



Newsletter 013, 2024Q3

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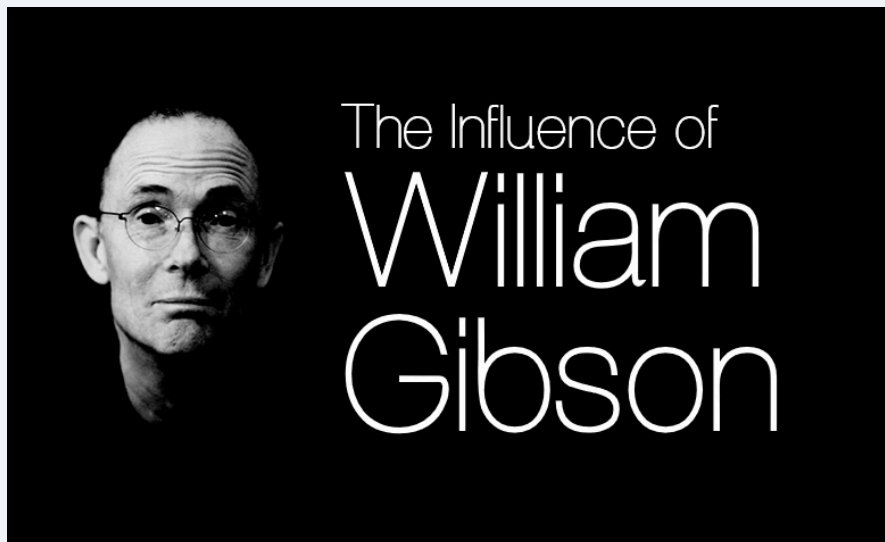
Fall is already here and it seems like this year has flown by—so much so that I missed getting my newsletter out for summer! But have no fear, I'm still here, alive, and writing diligently. I hit a major milestone by finally completing my debut novel, *The Osect Indiscretion*. But in the cruel world of being an author, writing has given way to editing, and I'm already working on my third pass through the novel tightening everything up. There are still several editing passes in my future before I'm ready to send it out to beta readers, but at least that is on the horizon.

I've also been spending more time writing short stories and flash fiction with an eye toward getting published in periodicals. Even while editing my novel, it is important to keep writing, and this is a great way to put words on paper and receive feedback.

I'm still regularly posting to my blog, and included within are links to some of my recent posts. And, of course, there some book recommendations and a recent excerpt of my writing—a short piece on being in Limbo. Called "Riding the Wipe", I thought it hit the mark, though the anthology publisher thought otherwise.

Without further ado, I hope you enjoy this edition of my newsletter.

Featured Article



(Photo: William Gibson at the Spook Country promotional tour in San Francisco, CA. Taken by Fred Armitage August 2007.)

The Influence of Sci-Fi Pioneer William Gibson

As a relatively new genre, at least in comparison to mystery or romance, science fiction has many pioneers making their mark and developing the genre in the last century. One of the most influential is William Gibson who is credited with coining the term cyberspace and is a founder of the cyberpunk sub-genre. Accompanying the rise in computers and technology at the height of the information age, in one way or another, his imprint and ongoing influence is found woven through nearly every science fiction book written since the 1970s.

Though many of his works are considered seminal milestones in the development of the science fiction genre, Gibson's *Sprawl* trilogy may be the most impactful. The series includes the genre-defining *Neuromancer*, *Count Zero*, and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, and helped launch the cyberpunk genre, setting many ground rules for cyber systems, hacking, and artificial intelligence (AI).

Later, in his Bridge trilogy, consisting of *Virtual Light*, *Idoru*, and *All Tomorrow's Parties*, Gibson takes a step back in time to consider how modern-day society might deal with the growth of new technologies. Many of the issues he outlines have been reflected in society.

Finally, in his Blue Ant trilogy of *Pattern Recognition*, *Spook Country*, and *Zero History*, Gibson explores how adjunct processes, such as viral marketing, location-based communications, and technology-integrated clothing might affect society with an undertone of how authoritarian regimes might utilize this personal information.

As I read other science fiction novels, I see Gibson's influence generally appear in three main areas: the rise of technology and its integration with humanity, the world-building of a hyper-populated society and its dependence on technology, and in the technology-influenced language that permeates not only the prose of other stories but also modern speech.

Read more about Gibson's impact on modern science fiction at:

<https://www.matthewcushing.com/post/the-influence-of-william-gibson>

Latest Blog Posts



Please Stop Calling it Artificial Intelligence

As an author, I enjoy working with the English language to convey an idea just as I want, or reading a skilled writer who can turn a phrase of wit, inspire action with the rhythm of a speech, or connect a character's emotions directly to my own. Much can be conveyed in phrases and clauses, sentences and paragraphs—as well as between the lines themselves. In so many ways, words matter.

When reading everything from magazines to blog posts to tweets to novels, I regularly notice missed opportunities where several vague, stumbling words are used instead one or two perfect words. And my eye actually ticks when the wrong word is used or the message is deliberately misleading! One area where this seems to happen quite often is technology marketing where juicy statements and bold claims lead to sales. Facts and accuracy should never get in the way of a punchy tagline.

Read more about my opinion on use of the term 'artificial intelligence'

at: <https://www.matthewcushing.com/post/please-stop-calling-it-artificial-intelligence>



The Fantastic Possibility of Alien Megastructures

As the James Webb Telescope joins the Hubble and earth-bound radio telescopes in the search for alien life, what might they find? Considering the distances to even the closest star systems, only the largest structures—those whose gravity may affect orbits, whose energy output can be identified, or whose bulk may dim the visual light of their star—may be found.

In other words, only the most massive of alien megastructures.

But this area isn't totally unknown, as science fiction authors and scientists alike have wondered what types of structures alien civilizations might need. Massive structures may be needed to capture the energy requirements of a space-faring race. Or massive orbital platforms may be created as colonies expand from a homeworld.

Learn about the types of possible (yet currently theoretical) alien megastructures at: <https://www.matthewcushing.com/post/alien-megastructures>



Books Every Author Should Have at Hand

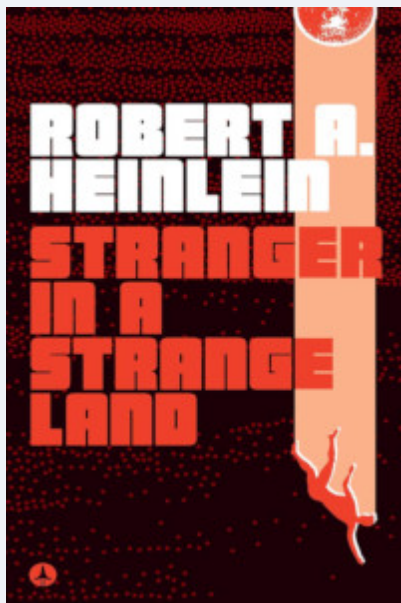
A fantastic source of knowledge and inspiration for writers is other writers. Those who have been through it before can share their knowledge and experience with those who are just starting out or new to a certain area. From planning, writing, and editing to querying, publishing, and marketing—and everything in between—learning what others have already figured out can make our own writing journey a little bit easier.

My reference shelf sits at the corner of my desk with a series of books that I refer to regularly for help, for clarity, and for inspiration. This particular set of books works for me, and while other authors may find help elsewhere, I believe having the following books readily available is a good place to start.

See what books I keep close at hand at: <https://www.matthewcushing.com/post/books-every-author-should-have>

Book Recommendations

Read reviews for these titles and others on my website at: <https://www.matthewcushing.com/blog/categories/review>



Stranger in a Strange Land
by Robert Heinlein

A sci-fi classic, the story follows Michael Valentine—a human who grew up on Mars—as he returns to Earth and tries to understand or 'grok' human society.



Iron Flame
by Rebecca Yarros

Part two of Yarros' fantasy tale of dragon riders at a ruthless prep school. Though it mirrors elements of other series, Yarros puts on an adult-oriented fresh spin.

Writing Excerpt - *Riding the Wipe*

The call for this piece was a short (around 200 words) piece about being in limbo. If anyone has waited in line at Disneyland, you'll understand the source of my inspiration.

Early morning, and I was ready to ride the *Wipe*. Already the line stretched out past the theme park gates, but I didn't care. The sickest ride ever, the *Memory Wipe* attracted the craziest thrill-seekers. And that was me: base jumper, ice climber, cave diver. If it could be done, I did it.

Energy rippled through the crowd. Someone whooped, and the line echoed. I high-fived the guy behind me.

"Hell yeah," he shouted.

"Hell yeah," I agreed.

The line inched forward as we baked in the midday sun.

I'd ridden the *Wipe* before. It was mind-bendingly extreme—so much that I hardly remembered anything other than loving it. Every time was like the first time.

The line disappeared around a corner, raising my hopes of being next. But another courtyard of bodies awaited, the line snaking back and forth. Everyone buzzed with anticipation. I ripped off my t-shirt and spun it in the air. People cheered. Feet slowly shuffled forward.

Beneath the setting sun, the line ended at a shaded archway. Finally, my turn. I thumped my chest and screamed. The crowd roared. I entered the dark passage with fists raised in triumph.

Just a moment for my eyes to adjust...

Early morning, and I was ready to ride the *Wipe*.

Writing Humor

I saw this salty joke online and had to share.

"Ooh, I want you inside me!" screamed the parentheses to the other punctuation.

Thanks for Reading

A heartfelt **Thank You** to everyone who has subscribed to this newsletter. Your support of my writing is both invaluable and motivating. If you want more up-to-date information on what I'm doing—from what I'm reading to what I'm working on—please visit my website at www.matthewcushing.com. Or, you can follow me on X or Threads at [@mhcushing](https://twitter.com/mhcushing). I'm also now on Bluesky at [@mcushing.bksy.social](https://bsky.app/profile/mcushing.bksy.social).

If you know anyone who loves speculative fiction (science fiction, fantasy, horror, time travel, dystopian, utopian, steampunk, solarpunk, climate fiction, space opera, urban fantasy, supernatural, etc.), please forward them a copy of this newsletter and encourage them to sign up!

Klaatu Barada Nikto, Live Long and Prosper, and Nanoo Nanoo!

Matthew Cushing

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