



SIGMA

The Official Parsec, Inc. Newsletter



Sigma #479
March 2026

Contents

Pg 3: Dear Friends of Parsec

Pg 5: Parsec Monthly Event

Pg 8: Confluence News

Pg 10: Parsec Programs - Parsec Ink

Pg 11: Parsec Programs - Parsec Short Story Contest

Pg 11: Parsec Programs - Write or Die!

Pg 12: Author Seeking Rejection by Timons Esaias

Pg 13: Member Announcements

Pg 15: Reviews

Back Cover: Next Month's Event

Cover image: "Intruder" by: John R. Muth, 2026.

Want to submit your own photo, art, 3D rendering for use on the cover of Sigma?

Submit files to parsecsigmanews@gmail.com

The four programs under the Parsec Inc., 501(c)(3) organization are:

- [Confluence Conference](#)
- [Monthly Events](#)
- [Parsec Ink Publishing](#) (Triangulation)
- [Word - Write or Die Writing and Critique Group](#)

**Need to mail anything to Parsec, Confluence,
Parsec Ink or Word? The address is:
PO Box 79281
Pittsburgh, PA 15216**



Parsec Inc., is an equal opportunity, nonprofit organization and does not discriminate based upon age, ethnicity, ancestry, gender, gender expression, national origin, disability, race, size, religion, sexual orientation, military status, socioeconomic background, or any other status prohibited by applicable law.



DEAR FRIENDS OF PARSEC,

Many apologies for the delay of the new Sigma issue! There's many excuses, but the main thing to see is that it is now here. (Please excuse any major errors, as this is more of a rush job than it usually is.)

March is Membership Month! Please make sure to renew, or purchase a membership for the first time (or in a long time). The reason(s) to do so are also small, but mighty. First, every membership helps keep the organization going. It pays the bills for the invisible things like hosting, storage, and all that. It helps with putting on the programs like Confluence and the Parsec Picnic and Holiday Party. And much more. Member benefits:

- Free advertising in the Sigma newsletter* for the full membership year!
- First to receive special announcements regarding upcoming event signups for the Parsec programs. (requires sign up for the member only ParsecTalk.Groups.io)
- This year we're also going to be offering an ebook of the winners from the Parsec Short Story contest. The first place winner's story will still be printed in the Confluence Program, but all winners will be published in the ebook! (I personally cannot wait to see how it turns out!)

OH! **Saturday, March 21** - the monthly event will be the Confluence Program Planning Session, at the Mt. Lebanon Public Library!

Until next time!

John Muth

Sigma Editor, Monthly event officer,
and Parsec, Inc. Board of Directors,
President

Become a Parsec Member today!

Parsec members in 2026 will receive a free ebook of this year's **Parsec Short Story Contest winners**, and enjoy **free advertising in the Sigma Newsletter!**



Your membership dollars allow Parsec to continue offering the following long list of programs, all of which are open to the public:

Confluence
Parsec Monthly Events
Parsec Ink — Triangulation
Parsec Short Story Contest
Write or Die Writing & Critique Group
Parsec Library
Sigma Newsletter

The Parsec Membership year runs annually from March 1st through the end of February.



RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OR BUY ONE FOR THE FIRST TIME!

With your membership you get a digital membership card with your name and status for the year. Each member can also choose to have your name on the Parsec website, and here in the Sigma Newsletter. Join today and get your name listed along with these folks:

Lifetime Members:

Barb Carlson, Greg Armstrong, Mary Soon Lee, Timons
Esaias, William Black Hall

Founders Fund Members:

Sarah Wade Smith, Joan Fisher

2026-27 Main Members:

Judith Gallagher, Susan Urbanek Linville, Susan Kaye
Quinn, Dan Bloch, Jenny Thompson, Barton
Levenson, Larry Ivkovich, James Hardin, John Muth (BOD),
Darcy Conaty, Scot Noel, Kathryn Smith (BOD), Jamie
Lackey (BOD), Alan Bailey (BOD), Jennifer Theoret, Jess
Simms, John Frochio, Greg Clumpner

2026-27 Associate Members:

Amy Finkbeiner, Stephen V. Ramey, Elizabeth Penrose, Jane
Noel, Bernadette Harris

PARSEC MONTHLY EVENT

Date: Saturday, March 21.

**Location: Mt. Lebanon Public Library, Meeting Room A
and on Zoom.**

Event 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. (Zoom opens at 12:45 pm)

To Register visit <https://bit.ly/PARSECmonthly>.

****PLEASE NOTE THE NEW ZOOM LINK!
THE OLD LINK WILL NO LONGER WORK!****

Open to the Public.

Help us Plan the Programming for **Confluence!**

In March, Parsec will be meeting to propose and discuss programming for the 2026 Confluence Conference.



Every year we come together to propose, argue the pros and cons of certain topics, and we may even be visited by a special guest...

This year's Confluence Guest of Honor is Andy Duncan, and while he will not be able to attend this meeting being both far away and on programming at another event, he may pop in to say hi.

Will he or won't he show up? The only way to find out is to be there!

Monthly Event Officer: John Muth



Mark Your Calendars!
In May, PARSEC holds its

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

Date: Saturday, May 2.

**Location: 2966 Voelkel Avenue,
Dormont, PA 15216**

Time: 4 to 10 pm

The last two Parsec Holiday Parties have been snowed out.

To keep this from being a trend, **Greg Armstrong** is going to have another Parsec Holiday Party, only the holiday will be **Star Wars Day**. It is pot luck, so bring and enjoy good food, better conversation, and the best books available!

(May the Fourth [be with You] is a Monday, and no one wants to party on a Monday.)

Confluence will be held July 24 through 26, 2026
at the Sheraton Pittsburgh Airport Hotel
1160 Thorn Run Road Extension, PA 15108

JUST ANNOUNCED!



2026 Featured Artist **Patricia McCracken**

Patricia McCracken is an accomplished Fantasy artist working in watercolor and acrylics. Her style is clearly influenced by the Japanese wood block prints from the Edo period called, Ukiyo-e, which translates to “pictures of the floating world.” Keeping her paintings light and delicate, but with the bold colors and patterns typical of the latter end of that period. “Ever since I can remember, art has always been a part of my life. I guess I was just born into it.” She pursued love of art through two degrees. Receiving her BFA at the

University at Buffalo and a MA at Syracuse University. In 2002 began exhibiting in art shows all across the country and has won a number of awards for her Japanese style work. Patricia continues to show at convention art shows and lives in New York City with her family.

Visit <https://confluence-sff.org/> for more information.

Confluence officers: Chair: Kevin M. Hayes. Treasurer: Karen Yun-Lutz.

2026 Guest of Honor **ANDY DUNCAN**



Andy Duncan is a professor of English at Frostburg State University in the western Maryland mountains; a fiction writer whose honors include a Nebula Award, a Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award and three World Fantasy Awards; a journalist since age 17; and a lifelong collector of Forteanana.

Writing Exercises

M. Christine Benner Dixon and Schereéya



2026 Musical Guest **QUICK SAVE**



Quick Save is a six-piece videogame music (VGM) from Baltimore, MD (three in the rhythm section, three in the horn section).

In their sets (which feature humorous visuals, screaming solos, and more musical memes than you can shake a stick at), they broadly explore VGM using the jazz/fusion spectrum. They pull selections from a variety of games — everything from classic 8 bit favorites to current Steam chart-toppers.

Writing Workshops with Marie Vibbert

Signup is required. Visit the [WRITING WORKSHOPS](#) page for more info.

PARSEC PROGRAMS



Parsec Ink

The 2026 Triangulation anthology is edited by Marie Vibbert.
The theme for this year is:

BAD ROMANCE

We had 505 submissions of short stories and poetry for Bad Romance. Editor Marie Vibbert is busy whittling away at her shortlist and concocting the Table of Contents. A few pieces have been accepted thus far, including one from award-winning author [Meg Elison](#).

The Kickstarter for pre-orders is coming soon!

Looking for a past edition of Triangulation?

[Dark Hearts](#) (2025)

[Hospitium](#) (2024)

[Seven-Day Weekend](#) (2023)

[Energy](#) (2022)

Or find many more of our anthologies on [Amazon](#).

Parsec Ink officers: Chair: Jessica Carver. Treasurer: Greg Clumpner.
Editor: Marie Vibbert.

PARSEC PROGRAMS

Parsec Short Story Contest

2026 Short Story Contest Coordinator: Jamie Lackey

This year's theme is Metamorphosis: Send us your stories of complete transformations, inside and out. Of inevitable moments of sudden, irrevocable change. Of destruction that leads to unexpected growth.

The contest is open to non-professional writers who have not met the eligibility requirements for SFWA Full Membership. Writers meeting the SFWA Associate level of membership are eligible to submit to the contest. Previous first-place winners and current year contest coordinators, readers and judges are ineligible to enter.

Submissions will be open from January 1 through March 31st. You can find out more [on the short story contest's webpage!](#)

Write or Die

A Science Fiction & Fantasy Writing Group



The Write or Die (WorD), Pittsburgh, science fiction, fantasy & horror writing & critique group meets twice every month!

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

- Tuesday, March 24 at 7:00 pm in the Mt. Lebanon Library, Room A with a Zoom Option available.
- Tuesday, April 14 at 7:00 pm, on Zoom only.

For information on meeting procedures, contact info and how to register, [**Visit WorD on the web.**](#)

AUTHOR SEEKING REJECTION

A QUEST, Volume 3

By Timons Esaias

In my search for 300 rejections in 2026, February was a bad month for rejections, but a good month for potential rejections.

Only 6 rejects have come in since last I wrote. Editors snowed in, I assume. My YTD is just slightly behind what I need, and stands at 50.

Last month I wrote that "I hope to report in March that I have more than 150 pieces in submission." And it would be good to report that, but it would be a lie. Alas, I have only 149. It's better than the "less than 100" I had a month ago, and if they all come back as negatives, I'll be 2/3 of the way to my goal. That is a good situation, and I still have 29 pieces piled in my outbox, and two flash fictions on the slipway. I may hit 180 by next month!

So why am I doing this again? I'm teasing myself into keeping up with a Brute Force Marketing strategy. If you want to sell your work, you have to keep it in submission.

Which brings me to the topic of bookkeeping. There are online submission trackers (Submission Grinder, Duotrope, Chill Subs) where you can put in your submission data and they'll help keep track of the submissions. That's fine, and I use Duotrope's feature that shows me a list of everything currently in submission, where it's sitting, and how long it's been cooling its heels there. Great, but I suggest two more self-records. In one ledger (or equivalent) list each property you've completed, and log where it is and what happens. Another spreadsheet should list all the markets you've submitted to, what you've sent them (to avoid resends), and the result.

Good hunting.

Timons Esaias is a sporadically award-winning satirist, fictionator and poet. His works have appeared in 22 languages, on at least one planet.

He also teaches workshops.



PARSEC MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS



From **Kevin M. Hayes:**

I have a new story narration up on [Escape Artists Podcast](#) - [Pseudo Pod](#) - The story is "[Faith, Hope, and Charity](#)" by [Irvin S. Cobb](#). First published in Hearst's *International Combined with Cosmopolitan*, April 1930. The warning is also included that it contains strong violence and racist language. Also, another fair warning -- it's a long piece, about an hour. Whew!

From **Greg Clumpner:**

It's been a fun start of the year for both writing and publication!

I participated in Codex Weekend Warrior for the second year in a row. Over six weekends, participants write prompt-based flash fiction stories and have them critiqued by the other participants within their group. One of my stories from this year, "Groundhog and Raccoon Through the Storms," has already been accepted for publication with [Zooscape](#). It's been such a motivating and rewarding experience for me, and I've gotten to know so many talented authors through the process. I highly recommend it for anyone who is a member of Codex or is eligible to become a member (It's free!).

Volume 4 of 100 x 100 (The 100 Word Project) from Manawaker Studios is now available in [print](#), [digital](#), and [audio](#), containing two of my drabbles: "Trolling for Dinner" and "Gridiron Classic." I also had another drabble published by Manawaker Studios in February: "My Bubble."

Another drabble of mine, "[Her Gift](#)" was recently released with [ScribesMICRO](#) in Issue #55.

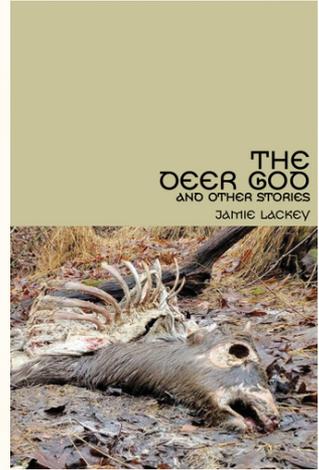
I have a microfiction currently available from Rat Bag Lit: "[Forest Unrequited](#)." Rat Bag Lit is also releasing my Valentine's Day themed drabble "[Lifetime Subscription to David](#)" on March 19th.

PARSEC MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS



Jamie Lackey is running a Kickstarter campaign for her new horror collection, *The Deer God and Other Stories*. The 33 stories in this collection are a mix of previously published and original horror stories. It's got evil unicorns, zombies, weird birds, and lots of blood.

Check it out [here!](#)



From **Mary Soon Lee:**

In case anyone has been on the fence about ordering a copy of "The Sign of the Dragon" - epic fantasy that tells the story of King Xau, chosen by a dragon to be king -- the ebook will be on sale from March 20 through March 31 at Kobo, Kindle, etc, at the bargain price of \$3.99. The print book, alas, remains a properly expensive item.

Your Announcement Could Be Here!

Parsec members never pay for ad space in the monthly Sigma!

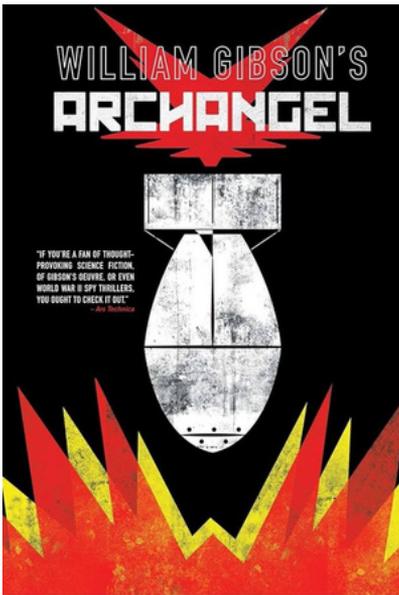
[Become a Parsec member for only \\$30/yr](#)

Email: parsecsigmanews@gmail.com

Archangel

**A graphic novel written by William Gibson,
co-created with Michael St. John Smith, and
illustrated by Butch Guice**

By: Larry Ivkovich



I didn't know William Gibson had written a graphic novel until recently. *Archangel* was published in five individual issues in 2017 and later collected in a handsome, hardbound collection, which is what I read. So this might be old news to some of you but here goes anyway:

I've been rereading Gibson's previous work for the last few weeks (finished the *Sprawl* and *Bridge* trilogies) and found, rather than being dated, they still hold up pretty well. I feel, in some cases, I appreciate them more now that I did 30, 40 years ago. So, when I found out about *Archangel*, I felt I needed to read it.

Archangel takes place in two different timelines and parallel universes, one in our then-present day 2016 America and one in an alternate 1945 Germany during the waning days of World War II. The 2016 world has been devastated by nuclear war but enough technology exists for a group of scientists to build a device called a "splitter," through which they've created an alternate, exact replica of Earth's and her history and can travel to and from it by means of a "quantum transfer platform." In 2016, the bad guys have basically destroyed and taken over the world and run it cruelly. But they're not satisfied: they want to take over and destroy the alternate world as well. They send agents to the alternate world's World War II timeline to screw up their history, which mirrors the 2016 history.

REVIEWS

Their plan is to hijack and divert the B-29 bomber headed toward Nagasaki with its atomic bomb and, instead, attack a port in Russia called Archangel, where all the top dogs of the Kremlin and the Russian fleet have congregated.

The good guys travel there to stop them. One messed-up Earth is enough.

Now, this series received pretty much positive reviews across the board and was nominated for an Eisner Award for Best Limited Series and I did enjoy reading it. But – I admit to being somewhat disappointed. It's more like a time-travel, alternate history/universe spy thriller than anything, which is fine, but it really didn't have Gibson's distinctive voice or ideas. It felt like any talented, imaginative writer could have authored it. I wasn't expecting cyberpunk since Gibson's not really continued in that sub-genre, and maybe it was the influence of his collaborator St. John Smith, but the whole story, while entertaining, felt incomplete somehow.

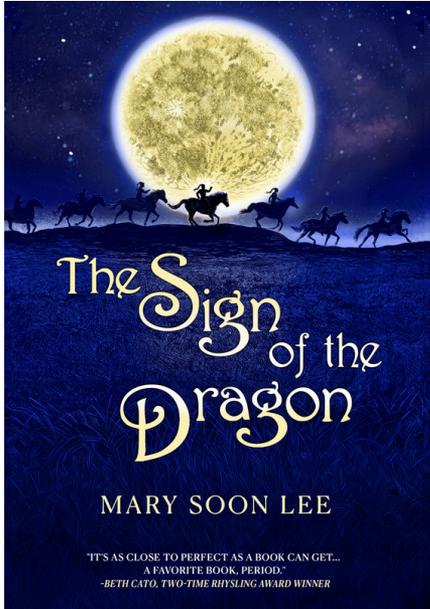
It's also hard to follow (I had a couple of "which world is which?" moments) but I blame some of that on the illustrator though, overall, the artwork is good. Like in other graphic novels/comic books, the characters aren't consistently drawn from panel to panel. Some of the characters look alike and it was confusing for me at first to differentiate them. Also some of the panels depicting action scenes don't convey what is actually happening, making it hard to understand, although a few panels later it becomes clear, for the most part. It's almost as if, like in a movie, some scenes were left on the cutting room floor.

There are some great moments throughout and I liked the ending which was very much like what happened in a famous short story by another great SF author, and, as I said before, I enjoyed the series. But I wish they would have done a sixth issue to give the other parts a little more room to expand on the ideas, characters, and action and to wrap it up in a more satisfying way.

So, this review may not sound like a recommendation but I say, go for it. It is entertaining plus Gibson wrote an Afterword explaining his inspirations for writing it, which is pretty interesting.

The Sign of Greatness

By: John R. Muth



I consider it a deep privilege that I can post a disclaimer saying I have, ever so slightly, gotten to know Mary Soon Lee, as I believe many reading this newsletter also probably have. (If you haven't, you haven't been paying attention to the Membership Announcements page[s].) All that said, know that I am probably an unbiased reviewer of this book, but also know that being not that into dragons (the cover to this Sigma issue notwithstanding), and pretty in-the-dark about poetry—I came to this book skeptical.

This book is magic. It's almost 600 pages long, yet the prose itself would probably only cover 200. And despite that, I could read the poems of this world indefinitely.

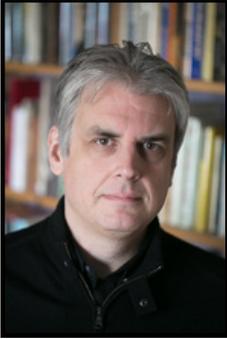
Everything is so fully fleshed out, yet the text so sparse that I kept envisioning the ease to which this could be adapted into a movie or a show, and yet I'd be sad to leave the poetry behind. Any adaptation, would be forced to overfill every moment that here is so perfectly spartan, that--I feel confused simply by the idea.

But I'm not confused that this is a masterwork that anyone interested in fantasy (whether from the Tolkien to the Martin tradition), adventure, or almost any genre, should absolutely read. The thickness of the book is intimidating. The idea of an epic poem is intimidating. But like King Xau, himself, it welcomes you and kindly ushers you along the way. Through love, sex, war, death, humor, and horror, it has it all.

It's magic.

PARSEC EVENT IN APRIL

Our guest will be Todd Sanders!



Todd Sanders lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he works as a graphic designer, poet and translator.

In 1997 he formed the Air and Nothingness Press to facilitate the publishing of his translations of French Surrealist poet Robert Desnos. To date he has published five books of translations by Desnos - *The Circle and The Star* (2000), *The Secret Book For Youki* (2001), *Calixto* (2004), *Mythmaking* (2006), and *Voyage to Burgundy* (2008). He also has five collections of his own poetry published - *Underland* (1997), *Lack River* (1998), *Species of Night* (2010), *Qila-Kolis* (2019) and *Ild-Irys* (2025).

Todd has also found time to be a successful board game designer. His game, *Pulp Detective*, was a Kickstarter success with his publisher AV Studio Games, and is printed in five languages. It has had 3 successful expansions and was followed up by *Pulp Invasion*, and *Pulp Romance*. He has other games published with LudiCreations and Button Shy Games.

The Air and Nothingness Press is currently celebrating its 29 year and publishes multi-genre short story collections and F/SF anthologies.

Date: Saturday, April 18th, 2026; Time: 1 to 2:30 pm

(Zoom opens at 12:45 and ends at 3:00 pm.)

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh - Hazelwood,

Meeting Room and on Zoom.

CLP is not the host or organizer of this event. CLP does not support, sponsor, or represent this group or event.

Check www.parsec-sff.org for more details.

Thank you to this month's contributors, who have yet to say anything about the dragon looking for its gold.

Editor, John Muth



Parsec Board of Directors: President: John Muth.

Vice President: Kathryn Smith. Treasurer: Larisa VanWinkle. Secretary: Laine Wilson.

At Large Members: Alan Bailey, Jamie Lackey. Executive Director: Diane Turnshek

Current BOD can be found on the [WEBSITE](#)

www.parsec-sff.org | parsecsigmanews@gmail.com