

# ORIGIN 50



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**Editor: John Thiel. Contact Origin at [kinethiel@mymetronet.net](mailto:kinethiel@mymetronet.net) .**

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## Staff



*Jeffrey Redmond, Jon Swartz, Judy Carroll*

## Contents

Editorial by John Thiel, Ye Maun Wash It in Yon Draw Well, page three  
Is This Dementia? by Garth Spencer, reprinted from **I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays**, page six  
Letters to the Editor, mail from Heath Row, page seven  
Our Fiftieth Issue, by Judy Carroll, page ten  
A World Lost, poem by Will Mayo, page eleven  
Recap on the Issue by John Thiel, page twelve

*Cover: "Fairy Tale Land" by Gwyn Hunter*

## EDITORIAL *Uz Maun Wash It in Yon Draw-Well*



Here it is, the fiftieth issue of *Origin*, over eight years of publication and a very nice run of published material as one looks back upon it—yet all is not well for us as we now run into publishing difficulties. It is not altogether new; the first issue of it got a total rap from one of the members of the N3F, and there has been some suspicion of it hovering over it along the course of time, with one major reprimand received, and lately this suspicion has culminated in some reviews in *Faneus Gazette* which questioned the validity of some of the material in it, as if we were not doing our best to have a good publication which would be pleasing to the membership. The reviewer proved himself to have good investigative capacities and a commitment to finding faults which might exist in the N3F, particularizing in our publication. We have received some favorable commentary as well, but of course the unfavorable commentary catches our special attention. The actions taken have crippled us; my most recent communication from Jeffrey Redmond says that he has been told by the President that he is not to appear with factual material in *Origin* or *Ionisphere* any more. I emailed back to him that he should continue writing columns but that he should give attributions to all quoted material, and then his columns might be acceptable once more to the President. He replied that it might take him a long time to straighten out this matter. So for the present his monthly contribution is not in the issue, which is a loss as he was doing ideal research otherwise. \*There have been some changes in this situation since this writing.

At the same time, Jon Swartz has decided that he has run out of material for *Origin*, and so he will be passing up writing for *Origin*, apparently henceforth. He seems to be suffering from overwork, and indeed he has been having numerous things to do in the N3F as well as outside of it, and perhaps *Origin* has been the least necessary of these

tasks from his viewpoint. That, too, is disabling to Origin.

So the present issue is greatly lacking in what it takes to make a good departmental magazine. We might be able to purify it by washing it in a draw-well, but that still would not keep it with contents.

I have been as optimistic as I could manage in issues which have been appearing up until now, trying to establish a progressive improvement, but one must face disasters when they occur and not consider them mere growing pains. It would seem that a positive attitude could be maintained in such a thing as science fiction fandom and the fantasy realm, but this is not the only problem which has come up in the NFFF and there appears to be feuding going on in it. I don't know if an organization can really flourish with negative attitudes and competition going on in it. One thing I have discovered in doing research is that fandom has had quite a history of feuding, and this has included some of it going on in the NFFF as it was being established. Sometimes it has seemed as if there was a whole round of mules going around in a circle in some of the priorly existing fannish enterprises. Is discovering these things Mata to the Maya of the optimistic overview of fandom? If so, room has to be made for it. The negative attitude does have its points to be made. But it would be a good thing if there was not an attempt made to undermine the positive; after all, it is a positive thing to be working on the production of a mode for expressions of viewpoint to be presented. If this positive production excludes the negative or argumentative attitude, there is reason for their disesteem of the positive. I try to leave room for all commentary, but have not been receiving much commentary; perhaps a cold shoulder is being turned to my work with the preconception existing that I will not accept their views, but this is not true. I have been printing unfavorable commentary when I receive it.

We at the History and Research Bureau have been trying to re-awaken the past by means of researching the history of science fiction and fantasy and meanwhile describing and defining it for the sake of clarity. We have been willing to answer all questions concerning these two literary forms, and willing also to discover by means of research the answers to any questions which we have not been able to answer ourselves from our pre-existing knowledge. I think in his run Jon Swartz has done a fine job of uncovering science fiction of the earlier days and pointing out what it had to it. I'm sure that readers of it unacquainted with these eras have come away from the reading of his articles with a better and fuller knowledge of science fiction and even a more developed appreciation of it. Maybe we should pause at this 50<sup>th</sup> issue to give him a big hand for

all he has contributed. Jeffrey Redmond has looked into all corners with his research and has furnished a fine overview of the progress of science fiction; it might be described as work few have undertaken, and we can appreciate an unusual amount of work done, this with a desire to communicate his findings to others with insufficient time to do such research. And Judy Carroll has presented a personal look at science fiction and fantasy and what it means to her and to us, and has also written about being in the N3F and what science fiction activity does for us. Who can assert that her writings have not brought us into closer contact with science fiction and the N3F? She has given reasons for the N3F to grow. So one would do well to go over our back issues, available at the N3F's site at [n3f.com](http://n3f.com), and read what we have presented over these years, if you have not read them already. We at Origin have been bringing the somewhat forgotten past of science fiction and fantasy back to life. These wonders of fantasy and science fiction should live on for us.

I'd like to present at this time some of the definatory material about science fiction and fantasy, which I imagine will give people a clearer look at what those are.

Science fiction is a fantastic and sensational presentation of stories which contain an element of science or which call attention to scientific concepts. It is fiction about fact and speculative fact. The fantastic nature of the stories have led some to prefer the term "science fantasy", and the fantasy element is what has been binding science fiction and fantasy together over the past century. Fantasy is an imaginative excursion into imaginative realms of life, unlimited in its speculative perception. Science fiction closes in on this imaginative view, narrowing things down and putting them in realistic focus. The secret of its attraction is that it makes things exciting and novel, as the titles of its magazines suggest—Amazing, Astounding, Fantastic, Astonishing, Startling. It is never dull and it keeps people wondering about life and looking around them. This sums up our research up to this point.

Knowing what one is reading is known as literacy, and the National Fantasy Fan Federation is an organization for the literate and perhaps furthermore literary sort, which has the aim of consolidating the literary perspective into an interest in science fiction and fantasy, and giving this literary interest the chance to develop and function and have a social outlet. So our bureau is a contribution to this literary effort and should remain attentive to its purposes.

*Here is a comment from another fanzine about the present state of fandom and fan activity. From **I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays**, an eAPA fanzine, April 2022, by Garth Spencer, abstracted from an editorial column labeled "Is This Dementia?" The column is in two parts; this second part is what concerns fandom's conditions:*

In mid-March I went a little mad and started yet another fanzine, **The Jezail Bullet**. The precipitating cause was yet another Facebook conversation among greying Vancouver fans, revolving around the factors that obstructed the preparations for another VCON, the descent of the oversight committee into personality clashes, and the non-appearance of BCSFA's monthly newszine. The official editor snapped that he had too much to do, his first priority was completing a novel, and he was also editing his small-press SF magazine. The next day I saw he had officially resigned as **BCSFazine** editor.

If truth be told, BCSFA members—and several members of WCSFA, the VCON oversight committee—are in their 50s and 60s, several of them with families. The energy, the enthusiasm, and (let's be blunt) the disposable income are not there.

It occurred to me that the focus of energy and enthusiasm in fans is elsewhere. But I wasn't even sure which other clubs are active in Vancouver. So I set out to find out, by distributing a new fanzine.

This is not, as I was later informed, as direct as asking questions of individuals. But neither was I so clearly direct the last time I did something like this. Sending out a broadcast publication is simply the way I work. Including a simple question at the outset, where people can read it, is also the way I work. Obviously, I assume people will read and respond.

Maybe my assumptions about local fandoms are also questionable: basically, that they may generally face the challenges that BCSFA members have faced, partly because of Covid-19, partly because of critical changes in the hotel/hospitality industry, and partly because there simply doesn't seem to be as much support now—neither in attendance, nor in volunteers—for a general interest SF club, or convention, as there was in the 1980s.

Within a week or so I determined that there are a number of more-or-less fan-type conventions and events in Vancouver...generally focused on a media franchise. I have now determined that there are a few dozen clubs with a wider range of interests, some of them actually SF-related. There are even a few that are not university student clubs.



**HEATH ROW:** On the second page, under the Staff heading, is that a picture of Ms. Carroll, Mr. Redmond, and Mr. Swartz? It is so good to see the Origin team is able to collaborate face to face as we emerge from the pandemic. (Yes, my tongue is firmly planted in my cheek. It made for fun filler art all the same!)

Your editorial, "As You Like It", reminded me of a couple of articles I recently read: Lawrence Leung's "Are science fiction stories set in 2022 more dystopian than real 2022?" in ABC EVERYDAY (<https://tinyuri.com/yh7wzh38>) and Linda D. Addison's "Never Let the Light Go Out" in **Apex Magazine** #130. The first piece considers several dystopian sf novels, movies, and TV shows—and whether they accurately represent our current times. And the latter is a self-help article offering advice on how to bring light to dark days. With everything going on, it can be easy to fall prey to hopelessness, nihilism, and passivity. As you ask: "However are we to keep the good and worthwhile activities we are doing...going?"

One of the things I appreciate most about—and draw the most inspiration from—science fiction as a literature is its very hope. Science fiction—in my eyes—is largely about overcoming challenges and solving problems. It is about smart, capable people developing a solution to the barriers we face as individuals, families, communities, and a planet. It is about using existing and imagined technologies and science for social good. And even the most dystopian examples drawn from literature, film, and television are either critiques of and commentary on those ills or purpose implicit or explicit solutions despite their dark nature.

"History should be concerned with the development of mankind into better ways than there have been in the past," you wrote. So should, I propose, science fiction. You even propose that the N3F can have a hand in that: "As a literary establishment, the N3F should have ideals...The ideals should be obvious—better writing, better thought, more

things to think about, progress in our good intentions...There have been N3F ideals, these should be resurrected, examined, and progressed." As a fellow member of the Directorate and its erstwhile chair, I am curious about those ideals of the past. I would love to learn more.

The remarks on Mr. Redmond's expurgated piece on horror fiction, as well as about John Scalzi's *THE END OF ALL THINGS*, reminded me of something my wife and I have talked about often over the last handful of years: When it comes to horror fiction and film, we tend to prefer supernatural elements. Then, the horror is otherworldly, fantastic. We have little appetite for—or capacity to deal with—horror in which the monsters are merely human, bad people doing bad things to other people. In my opinion, the real world can be horrific enough without seeking creative works that feature human monsters.

Judy Carroll's piece, "The Presence of Negativity", also struck a nerve. As she wrote, "Right now we need hope." Hear, hear.

In the end, I think this issue of *Origin* is entirely and appropriately dark and dire—while still seeking hope—in what are dark and dire days. The pandemic, growing political divisions, and now the war in Ukraine can serve to isolate and polarize us as *fen* and *Neffers*, or they can serve to bring us closer together. Personally, the pandemic has been helpful in terms of my *fanac*. Given the move to online meetings, I've been better able to participate in local clubs—including LASFS, BASFA, the Science Fiction Association of Bergen County (New Jersey, of all places), and a library book discussion group in western Massachusetts. My letterhacking and *apazine* activity has increased moderately. I have more time to read and explore. And I'm pleased to see the dark days inspiring a nod toward and *yen* for hopefulness in these very pages.

In Will Mayo's words from this issue: "We still do ponder the cosmos..."

Ponder on!

*I'm very happy to receive this corroboration for some of my views, Heath, and am glad to see you reacting to my editorial.*

*The picture actually was pretty close to what was happening then, and I would hope will not turn out to be justified.*

*Science fiction is highly cognizant of catastrophe and has seemed to me to be perhaps an apocalyptic literature.*

*There is something idealistic about forming a society, and so I see the N3F as having ideals, those being mostly the perpetuation of science fiction and the progress of it as a*



literary form, as well as the progress of science fiction thought. Some stories have played off other stories trying to reach conclusions. There has been no recording of science fiction thought and philosophy and no observation of its development, though that did exist in fandom; for instance, the Cult was always interpreting the significance science fiction had to life. The NFFF, when I left fandom for awhile, was discussing the possibility of there being a world war three and there was a lot of discussion of the atomic bomb. There was also some writing in the NFFF about whether science fiction had an appreciable moral development or whether much morality was expressed in science fiction. Bringing up religion led to a lot of argumentation and some discussion of religion's historic conflict with science. These arguments started becoming hot, and things there and in fandom in general seemed to go into a state of warfare. It's this kind of feuding that I'd like to see declared over, and that might be done by finding some impartial solutions to the problems that were sources of contention. The role of women in life is one of the contentions that is still going on (which seemed to me to start when Marian Zimmer Bradley published her first story in one of Ray Palmer's magazines. Palmer's **Other Worlds** kind of went out of business, mutating into something called **Flying Saucers from Other Worlds** as Ray, who was also the editor of **Fate**, became fanatic about extraterrestrial intelligence, and that is something else that is still going on today. Solutions reached, a fandom publishing company in Chicago and SETI, were not effective enough and were taken away from fan's hands as was NASA. (This is still referred back to when issues of Analog and IASFM were being sent up to the space station, but there was no real Calloo, Callay from fandom because there was no place to react, except the Dell Forums, and those were kind of locked. Another ideal I'm familiar with is the spreading of the Sense of Wonder, which I have been trying to do in Origin.

I have some articles by Redmond about women in science fiction and race in science fiction but these have not been checked. They do concern controversies existing in science fiction; in fact, Redmond seems an expert on controversy. Unfortunately he gets into a lot of controversy too.

I'd like it if all the science fiction organizations that exist could be brought together into a unity, with all of them having an awareness of one another.

It would be nice if we could bring an inspirational element back into science fiction fandom.



## Our Fiftieth Issue by Judy Carroll

Milestone: an action or event marking a significant change or stage in development.

There are many milestones in one's life; first steps, first day of school, high school graduation, first job, etc.

But what is a milestone in a fanzine? The successful publishing of a certain number of issues? Or the content of these issues?

Is the information we give you each month important? We think so.

We work hard trying to bring you what we feel is important to the members of the N3F and others interested in the origins and history of the N3F and science fiction and fantasy. We strive to bring you the past, present and future of these genres. (Origin is the Official Organ of the National Fantasy Fan Federation History and Research Bureau.)

I enjoy writing for Origin. I've written columns about when I discovered science fiction, the difference between science and science fiction, and finding your place in science fiction. I've told you the first dream I remember having as a six year old when I had a crush on Peter Pan. I've also re-lived my teenage years when I was the only female in the science fiction section of the book store. We've been to movies together and discussed what is well done and what could have been improved. We have discovered devices we use today which were first inspired by a science fiction book, movie, or TV series.

We've come a long way together, and I look forward to many more issues with you by my side.

# A World Lost

by Will Mayo

Strange ghost towns  
of what is and will be.  
Old men and young children  
keep to themselves.  
It is the way of the times.  
A plague sweeps the land.  
A war is well.  
There is talk of info-warfare  
and dueling among tyrants.  
While standards of behavior  
rise higher  
than any saint can ever reach.  
The Jesus people and the doubters  
cannot seem to get their act together.  
As celebrities cast the headlines  
and ponder their plummeting ratings.  
And time is the enemy of everyman.  
Listen now to the wind.  
It blows among shuttered outbuildings  
and far off outposts.  
It is the sound of all those  
who will never be seen again.  
Amid the trash heaps, it is heard still.

## Recap On the Issue by John Thiel

It seems like a landmark issue should feature some special presentations and be perfectly formatted and complete with all details, but time and tides wait for no man, nor do they coincide with intentions. Here we are missing two of our regular columnists and complaining about this and that rather than exulting in having gotten another issue out. It shows that we are not building something, just going along with the vagaries of fortune. Though as I have mentioned before, we are doing as much building up as possible.

Hard luck has started following us like something in a fantasy novel of late. We have encountered disesteem from our fellow Neffers which seems mightier than the esteem that has occasionally been shown us by NFFF readers. Well, perhaps disesteem has more force than does good esteem, and we shouldn't have it rile us and should try not to let it wreck us. Jeffrey Redmond seems to be getting stalked by certain people. He's been doing as well as anyone else, and has mishaps and makes errors as do others, but there seems to be a lot of vitriol expressed in confrontations with him, and I am pleased that he does not actually get into a feud about these things. Everyone knows he has plenty of pluses. But the hawk of internal warfare is showing its wing. We should, I think, try to amend feuding of the past, and not continue or restart any such feuding.

I think that a lot of this comes from outside science fiction and its fandom. With gasoline prices up to nine dollars a gallon, regular housing costing half a million, and books averaging twenty-five dollars for hardbounds, life is becoming difficult to maintain. It seems the future is skyhigh prices for everything, but the actual future is apt to be the most serious depression of all time. Book prices being on the increase, you have world problems creeping into science fiction, and mailing costs are killing off a whole lot of paper fandom. And science fiction, too, is letting people down with excessive horror in motion picture productions (you see people getting their limbs cut off), as our missing horror feature from March had been starting to indicate—horror overtaking sf. All we can do is try to withstand it.

Realistically, I have begun taking these things into account in what I am publishing here, and Origin is getting a bit more somber—but perhaps that is also getting more serious about things.



Art by Morris Scott Dollens