

SIGMA

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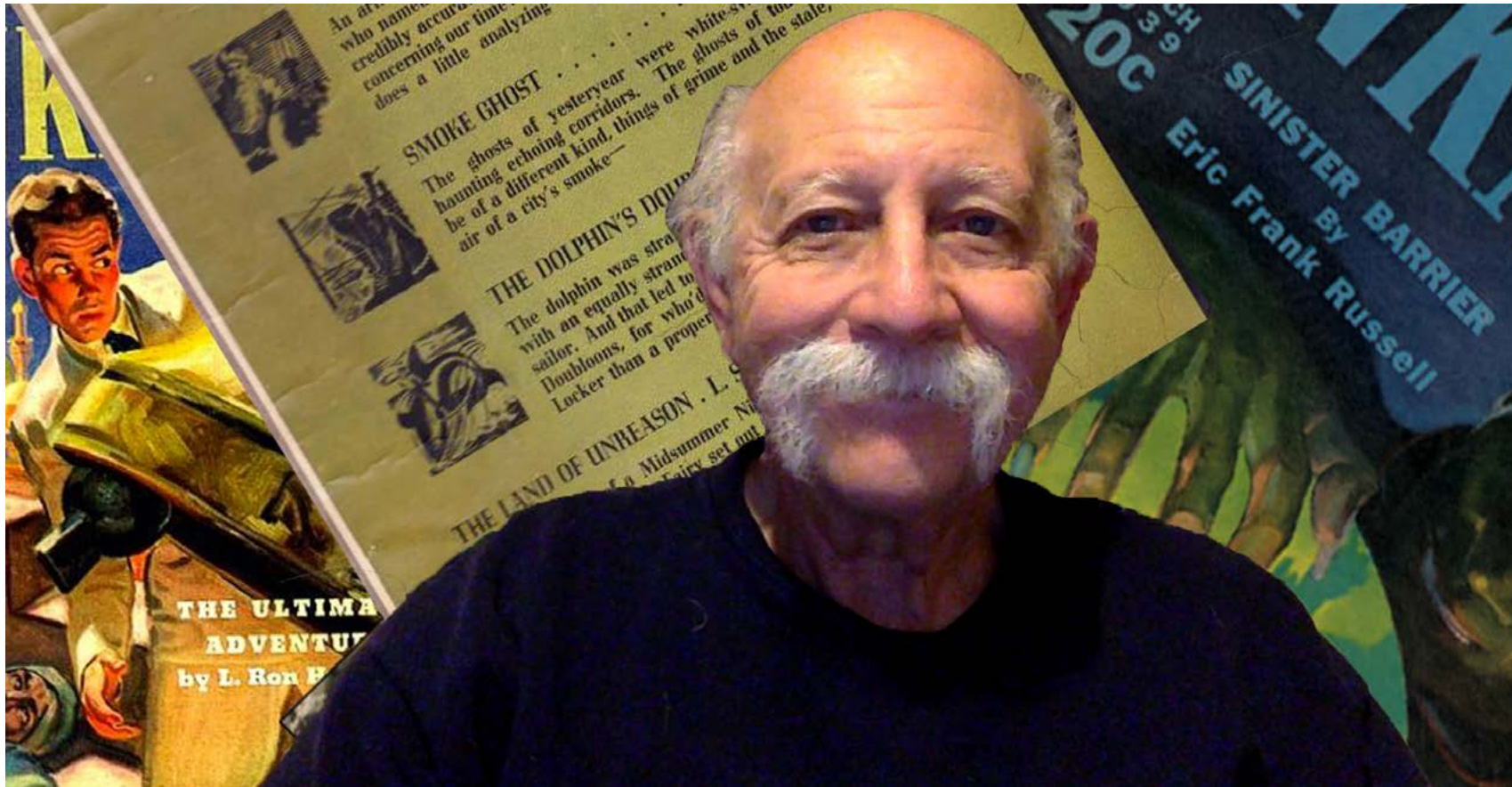
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President's Column



Some years ago, through my own ridiculous ideas about how to treat any medical problems I had caused over years of neglect, I stopped taking my medications and snuffled up food in great quantity without regard to diversity or quality. The hospital was happy to house me for five days and I did not return to work for a month.

In that delirious month, I thought long. I thought hard about why I did not, as I pledged time and again, follow my bliss. The answer was a complex as it was simple as it was ineffable as it was personal. I will leave it at that.

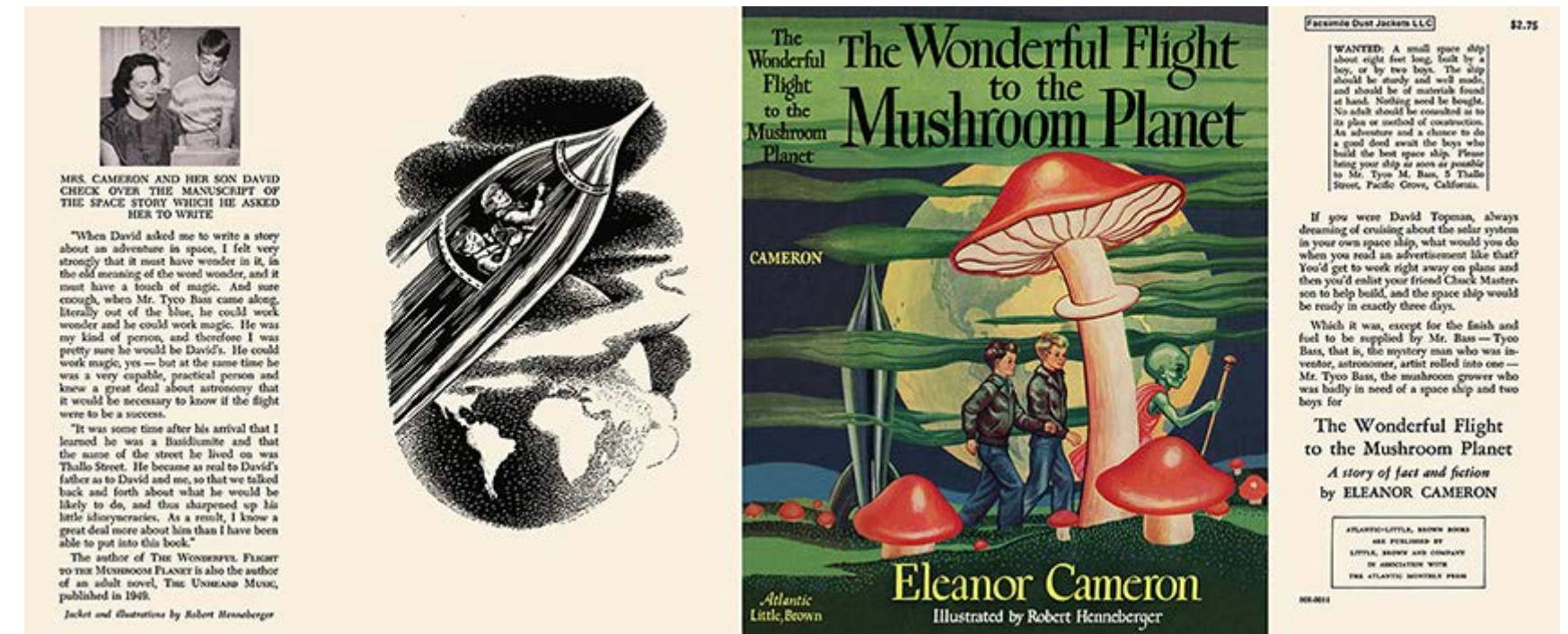
I rediscovered my love for science fiction. It had been with me as long as I can remember. In the guise of science, in the guise of literature, especially great literature, in the guise of image, in the guise of comic book, in the guise of film. It became an easy choice for me to rededicate myself to the genre, certainly as a fan, but also as something more. The more is what I will write about here.

I have long believed it is not important where you enter the dark forest that is the map of our lives, only that you enter. I have long believed there is no destination only the path. So when my friends, family, and acquaintances say to me "Science Fiction!?" I make my explanation. I know they, because of their ignorance of the depth of the genre, are thinking, the Mothra Twins, Obi-wan ben Kenobi and, the latest Warbots that



mangle with equal gusto foes and metropolitan areas. If they have read a book, it is "1984", "Fahrenheit 451", or "Slaughterhouse Five."

I explain after I have given my tortured metaphor about the dark twisted path, I have not abandoned my love of Proust, my admiration for Walt Whitman and Mark Twain, my awe in the face of Joyce, Mann, and Eliot. I



explain that I still feel joy in the discovery of contemporary works of fiction and revisit my film library I believe contains some of the most interesting and important works of film and video.

Yes, I do it partly because it is true, but also it recovers my air of legitimacy in their glazed eyes. Then I guide them through what I believe is that importance of the genre. I reveal here, to you all, that is the reason I began teaching and presenting the strength and visions of all popular literature. I reveal here that my studies in the genres, like my morning guitar playing exercises, is a devotion. There is no destination. There is only the path through the dark forest I stepped into in the third grade when I looked up at the evening skies and read Eleanor Cameron's "The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet." And my bliss.



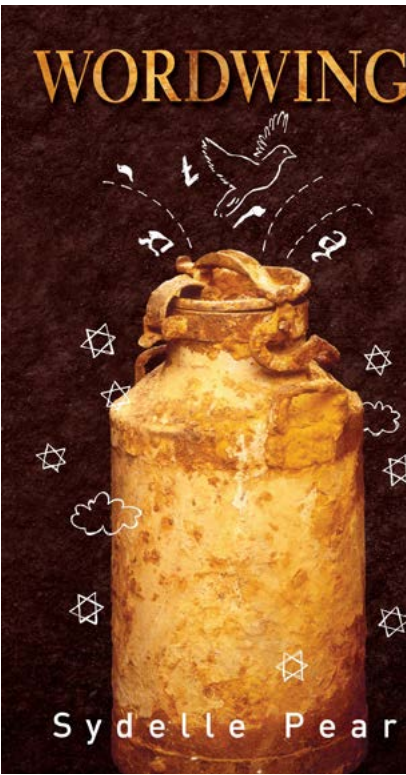
At the March 2018, Parsec meeting, Eric Leif Davin spent fifteen or twenty minutes in a “show and tell” about “Unknown” (after October 1941 “Unknown Worlds”) Magazine, the editorial effort John W. Campbell’s took on in addition to Astounding Science Fiction. Eric passed around two copies of “Unknown” from his personal collection of pulp magazines. His talk this March was rich with information, including a comparison between “Unknown” and the other legendary fantasy mag of the era “Weird Tales.” He also gave a short history of the development of SF through its pioneering authors.



perished, in an Underground Archive that was buried and later raised on wings from the agony and ashes of the Ghetto. Sydelle’s presentation was as impactful and stirring.

Eric’s talks have become a feature of every Parsec Meeting, as has a selection of Mary Soon Lee’s poetry read by her. The beginning of our meetings also include announcements from the members present about events of local SF interest and the world at large and information about the publication of the many Parsec members who are themselves writers.

In the April 2018 meeting, we had a talk by Sydelle Pearl, a local author of several works of young adult literature. She discussed her latest book “Wordwings.” A novel about the Warsaw Ghetto in the Second World War and the preservation of the voice of 12-year-old Rivke Rosenfeld, and others, written in the margins of existing books and other scrap papers, of both the survivors and those who



We hope, as a member of Parsec and a fan of speculative fiction you will attend our meetings to add your personality to the ambiance of our meetings, to enhance your knowledge, and just plain talk to others of like outré minds. Parsec, as an organization, does a lot of exciting things. The yearly Confluence Conference coming up at the end of July. The copy of Triangulation, Parsec’s yearly Short Story Collection, will be available and the winner of our Parsec short story competition will be announced. Young adult speculative fiction lectures and workshops are ongoing. However, in the mind of many, in particular, the twenty to thirty who regularly show up, the monthly meeting is the heart of the organization. We would all love it if you all came around joined us in the diversity and festivity of our meeting.

The coming months will bring other authors, other presentations, other insights, but above and beyond there is the discussion, camaraderie and the warmth that passes among the members of Parsec.

Parsec Officers

- Joe Coluccio (President)
- Bonnie Funk (Vice President)
- William Hall (Secretary)
- Greg Armstrong (Treasurer)
- Michelle Gonzalez (Commentator)
- Joe Coluccio & Larry Ivkovich (SIGMA Editors)

April 2018 Parsec Meeting Minutes



Eric Davin cornered a chapter in Parsec Ink’s history by buying up the last eight copies of Volume One, Issue One of our short story anthologies, if only because it features his interview with Isaac Asimov. (Also, my stories “The Final Mission” and “The Unmaker.”)

The Nebula Awards are coming back to our downtown Marriott.

A newsletter specific to Confluence is now available.

As of the meeting, there was still room in Confluence’s David Levine writing workshop.

A PDF of Larry Ivkovich’s new novel “Magus Star Rising” is now available for review.

Mary Soon Lee branched out from dominating poetry to also get two stories published. Work of hers will be appearing in the magazines Analog and F&SF. She read us two poems, one of which, “Diaspora,” was about the particulars of the meek inheriting the earth.

Diane Turnshek pointed out that Pittsburgh Magazine had another “Best in the Burgh” contest going and that we can vote for writer Thomas Sweterlitsch and the Rickert & Beagle bookstore.

Eric talked to us about how H. L. Gold’s classic SF magazine Galaxy offered a “soft” science alternative to that of John W. Campbell. Contributors were Isaac Asimov, with “The Caves of Steel” and “Tyrann,” leading to “The Stars Like Dust,” Alfred Bester’s “The Demolished Man” and “The Stars My Destination,” Ray Bradbury’s “The Fireman” which of course became “Fahrenheit 451,” and Robert A. Heinlein’s “The Puppet Masters.” After Gold, Frederik Pohl took over Galaxy and discovered Larry Niven and Harlan Ellison, and Pohl in turn was succeeded by Jim Baen, from whom Baen Books gets its name.

As it so happened, our raffle prizes were a Harlan Ellison anthology and a Harry Harrison anthology. Other books on hand were brought by Greg Armstrong from our library: Jean M. Auel’s “Clan of the Cave Bear,” a work by local talent Mike Arnzen called “Play Dead,” horror anthology “Gathering the Bones,” and the provocatively titled “Brooding YA Hero.”

Our speaker was Sydelle Pearl, talking to us about her longtime project “Wordwings” which takes inspiration from the Warsaw ghetto in WWII. She set out heeding the words of Isaac Bashevis Singer, who once said that a writer must believe that he or she is the only one to write a particular story. In Pearl’s case, the story was inspired by a milk can she saw at the Holocaust Museum, one which had been packed full of secret buried stories from the ghetto. Pearl imagined another such can – which indeed may exist – and wrote of that from the perspective

of a woman named Rivka. The can would contain stories, testimonies, diary entries, poems, and art.

Pearl drew on various sources, such as Joel Heydecker’s compilation of photos from the ghetto, as well as David Shavit’s “Hunger For the Printed Word” about the importance of Eastern European Jewish literature. It was a time when paper was so hard to come by that one might find the bare backs of pages of Hans Christian Andersen stories urgently scribbled on. Pearl notes that this took her many years but says “It was meant to be.”

She struggled for a title before settling on “Wordwings” and the appropriate cover art. As she tried countless publishers, she hit a snag when “The Book Thief” came out and many people claimed that “Wordwings” was similar. She also got a criticism that the book was “too real.” Yet Pearl took heart from the advice of editor Bruce Black, who noted, a little as Singer had, the mystery of how a story chooses a writer, and advised that a writer much reach deep down for the deepest, most secret, most painful of truth and express it. Over the course of twenty years it finally came out and four copies are available in our library system.

Pearl’s talk evoked some reactions. Eric Davin told us that she was good at finding overlooked topics, as in her book “Dear Mr. Longfellow” about actual letters to that author. Francis Graham noted that WWII has been an occasion for all manner of European books to get dumped on American shores, often at universities such as Kent State. Someone brought up a Post-Gazette story about a Torah which had been found inside a wall.

Eric also claimed that I wanted to change his historical novel idea so drastically as to deal out the labor conflict at its heart. That is not true. I was specifically thinking of how local talent Karen Rose Cercone was able to raise historical social issues in the form of a mystery in her book “Steel Ashes” and gamely wondered if something like that was possible. If I’m ever caught saying “Just obey the publishers and lose the labor conflict,” I hope someone shoots me.

Sometimes relatively short tight paragraphs are just the way to go with these reports.
President Joe wore a Weird Tales tie.
Our headcount reached 16.

- Secretary Bill Hall

PARSEC
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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 and lectures, plus other events that promote a love of the written word and a passion for speculative fiction in all of its myriad forms. Our members include writers, teachers and fans. PARSEC is a 501c3 non-profit corporation.

Fantastic Artist Of The Month

Chris Foss



Christopher Foss is a British artist and science fiction illustrator, known for his extensive use of the airbrush. He was born in 1946 and studied at Magdalene College, Cambridge.

He's created over a thousand book covers for, among other authors, Isaac Asimov, E.E. Doc Smith, Arthur C. Clarke, A.E. Van Vogt, and Philip K Dick. He drew the black-and-white illustrations for the original 1972 edition of the book, *The Joy of Sex*.

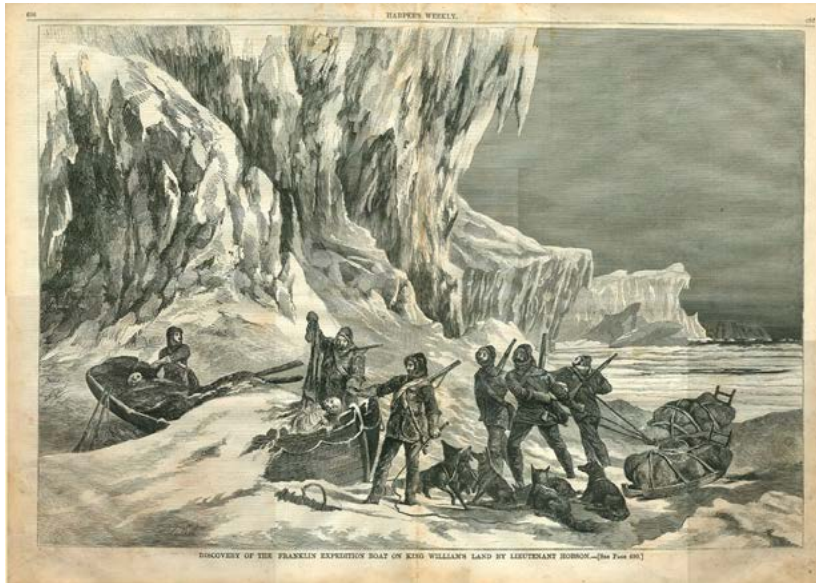
He's also worked in film design for such movies as Dune, Superman, Alien, Flash Gordon, A.I., and Guardians of the Galaxy.

Interestingly (and oddly), Foss is not an SF fan and never read the books he illustrated, simply using his imagination. Maybe that's one reason I couldn't find any information on any awards he may have won. He certainly deserves some.



The Terror - A Review by Larry Ivkovich

AMC's 10-episode series *The Terror* is a fantastic, expertly done tale, both historically accurate and supernaturally horrific. Adapted from *Hyperion* author Dan Simmons' 2007 novel of the same name, *The Terror* is based on true events surrounding the doomed 1845 Arctic expedition of Captain Sir John Franklin.



The Franklin expedition sets out to find the Northwest Passage through the Canadian Arctic. Two ships, the HMS Erebus and the HMS Terror, were equipped with food and supplies for 3 years and boasted the best naval and marine technology of the day. Despite that, the two ships got stuck in the ice and had to winter over until the thaw arrived, which didn't, making the crews icebound for another year. The remains of the ships were eventually located in 2014 and 2016, but both crews, made up of 130 men, were never seen or heard from again. Some relics and journals belonging to crewmembers were discovered, describing possible cannibalism and lead poisoning from the poorly canned food. But, like author Tim Powers, Simmons provides his own "secret history" of what really happened on and to the expedition, filling in the missing pieces with Inuit mythology, rich characterization, and sheer brutal, well, terror.



After an Inuit shaman is accidentally killed by a crewman, what appears to be a huge polar bear begins to stalk and kill the members of the expedition. The shaman's daughter, called "Lady Silence" by the crew, is terrified by her father's impending death, pleading with the dying old man not to "leave," that "she's not ready," and that "Tuunbaq will not obey her."



Spooky. Tuunbaq turns out to be the "polar bear" attacking the ships. But, of course, it's not a bear at all and Lady Silence, like her father, must form a bloody bond with this murderous mythological monster. If that isn't bad enough, the men start to get sick from lead poisoning, both physically and mentally, and begin to turn on one another.

And some, quite literally, lose their heads!

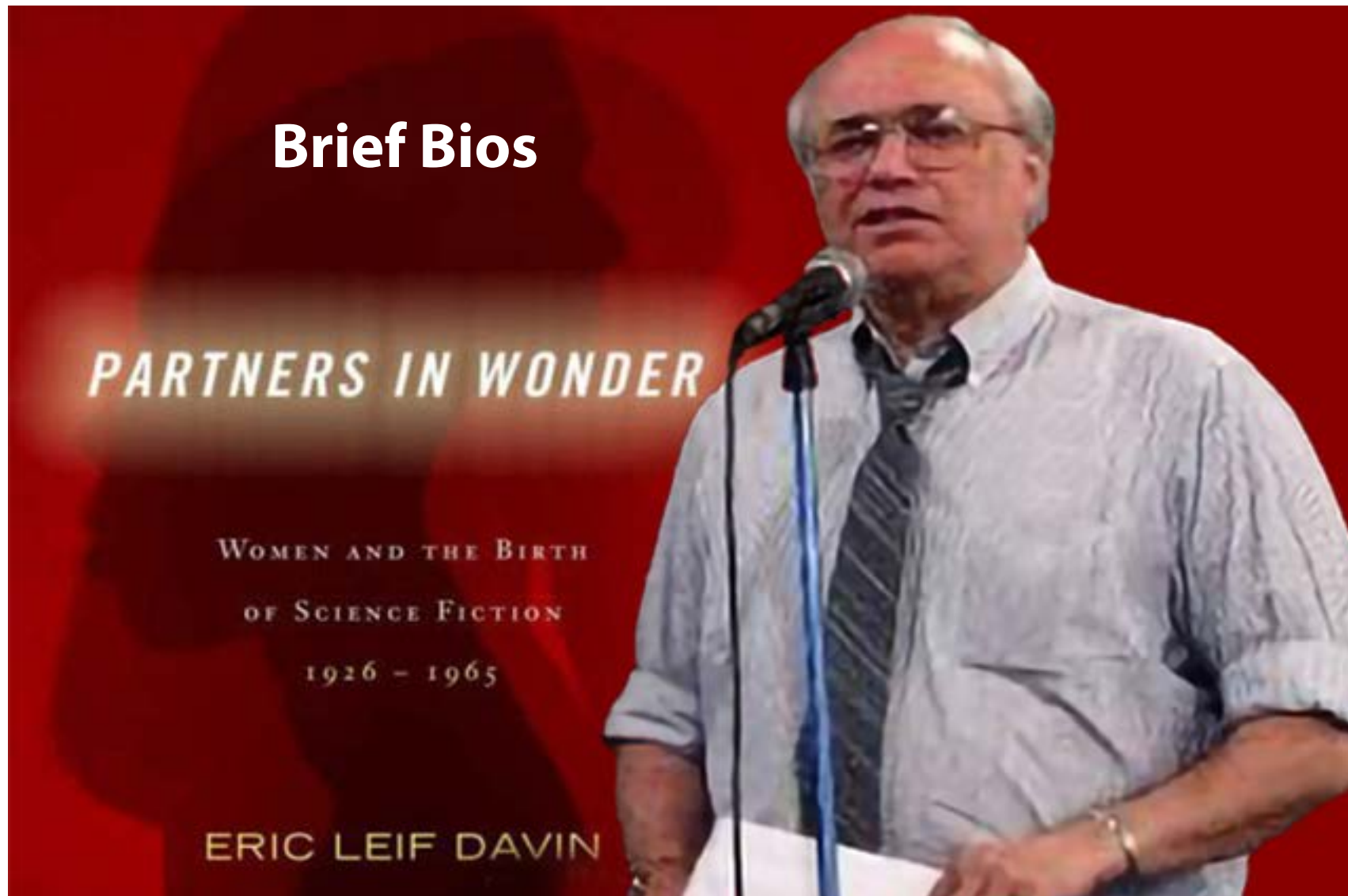
The production values of the series are very high with the outdoor scenes CG'ed, giving the show a surreal, ghostly look. Besides Simmons, famed director Ridley Scott, is one of the producers. Most of the actors are British/Irish (Jared Harris/*Fringe*, *The Expanse*, Ciarán Hinds/*Justice League*, Tobias Menzies/*Underworld: Blood Wars*) with Lady Silence being played by Inuit actress/musician Nive Nielsen.

I don't know if this is a limited series, ending with the 10th episode, but the book is pretty long so maybe we'll get more next year. Although, the way things are going now, with the body count increasing, maybe not. It's really good though.



Check it out. Trust me, you'll never look at polar bears the same way again.

Brief Bios



Elisabeth Mann Borgese, (1918-2002)

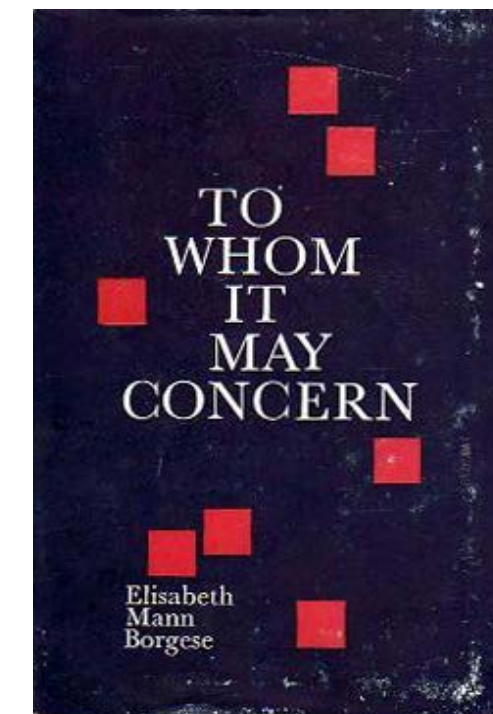


Borgese was the youngest of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Thomas Mann's three daughters and last surviving child. Trained as a classical pianist and cellist, she graduated from the Zurich Conservatory of Music in 1938. In 1939 she married Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, 36 years her senior. He was a noted Sicilian-American anti-Fascist exile and scholar of Italian literature who taught at the University of Chicago. She was also the sister-in-law of gay British poet W. H. Auden, who married her actress-writer sister, Erika Mann, in 1935. This was solely to provide her with a British passport so that she could escape from Nazi Germany.

Elisabeth became an American citizen in 1941 and worked

as a researcher and editor in Chicago, including two years as executive secretary of the board of the Encyclopedia Britannica in the mid-1960s. After her husband's death in 1952, she continued her studies. She eventually became a senior fellow at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California, where Frank K. Kelly, a well-known early 1930s science fiction writer, served as vice president. In 1979 she joined the faculty of Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, first as a professor of political science, then as an adjunct law professor. In 1983 she became a Canadian citizen.

An environmentalist much concerned with the oceans, she was a founder of the International Oceans Institute based in Malta and wrote many books on the subject. The best known of these is *The Future of the Oceans* (1986). She helped organize the Peace in the Oceans Conference in 1970, the first of 30 such international meetings. These worldwide gatherings eventually resulted in the 1982 United Nations Law of the Seas treaty. She died while vacationing in St. Moritz, Switzerland and is survived by a son and two daughters: Marcel Deschamps Borgese, of Halifax, Angelica Borgese, of New York City, and Turkey, and Dr. Domenica Borgese, of Milan, Italy.



To Whom It May Concern
A Collection Of Fiction
Elisabeth Mann Borgese

Includes:

The Rehearsal • (1957), To Whom It May Concern, The Immortal Fish • (1957), The True Self • (1959), Delphi Revisited, Twin's Wail • (1959), Flowers, The Straits, Again

SF Magazine Publications

For Sale, Resonable

Fantasy & Science Fiction v17n01 (Juy 1959)

One of Thomas Mann's three daughters here presents a concise and totally convincing picture of the ultimate triumph of the labor-saving device.

For Sale, Reasonable

by Elizabeth Mann Borgese

To Whom It May Concern: ¹

¹ *The following document of the year 1979, is among the earliest of this type on record. We reproduce it in its entirety because it sheds some light on the curious mimetic relationship, the puzzling transfer of qualities between man and machine, that began to become noticeable around the middle of the twentieth century. S.T. was purchased by the Inland Joy Development Corporation (I.J.D.C.) on April 24, 1980. The concept of liberty having been undermined by the political, social, and economic practices of the period, it was natural that the contract between S.T. and I.J.D.C. initiated a long series of similar self-sales, which, in turn, gave rise to the exorbitantly rich but reliably docile class of “promach” brains or Neo- Helots.*

True Self

Galaxy vi8n01 (October 1959)ww

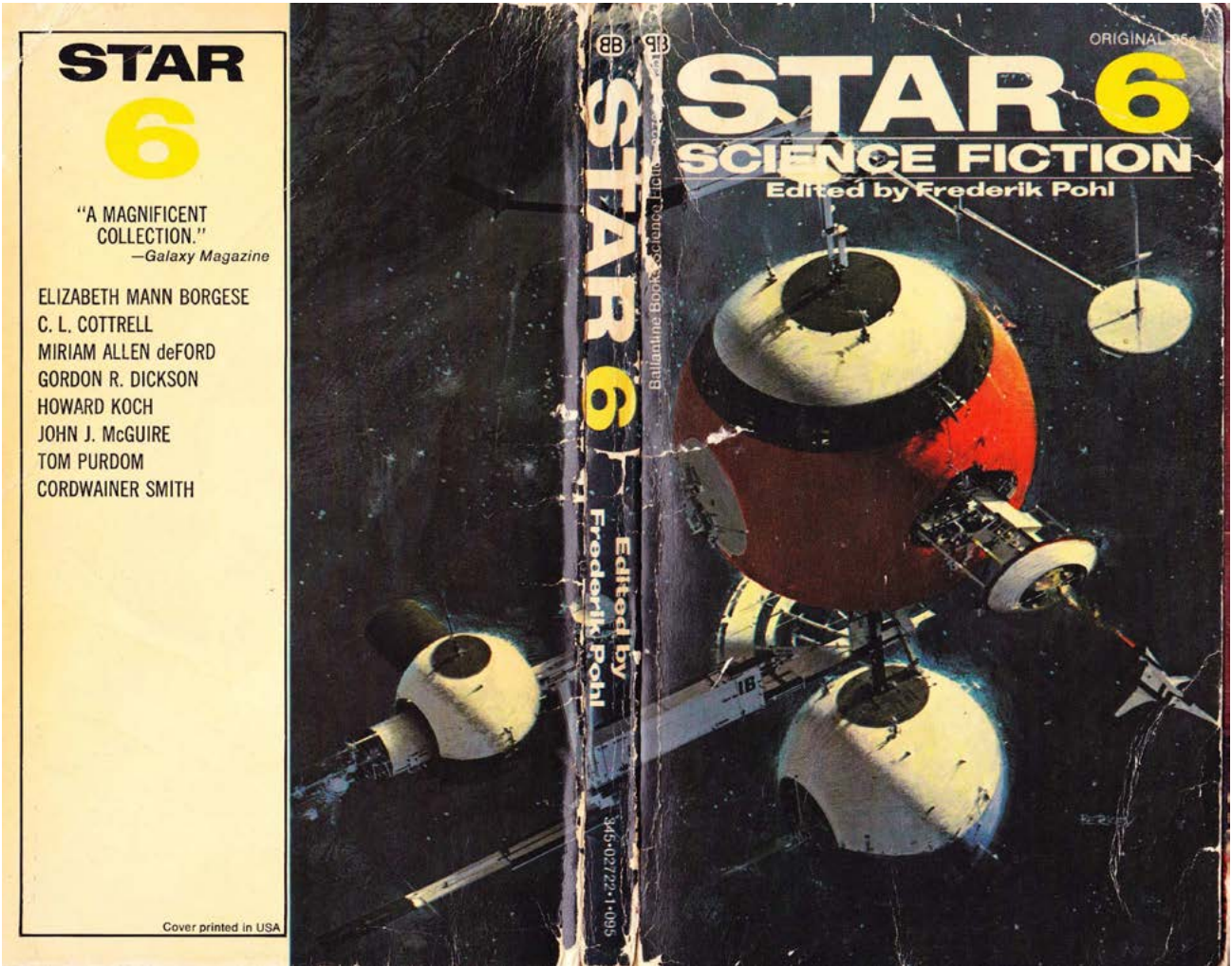


In addition to the two 1959 magazine stories on the list, she published another 1959 story, “Twin’s Wail,” in Frederik Pohl’s pioneering original paperback anthology, Star SF No. 6.

The child of the Great Writer is a familiar stereo-type—petulant brat, fattening on his father’s royalties, stomping his miserable adolescent boots over his father’s reputation. It is time to destroy this stereotype with the others. Thomas Mann’s family shows how wrong it is. His daughter Erika has long shown that one child could inherit his talent; that another daughter shares it as well is now demonstrated, with insight and beauty, in——

TWIN’S WAIL

BY ELIZABETH MANN BORGESE



SF Composer of the Month

Bernard Hermann - First Movement

Bernard Hermann ruined my life.

In September of 1960, my brother and I took the Harmony Short Line bus from what was then Penn (not its present appellation, Penn Hills) Township, Rosedale, RD1, Verona Pa to the corner of Sixth Street and Penn Avenue in downtown Pittsburgh. My mother worked in what is now the ticket office of Heinz Hall, then a restaurant called the Mayflower Coffee Shop. We ate lunch. After her work shift, we shopped for school clothes for the upcoming year. Before grabbing the bus for a trip home, we bought tickets from the Loews Penn Theater, purchased a large bag of popcorn and sat our asses down to view the latest Hitchcock opus, Pyscho.

Too few minutes into the film, Norman Bates, who seemed just a swell normal young lad, donned his mother's garb and stabbed Marion Crane in a black-and-white range, "color tone", sequence of seventy-two shots accompanied the black-and-white tonality of a score comprised of jabbing, puncturing strings.

My brother and I jerked. Our large bags of popcorn flew into the air. I believe my mother wished she had picked a less horrifying Hitchcock Flick. It was years before Norman stopped haunting the showers of my motel rooms.

So was it Hitchcock or Bernard Hermann's score of "Pyscho" that made me double check doors and windows of a myriad Shady-Rests before I stepped into the bathtub? The answer is obvious. Both.

Hitchcock, typical of his filmmaking aesthetic, wanted no music at all. The sound of the shower curtain ripping, a few dull thuds, Marion's scream, and the water going down the drain would be just fine. Hermann had his own ideas.

Like he did in all his music of film, radio, and tv.

Hermann's science fiction credits include: "The Twilight Zone Theme," "Twelve Monkeys," "The Day the Earth Stood Still," "The Journey to the Center of the Earth," "The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad," "Fahrenheit 451," "Jason and the Argonauts," and the infamous Orson Welles production of HG Wells "War of the Worlds in 1938."



But all of his work is imbued with the eeriness, the otherworldly qualities that we meet again and again in the works of science fiction.

Don't believe me? Listen closely to Hermann's first film score, Citizen Kane. Orson Welles claims that the Hermann score is fifty percent responsible for the success of the film. The somber beginning music comprised of an orchestration of low wind instruments could easily be heard in a horror movie or a dark take on science fiction narrative.

A Hermann score whether it is intended for a science fiction film, or a horror film, or not stands emotionally on its own. There are many CDs and streams for you to listen to. I recommend the score for Beneath the Twelve Mile Reef which I used as a background theme for an essay video I did about Jules Verne's "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea." It fit to perfection.

There are so many more. Next month, we'll dive into the composition of the music and the films they complement.



JOURNEY INTO UNKNOWN

At the April 2018 meeting of Parsec, Eric Davin talked about John W. Campbell’s “Unknown” Magazine. I took it as a call to adventure.



I admit I proceeded with the reluctance of Bilbo. At first, I was excited and amused to search through my digital library which is organized by hap and by stance. A massive unsortment of download stuffed into ill-named containers. Then a vague sense of discomfort and ennui began a creep onto my soul. Wouldn't it just be better to visit the latest Marvel excess at the multiplex? My wavering state of mind caused a very real pain to prick at my sacroiliac. A sweltering desire to crawl under the covers overcame me. Sleep beckoned. What could I gain if I left the shire?

I sipped a cup of Gunmetal Espresso, bitter as volcanic ash, burned my tongue, and refreshed my quest. The best way to proceed, I decided, is just to grab hold of the beginning. That choice, impossible in any case, almost defeated me.

Unknown, Volume One Number One, March 1939.

A quick look at the cover and a confirmation glance at the contents revealed Eric Frank Russell’s novel Sinister Barrier. Something I read many years ago. I began to read the story again. Out of the gate, I encountered Charles Fort. *“You are getting very sleepy.”* Alright, I knew the magazine was fantasy, and John Campbell right there at the beginning said the type of fantasy proposed for “Unknown” was meant to be entertaining. *“It is all that*

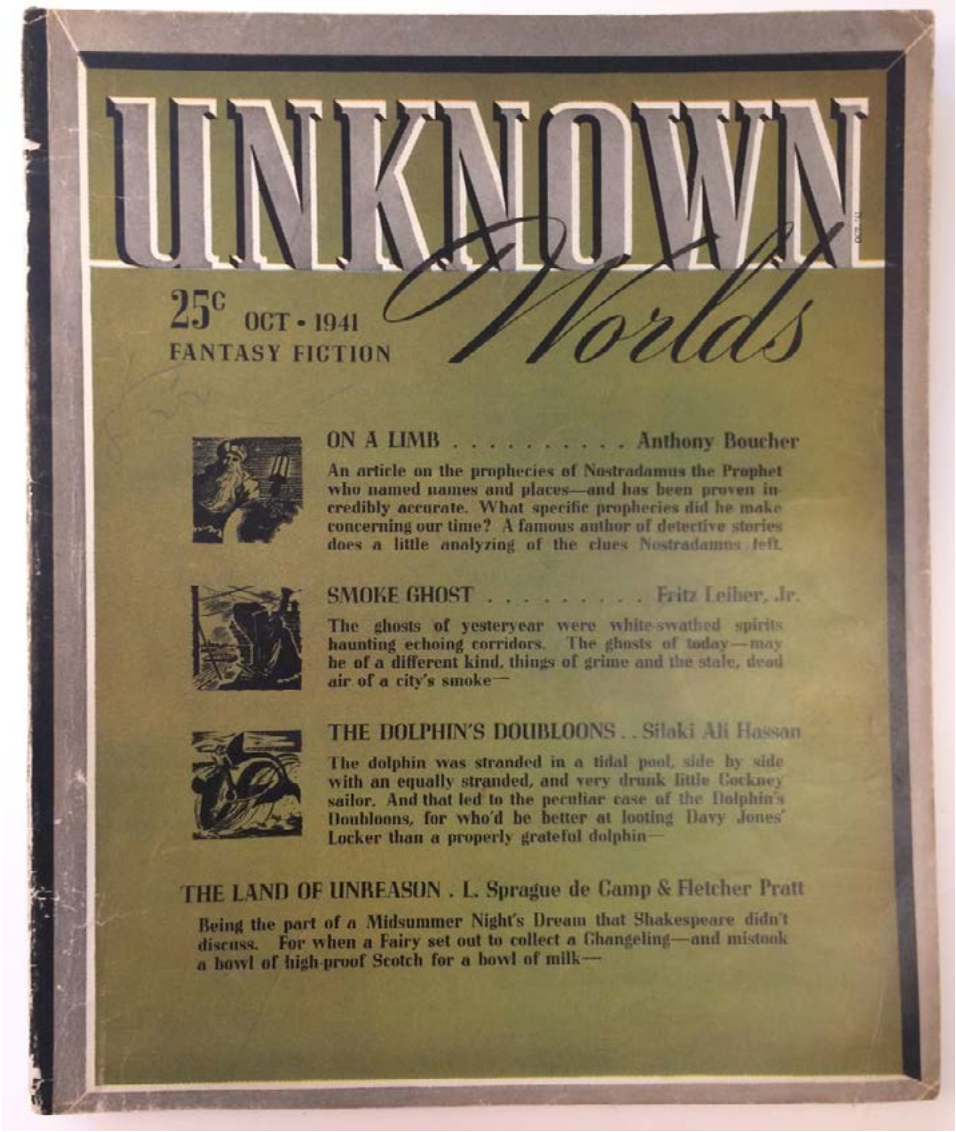
you can do to keep your eyes open.” Still, Charles Fort? Was this a foreshadowing of the Dean Drive and Eloptic Energy? *“Sleep! The effort to re-read this acknowledged classical work will present you with a sinister barrier.”* “Sinister Barrier” starting with eight dead starlings, a jaunt with the Fortean Society of American and several daunting suicides was more than my poor mind could handle. I did close my eyes, but not to sleep, instead to throw a virtual dart at the files on my iPad Pro.

It stuck in the heart of

“Unknown Worlds” (the first edition with the new name) Volume Five Number Three, October 1941. A quick look at the contents delighted me.

Magazines, even fiction magazines, are more topical reads than a novel. The words from the authors speak with an authority of active existence. More like a dated journal entry than the stories cast as eternal.

The authors of this issue, L. Sprague DeCamp, Fletcher Pratt, Robert Bloch, Henry Kuttner, Cleve Cartmill, Nelson S. Bond, Margaret Ronan, L. Ron Hubbard, Fritz Leiber, Jr., Silaki Ali Hassan, and Anthony Boucher, are a listing of the some of the most august and grand masters of the field of science fiction and fantasy. In 1941 they were just a bunch of hacks making a living at a penny a word with no idea of what is to follow.



It was easy as time travel to enter and a joy to experience the immediate “Unknown” universe page by page. There were also dangers along the way. What good is an adventure without them?

“The Land of Unreason” - L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt. Illustrated by Ed Cartier

A story that I also read in my enchanted world some years before. It starts with a sip of a bowl of milk by Fred Barber and leads through a rollick with Titania and King Oberon in a fairytale world that is constantly deteriorating. More fun than a Midsummer’s Night’s Dream. You can read it anytime in any one of the “Complete or Incomplete Enchanters.” The images on the following page sketched by Ed Cartier are from the magazine.



“No News Today” - Cleve Cartmill

A grim little story that you must not believe according to the author.

Cleve Cartmill’s legacy as a science fiction writer was achieved when in 1944 FBI agents entered the offices of John W. Campbell Jr and asked serious questions about how he and his writer Cartmill got access to the atomic secrets of the Manhattan Project. John Campbell read the technical journals on nuclear fission when he suggested to Cartmill that he write a story about a “super bomb.” It’s just science fiction, replied Campbell. The “fibbies” insisted that the March 1944 Issue of Astounding be yanked from the newsstands. Campbell convinced them the removal would be more of a tell to the world than just letting the story stand. The story is famous in SF circles, but have you ever read or heard of “Deadline?”

**

“A Good Knight’s Work” - Robert Bloch

I can’t help it. When I think of Robert Bloch, I think of Norman Bates and Ed Gein. There is nothing of the humor that Robert Bloch can manifest in Psycho, American Gothic and Night of the Ripper. But “A Good’s Knights Work,” and many of his other stories are stuffed with his sharp wit and wimsey. “A Good Night’s Work” has jousting and tommy guns and not one scary deranged killer. I stopped counting at five.

**

“Prescience” - Nelson S.Bond

An ugly little story about a psychiatrist who should not have used hypnotherapy on his patient.

**

“Borrowed Glory” - L. Ron Hubbard

A moral tale with a twist. Two angels Tufferan and Georgie manipulate an Eleanor Rigby woman and her paramour in a cruel wager that given happiness for 48 hours the woman will be left a satisfied happy mortal after the fact. A tale from the man who would in the May 1950 issue of Astounding Science Fiction Magazine create “a mix of Western technology and Oriental philosophy” called Dianetics, that would morph into the Church of Scientology two years later.

**

“On the Limb” - Anthony Boucher

To me, this was the most disturbing article in the October ’41 issue. Anthony Boucher, one of the few people revered by both science fiction and mystery fans goes out on a limb with the quatrains written by Nostradamus from 1555 to 1559. Here are the Boucher’s predictions deciphered from the Nostradamus text.

The war will continue relentlessly. Attempts at a negotiated peace will be frustrated by Hitler’s excessive demands. While France is hopelessly dominated, resentment against Hitler will increase in the United States as the arms program advances. George VI after the collapse of his prime minister will flee to Canada. The Rome-Berlin axis will cease to exist even in name and Italy become the merest vassal. De Gaulle will rally forces stationed in the East and lead an attack upon France through Italy, which will cause Germany to drop even the pretense of French independence. Despite the king’s flight, the British Isles will resist invasion and finally establish a completely successful blockade of continental Europe. With the aid of the United States, Great Britain will launch a naval attack from the Western Hemisphere on Europe, securing its first toehold war Bordeaux and advancing on Paris. Hitler will be defeated, and the peace terms will take the form of a sort of Union now under American domination. Great Britain will no longer rule the waves nor



hold the balance of power. The United States will take over both these functions, and with them establish a long reign of peace on earth.

Close, Anthony, but no cigar. The way he derives these predictions from the quatrains is as tortured as any other attempts at translated augury I have read. I still hold Anthony Boucher out as one of the greats.

**

“Smoke Ghost” - Fritz Leiber, Jr

A ghost story as bereft of white sheets horrors as it is a black and grimy look of how a ghost can transmogrify in an urban setting. If I thought more about this story, I would draw my blinds in the day as well as the night.

**

“A Gnome There Was” - Henry Kuttner



I have always considered the world a better place because of the wicked humor of Henry Kuttner. “A Gnome There Was” is an example of one the best. Tim Crockett “investigating the conditions among the lower classes” visits the Ajax Coal Mine in what I take to be Western PA. He believes the owners of the mine spy his investigation into the plight of the downtrodden and want to strong-arm him and otherwise beat him to a pulp. He runs and does not heed their shouts of warning “-before the dynamite goes off.” When he awakens he is no longer human, but still a labor rabble-rouser. This story is too delicious not to read. You can find it among over twenty anthologies including the ones below:

- The Best of Henry Kuttner 2014
- Two-Handed Engine: The Selected Stories of Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore 2006
- Unknown Worlds: Tales from Beyond 1988 (A great selection of other Unknown stories as well)
- Get yourself to a bookstore or library

**

“The Dolphin’s Doubloons” - Silaki Ali Hassan

This story, which is as salty as a Jack London epic and as swell as any sea tales, takes place in San Francisco’s Embarcadero “...a dozen hock shops to the block, each lined on both sides by rum cellars and cheap chop and chow houses.” The name of the author sent me running to the reference books and internet search engines.

From EF Bleiler’s “Science Fiction: The Gernsback Years” 1998 p. 293

MIHALAKIS. ULYSSES GEORGE

U.S. writer, then resident in San Francisco. Portrait with the story shows a young man. Wrote Oriental fantasies for Unknown under pseud. Silaki Ali Hassan and was at one time a professional wrestler under that name. Porges, however, (Vol. 2, p.943-944) gives his name as Agis I. Mihalakis. Signed self as Ulysses George in fan letters.

From Irwin Porges’ “Edgar Rice Burroughs The Man Who Created Tarzan” 1975 p. 619

Ed (Edgar Rice Burroughs) told of meeting Prince Ilaki Ibn Ali Hassan, a professional wrestler, and longtime Burroughs fan. Ed had corresponded with the prince for some time, and now, because the letters were “very amusing” he was forwarding them to Weston (longtime Burroughs friend) Hassan (whose real name was Agis I Mihalikas), Ed noted, was a successful pulp writer and had become a “prince” because his father owned 3000 goats in Arabia.

A wrestler and an Arabian prince with 3000 goats! A fantasy pulp writer published in Wonder Stories Quarterly and Unknown Worlds! Interesting as the story of the Dolphin’s Doubloons, this information and the following photos turned my Journey into the Unknown into gold.

Prince Mihalakis

General Information	
Real Name	Agis I. Mihalakis
Birthplace	Nevada (United States of America)
Date of Birth	22nd July 1913
Date of Death	17th September 1973



**

The excellence of many of the stories in the pages of Unknown Worlds, which can be found in quite a few “Best of” anthologies, did not diminish over the magazines five-year, thirty-nine issue run, ending in October of 1943, Volume Seven Number Three. Killed because of WWII paper drives and sacrificed for the preservation of Astounding Stories.



Four Science Fiction Database Sites Worth Checking Out.



The Internet Speculative Fiction Database, *ISFDB*, is a community effort to catalog works of science fiction, fantasy, and horror. It links together various types of bibliographic data: author bibliographies, publication bibliographies, award listings, magazine content listings, anthology and collection content listings, and forthcoming books
<http://www.isfdb.org/>

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Database

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Database is a freely available online resource designed to help students and researchers locate secondary sources for the study of the science fiction and fantasy and associated genres. These include: historical material; books; articles; news reports; interviews; film reviews; commentary; and fan writing. The database was originally compiled by Hal W. Hall, a librarian at Texas A & M University, and draws and expands upon the Science Fiction and Fantasy Reference Indexes of 1878-1985; 1985-1991; and 1992-1995.
<https://sffrd.library.tamu.edu/site/>



Risingshadow is a website focused on science fiction and fantasy books. The site was founded by Mika Salovaara and is maintained by dedicated speculative fiction fans. I referenced this site in Sigma a couple of years ago. They posted a nice tribute to David Hartwell after he died.
<http://www.risingshadow.net/>

sfadb

The Science Fiction Awards Database is a rebranding, redesign, and expansion of the Locus Index to Science Fiction Awards, established in 2000 but now deprecated, except for the homepage and the essays linked in the left pane.

This site went online in August 2012 with awards listings and individual pages for every nominee (under the Names tab, above) -- and for those with more than a few nominations, separate pages sorted chronologically and alphabetically by title.

This site's goal, despite the title, is to profile the significant works of SF/F/H history based not just on Awards, but on additional sources - Citations, and Anthologies/Collections.

<http://www.sfabdb.com/>

- Larry Ivkovich

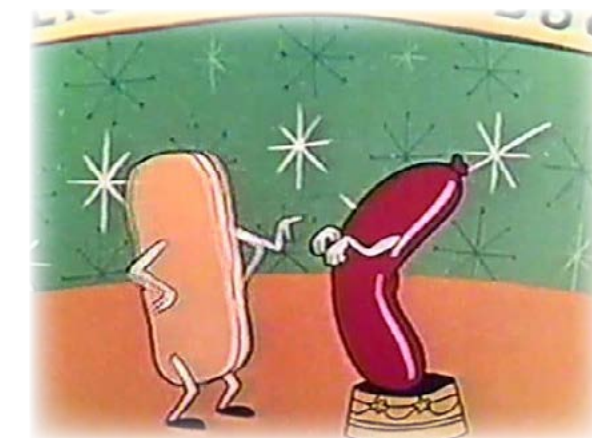
Parsec Picnic



Funny and fannish musician Steve Goodie, who performed (quite successfully!) as the Special Music Guest at Confluence in 2016, will be performing at the

Parsec Picnic on August 26, 2018, at the Dormont Park large pavilion.

Come enjoy the music.
Come enjoy the hot dogs and cool cats.
Come enjoy the conversation.
Come enjoy the games.
Oh, what the heck, just come.



Confluence

July 27-29, 2018



Guest of Honor:
Catherynne M.
Valente



Music Guest:
S.J. "Sooj" Tucker



30th Anniversary
Honors Guest:
Judi Miller

Writing Workshop at Confluence

The workshop will be held Saturday morning, during Confluence weekend. Award winning author, David D. Levine will be our workshop coordinator this year.

"If you are a science fiction or fantasy writer, published or unpublished, who wants feedback on your work, Hugo-winning SF writer David D. Levine will conduct a Writers' Workshop at Confluence for up to six writers. You'll have the chance to have a professional writer critique your work, along with several of your peers. Critiques will be done in a round-robin Clarion West style. This workshop style allows all the participants to read and critique everyone's work.

The cosplay/costume contest will return for another round in 2018!

We have the following judges willing to face the challenge of choosing the best costume and costumer at Confluence in 2018: Karen Schnaubelt, Lisa Ashton and Tom Higgs. **Please say you'll join us!**

For Registration and further information please visit:
<http://parsec-sff.org/confluence>

SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY WRITERS OF AMERICA PRESENTS

SFWA

FREE!
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!

Autographing Event!

AT THE 2018 SFWA NEBULA CONFERENCE
SUNDAY, MAY 20 • 1:00PM – 3:00PM
PITTSBURGH MARRIOTT CITY CENTER • GRAND BALLROOM
112 WASHINGTON PLACE, PITTSBURGH, PA

FEATURING OVER 90 AUTHORS!

Michael Anderle	Lara Elena Donnelly <i>Nominee</i>	Larry Ivkovich	Kevin McLaughlin	Alan Smale
Charlie Jane Anders	Gardner Dozois <i>2018 Solstice Award</i>	Rekka Jay	Sam J. Miller <i>Nominee</i>	Rosemary Claire Smith
Barbara Barnett	Scott Edelman	Michael M. Jones	Annalee Newitz <i>Nominee</i>	Lesley L. Smith
Sue Hollister Barr	Dr. Shana Feibel	Jeffie Kennedy	David Palmer	Jerome Stueart
Peter S. Beagle <i>2018 Grand Master</i>	Susan Forest	John Kessel	Sarah Pinsker <i>Nominee</i>	Shanna Swendson
Mansi Bhagwate	Luke Fredland	Scott King	Daniel Potter	Tom Sweterlitsch
Joshua David Bellin	Sarah Gailey <i>Nominee</i>	Ellen Klages <i>Nominee</i>	Cat Rambo	R.K. Thorne
Jonathan Brazee <i>Nominee</i>	Laura Anne Gilman	Mary Robinette Kowal	Jim Reid	Tracy Townsend
Michael Capobianco	Rebecca Gomez Farrell	Matthew Kressel <i>Nominee</i>	Martin P. Robinson <i>Awards Toastmaster</i>	Michael R. Underwood
Curtis C. Chen	Theodora Goss <i>Nominee</i>	Jamie Lackey	Kelly Robson <i>Nominee</i>	Jamie Wahls <i>Nominee</i>
Suzanne Church	Daryl Gregory <i>Nominee</i>	Mur Lafferty <i>Nominee</i>	Patrick Rothfuss	Martha Wells <i>Nominee</i>
Gwendolyn Clare	Amanda Hackwith	Jennifer Lee	Jason Sanford	Fran Wilde <i>Nominee</i>
Neil Clarke	Joe Haldeman	Fonda Lee <i>Nominee</i>	John Scalzi	Connie Willis
Kaelyn Considine	Erin M. Hartshorn	David D. Levine	Lawrence M. Schoen <i>Nominee</i>	JY Yang <i>Nominee</i>
Michael Cooper	Merrie Haskell	Kari Maaren <i>Nominee</i>	Nancy Schrock	Karlo Yeager Rodriguez
Sherrie Cronin	Karen Herkes	PJ Manney	Elsa Sjunneson-Henry	Caroline M. Joachim <i>Nominee</i>
Alyx Dellamonica	Claire Humphrey	Craig Martelle		Peter Zuckerman
Rob Dircks				
Carrie DiRisio				

AND MORE!

Step on it! We've got to get to the Nebula Awards!

Thursday, May 17th, 2018—Sunday, May 20th, 2018
Where: Pittsburgh Marriott City Center
<https://nebulas.sfw.org/nebula-conference/>



Parsec Meeting Schedule

Sunday May 20, 2018

The May 20, 2018 Parsec Meeting will be held at
Marriott City Center, downtown at 112 Washington Pl, Pittsburgh, PA 15219
after the
Nebula Book Signing
at 1-3 PM. Thanks to the Science Fiction Writers of America who are
providing us a meeting room right down the hall.

The book signing and the Parsec Meeting are free and open to the public.
We look forward to seeing you there.

