



Chronospace

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When two 24th century chrononauts from the timeship Oberon travel back to May 6th, 1937, to investigate the destruction of the Hindenburg over Lakehurst, New Jersey, the disaster is somehow averted and the airship lands safely. Now, lost in a parallel universe, their mistake will be felt by every single human being.

Chronospace Details

Date : Published January 29th 2002 by Ace (first published 2001)

ISBN : 9780441009060

Author : Allen M. Steele

Format : Paperback 336 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Time Travel, Fiction, Alternate History

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From Reader Review Chronospace for online ebook

Bryan says

The first Allen Steele book that I'd rate as low as 3 stars. It was good, but could have been much better.

The first third was fantastic, and actually could work as a YA novel that not only introduces new readers to the time travel genre of SF, but also introduces them to certain aspects of SF fandom.

The next third should have been gripping and intense, but the pace slowed right down after the Hindenburg scene. I really was disappointed that the author didn't use the opportunity to keep the reader riveted with high-intensity plot details.

And the final third - sorry, but it was cliché; all of this was done before. Worse, the novel seems to contradict itself. When the characters first realized they had introduced a paradox, they dismissed immediately any attempt to correct it (it would just make more divergence and create more paradoxical anomalies). Then, in the final third of the book, the characters decide that maybe it's not too late to go back and fix their mistake. Sorry, but that disappointed me - why not do that immediately (unless the characters are too stupid to think things through, and that would disappoint me also).

So... a decent read. Worth looking into if you've just got to read all the time travel books out there, or if you're a big fan of Steele and you've gone through his other works, most of which I'd rate more highly than this novel.

Jim says

A fairly standard time-travel story. Well done, but just not as fun as "Time Travelers Never Die" or "The Accidental Time Machine", for instance. Still, the author manages to tie up all the loose ends and time paradoxes in a reasonable manner, and the main premise (that UFOs are really time travelers) is a clever idea.

John Kirk says

[The characters refer to Worldline A, where Murphy works for NASA. However, he wrote his article based on reported UFOs; presumably he was therefore reacting to existing time travellers, which means that he was already living in an altered timeline.

A

Joe Noir says

Brilliant! One of the best time travel novels I've read. Entertaining and full of twists. Steele is adept at taking

the story in a new direction at the point where lesser writers would have ended the tale.

Jose Brox says

a) Donde los ángeles no se atreven (1.5/5): Relato de viajes en el tiempo no demasiado original, sin chispa y bastante machista: Para justificar una introducción en la que el protagonista y sus colegas hablan bebidos sobre la posibilidad de la visita de viajeros temporales (únicamente para sacarle el tema al lector), el autor busca la siguiente excusa: el prota es muy buen marido y siempre vuelve a casa tras el trabajo, pero como la madre de su esposa se ha muerto hace poco, ella no está de humor para hacerle carantoñas, así que él hace bien quedándose con los colegas (¡esto en un relato escrito a finales de los 90!). Igualmente, en una expedición que busca un OVNI, la única persona que está chalada y es verdaderamente irracional es la única mujer (con la que hacer chistes fáciles). Por último, todo el desaguado se monta porque el tacón de una mujer se engancha en una rendija (esto podría haberse justificado con un "es que soy del futuro, no estoy acostumbrada a llevar esta tortura prehistórica de los tacones", pero se ve que no, que es algo que en el futuro sigue pasando).

b) La muerte del capitán Futuro (2.5/5): algo mejor escrito. Relato que inicialmente versa sobre lo dura que es la vida de los marineros del espacio, y luego pasa a mostrar cómo un héroe canalla de esos que se supone que tienen que caerte en gracia, pero que a mí me parecen gilipollas, se lleva "la fortuna, la fama y la chica" mediante el engaño y el asesinato (pero bueno, es de un tío gordo loco, se lo merecía).

Michel says

Ik lees al graag eens over alternatieve geschiedenissen en tijdreizen. Daarom waarschijnlijk dat dit op mijn lijstje te lezen boeken stond. Ik weet niet meer precies hoe of wanneer het er op gekomen was, maar de toevalligheden van de zaken hadden ervoor gezorgd dat dit het volgende boek in de rij werd.

Het begint veelbelovend, meer als een kortverhaal dan iets anders, met tijdreizigers die voor zover ik begreep voor de leute gingen kijken hoe de ramp met de Hindenburg eigenlijk gebeurd was. (Niet dat we dat ondertussen niet redelijk goed weten, maar alla.)

En dan gebeurt die ramp niet. Ahem. Probleempje. Bij het terugkeren naar hun tijd, blijkt dat de Tweede Wereldoorlog niet is gebeurd zoals hij in onze tijdslijn gebeurd is. Volgen: nog wat reizen door de tijd, histories met mysterieuze "engelen" die interventies doen, veel in-jokes voor sciencefictionlezer (of eerder -schrijvers, denk ik eigenlijk), een hele reeks dingen te onwaarschijnlijk voor woorden, en uiteindelijk neen, niet echt een goed boek.

Wel onderhoudend en snel gelezen, en er zijn ongetwijfeld een paar degelijke aflevering van iets als Sliders uit te halen, of een hele reeks tienerboeken. Maar een beetje te mager om goed te zijn.

Paul Weiss says

Time travel with all the usual paradoxes and anachronism!

David Zachary Murphy is a NASA scientist but he's also a sci-fi lover and a wannabe fiction writer.

Repeated attempts have come to naught and, sadly, Murphy realizes that his story-telling skills will never come up to scratch and compare with the likes of his idols such as Isaac Asimov or Gregory Benford. But, he is a good writer and, in spite of his shortcomings with respect to fiction, he successfully publishes a speculative non-fiction story in which he postulates that UFOs are not alien starships at all. He suggests they're time machines traveling from earth's own future and piloted by human historians examining their own past. His bureaucratic superiors are not pleased that he has drawn attention to the UFO phenomenon which NASA would prefer lie buried at rest and have called him onto the carpet for publishing such a story without their permission.

Whether or not the top brass at NASA like it, Murphy's speculations happen to be right on the money. Franc Lu and Lea Oschner are time travelers from the 24th century. They've returned to 1930s Germany, the era that saw Hitler's post-WWI rise to power, in order to witness the destruction of the Hindenburg dirigible when it docked in New Jersey after a trans-Atlantic crossing. Something goes dreadfully wrong when Franc and Lea somehow become part of the events they are only supposed to observe. This interrupts the natural timeline, diverts history onto a new path and the Hindenburg fails to crash and burn in a devastating ball of fire. The pilot of their time machine makes a unilateral command decision to retreat but instead of returning to their own time in 2314 they "crash" land in 1998, the world in which David Zachary Murphy has just been blasted for his untoward speculations on time travel.

First the good news ... in **Chronospace**, Steele has converted his Hugo award winning novella **Where Angels Fear to Tread** into a full length novel jam-packed with non-stop action. The usual collection of paradoxes and anachronisms associated with time travel novels will keep readers pleasantly scratching their heads and musing over the possibilities throughout the length of the novel. His descriptions of 1930s Germany, the encounters with the newly formed Gestapo and the magic of the Hindenburg's luxury crossing have that compelling feel of realism about them that lovers of historical fiction are always looking for.

But there are also a number of problems that hold a potential four- or five-star rating back to a rather average two- or three-star rating at best.

First, is the rather jerky scene switches that, of course, amount to not only time switches but sometimes, "time-line" switches. That is to say, for example, that 1998 could represent two or three entirely different sets of events and characters depending on whether you're participating in Timeline A, B or C. This takes considerable mental effort to juggle and Steele hasn't done a particularly good job in facilitating the mental gymnastics required.

Second, Steele seems to want to have his cake and eat it too! He's obviously a believer in the Many Worlds Theory in that he has allowed the creation of new branched time lines because of the occurrence of different events. But my limited imagination sees that as both a problem for potential visitors from the future and a logic problem for this novel. Assuming it is possible at all, of course, their visit from the future to a moment in the past would by its very occurrence create a new timeline. This (I speculate) would preclude the visitors returning to their own original present because their real elapsed time is no longer occurring on that original time line. If they now make a trip to the "future", it will be to a set of events that have not yet happened. Clear as mud? I thought so!

Finally, Steele has injected a sub-plot which actually does include alien visitors from outer space. Frankly, it's unnecessary, intrusive, undeveloped and unresolved. It's a distraction that serves no purpose in this novel.

That said, **Chronospace** can still be recommended as a lightweight sci-fi romp with an enjoyable plot that sci-fi lovers will easily breeze through and be pleased to have done so. Recommended.

Paul Weiss

Kurt Milby says

The first thing I can tell you is that it took me years to read this book. I came across it in a dollar tree. This book reminds me of a different time (when I was a kid, still building up my library).

One of the things that I appreciate is the research the author had done and the second is the pacing between past, present and future. The past being 1937; present 1998; future 2314. The story starts in 1937 where the crew of the Timeship Oberon set out on an observational research mission investigating what happened to the Hindenburg. From that point on, without giving too much away disruptions in space time begin to happen (Not to mention a prologue that introduces an "anomaly" that might be responsible for the disruptions).

As I have given this book a 3 star rating--I would have given it a lower score because of glaring typos and misspelled words I found in the book. One was a heading of a passage showing the year as 1997 when it clearly should be 1998. This is the kind of thing the editor or editors should have caught but in the large scheme of things I just may ignore it because of the dollar that I paid for this book.

Mark Gardner says

I'm a sucker for alternate history, time travel, alternate universes and apocalyptic tales. Time Loves a Hero, by Allen Steel manages to touch on all of these. The chapters are easily digestible, with part one alternating between time lines nicely. Part two is a sudden punch in the gut, as the reader begins to understand what just happened, and the longest portion of the story, part three is a non-stop page turner while the reader races to the conclusion.

I enjoyed this book immensely, and fans of the above-mentioned genres will like it too. I hope the author considers continuing the story of three important characters, but quite frankly, I don't see how it could be done.

Rubén Vilaplana says

Relato corto de viajes en el tiempo. Los protagonistas quieren ser testigos del vuelo del Hindenburg, pero....

Historia recurrente y entretenida sin muchas pretensiones.

Joseph F Cowan says

Very fun read

Nicely complex time- travel novel. Dialog is engaging and the plot twists keep you interested. Recommended if you read Benford's Time Ships.

Christine says

Took a little while to warm up, but once it did I was very interested in the time travel theory that underlies this tale. The book read a bit like the article the main character wrote just before the story began -- a thought experiment. The characters were flat and only intended to serve necessary roles, which was why it took me a while to get into it. I'm very much a character girl, and this wasn't a character story. But it was an interesting thought experiment.

The reason I gave it three stars was not because of the flat characters. It is what it is and I'm rating it as just that -- a thought experiment. The trouble is that in the end, I wasn't convinced by it. Time travel is an inherently confusing topic, but I can usually follow the logic pretty well. In this case, I wasn't fully convinced. But again, an interesting experiment.

Graham says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and have been quite surprised to see other readers have been unmoved by it. It takes quite a novel approach to UFOs and time-travel and that's what kept my interest. There was no descent into battles and warzones which far too many SF books suffer with. It merged science and fiction in just the right way to make it plausible. I'll look for more Mr Steele stories in the future.

John says

Based on a multiple award-winning short story which I haven't read ("... Where Angels Fear to Tread"), this novel takes a hard-sf approach to time travel. Some centuries in the future, the Chronospace Research Centre runs carefully monitored historical field trips to important moments of the past to find out exactly what went on. One of these is to the *Hindenburg* disaster of 1937 . . . except that in the event the chrononauts inadvertently make some tiny but significant alteration in the proceedings: the bomb planted by an anti-Hitler terrorist (for the sake of plot, the novel subscribes to the conspiracy theory) detonates some while after the passengers have disembarked, rather than while the airship is still mooring. This trivial divergence is enough to alter the course of subsequent history.

In parallel with the narrative about the chrononauts, we're told about events occurring to NASA scientist David Murphy, who has earned the ire of his bosses by publishing a Science FACT article in *Analog* endorsing the notion that UFOs could be timeships from the future. As he makes his way home from the office, he finds his footsteps being dogged by a scruffy older man whom he sort of vaguely recognizes . . . and you're never going to guess who it might be, are you?

Once the chrononauts, post-*Hindenburg* non-disaster, start trying to make their way home, we move with a jolt (this is very effectively handled) into Murphy's altered timeline: now he's working for the Office of Paranormal Sciences, a government body set up by the same dimwitted Congress that, a while back, killed off NASA because its work was irrelevant. As an OPS "scientist", Murphy is one of the team sent to examine

the appearance of a UFO in remote countryside. Needless to say, this is the timeship of our chrononauts, one of whom Murphy runs into. His conviction that this character is from the future leads him to take a pivotal role in the development of the world's very first time machine. (Later he'll discover that, in his original timeline, his *Analog* article and a later sf novel he wrote inspired his son to do the basic research that gave birth to time travel.)

In due course the chrononauts team up with both the Murphys -- the young one from one timeline and the much older one from the other -- but not before they discover that the future for the world if time traveling continues is doom: an ancient alien species, policing the galaxy precisely to make sure the practice never arises, blow the moon to smithereens and thereby render the earth uninhabitable. This is because (pages 264-5)

Apparently, time travel is the most dangerous thing an intelligent race can discover, because a civilization capable of exploring its own history is likewise capable of changing it. When that happens, more often than not they destroy themselves . . . and sometimes they take other races with them.

It therefore becomes imperative that Murphy neither does the science himself nor publishes the writings that will encourage his son to do it -- better, in fact, that he lose himself somewhere in history. For the chrononauts the challenge is somewhat similar: without the invention of time travel, the future from which they came does not exist.

The book's title (sans Spielbergish capitalization) refers to Steele's mechanism for time travel. The medium of chronospace can be thought of as akin to hyperspace, only with the wormholes extending through time rather than through space. (Yes, I know, hyperspatial wormholes would have a time aspect too; but that's not relevant to this novel.) Here's a description of the timeship *Oberon* making an entry into chronospace (pages 144-5):

Oberon's AI discovered a quantum irregularity in Earth's gravity well; exotic matter contained within the pods beneath the saucer enlarged the subatomic rift into a funnel large enough for the timeship to pass through, and laced the funnel's mouth with energy fields that would keep the wormhole temporarily stable. Within moments, a small area of spacetime was warped into something that resembled a four-dimensional ram's horn: a closed time-like circle. Relentlessly attracted by the wormhole it had just created, the timeship plummeted into the closed-time circle.

It's a neat piece of verisimilitudinal hokey science -- certainly good enough to convince me!

ChronoSpace is a very ingenious item, but I have to confess I found the writing a bit pedestrian; matters aren't helped by the countless proofing errors. One puzzling glitch is that the name of veteran sf author Cleve Cartmill is spelled incorrectly throughout ("Cartmell"). What grated also was the sort of sf and sf fandom orientation of a lot of the book. I was told more than I needed to know about the content of classic issues of *Analog* -- treated as a well known magazine even though perhaps 99% of the population will never have heard of it. When Greg Benford made an appearance (sort of) as a minor but significant character in the tale I winced at what seemed like a sort of in-joke without the joke. And so on. In a way I suppose it's reasonable to direct an sf novel so especially toward sf fandom -- to people who're dedicated readers of the genre -- but my own preference is for narratives that (with obvious qualifications) are accessible to the rest of the fiction-reading public. If you mind none of these things, then I'm sure you'll love *ChronoSpace*; even if you do, it's

still well worth reading.

Tomislav says

Time Loves A Hero, is a re-publication of Allen Steele's novel Chronospace. As explained in the new introduction, this is the title which he originally intended – but in case you have already read Chronospace, be aware that there is no new story here. In turn then, Chronospace is the full narrative from which the novella “Where Angels Fear to Tread” was extracted for publication in the October/November 1997 Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine. After the novella won a Hugo Award and was nominated for other awards, the extended novelized Chronospace was able to be published in 2001. The original novella makes up the center part of the three-part novel.

The novella “Where Angels Fear to Tread” is set in a contemporary America in a slightly alternate timeline and concerns Dr. Zack Murphy, a physicist who has found work in the federal Office of Paranormal Sciences after the near shut-down of NASA. Zack is awakened by government agents in the night, and swept to the site of a crashed UFO, which he theorizes to be a human time ship from the future rather than an extraterrestrial alien craft. The reality of the UFO is interestingly revealed through means that are other than those intended by military leadership, and that is the charm of the story, I think. Clues to the history leading to this slightly alternate timeline augment the action of the story, as well.

In the novel, another bigger story is wrapped around the deservedly award-winning novella. In the bigger story, we are introduced to Dr. David Z. Murphy, a NASA scientist in a timeline much closer to our own. Murphy has written a speculative science article published in Analog, that theorizes UFOs are actually human time ships from the future, and which gets him in all kinds of professional trouble. The novel also introduces us to the crew of the 24th century timeship Oberon, which is preparing for a mission to the explosion of the German airship Hindenberg in New Jersey in 1937. The question of whether it was an accident or deliberate sabotage is finally to be determined.

Hard SF is a subgenre of science fiction that is often thought of as focusing on known science and technological capabilities. However, I feel that is a narrow definition, and that Hard SF is writing which focusses on speculative concepts, whether they are known science or not. Science and technology are used to enhance the plausibility of the speculation. Time Loves A Hero, like most time travel stories from H.G. Wells' The Time Machine onwards, are more about the concept of changes in history, and the resulting alternate timelines, than about the mechanics of time travel. In this novel, Steele writes that time travel has been possible since the time of Einstein, and all that was lacking was the financial investment and appropriate technology. I think plausibility is decreased by such a fun, but boldly false claim - rather than enhanced – especially since no real effort is made to actually explain time travel. There is no new time-travelling concept here; the puzzle of the timelines, and the identification of the points of departure, dominate the reader's attention.

While I eagerly read the first two parts of the three-part novel and recommend it overall, in the end, I found the reality of the wrapper story and timeline to be not as good as the implied wrapper story and timeline that was suggested in the original gem of a novella.
