



The Stars My Destination

Alfred Bester, Neil Gaiman (Introduction)

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In this pulse-quickenning novel, Alfred Bester imagines a future in which people "jaunte" a thousand miles with a single thought, where the rich barricade themselves in labyrinths and protect themselves with radioactive hit men - and where an inarticulate outcast is the most valuable and dangerous man alive. *The Stars My Destination* is a classic of technological prophecy and timeless narrative enchantment by an acknowledged master of science fiction.

The Stars My Destination Details

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From Reader Review The Stars My Destination for online ebook

Apatt says

I first read this book decades ago under the title of *Tiger! Tiger!* (British edition). I just reread it recently for the purposes of writing this review. Fortunately I have memory like a sieve so I enjoy this reread just as much as the first time.

The Stars My Destination is one of the few sf books that is included in almost every all-time best sf books I have ever seen, and I have seen many. If I see such a list without this book I will probably dismiss it.

The story is centered upon Gully (Gulliver) Foyle a vengeful anti-hero protagonist who thinks nothing of whacking all and sundry with a sledgehammer. It is set in a universe where practically everybody can teleport, the part where teleportation ("jaunting") is discovered by accident and developed into a normal mode of transportation is brief yet brilliant, and the social and cultural ramifications are very well thought out. Foyle is not exactly likable but you have to feel sorry for the ordeals he goes through in this book. Abandoned, marooned, kidnapped, tortured, and imprisoned, no wonder he is so bitter and vengeful all the time; at no point does anybody offer him a nice cup of tea or a manicure. Foyle stoically goes through all this ill treatment with a snarl and a promise of payback. Bester's witty and intelligent prose contrast nicely with the gutter language spoken by Foyle in the first half of the book. The author has cited The Count of Monte Cristo as an influence for this book but the similarity is not noticeable until Foyle reinvented himself with an extreme makeover in the second half of the book, the breakneck pace of the book also slows down for the elaborate revenge plan at this point.

As this is one of the most beloved sf books ever recommendation is not usually necessary for regular sf readers, readers new to the genre will find this an ideal starting point.

The last couple of chapters are wonderfully trippy, surreal, philosophical and cosmic! I suspect these last chapters play a large part in pushing the book to its classic status.

I love this book, me!

Matthias says

Grab no guesses you! Read it, is all.

This book has been quite the ride. Gully Foyle is your guide in a future where teleportation ("jaunting") is the main mode of transportation and where interplanetary tensions seem to mount up to an unavoidable Solar System War.

Gully Foyle is a guide you might not like very much, but boy, will he take you places. You'll feast your eyes on locations such as Nightmare Theatre, Freak Factory, sub-terranean prisons, a Sedative Garden and an asteroid consisting of salvaged wreckage, inhabited by savage scientists. On top of that you'll be taking short trips to the Moon, Mars and beyond. You'll meet colourful (and some extravagantly colourless) characters on the way, death-head Dagenham being one of my personal favorites. Better be quick though because Foyle isn't waiting up. He moves fast and in straight lines, through walls, through people, through morals, through

conventions, through dimensional limits, through action-packed chapters that will make your head spin.

Why might you not like Gully Foyle, you ask? He's a cockroach. An angry one at that, with a simple mind set on revenge. Anything that stands in his way, anyone who tries to trample him, is in for a surprise. He survives against all odds. And you know what stuff that doesn't kill you really does? Right. Your guide will evolve, his instinct for survival will always be that split second quicker than whatever wants to end him.

And as your guide grows stronger you might, despite a very shaky start, grow to like him. Don't be surprised if you would see an ugly, tattooed face next to the encyclopedia entry of "character development". It's Gully Foyle, the developing character *extraordinaire*. He might start off as a man *too easy for trouble, too slow for fun, too empty for friendship, too lazy for love*, a shell of a man throwing the angry question into the void: "**What's a matter, me? Help, you goddamn gods! Help, is all.**", but as this cockroach grows stronger, he also grows wiser. The cockroach will meet himself. A confrontation that, if handled successfully, will take him to the stars.

Paul Bryant says

Oh I forgot to list this one! Wow - oversight city! (A city not found on any maps). God knows whether this is really a five star novel, but it was when I read it as a young teenybopper, and it bopped all over my teeny brain and imploded it into a zillion sparkly pieces which took many months to gradually meld back into a usable item again - I think that's why I did so poorly in my physics exam. It was called *Tiger! Tiger!* then, partly because Gully Foyle, the antiest of heroes, has a facial tiger tattoo like this

Well, fiercer than that, so that big tough aliens are scared of him, you know. That was him when he was a lot younger. Or maybe his sister, it's hard to tell.

Tiger! Tiger! was written in 1956 so how Alfred Bester could predict both the psychedelic trippiness of the 60s and the extreme facial tattooing of the 90s is beyond me. If you read it closely there's also a reference to Tip-Ex, which wouldn't be invented until 1959, and mouse pads, which didn't come in until years later. What a guy.

So this is another in the series of I-loved-this-to-death-then-but-I-don't-know-what-the-hell-I'd-think-about-it-now useless reviews.

Catie says

I think that this book pretty much just blew my mind. I mean, am I crazy, or is this one of the most profound things ever written?

"You pigs, you. You goof like pigs, is all. You got the most in you and you use the least. You hear me, you? Got a million in you and spend pennies. Got a genius in you and think crazies. Got a heart in you and feel empties. All a you. Every you...."

Alright, you probably have to read the book to appreciate that, and you should! Can I entice you further by saying that an android delivers the meaning of life in a radiation fueled moment of lucidity, before collapsing, about five pages before that speech? How about the fact that this book contains an evil millionaire, an albino with abnormal perception, a gorgeous telepath, a radioactive courier, a slick super spy, a cold-hearted, red-headed jailbird, and a bionic psychopath bent on revenge? Okay, I am pulling out my very last card. Wait for it...

The Count of Monte Cristo...in space. That's right! Except in this version, he finds enlightenment and awakens humanity in the end.

I could see the comparison between these two masterpieces right away, but at first everything seemed to be happening much too fast. How could he cram the years and years of slowly simmering vengeance of Edmund Dantes into a paltry two hundred pages? But then I started thinking. This is the future: where teleportation makes travel instantaneous; where the body and mind can be upgraded with hypno-learning and a little re-wiring; where information can be gained with the latest psychological coercion techniques. In short, this is a world where patience is no longer required for revenge. Like Dantes, Gully is a simple man awakened to all of his great potential by a fiery need for vengeance. But Gully is ten times more impulsive and rash than Dantes ever was; he kills indiscriminately and without conscience. And when he begins to awaken, he wakes up completely.

This book contains one of the most colorful, interesting casts of characters that I have ever come across. I can definitely see that Alfred Bester had a history in comics; many of these characters seem like comic book heroes in the making. I can also see that this was written in the 1950's. It's nice that he could envision women fighting against their oppression, but I am a little sad that he saw the double standard placed on women continuing for hundreds of years. Also, I can almost see him delighting in his own progressiveness when he repeatedly describes Robin Wednesbury as a gorgeous "negro girl," more times than he describes the race of anyone else in the book (*stick it in your eye, racist pigs!*). But it comes across as a bit glaring to someone raised in the Sesame Street, avoid mentioning race at all costs generation. Some of the technological advances that he envisioned are quite a hoot as well. For example, he imagined that teleportation would end the need for communications systems:

"In an age when communication systems were virtually extinct – when it was far easier to jaunte directly to a man's office for a discussion than to telephone or telegraph – "

I think that he severely underestimated the lengths that people will go to to avoid speaking face to face.

Perfect Musical Pairing

Tool – Lateralus

I've seen these guys twice in concert, and I love them for their sweeping, dynamic, ten minute long songs. They put on quite a show – with crazy mind-bending imagery and clothes (or lack thereof). Their shows always make me feel like I would probably be getting more out of them if I were on mind altering drugs of some sort, which isn't really a good thing for me (huge fan of reality and lifelong abstainer). The ending of this book makes me feel almost the same way – it's just a little bit too "out there" for me to fully appreciate, but I still found it incredibly moving. This song is all about transcending our basic, human selves.

mark monday says

WOW BOB WOW!

GULLY FOYLE IS FAST AND FURIOUS!

A MADMAN OUT FOR VENGEANCE, LEFT FOR DEAD NOT ONCE - BUT TWICE!

HE IS HUMAN JUGGERNAUT, HE IS FORCE MAJEURE, HE IS BOTH ROCK AND HARD PLACE!

HE HURTLES THROUGH SPACE & TIME & MISADVENTURE, HE WEARS MANY FACES, A LOVER AND A RAPIST, THE MOST VIOLENT MAN IN THE ROOM, THE ANGRIEST BOY EVER, A HUMAN TIMEBOMB!

HIS FACIAL TATTOOS:

A TIGER, A TIGER!

BURNING BRIGHT!

THE ONLY GIRL FOR HIM - ANOTHER SOCIOPATH!

THE ONLY DESTINATION FOR HIM: THE STARS! LITERALLY!

THIS HOLY NEANDERTHAL IS HUMANITY'S FUTURE HOPE!

a thrilling narrative. a challenging protagonist. a metaphysical and surprisingly hopeful ending. a great classic!

Bradley says

Re-Read 6/5/17:

Reading this is like being on fire, snarling like a Tyger, and being the dumb brute and the intellectual mastermind at the same time. Reading it a second time is like chumming up with a psychopath and learning that he's really the good guy because everyone else is just as crazy as him.

And then, what else can we expect when practically everyone can Jaunte (teleport) practically anywhere they want? Society is radically changed in the next five hundred years, and it's not just the tech. It's the human mind and all their baser instincts let loose.

Still a fantastic tale. :)

Original review:

Wow. I can see now why this is considered one of the greats of sci-fi. It ought to be required reading for anyone setting out to know the history of the field and what sparked the imagination of so many other writers. The very ending was somewhat weak, but the climax was great. The emotions were the strongest part of the whole tale. Gut wrenching and visceral doesn't begin to describe it. Great setup, straightforward adventure/revenge tale, and a great twist. Loved it, loved it, loved it.

I just learned there *might* be a movie in development. Oh, my lord, I can't believe how excited I am about this.

It gets my heart pumping precisely eight times more than when I learned that Rama was in development.

SQUEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

(Ok. I'm not a little girl. But I FEEL like one, and isn't that what really counts?)

Manuel Antão says

"The jaunte rules supreme..."

I read this book more than 20 years ago and finally I got to read it again (It's been for some time on my TBR Pile of long-ago-SF-Books...)

There's many SF classics to be read, and I have read most of them.

Often, when reading books from the "good old day"•, the datedness of the tale, writing, and characters is very obvious to the modern eye. Not so with this book.

SF is a difficult and transient literature at the best of times. It claims to treat of the future. But nothing dates harder than SF. "The Stars My Destination" is one of those books that fends off the test of time.

When I read this book in the late 80's as a young teenager, I read it under the title "Tiger! Tiger!", which it's a title I much prefer.

This is Cyberpunk before William Gibson "invented" it: it has got corporate intrigue, a mysterious McGuffin (PyRE), an amoral hero and a super-cool woman,...

Still one of my favourites.

Lyn says

"Gully Foyle, that's my name, me."

Alfred Bester has created in Gulliver Foyle one of Science Fiction's great characters. The protagonist of Bester's 1956 novel *The Stars My Destination* is a brutish, driven by internal energies force of nature and provides the most memorable element of this archetypal SF story.

That and jaunting.

Bester describes a future society where personal teleportation – jaunting – has transformed human society in virtually every way, from economic to sociological to legal. This anthropological paradigm shift of society is

vaguely reminiscent of Poul Anderson's 1954 novel *Brainwave*.

Imaginative and surreal, this falls into the Philip K. Dick sub-genre of weird SF.

Megan Baxter says

Gully Foyle is not a likeable man. But he is a compelling one. And in *The Stars My Destination* Alfred Bester wrote one of his best. (I do like *The Demolished Man* a little bit more.)

Note: The rest of this review has been withdrawn due to the changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision [here](#).

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at Smorgasbook

Terry says

Gully Foyle is my name
Terra is my nation
Deep space is my dwelling place
The stars my destination

Sci-fi from its formative days is funny. Not funny ha-ha (not always anyway), but funny-weird...at least for me. I am often unable to get over the clunky writing and wispy plots despite the many cool ideas on display. Sometimes even a premise as cool as a galaxy-spanning empire held together by the prods and pokes of a few cognoscenti using an arcane sociological science still can't make a plodding plot with artless prose and paper-thin characters readable to me (sorry, Mr. Asimov). At other times the founders of the genre can suffer by comparison to their descendants who have taken the ideas that, while new and fresh when they used them, seem old and tired when you come to the foundational works after seeing them presented elsewhere, often with more compelling characters and well-crafted prose. Then there are books like this one, written by Alfred Bester, and you understand why some classics are still classics.

Gully Foyle is a gutter-boy. A low, brainless brute barely able to act as a Mechanic's Mate 3rd class on the spaceship 'Nomad', oiling and wiping the machines and acknowledged by his superiors to be a human dead end. Then the passing ship 'Vorga' left him to rot, the only survivor on a crippled ship in the void.

So, in five seconds, he was born, he lived, and he died.
After thirty years of existence and six months of torture,
Gully Foyle, the stereotype Common Man, was no more. The
key turned in the lock of his soul and the door was opened.

A purpose had been found that could open up all of the potential this beast-man had within him: vengeance.

From here we follow Foyle as he lifts himself out of the pit (physically at least) by his bootstraps and ingeniously contrives both his own rescue and the plans that set him on the path that will allow him to fulfill his oath: “I find you, ‘Vorga’. I find you, I kill you, ‘Vorga’. I kill you filthy.” All the while his spirit stews in the morass from which his body could escape and he becomes a rapist, thug and purveyor of violence in pursuit of his goal. No price is too high to reach it, whether it be imprisonment or social isolation; no obstacle can stand in his way, whether it be the most powerful institutions in the world, or the human dignity of those he uses. Beware, Gully Foyle is on his way.

Bester’s prose is well-wrought and carries us briskly along with Foyle on his quest, from the gutter tongue of the 25th century into which he was born to the more refined prose of the high society parties which Foyle must infiltrate. Bester also does a fine job of describing his world and his ability to portray everything from the rigours of Gully’s six month survival in a broken hulk in deep space a gruelling moment at a time, to the weird and wonderful portrayal of Foyle’s trauma-induced synaesthesia later in the book is astonishing. I was dazzled. There are also more ideas packed into one slim volume than you can shake a stick at and all of them are foundational in the genre: cybernetic implants for physical and mental enhancement, personal teleportation (with many of the social ramifications of its existence worked out in the story), world-ending manufactured compounds that leave the future of humanity lying on a knife’s edge, a world controlled by pseudo-feudal multinational corporations, a forgotten society of future primitives living on a lonely asteroid, tattooing their faces with hideous designs, and worshipping a debased form of the scientific method...and the list goes on. Why were they able, at their best, to do this kind of thing in the old days in one slim volume, while today a writer would have taken half of these ideas, or even one, and written a two thousand page multi-volume epic out of it? Add to that the cast of characters that are almost all equally memorable and well-drawn: the megalomaniac Presteign of Presteign, a man of wealth and power cognisant of little save his own desires and dignity; his equally powerful daughter, the beautiful blind albino Olivia, an ice-princess who sees the world in the infra-red and electro-magnetic spectrums and carries her own dark secrets; the memorably named Jisbella McQueen (Jiz to her friends, thanks very much) a criminal miscreant both attracted to and repulsed by Foyle; and the man with the death’s head smile, Saul Dagenham, a scientist made ‘hot’ by an accident that has left him a radioactive outcast, able to interact with others in only a limited way.

I must admit that, while I thoroughly enjoyed this book from the start, I was minded to give it a three star rating until I came to the climax and Bester managed to turn a scarred, brutal criminal into an altruistic saviour for a mankind as lost and directionless as he had been. One key had turned and made Gully Foyle into a remorseless machine for vengeance, another equally harsh set of trials then took this driven creature and made him into someone able to see the root of humanity’s need and try his best to give them the key to their own awakening.

I challenge you, me. Die or live and be great. Blow
yourselves to Christ gone or come and find me,
Gully Foyle, and I make you men. I make you great.
I give you the stars.

What a great read. Highly recommended.

(Bester also gets extra points for having written the silver age Green Lantern oath, a ditty almost as cool as the one quoted above about Gully Foyle.)

Also posted at Shelf Inflicted

Algernon says

This was a golden age, a time of high adventure, rich living and hard dying ... but nobody thought so. This was a future of fortune and theft, pillage and rapine, culture and vice ... but nobody admitted it. This was an age of extremes, a fascinating century of freaks ... but nobody loved it.

Alfred Bester began his career with stories published in **Thrilling Wonder Stories** , **Startling Stories** , **Astounding Science Fiction** - names that have come to define that brief period known as the Golden Age of SF, when the possibilities offered by science seemed limited only by the human imagination, and the opening of the road to the stars only a couple of decades away. Less concerned with practicalities like deadly solar radiation, terminal cold or the barrier of the speed of light, writers played the game of 'what if ...' and then went on to speculate on the changes future technologies and discoveries would play on the individual psyche and on society as a whole.

What if humans could teleport anywhere they want just by tapping the unused resources of their brains? What would be the limitations of this new discovered ability? How would it change economic and political relations around the world? Alfred Bester explores the notion in the context of a dystopian future, where humanity has colonized the Solar System but the Inner Planets are in open conflict with the colonists beyond the asteroid belt (sound familiar? it is one of the central issues of the Expanse universe in James S A Corey new space opera). It is the 25th century and society is controlled by dynastic mega corporations with the division between 'have' and 'have not' as sharp as ever and morality has regressed to the point where women are once again locked in castle towers and forbidden to go out without a chaperone.

All this is just the background setting and it is pretty much laid down in the introduction of the novel in a concise and clear exposition that skirts long scientific explanations of 'how' or 'why' and simply postulates concepts and technologies. Technologies and concepts that have just landed Gulliver Foyle in a deadly trap:

He was Gulliver Foyle, Mechanic's Mate 3rd Class, thirty years old, big boned and rough... and one hundred and seventy days adrift in space. He was Gully Foyle, the oiler, wiper, bunkerman; too easy for trouble, too slow for fun, too empty for friendship, too lazy for love.

Foyle, a slacker totally devoid of ambitions or life goals, discovers that he cares about something after all. When his Earth bound cargo ship (Nomad) gets hit by raiders and all the crew is killed, Foyle realizes he really wants to live and is not ready to give up, not even when a passing spaceship (Vorga) refuses to acknowledge his distress signals and departs without rescuing him. From 'drifter' Foyle becomes 'driven', obsessed with extracting revenge on the Vorga. After jury rigging his gutted ship, Foyle drifts back to civilization. Along the way, Foyle is captured by a sect of space scavengers based on a lost asteroid, where he receives a tattoo illustrating his transformation from prey to predator, from somebody at the receiving end of hard knocks to a mover and shaker of the world, from follower to leader of the pack. The incident also explains the alternate title of the book:

*Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye*

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

The development of the novel from here owes a lot to The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas, as uncouth and violent Gully Foyle evolves into the rich and slick entertainer Fourmyle of Ceres, a new man with a new face but still driven by his desire to exact revenge on the crew of the Vorga. There are complications though, as it appears that Foyle's original ship carried a secret cargo of PyrE (a mysterious and unique material that we might as well label 'unobtainium'), a cargo that could change the dynamic of the war between Inner and Outer Planets in the solar system. So Foyle is hunted in turn by the Earth's Intelligence Agency, by the clan leader of one of the mega corporations, by a radioactive bounty hunter and probably one or two more parties interested in laying their hands of the McGuffin material. (view spoiler)

I liked the novel, but honestly I couldn't see why so many writers and readers hail it as the greatest single SF story ever written. It is a tale well told, with well defined characters, lively pacing, gripping plot. The SF elements are numerous and daring and probably only the fact that they have been used by every writer that came after Bester explains why they had less of an impact on me. At the time the book was written they were cutting edge instead of standard SF concepts. As one commenter remarks : *Bester's description of synesthesia is the first popular account in the English language. It is also quite accurate.* . Neil Gaiman points out that what we have come to refer to as cyberpunk has its roots here in the pages of Bester : electronic body enhancements (admittedly powered by a nuclear battery inserted into the spine. yuck!) ; a dystopian future controlled by consumerism and corporatism, psionic powers, conspiracy theories that are actually true and last but not least great female sidekicks for the anti-hero.

It is only towards the end of the novel that greatness is achieved and surpassed and the focus of the novel is revealed as not the fate of Gully Foyle or the revelation of who ordered the Vorga to abandon him, but the destiny of humanity itself, it's moment of choice between self-destruction and 'childhood's end' in the sense that Arthur C Clarke interpreted it : leave the nest of the planet and of the Sun behind and take our rightful place among the stars. The choice between a cynical 'real-politik' world view where 'the weak are meat the strong doth eat' (I believe that's how David Mitchell put it) and faith that transcends organized religion to affirm that people are able to distinguish between right and wrong and choose the best way into the future. Hoping I will not spoil anything, here are a few quotes about the coming of wisdom for Foyle, in a conversation with a household robot:

'That's me,' he said, motioning to the robot. 'That's all of us. We prattle about free will, but we're nothing but response ... mechanical reaction in prescribed grooves. So ... here I am, here I am, waiting to respond. Press the buttons and I'll jump.'

- *'Why reach out to the stars and galaxies? What for?'*

- *'Because you're alive, sir. You might as well ask: Why is life? Don't ask about it. Live it'*

'There's got to be more to life than just living,' Foyle said to the robot.

'Then find it for yourself, sir. Don't ask the world to stop moving because you have doubts'

'Why can't we all move forward together?'

'Because you're all different. You're not lemmings. Some must lead, and hope that the rest will follow.'

'Who leads?'

'The men who must ... driven men, compelled men.'

'Freak men.'

'You're all freaks, sir. But you always have been freaks. Life is a freak. That's its hope and glory.'

'Thank you very much.'

'My pleasure, sir.'

'You've saved the day.'

'Always a lovely day somewhere, sir,' the robot beamed.

final verdict: it took me until the last page to reach a decision, but "The Stars My Destination" is worth all the praise and is rightfully called a classic of the genre. Goodbye for now, hope you'll have a lovely day!

Bill Kerwin says

This is my favorite classic science fiction novel. It is rich in incident, ambitious in conception, terse and unemotional in style, and fiercely Romantic in theme. Although it is a revenge tale based on *The Count of Monte Cristo*, its heart is perhaps closer to *Frankenstein*, but to a *Frankenstein* in which the monster is capable of self-redemption, of moving beyond isolation and bitterness toward an enlightened humanity. And all the things that are good about this novel are embodied in its hero—Caliban and Hamlet, Satan and Samson, Cain and Prometheus combined—the brute-genius Gully Foyle.

During a war between the Inner and the Outer Planets, Gully Foyle—unlettered, unskilled, amoral—is adrift upon the wreck of the space ship *The Nomad*, the sole survivor of an attack. When the friendly ship *Vorga* knowingly passes him by, he becomes consumed by the desire for revenge. It is this passion which motivates him throughout a series of crimes—including (but not limited to) blackmail, rape, and murder—as he transforms himself into the elegant Geoffrey Fourmyle, still searching for the person who years ago decided to leave poor Gully Foyle for dead.

Foyle's search takes place in a future world dense with marvels and horrors: wide use of individually initiated teleportation ("jaunting"), heartless mega-corporations, occasional telepathy, vast underground prisons, a cargo cult with cool tattoos, a cathedral housing a circus, a mysterious substance ("PyrE") which may either consume or transform our world, and the fragmentation of time.

This is a very entertaining novel, but also a thoughtful one. Its ending is ambitious and outrageous, exalting The Hero, Democracy and Freedom, and yet acknowledging the ignorance, darkness and oppression from which these gifts inevitably spring. I can give it no better praise than to say I think Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, and Mr. and Mrs. Shelley--and, yes, Dumas *pere* too--would have liked it a lot.

RandomAnthony says

Holy shit, *The Stars My Destination* is a revelation. How'd this novel get past me for so long?

I picture Alfred Bester as a mad scientist, surrounded by paper and typewriters, a cigarette dangling from his mouth, knocking this fucker out in the mid-50s. Bester writes like he has to get all of his ideas out of his head RIGHT NOW, like they're going to explode if they stay in his brain too long. People who buy special diseases so they can go into the hospital and hang out with cute nurses? Neurological modification so, when

a person tries to tell a particular truth, the brain short circuit and dies? He throws out concepts by the paragraph that less brave writers would save as other novels' cores. The storyline shifts and flows while the main character engages in despicable behavior in the search for the person who ordered a ship to leave him stranded on a fuel-less ship sipping through space. Through the text a thread of dread, hope, faith, and impulse pushes toward a stay-up-late-to-finish ending. I need to read this sucker again and savor the structure.

William Gibson apparently called *The Stars My Destination* "perfectly surefooted, elegantly pulpy," and "dizzying in its pace and sweep." I don't think higher praise could be afforded this book. And Bester wrote the book in the mid-fifties! I bow in your direction, sir. You kicked the shit out of this novel. On to your other works.

Sercan Vatansever says

Sonunda bir tokat atan kitaplara kar?? hislerimi kesinle?tirmem çok zor oluyor. Ortalar?nda b?rakmay? bile dü?ündü?üm bu kitab? sabah bitirdi?imden beri defalarca hakk?nda dü?ünürken buldum kendimi. Kitaba olan hislerim kitab?n kendisi gibi karma??k. Okurken ölesiye sinir oldu?unuz bir kitaba kar??, bitirince en sevdi?iniz kitaplar aras?na dahi sokabilece?iniz hissetti?iniz oldu mu daha önce? Resmen boyun e?diriyor.

?tiraf etmem gerekirse 'Kaplan! Kaplan!' biraz ba?tan savd???m bir kitap oldu. Ama bunun en büyük sebebi yazar. Mükemmel ba?layan bir hikayeye eklenmi? kuru aksiyon sahneleri bana kal?rsa özü öldürmü?. Okumas? kolay bir kitap oldu?unu dü?ünmüyorum, en az?ndan benim için öyleydi. Ancak bu okuma zorlu?unun ana sebebi dil de?il, karakterler. Okuyabilece?iniz en enteresan karakterleri yaratm?? Bester. Anlamlan?rmak güç. Ve beni bilenler bilir böyle Gully gibi uçuk karakterlere bay?l?r?m. Al??lmad?k. Gerçi Gully için uçuk biraz hafif kal?r, saykoyu tercih edecek?im.

Tekrar okunabilecek kitaplar listesine yazd?m kitab?. Tam y?ld?z veremiyorum kitaba. Dilinden ho?lanmad???m için en ba?ta. Her ?ey aniden oluyormu? gibi hissetten bir dili var Bester'?n. Yorumlarda da bundan yak?nm??t?m...

*'Dinleyin lan beni! Dinle insan! Vaaz verece?im iyi dinleyin bakiyim!
Lan domuzlar lan. Domuz gibi çürüyorsunuz alay?n?z. ?çinizde ço?u var ama az?n? kullan?yorsunuz.
?çinizde milyon var ama kuru? harc?yorsunuz. ?çinizde deha var ve deli deli ?eyler dü?ünüyorsunuz.
Kalbiniz var ama bo? hislerle dolusunuz. Hepiniz. Alay?n?z...
Size harcatmak için sava? olmas? gerek. Dü?ünmeniz için s?k??man?z laz?m. Büyüük olman?z için
meydan okumayla yüzle?meniz laz?m. Yoksa tüm gün k?ç?n?z?n üstünde oturun. Lan domuzlar lan!
Pekala, Tanr? da sizi kahretsin! Size meydan okuyorum lan ben. Ölün ya da ya?ay?n ve büyük olun. Ya
kendinizi patlat?p merhum ?sa'n?n ard?ndan gidin ya da beni bulun, Gully Foyle'u bulun ve ben sizi
insan yapay?m. Sizi büyük yapay?m. Size y?ld?zlar? vereyim.'*

Son olarak al?nt?y? yazarken akl?ma geldi; kitab? okurken elimin alt?nda 6.45 bask?s? da vard? çevirileri kar??la?t?rd?m. Daha ilk sayfadan inan?lmaz farkl?l?klar, korkunç hatalar var... Hiç 6.45 okumad?m ama elimde kitaplar? var, nas?l cesaret edecek?im bilmiyorum. Buradan vesileyle ?thaki'ye, Bar?? Tanyeri'ne te?ekkür edeyim de bir yere ba?layay?m bari. Elinize sa?l?k.

Sandi says

I have two thoughts on "The Stars My Destination" by Alfred Bester. One is that it really reads modern for a book written in 1956. The other is that it has some really antiquated ideas about the future.

First for the positive. For the first 200 of the 250 or so pages of the story, I couldn't stand the protagonist, Gulliver Foyle. However, he grows as a human being to the point that I ended up spending the last 50 pages cheering him on. Bester did an excellent job of taking Foyle from being almost an animal to a self-educated man with no conscience to a man who cares deeply about mankind and its future. The story is tightly written and the pacing is practically perfect. I had a hard time putting it down even while I was really hating Gully. I can see that this book has had a huge impact on modern science fiction writers. It is nothing like the typical science fiction novels of the mid-Fifties.

Now, for the negative. The things that really bothered me had mostly to do with the sensibilities of the Fifties expressed in the book. Women were protected and kept morally pure. They were more like possessions than anything else. You'd think that 500 years in the future, women would be a bit more equal to men. Also, while I really loved the character of Robin Wednesbury, I hated how Bester felt it necessary to say something about her being a Negro every time he talked about her. It's clear that he thought it would be really cool to have an intelligent, capable Negro "girl" character and he acts like it's really remarkable. I think she's a wonderful character and well-written other than the constant references to her race which I found distracting and dated. In contrast, he only mentions Olivia Presteign's albinism a couple of times, not every time she appears. Isn't albinism a much more remarkable trait than being an intelligent black woman?

Despite the racism and sexism in the book, I did like it. The flaws reduced my rating by a star though. I've read enough books from the Fifties and earlier to know that they are not typical of the better writing of the time and I feel that Bester's biases just got the better of him.

Stuart says

The Stars My Destination: Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright, Intent on Revenge
(Posted at Fantasy Literature)

Much has been written about Alfred Bester's classic 1956 SF novel *The Stars My Destination* (*Tiger! Tiger!* in the UK edition). According to Wikipedia, it is considered one of the best SF books of all time by many authors such as Neil Gaiman, Joe Haldeman, Samuel. R. Delany, Robert Silverberg, and William Gibson. Predating cyberpunk by almost three decades (if you count from *Neuromancer* in 1984), it features a fully-realized world of ruthless multinational corporations, cybernetic enhancements, and most importantly, the concept of "jaunting", the ability to teleport instantly between two places if the jaunter knows the exact locations and has seen them before physically. This ability is available to almost everyone in society. As you might expect, this created dramatic upheaval in global society and has completely transformed economies, transportation, and social behavior. For instance, due to the ability of people to jaunt into any known location, wealthy families create impenetrable labyrinths to protect themselves and women are confined to such places in many cases, giving rise to a Neo-Victorian society.

The story begins in very cinematic fashion with a lone crewman named Gully Foyle, who wakes up to find himself the sole survivor of an attack on a merchant spaceship called Nomad. He initially finds ways to survive but is not pushed into action until a passing ship, the Vorga, ignores the distress signals he has been

sending out. This fuels an intense rage in him that will consume and transform him utterly into a single-minded beast driven by the desire for revenge on whomever controlled the Vorga. As it turns out, the Vorga is owned by the same ultra-wealthy and decadent Presteign clan that owns the Nomad, and the further Gully pursues each link in the mystery behind the Vorga's actions, the more convoluted the plot becomes, and he encounters a plethora of very unusual and intriguing characters. Along the way, he himself changes in dramatic ways and we also get a very detailed tour of this future world where teleportation dominates. There are even some telepaths (echoes of Bester's previous novel *The Demolished Man*, which won the inaugural Hugo Award) in the story, a mysterious super-powerful substance called PyrE, a "jaunt-proof" high security prison, a primitive space-bound cargo cult, various assassins and secret societies, and a struggle between the Inner Planets and Outer Colonies, which is a theme that has been explored in the genre many times since, including most recently James S.A. Corey's *THE EXPANSE* series.

Perhaps the biggest question for modern readers is, does this classic still hold up today, almost 60 years after initial publication? The answer is ABSOLUTELY! This book is fierce, cynical, lighting-paced, complex, philosophical, darkly humorous, and frankly doesn't feel dated at all. It's more exciting as cyberpunk than William Gibson, not as self-congratulatory as Iain M. Banks' Culture novels, and takes a far more skeptical of the future than Robert Heinlein's SF novels. Stylistically, it runs circles around the pedestrian prose of contemporaries like Arthur C. Clarke (who I like) or Isaac Asimov (who I don't). Considering how much impact Bester has had on the genre with only two major books, *The Demolished Man* and *The Stars My Destination*, I think every serious SF fan owes it to themselves to give this book a try.

Carol. says

An excellent analysis of the Trump candidacy and events leading up to his election as #45. Uses both his perspective and that of the anonymous supporter to chilling effect. Guest appearance by Ivanka near the end.

Forgive me my little joke; when I picked up the classic by Bester, I had no idea what I was in for, except a classic sci-fi--in space, with a rather appealing title.

The main character is Gully Foyle, a spacer with no real motivation in life. Content to be lazy, without purpose beyond existence, he's a bit of a drifter, until a spaceship he is traveling on is destroyed. Gully discovers a will to live and manages to keep himself barely alive, leaving the tiny reinforced space he exists in to scavenge supplies five minutes at a time in his barely functional spacesuit. At last, he sees a ship passing close by. He sends up a signal flare. The ship slows, almost stops, and then turns away. From here, the story takes off, as Gully discovers the heat of revenge as the one thing that can give him purpose.

One might think that discovering a passion could connect Gully to humanity, and possibly even the reader, a previously amorphous blob of a human who was content to vegetate his way through life. But no, most certainly, absolutely no, because Gully is a psychopath. In his quest for revenge, he meets a woman, Robin, who teaches the previously head-blind the skill of *jaunting* or limited teleportation. She has the unfortunate distinction of being a one-way telepath, so those around her can hear her thoughts when she isn't concentrating. Gully, it becomes clear, has a moment where he can *understand* what she is feeling/thinking, but doesn't actually *empathize*, instead choosing to ignore her humanity in his fit of rage and frustration.

Throughout the rather short book, Gully goes through transformations, each a step on his goal, each transformation followed by a fall back into the depths. He is caught, he spends time in prison, he meets

another woman and--dare we recognize it?--falls into his version of love. But as is everything with Gully, his love is the negative side of the emotion, and though it can offer salvation, it is obvious what his choice will be.

It is an inverse of the levels of hell; each reinvention has Gully reinventing himself to become more surfacey human, moving up the ladder of society into something that appears more socially acceptable but that remains rotten at the core. Depending on the reader's point of view, he may become more accessible, but really he is the same single-minded psychopath, single-minded in pursuit of his goal and unable to recognize or empathize with others. At one point he thinks he 'falls in love' but as with everything, he's fallen in love with an idea, an instant of emotion and not anything real.

It's a brilliant book. Bester does an unbelievable job at getting at Gully's emotion; I found myself taking a break at each transformation, needing to get a way from the miasma of hate for some untainted air. While Gully transforms, we're offered commentary on each section of 'society' he encounters, from the parody of scientists on an asteroid to the 'high' society of the richest men in the universe and their cloistered women. It's one of those amazing little stories that you understand as you read is offering up a scathing social indictment and yet wraps you up in its fast-paced plotting. I can't remember the last book I read with a main character so filled with hate and rage, that ignores every opportunity for redemptive actions.

The ending was a little slap-dash and has me wondering if dropping acid at least once during a book was a basic requirement of some of the sci-fi boundary pushers (thinking of Zelazny and Philip K. Dick here). Well, no matter, but I think it would have been more powerful had Bester relied on words instead of word-pictures. The circular nature of the ending is asthetically pleasing, although someone pushing the rules of the book. No matter, it was powerful nonetheless.

We can all only hope that Trump will experience something similar.

Scott says

I *love* the thrill of discovering an older work of SF that still rocks.

The Stars My Destination is one such book, a thrill ride from beginning to end that despite being published in 1955 still hits hard and holds its own in 2017.

Several times while reading *The Stars My Destination* a very clear thought occurred to me- this *shouldn't* be working. The narrative is flush with odd plot developments, amusing 1950s sci-fi anachronisms (Newspapers being printed in the far future when they're struggling for readers in 2017) non-sequitur story twists (to my mind) and a foundation premise - scientists discover everyone innately has the power to teleport themselves - that is pretty thin. Yet despite all this I really dug Bester's novel, and I raced through it.

From the first few pages, where Bester's main character Gully Foyle is trapped for months in a psyche-warpingly small closet (the only sealed compartment left in his crippled ship) and eventually plans his rather gripping escape I was hooked. Foyle goes from zero-to-homicidally-driven-anti-hero over the course of a chapter and what happens to him in the wreckage of his vessel sets him off on a novel-length quest for revenge against the people who abandoned him.

The book runs at a sweat-inducing pace, dashing from development to development and only rarely stopping

to catch its breath. Things happen. They happen fast and they happen big, and as the story progresses Foyle's transformation from listless bottom-of-the-heap loser to implacable, resourceful hunter and beyond is very satisfying.

Some golden age SF can't transcend the period in which it was written, and is mired in concepts that are now outdated, or modes of storytelling that present day readers can find dull (see some of Asimov's short stories for prime examples of this type.)

The Stars My Destination in contrast, is still fresh. Its flaws are minor and its storytelling is both straightforward and engaging.

In short, it's well worth your time. I rate the pulse-quickenning opening sequence in the crippled ship as being right up there with the best parts of *The Martian* and I rank this novel as one of the classics of its era.

Nandakishore Varma says

I have been trying to write a proper review since the past one week - and I have to give up. There are certain books which impressed me, which resist all my attempts to condense them into a few short paragraphs. However, if I don't write something now, this book will join my "forever unreviewed books" list, so I am putting up a somewhat inchoate review.

This book contains one of the most unpleasant protagonists I have ever encountered. Gully Foyle is totally without ambition, content only to survive. That survival is threatened, however, when he is trapped inside a spaceship damaged in the war between the Inner Planets (IP - Earth, Mars, Moon etc.) and the Outer Satellites (OS - the moons of Jupiter and Saturn): but Gully survives for 170 days, when he sees a ship approaching. His delight is turned to chagrin, and then an insane desire for revenge as the ship *Vorga* leaves without picking him up. What remains is the story of that revenge and how it changes Gully and the world.

Bester has created a rich and complex future in the twenty-fifth century: mankind has spread across the solar system, there is a full-fledged war due to commercial tensions between the settled worlds, people no longer travel but rather "Jaunte" - that is, transport themselves at the speed of thought... in a way, it is information overload, and the author does the unspeakable thing of explaining it in detail to the reader in the prologue! (Blasphemy! Show, don't tell!) But he gets away with it by ensnaring us in the intricate tapestry, and immediately diving into the middle of the story.

Gully Foyle is a number one blackguard. He is uncouth, sexist, totally amoral and illiterate into the bargain. He uses people ruthlessly - in the beginning, he blackmails and rapes a Jaunte instructor, whom he later kidnaps to help him in his nefarious schemes. Similarly, he jettisons into space another young woman who has helped him escape from an underground asylum, so that he can save his skin. Yet we keep on following him due to two reasons - the story is so powerful, and there is absolutely no attempt from the author's side to justify his character.

Towards the end the novel takes a huge conceptual leap, as perspective shifts over time and space. to create the jagged effect, Bester has used the printed word in very innovative ways - the letters are boxed in, stretched out, strung together to create wave patterns and pictograms... it's the nearest you can come to jump cuts in literature. The narrative becomes almost visual here, and it is this part of the novel which pushed it up from three to four stars for me.

A real classic from the golden age.

Kemper says

You ever have a novel that you know is considered a classic of its genre yet you know absolutely nothing about it other than the title? This is one of those for me. I knew nothing about it other than the vague notion that it was an important sci-fi novel, but when it popped up as a deal on Audible I took a chance on it and went in cold.

How'd it work out? Pretty well.

A couple of centuries from now humanity has developed the ability to teleport themselves using only their minds in a practice called jaunting. While it has revolutionized society in many ways it's limited to just a few hundred miles at most so spacecraft are still needed to ferry people and goods around the solar system. Because people are always gonna be assholes there's a war raging among the Inner Planets and Outer Satellites.

Gully Foyle is just a working class grunt with little education and even less ambition who had the bad luck to be on a ship that got blown up real good as part of that war. For six months he survives by staying in a small storage lock and scavenging supplies in the wreckage using a damaged space suit. Deliverance seems at hand when he sees another ship named *Vorga* passing close by, but even though Gully sends out plenty of distress signals that couldn't be missed the other ship simply passes him by. Enraged at being abandoned, Gully begins to show more gumption than he ever has as he first manages to save his own life and then embarks a campaign to find and kill the people who left him to die. When he finds himself caught in much larger schemes of powerful people his obsessive need for revenge puts him beyond any attempts to bribe or bully him.

There's a lot of interesting stuff here that gets into some really big trippy sci-fi concepts that seem way ahead of their time in many ways plus there's a kind of *Count of Monte Cristo* style story embedded in it too. It's easy to see why this is so highly regarded and is considered a forerunner to cyberpunk.

Gully Foyle is also an interesting bastard of a character. He starts out as this crude and violent man fully capable of crimes like murder and rape, and his journey eventually turns him into something much more than that. Yet because it's his unswerving desire for simple revenge driving him he's always got that primitive core just below the surface.

Despite being published over 60 years ago it doesn't come across as that dated either. Alfred Bester did a lot of well thought out world building as to what this space faring society that has also mental powers like telepathy and the ability to teleport would be like. Some of the stuff he did here like a conflict between factions fighting for the resources of our solar system are still used today in sci-fi like *The Expanse* series, and the idea of powerful corporations being as much a force as government has been used countless times as well. The ending also seems like a leap forward to a kind of sci-fi that something like *2001* would do a decade later.

It's a bold and ambitious story that seems ahead of its time in many ways, and I'm glad that I took the opportunity to fill in a gap in my sci-fi reading.

