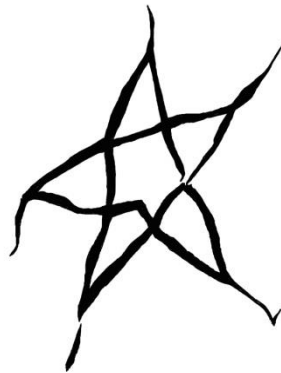


**The Black Archive #5**

**IMAGE OF THE  
FENDAHL  
SAMPLER**



**By Simon Bucher-Jones**

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## **Planet Five in Fiction before October 1977**

Although it now seems likely that there never was a Planet Five, the dramatic image of an exploding ('disrupted') world appealed to writers, and over time the missing world acquired a number of possible names, and descriptions. I'll touch briefly here on the main ones written before *Image*, that I've been able to inspect.

In *Seola* (1878) by Anne Eliza Smith – a novel set before the biblical flood, told as by a 4,000-year-old manuscript:

'Obora, [Angelic] Prince of the Upper Sphere [has]...In his circle a great planet between the Red World and the Green, uninhabited, cracked and fissured deep-seamed and rent by volcanic fire.'<sup>1</sup>

'Astronomers inform us that a great planet once existed between Mars and Jupiter which was shattered, and that the fragments called asteroids, are now to be seen in that portion of the solar system.'<sup>2</sup>

This 'fifth planet' is between Mars ('Red') and Jupiter ('Green'). It's destruction in a war between Lucifer's rebellious angels (here 'Devas') and the powers of the Eternal leads to the Great Flood.

(The colour green for Jupiter strikes a modern reader as odd, but may conceivably follow Chaucer's 'Canon Yeoman's Tale', where Jupiter's alchemic metal is noted as 'tin', which according to Richard Anthony Proctor's *Myths and Marvels of Astronomy* equates to 'mixed red and green'<sup>3</sup>. An English astronomer, Proctor produced some of the earliest maps of Mars in 1867, and was a contemporary of Anne Eliza Smith.)

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, Anne Eliza, *Seola* (1878) (Kindle edition), location 1345.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *Seola*, location 2602 (Author's own footnote).

<sup>3</sup> Proctor, Richard A, *Myths and Marvels of Astronomy* (Kindle edition), location 425.

Implicitly there are seven worlds at this time, Earth not being counted as among the planets:

'Quenched is one lamp of the Burning Seven, vacant the place of the Wan Planet and lost forever the bright constellation that madly plunged to outer darkness.'<sup>4</sup>

...which suggests that Smith considered Neptune, if she knew of it, as biblically uncanonical.

Phaeton the son of Helios, who drove his father's burning horses too hard and had to be slain by Zeus to prevent the crashing of the chariot of the Sun, was proposed as a name for Planet Five by the Russian astronomer Sergei Orloff<sup>5</sup>.

The science fiction writer Ross Rocklynne (a pen name of Ross Louis Rocklin) makes an ingenious use of the exploded-world theory in his story 'Time Wants a Skeleton' (*Astounding Science Fiction*, 1941). In the story the protagonists find a skeleton millions of years old in a cave on asteroid 1007, only to accidentally travel back in time (a result of their newly experimental gravity drive) to when the planet was still in existence, to face the horrifying prospect of one of them needing to becoming the skeleton to complete the paradox of 'a human skeleton [that] existed before the human race existed.'<sup>6</sup> They are returned to their own time by the gravity disruption when the planet breaks up, and the story ends bathetically, but before its joke ending it achieves a creepy power with its apparent early use of a 'predestination paradox'.

In *Space Cadet* (1948) by Robert Heinlein, the 'first proof that the asteroids used to be a planet'<sup>7</sup> is the definite presence of sedimentary rock in some specimens. There the disaster is considered to have occurred 'nearly half a billion years ago, [with] most of the ruined planet [having] escaped from the System entirely.'<sup>8</sup> The discoveries made in the novel by the crew of the lost ship *Pathfinder* on 1987-CD, 'a smallish asteroid about a mile in diameter', lead to 'the unmistakable conclusion that the disrupted planet was inhabited,' and that the planet, which humans have named Lucifer, 'was disrupted by artificial nuclear explosion. In other words, they did it themselves.'

Captain WE Johns (the pen-name of William Earl Johns, better known now for the **Biggles** books) gave Planet Five the hostage-to-catastrophe name of 'Kraka'. (Given such worlds in **Doctor Who** as Aridius – a waterworld that becomes a desert – this sort of naming does seem to attract bad luck.) In the second book in his **Kings of Space** series, *Return to Mars* (1955), a Martian refugee from a civilisation now based around Ceres ('Lentos' in his language) tells Johns' heroes – space travellers from Earth – about the prehistoric destruction of Kraka, whose side-effects devastated Mars<sup>9</sup>.

Brian Lumley, in his collection of stories *The Caller of The Black* (1971), names it 'Thyop' and blames its destruction on Azathoth, the mindless God responsible for the cosmos in Lovecraft's cycle of myth<sup>10</sup>.

Isaac Asimov in his mystery short story 'The Ultimate Crime' (1976) which turns on a literary puzzle, leaves Planet Five unnamed but suggested that it was the asteroid in Professor Moriarty's thesis *The Dynamics of An*

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<sup>4</sup> Smith, *Seola*, Kindle location 1831.

<sup>5</sup> 'One of our Planets Is Missing', *The Galaxy Express*.

<sup>6</sup> Rocklynne, Ross, 'Time Wants A Skeleton' (1941) in Asimov, Isaac, Charles G Waugh and Martin H Greenberg, *The Mammoth Book of Golden Age SF* (2007) (Kindle edition), locations 226-1367.

<sup>7</sup> Heinlein, Robert, *Space Cadet*, p144.

<sup>8</sup> Heinlein, *Space Cadet*, p150.

<sup>9</sup> I read the book as a child, but my memories are confirmed at 'Return to Mars'.

<sup>10</sup> Lumley, Brian, *The Caller of The Black* (1971), p167.

*Asteroid*<sup>11</sup>, and that the evil Professor's intent in his rarefied paper was to discover how that lost world was shattered by some prehistoric super-Moriarty, in order to hold Sherlock Holmes's Earth to ransom<sup>12</sup>.

The SF writer James P Hogan called it 'Minerva' in his **Giants** series (beginning with *Inherit the Stars* (May 1977)). In those books the moon of Minerva, blasted out of its orbit in the destruction of its primary, eventually becomes our Moon, and the preserved alien artefacts, and a space-suited body, found there rework our whole understanding of the prehistory of the solar system, including the genetic origins of mankind. The time-scale of television and novel production probably precludes this being an influence on *Image* (broadcast October to November 1977), but it does have some similarities.

In all these stories, the destruction of Planet Five is a consequence of war and folly, either the inhabitants' own or visited on them by a wider 'War in Heaven'. Bones and relics bring a reassessment of the history, or fate, of mankind, and in Rocklynne's story an existential and maddening fear.

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<sup>11</sup> Mentioned in Conan Doyle, Arthur, *The Valley of Fear* (1914).

<sup>12</sup> Asimov, Isaac, 'The Ultimate Crime', in *More Tales of the Black Widowers* (1976).

