

SIGMA

The Newsletter of Parsec June 2018 Issue 387

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President's Column



I have searched for some time to find the marvelous feeling of exploration and adventure that I believed came from memories of books read or movies viewed. Turns out I was looking for journey in all the wrong places.

Sure, I fought along with John Wayne and John Payne and Tyrone Power and Errol Flynn on many a Pacific atoll or purple mountain majesty or fruited plain. I blasted off into the universe, mined asteroids and defied time with Robert A. Heinlein and Arthur C. Clarke and Robert Sheckley and Alfred Bester. I researched the Quantum and gazed at the heavens with Fred Hoyle and George Gamow and Albert Einstein.

As I reexamined those works that filled my childhood with special wonder there was something missing. Only a partial shock of recognition, a momentary frisson remained. It's not that the early works were lacking. One, Two, Three Infinity and Farmer in the Sky and Life on the Mississippi all hold up as grand reading experience. I still watch Forbidden Planet and They Were Expendable and Red River with sufficient awe. I admit I pretty much owe the totality of what I know, not to the schoolroom, but from young excursions into popular media.

Those feelings and emotions returned one day when I picked up a copy of Action #1(1938) from a pile of oversized reprints that were on the brink of moldering in the basement. There (all purchased in the early 1970s) in a ragged pile were two dozen or so 10" x 13 ½" Treasury Editions. Whiz Comics #2(1940), Detective #27(1939), Sensation #1 (1942), Flash #1 (1940), along with a bunch of Marvel oversize reprints of a later vintage. Squirreled away on shelf close at hand all my gem reprints of EC Comics, Weird Science, Weird Fantasy

and so help me The Crypt of Terror and The Vault of Horror. Spa Fon!

I was time-slipped to the front porch of my childhood Carver Street home, a stack of luscious comic books piled high, my behind on gray painted concrete, sneakers on the stoop, a hot humid day. (Yes, my mother absolutely threw a fortune away.) As I and my doppelgänger read and viewed, I knew that this encounter with comic books was the missing dimension for which I had been yearning.

I continue to read and am mighty partial, not to the superhero books, but to the graphic editions that draw from and create true science fiction. Mystery In Space, Weird Science, Weird Fantasy, Journey Into the Unknown, Planet Comics, Tales of Suspense, Out of this World, Unknown Worlds, the Buck Rogers.Flash Gordon and Brick Bradford newspaper comic strips, even in the name of all that has crumbled, Magnus Robot Fighter. The incomplete list does not even begin to contemplate any modern comic book attempts at SF.

People ask me, "How do you find time to read?"As if that was a legitimate question. I answer, "How is it that you can't find the time? Are you standing in a supermarket line, eating breakfast, waiting for the movie to begin, riding on the bus, sitting in your backyard, taking the dog for a stroll, mowing the lawn?" I do get a few peculiar looks while intent on the EC work of Wally Wood, Johnie Craig and Al Feldstein as I peddle the hamster running machine at the gym.

I plan to base a presentation for a future Parsec Meeting on Science Fiction and the Comics. The history of the Comic Book is delicious, full of science fiction writers and brimming with unusual anecdote. Just think about the kinky Professor Marston.

I have yet to find a way to present a paneled story to an audience, but I am working on it. Until then Squa Tront!

The Nebulas Have a Cold



How was I going to write this? There was barely any official meeting on Sunday, 20 May 2018, just ten of us -- plus a visit from Steven H. Silver, more on him later -- gathering for barely two hours in a room that could seat 172, with no theme or topic or speaker to speak of, no old business, new business, departmental reports, library updates, announcements or raffles. The two hours seemed mainly devoted to a chance for Parseckians such as Mary Soon Lee and President Joe to “decompress” a little after a solid weekend of attending the Nebula Awards held at the downtown Marriott that weekend. Yet I had not attended, and so I wound up with a very superficial, yet oddly moving, impression of an event I hadn’t really been to. As an extremely inside journalism joke, and a tribute to Gay Talese, I offer this essay as “The Nebulas Have a Cold.”

It was also Pentecost Sunday, and I needed a bit of an epiphany to help make my day more efficient -- and I literally got one, too, in the form of the Epiphany Church just across the street. However, just before Mass I fell into conversation with the couple Jane and Scot Noel, who hope to launch a new SF magazine called Dreamforge in 2019, and I appreciated their emphasis on no-longer-so-dystopian visions

of the future. Later I bumped into Kate and Joe, Kate wearing a very starry -- indeed intergalactic, and I called it “universal” -- dress thanks to a firm called Modwear. (Sadly, this led to my showing up in a group photo looking evil and fat enough to pass for a Harkonnen.) I would also come across Ken Chiacchia, reeling off a list of celebrities who had been in attendance, and while he did note, say, Joe Haldeman, my mind somehow fastened onto Allan Heinberg and James Mangold, names more Hollywood than SF.

Evidently publishers offer not-yet-finalized editions of books as displays, and whole bagfuls of those arrived at a great table outside where all the book signing would be. I eagerly played a kind of game of Husker Du as we matched up books into every higher pile. Appearing in great numbers were titles like “Furyborn,” “The Book of M,” and something I thought of as Tanya Huff With a Girl With a Gun.

When the actual book signings got underway, it was good to be able to catch notables -- Connie Willis was there -- and recognizable authors such as Mary Turzillo. Larry Ivkovich was seated with Joshua Bellin and Larry related to me how Peter S. Beagle had received his Damon Knight Grand Master award. Not to take anything away from anyone else -- evidently, our Bud Sparhawk looked good in a tux -- but the spotlight was very much Beagle’s, and that was evident by the long, twisting line of people wanting his autograph.

Somehow it started hitting me: This is the Bookworld. Oh, we’ve cozied up with it at all our Confluences, but

this felt more intense, more industrious. Almost lost in all this was our own Tom Sweterlitsch, whose “The Gone World” I got him to sign. His autograph emphasized, “White Hole = BAD!!!” and I’m sure that will come in handy. He confessed that “Gone World” is rather more involved than his earlier “Tomorrow and Tomorrow,” which had been basically “film noir meets virtual reality.” Tackling one seriously tough homicide investigator, space travel, time travel, and no doubt a whole lot more, including some very serious science journalism which had gone into the research, “World” appears to be a heady read which has satisfied lots of readers and critics, complete with Sweterlitschian descriptions such as water in zero-G referred to as “jellied diamonds.”

I sat in the designated room “Marquis C” long before anyone else. Microphones which could raise my lead-balloon voice to almost human audibility... I could get used to that. Eric Davin came in and somehow we got to talking about Margaret Atwood’s “The Handmaid’s Tale” vis-a-vis Sherri S. Tepper’s “The Gate to Women’s Country,” the general grouse being that someone will claim to have “discovered” a trope or subgenre which in fact had long been around. Somehow I got to thinking of future worlds which are not outright hellish, like “1984,” but more aimless and run-down, not quite full dystopias. I offered “stagtopia,” to invoke stagnation. Later President Joe showed up sounding excited about the non-fiction book “Miracle at Coney Island,” about how a man named Martin A. Couney, possibly not even a real MD, who saved thousands of babies and possibly revolutionized medicine. Much later, Steven H. Silver, a writer, and editor who was evidently running the whole Nebulas shebang, looked in on us.

Such was my grazing encounter with the Nebulas, which will be in California next year. I really should have bitten the bullet and attended outright. The Bookworld beckons.

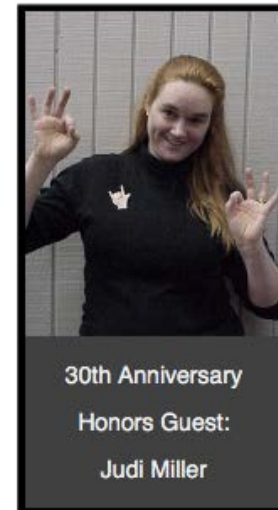
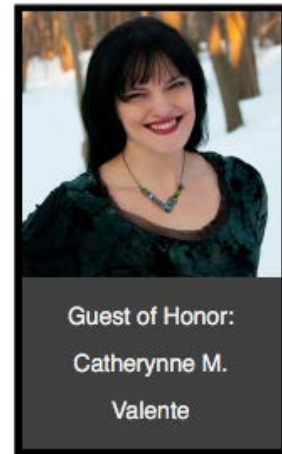
Secretary Bill Hall

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

Confluence

July 27-29, 2018



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>

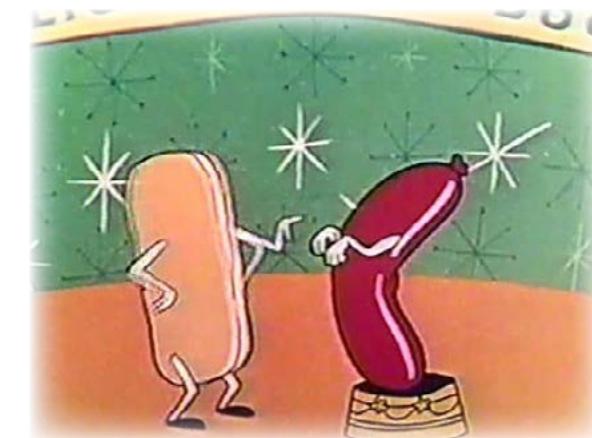
Parsec Picnic



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.



Tarzan Meets Superman!

No, not the 2001 comic book mini-series, *Superman/Tarzan: Sons of the Jungle* (more about that later). But, the 1945 movie *Jungle Jim*, which was the first in the series of 16 Jungle Jim movies made over 8 years starring Johnny Weissmuller. The movie was based on Flash Gordon creator Alex Raymond's comic-strip.



After his twelfth Tarzan flick, 1948's *Tarzan and the Mermaids*, Weissmuller decided it was time to hang up his loin cloth. He felt, at 43, he was too old to be running around half-naked in the jungle any more. Plus, the studio wouldn't allow him to get a share of the films' revenue, a new concept at that time.

So, he went right into the production of the JJ films. Only 6 months after the release of *Tarzan and the Mermaids*, *Jungle Jim* appeared on the silver screen. The JJ movies were B quality with less-than-stellar production values, editing, and writing but they capitalized on Weissmuller's popularity as Tarzan as well as appealing to a younger audience. A short-lived TV series followed. And Weissmuller got to wear clothes!



Instead of Cheetah, Jungle Jim Bradley had Skipper, the dog, and Caw-Caw the crow who, of course, could understand Jim's orders, etc., and often saved the day.

Like Cheetah, they were scene stealers. Tamba the chimp would appear in later films.



Now about Superman. Four years before George Reeves became the Man of Steel in the television series *The Adventures of Superman*, he starred in *Jungle Jim* as the nasty villain, Bruce Edwards. Edwards wanted to sabotage an expedition Jim was leading to find a cure for polio so he could get the profits and glory for the cure himself as well as stealing treasure from a native temple. Bad Superman!

Reeves was embarrassingly obvious as the villain. At least to the viewers. Not so much to the other characters in the movie, even after he tried to push Jim into a lion pit right in front of everybody in broad daylight!

At one point, after Jim fights and kills a lion, he appears in the next scene with no dirt or blood on him, no hair out of place, no scratches or torn clothes from the lion's claws. It's pretty clear two different lions were used in the fight scene – a handsome, dark-maned young male shown by himself roaring and an older, graying, short-maned, probably toothless, lion doing the fighting.

Still, it was a fun film to watch and to see these two actors at certain points in their careers -Weissmuller continuing after his Tarzan film glory and Reeves whose fame was still to come as TV's Superman.

— Larry Ivkovich



More Tarzan!

It seems, in recent years, Tarzan has been making the rounds. In the comic book universe, that is. He’s been teamed up with some familiar, if not iconic, comic and genre film characters in limited crossover story arcs. Here’s a brief look at some of those pairings.

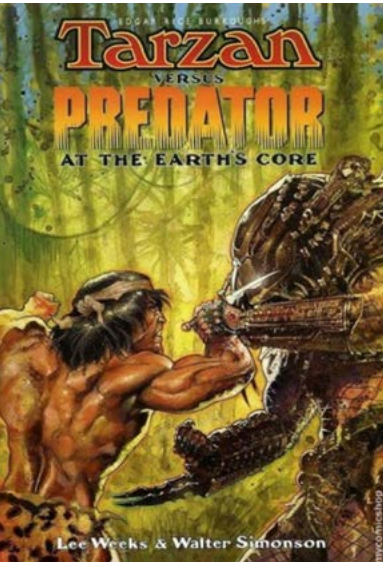
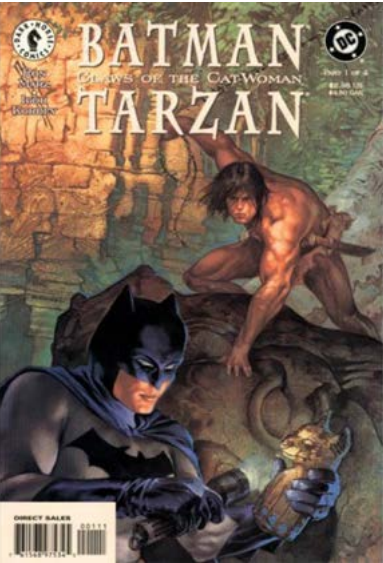


Tarzan And Superman

As I mentioned in my other article, a 2001 comic book mini-series titled Superman/Tarzan: Sons of the Jungle was released. This was a revisionist retelling of both legends with Tarzan as Lord Greystoke growing up in London and Superman as Kal-el the one raised by apes.

Tarzan And Batman

Batman/Tarzan: Claws of the Catwoman was also a comic book mini-series published in 1999. Taking place in the 1930s, it features that time period’s Batman teaming up with Tarzan. Both heroes help an African Cat-Cult priestess protect her people’s treasure from evil mercenaries.



Tarzan And Predator

Tarzan versus Predator: At the Earth’s Core was a four-issue comic book series published by Dark Horse Comics in 1996. Edgar Rice Burroughs’ Pellucidar, the prehistoric land at the center of the Earth, serves as the setting and battleground between Tarzan and the alien hunters.



Tarzan And Red Sonja

Red Sonja Tarzan is described as “The She-Devil with a Sword Meets the Lord of the Jungle!” The two scantily clad warriors team up to battle the bloodthirsty hunter Eson Duul, involving time-travel and alternate dimensions in the process. This series has only started to be published this year.



Tarzan And The Planet Of The Apes

Tarzan on the Planet of the Apes – Why didn’t anyone think of this sooner? Brilliant! An alternate storyline based on the movie Escape from the Planet of the Apes takes place in late-1800s Africa where Caesar and Tarzan are raised as brothers. The war between humans and apes takes Tarzan and Caesar from Africa to Pellucidar, sans Predators.

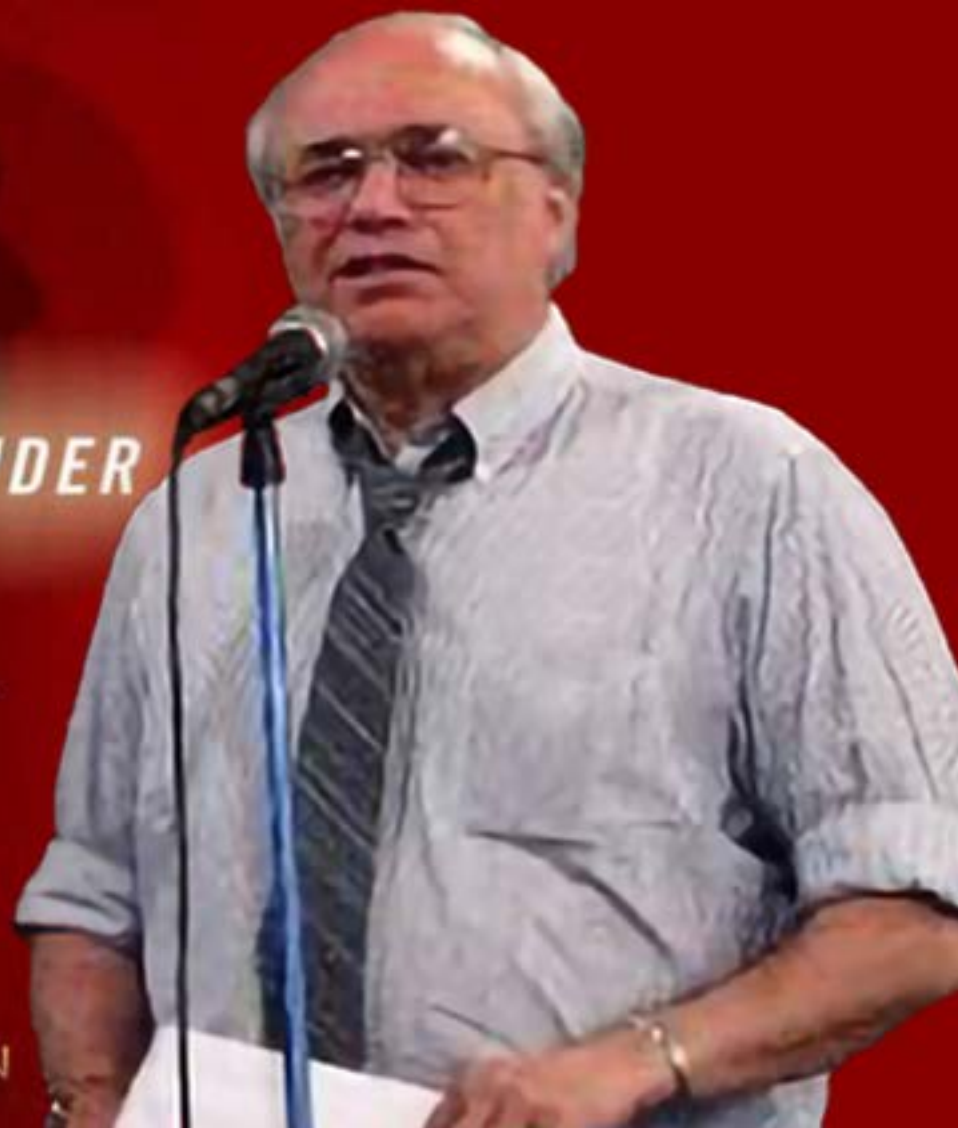
— Larry Ivkovich

Brief Bios

PARTNERS IN WONDER

WOMEN AND THE BIRTH
OF SCIENCE FICTION
1926 - 1965

ERIC LEIF DAVIN



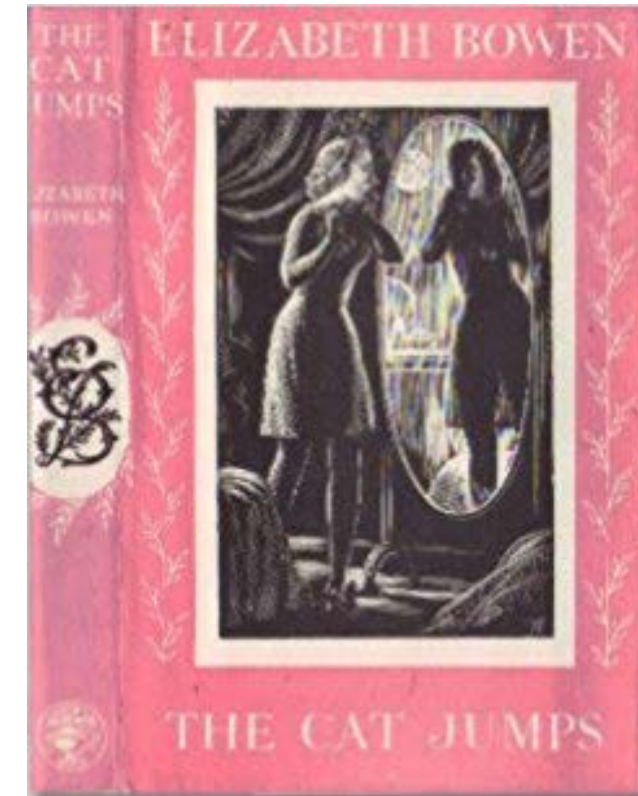
Elizabeth Bowen (Dorothea Cole), (1899-1973)



Bowen was born in Dublin, Ireland, and educated at Downe House School in England. She was a prolific and major Anglo-Irish novelist and short story writer, as well as a critic and a popular touring lecturer. Her first novel, *The Hotel* (1927), was an upper-class romance, but her 1929 short story, "The Cat Jumps," one of her best known, was a haunted house tale wherein the supernatural elements were used to explore the nature of fear.

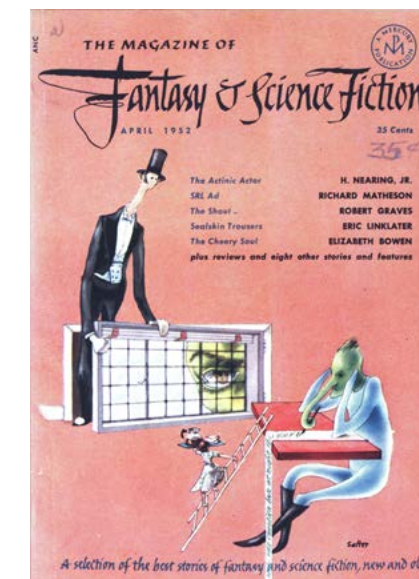
She moved to London in 1933 and became friends with Virginia Woolf and Iris Murdoch. Her 1938 novel, *The Death of the Heart*, catapulted her to fame as a major

novelist. The Blitz during World War II inspired many of her best stories. She published an autobiographical novel, *Seven Winters*, in 1942 while *Bowen's Court* (1942) was a family history. Her perceptive works of literary criticism included *English Novelists* (1942) and *Collected Impressions* (1950).



Her 1934 collection, *The Cat Jumps*, displayed her gift for supernatural fiction and *The Demon Lover* (1941), her most famous short story, is considered a major contribution to the form. She died in London at age 73.

You can download and/or read the "The Demon Lover" or "The Cherry Soul," published in the April 1952 (vol3, no2) Issue of *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, by clicking on the magazine Cover.



Bernard Herrmann Part 2

Some contemplation and possibly a point.

When I was knee-high to a hemidemisemi-quaver, a piece of music entitled “Asia Minor” would play on the radio and I would get a sad look on my face and begin to cry. I have a vestigial memory of a stately lugubrious melody. I find it interesting that probably my earliest memory is involved with music. Take a gander back, and you may find some refrain drifting into your consciousness.

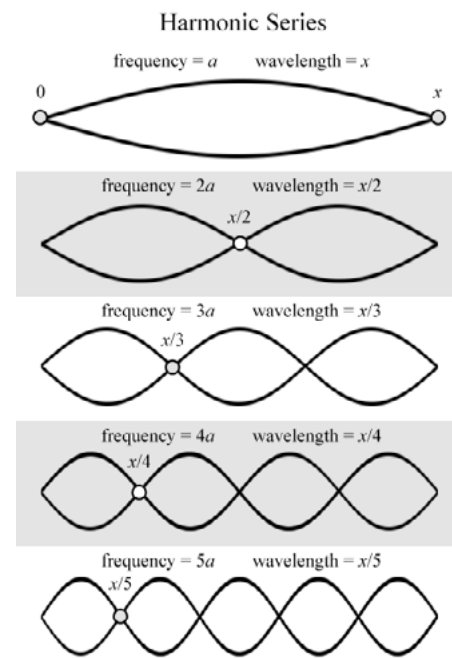
Music like science fiction is a marvelous mixture of art and science. A fantastic combination of intellect and aesthetic. A breathtaking composition of emotion and spirit.

Take a note. Any note, say C, on a vibrating string with fixed points at each end. Look at the first twelve harmonics as the string vibrates.

The harmonics created have a mathematical description,

The nth harmonic of a node has the frequency $f_n = nv/2L$

a visual description,



a musical description.



If you study the naturally occurring harmonic tones created by a simple string vibrating between two fixed points, you will begin an understanding of the Music of the Spheres. You will find a spiritual meditation that has moved philosophers and scientists from Pythagoras to Kepler to Laplace to Louis de Broglie. From the intricate movement of Quantum Mechanics to the Celestial Music of Orbital Resonances.

The harmony of that simple string will lead you intellectually, emotionally and spiritually into a new understanding of the universe. A function also signified by science fiction

“Cinema is the only form of art today which uses music as part of its artistic expression.”

“...no one really knows why music is needed(in cinema)...but it is not complete without it.”

“Film music must imply what actors cannot say.”

“The music tells us more than we can see”

— Bernard Herrmann from “A Conversation with Bernard Herrmann

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5-DGSnUS2M>

There is a famous story about an argument between the film Director Alfred Hitchcock and the musical composer Dimitri Tiomkin while they collaborated on the film “Lifeboat” about the survival of stranded passengers on the lifeboat of a ship which sank in the middle of a hostile and lonely ocean.

“Where Dimitri,” asked Hitchcock, “would you find a symphony orchestra in the middle of the ocean to play your music?”

“I’ll be glad to answer, Alfred,” answered Tiomkin, “when you tell me where you placed your movie cameras.”

I believed, like Hitchcock, that music in a film should be kept to a minimum. The camera must tell the story, surpass even the dialog of the actors. Until I heard Bernard Herrmann’s score for Citizen Kane. Before I was stunned by the eerie music that enhanced “The Day the Earth Stood Still.”

The music in a well-scored film takes on an important part of the narrative. View the nominal scene in “The Day the Earth Stood Still,” the hour Klaatu orchestrates all devised mechanical motion on Earth to a standstill. The director, Robert Wise, shows a montage of video depicting, a roller coaster stuck on the incline, stalled cars in a jumble of traffic, railroad trains frozen on the tracks, and farmers with machines that do not function. The music of Bernard Herrmann supports and amplifies this visual cessation of motion. How do you show motion in music? A move from dissonance resolving to consonance. Herrmann’s music score slides motionless from dissonance to dissonance. The effect is uncanny. We are as stuck as are the trains, planes, boats, and automobiles. Hung up on the incline of our frozen roller coaster. Our Earth at a standstill.

The music of Bernard Herrmann is available on most streaming services and on several YouTube channels. But the best place to experience it in the films. If you want to here an excellent breakdown of the compositions of both the famous “Psycho” Shower Scene and the main theme of “Vertigo” go to the url <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmaxctDKRIU>

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A Newbie At The Nebbies.



In New York, they call the Nebula Awards the “Nebbies.” At least, Leo from New York called them the “Nebbies” when we talked Saturday night. So I was a newbie at the Nebbies.

I am, indisputably, a newbie at whatever you call the Nebulas. I choose to call them “Nebulas” because that’s what I’ve always heard them called, and that’s what members of SFWA—the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America—call them. It’s possible that I’m such a newbie I don’t realize everybody but me calls them the “Nebbies.”

The only con I’ve attended that comes close to the gravitas of the Nebulas was the 1992 World Fantasy Convention. I was different, then. My first short story had been sitting in a drawer for almost twenty years, occasionally being pulled out, dusted off, tweaked, and drawered again. The SF and

Fantasy community was different then, too. I had read many of the authors attending: Joe Haldeman, David Drake, C. J. Cherryh, Orson Scott Card, and Andre Norton. I had stacks of books to be signed.

Fast forward to May 17, 2018. I’m writing my first novel. I’m at the Nebulas with SFWA, that legendary collective of minds whose names have adorned the covers of many of the books I’ve read, reread, and loved for decades. I’m looking at the list of nominees, and the only name I recognize is Guillermo del Toro.

The 2018 Nebulas were an odd combination of the unknown and the familiar. I didn’t recognize anyone on the panels I attended, but when I take into consideration the panels I was unable to attend (so many panels, so little time), there were presenters I not only knew but have eaten wings and drunk beer in the company of. Presenters like Parsec’s Own Larry Ivkovich (Author and Raconteur), who gave one of the Ignite Talks on “SF and Rock and Roll,” and Aaron M. Roth (Author, Scientist, likes a Cajun dry rub on his wings), a panelist on the intriguingly titled “Skynet, Matrix, Other: Where Will AI Lead Us?” panel.

The panels I did observe were all dispensing gold. Granted, some of it was weird gold, but it was thought-provoking, discomfiting, amusing, inspiring gold.

Collaborations: More than the sum of their parts (Like a marriage. Really.)

We’re New Here: How to Navigate Being an “Emerging Author” (I haven’t emerged yet.)

How to decolonize your fiction (You have to deal with the White Gays. Oh, you mean the White Gaze.)

Building Safer, More Inclusive Spaces in Writing Groups (Buckle up, you’re in for a wild ride.)

The Joys and the Hazards of Writing #OwnVoices Fiction (Actual quote, “Nobody can write about who I am but me!” #Prickly)

New vs. Experienced: The evolution of a writer (I’m still in my single-cell phase.)

A Users Guide to Writers’ Workshops (I discover that I have hearing loss. I think “Viable Paradise” is “Bible Paradise.” This may have contributed to the gays/gaze confusion in the earlier panel.)

What science fiction can learn from archaeology (The boobytraps don’t work after 2,000 years have elapsed.)

I returned home from the Nebulas and began working through my DVR queue. As I watched James Cameron’s Story of Science Fiction, I realized I was listening to one of the authors I’d just met, Annalee Newitz, author of Autonomous, nominated for Best Novel. In Cameron’s show, she was one of the recurring speakers on the topic, “Dark Futures.” The new generation has apparently been in front of me the whole time.

Someone mentioned to me last weekend that at past Nebulas there have been panels discussing the problem of aging authorship: there were too many old authors, not enough young authors. Problem apparently solved.

I confess that as the Nebulas came to a close on Sunday, I had a moment of existential crisis when I realized that, while almost everyone I knew at the Nebulas was attending the mass autograph session, I had no books, either to sign or have signed. But that’s a story for another day: Why I No Longer Read Books.

John Thompson wrote his first story while attending grade school in a small Iowa farming community. The story was a first-person present-tense account of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima told from the perspective of a man standing directly under the bomb as it fell. The story ended very abruptly and his teacher accused him of being too lazy to finish it. He’s been bitter about it all these years and has been consoling himself with Nancy B’s cookies and Better-Maid Donuts ever since he moved to Pittsburgh in 2014.



We are looking for few good fen!
Have the urge to express yourself?
Do you believe no one ever listens to you?
Have the desire to work your pinkies to the nub on your newly purchased nightlit tactical keyboard?
Or are you just tired that we seldom publish an article about the Good Doctor and have entirely ignored the poetry of Clark Ashton Smith?

Well, if any or some of these things are true:

Sigma is open for submission!

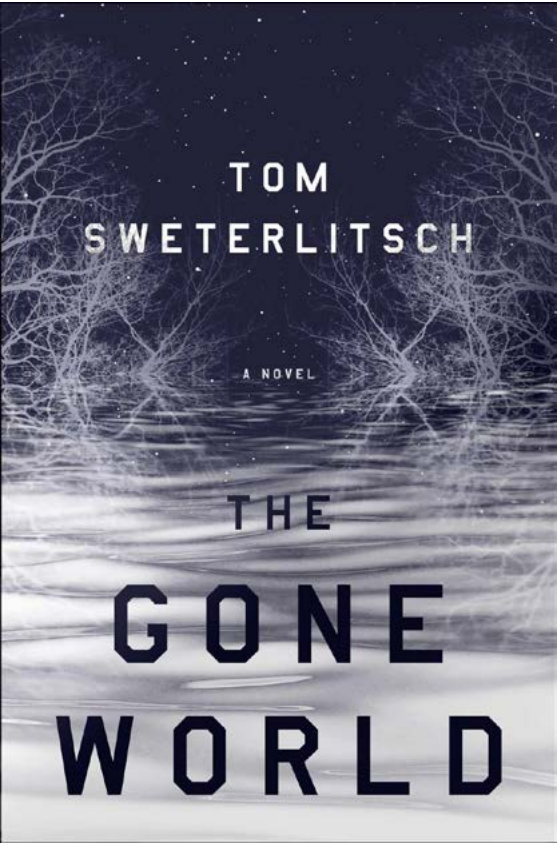
Please send article or inquiry to:

sigma@parsec-sff.org



Parsec Meeting Schedule
June 17, 2018

Meet with Tom Sweterlitsch



Tom's new book "The Gone World" was released in February. He has co-written a number of films with Oats Studios Director, Neill Blomkamp: "Rakka," "Firebase," "Zygote," and both volumes of "Adam."

The June 2018 meeting of Parsec is our time to catch up with with Tom and all the exciting work he has been doing. As a preview you can view the films at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCD4ZEYIBnHIC2DUhiizMOHg> They are rated *aaaagghhh* for violence.

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.

*At the **July 15, 2018** Parsec Meeting, author Josh Bellin will be visiting us to discuss his new book, "Ecosystem." "I'll probably end up talking about publishing traditionally as well as self-publishing: the hopes, the heartache, the hysteria," says Josh. Please be sure to attend. Bring a friend. Parsec meetings, as always, are free and open to everyone. It is a part of our mission statement.*