

# IONISPHERE 41



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*Cover by Richard Andre, "Stellar Awakening"*

## EDITORIAL



### Have We Got A Start?

Often I feel like the people in the early days of fandom who were just getting things assembled, with many an error and setback, looking to the future with a wild surmise, never knowing exactly what they had or were doing; we look back on them now and see our antecedents. They worked out on paper what we have now, and perhaps predicted the Internet. The down style of many fan histories tends to forget that we are still here, and I suppose we wouldn't be without these earlier efforts. I get a feeling that Ghu is watching and approving of our recent efforts. There is a feeling that Roscoe is also in the works somewhere; things are building up in the way he recommended.

Is it a time for a start? It seems like we are wallowing in old science fiction concepts being stirred without anything really new being abstracted from them, the way there should be to keep one story from being the same as another previous story except for having a different variety of ingredients, or a different juxtaposition of the contents. One problem there, is that in order to keep up with its being science fiction, an author has to borrow material from a story which has a better focus on what the things involved are, and use it in his own making, and this tends to reduce things to sludge. It's like transferring a worn-out seal from one performance to another in a zoo, and the seal has to be held onto and pushed through its motions because its original training relates to neither performance it's presently undergoing and it doesn't understand what anything is supposed to be. As for us, the readers, it's difficult to react to these stories and we might start talking about something else instead. Something like news items about armed police carrying some unknown forest vagrant away to the electric chair on a boxcar for forcing himself on a woman from a charity restaurant, or a magazine article on pederasty is what else seems to be available to us, two possible reading alternatives that might be options for discussion. There has to be something that can be talked

about for the reader to involve himself or herself in progressive discussion; those things are not really discussable successfully. Perhaps this time we live in is not a time for good writing and well-considered discussion. But it's what we should be doing, finding something of worth and talking about it. Are we not literary people and readers of magazines and books? I think when things seem to be coming to an end, that's when a start will occur, sooner or later. The opportunity for a start comes into existence, anyway.

We haven't really gotten a start with anything. We are striving here to start to continue. Maybe there should be some sort of new attitude about things. I'd suggest just getting away from things that are overdone and have perhaps "outlived" their usefulness, and trying out something that is fairly simple and hasn't been overused. For example, "it's spring!" An incoming season carries a heavy load, but one should not load any of this on its being "it's spring". That should be sufficient as a thought, and should not be extended to "it's spring, therefore...". Just linger with the thought and not with all the objections you might have to spring or to its being spring, and enjoy the simplicity of that simple thought. And when you do make something of it, make it something tolerable, like "It's time for spring cleaning." Remember, it's not the time you HAVE to do spring cleaning; no one makes you do that. You do it because you feel like cleaning things up. The improvement you might get is to see things looking nicer.

As an opening for a science fiction story of the thoughtful variety, try this: "There might be a way, even if there isn't a will for it." This thought is described as occurring to a character, and the character is shown as someone who goes easy with it and doesn't push the thought, but you see he wants a way for something and to make the opening pleasanter, there's no description of what that something is, just like it hasn't been formulated yet. Easier on the mind, not freighted with all the possibly related cargo—the thought is not even a boat, not even a freighter. So what's ahead of you in the story is not peopled with Jolly Jack Tars. Are there as yet undiscussed things that you writers would like to see thought about? This opening idea might be a good vehicle for a story expressing those thoughts, although it's not really a vehicle. It's not either a ship or a car, it's a thought, perhaps becoming an idea. One must remember being pleasant for the reader, so he can enjoy himself with the story, or otherwise he might become averse to it. There is such a thing as being pleasant.

Also, you don't need to solve all the world's problems, as presented to you in a news feed, in your story, just take care of some little problems you might know about, that are of concern to you at home or in the streets and woods. Are the woods nice to be in even though not very large? Not if you tear through them at top speed, and run right out into what's on the other side of them.

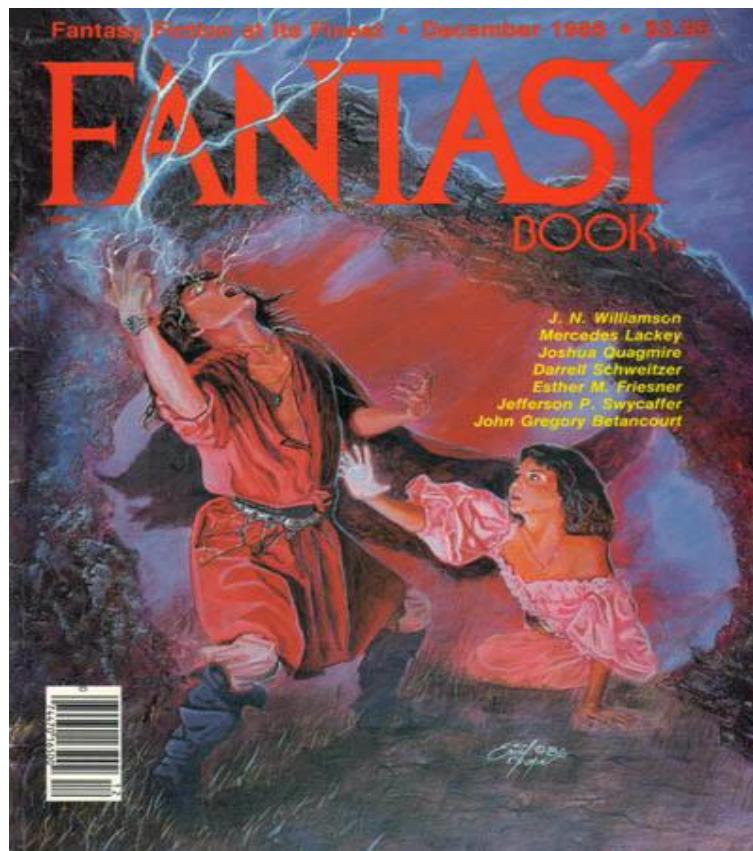
# **MEET THE PRO CONTACT:** Jefferson Swycaffer



**At ConDor**



**At Conjecture**





Jefferson Swycaffer, this bureau's Pro Contact, and the judge and presenter of awards in the annual N3F Writing Contest, has a background in both the writing of science fiction and in the activity surrounding science fiction, including its fandom. We'd like to give you a closer look at this bureau member. Get to know the people in the bureaus! He has written the following presentation:

Jefferson P. Swycaffer was born in San Diego, and grew up on a cattle ranch, learning from an early age to ride, shoot, and do dangerous things with dynamite. This exposure to real work inspired him to move to the city and take up a profession in computers and database management, much easier work, and a whole lot safer. He fell into science fiction and fantasy fandom in his school years and was an early historical board wargamer and fantasy role-playing gamer. His first professional sale was to **Dragon Magazine**, the Dungeons and Dragons house magazine, and his works, nonfiction and fiction alike, appeared regularly there through the 1980s.

Jefferson confesses, with some shame, that when he first sat down to write, he didn't know what a paragraph was. Content just smeared down the page without a break, lacking cohesion and context. Nowadays, he knows what a paragraph is. The cohesion and context must be assessed by the reader.

His first seven books were "starships and empires" science fiction, with space fleets, battles, intrigue, spies and assassins, and a genetically engineered slave race to provide more difficulties. Since then, he mostly writes "urban fantasy" involving skewed versions of the (laughingly so-called) real world, but infringed upon by mystical interests of various sorts.

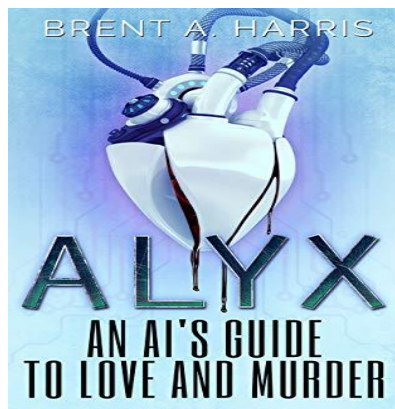
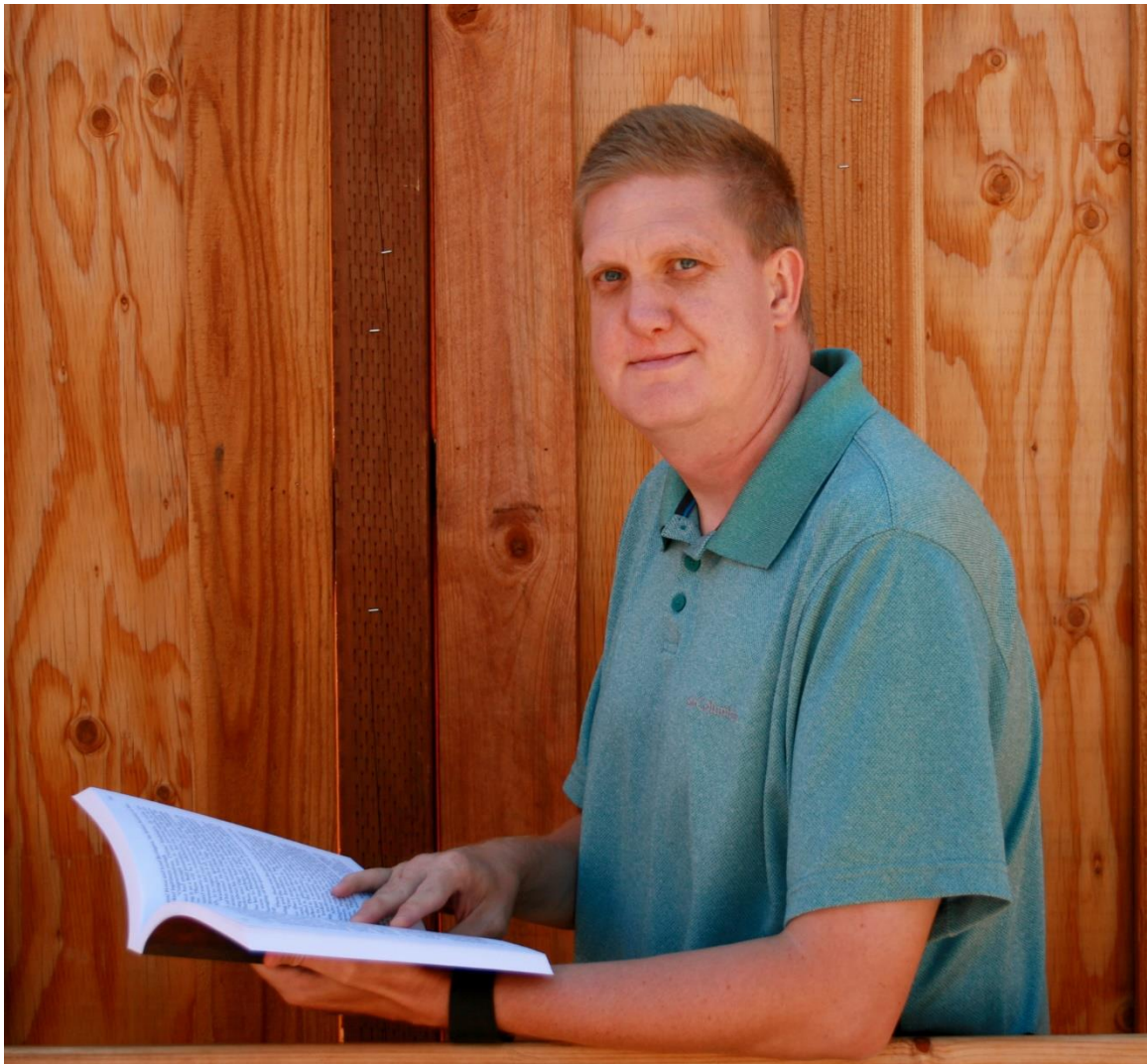
He still lives in San Diego, and is active in organized fandom (also laughingly so-called). He has been the convention secretary for ConDor for a good many years, and occasionally for Westercons and World Fantasy Cons.

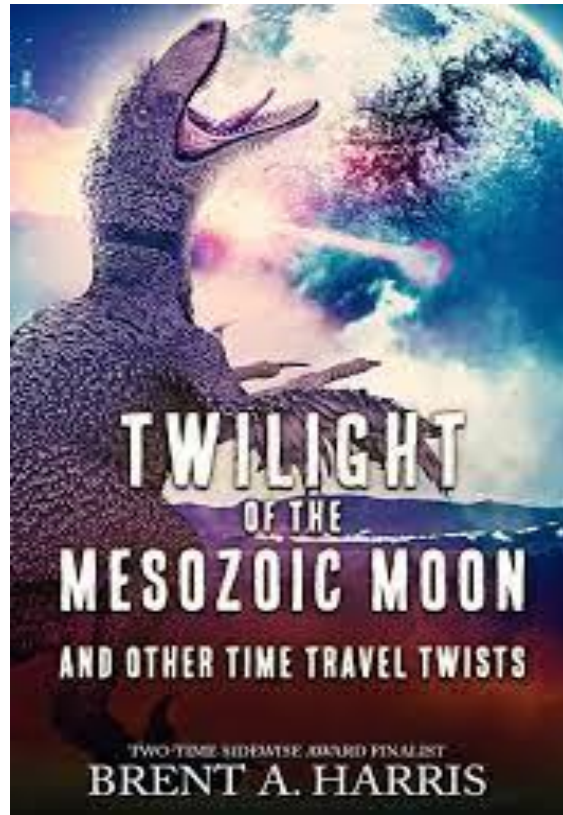
Jefferson's sister, Atanielle Rowland, has published a number of fantasy novels, as well as a trio of scholarly books about J. R. R. Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS. It was also she who taught him what a paragraph was, and sought to enlighten him as to cohesion and context.





**AUTHOR INTERVIEW: BRENT HARRIS** by Jean-Paul L. Garnier





**JPG:** Your stories often feature the theme of time travel. What attracts you to this theme, and what challenges arise when dealing with the paradoxical nature of moving through time?

**BH:** I've always found it fascinating how history hangs on choices of every size. A British regular decided that it wasn't "gentlemanly" to shoot someone in the back. But, if he had chosen differently, he would have shot dead a fleeing George Washington, thus challenging the course of a fledgling American country.

I also believe that we're all connected. Missing a train and catching another might mean meeting the love of your life, or the loss of your job. On the face of it, maybe

that's nothing, or maybe that's the start to a wholly different life. Maybe, like Bradbury's butterfly, we've rippled into a whole new world.

In fiction, we can take that idea to its extreme. In Ray Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder", something that has served as a sort of lynchpin and inspiration for me, an entire world is created due to one person's literal misstep. That introduction and subtraction of tiny organisms cascading through the course of history results in a world totally different from ours. His point, and I believe it to be correct, is that we're all linked in incalculable ways.

As for paradoxes, I subscribe to the unwritten Entertainment Rule. Every movie has a scene where they explain "the rules". Don't interact with your past self, don't change anything or you risk erasing yourself from existence, and of course, don't accidentally make your own mother fall in love with you.

But by the end of the third act, those rules are invariably ignored in favor of story. Steve Rogers and Peggy Carter had their happily ever after. John Carter is born out of some sort of quantum entanglement. And don't get me started on that tragic time loop that some version of Marty McFly is stuck in forever. Eventually these movies just said, screw it, we're throwing the rules out and making something that's meant to entertain. Time travel isn't possible anyway, so as long as you focus on the fun, writers should just relax.

**JPG:** Dinosaurs also make a regular occurrence in your stories. What is it about dinosaurs that inspires your storytelling?

**BH:** I think most of us go through a childhood phase of loving monstrous Mesozoic creatures. There's something empowering about stomping about and roaring when you're a tiny kid. I simply never grew out of that phase. I likely would have become a paleontologist, but my inability to learn math served as a gatekeeper. I'm very good at basic math, to the point of annoyance from others, but I couldn't work out anything harder. It impacted my college, discouraged me, and I went a different route. When I did go back to school, it took me four attempts to pass the minimum math level for my degree and I've never touched a calculator since.

I've always excelled in writing classes. While others scribbled whatever those S's were in notebooks, or doodled comics, I wrote stories. One of my earliest fanfics was a Tom Clancy-esque spy thriller where a military despot tried to train dinosaurs for their military (I'm convinced Colin Trevorrow must have sat behind me in class, or we both must have watched DINO-RIDERS as kids). Long story short, my love of writing about dinosaurs makes up for my frustrating inability to pursue my passion for paleontology any other way.

**JPG:** Some of your books are alternate history. What about this subgenre of SFF do you find appealing, and how do you go about conducting your research for such projects?

**BH:** I simply find the idea of “What if” too compelling not to ask. It’s the cornerstone of speculative fiction: what if we could travel to Mars? Or, what if fungus could control us? Or, what if we got Pedro Pascal to adopt every magical child? I simply take “what if” and use it to twist history.

What if (insert shameless plugs here) Washington fought for the British? What if the dinosaurs hadn’t been wiped out? What if Jurassic Park was never written? Or, what if Dickens’ characters lived in an age of steampunk? Examining our own past helps us better understand our own future. Asking questions that raise just how precariously the threads of the past are woven makes us realize just how uneasy our tapestry is.

As for the research? You must really love being a writer to doom yourself with endless homework. It’s exhausting but fun (until you get something wrong). A TIME OF NEED required reading thousands of pages of primary journals and secondary source summaries. I visited battlefields in Virginia, spoke with reenactors at Riley’s farm, and emailed historians and librarians. For A TWIST IN TIME (I consider steampunk the rebellious stepchild of alternate history) I visited the Dickens Museum, walked in Dickens’ steps, visited the Curiosity Shop, and have read pages and pages of Victorian reference books written by the experts. Still, I’m no authority, I get quite a bit wrong, but what it comes down to is what works best for the story.

**JPG:** Your novel, ALYX: AN AI’S GUIDE TO LOVE AND MURDER, and many of your short stories, feature AI characters. How do you feel about AI in literature versus what we are starting to see in the “real” world?

**BH:** It’s really not a good idea to write SF any more because your far-flung ideas have already been stamped with a corporate logo and are in stores even before your book hits its printing. In ALYX, I had an idea for THINKLINK, a device that connects directly to the brain that can do anything from accessing the internet to helping to restore mobility for people with prosthetic limbs. By the time the book was out, researchers were studying monkeys with an implanted device that allowed them to play video games. If it wasn’t enough to get slaughtered by noobmaster69, now you’ll have to take headshots from primates in a lab.

Already, there are smart toasters that have more computing abilities than all of NASA during the moon landings. Most of us have Alexa units, Echoes, ring door cameras that each control the safety and comfort of our homes. But what happens, in a generation or so, when our homes are wholly run by AI? What dangers lurk behind the curtain, when those drapes are in your living room? Yes, I wrote a horror/technothriller romance book

about a home's deadly AI, but in truth, AI is responsible for the deaths of hundreds, if not thousands, of people long before I started my story.

We place our safety and comfort in the hands of AI. That's dangerous enough, as ALYX demonstrates. But now we're entrusting AI with our art. ChatGPT is here and despite early flaws, it's easily the most advanced text-based AI we've seen. AI text programs have been responsible for (temporarily) shutting down submissions to a well-known SF magazine. Amazon hosts hundreds of books written by bots. And this is all nascent technology. Yet, art is meant to be our domain. There's something seriously wrong when we let AI do the one thing that we're good at. It's far more dangerous than a self-driving car. True, that car might crash, people might die. But by granting AI the ability to create our art for us, we're extinguishing the very spark that makes us human.

**JPG:** You recently published a collection of short stories, TWILIGHT OF THE MESOZOIC MOON. Do you prefer writing short stories or novels, and what do you find to be the challenges and strengths of each form?

**BH:** I prefer novels. I like the room they allow me to breathe, to develop characters, to create and flesh out a living, breathing world. But that's a more complicated task that involves copious research and a willingness to let your characters tell a story you may not have intended to write. Short stories, on the other hand, are great for getting across a simple, single thought that is burning at the back of your brain. They can be concise, but the trick is that suddenly the word count is against you; you almost must be poetic in your prose in order to get your thoughts down in fewer words. It's like the saying, "I would have written you a shorter letter, but I didn't have the time".

**JPG:** You've also been writing screenplays. How does this process differ for you? What are your aspirations in this field, and what projects are you most excited about for the screen?

**BH:** I love scriptwriting, but scripts are certainly the hardest to write well. Let's take an already difficult thing to write, like a book, but kneecap the writers further by limiting them to writing only what you can see and what you can hear onscreen. I mean, writing a book is hard, it's creating a vibrant and lived-in world with nothing but the arrangement of twenty-six letters tattooed onto dead trees. But in movies/TV, all the exposition and internal monologue that thrive in a novel are wiped away.

A script is more a collaborative process. You write down what you hope for and then trust that an actor will emote that internal turmoil, that the camera will capture the moment, the lighting shades the darkness of the soul, and a background extra doesn't try to ham it up. That's even before errant Starbucks cups and "guy in blue jeans" become memes that ruin your hard work.

Yeah, so I want the latter. I just want to make writing as difficult as possible, I guess, for even less recognition. It sounds fun. I have scripts ready to go, two of them adaptations from my own books. HBO Max, when you're done with your latest round of rehab, give me a call.

**JPG:** For the past several years you were living in Italy, and more recently in Japan. How has moving around different cultures affected your writing?

**BH:** My writing has been fundamentally altered by this, but it's hard to explain how. Is it possible to hold two opposing videos simultaneously? First, the world is impossibly huge. Traveling and living abroad has broadened my views. There's a plurality to our planet: cultures, languages, food, that at first seem vastly different. Secondly, the world is impossibly small. Whether you're enjoying pizza Margherita in Napoli or slurping ramen in Okinawa, we're functionally and fundamentally engaging in the same activities everywhere. We eat, we sleep, we create, we fall in love. I would imagine that so many of our petty squabbles would simply melt away if we could all undergo this transformative experience and recognize that we're together on this journey on this tiny rock careening through the cosmos.

**JPG:** What's next for you and what are you currently working on?

**BH:** Oh, advertising, thanks! Well, for those who haven't snatched a copy of my short story collection TWILIGHT OF THE MESOZOIC MOON AND OTHER TIME TRAVEL TWISTS, go do that as it'll give you a good idea of my writing and point you in the right direction toward my other offerings that I've mentioned.

Also, I wear an editor's hat over at Inklings Press. I'd be remiss if I didn't at least tell you about our critically acclaimed TALES FROM ALTERNATE EARTHS series. I should also mention that we're currently reading submissions for our genre detective anthology. I've got a stand-alone steampunk story for it from my TWIST IN TIME series.

Speaking of Twists, I'm fervently working on the third TWISTED EXPECTATIONS out in November. In the meantime, you can find me on Facebook. I didn't do the Tick-Tocks or the Insta and I'm not much for Twitter any more, so Facebook is the best way to reach out or on my website at [www.BrentAHarris.com](http://www.BrentAHarris.com).

Thank you so much!

Book Links:

Alyx: An AI's Guide to Love and Murder. <https://bookshop.org/a/197/9781736276006>.

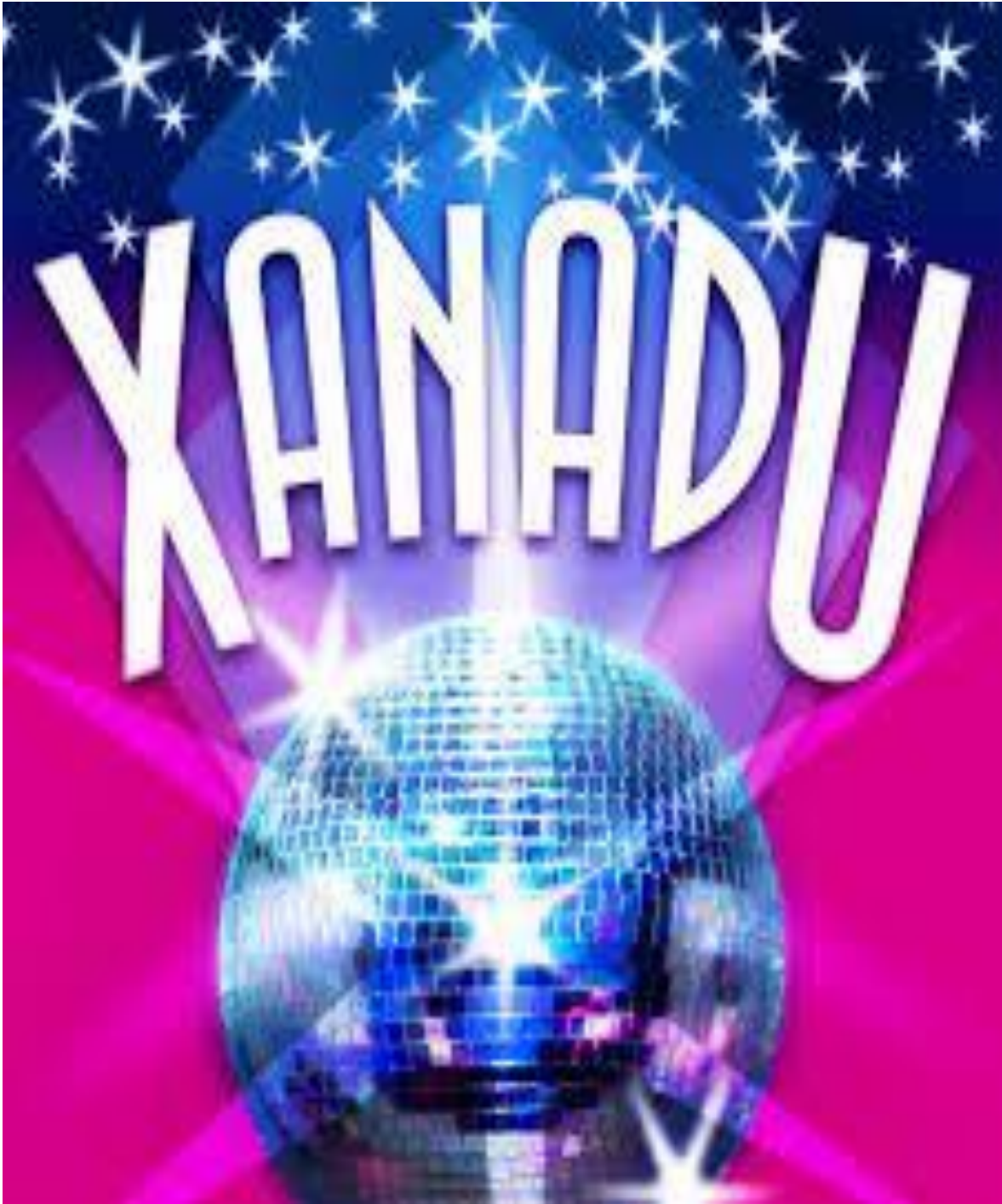
Twilight of the Mesozoic Moon and: And Other Time Travel Twists.

<https://bookshop.org/a/197/9781736276044>

A Time of Need. <https://bookshop.org/a/197/9780998804712>

A Twist in Time. <https://bookshop.org/a/197/9798628741306>

A Christmas Twist: A Twist in Time Book II. <https://bookshop.org/a/197/9798554388682>





# LETTERS



**JEFFREY REDMOND:** I liked you including a photo of me in Ionisphere, with the nice compliments. You won't persuade any of the negative N3F people to like me, but perhaps they will dislike me somewhat less.

Your editorial is right on. Groups dissolve because of internal strife, and a lack of desire to grow. The N3F has stagnated at times because of this. The Directory has some egos that cannot be overcome.

I believe my various suspensions are in increments, and I will be allowed to participate again, more and more, every few months. Meanwhile I am still



allowed to gain new members.

Michigan is indeed a rough and cold place to be in the winters. We are looking forward to spring.

*Well, the time must be about up on your ostracism, so it's a new start now.*

**GARTH SPENCER:** Editing a magazine—well, a fanzine—struck me as less of a gamble and more of a project for which I was free, for once, to exercise my initiative. (I came from an environment where initiative, even good sense, was ruled out of order. It was a relief to have a better place to go.) Granted, not everyone would appreciate what I did for them, but you simply can't get a unanimous response out of people.

The sense of conversing with myself sometimes came over me, too, while fan editing. The simple fact is that a majority of people do not respond in writing. The minority who do respond have their own points to make about their own concerns, and the attention readers give to others—for example, the editorial points you are making—is at a premium.

Or maybe I have a bad habit of dragging the threat to all civilization represented by the Evil Sinister Belgian Subliminal Mind Control Plot. Maybe I should give that a rest?

**JOSE SANCHEZ:** THANK YOU SO MUCH John !!! COVER AND INTERVIEW LOOK AWESOME! This is an EPIC moment for me! I'm very happy and words simply can't describe it enough.

*Glad to contribute something to your development as an artist. That was indeed a fantastic cover.*

**JEAN-PAUL L. GARNIER:** Thanks for all you do for the SFF community. I really appreciate Ionisphere , as I still love interviewing SFF authors and am happy to have the outlet.

*Nice to feel appreciated. You keep up those interviews, you are appreciated in return for sending them.*



## CREATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

John Polselli, a former member of our staff who didn't have a computer, contributes the following fantasy

### YAKSHI



It was a beautiful day - a day that encouraged roses to flourish and explode in magnificence. Butterflies fluttered by the hedges of the house while the aroma of herbal tea wafted through a half-open window.

Mary Turner, who is my neighbor, wanted to walk through the woods. It seemed like a good idea. That being the case, I and my long-time friend Devin Higgins, whom I have known since high school, accompanied Mary deep into the greenwood.

The magic of nature seems to bring out the best in almost everyone. We were not an exception. As we made our way through the trees Mary began to spin around like a delighted child. It was nice to see her enjoying herself. Being a busy mom who had four children to take care of, it wasn't often that she had time to abandon herself to the countryside.

As dusk approached, all three of us built a campfire over which we cooked Dutch oven chili. After our meal I invited Mary and Devin into the house for coffee. It was at that point in time that Mary, all of a sudden, became contemplative. A few minutes later I asked her if there was something wrong. She hesitated for a few seconds. Then she said something that neither Devin or myself would have expected.

"I saw a nature spirit in the woods," she whispered. "I couldn't believe it. She was beautiful!"

"A nature spirit?" said Devin. "What's a nature spirit? And when did you see it?"

"I saw it while we were out in the woods," Mary explained. "I've always believed that they were real. But I never thought that I would actually see one."

Although I was incredulous, I gave her the benefit of the doubt. I've never claimed to have all the answers about life. I don't think anyone does. There was one thing I knew for certain, and that was that Mary wasn't a liar. She may have misinterpreted what she had seen, but she was not a teller of untruths.

While sunset began to bathe the woods in dimness I started to cast sidelong glances through the kitchen window. If there really was a messenger from another congenial world, I wanted to see it.

During the days and nights that followed Mary's purported sighting I commenced walking through the woods. Although I was doubtful about what Mary claimed she had seen, I did not dismiss it altogether. Instead I kept my mind open to the possibility that what she observed might have been real.

The following night I had a peculiar dream where I found myself floating through a strange realm in which sylphs, salamanders, undines and gnomes were engaged in the creation of form out of matter that the outpouring of the Logos had quickened, hence they formed minerals, flowers, and other aspects of nature. When I awoke from the dream I experienced a familiar sensation. Somehow the dream seemed to convey a sense of vital importance. I rose from bed and went to the window. I stared at the woods. Everything seemed normal. Yet there was an air of mystery about the landscape that was somewhat peculiar. The entire environment seemed flooded with mystical light.

With a cup of coffee in my hand I went outside. Oddly, I had a feeling that I was being watched. I took a few steps in the direction of the Eastern white pines. Seconds later a streak of incandescent light entered the woods. Puzzled, I went over to where the light had come into the woods. Nothing was there. However, when I started back to the house I noticed something gleaming on the ground. I was puzzled to discover that it was a green stone. I had never seen a stone like it before. I picked it up and stared at it intently. I noticed that an image of a face was outlined upon the stone. To a limited extent the face looked human apart from the eyes, which were off-kilter. I looked at the stone for a long time before bringing it into the house, where I placed it on the cupboard. I poured myself another cup of coffee while wondering if I was going off the deep end.

When nightfall arrived I gazed through the kitchen window continually, on the watch for any sign of unusual activity. Yet I saw nothing that was remarkable. After a short time I went upstairs to bed where I stared at a waxing crescent moon until I fell asleep.

In the subsequent weeks after I had found the mysterious green stone, I began to

discover small canisters of milk that had been left in the thicket. From there on I came across jars of honey, paperclips, acorns and even dwarfish mirrors. Clearly someone or something was trying to get my attention. Nonetheless, in spite of the strangeness of the circumstances, I had never felt threatened in any way. On the contrary—I was, for whatever reason, held in high regard. But I couldn't understand why.

I had read about fairies when I was a child, and I was familiar with their tendency to bestow tokens to those they favored. But why would I be set apart? That was the burning question at hand.

I decided to find an answer to it.

In early October of 2017 I began walking through the woods not far away from my property with the intention of making contact with the secret message-bearer. There was an edge of fear as I wandered my way through the firebreak. Often I felt as though I was being enticed into a trap. But I saw nothing, and my attempts to communicate with the enigma were unsuccessful.

The doorknob was rattling. I stood frozen in place. At first I didn't utter a sound. At length I asked who was there. I was met with silence. Slowly I backed away from the door. I didn't want to see who was on the other side of it. Searching for the mysterious benefactress during daylight was unsettling enough without factoring in that it was now the dead of night. I did the best I could to keep my powers of reasoning. Finally I summoned up the courage to open the door slightly. When I did I was confounded to discover a single feather of a bluebird on the doorstep. I brought the feather upstairs and into my bedroom where I placed it on my bureau. Following that I drowsed off.

It was nearly 10:00 AM when I wakened. I remember thinking that there were strange faces peeking at me from behind the trees. For some reason or another the faces appeared familiar to me. Still and all I couldn't remember where or when I had known them. I peered out of my bedroom window. Autumn leaves were scattering in the wind. I thought of the woods and how the Eastern white pines looked like sentinels on the watch. All of a sudden I felt a presence in the room which was both subtle and formidable at one and the same time. I looked in all directions. In suspense I asked who was there.

"Have you forgotten who you are?" whispered an incorporeal female voice. I was stunned and incapable of speech. After a long time I succeeded in asking the invisible visitor who she was. Magically appeared a glowing orb of light that quickly transformed into a bewitching woman.

"You have been lost, Caspian," she chanted. "It has been years on end since I have set eyes on you. At long last I have found you."

"Mother! Oh, mother. It is you!" I exclaimed. "I've missed you to the moon and back. I thought I'd never see you again."

"This mortal coil holds mankind enraptured," she explained. "It is a web of trickery. As an effect of having been enthralled by the physical substance of mindless material for a long duration, you became immersed within its frequency and entrenched in its deceptive appearance. It is an understandable fallibility. You had forgotten who and what you are."

"But the gifts that you gave me, mother. How could I have not known that it was you that left them?"

"Again," she answered, "It was the labyrinth of subterfuge."

I looked on the Eastern white pines. "Shall we go, mother?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied. "We will go."

With my hand in hers we entered the pines. I was in light again.

## **When Sparrows Tame the Wind** by Gerald Heyder

Hearts know not where to go  
but know where they have been  
as wings fly the bird  
and spirit rides the wind.  
Autumn's dancing leaves  
are on a journey where they go  
and blizzard's swirling flakes  
creates a blanket of snow.  
Waves are the ceiling  
of ocean's depth below,  
clouds drift through space  
of azure sky we know.

*Je ne sais quoi* through the mind

may tease our mortal brain  
while notes waft through the air  
as dulcet sweet refrain.  
Artist colored canvas  
is a story book of paint,  
steeple bell ringing  
beckons both sinner and saint.  
Be we simple simon  
or of genius mind,  
philosophy will end  
when sparrows tame the wind!

## **Cemetery Tale** by Betty Streeter

This man was talking—he was a friend of the family—his eerie tale but true.

Three days he lay in the cemetery and didn't know anything

Couldn't explain how he got there or who he was with.

Lost focus that leads him to scratching his head.

Too drunk, with a concussion found

And taken to a hospital, doesn't know night from day.

Drunk among the dead.

Cemetery tale—I reckon he will learn to stay sober

Now.

Laugh on this one.

## **X-RAY GLASSES by Cardinal Cox**

Took an eye-test, offered x-ray glasses  
Frames aren't fashionable, clumsy and thick  
Wish I'd had them in my high-school classes  
Lenses let me see through clothing and brick.

Screens active with atom particle glows  
Reveals everything hidden, unseen  
Now I can check out how my sweetheart grows  
Every day, if you know just what I mean.

Didn't heed the warnings of Ray Milland  
Seeing such things mortals aren't meant to see  
And slowly the power gets out of hand  
Secrets to unlock and I've got the key

I know which cup the bean is pushed under  
Removes mystery-destroys the wonder

## **THE EARTH IS FALLING by Mel Waldman**

The earth is falling  
Galaxies galloping to  
The unrevealed Void

## **I DO NOT EXIST by Mel Waldman**

I do not exist  
Except inside the deep snow  
That falls forever

## SEEING THE ISSUE AGAIN

I have noticed in John Polsell's story a subtle reference to science which pervades the tale. It portrays a scientific confrontation with the mystical. At the end the character Caspian is accused of materialism. As we have such confrontations these days as readers of fantasy and science fiction, it is a nearby topic. This story seems to portray the clinch. Its author is partial to the idea that ghosts are for real, but I think the materialism found in the story is much to be found with him. He's laying it on the line. His past stories have often veered around this subject. The way it is laid out in this one shows how vital a thing it may be; sf writers are rather aloof about the matter, and this story may be a call to them.

As is often the case with people interviewed here, Brent Harris' interview makes him appear as if he is speaking from another world, a parallel world if you will. I think this is due to the segmenting which exists in book publication, the lack of cohesion among publishing empires. People being interviewed here have frequently spoken of how difficult it has been even to get in touch with publishers, and they often have agents as go-betweens, apparently a necessary thing or there wouldn't be authors' agents. All of these follow dissimilar pathways. Maybe Jefferson Swycaffer could explain this sort of tangle.

Answering the editorial question here at the end of the issue, yes, we have got a start. Ionisphere has gotten to be a well-formulated zine with a visible purpose, and our interviews have gotten to be more and more to the purpose, showing the readers who are fans views of published writers, and familiarizing them with what goes on in the realm of professional writing, hence making writing professionally clear to the fans of that writing and thereby accomplishing coordination. Yes, it may be that the members aren't reading Ionisphere, but even so, we are accomplishing something with it. The people being interviewed read it, and doubtless read the whole issue they are in. There are a couple of instances of feedback from a couple of them. I keep contact with some of them. I've friended the people on Facebook that I've interviewed, and sometimes exchanged commentary with them out front. And I've seen some of them that I didn't find for myself on Facebook, and friended them. I should record that here but it might be getting too far into business to do so. The staff and I don't presently exchange information about things relating to the bureau. If we did, that would be a bureau advancement. Also there has been some interactivity within the NFFF. I suggested there being one director per issue in TNFF, and got my wish via Heath Row, who handled it from his position on the chair of the Directorate. Nice going, Heath. That is somewhat doing what is the business of this bureau, improved relations. We work out of sight too.



