

SIGMA

The Newsletter of PARSEC
November 2018 Issue 392

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President's Column



I have always believed Fred Hoyle's Steady State Theory of the Universe, which seems to have been exploded by the more appealing notion of the Big Bang, should be abandoned with caution. Beware hubris! Further, we have never encountered a Black Hole, just have observed some properties that we deem real. Nor have we been plucked by a string, pricked by a quark, or pinned by a graviton. I am not saying the notions are not important, not real or not true, but they are a part of our picture of the universe that is implied by modern physical theory and possibly confirmed by experiment. We don't know. More importantly, we are able to change what we know.

Einstein famously did his exploration of the physical universe by performing "thought experiments." So what is an Einstein "thought experiment" but nascent science fiction and "hard" science fiction at that? Einstein transmogrifies his into a theory. Science fiction contains the same by story. Imagine, just by thinking we can explore and attempt to understand the nature of things. From the inner reaches to outer space. The universe is contained within us and in turn, we contain the universe. We are stardust.

I have long abandoned all notions about the differences between science fiction and fantasy as close to meaningless. There are more things, Horatio, in our universe than are dreamt of by our philosophy. Instead, I have given it all over to the thought experiment, born in imagination, bathed in awe, and nurtured by intellect.

Constraint pins me down, stifles my breathing, makes me claustrophobic. How says my mind, can I stick to one puny area of knowledge when there is so much to know? So much curiosity with which to explore and discover?

I went looking for my own personal "grand unified theory" and found it in my gut. It has liberated me to find all things in science fiction and to find science fiction in all things. It has helped me to understand. By keying into one subject I am given access to all.



October 2018 Parsec Meeting Minutes



The majority of the meeting from beginning to end was President Joe leading an active discussion of reviving meeting attendance – so let’s get to it. Some of this could be blamed on the library forcing us to switch from Saturday to Sunday, although Joe sees this mainly as a perception problem - that is, reaching Squirrel Hill and enjoying it is no harder on a Sunday. There was also some discussion of pushing the meeting time back as early as noon. Library policy has also relaxed so that we could bring back mild snacking, so long of course as we clean up. Joe noted that advertising is difficult because each publication insists on its own format, instead of allowing for a more generic press release, and fliers are a good idea – so long as someone can both create them and dispense them.

The main body of the meeting got underway with Joe pledging to restore the topics of old business, new business and announcements. Treasurer Greg announced that we have about \$2,300 as the main tally plus around \$2,000 in the corporate account. We’re also striving to keep the Parsec lecture series going. On the subject of Confluence (the next one is set for July 26-28, 2019), it seems to have come out in the black with around 350 attendees, close to an all-time optimum. Our next con will have Tobias Buckell as guest of honor and may be able to snag David Levine to lead a writers’ workshop. (We keep wanting the Mars Hotel back, but the staff keeps changing and so do their attitudes, from liking us to wishing we’d buy some booze.) Greg also noted that our library has “American Gods,” a Richard Matheson anthology including “Duel,” and Stephen King’s “Under the Dome.” On the subject of Matheson, Kevin Hayes opined that Matheson was a pioneer of tropes much as H. G. Wells was.

No sooner were officers tallied then they were very nearly all voted back in for another year. They are, as ever, President Joe, Vice-President Bonnie Funk, Treasurer Greg Armstrong and myself as Secretary. All incumbents got nominated. However, with the loss of Michelle Gonzalez as Commentator, Kevin Hayes was nominated, but Greg also nominated Larry Ivkovich if only because hey, it might be nice to hold an actual election. I commented to Eric Davin that we are keeping alive the great modern American tradition of incumbentocracy.

Members contributions are found in the anthology “Knee Deep in little Devils” now available for \$9 a copy. Mary Soon Lee has appeared online at Daily SF, while Scot and Jane Noel’s DreamForge magazine should begin to appear in February. Mary read her poem “How to Paint Mercury” and Joe read his story “Coney Nights.” Eric Davin passed around a book showing the work of a “father of fantasy art,” J. Allen St. John. The raffle was for a Harlan Ellison anthology, which I won. (Remember, gentle readers, you can’t win if you don’t show up.)

Speakers for some meetings several months into the future are expected to be Heidi Ruby Miller and Jason

Jack Miller.

At last, with Kevin Hayes writing them down, we took up suggestions for boosting attendance at these monthly meetings:

1. A greater online presence. (In keeping with that, be sure to check Facebook for the new Parsec SFF Meeting Group, featuring hardboiled detective Sam Scribble plus 30 members.)
2. A formal agenda for people to sign up.
3. Getting more of us to sign up as speakers and talk about our projects.
4. Restoring art shows, art demos, book sales.
5. As mentioned earlier this meeting, pushing for a noon start time and bringing back snacks.
6. Social outings after the meeting. Shall we gather for something over at the Manor?
7. Or bring in a DVD and open it to discussion?
8. Discussion of gaming.
9. Writers who illustrate.
10. Speakers’ panels.
11. Live feed meetings. (These would need assistance.)
12. Science presentations.
13. Speakers in the Pittsburgh area with Parsec contacts. (J.D. Barker leaps to mind. As does Rick Claypool, Scot and Jane Noel of DreamForge, and Jim and Laurie Mann.) We could also discuss individual books of note, and Mary suggested my doing an annual roundup of movies.
14. In addition, officers meetings for meeting ideas.
15. Passage parties.
16. Meetup.

Our headcount, while it can always be higher, did reach 15.

Secretary Bill Hall

Parsec Officers

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

Cover Image - Richard Powers

My family was pretty middle class. I grew up in a part of Penn Hills called Rosedale. We moved like reverse Clampetts from our Larimar Avenue (by the way it is not Lar-i-mer; it is Larmer) urban ethnic heritage to a northeast suburban version of Mayberry. We were not hard scrabble dirt scratching poor. The problem was not money when the clothes washing machine gave up its drum, as much as the hard-headed thought that it could be repaired. Note, not by an authorized repair person, but by our self-sufficiency. If only someone would get out the wrenches and replace a motor or change some errant control point. Alas, my old man, and I must admit I follow closely in his footsteps, by temperament, would never find a path to approach the repair.

As a result every Friday night, my mother would hustle five or six baskets of dirty laundry, my brother, me, down to the laundromat in Verona Pa. I would immediately run up the street and around the corner to the Newsstand. It sits, still there, on Allegheny River Boulevard. I would make the row of paperback racks squeak and twirl in search of the latest science fiction paperback. After a considered selection I rushed back to my mother and begged for a quarter or thirty-five cents.

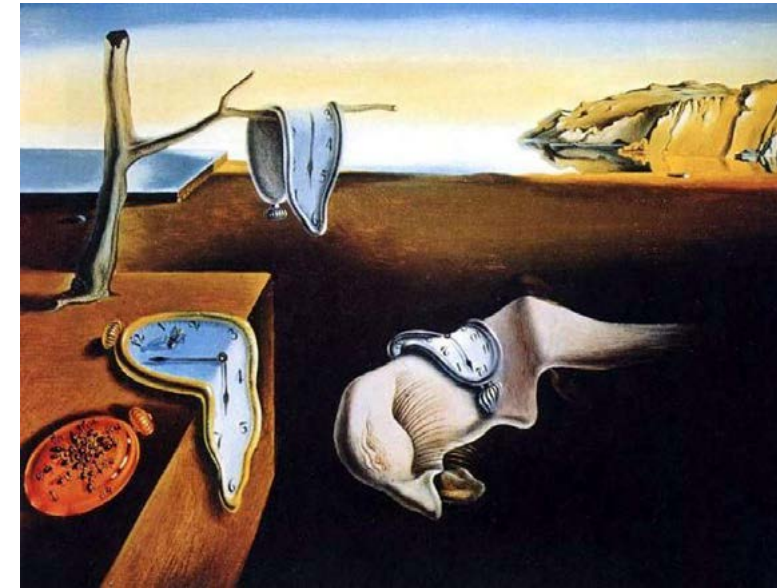


The Furniture of Time.- Yves Tanguy

Back at the newsstand, more often than not, I would have been attracted to the SF covers of Richard Powers. Little squiggly bits of rock and/or matter, a barren plane, some twirling alien concoction of line and color. For years I believed the covers were the work of the surrealist painter Yves Tanguy. That name is at least as good as Groff Conklin for an SF creator. So I was a little surprised when I looked up "Science Fiction Paperback covers like Yves Tanguy" on a search engine, the first answer was Richard Powers.

It is entirely appropriate that Powers designed the 1955 cover of *Symphonie Fantastique* by Hector Berlioz, in which an artist moves from a scene in the country; to a ball; to dreams of witches, demons and sorcerers; to a witness of his own execution. One reviewer writes, "I accept that this symphony is of an almost inconceivable strangeness and that the schoolmasters will no doubt pronounce an anathema on these profanations of the 'truly beautiful'." Sounds like speculative fiction to me.

Powers born in Chicago (1921) started out as a traditional pulp artist but was influenced by the cubists and surrealists, Picasso, Tanguy, Dali. It is hard not to see a connection between Dali's famous painting, "The Persistence of Time", in many of the works of Tanguy and the covers of Richard Powers. There is even the interesting barren plane with rock outcroppings at the beginning of some of the episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, if not created by Powers was certainly influenced. It is said that Richard Powers did more science fiction paperback covers than any other illustrator in the 1950s and 1960s. If you click the following link to the Internet Science Fiction Database <http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?1811>, you will see the very very very very long list of covers that Richard Powers produced.



Persistence of Memory-Salvatore Dali



When I think of the genre Science Fiction or Speculative Fiction or Science Fantasy or... the images of all those newsstand Richard Powers paperback covers on the works of all the grand names of famous SF authors comes unbidden into my memory. In short, I have been and I am hooked.



A stylized, handwritten signature of Richard Powers.

SF And Rock

Kate Bush



Multi-talented British singer, songwriter, composer, musician, record producer Kate Bush has long used literary, film, and speculative elements in her work. Though oddly not a household name in the U.S., Bush has had a long and successful career in the UK and Europe (though she has been nominated for Grammy awards and to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame). She's the first British solo female artist to top the UK album charts, and the first female artist to enter the album charts at number one.

Though occasionally performing on stage, Bush has mainly worked as a studio artist, playing a variety of keyboard instruments and multi-tracking her 6-octave voice to create layers of soaring vocals. Some of the artists who cite Bush as an influence on their own work are Tori Amos, Sinead O'Connor, k.d. lang, and Tegan and Sara.

The song "Breathing," from her 1980 LP *Never Forever*, was about nuclear holocaust, but with a twist. The apocalypse is experienced by a fetus in her mother's womb. "The Infant Kiss" is inspired by the film *The Innocents* which, in turn was inspired by Henry James' supernatural chiller *The Turn of the Screw*.

A couple SF-inspired songs off her 1985 album *The Hounds of Love*, are "Watching You Without Me," which tells of the ghost of a woman who's just died trying to contact her husband. The title track "The Hounds of Love" samples some dialogue from the 1957 horror thriller *Curse of the Demon*. "It's in the trees! It's coming!"

"Get Out of my House," from her 1982 LP *The Dreaming* was inspired by Stephen King's novel *The Shining*. Very creepy, atmospheric song. The name of the title track is inspired by the Australian aborigines' creation myth,

the Dreamtime, although the song itself describes the plight of contemporary aborigines. The album cover refers to the song "Houdini" which is about Harry Houdini's wife who, when kissing him right before one of his illusions when he was all chained up, would slip the lock key from her mouth to his.

Her album *The Red Shoes* and its title track are inspired by the 1948 film of the same name which, in turn, is based on the Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale about a woman who comes into possession of a pair magical ballet slippers.

She composed and recorded the song "Lyra" for the soundtrack of the film version of *The Golden Compass*.

Her 1986 single, "Experiment IV" is a little bit of SF horror about a military experiment to create murderous weapons of sound. Which, of course, goes horribly wrong. The video was initially banned on the British Top of the Pops program because of its "disturbing/violent" content. But it was nominated for Best Concept Music Video at the 1988 Grammy Awards, so go figure.

There's a scene in the video which is certainly inspired by *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. You'll know which one when you see it. Besides Bush, the video stars some familiar faces, albeit much younger – actor Hugh Laurie of *House* fame, actress and comedian Dawn French, and late actor Peter Vaughn who portrayed Maester Aemon on *Game of Thrones* among many other roles.

Here's a link to the video. But remember – it's disturbing and violent! Don't watch it alone!

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=experiment+iv+video&view=detail&mid=17152776F7A57992B2AC-17152776F7A57992B2AC&FORM=VIRE>



-- Larry

The Return Of Babylon 5

Larry Ivkovich



Praise the Great Maker, Babylon 5 is back!

The sophisticated, adult SF television series is being rebroadcast on the Comet TV Network (cable channel 469 on Verizon). I was a big fan during the show's 1994 to 1998 run on the now-defunct PTEN network for the first 4 seasons and TNN during its final season.



Created and, except for about 20 episodes, written by Michael J. Michael Straczynski, B5 still impresses 25 years later. The late Harlan Ellison served as the show's creative consultant and appeared in one episode in a cameo role. Other familiar SF figures are Walter Koenig portraying the nasty Psi-Corps officer, Alfred Bester (Yes, Alfred Bester, whose name was used because of his great novel about telepaths, *The Demolished Man*). And an adult Bill Mummy, Will Robinson of *Lost in Space*, as Linnier, aide to Minbari Ambassador Delenn.

Babylon 5 is a giant space station 5 miles long and serves as a focal point for interspecies relations. Many of the storylines detail the ages-old wars and their consequences between alien races (Earth/Minbari, Narn/Centauri) and the rise of a totalitarian government on Earth. Conspiracies and devious plots abound! Though 25 years old, the series is topical and prophetic, ringing true in our own troubled times.

Conceived as a television novel, with each episode as a chapter, the series is a 5-year story arc with occasional standalone episodes, taking place in the years 2257–2262. Complex and ambitious, the show featured the population of B5, which included Earth Force military staff, alien diplomats from extraterrestrial races the Minbari, the Vorlons, the Centauri, the Narn, and others, and various civilian and corporate characters. B5 was one of the first SF shows to use CGI effects and to focus on politics and religion as interpreted and practiced by the wide variety of alien races.

The first season featured actor Michael O'Hare in the role of Commander John Sinclair, who somewhat surprisingly left the show after the first season, being replaced by Bruce Boxleitner as the new commander and war hero, John Sheridan. It turns out O'Hare suffered from some health problems but did return over the course of the series in 3 episodes, the last 2 being a 2-parter which describes Sinclair's ultimate destiny in a very cool plot twist.



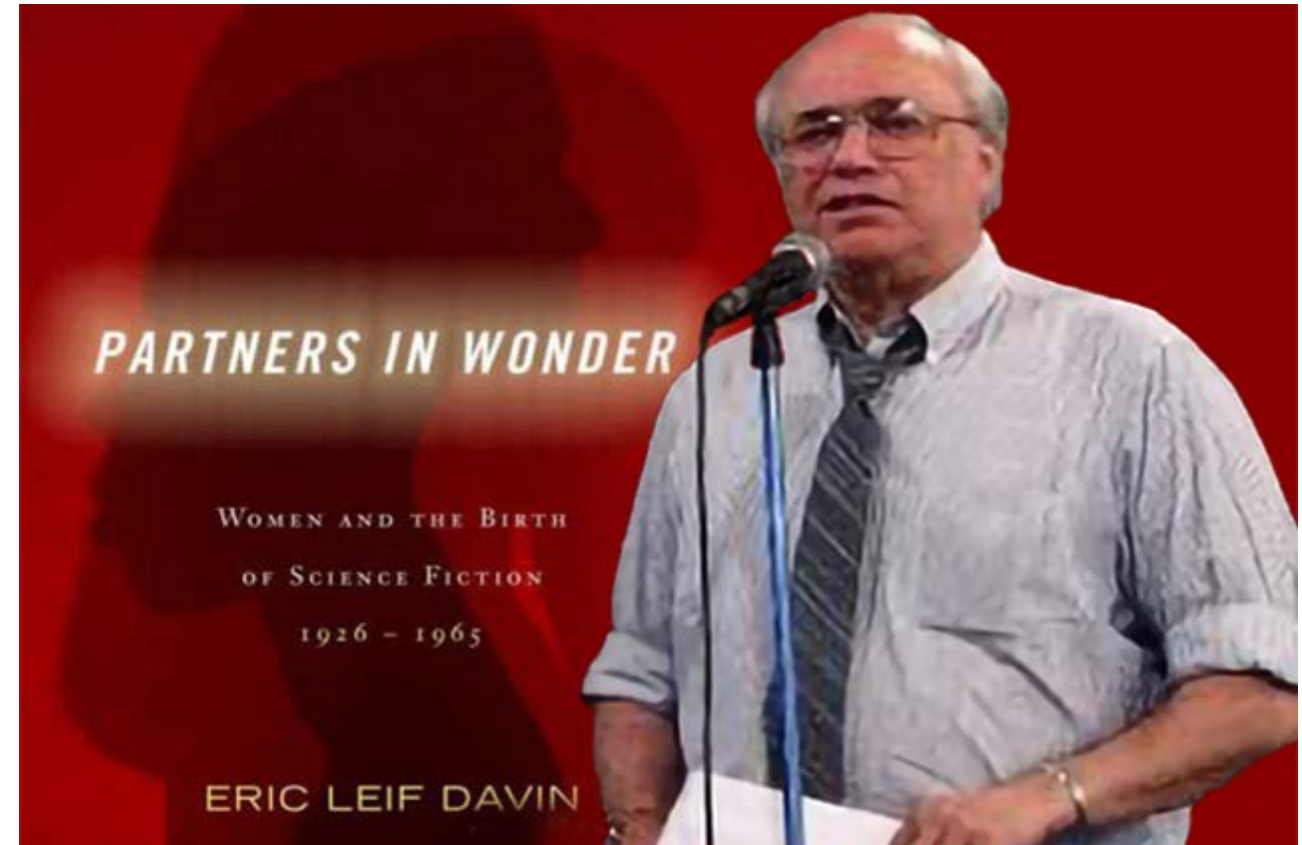
Unlike other arc-type television shows, like *Twin Peaks* and *Lost*, whose writers were often rumored to be making everything up as they went along, Straczynski rigorously planned and outlined the whole series, making changes and adjustments when necessary. He said he left a “trap door” for every character in case they left the series, which did happen in a number of cases.

The acting, writing, dialogue, directing, sets, and effects are superb. Even Michael O’Hare doesn’t seem as bad an actor as I first thought. He was great! Of course, Bruce Boxleitner was a terrific choice to replace him. No contest.

A test-pilot TV movie was first produced and aired in 1993 called *Babylon 5: The Gathering*, which details some of the pre-history of the series particularly with the Earth-Minbari war. With the movie garnering good ratings, the series was allowed to go forward. Some of the actors (and their characters) in that movie didn’t return for the series, with the exception of Patricia Tallman (commercial telepath Lyta Alexander), who replaced Andrea Thompson (Talía Winters) in Season 2 after another wild plot twist. Also, the character of Delenn, played by Mira Furlan who also portrayed Danielle Rousseau on *Lost*, looks vastly different in the series as compared to the movie, thankfully, with much less makeup and prosthetics. Five more TV movies were produced and aired, depicting various years in the series history.

A number of mysteries lie at the heart of the show. What happened to the first four Babylon stations? Why, during the Earth-Minbari War, did the Minbari surrender just as they were on the verge of victory? What does Vorlon Ambassador Kosh, always dressed in public in his encounter suit, really look like? What is the “hole” in Commander Sinclair’s mind? Why do the Minbari want Sinclair to command Babylon 5 and then to be the ambassador to their planet? What are the Shadows? What is the Minbari prophecy? What is Bureau 13? And more. One of the interesting things I found out recently about the show is it aired right around the time *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* did. It turns out Straczynski pitched B5 to Paramount first, giving them a copy of the show “bible” and notes. Paramount turned him down but then began production on *Deep Space Nine*. Straczynski claims there are some direct similarities between the shows which were lifted from his notes. A decision was made not to sue but I think most people would agree the better show by far, as good as *Deep Space Nine* was, is *Babylon 5*. Except, of course, for Sheldon on *The Big Bang Theory*, who panned B5 because of his love for *Star Trek*. I guess.

The websites Dailymotion and YouTube allow free viewing of all the B5 episodes, if you’re interested. I’d check them out if I were you or the Shadows or the Soul Hunters or the Techno Mages will get you!



Agatha (Miller) Christie (Mallowan), (1890-1976)

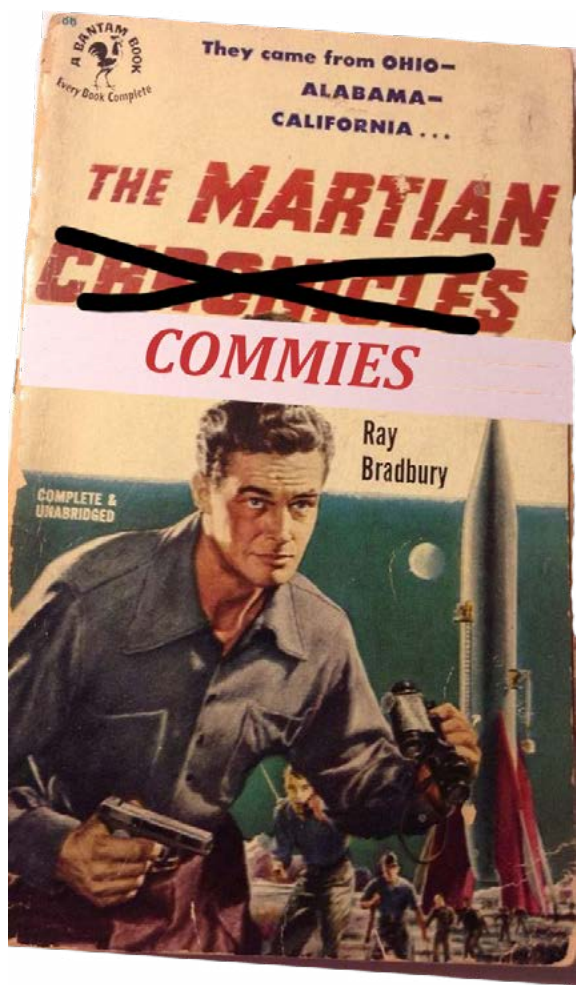
Christie was born in Torquay, Devon, England, and was one of the most famous detective writers of all time. She was home-schooled by her mother until age 16 and married Colonel Archibald Christie in 1914. During World War I she worked in a hospital dispensary, which gave her an intimate knowledge of poisons. Her first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), introduced her famous Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot (her other main detective was Miss Marple). In 1926 she divorced her husband and in 1930 married the noted archaeologist Sir Max Mallowan, whom she accompanied on digs in Iraq and Syria.

She wrote 66 detective novels, six novels as “Mary Westmacott,” two autobiographies, and several plays, including *The Mousetrap*. This play holds the record for the longest-running British play and is still running in London decades after its premiere. Her excellent collection of supernatural tales, *The Hound of Death* (1933), included the classic, “The Last Séance.” The Mystery Writers of America presented her with a Grand Master Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1954.



Spying on Ray Bradbury

by Eric Leif Davin



The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in its paranoia, especially under J. Edgar Hoover, kept files on nearly everybody who was anybody. My own requests for information from the FBI under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and subsequent lawsuits, forced the release of the Bureau’s files on early Wonder Stories editor David Lasser. Perhaps this is understandable, as Lasser was a member of the Socialist Party in the 1930s and a leader of the unemployed movement of that era. But the only reason the FBI opened a file on Lasser’s boss, Hugo Gernsback, was because he spoke German. Evidently, they couldn’t discern the difference between the countries of Germany and Gernsback’s native Luxembourg, where German is the official language.

There was perhaps even less reason for the FBI to open a file on noted science fiction writer Ray Bradbury during the 1950s, but it seems they did that, also. The fact that Bradbury was yet another suspicious “subversive” has been revealed in Writers Under Surveillance: The FBI Files, just out from MIT Press. The book collects facsimiles of the Bureau’s files on 16 famous writers, of whom Bradbury is the only SF writer. Much of the Bureau’s information on Bradbury came from actor and screenwriter Martin Berkeley, a former Communist Party member who gave 160 names to the House Committee on Un-American Activities during the McCarthyite Fifties.

Science fiction, it seems, was part of the Commie plot against America. According to Berkeley, Bradbury, and other science fiction writers, “reached a large audience through their writings which are generally published in paperbacked volumes in large quantities.” This was dangerous because, “The general aim of these science fiction writers is to frighten the people into a state of paralysis or psychological incompetence bordering on hysteria, which would make it very possible to conduct a Third World War which the American people would seriously believe could not be won since their morale had been seriously destroyed.” Berkeley couldn’t say for sure if Bradbury was a Communist Party member, but he had heard him warn against “McCarthyites and cowards” at a meeting of the Writers’ Guild of America, which was suspicious enough, and therefore warranted surveillance.

Who knew that The Martian Chronicles was merely a sequel to The Communist Manifesto and all part of the Commie plot to conquer America?



This month is a social meeting.

Be prepared to talk about your favorite SF/F/H Books, Films, Games, Poems, Illustrations, Costumes TV Programs, Radio Programs, Comedy Skits, Authors, Characters...You know, the yuushe.

The meeting is, as always, free and open to the public. Bring a friend, stranger, family member, five tenacled thing or other member of a glam rock group.

Squirrel Hill Branch of the Carnegie Library
Room C - At the Fornt Entrance
1:30 - 4:30 PM
Come in and introduce yourself
The room is open at noon.

Life After October 27, 2018

by Bill Hall



In the beginning was the Word. Thousands of years ago, the Word was not even available to us civilians and commoners but was hoarded as the precious software of the very root of civilization. It began, perhaps, as a system of bookkeeping for the affairs of kings, but then blossomed into tales of spiritual identity. Technically, statistically, half the people on Earth today are considered people of the Book, inasmuch as they owe some nodding respect to the Bible, that book taken for granted by Catholics and Protestants and Muslims but which was born as the lifeblood of the Jews. As with Shakespeare, we need to remember that the Bible was intended not simply to be read but to be spoken and shared, a campfire for a nomadic people huddling in the shadows of older and greater civilizations of their age. Today, post-Gutenberg, the Word is for and by all of us, and as Americans and in particular as devotees of science fiction we still feel nomadic at heart, gathering as a community united by stories told in all manner of media, imagining a universe as convulsive as anything that van Gogh ever tried to paint one starry night. The Word goes on, spreading to become the responsibility of all of us.

I have lived in the Pittsburgh community of Squirrel Hill since kindergarten. I once heard a mild joke that perhaps it should be called Scroll Hill, in honor of scrolls of Torah and the Jews who live here. My apartment building is practically across the street from a Yeshiva school, and throughout my days I see orthodox kids walking by all the time, sometimes playing in a little park a few houses down where Davis School once stood. My mother once got recruited as a token Gentile to help turn lights on during an evening service down at Congregation Poale Zedeck, and I proudly vote at Shaare Torah Congregation on Murray Avenue. As for the Tree of Life, I enjoy walking right past it as I go shopping at points north, and not so many years ago it was a regular feature of my daily walks to and from work. Squirrel Hill is far, far more than simply “the Jewish neigh-

borhood,” but its Jewishness doesn’t hurt, it doesn’t hurt – usually. The other night, kids at Allderdice High School, my alma mater and my sisters, organized a vigil up at Forbes and Murray while our mayor and our governor were right by at Sixth Presbyterian. When the heat is on, this is one neighborhood which lives up to the dream of Mister Rogers.

Far better and more intimate testimony to the tragedy, I leave to our resident poet Timons Esaias, and I also recommend an essay by Brentin Mock at an online paper called Citylab. For myself, I am simply struck by the fact that for many years now we have held our meetings at the Carnegie Library of Squirrel Hill right at Forbes and Murray, and we have done so just four blocks down from the Tree of Life.

There is one formula which says that we curse the insanity, shake our heads hard, sigh deeply, and carry on. That’s a fine formula, and I don’t knock it, but today I confess that I need a little more. Today, I dare to wonder if “closure” is necessarily an absolute good. Perhaps it’s because I’m just so damn old and I don’t see much point to healing myself into some pristine corpse for some tidy abstract concept of propriety. No, for once this is one scar I choose to go on wearing as a badge of pride. In a time like this I feel like we are all Jews.

Bowers, the man, the person, the humanoid simulacrum, whatever he is, fired away while screaming “All Jews must die,” inevitably reminding us of that Certain Someone who once took that idea very seriously indeed. His meaning may have been strictly ethnic, and yet even he by his very action acknowledged how horribly handy it was for him to find his targets at a meeting place defined, not by ethnicity, but by faith. What can it be about a faith, any faith, that so irritates and enrages an evil man? From time to time the faith that is science fiction imagines an eventual extinction of lethal garbage such as anti-Semitism. Granted, in losing that we may lose the human race altogether or simply trade in one set of problems for a whole new set. We don’t feel very utopian these days. The point being, we dare to see beyond, and for no other reason than that, there are those who would blind us.

As we head out into the Facebook wilderness, and occasionally bump against the sneers and jeers of bullies who would shame us for simply having a natural reaction to a horrible tragedy, we must remember what we are. Never, never, never apologize to anyone, least of all some anonymous nihilist, for being the owner of a caring heart. Be it faithful or secular, sentimental or technical, never doubt the Word’s power to reach out to a better world. In the beginning was the Word, and in the end, the Word is ours, and nothing is going to shut us up.



Sunday, December 16, 2018

Joe Coluccio - 1960 Pittcon



Did yinz know there was a World Science Fiction Convention in Pittsburgh?

In 1960?

Dawntawn at the William Penn Hotel en'at?

Honest to Pete.

Well, then ,my fine friend, please attend the Parsec Meeting on Sunday December 16, 2018 at the Squirrel Hill Branch of the Carnegie Library, Meeting Room B at 1:30 PM, because

We are gonna have a blast showing you the slides of our latest Time Traveling Trip to Pittcon in 1960.

SEE

Robert Heinlein dance with E.E. Doc Smith

WATCH

Harlan Ellison tickle Issac Asimov

DISCOVER

The Wild Science Fiction Party Scene

DON'T MISS

Daring Bjo Trimble in the Masquerade Contest

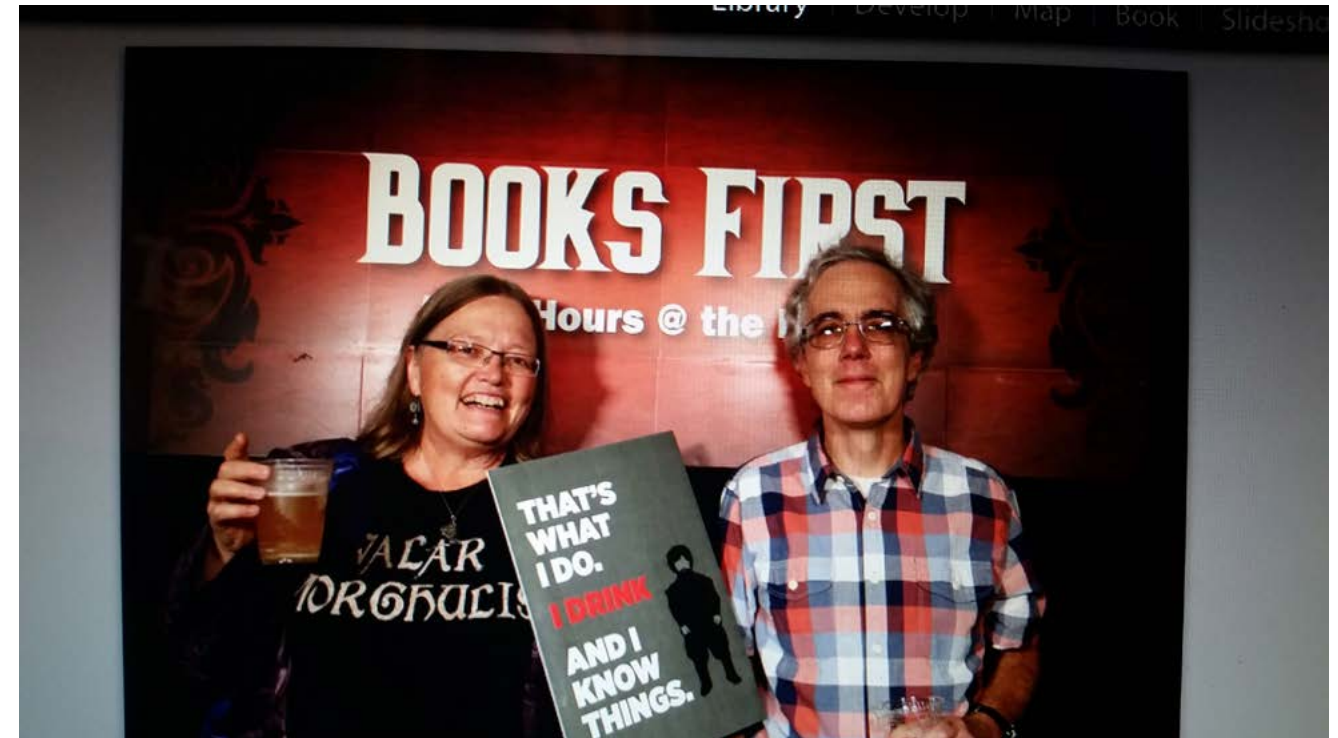
GAWK

At the Outré Exhibits of Art Show

Free and Open to the Public. No registration required. Just bring an active imagination. And maybe a tab or two of your favorite time motion sickness medicine.

Sunday, January 20, 2019

Jim and Laurie Mann



Jim and Laurie Mann are long-time members of Parsec. Before that, they were members of WPSFA (Western Pa Science Fiction Association). They have both been influential in local science fiction fandom; Confluence and other national cons; organizers of World Science Fiction Conventions; and the Nebula Awards.

Jim has helped edit several volumes of the prestigious works of SF for the New England Science Fiction Association.

Laurie is responsible for the always interesting Dead People Server and the updated Facebook group of the same name.

We are lucky to have them among us. This meeting is a must for those who want to be filled in on stories about both the history and the future of the Pittsburgh science fiction scene and a glimpse of the world of science fiction fandom at large.

Sunday, March 17, 2019

Jason Jack Miller - Fiction and the Power of Belief



[Jason Jack Miller](#) knows it's silly to hold onto the Bohemian ideals of literature, music, and love above all else. But he doesn't care.

His own adventures paddling wild mountain rivers and playing Nirvana covers for less-than-enthusiastic crowds inspired his Murder Ballads and Whiskey series. The first four books of this linked series are currently available: [The Devil and Preston Black](#), [Hellbender](#), [The Revelations of Preston Black](#), and [All Saints](#).

[Hellbender](#) was Jason's thesis novel for **Seton Hill University's Writing Popular Fiction Graduate Program**, where he is now a mentor and guest lecturer. The novel won the **Arthur J. Rooney Award for Fiction** and was a finalist for the **Appalachian Writers Association Book of the Year Award**. His career got its start when he co-authored an outdoor travel guide with his wife in 2006. Since then his work has appeared in newspapers, magazines, literary journals, online, as part of a travel guide app for mobile phones, and in the award-winning writing guide [Many Genres, One Craft](#). When Jason isn't writing he's on his mountain bike or looking for his next favorite guitar. He is a member of The Authors Guild, Pennwriters, Littsburgh, and International Thriller Writers.

He lives just outside of Pittsburgh with his wife, Heidi, with whom he shares a lifestyle and travel channel on YouTube called [Small Space Big Life](#).

Tweet him [@jasonjackmiller](#).

Gram him [@jasonjackmiller](#).

Email him at jasonjackmiller@gmail.com.

And peruse his website at www.jasonjackmiller.com.

Sunday, September 15, 2019

Heidi Ruby Miller In Between Middle Grade and YA: What About 11-13 Year Olds Reading Speculative Fiction?



[Heidi Ruby Miller](#) is a travel writer turned novelist. She uses research for her stories as an excuse to roam the globe. Her books include the popular [AMBASADORA](#) series, [MAN OF WAR](#), which is a sequel to Science Fiction Grandmaster Philip José Farmer's novel [TWO HAWKS FROM EARTH](#), and the award-winning writing guide [MANY GENRES, ONE CRAFT](#). In between trips, Heidi teaches creative writing at [Seton Hill University](#), where she graduated from their renowned [Writing Popular Fiction Graduate Program](#) the same month she appeared on [Who Wants To Be A Millionaire](#). She is a member of [International Thriller Writers](#), [Pennwriters](#), [Littsburgh](#), [PARSEC](#), and [Broad Universe](#).

Follow Heidi's adventures with her husband, [Jason Jack Miller](#), on their YouTube travel and lifestyle channel [Small Space, Big Life](#) and find her author interview series [Three Great Things About](#) at [Heidi Ruby Miller](#). You can also see what she's doing at her [website](#) and [Instagram](#), both named...you guessed it, **Heidi Ruby Miller**. It's so much easier to find her that way.