

SIGMA

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January 2017 Meeting



The Art of the Character Study

A Genre Writing Workshop

Sunday, February 12, 2017

The Danforth Lounge of the Cohen University Center

Carnegie Mellon University

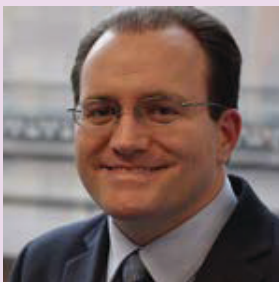
In this workshop, we will discuss the creation of character studies and their incorporation into a storytelling narrative. Participants will learn the relationship between show and tell in character building, the importance of genre and perspective, and the art of moving plot forward while also developing interesting protagonists and antagonists.

About the Instructor



Rex Jameson is the author of two novels “Lucifer’s Odyssey” and “The Goblin Rebellion” and half a dozen short stories. An avid history buff and an unabashed nerd with an appetite for science fiction and fantasy, he loves to create complex speculative fiction with layered characters. He earned a PhD in Computer Science at Vanderbilt University and researches distributed artificial intelligence in robotics at Carnegie Mellon University. Rex and his wife Jenny live in Pittsburgh where they enjoy hosting family and friends.

Speculative Fiction Lecture Series Sunday, February 12

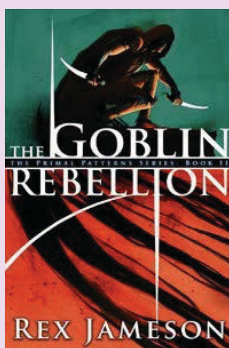


The Art of the Character Study
1:00-3:00 PM: Genre Writing Workshop by local
science fiction author **Rex Jameson**

Location: **Cohen Univ. Center
Danforth Lounge**
Registration Required See Below

The Intersection of Puppetry and Science Fiction
4:00 PM: Talk by three-time Hugo Award winning
author **Marry Robinette Kowal**

Location: **Doherty Hall
Room 1112**
Free Admission



5:00 PM: Book Signing from both authors

Location: **Doherty Hall
Room 1112**

Carnegie Mellon University
5000 Forbes Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Parking is **free** in the **CMU East Campus Garage**



Hosted by:
Partners in Speculative Fiction
Parsec (parsec-sff.org)



Registration at Event Page:
parsec-sff.org/lecture-series/



Alpha News

Daniel José Older will be joining us for Alpha this year.

<http://ghoststar.net/>



“Daniel José Older is the New York Times bestselling author of *Salsa Nocturna*, the Bone Street Rumba urban fantasy series from Penguin’s Roc Books and the Young Adult novel *Shadowshaper* (Scholastic, 2015), a New York Times Notable Book of 2015, which won the International Latino Book Award and was shortlisted for the Kirkus Prize in Young

Readers’ Literature, the Andre Norton Award, the Locus, the Mythopoeic Award, and named one of Esquire’s 80 Books Every Person Should Read.

He co-edited the Locus and World Fantasy nominated anthology *Long Hidden: Speculative Fiction from the Margins of History*. His short stories and essays have appeared in the Guardian, NPR, Tor.com, Salon, BuzzFeed, and the anthologies *The Fire This Time* and *Mothership: Tales Of Afrofuturism And Beyond*, among others. Daniel has guest edited at Fireside Fiction, Catapult, Crossed Genres, and

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Fantasy Magazine, and served as a judge for the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, the Burt Award for Young Adult Caribbean Literature, and the PEN Center USA Literary Award.

He has taught at Voices at VONA, Mile High MFA Program, Vermont College of Fine Arts Writing For Children and Young Adults MFA Program, Boricua College, St John’s University, and Rikers Island among other sites. You can find his thoughts on writing, read dispatches from his decade-long career as an NYC paramedic and hear his music at <http://danieljoseolder.net/>, on youtube and @djolder on twitter.”

Other Alpha author guests will be announced as they are added.

IT’S BACK!

21st Annual PARSEC Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror Short Story Contest

The theme for the 2017 contest is: **A HIDDEN, UNDERLYING TRUTH.**

Contest opens January 1, 2017 and closes March 31, 2017. There is no fee to enter and all entrants will be notified of the results by June 15th.

Word count for all entries: No more than 3500 words, no minimum.

Contest judges are:

JOSHUA BELLIN – Author of the YA SF duology, *Survival Colony Nine* and *Scavenger of Souls*.

MICHELLE MARKEY-BUTLER – Author of the historical fantasy, *Homegoing*.

THOMAS SWETERLITSCH – Author of the near-future SF thriller, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*.

Information on submitting and additional details can be found on the Parsec website at:

<https://parsecink.submittable.com/submit>

January 2017 Minutes



January 2017 Minutes

Our election determined that all officers last year are the same this year, except for Michelle Rodriguez as our new Commentator. Up for the raffle was “Scavenger of Souls,” the new book out by La Roche teacher and local author – and our speaker that day – Joshua David Bellin. Larry Ivkovich brought free books with him, along with news that our short story contest had received 17 submissions. We had a newcomer named George Obsince, who had a charming story of beginning with Tom Swift and moving on to Sturgeon’s “Venus Plus X.”

Treasurer Greg is also the Confluence chairman. (Evidently he is also back in Ann Cecil’s old house, a bit of a Hurrah for us nostalgic types.) The writers’ workshop known as the Pittsburgh Worldwrights is back, at a strength of around five – anyone interested can contact Barton Paul Levenson. Mary Soon Lee has a poem up for a Rhysling (as good as you get in SF poetry), with four poems accepted and twelve published. Jean Martin alerted us to the web page Progressive Nerds Network. Bonnie Funk made clear that Parsec T-shirts and back copies of Triangulation available. Evidently in May there will be a convention of fantasy writers held in Pittsburgh, which we may wish to keep in mind.

As ever, Confluence is on and can use registrations. It will be August 4-6 at the Airport Sheraton, as before. We’ve had a lot to pay out, so as of this writing we’re down to \$1119. (Dues, as ever, are due, at least for us traditional January folk.)

After pitching his latest novel, “The Scarlet Queen,” a “vampire” story (in which a pirate happens to be a vampire), Eric Leif Davin talked to us about early concepts of space transportation. In the aftermath of the 1926 success of Robert H. Goddard, while director Fritz Lang came out with the 1929 movie “The Woman in the Moon,” which basically invented the countdown and gave us a slightly more

serious moonshot than Melies had, an American Interplanetary Society arose (along with a British, German, and Russian equivalent). Although early space travel conjecture was often left to Hermann Oberth and Willy Ley, it was Science Wonder Stories editor David Lasser who wrote “Conquest in Space,” published in 1931 and read by one young Arthur C. Clarke a year later.

Mary Soon Lee read a poetic conversation with a dragon and former Sigma editor Francis Graham won the raffle for his second time in four months.

Joshua David Bellin arrived with daughter Lily Bellin. He had books for sale and his topic was whether or not YA (young adult) science fiction was a contradiction, his point being that YA tends to skew to fantasy. On that score he noted Maggie Stiefvater, Ellen Kushner, Nalo Hopkinson, Tamora Pierce, and Jonathan Auxier. So where is the hard SF? (Joshua sounded unfamiliar with the Heinlein juveniles and I hope he is in for an enjoyable education – Barton Levenson and I recommend “Have Space Suit Will Travel.”) He spoke woefully of the market tending to assume that YA is for girls who only want romance, as well as the success of the “Hunger Games” series inspiring various copycats. He did recommend “Zeroboxer,” “Railhead,” and “Illuminae” as good modern examples of YA SF with hard science.

Joshua also mentioned “The Passing of Boss Krenkel,” a story in which it turns out that “Santa Claus” has long been exploiting elves. (Because, honestly, what would elves have to do with Santa Claus in the first place? Unless they also bake cookies and make shoes.)

As the meeting wound down, Elizabeth Penrose noted the SF movie “Arrival” as a triumph for both hard and soft SF.

Our meeting’s headcount reached 30.

Secretary Bill Hall

Brief Bio Eric Leif Davin



G. St. John-Loe, Mabel Seeley, Wilmar H. Shiras, & Barbara Silverberg



Where Four Roads Met

by G. St. John-Loe

Stories, October, 1933, is a science fiction mystery story.

Mabel (Hodnefield) Seeley, (1903-1991): Seeley was born in Hermanville, Minnesota, but her family moved to St. Paul while she was young. Her father, Jacob Hodnefield, was the newspaper curator of the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul. She graduated summa cum laude from the University of Minnesota in 1926 and married Ken Seeley. They moved to Chicago where she wrote advertising copy while her husband worked on a master's degree. After her husband contracted tuberculosis, they returned to the Twin Cities area to seek medical treatment for him. They later divorced and Mabel turned to writing mystery novels to support herself and her young son, Gregory. By the late 1940s she and her son had settled in California.

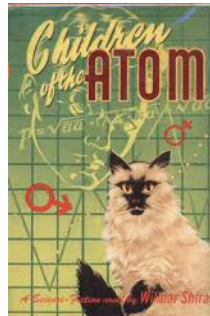


G. (Gladys) St. John-Loe, (1895-?): She was a British author of supernatural and mainstream novels, such as *The Door of Beyond* (1926), *Spilled Wine* (1932) and *Smoking Altars* (1936). Her story, "Where Four Roads Met," *Astounding*

Her many crime novels were immensely popular from the late 1930s into the 1950s, with many books to her credit.

Some of her more popular novels included *The Listening House* (1938), *The Crying Sisters* (1939), *The Whispering Cup* (1940), *The Chuckling Fingers* (1941), *Eleven Came Back* (1943), *The Beckoning Door* (1950), and *The Whistling Shadow* (1954). While on an East Coast tour to promote *The Whistling Shadow*, she met attorney Henry Ross, whom she married in 1956. After this marriage, Seeley stopped writing.

Wilmar H. (House) Shiras, (1908-1990): Shiras was born and raised in Boston. In 1927, at age 18, she married Russell Shiras, with whom she had three daughters and a son. They moved to Oakland, California, where she attended Holy Names College. Her first book, the 1946 mainstream novel *Slow Dawning*, was published as by "**Jane Howes**." She also published several non-fiction books under this name. She earned an M.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1956.



Her debut science fiction story, "In Hiding," was published in John W. Campbell's *Astounding*, November, 1948. It was judged one of the best stories of the year and is now included in the Science Fiction Hall of Fame. Her expansion of "In Hiding" into the novel, *Children of the Atom* (1953, 1954, 1978), is now considered a classic. She continued to write and publish into the 1970s.

Barbara Silverberg, (c.1940? -): Besides being an SF author in her own right ("Deadlock," *Astounding*, January, 1959), she was the first wife of prolific SF author Robert Silverberg. (Since 1987 Robert Silverberg has been married to SF writer Karen Haber.) She was an electronics engineer with a Bachelor of Science in physics. She was also extremely active in SF fandom. She now lives in Berkeley, California, and produces a fanzine for a small amateur press association.

DEADLOCK





Parsec Meeting Schedule Saturday, January 14, 2017

Parsec Guest Speaker
Leah Pileggi



Leah is the author of the novel "Prisoner 88". A ten-year-old in prison? This middle grade historical novel is set at the Idaho Penitentiary in 1885. It is the winner of:

Indies Next List pick, **2013 list of Notable Children's Books** in the Language Arts by the NCTE, **2014-15 Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award (DCF) Master List** (State of Vermont) **2015-16 Nebraska Golden Sower Award List** (in the YA category), **2015-16 Charlie May Simon Reading List** (State of Arkansas), **2015-16 Charlie May Simon Reading List** (State of Arkansas)

Squirrel Hill Branch of the Carnegie Library
Room B - Next to the Rear Entrance
1:30 - 4:30 PM
Come in and introduce yourself
The room is open at noon.

XIGNALS

Waldenbooks Science Fiction/Fantasy Newsletter by Larry Ivkovich

From 1983 until around 1993, Waldenbooks published a number of genre-related newsletters for its customers. These included mystery, romance, and science fiction and fantasy. XIGNALS was the SF/Fantasy newsletter, which I collected and read as avidly as I did *Omni* and *Fantastic Stories*.



For a relatively small publication, XIGNALS presented interesting, well-written material, and was a real cheerleader for the SF/Fantasy fields. In many ways, XIGNALS' format was set up like a smaller, less-formal version of *Locus Magazine*. It

was free to members of Waldenbooks Otherworlds Club, which catered to the tastes of SF and Fantasy fans.

Interviews with authors and artists such as Samuel R. Delany, Andre Norton, Michael Whelan, Roger Zelazny, Robert Heinlein, Anne McCaffery, and many others, graced every bi-monthly issue of XIGNALS.

Created and edited by writer/editor Peter Heck, the newsletter featured book and game reviews, editorials, entertainment/media articles, author profiles, convention news, readers' quizzes, the occasional writing contest (one of these was the first such contest I ever entered which ended with the first rejection I ever got!), and letter column (I did get one of those published, however).

Alas, publication of XIGNALS and Waldenbooks' mystery newsletter (*Crime Times*, also edited by Heck) ceased after Heck left to pursue other creative ventures, including writing a series of fictional Mark Twain mysteries.

I'm bringing my old collection of XIGNALS to the

next PARSEC meeting if anyone's interested in picking up some issues. It's fun to look back on those days and to see how young most of those authors looked then. I am keeping a handful for myself, though, including the one with my letter in it!



Fantastic Artist of the Month

Gray Morrow

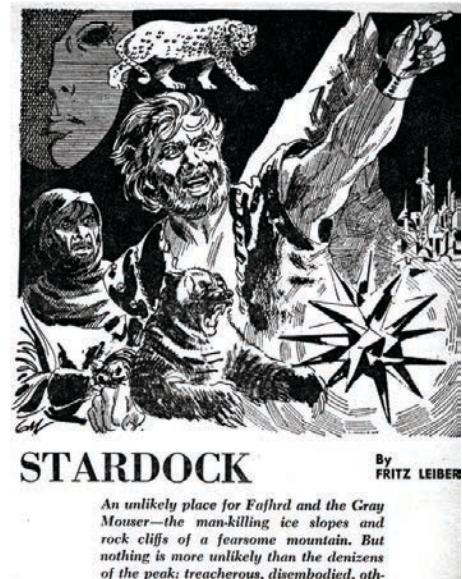
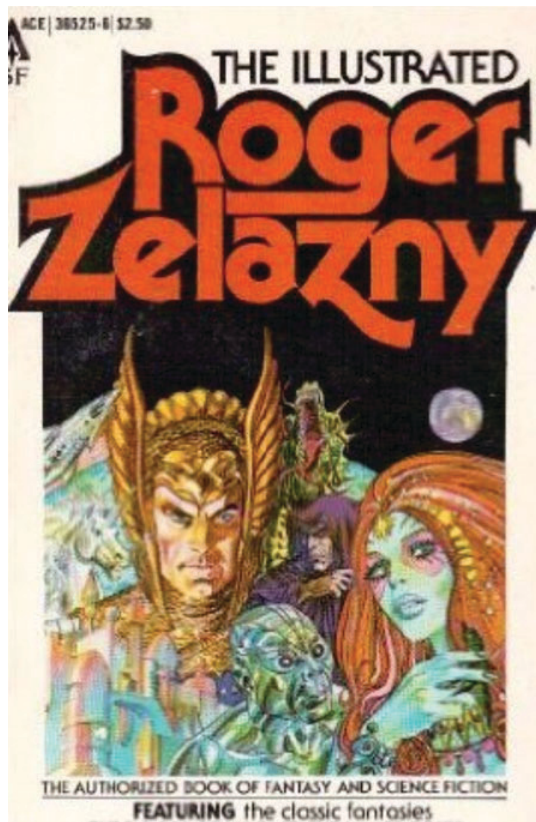


Gray Morrow (1935 – 2001) was a comics and paperback illustrator, known for, among other works, his illustrations for *IF*, *Galaxy*, and *Fantastic* magazines.

He illustrated many of Fritz Leiber's *Fafhrd* and *Grey Mouser* stories in *Fantastic*, such as "Stardock." He also drew the *Tarzan* Sunday comic strip from 1983 to 2001, and worked for *Cracked*

and *National Lampoon* and *Creepy* magazines.

One of his most celebrated works is the 1978 trade paperback graphic novel, *The Illustrated Roger Zelazny*. Morrow was nominated for the Hugo Award for Best Artist three times, in 1966, 1967, and 1968.



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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.