

## Bezos's Big Breakaway

May 15, 2019

Something big may be about to happen.

Trump impeachment? Financial collapse? War with Iran? — each is all-too-likely, none desirable. But I am referring to space.

In *The Economist*, May 14th, we read of Jeff Bezos's itch to live off-planet.

The article is "Amazon's boss reckons that humanity needs an HQ2," which tells us that on "May 9th the founder and boss of Amazon, who also runs Blue Origin, a private rocketry firm, unveiled plans for a lunar lander. 'Blue Moon,' as it is called, is just one phase of a bold plan to establish large off-world settlements."

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And then comes the obvious literary-cultural reference: "It is a vision ripped directly from 20th-century science fiction."

Can we dismiss it as space opera, though? A number of major figures, not least of whom is Elon Musk (whose Space X has often been



mentioned here), are talking seriously about near-term orbital, lunar, and Martian habitation.

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There remain scoffers, of course (and they may well be right), as well as more paranoid speculations — are the higher-ups, the most insidery of insiders, tipping their hand to a "breakaway civilization" event, perhaps to avoid worldwide catastrophe?

"People now have more information" than in the past, wrote Thomas M. Disch in *The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of: How Science Fiction Conquered the World* (1998), "and they are smarter, overall, as a consequence — even in those ways they choose to be dumb."

I am keeping an open mind on whether Bezos's proposed lunar colony is dumb or genius.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

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*N.B. The government is also jumping on board the Moon bandwagon, with the president floating a similar-to-Bezos schedule.*