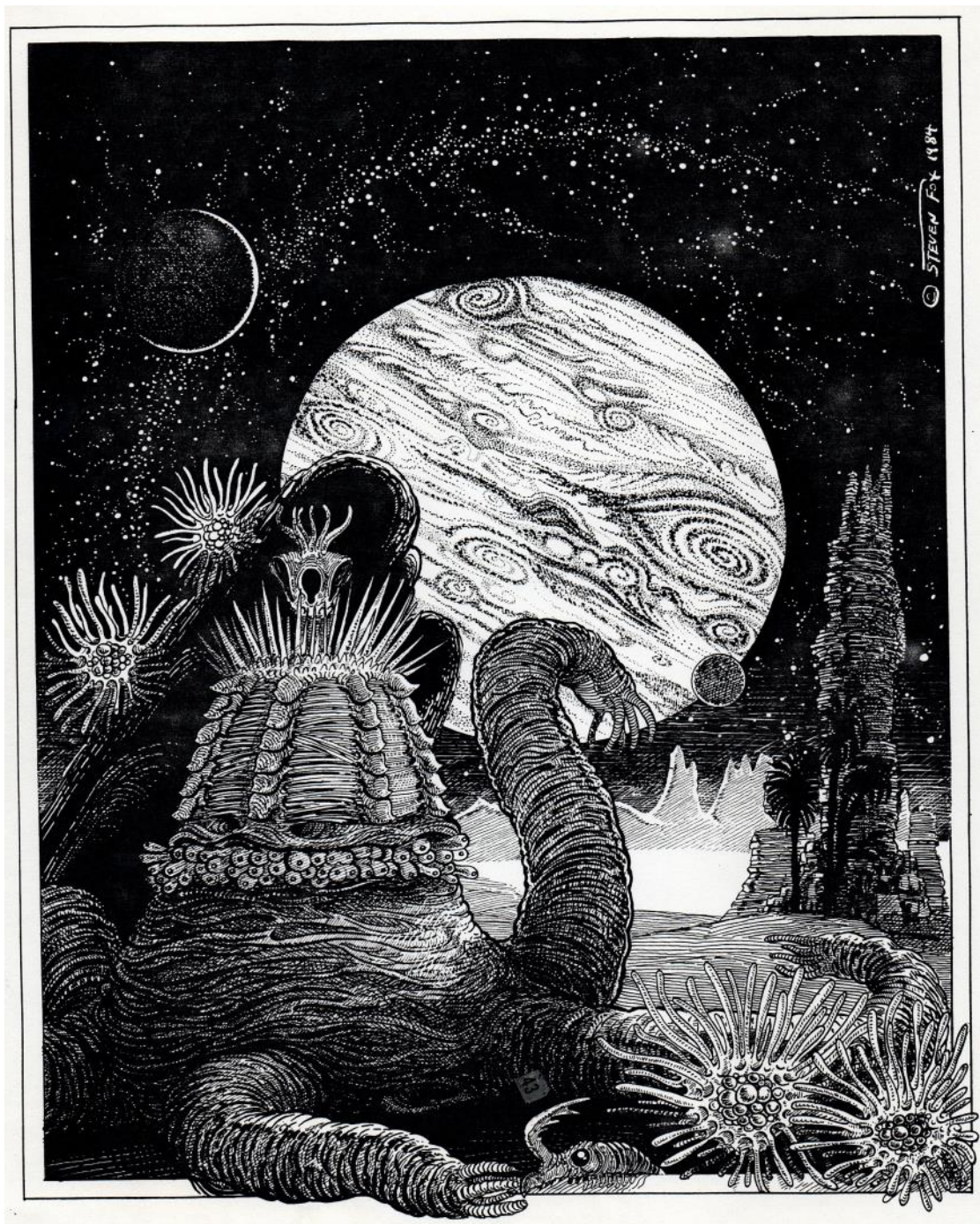


Tightbeam 381

June 2026



Cover by Steven Fox

Tightbeam 381

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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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Tightbeam is published approximately monthly by the National Fantasy Fan Federation and distributed electronically to the membership.

The N3F offers four different memberships. To join as a public (free) member, send phillies@4liberty.net your email address.

To join or renew, use the membership form at <http://n3f.org/join/membership-form/> to provide your name and whichever address you use to receive zines.

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Public (non-voting) memberships are free. Send payments to Kevin Trainor, PO Box 143, Tonopah NV 89049. Pay online at N3F.org. PayPal contact is treasurer@n3f.org.

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Writing Commoditizations

A Throwback Writing Article Cedar Sanderson

This article was originally published at the Mad Genius Club on January 27, 2018. This was before the era of AI and as I said recently: we've been through waves of cheap books before, swamping and reshaping the market much like a tsunami can reshape an entire coastline. We endured, figured out how to navigate the changed landscape then. We can do that again.

When a product can be easily and quickly price-shopped and compared apples to apples, the consumer is more likely to select the same product for the cheaper price. This process is called commoditization. When a product is first introduced, the novelty and scarcity drive up the demand, the supply is slimmer because it's not yet in mass production, and the producer can charge higher prices.

Books have been undergoing the commoditization process for the last decade. While an individual work is not, perhaps, a commodity, books as a whole are, and must be considered as such when developing a marketing plan. Your book, if you are an author, might seem like something unique, and special, and a novelty on the market, but to a reader, this is not usually the case: you are competing for a sale not with another author who writes similar books, but with the mass of books in that genre (or for the voracious reader, the mass of books in general, but that's another topic).

Indie Authors saw the commodity market opening up with Smashwords and Amazon, and they dove in exuberantly. By pricing their products lower than the rest of the market, they appealed to cost-conscious readers. Amazon, riding this wave, furthered the movement with Kindle Unlimited, opening a vast pool of reading material to consumers who shelled out a low monthly fee.

Much weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth ensued from writers and publishers. The problem is that as nice as the old system was in terms of profits, this is hardly the first time that cheap books have upset the market, and it probably won't be the last (although looking at the trends, it's hard to see how we can make it go much lower, which means that I predict a pendulum of the trend: cheap reads, but beautiful books that are more art than simple entertainment). Mass market paperbacks, and the pulps of yore, did it first. Ebooks are the children of the cheap paperbacks in the drugstore racks.

The internet, and the ability to cheaply transfer files, and then the advent of handheld digital devices that could snatch a book from the aether in seconds, all those things made ebooks a cheap and constant companion for the devoted readers. Audiobooks convert non-readers to readers. The commoditization of books, for readers who consume those books, has been a very good thing. And unlike, say, the mass production of, um, tee-shirts (to pick a quick example) books can't just be outsourced to another country where the living wage is pennies on the dollar (no matter what publishers seem to think about authors). In the tee-shirt market, the consumer can walk into Walmart and pick up a plain tee for, say, \$3. Or, if that consumer is particularly

fond of fun geeky tees, they can flit online to TeeTurtle and grab one for \$20, or if they're shopping frugal, on sale for \$12. That same geeky consumer can habituate cons and buy superior tees with designs you just can't find elsewhere from folks like Mystik Waboose Clothiers, and they will happily pay the premium price of \$24 for that shirt they can wear to fly their geek flag with pride.

Books can reach across that same spectrum - only they can do that with a single title. A consumer can borrow the book through KU (nets the author roughly 0.90\$), can buy the ebook (3.50\$ to the author), can buy the paperback (gosh, this is variable. Say \$5 to the author), can buy the hardback (urm. Let's go with \$6), can go to a con and have that book signed (Out of hand sales, so a higher profit of \$7). Those numbers can vary wildly, obviously, i'm working off my experience with my own books for pricing and length. I'll admit the hardback is pulled out of thin air - that's not something I've done although I plan to with the next book. That is how the commoditization of books can actually help the Indie Author.

Somewhat obviously, books becoming commodities hurts the traditional publisher. They have fought this tooth and nail - even entering into highly illegal price-fixing schemes in a desperate attempt to prevent the process from altering the market. With higher operating costs than the nimble Indie, they have been falling back into two approaches: trying to sell their books as 'better' than Indie titles, and cutting costs by reducing what is paid out to authors.

Writers are not interchangeable widgets. Unlike the tee-shirts I used as an example above, the writer can produce a product that isn't like other writers. Which the reader appreciates. And readers are willing to purchase books that are known commodities: i.e. written by an author they trust to produce a quality product. Readers are willing to pay higher prices for those books. However, the author cannot take advantage of this principle unless they are able to write fast enough to keep their current readers happy and buying (and no one can, not even the mass-production authors who can put out ten books a year) or unless they are able to lure in new readers with a loss-leader.

Jim Baen, a pioneer of the ebook market, and worth studying for his ideas on that which are still fresh and relevant, seized the bull by the horns and offered readers the first hit for free. The Baen Free Library still contains many first books in a series, free, in multiple formats, and many readers have spent a lot of money with Baen because they found those books, found them good, and read the rest of the series. Then, being voracious readers, they bought everything else they could find by that author.

Writers learned from this, and from the success of snippets, where the first chapters of a book were published online free to access by anyone. Hooked readers lined up not just to buy the book as soon as it was released, but clamored for a high-end product that could be consumed early, the original E-Arcs, which still sell for \$15, an astronomical price for fiction ebooks.

Books sell, if they are good books. Fans will buy books in multiple formats if they really love them. Fans will also give books as gifts, hoping to hook their friends and families on the authors they love. Making the book market more accessible to fans through commoditization will keep it alive in this era of cheap, easy, multi-media entertainment. Cheap books are not killing the market. Inexpensive reads are going to be what keeps it alive.

Anime

First Impressions – RErIdeD – Derrida, Who Leaps Through Time Analysis by Jessi Silver



In 2050 engineer Derrida Yvain is famous for his contribution to “Autonomous Machine DZ,” at his father’s company, Rebuild. But when he and his colleague Nathan discover a dangerous flaw in their creation, their warnings go ignored. The next day after Nathan’s daughter Mage’s birthday party, the group barely escapes an attack by unknown forces, leading to Derrida’s unwitting captivity in cryogenic stasis. Ten years later, he emerges

in a world at war with the mechanical lifeforms he helped create. Now, he fights to survive his nightmare future to make good his promise to “Take care of Mage.” – Crunchyroll

Streaming: Crunchyroll

Episodes: 12

Source: Original



Episode Summary: Derrida Yvain is a scientist working on a team developing “automata,” service robots that have insinuated themselves into many aspects of people’s lives. They’ve recently shipped the DZ model which are considered to be top quality new tech, but Derrida and Nathan, his friend and co-developer, have discovered a bug in the DZ programming that, if activated, could cause the model to go out of control. They beg Hans Andrei, project leader, to recall the units that have already been shipped so that they can patch them, but for whatever reason that plan is a no-go. Derrida will have to meet with his father, Jacques, the original developer, to hopefully work something out. That issue takes a back seat, however, to Nathan’s daughter’s birthday.

Mage, Nathan’s daughter, is a bright girl with an interest in her father’s work. She looks up to Derrida and seems downtrodden when he declines an invitation to join in Nathan’s upcoming research. As Derrida is leaving their home, she asks him one last time to reconsider, and though he’s noncommittal he hands Mage an electronic key to pass along to Nathan. Derrida meets with his father, Jacques, the next day and the meeting goes poorly; Derrida accuses Jacques of caring more about the DZ than the well-being of his own son. He learns soon enough that Hans has a hit out on Nathan and himself for “knowing too much” about the flawed DZ programming, and having “taken care” of Jacques Yvain earlier, intends to kill Derrida and Nathan and

frame it as a murder-suicide to the media. Nathan comes out on the bad end of the situation, but Derrida manages to escape into the woods where in his pained delirium he begins to see strange visions of Mage appearing and disappearing as if phasing in and out of reality. The vision leads him to an underground cryogenic facility, where Derrida's final act is to seal himself away in one of the pods. But what will he find when he awakens?

Though I would have liked to have gone into this viewing session clean, I happened to read the ANN preview of the first few episodes that was posted following the recent Crunchyroll Expo convention. The article certainly gave the impression that the story was a muddled mess and the technical aspects of the show were disappointing, so my expectations were definitely tempered somewhat. To be honest, when I discovered that Crunchyroll posted the first four episodes yesterday, I looked at it as an opportunity to get this first impression "over with" so that it would be out of the way by the time the Autumn anime started in earnest. I'm not sure if it was the effect of lowering my expectations or whether I'm just not as harsh a critic, but having seen the first episode I'm kind of questioning the rude audience reactions I read about in ANN's article. The episode certainly has its share of aesthetic problems and some of the dialog absolutely has issues with emotional realism, but while it's mediocre it's certainly not an unmitigated disaster.



Mage and her friend Yui enjoy the birthday party.

My suspicion is that many anime fans saw the name "Yoshitoshi Abe" attached to the series and became saddled with a set of expectations that the series could never hope to achieve. For those who are unfamiliar, Abe is an artist and writer who loaned his particular style to several well-known and influential series during the late 1990's and early 2000's. The most famous and well-regarded of these are *Haibane Renmei*, which is based on one of his own self-published manga, and *Serial Experiments Lain*, to which he pro-

vided very iconic character designs. He also created the *NieA_7* manga, another doujinshi effort that was later adapted into an anime, though despite being fairly charming doesn't seem to be quite as famous. In any case, to many of us who came into our own as fans around that time period, Abe's name brings with it a certain feeling of nostalgia and admiration; it's not surprising that the fact of his involvement would drum up some expectations about the type of story and its quality level, no matter how small his actual contribution was.

The fact is, Abe's rich, textured art style isn't represented well in the series; if I hadn't been told multiple times that he was involved, I wouldn't have guessed it on my own. The character designs as they appear in the show itself are very generic, which isn't necessarily a problem in-and-of-itself, but it does beg the question – why employ the services of a fairly famous character artist and not go to some effort to preserve the charm of their designs? Obviously anime production is more complicated than that, as anyone who's seen *Shirobako* will attest. It's not a system that allows the time or resources necessary for people to do their best work; we just happen to be lucky enough to get some great results some of the time anyway. Geek Toys, the animation production company for this series, is brand new, and with that newness comes many challenges. I can't entirely fault a studio for simplifying some designs more in favor of ones

that could be more easily animated. That said, the fact that there are a lot of off-model shots in the first episode doesn't exactly bode well for how the rest of the series is going to look.



Derrida sees visions of Mage in the woods.

Some of the writing and dialog leaves a bit to be desired. I actually mistook this for a direct time-travel story; thus far the only confirmed “time travel” is Derrida’s missing ten-year gap. I make it a personal policy to look past all but the most glaring plot holes when timey-wimey stuff is involved, but judging by the first episode, time travel and its resultant paradoxes aren’t a major factor (though based on what I’ve heard that stands to

change at some point).

Some of the character dialog, however, feels very melodramatic, and in the “bad” (meaning: not entertaining) way. I think the best example of this occurs when Derrida confronts his father with the information about the DZ’s flawed operating system; when Jacques doesn’t give Derrida the answer that he’s seeking, the situation goes from “zero” to “you never loved me, dad!” in a matter of seconds. While I can accept the fact that Derrida and his father might have some issues to work out, introducing those issues when we know very little about either character to begin with feels more like a ploy to wring some quick, cheap drama out of an under-developed situation. I could have managed with less time spent at Mage’s birthday party if instead there would have been a few more moments spent establishing the main character’s personality and the clearly important and probably complicated relationship he had with his genius father.

Still, I’m not ready to entirely discount the series yet, and this episode was actually fairly entertaining in spite of its flaws. At the very least, it manages to do what so few stories can; it warns us of the consequences of inaction and then, thanks to time manipulation (of a sort), proves those consequences to have been genuine.

Because they were available (and I decided it would be a better use of my time to watch the episodes now rather than pick them back up later), I decided to go ahead and watch episodes 2-4 of the show. It’s not my regular practice, but it’s difficult to pass on an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. In the subsequent few episodes, Derrida awakens from cryo-sleep to find that his fears have come true and that the DZ robots have gone rogue, causing mass destruction (which of course seems to benefit the wealthy Rebuild shareholders and other upper-class types, including Hans.) Derrida joins up with an older man and his young daughter – two people who have the tools and survival instincts to navigate the unfriendly robot-riddled terrain. They travel to find Mage’s whereabouts, learns that she’s dead (from her friend Yuri), then learns that that was a lie. Mage is, in fact, missing. Derrida’s new goal is to obtain a copy of the software patch so that he can nullify the DZ troops and save humankind, but they learn that the robots’ malfunction was not so much a bug as it was completely intentional and entirely by design. This

unsettling corruption appears to run deep and Derrida must trudge through it to find the answers that he seeks.

These episodes continue much in the same vein as the first; the show is basically competent in most respects and manages to maintain a modest amount of tension as Derrida and friends find themselves pursued by various factions (including a frighteningly-persistent female assassin who's identity I assume is less of a secret than it first appears). Hans Andrei makes for an ineffectual villain; rather than proving to be a real danger to the protagonist, he's mostly a bumbling rich guy who seems terrified of anything that might threaten his position. Derrida turns out to be kind of an unlikable protagonist, not because his goals aren't sound but more because he lacks emotional range and maturity; it becomes exhausting to listen to him fly off the handle while simultaneously trying to convince (coerce?) those around him to give up their safety to help him achieve his goals.

Part of me would like to give this one a shiny "You Tried" award; I feel like this is a story someone really wanted to tell. There are definitely echoes of something bigger and better to be found within the show's modest package. There are just a lot of aspects (visual and story-wise) that are holding it back, and as it stands it's too much of a hard sell.

Pros: Seen from afar, the show is fairly competent, if unimpressive.

Cons: The protagonist and antagonist are insufferable. There are many distracting aesthetic and quality-control issues.

Grade: C-

Video

Hulu's Paradise A TV Series Review Jim McCoy

What if there were a super volcano explosion in Antarctica which resulted in an extinction level event? What if the American government had known it was coming and prepared a bunker for its highest ranking officials and others who were useful? What could possibly go wrong for the people inside the bunker after the dust settled? Hulu's show Paradise asks those very questions. The answers will shock you.

Paradise starts off weird, slowly gets weirder and then goes straight off the deep end. The truly crazy part is how much all of the weird makes sense. The audience is introduced to the world of Paradise slowly, but the further we get drawn in and the crazier it gets the more sense it makes.

I'd like to meet the people that write for Paradise. They've found a way to tell a story that's partially in the present, partially in flashback and is always engaging. I want to pick their brains about how they did it. This story is amazing. It's layered. It's immediate. The characters quickly become people that you respect and care about. They took approximately elebenty bajillion dif-

ferent factors, threw them in the blender, and came out with a concoction that has me craving more.

Keep your heads on a swivel while you're watching Paradise, folks. Everything changes all the time. Go ahead and think you've got it all figured out. I dare you. Just know that you're wrong. I almost feel like the aforementioned writers of the show get together to write scripts like "Okay, things are bad. How do we make them worse?" Then everybody comes up with the most terrible thing that can happen to the characters and they go "Okay, now how do we get there?" and that's how they write the scripts. It was like watching the world's most awesome train wreck. Like, I knew something terrible was about to happen and I just couldn't wait to find out what the next disaster was going to be.

Unfortunately, they've only released two seasons to date and I just finished the last episode but that falls under the Jimbo Rule: If I don't write it, produce it, or act in it, and I'm not a member of the crew for it, it ain't my fault if it don't come out faster.

Or sumfin'

Anyway, blame Hulu because there's not more Paradise. I'm innocent this time. Google says no more episodes till February of next year. Oof.

Share

The main character is Secret Service member Xavier Collins, played by Sterling K. Brown. Xavier is the guy you want in your corner. He's loyal. He's smart and he is freaking unstoppable. Xavier is the guy who won't be deterred by the other side's deterrents, won't stop at the stop sign and won't break when pressure is applied.

Xavier is a bodyguard. He is a family man. He is the guy who will do whatever he needs to for his family. He's been through hell and he's come out stronger. Watching Paradise, you get to see Xavier take care of his own family. I'm here to tell you that if the worst happened, this is the guy I would want watching over my family. He's that good.

Xavier also seems to be the only character in all of Paradise who is who he actually is. You'll get that once you've seen it. There are a lot of people doing a lot of things and it's not always obvious what they want or how they're planning to get it. At least not until it's too late. It seems like everyone has an agenda. I didn't start off knowing what any of them were, with the exception of Xavier's agenda to protect the president.

There is a lot more action in Paradise than I expected to see in an isolated community living underground. That sounded like the recipe for some vanilla flavored pap. It wasn't. There is always something going on. There is always a scheme unfolding. There's even a bit of old school violence to spice things up. It's like fresh blood on the wall in Chicago. That's the old saying, right? Something like that. Well, I mean, except that it's not Chicago and I don't remember any blood on the actual wall.

Look, it's called a simile, okay? You don't have to take everything so literally all the time.

At any rate...

I know I had a lot to say about Xavier but he's not the only Paradise character worth watching. Samantha "Sinatra" Redmond is another favorite. She cuts an extremely interesting figure. I don't want to spoil too much, but she's definitely worth keeping an eye on. You'll figure out why eventually. Julianne Nicholson does an amazing job of presenting this complex character. As much as I hate the Sinatra character, I love the Sinatra character. I really don't know what to do with this woman. One minute she's acting like a loyal follower, the next minute she's trying to take over. We'll see where the character goes next, but there's something going on there. I can tell.

I'm both disappointed and relieved to state that I only found Paradise a couple of weeks ago. Disappointed because I really wish I had been on the Paradise train when it pulled out. Relieved because waiting for the second season would have sucked. I mean it. This is the kind of show that gets in your head and won't let go. It's not fun having to twiddle my thumbs while I'm waiting for the next season to start. It's like going to your crack dealer's house and finding a line six blocks long.

And now I'm stuck waiting for Season Three. I have a feeling that the totally awesome massively exciting thing is going to happen. I have no idea what that might be, but I feel pretty confident that it will be something. I haven't exactly found myself bored up to this point. I can't wait for the journey to continue.

Bottom Line: 5.0 out of 5 Broken Elevators

SerCon

Frank Robinson Bio-Bibliography by Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D. N3F Historian

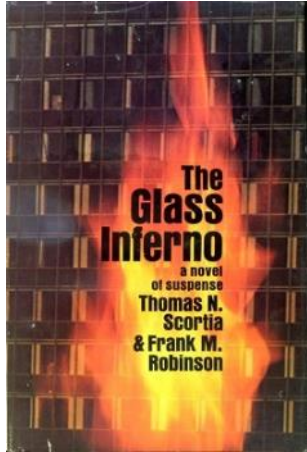


Frank Malcolm Robinson was born on August 9, 1926 in Chicago, Illinois, the son of Raymond Robinson (an artist) and Leona White Robinson (a housewife).

Robinson died on June 30, 2014. The cause of his death was heart disease and pneumonia, said Robin Wayne Bailey -- an author, friend, and former president of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, which announced Robinson's death.

As a teenager, Robinson was an active Midwest science fiction (s-f) fan, living for a time at the Slan Shack in Battle Creek, Michigan, collecting genre magazines, attending s-f conventions, and publishing his fanzine FANEWS/CARD in 1944. He regularly attended s-f conventions throughout his life, including the 1942 Bloomington Conference.

In addition, in his teens he worked as a copy boy for International Service, and then he became an office boy for Ziff-Davis Publications that published such s-f magazines as *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Adventures*.



Later Life/Work

He served in the Navy as a radar technician during World War II, and then served in the Navy again during the Korean War.

He earned a B. S. in physics from Beloit College in 1950; and then he received an M. S. in journalism from Northwestern University in 1955.

After college, he worked for a Chicago-based Sunday supplement. Soon afterward, he switched to the magazine *Science Digest*, where he worked from 1956 to 1959.

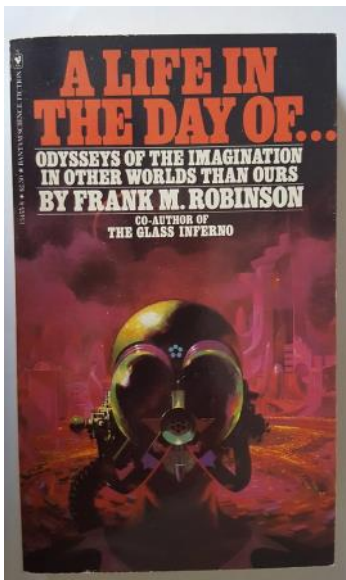
From there, he moved into editing men's magazines: *Rogue* (1959 -- 1975), *Cavalier* (1965 -- 1966), and *Playboy* (1969 – 1973), leaving *Playboy* to write full-time.

Robinson moved to San Francisco in 1973 to work with his friend, Thomas Scortia, on their s-f novel, *The Glass Inferno*, that was published in 1974. He and Scortia wrote other books together, including *The Prometheus Crisis* (1975), *The Nightmare Factor* (1978), *The Gold Crew* (1980), and *Blowout* (1987).

Robinson worked as a speech writer for the San Francisco activist and politician, Harvey Milk, writing some of Milk's most important speeches.

Robinson had a small role in the movie about Milk (2008), playing himself. The movie, *Milk*, starred Sean Penn, who won the 2009 Best Actor Oscar for his portrayal of the assassinated politician.

Other Publications



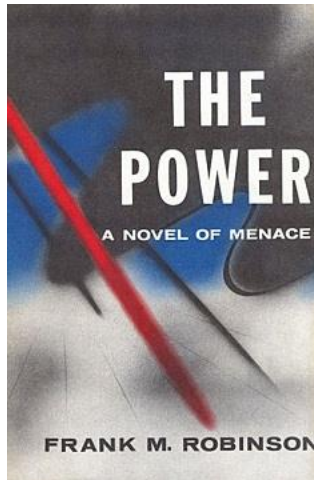
Robinson was the author, co-author, or editor of approximately 20 books, and he also wrote numerous stories and articles. Some of his novels were made into movies and TV series, including *The Power*, *The Glass Inferno*, and *The Fifth Missile* (an NBC mini-series).

Collections of Robinson's fiction included *A Life in the Day of ...* and *Other Short Stories* (1981), and *Through My Glasses Darkly* (2002).

His first published s-f story was "The Maze," that appeared in the June, 1950, issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*. He went on to publish several other stories in *Astounding/Analog*.

His book on pulp magazines, *Pulp Culture: The Art of Fiction Magazines* (co-authored with Lawrence Davidson), was published in 1998 by Collectors Press.

His autobiography, *Not So Good a Gay Man: A Memoir*, was published in 2017.



Stories on Radio/TV

On radio, Robinson had some of his stories broadcast, including one on Dimension X (“Untitled Story”) in 1951, and two on X-Minus One (“The Reluctant Heroes” and “The Girls from Earth”), in 1956 and 1957, respectively. In addition, one of his stories was heard on Tales of Tomorrow (“The Girls from Earth”) in 1953.

On television, his story “The Power” was adapted for an hour-long presentation on Studio One in 1956.

Pseudonyms

He occasionally used the pseudonyms of Thomas Benji, Robert Courtney, and James Walsh. He was also sometimes known as Frqnk from a typo in a 1940s fanzine.

Awards/Honors/Recognitions

He won First Fandom’s Sam Moskowitz Archive Award in 2008. He graduated from college Phi Beta Kappa.

Photos

His photo, and a brief biography, appeared in the June, 1955, issue of the s-f prozine *Imagination*.

He appeared in two photos in Warner’s history of s-f fandom, *All Our Yesterdays* (1969), first as a Slan Shack member, and then in a group of fans at Little Chicon in 1944.

His photo also appeared in Warner’s later fan history, *A Wealth of Fable* (1992).

Some Concluding Comments

He was an assistant editor at *Family Weekly*, a national weekly magazine supplement, during 1955 -- 1956. Then he was hired as an assistant editor at *Science Digest*.

He was a collector, and expert on, pulp magazines that were published from the 1890s to the 1950s.

He first publicly declared he was gay on a panel at the World Science Fiction Convention in Boston in 1980. He had been openly gay, within his close circle of friends, since the end of the 1960s.

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

Video Games

Let's Get These Made Into Video Games It's Just A Thought, but it Would be New Content Comment by Jim McCoy

So I was reading something yesterday, and it got me thinking. Brian Niemeier, over at Kairos on Substack recently threw up a post about the decline of remakes in the gaming industry. It's a good one.

Kairos on Substack

The Remake Bubble Is Bursting

A strange phenomenon has cropped up in the game industry over the last year. Publishers have spent the better part of a decade convincing investors that remakes were the safest bet in entertainment. Now suddenly, several of those same companies have begun canceling or shelving high-profile remake projects before release...

That's life in the salt mines, I guess.

But I was thinking. (Don't tell my mama I said that. She told me never to do it, because it always gets me in trouble.) If these video game companies can't remake the same stuff they've been making for the last forty years, they're going to need some new content. Now, where could they find something like that?

The answer is, to me at least, obvious. Crossover content has always done well. Marvel and DC have made TV shows, movies, toys, and video games from their content. Actually, they've made more but I don't want to be here all day. Star Wars has made crossovers into about everything imaginable as well, as has Star Trek, and probably about ninety percent of Disney content. Crossovers are huge.

And I, being the guy who promotes the Science Fiction and Fantasy stuff, have some ideas about some things that all of these AAA gaming companies could make into powerhouse franchises. Good ideas are what I do. (Or at least I like to think that.) So I am here to assist the video game industry identify properties that will translate well and which I believe (the video game company assumes all risk) will make you buckets of cash, which you may then toss into a giant vault and swim around in like Scrooge McDuck in Ducktales.

First off, two disclaimers:

Disclaimer Number One: I, being me, realize that my favorite authors will be paid licensing fees for the use of their intellectual property if it gets picked up. I am okay with this. Extra money provided to my favorite writers can be seen as a form of motivation for them to continue writing. Some people may actually accuse a sweet, innocent type like me of attempting to bribe said authors into writing more books using your money. I find myself okay with that as well. I'm even willing to make the sacrifice of being forced to read more quality content that would surely result for this and review it afterward.

A reviewer's life is a rough one but it is the life I've chosen.

In this case, it's a sacrifice I'm willing to make if it helps everyone else out.

Disclaimer Number Two: I make no representation, implied or explicit, that I own the rights to these properties or possess the authority to negotiate on behalf of those who do. I've never even met most of these people. These are ideas, not offers of products for sale.

On the other hand, and I am being one hundred percent totally serious here:

I work in sales. I have experience in Business to Business sales and appointment setting. If you need someone to get to one of these perspective authors and/or companies, I know how to figure out who to talk to and how to get past gatekeepers. I've done it before. All I ask for in return is money. And, let's face it, you're trying to make money here, too. If you deserve compensation for your efforts, why wouldn't I?

Having said all of that, here's what I'm thinking:

Dungeon Crawler Carl

Listen folks, this one is a no-brainer. It is one of the biggest untouched literary properties out there. Dungeon Crawler Carl is incredibly popular and already has merchandise available in stores. DCC hasn't reached Harry levels of popularity yet, but it's only a movie series and a video game away from doing so. Who doesn't want to make a game that comes with a pre-built huge following? Isn't that the whole point of doing remakes in the first place?

And Dungeon Crawler Carl is LitRPG. It mirrors a Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG). That makes it fairly easy to translate. Mechanics already exist. There are different sized boss fights in the books which would make great dungeon/raid sized boss fights. The AI that runs the dungeons in the books is freaking crackers, and that would leave developers a lot of leeway to add new things into the game.

The dungeon in Dungeon Crawler Carl has multiple floors. I see two ways to handle this: Either you set it up by levels, so that Character A starts the first floor at level one and can advance to the second floor at level 10 or whatever. This allows character growth and advancement through the dungeon and provides variety for the player. The floors are big enough to provide a bunch of different challenges, with commensurate rewards. There are eighteen floors and players could work their through all of them this way. Different boss encounters could be added with patches, similar to the way World of Warcraft adds new raids.

The other, albeit similar, option would be to go with progressing through the floors based on character levels, but limiting the number of floors available for a time, then adding in (and charging for) expansions from time to time ala every MMO ever. This approach, of course, generates monthly subscription fees on top of the price of the software and would make whatever company oodles and bunches of money over time.

The Four Horsemen Universe

The Four Horsemen Universe (4HU) is freaking huge. There are multiple alien species. There is a plethora of technology available. There is space combat. There is ground combat. There are as many possible targets to point your players at as you can imagine. It's awesome. And the cool part is that the whole milieu is based on mercenary units, so your players can do pretty much whatever set of tasks you feel like assigning them to. There are a million different factions, too. I think you'd definitely need to go open world here, but you could limit it the size based on what you needed to.

The Four Horsemen Universe is a shared universe similar to the Star Wars Expanded Universe or Dragonlance or a million other things. It might be best to start this one off slowly and build a franchise out of it. Different conflicts (including, but not limited to, The Revelation Cycle, Guild Wars, The Omega War, etc. provide plenty of room to expand your story mode or your MMO.)

What really has me excited about the Four Horsemen Universe is the Player Vs Player option. A grand melee works. So does a team concept. (Although I'd call them "companies" to fit the flavor of the series, since the 4HU is made up of mercenary companies.) Capture the flag and other objective related battlegrounds would work as well. Small combats would work well, such as the two on two or three on three option in World of Warcraft. I live for the chance to put a couple of humans in CASPers up against a Tortantula with a Wrogul healer. That would be way too much fun.

A ranked PvP system would be awesome if you could come up with prizes for people who win the overall season and would provide good online content.

Monster Hunter International

First off, there's a really good tagline from the books that would make awesome marketing material. Unfortunately, I can't tell you what it is because I don't want to get sued. When you sign Larry Correia and/or Baen Books to a contract to make a game out of Monster Hunter International, you can ask them. Tell them I said it involves looming and cowboys. They'll know what you mean.

But more importantly, Monster Hunter International is the kind of universe a player could get lost in. This would once again have to be an open universe game. I could see it as an MMORPG, with players forming their own companies (as opposed to guilds) to fight monsters and make bank. Raids could be against some of the big nasties from the books.

In the first book, main character Owen Pitt gets attacked by a werewolf and goes through new-bie training. That would be a good starting point. And, given the fact that being a monster hunter is all about getting paid (unless you're a government dweeb from the Monster Control Bureau) assigning quests, or tasks or missions gets really easy. Go here, kill the thing, collect the PUFF (I forget what that stands for but it's a bounty for every monster killed.) and continue onto the next one. It might take a bit of creativity to keep things from getting repetitive but it can be done with events like the Christmas party, etc.

There is also a main series and a side series (Monster Hunter Memoirs) that would make for easy expansion fodder. You could blow this thing up huge. There is already merch that exists. You could go full Blizzard and sell even more. It would be terrific. Especially if you made something with Skippy flying the Hind. IJS.

And that's what I've got for today. I'll have to revisit this at some point in the not too distant future.

But if any of you video game companies out there want to talk about me attempting to talk to these guys, hit me up. I'll do my best to help you out.

Food of Famous Author

Pickled Radishes A quick and easy condiment by Cedar Sanderson

As the garden produce starts to come in, almost every day becomes a game of 'what can I make with this?' and fortunately in a small garden, I can usually win at this by making delicious meals. As the spring turns into summer and the trickle increases to a flood, however, I'm inevitably faced with difficult decisions. Like... how do I preserve this?



Radishes struggle in the heat here, and I planted several varieties this spring for two reasons: to mark out where I'd planted carrots as they germinate rapidly, and to see which ones perform best in my garden. I have some definite winners already, although it will take a course of years to truly determine the ones I'll be growing every season. The daikon is thriving in spite of the early heat. The white icicle radishes did okay for roots, but their greens are so tender and mildly flavored I could use them in a salad to replace lettuce. And then there's this thing!



That is a black radish. Of the radishes I put into the carrot bed, only a few developed their roots. Most bolted, and I pulled them to feed to the chickens. I let this one go until I thought it was about to bolt¹ and then harvested it. Since I was planning a meal of pulled pork sandwiches for the big Saturday gathering, I decided to make a quick² pickle from the root, and use the greens (from this and the icicle radishes) to make a side dish of greens. Nothing to waste if I can help it, although some things cycle through the chickens for nutritious protein and fat in the shape of eggs.

Only the peel of this radish is black, and a snow-white interior was still tender.

You'll want about a pound of thinly-sliced radishes for this recipe. I just used this one large radish, which was close to a pound!



1 c rice wine vinegar³
 1 c water
 2-3 tbsp sugar
 1 1/2 tsp pickling salt
 Thumb of ginger, cut into thick slices
 2-4 garlic cloves, peeled
 1 tsp mustard seeds
 optional: sliced chili pepper

Slice and cut into small pieces the radish, smaller radishes will work just thinly sliced. I'm planning to put this on sandwiches, so I kept the slices smaller but if you want to eat them offhand, they could stay in bigger sliced pieces! Pack this into a wide-mouth pint jar (will fill two with a full pound of slices) or a single quart. Add thin chili pepper slices to the top if desired (can use hot peppers if you like!)



Bring vinegar, water, and spices to almost the boiling point, until the sugar and salt are dissolved. Pour this over the radishes in the jars. Allow to cool to room temperature, then place into the refrigerator. Will be ready to eat as a quick pickle in 4 hours to overnight, and this should keep up to a month in the fridge if it lasts that long.

The bright bite of acid and peppery radish is a lovely accompaniment to the rich pulled pork on these sandwiches.

1: Bolting is the act of flowering. In most plants that do this, you don't want to try and eat them after they bolt, as leaves grow bitter and roots woody once they have achieved their biological goal of reproduction.

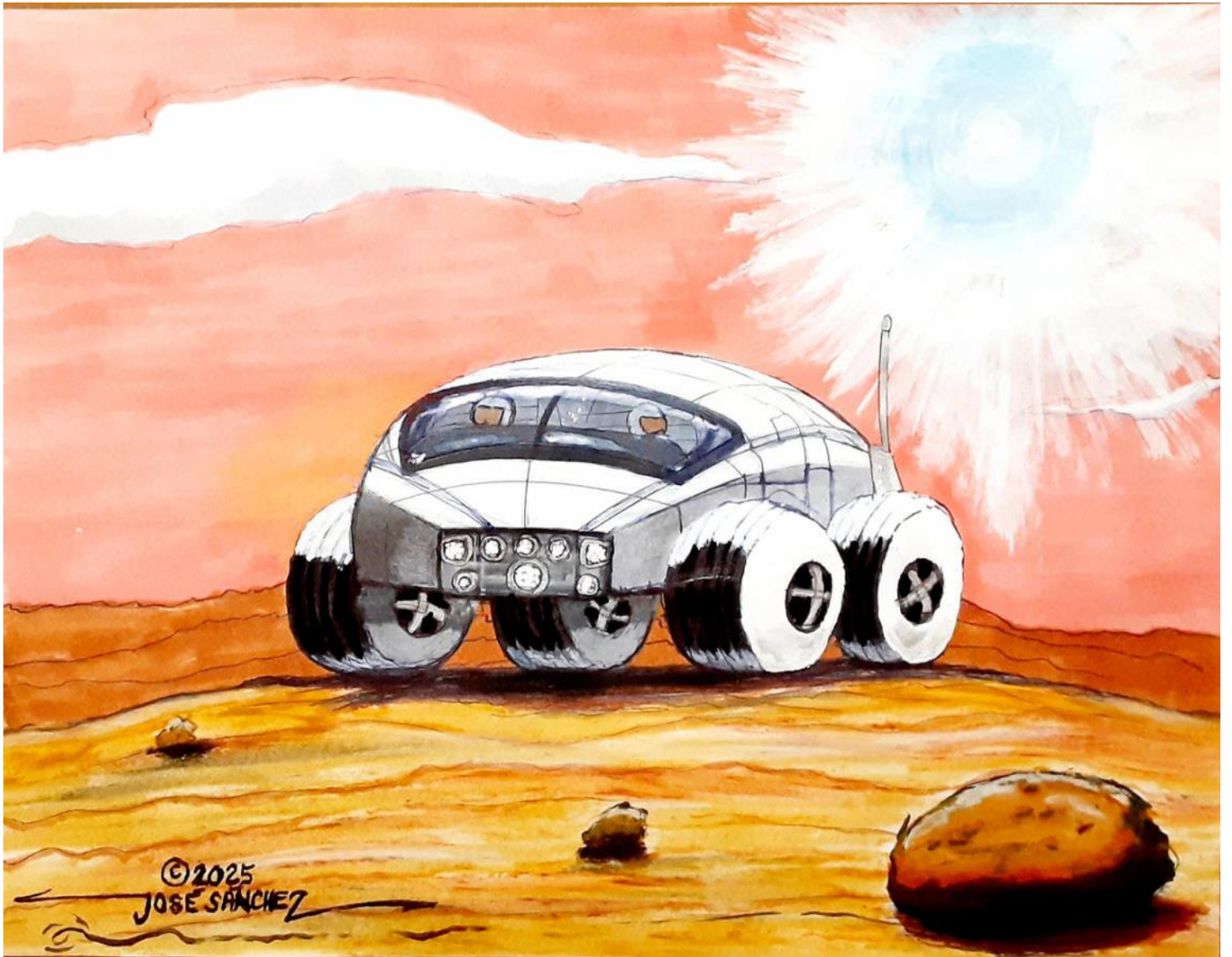
2: Sometimes also called a refrigerator pickle.

3: Use a cider vinegar or something else for a sharper flavor.

4: You can use what salt you have on hand. Kosher or sea salt also work very well.

5: This radish was quite bitey, so I used a sweet Manganiji pepper from my garden. It was the first ripe pepper of the season!





Driving Around
On Mars
by Jose Sanchez