

# IONISPHERE 29



June 2021

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

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*Welcoming Tamara Wilhite as a new staff member.*

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## **EDITORIAL**



### **Difficulties Existing in the Bureau**

When Irwin Koch organized this bureau in the early 1980s, it was because he saw science fiction fandom as becoming discursive and losing good contacts, with factions here and there unaware of one another and activity generally becoming unruly and disorderly. It was a very ambitious move on his part to create this bureau. I had been discussing this with him and he decided to put me in charge of it and see who else he could round up to be in it. I started the bureau publication Ionisphere and, introducing myself as the head of this bureau and explaining its function, wrote to various magazines explaining the bureau to them and requesting more attention to fanzines in the magazines. I also wrote to authors, whose addresses I was able to find in some reference books called the WHO'S WHO, explaining the bureau and its objectives. Also I sought N3F representation at conventions, where the organization would be explained to those attending the conventions. But progress was slow; some of the magazine editors had never even heard of the N3F. So I explained it to them and also its place in science fiction fandom. But things were really limping in those days, and progress was not managed quickly. Moreover, the N3F was in a state of confusion, and most of its bureaus were involved in trying to figure out themselves and their functions. Koch left the presidency and I was not so tight with the people following in that office. At last one of them killed the Fan-Pro Activity and I left the organization. It was many years later that I rejoined the N3F and in discussing my past in the NFFF, George Phillies suggested that I recommence Ionisphere, and he started the Fan-Pro Bureau up again. So I was back for another try at achieving those objectives we had previously had. Due to its being on the net, I was able to achieve a total distribution of Ionisphere, which I had not

had in previous times when Ionisphere was mimeographed, which made producing enough copies more than difficult, and also the ground postage rates were already high. Some were complaining that those postal rates were breaking up fandom.

Now with net fandom I find it easier to achieve contact with professional writers and I am able to interview them. Back then I got a few interviews and was able to give authors' addresses to the membership, but saw few visible results from that. Presently with the net, authors are coming through with interviews more than they were before and I am able to give the membership their email addresses. We have, as pointed out, a new staff member who also does interviews and she has resources of her own. We have feedback problems with giving authors' addresses; we should be receiving feedback from members who have used these addresses and they could tell us whether they had had success in writing to the authors, artists, etc. If I were able to display reports of such contact successes here, we would have a fully successful bureau. I will point out here that bureau success is N3F success, and N3F success is membership success, and now I have said how that success would be realizable. I am hoping the membership will come to this realization in the course of time.

There are, of course, impediments to the further progress of the viewpoint of this bureau, meaning intentional sabotage coming from entrenched saboteurs with their own established activity, which amounts to warfare conflicts. Can we manage to do anything positive in such a milieu? I say we should not ourselves be in intentional conflicts with these people with their alternatives to our activities. Even if we are not, though, there is still malware in use, which principally attacks anything that is showing any signs of success. There we have our own warfare conflict, because we are striving to get rid of this, but I think that in doing this we should stick to proper methods and not use imaginative counterassaults or methods which are themselves, as is malware, illicit. It is success to do things the right way in such conflicts, and maintain our own standards. We cannot be functioning very well using unearthly methods of counter-operations, such as hoaxes, sophism, misdirection, shams, and other illegitimate methods of operation. One thing an organization needs in order to be successful and to continue to be that is to have a proper set of standards consonant with known honest and virtuous standards. Right is what it always has been; we are confused by avant-garde procedures and dissenting practices. Progress usually includes change, and changes are outside the scope of our practices. However, we know how to correct this, and that is to behave righteously, let progress come when it will. One thing which is discouraging to our good

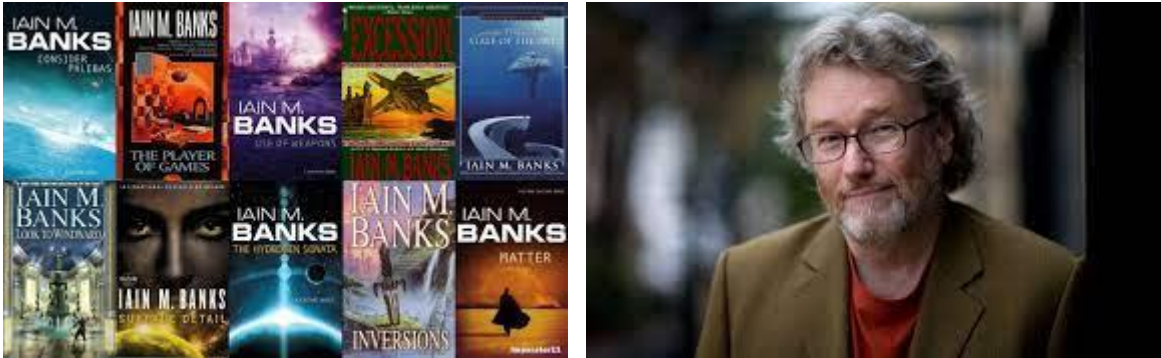
efforts is to look into the past and see one good system after another come down; something will thrive and then be wrecked by one thing or another, and here in the NFFF, we do not even have histories of these past doings because proper records were not kept, what with the holders of them gafiating and then growing away from fandom and any contacts with it. Gafia has done a lot to bring harm to fandom. I'd say that if people are interfering with what we are doing, we should do it anyway and try to ignore these interferences and get around their sabotages as best we can. The best way to evolve a system that does not go to ruin is to make sure it does not go to ruin by not allowing ourselves to be ruined by it. Let us not be pessimistic by our projects going astray—insofar as they have worth, they are recoverable and pessimism is made up of not continuing to recover and perpetuate what we are doing.

We should have columns in Ionisphere about everything where fan and pro interactivity occurs. There should be writing about conventions and reports on the fan and pro interchanges that go on there, and we should consider ways in which we could increase and improve these inter-relations, such as getting events scheduled which are directly relevant to fan and pro interchanging. We should have news sources for stories involving writers and artists when they are into something they would like publicized. Activities involving fans should be reported here, such as on-the-net conferences. (Those are still in their experimental stages.) Events should be fully publicized and described. And projects to get things accomplished should be given coverage here. At present we don't have ways and means to do all these things, and we are looking for opportunities to acquire these means. WE are in developmental stages, and developing our bureau is one of our projects here. So a lot of what I am writing is visualizations for the future. But patterns for the future are a good thing to have to aid in an organization's development. For an optimistic future you want a stable present.

There might also be writings on how fandom is getting along here. Those would be imaginative, reactive writings, and would contribute to people's perceptions of fandom. All these things I mention are things I have seen in various places in fandom in the past. Fandom needs to be painted and portrayed, considered, contemplated and criticized in order to exist. After all, fans are literary people, and want views of fandom to help them understand what they are doing and to help them in doing things related to fandom. We are emphasizing the need for these things, and will want to report the improvement of fandom when things of a literature-conscious nature are being done.

# BEHIND THE SCENES

## Jeffrey Redmond un-wraps THE CULTURE SERIES



*Here is science fiction about living and the progress of life which we might well consider in being in our own culture in fandom.*

The Culture Series is a science fiction series written by Scottish author Iain M. Banks and released from 1987 through to 2012. The stories center on The Culture, a utopian, post-scarcity space society of humanoid aliens, and advanced super-intelligent artificial intelligences living in artificial habitats spread across the Milky Way galaxy. The main theme of the series is the dilemmas that an idealistic, more advanced civilization faces in dealing with smaller, less advanced civilizations that do not share its ideals, and whose behavior it sometimes finds barbaric. In some of the stories action takes place mainly in non-Culture environments, and the leading characters are often on the fringes of (or non-members of) the Culture, sometimes acting as agents of Culture (knowing and unknowing) in its plans to civilize the galaxy. Each novel is a self-contained story with new characters, although reference is occasionally made to the events of previous novels.

The Culture is a society formed by various humanoid species and artificial intelligences about nine thousand years before the events of novels in the series. Since the majority of its biological population can have almost anything they want without the need to work, there is little need for laws or enforcement, and the culture is described by Banks as space socialism. It features a post-scarcity economy where technology is advanced to such a degree that all production is automated. Its members live mainly in spaceships and other off-planet constructs, because its founders wished to avoid the centralized political and

corporate power structures that planet-based economies foster. Most of the planning and administration is done by Minds, very advanced AIs.

Although the Culture has more advanced technology and a more powerful economy than the vast majority of known civilizations, it is just one of the “involved” civilizations that take an active part in galactic affairs. The much older Homomda are slightly more advanced at the time of CONSIDER PHLEBAS. This is, however, set several centuries before the other books, and Culture technology and martial power continues to advance in the interim. The Morthanveld have a much larger population and economy, but are hampered by a more restrictive attitude to the role of AI in their society. The capabilities of all such societies are vastly exceeded by those of the Elder civilizations (semi-retired from Galactic politics but who remain supremely potent) and the Sublimed, entities which have abandoned their material form for existence in the form of non-corporeal, multi-dimensional energy beings, but these generally refrain from intervention in the material world.

Some other civilizations hold less favorable views of the Culture. At the time of their war with the Culture, the Idirans and some of their allies regarded the control that the Minds exercised over the Culture as a form of idolatry. The Homomda regard the Culture as idealistic and hyper-active. Some members of the Culture have seceded to form related civilizations, known collectively as the Ulterior. These include the Peace Faction, the AhForgetit Tendency and the Zetetic Elench. Others simply drop out temporarily or permanently.

Since the Culture’s biologic population commonly live as long as four hundred years and have no need to work, they face the difficulty of giving meaning to their lives when the Minds and other intelligent machines can do almost anything better than the biological population can. Many try—few successfully—to join the Contact, the Culture’s combined diplomatic/military/government service, and fewer still are invited to the even more elite Special Circumstances (SC), Contact’s secret service and special operations division. Normal Culture citizens vicariously derive meaning from their existence *via* the works of Contact and SC.

Banks described the Culture as “some incredibly rich lady of leisure who does good, charitable works...Contact does that on a large scale.” The same need to find a purpose for existence contributed to the majority of the Culture embarking semi-voluntarily on its only recent full-scale war, to stop the expansion of the



militaristic and expansionist Idirans—otherwise the Culture’s economic and technological advancement would only have been an exercise in hedonism.

All of the stories feature the tension between the Culture’s humane, anarcho-communist ideals and its need to intervene in the affairs of less enlightened and often less advanced civilizations. The first Culture novel, *Consider Phlebas*, describes an episode in the Idrian War, which the Culture’s Minds foresaw would cause billions of deaths on both sides, but which their utilitarian calculations predicted would be the best course in the long term. The Idrian War serves as a recurring reference point in most of the subsequent novels, influencing the Culture’s development for centuries and dividing its residents—both humanoids and AI Minds—along the pacifist and interventional ideals.

In subsequent novels, the Culture—particularly SC and, to a lesser degree, *Contact*—continue to employ subterfuge, espionage, and even direct action (collectively called “dirty tricks”) in order to protect itself and spread the Culture’s “good works” and ideals. These dirty tricks include blackmailing persons, employing mercenaries, recruiting double agents, attempting to effect regime change, and even engaging in false flag operations against the Culture itself (potentially resulting in the death of billions).

Though each of these individual actions would horrify the average Culture citizen, the Culture’s Minds tend to justify these actions in terms of lives saved in the long term, perhaps over the course of several hundred years. The Culture is willing to use not only preemptive, but also retaliatory, actions in order to deter future hostile actions against itself. Banks commented that in order to prevent atrocities, “even the Culture throws away its usual moral rulebook”. Andrew M. Butler noted that, “Having established the peaceful, utopian, game-playing tendencies of the Culture...in later volumes the Culture’s dirty tricks are more exposed.”

The Culture stories have been described as “eerily prescient”. *Consider Phlebas* explicitly presents a clash of civilizations, although this phrase was used by Samuel P. Huntington and earlier authors. This is highlighted by the novel’s description of the Idirans’ expansion as a “jihad” and by its epigraphic verse from the Koran, “idolatry is worse than carnage”. However, it was as much a “holy war” from the Culture’s point of view. Throughout the series, *Contact* and *Special Circumstances* show themselves willing to intervene, sometimes forcefully, in



other civilizations to make them more Culture-like.

Much of *LOOK TO WINDWARD* is a commentary on the Idiran-Culture war, from a viewpoint eight hundred years later, mainly reflecting grief over both personal and large-scale losses and guilt over actions taken in the war. It combines these with similar reflections on the catastrophic miscarriage of the Culture's attempt to dissolve the Chelgrians' oppressive caste system. In neither case, however, does distress over the consequences of Culture policy lead its representatives to reject that policy. The book illustrates the limitations of power, and also points out that Minds and other AIs are as vulnerable as biological persons to grief, guilt and regrets.



The Culture Series comprises nine novels and one short story collection. The list, ordered by date of publishing, is:

*CONSIDER PHLEBAS*, published in 1987, set in AD 1331. An episode in the full-scale war between the Culture and the Idirans, told mainly from the point of view of an Idiran agent.

*THE PLAYER OF GAMES*, published in 1988, set in 2083 to 2087/8. A bored member of the Culture is blackmailed into being the Culture's agent in a plan to subvert a brutal, hierarchical empire. His mission is to win an empire-wide tournament by which the ruler of the empire is selected.

*USE OF WEAPONS*, published in 1990, set in 2092 and in 1892 CE. Chapters

describing the current mission of a Culture special agent born and raised on a non-Culture planet alternate with chapters that describe in reverse chronological order earlier missions and the traumatic events that made him who he is.

THE STATE OF THE ART, published in 1991, beginning in 1977. A short story collection. Two of the works are explicitly set in the Culture universe ("The State of the Art" and "A Gift from the Culture"), with a third work ("Descendent") possibly set in the Culture universe. In the title novella, the Mind in charge of an expedition to Earth decides not to make contact or intervene in any way, but instead to use Earth as a control group in the Culture's long-term comparison of intervention and non-interference.

EXCESSION, published in 1996, set in 1867, with 1827 and 633 in flashbacks. An alien artifact far advanced beyond the Culture's understanding is used by one group of Minds to lure a civilization (the behavior of which they disapprove) into war. Another group of Minds works against the conspiracy. A sub-plot covers how two humanoids make up their differences after traumatic events that happened forty years earlier.

INVERSIONS, published in 1998, set in the Middle Ages. Not explicitly a Culture novel, but it recounts what appears to be the activities of a Special Circumstances agent and a Culture emigrant on a planet whose development is roughly equivalent to medieval Europe. The interwoven stories are told from the viewpoint of several of the locals.

LOOK TO WESTWARD, published in 2000, set in 2167. The Culture has interfered in the development of a race known as the Chelgrians, with disastrous consequences. Now, in the light of a star that was destroyed eight hundred years previously during the Idiran War, plans for revenge are being hatched.

MATTER, published in 2008, set in 1887 CE and 2167 CE. A Culture special agent who is a princess of an early-industrial society on a huge artificial planet learns that her father and brother have been killed, and decides to return to her home world. When she returns, she finds a far deeper threat.

SURFACE DETAIL, published in 2010, set between 2767 and 2967. A young woman seeks revenge on her murderer after being brought back to life by Culture technology. Meanwhile, a war over the digitized souls of the dead is expanding from cyberspace into the real world.

THE HYDROGEN SONATA, published in 2012, set in 2375. In the last days of the Gzilt civilization, which is about to Sublime, a secret from far back in their history threatens to

unravel their plans. Aided by a number of Culture vessels and their avatars, one of the Gzilt tries to discover if much of their history was actually a lie.

When the first Culture stories appeared, science fiction was dominated by cyberpunk, a pessimistic subgenre that worried about, but offered no solutions for, the offshoring of jobs to countries with lower costs or less strict regulations, the increasing power of corporations, and the threats to privacy posed by computer networks. The Culture stories are space opera, with certain elements that are free from scientific realism, and Banks uses this freedom extravagantly in order to focus on the human and political aspects of his universe; he rejects the dystopian direction of present-day capitalism, which both cyberpunk and earlier space operas assume, in creating a post-scarcity society as the primary civilization of focus.

Space opera had peaked in the 1930s, but started to decline as magazine editors such as John W. Campbell demanded more realistic approaches. By the 1960s many space operas were satires on earlier styles, such as Harry Harrison's *Stainless Steel Rat* and *Bill, the Galactic Hero* stories, while televised and film space operas such as *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* were thought to have dumbed down the subgenre. The Culture stories did much to revive space opera.

Banks has been described as "an incorrigible player of games" with both style and structure—and with the reader. In both the Culture stories and his work outside science fiction, there are two sides to Banks, the "merry chatterer" who brings scenes to life and "the altogether less amiable character" who "engineers the often savage structure of his stories". Banks uses a wide range of styles. *The Player of Games* opens in a leisurely manner as it presents the main character's sense of boredom inertia, and adopts for the main storyline a "spare, functional" style that contrasts with the "linguistic fireworks" of later stories.

Sometimes the styles used in *Excession* relate to the function and focal character of the scene: slow-paced and detailed for Dajeil, who is still mourning over traumatic events that happened decades earlier; a parody of huntin', shootin', and fishin' country gentlemen, sometimes reminiscent of P.G. Wodehouse, when describing the viewpoint of the *Affront*; the ship *Serious Callers Only*, afraid of becoming involved in the conflict between factions of Minds, speaks in cryptic verse, while the *Sleeper Service*, acting as a freelance detective, adopts a hardboiled style. On the other hand, Banks often wrong-foots readers by using prosaic descriptions for the grandest scenery, self-deprecation and humor for the most heroic actions, and a poetic style in describing one of the

Affront's killings.

He delights in building up expectations and then surprising the reader. Even in *The Player of Games*, which has the simplest style and structure of the series, the last line of the epilogue reveals who was really pulling the strings all along. In all the Culture stories, Banks subverts many clichés of space opera. The Minds are not plotting to take over the universe, and no one is following a grand plan. The darkly comic double act of Ferbin and Hoise in *Matter* is not something most writers would place in "the normally po-faced context of space opera". Even the names of Culture spaceships are jokes—for example *Lightly Seared on the Reality Grill*, *Experiencing a Significant Gravitational Shortfall* (part of a running gag in the series), and *Liveware Problem*.

Banks often uses "outsiders" as viewpoint characters, and said that using an enemy of the Culture as the main character of *Consider Phlebas*, the first story in the series, enabled him to present a more rounded view of the Culture. However, this character realizes that his attempts to plan for anything that might conceivably happen on a mission are very similar to the way in which the Culture makes all its decisions, and by the end suspects he has chosen the wrong side.

The focal character of *The Player of Games* is bored with the lack of real challenges in his life, is blackmailed into becoming a Culture agent, admires the vibrancy of the Azad Empire but is then disgusted by its brutality, and wins the final of the tournament by playing in a style that reflects the Culture's values.

*Use of Weapons* features a non-Culture mercenary who accepts the benefits of association with the Culture, including immortality as the fee for his first assignment, and completes several dangerous missions as a Culture agent, but complains that he is kept in the dark about the aims of his missions and that in some of the wars he has fought maybe the Culture was backing both sides, with good reason.

*Look to Windward* uses three commentators on the Culture, a near-immortal Behemothaur, a member of the race plunged into civil war by a Culture intervention that went wrong, and the ambassador of a race at similar technological level to the Culture's.

The action scenes of the Culture stories are comparable to those of blockbuster films. In an interview, Banks said he would like *Consider Phlebas* to be filmed "with a very, very, very big budget indeed" and would not mind if the story were given a happy ending, provided the biggest action scenes were kept. On the other hand, *The Player of Games* relies mainly on the psychological tension of the games by which the ruler of the Azad Empire is selected.

Banks is unspecific about many of the background details in the stories, such as the rules of the game that is the center piece of *The Player of Games*, and cheerfully makes no attempt at scientific credibility.

Banks says he conceived the Culture in the 1960s, and that it is a combination of wish fulfilment and a reaction against the predominantly right-wing science fiction produced in the United States. In his opinion, the Culture might be a "great place to live", with no exploitation of people or AIs, and whose people could create beings greater than themselves.

Before his first published novel, *THE WASP FACTORY* (1984; not science fiction), was accepted in 1983, Banks wrote five books that were rejected, of which three were science fiction. In Banks' first draft of *Use of Weapons* in 1974, his third attempt at a novel, the Culture was just a backdrop intended to show that the mercenary agent was working for the "good guys" and was responsible for his own misdeeds. At the time he persuaded his friend Ken MacLeod to read it and MacLeod tried to suggest improvements. But the book had too much purple prose and a very convoluted structure.

In 1984, shortly after *The Wasp Factory* was published, MacLeod was asked to read *Use of Weapons* again, and said there was "a good novel in there struggling to get out", and suggested the interleaved forwards and backwards narratives that appeared in the published version in 1990. The novella *The State of the Art*, which provides the title of the 1991 collection, dates from 1979, the first draft of *The Player of Games* from 1980 and that of *Consider Phlebas* from 1982.

*Inversions* won the 2004 Italia Science Fiction Award for the Best International Novel.

The American edition of *Look to Windward* was listed by the editors of *SF Site* as one of the "Best SF and Fantasy Books of 2001" after the UK edition had missed out by just one place the previous year.

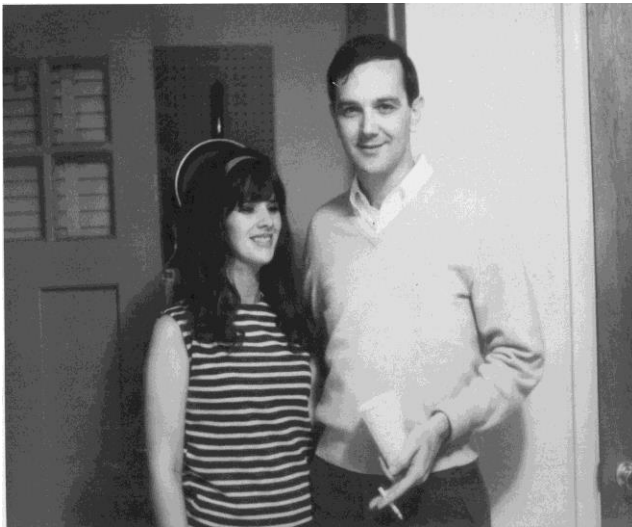
*Use of Weapons* was listed in Damien Broderick's book *SCIENCE FICTION: THE 101 BEST NOVELS 1985-2010*.

As a posthumous tribute to Iain Banks, aerospace manufacturer SpaceX named two of its autonomous spaceport drone ships after sentient starships, *Just Read the Instructions* and *Of Course I Still Love You*, which first appeared in the novel *The Player of Games* and names a third one *A SHORTFALL OF GRAVITAS* which is taking inspiration from star ship *Experiencing a Significant Gravitass Shortfall* in *Look to Windward*.



# LUNCH WITH WALTER M. MILLER, JR.

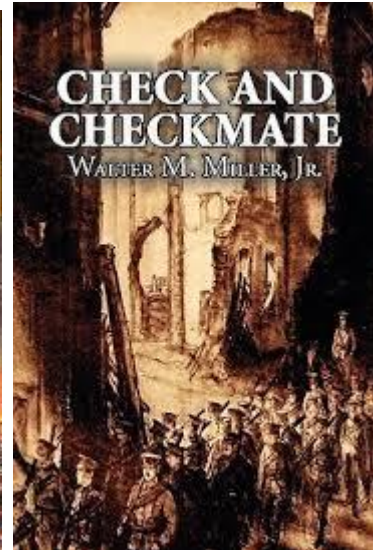
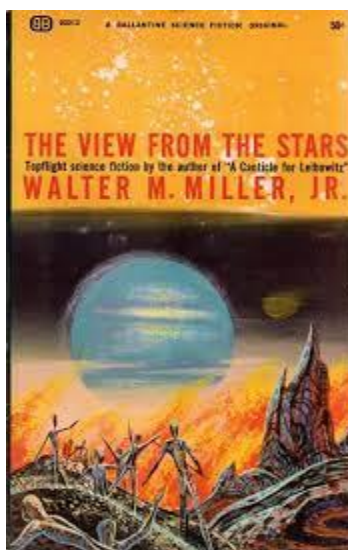
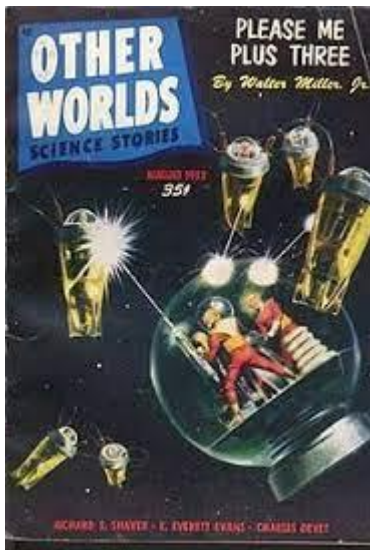
by Jon D. Swartz, N3F Historian



Jon and Carol



Walter M. Miller, Jr.



*Meet the author, along with Jon Swartz and his wife*

It was in the 1960s when I was at the University of Texas at Austin, first as a student and then as a faculty member. The anthropologist and science fiction author, Chad Oliver, was also there at that time. Chad and I were friends and sponsors of The University of Texas Science Fiction Club that met weekly.

One morning the inter-campus phone rang in my office in Mezes Hall. It was Chad on the line, calling from Benedict Hall, where he had his office, asking if I wanted to meet and have lunch with Walt Miller, who was in Austin looking into the possible enrollment at the University of one of his daughters.

Chad, my wife Carol—doing graduate work in anthropology under Chad's supervision—and I usually had lunch together every Wednesday at a local restaurant about a block from the campus; but the day of this phone call was not on a Wednesday. I replied that I would love to meet and have lunch with Miller, who was one of my favorite science fiction writers. I asked if Carol could also come and meet Miller, since *A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ*, Miller's novel, was one of her favorite books, in addition to a Hugo Best Novel winner. Carol read science fiction, had dated Harlan Ellison when she lived in Los Angeles with her mother, and collected signed books. Chad said that she was welcome to join us.

Carol was working at home, and taking care of our two young children, when I phoned her and told of our plans. I asked her if she wanted to join us, and if she could bring with her some of our copies of Miller's books for him to autograph. She was unable to join us for lunch, but was able to get two copies of the Bantam paperback edition of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* to me before I joined Chad and Miller for lunch. I still have those two books, with Miller's autographs.

I don't remember why, over 50 years later, but the three of us ended up at the cafeteria of a small residential facility directly across the street from Benedict Hall. This particular eating place served good lunches and was quiet, especially when compared to the restaurants where we usually had lunch. Perhaps Miller chose it because he had attended the University some years earlier and was familiar with eating places on and around the campus.

It's difficult to remember just what we talked about during lunch, but I assume his writing was a major topic, since I was a fan of his work. I also knew that he had lived for a time with science fiction author and editor Judith Merril. I had some of her books, and was interested in hearing what she was like.

We also discussed my wife, as I told how she had brought the copies of his books I



had with me. Chad told how she was his best student, and how he often went over her exams several times, trying to find an error so he wouldn't be forced to give her another 100! One topic I know we did not talk about was Miller's experiences in World War II. Chad had warned me that this topic was off limits. I understood because my older brother, George, had served in World War II and had fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He too did not want to talk about his wartime experiences. I didn't learn until much later just how affected Miller eventually became because of his activities during the war.

Whatever it was the three of us found to talk about, it was a long and pleasant luncheon for me. I trust it was the same for them.

My copy of *Canticle* is signed: "For Jon, with pleasant memories of barbecue and cabbage. Walter M. Miller, Jr." Carol's copy is signed: "To Carol with morbid fascination, Walter M. Miller, Jr."

I don't believe Miller had time to do so on this particular trip, but he later spoke to our Science Fiction Club, where he also autographed some of his books. Chad and I always tried to get visiting friends who had a connection with science fiction to speak to the club members since they had heard just about all we had to say on the subject. Science fiction author Randall Garret was a popular speaker with members when he and his girlfriend visited Austin and were guests at a club meeting. When he visited our club, he had written the cover story for the current issue of **Astounding**.

At the time of Miller's visit, there were three "sister buildings" all in a row, in which I spent a lot of time. I had my office in Mezes Hall, which housed the departments of psychology and philosophy; Benedict Hall to the south, was the home for anthropology and mathematics; and Batts Hall, next door to the north, held the various language departments and Batts Auditorium, where free movies were shown and visiting speakers were heard. All three buildings contained classrooms where I had classes as a student.

Outside of Batts Hall, next to the auditorium, was where I met Aldous Huxley, author of the famous science fiction novel, *BRAVE NEW WORLD*.

But that's another story.



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Note on a live fan site: Jeffrey Redmond's SCIENCE FICTION, which now has myself and George Phillies connected with it, might be called the most thriving science fiction fan site on Facebook, perhaps as well as on the net in general. Members call attention to movies, books, articles, news items, and science-fiction-related occurrences, as well as scientific news, and provide links to these to the membership, and frequently are able to point out science fiction activities and YouTube films and recordings to the other members. The interchange is rapid. Science fiction art is frequently displayed there. The NFFF is being called to the attention of its membership, and all in all it might be considered a lively and active group (numbering thousands of members) to be visited by NFFF members who wish to be *au courant* with science fiction happenings. It might be worth taking a Facebook account to visit this group frequently; it may be found by name (SCIENCE FICTION) on Facebook with a Facebook search.

In this manner science fiction fandom awareness spreads from the N3F, and perhaps we will be able to spread awareness of the N3F to people elsewhere on the net. Be aware of them, get them aware of us.

When the ANALOG and ASIMOV'S forums on the net were shut down, many forum members were recommending Facebook to one another as a continuance of forum activity, and some similar groups were set up; F&SF, Asimov's and Analog all have forum groups there, and there is a Dell Forums Group (this last being one of my Facebook groups). It might be a good idea for the NFFF to have Facebook awareness. Spreading SF on the net expands fandom.

I'm considering having Facebook SF news reports here in Ionisphere to furnish this expansion of science fiction awareness and, incidentally, make the net more conscious of science fiction fandom.



**Jeffrey Redmond, photographed at an deserted industrial complex**

**Note:** I notice a number of people not otherwise appearing to be active, but listed in the NFFF membership, in the N3F Review of Books, and it occurs to me that it may be one of those things where they have their activity and we have ours, that has been the case in the NFFF before. It makes me wonder if some members are confining their activity to a single available activity, and not paying much attention to things in general. I assume that everyone listed as a member receives Ionisphere, and I'd like to ask members for an occasional appearance here just to

say hi. Perhaps an NFFF news publication is still a good idea, in that it could bring a broad view of the NFFF into being, with awareness of all the bureaus and interests made common knowledge.



**Ionosphere, NASA solar station research**