

SIGMA

The Newsletter of PARSEC March 2016 Issue 360

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Parsec Meeting - February 27, 2016



President's Column



I enjoy being a member of Parsec. Waiting for the “but” are we? Serving as President of the Meeting Committee has been a joy for me. Keep waiting. I assure you, there will not be a pithy pejorative slam or a disparaging counter-strike to follow.

Parsec is a fan organization.

Parsec, because of the foresight and the hard work of the early members, formed as a non-profit corporation.

Parsec is rooted in the Western Pennsylvania area.

If you are reading this newsletter, it is presumed that you are a member of Parsec. The math in this regard is not exactly definitive.

One hundred and fifty-two emails were sent out to a mailing list purported to be a list of members in good standing and a smattering of friends of the organization. At last look... see, I am now leaving this flurry of typing and accessing the internet... sixty-three people have opened the February Sigma email and eighty-nine did not. (It's the internet, friend, I didn't have to alert my contacts at the NSA for the information. Although, it is of interest to me, the survey includes a dossier on you and your habits. Painting your toenails that intriguing shade of fuchsia. Sinking wooden model triremes in your bowl of Cheerios. Coating your rain slicker with an application of Pam.) I'm curious what the math of this statistic means and will look into the reasons. The cost of the email is not much, around three cents an email, but it is a cost.

And I have no idea, among all the ideas that I don't have any idea of, how many of the issues sent out in the Sigma newsletter physical mailing are received, read, then used for the floor of the canary cage. (Watch out for little yellow birds, they are far more insidious than any intelligence gathering configuration.)

Parsec is a group of very different people who somehow are like minded. United in a passion for Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror. So say the very bylaws of our organization.

What you bring to Parsec is entirely up to you. There is a demand of fifteen bucks a year to become a

member and a hope that you will meet with us once a month to talk about, to learn about, to speculate about science and science fiction.

Parsec is run by a group of volunteers, who give their thought, their work, their care and too often their money to the cause. Here the math is a little more concrete. Without active volunteers the reach that Parsec can have is limited. I hope you will consider taking a more active part. We can use the help. You can be valuable. It seems it is my lot, sometimes it feels like Jacob Marley's clanking chains around my neck, to be a member of a volunteer organization. I can tell you that everyone involved and providing hard work at some time feels put upon that their effort appears to go un-or-underappreciated. It's the wrong way to look at things.

I like to moan and pitch a fit of self-righteous prattle along with the best of you. Hell, you should see me put on my best-wretched face when I sit down to write this column each month. And oy! carrying the onerous bunch of stuff to the monthly meetings. My leg aches, the dog bit me, and I had to wait in line for five minutes for my medication. Did I mention the acid reflux? Alright, already, I'll stop.

Because here the math is very clear. Meeting and working with you furthers me. Makes me a better person than I used to be. Makes me more intelligent. Makes me less awkward in social situations. Puts me center in my passionate affair with the SF genre. Brings me bliss. Come to our gatherings. I'm positive it will do the same for you.

Joe Coluccio - Read my blog each Sunday at <http://parsec-sff.org/blog/category/presidents-blog/>





From the Editors

ZOMBIES – A LOVE/HATE RELATIONSHIP.

I've never been a big fan of the zombie genre. In my mind, if you've seen one zombie film, you've seen them all. Zombies shamble, or run these days, chasing humans for brains and other juicy body parts while the humans try to escape, hide, or fight back. Now that's a generalized statement, I know, but the whole "eating brains" and "zombie virus thing" kind of leaves me cold, if you'll pardon the pun.

At least it did. I've found, lately, my position is softening somewhat on that front. I really liked the movies *28 Days Later* and its sequel, although I argued with people at the time, positive those films weren't really about zombies. But, they were. These days, one can become a zombie through a virus and not the old Voodoo magic.

However, I still have some gripes.

One of my main complaints is why do zombies have to eat? They're dead! And if they eat, do they defecate and urinate also? Zombie poop--now there's a subject for a scientific paper, which could have already been written. In fact, someone mentioned to me recently there was something published explaining zombie physiology, which, of course, is all conjecture. Zombies really don't exist, do they?

Then again, the Department of Defense has a plan in case of a Zombie Apocalypse. It's true. This plan even has categories for zombie chickens, magic zombies, and vegetarian zombies! Although, to be fair, the whole thing was set up for testing purposes with "zombie" used as a placeholder for who or whatever really might attack the United States. Still--zombie chickens? They probably taste like chicken.

Also, why can't we have zombies that can hold a conversation? Who can reason for a change? In fact, I have heard of some recent movies, TV shows, and books which have these kinds of zombies, which I think is great. In the movie remake of H.G. Wells' *Time Machine*, they created an "uber-Morlock" played by

none other than the great British actor Jeremy Irons, who was the brains behind the otherwise hive-like, brutish Morlocks. He could think rationally, converse, make evil plans. Now that's what I'm talking about!

What I'm saying is I'm not completely resistant to the zombie phenomenon anymore but hope it continues to evolve in more interesting and unusual ways. Some Steampunk novels like *Dreadnought* by Cherie Priest and *The Horns of Ruin* by Tim Akers contain zombie elements and both are characterized somewhat differently than the norm.

I guess I'll have to start binge-watching *The Walking Dead*. But only for research purposes you understand, to prepare myself for the Zombie Apocalypse.

Zombie chickens! Run for your lives!

Larry

Alpha Workshop July 21 - August 31

2016

The 2016 Alpha Workshop will be held July 21 through July 31 at the University of Pittsburgh, Greensburg campus. Guest authors this year are critically acclaimed YA author Malinda Lo; Lambda- and Campbell Award-nominated author Max Gladstone; poet, prose writer, and critic Amal El-Mohtar; and of course our perennial guest, world-renowned and widely beloved Tamora Pierce.

On-site staff include Strange Horizons editor Catherine Krahe, Geeks Guide to the Galaxy's David Barr-Kirtley, and authors Karina Sumner-Smith, Seth Dickinson, and Lara Elena Donnelly.

For more information, follow Alpha on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#), and visit [the Alpha website](#).

Confluence News

Confluence – July 29-31, 2016

Confluence, now the longest-running SF/F/H conference in Pittsburgh, will be at a new hotel this year.

Due to escalating costs, it is necessary to raise the price of the conference a modest \$5. Registrations will be \$55 at the door and \$45 pre-reg.

If you plan to get a hotel room, please book at Sheraton Pittsburgh Airport since that will help us fill our room block. If we don't fill the room block, we must pay the hotel a penalty for the unused rooms. Confluence operates on a very tight budget, and the additional cost would likely mean that we would not have the funds to continue with our tradition of a yearly conference.

Online registration is open, and we have a new feature this year—you can prepay for your Confluence 2016 T-shirt! This will ensure that we won't run out of your size. Go to the T-shirt URL given below, choose your size and "pay for a coupon". When you get to Confluence in July, bring your receipt to Registration and pick up your badge and T-shirt.

Useful links:

Confluence website: <http://parsec-sff.org/confluence/>

Our new refund policy: <http://parsec-sff.org/confluence/reginfo/>

Register now: <http://parsec-sff.org/confluence/register-now/>

Pre-order t-shirt online: <https://squareup.com/market/confluence>

T-shirt art will be coming soon. This year Nancy Janda is doing the artwork. The shirts will be the same price as last year—S-XL: \$20; 2XL-5XL: \$23.

Volunteers are needed. Contact Barb at bcarlson@andrew.cmu.edu

We need volunteers for Confluence!

Confluence will be held in Moon Township this year at a new hotel: [Sheraton Pittsburgh Airport](#). Barb Carlson is running Registration and also will be scheduling people to man the Parsec table.

We need volunteers to help at both tables. Shifts will be about 2 hours, but we're flexible. We will use the Square application exclusively for all sales. The advantage of using the Square is that it will keep track of all sales, how they were paid for (cash, credit or check) and best of all, it will keep track of inventory.

At the Parsec Table, you will use the Square app to sell Confluence t-shirts, Triangulation books (both current and back stock) and Parsec memberships.

At the Registration table, you will look up names in a database, ask for and make address corrections, use the Square to accept payment and hand out Confluence programs, badges and pre-paid t-shirts.

It's best to have 2 people at each table to help out, cover for bathroom breaks and most of all, for good company!

We'd like to have one or more training/brainstorming sessions so all the volunteers are familiar with how to use the Square (it's easy) and the database. Training sessions would probably be at Barb's house in Mt. Oliver (15210).

Please contact Barb Carlson at bcarlson@andrew.cmu.edu for more information.

Parsec is now offering a \$5 discount to attend Confluence

If you are paying at the door, present your Parsec Full Membership Card (must be valid through July 2016) and receive a \$5 discount on your Confluence registration. If you pre-register, present your Parsec Full Membership Card at Registration when you come to pick up your badge and you will receive a \$5 rebate! Free money!

Space Angel

A 1960's "unanimated" animated science fiction TV series.

by Larry Ivkovich



Space Angel: An E-"Motionless" Outer Space Adventure

Those of us of a certain age remember the primitively-done but beloved animated series, Clutch Cargo (1959). But even some of that boomer demographic don't recall the show, Space Angel (1962-1964), created by Dik Darley. Produced by Cambria Productions, the same company which created Clutch Cargo, Space Angel employed similar art techniques and film "technology" as well.

In this age of ubiquitous CGI and four-star animation, both Clutch Cargo and Space Angel stand out for their utterly low-budget simplicity. But we older sci-fi geeks who do remember hold the latter show close to our hearts.

Because of budget constraints, Cambria Productions created Clutch Cargo utilizing a process they referred to as "Synchro-Vox." This allowed actual human mouths to be superimposed on still drawings of the show's characters. The only "animation" was the moving lips! Cardboard cutouts were shuffled around sometimes to give the effect of movement but Clutch was just a still image in search of motion.

So too Space Angel but with some differences. This show was made with an improved coloring process which blended the real speaker's lips into the cartoon face more seamlessly. There was animated eye movement and the space ships appeared to be cruising through the solar system. The drawings themselves, done by comic-book artist Alex Toth in one of his earliest high-profile animation gigs, were much more realistic than those in Clutch Cargo, not cartoonish at all. And the spaceship, Starduster, was absolutely terrific-looking.



Space Angel, aka Scott McCloud, was an agent for the EBI (Earth Bureau of Investigation). He and his teammates, Professor Mace, Crystal (Mace's daughter and potential love interest for Scott) and Taurus, a Scottish mechanic, based their operations out of the space station Evening Star. In very short, five to six-minute episodes (a whole show being 4 or 5 of these), Scott would fight evil and corruption of the interstellar kind.

These short segments actually contained a lot of story elements with each episode ending in a cliff-hanger. The characters were stereotyped but appealing--a lot of friendly bantering went on between Scott and Taurus ("You old space goat!") and Crystal was depicted as an intelligent and daring crew member. Although her flirting skills were strictly out of the forties ("Scott McCloud!", "Hmmphh!", "Now, you apologize."). Hey, even the original Star Trek didn't always get that right.

The villains were bad, bad, bad and always sinister-looking. One female baddie was obviously modeled after the Egyptian Queen Nefertiti, complete with skyscraper-tall hat. Apparently "Space Angel" was Scott's code name for the EBI but it was never explained why he wore an eyepatch. He looked very cool though and always saved the day.

Episodes of Space Angel can be viewed on You Tube and are also available on DVD. Do yourself a favor and watch some of these to see just how much fun low-tech can be.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbEla3FLDcQ>

Larry Ivkovich's latest novel "Warriors of the Light," sequel to "The Sixth Precept" is forthcoming from IFWG Publishing

February 2016 Minutes



February 2016 Minutes

President Joe started off the meeting – which was in our original room after all – apologizing that he had forgotten the tickets, so there was no raffle. We got to greet some newcomers: a young fellow named Fred, a man who had already come twice before, I believe named John Thompson, and a woman named Katie formerly from Tennessee and new to Pittsburgh. Katie is an archaeologist who is behind a bid for Valley Forge as a site for the North American Science Fiction Convention in 2017 – however, do not be fooled by her ID photo at <http://www.valleyforge2017.org/WhoWeAre>, as she is not a Muppet.

Triangulation: Beneath the Surface is already at about 33,000 words and shoot for sixty or seventy thousands, with dozens more submissions to wade through and a fair mix thus far of fantasy, SF, and horror. Greg assures us that our budget is currently somewhere over \$2000 and he has clarified (for me, anyway) that we are at the Airport Sheraton in Moon, which we've never really been to before. Alas, there will be no video suite. Guest of honor is Saladin Ahmed and we're also having a Nebula Award nominee. We are asked to please specifically book at that Sheraton, so as to encourage the idea that we're a booking competitive with weddings and such. The Parsec library under Greg's care currently stands at 3354 books, and this time he cited titles by David Drake, Joan D. Vinge and Alan Nourse.

After a general call that the Con Committee can use new people, Barb explained that Con registration is \$55 at the door, \$45 preregistered,

and a \$5 discount for members is being discussed. She needs volunteers for registration and wants a chance to be able to train them. Eric Davin palmed off some old videos on us; I picked up two. Mary Soon Lee, as ever, has had lots of work accepted and read us two poems. Eric Davin, having introduced to bygone SF poet Dorothy Quick the last time, warned us that Ayn Rand (aw, heck) will be his subject next time. This time, however, he returned to the subject of Quick to pass around Quick's memoir "Mark Twain and Me," complete with a picture of Quick as a little girl and Twain proudly wearing an academic robe thanks to his honorary degree from Oxford University.

This meeting had no particular theme other than a chance to talk, and Joe suggested that we would be free to make short presentations of our own at future meetings. He is also considering saying from now on that noon begins an early gathering during which people are free to mingle and talk before the official 1:30 PM business. (We can bring snacks too.) Immediately after the next meeting, coming right up on Saturday, March 12, Diane Turnshek plans to herd as many of us as possible into an Indian restaurant, from which we will proceed to an evening at the Assemble Art Gallery in Garfield at 5125 Penn Ave. It will be packed with authors, Barton Paul Levenson and Larry Ivkovich and Mary Soon Lee among them, with a possible Bill Keith appearance. The gallery will be devoted to the topics of art and astronomy throughout March.

Our head count this time was 20.

Secretary Bill Hall

Brief Bios

Brief Bio: Ayn Rand

Eric Leif Davin



Ayn Rand (Alyssa “Alice” Rosenbaum), (1905-1982): Rand was born in St. Petersburg, Russia. She graduated from the University of Petrograd (formerly St. Petersburg, then Leningrad, now St. Petersburg again) in 1924.

In 1926 she emigrated to the United States from what was then a Soviet Union in the midst of revolution and civil war. She settled in California and worked hard to learn English in order to be a writer. She became an American citizen in 1931. In 1932 she sold her first screenplay, *Red Pawn*, to Universal Studios. Her first play, *The Night of January 16th*, had a substantial 1935-36 run on Broadway. It was revived in 1973 as *Penthouse Legend* and continues to be a staple of little theater. Taking place entirely in a courtroom, a jury is selected from the audience each night to decide the fate of the heroine. In 1940 a second play, *The Unconquered*, had a short Broadway run.

She published her first novel, *We, the Living*, in 1936. This was followed in 1938 by the dystopian *Anthem*. This novel is about the protagonist’s search for identity in a conformist future society in which even the word “I” is forbidden. When the protagonist realizes he is an individual, he names himself “Prometheus.” These first two novels were mostly ignored. But in 1943 she published the best-selling mainstream novel, *The Fountainhead*. It was made into a 1949 movie starring Gary Cooper, directed by King Vidor, and scripted by Rand herself. This established her reputation as a novelist of ideas.

Her next best-seller was the science fictional *Atlas Shrugged*, in 1957. It, too, is a dystopian novel of a near-future socialist America in which things

are falling apart because individual excellence is discouraged in favor of mass mediocrity. Worth and performance are devalued, as laws and rewards are established to help only those in need. A small band of brave rebels try to set things “right,” rebuilding society along the individualistic “Objectivist” philosophical lines Rand espoused. The theme struck a resonant chord in many readers. A 1991 survey by the Library of Congress and the Book of the Month Club found *Atlas Shrugged* to be second only to the Bible as a book that most influenced readers’ lives.

She wrote no more fiction after *Atlas Shrugged*, turning instead to a series of non-fiction books. These included *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964), *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (1966), and *The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution* (1971). These books expressed her deeply conservative belief in free market capitalism and unapologetic self-interest as the greatest social virtue. She scorned altruism and self-sacrifice for the common good as liberal delusions and social vices. Her views found a wide following on college campuses in the 1950s, where Ayn Rand Clubs proliferated.

In 1971 historian William O’Neill published a biography of her aptly titled, *With Charity Toward None*. In 1991 Mary Gaitskill caricatured Rand and her philosophy in *Two Girls, Fat and Thin*. She was working on an adaptation of *Atlas Shrugged* for a TV miniseries when she died in New York City.

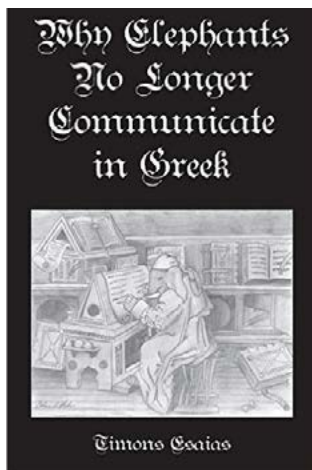
Eric Leif Davin’s Parsec Short Story Award-winning story, “Twilight on Olympus,” will appear in “The Year’s Best Military and Adventure Science Fiction,” forthcoming in 2016 from Baen Books. He is also the author of “The Desperate and the Dead,” from Damnation Books, available on Amazon and at Barnes & Noble. http://www.amazon.com/Eric-Leif-Davin/e/B001K8MH0W/ref=dp_byline_cont_ebooks_2

Book Review

by Mary Soon Lee

Review of “Why Elephants No Longer Communicate in Greek,” by Timons Esaias

Initial disclaimer: I know the author (and so I am sure do many Sigma readers).



That said, I like this poetry collection very much. I had naively planned to write comments about the poems that I particularly admired and liked, but, since I annotated over forty poems as especially fine, I shall have to be more discriminating. Cavalierly clumping poems into groups, there were six poems with a light frivolous flavor that I loved: “Hello,” “Carnegie Library,” “Nudge,” “Poetry Defined,” “Rubaiyat LXXI, Revised,” and “Appropriate Salutations.” All excellently executed.

There are science fiction poems and science poems, including “Checklist,” “A Fire on Ganymede,” and the beautiful “A Universe.”

There are many excellent romantic-relationship poems, with repeated themes of the narrator reflecting on his love being rejected or undervalued. My favorite of these was “For Love, This Cup,” which is specific yet universal, tender, and haunting.

Two other relationship poems, though not romantic relationship poems, also stood out to me: “But will they come when you do call for them?” which is about the narrator’s parents, and “Photonic Relationships,” which is about his brother. (At least, that is how the poems are presented, but they may be fictitious rather than autobiographical.)

One poem with a clearly invented first-person narrator, “All the Important People #2,” deals with ageing, and is tender and moving and among my

favorites in the book.

Many of the poems are clever; many exhibit the author’s breadth of knowledge. Some, even though I may like them, remain at least partially cryptic to me, including the opening poem “All the Important People #5.” (I find many poems cryptic, so this may reflect upon me rather than upon the poems.) Even though I found it somewhat cryptic, I loved the poem “At the Mountain Inn, Shaded by Broken Pines,” and wished there were more in that voice or world.

The endings of the poems are often wonderful, sometimes turning the poem in a new direction, for example the skillful and witty “Supplementary” shifts (for me) toward yearning in the closing two stanzas. There are two variants on the title poem, both of which I liked very much, but the second slightly the more, because of its final four-word stanza. Quite a few poems are pointed, and I particularly liked both the points being made and how that was achieved in “We Used To Have Faces” and “Famous Poet, Rant, Point of Order.” A very fine collection.

You can find further information about the poems here: <http://concretewolf.com/contests/2015-Louis.htm>

Mary Soon Lee was born and raised in London, but now lives in Pittsburgh. She is working on an epic fantasy in verse, the first book of which (“Crowned,” Dark Renaissance Books, 2015) has been nominated for the Elgin Award. The opening poem, “Interregnum,” won the 2014 Rhysling Award for best long poem

Parsec Member Art



Demon key - Christine Hutson



Eye - Christine Hutson



Parsec Meeting Schedule

We're back in the "B" room again
Out where a fan is a fen
Where the Parsec members meet
and discuss our SF neat
Back in our old room, again

Saturday March 12, 2016 1:30 PM

And

Saturday April 9, 2016 1:30 PM

Squirrel Branch of the Carnegie Library

"B" Room - Rear Entrance

First Room on the Right

For the March meeting, because of the short notice we received about our location in the library, there is no formal presentaion prepared. The people who attend should plan on discussing books, movies, art in a grand social gathering.

There are no scheduled presentations for the April meeting, yet

If you bring them, we will munch

Snacks are now permitted at our meetings with the understanding the room will be clean when we leave. Any plastic bottles must be removed and all wrappers bags, etc. in the trash baskets.

I arrive at the library at noon on Saturdays to set things up. Everyone is welcome to come for an hour and a half social time to meet and greet before the meeting begins.

Joe

Fantastic Artist of the Month

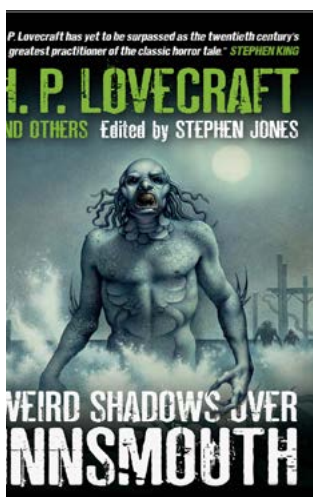
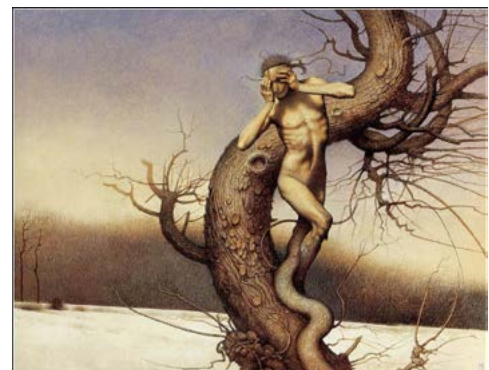
John Jude Palencar



John Jude Palencar (Born 1957 in Fairview Park, Ohio) has been illustrating science fiction, fantasy, and horror for more than twenty-five years. A true stylist, Palencar's images, though of a realistic nature, are more surreal and dream-like than many of his contemporaries.

Palencar has created covers for the works of authors H. P. Lovecraft, Ursula LeGuin, Marion Zimmer Bradley, P.D. James, Charles deLint, David Brin and Stephen King, among many others. All four covers of the Inheritance Cycle by Christopher Paolini – Eragon, Eldest, Brisingr, Inheritance – were painted by Palencar.

Besides winning the 2008 Spectrum Grand Master award, Palencar has been nominated for the Hugo, Locus, and World Fantasy awards for Best Artist.



PARSEC

P. O. Box 3681

Pittsburgh, PA 15230 - 3681

www.parsec-sff.org

Dues: Full Membership \$15

Associate Membership \$3 (with full member in the same household)

PARSEC is Pittsburgh's premiere organization of science fiction, fantasy and horror. We sponsor an annual conference, workshops for young writers, lectures, and other events that promote a love of the written word and a passion for speculative fiction. Our members include writers, teachers and fans. PARSEC is a 501c3 non-profit corporation.