

# THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN

PRODUCED BY THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION



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# Letter from the Chairman

This is a letter from me as chairman of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. I am standing in for our president.

The year 2009 is going to be over shortly, and 2010 will soon be here. Looking back on the last year, I think the N3F made a few improvements of note.

We've managed to publish the clubzine regularly due in large part to the efforts of Heath Row, who joined us recently—and then volunteered to edit the zine for us. I think he is doing an outstanding job.

David Speakman has continued to do outstanding things for the club, and we now have two new Web sites because to his efforts. In particular, we now have <http://tightbeam.net>, which is an online version of our old letterzine *Tightbeam* (also now the name of the letter column in *The Fan*). The site is accessible to everyone, but Neffers have some extra privileges. David has also made <http://www.fandominion.com> available. FanDominion has a

lot of good material on the latest movies and other sorts of things that you all will find interesting.

David and I have also set up a presence on Facebook, largely because there are several current—as well as former—Neffers on the social network, and because I spend a great deal of time on Facebook. So the N3F now has a group on Facebook, and I encourage all Neffers to check it out.

I think the N3F needs to move with the times in our efforts to meet the needs of our members—and to hopefully meet the needs of future members.

Be sure to make note that this issue is the election issue. As the last issue before the annual N3F elections, it will include candidate platforms by some of our members who are running for office, myself included. Just turn to page 27. Please, everyone, vote. Participation is important. This is your club.

—Dennis Davis

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## *The National Fantasy Fan* Submission Guidelines

This is the official clubzine for the N3F, a combination of the old *Fan* (the official reports) and *Tightbeam's* reviews, con reports, poetry, and fiction. Art—covers and illustrations—is always needed. *The Fan* is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December. Deadlines are the 15th day of the month before the publication month (e.g. May 15 for the June issue). When submitting, paper copies are fine, but electronic formats

are preferred. Paper submissions won't be returned without an SASE. Submissions can be made to the editorial cabal chief (the current president), the current editor, or the advisor; query first. Send art to the art editor; send reviews to the reviews editor. Please send only copies of your work, not originals. If you've never submitted an article to a zine and aren't totally comfortable with writing, please consider writing a letter of comment. All submissions will be edited.

# Tightbeam: Letters of Comment

Enjoyed the June issue, especially the page size. Been catching up on *NCIS* episodes on disc since the analog signal switch off. I refuse to go digital signal and have been called "caveman." Still hunting for a heavy club to hit that guy.

Trying to read *Kite Runner*, but snuck a peek of the movie. Other titles on reading list to get through—mostly non-sf. Recalled some years ago there was an anthology of sf short, short stories running to mere paragraphs. Only natural to see short stories limited to 140 characters. Hope you can print some in a future issue.

I was informed that there is a Project Gutenberg Australia, which has titles not carried by the North American group. Shouldn't be surprised that the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs are in the public domain. Read the John Carter of Mars series way back.

Good luck collecting favorite sf book titles for the N3F sf and fantasy canon!

Here's a question that might be posed to readers of *The Fan*: What are some of the unconventional ways spells and magic are created and undone?

I can come up with three instances:

1. A character says some can cast spells with the eyes.
2. Advanced students (*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*) are taught to cast spells silently in their minds by thinking the spell words. They are taught to guard against an opponent reading their minds.
3. In Judith Tarr's short story "Widdershins," a riding instructor adapts a series of flowing patterns for her students. In riding these patterns in a quadrille, they form a spell that isolates the academy from the outside world. To reverse the spell, six riders and their horses must ride a reverse pattern.

Don't have enough for an article, but other members might recall similar examples from their readings.

Interesting how each writer can change the rules about how magic is used or perceived. Much like how *Star Trek XI* discarded continuity, but the less said about that, the better.

—Gar Chen

Greetings to all. First, I want to be sure to commend Heath for the fantastic job he's doing with *The National Fantasy Fan*. It's seriously wonderful and exciting! So thank you for that.

There have been a number of sf/f movies out this summer. Warning: Spoilers ahead! You can read my thoughts on *Star Trek* elsewhere in this issue. For the Harry Potter movie, I did like it overall, but I have a bone to pick. The scene where Dumbledore dies was completely botched up. I normally don't complain about changes made in movies because I understand that it's a different medium than the printed word, and it can be necessary. However, that was ridiculous! The power and intensity felt in the book

was completely lost in the movie.

In the book, if you recall, Harry puts his invisibility cloak over himself when he and Dumbledore realize the bad guys are coming. Dumbledore uses his magic to immobilize Harry—to save him because he knows Harry would defend Dumbledore despite them being outnumbered. Harry wants desperately to help but cannot because he cannot move! All he can do is watch in agony as Dumbledore is killed. That is the powerful scene in the book. In the movie, what do they do? Harry goes "below deck," so to speak, watching the whole thing through whatever those wooden beams were. He paces and watches and doesn't do anything even though he could because there's no spell on him! Then at the end, he tells Hermione something like all he did was watch, or he didn't even do anything to prevent it... some stupid little comment like that. What a wimp they turned Harry into! How unsatisfying and lame that scene was! This is the first time I've been highly annoyed with the Potter movies.

Are there any *Twilight* fans out there? I've finally decided to read *Midnight Sun* from Stephenie Meyer's Web site. I don't like reading books on the computer, but in the end, my desire to read *Twilight* from Edward's perspective has won out. I'm about halfway through and really enjoying it. On Stephenie's Web site you'll be able to read about the events that lead to Stephenie's decision to put her manuscript on her site before it was completed or published.

—Sarah E. Harder

I recently moved from Miami to 4308 Lariat Drive, Baytown, TX 77521, and it is like I have fallen into a bubble of non-existence. Would you please spread my new address around? I have moved and am anxious to make contact with Texan fans.

—Joe Schaumburger

A few weeks ago. I went to my 50th high school class reunion. Almost everybody looked older than me, but only one other used a walker. Hers had cargo space.

Well-done cover. A pity they didn't have more time. Robot and man with short-range weapons should be in front. Girl with blaster should be at top of the steps—where she can shoot over their heads.

George Wells: And here I thought Starman was an early member of the Justice Society of America, a comic-book series that I bought back in the early '50s.

The Daily Kitten has a new kitten online every day. Last month featured a kitten named Neffy. I wonder where they got that name.

Round Robins by email were called Bouncing Round Robins. I'm pretty sure Joy Beeson's writers group had one.

—Rick Brooks

# Historical Vignette: *Bonfire*, December 1943

By Jon D. Swartz

**B**onfire was the name of the first official National Fantasy Fan Federation clubzine and preceded *The National Fantasy Fan* by three and a half years. The name was conceived by the club's first president, Louis Russell Chauvenet and is said to have come from the phrase "Bulletin of the National Fan Federation." The first issue—Vol. 1, No. 1—was dated June 1941, and the name wasn't changed to *The National Fantasy Fan* until after the December 1944 issue. Science fiction fan and later professional author E. E. Evans was the first editor of the N3F clubzine.

This December 1943 issue was mailed from Battle Creek, Michigan—a magical place for those of us who grew up listening to children's programs on radio. Although it's only eight pages in length, the issue was divided into several distinct sections. With the exception of a crudely hand-lettered title on the first page, there were no illustrations.

"What Has Gone Before," a piece nearly two pages in length, was written by acting president (and Slan Shack resident) Al Ashley, who was tapped because president Evans was in the military. In this report, Ashley explained how the work of the club had come "to a grinding halt" in the summer of 1942, partly because of disagreements over the club's constitution. Because of this heated issue, the membership was asked to vote on a new Emergency Constitution.

The Emergency Constitution, a seven-part document, was presented on pages 3-4 and consisted of sections addressing the duration of the constitution, its purpose, club officers and their duties, membership requirements, dues, means of amending the constitution, and the purpose of *Bonfire*, the club's official publication—"which shall be issued monthly."

In a brief "The President Speaks," Evans thanked Ashley for his help while he (Evans) was in the military and wrote that he hopes members "will cast your ballot immediately, as he (Ashley) requests."

Next was an announcement about voting rules and a

list of N3F officers: Evans; Ashley; Chauvenet; Bob Tucker; Art Widner; Harry Warner, Jr.; D. B. Thompson; Phil Bronson; and Walter Daugherty.

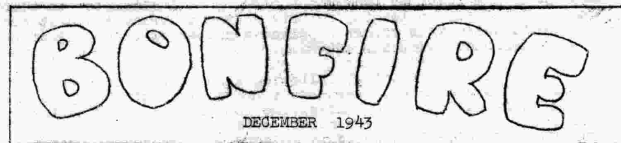
The following two pages were devoted to a numbered list of club members as of Jan. 1, 1943. At the time, there were 76 active members, among them several prominent names in sf. In addition to those already mentioned, members included Forrest J Ackerman, Gordon R. Dickson, David A. Kyle, Robert Lowndes, Leonard Moffatt, Merojo (fan name of Myrtle Rebecca Douglas), Elmer Perdue, Ollie Saari, Larry Shaw, E. E. "Doc" Smith, Jack Speer, Julius Unger, Richard Wilson, and Donald A. Wollheim. Several of the male members were in the military, and there were only a half dozen female members.

Dues cost \$1 per year, and the Treasurer's Report from Chauvenet revealed that the club had a total of \$25.50 on hand. That was significantly more than previously, however. The former secretary-treasurer had turned over a total of \$5 to Chauvenet when he became treasurer!

The final section was a brief report by Tucker (signed "Boob" Tucker) on the club's failed proposal "to supply fan in service with free fanzines." The reasons for the failure were many: the lack of money, problem of printing extra copies of the various

zines, lack of storage space, etc. In addition, Tucker reported that most of the people in the service reported that they didn't need charity now that they were being paid as much as "fifty bucks a month."

This early issue of the clubzine mentions several things that should be of interest to the membership today. While 1943 was a war year and much of the information reported was related to this conflict, items in common with today's club are apparent. In particular, the club was having some internal problems, and there were concerns regarding the membership. While the money in the treasury was only a pittance by today's standards, the more active club members were intent upon "doing things"—such as providing free fanzines for fans in the military.



## WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

In the summer of 1942, the National Fantasy Fan Federation, which had offered such great promise and was backed by the goodwill of most of Fandom, came to a grinding halt. Organizational complications as well as personal difficulties played a large part in this disaster.

Then, unwilling to accept the demise of the NFFF, EEE Evans put forth heroic efforts and managed to get it under way again. But just as he seemed to be succeeding he was called away. Thus, in the late Fall of 1942 I came into the position of attempting to carry on what EEE had started.

Evans had laid out some rather comprehensive plans for the organization, but to a great extent these plans depended for success upon considerable change in organizational structure. He asked Harry Warner to draw up a new Constitution. Harry promptly did so, but due to both misunderstanding of, and disagreement with some of the ideas EEE had in mind, Evans felt that he couldn't successfully proceed with his plans under that constitution. Finally, rather than making a mess of Harry's constitution trying to revise it, he enlisted the aid of the Battle Creek fans and drew up an entirely new one that he felt would permit a complete revival of the NFFF and ensure for it a successful future. This constitution was sent out to the Directorate (Advisory Board) and a few others for their approval before submitting it to the membership. Unfortunately, the fates had to choose this critical time to beckon EEE into the limbo of military secrecy.

Replies to the proffered constitution arrived. Nearly all disagreed with one or more of its features although it was seldom that two of them disapproved of the same point. Any attempt to eliminate all the parts to which anyone objected would have left the document an utter farce. Dropping the whole thing would have meant dropping all the plans it represented and left the NFFF very much in the same situation as when EEE attempted to revive it. The plans EEE had made were largely those for which the membership had expressed a desire. That constitution appeared to me, as it had to EEE, to represent the logical means of attaining those desires. Even though I was convinced that a majority of the membership would approve the constitution if it was put to vote, I feared doing so under such circumstances might lose me the wholehearted enthusiastic support of the Directorate and other officials—a price I felt was too great. Deciding that many points and features of the proposed constitution, and the plans they represented, were not quite

*From the collection of Jon D. Swartz*

# Member Spotlight: Jack Robins

By Jon D. Swartz and Heath Row

Longtime National Fantasy Fan Federation member Jack Robins (born Jack Rubinson) is a still-active sf fan who got his start as a member of the International Scientific Association (ISA) in the early 1930s. After the famed Futurian Society of New York formed in the late '30s, Robins was one of the members (along with Donald Wollheim, John Michel, and Frederik Pohl) who organized the Committee for the Political Advancement of Science Fiction (CPASF), and he attended the first WorldCon—NYcon—in 1939.

In the early '40s Robins edited and published 10 issues of his fanzine, *Looking Ahead*, and he contributed an article, "Sex in Science Fiction," to *Geep! The Book of the National Fantasy Fan Federation*, edited and published by Rose Secrest in 1987. In addition, he has written articles and pieces for *The National Fantasy Fan* and *Tightbeam* over the years, including a couple of book reviews and an article in this very issue. Robins is also a member of First Fandom.

Born Feb. 17, 1919—Robins turned 90 earlier this year—Robins says science fiction has been an important part of his life since he was a pre-teen. While a student at Boys High School in Brooklyn, he was friends with Isaac Asimov, whom he invited to join the Futurians.

The editors of *The Fan* are proud to feature Robins, a remarkable person, in its first Member Spotlight. Our conversation with Robins draws on his memories of the Futurians, his involvement in the N3F, and the *science* in science fiction.

**The National Fantasy Fan:** How did you get involved with the Futurians?

**Jack Robins:** The Futurians didn't start overnight. It had its beginnings with an organization called the International Scientific Association—the ISA. Most of the people who were members of the ISA later became the nucleus of the Futurians. (See the sidebar, "How I Joined the Futurians," below.—ed.)

**The Fan:** Who were some of the people you interacted with through your involvement there?

**Robins:** I interacted with most of them, but especially Frederik Pohl, Donald Wollheim, Johnny Michel, Walter Kubielius, Isaac Asimov, Cyril Kornbluth, Robert Lowndes, David Kyle, and Daniel Burford—who was an artist and

illustrator.

I lost touch with Isaac and the Futurians after I married and pursued a career as a chemist, finally earning a doctorate in physical chemistry. My wife, Lottie, and I loved to attend summer writers conferences, and one day, when we went to a Cape Cod Writers' Conference, we found Isaac. He was a writer in residence and was there with his first wife and children. Isaac recognized me right away even though many years had passed since he had last seen me. He wrote about meeting Lottie and me in the second volume of his autobiography.



Roy Paul Nelson

**The Fan:** How does the N3F compare with the Futurians?

**Robins:** You really can't compare the two. The Futurians were a face-to-face group plus individual interaction. Discussions covered every topic you can think of: science fiction, science, writing, literature, and virtually anything intellectual—but not sports. And they were largely located within commuting distance of New York City.

The N3F is basically an email interaction group with limited topic discussion. Because members are scattered all over the country, any face-to-face interaction by N3F members is possible only at conventions.

**The Fan:** Tell me about the Committee for the Political Advancement of Science Fiction.

**Robins:** That was Michel's baby. He believed that, because science fiction readers were escaping their worlds of depression and possible wars by reading about other worlds that might be better, science fiction readers should get together and try to bring about a better world. His committee went nowhere, however, and simply died.

**The Fan:** Do you think science fiction is political?

**Robins:** Science Fiction as literature is not necessarily political. Edward E. Smith, one of my favorite authors, wrote some stories that were anti-union; he seemed to have no understanding of the reasons why unions were formed.

There used to be stories of the world being ruled by technocrats. Then there were many alternate history stories, including one in which Adolf Hitler won the Second World War.

The stories were really explorations—"What if?" They were not trying to influence anyone to become a member of any political party.

**The Fan:** How has science fiction fandom changed over the years?

**Robins:** The action in science fiction is taking place largely in the conventions. There, you have panel discussions that can bring you up to date on what is happening. The emphasis today is on writing science fiction and trying to publish. I am a member of First Fandom, and the letters in their publication concentrate on which sf conventions a member went to in the past year. I miss the excitement and comradeship of the Futurians, but that is a world long gone.

**The Fan:** For many years, you worked as a chemist. Is there a connection between chemistry and science fiction?

**Robins:** I loved science fiction—and I loved science. Perhaps my going into the scientific field was influenced by science fiction; I don't know. Originally, I wanted to be a chemical engineer, but when I read what that entailed—working with big machinery—I lost interest. In high school, I learned with fascination that the elements could have different and pretty colors. Our chemistry teacher let us burn powdered metals in the flame of a Bunsen burner, and I was intrigued by the green color barium produced, the yellow of sodium, the red of strontium. I was sold. Chemistry was to be my field.

I earned a Bachelor of Science in chemistry from City College of New York, a master's degree from the University of Buffalo, and a PhD from the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, which is now merged with New York University. I worked for several companies as a chemist, the last being

Atlas Powder Co. in Tamaqua, Pennsylvania. There, I was a research chemist for 25 years on commercial explosives. I retired in 1984.

**The Fan:** How's retirement treating you?

**Robins:** Since 1984, I have been busier than ever before! I've done a lot of nonfiction writing and have been published in various magazines. I write a monthly column in our local condominium newspaper. I am also writing my memoirs.

I have constant battles with my computer, sometimes going online frantically for help. So far, I have not invented new curse words; I just use the regular ones. I still drive, and my license is valid until Feb. 17, 2014. I am co-president of the computer club at my condo and am in charge of its publicity.

**The Fan:** Of all the sf books you've read, which ones would you like to publicize to other N3F members?

**Robins:** Every person has his or her own taste in reading anything. I can't tell anyone which story or author shouldn't be missed.

Let me just say which authors and works I have enjoyed the most. They include Edward E. Smith's Galactic Patrol series and his Skylark series, Jack Vance's science fiction and fantasy, Fred Pohl's many collaborations, some of Donald Wollheim's stories, Anne McCaffrey's stories, the various Star Wars novels, the seven Harry Potter books, Piers Anthony's stories, Robert Asprins' Myth stories, Asimov, Robert Silverberg, and too many more to name.

# How I Joined the Futurians

By Jack Robins

It was the summer of 1936. I was 17 years old. I had just completed my first year of college at City College of New York. I was sitting at my father's fruit stand, relieving him so he could have lunch and a little rest. In between customers, I read stories from a science fiction magazine. Suddenly, I heard a familiar voice.

"I was sure I would find you here," said Walter Kubilius.

Walter and I were buddies ever since public school days. It was he who had introduced me to second-hand book stores where I could purchase old issues of *Amazing Stories* and *Argosy* magazine. We had lost touch with each other after I entered college.

We greeted each other warmly.

"Do you want to go to a science fiction club? There's a meeting this Sunday afternoon."

Did I want to? I couldn't wait. We made arrangements to meet at a subway station Sunday, and from there we would go to the Queens home of William Sykora.

The club was called the International Scientific Association, or ISA. The theory was that readers of science fiction would be encouraged to become scientists. I soon learned that there were other views. The members of this club were largely teenagers, although Bill Sykora and Donald Wollheim were in their early twenties.

We met in Bill Sykora's large basement. I was welcomed like a long-lost friend. I am sure it was not because of my good looks. I think the way I listened (wide-eyed and perhaps open-mouthed) to everything they said encouraged them to talk to this poor slum kid from Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Besides Sykora and Wollheim, and Kubilius, there was Johnny Michel, Herb Goudket, George Hahn and a few others whose names escape me.

They told me that, about a month previous, they had set out to prove you could send letters by rocket and that rockets could be the future of mail delivery. They had gone to a field, tied some letters to a rocket and set it off. It went up and then down, not too far away. Wollheim said that the rocket had been fired at the edge of the city and had merely gone to the boundaries of the next city. "But what about the letters?" I asked. "Oh, those that weren't burned were picked up and mailed in the nearest mail box." Work on rockets was stopped when they got a warning from the police.

Sykora showed me mixtures of rocket powder he had been experimenting with. He had been powdering the mixtures by hand for the rockets. "I didn't know then how close I came to setting the powder off and blowing up my hands."

Sykora had also soldered together a tesseract, a three-dimensional representation of a four-dimensional cube. I

looked it over, marveling, and asked, "When you soldered one corner, didn't the other corners melt?" "I had a hard time," he admitted, "but I finally succeeded."

Fred Pohl, always smiling, always optimistic, was the editor of the club magazine and inveigled me to write. I gave him a copy of my term paper from my English class, about coffee. He liked it and printed it.

What I loved most of all were the constant discussions of science fiction stories with analyses and criticisms as interesting as the stories themselves. Right away, I learned that there were two opposing views about the purpose of science fiction. Sykora was very vociferous about science fiction readers becoming scientists. Wollheim, Michel, and Pohl were just adamant that science fiction readers would tend to become writers. (Today, of course, we know that both views were correct and that many of today's scientists were influenced by science fiction to become scientists *and* writers.)

Wollheim and Michel collared me one day and stated that Gernsback had published stories of theirs and never paid them, and they were very angry about it. The amount they would have been paid was about \$5 or \$10. Michel also had the interesting view that the depression made science fiction readers want a different and better world (this later became the theme that led to the title "Futurians").

The group decided to make a science fiction movie. Several of us submitted ideas. Mine was about a magic elevator: You entered but the other three sides each opened into a different world. Mine was not accepted. I misread the postcard saying that the movie meeting would be held on a Saturday, so that Sunday I went to Sykora's. There was no meeting that day, and Sykora was amused that I had come all the way to his place. He asked me if I wanted to go on a field trip with him. I agreed. On that trip, he noticed a frog laying eggs. He rolled up his pants, waded out to the eggs, and collected a lot of them in a jar. I begged for some, but he gave me only four. At home, I put the four into a fish tank. They hatched into tadpoles and later into small frogs. I put in a piece of balsam wood, which allowed the frogs a platform to sit on. Two disappeared somewhere. I never found them or their bodies. I put some wire mesh over the fish tank and caught flies, which I slipped under the screen. The frogs must have been smiling, because the flies disappeared. I got tired of catching flies. Sykora had bad luck with the other eggs. I don't know just what happened, but he ended up with a smelly mess, which he threw away. I gave him my two frogs, but he placed the fish tank on a window sill where the sun got at it and heated the water enough to kill the frogs.

After my first meeting of the ISA, as we walked to the subway, I noticed a soda fountain store on the way. I hated the idea that my new and such overwhelmingly interesting friends would be going home so soon, so I suggested we have a "meeting after the meeting" in the soda fountain store. They agreed with some enthusiasm, and this became a regular feature, but of course, Sykora was never aware that we did this. Over sodas, we had excellent

discussions. George Hahn talked to me about the French writer Proust and how the man wrote his prose in such a fascinating way, in which each character became an island in himself. George also told me that he wanted to write a story about kitchen appliances suddenly coming alive and then expressing severe hate towards their owner. (I believe a story like that did appear eventually, but not written by Hahn.)

Wollheim and Michel told me of a mythical character called "Ghu." They said, "Anyone who hears of Ghu gets a purple soul and is saved." This was a parody of the fundamentalist Christian attitude that if you accept Christ you will be saved. "But what if your soul is purple and you commit a murder. Are you still saved?" "Yes," came the reply. "As long as you have a purple soul, you can do anything, and you are still saved." Of course, they smiled, almost laughing, as they told me this.

Pohl and Cyril Kornbluth wrote poetry. They experimented with different formats and even wrote sonnets. Years later, I decided that if they could do it, I could do it, and I wrote two sonnets about my friends, "The Mind of Man" and "The Ivory Tower." Cyril and Fred also rewrote the words of Christmas carols, making them funny and irreligious.

These were wonderful times for me until one Sunday, as I was walking towards Bill's house, I found Fred Pohl standing outside the soda fountain store. "Don't bother going any further. Bill Sykora locked us out." Fred ushered me into the store.

I was devastated. Just when I had met the most interesting people in my life, was it to be all over? "Is this to be the end of all our science fiction meetings?" I asked Wollheim.

"Definitely not!" he said.

For the next few weeks, plans were laid for us to be a new organization. It retained most of the people who had met in Bill Sykora's basement and added more—Dick Wilson, Gillespie, Leventhal, and others—as time went on. The meetings (get-togethers, really) were now held in Brooklyn. Herb Goudket and George Hahn, who lived in the Bronx or upper Manhattan, decided not to join but were occasional visitors. And of course, Bill Sykora wanted nothing to do with us.

One day I noticed a letter in one of the magazines from my old high-school friend, Isaac Asimov. I asked Wollheim if I should invite Isaac to the club. He said, "By all means."

I wrote to Isaac asking, "Are you the Isaac Asimov who went to Boys High School at the same time I did?"

He wrote back, "Yes."

A few weeks later he became a member.

At first, there were official meetings, which really were hilarious with arguments whether to use Robert's Rules of Order. When Wollheim, Michel, and Robert Loundes rented an apartment, the Futurians simply became an association of individuals who came and went as they pleased.

The Futurian organization really started in the ISA in Bill Sykora's basement and became a separate official club after the split that ended the ISA.



# Convention Report: Westercon 2009

By Jacqueline Lichtenberg

No, it wasn't the 2,009th Westercon, but the 62nd. 62 is a respectable number for an annual science fiction convention. I can't keep track of conventions by their numbers, so I use the year. I even do autographs that way. This year was a particularly nice Westercon.

Science fiction conventions aren't like political conventions to which large bodies of people send delegates to represent them. Cons are a "y'all come" gathering of anyone and everyone interested in the array of topics, as well as professionals working in various fields, from books, e-books, and other media to feature films.

I posted my panel schedule in my blog, and, as it happened, all my programmed events were on time and in the scheduled location. That is the sign of a well-run con.

My husband and I arrived at the Tempe Mission Palms Hotel and Conference Center just before 9 a.m. on Friday July 3, and our room was already cleaned and ready for us to move in. The convention had even arranged for us to use the valet parking without an additional charge, so that saved a good 15 minutes. That was a good omen, and the rest of the weekend went just as well.

Those 15 minutes were important minutes because I was scheduled for my first panel at 10 a.m. We deployed our stuff in our room and went to find the green room, where program participant badges were to be had.

Finding the green room was easy. We were on the same floor, but far enough away that the parties in the convention's reserved corridor weren't going to keep us up all night. The Mission Palms is laid out somewhat like a Roman villa, with a square hole in the middle and palm trees waving in the court yard, their fronds reaching the second story level.

The sound proofing was really good because the hotel is right under the flight path for Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, but planes were a distant rumble. It was a comfortable room (not that I saw much of it!).

When I arrived at my first panel, people were already in the room holding a rambling conversation as the other panelists zipped in and the room gradually filled. From there on, it was energy and laughter and wide-ranging, well-informed questions and comments from the audience.

A few quick polls of several of the panel audiences showed that they had much reading in common and had at least seen many of the same TV shows. They didn't all know each other, but they really all *knew* each other. There were instant friendships being formed everywhere and old acquaintances reconnecting.

That thread continued through nonstop panels, hallway conversations, con suite conversations, and into the evening parties.

Friday night, one of the Sime~Gen fans known as Kaires engineered a Sime~Gen party, put posters up, got a room in the party section of the con's hotel block, and put out an array of interesting snacks. R-Lauraine Tutihasi and her husband helped set up, and within an hour we were

having drawings for door prizes (mostly books of course).

The Art Guest of Honor was Todd Lockwood, who did the splendid cover for *Sime~Gen: The Unity Trilogy*.

While I was running around madly Friday on programming, my husband tracked down Todd (who seemed to be on programming opposite me all the time) and got him to sign a hardcover copy of *Sime~Gen: The Unity Trilogy* for me. (Gosh-wow, indeed!)

One panel I was on was about the new *Star Trek* movie (see "*From the Bridge: Perspectives on Star Trek*", also in this issue—ed.) and included moderator David A. Williams and Alan Dean Foster, who wrote the novelization of the screenplay.

Alan had tales to tell about how much—and how little—access he had to the film before having to write the novelization. He has written a number of novelizations of films, so he had a great deal of experience to draw on to make the most of the very little a novelization writer gets from producers. He said he got to see a screening of the *Trek* movie rough cut, but couldn't record it and had to take handwritten notes to work from.

Between panels on Friday, I stopped at one of the used book dealers in the dealer's room to sign whatever copies of my books he had (quite a stack—I keep thinking I must have signed every one printed, but, alas, not yet) and while I was sitting there a couple more people came up with stacks for me to sign.

I think they might have thought it was my official autographing session, which was scheduled for 5 p.m. on Friday. One fellow brought along three or four titles plus *Faces of Science Fiction* (photos of sf authors), which I'm in. I said, "Ah, you must be a dealer," and he said, "No, these are for my relatives."

A whole family that loves science fiction? Wow.

I think I signed books and touted and sold some for the merchant for about 40 minutes.

Then I ran to another panel and came back for my official autographing. There were only a couple of people waiting. The other person who was scheduled to autograph didn't make it to the table. A writer I'd met on Facebook, Dana Davis, brought me a couple of review copies of her own books, one of which I started reading right at the autographing table because there was a lull in conversations. I'm still reading it (with absorption). *Desert Magic: Superstition* is set in Scottsdale, Arizona, right here in the Valley of the Sun, and in the Superstition Mountains, which I see every day I walk in the park. (I'd see them all the time, but houses are in the way.)

Jennifer Roberson likewise didn't make it to Westercon, though she was assigned a number of program items. I was looking forward to seeing her again!

Saturday, I was pooped already, and I wasn't on any programming items, so I had the luxury of going to things instead. I saw an entry for a film titled *Starwatch* that was being previewed at the convention. After showing the film, there was to be a panel with the actors and producer. I wish you could buy the DVD already. Here's why.

As I sat down to watch it, I recalled it was supposed to be a low budget film, but when it started, I sat watching the whole first act, and it suddenly occurred to me to wonder if I were in the wrong place. "Where's the low budget film?"

But no, it was the right place. It was an astonishingly low, low budget film with a credit roll that took only a few seconds, but the film had the look and feel of a typical theater release.

It's set in the asteroid belt after a war between Earth and a corporation that settled the asteroid belt and created a whole new culture. But it's still oil and water out there—the factions are spoiling for more fighting.

The science premise that has me intrigued is that one faction is hot on the trail of a method for "weaponizing souls"—harvesting souls from dark energy from the Big Bang and using the souls to transmit destructive force that can pulverize anything.

The audience and the producer didn't seem to think this particular weapons research would turn up again in a TV series made from this feature film (if there ever is one), but I can think of more stories to tell about it.

I didn't at first realize that the fellow introducing the film (whom I was sure I'd seen at cons before) was actually the producer of the film, but later I went up and told him exactly what I thought of it, then realized it was his work. Honestly, I wasn't trying to butter him up or anything. I really do like this film.

After the panel with the actors and producer, I met the fellow who did the special effects (all the space ships and advanced tech), Jeremy Totel. I met a couple of the stars, among them a woman I think might go far, Silvia Suvadova. I met her later in the restaurant and she gave me her card. I gave her my NL flyer. I would love to see her as a Vulcan on *Star Trek*, and a major ongoing character.

Then I went to see (finally) a presentation by Todd Lockwood. Todd showed slides of some of his work (mostly dragons and warriors, his specialty) and then gave a demonstration of how he can use Corel Draw to make a dragon's head. He says he prefers working in oils. Today, publishers often accept electronic files for artwork, which makes working in electronic originals more attractive. He uses a top-of-the-line digitizer pad to draw freehand.

Saturday night, the 4th of July, there were fireworks. (The hotel was very close to where major city fireworks displays originate, and mundanes flock to this hotel for the vantage). The con committee had the genius to nail a suite that had the best view of the fireworks, and they held a fabulous party with good food and lots of people.

At the same time, there was a *Star Trek* party put on by the local *Star Trek* fan organization, one of the oldest (perhaps by now the oldest) in the country. Many members have gone on to work in the space program projects based in the Arizona State University campus nearby, and south of here in Tucson.

I talked so much that by Sunday morning I had laryngitis. There were no microphones for the panelists, and the parties were full and loud. The crowd was exuberant and joyful, even the smokers who could only smoke outdoors, usually on the balconies outside the

elevator lobbies.

But Sunday, luckily, I had smaller panel rooms, which still had a good turnout, considering how much partying everyone had done. Even the 3 p.m. panel I was on about making fan-friendly Web sites was well attended.

Sunday between panels, I signed some more books. By the end of the con, I was ready to take off for home, which was only a half hour drive. That is one of the reasons I decided to move here—local conventions! And Los Angeles and San Diego are in reach. Even the San Francisco Bay area is available. And these days, there are good cons developing in Las Vegas (Xanadu being a case in point). Seattle often hosts Westercons, as well.

Overall, Westercon was a very well-run convention. The programming mix of topics and panelists done by Catherine Book was ingenious, the food services in the con suite were nothing short of miraculous, and the dealer's room was full of books, costumes, and jewelry.

The art show was small, but high quality. In addition to Todd Lockwood's leap-off-the-wall art (the man is a master of perspective), there was a tapestry of the Hogwarts coat of arms that dominated one aisle and was readable across the huge ballroom that contained the art show and dealers room. It looked real. I've seen it before, but it was hung splendidly under the right lighting here.

The costume masquerade actually ran short but produced eye-popping winners. I suspect the economy and the threat of the flu pandemic that's developing as worse for younger people kept some people with children home. There were fewer very young children than usual, but those that were there had the advantage of a very professionally run children's programming track.

Usually, fans come to conventions regardless of whether they're sick, hacking and coughing, sneezing and wheezing as they ignore everything just to get to the panels and parties. This time, though, I didn't notice anyone who was ill.

Regional sf book-focused conventions have shrunk in size, and this year Westercon had around 700 people attending in a hotel where you had to go outside to get from one group of function rooms to another. July in Phoenix, remember.

Because I live here, I didn't mind too much, and there were even people sitting at outdoor tables in the court yard in the 107-degree heat talking a mile a minute. I actually had to wear a sweater most of the time because the hotel had cold spots. I wasn't uncomfortable in the sweater when I went outside. The dew point had dropped below 50 again, and it was nice weather.

When I got into the car to drive home, I checked the dashboard thermometer, and it read 112 degrees Fahrenheit. Well! The valet had left the car in the sun.

*This essay was published previously in a slightly different form in Alien Romance (<http://aliendjinnromances.blogspot.com/>) on July 7, 2009. Reprinted with permission of the author. You can learn more about Lichtenberg and her work at <http://www.simegen.com/jil/>.*

# From the Bridge: Perspectives on *Star Trek*

In the June issue of *The National Fantasy Fan*, the editor asked N3F members what they thought of the J. J. Abrams *Star Trek* movie that was released in early May, not long before the clubzine went to press. The movie attracted a lot of mainstream attention and did pretty well in the box office, pulling in \$75.2 million opening weekend and grossing \$381 million worldwide as of this writing. Did N3F members like the movie? Here are some remarks we received. Spoilers below!

## Reinventing the *Star Trek* Universe

By Sarah E. Harder

I liked the new *Star Trek* movie very much. It was touching in places, and of course it had plenty of adventure and action. I had to be reminded that this was a "reinventing" of the *Star Trek* universe because I didn't care for the Spock/Uhura romance that much. It didn't exactly bother me, but it didn't do much for me, either. I also didn't like the change in history with Vulcan being destroyed (along with Spock's mother dying). I kept expecting history to be made right again at the end of the movie. When it wasn't, it left me surprised and unsatisfied—though I was satisfied overall with the film, especially if I put out of my mind the original history. In and of itself, it was a great story. It was interesting to have the two Spocks in the movie, as well. Seeing Leonard Nimoy on screen was a nice surprise. He is such an excellent actor, and his character has only improved and deepened over the years.

## To Boldly Go Where No Fan Has Gone Before

By Steven Rose, Jr.

Before its release, news of director J. J. Abrams's *Star Trek* movie was stirring up anxiety in many *Trek* fans. Many fans of the late Gene Roddenberry's space epic were worried that Abrams wouldn't stay true to the previous movies and the original TV series. After I saw the film on the weekend of its release, I'd say hardcore fans' anxiety had not been wasted. Myself? I'll admit, I'm only a part-time Trekker (because I'm a full-time science fiction fan). I thought Abrams' *Star Trek* was a great film that stays true to the preceding movies and the original TV series, to a certain extent, yet has to depend on neither to uphold a well-developed plot. However, that very autonomy was the problem I had with the movie.

It's hard to deny that, on a superficial level, Abrams's

*Star Trek* stays closer to the original TV series than any of the other movies. To begin with, the lettering of the movie's title is in the same slant style as that of the original series. Also, the Enterprise crew are given their original four-color style uniforms back, complete with black slacks for the men. That's almost the case: The red, blue, and yellow tops and skirts are darkened to reflect a more military solemnity. Doing so prevents a campy appearance that would stand out against the 23rd-century high-tech Enterprise interior based on 21st-century technology. Even some of the original sound effects from the original TV series are back—such as the low volume, whistle-like pulsing of the bridge's computers.

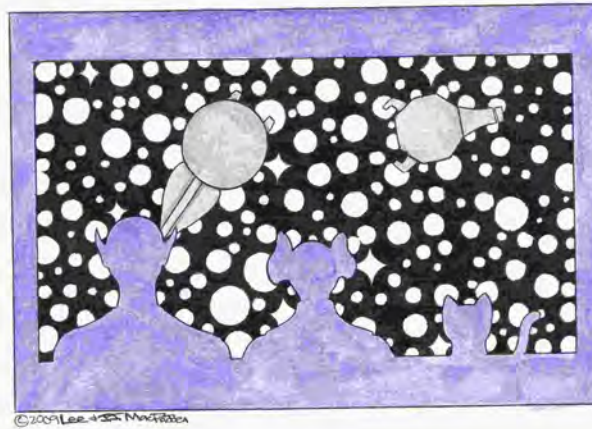
More importantly, the actors stay true to the behavioral traits of the original characters. That's because they stay true to the original actors' performance of those characters.

The one who does that best is Zachary Quinto with his Spock role, particularly with Spock's emotionless but philosophical speech tone. Christopher Pine did an overall good job with his role as Kirk, but, except for a few flash instances, the original Kirk's command-waving hand gestures, facial expressions, and speech mannerisms were not there as much as they could have been. The actors who played Chekov, Uhura, McCoy ("Bones"), Scotty, and Sulu captured their behavioral traits in their roles much better than Pine did his. But the characterization overall was

very well developed and therefore much more realistic than that of the original TV series.

As with many episodes of the original TV series and the previous films, the plot was well constructed. It begins with Kirk and Spock's childhood and builds off of the initial uniting of the two men and the other main Enterprise crew members and takes us through their training at the Starfleet Academy. Those events are structured around the conflict with the Romulan Nero, who travels from the future to destroy the Earth and the rest of the Federation planets out of vengeance for the destruction of his home world. That event triggers an occurrence of alternate reality—and so the movie cleverly involves one of the latest trends in science fiction. That is, it cleverly does that until it breaks the continuity with the previous movies and TV series.

So as not to create any spoilers for any Johnny- or Janie-come-latelies to the movie, I will not go into specifics, but the destruction of a main character's planet (not Nero's in this case) alters the future. Along with this problem is the death of a guest character who has appeared in the previous movies as well as the original TV series. Those two incidents reset the course of the *Star Trek* universe,



Lee and J. J. MacFadden

deviating from the status quo set up by the original TV series. Such a deviation contradicts the previous films and TV series, a contradiction all too noticeable by Trekkers of all levels (including us part-time ones). The *Star Trek* universe from this movie onward, as well as any fan fiction offshoots (e.g. novels, comic book series, or perhaps even a new original Enterprise crew TV series?), can only be an alternate *Star Trek* universe. Such a version of the universe cannot match up to the one we have known all these years. Therefore, the alternate reality element works well as a trend but is overdone to the point of severing this movie from the rest of the saga that came before it.

Apart from the other *Star Trek* movies and the original TV series, Abrams's *Star Trek* is a great film. Because it stands on its own, non-Trekkers might appreciate it more than Trekkers. For Trekkers, it stands on its own a little too much, disrupting the continuity between it and the rest of the saga that came before. If Abrams decides to do a sequel to this prequel of the *Star Trek* movies, I hope he'll involve time travel and alternate reality again. I want to see it do for the above-mentioned dead character and annihilated planet what *Star Trek III* did for Spock: bring them back and get the universe back on its original course!

*This review was published previously in a slightly different form on HubPages ([http://hubpages.com/hub/To\\_Go\\_Where\\_No\\_Fan\\_Has\\_Gone\\_Before](http://hubpages.com/hub/To_Go_Where_No_Fan_Has_Gone_Before)). Reprinted with permission of the author.*

## Accusations of Melodrama

By Jacqueline Lichtenberg

There's a wild and thriving set of posts on Twitter about people seeing the new *Star Trek* movie four and five times—and more. Some posts say, "What's so great about ST?" Others are in gosh-wow shock. Other long-time fans of *Trek* are seeing it for the first time.

Twitter is carrying some criticism of the actors, some sneering at the entire concept. I saw one review that really lowered my opinion of both the reviewer and the publication, calling the *Star Trek* movie melodramatic.

It isn't.

I can see how someone assigned to review a movie set in a universe they think of as kiddie stuff or teen-action stuff (sf has borne that pejorative all along) would find this script "melodramatic." That's a point of view that always happens when someone isn't engaged in the fictional universe. If you're wholly engaged, the emotional tension doesn't seem overblown or out of proportion to the issue. But that works only if you really understand the issue.

If everyone is running for the exit in screaming panic, and you're just standing there, you should ask yourself, "What do they know that I don't know?"

Reviewers who slap the label "melodramatic" on a piece of fiction generally haven't asked themselves that question about the audience that doesn't see the story as melodramatic. In fact, the rest of the audience might be seeing the story as understated while "sophisticated" reviewers trash it as melodramatic. This is in general, not just about this particular *Star Trek* movie.

It's not the writer's fault. Melodrama isn't a property of the text or script. It exists in the reader or viewer's mind. There is one flaw a writer might introduce that could give viewers the impression of melodrama. That's failing to display in show-don't-tell the character motivations, sensitivities, hot-button issues, loyalties, friendships, and relationships, all clearly derived from the theme.

The J. J. Abrams *Star Trek* movie is written to give you as much of those character and situation traits as possible in the time allotted (and fit in all the commercially requisite action). Anyone have an opinion on what the envelope theme of this film is? Perhaps it's "challenges temper the character strengths"? In effect, what character strengths are there already get made stronger by challenges.

When a reviewer sees a movie as melodramatic it might not be the reviewer's fault for being unobservant, disinterested, or prejudiced. It might be the fault—if it is that—of the review publication for assigning the wrong person to do the review. If someone has a strong emotional reaction to a piece of fiction, a reaction that embarrasses them deep inside, they might slap a distancing label on the fiction—as if the fiction is at fault for their refusal to confront their own emotions. You can't tell if that's the case just by reading a review of a film you have seen, however.

Or, the negative reaction might be the fault of the professional reviewer for choosing to review a product because it's popular so that the review will get read rather than reviewing something else that's less popular.

When I read the accusation of melodrama against *Star Trek* (in the context of "It's not a good enough movie for this much hype, and people who are enchanted with it have something wrong with them."), it brought up questions about how people interact with fiction, fictional universes, and with their own expectations and anticipations.

There's a lot of hype for the *Trek* movie, and as usual, fans are divided into various camps regarding how well or poorly this or that favorite aspect was handled. In general, there's a consensus of approval and wait-and-see from the old fans, and some astonished interest from new or younger people. To them, it's just a good action movie without a lot of subtext. To veteran fans, it's all subtext.

So public discussion makes non-fans (or even non-viewers) curious, and they go see the movie and express their reactions in public—even on Twitter, perhaps. That's how you sell a lot of movie tickets, you see. Word of mouth (or tweets) motivates people better than any amount of paid commercial time on television.

There are subjects flickering in the back of my mind about how the United States used to have a common language and experience—and how that's been destroyed.

The base cohesiveness of our society has been shattered. That lack of imagery and trivia in common is taking a huge toll, and most people don't realize why these horrific things are happening. New stuff will arise to take its place, because humans need stuff in common with each other, but in the meantime, we've got a generation without a cultural connection to anyone other than those with interests in common. The wireless Web is changing that, too, but it hasn't taken hold yet.

Not everyone paid attention to the presidential election!

Those who did form cliques, as usual in politics. But we can't even say everyone heard Barack Obama's speeches other than snippets on the news. You can read his words on the Web, but it's not the same as watching his delivery.

Recently, I met someone who had worshipful, shining, beatific eyes every time she mentioned how much she trusts Obama to do the right thing. She was absolutely pro-Israel and seemed totally unaware of Hillary Clinton's declaration that none of the United States's verbal agreements with Israel will be kept, period.

As she spoke, I thought that if her conversation were dialogue, an editor would cross it all out because the way she ignored everything everyone said and insisted on how much she trusts Obama, that trust solves all problems, was implausible. (Talk about melodrama—her conversation *dripped* melodrama—I couldn't believe I was watching a real person, not a character.)

Other people listened to her politely but didn't challenge her thinking (remember the idea about character tempered by challenge). People expressed their opinions without pointing out the fallacies in hers—they could see she'd explode emotionally if challenged, and that would be disruptive. She left, her certainties unquestioned, as one would expect in fictional dialogue. Her personal, real-world story and plot didn't progress because of this conversation.

Which leads to a point I've made before, that dialogue is not conversation and characters are not people.

Someone who prefers to read nonfiction but has to watch the *Star Trek* movie might take the film's dialogue as melodramatic because it tries, in a very short time, to lay out for viewers a set of comprehensible motives.

Also consider that this is a feature film. The series was designed to be an ensemble show, and each character got a 50-minute show in which to be introduced. Abrams started from scratch to introduce the characters to a new audience, all in one movie. The script does that fairly well. The characters, of course, come off shallow if all you know is what you see in this new movie—shallow and perhaps overly impressed with themselves.

One of the requirements for good feature film script writing is that there is one star character, maybe a co-star, and the rest are supporting characters. Kirk is nominally assigned the starring role—but the truth from the POV of many viewers is that Spock is the star. I'm one of those. Because this show was (will be again?) a TV show (already another movie is in the works), the ensemble cast requires fudging the star/co-star supporting paradigm.

If you superimpose the characters on the old TV characters, you'll see disparities and be so busy thinking what the old characters would do that you don't totally engage in and thus believe the current characters.

The result is that you see melodrama instead of drama because you think the characters are overreacting.

Is that woman who trusts Obama overreacting? She doesn't think so, and most of you might not either. She thinks she has good reason to trust him but can't say what those reasons are. She's bewildered that anyone might squint sideways at Obama and wonder if WYSIWYG.

It has to do with how we judge people and characters—how we evaluate the values of another person. That

brings us to the question of whether politicians (and actors) whose images have been professionally built by spin doctors are characters or people.

That woman was in love with Obama, even though she'd never met him. She couldn't separate the image from the man—the character from the person.

The adoration I saw in her eyes was soooo totally "romance"—it was Neptune at its best, worshipful adoration. I've seen fans of Kirk, Spock, McCoy, Chekov, Uhura, and Scotty with the same beatific expression when discussing the lives of the characters as if they were the lives of the actors, or vice versa.

I saw in her eyes the experience of joy in being understood and being safe at last. She was not an sf fan. She was ever so mundane. She was an older woman, securely married. Her husband agreed with her assessment of Obama and had no inkling that there could be a jealousy issue. Here was a woman so infatuated with a public image that is a character more than a person that she totally believes she's assessed him correctly.

That's what falling in love does. It cuts the critical faculties out of the circuit and allows you to believe the image you are projecting onto someone is the actual, real person and not a reflection of your own aspirations.

Here's the thing about Neptune, though. What you see in another person through Neptune's veil is sometimes more true than what you see through your critical faculties. Sometimes, your critical faculties have been honed by training in logical, practical ways. Because of that, your critical faculties will reject information that is pertinent simply because it seems implausible.

That's how a professional reviewer could conclude that the J. J. Abrams *Star Trek* movie is melodramatic. A reviewer often is trained as a critic (they aren't supposed to be the same function), and an art critic has to view art through his or her critical faculties.

But art, by its very nature, speaks to the subconscious, subverting all critical analysis. Even the art of the spin doctor creating a politician's image for the media speaks to the subconscious. Spin doctors work with the fabric of symbolism to get you to believe what they tell you in ways that mere words could never achieve.

The subconscious doesn't view the world through the conscious mind's critical faculties. When the subconscious is convinced, it overrules the conscious mind and asserts its opinion as the truth. Facts can't sway the subconscious.

If we're going to create a TV show that will argue our case the way *Star Trek* argues the case for sf, we have to include one character like the woman I met with the starry eyes for Obama. That character has to speak for the human capacity to see past the obvious surface and into the true heart—as McCoy does in *Star Trek*, and as this woman believes she has with Obama.

*This essay was published previously in a slightly different form in Alien Romance (<http://aliendjinnromances.blogspot.com/>) on June 9, 2009. Reprinted with permission of the author. You can learn more about Lichtenberg and her work at <http://www.simegen.com/jil/>. In 1975, she co-authored Star Trek Lives!*

# Dialing Down the Gnarl with Rudy Rucker

By Heath Row

Even though I haven't read most of his books, Rudy Rucker is one of my favorite science fiction authors. I certainly have most of his books on my shelves—and on my reading pile. Rucker's writing resonates with some of my favorite cyberpunk and post-cyberpunk writing by authors such as Bruce Sterling, Cory Doctorow, and Paul Di Filippo but adds an element of the biological—the *physical*—that so much science fiction lacks. From *White Light* and the Ware series to his nonfiction books on mathematics and physics, Rucker combines big ideas and a sense of humor with a firm grounding in the empirical. The result can be mind opening.

Rucker's newest novel, *Hylozoic* (Tor, 2009), is no different. The sequel to 2007's *Postsingular* is a clever take on the promise and perils of posthumanism, do-it-yourself multimedia, inter-dimensional travel, and the redeeming nature of friendship and true love. For a full review of the books, see the sidebar below.

*The National Fantasy Fan* connected with Rucker for an email interview to explore some of the ideas addressed in the new novel and his writing in general. Serendipitously, he wrote his responses on the 40th anniversary of the moonwalk. Here's what he had to say.

**The National Fantasy Fan:** The singularity, which we might call new-school posthumanism, plays a role in your last two novels, *Postsingular* and *Hylozoic*. What role does the singularity play in contemporary science fiction? Is it really going to happen?

**Rudy Rucker:** We notice that our computers keep getting faster, and have bigger memories and better software. So there's a dream that at some point, artificial intelligence will progress to the point where computers have minds as powerful and creative as ours. And then we jack up the computers with faster chips and extra RAM and we have superminds.

There's also a sense that biotechnology might be on the point of big breakthroughs—perhaps we'll be able to custom design organisms, and maybe we'll be able to make biological things that are in some sense like digital computers. Nanotechnology is a related front where we feel that we might be approaching some great leap forward, such as self-replicating machines. My feeling, by the way, is that the actual nanotechnology we develop will really be a type of biotechnology, that is, our nanomachines will be things like tweaked bacteria or redesigned biological viruses.

Anyway, with all this dreamy technology on the horizon, there's a sense that if any or all of it comes to fruition, then the pace of technological change might speed up even more, dragging us past a historical turning point that Vernor Vinge dubbed "the singularity" in his prescient talk of 1993.

For a time, science fiction writers resisted writing about

postsingular worlds, but by now we're getting used to these new futures. Earlier sf writers learned to write about starships, telepathy, robots, and aliens—and it's really no different for us to be writing about worlds where your toothpick might be as smart as Albert Einstein. It just takes a straight face and a little practice.

Whether the singularity is really going to happen isn't so obvious. Some would say that we're already in a technological singularity, some might even say that history is always singular, in that new things have always been happening, and the human race is perennially surprised and unprepared. Saying that there's something unique about our situation is, in my opinion, a kind of self-aggrandizement.

OK, but I'm dodging the question people that people really want an answer to: Are the machines going to get as smart as us? Short-term answer: No. We don't know squat about how our minds work, and contemporary artificial intelligence is nothing more than a grab bag of cheap tricks and illusions. Longer-term answer: Yes, but. That is, yes we'll be creating intelligent things, but those things are not going to be chip-based digital computers, any more than they'll be boxes stuffed with gears and springs. They might not even be very much like machines. That is, they might be more biological.

**The Fan:** There seem to be two general approaches to science fiction. In one, the frontier is outer space, and humans are freed from the physical and mental confines to explore the outer reaches of the universe. In the other, the frontier is more local, more native, perhaps even "inner space."

That seems to be your approach in these two recent novels, and was your approach in the Ware series as well. What's alluring to you about the local or *native* version of science fiction?

**Rucker:** That's a good question. I can pinpoint when I turned against space travel as being an interesting thing to write about: it was exactly 40 years ago today, when men first walked on the moon. The astronauts were, for all their bravery, disappointingly inarticulate men, and having the government in charge of the mission pretty well drained out all the juice. I dislike the whole convention of having spaceships be like ships of the navy—with a rigid chain of command and a captain in charge. The military and large companies bore me. I'm much more interested in individual mad scientists who make wild discoveries on their own or with a couple of friends.

Of course this leaves open the possibility of writing about small groups of independent-minded beings who master space travel on their own. But I have tended to set most of my stories and novels right here on Earth. To my way of thinking, space travel is in some sense too obvious a way to get somewhere new. I'm more interested in finding a magic door or a stargate, or in shrinking down to a tiny size, or in hopping into a higher dimension, or in altering the behavior of Earth-based matter so as to utterly

change our world.

A less obvious reason for setting my tales on Earth is that I don't want to encourage the notion that our planet is just some piece of crap for us to burn through so that we can get down to the "serious" business of exploring other worlds. Life right here is incalculably rich and strange—all we have to do is to find new ways to notice this.

**The Fan:** *Postsingular* and *Hylozoic* also address the threat of commercial sameness, of a chain-store world where everything is ordinary and lacking in what you like to call "gnarl." Where do you go to seek or replenish gnarl? Do you think computers are dialing down the gnarl, or might they be introducing *more* gnarl into the system?

**Rucker:** For me, nature is always the place to go for replenishment. In earlier times, human dwellings were hand crafted, and they took on some of the complexity and interest of a natural object. With the coming of the industrial revolution, however, we found ways to produce house more cheaply, by using mass-produced, standardized components arranged in generic kinds of architectures. And the whole notion of architectural ornament has largely fallen away.

Computers can work in either way—on the one hand, using computers makes it ever easier to produce totally generic and uninteresting architecture and design. On the other hand, with just a little more effort, we can use our computers to produce unusual and organic designs such as, for instance, the buildings of Frank Gehry. And when we couple these designs to computer-automated fabrication tools, it becomes commercially feasible to be marketing things with unusual and individually customized shapes.

So there's a dream that, in time, computers can help make the world a lot gnarlier. But that's only going to happen if individual people demand this and do their best to resist centralized control. I don't think the situation is hopeless—the Web's anarchic freedom and lack of control gives me a lot of hope. Anyone at all can put up a Web page, and everyone can see it—without any authorities ever getting involved. Really, I never would have predicted that things would turn out this well.

**The Fan:** In *Hylozoic*, the orphidnet reality soap opera *Founders* posits a potential path for the future of media. What needs to happen for the current world of Twitter, blogs, and online video to more closely approach that scenario?

**Rucker:** We are indeed on the verge of what you might call "me-shows." A person broadcasts their whole life in real time, and people watch it—unless I'm mistaken, I think some people are already doing this.

The catch is that most people won't watch a me-show. I mean, why would you? Most of us are only interested in our *own* ongoing me-show. The whole trick of art is to somehow get people to devote a couple of hours to soaking up your own personal view of things.

That said, at any given time, there are always a couple of celebrities who obsess the public to the point where a me-show on them *would* attract viewers. What could

happen is that there are indeed me-shows, but with a fairly rapid turnover in terms of who they showed. And now and then, some off-the-wall, unknown individual will get interest going in their own me-show, if only for the proverbial 15 minutes.

**The Fan:** Interactive fiction and hypertext fiction almost seem quaint relics at this point. Do they still hold any promise for communication, storytelling, and media? What new literary forms might emerge?

**Rucker:** The big problem with a branching, interactive, or hypertextual novel is always that we prefer for the writer to make these choices for us, and to deliver a single shapely narrative. Probably our intelligence would need to be amplified or augmented for us to have the patience to absorb a novel that has a large number of alternate threads.

One of the minor themes in *Postsingular* and *Hylozoic* is that the characters have not only become telepathic, they've all gotten these huge amounts of extra memory connected to their minds. My character Thuy Ngyuen is a writer who takes advantage of this by creating what she called "metanovels," which are perhaps a thousand times as long as today's novels. Rather than writing a metanovel word by word, you kind of think it through, and "reading" it is also a somewhat telepathic process.

My private running joke in *Postsingular* and *Hylozoic* was that, during the course of these books, Thuy is writing metanovels called *Wheenk* and *Hive Mind* that in some sense mirror the novels within which she lives.

**The Fan:** Parts of *Postsingular* were originally published as short stories in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*. Did you originally have a novel in mind, or did you expand the novel from a series of interconnected stories?

**Rucker:** As you say, I had those two stories, "Chu and the Nants" and "Postsingular" in *Asimov's*. Originally I thought of "Chu and the Nants" as a standalone story. I got the idea for it while I was teaching a course at San Jose State on what I billed as the "Philosophy of Computation." The Chu story was in some sense a rebuke to the transhumanist dream of replacing Earth by a gargantuan computer simulation—which is something I consider to be a really horrible and misguided idea. Just for starters—as anyone who's worked with computers knows—the simulation would inevitably suck.

Anyway, after I sold the Chu story, I kept thinking about it and wondering what would happen next, and considering the ways in which we might have a postsingular world which remains vibrant and interesting—an ultra-futuristic world in which we don't all get steamrollered into two-dimensional *Jetsons* or *Star Trek* characters. And that's how I got into the "Postsingular" story, and by then I knew I was going to expand it into a novel or two or three.

**The Fan:** You taught computer science in Silicon Valley for 20 years. What do you think the most important current trend is in this area?

**Rucker:** There's all sorts of things I could talk about, such as social networking or location-based programs, but for

today I'll just focus on cloud computing, the notion of having your computing device be a very bare and simple tool whose programs and data all live up in the "cloud" of servers in cyberspace. The cloud is getting a lot of buzz this year.

The Web in general and Google in particular are clouds, so obviously the cloud is a win in some contexts. But I want to remark that cloud computing isn't going to work out as a good idea for every situation. At least for now, I'd prefer not to entrust my writings and my photos solely to servers in cyberspace.

Someone once said: "Digital storage! It lasts for eternity... or for seven years, whichever comes first." The point is that digital storage is very flaky, and you really have to tend to those files that you want to keep alive.

Another issue I have with using the cloud for personal computing is that I don't want to be continually data mined, I don't want to look at ads when I access my stuff, I don't want to maintain a subscription, and I don't want to lose everything whenever the cloud gets munged by computer viruses.

And I prefer not to use cloud-based software (such as the Google word processor) because I'd rather not have the tools that I work with being upgraded overnight all the time. "Surprise! New interface!" One big upgrade every few years is painful enough. And, of course, a tool that lives on your local machine is going to run faster.

With all that said—sure, when I'm dead and I'm done changing my stuff, why not put my writings and my photos all in the cloud? That's a type of digital immortality that I sometimes call the lifebox. It's like a pyramid. The Blog of the Pharaohs!

**The Fan:** Are there any parallels between computer programming and writing fiction?

**Rucker:** There are some rough parallels. For one thing, it's good to have an overall architecture or plan for a program or a book before you start working on it. Another similarity

# Rucker, Reviewed

*Postsingular* by Rudy Rucker (Tor, 2007)

*Hylozoic* by Rudy Rucker (Tor, 2009)

The two books in this story arc can be read separately, even out of order, but I recommend that you start with the first book. Of the two novels, I found *Postsingular* to be the stronger unit, and it establishes many of the characters and concepts, which could be useful background when things get really weird. Because they can, and they do.

At base, these are novels about the singularity, and what happens afterward. Rucker's vision of the singularity is relatively close to home, involving nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, biology, and higher mathematics—as well as parallel planes. There are various entities that bridge the technological and the biological, including nants and orchids (a play on RFID, perhaps), the Peng, and other creatures that inhabit our and other planes. A talking pitchfork! A magic harp! Hieronymus Bosch! But the novels are really about the people that inhabit the postsingular

is that the standard design patterns used for software programs serve a purpose like the default literary tropes that we use for our tales.

But really the two activities are completely different. I write with my whole mind, my whole soul—and computer programming is a much narrower kind of task. It can be a huge amount of work to make very simple things happen in a program, but if you're writing, it might only take a few well-chosen words. At this point, programming is an exceedingly brittle and unforgiving art form. Leave out one semicolon, and all you see is a blank screen.

**The Fan:** Another theme in *Hylozoic* is the tender balance between the value of expanding one's consciousness through chemical and technological means and the potential risks and damage of excess. How do you strive for that balance personally?

**Rucker:** These days I strike the balance by being clean and sober! When I was younger, like so many writers, I liked to think that getting high gave me creative inspiration—and maybe, now and then, it did. At the very least, it brought me into contact with some colorful people. But at some point, the cost began seeming too steep.

What I've found over the recent years is that I don't actually need any kind of chemical input in order to have strange ideas. Come to think of it, I even had unusual ideas when I was an kid. That's just how my mind happens to work—you might say that I'm lucky.

These days if I feel dry or uncreative, it helps to simply do something different. Go on a bike ride, go to the beach, see a movie, talk to people or, if I have the time and the money, take a vacation trip. And even if I don't do anything much, in a day or two the images and ideas come dripping back in. Sometimes it just takes a little patience. So far, the Muse keeps showing up.

You can learn more about Rucker and his work at <http://www.cs.sjsu.edu/faculty/rucker/>.

world along with these newcomers.

Rucker uses that framework as a backdrop to explore self-awareness, the role of technology and media, aspects of privacy, the power of creativity, and the value of relationships. There's an undercurrent of anti-commercialism and media criticism running throughout the novel, but it's not a political text. Instead, it's an occasionally cartoony, always gleeful, game with words. By limiting the story to the local and physical—while examining the outer limits of postsingular surreality—Rucker applies real constraints to his fiction. At the same time, he has a blast pushing up against the membrane surrounding his literary construct.

Because there's so much inventiveness—craziness—in the novels, they might be better read with a pause in between. I read them back to back and at times felt almost overwhelmed. Wrap your head around these books with care, but wrap. Wrap! (HR)



# The God Monologues

Fiction by Jefferson P. Swycaffer

## Part I: Man

We started with ghosts. The team consisted of a chemist (myself) and a physicist, with three grad students we could call upon for grunt work. Our budget was just the tag end of the grant money left over from another project entirely.

Instead of returning it (never!) we worked out an underhanded bit of creative accounting, and splurged on some experiments we'd come up with. The fact that we'd been drinking at the time is of little or no consequence.

Ghosts are interesting. They're all over the place. You can't go ten miles in this part of the country without stumbling over someone's haunted mansion, or haunted cabin, or haunted hotel. I even once saw a haunted loo.

But what exactly is a ghost? Departed human, right? Immortal debris left over after a mortal coil-shuffling event. The spirit in a spirit world. Dead man walking. Ex-mortal. Someone who had ought to go to his reward, but got lost on the way.

So... Why can we see 'em?

Think about it for a while. How can you see ghosts? How else? They emit photons. They possess some form of energy, which flows in some fashion, exciting some variety of particles, thus inducing some kind of glow. All perfectly sensible. And thus we spent a week in the back country. We drove up hill and down vale on winding narrow roads, sleeping by day in the van and spending our nights shivering in the middle of graveyards or gangling abandoned houses, the kinds with shutters and gables and mansard roofs. We took a lot of pictures.

Some of the pictures turned out.

Most didn't. We expected that. But some came out quite nicely, showing man-shaped glowing things with dark smudges where their eyes ought to be and gaping maws that seemed to be trying to impart wisdom or warning. Ghosts. Real, live ghosts.

Back to the lab. A couple of weeks working with film-chemistry (me) and lens filters (my partner). Back to the countryside. Back to long eerie nights and hair-raising encounters, and lots and lots of photographs.

Are ghosts spiritual entities? What does that mean, anyway? What is spirit? As one might expect from classic ghost yarns, the stuff is hard to get a handle on. Ghost stuff doesn't have mass; we never captured any in any of our bottle traps. You could go tearing at a ghost with your fists and never feel a thing. It didn't take us long to work out that it was, ultimately, immaterial. Not in the sense that it was not made of matter—atoms—but in the sense that we didn't give a damn.

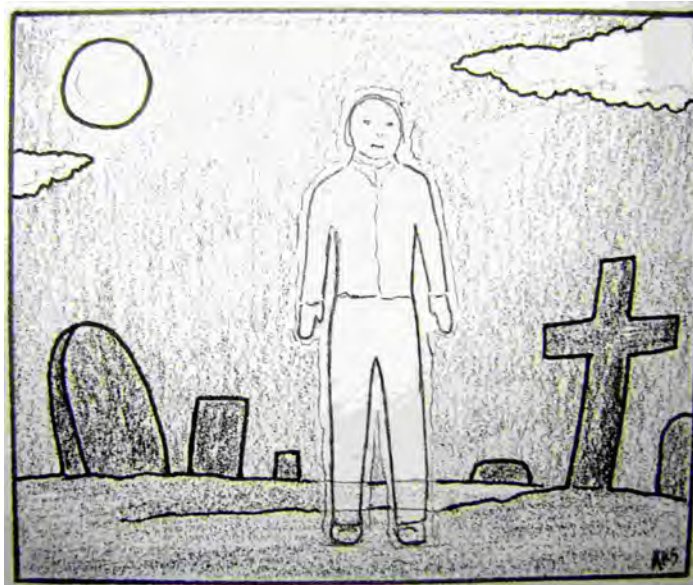
We weren't out to capture the cussed things. We just wanted to know what made them shine. And, in due course, we worked it out. We figured out the optimum system of colored dyes (me) and polarizing lenses (him) and we came away with photographs that would convince even the hardest-hearted skeptic. And, failing that, we figured we'd make a pile flogging them to the tabloids.

Then we got creative. We worked out a way to project ghost light from a lantern. The effect, in a darkened room, is dramatic. Ghosts pop out like fog in the beam of a searchlight. Big cottony ghosts, and little fluttering ghosts, and everything in between. Being scientists, we spent some time making measurements and drawing distribution charts. But being tinkerers more than anything else, we kept on working with our instruments.

Basically, the key is that there are two universes, the material and the spiritual. But there is an interface between them. If it helps any, think of amphiphilic molecules, such as ordinary soaps, that have an attraction both to oil and water. They allow oil and water, ordinarily immiscible, to mix. Well, somewhere in the ghost's make-up are amphiphilic substances—things that are able to connect to matter and energy in our world, and also to connect to spirit stuff in the spirit world.

We'd learned how to excite those substances, although we hadn't yet learned what they were. (I think they are specific proteins built up in limited regions of the human brain. My partner leans toward quantum energy strings.) But, you see, it doesn't matter what they are. We'd learned how to cause a basic reaction.

Neither of us is an anatomist, and we didn't have the budget (nor the inclination) to perform brain sectioning studies. However, we did amuse ourselves by shining our spirit lights at people, and, indeed, in the darkness, some people glowed slightly. This indicated that the envelope of



Angela K. Scott-Cox

their soul extruded slightly past the boundary of their body. Mine, by the way, doesn't. Neither does my partner's. Maybe we've just got shriveled little souls. It wouldn't surprise me a bit.

Still, it was a thrill, and we did not soon get tired of it. We went to crowded airports, or shopping malls just before major holidays; we went to funerals, and weddings, and we were lucky enough to be on hand during the worst of a major race riot. Sure enough, people's souls change shape, color, and texture according to their moral disposition. Emotions have some visible effect, but it's morals that make the soul. You can actually identify evil people—not always, but now and then—by the photographic methods we had devised. I'm not going to name names, but at least one U.S. Senator, two priests, and a smiling beat policeman we encountered, all ought to be kept inside a pentagram and candles, so diabolical are their personal moral auras. But, again, I don't suppose I have anything to be proud of in that department.

Is the substance—the interfacial material that conjoins the universes—subject to decomposition? We thought it ought to be, as ghosts fade over time. So we boosted the output on our ghostlights. Pumped it way up. Mased it.

Burns ghosts away like setting fire to tissue paper.

We went on a spree, frying ghosts away. We wiped out a whole graveyard one night. The ghosts grew more and more agitated, but didn't have the behavioral wherewithal to flee. They kept coming at us, and we kept flaming them down. More fun than a video game. I got hundreds, but my partner got the high score. He worked out a wider dispersion on his lenses, that's all.

We sinned. I confess it readily. We went out one night and shone our soul-burning lights at people. And, yes, we also tried it on ourselves, although at a lower wattage.

It hurts. It hurts badly.

You see, when you strike a living person with this ray, you aren't engaging their brain, but their soul. We'd invented the damnation gun.

We stopped that right away. We took a long weekend off, and talked it over at length.

Then, we figured, what the hell do we have to lose? We're mortals, doomed to die. It's in the contract. And we're non-believers, by anyone's standards, so we're looking at hell anyway. So...

We built a bigger emitter. Put in a lot of watts. Nice big telescope lenses. Cryogenic coolant, a xenon arc fed through lasing tubes, the whole affair looks like a shoulder-mounted anti-tank gun. But we weren't out shooting at tanks.

We were shooting at angels.

Got five.

Now, here's the deal. A wise man once said that if something looks like a duck and sounds like a duck, it is a duck. But that means that a loon, which looks and sounds like a duck, is a duck. And that means that a grebe, which looks and sounds like a loon, is a duck. And that means that swans, which are like grebes, which are like loons, are ducks. And thus anything swanlike, or anything that is like anything that is like a swan... is a duck. In just a few steps, you can define every bird there is as being a duck.

We worked out ways to extend the reach of our weapon into the spirit world. We knew how to excite the first stratum of substance, the interface between matter and spirit. We then used that reaction to excite the next layer of stuff, and the layer beyond that, and so on. We could set up a cascade effect that reached far, far beyond our ordinary ability to manipulate.

We worked out some of the basic chemistry (me) or physics (my partner) of the spirit universe. We even discovered ways to initiate chain reactions and runaway processes.

The two of us, working pretty much alone, were able to build a gun that could knock God off his throne and lay him as low as he laid Sodom, Gomorrah, or the Pharaoh of Egypt. We have this gun now, and we know how to use it.

So, God. God, old fellow. Old chap, old creator, old soul.

We want Eden back. We want to eat of the Fruit of the Tree of Life, and live forever.

We're asking nicely. We can afford to.

We've got a gun.

## Part II: God

In the beginning...

No, no: I don't need to tell the whole story again, now do I? And yet, in light of today's events, perhaps it is best if I do.

Theologians have recognized three principal ways in which My thoughts are made known to mankind: the first is Scriptural Revelation, in the form of the holy texts and sacred writings of the world's religions. The second is Special Revelation: miracles, signs and wonders, the images of saints in drying concrete, weeping statues, and the like. The third is the Revelation of Nature, studying the physical universe and divining My will by increasing your own understanding of rocks, plants, animals, clouds, and stars.

That is one of the motivations behind the science of Physics. Oh, yes, there is ordinary everyday curiosity, and certainly there are practical goals, as every abstract puzzle you solve leads to useful technology which can be used, one hopes, to better the world. But an understanding of creation itself, a deeper comprehension of how the cosmos is made, is, at the heart of things, one of the most compelling reasons that people turn to a study of the natural universe.

This has led to a certain degree of complication... Let Me explain...

When you were very young, and I, myself, had a different way of viewing you, I made the world without a great deal of concern for its inner workings. The stars were just little lights in the sky; the sea was deep beyond all measurement and the mountains were high; the Sun gave light and the fields brought forth both herds and harvests. It never seemed likely that you would go to great lengths to learn more. What need for sea bottoms, orbital mechanics, or a genetic code?

But you were observant, and systematic, and I quickly saw that the world's workings must go beyond the ostensible level of mere purpose. You needed to know why and how, and it was My duty to provide answers.

Now, allow Me to explain something important: I am not malicious nor deceptive. I have played fair with you from the beginning. Yes, at times I have made changes in the way the universe works—but those are changes you could never have observed. Thus, when you worked out the principles of optics and learned to refract light into a spectrum, it was necessary for Me to go into the universal sky and alter the light as it travelled from the distant stars. When you demonstrated that light has a measurable, finite speed, I had to touch every ray of light in the whole of the cosmos, to make it conform to those rules.

You couldn't have known. You could never have detected the changes. They were made outside of your ability to observe. The first light to fall upon your faces was of a different nature than light today. I changed it to make it consistent, not with your theories, but with itself.

As you learned and observed more and more, I was given certain choices to make. Should the seas have bottoms, or not? Should the stars be infinitely distant, or not? Should the genetic code be chemical? Should organic chemistry be able to be reconciled with inorganic chemistry? You asked the questions, and it was incumbent upon Me to create the answers. And the answers must be self-consistent, for that rule alone I would never allow Myself to break. Logical self-contradiction is almost—not quite, but almost—as loathsome to Me as are wickedness, iniquity, and sin.

But every decision turned out to lead to a thousand others. Each revelation led you to ask new questions; every experimental verification of a new theory led, not to satisfaction and closure, but to the formulation of new theories. When you saw that matter was made of atoms, I touched all matter, and, Lo!, all things were made of atoms. When you saw that atoms must themselves be divisible, and I agreed, for that was implied by the periodic nature of the elements, I made electrons and atomic nuclei. When you saw that there was a problem that this left unsolved, I formed protons and neutrons.

You became more skillful, and the riddles burgeoned. I created an explanation, every time, revealing new details. I made the new details, for these were vital to opening up to you the workings of the previous new level of revelation.

At some point, I began to be concerned. Who was really controlling the show? Was I creating mesons, hadrons, leptons, and the like—or were you? Your theoretical predictions were always so logical, so keenly reasoned and compelling, it seemed only fair to confirm them. And yet, in the chaotic and swelling subatomic zoo, it seemed to Me that you had taken a role of your own in the designs of creation.

At some point, I began to see that, in a way, I had trapped Myself. I had created a universe so rich in details that there could never be a full and complete explanation for everything.

Take, if you will, mathematics. I gave you the everyday counting numbers, convenient for keeping track of the animals in your herds. But you saw that numbers could be arranged in figures, as square numbers, for instance. Some were prime, and some were composite. I was pleased at your discovery; but soon, My brow was creased with concern as you worked out deeper and deeper properties of numbers. Numbers! The purest abstraction, and yet, by the rule I had set myself, even abstractions must be consistent with themselves. And before much time at all had passed, you were able to prove—to prove!—the property of arithmetic called "undecidability," in which the truth or error of an arithmetical conjecture might not even be possible to learn. You had, in a way, thrown up a boundary about Me, which I might not cross!

So, then, with Physics. You learned to create particle/anti-particle pairs, such that information about one half of the pair would confer knowledge about the other half. I was soon in the rather uncomfortable position of having to keep track of the properties of particles all over the place, just in case you chose to measure the properties of the corresponding partner-particles.

Then came the awful day when you worked out a means of tracking entangled quantum particle pairs at vastly disparate velocities. Trans-relativistic entanglement! I was staggered. I had, for all of my reputed omniscience, never expected you to pursue this abstract course of curiosity to its ultimate end. But you had.

You had come up with an experiment that implied time travel.

In practice? No. You weren't going to be building time chambers and moving back, bodily, to eras gone by. There were mere engineering objections that kept this ever from becoming practical. But that isn't the point.

You *could*. In pure abstract theory, you had worked out a way to send a signal back, to be received at a time before it had been sent. There were paradoxes aplenty, but these were not what concerned Me.

What concerned me was that, now, you could, in an idealized thought experiment, observe the laws of physics as they existed in earlier times. You could go back to a time before atoms had protons, before light had a wavelength, before the oceans had bottoms.

I was defeated, not by any failure of My own cleverness, nor by any real triumph of your ingenuity, but by the unexpected combination of both. You had the means to, as the saying goes, "look behind the curtain." You had the ability to catch Me in the act.

I always used to laugh when I read the headlines in the Tabloids. "Science Proves God's Existence." But I am not laughing tonight.

Instead, tonight, in the light of circumstances, I stand before you, in mutual honor and awe. It is with great respect for you, and with at least a small measure of pride, that I accept this, the Nobel Prize for Physics, for my contributions to the understanding of fundamental principles.

Thank you.

# 2009 N3F Amateur Short Story Contest

## Story Contest Rules and Entry Blank

1. This contest is open to all amateur writers in the field, regardless of whether they're members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. For the purposes of this contest, we define an amateur as someone who has sold no more than two (2) stories to professional science fiction or fantasy publications.

2. Stories entered in the contest must be original, unpublished, not longer than 8,500 words in length—and must be related to the science fiction, fantasy, or similar genres in the opinion of the judges.

3. Manuscripts should be typed, single sided on 8 1/2"-by-11" white paper, double spaced, with pages numbered. The name of the author should not appear anywhere on the manuscript to ensure impartial judging. Photocopies are acceptable, if they are of good quality. Computer printouts must be legible. Email attachments of Word documents are also acceptable.

4. Contestants can enter any number of stories, provided that each is accompanied by a separate entry blank and fee. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) if you would like your story returned at the end of the contest. Do not send your only copy in case of accidental loss; we are not responsible for lost manuscripts. Stories will not be returned without an SASE.

5. The entry fee is \$3 per story for N3F members in good standing, and \$5 for non-members. The extra \$2 is for printing and publicity, which will be paid for using N3F funds. The basic \$3 is for judging expenses and prizes. While N3F members are encouraged to enter the contest,

members will *not* receive any preference in judging. Because of a long-standing agreement with the British Science Fiction Association, BSFA members can pay the same fee as N3F members.

6. Cash prizes totaling \$100 will be awarded as follows: First prize is \$50, second \$30, and third \$20. Honorable mentions and semi-finalists will receive a certificate of award.

7. Send all manuscripts, accompanied by SASEs, entry forms, and fees to the contest manager: Jeff Redmond, 1335 Beechwood NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505-3830; [redmondjeff@hotmail.com](mailto:redmondjeff@hotmail.com). Make checks payable to William Center. Well-concealed American cash (dollar bills) is also acceptable. All entries must be received or postmarked no later than Dec. 31, 2009.

8. The preliminary judge, who will pick the 10 or 12 semi-finalists, will be a knowledgeable member of the N3F. The final judge will be a professionally published writer.

9. The N3F assumes no publishing rights or obligations. We want to encourage professional sales, not fan publication. All entries will be returned after the contest is over, if accompanied by an SASE. Winners will be notified as soon as the judging is completed. Announcements and notifications of winning entries will be made in March 2010.

Jeff Redmond himself won the N3F writing contest in 2004.

Please take your time and submit your best work. You can resubmit stories previously entered. All entries will be kept confidential and will be judged fairly and anonymously. The deadline for all entries is Dec. 31, 2009. Good luck!

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## Entry Form

(Detach or photocopy. Must accompany all entries.)

Title of story (for identification): \_\_\_\_\_

Author's name and address: \_\_\_\_\_

Author's email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Author's age: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is the entry fee of \$5 (for N3F or BSFA members, the fee is \$3). I have read the above rules for the 2009 N3F Amateur Short Story Contest, and I agree to them.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to:** Jeff Redmond, 1335 Beechwood NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505-3830

# Re: The Review Section

Unless otherwise indicated, the reviews editor compiles and writes the review section. Members of the N3F are invited and encouraged to submit reviews, preferably by email, although postal mail will be accepted. If you send a review by email and do not hear back within a reasonable length of time, please write to check on its status. Publishers: We are especially interested in receiving new books to consider for review. Jon D. Swartz, 11600 Starview Trail, Austin, TX 78750; jon\_swartz@hotmail.com.

**Editor:** Heath Row (HR) for Jon D. Swartz (JS).

**Contributors:** Gar Chen (GC), Denise Fisk (DF), Jack Robins (JR), R-Lauraine Tutihasi (RLT), and Matthew Weitendorf (MW). **Illustrator:** Ruth R. Davidson.



## Books

***Digital Fortress*** by Dan Brown (St. Martin's Press, 1998)

***Angels & Demons*** by Dan Brown (Pocket Books, 2000)

***Deception Point*** by Dan Brown (Simon & Schuster, 2001)

The publishers call them techno-thrillers, suspense thrillers, or suspense mysteries, but science fiction fans know them for what they really are: near-future science fiction stories. Whether by Tom Clancy, Michael Crichton, James Rollins, or Dan Brown—the subject of the current review—techno-thrillers deal with topics such as artificial intelligence, extraterrestrials, antimatter, supercomputers, runaway robots, sunken spaceships, gene manipulation, lost worlds, and cryptography—just like the plots of countless sf stories in *Amazing*, *Astounding*, *Galaxy*, and other sf magazines during the last 80-plus years. Many of us have read Brown's hugely successful *The Da Vinci Code* (or seen the movie based on the book), but this review will be limited to three of his *other* techno-thrillers, novels that can only be considered science fiction—despite what their publishers say.

In 1998's *Digital Fortress*, the National Security Agency (NSA) is being held hostage by a code that, if released, would cripple United States intelligence. There are two main settings for this story, the NSA in the United States and Seville, Spain—where a Japanese cryptographer recently dismissed from NSA drops dead of a supposed heart attack. The cryptographer leaves behind a computer program, *Digital Fortress*, that creates unbreakable codes

and could make NSA's supercomputer useless. The deceased wore a ring embossed with a decryption key. That ring is the MacGuffin of the plot, and everyone winds up feverishly looking for it. NSA cryptology deputy director Trevor Strathmore dispatches linguist Dave Becker, Susan Fletcher's lover, to recover the ring. In Seville, chase scenes abound as Becker and others search for the ring. Meanwhile, at home, other critical events take place at NSA. Nothing is as it seems in a story whose climax includes murder and double crosses. In addition, *Digital Fortress* is a love story.

*Angels & Demons*, then, was Brown's first novel featuring symbologist Robert Langdon. In this story, Langdon is summoned to analyze a symbol burned into a physicist who is also a Catholic priest. This scientist-priest, Leonardo Vetra, had created matter out of pure energy. While investigating his murder, Langdon discovers evidence of an ancient secret brotherhood that has surfaced to carry on its war with the Catholic Church.

Langdon's worst fears are confirmed on the eve of the Vatican's holy conclave when a messenger of the Illuminati announces he has hidden an antimatter time bomb in Vatican City. Langdon jets to Rome to join forces with Vittoria Vetra, an Italian scientist (and the adopted daughter of Leonardo Vetra), to help the Vatican survive. Langdon and Vetra “follow a 400-year old trail of ancient symbols that snakes across Rome toward the long-forgotten Illuminati lair, a secret location that contains the only hope for Vatican salvation.” Brown relates further adventures of Langdon in *The Da Vinci Code* and in *The Lost Symbol*.

Finally, *Deception Point* opens in Washington, DC, during a tight Presidential campaign. The incumbent is a major NASA supporter. His opponent, Senator Sedgewick Sexton—who is basing his campaign on turning NASA into a private, non-governmental agency—is ahead in the polls. Sexton is also accepting illegal campaign contributions from private aerospace companies that have billions to gain from the privatization of NASA.

Then a NASA satellite detects a large, high-density rock buried below the Milne Ice Shelf on Ellesmere Island high in the Arctic Circle. NASA scientists determine the rock to be a meteor containing fossils proving that life exists elsewhere in the universe. To verify the authenticity of the find, the White House sends a team of independent, civilian experts to a NASA habisphere that has been built over the meteor. One of these experts is Rachel Sexton, an intelligence analyst and Senator Sexton's alienated daughter.

While in the Arctic, Rachel uncovers what could be scientific trickery, a deception that could cost the President his bid for re-election. When she and her colleagues attempt to investigate further, they are attacked and almost lose their lives. Their only hope for survival is to discover the culprits and expose the truth. Brown's fascination with intricate science serves him well in *Deception Point*, as he combines science, science fiction, and high-tech weapons

in a fast-moving story of politics and intrigue.

Although readers of Brown's techno-thrillers aren't supposed to know they're reading science fiction, references to science fiction are in all of his books (e. g., "Good science fiction has its roots in good science."). In all of these novels, scientific developments are crucial to the plots. To quote John Clute and Peter Nicholls's reference work *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, "Any novel in which future developments in science play a central role is not a techno-thriller at all: It is sf." (JS)

***Dog Days*** by John Levitt (Ace, 2007)

In the urban fantasy subgenre, the setting is in a contemporary city, and the writer gets to tweak the rules on how this urban fantasy universe is defined. Levitt distances himself from such terms as sorceress, witch, mage, or warlock to avoid familiar associations. Instead, spellcasters are called Practitioners. Magic ability is called Talent, which manifests itself in a small segment of the population, usually during adolescence. The sometime wayward teen is paired with a mentor, so as to blend in among the Normal (non-magical) community more easily while honing their magical education.

The protagonist Mason ekes out a living as a jazz guitarist in contemporary San Francisco. He doesn't like to practice, gets bored easily, and lives in a converted garage with a magical creature called an ifrit, which takes the form of a mini doberman that he names Lou.

What makes Mason a good musician—improvisation—also makes him a talented practitioner. He's good at inventing spells as the need arises. In one instance, he used the natural power of the sun and combined it with organic magic to redirect the life force of an ivy plant to cast a binding spell.

Of late, practitioners have been subjected to a mean-spirited practical joker. For instance, a practitioner returned home to find every stick of furniture removed—even the soap from the soap dish—despite the fact that the house was warded against intrusion. Another female redhead practitioner awoke to find the next morning that she is now a brunette. The current theory is that this practical joker is testing the limits of his power.

Improvisation also provides Mason with an instinctive understanding of relationships and to see associations that others fail to notice. That ability makes him ideally suited as an investigator, if not for the fact that he is basically lazy.

After two failed non-lethal magical attacks on him, plus the voodoo doll left in his van, Mason moves to investigate why someone wants him neutralized.

Can Mason find answers before these magical attacks on him escalate to a more lethal note? (Never mind that the last investigator on the same case turned up dead.) Is there a connection between the attacks on him and the mysterious prankster? (GC)

***The Enchantment Emporium*** by Tanya Huff (DAW, 2009)

I met Tanya Huff many years ago at a small convention in Michigan. Without looking in my diary, I couldn't tell you which convention. When she started publishing, I noted that she wrote fantasy. As fantasy isn't my primary interest,

I didn't check out her work.

Recently I watched a TV series based on some of her work. The series was titled *Blood Ties* and was carried on the Lifetime network. Unfortunately, they never aired the last few episodes, and I never had the time to check them out online.

I welcomed the chance to read some of Huff's actual writing. I was a bit leery. As I mentioned above, I generally prefer sf to fantasy; but I was not disappointed. One type of modern fantasy I like is written by F. Paul Wilson. His is much darker than Huff's. But they share some characteristics. They both take place in the modern day, mostly in settings we can all recognize. Huff's is much lighter. While Wilson's people are mostly victims of the dark side, Huff's main characters are less or more than human, depending on how you look at it.

In *The Enchantment Emporium*, most of the characters are witches. There is also a sorcerer or two, dragons, a leprechaun, and various minor characters who are not exactly human. In many ways, the novel is also a coming of age story. Alysha Catherine Gale is a witch and a member of a very large family of witches. One day she receives a letter from her grandmother leaving her store in Calgary to Alysha. Having recently lost her job, she travels to Calgary to check out the situation. She quickly becomes involved with a human reporter. He turns to be implicated in the complex situation she slowly uncovers. The tension builds up slowly and grabs the reader. If all of Huff's writing is like this, I'll have to read more of it. I highly recommend this book to all fans of urban fantasy, as I believe this type of fiction is called. (RLT)

***A Grey Moon Over China*** by Thomas A. Day (Tor, 2009)

This book was originally published in 2006 by Black Heron Press, a small literary press located in Seattle. Tor probably picked it up after a successful run there.

I have mixed feelings about this novel. The general feel is rather grimmer than I care for in my fiction. The ending is mixed, though one could say it's more upbeat than not. The book is written as a memoir, so the reader knows that the protagonist survives to tell the tale.

It takes place in a dystopic near future when all the world seems to be at war with one another. No one trusts anyone else. In this climate, our main character finds a new invention that could revolutionize the world. Instead of sharing it with the world, though, he sees it as a ticket to freedom—off planet. He starts a secret project to get himself and select others to an Earth-like planet someplace else. They use some sort of star gate, which is never really explained. It allows people to travel great distances in a short time. To help in their endeavor, they invent drones, which are robotic creations that can learn and build replicas. The lack of trust permeates even the project, and many members have secret agendas of their own that are kept from the others. The secrecy leads to things going wrong. The upshot is that when the group travel to a new star system, they bring all their political baggage and biases with them. The first system they reach is barely habitable. There is a better system through another gate, but they find an enemy they don't understand there. They

must somehow come to grips with the enemy—and with each other.

I found the character development to be less than I would have liked. Any development was so slow as to be hardly noticeable until near the end. I almost wrote the book off. There are, however, excellent insights into the human character and some hope that one day at least, some of us will overcome our shortcomings. (RLT)

***Magic to the Bone*** by Devon Monk (Roc, 2008)

In this urban fantasy universe, magic is a commodity freely accessible to all. Properly used, it can save lives; ease pain; and enhance food, fashion, entertainment, and sex. Over time, magic users discover the price for its use was some form of pain: short-term migraines or muscle cramps or long-term fever or flu-like symptoms. Continued use of magic also leads to memory gaps. Powerful spells can even result in short-term amnesia.

Magic users came up with a dispersement spell that enables them to choose which form of pain to accept. Power users, like big businesses and corporations, use legal proxy offloading—siphoning the negative effects to prison or penitentiary inmates. Some users illegally offload on unknowing, innocent victims, a process known as transference.

Allie, a six-foot-tall brunette with pale green eyes, is a Hound. She makes a marginal living freelancing in the poorer section of North Portland (Oregon). A Hound is a combination tracker and magic forensic specialist who can trace a spell (each with a unique signature of the caster, much like a DNA sequence or fingerprint) back to its point of origin.

One day, Allie is asked to look at the 5-year-old son of a former client in the poorer section of town. Upon examining the boy and retracing the spell, she learns to her horror that it originated from her estranged father. Even under truth spell, he denies knowledge or responsibility.

Forgetting to first use a dispersement spell when confronting her father, Allie goes home to sleep off the painful price of magic use. When she awakes the next morning, her world falls apart. Her father is found murdered, and the killing spell has Allie's signature on it. Now, other Hounds are on her trail.

Can she elude the Hounds long enough to find out who murdered her father? He had four ex-wives, and there is the current Mrs. Beckstrom, her stepmother. Of course, Allison "Allie" Beckstrom is now the prime suspect.

*Magic to the Bone* is a well-written, suspenseful read that will keep the reader engaged to the end. Monk doles out just enough information to engage the reader's curiosity, although not every mystery is explained—a sneaky way to hook the reader into reading the sequel. (GC)

***The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike*** by Philip K. Dick (Tor, 2009)

This novel was originally published about 1984 and was reissued by Tom Doherty Associates in February 2009. I always approach Phil's books with trepidation because his books can be so weird that I might not like them. For

example, he wrote one book about time going backward and dead people rising from graveyards—only to keep growing younger until they return to the mother's womb. I had an ambivalent feeling about it.

But I did like this one. It has characters who are people, not cardboards. The main characters are Leo Runcible, a brilliant, civic-minded liberal Jewish real estate agent living as the only Jew in a rural town in Marin County, California. His wife is not Jewish. They are constantly in conflict with a neighbor, Walter Dombrosio, a talented designer, as well as a practical joker. For example, Walter made up cow suits that seemed so authentic that when he and friends put them on and mingled with regular cows—and went along with them for the milking—they almost gave the milkers heart failure by suddenly speaking up and criticizing them.

Walter, however, is one of those macho guys who treats his wife abominably. When Indian artifacts started washing down from Runcible's property, Walter and his friends dig up a very old skull of an individual with a big jaw and teeth (all of which are exactly alike) and plants the skull on Runcible's property. After the skull is found by Runcible and an amateur archeologist, the two are excited and think they have discovered the first Neanderthal skull in North America. They get newspapers and colleges involved. Then it is discovered that the skull was fairly recent and, upon tracing its origin, what they find is so horrible that everyone's life is changed. (JR)

***New Tricks*** by John Levitt (Ace, 2008)

In this urban fantasy, Mason is a (magic) Practitioner who ekes out a living as a jazz guitarist in contemporary San Francisco.

Improvisation makes him not just a good musician, but a talented (magic) Practitioner and a gifted investigator. That skill enables him to instinctively make associations and relationships that less talented investigators might not notice initially.

Not surprisingly, Halloween night is a favorite time for magic practitioners, as they can congregate openly. The unwritten rule is to come up with the most convincing and imaginative illusion, using the minimum of magical talent. Thus a vampire can be seen conversing with a zombie, a werewolf, and a demon on Castro Street in the evening hours.

Merriment turns to concern when one of their number fails to appear, especially when the female practitioner had previously called, and she said she found something odd. She wanted to discuss it that night with them.

Eventually, Mason and friends find her on a solitary bench by the water, with a slight smudge on her unmoving body, eyes staring blankly, fists clenched tight. Upon closer examination, someone left a neat hole in her forehead, the result of a failed attempt to magically possess her mind and body.

It appeared an identical incident happened up north in Portland, Oregon. A brother-sister practitioner duo have been called in to assist Mason's investigation into his friend's demise.

With the exposition defining his universe completed in

his first novel *Dog Days*, Levitt jumps directly into the plot, creating a riveting fantasy-murder mystery. Mason pursues his investigation through the mundane and magical underbelly of San Francisco and encounters a host of unusual characters and red herrings. Like a good murder mystery, the culprit is the last person you'd expect. (GC)

***Night Life*** by Caitlin Kittredge (St. Martin's, 2008)

Luna Wilder is a young, hip police officer in Nocturne City. Her job is to apprehend the guilty and solve the murders of the dead. Only she has a very well kept secret. She's a werewolf, bitten on the neck at the tender age of 15 by a (now very ex) boyfriend.

Luna has to keep her secret close to her vest, as her human co-workers just wouldn't understand her, um, proclivities. When she gets really mad, the werewolf side of her starts to come out. So it's a daily struggle to keep the werewolf at bay, lest she lose her job, and much more.

A series of gruesome murders have hit Nocturne City, and Luna is assigned to solve them. Among the suspects she meets is Dmitri Sandovsky, the werewolf leader of a local motorcycle pack. It doesn't hurt that he's very, very handsome. Sparks immediately fly between the two, and they fight off a mutual attraction. Also, Luna being a lone werewolf (or Insoli) on her own, learns a bit about what it would be like to live in a pack. She finds out that it's dangerous to be an Insoli.

This book is a great read. The dialogue is crisp and sometimes sassy, and the narrative flows really well. Luna is a likable heroine, if a bit rough around the edges. If you want to find out all about werewolves and their culture, this book is it! Fair warning, though. The book contains a few explicit sex scenes, and some of the language is a bit "salty." Overall, though, I highly recommend it! (DF)

***Pebble in the Sky*** by Isaac Asimov (Tor, 2008)

This book was first published about 1950 (I was 31 years old at the time) as Asimov's first published novel and was republished by Tom Doherty Associates in January 2008. I remember enjoying it when it first came out, but as I reread the book, I found I had forgotten most of the plot.

An elderly Jewish tailor, Joseph Schwartz, 62 years old, is walking along on a street in Chicago opposite the Institute for Nuclear Research. An accident at the institute emits a radioactive wave that sends Joseph thousands of years into the future into Asimov's Galactic Universe. Joseph was lifting up his foot to step over a rag doll when suddenly he and the doll are no longer in Chicago. He manages to find his way to a farm and finds the language has changed so much that he can't understand it. Earth is radioactive in this time period, but the people have developed tolerance.

There are two sets of rulers of this Earth, one a dictatorship by a clique of earthmen who handle Earth's inhabitants, and the other, representatives of the Galactic Emperor of Asimov's first Galactic Empire. The Galactic people wear lead-lined suits if they have to go out of their radioactive-free bubble into Earth's atmosphere. In the future Chicago, now called Chica, there is another institute where Dr. Shekt has developed a "Synapsifier," which

affects minds. But Dr. Shekt is not permitted to use the machine on human minds.

When the farmers bring Joseph as a "volunteer" to be treated, Joseph's mind changes slowly so that he can soon read thoughts. This story is full of conflict and is a page turner. I found it hard to put it down, and I was glad to reread the story. The earth dictators have a scheme to send special mutated radioactive germs to the rest of the galaxy, killing so many of the inhabitants of other planets that Earth can now be the rulers of the entire galaxy. Now it is Joseph and a few others who have to try to stop the earth dictators. Everything they try to do seems unable to stop the dictator. There is also a love story between an archeologist, Bel Arvandan, from the Riegel sector and Dr. Shekt's daughter—with the complications that many non-Earth people treat Earthians as inferior barbarians. (JR)

***Starfinder*** by John Marco (DAW, 2009)

Following his two fantasy trilogies *Tyrants and Kings* and *Eyes of God*, John Marco has embarked on a new series of novels, *Skylords*. This young adult fantasy novel is the first book in that series. Even though it's not necessarily marketed as a YA novel, it reads like one—and even skews a little younger in tone and content than other YA books that I've read. But it's not chapter-book stuff; it's got several interesting ideas in it, reads well, and bodes well for the series as a whole.

One element that struck me as most intriguing were the dragonfly-like ornithopter air machines that seem to be a cross between a helicopter and a biplane. They're flown by the Skynights, who defend the realm of Calio. Secondly, Calio borders a zone called the Reach, a "churning wall of fog" ... "stretching on forever and ever, all the way to the horizon." I found the Reach full of wonderful potential. Here was a zone in which characters—specifically Moth, the protagonist—could get lost, misdirected, confused, challenged, and changed. In the end, that aspect of the book proved disappointing. Turns out it's not all that difficult to get through the Reach. So why had so few people tried—and succeeded—before? The stuff of myths and stories.

The *Starfinder* of the book's title is akin to Phillip Pullman's *Golden Compass*, a device that can help people—and gods—find their way, in this case, through the Reach. The *Skylords* on the far side of the Reach (where the hero and his companion go) want the *Starfinder* so they can return to the world beyond the Reach and again rule over humanity. It's an interesting clash of desires—the emerging steampunk-like technology of the human race pitted against the stuff of legend, gods and monsters. There are even battles involving dirigibles.

While the book doesn't necessarily make me want to read Marco's other work, it would be well read by fans of YA fantasy, people interested in steampunk, and people who enjoy fantasy along the lines of Pullman and C.S. Lewis. Coming of age by way of the hero's journey. Can't get much better than that. (HR)

***Terribly Twisted Tales*** edited by Jean Rabe (DAW, 2009)

This is an anthology of 18 stories that use well-known fairy tales as a starting-off point. Some are obviously related to



the fairy tale they're based on. Others use the fairy tale merely as a jumping off point and go off in a direction that would be difficult to predict. In fact, they are so different from the fairy tales that it takes a while to figure out which fairy tale they're based on. They vary in length from a handful of pages to about 30. Some are more "twisted" than others.

My favorite is the last one, titled "The Adventure of the Red Riding Hoods" by Michael A. Stackpole. It's very loosely based on "Red Riding Hood" and is a Sherlock Holmes pastiche. My second favorite is a clever story loosely based on "Puss 'n Boots" titled "Capricious Animistic Tempter" by Mickey Zucker Reichert; I think I liked it partly because I'm partial to cats.

The two most twisted, in my opinion, are "Once They Were Seven" by Chris Pierson, based loosely on "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves," and "A Charming Murder" by Mary Louise Eklund, based loosely on "Cinderella." They are twisted to the point, to my mind, of being sick. They are both fairly grisly.

There are other stories based on "Hansel and Gretel," "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," "Jack and the Beanstalk" (a rather clever one by Robert E. Vardeman titled "Jack and the Genetic Beanstalk"), "Rumpelstiltskin," "Androcles and the Lion," "Peter Pan," "Rapunzel," "The Little Match Girl," "Pinocchio," "Sleeping Beauty," "Three Billy Goats Gruff," "The Princess and the Pea," and the ubiquitous three wishes theme.

Whether a reader enjoys this book or not is probably mainly based on how he feels about fairy tales. I happen to be an aficionado of them, and I happen to have a taste for off-beat fantasy. Not all the stories herein were to my taste, but I found the book enjoyable on the whole. (RLT)



## Movies

### **Creature**

In part inspired by movies such as *Alien*, *Outland*, and *The Thing*, this 1985 sf horror film written and directed by William Malone is slow, somewhat stiff, and quite enjoyable. The gist of the plot is that two competing companies are going to Titan, Saturn's moon, to explore ruins and artifacts left behind by an alien race (or races) for 2,000 centuries. Their mission is one of profit making but quickly becomes one of survival.

Apparently, the ruins were once a zoo or menagerie of sorts, housing creatures collected from across the universe. Some are less than friendly, and some are still

alive. Klaus Kinski provides a deliciously creepy performance as a German astronaut who briefly joins up with the second landing force. And two female cast members offer divergent aspects of feminine beauty: there's a gratuitous but surprisingly subtle nude scene, and Diane Salinger's security officer Bryce carries a chill and chip on her shoulder that impresses in the end.

But what's most subtle—despite the gore and mayhem that it engenders—is the alien creature. Yes, it's a rip off of H. R. Giger's character designs for *Alien*, and yes, it's a man in a rubber suit, but the treatment of the alien—in darkness, in shadow, and in the distance—is much more played down than it could've been, given its impact on the cast and crew. There's no little gore, and the special effects are passable. All in all, not a bad late-night shocker. (HR)

### **Riders to the Stars**

*Riders to the Stars* was a film made in 1954 about space travel. The producer was Ivan Tors, whose diverse science fiction films and television series ordinarily showed an interest in actual working technology and avoided the more sensational elements that are endemic to the medium. In this film, Tors even went to the USC Centrifugal Force Department and filmed the chief actor in a centrifuge.

The hero of the film is the first man to pilot a guided rocket through the atmosphere of Earth. The heroine is a "space medicine girl" who dreams about flying almost every night. The father of the hero is a rocket scientist who explores the problems of cosmic radiation.

It seems that rockets sent into space break up, but meteors do not. The idea is to capture a meteor before it enters the atmosphere so they will uncover the mysterious quality of the objects for use on the surface of a spaceship. They finally succeed after two fatal accidents and discover that meteors are protected by a layer of carbon and diamond dust that burns off when the meteor enters the atmosphere.

The almost documentary style of the film was increased by means of newsreel film of a WAC corporal and V2 rockets. One scene—real—of white mice in a weightless state was especially impressive for the time.

It is a straight science fiction film without monsters or politics. In addition, the film has historical interest as a chronicle of scientific thought concerning space travel in 1954. When one thinks about all the fantastic hardware in modern science fiction films, one asks oneself if a similar attempt at factual extrapolation might not occasionally be in order. (MW)

### **Sky Crawlers**

In mid-July, I went to a free screening of this two-hour, feature-length anime at the Sony Wonder Technology Lab in midtown Manhattan. Originally released in 2008 by Nippon Television Network Corp. and now distributed by Sony Pictures Classics, the anime is based on a series of five novels by Hiroshi Mori, perhaps best known for his mystery novels. The movie was directed by Mamoru Oshii and features character designs by Tetsuya Nishio.

While I don't know much about Mori's original novels, much less which editions are included in the movie, I was

intrigued and impressed by the ideas behind the anime. (There have also been video game and manga adaptations.) The general idea is that a series of international corporations maintain a persistent state of war in order to remind citizens of the value of peace and nonviolence. To do so, they stage an ongoing series of battles—primarily by air, using planes (the anime isn't steampunk, but it comes close)—actively televising the battles and their outcome. Given the wages of war, a special class of citizen now exists in order to "staff" these wars and battles. Because they're cloned youths, they're called kildren.

In the anime, the main character is newly assigned to base, only to learn that he might have been there before, that his leader might not have his best interests in mind, and that the leader of the enemy—or the primary enemy—might have a more personal connection with him than he realizes. The anime is well done—especially in high definition—and Nishio's character designs remind me of the artwork of Moebius. That said, the movie is slowly paced and felt slightly over long. Regardless, it's worth checking out, if not just for the character design, the ideas contained therein and the music by Kenji Kawai. (HR)



## Smoking, Writing, and the Moon Landing

By Jon D. Swartz

**Editor's Note:** To help celebrate the 40th anniversary of the moon landing, I asked N3F members to share their memories and experiences of the event. Here's how Jon remembers it.

I started smoking cigarettes when I quit playing basketball my senior year in high school. Most of my male friends smoked, my father and older brother smoked, and I wanted to be like them. It was 1953, and I was 18.

In July 1969, I was married, had two children, and was about to complete my doctorate in psychology at the University of Texas in Austin. I was also a science fiction fan and very excited about the upcoming moon landing. Unfortunately, I was still a cigarette smoker. I had tried to quit a couple of times—and once didn't smoke a single cigarette for nearly a year. Because almost everyone around me smoked, however, it was very easy to begin

## Zines

### **Fanzine Fanatique** (Spring 2009)

A wonderful, compact (four pages!) reviewzine focusing on science fiction fanzines and amateur press association apazines. This issue, the editors' first on their laptop, contains reviews of about 35 items, including some PDF zines. Global in focus. This is a short and sweet synopsis of the state of sf fanzines today. The Usual to Keith and Rosemary Walker, 6 Vine St., Greaves, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 4UF, UK.

### **On Loving Dracula**

This 24-page digest photocopied zine was published as part of the 24-Hour Zine Thing, which was held in July. Produced by the man behind the dark culture zine *Absent Cause*, the zine is an appreciation of the 1931 Universal Pictures movie directed by Tod Browning starring Bela Lugosi. Redguard cuts and pastes images from the film, as well as its promotional materials, alongside his recollections and analysis of the film.

Redguard considers the movie's importance in terms of the transition from silent to talkie films, positions it as an icon in goth pop culture, compares it to the later *Frankenstein*, and addresses its relationship with Bram Stoker's novel. He also looks at other adaptations and references in pop culture and offers a selection of quotes from the movie that offer insight on the place *Dracula* plays in our collective unconscious and media mythos.

Given its involvement in the short-term zine-making project inspired by 24 Hour Comics Day, the zine only goes so far in its explorations. If you are a fan of the fantastic in cinema, it just might inspire you to revisit the movie in a slightly different light. \$1 or trade to Redguard, P.O. Box 1568, New York, NY 10276; [redguard@gmail.com](mailto:redguard@gmail.com).

again; I did.

My wife and children had gone to bed on July 20, 1969, while I sat writing the last words of my dissertation—and watching television as the astronauts were about to land on the moon. I was also smoking. At the time, I found it impossible to write without a lit cigarette close at hand.

At almost the exact same time, three things happened: Neil Armstrong stepped down on the moon, I wrote the last sentence of my dissertation, and I put out the cigarette I was smoking. I decided then that I would quit smoking and throw the rest of the pack in the trash.

Later in life, when tempted many times to start smoking again, I was able to resist. In analyzing how I was able to do so, I concluded it was in part because—if I started smoking again—I wouldn't be able to tell my story of smoking, writing, and the moon landing. In my study today is a photograph of Armstrong next to a model of Apollo 11, with July 20, 1969, printed on it.

I remain, 40 years later, Jon D. Swartz, PhD, science fiction fan, and non-smoker.

# 2010 N3F Election Platforms

The following members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation seek election to serve as president or director in 2010. Please read their campaign statements and refer to them when casting your vote.

## Presidency Platforms

### Jon D. Swartz

I've been a science fiction fan since the 1940s. As a teenager, I belonged to an sf club and worked on a fanzine. In college, I was a member of an sf club at the University of Texas, Austin. In addition to the N3F, I'm currently a member of First Fandom and have been special features editor for *Scientifiction: The First Fandom Report* since 2002. I'm a member of CAPA (an apa founded in 1941 by Rick Sneary, a former N3F president) and a regular contributor of articles on science fiction topics to *Paperback Parade* and *The Big Little Times*. I'm also a fan of old-time radio and have written extensively on the subject. My most recent published book was *Historical Dictionary of Old-Time Radio*, co-authored with Bob Reinehr. Currently in the works is a book on radio sf that I'm writing with sf author and fan Jim Harmon.

In my mundane life, I was a licensed psychologist (PhD, Texas, 1969), serving as chief of psychological services at Central Counties Center for Mental Health-Mental Retardation, in Temple, Texas, from 1990 until my retirement in 1999. Previously, I was a faculty member and administrator at several universities.

I've been a member of the N3F since the 1990s. After serving as reviews editor of *The National Fantasy Fan* (since 2003), club historian (since 2004), member of the directorate (since 2007), contributing editor to *FanDominion* (since 2008), and an active member of N'APA (since it was revived in electronic form in 2008), I've decided to run for president. There are several things I'd like to see done that can be accomplished only if I am president. For example, one of my first steps would be to establish a President's Fund to enable active club members to retain their memberships when they no longer can afford to do so.

If elected, I'll carry out the duties of the office in a responsible manner. If I'm unable to do so, for any reason, I promise to resign immediately and notify the directorate of my inability to serve.

## Directorate Platforms

### Dennis L. Davis

I am currently a director, and I'm proud to have been a director this past year. I feel like we in the directorate have accomplished a good deal, and I have decided to run again as a candidate for the directorate of the National Fantasy Fan Federation because I desire to continue to serve the membership as one of your directors. I do hope to get your vote. Please vote, however you might decide!

### Sarah E. Harder

My name is Sarah E. Harder, and I have served as a member of the directorate for the past several years. I would like to continue to serve you in that capacity. The N3F is rolling forward, and many exciting developments are and have been in the works. My role in those developments has been minimal at best, but I have supported and encouraged those at the forefront of the projects. Part of the role of the directorate is to discuss problems and solutions—and decide on the best course of action. As your representative, I will always listen to what you have to say (as will any directorate member) and bring it to the directorate for discussion. Please vote (regardless of whether you vote for me)! As is true on a national level—and perhaps even more so here—your vote does count.

### Heath Row

I might be a newcomer to the N3F, as well as organized science fiction fandom, but I am not a newcomer to science fiction. As long as I've been able to read, I've read science fiction. While I enjoy comic books and genre movies, as well, for me, science fiction is primarily a written media. Novels, short stories, the prozines, the fanzines... I've read them all to some degree or another. I'm not as well versed in the classics as I might be the new wave, cyberpunk, and later subgenres, but I have an appreciation for the history of the genre as well as the new and the now.

In part, that's why I volunteered to edit the clubzine—and why I'd like your vote for participating in the directorate. As one of the oldest science fiction clubs in America—and approaching its 70th anniversary in 2011—the N3F is especially well positioned to help advocate for the value of science fiction. I'd like to help the N3F become a center point for sf fandom and a clearing house for information about the literature. I'd also like to help cross-pollinate local sf and fantasy clubs, as well as conventions, through our efforts as a coordinating body. By serving as the mortar between the bricks, the N3F can help build a better fandom.

I'd also like to help position the N3F as a node between the fictional and the *scientific* elements of sf. As an amateur futurist, I enjoy the glimpses and hints of the future that we can find in science fiction, as well as its representation and reflection of modern-day mores and norms. Science fiction is more than speculative fiction, it's a literature of possibility, of potential.

Our club, while small and not overly active, still has a lot of potential. Given your vote, I can help the incoming president, fellow directors, and members explore those possibilities—of science fiction, fandom, and the future.

### David Speakman

Having just come off my first year as a member of the N3F directorate, I humbly submit my name for a second go, if you'll have me. We have made progress in the past few months, thankfully wrangling an apt (and very talented)

editor for the clubzine and beginning our initial efforts with developing a more robust online presence in this Internet-centric age of fandom. In the upcoming year, I'd like to help the N3F continue to reinvigorate itself, expand outreach to new fen and new sf and fantasy fandoms, continue to evolve its presence on the Net, once again become a welcomed presence at the major cons, and continue our proud print zine tradition. As I write this, I am finalizing my travel arrangements for DragonCon in Atlanta—and making flyers and handouts, excited to spread the word about the N3F to its tens of thousands of participants. Thank you for allowing me a great first year on the directorate, and to paraphrase *Oliver Twist*, please, may I have some more?

#### **Keith Walker**

I have been an N3F member several times over the years and very much enjoyed my periods of membership. I believe the N3F to be the most *friendly* of sf-related organizations. They don't just take your money and forget about you.

I would like to see some expansion of the N3F in Europe, especially the UK. I believe serving on the

directorate would help facilitate that. No promises, though, other than that I'm prepared to work on such a proposal.

I've been in sf fandom since the mid-'60s. I created the British Fantasy Society, which is still running strong. I have published hundreds of fanzines and am a long standing member of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, as well as N'APA. I publish *Fanzine Fanatique*, the longest-running fanzine reviewzine in the world. I've also been active in a number of fannish orgs and involved (though not recently) in con running.

If elected, I promise to do my best to work for and promote the N3F.

#### **Election Notes**

Paper ballots will be mailed to members before mid-October. All votes need to be sent to the election teller, Ruth R. Davidson, at her current address, 4807 Capay Drive #2, San Jose, CA 95118. You can also email your vote to [qualtree@ruthiechan.net](mailto:qualtree@ruthiechan.net).

The deadline for submitting your vote to the election teller is **Dec. 1, 2009**. Election results will be announced once the votes are tallied. Terms start Jan. 1, 2010.

## Bureaus and Activities Reports

#### **Artists Bureau**

It is proving to be an exciting time to be an N3F artist. The artists are enjoying the challenge of actually having illustration assignments from Heath! We feel like we're working for a national fantasy magazine: the stories and articles come in and assignments for accompanying art go out. It's fabulous! If you are an artist but not a part of this bureau's email list, then you are missing out on these opportunities. Please let me know that you'd like to be a part of my email list.

When the assignments come in, I send them out to my email list. The artists then email me back stating which stories or articles they wish to illustrate. We all are busy with our lives and sometimes cannot do assignments. It's worked out that there's always been someone able to take on the task(s). The more artists we have, the less burden there is on any one or two available artists. So please don't think that you aren't welcome because we have enough artists. That has never been, nor ever will be, the case. Besides, Heath gives us plenty of assignments per issue! Which is great, because it gives all of us a chance to illustrate a piece. So please email me!

I have had a couple of requests to reinstate the Artist's Spotlight. I will do so starting next issue. The spotlight can be on member or professional artists. Please let me know if there's any artist you would like to read about so that I can contact them. I do admit, I miss the spotlight as well, so thank you for the request! It is difficult to know for sure what the members enjoy without feedback so I appreciate those who contacted me about it.—Sarah E. Harder

#### **Birthday Cards**

I send out cards to every member on his or her birthday.

Since the last issue of *The Fan*, I've mailed about a handful of cards. If you feel you've been overlooked, please feel free to contact me at [laurraine@mac.com](mailto:laurraine@mac.com) or P.O. Box 5323, Oracle, AZ 85623-5323. I started this last November.—R-Laurraine Tutihasi

#### **Blind Services**

Since my last report, I haven't gotten any offers for donations to help with the sound recordings of *The Fan*. I'm still open to donations to cover shipping and handling. I already have blank cassette tapes, so I can take care of the recordings themselves.—Steven Rose, Jr.

#### **Correspondence Bureau**

Please help! In the last issue I requested articles from the membership at large on the etiquette and rules for online socialization. I haven't received any, though I did get a request from our editor to write one myself! I will make an attempt for the next issue... however, I need your help! I am quite unqualified to write the article without your input, as I do not engage in many social activities online. If you aren't able to write an article (or if the thought of writing a whole article yourself sounds daunting), will you please email me nonetheless with your views so that I can quote you? If you play games online, blog, contribute to forums, clubs, or social networking sites, then your input is invaluable! Share stories (both good and bad), rules and your takes on them, and appropriate etiquette for participation in these activities. I need your help! A sentence, a paragraph, anything would be of use to me.

I have managed to write an article about a subject that is special to me—one that I at least know something about! It will appear in the December issue.—Sarah E. Harder

## Gaming

I look forward to having available, within a year, a catalog of board war games, largely complete up to, say, 2005 or so. The major obstacle at the moment is the board games in the magazines and fanzines. I have 14 four-drawer filing cabinets full of them and am now preparing to do a pass through them to find any games in magazines I might have missed. For those of you who are curious, I would estimate that there are about 4,000 board war games, not counting Diplomacy variants.

Those interested in Eurogames should try to catch Tom Vassel's *The Dice Tower* podcasts at <http://www.thedicetower.com>.—George Phillis

## The Mangaverse

My desktop computer was down for a while, and that's where all my fannish stuff is, of course. I still hope to get the latest ish of *The Mangaverse* fanzine out before September. We will see how that goes. If I have my way, y'all will receive email notices about the issue by the time you read this in *The Fan*.

What I have so far is the following: a letter of comment from Priscilla Johnson; a snippet about *Ah My Goddess* by Eric Glasgow; part three of "The X-Men Primer" by Priscilla Johnson; "X-tra Coolness," regarding DVDs of all of the *X-Men* comic books; reviews by yours truly, as well as the manga *Elfen Lied*, *Naruto* dubbed, *Naruto* and *Filler* eps, *Naruto Shippuuden*, and then "Naruto—Anime vs. Manga." The last two I am still working on. I was scheduled to finish the issue in mid-August, but then the computer died. The issue will also include reviews by Heath Row of *20th Century Boys Vol. 1*, *Election Daze: What Are They Really Saying?*, *The New York Four*, and *Northlanders #1-7*. Heath also contributed an interview with comics creator Bob Fingerman. Except for the review of *Naruto Shippuuden*, "Naruto—Anime vs. Manga" and Heath's reviews and interview, everything was submitted in 2007.

The issue will also include artwork by Usagi Stevens and Sarah Harder. Total page count is currently 22 pages, and I'll be contributing a short "Ruthiechan's Corner" to reintroduce the zine. I also have a group on Tightbeam.net devoted to *The Mangaverse*. If you want to join the Tightbeam group, that'd be great.—Ruth R. Davidson

## Membership Cards

Currently, I am unable to print cards on my printer. I don't really know when I will be able to do this, so I don't have any sort of time frame. If anyone else is able to print membership cards more easily than I am right now, please let me know.—Dennis Davis

## Membership Drive

This is an ongoing project for me that does bring in more members on a regular basis.

Sometimes the members are new to the N3F, and sometimes they are former Neffers who have decided to rejoin the club.

I have tried various methods in my efforts to get people to join over the years, and previous to the last four months

one of my main efforts has consisted of sending letters and emails to former Neffers and trying to get them to rejoin.

I have now changed my focus to using the N3F's online presence more because we now have three different Web sites where fans might connect with the N3F and decided to become a member.

Just so everyone knows the URLs, those sites are <http://www.n3f.org>; <http://tightbeam.net/>, which is the new online version of the old *Tightbeam* letterzine; and <http://www.fandominion.com>, our e-zine published by David Speakman.

Recently, I have also joined Facebook and become very active there, so with the help of David Speakman, we have set up a Facebook group: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/N3F/89128934330>. I am trying to get people on Facebook who are interested in fantasy and sf to join our group on Facebook. I also encourage Neffers to join our N3F group so that they might connect with fellow Neffers there, as well as connect with other fans that are not yet Neffers.

My thinking is that if people join the N3F group, some of them might decide to check out the other parts of the N3F online presence. Thus, we should get people going to our other Web sites. Ultimately, at least some of them might decide on becoming a member.

My other ongoing effort is to provide masters for con flyers. Any Neffer planning on attending a con who is also willing to distribute some flyers should ask me to send them some masters.

I am still sending letters and emailing former Neffers. Also, if anyone has a Web site that is not already linked to our main Web site, please contact Ruth Davidson.—Dennis Davis

## Neffers Amateur Press Alliance (N'APA)

For those new to amateur press associations (apas), this is like a group correspondence in zine form. We are operating bimonthly, electronically via PDF, but I'm flexible for those who want to participate but don't have easy access to the Internet. Interested members can contact me at [laurraine@mac.com](mailto:laurraine@mac.com) or P.O. Box 5323, Oracle, AZ 85623-5323. We currently have plenty of openings.—R-Laurraine Tutihasi

## Neffy Awards

I'm taking a break from finalizing the Neffy Award ballots to write this bureau report. The goal is to have them done, printed, stapled, stamped, and in the mail—and out to the membership—this weekend (or Aug. 31 at the latest).

For the noobs, newbies, and those N3F veterans who just poked their nose out of a book for the first time in years and long enough to read this zine, the Neffy Awards (officially, the National Fantasy Fan Federation Speculative Fiction Awards) are the N3F fan-voted awards for our annual picks for the best in print, broadcast, film, and online speculative fiction—as well as fan of the year.

As in previous years, ballots can be returned by U.S. mail or email to a special Neffy email address that will be printed on your ballots.

Additionally, the Neffy bureau is looking for members. We have two types of volunteers: those who coordinate the

awards (and waive any ability to be nominated themselves) and those who don't want to help run the awards, but instead want to contribute profiles of award nominees and recipients—coming in book form to a Web site near you.

I've been checking out the details of the major self-publishing houses—and trying to find the best deal and widest distribution available. The goal is—every five years or so—to publish a new volume that profiles the Neffy Awards winners and finalists, written by Neffers (that means you). The book would be distributed via online stores including Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and others. The timeline for the first volume of this book series going off to press is December 2010.

For more information on how to get involved in the bureau, contact me via the info provided on p. 2 of this issue or message me via my user page on Tightbeam.—David Speakman

### Round Robins

The round robins are still rounding, and we always welcome new members. For all the Neffers who have sent me emails about round robins they would like to join—or be put on the waiting list for—in the last six months, please email me again. I print them all out and put them in a file, but my file has disappeared from my desk.

Also, robin masters (the people who coordinate a round robin), will soon get an email (or a letter if I don't have your email) from me to double check whether all of your round robins are still active, as well as to see if anybody has dropped the round. This is so I can create an updated list. Please be patient with me as I do so.—Lorna Hansmann

### Short Story Contest

The N3F short story contest is still on for 2009! Submissions can be sent to me and can be emailed or

# Secretary's Report

By Dennis Davis

I am your N3F secretary, and all of the information is as correct as we make it. Please contact me if you find a discrepancy or have not found your name in this report, which I completed July 31, 2009.

Help me to serve you better by doing the following:

1. Check your information in the roster. Notify me of any changes.
2. Mark the expiration date on your envelope or include your renewal reminder card.
3. Send address corrections as soon as possible. The postal service charges me to return undeliverable zines.

My N3F email address is [n3f\\_info@yahoo.com](mailto:n3f_info@yahoo.com). If you give my email address out to someone, please give them the [n3f\\_info@yahoo.com](mailto:n3f_info@yahoo.com) address.

Please send your checks to the secretary: Dennis L.

snail mailed until Dec. 31, the deadline. As contest manager, I will send entries immediately to the reading judge, Jefferson P. Swycaffer. Please remember to include the small fee, with checks made out to our treasurer, William Center.

More contest rules and information are available on p. 24 of this issue. You can also learn more online at <http://www.n3f.org/N3Fssc.shtml>. You have the rest of the season to participate, and we all know you have at least one tale to tell. Thank you for your time and talent. Good luck and good hunting! Jeff Redmond, 1335 Beechwood NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505-3830; [redmondjeff@hotmail.com](mailto:redmondjeff@hotmail.com).—Jeff Redmond

### Webmistress

Tightbeam is still up and running, though traffic is slow. At least it's easy to keep up with stuff that way, but it'll eventually pick up the pace, methinks.

FanDominion is also still around—and, of course, participation there would be awesome. We need people who are not fafia to help us out here. David Speakman and I are often busy writing stuff for school.

N3F.org is also up and running. Feel free to check it out, and let me know if there are any errors or updates I've missed.—Ruth R. Davidson

### Writers Exchange

The Writers Exchange now has a LiveJournal community—a group blog. I've set it up so anyone can post (I think!). Drop in at [http://community.livejournal.com/writers\\_n3f](http://community.livejournal.com/writers_n3f) and talk to each other.—Joy Beeson

**Open positions:** Computer Gaming, Convention Coordinator, Future Fandom, and Teaching Science Fiction. Contact the directorate to learn more.

Davis, 25549 Byron Street, San Bernardino, CA 92404-6403. Make checks or money orders payable to William Center.

**Key:** GS=good standing, NEW=first time membership, RN=renewal, and REIN=reinstatement

### Address changes and corrections:

GS 1209 Ruth Davidson, 4807 Capay Drive #2, San Jose, CA 95118

GS 1009 Valerie Mignault, 1584 Scituate Ave., Cranston, RI 02921

REIN 0810 David K. Robinson, 88235 Highway 9 #5, Lineville, AL 36266-6944

GS 1209 Joe Schaumburger, 4308 Lariat Drive, Baytown, TX 77521

EXP 0509 Angela Scott-Cox, 216 Dingo Road #D, Spring Lake, NC 28390

EXP 0109 Mick Taylor, P.O. Box 4120 #23061, Portland, OR 97208

GS 1209 R-Laurraine Tutihasi, P.O. Box 5323, Oracle, AZ 85623

GS 1109 George Wells, 3939 W. Windwills Blvd. #1130, Chandler, AZ 85226-1398

**Expired list:**

May 2009: Sarah Harder, Alexander Kent, Angela Scott-

Cox, and Taras Wolansky

June 2009: Priscilla Johnson

**Reinstated:**

REIN 0810 David K. Robinson, 88235 Highway 9 #5, Lineville, AL 36266-6944

**Renewals:**

RN 0910 Jack Robins, 223 Lake Meryl Drive, West Palm Beach, FL 33411-3392

# Treasurer's Report

By William Center

**Receipts**

New members dues (includes reinstatements)	\$36.00
Renewal dues	\$116.00
Short story contest fees	\$8.00
Total receipts	\$160.00

**Disbursements**

June 2009 clubzine, printing	\$182.70
June 2009 clubzine, mailing	\$68.00
PayPal service charge	\$3.52

Total disbursements	\$254.22
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**Aug. 15, 2009, report**

Beginning balance (May 15, 2009)	\$4,180.11
Additions	\$160.00
Subtractions	-\$254.22
Ending balance (Aug. 15, 2009)	\$4,085.89

Send all dues, new or renewal, to Dennis Davis, 25549 Byron Street, San Bernardino, CA 92404-6408. Make checks payable to William Center, not the N3F. Canadian and overseas members, please pay in U.S. funds.

# Membership Roster

The following is the National Fantasy Fan Federation's membership roster, as reported by Secretary Dennis Davis on July 31, 2009. Please notify him of any changes or corrections via email at [n3f\\_info@yahoo.com](mailto:n3f_info@yahoo.com).

Total members on the Roster: 58.

**Key:** GS=good standing, NEW=first time membership, RN=renewal, and REIN=reinstatement

003 GS0210 Joy Beeson, 1700 Park Ave. , Winona Lake, IN 46590-1637

004 \*GS0809 Ginny Benson, 1265 Dyer Road, Tawas City, MI 48763-9572

005 GS0510 Bob and Diane Blackwood, 4304 N. Marmora Ave., Chicago, IL 60634-1739

006 GSJ1209 Craig and Sherry Boyd, P.O. Box 25631, Little Rock, AR 72221-5631

152 NEW0410 Charles Bradley, 504 Heritage Ave., Terrytown, LA 70056-4009

007 GS0310 Richard Brooks, P.O. Box 834, Angola, IN 46703-0834

146 EXP0409 Jason Burnett, 4903 Camden Ave. N, Minneapolis MN 55430

010 GSJ1209 William and Michelle Center, 1920 Division St., Murphysboro, IL 62966-2320

011 GS1017 Gar Chen, P.O. Box 1286, New York, NY 10013-1286

153 NEW0410 Ralan Conley, [ralan@ralan.com](mailto:ralan@ralan.com)

013 GS1209 Ruth Davidson, 4807 Capay Drive #2, San Jose, CA 95118

014 GS0410 Dennis Davis, 25549 Byron St., San Bernardino, CA 92404-6403

018 GS1209 Tom Feller, P. O. Box 140937, Nashville, TN 37214-0937

023 EXP0509 Sarah Harder, 1574 Notre Dame Ave., Belmont, CA 94002

029 GS0110 John Jeffers III, 1110 Tate School Road, Huntingdon, TN 38344-6814

030 EXP0609 Priscilla Johnson, 3418 38th St., Sacramento, CA 95817

150 EXP0509 Alexander Kent, 14816 Dunton Drive, Whittier, CA 90604

032 \*GS0809 Patricia King, 510 Village Court, Nashville, TN 37206

035 GS1109 Dorothy Kurtz, 230 Kings Highway East #188, Haddonfield, NJ 08033

104 \*GS1009 Jean Lamb, 4846 Derby Place, Klamath Falls, OR 97603-8338

037 \*GS1009 Jacqueline Lichtenberg, 4133 West Bart Drive, Chandler, AZ 85226-2116

038 GS1109 L. A. Vern Loretz, Jr., 8223 Indian Hill Road, Manlius, NY 13104-9705

129 GSJ0210 Lee and J. J. MacFadden, 1315 Rock Rose Road, Bristol, TN 37620-5219

041 GS1209 Jennifer Mackay-Galicia, 7907 N. E. 12th St. #43, Vancouver, WA 98664-1863

116 GS1209 Joseph Martino, 905 South Main Ave., Sidney, OH 45365-3212

043 GS1209 Edmund Meskys, 322 Whittier Highway, Moultonborough, NH 03254-3627

044 \*GS1009 Valerie Mignault, 1584 Scituate Ave., Cranston, RI 02921

139 GS0210 Ray Nelson, 333 Ramona Ave., El Cerrito, CA 94530-3739

141 GSJ1209 Kemse net-Ubasti, 3535 E. Thunderbird Road, Phoenix, AZ 85032

053 \*GS1009 George Phillis, 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester, MA 01609

054 GS0610 Jeff Redmond, 1335 Beechwood NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505-3830

057 RN0910 Jack Robins, 223 Lake Meryl Drive, West Palm Beach, FL 33411-3392

058 REIN0810 David K. Robinson, 88235 Highway 9 #5, Lineville, AL 36266-6944

059 GS0110 John Robinson, 8 Sagadahoc, Rumford, ME 04276-1534

151 NEW0110 Heath Row, 101 Russell St. #4-R, Brooklyn, NY 11222; [kalel@well.com](mailto:kalel@well.com)

061 GS0410 David Rubin, 15 Leverett Court, Staten Island, NY 10308-1726

064 GS1209 Joe Schaumburger, 4308 Lariat Drive, Baytown, TX 77521

025 EXP0509 Angela Scott-Cox, 216 Dingo Road #D, Spring Lake, NC 28390

096 GS1109 David Speakman, 501-83 Moorpark Way, Mountain View, CA 94041

096 GS1109 Rich Speakman, 501-83 Moorpark Way, Mountain View, CA 94041

070 \*GS1009 Jon Swartz, 11600 Starview Trail, Austin, TX 78750-1382

071 GS1109 Jefferson Swycaffer, P. O. Box 15373, San Diego, CA 92175-5373

072 EXP0309 Sally Syrjala, P.O. Box 149, Centerville, MA 02632-0149

149 EXP0109 Mick Taylor, P.O. Box 4120 #23061, Portland, OR 97208

143 GS1209 R-Laurraine Tutihasi, P.O. Box 5323, Oracle, AZ 85623

077 GS0709 Susan Van Schuyver, 1921 Churchill Way, Oklahoma City, OK 73120-1149

078 GS0912 Michael Varbanov, 54 Lord Byron Lane, Williamsville, NY 14221-1997

080 GS0510 William Voharas, 7471 East 29th Place #2004, Denver, CO 80238-0000

097 GS0110 Keith Walker, 6 Vine St., Lancaster, Lancashire, LA1 4UF, UK

148 GS1109 Matthew Weitendorf, 20592 Williamsburg Court, Middleburg Heights, OH 44130

081 GS1109 George Wells, 3939 W. Windwills Blvd. #1130, Chandler, AZ 85226-1398

082 GS1109 William Wharton, 11 Laurel Drive, Oakdale, CT 06370-1727

0-na Special Thomas Whitehead, 1210 W. Berks St., Philadelphia, PA 19122

083 GSJ1209 Rikki Winters, 3535 East Thunderbird Road, Phoenix, AZ 85032

084 EXP0509 Taras Wolansky, 100 Montgomery St. #24-H, Jersey City, NJ 07302-3721

Please check your expiration date carefully. If you believe there is an error, contact the N3F secretary, Dennis L. Davis, 25549 Byron Street, San Bernardino, CA 92404-6403; [n3f\\_info@yahoo.com](mailto:n3f_info@yahoo.com). Notify the secretary of any address changes ASAP.

## In the Next Issue:

**A**n interview with Jim Munroe, screenwriter of *Infest Wisely* and writer of the comic book *Sword of My Mouth*; an article by R-Laurraine Tutihasi about sf authors living in the state of Arizona; Sarah E. Harder on the power of pen pals; a short story collaboration by members L. A. Vern Loretz, Jr., and Heath Row; a directory of local sf and fantasy clubs around the world; and more! Submission guidelines are on page 3.



# Convention Calendar

The following conventions will occur between the release of this issue and the next issue of *The National Fantasy Fan*. Not all events can be listed because of space limitations, and con planners should send future event listings to the editor for possible inclusion. Please contact organizers before making travel plans; we are not responsible for changes or cancellations.

## **North American Discworld Convention 2009**

Sept. 4-7, 2009, Tempe, Arizona  
Fan-run con celebrating Terry Pratchett's fantasy novels  
<http://www.nadwcon.org>

## **KillerCon**

Sept. 17-20, 2009, Las Vegas  
Horror, thriller, and supernatural romance con  
<http://www.killercon.org>

## **Con\*Stellation XXVIII**

Sept. 18-20, 2009, Huntsville, Alabama  
General interest sf con  
<http://www.con-stellation.org/constell/index.html>

## **FallCon**

Sept. 18-20, 2009, Calgary, Alberta, Canada  
"A cornucopia of gaming"  
<http://www.fallcon.com/home.php>

## **FantasyCon 2009**

Sept. 18-20, 2009, Nottingham, UK  
Hosting the 2009 British Fantasy Awards  
<http://www.fantasycon.org.uk>

## **FenCon VI**

Sept. 18-20, 2009, Addison, Texas  
Fan-operated sf and fantasy literary and filk convention  
<http://www.fencon.org>

## **Horror Realm**

Sept. 18-20, 2009, Pittsburgh  
Geared toward fans of zombies and the horror genre  
<http://www.192.pair.com/lifeless/HorrorRealm/home.htm>

## **Maelstrom International Fantastic Film Festival**

Sept. 18-20, 2009, Seattle  
Independent and international genre films  
<http://www.miff.org/>

## **RainFurrest**

Sept. 18-20, 2009, Seattle  
Furries  
<http://www.rainfurrest.org/2009/index.php>

## **B-Movie Celebration**

Sept. 25-27, 2009, Shelbyville and Franklin, Indiana  
B movies

<http://bmoviecelebration.bside.com/2009>

## **Foolscap 11**

Sept. 25-27, 2009, Redmond, Washington  
Written sf and fantasy  
<http://www.foolscapcon.org>

## **Archon 33**

Oct. 2-4, 2009, Collinsville, Illinois  
General sf con  
<http://www.archonstl.org/33/index.php>

## **Browncoat Ball 2009**

Oct. 2-4, 2009, Portland, Oregon  
*Firefly* and *Serenity* media con  
<http://www.browncoatball.com/2009/>

## **VCON**

Oct. 2-4, 2009, Vancouver, BC, Canada  
Science fiction, fantasy, and gaming  
<http://www.vcon.ca/index.htm>

## **Conflux 6**

Oct. 2-5, 2009, Canberra, Australia  
Speculative fiction  
<http://www.conflux.org.au>

## **Viable Paradise**

Oct. 4-10, 2009, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts  
Science fiction and fantasy writers' workshop  
<http://www.sff.net/paradise/>

## **Albacon**

Oct. 9-11, 2009, Albany, New York  
Fans and creators of science fiction and fantasy  
<http://www.albacon.org/>

## **ConClave 34**

Oct. 9-11, 2009, Romulus, Michigan  
Science fiction convention  
<http://www.conclavesf.org/cc34/index.htm>

## **FilkCONTinental 2009**

Oct. 9-11, 2009, Freusburg, Germany  
Filk, sf, and fantasy  
<http://www.filkcontinental.de/2009/home/>

## **Gaylaxicon 2009**

Oct. 9-11, 2009, Minneapolis  
International GLBT sf, fantasy, horror, and comics con  
<http://www.gaylaxicon2009.org>

## **Bouchercon 2009**

Oct. 15-18, 2009, Indianapolis  
World Mystery Convention  
<http://www.bouchercon2009.com/>

**Capclave**

Oct. 16-18, 2009, Rockville, Maryland  
Literary science fiction convention  
<http://www.capclave.org/capclave09>

**Imagicon 2**

Oct. 16-18, 2009, Stockholm  
Swedish national sf convention  
<http://www.imagicon.se/eng/>

**Valleycon 35**

Oct. 16-19, 2009, Fargo, North Dakota  
"The Fargo Entertainment Expo"  
<http://www.valleycon.com>

**Armageddon Expo**

Oct. 17-18, 2009, Melbourne, Australia  
Media con  
<http://www.armageddonexpo.com>

**Geek.Kon**

Oct. 23-25, 2009, Madison, Wisconsin  
A con for all things geek  
<http://www.geekkon.net>

**ICON 34**

Oct. 23-25, 2009, Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
"Adventures in the Secret Kingdom of Fandom"  
<http://www.iowa-icon.com>

**MileHiCon 41**

Oct. 23-25, 2009, Denver  
Literary sf convention  
<http://www.milehicon.org>

**Necronomicon '09**

Oct. 23-25, 2009, St. Petersburg, Florida  
"Florida's Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Convention"  
<http://www.stonehill.org/necro.htm>

**UberCon XII**

Oct. 23-25, 2009, Edison, New Jersey  
"The Ultimate Gaming Experience"  
<http://www.ubercon.com>

**World Fantasy Convention 2009**

Oct. 29 to Nov. 1, 2009, San Jose, California  
Celebrating Edgar Allan Poe's 200th birthday  
<http://www.worldfantasy2009.org>

**KomiksFEST! 2009**

Oct. 31 to Nov. 7, 2009, Prague, Czech Republic  
Independent international comics festival  
<http://www.komiksfest.cz/2009/english>

**Astronomicon 11**

Nov. 6-8, 2009, Rochester, New York  
Rochester's sf convention  
<http://www.rochesterfantasyfans.org/conpage.html>

**Oslo Science Fiction Festival**

Nov. 6-8, 2009, Oslo, Norway  
Norwegian sf con  
<http://www.osff.no>

**IDWCon 09**

Nov. 6-9, 2009, Ennistymon, County Clare, Ireland  
The first Irish Discworld convention  
<http://idwcon.org>

**IlluXCon 2009**

Nov. 12-15, 2009, Altoona, Pennsylvania  
Dedicated to fantastic illustration  
<http://www.illuxcon.com>

**New England Fan Experience**

Nov. 13-15, 2009, Boston  
Media and gaming con  
<http://www.nefanx.com/experience/scifi>

**TusCon 36**

Nov. 13-15, 2009, Tucson, Arizona  
Science, sf, fantasy, and horror  
<http://home.earthlink.net/~basfa>

**WindyCon 36**

Nov. 13-15, 2009, Lombard, Illinois  
General sf con  
<http://www.windycon.org/windy36>

**Philcon 2009**

Nov. 20-22, 2009, Cherry Hill, New Jersey  
"Philadelphia conference of science fiction, fantasy, and horror"  
<http://2009.philcon.org>

**ChambanaCon #39**

Nov. 27-29, 2009, Urbana, Illinois  
"Central Illinois' Longest Running Relax-a-Con"  
<http://www.chambanacon.org/>

**LOSCON 36**

Nov. 27-29, 2009, Los Angeles  
General sf con  
<http://www.loscon.org/36/html/mainmenu.html>

**OryCon 31**

Nov. 27-29, 2009, Portland, Oregon  
"Oregon's premier science fiction convention"  
<http://www.orycon.org/orycon31>

# National Fantasy Fan Federation

## Membership Application

New Member     Reinstatement     Joint Membership     Gift Membership

Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Postal Code, Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Male:  Female:  Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Interests.** Please select any and all of the following that you're interested in or would like to get involved in.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> APAs (amateur press associations)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Fanzines                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Filk singing                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Audio                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Games and video games        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blogging                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Movies                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Books                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Online activities            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning, cartoons, and animation | <input type="checkbox"/> Publishing                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collecting                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading and book clubs       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comic books                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Reviewing                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computers and technology            | <input type="checkbox"/> Roleplaying games            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conventions and clubs               | <input type="checkbox"/> Round robins (group letters) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Taping                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Costuming                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching science fiction     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DVDs and videos                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Television                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Editing                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing                      |

Which would you prefer?

The National Fantasy Fan in PDF sent to your email address     The clubzine printed and mailed to you

How long have you been interested in science fiction and fantasy? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been involved in fandom? \_\_\_\_\_

List any other clubs you are or have been a member of: \_\_\_\_\_

List any conventions you've attended: \_\_\_\_\_

What prozines and fanzines do you read, if any? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your favorite type of sf/f? \_\_\_\_\_

Who are your favorite sf/f authors: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you interested in online activities? If yes, what type? \_\_\_\_\_

Which, if any, of the following would you be willing to help the club with?

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Artwork               | <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting at conventions | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing for club publications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Corresponding             | <input type="checkbox"/> Publishing                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____          |  |  |

Name of Sponsoring Member (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Dues are \$18 per year (\$22 for Joint Memberships) which includes subscriptions to the club's fanzine as well as other activities and benefits. Make checks or money orders payable to William Center (the treasurer). **All payments must be made in U.S. funds.** Mail dues and application to club secretary Dennis Davis, 25549 Byron St., San Bernardino, CA 92404-6403. Please allow at least eight weeks for your first clubzine to arrive. You can also sign up online at <http://n3f.org>.

Send all address corrections  
and undeliverable copies to

**Dennis L. Davis**  
**25549 Byron Street**  
**San Bernardino, CA**  
**92404-6403**

“Everything is becoming science fiction.”—J. G. Ballard