

IONISPHERE 32

December 2021



Publication of the National Fantasy Fan Federation's
Fan/Pro Coordinating Bureau

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER: John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street,
Lafayette, Indiana 47904. Email contact: kinethiel@mymetronet.net

Published for the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F). To join or renew, use the membership form at <http://n3f.org/join/membership-form/> Full memberships are \$18, email memberships \$6. Public memberships are free. Send payments to Kevin Trainor, PO Box 143, Tonopah, NV 89049. Pay online at [Http://n3f.org](http://n3f.org) .

STAFF



John Thiel, bureau head.

Jefferson Swycaffer, pro contact, post office box 15373, San Diego, California 92175-5373, abontides@gmail.com

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

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

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

John Polselli, ground contact, 264 Chestnut Hill Road, Chepachet, Rhode Island 02814

CONTENTS

Editorial: "Open Windows" by John Thiel, page three

Author Interview: Jack Mulcahy, page five

Artist Interview: Nathan Warner, page nine

Race in Science Fiction, by Jeffrey Redmond, page eighteen

Commentary, page twenty-five

Views of the Ionosphere, page twenty-nine.



EDITORIAL Open Windows

I get Windows 2010 with my computer and it's very nice being in this hyperspace form of fandom, but I am always concerned—as a spacer might well be—about losing contact with the ground. There, time is slower and activity less direct. And I think that there may be several disadvantages in terms of fan solidarity to this form of existence. There is talk about becoming computer entities, in living a virtual existence instead of a real one, which has been somewhat predicted before; in fact, science fiction stories predicting such computer use have not expressed the solid appreciation of the internet possibility that we find around us now, nor has prior science fiction shown an out-and-out approval of advanced technology, such as is almost universalized in our commentary about it now.

What the Fan-Pro Coordinating Activity is about is keeping a united fandom and making sure there are contacts among those who are in it. These contacts are not going very well on the computer system, as short form is generally in use and there is considerable blocking going on, as well as identity thefts, phishing and usage of bots. So the fan-pro bureau can either sit looking at it all and wondering what to do about it, or it can find something to do about it and do it. I think a good start in doing something about all this is to present the problem and show how bad it may be. Then we might want to show what we're doing to see what people think of it. A lot of doing is saying.

The message is also the message, and may be the doing involved.

What we're after is preservation of what we have (which has been the goal of Ninth Fandom) and restoration of what we may have lost, and augmentation of the actual objectives which science fiction fandom has had. We use any means we have to keep fandom together and active and to make it possible for things to function in fandom. We want the writers and the fans to feel together. We want to say sensible things upon which we can agree, not outre and outrageous argumentation.

As science fiction values progress, I think I can point out that we are in a situation where progress is interfering with progress, and with this tremendous appreciation of technology based upon our claims to it we may be finding ourselves hoist by our own petards, as the saying goes. It's the opposite of a situation we get out of by pulling up our bootstraps. It may be when there is too much technological development all at once, the piled up accumulation of the faults which technology may have can overwhelm us. It may be that men have built so much so well that they have produced more than they can handle, and they have lost the humanitarian viewpoint of considering it in the apocalyptic activity of using it. Our problems overall are big ones, and the considerations thereof have to be on a large scale. (Say the scale held by Libra, the liberator, to give fantasy a say-so.)

So, we have those windows to the world, but let's open them wide to get a better look at what's outside. If we can't get them open, maybe they're stuck. You want to get a screwdriver underneath the window and jiggle it loose. Or get your father to do it, if you're a young person. Don't have hubris and think you can comprehend a larger view, but also don't let your comprehension be limited by those focusing those windows. We want to have outlooks and perspectives, but not have those dictated to us by people with a purpose not our own. Perspectives aren't certitudes, and as science fiction and fantasy readers, we don't want to be enslaved by certitudes, even those made suitable to us by being tailored to our present considerations. And what's this? We don't want to be "out-thought" by technologically wrought devices. That's been a speculative fear since the Nineteenth Century (see Poe's "chess player" article).

This issue we've got interviews with two fans/pros who are N3F members, and this is part of our getting to know one another, the way things should be in the NFFF. We don't want to just look at ideas, we want to know who we are looking things over with. Read on, we are just getting started.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: JACK MULCAHY



Jack Mulcahy is a new member of the National Fantasy Fan Federation who listed himself as a writer. We are of course interested in hearing about the books he has written, and in this interview he goes into detail about his coming to be a writer and about what he has written. He seems to be all in favor of science fiction activities.

IO: You're new to the National Fantasy Fan Federation, and I think the members hearing that you are a published writer would be interested in hearing about your writing. The opening questions are from a naïve viewpoint since I am asking questions of someone new to it.

First question is, How long have you been writing?

JM: I wrote my first stories when I was in high school in the late 1960s. I had discovered

Rod Serling and Ray Bradbury, and thought (ha!) I could do what they were doing. I also was reading Marvel Comics; at one time, I wanted to write and draw comic books. In 1973, I took a day off my job at a paint store and drove up to Charlton Comics in Derby, Connecticut, with no appointment. Nick Cuti was kind enough not only not to kick me out, but to talk to me and look at my samples. He found a kind way to tell me I wasn't a good enough artist, but he also read a few paragraphs of a prose short story I'd brought, told me I was a very visual writer, and recommended I not get into comic books.

In the mid 1980s, I started to get more serious about my craft. I began writing and drawing a graphic novel. That was the incarnation of "The Chronicles of the Healer." I actually wrote, penciled, lettered, and inked two 20-page chapters, which took me way longer than I'd expected. The experience convinced me that I'm a much better writer than artist.

IO: What writings have you published, and where were they published?

JM: Here's what I've sold since 1997:

"The Talisman", 1997, appeared in **Lesbian Short Fiction**, issue 4.

"When the Student is Ready", 2001, **Lost Worlds**, Volume 10, N. 4.

"Healer", 2008, **Flashing Swords**, issue 11.

"Journey Into the Darkness", 2008, **Sorcerous Signals**

"The Man in the Feathered Cloak" (rework of "When the Student is Ready"), 2009.

Abandoned Towers

"Ware the Power", 2010, **Pulp Empire**, Volume 3

"Into the Demesne of Dhuada" 2011, **Pulp Empire, Heroes & Heretics**

"Jehan's Legacy", 2011, **Pulp Empire**, Volume 5

"Arys the Younger", 2011, **Pulp Empire**, Volume 4

"First Mission", 2011, **Young Adventurers, Heroes**

"Twelve-Step-Group", 2022, Pending, **Journeys Anthology**

"Beware My Power" (Rework of "Ware the Power"), 2022, Pending, **Dimensions of Fantasy**

IO: What do you consider your most important writing?

JM: Other than my work-in-progress novel, I think "The Talisman" is the most important piece I've done because it's the first one I sold, and to a publication aimed at lesbians. I

jumped up and down and shouted "I got it right!" when I saw Editor Jinx Beer's acceptance letter. I actually sold her a second story that followed "The Talisman", which Jinx accepted also, but she had to close up the magazine before publication. She still paid me for the story, however, great person that she was.

IO: What are your major themes?

JM: All my short fiction is set in the world of the novel I've been writing (for way too long). I try to write about characters I admire facing issues readers can relate to. I feature stories about tolerance, love, courage, and perseverance in the face of difficulties. While I try not to write cardboard, black & white characters, I dislike harsh, hard-edged anti-hero types. My ideal heroes are characters like Leroy Jethro Gibbs, Travis McGee, Dimonic Flandry, and Miles Vorkosigan. I also admire Hester Prynne (THE SCARLET LETTER by Nathaniel Hawthorne), Dorothy Gale (the L. Frank Baum OZ series), Megan and Sh'kaira (FIFTH MILLENNIUM series by Shirley Meier, S.M. Stirling, and Karen Wehrstein), and Paksenarrion Dorthansdotter (THE DEED OF PAKSENARRION by Elizabeth Moon). The common element all these heroes have is that they stand for something, and refuse to compromise with evil.

IO: Who are some of your influences in the field of fantasy writing? What prompted you to write fantasies?

JM: Elizabeth Moon, Robert E. Howard, Glen Cook, Lois McMaster Bujold, Poul Anderson, Heinlein, Tolkien, Moorcock, Jennifer Roberson, and Evangeline Walton are just some of my influences. I grew up (or so they say) reading comic books, Conan and Tolkien (usually instead of the books my teachers assigned). I tried writing comic books long before now-famous comics writers were being interviewed in fanzines, about which I knew nothing until I was in my 50s. I'd always enjoyed the Conan books; my first attempt at a novel was a post-apocalyptic mess. I had no mentor(s) to advise me that *everyone's* first drafts are a mess. I didn't even know about manuscript format until I encountered a very kind and generous teacher of an Adult Learning course called "Beginning Your Novel". Bill taught me a great deal.

IO: As an NFFF member you are in science fiction and fantasy fandom. What other experiences have you had of fandom?

JM: I used to belong to the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society (PSFS), whose meetings featured authors like Jack Williamson, Connie Willis (a truly *wonderful* and funny lady, besides being a great writer), and others. Not sure why I left PSFS, and I keep telling

myself I'll rejoin some day. I've also attended PhilCon quite a few years. My first year at PhilCon, I saw Connie Willis in an empty hallway, and said something like, "My God, that's Connie Willis!" She walked right up to me, shook my hand, introduced herself, and I got an opportunity to ask her about writing and to inquire when a great-sounding story she'd described at a PSFS meeting was going to appear. She said that was "Why the World Didn't End Last Tuesday", and she was hoping it would fit into her next "Greatest Hits" collection. That encounter took place in 1995 or so. There have been two Best of Connie Willis collections since. I'm still hoping the story will appear some day. I also attended the annual Philadelphia Writers Conference, where I met lots of other writers, editors, and agents from all fields of writing.

IO: You were one of the five finalists in Hubbard's WRITERS OF THE FUTURE competition. Was your story included in the anthology they publish? Your story was "Night of the Full Moon". What was it about?

JM: To the best of my knowledge, none of my stories has ever appeared in a WOTF collection. I knew one of my stories had earned Honorable Mention, though I don't think "Night of the Full Moon" was one. You may actually know more than I do about this one.

IO: Or have some misinformation. Your writing expresses a conflict among men and women. Is this an important part of your writing?

JM: My writing expresses a strong belief in the rights of people to be treated with dignity and respect. However, I have always had firm opinions about women's rights. I actually have been trying to improve my fiction, so it's not just an expression of conflict between evil men and virtuous women. My later stories, and "Night of the Full Moon" is among them, tend to be about the need for cooperation between women and men.

IO: Have you any connections with the feminist movement?

JM: No direct connections that I'm aware of.

IO: Have you read Jane Robert's "The Chestnut Beads" and "The Bundu"? These concerned a situation of women fighting against the domain of men.

JM: I have not read either of them, though they sound interesting. Thanks for taking the time to develop these questions. I hope my answers gave you a good place to start. I'm open for other questions you may come up with.

IO: Glad to have had you with us, Jack, and we thank you for the interview.

ARTIST INTERVIEW: NATHAN WARNER



Nathan Warner has recently entered the National Fantasy Fan Federation and has contributed art to Ionisphere and Origin. We're pleased to have gotten an interview with him on the subject of his art.

IO: We're very impressed with your art, which is of a professional quality. Have your pictures been the covers of any science fiction books? If so, what were the books?

NW: Firstly, thanks for the compliment. I am truly humbled. No, none of my artwork has been featured on any books, although I made a booklet of my early artwork, which is available on Amazon. I only began making my Star Trek art in 2018, so I am late to the table, as it were.

I began making the art almost accidentally. I was working in Church ministry at the time and felt I needed a creative outlet that I could relax with. I was waiting for my wife to get ready for a night out on the town and I was holding some micromachine Star Trek ship models and I just started photographing them with my camera-phone. I

played around with some filters on the phone and I was blown away with how it looked. I had developed some PowerPoint skills while working as an Engineer before the 2008 Recession, and I employed them to begin adapting this simple technique to make my art. PowerPoint is essentially a collage canvas—You can add many images and manipulate them to your desire, but it was not designed for that and it is very limited compared to professional programs, but I believe in the power of limits to challenge the mind to be creative and boost innovation. I believe I may be one of the few PowerPoint artists in the world.

All my art is an homage to traditional special effects that made the original Star Trek series before 3D animation took over. Each artwork I make starts with photographs of a physical model (a ship) taken under the lighting of a bankers' lamp. Then in PowerPoint, I painstakingly mask that model out of my photograph by hand-drawing overlapping shapes around it, tracing it out. Then I isolate the ship and composite it into my own photography or NASA imagery that I heavily modify for my artistic interest. A lot more work goes into it, but that is the foundational process. It has many similarities to the original techniques they used on the show.

IO: Have you ever done magazine art?

NW: No, I have not. Again, I have only recently entered the amateur artistic field. I have traveled to two Science Fiction conferences and had tables with canvases of my work for sale. I was generously invited by the Klingon Assault Group of Colorado who paid for my trip and they procured me a table. But my art is a part-time hobby now that I'm working full time, so I have little time to seek out opportunities.

IO: What are the names of the science fiction events you have attended, and where were they held?

NW: In spring of 2019, I was graciously invited to Starfleet, Denver, Colorado, by the Klingon group—House Vampyr. I had a table there with my artwork and sold some pieces, including my first art-book: <https://www.amazon.com/Between-Heaven-Earth-Artists-Journey/dp/1728830885>. In fall of 2019, I attended GalaxyCon, Minneapolis, Minnesota, where anime was over-represented and my table was lost in the noise. It was a good experience, but I lost interest in doing conventions after I did not recoup the cost of attending there.

IO: Have you any interest in illustrative art?

NW: At this time, I have ceased from all commissions, but I may be open to them in the future.

IO: Well, I'd like to hear of the new development if you do. When did you become interested in science fiction?

NW: I have loved science fiction since I was a small child. My father is an aerospace engineer and so filled me with a love of manned machines (particularly aircraft). He was a fan of the Original Star Trek series and shared his love of Star Trek with me at a young age.

I remember having a TV dinner and watching "The Search for Spock" with him and just being completely entranced in the story and the concept of a rapidly dying planet. All those movies are great.

But my love for science fiction does not end with Star Trek. I love how Science Fiction deals with such a broad range of speculative concepts, pushing the human mind to think about possibilities. I am a scientist by education, graduating university with degrees in Geology and Geophysics and an engineer by profession, working on advanced flying and swimming vehicles, so I understand how science fiction and science often are dovetailed, one inspiring the imagination of the other. It is good to stretch the practical mind to think beyond the scientific moment and consider deeper questions about what you are doing and the future implications.

Science fiction fires my imagination—to this day the Starships of Star Trek fill me with wonder. I have composed my own ambiance tracks for my YouTube channel that I play sometimes at night to transport me to the cabin of a starship.

There were, of course, many other science fiction entries that captured my imagination. The Disney version of "20,000 Leagues under the Sea" had a profound impact on me as a child as well as did the haunting work "2001, A Space Odyssey". I have never been able to get that film out of my head.

"Blade Runner" influenced me and the Vangelis soundtrack was a revelation. I enjoy some cyberpunk music ambiance now and again because of it while I work. The thematic material was first rate—loved the luciferian metaphors and its existential questions about humanity. And its final scene also made a huge artistic impression on me, especially the monologue, "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhauser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die." The sense of scale and world building there in just a few lines continues to blow me away.

Of course, I like Star Wars (however, it is more mythology and fantasy to me,

rendered in the trappings of science fiction) but Star Trek has always been my favorite science fiction experience, simply because it is very thought-provoking while maintaining an intense optimism and moral center—it is the universe I would most like to be transported to with its focus on science and exploration, discovery and wonder. And I like the strong sense of honor, duty, truth, the scientific method, and care for life.

I love all the Star Trek theatrical films (but especially the Kirk and crew ones). Many folks feel Star Trek the Motion Picture is boring and dull, but I love the “2001, a Space Odyssey” DNA it carries—the meditative, immersive experience it gives. It puts me in that world and I feel like I am actually there as the camera lingers and takes its time—and the score! The scene where Spock rockets into V’Ger and his entire reconnaissance mission inside is so incredibly visually amazing—as is the entire V’Ger flyby scene. It is an underrated classic.

IO: What science fiction books are your favorites?

NW: I grew up with Jules Verne and H.G. Wells. “War of the Worlds” and “The Time Machine” were early favorites. My brother and I were obsessed with heat ray weapons for a time because of it.

As a child, I really liked the spiritual/science work of Madeleine L’Engle in “A Wind in the Door” and “A Swiftly Tilting Planet” even though the writing quality was not as good as I remembered when I read them again recently. But the way she connected the macroscopic with the microscopic blew my mind as a child and still ripples through my subconscious. I look at cellular organisms gobbling up each other for energy under a microscope and then by a telescope see galaxies in the heavens (which do not look entirely dissimilar) doing the same thing—devouring one another, fueling their star production. It makes you think.

I still have a collection of Star Trek Academy novels for children that I enjoy for a quick and innocent diversion on raining days. The Worf trilogy by Peter David is my favorite.

I discovered C.S. Lewis’ “That Hideous Strength” after struggling through his “Space Trilogy” and was deeply affected by his prescient warning about the dangers of Posthumanism.

I recall a volume of short stories of Isaac Asimov that I enjoyed as a child and would love to find it again.

I think my favorite Science Fiction novels must be “Dune” and “Dune Messiah”. Frank Herbert is Tolkien’s peer in the Science Fiction realm, in my opinion, and Tolkien is my

favorite author of all time, so that is saying something.

Frank Herbert really thought about politics and its relationship with religion and some of the stuff he says is amazing. The feudal understanding of his work is very deep and observant. I first read him during our invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, so the metaphors ringing in my head were razor sharp for over a decade.

I also enjoyed the novel version of "2001, a Space Odyssey" as it cleared up some of my confusion with the film—asserting its exploration of alien-assisted Transhumanism—something Christopher Nolan continued in "Interstellar" but replacing the alien influence with the Final Anthropic Principle.

There are many other works surely, but those come to mind readily.

IO: You have art displays on the net. Have you displayed your art anywhere else?

NW: Aside from trying to make a splash on the Internet, I have displayed my art at several Science Fiction conferences and given talks on how I make my artwork. Prior to my recent move, I had a small art gallery at my home for folks to view—primarily the left-over canvas pieces that didn't sell at conferences.



Galaxy Con in Minneapolis



IO: Has your art attracted a lot of attention? What successes have you had in gaining interest in your art?

NW: I gained a lot of attention early on and, as I said earlier, was even invited to Colorado as a special guest by the Klingon Assault Group—House Vampyr. However, interest seems to have waned over the last couple years. I thought Covid would have driven people to spend more time online and I expected more attention for my art—I certainly made an effort to share it on my end, but interest largely dropped off. I still don't understand that metric.

Also, I have learned over the years that the average fan expects to get art for free—after all, you can do a Google search and find heaps of great artwork that you can store on your phone or print out yourself for free. So, the market for artists to support themselves is pretty tough right now. I think the only avenue to support yourself right now is to do art commissions, but I don't really go in for that presently. I gave up trying to sell my artwork and focused instead on making it purely as a hobby for my enjoyment and for other people. I have continued to garner some interest online, but unfortunately changes on the Deviant Art platform significantly hampered my reach. My most success sharing my artwork recently has been on Printerest.

Since March of this year, I switched gears from making Star Trek art and have been working on an original science fiction novel more in the "plausibly realistic" style of "The Expanse". As a scientist and engineer, the "write what you know" adage has been ringing in my ears, so I applied it to the topic of space and have created on the page a world 100-200 years in our future that is "plausible" based on the technology of today. The soul of the story comes from one of my science heroes, Freeman Dyson, whose assertion deeply affected me, that humanity must have a frontier for its soul to survive, and that Earth has exhausted its frontiers, so we must get out into space—coupling that with Stephen Hawking and Elon Musk's assertion that humanity must get off the planet if it is to survive the dangers of self-destruction, balanced against an existential threat of humanity's own making. I hope I have written something compelling for the science fiction audience.

I have recently completed it and am in the third pass of editing. I am researching publishers now and hope to get it published.

IO: Do you do any art which is not pictures of space ships, such as scenic art or art with people in action in it?

NW: I was a pencil and sketch artist all through high school and have a large portfolio

that hasn't been digitized. In college, I became a 3D animator, using Lightwave 3D and have several old show-reels on my YouTube channel. Since 2010, I have used Lightwave primarily professionally in my Engineering field, not artistically...although the warp fields I use in my Star Trek art were animated in Lightwave 3D.

One YouTube Demo reel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KERyqipisL8> .

But as far as art that I showcase, I have some spiritual artwork I showcase:





IO: The trail in the one picture has a real sense of wonder about it.

How do you like the National Fantasy Fan Federation?

NW: I love the community and the legacy. It's amazing to be part of such a long-standing and respected organization and I'm honored to have been asked to join. It is a great privilege.

IO: Do you belong to any organizations of artists?

NW: I do not belong to any professional organization. I am a member of many Facebook artist groups and I have a presence in the Deviant Art community, but not much aside from that.

IO: Are you in search of further experiences with science fiction?

NW: I am always open to it. I heard for the first time about Isaac Asimov's "Foundation" series and am intrigued to check the book out—I hear such great praise heaped upon it, that it even beat out the Lord of the Rings for an award, so I must see to it. I had never heard of it before, strangely enough.

Most of the science fiction I explore these days comes through films and television—The Expanse, Interstellar, Ghost in the Shell, the first Matrix, Stargate, *etc.*

I enjoy mythological science fiction such as Star Wars and Firefly, but I most enjoy

philosophical and thought-provoking science fiction as well as conceptual science fiction that explores technology or scientific concepts. Star Trek has always excelled in this area in an easily accessible way to a broad audience.

IO: Do you have acquaintances who are also readers of science fiction?

NW: I do have a few friends and family who enjoy science fiction, but not to the same degree as I do.

IO: Thank you for an excellent interview, and we'll be glad of any more we may hear about you.



RACE IN SCIENCE FICTION by Jeffrey Redmond



How are inter-racial communications coming along? As science fiction grows, there's more to work with.

White people are a distinct minority of the Earth's population, but they continue to dominate in most science fiction. Racial matters have long been a very highly charged category of Politics. Early science fictional discussion of the problems of race relations would often distance the issues by a metaphorical transfer to the imaginary or Alien societies of Lost Worlds and other planets, since serious speculation tended to be swamped by anxious fantasies. Notably the specter of the Yellow Peril, and by the kind of unthinking racism and antisemitism which were for many years endemic in popular fiction of all kinds.

Such open-minded works as Herrmann Lang's *THE AIR BATTLE* (1859) remain anomalies in a nineteenth century dominated by the racist ideologies which found virulent expression in King Wallace's *THE NEXT WAR* (1892) and Louis Tracy's Anglo Saxon supremacist *THE FINAL WAR* (1896). Tracy's worldview was echoed in M.P. Shiel's early Yellow Peril novel *THE YELLOW DANGER* (5 February-18 June 1893 *Short Stories* as "The Empress of the Earth", 1898), but Shiel repented of it in such later books as the misleadingly retitled *THE DRAGON* (1913; revised version *The Yellow Peril*, 1929), in the same way that he reassessed and reversed his occasional knee jerk antisemitism in his Messianic political fantasy *THE LORD OF THE SEA* (1901). Another white supremacist work is *BLOOD WILL TELL: THE STRANGE STORY OF A SON OF HAM* (1902) by Benjamin Rush Davenport.

The United States inevitably produced a considerable number of political fantasies about black/white relations, an important early landmark being Martin R. Delany's separatist *UTOPIA BLAKE, or THE HUTS OF AMERICA* (January-July 1859 **The Anglo African Magazine**, part only; 26 November 1861-24 May 1862 **The Weekly Anglo African**, full text; all surviving portions 1970)—the first novel to be published by a black person in America. Also of note, from the very early twentieth century, is Pauline Hopkins' *OF ONE BLOOD, or THE HIDDEN SELF* (November 1902-January 1903 **The Colored American Magazine**, 2004). Other thoughtful works include Robert Gilbert Wells' *ANTHROPOLOGY APPLIED TO THE AMERICAN WHITE MAN AND NEGRO* (1905)—introducing the frequent sf theme of being able to change one's skin color at will—T Shirby Hodge's *THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN* (1915) and George S. Schuyler's satire *BLACK NO MORE* (1931).

David H. Keller's four-segment story "The Menace" (Summer 1928 **Amazing Stories Quarterly**) depressingly begins with a paranoia-laden black peril plot against the USA, with foreign gold financing plans to destroy the country via a serum that turns black

people white. The protagonist, in a speech concluding with the n-word, insists that “Your race can change the color of their skins but they cannot change the color of their souls”. The next stratagem, still more horrifying to Keller’s hero, threatens wide deployment of an adapted serum to make white people black, the color of their souls here offering no consolation.

Echoing Jonathan Swift’s *A MODEST PROPOSAL* (1792 chap), George P. Elliott’s “The NRACP” (Fall 1949 **The Hudson Review**)—whose title initials stand for “National Relocation Act: Colored Peoples”—sets out a US program of transporting Afro-Americans to reserves where they are slaughtered. In “Dark Interlude” (January 1951 **Galaxy**) by Fredrick Brown and Mack Reynolds, time travel from the post-holocaust future to mid-twentieth-century USA is fatal for the visitor who, initially welcomed, proves to be of mixed race.

Harry Stephen Keeler’s *THE MAN WHO CHANGED HIS SKIN* (written 1959, translated into Spanish 1966, 2009) centers on identity exchange between a white and a Black American in 1855. As the Civil Rights movement began in the 1950s and reached its first climactic phase in the 1960s, several notable futuristic fantasies of race relations were produced by mainstream writers, including *A DIFFERENT DRUMMER* (1959) by William Melvin Kelley, *THE SIEGE OF HARLAM* (1964) by Warren Miller, *THE SPOOK WHO SAT BY THE DOOR* (1969) by Sam Greenlee—filmed in 1973—and several novels by John A. Williams beginning with *THE MAN WHO CRIED I AM* (1967).

Such direct treatments, however, seemed too sensitive to most genre-magazine editors, who preferred their writers to use aliens in parables whose arguments were conducted at a more abstract level. A notable exception is the series by Mack Reynolds begun with *BLACK MAN’S BURDEN* (December 1961-January 1962 **Analog**) set in Africa rather than the USA.

Harry Harrison’s barely science-fictional “Mute Milton” (February 1966 *Amazing*) features an unrecognized black genius who has invented a new, fuel-less power source; when he is shot (and his invention destroyed) by small-town US police pursuing another man, nobody cares about the fate of this second-class citizen. “The Space Traders” (in *FACES AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL: THE PERMANENCE OF RACISM*, collection 1992) by US lawyer and civil rights activist Derrick Bell (1930-2011) bleakly proposes a thought experiment in which aliens offer the USA solutions to its problems of economics, pollution and power sources in exchange for the entire black population; the deal is eagerly accepted. America is divided by strict apartheid in Howard Means’ *C.S.A.*:

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA (1998).

More typically Genre Sf would deal sympathetically with the aspirations of, say, an Android underclass, as in Clifford D. Simak's *TIME AND AGAIN* (October-December 1950 *Galaxy* as "Time Quarry", 1951). Cordwainer Smith's under-people (uplifted from animals) pervade his *Instrumentality of Mankind* sequence and, recalling attitudes to African Americans in times when they were denied political power, are credited with deeper spirituality than "normal" humans—as for example in "The Dead Lady of Clown Town" (August 1964 *Galaxy*). Frederik Pohl performs a neat if routine sf reversal in "The New Neighbors" (May 1983 *F&SF*) as a community of nice middle-class robots reacts to the arrival of humans in their apartment block—only two, but: "Did you forget they're organic? What are we going to do if they start to reproduce?" The film *ALIEN NATION* (1988) transposes the well-worn buddy theme of a black and white cop learning to work together into an alien-plus-human team; Terry Pratchett's *MEN AT ARMS* (1993) replays the cliché to comic effect with a dwarf and a troll, whose inter-species hatred is a Discworld tradition.

In the 1950s and early 1960s the mere appearance of an ethnic minority character in a positive role was faintly unusual, with the exception that Native American ancestry was remarkably common in spacemen and other sf heroes; two examples of very many are the lead characters Kade Whitehawk in Andre Norton's *THE SIOUX SPACEMEN* (1960) and Two Hawks in Philip Jose Farmer's *THE GATE OF TIME* (1966, expanded version *TWO HAWKS FROM EARTH* 1979). It is frequently noted that Eric Frank Russell's *MEN, MARTIANS AND MACHINES* (May 1941-October 1943 **Astounding**, expanded as a collection of linked stories 1955) offers a characteristic vision of multi-racial harmony—tentacled Martians, though not women, being included on equal terms—on a spaceship whose highly competent doctor is black.

Robert Heinlein quietly indicates that the narrator of *STARSHIP TROOPERS* (October-November 1959 **F&SF** as "Starship Soldier", 1959) is a Filipino, but is very much more coy with hints that the female lead of *I WILL FEAR NO EVIL* (July-December 1970 *Galaxy*, 1970) may be black. The original *Star Trek* series famously includes the black communications officer Uhura, her and Captain Kirk's kiss, albeit under the influence of alien mind control, in the episode "Plato's Stepchildren" (1968) was seen as a groundbreaking moment—the first interracial kiss in a science fiction series on US television, although by no means the first when other genres are considered.

Heinlein's uncompromisingly brutal *FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD* (1964) describes a far

future America where blacks rule whites as slaves. Frederik Pohl, in "The Day After the Martians Came" (in DANGEROUS VISIONS, anthology 1967, edited by Harlan Ellison) shows white Americans gleefully transferring an entire tradition of racist slurs and jokes to unlovely aliens found on Mars. The punchline, spoken by a black man, is that the coming of this new underdog/scapegoat is "going to make a difference to some people".

Norman Spinrad tackles US racial politics, though incidentally and with a broad brush, in BUG JACK BARRON (December 1967-October 1968 **New Worlds**, expanded in 1969). This features a black separatist state of Mississippi. Octavia Butler's KINDRED (1979) thrusts her Afro-American heroine via time travel into the harrowingly depicted slave state Maryland of 1815, which can only be endured. Films in which white men become black are CHANGE OF MIND (1969)—which achieves the effect by identity transfer via brain transplant—and the comic WATERMELON MAN (1970). A US general subjected to involuntary identity exchange in Thomas M. Disch's CAMP CONCENTRATION (July-October 1967 **New Worlds**, 1968) dies of sheer horror on realizing he is now black.

In Britain, two 1930s role-reversal satires in which a future England's degenerate white primitives have given way to black Catholic colonists from Africa are John Gray's PARK: A FANTASTIC STORY (1932) and Evelyn Waugh's "Out of Depth: An Experiment Begun in Shaftesbury Avenue and Ended in Time" (December 1933 **Harper's Bazaar**). The other familiar form of racial role-reversal is central to W. Douglas Newton's THE BLACK ARAB (February-July 1928 **Cassell's Magazine**, fixup 1933, abridged 1944) as by John Halstead, in which the titular character devises a means of turning his country's white exploiters black. Further UK sf novels bearing on racial problems include Margot Bennett's THE LONG WAY BACK (1954), Robert Bateman's WHEN THE WHITES WENT (1963), John Brunner's THE JAGGED ORBIT (1969), Christopher Priest's FUGUE FOR A DARKENING ISLAND (1972)—by far the boldest of its period; Peter Dickinson's satire THE GREEN GENE (1973), in whose alternate history UK the Velts are green-skinned and subject to discrimination, and Barry Norman's END PRODUCT (1975), which echoes the slaughter theme of Jonathan Swift's satire "A Modest Proposal" (18\729 chap) and George P. Elliott's above cited "The NRACP".

An example of a more distanced treatment is "Dumb Martian" by John Wyndham (July 1952 *Galaxy*), whose titular female alien is in effect a black slave whose stupidly cruel human master "knows" she cannot be intelligent and is dumbfounded when she

takes well-deserved revenge. The internal racial harmony of a near Utopian future Earth in John Brunner's *THE LONG RESULT* (1965) is balanced by a residue of irrational prejudice against aliens, fostered by an all too plausible human supremacist movement calling itself The Stars Are For Man League. Malorie Blackman's Young Adult *Noughts & Crosses* sequence beginning with *NOUGHTS & CROSSES* (2001) reprises, strongly, the inverted situation in which blacks oppress whites.

South African political fantasies on the theme include Sydney G. Attwell's minatory *DRIFTING TO DESTRUCTION* (1927), Arthur Kepple-Jones' anti-apartheid *WHEN SMUT GOES* (1947), Garry Allighan's pro-apartheid *VERWOERD—THE END* (1961) and—a more oblique “anti” treatment—J.M. Coetzee's *WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS* (1980). The highly visible injustice of the old South African apartheid policy offered a safe target for UK and US writers: civil rights are denied to the white minority at the outset of Arthur C. Clarke's *CHILDHOOD'S END* (April 1950 **Famous Fantastic Mysteries** as “Guardian Angel”, much expanded 1953, revised 1990); an African in Margot Bennett's above-cited *The Long Way Back* expresses mild concern about lions “loose in the nature reserve” which might “get through the fence and kill all our Boers, and then what'll happen to anthropology?”; an unpleasant fate befalls the expelled whites in Vernor Vinge's “Aparthness” (June 1965 *New Worlds*). The South African film *DISTRICT 9* (2009), set in and around Johannesburg, nods to the country's history of racial strife before sideslipping into action-adventure.

Like native Americans, Romans, also known as Gypsies, Roma, or Romani, are often romantically treated, appearing as lovable rogues in many works of fantasy. Examples include *The Cornish Trilogy* by Robertson Davies (1913-1995), beginning with *THE REBEL ANGELS* (1981) and *ETERNITY* (1990), concluding Piers Anthony's incarnations of immortality sequence, and Philip Pullman's *NORTHERN LIGHTS* (1995, variant *THE GOLDEN COMPASS*, 1996), where the alternate world term for the travelers is “gyptians”. The notorious wanderers preserve the human heritage through Post Holocaust times until non-travelers are ready to resume their usual ascendancy in “The Star Gypsies” (July 1953 *F&SF*) by William L. Gresham; they regain their lost Earthly country (removed as an alien experiment) in R. A. Lafferty's “Land of the Great Horses” (in *Dangerous Visions*, anthology 1967, Ellison), and find a new planetary home in Robert Silverberg's *STAR OF GYPSIES* (1986).

Some Jewish issues are explored in two notable Alternate History novels of the twenty-first century, Philip Roth's *THE PLOT AGAINST AMERICA* (2004)—in which US

antisemitism rises sharply during the imagined 1940s presidency of aviator Charles Lindbergh—and Michael Chabon’s *THE YIDDISH POLICEMEN’S UNION* (2007). Earlier Jewish-themed stories are assembled in Jack Dann’s anthologies *WANDERING STARS* (anthology 1974) and *MORE WANDERING STARS* (anthology 1981). Avram Davidson’s many stories on this theme, mostly non-genre, are collected in *EVERYBODY HAS SOMEBODY IN HEAVEN: ESSENTIAL JEWISH TALES OF THE SPIRIT* (collection 2000).

All too frequently, as real world racial hatred and fear remains intractable, the tendency of Genre SF has been either to ignore the issue or to sanctimoniously take for granted its eventual disappearance. Overly easy “solutions” to long-established frictions include the ability to choose one’s skin color—the premise of George Schuyler’s sardonic satire *BLACK NO MORE* (1931) and of Christopher Anvil’s “Devise and Conquer” (April 1966 *Galaxy*), in which Soviet provocateurs find it impossible to stir up racial hatred in the no longer color-coded USA—and alter other racial indicators at will. Sometimes deep-rooted prejudice vanishes with similar suspicious ease, as in Robert A. Heinlein’s *DOUBLE STAR* (February–April 1956 *Astounding*; 1956), in which a long standing racial phobia (about Martians) is cured by a single session of hypnosis. Ursula Le Guin includes a satire of such easy fixes in *THE LATHE OF HEAVEN* (March–May 1971 *Amazing*; 1971), where reality is malleable and an expressed wish to abolish race prejudice has the effect of turning everyone the same leaden shade of grey.

A whiff of racism, thinly disguised as marketing savvy, has long persisted in science fiction cover art. Even now, many black or otherwise non-Caucasian protagonists have their distinctive characteristics blurred, or entirely removed, when depicted on the book jacket, a process often referred to as whitewashing. All Hollywood movies from Tokyo have more Japanese in them, but there is a white male actor featured in a lead role. It’s also amazing how so many space aliens speak English. California has a large Spanish speaking population, but none of this language is (or is hardly ever) spoken in sci fi.

On the Spot Fan-Pro Relations A tip to the NFFF SF reader: Jefferson Swycaffer is of course available by email. He is a published writer and we suggest you get one of his books, such as *REVOLT AND REBIRTH*, read it and write to him with comments and questions.

COMMENTARY



As you know from reading the preceding issue, I now have a commentary section in Ionisphere which is supposed to involve commentary from staffers and readers alike, about the issue that they have most recently read or, in the case of staff members, talk about some of the doings of this bureau or the doings of the other staffers. Also I had my own talk going about people I'd heard of in the NFFF membership. I had a few comments I made about a lot of the people in the membership. My thought was that they would all be receiving Ionisphere and, having received it, would be reading it, and in reading it would read the commentary and, having read that, would have seen my comments about them, and as Ionisphere contains an email address to which to send replies to these comments, would have had something to say about my mentions of them. It is difficult to imagine people remaining silent about these mentions of themselves, yet there was not a single reply from any of them, leaving (for me, at least) a mystery about why they would all be silent. It is possible that they emailed someone else to say that I had said something about them in the issue, and then that would not have been absolute silence, but why they would not, in that case, have said something to me as well remains mysterious. Could it be that my statement that I would print replies was seen as a threat? That would be one difference between me and someone else; others would not have a space where they would print replies. There is no desire to engage in activities shown by this, but there is a desire to be in the NFFF shown by the fact that they have joined the NFFF at one time or another. This leaves the possibility that they enjoy reading NFFF publications that are sent to them, but would not enjoy talking about them, and do not care even to mention that they do not feel like commenting, even if it does leave people wondering about them, which I think it clearly would.

In the course of publishing Ionisphere I have had some responses from the members, which might help me in evaluating the silence. (There is a film called THE SILENCE, and Wilson Tucker wrote a book called THE LONG, LOUD SILENCE, so they might be imitating these, but they'd have to have gotten it up together at some time, or it may be that they all had the same impulse.) Anyway, one membership response was to my other publication ORIGIN, which expresses the History and Research Bureau, and that response was negative to the publication of Origin, so if that's a clue about the membership then it may be that they are negatively inclined to it and to IO but are restraining their tempers more than he did. Gary Labowitz sent more than one letter of comment, and I found he was active enough to have a blog on the net, but I stopped hearing from him and his letters said he was somewhat gaffed but only keeping in touch as a token; if that describes the rest of the membership, then that constitutes an explanation of why they are not responding, and would seem to me to be a matter to be looked into—why are they all tending to be gaffed (again, if that IS what is the cause of their silence. Perhaps they read Frances T. Laney's "Ah, Sweet Idiocy" and decided, "He's right!" The sweetness would have retained them as members but the idiocy would have driven them into silence.) George Wells has written back to me, but expresses being busy with many responsibilities. I see him jumping around on Facebook, but what he talks about is sporadic and he maintains little consistency; you have to guess about him. It may be a result of preferring rhythm and blues to opera.

Andy Porter told me that a lot of fans don't have Windows and things must be in a Pdf format for them to read it. IO is in a windows format and I am wondering if a lot of the members aren't reading it and Origin because they can't, and if so why they are not making complaints about this. Perhaps their communications systems are not very advanced and they aren't able to respond. It makes me feel like I'm doing my job in the coordinating bureau to bring up this possibility and suggest that there might be research done about it. How good are the communications systems of the membership? Perhaps not any better than to join the NFFF, and thereafter do little to take part in it. I think the organization is not finding out enough about its membership and an NFFF project might be to find out more about them. The NFFF used to ask more questions about beginning members than we now do, and used to make sure at the outset that new members found something to do—they also kept track of them. That was more together than we are now being. I've been thinking right along that we ought to put more attention into our communications abilities and those of others. Has this been

neglected in the fandom transference to the computer? I've been urging John Polselli to find out if ground mail (as I call paper correspondence) is more successful at communicative contact, and so far his reports have not been very positive. Here's one: "My girlfriend and I are planning to take Peter ----- and his girl friend Mary whale watching in Gloucester, Massachusetts this coming summer. They've never seen whales in *propria persona* before. They're looking forward to that experience. Peter said he'll send monthly again. As regards writing LoCs, he seems unclear still. I'll keep you well-briefed." That's about getting someone back from Gafia. (It's a good addition for my commentary, I'm not the only commentator this way.) Here's my comment to Polselli: "He's pretty cryptic about that matter, is he? Reminds me of Robert ----- and Joel -----, Joel and his lady companion were helping Bob get through what might be called difficult times. Both of these fellows were science fiction and fantasy aficionados with whom I'd interchanged comments, and it came to pass that I met them somewhere but they were not revealing their identities....Joel was making a living as an architect, the other two also had jobs. They were living lives of survival." That's doing ground work concerning science fiction fandom.

So that's a summary of my interpretations of the lack of response from members, even those who are being spoken of. Either they are not getting to read Ionisphere or do not have enough interest in it to read it through, or they are not able to communicate successfully with established addresses via email, or are being blocked by negative maneuvers, or they have not established good and complete contact with the N3F, or they are in conflict, or are retaining a position while otherwise gafiating. Lack of interest in a mention made of themselves in organizational publications represents zero interest, unless there is some other explanation of it. I am thinking we may be looking at people lacking communicative success, more than anything else. Perhaps time will come up with some answers.



For those thinking I have forsaken the scientific meaning of the term Ionosphere for a fannish meaning, here are two views of the Ionosphere (one an earlier cover).





Ionospheric Manifestations

Ionosphere: an isotopic layer completely surrounding the Earth