

IONISPHERE 19



Bulletin of the National Fantasy Fan Federation

Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau October 2019

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A bimonthly publication covering bureau activities.



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NEWS ITEM: Google Images now picks up a full outlay of N3F publications, which you may find by Googling “The National Fantasy Fan Federation (images).”

Science fiction is being spread over the net, from mostly occasional references available to a search engine to a common presence.

EDITORIAL



Our Fourth Year

We commence with this issue our fourth year of publication and the same number of years of the existence of the Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau, though that was commenced in advance of the publication and was not celebrated for it in the publication. It has lasted about as long as the original bureau (or "activity" as it was called in those days) did, and this run of publications seems more auspicious and favored. I was always insecure in my way of running the bureau then, but have found a solid spot in the Ionisphere and the committee work of today. My success in contact with authors far exceeds what I had back then. With such contact in mind I will be listing email addresses of those authors, editors and fans interviewed in IO in an issue this year, for the benefit of members wishing to write to them. My accomplishments in these three years? Interviewing fans and authors, giving email addresses for writing to them, and along with the others on the staff, substantiating the existence of the bureau, solidifying it, publicizing the fan-pro coordinating effort, finding mutual interest in this effort among others outside of the NFFF, investigating and publicizing information about relevant matters, and publishing a zine that has gotten widespread interest. We are all doing well at keeping the bureau active.

At this time I would like to pose this question to the membership: are you receiving clear, readable issues of IO via your equipment? If you are having any trouble with your viewing of this zine, please let us know and we will see what we can do about your problems. The address is the editorial address or that of the staff members, whichever you might choose. We are pretty good at figuring out such problems, and if malware seems to be involved we would like to signify that its usage exists. Of course we are not doing topnotch if you are not able to read IO easily. So don't leave your problems uncorrected.

Hoping to continue on the course we have set and continue to develop our bureau.

A science fiction convention is one of the ways in which fans meet writers in real life. They are a hub of science fiction activity. Meeting people is very important at one of these, and there are a lot of parties; some people spend more time at them than at any of the serious business that is had at conventions. They generally last three days. Here we have a description of a world science fiction convention, the most important of the conventions, by a science fiction fan who attended it, a five-day affair.

The World Science Fiction Convention in Dublin, Ireland
Worldcon Memories

by Peter Cardinal Cox



So our party of five get on the aeroplane and, oh look, they're fans over there, so are they, seen them at a con somewhere, they're proper writers...and we're off to Ireland for my eighth Worldcon.

Not everyone was so lucky, as we'd heard that the Nigerian delegation had not got visas, and so far (at time of writing) not heard who was to blame for this. I remember at the 1990 Worldcon in The Hague the Chinese delegation had come overland by train.

Thursday. So Thursday began, for me, with my show High Stakes. It grew out of my residency with The Dracula Society. I describe it as having funny bits, serious bits, puppets and a prize for best shoes. We do tech from 10 and then the show started at 11. So a good number of people weren't even at the con yet, and of those that were some were still in the queue for registration. Plus there were already sixteen other things on. The social media team for the con had been plugging it like billy-oh all over Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and, for all I knew, Tinder too. Audiences came, and came, and came. Had about 75 so was probably my best show so far. And they appeared to enjoy it.

In the afternoon we wandered the half mile or so to the other venue (a half-empty shopping precinct with a cinema and the worst escalator layout in the history of humanity. Fortunately fannish ingenuity sorted it out by the next day). I went to a talk by the artist Jim Fitzpatrick on working with Thin Lizzy. I mean THIN LIZZY folks, proper rock and/or roll. Stories were told.

The evening included a Speculative Poetry open mike organized by the Trinidadian poet Brandon O'Brien. Good proportion of those reading were at their first worldcon.

A problem that had quickly emerged on the first day was queuing for programme items. By day two, tape was applied to floors and designated areas allocated for those waiting to enter a room. Some items may have proved to be more popular than expected, some less so. Con committees don't have crystal balls.

Friday. Friday morning started for me with a panel on Concept Albums (which so often embrace sf and/or fantasy themes). I was briefly distracted as outside a van went by delivering chicken bits to butchers and restaurants. The side of the van was emblazoned with the slogan "Poultry in Motion".

I got to the venue of the panel on Lord Dunsany early and snuck into the item before. An alarm went off. We looked at each other. The alarm stopped. As I wasn't that bothered by this item (a book-group pod-cast live) I went in search of hotel staff...

"Hello, I was in the Alhambra Room, an alarm just went off."

"Yes, it's just down there on the right."

"Yes, I was in the Alhambra Room and an alarm just went off."

"Yes, pass that table, on the right."

"Yes, I was in the Alhambra Room. While I was in there, just now, an alarm went off."

"Yes, it is down there, on the right, pass that table."

I went back to the room and shrugged my shoulders to everyone else in there. We didn't die.

The panel on Lord Dunsany (well, you've got to support up-and-coming fantasy writers, haven't you?) was very good with Martin Andersson from Sweden who is currently busy at Castle Dunsany transcribing previously unpublished stories. Of which there are about 150. Publishers please write direct to Castle Dunsany and put your bids in.

Friday night found us in the bar and the Finnish Worldcon committee from two years ago put money behind the bar which didn't last too long.

Saturday. Saturday morning saw a demonstration of medieval combat by the Medieval Armored Combat Ireland team. This is an extreme sport to beat most others as they don reproduction armor and batter heck out of each other (rounds last a minute) to an approximation of tournament rules from the fifteenth century. Yes the weapons are blunt (as they would have been in a tournament), but do you fancy being whacked with a metal bar? Also certain moves are *verboden* as (as the Marshall explained) they all have to go to work the next day. So no poking into the helmet to try and blind your opponent. Later in the weekend the SCA also did a combat demonstration that (apparently) was less impressive.

Saturday night we went to bid parties, starting with New Zealand (who are hosting next year's Worldcon). They had a refreshing fruit cocktail (non-alcoholic) but also delicious pavlovas. Next was Chicago (bidding for 2022) with Harvey Walltangers (vanilla vodka and tang) or cups of tea loaded with whiskey. Next was Memphis (new bid for 2023) with bourbon and cheese. Last was Scotland (bidding for 2024) with tiny, tiny tots of whisky. There was a queue to get into that time and by the time I got in I'd had enough and struggled out and went to find my bed. Other bids (Washington DC 2021, China 2023 and France 2023) hosted parties other nights, but I'm getting old.

Sunday. Sunday was a quiet programme heavy (well, for me) with, in the morning, a panel on Image Comics. In the afternoon I went to a tribute to Bob Shaw in the form of a Serious Science Talk in his memorable style (my eyes may have closed, that was not a comment on Michael Carroll); a panel on Matte Paintings in Film (which didn't have illustrations, but actually didn't need them as they spoke so eloquently about the changing nature of the movie industry); and then a talk on Film and Game Music with composer Joao Goncalves. This counted as research for me as I had picked up a commission to create a score for an old silent movie.

In the evening I tried a panel on Drinking Songs in Fantasy and SF, and gave it almost half an hour. Most people in the room could sing in tune. Unfortunately they didn't all know the same versions of songs or the same tempo...Much more rewarding was a talk on the Cassini Probe by Bridget Landry from JPL/NASA, delivered while dressed as

Morticia Adams.

Elsewhere the Hugo Awards were being presented, relayed to a couple of other rooms for overflow, with disastrous (or actually just average if you watch live TV coverage) sub-titling...Oh, and Jeanette Ng won the John W. Campbell Award (Not a Hugo TM) and took the opportunity to point out that perhaps you shouldn't have awards named after such odious people. There was much discussion (some of which was actually informed by people who have carefully read what he did and said) and Dell Publishing have opted to re-name the award the Astounding Award.

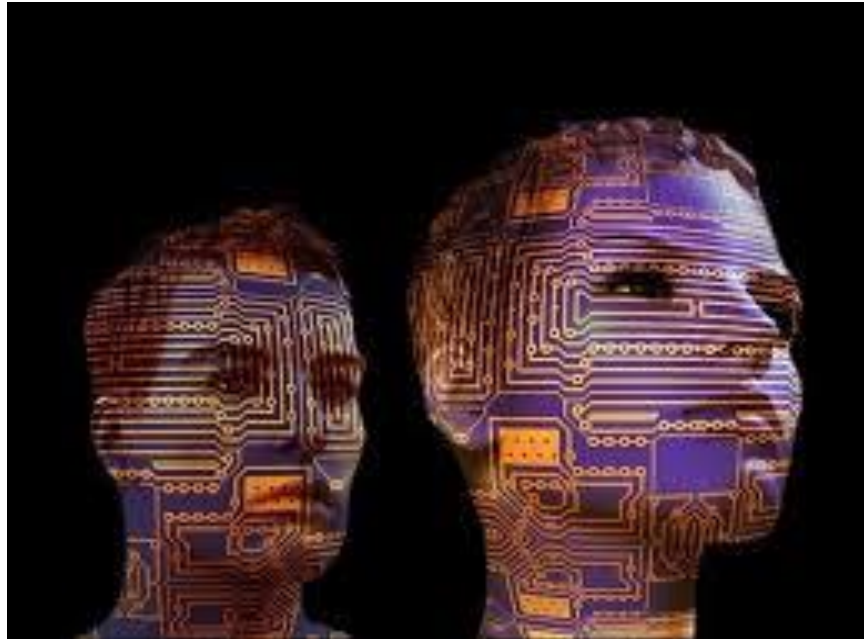
Monday began (for me) with a panel on Irish Horror (during which my eyes may have briefly closed, again) and continued with the artist Jim Fitzpatrick talking about his life. "...and then I met Che Guevara...and then I worked with the Black Panthers in America..." Yes, I want to read the biography he is apparently writing. There was a panel about Speculative Poetry and as I queued up a friend suggested that they were surprised I wasn't on it. I wasn't, as the four people on the panel had a far greater knowledge about the field and I'd rather listen to people who know something than just being embarrassed by being on a panel in silence.

In all a Worldcon that exceeded my expectations. Yes there may have been problems, the relatively late emergence of the need for parents to be with their children at all times unless in paid-for care meant parents had to re-think plans. (One of our group had been fifteen at the time of the 1987 Worldcon in Brighton—we hadn't known him then—and was pretty much feral for a couple of days, sleeping in the film programme, fending for himself. I don't think anyone would advocate that today.) Beyond that there were old friends I met briefly, new friends made. There have now been more countries that have hosted a World Con once (Germany, Holland, Japan, Finland and Ireland) than have hosted it multiple times (America, Canada, Britain and Australia) and this I think is a good thing. Worldcons should embrace the world, when those parts of the world are ready for Worldcon.



Science Fiction Fandom on Facebook by John Thiel

My SCIENCE FICTION FANDOM site on Facebook now has over 650 members; of these the following are well-known names in science fiction fandom: Will Mayo, Steve Fahnstalk, Joanne Tolson, Jeffrey Redmond, George Wells, Nescher Pyscher, Steve Davidson, Cus Custer, Karel DeVore Sissom, Matthew Tepper, Moshe Feder, Stoney Emshwiller, David Hardy, Lawrence Dagstine, Alan White, Garth Spencer, Peter Cardinal Cox, John Purcell, Tim Marion, Petrea Mitchell, Richard Graeme Cameron, Joe Siclari, Michael Lowery, Matthew Goff, Byron Bailey, Mord McGhee, John Montagne, Hank Luttrell, Gary Mattingly, Leah Zeldes, Gene Turnbow, Al Sirois, Owen Lorion, Piet Nel, Audrey Trend, David K.M. Klaus, Lloyd Penney, Allan Beatty, Joyce Scrivner, Bruce Richard Gillespie, Fabrice Doublet, Dave Truesdale, Christopher Garcia, Rose Hogue, Frank Lunney, Rob Imes, Pawyigh Lee Montgomery, Michael Earl Swaim, Robert Eggleton, Ron Salomon, Charlotte Proctor, Kent McDaniel, George Ternant, Tony Cvetko, John Guy Collick, Alyson Abramowitz, Paul Treadaway, Alexi Vandenberg, Joseph T. Major, Eyalat Polinar, Patrick Ijima-Washburn, Trinlay Khadro, Loyal Ramsey, Daniel Lambert, Paul Levinson, Heath Row, Katrina Templeton.



AN INTERVIEW WITH KARINA FABIAN by Tamara Wilhite



Karina Fabian is a prolific science fiction and fantasy author. She's written both a modern fantasy mystery series and several science fiction stories. I contributed to her INFINITE SPACE, INFINITE GOD 2 anthology and was a beta reader for her new science fiction collection SPACE TRAIPISE: HOLD MY BEER. I had the opportunity to interview this busy writer.

Contact Tamara Wilhite at tamarawilhite@hotmail.com and Karina Fabian at karina@fabfanspace.com

TW: I've called the Space Traipse stories one of the few good things to come out of a Tumbler thread. How long has it been going on?

KF: Since 2017. It was a stressful year for me both personally and professionally. I was very frustrated in my writing and decided I needed something to do just for the love of it. Something where I didn't stress out about themes or publisher expectations, but just creating fun characters and amusing myself—and hopefully others. I'd also wanted to review my blog. Then, a friend on Facebook shared the fateful Tumblr post, and I knew what I wanted to do.

That was my place to be silly, set up fun characters and situations and let them run wild. To play shamelessly with clichés, make mistakes, even break the fourth wall to make a joke or call attention to lazy writing. (For example, I may say, "Look, I could spend 200 words to describe this, but you know the scene where...? Yeah, imagine that and let's move on.") I crack jokes inside the story as well as out.

It helped my stress level a lot. I found myself giggling at something Gel would do. I'd watch or read something (or have something pop up in real life) and think, "That's going in an episode!" And writing without pressure helped me recapture some of the joy I'd

lost, and that spread into my other writing.

Then, what do you know? I started getting fans!

TW: Did you think that the Space Traipse series would become a serial publication?

KF: I have to admit, it was in the back of my mind, which is why I named it "Space Traipse" instead of "Star Trek: Hold My Beer." That let me keep the ST: pattern for comedy purposes while not-waving a red flag at Paramount's lawyers. (Who get the occasional nod-to in my stories, incidentally. Please don't hurt me, guys!)

However, it never was my intention. Like I said, this was Writing Without Editors. There were typos. There were mistakes—some of which you pointed out (and I always appreciate that, truly). There were even times I'd forget someone or something's name and put a placeholder (SHIPNAMEHERE) and then publish without replacing it. Plus, these are free-slowing stories. The plots ramble or stop for a joke. I jump ahead (and make a point of it.) So I wasn't especially interested in doing the work of fixing it up to what common wisdom says are publication standards.

Then I saw a post from a fan—as a comment on the page of someone I didn't even know. He was recommending Space Traipse and saying how awesome it was, but how hard it was to read only one installment a week. I discovered others felt the same and were waiting months, then visiting to binge read. So, I decided to do a thorough copy edit, compile them, and self-publish them.

I did not, however, revise them from a plot point of view. People are enjoying the chaos, the wall-breaking, the twists. I don't want to edit the energy out of the stories.

It's been interesting to see the Amazon ratings. I've never made Top Ten, but I'm consistently in the Top 200 for several of the categories I'm in.

TW: "Space Traipse: Hold My Beer" Season 1 has an additional long story that wasn't featured on the blog. Are there additional stories that weren't on the blog available elsewhere, such as through your newsletter?

KF: No, I wrote "Rest Stop" initially because the book seemed too small, and I wanted to reward the people who followed the blog but buy the book, anyway. I plan on having a bonus episode in every book from now on.

Unless I get a specific inspiration, my plan is to pick a well-loved episode of Star Trek or some other science fiction show and put my characters in a similar situation. "Rest Stop", of course, is patterned after ST:TOS "Shore Leave", but is very different. My characters caught on fast that this was a Planet of Wishes—and this is the crew of the Impulsive, after all.

Perhaps, if my Patreon account picks up, I'll add some bonus episodes there—or at least some cut scenes.

TW: This series definitely pays homage to the original and later Star Trek series. How many of those have you watched? And what do you think of "The Orville"?

KF: All of them—including the animated series, the Continuing Adventures, and Galaxy

Quest, which deserves a nod. We're binge-watching DS9 right now. (That one is my favorite.)

I'd always been a fan of Star Trek. We used to move the TV so we could watch while eating dinner. (That was a big deal in those days.) And I've always loved humor and parody.

I'm really enjoying the Orville. I think it brings in a lot of the TOS elements back without sacrificing comedy. I think McFarland does a fair job of keeping the issues complex so it's not preachy. Even so, there's so much humor and fun. It's a solid dramedy all on its own.

TW: "Space Traipse" isn't the only project you've been working on. You've been busy with the DRAGONEYE PI series, too. When does MURDER MOST PICANTE come out?

KF: We're working on the cover art right now. For those that don't know, this is my humorous fantasy about a dragon, Vern, who emigrated from Faerie to the Mundane (our world), where he's underpaid and underappreciated. He spends his time saving the world from disasters where technology and magic don't mix. I have two novels and some short stories with him, but it's been years since he's had anything new. That was part of my stress in 2017. I was trying to rebuild his universe from the beginning to launch a better series.

Space Traipse and my wonderful crit group (CWG SFF group) helped me get back into Vern's voice, the humor, and the fun. I have a new publisher who is very flexible, Annona. We're working the cover now, so perhaps by the end of the year. Murder Most Picante is Vern's first case in the Mundane, where he not only deals with a murder but a crazy cat lady who thinks he's eaten her Sacha, townspeople who protest his presence in their neighborhood, and a chief of police on the payroll of the villain. He gets so much grief. It's beautiful.

TW: Will you be releasing a Space Nuns anthology? Or will there be a follow-up to the Space Nuns novel DISCOVERY?

KF: I have ideas for their adventures, but nothing had grabbed me yet, so the Rescue Sisters are on hold. I really want to write a story about Sister Thomas' late fiancé. He's not dead! She is so mad when she finds out.

I will have a hard SF coming out next year: two novellas: "The Old Man and the Void" and "Dex's Way." I'm workshopping them in crit group right now, and they are generating high praise from these keenly particular people. I'm excited about it. They concern Dex Hollister, a spaceship captain who salvages relics from the accretion disk of a black hole, and his ship, Santiago.

I wrote The Old Man and the Void many years ago on a challenge from my husband. He wanted me to write "The Old Man and the Sea" in space. I was not a fan of The Old Man and the Sea, but it turned out to be an excellent science fiction adventure when you put it in a black hole. Dex has all the grit of Hemingway's Santiago, but a much

deeper background, and I gave him a ship's AI to play off of. (It's named Santiago as a hat-tip to Hemingway.) It's definitely a man-*vs*-the-elements kind of story, but Dex is also fighting his past, an illness similar to Alzheimer's, and an alien species.

TW: What else have you been working on?

KF: I'm re-launching the NEETA LYFFE, ZOMBIE EXTERMINATOR books, and hope we can get them out in 6-month intervals. There are at least four coming. I have some short stories coming out in the PLANETARY anthologies from Superversive Books. And I just started freelancing for Fit Small Business, which I hope will become a very steady gig, because much as I love fiction, it does not pay me well.

TW: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

KF: In 2017, I made a decision about my writing. Until then, I'd aspired to make it a career. In other words, I wanted to make enough in royalties to pay the rent. When we moved to Florida and I lost my full-time job, it became very clear that that was not going to happen, and putting pressure on myself didn't help. Space Traipse was my way to return to my love for stories, for humor, and for sharing some zany ideas. I won't quit writing, because I love it so much, and thanks to my wonderful husband [Rob Fabian is President of Rocket Crafters—a real-world space enthusiast and rocket scientist, who with his team is changing the launch industry.], we can pay the mortgage and our bills without my books.

Not every writer is as lucky as I am. If you have a favorite author—or even one you just hope will keep putting out books—then you have to help them. Buy their books—don't pirate them or ask for free copies. Review them. Tell your friends about them. See if they have Patreon accounts and toss in a dollar a month. It adds up.



BEHIND THE SCENES: Science Fiction Becomes Science Fact by Jeffrey Redmond

With so many fancy gadgets around today, it's no wonder we are so amazed by what we have. But in the older science fiction stories and movies these were just imaginary devices of futuristic fantasy.

In "The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of: How Science Fiction Conquered the World", Thomas Disch calls this relay between fiction and reality "creative visualization". Businesses have started to co-opt it. The designers of the iPhone and the Kindle cite works of science fiction as inspiration. Boeing, Nike, Ford and Intel have hired Prototyping, future casting, and world building ventures for product development. As the author Brian Merchant put it on Medium recently, these companies "do what Science Fiction has always done. They build rich speculative worlds, describe that world's bounty and perils, and, finally, envision how that future might fall to pieces."

This is "speculative" fiction in the financial sense, too, a new way to gamble on futures.

The irony, or the proof, of this brave new business model is that sci fi saw it coming. Dystopias have long portrayed artists being drafted into nefarious corporate labor. In *BLADE RUNNER 2049*, for instance, the Wallace Corporation sets a woman the task of crafting memories. Not for characters in a novel, but for androids.

It's a touch self congratulatory for sci fi creators to imply that they're the unacknowledged designers of the world. But they do seem to have a knack for innovation. The genre has predicted satellite communication, army tanks, tablets, submarines, psychotropic pills, bionic limbs, CCTV, electric cars, and video calling.

You can find dozens more examples of sci fi created gadgetry on the internet, which is itself a prime example of the phenomenon. The word "cyberspace" first appeared in the cyberpunk novel *NEUROMANCER* (1984), to describe "a consensual hallucination. A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system". Its author, William Gibson, is our Nostradamus. His novels have prophesied reality television, viral marketing and nanotechnology.

Science Fiction is often set in the near future, and tests its powers of prophecy. There is a story about a germaphobic couple who want to have sex without touching. They purchase the "TouchFeely" from the "Feelies" in Aldous Huxley's *BRAVE NEW WORLD* (1932). It includes an apparatus that has an electrified dildo and a sheath that respond remotely to each other. There is also Hera and Zeus, "the world's first internet enabled" sex toys. These "teledildonic" devices uncannily resemble the science fictional invention. The story characters each start affairs with the bot. One ends up choking on the dildo, and it is as if the writer had conjured something into existence. The dream of every

artist.

There is science research on H.I.V. vaccines for the novel *THE OLD DRIFT*. With some help from a biologist at New York University, the author came up with one that uses a particular technique to target a specific gene sequence. It was strange and wondrous when soon after Chinese scientists used the exact same mechanism for their "AIDS vaccine development project", also known as the CRISPR babies, the first genetically modified humans.

Moskeetoze™ microdrones were designed for the novel and may some day buzz to life, too. Raymond Z. Gallun's 1936 short story "The Scarab" got there first, but the TV series "Black Mirror" introduced robo-bees into the popular imagination, just in advance of their emergence in the real world. And Walmart has recently filed a patent for a fleet of pollination drones.

This is the dark side of Science Fiction prophecy. "Wow, I was right!" can turn quickly into "Yikes, I was right!" You almost envy Cassandra, the Trojan princess who was doomed by the gods to be always correct yet disbelieved. "I was never able to predict," William Gibson demurred in an interview with *GO*. "But I could sort of curate what had already happened." It was brought to his attention that the global disasters he had envisioned in his 2014 novel, "The Peripheral", seemed to be happening even before it was published. Gibson admitted, "That makes me very uncomfortable."

What if you don't just predict a bad idea but inspire it? Mary Shelley's *FRANKENSTEIN* (1818), widely considered the first Science Fiction novel, tried to forestall this. "Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge." But while Science Fiction aims to warn, humans are teenagers at heart. We love doing what we're told not to. Our modern day Frankenstein, Michael Crichton's *JURASSIC PARK* (1990), may even have spurred researchers to try to recover dinosaur DNA. Should the makers of Sci Fi quit indulging this desire to peer into the future?

Well, no. First of all, our predictions are off a lot of the time. No one's floating around in jet packs and hovercrafts just yet. Huxley presaged genetic engineering. His test tube babies are the true precursors of CRISPR babies, but so far we've passed on his multisensory "Feelies" and stuck with the good old fashioned movies. For some reason, there's a slew of older sci fi films that happen to be set in 2019. *BLADE RUNNER*, *THE RUNNING MAN*, *THE ISLAND*. So we have new proof of our flubs. The *IGN* piece detailing these failures of prophecy is titled "The Sci Fi Movies That Predicted 2019 and Got It Wrong".

The writer Harry Turtledove tweeted a link to that article with an exclamatory comment: "Science fiction does not predict the future. Not. Not! [expletive] NOT! It uses the imagined future to comment on the real present." Margaret Atwood often claims something similar, echoing Gibson's protestations. Despite manifest evidence of her

acute forecasts—the rise of the Christian right, in vitro meat, sexbots modeled on real people, apocalyptic climate change, live aquatic jewelry.

She says, “I’m not a prophet. Honest, I’m not a prophet. If I were a prophet I would have cleaned up on the stock market years ago. They’re saying things about ‘Oryx and Crake’ and ‘MaddAddam’ are all coming true. But that’s based on things people were already working on when I was writing the books. It’s just that I was looking for those things and other people weren’t.”

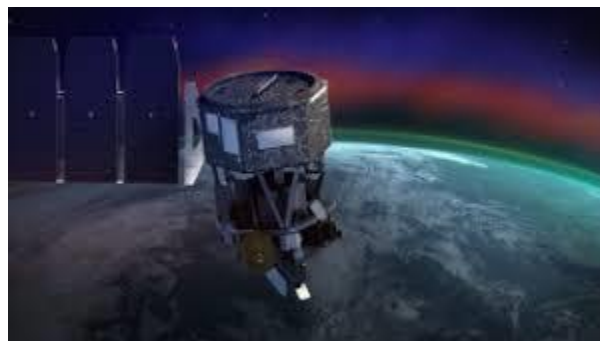
Maybe Science Fiction’s future is actually just a lens of the present.

Some writers do like to don the mantle of prophet. In 1983, Isaac Asimov published a set of 2019 forecasts. He was right about some things. “The mobile computerized object, or robot, is already flooding into industry and will, in the course of the next generation, penetrate the home.” But it’s embarrassing to see how hopeful he was about us.

Asimov thought computers would have freed us from the most tedious forms of labor by now. He imagined we’d have fixed pollution, developed technology based on the special properties of space, and even settled on the Moon. This rosy picture might seem surprising, given Science Fiction’s proclivity for doom and gloom. Yet given our headlong plummet toward the death of this planet, to picture any future at all feels optimistic these days. It assumes that, when the Apocalypse comes, we will still be here to witness it.

Stories are one of our oldest technologies. They let us have vivid experiences. Beautiful, moving ones, but also horrifying, dark ones. And then close the book, or the laptop, unscathed. They give us a kind of perverse pleasure in reverse. Not of seeing the worst come true, but of seeing the worst without it coming true. And this is the other reason writers shouldn’t give up on the art of prediction.

Writers don’t just see into the future or possess special insight into the present. They also construct a kind of machine for virtual hindsight. They create an immersive simulation of the future that we can all experience and look back on, so that we might decide together whether we want these dreams to come true after all.



NASA’S IONOSPHERIC EXPLORER



HEATH ROW: Has **Ionisphere** really been an N3F publication for four years? Man, when I check out on the activities of a club I was once extremely active in (Fan editor, Directorate member, *etc.*), I check OUT. #17 (June 2017) is the first issue I've ever read, and sheepishly, it has been my loss. Personally, I'd prefer receiving a paper zine, but such are things. I can at least write an LOC in response.

For me, yes, writing like this is better than emailing. I think differently online, and I write differently online. So here I sit at the dining room table with a highlighted printout of the zine, a notebook, and a pen. If I didn't do this this way, I wouldn't do it, probably.

With ten years under your belt, it might be time for an Ionisphere index! I'm sure other issues are as impressive as this one was.

The interview of James Van Pelt was a wonderful introduction to the author, whose work I'm not familiar with. I will have to remedy that. His comments on network, at sf cons, his formative reading, the productivity of the field (and perhaps the loss of...or changes to...the idea of a *genre* canon), and his approach to writing was all interesting and inspiring. Based on the interview, I think I'd enjoy his stories.

Mr. Redmond hit the nail on the head when he said, "No writing is ever wasted." That is so true. Even LoCs have value...and I occasionally can pull my outdated Round Robin missives to repurpose for one of the clubzines as a review or article. From smaller audiences to larger audiences, and all good practice.

And Mr. Fahnstalk's Norwescon review was a fine read—especially given Van Pelt's comments on his own experiences. I would have liked to learn more about Fahnstalk's representation of **Amazing Stories** and the connections between staff, readers, and writers facilitated by his involvement. Seems like a neat opportunity!

In closing, I've been reading the November 1951 issue of *Amazing Stories* recently and enjoyed this exchange on fan-pro relations in that issue's "The Readers' Forum": "I do not care a whit about the author's biography, his likes and dislikes leave me cold, and his home life is or should be his own. I do not care how many wives and ex-wives he has, nor whether he is left-handed or ambidextrous, or even if he has a temper! Not!! All I want to know about any author is that he can write, and has ideas I can study," writes reader Anna Gross. Editor Howard Browne replied: "Anyone who creates, be it fiction, art, music, or any other form of entertainment, can't help but be interesting as a person to those who form his audience....That is why nearly everyone feels a kinship with published writers."

Thank you for doing your part to further that kinship.

*I'm glad to be doing so. You've hearkened back to a spirit in science fiction I've been referring to, that is not being found in fandom or the magazines of today to any great degree. There is a closeness and a proximity to be found in some of those earlier magazines' letter columns that is not found today. Howard Browne, I'd point out, was the founder of "The Space Club", a science fiction correspondence group originating in the 50s and centering around *Amazing Stories*, which was intended to augment fan-to-fan relations, and he also had fanzine reviews. This was picked up by William Hamling, who added "The Cosmic Pen Club" to *Imaginative Tales* (not without crediting Browne with the idea and referencing his magazine and group), and had fanzine reviews in *Imagination*. As for what that letter said, I think people are getting too much into the foot lockers of writers, without any real liking and intimacy, and issuing bulletins on their health, which seems unnecessary to me from the viewpoint of what anyone should know. One might argue that we couldn't keep up with their deaths were these people not standing by to report them, but we don't need to; what's more to the point for us is what they have to say. So why not stick to good news about them if we are to follow Browne's policy? Otherwise that fan letter has a lot of validity.*

*I am just starting a fourth year of publication with this issue. You can find all the back issues of *Ionisphere* in the annals which are kept at the N3F website, <http://n3f.org>. Seeing you have sent this by regular mail, kind of crashing my heading photo, and are reading a printout of the issue (which I wish were available to all ground members), enlightens me that you might not have electronic facilities, but if you know someone who does, I assume you could read the back issues off their machine. You may wish to contact my ground adjutant, John Polselli, whose present address is 861 Sebastiani Court, Las Vegas, Nevada 89123. I'll send you a printout of this letter column if you need it, but can't afford to print out spare issues of *Ionisphere*, though I wish that I could. Your letter gives me a chance to talk about ground matters.*

I'm not doing an index because the back issues are available to most of the members in the N3F annals.

Rounding off the zine with creative writing:

***A Father's Two Daughters* by Jeffrey Redmond**

From the ancient Er-Dan manuscripts (Codex 1335), as translated by Jeph the Scribe:

Kazmar was a veteran of the Distant Islands invasion. He had two daughters, and gave them both away in marriage. He had been wounded in the War, and received an extra share of the pillage looting. So he had enough wealth to settle all of his debts, while also having equal dowries for each of them. The weddings were proper affairs, and all enjoyed themselves at the celebrations. The older one Lizbeta went to a farmer, and the younger one Orwena went to a potter.

But now there was just him and his wife Ronana in their large dwelling. And after a short while he began to miss both of his daughters, and he wondered how they were doing. So first he limped along and paid a visit to the older one at her farm dwelling. Lizbeta greeted him with a big hug, and prepared him a good breakfast.

At length he asked her, "How are you getting on, and how is your farming here?"

She replied, "Things are to our liking. But I have only one request of the deities. We need storms and rain to water the fruits, grains, and vegetables. They will grow and be the best of crops."

He told her, "Well, I'll give up a prayer and see what I can do."

Then he limped back and went to visit his younger daughter at her home above the Pottery Shop. She greeted him with a big hug, and prepared him a tasty lunch.

At length he asked her, "How are you getting on here, and how is the pottery business?"

Orwena replied, "We lack for nothing, but I have one wish to make of the deities. That the weather should stay fine, and the Solar Star always shine to dry our pots, cups, bowls, and plates. Then they will bake and dry hard, and be the best of wares."

He told her, "Well, I'll give up a prayer and see what I can do."

Then he limped home to see his wife, and she scolded him. "Where have you been, Kazmar? To the Tavern again? You are late! Wipe your feet!"

Which he did.

He explained, "I have been visiting our two daughters. They each want prayers to the deities. But if our youngest wants good weather, and our eldest wants bad weather, for which should we offer our prayers? Can the deities grant both at the same time?"

Ronana replied, "The weather is always changeable. What will happen will happen. Now come and have your supper."

And so he did.

Note: In our last issue, the last paragraph of Jeffrey's story contained a displaced word error.

"Suspected" should read "suggested." May the deities guard that we make no such further errors.

MORNING WITH WAGNER by Will Mayo

I dress each morning
with Ride of the Valkyries.
A horned woman fastens my trousers.
A demon with wings buttons my shirt.
I hear the voices of the multitudes
And a goddess places my hat on my head.
As Thor swings his mighty hammer
and the trumpets blow through the clouds around me.
Then the notes slow, another hymn begins.
And the old gods vanish in a swirl of wings
and forgotten tales while new gods help me change.
I look down and see the angel (Cupid's bow in hand)
tying my shoes as the Lord of Light makes his entrance.
At last, I am ready for a day
when unknown fortunes beckon with every step.

IN THE COMPANY OF THE STRANGE by Will Mayo

In the company of the strange
there's nowhere to go,
nowhere else to be.
Always a wary glance behind
and then the look ahead for trouble.
Always, trouble, trouble on the way
while the crowds stop and stare
and then scatter
when the strange come along.
They are the exiled, the unwanted, the lost,
but also the seers, the mystics, the doers.
Wherever you are, look around.
The strange are always on their way.



“As close as I got.” —Cardinal Cox at the Worldcon



Fourth Floor View: shot by Cardinal Cox



Worldcon Medieval Tournament: shot by Cardinal Cox



Second Medieval Tournament



Endpage