

# Dither 14

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**T**HE FUTURE, eh? It's headin' our way at breakneck speed. Not that it always does. Have I told you about my theories about the nature of time and space? It's not all worked out, yet, but if you have a few hours to spare, I could bore you silly with the pieces/parts I'm semi-convinced of so far. If nothing else, it would demonstrate to you how time can seem to slow down to a pace worthy of your average snail and at the same time stretch out toward eternity...

When the topic is... (fanfare) — **The Future!** ... I find myself inclined to think, "**of Mankind!**" Right? (Maybe that should be "Personkind" or something, but when that kind of idea crops up I get depressed about the future, or even The Future.) My personal future, or the future of any coterie I may inhabit, is lower-case future. Maybe I'll get to it later... [heh, heh]

It has been interesting to observe the changes in speculation about the future, from the glorious spires and towers, flitting autogyros and personal space-ships of the golden era of pulp fiction, when the power of the future was still electricity; through the apocalyptic dooms and their post-vivems, and the rigid conformist societies, of the 50s, when then-misunderstood radioactivity was to work amazing miracles; to the electronically charged, feudal grunginess of the last decade, wherein the frontier lies among the computer nets of cyberspace.

H.G. Wells, exemplified in that grand old movie, *Things to Come*, anticipated both the earlier two (we tend to forget Ralph Richardson's postwar warlord society of that tale on behalf of Raymond Massey's white-robed, white-towered underground industrial complex—at least, I do). His Time Traveler also saw a devolved future plunging into the post-Man stage on Earth.

No USPD jokes here, please. Well... okay, heck. Talk about devolution!

It would be easy to draw parallels in our own age between the Morlocks and the Eloi, of course—but then, that's what Wells was really writing about, and if the shoe still fits after many decades, then ... My first thoughts as analogues are skinheads and New Agers, but both are but instances of larger trends. The parallel can be drawn in the cyberpunk world, with a little stretching but not a lot, I think. And that, too, is because the trends of today are built in to the tales of tomorrow.

"No!" you cry with amazement.

I confirm, proudly, wisely: "It's twoo!"  
Sure, it could have gone without saying, but sometimes I just get contrary that way.

There are happy trends and unhappy ones, and bad habits this society needs to trend its way out of if possible. Two that worry me (in both the world and in the SF world) are the overall losses of both expansionism (Space? Tried that; people don't think it's

worth the effort any more) and optimism. I mean, yes, the depressing SF of the post-WWII/circa Korean War era, kicked off or at least supported by Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World* (I know, that was 1932, but then in the '50s he wrote *Brave New World Revisited* to show how much of it had already come true), seems, even in retrospect, gloomier than the exciting Cyberpunk

universe—But I dunno... Yes, Roddenberry's bigger than life optimism made and makes the Star Trek universe a major popular phenomenon, but it's also classified in the majority of the populace's mind with fantasy and other escape fiction...

Sheesh! Dunno why.  
The Future... Whoops! Here it is now!

