

IONISPHERE 14



DECEMBER 2018

**A publication of the National Fantasy Fan
Federation's Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau**

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Ionisphere (may be abbreviated as IO) is a bi-monthly publication distributed by the N3F and available also via <http://efanzines.com> . All correspondence is welcome; send to the editorial address or editorial email address.

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IONISPHERE represents the National Fantasy Fan Federation's Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau, the purpose of which is to improve relations among fans and pros, editors and writers, by means of information and increased interchange. You'll see our latest doings here. It is also our means of interchange with the membership. We have a total email distribution with the members.

EDITORIAL



What Have We Accomplished?

We're getting into our third year now with this bureau, and the membership might well be asking, "What has this bureau, no longer so new, accomplished?" I might be wondering that same thing, as far as moving ahead is concerned, but one of our accomplishments I can point to is the establishing and developing of this bureau, as well as providing the membership with something to read, as, for example, with our always interesting interviews, which have included the editor of ASIMOV'S SF and the editor of AMAZING STORIES. That's greater contact between fans and pros right there, and as we provide email addresses on the people interviewed, the members can go beyond merely reading the interviews if they wish to. Our fan interviews might result in some good correspondence, too, if readers were to take advantage of it. Nothing to talk about? Talk about fandom! That's what we're beginning to do here.

Here I might want to recall President Kennedy's statement about a not dissimilar topic: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." The N3F needs activity from its membership.

Behind the Scenes by Jeffrey Redmond



The New Doctor Who on BBC America

If you love Doctor Who then you'll need to find every excuse to do nothing else but watch "The 13 Days of Doctor Who". It's here directly from BBC America, which is airing every episode from the most recent ten seasons of the cult classic series.

The event kicked off on September 25th, 2018. Every episode stars Christopher Eccleston, David Tennant, Matt Smith, and Peter Capaldi, airs and leads up to the premiere of Jodie Whittaker as the Thirteenth Doctor.

The new season premiered on October 7th, 2018, with the times set as announced. It has been followed up by an encore which takes place in what is the show's new regular prime time evening slot on Sunday nights.

Obviously, they're really trying to pull at your heartstrings to get the ratings up. It isn't that hard, as Whovians are eager for the chance to re-watch some of their favorite episodes in the scheduled times.

The latest series marks the arrival of Jodie Whittaker, the Thirteenth Doctor. She's a super smart force of nature, alongside a team of new and delightful characters. This series is full of action, adventure, humor, and thrills. It's a great drama everyone can enjoy. Alongside Jodie's Thirteenth Doctor is an all-new cast with Bradley Walsh, Mandip Gill, and Tosin Cole.

Showrunner (executive producer) Chris Chibnall says, "Jodie Whittaker's Thirteenth Doctor has landed onto the nation's screens. It's thrilling to think there are children encountering Jodie's Doctor who've never seen the show before. She'll be forever their Doctor. You never forget your first."

Alongside Jodie, there's the delightful ensemble of new characters for the audience to fall in love with, led by the incomparable Bradley Walsh.

So get your popcorn and hunker down for Sunday night adventures in space and time, with the Thirteenth Doctor and her new best friends. The journey is here. If you've never seen the show before, this is a great season to start with. It doesn't require an encyclopedic knowledge of Doctor Who to get into it.

The show has a very rich history from the past fifty-five years. The wonderful thing about this is every time there's new cast members and new Doctors or new companions, the show is regenerated in a literal sense with the character. New energy is brought into it. The producers wanted to make it into a series that was very inclusive, because for people like us we're all very new Whovians as well. We're introduced into this world as new fans will be on this season.

If you're a fan of the show already, it has everything you'd expect. It's got new monsters and fantastic new worlds. It also has worlds that we're familiar with, but are maybe seen from different points of view. It honors everything that has gone on before, but it now has a different burst of energy with all the new cast members. Doctor Who is for everyone and anyone.

This season is ten stand-alone episodes, so you have contained story-lines within every episode. And there is a huge series character arc for many of the characters. But if you come in at episode five, you'll get a stand-alone story which feels like a film, and which stands up amongst all the television that's available to everyone now.

There's the constant themes of friendship, loyalty, and survival. All things that are very human, interlaced with things that are very far from human and familiar. It's thus a very inclusive world.

When we watch TV and movies, we want to feel engrossed and excited, particularly in this world and *genre*. Doctor Who in itself is its own genre. So you can enjoy it feeling like a roller coaster ride.

But do viewers need to have seen Doctor Who before to enjoy this series? No, not at all. This series itself is a perfect stepping-on point.

With this new Doctor Who there's a new beginning, a new opportunity for people to join the show as viewers. It's for people who might have drifted away, or who haven't seen the show for a few years, or ten years, or twenty years. It's a great time to remind people of how amazing Doctor Who is, and to have a restart. But also, it's a great time for a new generation of children and families to start the habit of gathering around the television together to watch this funny, scary, extraordinarily entertaining show!

It's not just a reboot. It's that great, unique thing which is built into every Doctor Who. A fresh start happens every few years. This is no different from when Tom Baker changed to Peter Davidson, or when the show went from black and white to color, with Patrick Troughton handing over to Jon Pertwee. The show has a history of renewal, while also staying faithful to what it's always been.

The amazing thing about Doctor Who is this fresh start every few years, which brings the whole new jolt of energy to the show, and hopefully encourages the next generation of audiences to try the show, while also reminding existing audiences of why they love it.

Casting a new actor also brings in new opportunities to think about where the show is, think about

where the world is, and think about where you might want the stories to go. There's a fresh set of stories that are engaged with, and resonate with, the world we live in now.

Viewers can continue to expect emotion, action, adventure, monsters, far-off planets, and huge alien vistas. We can also continue to expect a lot of humor, a lot of warmth, and more great characters.

There's four ideal new friends for you to meet, as they go through the past, present, and future. And you meet some incredible people from history, while going to battle on alien planets, as well as fight threats closer to home. It's really a whole array of different stories. Ten individual stories that show off the range of the Thirteenth Doctor and her friends, but also of the show as a whole. So you can expect everything you've ever loved about Doctor Who.

Thus, more than anything, it's hopefully incredibly entertaining, as this series has something for absolutely everyone. If you've seen Doctor Who before, you're going to be getting all the stuff you love. If you've never seen it before, this is the place to start, and you're in for a rollicking ride.

Jodie, Mandip and Tosin, and the different directors who have come in with the fantastic crew, are the elements most enjoyable about Doctor Who. Viewers are especially excited by Jodie. She is an exceptional actress with the energy she has, because she's still so young, and her talent is truly extraordinary.

Critics have exclaimed that this new dawn for Doctor Who is grounded, exciting, fantastic, unpredictable, beautiful, and timeless. The cast and crew are fantastic, because they work hard and are so enthusiastic.

The new series of Doctor Who will remain forward-thinking, innovative, bold, and brave. It returned to us on Sunday 7th October 2018, and it will thrive.



Science Fiction and Fantasy Conventions

They say conventions are an excellent way for fans to meet other fans and writers and develop acquaintances. The following are conventions due to be held in the near future, along with their locations. If any of them are near you, you might want to get further information about them and perhaps attend them.

Windycon, Lombard, Illinois, November 9-11
Fantasy Masquerade Ball, Essex Junction, Vermont, November 10
Philcon, Cherry Hill, New Jersey, November 16-18
Super Power Con, Southampton, United Kingdom, November 17-18
Anglocon, Seattle, Washington, November 30-December 2
Weekend of Wizardry, Tacoma, Washington, December 6-9
Chattacon, Chattanooga, Tennessee, January 25-27, 2019
Galaxyfest, Colorado Springs, Colorado, February 1-3
Capricon, Westin, Illinois February 14-17
Life, the Universe, and Everything, Provo, Utah, February 14-16
Boscone, Boston, Massachusetts, February 15-17
AnachroCon, Atlanta, Georgia, February 15-17
Pensacon, Pensacola, Florida, February 22-24
ConNooga, Chattanooga, Tennessee, February 22-24
Escapade, Los Angeles, California, February 22-24
Mysticon, Roanoke, Virginia, February 22-24
Whimsey Con, Denver, Colorado, March 1-3
MidSouthCon, Memphis, Tennessee, March 15-17
Norwescon, Seattle, Washington, April 18-21
Corflu, Rockville, Maryland, May 2-5
Confluence, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, July 26-28
Multiverse Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention, October 8-20
Amazicon, Essington, Pennsylvania, November 15-17

Further descriptions of science fiction conventions can be found at <https://www.upcomingcons.com/science-fiction-conventions> .



INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT

In this issue we interview our NFFF President, **George Phillies**.



Interview conducted by John D. Swartz
with added questions by the editor

George Phillies is an SF fan, physicist, and author. He was recently elected as Fellow of the New England Science Fiction Association. He also owns the largest collection of board war games in the world.

Phillies was born July 23, 1947, in Buffalo, New York, first son of Eustace G. Phillies, M.D., and Clara Phillies. He grew up in Kenmore and Williamsville, New York, finished as salutatorian at the Williamsville Central High School, and went to M.I.T. in Cambridge, Massachusetts. While at M.I.T., Phillies earned degrees of Bachelor of Science in physics and life sciences, as well as Master of Science and (in 1973) Doctor of Science degrees in physics. He then joined the Harvard-MIT Health Sciences and Technology program as a researcher, followed by moves to the USLA Department of Chemistry, the University of Michigan Department of Chemistry, and finally the Worcester Polytechnic Institute Department of Physics. In 2015 he retired with the rank of Professor of Physics.

A long-time member of our National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F), he has served as a Bureau Head and on the club's Directorate. He was elected President of N3F in 2015 and re-elected for terms in 2016, 2017, and 2018. He is running again for this office in 2019.

Phillies currently edits *The National Fantasy Fan*, *Tightbeam*, and *Eldritch Science*. He

is also head of the N3F Book Review Bureau and the N3F Franking Service. Phillies received the club's Franson Award in 2003 and the club's Kaymar Award in 2007.

He contributed a short story, "Who Slays Satan", to **Geep!, The Book of the National Fantasy Fan Federation** (1987), edited by Rose Secret. Several of Phillies' short stories have won First Prize in the NESFA short story contest. He has contributed to N'APA, APA-NESFA, The Wild Hunt, and Alarums & Excursions.

His short story, "The Puzzle of the Peregrinating Coach", appeared in the prozine **Baen's Universe**. His published novels include THIS SHINING SEA, THE ONE WORLD, MINUTEGIRLS, MISTRESS OF THE WAVES, AGAINST THREE LANDS, and soon ECLIPSE: THE GIRL WHO SAVED THE WORLD. His published short story collection is NINE GEES. He had also published a series of five books on board wargame design, four books on Libertarian Party history and strategy, a textbook on statistical mechanics, and a monography on properties of polymer solutions.

IO: Some personal statistics, please.

GP: Born 1947, single. Now 71, retired, and enjoying it. In my career I have written somewhat closing on five million words, including technical papers, technical books, textbooks, heavily-researched historical works, novels, and short stories. I am retired! No more (blue) books! No more Provost's dirty looks!

IO: When did you first become a science fiction fan?

GP: I first became a fan, well, a reader and viewer, in the early 1950s. My grandparents, who at the time lived in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, had no trouble receiving the Dumont Network, so I saw several episodes of Captain Video. This must have been in 1952; we didn't get a TV until several years later, when I carefully watched Captain Z-Ro until it vanished from the air. I later watched Rocky Jones. My reading skills developed at about the same time, so I read the likes of Tom Swift, Junior and various adult-level novels. I particularly remember FOUR FROM PLANET FIVE and Jack Williamson's DOME AROUND AMERICA.

IO: How did you get involved in SF fandom and the N3F?

GP: In 1964 I went off to MIT and joined the MIT Science Fiction Society, which that year moved from an incredibly tiny room in the basement of Walker Memorial over to its first room in the MIT student center. The MITSFS position was anti-fannish: "We're not fans, we just read the stuff". I was President of MITSFS for a bit over three years. I later for a while was active in NESFA. Early on, I contributed to several role gaming apas. In the magazine AMERICAN WARGAMER, I was the first anywhere to propose that D&D is not just a set of miniatures rules (actually, it was a variant to the Chainmail miniatures rules); it is a new branch of the wargaming hobby.

So far as I can remember I came to us (N3F) through the short story contest. That

was perhaps in the 1980s. I perhaps saw that mentioned in a NESFA zine.

IO: What interested you in science fiction and fantasy fiction?

GP: I enjoy reading it.

IO: What are some of your other interests, literary and otherwise?

GP: My interests are in what is now called soft matter physics, now entirely theoretical physics. My research areas have included colloid and protein solutions, surfactant micelles, and most prominently polymer solution dynamics. I substantially pioneered the optical probe diffusion technique, which was invented by a Canadian group but not exploited by them. I also do extensive theoretical research, including pioneering novel mathematical techniques. More recently I have done molecular dynamics simulations; we appeared to have confirmed the Kivelson glass model. I now have twenty-three published books and more than one hundred and seventy published papers, a textbook on statistical mechanics, and a monograph, "Phenomenology of Polymer Solution Dynamics", from Cambridge University Press.

IO: What are some of your other current activities?

GP: My other active hobby is board wargaming (hex and counter games like Stalingrad). I collect board wargames and have just short of six thousand of them, and about one hundred shelf feet of board wargaming magazines. My most recent university, WPI, has a computer game "Interactive Media and Game Development" program. I offered to teach a course on board game design, and ended up teaching two courses, for which I wrote a set of five textbooks. They are available at Amazon and on Smashwords. The courses are more or less nationally unique. You can watch them on youtube on the George Phillies channel.

For a while I was active in politics in the Libertarian Party. I ran for Congress once, and ran for my party's presidential nomination. The New Hampshire Party actually put me on the ballot. I also served for a decade as State Treasurer and then as State Chair of the Libertarian Association of Massachusetts, and published several magazines covering Libertarian politics, including LET FREEDOM RING! And LIBERTY FOR AMERICA. These were newszines, not preaching at the choir zines.

I am fond of gardening. You can see some of my results on my Facebook page.

IO: Have you been at science fiction conventions? If so, which have you attended?

GP: I attended a number of Boskones, Arisias, and Readercons, but my work schedule eventually shut down going to the first two of these.

IO: Have you any stories about your adventures in science fiction that you might like to tell? Meetings with noted people, projects, incidents?

GP: I seem to have missed much of the strange stuff. Novelists I have met include Isaac Asimov, Larry Niven, and Arthur C. Clarke. I was good friends with Hal Clement until he passed away.

IO: What is your history as a writer of science fiction and fantasy?

GP: Six novels, one short story collection, one short story in the prozine **Baen's Universe**. Many other novels under way.

IO: What do you like to see in science fiction and fantasy? Where do you think SF has been and where do you think it will all head?

GP: SF has always gotten tied up in national politics. Observe the nastiness over the Hugo Awards. This is a bad deal. Fortunately the N3F has so far stayed out of these political issues. However, it appears to me that the useful book to read, to understand what is happening here in America, is David Potter's *THE IMPENDING CRISIS*, which covers American politics from 1845 to 1860. As late as 1858, the core political issue was unionism, keeping the country together. We passed a tipping point at which the core issue became slavery; after John Brown's raid, people stopped listening to each other and the country went to Hell in a handbasket. We appear to be recycling this chain of events, hopefully with a happier ending.

IO: What was fandom like when you were growing up?

GP: I have no idea. I never heard of it back then.

IO: Is there anything else you'd like to tell our readers?

GP: We have a club, our Federation. It is as good as we all contribute to it. If you do not contribute, if you are a passive observer, our N3F—yours and mine—is weakened. Please find a stfnal fannish activity in which you are interested, and participate.

IO: Thank you.

Mr. Phillis can be found at many of the Facebook SF pages also.



Author Interview

Rajnar Vajra



Rajnar Vajra has been active on the Dell Forums, and has been available at Facebook since then, and is now a member of the New Dell Forums on Facebook, having also his own Facebook page, so one can see he likes to talk about science fiction and fantasy. His friends find him frequently on their walls, I believe they're called. His writings contain controversy and sometimes bring forth controversy, which I think one may assume he likes, especially as he discusses politics on Facebook. Let's hear from him here:

IO: I'm starting with the first story by you I read, SHOOTOUT AT THE NOKAI CORRAL, serialized in Analog, February-May 2003. There've been various questions raised about this story, and various interpretations of it. I'd like to know what you and the editor had to say about this story before it was printed. Was there much exchange of commentary, did you have any disagreements with the editor or did he suggest any changes in the text?

RV: John, Dr. Stanley Schmidt was the editor of Analog at that time, and he wasn't a hands-on sort of editor asking for many changes in a work that he liked. But he made sure that whatever science the writing included was dead accurate. For SHOOTOUT, his main comment was how much he liked the characters, and that he had trouble enjoying any writing where he couldn't find at least one character to like. He didn't suggest any text changes that I recall, but I rewrote the novel a few years later, and found a lot of weak areas that I improved. By the way, after that, I sent it to a good editor in a major publishing house who kept it gathering dust for nearly seven years, and eventually told my agent that she'd lost interest in SF and would never get around to reading it. It's only recently been sent to another editor.

IO: Was there anything that you would cite as having influenced you in the writing of it? (It seems out of the mainstream of general sf.)

RV: Unlike some of my stories, which were written in part as subtle tributes to authors I love, this novel wasn't inspired by anyone in particular. However, writers who love SF, and I'm one, don't operate in a literary vacuum, and surely many other authors influence everything I write.

IO: Was there anything you personally wished to put across to readers in this story?

RV: Yes. See response below.

IO: What would you call the major import of the story, that is, what theme or themes prevailed as it was written?

RV: Aside from trying to write something readers would enjoy, I wanted to demonstrate, without any hint of lecturing, some positive possibilities in how people could treat each other, and how the right kind of leader, someone who truly cared about his people and who had real humility, could bring a small group of very different individuals into harmony. Beyond that, the novel presents my answer to the troubling classical ethical question of whether the ends justify the means, specifically in the case of terrorism.

IO: Would you want to describe the story as it progresses, in short form, from beginning to end? There are readers who considered the story cryptic.

RV: The only thing I can imagine that would make SHOOTOUT cryptic is that although it was written to stand on its own, a reader would need the sequel, HIGH NEON, where the Dust Devils travel to Earth, to understand exactly what's been going on.

I don't want to outline the entire novel—talk about spoilers!—but I'll provide a partial summary.

By the 22nd Century, twelve extraterrestrial planets, so-called “theme worlds”, have been colonized by humans. These planets have been set up as large-scale psychological and social experiments, each given a different artificial society modeled loosely on some particularly vital society from humanity’s past. Earth’s leaders claim these experiments have been designed to abate a terrible and growing apathy on the overcrowded, over-stimulated home world. Not all claims, however, can be trusted.

Each planet is monitored by “proctors”, military personnel representing Earth, invested with powers and advanced weaponry to squelch any hint of revolution, autonomy, or deviation from Earth’s rules. They are hated and feared by citizens on every theme world but have vast resources to back up their authority.

One such world, Paladin, was given a cowboys-and-Indians *motif*, with a combination of Jews and Hindus comprising the “Indian” component since Native Americans proved unwilling to participate. Paladin was chosen as the site of an intriguing but risky secondary experiment: to see what genetic wonders a society limited to the single science of biology might produce.

Unknown to the subjects of this experiment, Earth has a specific kind of biologic wonder in mind.

Most Paladin citizens are also unaware that they have a serious and immediate problem: someone has been systematically killing off the private marshals, Paladin’s only effective answer to outlaw slingers, genetically augmented men and women. And the marshals, whose leaders are also slingers, have been keeping the situation hidden from the proctors lest the people of Paladin lose what freedoms they have.

Shootout is the story of a physical and moral conflict between two remarkable slingers: Grand Marshal Tornado Carter and a former Grand Marshal turned outlaw, William Caine.

Tornado Carter heads up a private law organization, the Dust Devils. He cares extravagantly for people and will spend himself ruthlessly to protect them. He is far stronger and faster than any normal human, and even most Slingers, but he’s also a man who tries to replace violence with cleverness whenever possible. To a great degree, he is driven by an old personal tragedy, the death of his young brother when he was supposed to be watching the toddler.

Tornado has come to Sunstone, a small town in the western half of Paladin’s Tenderfoot Continent, because the local sheriff has sent out a request for emergency help. A large gang of especially nasty outlaws, the Mudslingers, has been repeatedly pillaging Sunstone and nearby towns. After talking with the sheriff, Tornado agrees to send for the key members of the Dust Devils—living legends with astonishing abilities such as mighty Henri Jacques, superhumanly quick Lightning Lil, and the immense and intuitive Joe Li, nicknamed Lo Pan (Pinyin for “compass”) because he always knows where to point.

Tornado is appalled to learn that the leader of the Mudslingers, Dirty Jake, is really a world-

renowned slinger in disguise: William Caine, generally regarded as the greatest marshal of all time. Caine was supposedly a killer in an ambush fifteen years earlier.

Caine was once Tornado's teacher and personal idol; he can't imagine how such a good man could have become corrupt. And he can't imagine why Dirty Jake is focusing his attentions on such an unimportant area.

The lawman, against his will, finds himself increasingly involved with the townspeople, especially Daana Rider (owner of the local saloon and a woman of many resources); Sunstone's courageous and intuitive sheriff, Chou Larker; and the brilliant Chief of the Paladin Anasazi Indians, Shining Wing Krishna.

Tornado's protective instincts rise to new heights, but he is terribly afraid. He knows that this time, his enemy is more than his equal. William Caine wasn't just a great man, he was probably the most radically enhanced slinger in the history of Paladin.

William Caine, on the other hand, regards himself as a righteous terrorist, doing evil things in a noble cause.

Sixteen years ago, after his entire family was killed in a tidal wave that inundated the coastal city of Strake, Caine was devastated by grief. A friend of his, Captain Sir Gregory Tormuelson of the deep-spaceship **Fenris**, (a glorified taxi for transporting Proctors to Paladin), made an extraordinary effort to not only help his friend, but to resolve a mystery. Tormuelson has overheard a Proctor refer to the "Richard Boone files", but investigation revealed that such files didn't officially exist. Hoping to distract Caine from his suffering and gain access to the hidden files using slinger abilities, Tormuelson broke the rules and smuggled Caine to Earth. Slingers are banned from leaving Paladin because Earth authorities regard them, rightly, as highly dangerous.

After Caine succeeded in stealing the files, the conspirators were shocked to learn that there were three experiments taking place on Paladin, and the secret one was, by far, the most important. Paladin was set up to be a breeding ground for a kind of human warrior caste. A warrior caste created for the day, if it ever came, when the human race would encounter hostile and organized non-humans. Caine discovered that the Proctors and other Earth agents were carefully directing the flow of biological advancement, steering it toward Earth's covert goals. And he discovers the existence of a huge cache of advanced Earth weaponry, machines, and even an entire starship buried near the otherwise unimportant town of Sunstone.

His most personally shocking discovery was that the Strake calamity had been preventable. A network of sophisticated weather satellites orbit Paladin and if local scientists were allowed to use electronics and given access to data from those satellites, the tidal wave could have been discovered in time for Strake to be evacuated.

Caine returned to Paladin with a mission, breaking his home planet away from Earth's control. With a surgically altered face, he set himself up as Dirty Jake, began to collect the worst kinds of outlaws for his new gang, and started implementing his new plan. The plan entailed killing off or subverting most of the private marshals, creating an emergency situation that would force the population to take some terrible risks, and defy Earth despite the proctors. And to add to the trouble he was shaping for Paladin, he began to breed a very special crop of large and highly unpleasant monsters...

Tornado Carter learns that Caine is the man behind the marshal-assassinations. But when he learns why Caine has become a gang-leader, he finds himself in a dilemma. Duty insists that he try to defeat a man whom he still loves and respects, a man stronger and faster than he is, and who has resources he can't match including a high-tech weapon that could defeat an army of slingers. And the worst part is this: he isn't convinced that Caine is doing the wrong thing.

IO: Has the story been printed in hardcover or paperback editions?

RV: It hasn't. But I have hopes it will be along with HIGH NEON.

IO: Next, the Dr. Alien stories. Why did you want to do a story about an alien doctor?

RV: These stories aren't about an alien doctor, but a human psychologist who treats aliens. Several authors have written tales on similar themes in the past, and I felt it would be fun to do my own version, and it would allow me to present glimpses not only of original and unusual alien types, but allow me vast scope in settings.

IO: Oh yeah, I've made that mistake before. Are there things in our society or existence that would be parallel to things in the Doctor Alien stories?

RV: I'd say that considering the tremendous variations in human development and individual psychology, in a sense, every psychologist is potentially dealing with aliens.

IO: Did you think the artist chosen to illustrate this, Mr. Allemand, did a good job in showing the story to readers? Did you have any contact with him about the art?

RV: I think John Allemand is a remarkably talented artist. The cover he did for "Doctor Alien", the first of the series, is certainly dynamic and impressive. But I had no contact with him at the time, which is a shame since I would've preferred a different appearance for my main character.

IO: And on your history in the field: how long have you been with science fiction?

RV: Since the 50s, and the Tom Swift, Jr. books. But it was Harry Harrison's DEATHWORLD, and Clifford Simak's TIME IS THE SIMPLEST THING, that got me hooked. I've also loved fantasy ever since I stumbled on THE THIRTEENTH IS MAGIC in elementary school. My novel UMBRELLA JONES would fall mainly into the fantasy category, BRIGHT AND DEEP even more so, and OPENING WONDERS has more fantasy than SF elements.

IO: What was your first publications of a science fiction story?

RV: "Passing the Arboli Test" in Warren Lapine's **Absolute Magnitude**. My first Analog tale was "E-mage."

IO: What brought you around to reading and writing science fiction?

RV: As to what got me to reading SF, that's just the sort of pitfall that comes from being a voracious reader. And it was reading SF that got me interested in trying to pay back to a field that's given me so much pleasure by writing myself.

IO: Have you met and conversed with others who write science fiction or are editors? Who were some of them?

RV: Most of us who write SF have met a great many editors and writers. Too many to list.

IO: Have you talked much with readers of your stories who are science fiction readers?

RV: Some, but I wouldn't say much. I'm not yet that well known.

IO: Have you attended any science fiction conventions?

RV: Sure. The World Convention a few years ago, for example; Readercon several times, Albacon last year, and I'll be attending Boscone again this year in February.

IO: Do you belong to any science fiction societies, organizations or clubs?

RV: I was a member of SFWA for twenty years but recently dropped out.

IO: What science fiction story ideas do you have for the future?

RV: That will remain my secret for now.

IO: What is your impression of what may come about in the future, and in the future of science fiction writing?

RV: I expect the societal impact of ever-improving information and entertainment technology to become increasingly evident over the next twenty years. I expect a convergence of such technology with nanotechnology resulting in great improvements in human capacities and health along with new dangers. As for societal impact, beginning with the invention of the radio and more currently ever since the invention of smart phones, we've been conducting a psychological experiment on our species on a global scale, and I'm convinced there'll be huge consequences no one can anticipate. I expect the waves that swing societies from one extreme to another will continue but hope that our species can survive long enough to make those swings smaller, more graceful, and far less hurtful.

I suspect that the future of science fiction writing will involve, as it does right now, looking beyond obvious recent and upcoming changes in technology and how people live, and beyond that to what might be possible. SF writers can be the bellwethers of dangers and the inspiration for new explorations and new kinds of explorations. I expect that the current trend of greater inclusiveness for writers of all genders, races, and nationalities will continue, and eventually become the norm. Finally, I'd be surprised if future SF writing doesn't increasingly better balance characterization, science, and plot.

IO: An interesting view for the future. As a final question, is there anything further you'd

care to say to readers of science fiction in this interview?

RV: I write SF and fantasy not only to try and tell a good story, but as my small way of trying to help humanity. I have no interest in forcing my beliefs on anyone, and no capacity to do so, and if I simply stated the most important things I've learned, they wouldn't make sense to many people. What I can do, however, is drop occasional hints of whatever wisdom I've managed to scrape up, like tiny seeds, in the hope that someone will absorb that seed and let it grow, or someone will understand that I've traveled a similar road to theirs, and they aren't alone.



LETTERS



GARY LABOWITZ, garylantz51@gmail.com : IO 13 has arrived here and is a nice clean layout and easy to read ezine. I spend a lot of time on my computer reading and I suppose this has become a fairly common way with most activities in today's world. But here is, at least, a LOC for you. The very fact of what processes it will go to before anyone else sees it is part of the focus and direction of my comments.

N3F was (and is partially, still) a way for fans of that crazy Buck Rogers stuff to communicate. The only connections were local clubs, cons and meetings of some sort, and postal contacts for letters and fanzines. The letter columns of prozines provided a very tiny window of exposure, also, and was one entry point into fandom.

But the major activities, both in contact with others and in dealing with obtaining and/or collecting science fiction was *via* the mail system. Very slow, expensive, and not very conducive to international contact. But that's what we had. It worked fairly well, given the times, but only for those of us in the great FAPA desert (meaning the non-coastal areas serviced almost completely by mail, unless you had the time and money and inclination to travel a lot to go to conventions.) For the younger set getting into fandom (as I was) mail and a local fan club (filled with adults and pretty boring to me) was all there was to fandom. Of course I was reading a lot of science fiction, using the library, the science fiction book club, paperbacks, used book stores, and buying used science fiction books and magazines through the mail...with all those sticky dimes and quarters taped down on index cards. This last method was facilitated by the Kaymar Trader, which was my only way to get anything cheap, and eventually got me into publishing and more active fannish activity.

All this changed for the normal reasons and one new innovation. The normal reasons were the growing up process, other interests intruding, like school, work, marriage, *etc.*

The new innovation was the lower cost home computers (and kits) and the development of the internet. Since I worked for IBM on finishing college, I had some really large computers at my work, but my telecommunication software wasn't useful for connecting with others on a hobby basis. But my Apple clone and the internet made a huge difference. Email, forums, developing programs for text creation and formatting, ability to send graphics, *etc.*, started coming fast and furiously with the real advantage of quick interchange. I started using my home computer to do all the communications I needed to interact with lots of fans, all over the country and then the whole world. All I needed was an IP address and time to dial up my provider.

And look where it has gotten us! The internet and easy to use layers of programs and control functions has made it possible for anyone determined enough to learn new things to produce total interactions with as many persons as you could get addresses for. At fairly low cost you could produce a fanzine, using free to cheap programs, type it up, format it to the degree you had any design skills at all, add graphics and photographs (in color too) and get it sent, delivered, read, and commented on in a few days. So much for mail and print production. No more hector, mimeo, carbon paper zines. Just clean, fast, cheap, "professional" looking printed material, sent out with a press of a button. There was still a cost for internet providers and better and better computers, printers, scanners, and so on, but these got cheaper and more reliable and easy to use as the years rolled by.

Almost all of what N3F was built up to do for fans could now be handled by each individual at his home computer den, quickly and completely at his/her control. Goodbye N3F! (I'm reminded of the comment made by Ed Yourdon in which he pointed out that when the telephone was starting to be installed in more and more locations there were getting to be so many calls that the phone company had to hire more operators. You made calls by telling the operator the number you wanted to connect to and she dialed it for you and plugged you in. The complaint made at that time was that with all the telephones it would soon grow to the point where everyone would have to work for the phone company and be an operator! And, as he pointed out, that's exactly what happened.) Anyway, back to goodbye N3F. Well, almost. There is still the hobby aspect of the club and the desire for us featherless bipeds to be in contact with one another on a personal basis. There is still the need for one-to-one help with learning some of the history, creation, and selling of science fiction. This becomes even more diffused as the *genre* becomes more fragmented into multiple aspects and styles. Here I think of fantasy, hard science fiction, alternate worlds, and I suppose even porn science fiction.

N3F can still be helpful with history and development of science fiction and its offshoots, and even of N3F and fandom themselves. We all know that we are losing the people who created science fiction and developed it into the various versions it has had

in the past. And it is still going on today with a whole new set of persons. From early fantastical fictions (Wells, Verne, *etc.*), through the early hard science fiction (Gernsback, aSF and other magazines), through what I think of as the Golden Age (pre-actual space activity) and development of intricate fantasy worlds (in some huge series of work) we are transformed into a new way of involving ourselves in a "science fiction" interest.

It is becoming so splintered that it is hard to imagine one club, or group, satisfying the differing needs of large numbers of members spanning a wide range of ages and interests. Gone is the need to produce paper output; we can do almost everything digitally and send electronically. Speed of communications has eliminated the politics and confusions of responses to events handled in slow motion. A structure like our federal government, built to accommodate the pace of transmitting information from state to state on horseback, is a laughable way to handle today's government processes. But we still do it. An election is held, certified, and the winners are known (barring legal problems) within hours of the voting. Why, then, are the winners sworn into office to begin their terms weeks later? Large institutions are mired in their history, their conflicting factions, and the imagined status of their structure to upgrade to what's available with today's technology. Why are the doctors' offices mired down in huge storage of paper files and use of fax transmissions to send copies of reports and test results from office to office? Even banks, with their huge investment in data processing and huge cost savings in digital information data bases still charge exorbitant fees for some activities...and delays in availability of funds as if the processes were being handled by hand at a one at a time basis by a staff of clerks! Such nonsense. We're getting to an age where schools aren't going to teach writing any more because all the students already just type everything (or dictate it) into digital storage.

What does all this have to do with the N3F? Well, the N3F seems to have already started the switch to digital storage. Only some, who are slowly dying off, want paper magazines. The nostalgia of it all! Useless. It's all of a bygone age which hasn't gone by yet.

The N3F is an interesting study of this syndrome. It still has some need for elements of science fiction fandom and business activity. Passing skills (writing, production) still seem to be done more pleasantly with person to person. But here comes conferencing technology. Science fiction itself has used as a medium the use of computers located on different planets with students attending class taught by a distant teacher. Impossible at that scale, but a good science fiction story. And completely possible (and being done) on our planet! Only institutions keeping artifacts (like some university libraries with a science fiction section) are piling and filing paper fanzines at this point. And lots of them are beginning to scan them into searchable data bases. I've used one myself, but just to look back at some of my old fanzines with a sigh.

I have no need, or desire, to collect paper fanzines. Please don't send me any. The

only one I still think it would be nice to have is The Recluse. I sold my copy years ago, and just wish I hadn't. Oh, well, it really isn't important.

Can N3F actually morph into something useful, while getting rid of those activities that really aren't needed in the original form any more? It will, of course, or just fade away like so many obsolete activities have.

I'm still interested enough to want to see what happens. But it's also not important. We get everything we have as a loan to be used for a short time. That's all it is. It can be fun, instructive, aggravating, useful, or a burden. But it is just a passing parade and not important.

I guess I've finally grown up.

Actually, I've had a pretty good time. I want to see how the N3F process will develop. I have no regrets, and I'm content.

Thanks for a nice IO and the chance to spill out some thoughts. It's gotten longer than I expected, but it's just a bunch of zeroes and ones, after all.

Well, it's a long and impressive letter and says a lot more than people are used to. Some of your statements are very dire, but there is a partial resolution that's like zen at the end, so it comes out well. My own prospectus for the N3F is for it to remain and keep with it. Having being is a very important factor is having something.

Net production has its superiorities and inferiorities. In some ways it's like a space-time warp which leaves our bodies but not our minds behind, as to its speed. It produces a new extrastellar time concept which renders it somewhat out of the mainstream of life. But I like getting color in my zines and not having to pay much for it. When I saw the net coming I expected to see fandom end up in it. The only thing is, where it says "net produce" the sf fan may find it a little difficult to figure out what to fill in. If he has patience it will come to him. But, like the fellow in the Voyager episode, the productive fan, traveling at warp speed ten, expands to fill the space-time continuum and may fade out and not return.

In my original run of Ionispheres, Art Rapp pointed out that something had been affecting fandom and causing it to fade away. His statement was that it was television that had done that. If so, the net does it even more, and what is the solution when we're all net-dependent? I think it would be, adapt to it, and see what can be done with it. That leaves old forms behind, but they might catch up.

I don't believe in giving up or forgetting what has been had, I believe in carrying it forward. If the effort of doing this gets to giving someone the jaws, he should remember that it has always been fun and frustration both to work with our productions in fandom.



SNOW WALKER *by John Polselli*

The sun had risen high above the land.
The frosty mountains, mute and ominous,
Were casting looming shadows on the snow
Outside a solitary house in which
A man was waking. Through the night he had
Heard footsteps in the frozen snow beyond
His door. He listened momentarily.
But sleep presided over wonderment,
And soon he drifted back into his dreams.
He saw large footprints in the snow outside.
He did not dwell upon the mystery.
Instead he started walking to the woods
Which were nearby his house. The scent of pines
Refreshed him, and he gazed long at the sky.
He tossed a coin into the snow for luck
And prayed a silent prayer that he'd be safe
From things the world withholds beyond the veil
In the dark, for that was all that he
Could do amid the mute and frosty mountains
Casting looming shadows on the snow
Outside a house in which a man was sleeping.





Endpage