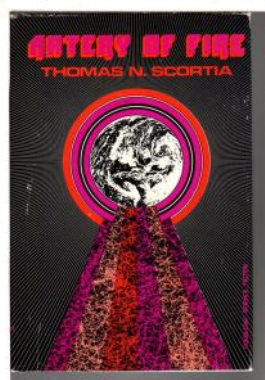


"The Shores of Night" (1956)
 "Sea Change" (1956)
 "The Bomb in the Bathtub" (1957)
 "The Icebox Blonde" (1959)
 "The Weariest River" (1973)

Pseudonyms

He sometimes used pseudonyms, including Scott Nichols, Gerald MacDow, and Arthur R. Kurtz.

Criticism of His Work



Genre critic George Zebrowski once wrote: "Scortia's stories of the 1950's and 1960's are powerful streams of thought and feeling, combined with rigorous speculation flowing out of his critical but compassionate disappointment with the world."

Some Concluding Comments

Scortia's first book-length s-f novel, *The Glass Inferno* (written with Frank M. Robinson), was the inspiration for the 1974 film "The Towering Inferno."

He contributed some factual articles on space flight to the s-f prozine, Future Science Fiction, in the late 1950s.

He held a patent for the fuel used by one of the Jupiter fly-by missions.

He once wrote: “Science fiction has always been fascinating to me.”

Scortia died of leukemia and was buried at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Covina Hills, California.

At the time of his death, he lived in La Verne, California. Among other family members, he was survived by his son, Nicholas, who also lived in La Verne.

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Note: In addition to the above, I consulted several Internet sites, including Fancyclopedia 3, ISFDB, and Wikipedia.

Television

How I Would Have Done Galactica 1980

By Chris Nuttall

In many ways, Galactica 1980 is a shining idea of a great concept executed so poorly that the entire series has largely sunk without trace. Many fans prefer to pretend it never happened; others, perhaps more thoughtful, dismiss it as fever dreams or the work of the diabolical Count Iblis. And yet, it had - and has - magnificent potential.

The basic idea was fairly simple. The original Battlestar Galactica has discovered Earth. Unfortunately for Commander Adama and his crew, they’ve discovered the Earth of 1980 - a world effectively defenceless against the Cylons, who have followed Galactica for countless light years and will destroy Earth if – when - they discover the planet themselves. The crew decide to continue into interstellar space, leading Cylons away from Earth, while deploying small teams to boost science and improve the planet’s defences. However, it did not take long for the network executives to ruin the show. They had no intention of actually allowing Glen Larson to create a great show. They decreed that it had to be non-violent – so no real laser battles – educa-

tional – forcing the characters to spout off dialogue that was meant to be educational and was probably stupid – and include childish interests, forcing the addition of a child genius who led the fleet – yes, really – and a bunch of brats from the starship who somehow developed super-powers under Earth’s gravity field. After several episodes, viewers just started wondering when the Cylons were going to put the planet out of its misery. One great episode – The Return of Starbuck - could not make up for so many howlers.

Like I said; great idea, downright terrible execution.

How would I have done it?

The concept of improving Earth’s technology is not a bad one, but it seems to me that the Galactica simply doesn’t have the time to make the plan work. The Cylons are in hot pursuit. It is just a matter of time until they detect Earth’s radio transmissions, even if they don’t shadow one of the fleet’s ships to the planet. Adama and his crew have to work a great deal faster and that means making open contact with Earth. This would be a difficult task under any circumstances, but far worse in 1980 because the Cold War is still underway and convincing the Russians and the Chinese - and the Americans, to be fair - to cooperate would be very difficult. It would be a great deal harder in the original series, because Colonial society is actually quite different from 1980s American (the reboot based the Colonials on modern day America). There would be a great deal of suspicion, both between the various nations of Earth and the Colonials themselves.

In my view, there would be three separate subplots. One would have the Colonials developing Earth’s defences and technological base. The second would be the Colonials trying to land and integrate on Earth, which should be difficult because of all the prospects for culture shock. I imagine they would be given land in America in exchange for technology - an arrangement comparable to the Zone in Axis of Time - although it would be harder to integrate when the Colonials are a separate society rather than a time displaced fleet. An autonomous zone would be harder to sell to the American government when the settlers aren’t actually American. The third would be the introduction of political chaos, as repressive regimes discover they are suddenly outmatched by the Colonials and threatened by the introduction of modern technology (the Colonials would introduce the Internet ahead of time, in a manner that make it much harder to censor) and the regimes would have to find a way to survive in a suddenly very unfriendly world. They might ally with rogue Colonials or even with the Cylons themselves, assuming they could survive as rulers of the world after the Cylons destroy the Colonials. They would be, of course, wrong.

These plots would interact throughout the first season, as Adama and his crew struggle to cope with the ever-changing world. He would be forced to consider taking over the planet himself, for its own good, and that would be strong arguments in favor of him doing just that. The clashes between Earthly and Colonial society, the urgent need to build defences, the more unpleasant aspects of their New World - the Colonials do not have racism or sexism, for example, but it remained an ugly reality on 1980s Earth - and the need to preserve at least some of their own culture would all encourage a takeover. When Adama finally dismisses the concept, Dr Zee and Commander Xaviar would try to take over themselves.

Both of those characters were terrible concepts, for different reasons. Dr Zee was Wesley Crusher before Wesley Crusher; a super-smart child genius who, at times, seemed to lead the fleet. Commander Xaviar was a little more reasonable as a character, demanding that the fleet

work harder to enhance Earth and even using time travel in a bid to prepare for the coming war, but - rather unwisely - he thought he could work with Nazi Germany (thus destroying any sympathy points he might have earned) and the Colonials had to stop him. (After that, time travel vanished from the show.) In this continuity, Zee would be an elderly scientist who intends to transfer his mind into a child's body and Xaviar would be a hardened military officer. They have understandable motives to take over, so they do.

The second season, therefore, would be resistance to the new order. There would be strong arguments for and against the coup plotters. Some would follow them out of fear or desperation, but others would agree; Colonel Tigh and Boomer, for example, would face a crisis of loyalty because they are both black, not a problem in Colonial society but a serious one on 1980s Earth.

Or because they think preparing Earth to resist the Cylons takes priority, even if it means installing a military dictatorship akin to Empire from the Ashes. Adama himself would be a prisoner, but Apollo and his son would lead resistance and eventually defeat the terrible two. Xaviar would go down fighting. Zee would go to the USSR and trade scientific knowledge for support.

The show would change in the third season, when Starbuck returned. In the original show, Starbuck crash-landed on a desert world, encountered a mysterious pregnant young woman and eventually shipped her child to the fleet; this child would grow up to be Zee, adding to the Wesley Crusher similarities.

Starbuck would bring a warning: the Cylons are on the move, heading towards Earth. He admits he was rescued by the Ship of Lights - after proving himself by saving the woman, one of the enigmatic ship's crew - and given a chance to prepare the fleet for the coming disaster. This would trigger off a religious revival throughout the fleet, and the outside world, prompting threats of war between the colonials and the new communist alliance. It will become clear, slowly and steadily, that Zee has sold his soul to Count Iblis. Eventually, the first Cylon attack on Earth would trigger a planetary war.

The fourth season would cover the war itself. The Colonials and Earth would have some advanced weapons (the Colonials making technological advances was another aspect of Galactica 1980 that was largely ignored in favor of moronic scripts), giving them an edge over the vastly more numerous Cylons. However, they would also have to contend with the communists on earth fighting for the Cylons and other threats from their supernatural backer. (One point that popped up in the original War of the Gods was that the actor who played Count Iblis also voiced the Cylon Imperious Leader, providing a nasty moment for Baltar who recognises the voice.) The war would eventually turn into something of a rescue mission, with Starbuck trying to save the Cylons as well as the human race from Iblis. The ship would end with the final defeat of Iblis, the Cylon fanatics and their communist allies.

I can't help but think that if the original series had followed this course, it would be far better remembered today.

What do you think?



Experimental Rotocraft
by José Sánchez