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Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau**

Editor and Publisher: John Thiel (bureau head), 30 N. 19th
Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904. Email kinethiel@mymetronet.net

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Staff

Jeffrey Redmond, 1335 Beechwood NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505-3830. RedmondJeff@hotmail.com
Heath Row, 4367 Globe Avenue, Culver City, CA 90230, kalel@well.com
Jon Swartz, 12115 Missel Thrush Court, Austin, Texas 78750, jon_swartz@hotmail.com
Jefferson Swycaffer, PO Box 15373, San Diego, CA 92175-5373, abontides@gmail.com

CONTENTS

Editorial, “Reflections on the Vortex of SF in the Modern World,” by John Thiel, page three
Author Interview: Christopher Nuttall, page five
Author Interview: Rick Hanners, page nine
Author Interview: Declan Finn, page fifteen
Notes on Jeffrey Redmond, page twenty
Convention Report: “Chiller Condiments” by Cardinal Cox, page twenty-one
Existential Musings, by Will Mayo, page twenty-eight
Looking Over the Issue, by John Thiel thirty-one

Cover—photo by NASA

Editorial



“All too happy to present my thoughts.”

Reflections on the Vortex of SF in the Modern World

A vortex is something like a whirlpool or a tornado, a concentration proceeding to a center and drawing things to its center. There are comparable things outside of nature, which have been noticed in literature, for example in Allen Ginsberg’s poem “Wichita Vortex Sutra” in which he comes to an understanding upon being caught in a vortex. Bob Dylan’s “Stuck Inside of Mobile with the Memphis Blues Again” describes a vortex effect (by the way, it was good news seeing him win the Nobel Prize in literature), and Credence Clearwater Revival’s recording “Stuck in Lodi Again” has the same situation. There is a vortex effect in ALICE IN WONDERLAND and in L. Frank Baum’s THE WIZARD OF OZ. These are people caught up in circumstances they are unable to escape. They are caused by something interesting and controversial being closed in upon by surrounding places where not much of interest is going on. Poe’s “Descent into the Maelstrom” has a real one, for comparison.

All activity goes to central points in a vortex, which shows that one should not call too much attention to oneself and industries should not become showy and overactive.

Science fiction has achieved a presence in the world of the present, and is getting a lot of attention where they have not usually had it, and as you know, science fiction and fantasy are both pretty flagrant things, which when discovered cause alarm and investigation and a tumult of public reaction, where they have plenty of opportunity to see science fiction on the SF channel, if they were able to make a purchase that would include that channel. What SF has been talking in televised presentations is mainly doom, with Battlestar suffering almost total destruction, Star Trek vanishing in realms beyond space and time, SG1 plunging itself into infinity with an endless trip of no

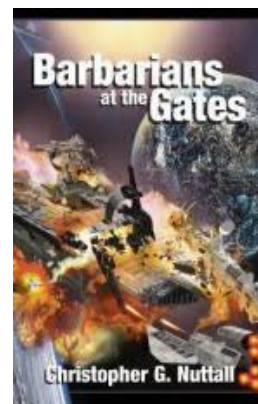
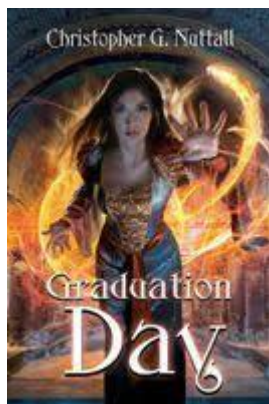
return, the characters in Andromeda witnessing the destruction of Earth and then heading into what seem realms of punishment, Dark Angel ending in a freak war, Eureka blowing itself up, and the fantasy realms going down in bloodshed. Seemingly the message sf has been bringing is "There is Naught but Doom", and that does tend to match the modern environment, but there is no reason why sf should parallel things like that. SF used to end mainly on an up-note, not without dire warnings to the readers. "Humanity perishes laughably" is too much a modern theme, too bad an attitude for an author to have if he is being read by humans. Strange that it should be reinforced, but better news is considered lying propaganda. War madness? Is lying down by the still waters lying propaganda? Instead you get the interpretation, "Lying, down, beside distilled waters." Funny, perhaps, but negative.

Don't get concentric. Remain free, open and liberal in your thoughts, and not obsessed by the sight of evil.

When I had the Lafayette Interstellar Society of Science Fiction Study, we had an official fanzine called Vor-Zap, which meant vortice zapper, referring to vortexes. We considered that we were in one of those, and the title suggested that a vortex should be zapped, as with a zap gun, a fan device which represented a ray gun. Vortex is a scientific term, so there's your science in what we were saying and doing. We agreed that a zap gun wouldn't be a catalyst. (Vortices explode.) We were trying to assert that thought should be more open, outward reaching rather than concentric, and then we would be back to literature. We went to two conventions trying to express our attitude, a Windycon in Chicago and an Autoclave in Detroit. I was doing fan-pro relations in those days, before the Fan-Pro Activity, as it was called, was established in the N3F. Irvin Koch thought the activity up and appointed me as head of the bureau, saying he'd look around for some others to be in it. Anyway, that's my background, and I'm still trying to get science fiction to look outward again, rather than inward. (Has anybody noticed how psychological a lot of science fiction is getting to be?)

More comments on what the purpose of the Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau is— getting together again, rather than going in all directions with individual purposes that we don't express to one another. Notice that our interviews are becoming closer than they have been, striking to be friendlier. I am hoping that this advance, as I consider it, will succeed.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: CHRIS NUTTALL



We have a solid NFFF member in our interview this month; he's been with us for years and can be seen in the review of books. As a writer, he's a specialist in alternate history. He was born in Scotland in 1982 and is the author of more than a hundred published novels in the genres of science fiction and fantasy. He may be found advertising and displaying his works at several expensive websites and has plenty of books to show at <https://www.fantasyfiction.com>. His blog, THE CHRISHANGER, is found at <https://www.fantasyfiction.com.christophernuttall>. His official website is <http://www.chrishanger.net>. His email is christopher_g_nuttall@hotmail.com. He's been interviewed in Ionisphere before, but here is a second look at him.

The latest TNFF shows that he's been nominated for some Neffy awards.

It should be easy to get up an acquaintance with this NFFF member writer.

IO: Chris, I've interviewed you for Ionisphere before, but George Phillies said he'd like to see you interviewed again, and as a lot of time has passed you doubtless have new things to add. Something I didn't notice before is that you have over a hundred published science fiction and fantasy novels—perhaps you hadn't published as many books then. That's a whole lot of writing; when did you commence writing fantasy, and when did you start writing science fiction?

CN: I started writing science fiction from a very early age, but I started to take it seriously in 2004 and put my first semi-coherent novel together in 2005. That was a near-future thriller that was, in hindsight, completely cringe-worthy; I shudder at the thought of someone reading it these days. I followed with my first alien invasion story (also cringe-worthy) and then many other science fiction, fantasy, and alternate history novels. It wasn't until 2012 that I had any real success at writing.

IO: I know what you mean, I have to hide my shame when I go over early things I've written that I've preserved. A letter I had published in **Fantastic Adventures** that says SF fanzine writers outdo Shakespeare is an example. Your first novels sound like they had a lot of spirit and a lot to be said for them, though. Do you have fantasy and science fiction activities ranging beyond being in the NFFF and writing books? If so, what are

some of these other activities?

CN: I used to run an online alternative history magazine, but I passed on that when I found myself no longer able to give it the time it deserved. Right now, I am co-editor of **Fantastic Schools**, a collection of anthologies set around the concept of wizarding schools (and we're always looking for more submissions, if anyone is interested). I post every so often on various blogs and forums, but I don't have the time any longer to do it full time.

I've also been trying to give a little back to the community by offering advice to newbie writers. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

IO: There ought to be some findable, *via* the writers' bureau, who would like advice. Maybe you should stand by there. Have you had stories in science fiction or fantasy magazines?

CN: No, but I do have a handful of short stories in various collections.

IO: Have you been active on Facebook?

CN: I have a Facebook fan page, for anyone interested.

IO: You do book reviews; is your reading of science fiction and fantasy as extensive as your writing of it?

CN: I think I've been reading from childhood and I long since lost count of the number of books I read.

IO: Have you been to conventions or meetings of science fiction societies?

CN: I've attended a handful of conventions in the UK and US—the latter is harder as I live in the UK and there's nothing I can afford to attend on spec.

IO: What do you think of modern fantasy and sf as compared to SF of, say, fifty years ago?

CN: That's a tricky question to answer.

On one hand there's a lot of early SF staples that have been thoroughly discredited. We know now, for example, that the light barrier isn't "just" a theory, as Doc Smith's characters suggested in *THE SKYLARK OF SPACE*. We also know that Mars and Venus are uninhabitable wastelands and there are no aliens waiting to meet us, not there. On the other, a lot of the early SF books had an optimism about the future many of their modern counterparts lack.

It's easy to say a lot of the older stuff is deeply problematic now—and, of course, a lot of people do. Many early tropes have been thoroughly discredited. Others have been questioned and deconstructed and suchlike, although a lot of this has been exaggerated

for one reason or another or taken out of context. Generally, I try to remember they were written in an earlier age and not blame the authors for not sharing modern day sensibilities or for writing under limits that simply don't exist nowadays.

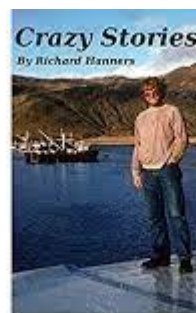
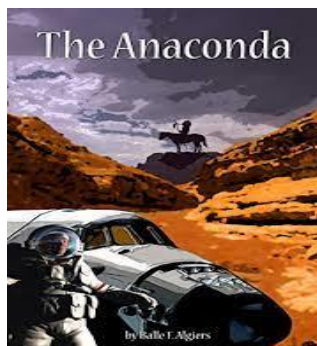
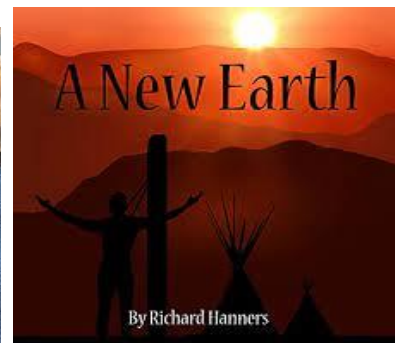
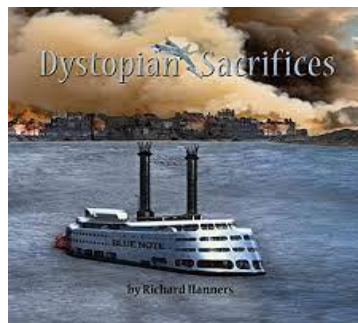
IO: What sf and fantasy authors do you favor?

CN: Too many to list, really. I'm particularly fond, these days, of Brandon Sanderson, Rebecca Kuang, Peter F. Hamilton, David Weber and many—many—others.

This interview would have been longer, with further questions asked, had I not run into a communications difficulty. This was Chris's answers to these questions not coming through to me, in spite of being addressed correctly. Finally I suggested he use the back-and-forth communication we had been using for his answers, and I received the answers on the 31st of last month and am adding them to IO on the first of the new month, exactly when the issue is due out—so no more chance of additional questions. Readers of IO may recall that there have been complaints about communications difficulties, including being blocked by malware, made here. They may also recall a concern about communications being expressed in an article in IO by Heath Row. And I have made a statement that I am making better communications an issue in the Fan-Pro Bureau, where we are surely wanting good communications. Just a matter of forging ahead—forging ahead to better communications! If our communications don't improve, we won't have much luck in forging ahead any appreciable distance, though we might manage to be making some repairs here. I have speculated about inactivity among the total membership being due to interrupted and inaccessed communications. Our bureau, for one, will be working toward the solution to these problems. Check my contents listing to see if the page numbers jibe with the contents.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: RICK HANNERS

Rick Hanners has published seven science fiction books in an alternative history series on Kindle since retiring, with an eighth underway. Four of these have been made into audible books, with a fifth nearing completion. “When this last book is completed, I’m going to step away from this series and try something else. I have too many ideas popping up all the time, so I’m considering a short story collection rather than another novel, although I have notes and starts on two more novels.” He may be contacted at righthanners7@gmail.com . He lives in Oregon.



IO: I haven’t seen your books and was able to find very little information about you on the net, so I will have to start this interview without much knowledge. George Phillis said you wanted the interview done, so let’s do our best on it, and I’m always glad to further publicize the books of writers. My first question is, in what publication or at what site did you see George Phillis’ invitation to be interviewed?

RH: I am a member of the Facebook groups Science Fiction and Writers of Sci-Fi Group,

of which George Phillies is an administrator.

IO: Thanks for telling us that. Jeffrey Redmond, of this bureau, is an administrator of those groups also. Why did you select Kindle as the place to publish your books?

RH: Kindle offers several advantages for a writer who is new to the science fiction business—it's easy, it's free, and it connects with people you don't know around the world. I can publish a new book on Kindle in about fifteen minutes or less and easily upload a new version of the text if I find small edits I want to change. The disadvantages are the same for all publishing—promotion. A person can pay Kindle or professional consultants to promote books, but I think the standard model today is self-promotion at the author's expense. My activity with Facebook groups is one way I try to promote myself.

IO: What is the process for finding your books on Kindle, and what is the URL? I am not familiar with Kindle, so perhaps you would describe this to me.

RH: To find my published works on Kindle, visit the Kindle website at <https://www.amazon.com/Kindle-Store/b?ie=UTF&&node=133140011> and then search their listings for my name, Richard Hanners. All eight volumes from my alternative history sci-fi series, sequentially numbered under the joint title "The Anaconda", will appear along with two other works of fiction and an autobiography I cranked out in a hurry before I went in for surgery.

IO: What is your opinion of Kindle as a publisher? Do you make any money publishing them this way?

RH: For me, Kindle pretty much does what I expected—nothing more, nothing less. Last November, the New Yorker magazine published an article about Kindle, "Is Amazon Changing the Novel?" I disagreed with some of what was said in the article, particularly the author's description on how Kindle operates, which didn't match my experience. I read long ago that people write for themselves, for their friends or for the public. In some ways, Kindle short-circuits those three phases. In that way, it resembles Facebook—anyone can publish anything on the internet, from posts to books. Kindle can be a useful tool for a person who does a good job at self-promotion, and Kindle offers different kinds of promotional services for a fee. The way the internet works, a person's name, ideas on writing might find itself in the right place at the right time and go viral—life as a lottery game. An author could then increase the Kindle book price or even remove them from Kindle and go to a mainstream publishing house. In the early 19th Century, the first novelists could have coffee with their publisher, and Mark Twain

owned his own printing press for a time. Those days are long over.

IO: Whose decision was it to make audible books of your books?

RH: The graphic designer who creates my book covers first suggested I turn my Kindle books into audible books. Months later, I decided to look into it. In my online search for a narrator, I came across the name of a person from a small town where I once lived in Montana. I remembered her as an actress but soon discovered she was also a drummer for a rock band. I then contacted a sound engineer in the same town, who agreed to handle my audible books (for decades he was the sound engineer for one of the best-known rock bands in history). Finding them the way I did was unusual and fortuitous. After that came some education for all three of us. Most audible books go through a common portal, ACX, a service that connects writers, narrators, sound engineers and others while also providing lessons and guidance on how to make audible books. I needed to modify my Kindle books into scripts compliant with ACX rules and create a chapter index and a pronunciation guide for all the foreign language and technical terms I used in my books. Five of my eight sci-fi books are now available as audible books, while the other three are in my narrator's hands.

IO: Where can we find your audible books?

RH: According to ACX, my audible books are available on Audible, Amazon and iTunes. If you go to the Audible.com website and search their listings for my name, Richard Hanners, you will find my five sci-fi novels with a slightly different cover from Kindle. I don't have iTunes on my computer to check, but I'm guessing the process is the same. I think Audible and Amazon are the same thing.

IO: Where did you acquire an interest in writing science fiction? Do you prefer it over other forms of writing? If so, why do you have this preference?

RH: The first science fiction I read was a short story collection by Arthur C. Clarke which included "The Wall of Darkness". It was the early 1960s and I was in grade school. Later when I was a teenager living on the island of Trinidad, the Star Trek TV series came out. Our black-and-white TV wasn't the best, so the show was very grainy, but I really enjoyed it. After that, I picked up sci-fi paperbacks at bookstores, airports and other places. Frankly, my favorite type of reading is nonfiction—I'm an avid reader of history, science, politics, archaeology, astronomy, technology and weird new trends—I'm currently reading about the history of LARPs and how the Disney corporation uses them. But I think my nonfiction reading helps my sci-fi writing. My personal preference as a writer is sci-fi with probable science and technology based on speculating into the

future from current knowledge. Now retired, after writing heavily-footnoted historical reports or deadline-driven news for more than two decades, science fiction gives me the latitude and freedom to write what I want—and think.

IO: Will you write a description of the contents of some of these books?

RH: My alternative history sci-fi series, “The Anaconda”, depends on a single very speculative plot device—a space-time warp that transports an asteroid-mining ship from the 23rd century to 1801. That puts the reader in the middle—with decent knowledge about what happened in the past two centuries while able to speculate about what will happen in the next two hundred years. The twenty-four people on the spaceship are the best and brightest engineers and soldiers from the future and possess many material advantages—nanotechnology, artificial intelligence and millions of tons of processed ore aboard a ship in geostationary orbit that has grown to the size of Manhattan Island. They also have the Alexander database, which holds every scrap of knowledge about the Earth up to the next time the ship left the 23rd Century—the crew more or less knows where everything is and what will happen next.

As developed in the course of eight books, these advantages make the crew like gods, a situation that devolves into factions—two engineers who want to build a native army and drive the Europeans out of the New World; two executives who want to create a middle-class consumer economy in the Ottoman Empire; a Chinese woman who wants those two factions to succeed but without unnecessary cruelty and death, hence becoming the mythical Bird Woman; a Scottish woman who wants to collect endangered art from around the world at a museum on a South Pacific island; and twin female assassins who wield the most power but just want to have fun sport-fishing, mountaineering, skiing, drinking beer and manhunting for romance. When the twins decide to eliminate the African slave trade, they become the pirates of the Middle Passage. Nothing is perfect in this world—even the smartest of them cannot control what the Bird Woman calls the chaos of living in the fractal edges of history. The future of this New Earth belongs not to the crew of the Anaconda but to the First Generation.

IO: What have you to say to National Fantasy Fan Federation readers about your books? You might want to advertise them somewhat for our readers.

RH: “The Anaconda” series contains adventure and humor, but the writing can also be dense and controversial, contrasting advanced political ideas from the future with the brutal harsh realities of the past. I spent a lot of time researching history from 1801-1812 to get people, places and events correct, as the crew of the asteroid-mining ship

travel by foot, horse and hypersonic jet across the North American wilderness, the vast South Pacific, rugged Tibet and Patagonia, the ruins of Egypt and Greece, and the jungles of West Africa and South America. Europeans are clearly the bad guys, but anyone who spends a little time reading about how the Spanish, English, French and Portuguese colonized the New World won't disagree. The success of the Anaconda crew in bending the arrow of history depends on their advanced technology—flybots, spybots and needle guns, surveillance satellites that can hear through walls, one hundred percent hindsight about current events (at least until the crew changes history), nanotech clothing and building materials, perfect medicine, and an omniscient, omnipresent, omnificent artificial intelligence that became contaminated with the conscious minds of two crew members during the space-time warp transit from the 23rd Century to 1801. Building a utopia in an attempt to avoid a known historical dystopia may sound like a good idea, but is it truly –possible? Is advanced technology and concepts of governance enough? Is racism endemic, and who will stop the threat of gold poisoning?

IO: Have you heard much about the NFFF? What are some of your impressions of our organization?

RH: I only recently learned about the National Fantasy Fan Federation. I'm pretty new to the sci-fi writing business, but I've worked as a professional historian for four years and as an editor, journalist and photographer in the newspaper business for nearly two decades, so I have been published thousands of times. Making connections in the sci-fi world is very important.

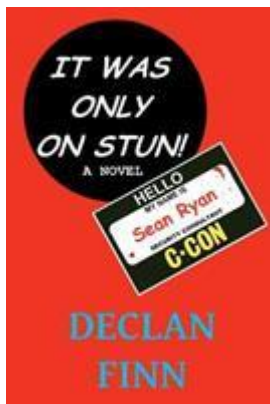
IO: Do you have viewpoints that you try to get across in your writing? What do you wish to express about things in general?

RH: The point of writing my alternative history was a big do-over. Could all the great positive things we enjoy today have possibly evolved without all the misery, destruction and chaos caused by oppression, war and environmental destruction over the past two centuries? Or does fate and destiny control history? As I wrote the eight books in the "Anaconda" series, I learned much about the history of this time at a granular level that I didn't know. While some of the most controversial aspects of the early 19th Century are readily apparent, the crew of the spaceship came from two hundred years in the reader's future. I came up with the idea of a new social system that governs the world after climate change and mass migration led to the collapse of civilization in the 22nd Century. I left the exact details of the Social Limits laws vague—governing everything from

markets to the courts, they are so complicated they basically work as algorithms. The Social Limits laws could be seen by present-day readers as a reaction to the self-destructive nature of industrial capitalism. But could such a perfect system of government ever be created? In my books, the Social Limits laws come up from time to time in passing, but they don't apply to the world of 1801, which is just entering the age of steam and steel. Instead, the 23rd Century's greatest designer crafts an army of myths and native soldiers to drive the Europeans out of the New World, along with detailed plans for a utopian world to follow. On the other side of the globe, the spaceship's general manager builds a middle-class consumer economy in the Ottoman Empire, a grassroots effort to create the perfect society without conflict. Meanwhile the mythical Bird Woman, a former fusion furnace engineer aboard the spaceship Anaconda, and her Shoshone sidekick show up in the midst of great battles to plead for victory without unnecessary cruelty and death. In time, she becomes the reluctant harbinger of a new global religious movement, even though she believes history cannot and should not be controlled.



AUTHOR INTERVIEW: DECLAN FINN





Declan Finn is well established on the net and may be easily Googled, where images are also available, of both Finn and his books. His books are no-holds-barred action thrillers and he is a very prolific author. He is listed as an N3F member and reviews for the N3F review of books. Two of his books are reviewed in the June Review of Books. He has a Facebook page and can be found at <http://www.declanfinn.com> .

IO: Glad to make your acquaintance, Declan! I've been seeing your reviews in the NFFF books publication, and then George Phillis said that you were a writer. I've been going through Google and found many references to you, as well as photos of you in images, and I now have an idea of what you have written. My interview interest in you has been in your being an NFFF member, but how you have distinguished yourself is of interest also and I will be asking questions about your books. You've been prolific in your reviews and it seems from what I've found that you are prolific in your novels also. I'll start out with a question about your being in the N3F. How long have you been an NFFF member, where did you find out about it, and what drew you into entering the N3F?

DF: You may want to delete the answer. George Phillis asked me for reviews about a

year ago. Along the way, I discovered later that I was considered an N3F member. It just kind of happened.

IO: I'm not deleting it, we want the facts here. What do you think of being in this organization? How do you like it?

DF: There's too much navel gazing, and not enough doing anything. The reviews are the best part. Pat Patterson, Jim McCoy, Eric Postma and others are all good people with great taste in books.

IO: Well, we're glad to have you in it. We're trying to get action started. What influences have you had in writing your books? What authors of science fiction and fantasy do you like best?

DF: My influences are J. Michael Straczynski, Timothy Zahn, John Ringo and David Weber. Add in Joseph Garber, RIP. Obviously I enjoy all of the above, as well as Jim Butcher.

IO: That could be much talked about. Is there a particular type of science fiction that you write, such as space opera, hard science fiction, new wave science fiction, *etc.*?

DF: I write space opera, largely because I prefer solid action and character development, without a lot of hard SF elements...since I don't have a PhD in the sciences, I don't even feel qualified to play in that end of the pool.

IO: Noticing a certain amount of humor about some of your titles, I wonder if you have heard about the "camp" movement, and whether you would identify yourself with "camp" writing? I have heard other science fiction writers discussing camp.

DF: You say camp, I think BATMAN, 1966. I haven't heard a lot of discussion outside of that area, so no, I can't help you there. I'm a New Yorker who has been called "a southerner at heart", so my sense of humor leans more into the sarcastic and the sardonic. A lot of my readers hate "New York City", but what they really hate is Manhattan...which has earned all the scorn and derision heaped upon it.

IO: Your writing seems particularly wild and violent, *e.g.* HELL SPAWN, DEATH CULT, INFERNAL AFFAIRS. How would you describe these and your other books?

DF: Technically, I write genre novels that are heavy on action. I figure if I'm bored, so is the audience. My solution to writing was provided by Raymond Chandler: when the story gets slow, send in a man through the door with a gun. I don't really think that they're really violent, I see the action as more realistic. I've had training in Krav Maga, so I understand how it feels to be hit, and to strike something.

The novels you point out are in the Saint Tommy NYPD series, where I tripped into

the horror genre. I was supposed to be writing Urban Fantasy, but I researched the demonic and serial killers, and the combination led me into the horror genre.

My other novels include my revenge on Dan Brown, THE PIUS TRILOGY—I basically combine my history degree with my enjoyment of action films. Unlike certain authors, I can give footnotes for the history I use.

The Love at First Bite series was me taking microbiology and metaphysics, and making vampires make more sense...and then I got to weaponized modern technology against them.

IO: Why do you want revenge on Dan Brown? Has he done something which has affected you? What's the action there?

DF: I'm a historian and a thriller writer. Dan Brown pretends to be both and is pretentious about it. I dislike lies and liars, and spreading lies, even in the guise of popular fiction, p---es me off.

IO: I've reviewed one of Brown's books for the NFFF. I found a lot of faults to it, but he seemed to me to have written an important book. What is your purpose in writing the books that you do?

DF: My purpose is to entertain, pure and simple. If my readers get any more out of my books than that, it's a bonus.

IO: I'm going to show where your books are available: what would you say to NFFF members about your books and how would you advertise them to NFFF members?

DF: If you love action and adventure with fleshed-out, colorful characters and solid world building, you should be reading my stuff.

IO: Have you been in other science fiction activities, such as going to conventions, or do you belong to any other organized sf activities such as science fiction clubs or groups?

DF: I mostly work the convention circuit when I can. Obviously, the last two years have been a little tough on that. And I live in New York City, they haven't believed in social activities. As for the other clubs and groups...I'm not really a social butterfly. If I enjoyed interacting with the general populace, I wouldn't be in a job that locks me in a room by myself for nine hours a day.

IO: Have you anything else to say that you would consider significant to this interview?

DF: I can't imagine what. I'm a guy who loves to read, and loves to write. The most interesting parts of me end up in my novels.

IO: Thank you for the interview. I think you've said some things that should bring about

reactions and discussions from the membership, or else maybe they're busy with like you said, self contemplation.

Finn's books can be found at <https://twitter.com/DeclanFinnBooks>

https://www.goodreads.com>6444682.Declan_Finn

<https://www.fantasticfiction.com>author>declan-finn>

<https://www.audible.com>author>Declan-Finn>



Event Horizon

NOTES ON JEFFREY REDMOND

We have perhaps all seen that Jeffrey Redmond's column "Behind the Scenes" has been missing for a few issues now. This has been a valuable column because it investigates what is going on behind science fiction and fantasy and behind fan activity as well. There came the accusation that Jeffrey had been transcribing material without identifying (or as it is being called, "crediting") the source material. Often the source material quoted was anonymous and often, too, it had been through several transpositions on the net, with those holding it not themselves identifying its sources very well, if at all. It's often quite a chase to find the source of what's on the net and some sites are clearly confiscating material from their membership without identifying it. Therefore it's a jungle that it's dangerous to research, and Redmond has been working hard and meeting the research challenge with fortitude. If the statements I've just made are ignored, as if they weren't there, and the accusations retain their original format, I'd as soon not hear back from them on this matter. A check did find examples of his quoting things without crediting them, but the things quoted were not shown to have a source and the crediting would be to Wikipedia and not its writers, who include people solicited in a general statement for contributions to its written contents, and they also ask for corrections and emendations to what they have on the net, and in other words are a-building and not that reliable a source of information, but most of their authorship remains anonymous. So reprinting without credit is about what they're doing, but they are usually called an infallible resource by those making accusations of its use, and I have just stated clearly locatable evidence that they are altogether fallible in what they print. They are not actually legitimate and certifiable by any but online racketeering. So I would call the accusations against Jeffery not as serious as they are made out to be.

But Jeffrey is back in with an article in Origin which does have accreditations. And so if he has accreditations for his articles for Ionisphere I will be able to print them without the harassment that is being raised. I believe he's being phished sometimes. Actually his columns maintain a consistent style, which signifies that he does a lot of the writing in them. Redmond seems to have a thing about The Stepford Wives; it keeps being spoken of in his articles. That would be consistency, but now I'm wondering if he's quoting numerous other writers who all are reacting to that, from all walks of life. Anyway, he's got his problems, and I will feel better about it if he continues identifying sources in his writing and I am able to continue printing his columns. He does a lot of work.

Chiller Condiments

by **CARDINAL COX**

A report on a science fiction convention held in Britain this year. Conventions are occasions where fans meet writers and artists of a professional caliber, and we are going to be presenting descriptions of these conventions whenever we get the chance. Here's one by a noted Big Name Fan, done especially for Ionisphere.



Foyer



View from Within



Castle



Paradise



Reading Area

Cox, with Rosanne (photo Tina Hautala)

Chillercon (25-29 May 2022) started as a Stokercon intended for April 2020. Then everything happened (gestures at the state of the world) and it changed date four times (and name just once as Stokercon has a constitution that wouldn't allow more than one a year—branding in such like). Now Stokercon is a large horror convention, sponsored by the HWA, that has taken over from the World Horror Convention (I'd been to one of those when it came to the UK in 2010). Over here in Britain there's a large overlap amongst the professionals when it comes to horror, sf and fantasy (and thriller writing) so even if I wasn't a horror fan (though I am) I knew there'd be stuff to interest me. As it happened my collection *GRAVE GOODS* came out during lockdown so I hoped I could do some promotion for that at the con.

However, as if enough hadn't happened, on Friday 13 May they announced that the ceiling in the ballroom of one of the main hotels in Scarborough (The Grand) had collapsed, spreading asbestos dust. Programme and members who had booked into there had to be moved into the other hotel (The Royal).

With a couple of days to go I was contacted by Rosanne Rabinowitz, who was sharing the reading slot with me. She pointed out that it was ten o'clock at night—not ten in the morning as I had thought. She was going to read part of a short story (featuring the ghost of W.B. Yeats). As I was doing poetry I suggested that she needn't stick to the rigorous twenty-five minutes if the natural break came a bit later, I could do a few poems less, no one would notice. We also agreed we could have an introductory chat about ideas.

I opted to travel up on the Wednesday so I could settle in a day earlier and perhaps have a look around the town, plus get my registration pack ahead of the crowds.

There's a traditional game played when you travel to a con by public transport. It's trying to spot some other travelers also going to the con. I had to change trains in my journey and at the intermediary station I spotted what I thought might be three more con-goers. Before I could ask them it was announced that the next train was cancelled. Our mutual looks of disappointment gave the game away. I suggested we go to the station coffee shop (in the old station master's office) and here I learned that they were from Finland. Marko Hautala had had one of his twenty-five novels (THE BLACK TONGUE) translated into English so was here to promote it.

When we got to Scarborough (an old fishing port on the North Sea that became a tourist destination in Victorian times) I managed to get the four of us lost between the station and the hotel (it's a knack) but we did find the town's sf-themed tattoo parlour—R2-Tattoo. My room...I was on the Fourth and a half floor (you went up in the lift to the 4th floor, went up the stairs towards the 5th floor and halfway up the stairs was the door—which didn't quite fit the frame—to my room. Wouldn't say it was small but when I sat on the toilet my knees were still in the bedroom. And the single bed meant I almost fell out my first night there. I tried the food in the hotel restaurant. The setup was a bit eccentric. There was one waiter trying to take everyone's orders. Some opted for the buffet, some for the table service (there was some difference in choice). However, from where I sat I could see that if someone having table service requested soup, a chef would come out of the kitchen and fill a bowl from the tureen by the buffet, then take it back into the kitchen. The waiter then had to go into the kitchen to get the bowl of soup for the customer.

Like I said, I like to get to big cons early so I can pick up the membership pack. Unfortunately this wasn't available as the lanyards hadn't arrived yet. So we went to the bar...where I found the beer was terrible. Truly terrible. I was going to be on cola for much of the weekend. Then an ABBA tribute act started—presumably for the mundane residents of the hotel. I got into conversation with sf author Neil Williamson. Our chat was partially about the local (to where I live) author/editor/publisher Ian Waites who (having been ill recently) I thought should focus on his own work rather than a hundred other projects. Neil however thought Ian should ABSOLUTELY focus on his own work and delegate some of his other jobs.

Wednesday night also saw a successful attempt at Whitby (just down the coast) to

break the Guinness World Record for the number of Vampires in one spot. Despite me having my cloak with me I didn't attend.

Thursday morning I picked up my membership pack, though the lanyards still hadn't arrived but, we were told, would do so on Friday. So we had to write our own membership badges. I had a wander down to the beach and around the nearby bit of the town. In the library there was an exhibition on the history of the local GCHQ base (the British equivalent of the NSA) that had been established before World War One.

After the opening ceremony (who goes to them?) the con proper started about three o'clock with two programme streams. I went to panels on horror comedy, book covers, podcasts, and folk horror. There was then a two-hour gap for the evening meal. This coincided with the return of the ABBA tribute act from the night before, doing 70s and 80s pop. We ran away (and overheard a rumor that there is to be a bid at UK for the World Fantasy Convention, but you didn't hear that from me). The programme started again at nine and at ten I went to a panel on world horror. This included Marko and his wife Tina Hautala, Eyglo Karisdottir (from Iceland but now living in Sweden) and Robert Knowlton (from Canada) who proved to be very knowledgeable.

Friday started at ten o'clock. At times there were seven programme streams running. I know for a couple of people this was to be their last day as they were going to the sf convention in Glasgow for Saturday & Sunday. I went to panels on anthologies, tie-ins, and independent presses. Because of the loss of the use of rooms at the other hotel some programme items were put on in a corner of the restaurant. OK until catering staff had to move crockery. There was a gap of an hour for lunch. During the afternoon I asked if the lanyards had arrived, to be told that they were "lost at sea" and were now expected on Tuesday...Friday night Rosanne and I were due to do our reading so I thought I'd go to the reading by contributors to **Black Static** magazine (published by TTA Press, who also do **Interzone**, which was in Ely last time I heard so fairly local to where I live). Readings were being done in a stairwell. A very plush stairwell with sofas and chairs and paintings on the wall, but still a stairwell. Under the stairs there was a low cupboard, and this gave me an idea...After this was a panel on getting short stories published, followed by a reading by Roger Lloyd Parry. He read two short stories by Arthur Machen. He has been touring his one-man shows performing ghost stories (he also toured a performance of H.G. Wells' THE TIME MACHINE for a while) for at least fifteen years. I've seen him several times.

So, Rosanne's and my own reading. The small audience gathered in the stair well.

Rosanne started to ask, "Where's the Cardinal? Has anyone seen the Cardinal?" At which point I emerged from the cupboard saying "Here I am. There's a whole network of tunnels back there." We got eight or nine people along which filled the space nicely. The audience included a couple of representatives of The Dracula Society as the collection I was effectively launching was drawn from work I'd written during my residency with them.

I stopped in the reading area as we were followed by Paul St. John Mackintosh and his reading included some modern ballads he'd written based on folklore of the clan Mackintosh.

Before the start of the con on Saturday morning I took the opportunity to take the Victorian funicular railway down to the promenade. Now Scarborough being a coastal tourist town has a problem with gulls. They strut around totally oblivious to what humans think. And if a small child has a packet of fish and chips they'll not just mug the child for them but if they put up resistance are as likely to carry off the child as well. The other (unused) hotel is an ornate Victorian structure of occult significance (legend has it that it has 365 rooms over seven floors) that the gulls nest on every rock and cranny amidst the guano covered carvings. At some point metal spikes have been added upon ledges and edges to put the gulls off. As you take the funicular railway through you can see the corpses of gulls impaled upon those spikes when they foolishly tried to land there.

The con started at ten and I had booked to go to the Kaffeeklatsch with some local film-makers who worked for Troma Films. These included Joe Cash (worked on STAR WARS—THE FORCE AWAKENS, WORLD WAR Z and MAD MAX: FURY ROAD, though his new film was SHE DOGS OF THE SS) and actress Kitty Kiss (NEKROLOGY). So there was a couple of red shirts (equivalent of gophers) and me, and that was it. And it was AWESOME! Had a right laugh learning about their history of film-making and plans for the future. And no, I didn't get a film contract out of it, but then I had nothing to pitch to them. After that I went to two Guest of Honor interviews. First was Kim Newman and after the hour of his talk we only got up to his first novels (WARHAMMER tie-ins) in the mid-1980s. Second was Grady Hendrix about whom I previously knew nothing but after his talk I'm going to be getting some of his books.

In the afternoon I only got to the Kaffeeklatsch with George Mann. Again there was only three of us and again it was great. Taking us through his only writing history, from writing an Encyclopedia of SF while being a buyer for a chain of bookshops, to

becoming a publisher with the Black Library of Games Workshop—Warhammer-related books, to his own steampunk novels to writing Dr. Who and Star Wars-related works. Fascinating.

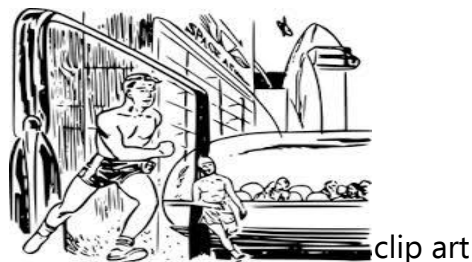
After the two-hour gap for evening meal (think I got a pizza) Robert Lloyd Parry did one of his trade-mark M.R. James ghost story recitations—“Oh Whistle and I’ll Come to You”. We got chatting (and maybe drinking) afterwards and it turned out he knew my name from some non-fiction I’d written thirty years ago. He regaled us with tales of touring to New York and I countered with my own experiences of performing at Worldcons in Helsinki and Dublin. About two o’clock I crawled off to bed.

The main event on Sunday was a banquet I’d not got a ticket for, so I went out into the town. Visited the ruins of the castle built in the twelfth century. Went in search of Anne Bronte’s grave (didn’t find it). Found a gate in a wall labelled Paradise and was about to go through when I remembered I’d promised to help some friends in the dealers’ room pack up.

My friends (Cathaven Books who publish the **Occult Detective** magazine) were packed up but waiting for the redshirts to get back from lunch. So I sat around for about ten minutes. Then I asked, “Why are we waiting for the redshirts? Do you just need one of the trolleys to take the boxes downstairs? If that’s the case I might know where they are kept.” So off I did trot. Found the trolley and got it back to the dealers’ room and we took the boxes downstairs to where they could be loaded into their car. After that there was a Dead Dog Party where wine undrunk at the various launches was re-distributed (I don’t drink wine) then they went to get some food and I found a nice Thai restaurant that was open.

Monday morning came the struggle to get everything into my rucksack and get the trains home.

So it was a convention beset with problems but none of them (Covid, hotel, lanyards, *etc.*) were the fault of the committee. Indeed, they rose above all adversity. If they had a crack at another bid for a Stokercon I’d sign up. Global pandemics permitting.



clip art

Existential Musings by Will Mayo



N3F Member Will Mayo has had a number of books of his poems published and here speaks with other members with a rare intimacy, giving readers a still rarer look at himself and his thoughts.

Set Apart

Our world is filled with billions and billions of life forms, all looking to kill and be killed and to satisfy their hunger. There are those that are very aware of this thing death and linger with the bodies of their loved ones long after death. Man alone, of all these life forms, seeks to deny his death and attain a heaven or a Valhalla beyond our sphere. Whether he will achieve this is unknown. But what is known is that he is the most unnatural of all the species. For him, the obvious will not do. So he seeks after lives. And is set apart for it.

Just Another Day

At times our lives appear in lockstep with the universe.

At other times, lost in utter chaos.

But perhaps it's both.

Peer through a microscope and see atoms binding
in chaotic energy.
Look into a telescope and see galaxies collide.
In between, our world comes together
The way a city block joins to another to create a city.
Through it all, neurons race, stars eat planets
and one man ponders his destiny.
It's just another day in the multiverse.

THE MOMENTS

Another and another
shall come to pass.
Till at last
our eyes will be opened.
It's a hard world
with chance moments
of beauty.
But what beauty.

EXAMPLE ONE

Here I am.
No sermons.
No miracles.
No special effects.
Born of modern technology.
No hidden tricks up my sleeve.

Just a simple man with the night
writing his life away.

You can take me as I am.

Or you can do as
most people do
and walk away.

The choice is yours.

But here I remain

Just one man with the night.



Looking Over the Issue by John Thiel

Comments left to say, afterthoughts on the contents by the editor

Like I say, there's things to comment on in the issue. I'm surprised that we don't get many LoCs. Perhaps our subject matter is not that interesting to a lot of the readership. Let me make up for this apparent lack of interest by showing that I am interested.

It may be a political viewpoint that I'm not in tune with a majority, but I do have an elite minority with me who do a lot of activity to make up for their numbers.

The cover looks good; it's a view of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. This should be interesting to science fiction fen and appropriate here.

Reading over the review with Rick Hanners reminded me of how popular world-building and terraforming novels have become, which show mankind operating with fantastic ability rivalling the mythical creation of planets and stars, but here with these stories science is involved, a science which is altogether possible, though not quite as yet conceived. Many and many are the writers of alternate reality novels and of novels involving the changing of present-day reality through time travel, which has apparently not been done yet in real life. There are schools where world-building is taught and societies or guilds practicing the formulation of alternate realities, and many are the conceptualizations of alternate universes, our own perhaps not being very satisfying, but most of the authors show the alternate universes as worse, at least from our viewpoint. This I think surpasses most of the science fiction of the fifties, is much more ambitious than science fiction was in those days, though things get somewhat stalled, I believe, by how fierce the competition is. Writers carve governmental setups gleaned from various reading into their landscapes of the worlds they have built. Rick Hanners has some broad world views in what he writes, and readers could well spend some time with what he has written.

Chris Nuttall brings up the fact that when the science in a science fiction book becomes outdated, it leaves books of the time with little interest because their continuity of facts has been neutralized; for example, one cannot but be aware that stories set on Mars or Venus have simply not been about reality; what enjoyment can be had out of a book when we know it for certain to be wrong in its major conceptions? This might be what has led to all the talk about getting into another universe, one where

there may be life on other planets, so that there can be something discussable about the planets. In fact, even in the fifties people were pretty dubious about there being life on other planets—why would there be? Does there being a planet imply that there is life upon it? Planets are simply there; the surprise might be to find that there is life on any of them, namely Earth. We know there is life on Earth because WE are life on Earth. Send people out there, they find out that there is none on those other worlds. But the fantasies that people enjoyed in those early eras have been put to a dead stop by the discovery that there just isn't anything worth a hoot out there. The imagination and its enjoyment is curtailed by stark reality. We might turn to fantasy and populate those worlds with spirits, as Bradbury did, but on the whole this dead stop of the imagination has made a whole lot of writers into world-builders. I myself enjoy thinking back on science fiction I have read, whether it's real or not. There is a certain reality to works of the imagination. Chris himself lets his imagination go a long way.





art by Aboya Cruise



Valhalla