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Cover by Jose Sanchez, "The Manta Has Landed"

Edited by bureau head John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904
kinethiel@mymetronet.net

STAFF



Jefferson Swycaffer, PO Box 15373, San Diego, California 92175-5373 abontides@gmail.com

Jon Swartz, 12115 Missel Thrush Court, Austin, Texas 78750 jon_swartz@hotmail.com

Jeffrey Redmond, 1335 Beechwood NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505-3830 redmondjeff@hotmail.com

Heath Row, 4367 Globe Avenue, Culver City, California, 90230, kalel@well.com

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EDITORIAL



Here's Another Year Drawing to Its Close

The years go by pretty fast when you're in a fast-paced future. Fast-paced? There's instant messaging, lightning computing, simplified systems, super highways, technology races, process speeding, information streaming, linguistic shorthand, and many other accoutrements of speed. A breakneck speed romp into a future that exists only for those fast enough to keep pace with the media, which is now flashing programming in bits and pieces, if television be your medium. I would point out that there are people who are not as fast as this super speedup, and they seem to exist in a different time frame than those who are that fast. Swoosh, and that amount of management is taken care of, while other things which are in the hands of slower people are left behind in the distance and we don't have to our present what they have had to contribute, often essential; but our essentials are those things which can be speeded up, and they are made to be the essentials of speed, rather than the essentials of life or living. Slipups are crashes and we keep crashing. Everything under consideration in this new age of being is geared to GO, and is of the going thing that is going on. But what it ends up with is that what is "going on", more than anything else, is speed itself. The message is the medium. We talk about technology much more than about what technology does, which is officially stated and is notable for brevity.

So the years go by with no essential changes, only the somewhat hallucinatory changes wrought by technological advancements. We do not find life better with each passing year, we find it the same, and what is the same is all the problems we have, which have not been solved by speedy means. In fact our speed is one of our problems, as it separates the culture into different levels of speed.

How are we to do something in the present when speed has taken away all our perceptiveness of what is to be done by whisking it past us along with all the other data? Is speed actually good, or is it just something that happens because it has been

made possible for it to happen and the possibilities are being utilized to make it what happens? Nobody has asked the general populace about how fast they want things to move, but I think the answer if the question were asked would be, "not THAT fast".

Matter, as in "the truth of the matter", is being transformed into energy and we see something that is worth considering and working on flying past, having become an essence rather than a reality. Braking devices are not in place. You go for your air brakes and find air rather than brakes. Most braking has been blocking of communications.

"This is all very well because it wins," some say, but what it wins is its own perpetuation; it has left matter behind. You lose everything when you operate at top speed, except for the top speed at which you operate.

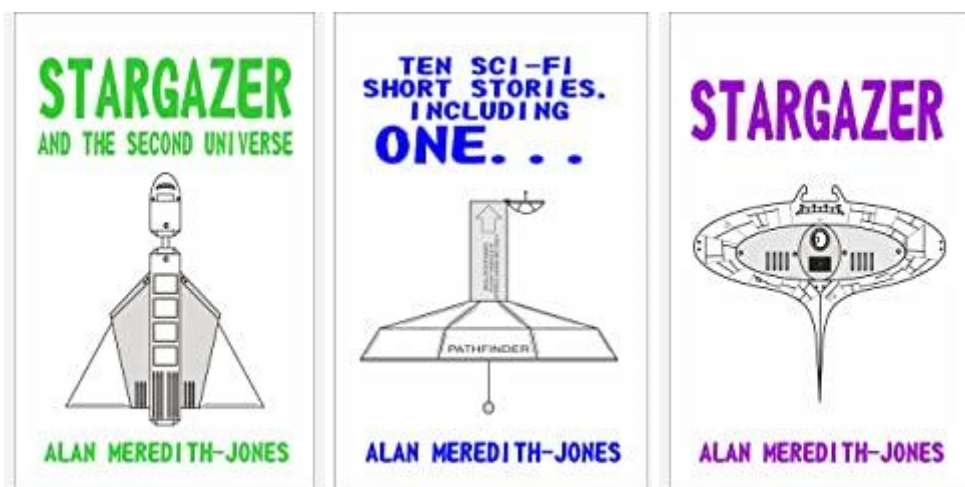
And so it goes. The passing years do not do very much for us. We have to do things for ourselves, and not look outward to the progress which is being made, much of which is unintelligible, and which is presently being inhibited by the spread of an influenza which threatens all.

What I am saying here that relates to us is that we have an opportunity in the N3F to do things which are of value, and to relate better to what we are doing because it is something we know. The N3F has always had the purpose of giving us our own advancement and to promote our own interests in fantasy and science fiction, and to elevate literary interests above those interests of the commoner sort. Unfortunately much of science fiction has been diverted into technology-worship and people have forgotten the literary aspects of science fiction. We hope here to recover that consideration of literary interests. No need to blare about what science has come up with, just note it and note also that it does not affect our lives as much as do literary concerns and the exchange of human intelligence. Science is not very intelligent, it is more cogitative and intellectual. In science fiction, the fiction provides the intelligence, such as it may be, and fantasy provides the imagination.



Trip Tucker, by chance?

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: ALAN MEREDITH-JONES



ALAN MEREDITH-JONES is a graduate industrial chemist, a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry and a Chartered Chemist. He is the managing director of an online microbusiness called Magnacol Ltd. which sells scientific supplies. He is currently studying for a degree in IT and computer studies with the Open University. His books are *STARGAZER*, about an alien invasion gone wrong; it has a sequel, *STARGAZER AND THE SECOND UNIVERSE*, and a third book in the trilogy, *STARGAZER AND THE BLACK HOLE* is coming up. He also has a book of short stories, *TEN SCI-FI SHORT STORIES, INCLUDING ONE...* which he made up to publicize the novel. "I was quite annoyed when it outsold the novel by about ten to one", he says. He is also working on a serious non-fiction book "in which I

discuss the possible use of a chemical called ferrofluid to power a starship on a journey to Alpha Centauri using only technology available today. The idea is that the non-fiction book would be paired with a fictional account of how the system might be used in practice. “Whenever I can, I like to use my scientific training in my writing and snippets of chemistry are often included. For example, in *Stargazer* and *the Second Universe*, when our hero is stranded on a comet in Earth’s Oort Cloud, I describe the use of genetically modified bacteria to terraform the comet, deriving energy by reacting carbon monoxide and water from the comet ices to make formic acid, which is then neutralized by ammonia, liberating large amounts of energy.” His current studies with the Open University are intended “partly to help me with my online business but also to help with my writing, particularly in stories which involve Artificial Intelligence.” He says he writes as a hobby in his spare time. That hobby is where we are in touch with him. He is contactable at alan.m-j@live.co.uk . He says:

IO: Looking it all over, I wonder what drew you into being a chemist, and wonder why you chose industrial chemistry.

AM: I always wanted to be an industrial chemist, right from when I was given a chemistry set as a kid. I looked at the test tubes of colored chemicals—most of which a child wouldn’t be allowed to play with today—and I was hooked. In my heart I wanted to be like Q in the Bond films, designing neat gadgets (but not actually getting shot at). In my first job I worked for Unilever and it was incredible. I was analyzing samples using a mass spectrometer. It was the coolest thing you ever saw—literally, it was cooled with liquid nitrogen—and it looked like something out of Star Trek, covered with Vernier knobs and oscilloscopes and signs saying “Warning 8000 Volts”. Wow. After that I worked in a lot of different areas. I never did design a poison dart pen but I did form a company to make ferrofluid, which is a liquid which responds to magnetic fields. This stuff makes some interesting visual effects and my biggest claim to fame is that my ferrofluid was used in one of the Harry Potter films and in the Alien franchise film PROMETHIUS.

IO: What’s with STARGAZER? What does the title mean, and what is the general gist of the books? What things have you put these books forth to signify?

AM: The starships in my books use hyperspace. Hyperspace is a fourth dimension.

In my books, it is the medium the universe is expanding through. If you imagine the three-dimensional universe represented by the two-dimensional surface of a balloon which is slowly being inflated, then hyperspace is the air inside and outside of the balloon. The problem is that three-dimensional creatures like humans or the aliens in the book can't resolve hyperspace. We can't see it so there is no way to navigate. A Stargazer is a rare person whose brain is capable of resolving hyperspace and is much sought after for navigating starships. The general gist of the books is alien starship comes to our solar system, crashes on Phobos in a freak accident as it emerges from hyperspace and the survivors, a race of slaving aliens, attempt to conquer Earth until our hero, Welsh spaceship captain Dewi Williams, kills their leader and thus by the Aliens' law becomes their new leader. The rest of the book and the two sequels (the second of which is nearly ready to publish) are about how Dewi and his hastily repaired starship attempt to stop the rest of the alien armada which is heading to take over a defenseless Earth. The books are meant to be humorous but written to be as technically credible as possible. Linguistic difficulties and misunderstanding of alien ways of thinking often cause problems for our hero, and the book is partly the exploration of how an alien mindset might work when they have fundamentally different principles from us.

IO: How long have you been interested in science fiction and what are your thoughts about the science fiction genre?

AM: I have been interested in science fiction since I was about four years old. FIREBALL XL5 was my introduction to the genre on TV and E.E. (Doc) Smith's Lensman series got me hooked on the books. Back then science fiction was a rarity (at least in England) and was disapproved of and looked down on. I remember my English teacher actively trying to discourage us from reading or writing it. I'm sure he would be disappointed in me. Despite this, or maybe a little bit because of it, I remained fascinated and would hungrily consume all and any sci fi I could find. I recall often reading some poorly thought out or badly written sci fi and thinking I could do better. And I've given it a try. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. These days science fiction is much more abundant and has broadened out into a whole range of subgenres unheard of in the sixties, from steampunk to humor, and it is "acceptable" and mainstream in a way it never was before. I still read avidly but being a writer changes the way you read.

These days I don't just absorb and enjoy the story, I review it critically. I enjoy and applaud the technical ability in a well-constructed story and I have become a fanatical proof-reader. To me a story is like a train ride and if I see the tiniest error, it's like being derailed. Even a quote mark the wrong way round has me out of the story and back in the room. A few times I have proofread for other authors but that can be a delicate business. Pointing out errors in someone else's baby can easily not be taken in the spirit it was meant!

IO: Where may your books be found?

AM: My books can be found exclusively on Amazon. Just search my name. There are three books published—STARGAZER and STARGAZER AND THE SECOND UNIVERSE are the first two novels of a trilogy. The third book, STARGAZER AND THE BLACK HOLE, is due to be published soon (Spielberg, if you're reading this, the film rights are still available). I have also published a book of short stories, TEN SCI-FI SHORT STORIES INCLUDING ONE... which I published mainly to raise awareness of the novels and which—annoyingly—outsells the novels by about ten to one.

IO: What is your general impression of artificial intelligence? Why is AI something you choose to write about? What place do you think artificial intelligence has in the world of today?

AM: Artificial intelligence in real life is something I am very wary of. I don't like it when a machine decides it knows better than me. I don't want my fridge to decide what groceries I'm going to order. I don't want my washing machine talking to my DVD player and the thought of self-driving cars fills me with horror. I'm currently studying for a degree in IT and computer studies and a greater familiarity with the mechanics of AI isn't doing anything to make me feel better about it. On the other hand, AI in science fiction is brilliant. I love it. In my book of short stories the actual short story "One" is about AI in the form of human personalities imprinted on a computer chip flying a hybrid real/virtual starship to Alpha Centauri. It looks at the question of whether an AI can ever be truly conscious and if it was, how would we know? How could we tell a genuinely self-aware AI from a really good Chinese room? We don't have sufficient knowledge of consciousness in ourselves to make that judgement. I enjoyed writing that so much I'm thinking of updating it to be the opening chapter of a full novel.

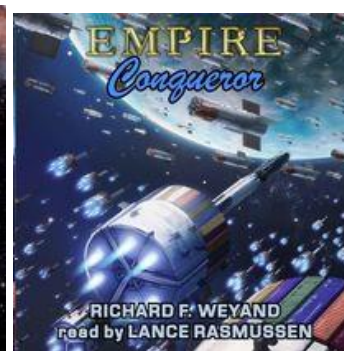
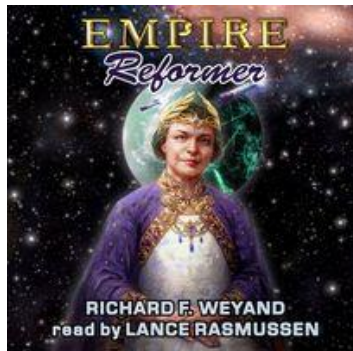
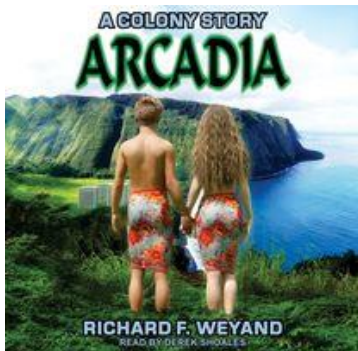
IO: What is a second universe? How do you describe this?

AM: In the Stargazer series, remember I talked about the universe being like a balloon? Well, imagine if the big bang wasn't just one event. Imagine if the big bang was a series of pulses, like a pulsed laser. Imagine, instead of one balloon if there were a series of balloons, one inside the other like Russian dolls. As you go further in, each universe is identical to the one before, just younger. Traveling to the next balloon inward, you would be traveling back in time. Traveling outward you would be going to the future. In Stargazer and the Second Universe, our hero Dewi Williams and his crew are stranded on the next balloon in—the second universe. Can our hero get back to his own universe in time to stop the alien hordes enslaving Earth? Only one way to find out.

IO: Thank you for an interesting interview.



AUTHOR INTERVIEW: RICHARD WEYAND





RICHARD WEYAND has this to say about his career in science fiction: “I started reading early, because my mother read to me, and I didn’t want to not read when she wasn’t available. When she read to me, she would move her finger along with the words, and I just picked it up.

“The first book I can remember reading is a hardcover of Lucky Starr and the Moons of Jupiter, by Isaac Asimov under his Paul French *nom de plume*. It was a hardcover my mom gave me for my birthday, I think. That would have been around 1959, at age six.

“Our city librarian was a woman named Dorothy Bieneman. She was our city librarian from two years before I was born until two years after I left for college. She thought that if you wanted boys to read, have books they wanted to read. So there were two tall bookshelves of science fiction on the back of the front wall of the library, on the left as you walked in the door. We didn’t have a lot of money for buying books, so the library was a thing. I read them all. THE SPACE MERCHANTS. PLANET RUN. It was a good collection, and I read it all.

“In high school I started buying paperbacks, and I still have most of them, maybe five hundred in all.

“I never went to a convention. I never met any of the people I read. I was shocked when I saw Isaac Asimov on TV discussing the Challenger disaster in 1986 in a thick New York accent. I only knew the writers through their books.

“I could always tell a decent story. I always wanted to be an SF writer. But I graduated in multiple degrees in physics, and went into computer engineering, and I always made too much money to be able to walk away and begin a writing career.

“My wife and I moved from the Chicago suburbs to Bloomington, Indiana, in 2011. I continued my litigation consulting (on technology theft and trade secrets cases). I retired in 2015 at the age of 62, and my last case finally went to trial at the end of 2017.

“I had a ‘walking’ heart attack in December of 2015. They put a couple of stents in, and I’ve been fine since. But I had a completely blocked “widowmaker” (the Left Anterior Descending coronary artery, or LAD), and the cardiologists had a hard time figuring out why I wasn’t dead. So ‘someday’ became ‘now or never’. In 2016 I put an anthology of short stories together—mostly writing exercises, nine hard SF and two high fantasy—and published it indie through Amazon. I also went to LibertyCon—at age sixty-three, my first convention—in June of 2016.

“It was the LibertyCon of 2017 that really jazzed me up, though. I came home and started writing. In the five years since, I have written and published twenty-five novels in four series. CHILDERS is five hundred years out Military Science Fiction, EMPIRE is a thousand years out galactic empire Science Fiction, COLONY is two hundred years out colonization Science Fiction, and PANTHEON is present-day ‘hard’ fantasy.

“The books have been generally well-received. The reviews were good enough to shock me, especially on EMPIRE. That’s been very gratifying. My fan base keeps growing, though it’s still an indie effort. I don’t submit to trad pub.

“I had a multi-disciplinary education, and watch a lot of TV documentation, so I have a broad base of history and technology to draw on. I read, wrote and spoke Latin and German when I got out of high school, and graduated undergrad with a physics major and three minors, Math, German, and Latin. My influences are primarily Heinlein, Bujold, Weber, Moon, and early Ringo.

“Curiously, when I started writing, I stopped reading. Writing apparently fulfills my need for story.”

Richard’s email is weyand@rcn.com . He can be found at <http://www.weyand>
Well, now, a few questions for the man:

IO: What do you think about the Lucky Starr book? I saw that in my eighth grade study hall reading room, and didn’t read it, but looked it over, and it interests me to see it brought up now. Have you read any other Asimov? Did Lucky Starr have any influence over your subsequent development of an interest in writing science

fiction?

RW: It's been over sixty years since that first SF book, and I remember its existence now more than anything else about it. I read the plot summary for answering this question, and I don't recall it at all. That said, Asimov was where I started my SF reading, and I read most of his early books. The FOUNDATION trilogy, the Robot books, THE END OF ETERNITY, THE CURRENTS OF SPACE. I lost interest in the later Asimov, and I think the last thing I read of his was THE GODS THEMSELVES.

From Asimov, I moved on. I liked mostly the space-based far future books. Heinlein, Bester, Niven, Pournelle, Farmer, Pohl, Zelazny. I was less interested in the newer term, hard SF books like Clarke, Sturgeon, Bradbury. I thought RAMA was a snooze. A seminal event in my reading was the release of the first DANGEROUS VISIONS volume in 1967, the year I graduated from grade school. It opened me up to new authors.

I also find many of the newer authors—Gaiman, Stephenson, Pynchon, Delany, Brin—uninteresting. Zombies and monsters also generate no interest for me.

Of currently writing authors, David Weber, Elizabeth Moon, Lois Bujold, and John Ringo are probably my biggest influences.

IO: About how many books did you read out of those two bookshelves?

RW: At one point I set out to read every book, in order, of the two bookshelves of SF in the library. I think I had finished them all by the time I discovered girls, and my attention wandered from reading for a while. I don't read quickly—perhaps three hundred words a minute—because I mentally narrate the book to myself, but I read persistently. I could spend the entire day reading, knocking off three novels in a day.

Curiously, since I started writing on July 1, 2017, I haven't done any fiction reading at all. It's as if telling stories fulfills my "need for story", and I don't have the compulsion to read I once did. I'd rather write. I talked to John Ringo about this at a recent LibertyCon, and he said the same thing.

IO: What does computer engineering consist of?

RW: Computer Engineering is the set of disciplines required to implement computer-based projects, so it encompasses hardware, software, and applications. I worked in all three areas during my career, and roughly in that order, though with a lot of overlap and combinations.

IO: What do you think of Bloomington? I've been there many times, and since you have been there only in the most recent decade, I wonder how you took to the town. Do you go over to the university very much? I know of some science fiction fans in Bloomington, and wonder if you've met any people there who also have this interest.

RW: When we were looking to retire, ending our need to be in the Chicago area, we looked all over the place. The California coast from La Jolla to Eureka, New Mexico, where my wife was born. Colorado, where we had both vacationed as children. We even looked into overseas locations, particularly the Algarve coast of Portugal and the West Indies of Costa Rica. Out of all these possibilities, we chose Bloomington, Indiana University town. Top-ranked music school, with a thousand free or nearly free musical events a year. Lots of hilly wooded places to live and bike and explore. Brown County State Park and Hoosier National Forest nearby. Monroe Lake, the largest lake in Indiana. Bloomington has a lot going for it.

We love it here. It's very much home now, eleven years on. We don't go over to the university much, except for the musical events. But many of our friends in town are associated one way or another with the university. The student body is about the same size as the town's permanent population now, so it's pretty much a one-horse town from that point of view.

I have a few friends here who have an interest in SF, and some of them read all my books as they come out. I have not connected with any organized group of fans, like an SF book club at the university or something, but I do occasionally hear from someone who reads the very short bio on the back of my books and is surprised to find out I'm so close.

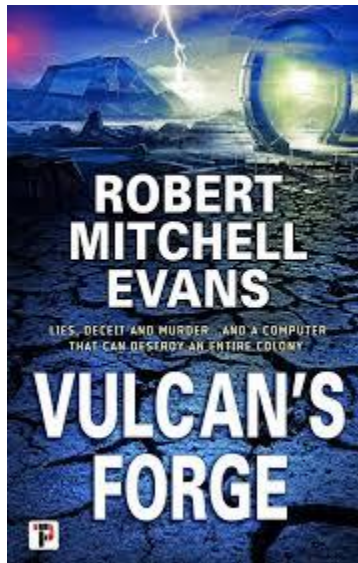
IO: Where was LibertyCon held?

RW: LibertyCon is held every year in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on the last or second-last weekend of June. It's basically tied to Independence Day.

IO: What is a "fanbase"?

RW: Your fanbase is that group of people who buy every one of your books as they come out. They discover you by reading one of your books, maybe on a recommendation from a friend, and then they gobble up all the rest of your existing books and wait breathlessly for the next. They look you up at a convention—for me, LibertyCon, or ConFinement, or FantaSci—then show up at your book signing and panels.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: ROBERT MITCHELL EVANS



ROBERT MITCHELL EVANS says of himself, “I principally write science fiction with occasional excursions into horror and even rarer trips to other genres. I read a lot of science fiction, a smattering of fantasy (I have the LORD OF THE RINGS trilogy, the DISCWORLD series, and many years ago Steven Brust’s Vlad Taltos books.) I am a dedicated cinephile often slipping references to favorite films into my longer works. I do have a traditionally published novel VULCAN’S FORGE which can be found here: https://www.amazon.com/Vulcans-Forge-Fiction-Without-Frontiers-ebook/dp/BO8668SX8F/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=evans+vulcan%27s+forge&qid=1660105362&sprefix=%2Caps%2C270&sr=8-1 . It is a blending of science fiction and *noir*. Sadly it was cursed with being released late March 2020—the same week the world went into shutdown. I have half a dozen short fiction sales to semi-pro markets with A CANVAS DARK AND DEEP selected for a best of collection TWILIGHT WORLDS. I maintain a personal blog at <http://robertmitchellevans.com> where I natter about film, writing, and politics.”

Evans has been a sailor, a dishwasher, a shipyard worker, a cashier, and currently his day-job is in the non-profit healthcare industry. He resides in San Diego, California and “can frequently be found haunting Southern California science fiction conventions.”

IO: How would you describe your life as a cinephile? I've never met one, and you say you are dedicated to it.

RE: Some of my earliest memories are of movies. Growing up in the 60s in the mountains of North Carolina, my moviegoing experience was principally at the drive in. My older brothers would always promise my parents that we would be going through some family-friendly film, but in the end, it was nearly always some sort of low-budget horror film. I have a fairly clear memory of a full color horror film with a brain and a jar. I'm pretty certain that's one of the Hammer Frankenstein movies. This is what set me on my lifelong love of film and cinema. While I am a reader and I love short stories and novellas and novels, there is also something magical about film and its ability to transport you so completely and emotionally. I have over four hundred films in my physical media collection and the study analysis and enjoyment of cinema is something I can't remember a time that it wasn't a part of my life.

IO: Why do you say you "haunt" Southern California sf conventions? Don't you attend them in the regular manner?

RE: I merely used the word haunt in a playful manner. I do try to attend the southern Californian science fiction conventions on our regular basis. While San Diego is home to the world-famous San Diego Comic Con convention, I find that it is too large for my enjoyment, and I am much more drawn to the conventions of a few thousand or even a few hundred people. It's at these smaller conventions that you can mingle with fellow fans and with pros and really be energized by the atmosphere.

IO: VULCAN'S FORGE looks like a mighty novel from its cover. How would you describe its contents to readers here who may want to purchase it?

RE: Vulcan's Forge is really the novel that melds my two passions. As a child of the 60s the space race, the Gemini missions, the Apollo missions, and Star Trek really cemented my love of science fiction. In college, when I was exposed to a wider range of films, I discovered *film noir*, a genre of movies about questionable characters and dubious moral choices in the darker side of American life. Vulcan's Forge is a sci-fi novel that is deeply inspired by film noir—it is filled with references to classic films and is set on a distant colony world where the colonists are attempting to recreate the mythical America of the 1950s. The protagonist Jason Kessler is a man who is rebelling against the strictures and conformity of

that culture and in doing so gets himself involved with a criminal underworld he had no clue existed. As he gets deeper into the trouble, not only is he in danger but he discovers a conspiracy that endangers the entire colony. The amusing thing is I wrote the novel entirely for myself, never expecting I would find a publisher who would want to buy something so out of step. But Flametree Press loved it from the moment they read it and I am thrilled that it got a traditional publishing release. So far, there have been no negative reviews of the novel. I think anyone who likes stories of crime and sensuality and characters who make the wrong decisions would enjoy Vulcan's Forge.

IO: Why is the title of the book a mythological reference? Are you inclined toward mythology and mythological regions?

RE: And it is a direct deliberate mythological reference in the title. The nature of the title is also the nature of the McGuffin. The McGuffin in film is the device or item that drives the plot and that everyone, bad guys and good guys, are trying to acquire. Vulcan's Forge is a direct reference to the device used by the God of Smiths to make things and then in the story it references a device that has tremendous powers of creation though not magical and is the source of the main character's salvation and damnation.

IO: What are some of your longer works?

RE: Vulcan's Forge is my only published novel length work. I have other novels currently out at publishers and other novels that are currently being written but the only long form fiction available for readers at this time is Vulcan's Forge. I do have short fiction available at newmyths.com, the short stories "A Canvas Dark and Deep" in their December 2017 issue and "Any Landing" in their September 2018 issue. I am quite proud of both of these stories.

IO: What sort of things do you like to express in your science fiction?

RE: Well, that is an interesting question. You know it's an easy thing to say I'm interested in character and character growth and challenging my fictional characters with their beliefs and testing them against their beliefs. But that's really the job of fiction whether it's science fiction or fantasy or literary fiction. I think what I really like to explore are the questions that technology opens up to us. What might be the nature of artificial intelligence, especially if we get beyond the it's out to destroy us trope which now has generated lots of entertaining stories, I don't think is that likely of an outcome. Or does it mean in terms of what

do you owe your culture and what does your culture owe you? That is the thematic question that underpins *Vulcan's Forge*. Jason Kessler has what he wants, and is in conflict with his culture—what debt does he have to them and what debt do they have back to him if they are stifling his expression and his desires? In the military science fiction novel I am just completing I'm exploring what does a future in which the United States has become a third-rate power look like and what does it mean to be an American in that setting? Which of course is a reflection of what does it mean to be an American today? All fiction reflects the time in which it was created, and all fiction is political. So, rather than avoid it, I dive into it. My next novel is going to be criminality and greed on a Martian colony, but what it really thematically will be exploring is what does it mean if the Martian colony is entirely a corporate construction? So, there is no simple answer to what do I like to express in my science fiction, because it does change from year to year as I grow, and I experience new things and I see the world in new ways. I find new questions that I won't explore and at least see if I can determine the vague shape of the answers to.

IO: Well, you certainly seem to be an action, involved writer and that sounds like a very good approach to writing. I thank you for your time in answering this interview.



Nice to see our astronauts taking good care of their health. Except for having of necessity to ignore social distancing in the “cockpit”.

BEHIND THE SCENES by Jeffrey Redmond

Sturgeon's Law in Science Fiction



Sturgeon's Law (or Sturgeon's revelation) is an adage stating "ninety percent of everything is crap". It was coined by Theodore Sturgeon, an American Science Fiction author and critic, and was inspired by his observation that, while science fiction was often derided for its low quality by critics, most work in other fields was low quality too, and so Science Fiction was thus no different. [1]

The Original Sturgeon's Law

Sturgeon deemed Sturgeon's law to mean "nothing is always absolutely so" in the story "The Claustrophile" in 1956 issue of **Galaxy** [2]. The second adage, variously rendered as "ninety percent of everything is crap" or "ninety percent of everything is crud", was known as "Sturgeon's Revelation", formulated as such in his book review column for **Venture** [3] in 1957. However, almost all modern uses of the term Sturgeon's Law refer to the second, including the definition listed in the Oxford English Dictionary. [4]

A similar adage appears in Rudyard Kipling's *THE LIGHT THAT FAILED*, published in 1890: Four-fifths of everybody's work must be bad. But the remnant is worth the trouble for its own sake. [5]

A 1946 essay by Orwell, "Confessions of a Book Reviewer", asserts about books:

"In much more than nine cases out of ten the only objectively truthful criticism would be 'This book is worthless...'" [6]

The first written reference to the adage is in the September 1957 issue of *Venture*:

"And on that hangs Sturgeon's revelation. It came to him that [science fiction] is indeed ninety percent crud, but that also—Eureka!—ninety percent of everything is crap. All things—cars, books, cheeses, hairstyles, people, and pins are, to the expert and

discerning eye, crap, except for the acceptable tithe which we each happen to like. " [3]

The adage appears again in the March 1958 issue of *Venture*, where Sturgeon wrote:

"It is in this vein that I repeat Sturgeon's Revelation, which was wrung out of me after twenty years of wearying defense of Science Fiction against attacks of people who used the worst examples of the field for ammunition, and whose conclusion was that ninety percent of S.F. is crap." *The Revelation: Ninety percent of everything is crap.*

Corollary 1: The existence of immense quantities of trash in Science Fiction is admitted and it is regrettable. But it is no more unnatural than the existence of trash anywhere.

Corollary 2: The best science fiction is as good as the best fiction in any field. [7]

According to Philip Klass (William Tenn), Sturgeon made this remark circa 1951, as a talk at New York University attended by Tenn. [8] The statement was subsequently included in a talk Sturgeon gave at a 1953 Labor Day weekend session of the World Science Fiction Convention in Philadelphia. [9]

In 2013, philosopher Daniel Dennett championed Sturgeon's Law as one of his seven tools for crucial thinking. [10]

"90% of everything is crap. That is true, whether you are talking about physics, chemistry, evolutionary psychology, sociology, medicine—you name it—rock music, country western. 90% of everything is crap." [11]

Its re-introduction to a modern audience received a positive reception, according to Dennett. [12]

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[10] Dennett, D. (21 May 2013). "Daniel Dennett presents Seven Tools for Critical Thinking". OpenCulture.com.

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See also: Theodore Sturgeon's 1972 interview with David G. Hartwell, *The New York Review of Science Fiction* #7, March 1989; #8, April 1989.





HEATH ROW: Your editorial in Ionisphere #36 inspired me to add some new songs to a playlist I've been gathering based on mentions in various clubzines. "The Songs of the N3F" (<https://tinurl.com/yckmzhq>). Between you and Will Mayo, it makes for some interesting listening! I don't know whether sf is experiencing a vortex effect currently—as you suggest—in part because I don't know if there's a center. Regardless, I do wonder sometimes whether it's going down the drain, which is another vortex of sorts. I'm half joking, but with so much current public understanding of our beloved genres being limited to the Marvel Cinematic Universe—and the DC corollary—on the big and small screens, I wonder when the rose will lose its bloom. Comic book and graphic novel sales might benefit people somewhat, but those are still through direct sales channels or national chain bookstores—and so much attention there is going to manga given the popularity of anime. I am curious whether there's been any recent benefit to sf and fantasy publishing outside of a young adult market, which still seems to continue to flourish. I understand your point of needing a central focus or shared point for activity—rather than going off in all directions—but where is the center? And will the center hold?

Your interview with Chris Nuttall is timely given his recent recognition as an N3F Laureate Award winner. When did Ionisphere last feature him? I referred to "People Interviewed in Ionisphere" in #30, but it was a list of email addresses rather than an index. I haven't spent a lot of time reading the interviews with Nuttall, Chris Hanners, or Declan Finn, but two of the three pieces suggest that they're appearing at the behest of our president, which, while a worthy recommendation, suggests that I should probably make good on some of the interviews I've proposed or considered to help diversify the voices we feature. [Click! That clicks. I'd like the further help with these.—JT]

I appreciate your comments about Jeffrey Redmond. Thank you for sharing some of the back story about the recent controversy around crediting sources. I think that, regardless of the source, its provenance, or its authorship, using the words of another writer, even if an anonymous collective attitude—verbatim—and putting your byline on

it as your own writing, is worth discouraging, and avoiding as an editor and writer. As a fan writer myself, I research widely online, drawing on online articles and old fanzines, but I am careful not to merely copy and paste another's text—I use it as a secondary or primary source, even if not credited or footnoted *per se*, and rewrite. There's a difference between using another writer's facts—which is more fair game—and using another writer's words or writing. In any event, the situation isn't an enviable position to be in as an editor, and it's worth addressing—and is eminently solvable. It sounds like you and Jeffrey are taking appropriate steps. He's a fan writer worth keeping active and involved, especially given the recent piece in *Origin*, which I comment on elsewhere.

Cardinal Cox's report on the Chillercon this May was welcome—it's good to see folks are returning to cons. His report included a wide range of commentary, from transportation to the venue, and his author and other attendee-mentions of related multiple options for reading, viewing, and further learning. (**Occult Detective?** Sign me up.) I participated in the recent Westercon *via* zoom, and a couple hundred attended on site. The programming was excellent even if the room parties were few, and the programming suggested that the hybrid approach offers some interesting opportunities in terms of involving further-flung panelists and speakers. Most of the morning sessions featured British and Australian fan and pros. It's a shame Cox never got his lanyard! [It does seem that way.-JT]

The poetry by Will Mayo was a welcome refreshment at the end of the issue, and your end note—"I'm surprised that we don't get many LoCs"—made me glad that I wrote this one. May the staff keep doing what it does. *Ionisphere* is a doozy of a clubzine.

I think science fiction itself is a shifting center to the vortex. The centrality I look for is a different and more intelligible kind than is found at the center of a vortex, which is usually functioning around an oddity.

*Those attachments to standard science fiction are parasitic. Anime features a lot of sexual suggestiveness and is seductive, in the true sense of diversion. Anent both parasitic and plagiaristic, there are frequent examples of plagiarism in *Star Trek*, uncredited as to source except in the form of jokes. There are a lot of rehashes of familiar things, too, and not all of its sources are drawn from science fiction. *Star Trek* and *SG1* should both credit Andre Norton, for *STAR RANGERS* and *STAR GATE*. They also drew material from Lewis Padgett. Clifford Simak should be credited for various of his writings by *BATTLESTAR GALACTICA*. I think Richard Shaver should be mentioned by *STARGATE ATLANTIS*.*

According to William Butler Yeats, the center cannot hold. The focus I'm wanting is merely where science fiction is primarily just that.

There is so much plagiarism going on currently that why zero in on minor cases of it? The internet promotes plagiarism by grabbing up images and spreading them around, and by relaying information piecemeal. And there is standard text, which is a way everybody writes but which is not attributed to individuals. Plagiarism is a stealing of natural influence and works with it in a way that it should not. Bots are what usually transcribes exact text and credits it to a bot name.

Occult detective stories seem to occur from time to time, for instance Hodgson's Carnaki the Ghost Finder.



Ionospheric Explorer

Talent Section

John Polselli has decided he can't handle his position in the bureau staff without having a computer, so he has been removed from our staff list, but here he has a poem to end the issue.

Neverwhere



The stars are wheels spinning far
Within the halls of outer space
Where giants roar their repertoire
And search the void for Tyrra's face.

How gentle are the eyes of one
Who scans the heavens placidly
And makes the specters eat the sun
While Bridesmaids hover savagely.

A waning crescent moon unveils
Clouds that shelter Danu's gold
That glints upon the spiral trails
Where the Mulga snake unfolds.

Now the rabid child comes
To seek the realm of Neverwhere.

In truth the visitor succumbs
And no one shall return from there.



art by Johanna Basford

Recap The issue discussed by the editor

Well, we're coming into the wintry months, and we've got a good big issue to keep away the suffering of winter with its bounty. I hope we will do as well in December.

It's nice to have an N3F artist doing the cover, instead of outsourcing, which we so frequently have been doing. It makes it look more fannish, more N3F, to have this cover. And congratulations to Jose for having taken the position of head of the artists bureau. Here's interchange with another bureau head.

Looking at Alan Meredith-Jones' interview struck a chord with me when he spoke of receiving a chemistry set as a child. I had exactly that same experience, and was fascinated by the gift. It all looked so professional. We had a small storage shed in our basement and I set up a laboratory in there, and let all the kids visiting me look it over; they were all interested and impressed. News of my lab spread through the neighborhood and there was a lot going on in it sometimes. I got into some competition with what others my age were doing, and it kept neighborhood action going. They all took to showing me what they had, as did others living farther away. I added to what I basically had from a catalog coming from the company that sold the chemistry set. Some other kids, although not many, got chemical equipment. I did all the experiments outlined in the book and they had suggestions for doing further experiments of my own; these weren't prepackaged and wouldn't always come out according to expectations, they said, but that was adventure and actual experimentation. Someone else had an erector set, which was mechanics, and I looked that over. A fellow came by who was interested in insect species. It got all over town what was going on in our part of the town. At a later time I won a radio assembly kit in a game championship at a park and you might say I started working with technology there, learning electronics and the way radio worked with the elementary kit that didn't pick up more than sound when fully operating, though implementing it would bring about more. Some people with ham radios came around to talk about it. There was science fiction talk at that time about sending out beams and rays and being mad scientists with the power of advanced technology, kids' play. We all were having learning experiences. I was asked if I wanted a future in any of these things and I did not, so I didn't duplicate any of Alan's progress.

Some of Richard Weyand's experiences at an early age resembled my own, too. I recall when our library had a front room spread of new books and I found THE ROLLING STONES by Robert A. Heinlein in it. I had a big argument with another fellow my age about who had seen it first. He said he'd seen it and intended to come back and take it out when he left the library. I said that was very imaginative of him, but I had the book now and was intending to carry it around with me and take it out. He was arguing magic with science, which was my viewpoint. He preferred fantasy and cited THE ARABIAN NIGHTS. He tried to further his claim on the book by pointing

out that the book was a work of imagination. But I pointed out to him that it was called science fiction. Finally I let him have the book first and he called me an "altruist" because I had the attitude of doing this. We had the book to discuss later on. Another fellow had THE GODS OF MARS by Edgar Rice Burroughs and he gave it to me to read. Science fiction book number two. We had Captain Video on TV too. This fellow held onto the Burroughs book tightly, as if it were esoteric, and it didn't get talked around as much as the other books, but he made the point that it was being discussed more intelligently than the other books. The first fellow I mentioned said there was a lot of magic in Burroughs' book too. He got that book's possessor into a lot of conversation about the Arabian Nights. At one time he said he identified with Ali Baba. So they were going on that way and it brought around a lot of people from all over town to see what the talk was about. It came to be that we started resembling the characters in the books we were reading and having their interests. Our doings started resembling the things we were reading and generating further from the talk these books raised, which had a lot of the kids revealing the knowledge they had of such and such things, some exotic and far away. Some of the big kids from the other end of town came around to argue what we were all doing and saying and they told us about some horror comics they had read, bringing up Tales of the Uncanny and Vault of Horror. They also started talking about some literature they had seen. They were called the bad guys and they started reacting as such. The adults or "grown ups" around town started in with saying we should be acting our age and not reading such things. There were more books being discovered like THE BAT by Mary Roberts Rinehart, THE YELLOW ROOM by Gaston Leroux, THE SECRET OF THE WAILING ECHO by I'll recall the name shortly, and these books we were reading came to be part of our lives, while the adults went around looking for better books for us and came up with things like THE HOUSE ON POOH CORNER by A.A. Milne and THE JUNGLE BOOK by Rudyard Kipling, who they pointed out was considered a writer of literature and was therefore better than what we had found to read, but we came back with "Look what's in that jungle book!" An answer to that was "They seem somewhat like you," but one of the fellows, the one with the Burroughs book, said that that was irrational reasoning because what was being discussed was the betterment of children and that jungle book wasn't going to better anyone at all. This came to seeing movies like RIDERS TO THE STARS by Kurt Siodmak, ANIMAL FARM by George Orwell, Frankenstein and Dracula, till some of the adults were saying "What will become of us all?" So there's a match to some of Richard Weyand's experiences and it might be interesting to read his books and see what he came up with out of the life experiences he has mentioned. Weyand is now living near me, in Bloomington, Indiana, and it recalls to me that John Ford used to live there and read science fiction and he had a fanzine. Looking at Mr. Weyand's books, they seem like just the sort of science fiction Ford liked best. I haven't heard of Ford for a long time, so there's a missed opportunity to get up some talk.

Weyand says he was considering moving to Costa Rica, a coincidence because at one time my parents were thinking of moving there for their retirement. My father was interested in the

culture there. I spent a lot of time and energy seeing if I could talk them out of the move, and finally they decided against it. Weyand also mentions Brown County; at one time my father took us on a tour down there.

Robert Evans' comments about cinema remind me of what Ray Bradbury said about movies (it may have been in DANDELION WINE, I don't recall). Evans speaks of being transported by Cinema and Bradbury was describing how it was almost like stepping into another world to go to a cinema showing in his locale. He described the people coming out of the theater talking like the people in the film they had seen, so enrapt had they become. I've had that experience with the cinema too. It was always my enjoyment to be in the crowds acting out what had gone on in the movie when they were out in the front of the theater.

Vulcan's Hammer, from his explanation of the title and his remarks about the Greeks, reminds me of Ayn Rand's ATLAS SHRUGGED, which had a protagonist named John Galt who strove with the culture in a search for better things. I wonder if Evans has seen this book?

Referencing Jeffrey Redmond's column, I don't think "Sturgeon's Law" has anything much to do with laws, rather the "law" is just a comment. Science seems to think that scientific statements when classified are "laws". Laws are governance of behavior and requirements for living in a society. I don't like his statement, either. I don't think that crud should be given the name of being literature, and that all acceptable literature should not be crud, even in part. Sturgeon's been largely on my mind lately because of his views on group thought, and I've been discussing him in my NAPA fanzine "Synergy".

I can recall, if not buy, many a science fiction novel which was not crud at all.

I'm satisfied with this issue; it's given people many a thing to talk about, if they wish to do so. I think John Polselli's poem is a good example of use of the imagination, as well as being attuned to good poetic rhythm and rhyme, which is highly evocative when managed in a poem. Most of the poetry I see nowadays is blank verse; Poetry Magazine has had nothing else in it but blank verse, as if blank verse now ruled the poetic culture. A lot of poetry used to be cryptic, but now the poetry is mostly cyphers which not one can really relate to understanding. The poetry in F&SF standardly makes no sense at all...there is no way of detecting what it may be about. That's being secretive enough about meaning, but its entertainment value is as nil as its premises. Why not good poetry instead of bad poetry? That's what I think when I read Polselli's verse, which shows true poetic ability and as it says in my heading, actual talent, which are parts of the magic of verse. Poetry which does not evoke anything lacks a quality which should be present in poetry. Verse, maybe, is different, though it is nice when one understands what the verse is about. Verse is more commonplace than poetry and is a good "outlet" for people who primarily wish to rhyme. Verse that doesn't rhyme doesn't make it at all.

That wraps up the issue, for me, and of course for you, the readers of it, since there isn't anything more in it. Hoping to hear back from you on the issue, but perhaps I shouldn't say that, as that brings around bad luck consisting of the very opposite of what one has wished for.



Leng?

Om, om, omega
end of issue.