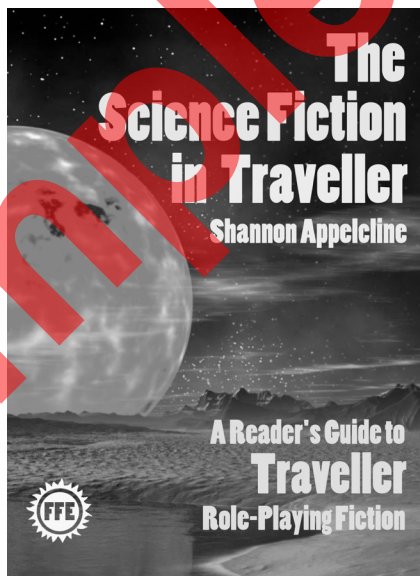


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FOREWORD



Award-winning reviewer Shannon Appelcline (*Designers & Dragon*) investigates the science-fiction literature that shaped the structure and content of the Traveller science-fiction role-playing game. He

reviews and discusses the broad expanse of SF that influenced Marc Miller as he designed the massive background universe of Traveller, and then gives equal consideration to the novels and short stories that were inspired by Traveller.

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INTRODUCTION

I think that one of the best ways to prepare yourself for a roleplaying game is to immerse yourself in its fiction. It's a way to gain a visceral, unconscious understanding of a game world — allowing you to instinctively respond to your player's action in the context of a real universe. So, when I decided to run a Mongoose *Traveller* game in 2009, I started reading.

Marc Miller has listed a number of novels that influenced *Traveller* over the years, and I began with some of those — including classics from the '50s and '60s by authors that I was largely unfamiliar with, like H. Beam Piper, E.C. Tubb, and Keith Laumer. They helped me to gain a better appreciation not just for *Traveller's* universe, but also for science fiction's history.

I could have read scores more “inspirational” novels, but instead I moved on to the novels actually written about the *Traveller* universe. Though *Traveller* doesn't have the depth of *D&D's* fiction line, I was happy to discover that there were about a dozen novels that were “*Traveller*” to various degrees. I read the first in August 2009, and kept reading through the end of 2010.

I think my work served its purpose. I ran an enjoyable and well-

received 20-session campaign, my longest running *Traveller* campaign ever.

Being an obsessive writer, I documented everything I could about the experience. You can find an Actual Play (AP) of the run at RPGnet under “The Spinward Marches Campaign”. I also used the experience as the germ of an RPGnet GM’s column about *Traveller* called “Fifth Imperium” — because back then we didn’t know better and thought that Mongoose’s *Traveller* was *T5*. Oh, and finally, I reviewed every one of those books I read, talking about both how good they were and what they could add to a *Traveller* game.

When Marc Miller Kickstarted his own *Traveller* novel, he learned of my fiction reviews, and commissioned me to collect them all into a book. *This is that book*.

Within you’ll find 29 reviews of *Traveller* influences, novels, and short stories. That includes my original 23, plus six new reviews written for initial release in this book, including: one influence that Marc suggested, one book I inexplicably missed (inexplicable because I had a copy of it!), and four reviews of books that have appeared since last I wrote. Those four new releases are especially exciting because they show that the world of *Traveller* fiction is continuing to rapidly grow and evolve. I look forward to seeing what’s next (and vaguely dream about trying my hand at the genre myself!).

My original reviews have all been revised for this book. They’ve been organized, standardized, and generally edited. I also added historical notes about many of the publications, because I’ve become increasingly in over the history of our industry in recent years, something that’s reflected in my other recent publication, *Designers & Dragons*.

Shannon Appelcline

January 27, 2016

About the Ratings

All of the reviews in this book are rated based on their “Style” and “Substance”, a somewhat nebulous pair of categories used in all RPGnet reviews.

Here, they're defined as follows:

Writing Style (on a one to five star scale: ★★★★★) describes the quality of a book's writing. Does it read well? Are the characters realistic? Is the setting evocative? Is the plot interesting? Does the story have depth? Is the book *good*?

Traveller Substance (also on a one to five star scale: ★★★★★) measures how true the book is to the *Traveller* game, how much it reveals about that setting, and how useful it might be for a GM looking for inspiration.

Both categories are rated on a five-point scale.

One caveat: I can't guarantee the rating scales are consistent between the books I read in 2009 and those I read in 2015 — because both my critical eye and my preferences may have changed in that time. I did my best to reassess my older ratings based on what the reviews actually said and to use that as a guide for my new reviews, but there's still a gap.

The six reviews newly written for this compiled volume are: The Cosmic Computer, Yesterday's Hero, Fate of the Kinunir, Shadow of the Storm, [Marc Miller's Kickstartered] Agent of the Imperium, and Slices of Life.