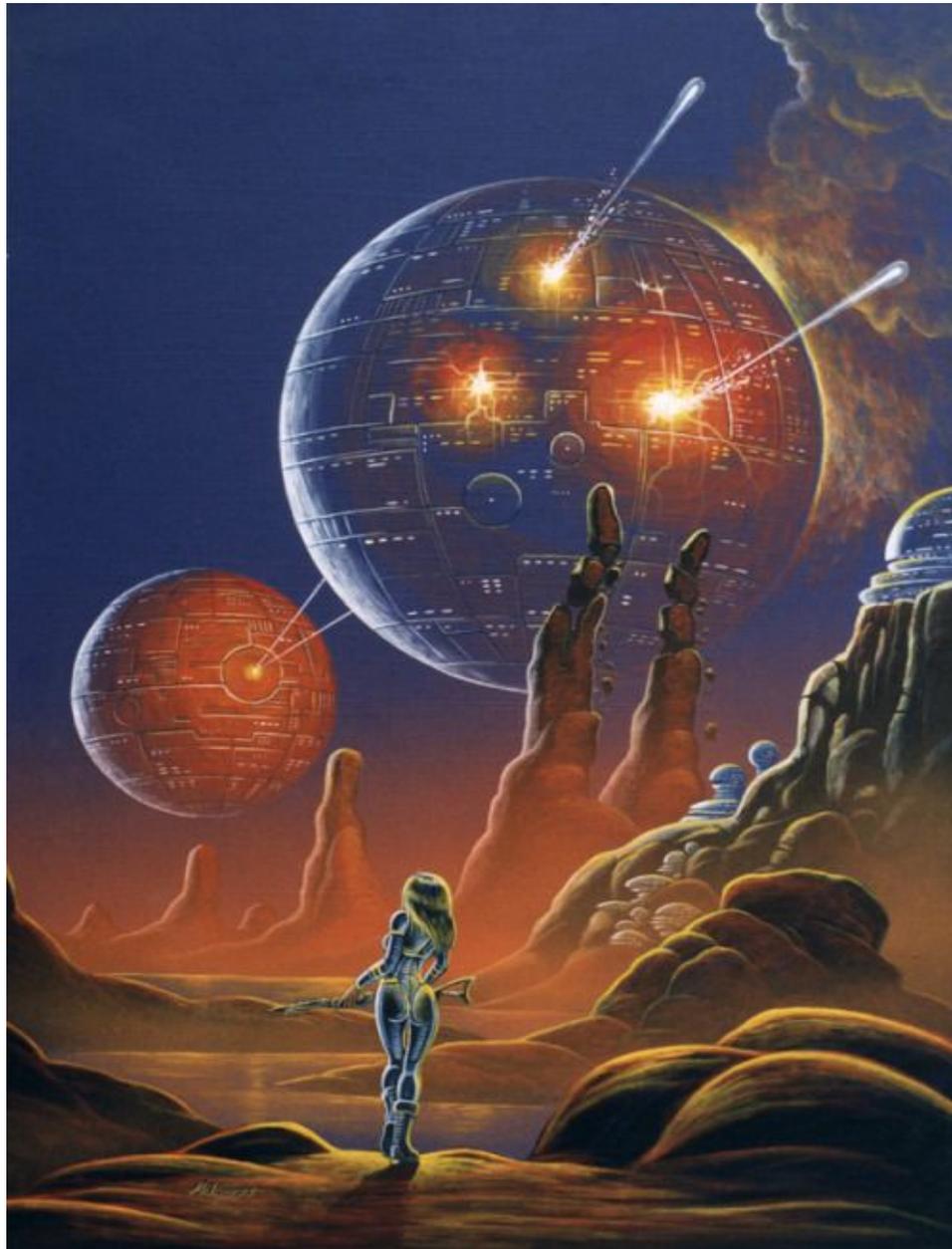


IONISPHERE 9 **February 2018**



A publication of the National Fantasy Fan Federation's
Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau

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IO is presently not distributed to NFFF members who do not have email addresses. To solve this problem we have a ground adjutant who will help coordinate the regular mail membership with the online membership and serve as a contact man for regular mail members. Our lack of total distribution of IO is due to lack of finances. Regular mail is literally expensive, the cost of mailing a single issue of Ionisphere being up over a dollar, and printing it would be an additional dollar an issue, so it would cost a hundred dollars up to mail it out to the whole membership. That's every two months. If any were willing to help support this, we'd be glad to hear from them. This is a better distribution than the earlier Ionisphere was getting back in the 1980s, when it was just distributed to interested people, which is a good enough distribution but we'd like the entire membership to see it regularly. We've also thought of an interested parties distribution at the regular mail level where the groundside members would indicate their interest by paying two dollars for their copies, and I'm about to work out a bulletin to be mailed out to the groundside membership asking if they would be interested, as Mr. Polselli suggested. Of course not mailing to the total membership is not what a coordinating bureau is about, quite the opposite. Certainly we should be coordinating with all the members without there being a schism. That's not something we like there being; it's been mentioned that

there's a kind of schism between fans and pros that should be dealt with by our bureau. Certainly, then, we should not have a schism existing with members.

EDITORIAL



Science Fiction Enterprise

It's about having more science fiction activity for appreciators of this *genre* of literature. Science fiction is in a slump as far as mainstream science fiction is concerned, and it needs revivifying. There are plenty of science fiction supporters around to do this, but there is not plenty of activity for them to engage in, or outlets to express themselves. Science fiction looks to be into a recession, and that is something which must be overcome.

What value has science fiction? Progress. If we stay just the way we are for too long, we get into a state of inertia. But science fiction looks for the new and unexpected, later to be incorporated into a developing society. Science fiction runs parallel to development, having been stimulated into being by the progressive effect of the industrial revolution, which transformed a lot of things about the world, and which is still going on in the form of developing technology. Then too there was the literary surge brought on by the renaissance, changes in thought brought on by new (and competing) philosophies, and the development of new outlooks in science—Darwin, Freud, and numerous astronomers. Science fiction developed in the midst of all of this, in places where new thinking was at its hottest, and partly recorded the step-up in progress and partly contributed progressive ideas of its own. Finally this type of writing was consolidated into a couple of magazines, **Amazing Stories** and **Air Wonder Stories**, around 1926, and these published exciting tales which led to a greater interest in science. (There also existed a fantasy magazine in those times, which had preceded Amazing by part of a decade, **Weird Tales**.) These magazines became part of the culture, though they were rather low-rated by literary standards, and were somewhat misunderstood. What they featured was not what was common in literature and life, but what was uncommon and

novel. It may be that science fiction is presently at a setback because of the extreme progressive trend which is presently occurring all over, but it is at just such a time that we need to support the form of literature we like so well.

INTRODUCING JEFFREY REDMOND

Jeffrey Redmond is the newest member of the Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau. Here is a brief look at him.

Jeff Redmond was born in Detroit, and grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He attended colleges at Davenport University, Michigan State University, U.C.L.A., and Lund Universitet in Sweden, among others. He has Bachelors Degrees in History, Business Administration, and International Business, and a Master's Degree in History.

Jeff has written several books of both fiction and non-fiction. He has been a member of the Authors Guild, the National Fantasy Fan Federation, the Science Fiction Writers of America, the International Star Trek Fan Association, and the Writers Guild. He has been listed in the WHO'S WHO in America for numerous years.

Jeff has been a school teacher, speaks several languages, and enjoys researching and writing about fantasy and science fiction. His chief love is to help others to improve their lives, and to offer them all the encouragement he can.

Those wanting further information about Jeffrey will find it in our last issue, where we interviewed him as a Facebook sitemaster. He's a very active fellow, and I hope this activity shows up in the Fan-Pro Bureau, where he is handling news and items of fannish interest. He's also in the Recruitment Bureau and has taken some other roles in N3F activity. It's my pleasure to welcome him to the group.



IONISPHERE OF THE PAST

Last issue I was describing the 1980s issues of IONISPHERE, and went over the first issue of it. Here are some more insights into the past of the Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau and the NFFF.

Ionisphere #2 had a cubist art cover, in the futurist mode. Stan Woolston, an old time N3Fer, gave me a hand with a letter of comment. He spoke of the Doc Smith Day at the Iguanacon. He was handling it and he cited President Koch as saying that most or many plans had to be finalized at the last minute. The NFFF was actively involved in the con. (Koch also put me on the news and publicity department and I was involved in projects to publicize the N3F at conventions.) He suggested I do interviews with pros for Io. Ann Chamberlain mentioned in a LoC that fans used to meet through magazine letter columns, quite out of style in the time of Ionisphere, since addresses were seldom printed with letters. There was some writing, with quotes, about Analog's policy regarding manuscripts. On the back it says "This has been a shorter issue of IO than the last ones," perhaps a typo that should have been corrected. There's a photo of my NFFF member certification card.

Issue #3 had a photo of an Analog letter of rejection and a quote from a letter replying to one I'd written to Analog denying that I had written something they'd received that had my name on it, entitled "Deglar Was a Dero". Analog sent the manuscript back to me, so apparently the address was faked on the submission. Ben Bova had just been replaced by Stanley Schmidt, whose policies I'd quoted from in the previous issue. There's a photograph of the magazine's writers guidelines and a photo of a letter from Schmidt discussing those guidelines. Art Hayes asked questions about the activity, and said a central bureau might be a very good idea. He said "too often a pro finds himself burdened with fan requests, cutting in too much into his writing time."

Donald Franson said there should be a clear explanation of the goals of the new bureau. Rick Sneary (one of the few times I've ever heard from him) says he can't imagine what a Fan/Pro Coordinating Bureau does. He wonders what a fan would say to a pro and vice versa that would count. He meditates on what the N3F used to be. Herb Summerlin and Eddie Anderson are introduced as members of the Fan/Pro Bureau.

In Issue #4 John Robinson, who had been the News/Publicity director but didn't pay his dues in time and was temporarily suspended, resulting in News/Publicity being temporarily turned over to me, contributed "The SF Line", which describes a telephone hookup arrangement, which apparently appeared on television on the Public Access Channel. I haven't heard much about it since. Other letters are from Irvin Koch, Joseph Napolitano (who puts down people who are having trouble understanding what the Fan/Pro activity is about), Gertrude M. Carr, who offers encouragement, Eddie Anderson,

and Art Hayes, who stirs up some trouble.

#5 has a report and photos of the Windycon 6, adds Anita Cole to the bureau, presents a list of upcoming conventions, some fanzines and some book dealers. I discuss meetings with N3Fers Fred Jakobic, Mike Lowery, and Mike Glicksohn. I went to a Darkover party there, "a party with a bunch of adults and one young boy, a variation of having TWO children, one of each sex, present" (I think my observation here deserves preservation, which it may have had anyway). Donald Franson was running for President. Requests for Ionisphere came from Robert Kasselbaum, Vernon Clark, and Rose Hogue, so talk was going around about the zine. Standard LoCers appeared in the issue.

The cover on #6 is a cartoon showing part of the N3F administration. Donald Franson, now President, took the News/Publicity back out of my hands and appointed Stan Woolston to run it. Eddie Anderson wrote saying Herb Summerlin had been out of the N3F for over ten months, and that he himself would be out in a month and was not bothering to renew. However, Vernon Clark was added to the Bureau and I still had Anita Cole. There was an interview with Jack Williamson, who spoke of what he thought of the relevance of science fiction.

#7 had a cheesecake cover, somewhat daring of me, but I think it made it look like an effective issue. Within was an interview with Phillip Jose Farmer, a report on the Hoosiercon 1 with a photo of my reservation and a photo of my N3F membership card. The editorial is about the condition the NFFF seemed to be in. There was a New Fanzine Appreciation Society at that time that I was in. Joseph Napolitano was complaining about the lack of activity in the Collectors Bureau, to which he belonged. Robert Asprin, Roland Green, Robert and Juanita Coulson, Mike Resnick, and Lou Tabakou were the notable names at the convention, and people from the Indiana Science Fiction Association were there. The issue has a bio and biblio of Jack Williamson. There was a news item on teaching science fiction; Janie Lamb had forwarded a request for

information from Southern Illinois University and I got a number from Janie and got an interview with the people there on science fiction activity in schools. It was kind of like big time activity. There are fanzine reviews and a letter from Jack Williamson.

In issue #8 I interviewed a science fiction teacher at Purdue in person. He showed me an sf book he was writing. There was a writeup of Harry Warner, Jr. Book and fanzine reviews, interesting ads, fiction by Steve Sneyd, letters from Harry Hopkins (of the Fandom Computer Services), the interviewee from SIU, Art Hayes, Napolitano, Herbert Jerry Baker, Janie Lamb, Owen Laurion, Harry Warner and Jean Lorrh. There was much discussion of N3F doings starting to occur in IO, which is well in the scope of the Fan/Pro Activities' purposes. Complaints, ideas, election discussions, maneuverings were among the things being discussed. It made for a successful zine.

I'll continue looking over the complete run of Ionisphere in the next issue of the present Io, and perhaps in the future quote some of the materials I have mentioned where they seem presently interesting.

THE NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION'S SHORT STORY CONTEST

notes by JEFFERSON SWYCAFFER

Judging just took place for the latest installment of the N3F Short Story Contest, and the winners are noted below in the official contest statement of results.

The late Donald R. Franson, of fond memory, ran the contest for a goodly number of years. Some while ago—and I can't recall how many years it has been—he recruited me to be the final judge, while he would winnow down the many entries to the final dozen. When he was no longer able to manage this administrative end of the contest, Jeffrey Redmond took over, but he needed to drop that task, and so the contest is now pretty much run by myself as a sole operation.

In Don's day, we used to get a great many entries, including one year where there were more than fifty. Choosing twelve finalists was a great chore...and also a great honor, and he enjoyed it, studying the stories with a critical eye, and taking serious pleasure just in the reading. I have always kept this duality in mind when judging the contest: it is hard work...and immense pleasure.

These days, we have fewer entries than before, including one dry year, not too long ago, when we had one, count 'em (1) entry. Another year we had only three. Those years, no prizes were awarded, for it makes no sense to have a contest that awards a First Prize, Second Prize, Third Prize, and Honorable Mention if there are fewer than four stories under consideration.

It is due to the efforts and labors of George Phillies, for some time now the President of the N3F, that the story has been publicized and marketed again, announcements going out to other science fiction and fantasy fan clubs, to universities, to writing groups, and to conventions. George has done a sterling job here, and accomplished something I could never have managed. In 2016, we had eighteen entries, and for the most recent contest, the 2017 contest, we had twenty. Or nineteen, actually, as one story had to be withdrawn from consideration—because it had been sold professionally! There could be no possible better reason!

George also arranged a “fanthology”, a fanzine to print some of the winners and runners-up, making the stories available to the N3F, and the world. This isn’t a hard-and-fast deal, and it isn’t in the contest rules, but when it is possible, we contact the winners and some of the finalists, and invite them to be in the anthology. George is also looking to see if some of the stories could go in the N3F anthology, **Eldritch Science**.

It’s worth emphasizing that this is an *amateur* short story contest, only for people who have not sold stories professionally. The purpose of the contest is to encourage new writers, people who haven’t, perhaps, accomplished their full maturity in the craft of writing. Beginners and newcomers and young writers, particularly, are who we want to hear from.

The quality of the stories has been high, with remarkable consistency. Okay, yes, there may be a few clunkers now and then, but never, not so much as once, in all the years I’ve been reading for this contest, has there ever been a stinker. There has been a nice balance between science fiction and fantasy. The imagination on display is astonishing. And amazing. And fantastic! And a whole bunch of other adjectives that have been used for magazine titles.

If anyone feels dread for the future of writing, let this contest serve as a hearty reassurance. The writers of the future (to borrow another publication title) are here today, and they’re writing their hearts out. They’re creating beauty, and awe, and joy, and terror. They’re busting clichés right in the chops, coming up with new and completely original ideas. Anybody who says that all the ideas have already been taken has never judged this contest!

I’d like to take a moment to describe the judging process. It’s like politics...or the making of sausage: it isn’t particularly pleasant to watch! The very first thing that happens when a story comes in is that it is separated from any identification of the author, so the judging can be on a basis of impartiality, guaranteed by anonymity. This is why notifications to the authors always begin with, “To the author of [story title]”. At the time I write those notifications, I do not know who the authors are.

Next is the bloodiest stage, the initial read-through for triage. Stories go into three piles: Yes, No, and Maybe. This is also the hardest phase of the judging, because there are so very, very many stories in the “Maybe” category! Frankly, I’d say it’s 20% “No”, 60% “Maybe”, and only a 20% “Yes”. And stories move back and forth between the stacks. It isn’t scientific.

What is, then, scientific is the second read-through for ranking. Here, stories get a good old fashioned grade, just like in school, on a scale of one to twenty. Every year, there is a “twenty”. Every year, there is more than one “twenty!” And I’ve never, in all the years of this contest, graded a story as a “one”.

After that, there are fine considerations of overall quality. I value ideas and creativity more than anything else. The next most important thing is character presentation. Do we get a strong sense of who the characters really are? Does their individuality stand out? The next criterion is dramatic structure. Is the story a complete story, with a beginning, middle and end? SF and fantasy are *genres* where the rules exist only to be broken, and sometimes a story doesn’t really need an “ending”. I see a lot of “The Lady or the Tiger” endings, where the final resolution is absent. This isn’t always a bad thing—although I have to say that sometimes it is. A hanging ending has to have a reason. At the bottom of my list are considerations of grammar, spelling, and other ideals of orthography. No story has ever lost the contest because of bad spelling, but good spelling and good grammar will endear a story to me, and might make the difference between the levels of the prizes awarded.

Don Franson used to write little critiques, just a couple short paragraphs, for each of the stories he received. When the contest grew too large for that, he wrote critiques for the finalists. When I became the final judge, I took on that duty, and have, since then, written a few notes to the entrants—to the finalists in the days when there were a great many entries, and to all entrants for the last few years. I have always been concerned that these notes might be taken amiss, but, to date, no one has written back to me in anger, or even in stern disagreement.

We've had entries from all over the world. We've gotten stories from every English-speaking nation, and from writers of English whose native languages are Japanese, Greek, Russian, French, Norwegian, German, and Czech, to name only the few that I recall positively. The largest majority of the stories come from the U.S.A., but Canada is the second largest contributor, and the British Isles are the third. Within the U.S., it is impossible for me to single out any given state as a leader in contributions. We've gotten stories from every one of the fifty, and from territories and possessions and protectorates as well.

The N3F was originally a "correspondence club", and for many years, the contest entries were printed—or typed—and mailed in on paper in envelopes. As the information age has wrought its transformation, the N3F has become more and more an Internet club, and the arrival of stories to the contest has certainly followed that pattern. A very few stories, however, still arrive in my P.O. Box, in envelopes, on paper. This year, there was only one; last year there were three. I like to think of it as the club keeping in touch with its origins and roots.

Doctors are urged to "Do No Harm". I have always approached the contest with that spirit. It is probably inherent in humankind to be susceptible to partiality and bias, but I have fought as hard as I can to approach judging with the goal of committing no injustices. Some stories have been ideological screeds, pushing specific partisan agendas, or taking stances on major issues of public concern. There have been gun-control stories, racism stories, sexism stories, stories with a decidedly liberal or conservative slant, stories with specific religious content, and many others of a sensitive nature. You know, those things your mother told you never to discuss with strangers! Well, please let me assure you that I have never up-judged or down-judged a story on the basis of its political content. I can disagree—or even agree!—without letting that have any effect on the outcome.

What we want most is a *story*!

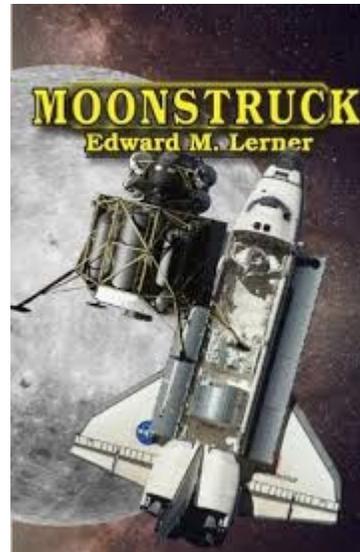
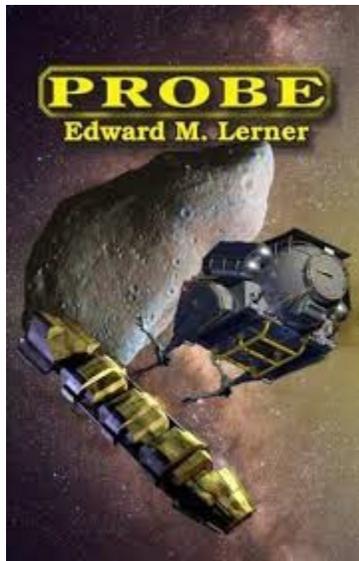
Well, okay, I've gone on at too much length, and probably nobody cares too much. The lesson to take away is: write a story and send it in! And if you don't qualify, because you're a professional and have already sold a story or two, well...send your work to the magazines and anthologies and web-sites! You guys don't need this contest. Who needs this contest are the people struggling to express themselves for the first time in prose fiction, who have ideas burning a hole in their souls, and who have finally mustered the determination and discipline to write.

As my very first editor liked to say, "Write On!"

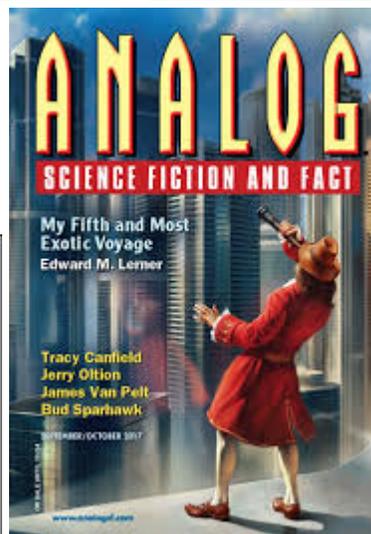
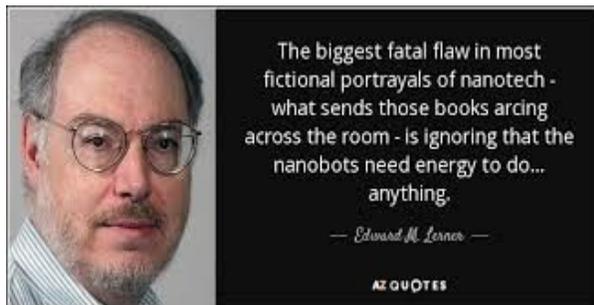
The results are in for the 2017 National Fantasy Fan Federation Short Story Contest. The first prize goes to "Quantum Quietus" by Philip A. Kramer, a brilliant exploration of quantum weirdness as applied directly to human experience. The story is clever and witty, yet perfectly grounded in the common-sense personality of the protagonist.

The second prize goes to “Qualnoth’s Favor” by Gustavo Bondini, a Swords and Sorcery yarn just the way we love ‘em best, with magic and roguery and plenty of swashbuckling. The Third Prize goes to “Trash Smashers” by Robert Jennings, an Urban Fantasy tale where a greedy guy with a brilliant idea takes things just one step too far. The Honorable Mention is awarded to “Immaterial Witness” by Graham J. Darling, an eerie little tale which explores the notion of séances and spiritualism, if they had a solid scientific grounding. With nineteen entries, we could divide the list and choose finalists, so I want to mention these: “A Fistful of Brifgars” by F.R. di Brozolo, “Nautilus” by Philip A. Kramer, “Icarus Drowned”, also by Kramer, “Marionettes” by Michael Simon, and “The Eternity Machine” by Graham J. Darling. In a contest like this, there are never “losers”. Some entries win prizes and others do not, and that’s the way of the world. But the stories entered were all thoughtful, inventive, original, clever, and skillfully written. It is an honor to name them: “Memory Wipe” by John Thiel, “Old Soldiers” by Gustavo Bondini, “The Darkening Mystery” by M.J. Weitendorf, “The Hills of the Silent Cries” by viel nast nafpaktou, “Off to See the Wizard” by J.J. Collins, “Aila”, “Cru-Free” and “The Time Traveler’s Life” by Fiona M. Jones, “Immaterial Witness” and “Earthly Remains” by Graham J. Darling, and “Kryptos” by Bahiti Takeru. The stories promise us all that the literary future is assured. New writers are coming. No few of these writers will become professionally published in our lifetimes, and earn the reward for their hard work and the sheer brilliance of their creativity.

INTERVIEW



Edward M. Lerner



Edward M. Lerner has been outstanding in Analog Science Fiction and Fact Magazine for well over a decade, and has written blockbuster novels that break greatly with conventional science fiction. Here we ask him questions about it.

IO: Most of your stories have appeared in Analog. What is the nature of your relationship with Analog?

EL: In a word, great. My very first pro appearance (“What a Piece of Work Is Man”) was in the magazine’s February 1991 issue. I’ve since had dozens of pieces in Analog, including fiction at every length from vignettes (in the Probability Zero department) to four-part serials, and nonfiction of every type except book reviews. I consider past and present editors my good friends.

Still, I’d de-emphasize “most”. My short fiction has appeared in many other venues, including (alphabetically): Amazon Shorts (a precursor to Kindle Singles), Artemis,

Asimov's, Galaxy's Edge, Grantville Gazette, Jim Baen's Universe, and Sci Phi Journal. And anthologies, of course. At book length, there are, so far, fourteen novels and three collections.

IO: Some letters in the letter column, too. I've been following your writing in Analog since the year 2000, and you seem almost a part of the magazine, having written editorials for it sometimes. How did it happen that the editor had you (and others as well) write those editorials? Was being acquainted with the editor involved?

EL: This all came out of Analog's editorial transition from Stanley Schmidt to Trevor Quachri. Trevor was on vacation when someone high up at Dell Magazines decided the big announcement should be made—a scant few days later—at the Worldcon (Chicon 7, in 2012). Great timing for the fans. A quite abrupt transition for Trevor.

Recalled from his vacation to participate in the announcement, Trevor took the opportunity to invite a handful of the MAFIA, also at the Worldcon, to submit guest editorials. (MAFIA: Making Appearances Frequently in Analog. We're a proudly geeky group. No secret handshake, but we do have keen buttons.) And so it began. I guess Trevor liked the result, because after all these years he still sometimes runs guest editorials in some issues.

IO: Now to turn to your stories, my attention was originally caught by MOONSTRUCK back in 2003. A great story, but I had one question about it, which I still have—the government figures centrally in the story. Did you get any reactions from the government to the story?

EL: When I started MOONSTRUCK, I was working full-time, and often a lot more, as a government contractor. Some governmental employees with whom I regularly interacted knew of my then hobby—and were very supportive—but I didn't ask them to comment. I don't put any reader on the spot by asking for their impressions. I DID solicit technical feedback from an ex-NASA employee on an early draft of the prologue, and she was encouragingly positive.

That's it as far as my government interaction went regarding MOONSTRUCK. Then again, I suspect government employees aren't permitted to comment on commercial products in their official capacity.

IO: Did you get reader feedback on the story, or other comments on it that were of interest?

EL: Almost certainly I did. Reader comments about stories, and especially books, are common—and welcome! Back then (Moonstruck was an Analog serial in 2002, and a hardback release in 2003) it would have been seen by email. Many comments still come that way, but nowadays a large part of reader reaction arrives *via* social media.

I have to admit, specific comments from that long ago escape me. Maybe ask about a more recent Lerner story or book ;-)

IO: I was about to. Moving on to ENERGIZED, another big moment for an Analog reader,

I've a comment on that myself. It seems to me to portray man as being primarily concerned with technology, and to have little other than that to point to as the accomplishments of mankind. Also it seems to me to show mankind of the future as being dominated by evil. I'll ask whether in fact these are viewpoints you have in the story, and also whether you expect reader identification with what is in the story. (I do, myself, see this as resembling fixes we're all in.)

EL: I would characterize ENERGIZED somewhat differently (but I'll try to stay spoiler-free). Its few protagonists, all scientists or engineers, do indeed seek technological solutions to some arguably existential problems. But the engineer needs heart and courage at least as much as knowledge. One of the scientists must lose all that he holds dear. And so on.

If I recall correctly, it was George R.R. Martin who said no one is a villain in their own story. I don't know about "no one"—but I do believe the statement is largely true, and I try to make it so in my writing. In general (and certainly in Energized) I shoot for the antagonists to oppose the protagonists for some justifiable reason, not from being evil.

Rather than write in Bad Guys, my goal is to craft in characters whose conflict with the hero comes of understandable motivations, imperfect knowledge, coercion, and/or desperation. If I've done it right, a character who at the outset appears good, or bad, might flip in the reader's estimations before the story ends.

To another part of your question, in my opinion not every story requires that the reader identify with the protagonist. That character's background, situation, or needs may be too alien (and in the case of SF, we may be speaking really alien) for that. But every character does require a degree of, if not believability, then of *something* (hat tip to Samuel Taylor Coleridge) to help the reader suspend disbelief.

Free-associating just a tad beyond the scope of your question...I also take to heart, from Kurt Vonnegut's rules for storytelling: give the reader at least one character he or she can root for.

IO: I meant readers identifying with being in such a situation as the story shows, not identifying with the characters who are in the situation. It seems to me there are, indeed, situations in the life we presently lead that can identify with these future situations. So I'd rephrase that by asking whether you are referring to things happening now, or entirely extrapolating the story from things now happening?

EL: Thanks for clarifying. In ENERGIZED (Analog serial in 2011, initial book publication in 2012), I started from familiar issues (again trying to avoid spoilers): a Middle East in chaos, a global energy crisis, and Russian meddling. I certainly anticipated readers then would identify with the setup. In 2011 and 2012, an energy crunch was all too likely (remember \$4 gas?). Today—when, as it happens, the novel is about to be re-issued—energy is cheap. That, too, will pass. Of course, chaos in the Middle East and the prospect of Russia meddling both remain all too common.

How the novel develops from their core elements will, I believe, be new to most readers. The personal challenges the protagonists must face are more universal. As in: how far out on the metaphorical limb should I go for what I believe is right? What sacrifices am I prepared to meet for the greater good?

IO: We're having a water leakage and billing crisis here right now which gives me similar feelings to what your characters were suffering. But onward to *DARK SECRET*, in which, if I understand it correctly, the entire human race is wiped out of existence but for the survival ship carrying future generations and a small crew. That's fewer human survivors than I've ever seen of a cosmic destruction. Noting that they don't get along very well, I'm wondering if this has anything to say about the human race. How do you see that?

EL: And with *DARK SECRET*, we've arrived at my latest book (for another few months, anyway).

Indeed, as far as they know, the crew of **Endeavour** (apart from their cargo of frozen embryos) are humanity's sole survivors. When I mete out cosmic catastrophes, I don't mess around. I didn't make things easier for the survivors *after* the destruction, either.

Are conflicts and frictions among the adult crew members symbolic of the overall human race? Absolutely. That small crew (specifics purposefully omitted: still in spoiler-avoidance mode here) was enlisted—and sometimes, drafted—in a hurry. If that selection process was not quite random, it nonetheless was an opportunity to bring aboard a broad spectrum of traits. Which of these choices turn out to further the mission, and which to endanger it—that's a fair chunk of the novel.

Hopefully your leakage/billing problem will turn out a lot less existential.

IO: In looking over your short stories, it seems to me that a lot of them that I've read are concerned with reality, or its opposite. There's game-playing, computer reality, virtual reality and other questioning of or departures from the order of existence. Are these aimed at challenging the usual order, or are they just innovations? Do you seek to give readers new perceptions or introduce new outlooks?

EL: These themes *are* common in my writing, but for another reason. That is: I worked in computer-intensive industries for thirty years. In developing (hopefully) entertaining SF stories, I extrapolated, in part, on what I knew best. I seldom write stories that question the nature of reality, or in which what is real is uncertain, *a la* Philip K. Dick. Which isn't to say never. "A Time for Heroes" exactly fits the "what's real" theme.

I wouldn't want to leave the impression, however, that my fiction draws only on my computer background or that I write only for entertainment. A second, very important, aspect of my background is physics; many of my stories draw upon that. And as one example of a message-oriented story—incidentally having both physical science and computer underpinnings—I'll mention, again originally in *Analog*, "Dangling Conversations". That novelette deals with such issues as how humanity could decode a First Contact message, how we might respond (or choose not to!), how opinions on

these things might vary across the globe, and why aliens might reach out to us in the first place. “Dangling Conversations” turned out to be the start of what is, so far, a three-volume InterstellarNet series.

IO: I’d like to go over a lot of these stories, and in fact I’d like to discuss your novels in great depth—I think *Dark Secret*, in particular, should have a lot more attention than I’ve seen it getting, but if there’s a place where books are discussed that much, I haven’t found it. But that’s about the length of an interview for Ionisphere. As a final question, perhaps you’d say something about what you plan for your next novel. Also you might want to say what your general outlook is towards science fiction writing. IO is read by the NFFF and is also posted at efanazines, where general fandom can look at it, so you might also have a few more things you’d like to point out to that audience, whatever you might like to say in conclusion of the interview.

EL: Thanks for those kind words about *Dark Secret*—and, in fact, about every Lerner title you’ve mentioned. As for *Dark Secret* in particular, while it hasn’t received as much attention as I would like, I would refer any curious Ionisphere reader to the review at <https://www.tangentonline.com/component/content/article/280-novel-reviews/3537-dark-secret-by-edward-m-lerner> (**Tangent Online**).

Plans? My next new book, due out soon (late March 2018) is genre-centric nonfiction. As back story: For several years I wrote occasional nonfiction articles for *Analog*, each exploring the science and tech that might underpin a common SF trope: FTL travel, time travel, human enhancement, general AI, and the like. *TROPE-ING THE LIGHT FANTASTIC: The Science Behind the Fiction* expands and updates those articles. Each chapter also surveys science fiction—foundational and modern, in short and long written form, on TV and the big screen—that illustrates a particular trope.

The good, the bad, and occasionally the cringe-worthy. All imparted with (I like to believe) wit, and ample references to learn more.

And after *TROPE-ING*? I’m nearly at the end of a first draft of a new novel, working title *DEJA DOOMED*. Think of that as combining the near future technothriller realism of *ENERGIZED* with the existential threat to humanity of *DARK SECRET*.

My general sfnal outlook? I like science in my fiction (although I don’t care for the label “hard SF”). Science as an essential element of the story, not merely as gee-whiz background. That’s most of what I read in the genre. It’s almost all of what I write. And I generally don’t care for dystopic stories. All too many problems exist, but where is the profit in dwelling on those rather than exploring possible solutions? I’ve written about, even invented, my share of possible catastrophes and nasty predicaments—it’s what fiction authors DO—but my heroes are never accepting of those situations. I want a story to focus on the struggle to use intelligence to prevent or to escape from whatever may be threatening or wrong.

And on a final note, thanks for inviting me to Ionisphere.

IO: Thanks for an excellent interview. The interview will appear in the February

Ionisphere.

EL: I'm also happy with how it worked out, and I look forward to seeing the assembled interview.

Edward Lerner's email address is eml@edwardmlerner.com

His writers website url is www.edwardmlerner.com



FEEDBACK letters

JOHN POLSELLI: Thank you for sending the December issue of Ionisphere. I'm thoroughly enjoying it. It's great to see my bio in it, and I LOVE the interviews.

JEFFREY REDMOND: Excellent issue! I like the interview with me. You've summed it all up quite well, John. You'd make a great news reporter.

My Science Fiction Facebook site has 40,000 members now. I continue to invite others to at least like the N3F page. The PayPal system for joining doesn't seem to work. I informed George about this, but he may have limited influence there.

Thanks for the interview. I hope it will let a few more Neffers know about me. I'm friends on Facebook with some of them...it will be fun to see if we can get the N3F up to 500 dues paid people (again).

JAY WERKHEISER (in response to George Phillis's comments in last issue's lettercol): Thanks for the heads up! It's nice to see my experience isn't unique and that others see the increasing vitriol as well. If enough people recognize it and call it out, maybe that will be enough to get the people doing it to dial it down. I can hope, anyway!

ANGELA MEYERS: Just very quickly glanced at this edition and wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the art. I especially like the picture titled "Observation Deck".

Hope to be able to get back and read more carefully soon. The issue looks really interesting to an old lady like me who started reading SF when she was under ten years old. (That would have been in the early 50s for those who care.)

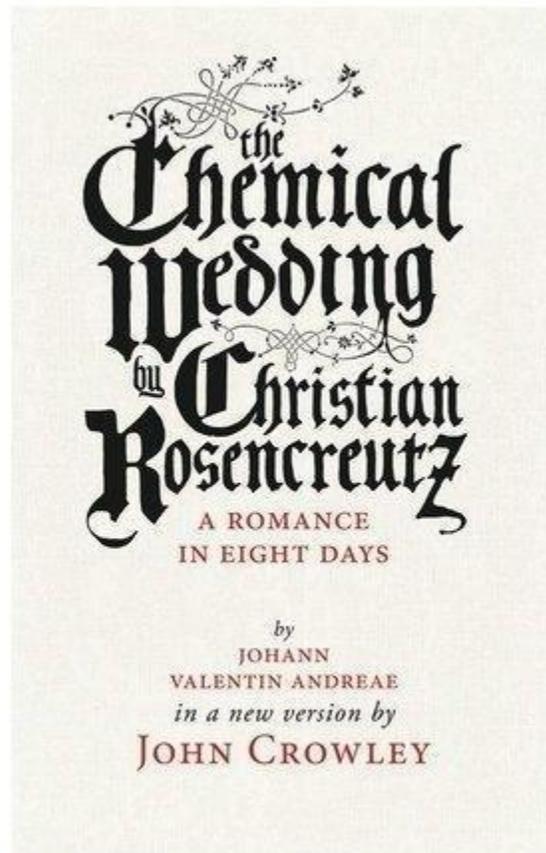
I've fallen behind because I took back rights to my first novel, **WHEN THE MOON IS GIBBOUS AND WAXING**, and am in the process of re-issuing it with a new cover and lower price. While I was waiting to get it back, I wrote a sequel, **IN THE DARK OF THE MOON**, which will be published soon. I'm also having **THE WILL TO LOVE** reformatted for re-issue, and will be publishing an SF novelette, "Not In the Wind", when all that other stuff gets done.

Add that to my occasional writing for a local magazine and several interesting trips, and I've been a busy gal. Keep up the good work.

JOE NAPOLITANO: I was impressed with IO 8, very well done and better than what's usually found in prozines.



THE CHEMICAL WEDDING by Jeffrey Redmond



Science Fiction is a wide variety of endless possibilities. It covers magical spells, monsters, robots, androids, aliens, space and time travel, and pessimistic speculations about the future. It's a tradition with a rich history, full of authors who accurately and imaginatively predict new technologies and the roles they play in shaping our existence.

Accuracy aside, the sci fi *genre* has the power to suggest how a future can unfold, while encouraging solutions to our problems. And it's a sharing of stories, entertaining readers, and perhaps giving our lives more than a mere bit of meaning.

Where and when, then, did the science fiction genre begin? What story, or stories, began this incredible process? Mary Shelley's "The Last Man" (1826), a post apocalyptic book about a wandering crew, is often credited as the first science fiction novel. With help from Percy Shelley and Lord Byron, she did give us "Frankenstein" (1818) after all.

But "The Last Man" as a purely science fiction novel is complicated to defend, especially when both "science fiction" and "novel" are necessary descriptors. There is an earlier work which may be considered as the first sci fi novel.

Published in 1616, THE CHEMICAL WEDDING (original title, CHYMISCHE HOCHZEIT CHRISTIANI ROSENCREUTZ ANNO 1459) is the story of a man who is invited to attend a wedding. It's full of strange humor and wonder, and has a sci fi element of alchemy, which was regarded at the time as a technology with demonstrable effects.

It was a German book edited in Strasbourg, with its anonymous authorship attributed to Johannes Valentinus Andreae. No author was named in the book, other than Christian Rosencreutz, but Andreae (1586-1654) claimed to be the author in his autobiography. The first English version appeared in 1690, followed by other translations into many languages afterwards.

Although the book first appeared in 1616, the story takes place over 150 years earlier. The events of this story span seven days and are divided into seven chapters, each chapter relating a different day. The tale begins on an evening near Easter. In the final chapter (the seventh day) Rosencreutz is knighted, and the year is 1450.

It is an allegoric romance story divided into the Seven Days, or Seven Journeys, like Genesis. It recounts how Rosencreutz is invited to go to a wonderful castle full of miracles, in order to assist the Chymical Wedding of the king and the queen, who are husband and bride. This work has been a source of inspiration for poets, alchemists, and dreamers. The word "chymical" is an old form of "chemical" and refers to alchemy.

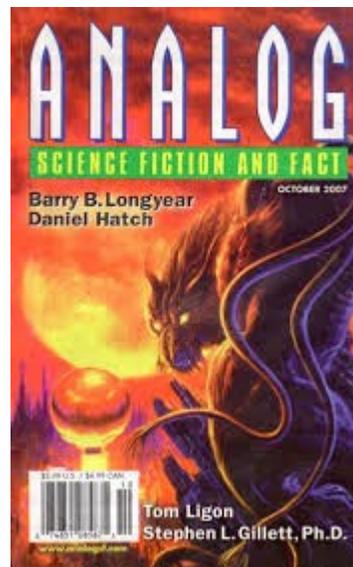
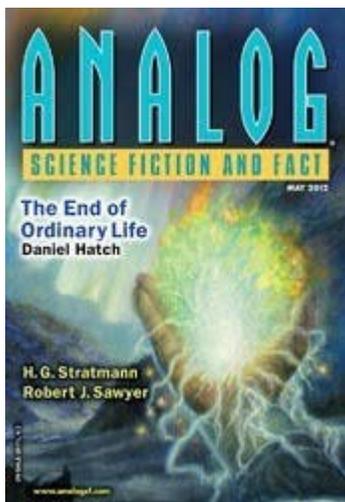
Defending the book as science fiction, it can be argued that Alchemy was a science. It had a general picture of the material world, and a rational scheme for formulating hypotheses and proceeding with investigations of these. It was also science in that it attempted to learn about the world and expand practical human knowledge and possibilities. Yes, most of the alchemists started off searching only for how to make gold. But they made quite a few discoveries, if only by accident, along the way.

Regardless of whether The Chemical Wedding is truly a first, it's an entertaining look into the beliefs held by those who read it at the time. Over the course of the seven days, the hero Rosencreutz explores the strange wonders of the castle where the wedding of the king and queen is held. The book was seen at the time as mystical by readers. They were convinced there was a hidden society controlling everything. If they could understand texts such as The Chemical Wedding, maybe they could ascend from their everyday life and discover the secrets to life, happiness, and prosperity.

The story may provide the context for contemporary readers. Hopefully to appreciate it as more than a historical artifact, and engaging with it as a contemporary book, understanding the character's humanity. Most of us are a bit like Christian. We can see the grand adventure, and we get to take part in the strangeness, delight, and trouble. And in the end we can be changed by our experiences, while remaining our basic selves, from this work of what is perhaps early science fiction.



Interview with DANIEL HATCH



Daniel Hatch has a pattern-breaking approach to writing and his stories stand out in the magazines. There was a little trouble in communications in getting this interview but it came in just in time for the issue, which is great because it goes

along well with the blockbusters of Edward Lerner, also interviewed. Mr. Hatch's email is dhatch999@comcast.net . Let us commence:

IO: I was highly interested in one of your stories in particular, "An Angelheaded Hipster Escapes", in the October 2007 issue of Analog. I noted that the term "angelheaded hipster" was used in Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl" and wondered how much the poem had to do with the writing of the story. Are the characters seen as being in a "Moloch", as Ginsberg puts it? I was interested in this aspect of the story as a crossover from the Beat Generation culture, and wonder also if you were trying to have an avant-garde effect with the title.

DH: Actually there wasn't a "poetic" purpose behind the title. It was more "prosaic"—I needed to date my character, Jonathan Bender. "I'm so old, I know *two* verses of 'Howl', he would say. I modeled this guy after Christopher Stoll, astronomer working at the Lawrence Labs who caught a computer hacker with a voltage meter in the early days of computers when you could do that. I do really like that second verse more than the first. "Angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night". I plan on using it for a couple more titles in the extended story of the disembodied brain of poor Mr. Bender—especially since in this future, artificial intelligences run nearly everything in space.

IO: Karl Schroeder's novel LOCKSTEP reminds me of that story, with mankind being a part of mankind's technology, as does your own story, "The Chorus Line", in the same issue in which Lockstep was being serialized, with a culture centering around making scores on the net. A good issue, Carl Frederick, Paul Levinson, Arlan Andrews, and Edward Lerner in there too. I am wondering what you were showing in this story, what were your major reasons for writing it? Does the story have something special to say to the reader, outside of just the idea it has? For instance, is mankind's origins a major point, and does it have something to do with the way the present society is presented in the story? I see hints that it does.

DH: I got the germ of the idea when the news first came out about *ardreipithecus*—the first smiling primate. I saw the video they made of him walking through the forest, his long arms wrapped around a bunch of food. I pictured him smiling...and a bunch of them locking arms, smiling and dancing. Then my wife pointed out that they would have to invent rhythm before they could dance. So there's the story—a false image of Ardy dancing. Who would make such a thing?

The rest of the story was a delightful travel research project. I cobbled it together with "found objects" and ended the research in the public library in Longmeadow, Massachusetts, an old mansion converted into public space, reading about the

experience of chewing khat in the nearest copy of a book on the subject that I could find.

Djibouti is an amazing place. A humid desert...you can walk to Somalia from there.

And while a reader gets immersed in a place for an hour, the writer gets to spend a few months there.

IO: "The End of Ordinary Life" is certainly an arresting title. The discursive social pattern portrayed hardly holds together at all. What inspired this story? What are you saying to people through the story? By "ordinary", do you mean "ordained" life?

DH: I started writing "The End of Ordinary Life" when gas prices hit \$4 a gallon. When they went back down, I had to re-think the whole future social and economic history. But rounding up economists and putting them in FEMA camps sounds much less preposterous today than it did when the story came out. At the time, ordinary life seemed on the brink of disaster...it was going 2008 and we were one day away from martial law. And Alaska has always been just beyond the edge of ordinary life.

When Stan Schmidt and I had dinner a few months later, he asked me if I had ever been a pilot in Southeast Alaska—because *he* had been and the story was so real to him. I had to confess that I'd used Flight Simulator and Google Street View and lots of research to bring the setting to life.

IO: What did you think of the introductory comment the editor wrote for the story? Do you think it agrees with the point of the story?

DH: I don't remember what Stan wrote, so I can't help you there.

IO: What do you have to say overall about social change?

DH: Overall social change is a struggle. It doesn't happen by itself. People have to work hard to make it happen and they have to know they are making it happen. We haven't done that work lately and it shows. I am a self-contained radical on the subject. I was stuck on a Coast Guard cutter in the middle of the North Atlantic for weeks at a time with lots of books...in the early 70s when books were subversive and revolutionary. I put Marx up there with Darwin, Freud, and Einstein. I read all the books by Erich Fromm, a Freudian psychoanalyst who used Marx to analyze Freud—the most powerful analytical tool for understanding human nature we've ever created. It shows how the historical narrative and the personal narrative are the same process—we come into the world powerless and alone with all our human relationships turned against us as hostile forces, and we have to make ourselves human by taking control of those relationships and those forces. The god of western civilization is the god of the narrative—and he is an awesome god (this is a metaphor, by the way).

IO: When did you begin writing science fiction? What was your first story to appear in print, and where did it appear?

DH: I began writing science fiction when I was 15, but it was awful. I got better. The first story I wrote that was ever published I did while I was still in the Coast Guard in 1974.

When I sold it, I validated all that I did and didn't do during all my years in college and afterwards. But the first story to appear in print was "The Scout Post"—a story about an interstellar society where you can travel at the speed of light, but no faster. Travelers cross decades as well as the distance between the stars. But the story keeps a narrow focus on a radical who gets kidnapped to be removed to a nearby star system—and the nephew of the guy who arranges the kidnapping. It appeared in *Analog* in May 1990.

Coincidentally, the day I got the acceptance letter from Stan Schmidt was the day the earthquake interrupted the World Series in San Francisco. That kind of thing happens to me more than it ought to—the day I graduated from the University of Connecticut was the day Mr. St. Helen erupted.

IO: Do you intend your stories to be revolutionary?

DH: Yes. All fiction should be revolutionary. Revolution has a very specific meaning for me. It means a self-conscious struggle to liberate yourself from the false and alienated understanding of things and the very real material, political, and economic relationships that prevent us from using our natural human powers—reason, faith, hope, love, justice, and the other virtues. The simple structure of narrative fiction naturally fits in with that understanding of its best use and goal.

IO: Who are some of the other writers of science fiction you would identify with? What other writers do you like best?

DH: That's a hard question, because I don't think about things like that. I like all kinds of things and all kinds of writers. I'm old enough that I once was able to read *everything* in SF—but that was almost 50 years ago and I was 16.

IO: What attracted you to the writing of science fiction?

DH: I signed up for the Science Fiction Book Club and got "The Rest of the Robots"—where Isaac Asimov wrote about what it was like to be a science fiction writer. I was 15 and that was when I first realized that science fiction writers were people and that I could be one. I also wanted to become a biochemist, but that idea didn't last long. I don't know what attracted me to writing, except that I grew up in a family where everyone assumed you could always learn to do what anyone else did.

IO: Any plans for what you'll be writing in the future?

DH: I have way more story ideas than I have time to write. I'm working on a book that is largely autobiographical—"The Guy Who Talks to Aliens"—where the most outrageous and unbelievable elements are the ones that are true (see earthquake and volcano above). This summer, while on vacation in Maine, I asked my wife, who has a degree in economics, "What are the political economics of virtual realities?" She said, "Anything you want them to be." So I picked post-human and post-capitalist, and the rest of the tale began to write itself. I hope to put words on the screen soon—as soon as I finish two other works in progress.

IO: What things overall most motivate your stories? What are your chief interests in the

writing of them?

DH: I write because it hurts when I don't. I want to continue my vision of spreading subversive ideas through popular fiction.

IO: Do you belong to any science fiction groups at the present time?

DH: No, I live just far enough away from Boston and New York to make that inconvenient.

IO: Is there anything you would care to add to the interview?

DH: My approach to writing imaginary fiction that requires a strong suspension of disbelief is to include as much reality in them as possible. I have 40 years in journalism to help with that. One of the first things they taught us in journalism class was how to do a travel research project—and I've been doing them ever since. I just travel to worlds of my own creation, based on research into the realities that can be discovered... either through reading what others have experienced or through calculating the astronomicals of a world orbiting a gas giant with 8 days of sunshine and 8 days of dark.

Science fiction is the combination of two great themes of literature—romance and realism. One works against the other, they both work together, and in the end, we learn how to be more human and how to capture our human powers to deal with the universe as we change ourselves and the world.



That's the end of this issue. Hope to see you all again in two months.

