





Cover image: “Palimpsest — Functions Follow Forms of Desire — Jean-Francois Millet-Man Ray”

Introduction to H. Arthur Taussig

“SPECIAL SECTION” SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A JOHN LE CARRÉ COLD WAR NOVEL. It’s ironically appropriate for H. Arthur Taussig, for he tends to fly under most people’s radar. By which we mean, he’s not by any means famous, though his work is everywhere, and he has been called “a folk [music] legend.” Represented by one of the top galleries in NYC for many years, his works are in the collections of important museums and private collectors the world over. The last to toot his own horn, he did receive an NEA grant. And that’s just his work in photographic art. Arthur is a rare polymath. His doctorate is in biophysics, and did some important research on marijuana. Recording artist, composer of choral music and performance art. Science fiction writer and more. While so much art today is snarky and condescending, Arthur’s work is fun, often poking fun at the art world, but when he makes you laugh, it’s with the world, not at it. His books for children, moreover, never speak down to them, and he visually brings alive the magical world young children live in, while making reading accessible and fun. We realize we’re using a lot of superlatives, but, trust us, the volume of work he’s produced, since the 1970s, will leave you breathless. And there’s no sign of him letting up. In this section we’re giving you a small sampling of his works, including a hilarious excerpt from his yet-to-be-published sci-fi novel. Plus, there are hyperlinks to Arthur’s website, his music, interviews with him, and more. We hope this section enlightens, entertains, and, most importantly, inspires you. To paraphrase Arthur, if what you’re making is not for you, before anyone else, then it’s not art.

—Drew Niemi & Jerome F. Shapiro, curators.

More Taussig Online

Arthur Taussig is a prolific multimedia artist whose works often slip the surly bonds of print. You can find more of his prolific work on the web at the following locations. We have also included these as part of our extended spotlight on Taussig over at our digital insert, Cornfield Review: Online (cornfieldreviewonline.com).

Arthur Taussig's website. This is where you can OD on “eye candy.” The website also includes a brief biography:
www.arthurtaussig.com

“The Alchemical Visions Tarot Deck: Art Opening for Artist Arthur Taussig.” Here, Arthur is interviewed about his Tarot card deck at The Philosophical Society (you might want to turn on the closed captions):
<https://youtu.be/13WbBLxTtBg>

The Alchemical Visions Tarot: 78 Keys to Unlock Your Subconscious Mind. Arthur's Tarot deck is available from book sellers, including Amazon. You can sample his other publications on his website.
<https://go.osu.edu/B8V4>

Tompkins Square Label.

Tompkins Square has reissued some of Arthur's earlier albums, and newer albums. In fact, Tompkins Square has a large catalog of “folk legends.”
<http://www.tompkinssquare.com/taussig.html>

“At South By Southwest, A 71-Year-Old Guitarist Makes A Belated Debut.”

An interview with Arthur, on NPR's *All Things Considered*:
<https://go.osu.edu/B8V5>

“Folk Legend Harry Taussig Takes the Stage for the First Time at South by Southwest.” Interview on radio station KPCC's *Take Two*.
<https://go.osu.edu/B8V6>

Listen.

Improve performance: <https://youtu.be/KkNEUbm9nu8>

Other performances.

<https://go.osu.edu/B8V9> (a YouTube search query for “Arthur Taussig” and “South by Southwest”)

Photographic Art



From the series, “Study of Clouds.”

In 1929, Rene Magritte made a significant contribution to art theory without really ever being recognized as a theoretician by the art world (see below). He made a painting of a pipe. Painted on the canvas below the image of the pipe is, “*Ceci n’est pas une pipe.*” “This is not a pipe.” His instructions to the viewer were to see the painting as a painting and not the subject matter, the painting is, most significantly, not a window to what has been painted. As painting progressed and abstractions of various ilks to hold, this edict became easier and easier to follow.

Photography has been troubled by the same problem since its inception in 1837. About the same time as Magritte painted his pipe, Alfred Stieglitz photographed clouds and called them “Equivalents,” meaning that they were the visual representations of an emotional state or feeling. Another way of saying the image is not a window to the subject matter.

In this series of images, I have finally found a way to express my feelings and admiration for their contributions. I label my photographs of clouds as, “This is not an equivalent.” And yet, through the manipulation of the original photographs, they are equivalents, but not of the Stieglitz ilk nor am I denying the window nature of the images in the Magritte ilk. I am looking for a third way of viewing an image, grounded in the liminal space between experience and thought.





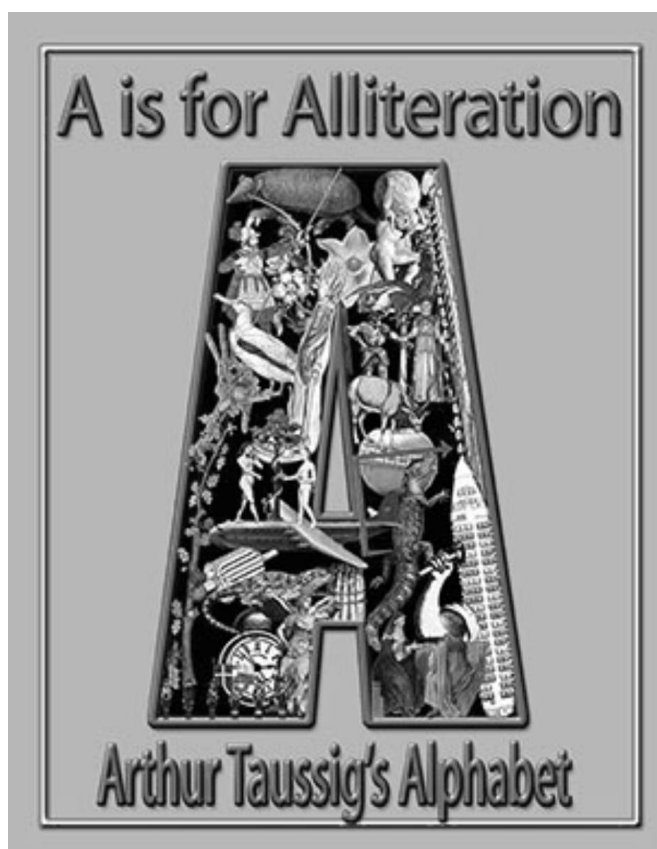
Botanická Zahrada, Prague



The Tarot - Major Arcana - Page 03 - The Magician



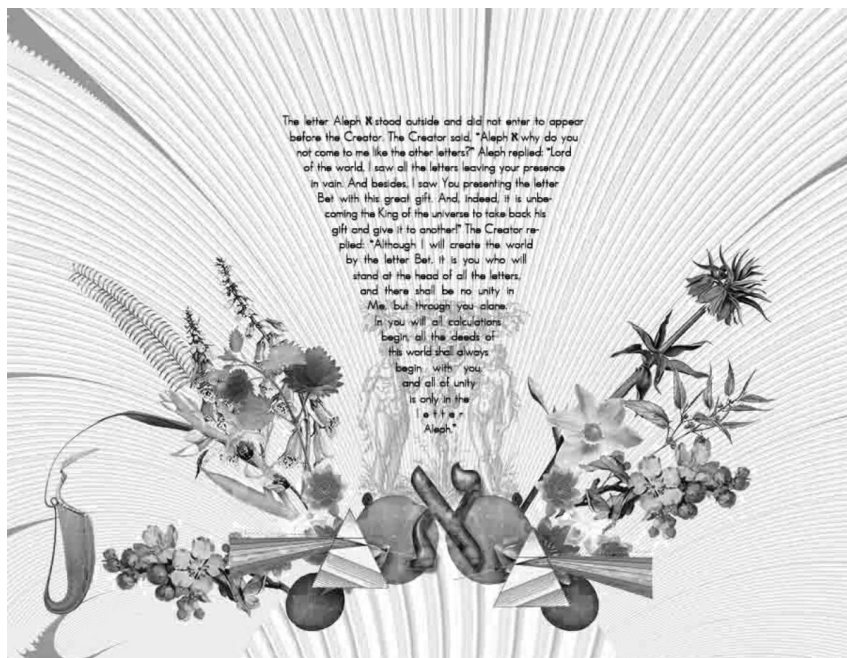
Optical Collage - Dorothea Lange – 1982



Cover for children's alphabet book



From the collection: *The Secret Life of Flowers*



Alphabet of Rabbi Hamnuna-Saba 16 - Aleph

From the website:

“THE ALPHABET OF CREATION—THE LETTERS OF RABBI HAMNUNA-SABA

The Alphabet of Rabbi Hamnun-Saba is a chapter in the Zohar. The letters of the Hebrew alphabet – symbolic of the properties and forces that the Creator governs directly – came into the presence of the Creator, each trying to prove that it is the “most fitting” to achieve the goal of creation, that is merging with the Creator. While the letter points out its positive aspects, the Creator in return points out the deficiencies of each.”

More about The Alphabet of Creation:

<https://www.arthuraussig.com/about-the-alphabet-of-creation/>

NOW BEFORE YOU GROAN, “NOT THIS AGAIN,” BE ASSURED THIS will not be a replay of what is taught to every grade-school student; but rather a history intended specifically for travelers. There are many things you should know that aren’t taught in school and, conversely, there are a lot of things you learned in school that are either useless or just plain wrong.

As everyone knows, First Contact was a disaster.

A Brief History of Contact

ARTHUR TAUSSIG

While we were clumsily stomping about our own backyard looking for bacteria on Mars, Enceladus, and Titan, the hundreds of space-faring civilizations out there didn’t even notice us. We were, essentially, bacteria that were beneath *their* notice.

The reason we were ignored wasn’t hubris on their part but simple economics. Sure, curiosity accounted for the few visits they paid us, but mostly they found more interesting economic prey elsewhere. Travel, whether by train, plane, or spacecraft, costs money. And unless you’re a trust fund baby, you have to make it pay. On any world, tax-deductible business junkets that don’t increase the gross go only so far before getting audited.

Simply put, we had nothing they wanted. So, they stayed away in droves. Why, then, did they come? Because of the only force that can trump economics: politics.

An economically liberal, left-wing political party was running for office somewhere — we’re still not completely sure where — promising to lower the standards for contact and “open up a thousand new worlds for the benefit of our traders.” Rumors ran rampant. One was that anti-isolationists had slogans something like, “Our planet first” or “Return our planet to greatness.” They claimed the resulting increase in interplanetary trade would stimulate business as well as increase employment, lower taxes, and lower the collective debt. Beyond being a successful campaign slogan — they got elected — we don’t know what happened on the various home worlds to the corporations that were involved financially. There are still vague rumors of various forms of comeuppance. But we do know exactly what happened here on Earth . . . and it wasn’t pretty.

The same thing happened on Earth that hap-

pens everywhere when an advanced civilization encounters one “less advanced” — “primitive” is such a pejorative term, especially when we apply it to ourselves. Perhaps “technologically challenged” would be better. It happened when Cortez landed in South America; it happened when the Chinese came to Taiwan; it happened when the Dutch landed in North America. The less technological culture quickly becomes enamored with the goodies of the more technologically advanced culture. That is why the indigenous North Americans sold Manhattan for a few sparkly beads. And, once the “natives” fall under the thrall of attractive material goods they can’t afford, the next inevitable step is economic collapse.

And on Contact, Earth’s economy suffered what would be best termed a global implosion. While we lusted after their hi-tech goodies with gay abandon, we had no Manhattans to trade. There was nothing we had that they wanted.

Attempting to save up enough money to buy something off-world — for status mostly, but occasionally for hope of economic gain — millions of humans scrimped, saved, and starved, and bought nothing human-made beyond the bare necessities. Having windows from Krakana that looked open and let in the fresh air but kept the bugs and pollution out would certainly be the talk of the neighborhood. Having a floor from Golnia that could be programmed to “eat” specific food items dropped on it and convert the garbage into electricity would be a boon to a fast food restaurant, a high-school cafeteria, or any home with teenagers.

They let us stew in economic

depression and fiscal misery for over a decade. Not through intention or vindictiveness, but because we were very low on their list of things to attend to, and, apparently, almost anything brought to their attention would bump us a few notches down. The only thing that got us out of our predicament was a new election. Back on whichever planet it was, the challenging party used Earth as an example of the first, liberal party’s bad, inhumane, self-serving, and greedy policies — which, several commentators snickered, made them no different than any other political party.

Three things resulted from this political tactic. They got elected. Earth became known . . . but no more so than any minor Third World country here on Earth whose name is recognized because it appeared in the news in fourth or fifth place for a day or two, but no one is sure exactly where in Africa or in Asia or in South America it is. And, most importantly, Earth got the interplanetary equivalent of a Marshall Plan as an apology.

Several systems bankrolled a bunch of projects that were intended to bring Earth into the economic fold. They were willing to spend money on us for two reasons. The first was simple revenge against their political opponents. But the second was the argument that, at least publicly, carried the day: Earth would become a valid trading partner — the irony that this was the rationalization that got us into so much economic trouble in the first place escaped very few. So, greed won out after all, even when perpetrated by our “friends.”

Since Earth had almost nothing material anyone really wanted, it was decided that the best way to bring

hard currencies here was through tourism. (Although various off-world drug companies picked up a variety of plants, they found almost nothing useful that they didn't already have from somewhere else.) There were many harebrained schemes, like taking a bunch of Chinese chefs around to a dozen worlds for cooking demonstrations and giving basketball demonstrations on monocular worlds. However, the most successful plan, economically, was when several off-world corporations built hotels and resorts to cater to off-world tourists with the right size and shape beds, the right size and shape bathtubs, and, most important, the right size and shape toilets. At first, these were built at or near various places that the corporations, in consultation with Earth governments, thought would be attractive — The Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Angkor Wat, Giza, and so on. Surprisingly (or perhaps not), what the visitors liked best was watching the “quaint” humans, especially the hotel employees, going about their tasks. Some asked to go to their homes to watch their daily activities and were often willing to pay handsomely for the privilege. It was like live reality TV for them and Earth soon became known as an inexpensive, if a little disreputable, place to vacation.

Participants didn't mind the “human zoo” aspect of this arrangement and soon a goodly number of people were converting the second bedroom — Johnny and Jane would have to share a room — into an off-world guest room (toilet and all). This would often render an income in a month greater than what an engineer and her waiter husband working full time could earn in a year. It was rumored that the money was so

good from these wealthy and curious tourists that some hosts would allow access to the most personal and intimate activities — for a price.

There were, of course, problems in attracting off-world tourism to Earth. Arlington National Cemetery once explained, for instance, would engender such overwhelming horror in a species that had not had physical conflicts for millennia that they would head directly for the D.C. off-world shuttle station often in such a state of panic that they left their luggage behind.

While tourism was the basis for a slow but steady economic recovery for Earth, there were other things going on; but these were mostly fads and flashes in the economic pan. The Navaho Nation, for instance, became very wealthy almost overnight when off-world museums discovered Katchina. These personifications in miniature of the spirit world — still called to this day “dolls” by the ignorant — turned out to be something that many off-world religions could relate to. They were bought by museums throughout the galaxy and displayed as an indication of the highest accomplishments of human civilization.

While the Native Americans in the southwest enjoyed a brisk business, unfortunately they spent generously on large cars and guns and too little went into alcohol rehabilitation, health care, or tuberculosis treatment, all of which continued to plague many native cultures because of the seemingly never-ending racism and guilt of the dominant culture. However, they were clever enough to hide these facts from their benefactors who remained convinced that they were the shining example of humanity at its highest level

of accomplishment (a perception which many of the Native Americans felt was correct). The irony was that the native's own contact with the white invaders centuries earlier had a lot to do with their current deplorable state of affairs just as our contact with the off-world civilizations had to do with our current state of affairs.

Another flash-in-the-pan surfaced when it was noticed that there was a sudden influx of off-world professional gamblers into Monaco, Macao, Las Vegas, and the dozens of Native American casinos dotting the US. What the casinos greedily saw as a flood of new, and presumably naïve customers, quickly turned into a disaster as they saw their newly-minted customers leaving with mountains of the house's money.

One wit named the whole affair "Schrödinger's Rat" in a pun on the old exemplar of "Schrödinger's Cat" as a demonstration of the theory of quantum superposition. In 1935, in a thought experiment, Edwin Schrödinger proposed that if a cat were put in a box with a pill full of poison triggered by the decay of a single radioactive atom, we wouldn't know if the cat was dead or alive until we opened the box and looked (Schrödinger, apparently, had a thing about cats). Until the box is opened by an observer, according to quantum theory, the cat exists in two states simultaneously, both dead and alive. The two possibilities represent two possible universes that both exist at the same time; according to quantum theory, only direct observation eliminates one and makes the other "reality."¹ In the quantum world, observation affects the outcome. Earth science has observed these effects at a subatomic

level in which a single particle is demonstrated to exist simultaneously in multiple locations. More exotically, subatomic particles called neutrinos exist in multiple states: you can't tell the "flavor" of a neutrino, for instance, until it bumps into another particle and disintegrates into a different, tell-tale particle that, in turn, identifies what its flavor used to be — electron, muon, sterile, or tau. Quantum physicists seem to have a thing about taste and color as much as Schrödinger had about cats.

So much for Earth science. Off-world science pushed this theory much further a long time ago. If Schrödinger's kitty wears a wrist watch, there are four possible states of time in the box: the watch is accurate, it is fast, it is slow, or it doesn't work at all. One wouldn't know the state of time in the box unless it was opened and subjected it to direct observation.

Now, imagine a series of Schrödinger's kitty+watch boxes lined up through space/time extending to infinity. Each box represents a different moment in the time continuum. Since we can never know exactly in which box the single superimposed radioactive atom trigger is, or indeed where the single animal is now located, there is a small but finite possibility that it is in the next box, affecting the next instant of time. Before the boxes are opened, the cat and the watch are in all the boxes at once and all states of time exist simultaneously. Thus, there is a subatomic hole between the boxes of time chewed through the wall by "Schrödinger's Rat," which allows "leakage," so that one event, apparently independent from the next, actually affects it.

Gamblers were clearly inter-

ested in the Earth's ignorance of this fact and especially Earth's lack of protection against this effect in their gambling houses. If someone can predict the probability of the next card in the deck, the next slot into which the roulette ball will fall, or the next die face to come up, he/she/it can make much more money than by simply counting cards.

Las Vegas and the other gambling havens quickly went broke and the happy gamblers returned to their home planets. Typically, a gambler would make a pile in Vegas and head south to New Mexico. There they would buy a few dozen (or more) Kachina and take off for his, her, or its home planet. It turns out, as mentioned above, that at that time Kachina were about the only things on Earth that most other civilizations recognized as having any value. Buying a Kachina for a few hundred or even a thousand dollars, a trader could easily make ten times that amount selling it to an off-world museum or collector. It was always an open question in which section of a museum the Kachina would wind up: in the off-world-art wing or in the anthropology (sic) section.

The first result of the raiding of our world's gambling dens was for the underworld, always deeply associated with gambling both legal and illegal, to search for a way to cut their losses. Their traditional methods — heavy-handed threat and/or direct violence — didn't work because all off-world gamblers either wore clothing or had electronic devices that prevent physical injury. And attempts by a dozen armed burly men in black suits to waylay a gambler in a back alley weighted down with his/her/its winnings quickly

showed that a single off-world gamester, equipped with something hidden in his/her/its pinky ring — assuming, of course, he/she/it had fingers — easily outgunned automatic weapons and shotguns to say nothing of blackjacks and baseball bats.

Frustrated, the mob decided to fight fire with fire, so to speak. Making “unrefusable offers,” they “hired,” (i.e. coerced) scientists to find a way to foil the gamblers. It was not a simple task and the effort quickly escalated into a world-wide scientific research effort employing hundreds of scientists and funded by hundreds of billions of dollars of mob money . . . far more than any single world government was willing to spend on basic research. The scientists were helped, however, by knowing that an answer was possible rather than just searching blindly in the dark. Soon, with a Manhattan Project-like effort, devices were installed into the basements of casinos around the globe to protect their machinery — dice, cards, roulette balls, and so on — from the traces of the time slip that the off-world gamblers used to their advantage. While the devices were very large, clumsy, crude, and used enormous amounts of power, they were, nevertheless, Earth's first step into what the rest of the galaxy saw as “modern science.” While the real origins, purpose, and sources of funding is known to all, it is never spoken of in polite company. On any planet.

Proving that humans were capable of “modern science,” however, didn't convince the various off-world cultures to supply us with scientific help on their own accord. That came at much greater cost than Las Vegas almost going broke; the cost

was in human lives. A species-jumping virus arrived on Earth. To this day no one knows from where it came or how it passed thorough the biofilters at the entry ports, but its effects were ghastly. Since its species jumping behavior was similar to the Avian Flu that preceded it by many centuries, the media quickly dubbed this virus as the Alien Flu. It infected billions; killed hundreds of thousands. This finally convinced off-world governments to supply Earth with the medicines and medical devices needed to fight it.

Once again, Earth's governments weren't up to the task. However, this time it wasn't the Mafia but the medical profession that stepped up to the plate — though there were wags who said there was little difference between the two. Once the Alien Flu was under control, doctors asked about the possibility of other infections and respectfully requested the medicines and devices to deal with them. They then, less respectfully, asked for the equipment to maintain the original devices. Like the clichéd ripples spreading from a pebble thrown into a pond, devices, technicians, and the beginnings of an advanced technological infrastructure soon arrived on Earth. Much like doctors who use new drugs “off label,” that is, for a legitimate but unapproved purpose, many off-world technologies quickly spread from strictly medical uses to uses far beyond what was originally intended by their donors — medical and otherwise.

This period was to become known as the Era (or Invasion depending on one's political persuasion) of the Black Boxes, as the various medical and ancillary devices were dubbed. In part, these were given to Earth as partial

compensation for the economic harm we suffered by opening our planet to interplanetary trade too soon and partially to prevent further viral invasions.

A “black box” is a sealed device that performs an advanced — from Earth's point of view — function. They are rarely black. They are rarely box-shaped. They rarely need a physical connection to do their job. Place one in a power plant and the efficiency doubles or triples. Place one in an airplane and it will arrive at its destination within seconds of taking off without using any fuel. Place one near an ailing bridge and, in a few minutes, metal is strengthened, rusting rivets and bolts are replaced with invisible welds, shapes are subtly changed for better load support, and, to top it all off, a new coat of paint appears seemingly out of nowhere.

It was rumored in scientific circles that whoever built the black boxes harnessed the quantum “Cheshire Cat” effect in which a particle can be separated from its properties, moved to a different location and then reunited with its properties. While Earth scientists were interested in the exotic properties of subatomic particles like spin, charm and color, extraterrestrial scientists were pursuing something much more practical: separating a particle from its mass. It is suspected that this is the principle on which their interstellar transportation is based. But they ain't tellin' so no one is really sure.

Alongside the Black Boxes came the MAs. What we call robots, most of the other cultures who opted for this path call them “mechanical assistants” or “MAs.” This difference in naming points out the bad choice of the neologism “robot.” It came from the Czech Karel Čapek's 1920 play, “R.U.R.,”

which stood for “Rossum’s Universal Robots.” The idea was that mechanical workers — “robota” (forced labor) in Czech — would soon replace live workers. As time progressed and both the idea of the robot and the word became part of the normal visual and verbal vocabularies, the primary image called to mind is that of the mechanical man. Around the end of the 20th century, some European lawmakers even proposed “electronic personhood” for them.

However, there was no need for mechanical men — outside, that is, the old 2Vs which reveled in them from the mechanical seductress Maria of the 1927 *Metropolis* to the fussily hysterical C3PO of the 1977 *Star Wars* (basically the same robot) to the belching, Lucite-topped distillery Robbie the Robot of the 1957 riff on Shakespeare’s *The Tempest, Forbidden Planet*.

The reason advanced civilizations prefer MAs to robots is quite simple: It is very inefficient to make a device that can perform many tasks, just like it is inefficient (and slow) to make a computer whose hardware must be changed to perform different tasks (software is given that job).² What is far more efficient is to build devices for narrow, specialized tasks.

Of course, our world was full of them without our taking notice: motion sensors to turn on lights, automatic transmissions in automobiles, doors that open when approached, auto-focus and auto-exposure cameras, push-button coffee makers, and even a device to pick up the tone arm of a record player and gingerly set it in the first groove of a valuable, antique vinyl music disk.

Now the MAs, as they finally became known, appeared everywhere

in their most advanced forms alongside their trashy imitations. Home Shopping Channel changed its name to MAC — Mechanical Assistant Channel — but continued selling the same junk (automatic egg crackers, robotic vacuum cleaners, and so on). What changed most was industry. For decades, factories had been heading toward mechanization with the likes of automated automobile assembly lines. But this, combined with union troubles, changed the appearance of the MAs from sequestered behind factory walls to direct interaction with the public. One of the first was a free-standing, mobile, automatic cappuccino/espresso machine. Simply call it over, hand it a cup, tell it what you want in as much detail as you wish, and there is your coffee. The machine is self-cleaning, self-maintaining, and even orders its own supplies. As a result, most of the specialty shops serving badly made and over-priced exotic coffees around the world quickly became a thing of the past. This being one example amongst many of further exacerbating the economic problems resulting from contact.

Like contact itself, the introduction of sophisticated MAs had both good and adverse consequences in addition to a whole host of unforeseen ones. While many were called “labor saving,” very few replaced human jobs in toto as the alarmists so vocally claimed they would. Rather, pieces of jobs were replaced. For instance, a house maid’s job might include both scrubbing the floors and dusting a collection of very fragile china figurines. The maid was relieved of the scrubbing task. But no matter how much AI was packed into an MA, it would not be doing the delicate dusting.

After a series of similar economic adventures and misadventures, things on Earth gradually normalized. Many unemployed or unemployable “Earthers” began to go to other planets to find work. Jobs were found that took advantage of uniquely human characteristics — opposable thumbs, breathing oxygen (especially on planets where it is used in manufacture and is poisonous to the locals), and so on. Some jobs were legitimate, some less so. Musicians, artists, and philosophers — those with advanced degrees who had spent most of their days on Earth flipping burgers — were suddenly in demand off world. Surprisingly, a large and profitable industry was founded on taking our old 2Vs and converting them to formats that could be played in the local exoplanet theaters. Not surprisingly, film noir and Charlie Chaplin were hits on many planets. (The unique movie tastes on the Chymer planet will be discussed in the section on that planet.)

In addition to jobless academics, others were desperate to leave Earth for reasons of failure, criminal records, or prejudice. Ethnic and religious colonies were formed and followed their own whims and/or textual interpretations (one of these are described in more detail at the end of this guide). For instance, on planets where the locals had chitinous outer coverings, humans “volunteered” (for a price, of course) for testing of skin lotions. On worlds of monocular beings where depth perception was difficult and involved wagging one’s head side to side, basketball demonstrations brought in amazed crowds. And there was always a job as a geek in the equivalent of a circus freak show. This was not the computer kind of geek, but one who

would bite the heads off live chickens in primitive circus sideshows — in this case eating human foods like a fried chicken, which was unimaginably repulsive on more than one world. And there was always the sex trade.

As soon as these small off-Earth groups began to prosper, support followed — doctors, restaurateurs, barbers, shopkeepers, bakers, even lawyers, all willing to supply a fledgling human colony with goods and services that reminded them of home. What was supplied to the local humans — often ghettoed together in what was locally called an “H-Town” — were often simply crude and shoddy modifications of local merchandise. The expense of real Earth goods put them out of the reach of almost everyone. Given that the means of transportation and with the almost universal assistance of the black boxes, moving things from planet to planet was very easy and cheap, it was often xenophobia that added high tariffs on goods at the insistence of local communities who touted off-world merchandise as “dirty,” or “corrupting the youth,” or “stealing our jobs,” etc.

In any case, soon small concentrations of humans began popping up around the galaxy. These generically named H-Towns, in fact, differed radically from town to town; their major population could be a concentration of Korean or Slovak or Thai or Orthodox or Evangelical. There are, at current count, several hundred planets with humble, seemingly permanent human populations.

In addition, there are probably several thousand planets where humans live. Many of these expatriates are loners or a single family. Many, often in a fit of galactic romanticism, have “gone

native” having found the local cultures more satisfying and “better” than the ones they left on Earth. Some learned the native languages and found work translating human literature. Human myth, folklore, fairy tales, and ghost stories are popular on many planets. Some, having “gone native,” found companions, and, if there was genetic compatibility, had offspring that were often shunned by both the locals and other human beings.

Some underwent “reverse migration,” returning to Earth with skills — mostly linguistic — to become teachers and scholars of “alien languages.” Many “returnees” were hired by Mormon colleges to teach off-world languages so that youngsters could be sent into the stars for their proselytizing missions.

The sons and daughters of the wealthy, often during the “gap” between high school and college, were sent on an outer-space version of the 19th century Grand Tour. While the parents assumed it would be educational and culturally broadening, for the adolescents this junket usually turned out to be a three-week-long overindulgence in exotic alcoholic beverages . . . and a lot of unbridled sex far from a guilt-inducing parental gaze. Some H-Towns became profitable as exotic tourist attractions for the locals. Families would visit on weekends, children clutched tightly, to gaze into shop windows and, for the more adventurous, a meal of strange human foods. One of the most popular repasts was described by a local guidebook as “a complex and exotic preparation of a recently butchered ungulate animal whose muscles are harvested and degraded into a fine texture. Small disk-shaped portions are

formed and are individually heated on metal plates until caramelization of the proteins begins. The disk, now dripping with protein breakdown exudates, is topped with a layer of coagulated liquid squeezed from the mammary gland of the ungulate that (unwillingly) contributed the protein. This is placed between two hemispheres made principally of a powder derived from the hard seed fruit of a weed plant which is formed and heated and whose texture is stabilized with the gaseous products of a microorganism degrading some of the simpler molecules of the processed seeds. This is often layered with a leaf, a slice of a wet, red and seedy fruit, and a viscous combination of many unfamiliar and mostly unidentifiable substances. A traditional accompaniment is a tuber cut into long, thin sections and then allowed to soak in a very hot lipid extract.” A cheeseburger and fries.

In the long run, contact turned Earth upside down: culturally, psychologically, theologically, and economically. Theologians divided more than ever on questions like: where was the Garden of Eden, was the Snake an alien, what is the nature of original sin, did the Fall from Grace occur only on Earth, and, most frighteningly, are there planets that were exempt from the Fall?³

Earth’s economies slowly absorbed radical changes unimaginable in the days before Contact. The introduction of every piece of alien technology, no matter how small, typically got two reactions: The people who could afford it were happy to have labor saved and/or a healthier environment (to say nothing of the social status gained). Some found new avenues of employment around the new technologies.

Opposed to them — usually those whose jobs were displaced by a new technology — were a vocal minority complaining about the loss of national pride, indeed, human pride, the corrupting influence of alien cultures, the overall degradation of “humanity,” etc. They seemed oblivious to the historical fact that every change in technology, whether of human or alien origin, has put people out of work: Guttenberg and his printing press were railed against for putting copyists out of work, the telegraph put Pony Express riders out of work, Ford and his automobile were pilloried for putting not only saddle-makers out of work, but the thousands employed in every city removing mountains of horse dung from the streets.

One of the milestones on the road of Earth being folded into a wider scientific community was the meeting of a small, minor off-world scientific society in Lima, Peru. While poorly and unenthusiastically attended (who’d want to attend a conference in an uninteresting backwater like Earth?), it was nevertheless the first time that twenty-or-so different alien species were on Earth at the same time as representatives of their respective governments. Earth scientists were reluctantly invited to attend. They could understand very little. And during the coffee breaks, a commonly heard word, mumbled at a very soto voce, in almost all twenty alien languages, translated best as “apes.”

And on the cultural/psychological front, within a decade or two after Contact, what happened on Earth is what happens pretty much everywhere: intra-planetary struggles, national conflicts, contrivances, and local (i.e., planetary) problems paled quickly in light of the vastness of “out there.”

The differences between people — color, conformation, commitment — quickly become insignificant. For instance, after meeting a 12-foot-tall purple-feathered grasshopper with an IQ of 220, racism was bound to wind up as a symptom of abnormality in the DSM.

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1. This formulation embraces totally the megalomaniacal idea that one’s personal state of mind makes the reality of the world come into being.
 2. That is, outside of a few experiments with magnetically based morphware.
 3. These questions were rather presciently confronted in the middle of the 20th century by theologian/writer/Christian apologist C. S. Lewis in his books *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Paralandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*.. ✱