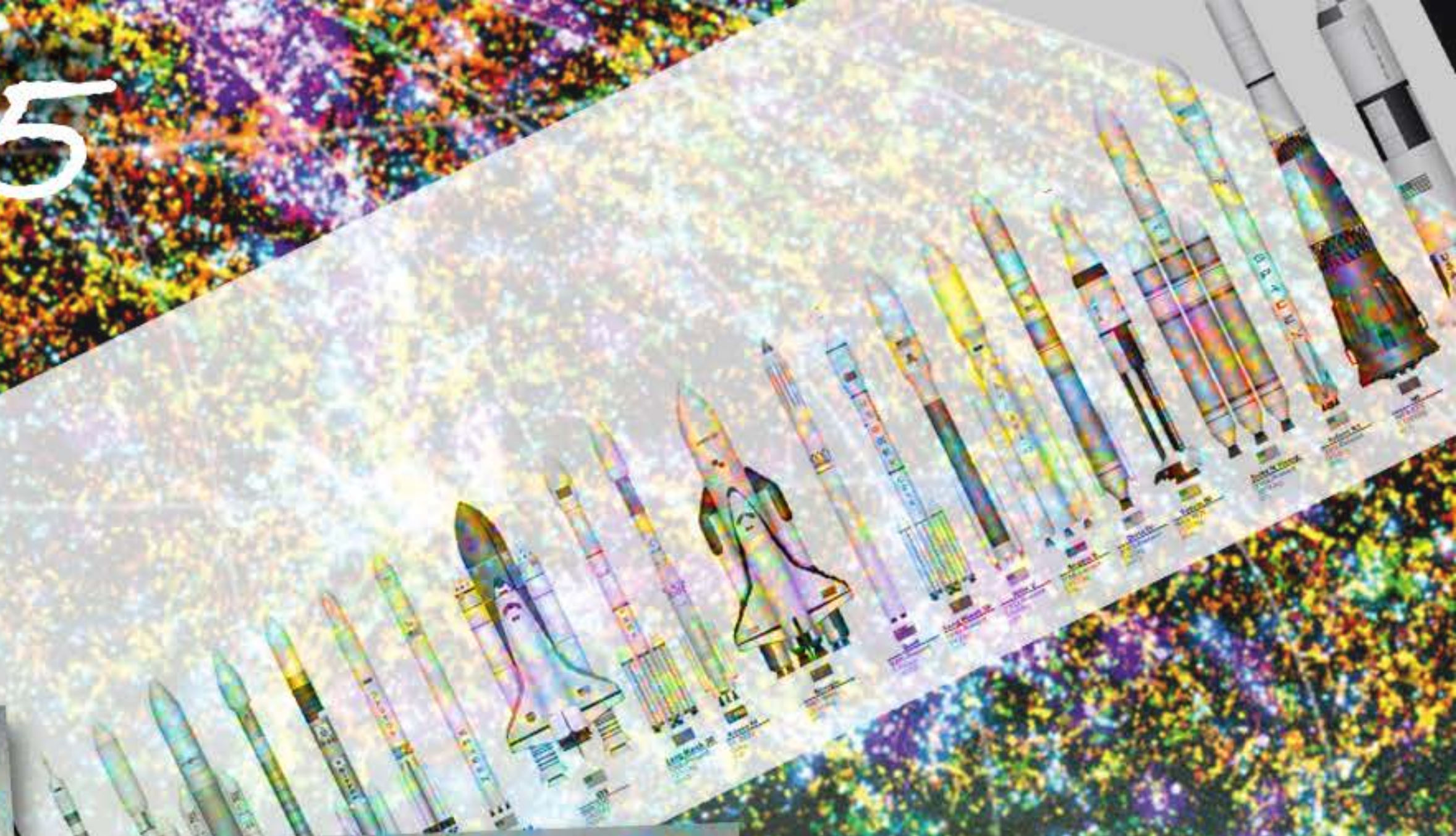
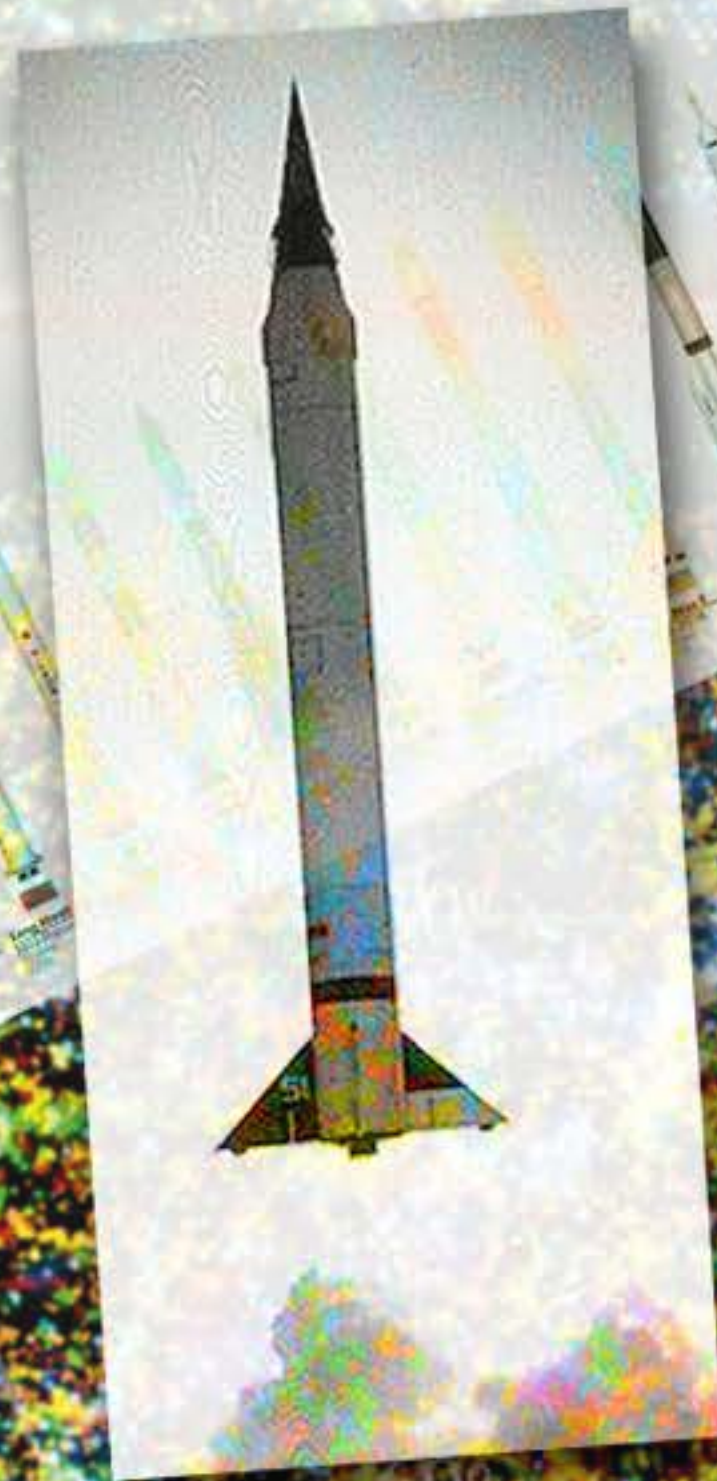
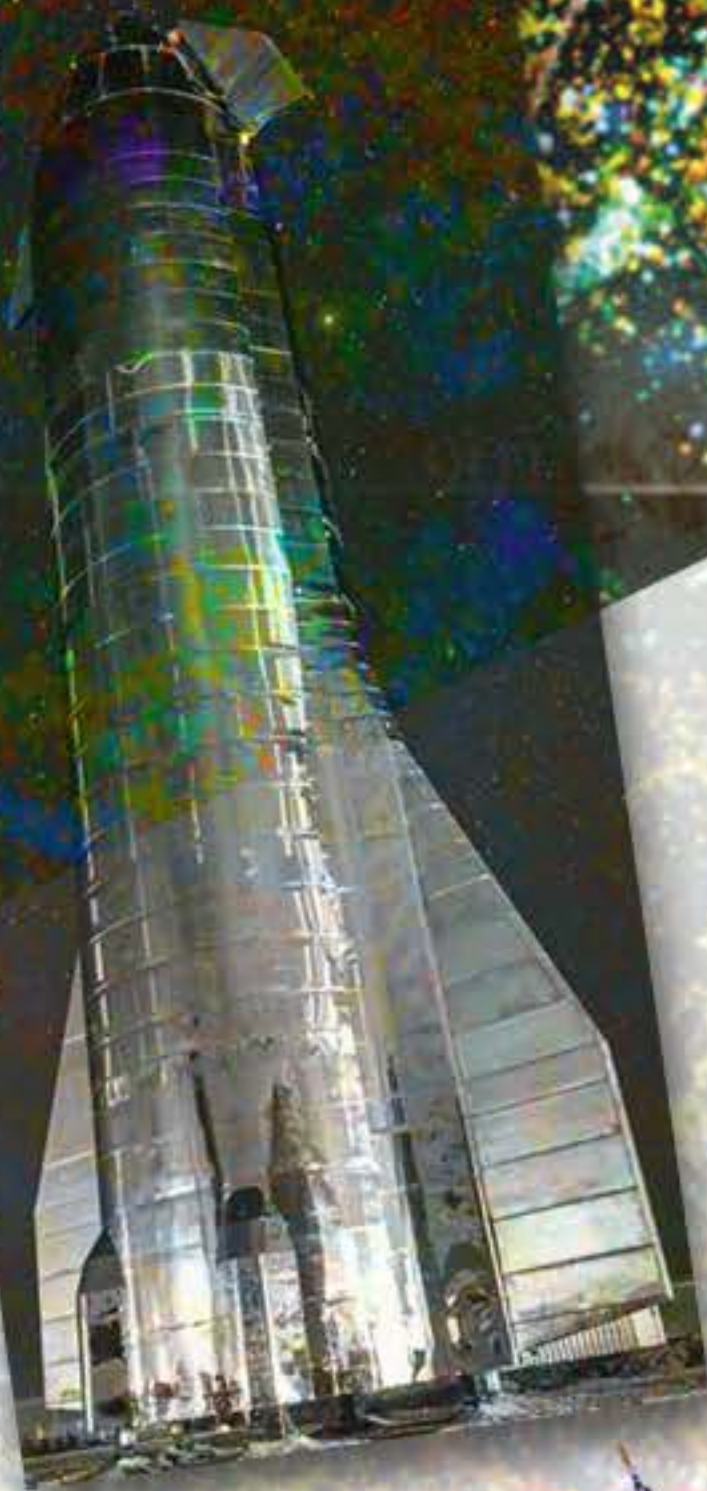
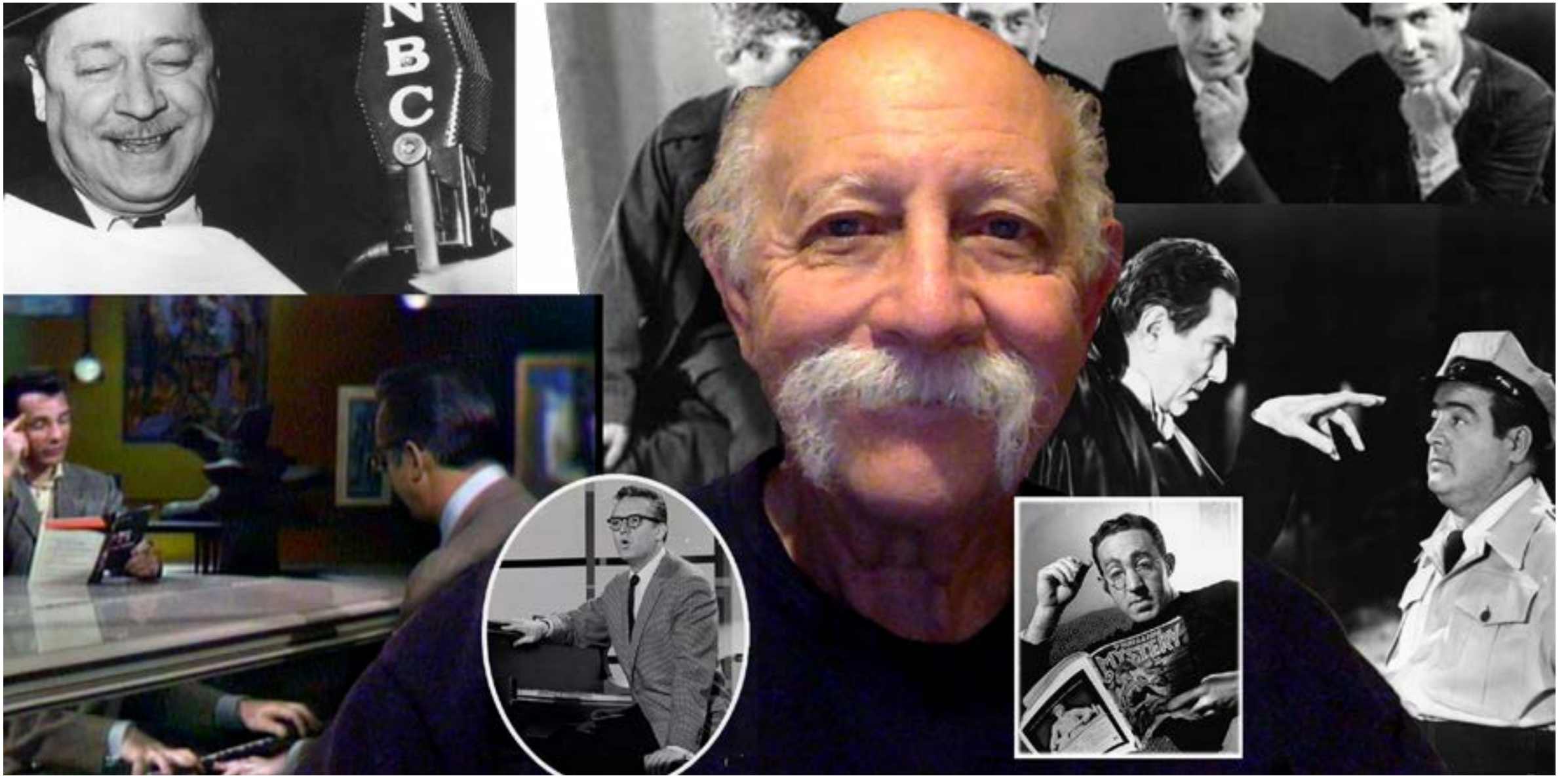


Sigma Issue 425

August 2021





PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

HOW DO I LAUGH? LET ME COUNT THE WAYS

By Joe Coluccio

Of my passions, SF is but one. I have loved and been influenced by comedy, radio, the guitar, and noir fiction and film. I won't bother to write the list of the remaining. You wouldn't care all that much, and I don't have the time or inclination to sculpt an inventory spiraling into my diminishing spheres of interest.

How do those mentioned areas of sway relate to SF? a little patience, give me a minute. So Comedy, not in the sense of Aristophanes, although I have cracked a smile or two at the Birds, in particular where the magic root is chewed, and I was transformed into a bird, (Still think there is no relation to SF?), but in the sense of make me laugh until my belly button screws out. First, let me figure the depth and breadth and height of the sources of my inspiration.

Although I am enamored and devoted to the works of S.J. Perelman, the worlds of Groucho and the rest of the Marxes, the timing of Bud and Lou (Third base?), fabulous Joan Rivers, or remarkable Tina Fey, need I mention Robert Benchley, or, it needs to be said, Bob Hope, or Dorothy Parker, Mark Twain?, before all of them, in my own proud comic bent, comes Steve Allen. His sense of comedy was absurd and magnificent. The American audience witnessed a brilliant exhibition of comedy years long that bordered the dangerous and delivered to the gut. At times the audience responded to his work with encouragement, sometimes with less gusto. No comedy is perfect. Even the most hilarious can go flat. I will remind you that Allen was one of the few people that interviewed Jack Kerouac on national TV. Can there be anything more amusing than that?

Over the years, he was co-creator and the original Tonight Show host, had a Sunday Night variety hour, opposite the immensely popular Jackie Gleason Show, and later in his career, an after the news and worries of the day passing midnight bacchanal syndicated TV Show.

Evening after evening (The Steve Allen Westinghouse Show was on West Coast Time) after a trip on a camel down Hollywood Blvd, Steve would proclaim as a prelude to some antic behavior, 'make me a banana split and the crew would escort him over to a large silver boat, pack him in many flavors of ice cream, pour syrup and fruit over him, top all with whipped cream and a cherry and let the audience form a queue to scoop a dishful. Now, that, my friends, tips the tops of Aristophanes.

HOW DO I LAUGH? LET ME COUNT THE WAYS Page 2

An Aside from the Wikipedia:

Steve Allen’s *... cause of death* (in October of 2000) *was a ruptured blood vessel caused by chest injuries he did not realize he had sustained in a minor traffic accident earlier in the day. According to Jayne Meadows* (his wife)*, “Typical of Steve, [who] was the dearest, sweetest man: He was hit by a man, backing into him, breaking all of his ribs, that pierced his heart ... and when he got out of the car, he said to the man, ‘What some people will do to get my autograph.’”*

He introduced the world to Gypsy Boots, and Brother Theodore and Lord Buckley, while I gorged and went to school tired and wanting each AM. My average high school grades could not possibly suffer anymore, and once I was accepted to college (a career move that revolved funnier than any Steve Allen episode) I did not give a slight damn.

I think long, and I think hard about humor, comedy, and my life. Seems we are in a trough now that feeds us the stuff of dystopia. It happens once in a while. The unfair part of the bargain we make with such “serious” palaver is no room is left over for the comic, the ironic, the funny, the wit, the droll. We walk around with the drag of the future around us, like Marley’s chains on Christmas Eve. Even the stand-up comedy of the day is drenched in gross-out sexual images that make the audience swoon at the daring of it all. Comedy prepared by ill-tempered stand-ups who cannot possibly have the reach of a Richard Prior or Lenny Bruce, who they so want to emulate.

We lack the comparison with grand funny, which is in sad decline. What passes for biting wit is now signified by comedy directors who picture bowling balls dropping on the toes of supposed pathetic people inhabiting a suburban bowling alley, followed by a quick cut to the emergency room where each has their feet amputated. (Not in any film I just made it up) Big Hoot! I long for a Laurel and Hardy neighborhood-wide pie-throwing dust-up or foot hopping contest. For WC Fields and Mr. Muckles popping light bulbs off a grocery table.

Seems it’s harder these days to find any experience that moves you in the propor direction toward twisting loose your belly button so your being can fall apart. What you recieve instead is a smear of the potty humor you left behind in a giggle in the school playground. An easy mark for the laugh, which is only the left over residue of comedy.

Rebirth and circle the wagons.

True SF and Honest Comedy skirt the environs of our existence and often crossover to a new unfolding universe. Give a new perspective, not a necessary pleasant, not entirely satisfying, not entirely civilized. You may have to scratch hard for the payoff. It can be confusing. It can be unnerving. It can be embarrassing. The hope? It helps you to see and think in novel directions. To leave your low-down-mud-grunting ways behind and reckon with an eternal moment of absurd experience.

Minutus cantorum, minutus balorum, minutus carborata descendum pantorum.

Parsec Membership

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I read a whole big bunch of academic conjecture about SF. It almost becomes understandable once you catch on to the vernacular, milieu, and measure. In many cases, if it wasn't ridiculous it would be funny. Just like everywhere else on the intellectual spectrum, on occasion, it is purely brilliant, provocative, exhilarating.

The latter is why I keep reading.

The latter is what I attempt to write. In varying degrees. From plain playful and sinful to a trip halfway up the mountain.

The latter is what I seek as editor. I feel we are lucky to have a panoply of such talent within the Parsec organization. On display and in this and every issue. This August 2021 Issue I no exception. Do yourself a favor and read the articles and poem on hand.

It would be fun to have a short story. A limerick, a drawing of some creepy crawly from Deneb 6 (didn't look it up or give it much thought, did not check the hosts of exoplanets, just made it up as I wrote), a pissed off letter, a thoughtful comment, or something I never contemplated would make good copy. It is all grist for this particular non-paper mill.

It is late. My eyelids are closing. I poured a glass of Jack over ice and am relaxing as a neo-noir film glazes over the TV screen. I know I will not make it and will have to rewind in the AM. There is so much more I wanted to do with this month's Sigma. Maybe next month.



Send your submissions to either:

sigma@parsec-sff.org

or

joe@joecoluccio.org

[Submission Due by
September 5, 2021](#)

The Cover

Since the day I picked up a copy of The City and the Stars, I have been a fan of the generation ship. We are on a large generation ship making its way through a tiny portion of our galaxy, swimming in a cosmos full of wonder, filling our teacup with knowledge.

It occurred to me, having the experience of the generations from my Grandparents to my Grandson, that our tiny exploration vehicles which have paraded across the landscape since the 1920s, may expand and grow up into longterm interstellar habitats.

Will Jeff Bezos become D.D. Harriman?

I'm looking for the "spindizzy" (Dillon-Wagoner Graviton Polarity Generator) to spirit Pittsburgh away ad astra. Salute!



JULY 2021 MINUTES

Secretary Bill Hall

A dozen of us Zoomed the July 16 meeting. There was some discussion of Anthony Mackie joining the second season of “Altered Carbon” and speculation on the forthcoming Villeneuve Dune. Mary Soon Lee got two short stories published (but of course). John Thompson pronounced our forthcoming “Triangulation: Habitats” to be our best yet, though as of the meeting it still had no final covers. Kevin Hayes opened the possibility of Confluence finally resuming in person in late July 2022 (putting it in possible competition with PulpFest and the Pennsic War) or early October 2022. There is as yet no guest of honor. Scot Noel announced the start of a DreamForge discussion group called Dreamcasters. Mary read two poems, of which I particularly remember the one about the Andromeda Galaxy and our being due to collide with it in four billion years.

The meeting began with President Joe (ours, not the nation’s) giving a quick autobiography: the New Experimental College in Denmark, work at WYEP-FM Radio, starting the comedy group Lackzoom Acidophilus, named for a building on Penn Avenue amidst the neighborhoods of Garfield, Friendship, and East Liberty. Then he attended Parsec’s 2013 Christmas party and became President. Throughout his life he has noted that volunteer groups such as Parsec tend to have labor and responsibility apportioned very lopsidedly. We

revisited Parsec’s four sections and the people running them.

Invited to contribute, I jumped in a bit haphazardly with Parsec history as I saw it. For over twenty years, it seemed to me, Parsec relied on a set of built-in powerhouses. One was Ann Cecil, who co-founded and essentially lived Parsec, thoroughly organized it, engaged individuals, annotated and housed our library, and enforced dues payment. (In my case she spent an evening shepherding a typewriter-loving cyber-savage like myself with saintly patience through the process of composing and attaching essays via e-mail – very simply, I would not have been Secretary for fifteen years without her.) Another was our convention Confluence, which early on always impressed me as Parsec’s biggest ongoing project and concern. The centerpiece of Confluence, a kind of binding energy and top event, was the musical play. It was convenient to assume that we could go on relying on these forever. By 2011 we lost Ann at the unjustly early age of sixty (what I am now) and the main engine behind the play, our Parallax Second Players, seemed to peter out, with Covid-19 delivering an extra blow. There was some concern that this was mere mourning and despair on my part, but I was trying to make a practical point: we’ve been running on inertia, and graying along the way, for thirty years and still need to reinvent ourselves and adapt to a new century.

Scot Noel talked about keeping DreamForge going in hard times with a sense of mission and devotion to charity. Christopher Niessl kept things in perspective by noting that there are simply 33 official SF fans at Carnegie-Mellon. (This raises the question of how Pitt is doing.) Kevin noted that Ann was aware that we are in constant competition with other conventions and kept in touch with them, attending many. At this point, Mary wondered if we were maintaining a list of contacts. Kevin also recalled Confluence plays of non-Parsec origin and was kind enough to remind me that a successful non-play event was the Trial of Kirk, which evolved from Eric Davin and myself just talking. Along with Kevin, John Thompson noted the rising importance and success of our Triangulation anthologies.

One idea seemed to emerge, beginning with Mary wondering about expanding Triangulation themes to programs and events. Scot and I got to speculating on the generation of themes, as he has used themes for DreamForge. Could a steady attack of topical or popular themes generate new interest and invention? (Personal side note: it worked for The National Lampoon.)

Somewhere in all this I also blurted out that, in honor of the upcoming centennial of a neighborhood theater, I wanted to run a science fiction film festival there sometime next spring. I invite ideas and technical advice and see it as an opportunity to get out more word about Parsec.

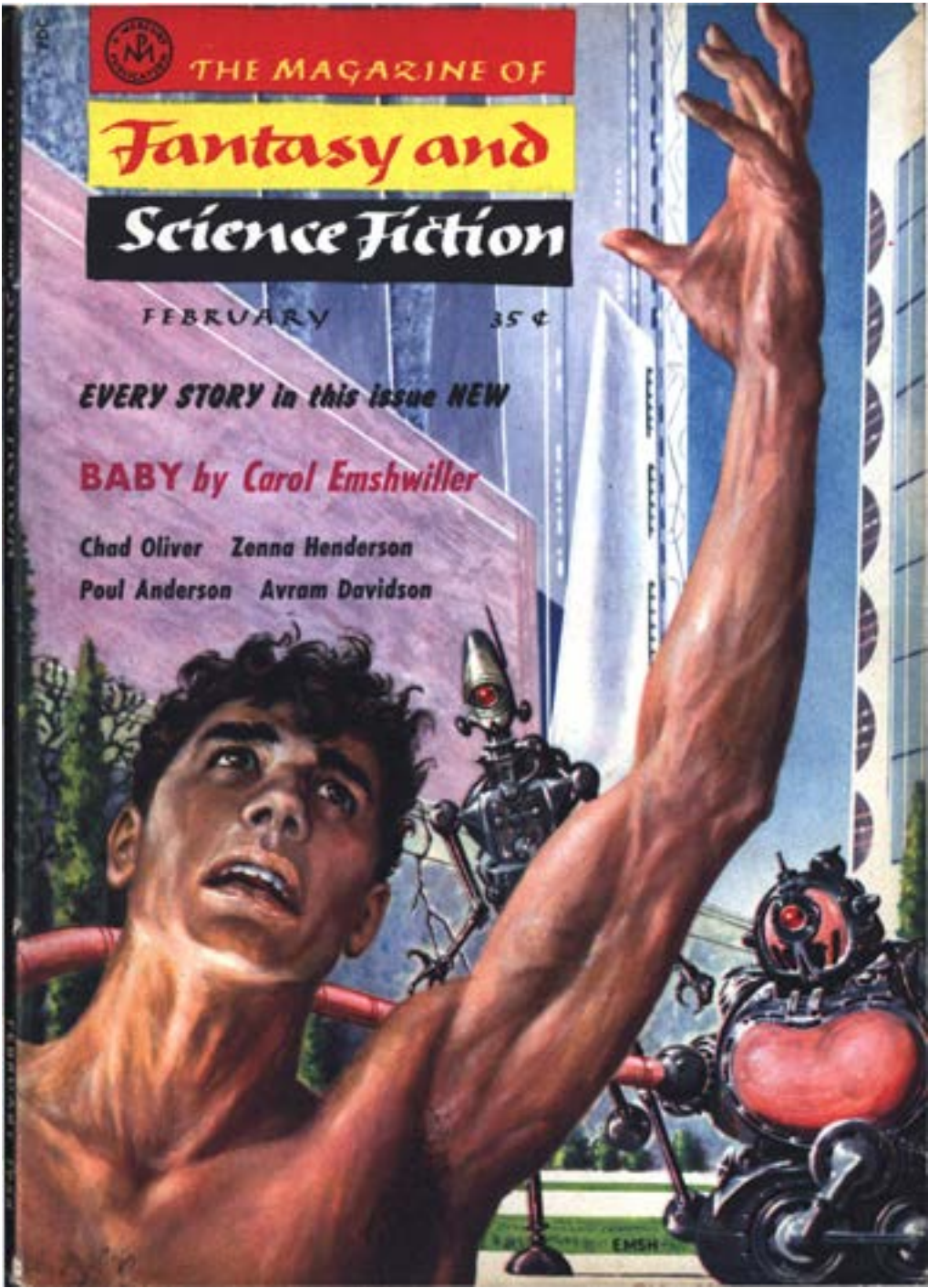
A discussion seems to have at least begun, and with that, and a virtual C’mon-2-fluence, July closed.

BRIEF BIOS
By Eric Leif Davin

Carol (Fries) Emshwiller (1921-2019)

Emshwiller was born and raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where she also attended college, receiving a B.A. in music from the University of Michigan, and, later, a B.A. in design in 1949. That same year she wed noted SF artist Edmund Emshwiller ("Ed Emsh") (1925-1990), with whom she had three children. They moved to Paris where she was a Fulbright Fellow and her husband studied art at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Afterward they motorcycled around Europe for awhile before returning to Long Island, NY, where she has lived most of her life.

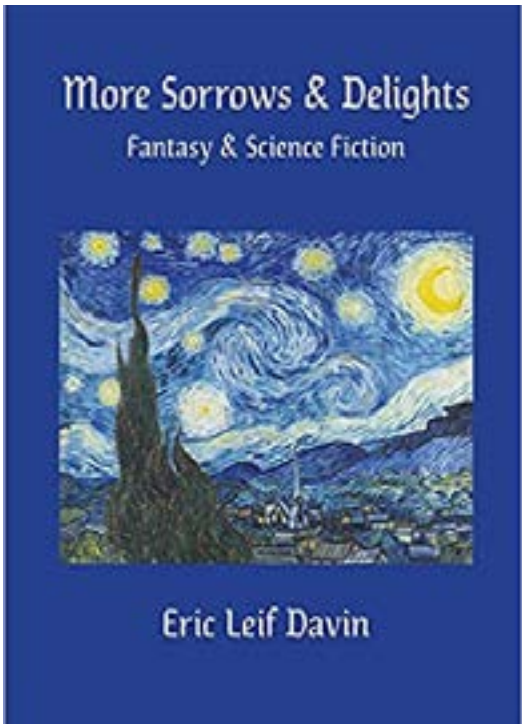
She published her first science fiction story in 1955 and much of her early fiction appeared in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction or Damon Knight's Orbit anthology series. The cover of the February, 1958, issue of The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction was devoted to her story, "Baby," and was painted by her husband. She also wrote mystery fiction, such as "Hands" (Double-Action Detective and Mystery Stories, Summer, 1957).



Her story, "Sex and/or Mr. Morrison," appeared in Harlan Ellison's legendary anthology, Dangerous Visions (1967). Her early fiction was collected in Joy in Our Cause (1974). Other collections include Verging on the Pertinent (1989), The Start of the End of it All (1990) and Report

Eric Davin's story to the new editor of Galaxy's Edge is scheduled for the September issue. It will be his eighth story to appear in Galaxy's Edge.

Eric Leif Davin's Short Fiction Collection Has Just Been Released. Available On Barnes & Noble, Amazon, Etc.



Award-winning author Eric Leif Davin journeys to hell and back in this collection of his fantasy and science fiction stories. His journeys take him from a military base on the Moon to the far reaches of the galaxy, from the death of a dryad to an encounter with Satan himself. And everywhere, as he dances with the ghosts of dead ancestors and witnesses fantastic visions in the night sky, there's a hell hound on his trail.

FACING DOOMSDAY

By Scot Noel

Scot, along with his wife Jane, are the publishers of Dreamforge Magazine. He is a member of the Parsec Board of Directors. His novel "Stellar Glory" is in a list of Brand New Science Fiction published by the Writers of the Future in 2019.

"While there is a chance of the world getting through its troubles, I hold that a reasonable man has to behave as though he were sure of it. If at the end your cheerfulness is not justified, at any rate you will have been cheerful."

H. G. Wells

Existence has always been dangerous; the universe is quite indifferent to our fate, and as a species we harbor some interesting self-destructive tendencies. However, our doom seems to be that thing that is always just out of reach.

In the 1960s, the population bomb was taken as seriously as climate change is today. Widespread famine, social upheaval, and the collapse of modern nation states was predicted. Although I myself was born into a world of 2.9 billion in 1957, our species has grown to 7.9 billion and no collapse yet. Hunger, even starvation, remains an issue, but has been decreasing and is now mostly caused by political factors and lines of conflict, not a true inability to produce or distribute calories.

For those who don't remember, President Jimmy Carter wore a sweater in a fireside chat to tell us to conserve energy, because there wasn't going to be as much as there used to be. There was emergency energy legislation. Hundreds of thousands of people were being laid off. Schools were closed in Pennsylvania. Gas services were shut off to factories.

In my youth and young adulthood, nuclear holocaust was coming as clear as day, up until the Berlin wall fell. Of course, it could still happen, but at least now it would be a surprise.

Actually, I think compared to World Wars I and II (not to mention the aftershocks of Korea and Vietnam), almost everything in the second half of the twentieth century pales in comparison to the true world-wide apocalypse in the first half. And they had Carmen Miranda and *Chica Chica Boom Chic*.

You could say we're ruining the planet. I might counter that we're outgrowing it. Actually, it would be almost impossible to kill a technical civilization of 7.9 billion short of a direct planetoid impact that evaporated the oceans and turned the Earth's surface entirely molten.

In the meantime, what does the future hold? Almost no one thinks anywhere near boldly enough. Here are some guesses about the next century, which I personally find more likely than not:

Vastly increased energy and materials production as we enter the first phase of a post-scarcity society.

The establishment of a plain of virtual reality, uniting all peoples in all places with a common language through instantaneous travel and translation.

Fleets of ships reaching out into the solar system, establishing millions or tens of millions of people off-world and the beginnings of the human Dyson swarm.

The elimination of disease, plague, and genetic disorders, along with the first steps toward universal human immortality.

Perhaps most importantly, the rise of the Superintelligence. Within just a few decades, a general, reasoning, artificial intelligence will surpass our ability to reason in the way we surpass the abilities of a Chimpanzee, or a Robin.

People will forget about current crises, like climate change, not because they're not real, but because technical progress is going to happen so fast that whatever we were worried about just won't make any sense anymore.

The Superintelligence is not likely to become our master, nor our executioner, because those are monkey concepts that we will sidestep as we become one with the Superintelligence as easily as we put in ear buds today. (That which is hard will become easy. That which is incomprehensible will become effortless.)

FACING DOOMSDAY Page 2

The future is bold and bright. It is beyond Earth and it is beyond our current conceptions of the nature and limitations of our species. And that’s all just in 100 years.

From then on, the settlement of the galaxy awaits. The Human Adventure is just beginning.

And there will always be room for cheerfulness and *Chica Chica Boom Chic*.

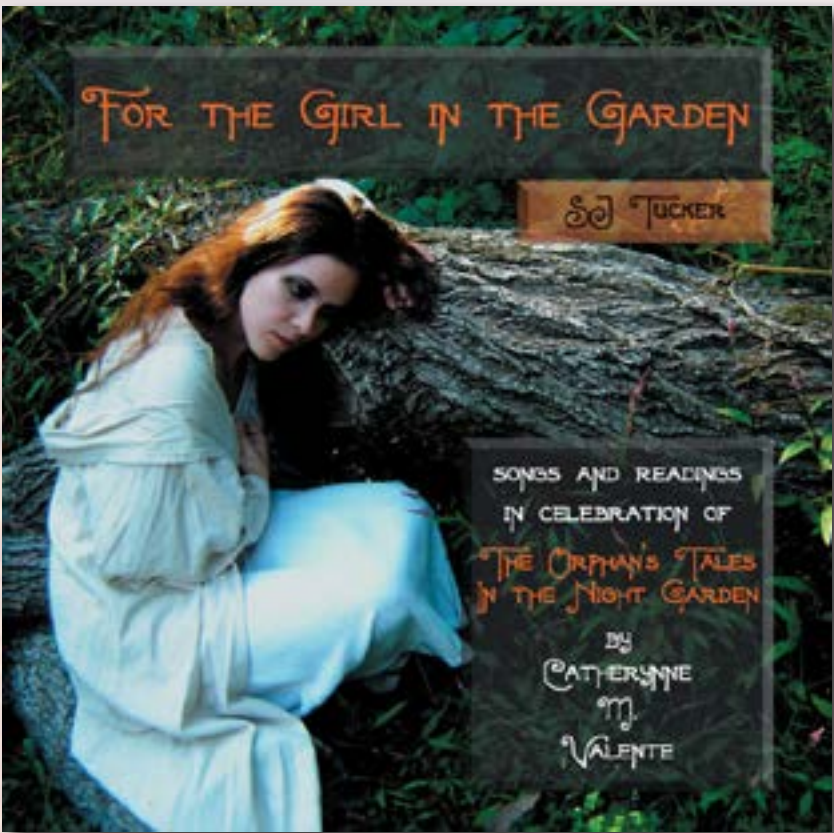
SF AND ROCK
By Larry-Ivkovich
For the Girl in the Garden
by SJ Tucker



Singer, composer, musician, multiple Pegasus Award winner, and Confluence Musical GOH in 2018, SJ Tucker has long used speculative, literary, and mythological elements in many of her songs. Her 2010 album, *Mischief*, alone contained “Cheshire Kitten (We’re All Mad Here),” a homage to Alice in Wonderland, “Wereowl,” a song about a shapeshifting lover, and “Neptune,” depicting a woman’s plight as the sea god’s captive lover, trapped between the sea and the land.

In 2006, Tucker collaborated with friend and SF writer Catherine M. Valente (the literary GOH at Confluence 2018) in recording an album based on Valente’s fantasy work, *The Orphan’s Tales: In the Night Garden* (2008 Mythopoeic Award for Adult Literature and 2007 World Fantasy Award nominee), called *For the Girl in the Garden*. Along with songs including “The Girl in the Garden” and “Shipful of Monsters,” the album also contains readings from the book.

A follow-up recording, *Solace and Sorrow*, based on Valente’s second book in that series, *The Orphan’s Tales: In the Cities of Coin and Spice*, was released in 2007.



LAST HUMAN IN THE OLYMPICS
(first published in Fantasy & Science Fiction Magazine)
By Mary Soon Lee



***Forget the years you trained,
mauling merely human muscle.***

***Forget how fast you fell behind
the fleet four-footed favorite.***

***Forget the crowd, their scorn,
jeers pounding in your ears.***

***Forget what you'd have given
to be modified, improved.***

***Forget those last leaden laps,
how envy fueled failing limbs.***

***Forget how you staggered
across the finish line.***

***Last place. Gasping. Cramping.
But then--remember this--***

***the other athletes awaiting you:
hands, paws, talons raised in salute.***

TRIANGULATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

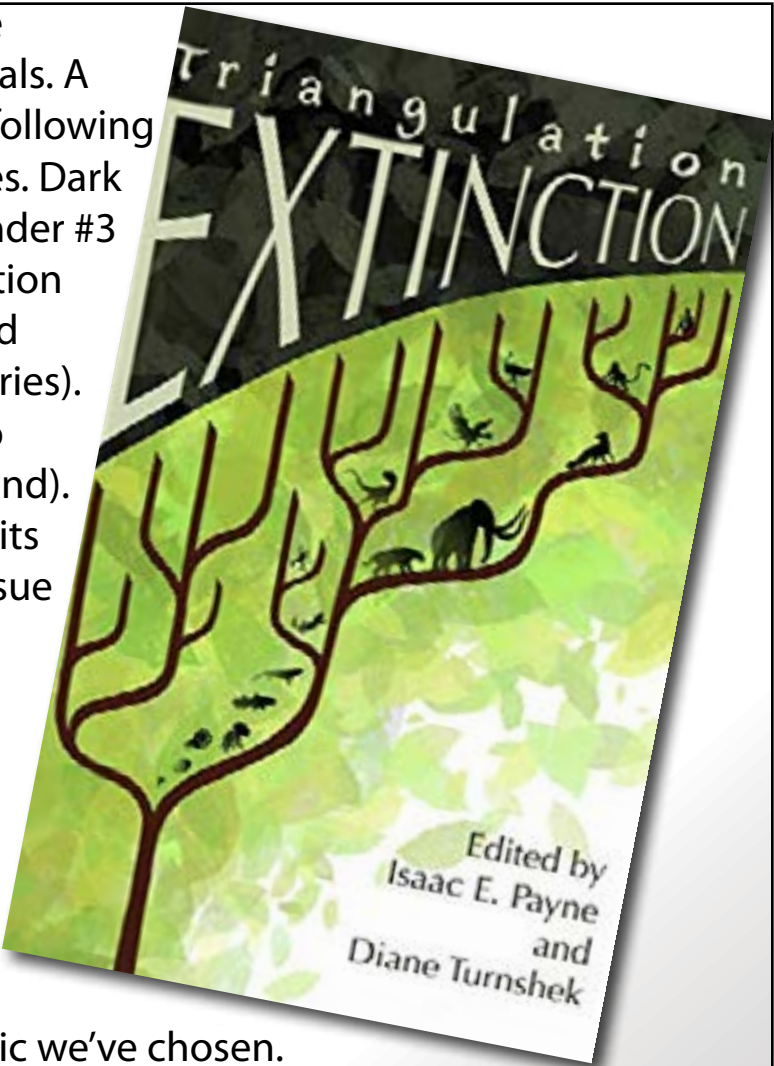
By Diane Turnshek

Diane Turnshek teaches college astronomy classes in Pittsburgh. She writes science fiction stories with an eye to the stars and taught writing classes at CMU and St. Vincent. She has been on the Board of Directors for both SFWA and Parsec, Pittsburgh’s premier science fiction charitable organization. For nine years, she mentored graduate students at Seton Hill’s MFA Writing Popular Fiction program.



In 2018, the United Nations released 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>. A year later, Parsec Ink’s Triangulation series started following these goals with its environmentally themed issues. Dark Skies was focused on light pollution, which fits under #3 Good Health and Well-being, #9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, and #11 Sustainable Cities and Communities (and touched on five more categories). Extinction focused on the loss of biodiversity, so goals #14 (Life below Water) and #15 (Life on Land). Habitats is solidly in the #9 and #11 camp with its theme of sustainable housing, and the 2022 issue of Triangulation will fall into SDGs #7 and #12.

It’s been fun, being educational as well as entertaining. This greater sense of purpose of the yearly anthologies fits Parsec’s charitable mission. Thousands of authors read the Triangulation guidelines when the submission call first appears on December



1, and hopefully they think about the environmental topic we’ve chosen.

Hundreds more authors craft stories because they feel passionate about the theme. Making people think is the first step in furthering the UN’s worthy goals. Whoever reads the book will enjoy a wide range of stories and, by the end, may have altered their preconceived notions on our thematic topic. What’s the best way to teach an unforgettable lesson? Connecting with proactive, sympathetic characters as they struggle with the consequences of humanity’s current harmful actions or when they find clever (even magical?) turnarounds to the problems plaguing humankind.

The anthology continues to offer plentiful opportunities. Over a dozen junior editors get firsthand experience in the publishing industry and college credit for helping a non-profit. Editors get a byline. Many Triangulation authors can boast they have made their first paid story sale! Last year, a CMU computer science student made her first ever cover and followed it up with a second stunning cover. This year, we included poetry in the submissions call, expanding our draw.

Triangulation: Habitats is a fine addition to the series. At 290 pages, it stands thick on the shelf with its brethren, plumped by eleven poignant poems. One reprint, wearing the theme like spandex, is guaranteed to make you laugh. So many possible futures for us, the stories laying out lines from here to elsewhere. Habitats range from space colonies and generation starships to down-to-Earth abodes on what’s left of our globe. From yesterday’s treasured home, its hour come round at last, to the day-after-tomorrow’s growing dwellings. Aliens and elves and monsters and robots and multiple dimensions enough to tickle even the most fennish of fans.

I am pleased to introduce to you the book some said wouldn’t be possible, Parsec Ink’s Triangulation: **Habitats**, the exciting! thrilling! adventureful! anthology on the gripping topic of sustainable homes.

P.S., please consider leaving a review, the lifeblood of any creative publishing project.

Parsec Ink's 18th genre anthology
Triangulation: Habitats explores
the theme of sustainable habitats
through thirty-five stories and
poems from around the world.
Does the dawn of humanity
represent the twilight of the rest
of life on Earth? Can sustainability
reverse the trend?

*Including works by Octavia Cade,
Jennifer R. Povey, Liam Hogan,
Oliver Smith, Sandra Kasturi,
Jamie Lackey, JameyAnne Fuller,
and more.*

PARSEC
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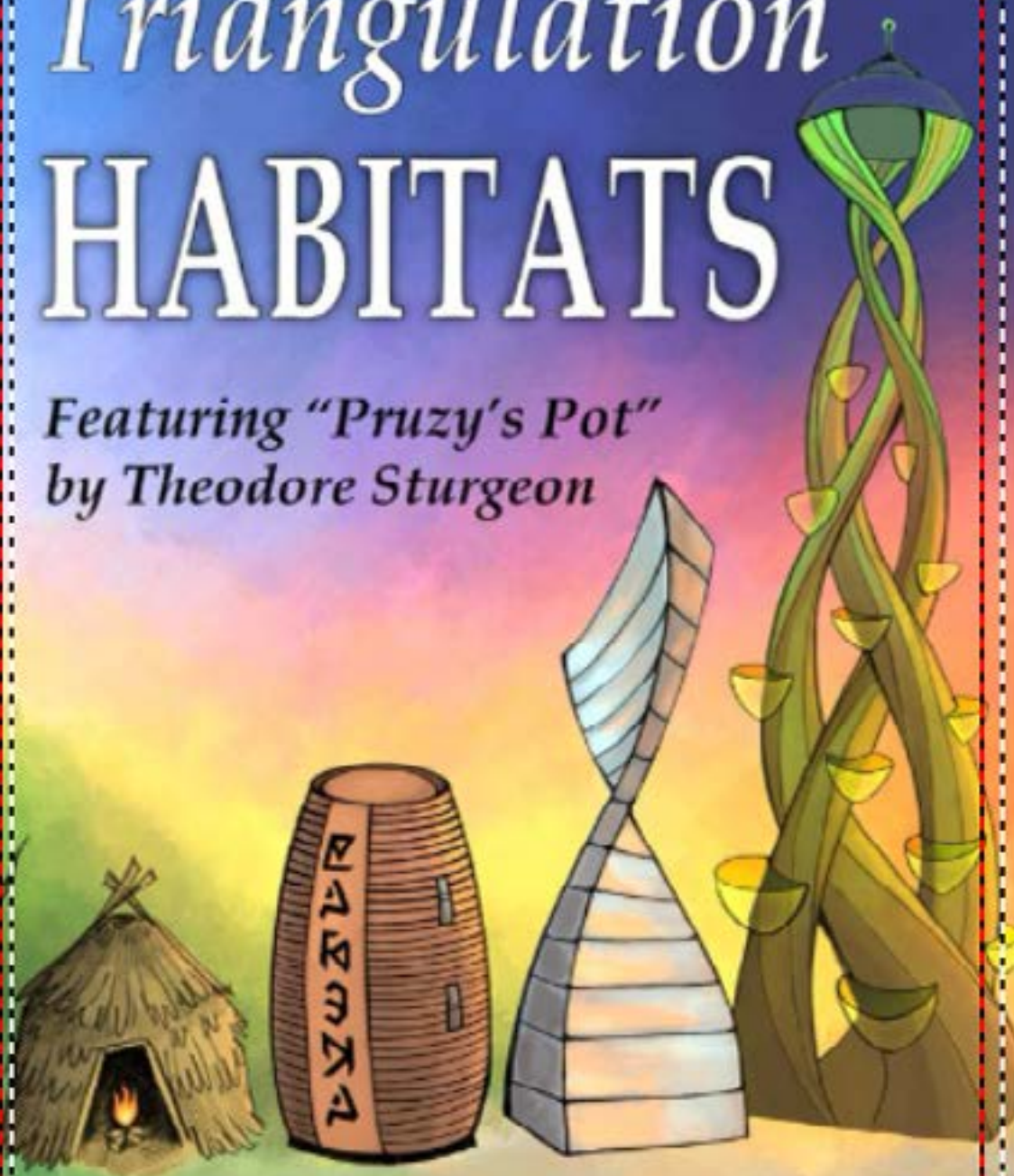
Triangulation: HABITATS

PARSEC INK

Triangulation HABITATS

*Featuring "Pruzy's Pot"
by Theodore Sturgeon*

*Edited by John Thompson, Diane
Turnshek, and Dr. Herb Kauderer*



HABITATS INDIEGOGO FINAL RESULTS

The Habitats IndieGoGo fundraising campaign ended August 3, 2021, at 11:59 pm PDT. We received \$1,961.00 in donations. Here are the details.

\$5,000 - Goal	Estimated Upcoming
\$1,961 - USD Raised	Disbursement \$1,689.73 USD
39% - Funded	Estimated Disbursement Week
59 - Number of Backers	Week of Aug 6, 2021
570 - Total Visits	Reserved Funds \$98.05

Reserved funds are held back from disbursement to us so we can process requested refunds via IndieGoGo. This money will be held for six months and disbursed “in accordance with [IndieGoGo’s] other policies on fees and disbursing funds.” For more on this, visit the IndieGoGo Reserved FundsFAQ.

IndieGoGo will take their cuts. There are Platform Fees of \$98.05. There are Payment Processing Fees of \$75.17 (based on a 2.9% + \$0.30 Fee per Transaction). These fees and the Reserved Fund of \$98.05 are the difference between what was donated (\$1,961) and the amount to be initially dispersed (\$1,689.73). Six months from now we’ll get some portion (or all?) of our \$98.05 Reserve Fund. It’s possibly not a coincidence that the IndieGoGo platform fee is the same amount as the money held in the reserved funds.

There have been many lessons learned and remaining to be learned as we analyze the campaign. Next year we’ll start working on the campaign earlier to allow better coordination with promotions and obtain the cover earlier to give us an attention-getting graphic for publicity.

But we raised enough money to pay the artist and authors for this year’s anthology and have seed money for next year.

It’s been an interesting experience.

John Thompson

GREATER PITTSBURGH SCIENCE FICTION BOOK GROUP 2021 READING LIST

August 25, 2021 (Michael)

Novel: “Saturn’s Children” by Charles Stross (316 pgs)

Short Fiction:

“Genesis” by H.B. Piper (29 pgs)

“The Best We Can” by Carrie Vaughn (9 pgs)

September 22, 2021 (Jim)

Novel: “Citizen of the Galaxy” by Robert A, Heinlein (236 pgs)

Short Fiction:

“The Mountains of Mourning” by Lois McMaster Bujoid

“Pilgrimage to Earth” by Robert Sheckley (11 pgs)

For more information contact: Greg Armstrong
roboman@cmu.edu

GEORGE WESTINGHOUSE, G. EDWARD PENDRAY, & THE INVENTION OF THE TIME CAPSULE

By Eric Leif Davin

ericdavin@hotmail.com

I was touring “The Castle” with inventor and captain of industry George Westinghouse, Jr., who not only invented the Westinghouse Air Brake, still found on all railroads, but also founded the Westinghouse Air Brake Company to sell it. He also patented 360 other inventions and launched 60 companies, including the Westinghouse Electric Corporation, Union Switch & Signal, and the forerunner of aerospace giant Rockwell International.

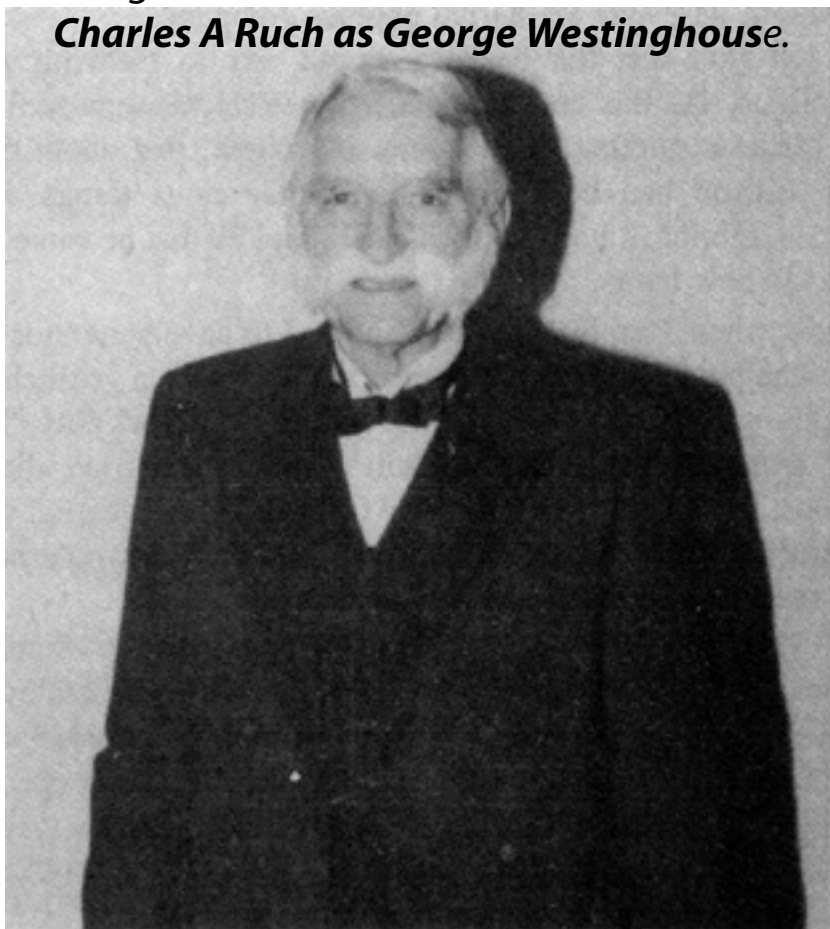
Actually, it wasn’t the real George Westinghouse. He died in 1914. It was a Westinghouse impersonator named Charles Ruch, but in his black top hat, Prince Albert coat, and with his white mutton chops, Ruch certainly looked like the real thing.

Meanwhile, “The Castle,” through which Ruch guided me, **was** the real thing. It was built by George Westinghouse in 1890 in Wilmerding, Pennsylvania, about a 30-minute drive east of Pittsburgh. For nearly a century The Castle, a massive stone structure

designed by noted architect H. H. Richardson, was the corporate headquarters of the Westinghouse Air Brake Company, also located in Wilmerding. Intended to look like a medieval robber baron’s castle, some might say it was an entirely appropriate command center for a modern robber baron.

Charlie Ruch would not be among those. Charlie Ruch greatly admired George Westinghouse. That’s why Charlie impersonated Westinghouse when he conducted tours of The Castle and when he made appearances as his hero throughout Western Pennsylvania.

Charles A Ruch as George Westinghouse.



Born and raised in the Pittsburgh area, Charlie Ruch graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 1936. There he’d been a journalism major and had edited The Pitt News, the student newspaper. He began working at the Westinghouse Castle in 1938 as assistant editor of the company’s employee magazine. In 1942 he became its editor and he subsequently served as communications manager. In the years before his retirement in 1980, he was the Westinghouse director of personnel communications and community relations.

But Charlie Ruch never really retired. He stayed on at Westinghouse as a volunteer historian. In 1984 Charlie began impersonating George Westinghouse in order to raise awareness of the inventor’s achievements. By 1998, when Charlie died, he had impersonated George Westinghouse on 501 occasions.

It was Charlie who was the driving force behind the creation of the George Westinghouse Museum, which opened at The Castle in 1987. When I stepped into the Family Room of the Museum that day, I saw George Westinghouse himself, incarnated by Charlie Ruch, bent over his writing desk. He looked up from his papers,

smiled, and welcomed me into “his” home. Then he led me on a tour, proudly pointing out the artifacts and memorabilia of the Westinghouse family, including furniture and Tiffany glassware from Solitude, the Pittsburgh home of George Westinghouse and his wife, Marguerite.



GEORGE WESTINGHOUSE, G. EDWARD PENDRAY, & THE INVENTION OF THE TIME CAPSULE Page 2

In the Appliance Room “Mr. Westinghouse” introduced me to a complete kitchen outfitted with Westinghouse appliances, including toasters, irons, mangels, coffee percolators, waffle makers, radios, washing machines and driers, and even an early Westinghouse sewing machine.

The Inventions Room held memorabilia relating to the 361 patents and inventions of George Westinghouse, including a model of a pioneering city-wide automatic telephone switching system.

I was most impressed, however, by the “Room of Achievement,” filled with an array of artifacts and photographs of products developed by companies founded by George Westinghouse. On one wall was a spectacular 12-foot-long oil painting of the Electric Company’s far-reaching East Pittsburgh Works in 1920. Displays ranged from a rifle made for the Russian army in World War I to the model car used in introducing a rapid transportation system of automated people-movers.



Burying the 1939 New York World’s Fair Time Capsule

Of greatest interest to me in this room, however, were exact replicas of the twin time capsules buried by the Westinghouse Corporation at the New York World’s Fairs of 1939 and 1964. Both were 7.5-foot--long cigar-shaped metal cylinders. Unlike the ones in New York, however, these replicas had windows cut into the sides so you could see duplicates of all the objects crammed into the original capsules buried somewhere in New York. An adjacent plaque listed every item inside.

I stared at the time capsules, gleaming like torpedoes ready for launching. With “George Westinghouse” himself beside me, it was almost as if I’d travelled back in time to the 1939 World’s Fair and was standing beside the very first “time capsules.”

Preserving things for the future, of course, wasn’t exactly new in 1939. Cornerstones in buildings date back to antiquity and are often filled with coins and other memorabilia. But in 1922 Howard Carter discovered the millennia-old tomb of the Pharaoh Tutankhamen in Egypt’s Valley of the Kings. Perhaps the most famous archaeological discovery ever, the artifact-crammed tomb -- an unintended time capsule -- catapulted the obscure “King Tut” into international prominence. The discovery also inspired Thornwell Jacobs, president of Atlanta’s Oglethorpe

University, with the idea of deliberately storing records and items for more than 6,000 years with a scheduled opening date. He eventually constructed a device to do so, which he called the “Crypt of Civilization,” at Oglethorpe University. He also publicized his idea in a notable 1936 Scientific American article.

Shortly thereafter, Westinghouse Electric Corporation was looking for something to promote the company at the 1939 World’s Fair. A Westinghouse publicist proposed that Westinghouse build and bury a similar “Crypt,” meant to be uncovered and opened in 5,000 years, at the Fair. However, the executive, who also coined the word “laundromat” to describe the Westinghouse washing machine, suggested a snappier label. He proposed that the “crypts” be called “time capsules.” The phrase gained currency almost overnight and stuck.

The Westinghouse publicist who proposed the idea of these time chambers, and named them, was G. (George) Edward Pendray, a rocket engineer and, under his own name and the name “Gawain Edwards,” also a science fiction writer. Pendray, who died from Parkinson’s Disease in 1987, was born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1901 and graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1924. A year later he earned a Master’s from Columbia University. He thereafter authored over 500 technical articles.

The same year he graduated from Columbia, Pendray joined the staff of The New York Herald Tribune as a reporter, later becoming its science editor. He left the paper in 1932 and was an editor at the Milk Research Council until joining the Westinghouse Electric Corp. in 1936 as assistant to the president. There he helped develop and administer the annual Westinghouse Science Talent Search and kept the Westinghouse president from calling the 1939 time capsules “time bombs,” as he reportedly wanted to do. He left Westinghouse

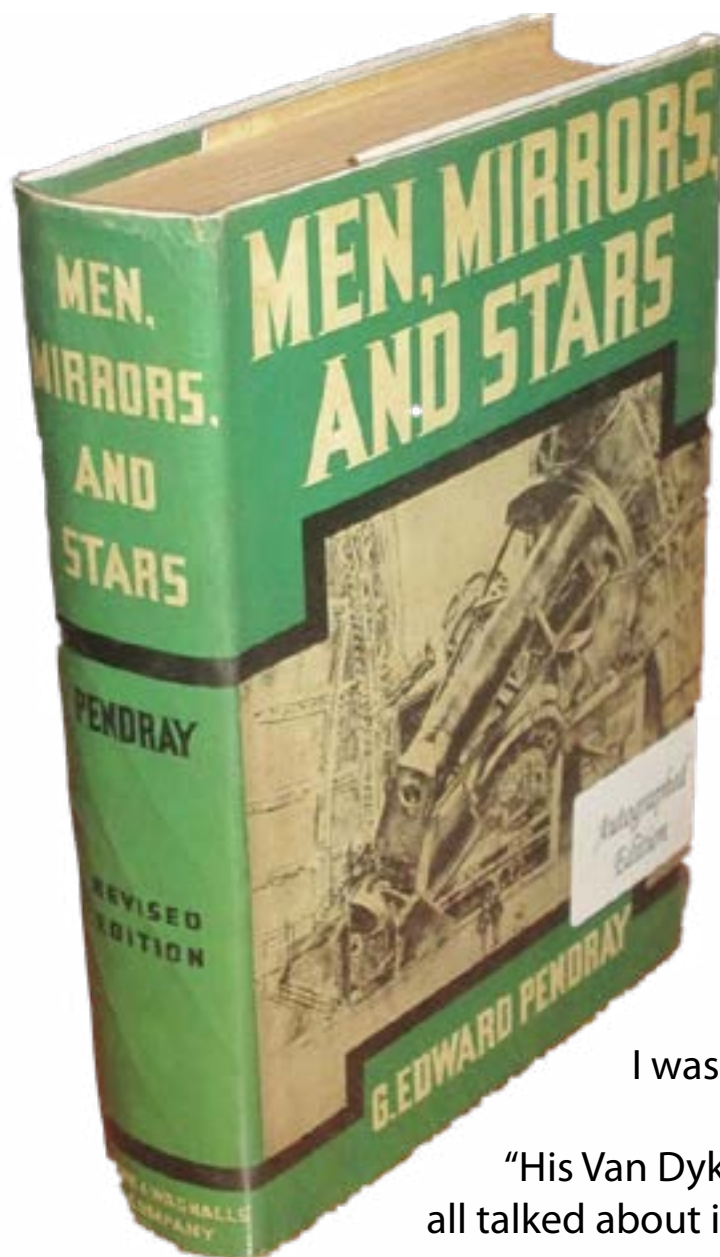
GEORGE WESTINGHOUSE, G. EDWARD PENDRAY, & THE INVENTION OF THE TIME CAPSULE Page 3

in 1945 to open his own industrial public relations firm, Pendray & Co., based in Bronxville, N.Y., where he was a senior partner until his retirement in 1971.

In 1929, New York publisher D. Appleton released Pendray's only SF novel, "The Earth Tube," published under the Pendray name. It is a "Yellow Peril" future war story in which Asians tunnel under and conquer South America in a drive to invade America. The hero destroys the tunnel, in the process flooding South America (sorry 'bout that!).

Perhaps it was this novel which brought Pendray to the attention of David Lasser, editor of Hugo Gernsback's "Science Wonder Stories." In any case, Pendray soon appeared in Lasser's magazine under the name of "Gawain Edwards." He quickly published three stories for Lasser, including "A Rescue From Jupiter," Science Wonder Stories, Feb.-March, 1930; "The Return From Jupiter," Wonder Stories, March-April, 1931; and "A Mutiny in Space," Wonder Stories, Sept., 1931.

More importantly, Pendray became the prime mover behind the American Interplanetary Society, responsible for much of its early rocket research.



The society was founded by David Lasser and his writers at an April 4, 1930 meeting in Pendray's New York apartment. The writers elected Lasser as President and Pendray as Vice-President. When Lasser resigned in April, 1932, Pendray took over as President, serving in the capacity until April, 1934, when the society also changed its name to the American Rocket Society. Pendray continued his association with the society, serving as its Director from 1936-55.

In 1963 the society changed its name to the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, and Pendray continued to serve as its public relations consultant. In 1945 Harper & Bros. published his The Coming Age of Rocket Power and in 1948 he edited the papers of rocket pioneer Robert H. Goddard, published by Prentice-Hall as Rocket Development: Liquid-Fuel Rocket Research, 1929-1941. He was chosen for the latter task by Goddard's widow, Esther, as by then Pendray was recognized as one of the leading American experts on rocket research.

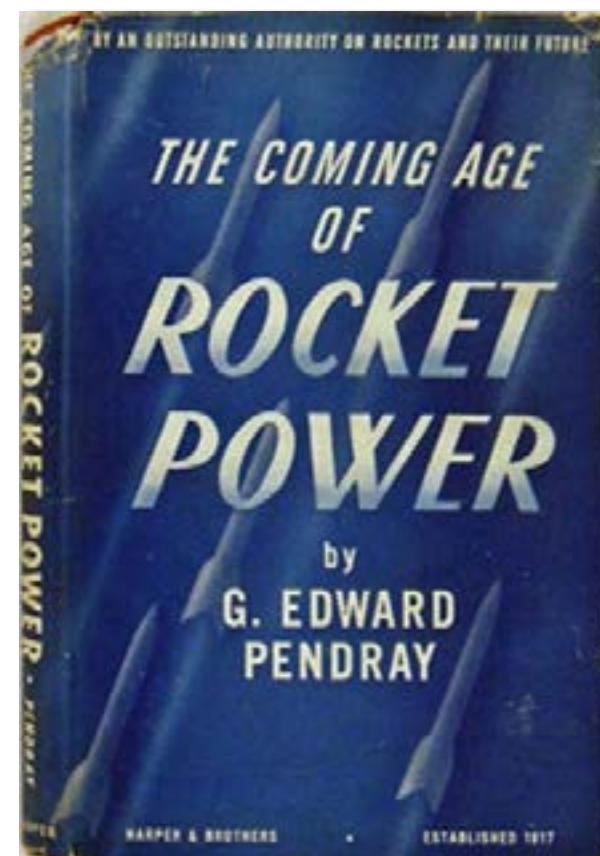
Looking down at the shiny time capsules Pendray was responsible for naming, I mentioned some of this history to Charlie. "Oh, yes, I remember Pendray, he was here at the Castle many times."

I was excited to hear this. "What do you remember about Pendray?"

"His Van Dyke beard. No one wore beards in those days, but he had a very distinguished Van Dyke. We all talked about it. It made him look like a professor or an important scientist." **(Cont'd next page)**

GEORGE WESTINGHOUSE, G. EDWARD PENDRAY, & THE INVENTION OF THE TIME CAPSULE Page 4

I glanced at Charlie Ruch standing next to me. Every inch of him looked like George Westinghouse, important inventor and entrepreneur. But he wasn't the real thing. He was just pretending. "Charlie," I said, "Pendray didn't just look like someone important. He was the real thing.



WE NEED A NEW THING By Bill Hall

So long as I remember to keep providing minutes on time, the one thing that anyone ever asks of me is a movie review. Evidently, I am Mister Movie. I have performed as such in these pages since at least 1990, and it's nice to be wanted. But are movies themselves wanted? In the past I would hear odd groans about how inconvenient and expensive, even borderline elitist, it was to attend a movie, to which I had to wonder "So you find it more economical to attend a play or a concert?" As a (usually) solo moviegoer who simply walks to a theater, I have frankly never empathized very well with grumbles over parking, group rates, or lavish expenditures on snacks, and have found live movies to be highly economical while also deeply immersive, even granting insights into the mindset of an audience.

More recently, live movies have had to endure the one-two punch of coronavirus and the home video experience. All this I resist and I plan to go on resisting till I die, which with any luck may be in the 2050s. Meanwhile, I've been missing out on a lot of television (network, cable, Netflix, computer streaming – it's all television to me, the Small Screen) and I've invited others to fill this gap. I thought John Thompson was doing a good job and I encourage him and anyone else to continue. Among my last reviews were Avengers: Endgame, The Invisible Man, and Tenet, and for one simple reason: I felt that they deserved reviews. However, when I reviewed Endgame, I worried over the rise of the "super" movie, with superheroics carving out their own genre. Much about these super movies has been enjoyable, and yet I can recall 1988, a time when people decided "Let's go see a movie named for a child's nickname for his autistic brother." I refer here of course to Rain Man. Today, the more personal stories tend to get relegated to horror. So, whenever anyone wonders if I'm going to review a movie, you need to understand that what I love best is to recommend a movie I find worthy and encourage people to go.

Therein lies a problem. Will anyone go?

WE NEED A NEW THING Page 2

There is another and even deeper problem, the one of F&SF feeling “fresh.” By “freshness” I refer to that joy of discovery you usually get to experience as a kid, and I will confess that it was the Small Screen that first got me hooked. It may sound downright unAmerican, but “The Twilight Zone” never did nearly as much for me as “The Outer Limits” did. Dismissed as “that monster show,” often shamelessly exploiting the tropes of horror, “Limits” nonetheless inspired in me that primal Wow. Near inevitably it was followed up by “Star Trek” and I was off and running. Then 2001: A Space Odyssey arrived and a bold new chapter of science fiction cinema was born, which deserves its own essay.

Yet even as I was becoming Mister Movie, I was always, always Mister Book. I went through the Heinlein juveniles (and stubbornly defend “Starman Jones”). I cozied up with Bradbury and Le Guin. “Dune” dominated my adolescence. Sadly I have lost much of this sense of freshness in the world of books as well, although that may be far easier to get past, given the right book. Any suggestions?

As freshness faded, a double-edged quality known as respectability tried to take its place. Shows arose like “Deep Space Nine” and “Babylon 5,” which I often respected the hell out of – but how deeply did I actually warm to them? Then respectability gave way to a colder, staler quality: obligation. We felt obliged to see the “Star Wars” prequels, and since then we have felt obliged to see the movies of various books. Yet I have to tell you: as much as I love movies, I yield as much as possible to the sovereignty of the book. Currently we are obliged to be excited that there is a new attempt to film “Dune.” It may turn out fine. Yet “Dune” will always be for me that initial intimate reading experience. Will any movie ever be able to truly recreate that banquet scene? The Peter Jackson adaptations



of Tolkien are often beautiful, but I will always prefer to simply read old J.R.R.

Presently I find it “interesting” rather than truly “exciting” that more literature is getting adapted. Evidently Isaac Asimov’s “Foundation” is due for such treatment. It may look great and, truth to tell, Asimov was far more a Gernsbackian raw ideas man than a stylist. Strangely it was the faltering of the attempt to audiovisualize Arthur C. Clarke’s “Childhood’s End” that particularly saddened me, if only because I was looking forward to the character of Karellen being brought to life, or a truly evocative tour of the planet of specialized cities.

So long as this century continues to permit, however reluctantly, a moviegoing experience, and so long as movies pop up which I really want to draw attention to, or at least analyze, on those occasions I will, yes, review. All I’m saying is: let’s not kid ourselves. I’m tired of claims to respectability and obligation straining to inspire a love which I simply do not feel. I’m tired of literary adaptations which do not so much liberate the source material as ride its wave of popularity. And of course I am tired, tired of retreads. A classic case is That Which Gets Called Star Trek. For me Star Trek died, and there is absolutely nothing tragic in that. It died gloriously with the movie Star Trek: First Contact and the conclusion of “Deep Space Nine.” There is Trek 1, from years beginning with the numeral 1, and Trek 2, from years beginning with the numeral 2, and I’m sorry but Trek 2 is simply not Trek 1. I am thankful for the spirit of projects like “The Orville” and “Strange New Worlds,” not to mention various fan-driven productions, but that ship has flown.

We need a new thing.

WE NEED A NEW THING Page 3

Specifically, we need a new paradigm. Upon its debut, “Trek” was “Forbidden Planet: The Series,” efficiently encapsulating so much of the formula of space opera literature from decades past. Yet if there is anything to truly recommend the Trek phenomenon, it is that it has inspired so many, so deeply and so meaningfully, to try to make its universe our reality. Engineers have been entertained by all manner of SF, but it is Trek which has dared them to create. Should I ever break down and finally get a mobile phone, it will be the flip kind, so that I can feel free to declare “Kirk to Enterprise.”

We need that again, but a mere retread won’t work. Science has revealed to us a far tougher universe than the one we previously supposed. Where once we expected an infinitude of “habitable planets,” perhaps a greater commonplace will turn out to be “habitable regions of planets and moons.” While we continue to lust after warp drive, we have not even hit Mach 939, which is what I compute to be a logarithmic mean between the speeds of sound and light. Probes have reached amazing speeds, but by relentless gravitational slingshot effects, not any controlled directional drive. We have still come nowhere near meeting all the demands of space medicine for us fragile humans. We will hate omnipresent dust and invisibly small meteors. What is more, he have yet to get space to provide for itself, with metals refined and processed on our moon.

Mike Watt’s most excellent dad Bill Watt has spoken to us about the impact of the Western upon SF. The Western was largely born, however loosely, of its environment, its hard life, empty spaces, and lurking dangers. I opined then, and still do now, that we need “the Outern,” a no less organic grasp of life in space. We need to be simultaneously leveled with and encouraged, educated and challenged. As goes space, so goes Earth. How do we best navigate this Anthropocene era of ours, and how do we portray that in any way which is at once truthful yet positive? These criteria require deep thought and careful planning, qualities not usually respected by Hollywood. Yet somewhere in the midst of this urgent puzzle, I believe, I hope, we will get our new thing – and when that happens, should that happen, I will happily cave in once more to the siren song of the Small Screen, to Amazon this and Hulu that and Netflix whatever, and the universe may feel fresh once more.

We will not be hyped, or nagged or force-obliged, into recognizing it. When it comes, we will know, noone will have to tell us. It will be the new thing, the true Outern, the Trek Beyond, a humane survival guide to the Anthropocene. We will know it when it comes.

So if you want me to review a movie, or start looking at the Small Screen again, I have already laid out for you – and anyone who will listen – the best way to inspire that.

Create the new thing.

Write it for me, for all of us. Now. Today.

Write it.

Bill Hall

JUST WHEN YOU THINK YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON

By Kevin Hayes

Kevin M. Hayes is past president of Parsec who helped organize and implement the Parsec Bylaws His stories have appeared in "Six From Parsec" and several volumes of "Triangulation." He has also published limericks. Sometimes, he reads for the podcast, "Pseudopod." www.kevinmhayes.com

Everybody thinks they understand about Parsec Inc.

Sometimes, even when you know, you don't really know everything. Or maybe you used to know and your memory isn't as good as it used to be. There has been a lot (and I do mean A LOT) of talk about Parsec, what it is, what goes on and why; and why can't we do better? I had started this article a completely different way and I stopped it because it was boring me. It wasn't saying what I wanted it to say. So here goes Parsec Article 2.0.

Most of the people who have been involved with Parsec for any length of time understand there are different parts of Parsec; they may even know what the different parts are. It is generally understood that there are by-laws and breakdowns and a bunch of information that gets muddled up the longer we talk about it. We know there is a mission statement and we know Parsec is a mystical financial beast the government calls a 501(c)(3). And that's where everybody says, "yep, got it; moving on."

This time, we are going to stop, and we aren't going to keep moving along. Parsec isn't complicated and it really is pretty amazing when you get down to it.

First of all, when the decision was made to push Parsec into becoming a 501(c)(3), we had to decide whether that was what we actually wanted. Maybe it was just me, but I didn't realize there were different financial organizations that are discussed in the IRS information. Section 501 of the U.S. tax code outlines which types of nonprofit organizations are tax exempt. The section of this code that provides for exemption is section 501(a), which states that organizations are exempt from some federal income taxes if they fall under sections 501(c) or 501(d), or under section 401(a). I had to learn all this as we did the necessary drafting, writing, amending, appending and editing and I didn't know anything when I started.

The thing that also needs to be kept in mind is that this is the federal taxes. A 501(anything) still needs to pay their state taxes--local taxes too if it comes to that.

Only specific kinds of organizations can apply to be a 501(c)(3). It's not like every public group wanting federal tax exemption can be one. You have to fulfill a certain kind of profile before you can even be considered. The IRS designates eight categories of organizations that may be allowed to operate as 501(c)(3) entities. Most organizations are eligible to become one of the three main categories, including public charities, private foundations and private operating foundations. None of those describe Parsec, so it had to fall into one of the other five categories which include:

- Scientific
- Literary
- Testing for public safety
- To foster national or international amateur sports competitions
- Prevention of cruelty to children or animals

For as much as we present ourselves as an educational organization, for the sake of the IRS we had to be a little of something else. Points to you if you guessed Parsec is a Literary 501(c)(3). (I know, scientific is a real temptation too). The question, after the decision was made to fulfill the profile of a literary organization, was how would we best be able to do that and how could we show we are a valuable addition to the community at large because of it. That's where the educational aspect comes in. And it is that very aspect that is summed up in our mission statement:

Our mission is to promote awareness of the richness of speculative fiction as literature, art and music; further general education in the sciences and arts, support contributions--both scientific and artistic--to society and to espouse the enjoyment of speculative fiction as literature, art and music with others. The specific purpose of the corporation is to:

1. Provide an environment to allow and promote understanding and exploration of ideas associated with science and speculative fiction in all its forms.
2. Promote recognition by the general public of the richness and variety of the forms of speculative fiction.
3. Sponsor and promote conferences and workshops open to the public to encourage awareness, enjoyment and the creation of speculative fiction in all its forms.

All of what we as Parsec do is directed by that mission statement. All four branches under the Parsec Incorporated umbrella are focused by those words. And for as simple as it sounds today, there was a lot of discussion about how many different parts Parsec Incorporated was going to be comprised of and how they were all going to work together.

JUST WHEN YOU THINK YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON Page 2

I don't remember whether labeling the four branches as standing committees required a lot of discussion or if it was in the instructions we received about the structuring of our nebulous mass into a ship worthy of the 501(c)(3) classification. But we decided we had four distinct active groups to put under the umbrella of Parsec Incorporated. To quote the by-laws: The corporation shall have Standing Committees, which currently consist of:

Program committee, [meeting group]

Conference committee, [Confluence]

Workshop Committee, [Alpha]

Publishing Committee- [Parsec Ink]

We did a terrible disservice by incorporating the name "Parsec" into two of those standing committees. The meeting group, which was the original "PARSEC" -- where the Parsec, for Parsec Incorporated came from. I don't know if it was originally intended as an acronym, but I understand it is owed to Kevin Geiselman for his creation of **P**ittsburgh **A**rea **R**eal-Time **S**cientifiction **E**nthusiasts' **C**lub. If I got that wrong, I apologize and invite the originator of the acronym to come forward. Pain will be minimal. Promise.

And I accept the blame for naming the publishing arm Parsec Ink. I should have known better. Please keep the pain minimal.

It is things like this that keep new members confused. "Why are there so many 'Parsecs?'"

The short answer is, "There aren't." Parsec Inc is a wonderfully multi-faceted organization that has a meeting group where people can come together for discussion of a speculative fictional nature. Often enjoying presentations and education about the literary, cinematic, musical or artistic forms, this is the group most of us think of as "Parsec." With the talks, social interaction and sharing of things science fictional, fantastic and horrific, the educational aspect is obvious. And this part of organization is the part that speaks to the first "purpose" in the mission statement.

Then there's the publishing group. Called "Parsec Ink" (again, sorry about that) there is some quiet background discussion about just calling it "publishing" or "Triangulation" to hopefully reduce the ongoing confusion. And even though it is the publishing arm, it's more than just books. We have some Parallax Second Player DVDs that became available through the so-called publishing arm and we hope to have more. And with luck, maybe even some filk CDs from performances at Confluence. The educational aspect? Ask the anthology editors if they got anything out of their year or years putting together collections of short stories that have been recognized for their continuing quality and platform for new voices. There are always new things to learn. And when the books, DVDs and CDs are generally available, it satisfies the part of the mission that says we should promote recognition by the general public of the richness and variety of the forms of speculative fiction. Second mission statement point anyone?

The conference committee is responsible for Confluence. If you're reading this and you're not familiar with Confluence. I am flabbergasted. Go and mark your calendars for July 29, 30 and 31 2022 and get ready to be amazed. Confluence has been around since 1987 and keeps getting better. We invite writers, editors, publishers and scientists to talk. And talk they do. To us and each other. About writing, reading, new things on the horizon and what's being done to get us there. Educational? Breathtakingly so, and still firmly based in the literary world of speculative fiction.

The last committee on this list is the workshop committee. Usually that one is associated with Alpha, the young writers' workshop. To be honest, Alpha does take center spotlight in this branch, providing a venue in which young aspiring writers can meet and receive instruction from some of the notable names in the genre industry. See that? Literary and education again. Promoting awareness, providing support. Pretty cool, huh? But you know what? There are other voices in the wings. We've supported presentations from the likes of Ellen Kushner and Delia Sherman. We've had writing workshops led by Geoffrey Landis and Mary Turzillo. And those were just the ones I went to. There have been a number of writers talking about their work; there have been a number of writers encouraging us to write better and showing us how to do it. And if you haven't figured it out, Confluence and all the workshops we do are how we meet the third point of the mission statement.

It isn't a static thing. If you have questions, all you have to do is ask.

It's a cornucopia of spec fic available from an aspect of a little group called Parsec. Parsec is a little bit of everything and it's all there for everyone to take advantage of. Who have you told about Parsec lately?

2021 HUGO NOMINEE REVIEWS – PART 2

By Larry Ivkovich

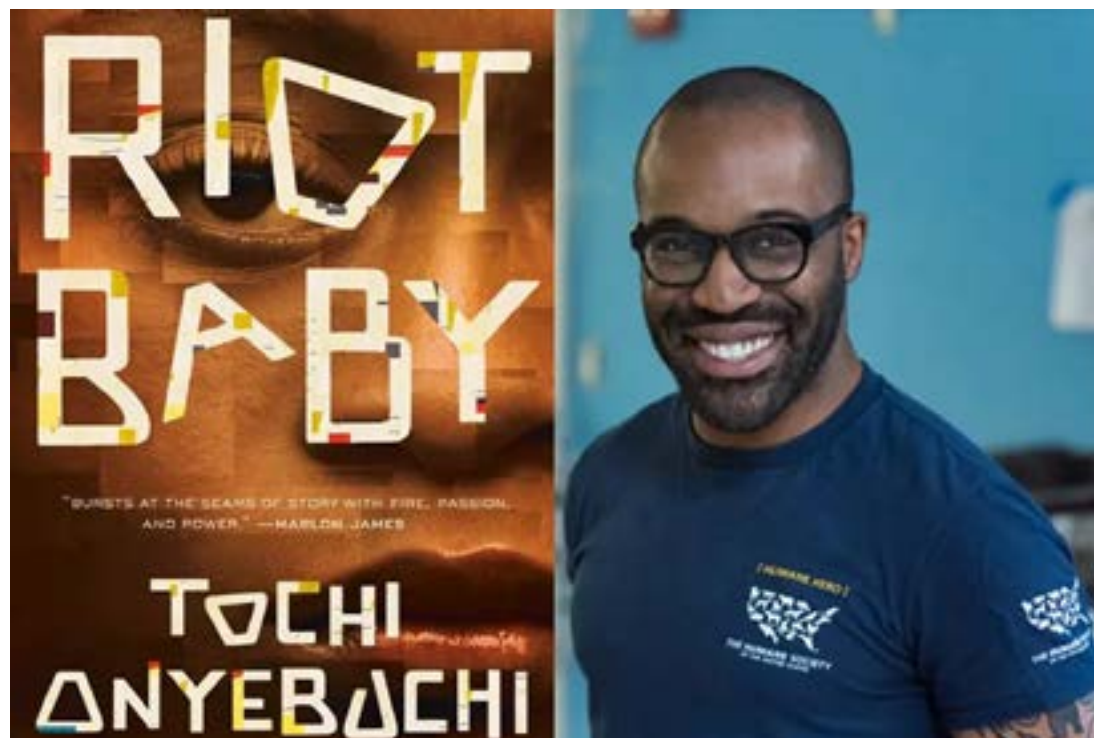
Larry Ivkovich is the author of The Sixth Precept, Warriors of the Light, Orcus Unchained, and Magus Star Rising

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Best Novella Nominee

RIOT BABY by Toni Onyebuchi



This Nebula Award nominated story, Nigerian-American Toni Onyebuchi's first non-YA work, is a powerful and angry tale of two siblings who possess, for lack of a better term, superpowers.

Riot Baby begins during the riots following the beating of Rodney King in 1992 Los Angeles. There, young Ella Jackson is present when her mother gives birth to her brother, Kevin, nicknamed Riot Baby. But Ella is special. She has her "Thing," which is essentially a combination of psychokinesis, astral projection, and spiritual time-travel. Kevin has this gift too but it's more latent and subdued than Ella's, at least initially. The story shifts POVs between the siblings as we see Kevin as a young, curious, intelligent kid fall into gang life, eventually spending time in prison. Ella leaves him and her mother out of fear of losing control of her Thing and harming them. But she uses that time apart to master her powers.

The novel enters into a near-alternate-future with America becoming a fascist country and racism and brutality increasing. This is a little confusing at first with small hints dropped to indicate the reader's not in Kansas anymore, but soon becomes clear. Mostly episodic, the book brings everything together at the end. Ella and Kevin become a force for justice and global change in mastering their psychic gifts.

Riot Baby is a tough book to read at times with its grim depictions of gang and prison life, racism, and oppression of people of color. But that's the point. And it's worth the read. Highly recommended.

Best Novel Nominee

THE CITY WE BECAME by N.K. Jemisin



This book (the first in the Great Cities series) can best be described as the ultimate urban fantasy. The idea of a city being alive, having a soul, etc. isn't new but Jemisin takes the concept to a whole different level.

New York City is about to be "born." This happens to cities all over the world after a certain period of time, lasting centuries, until the city in question begins to gestate and develop a consciousness. In New York's case, because it's so big and made up of several different boroughs, it has to have a human avatar for each of its five boroughs for the city to focus its power. These five, Manhattan (Manny), Queens (Padmina), the Bronx (Bronca), Brooklyn (Brooklyn), and Staten Island (Aislyn) must work together to empower the sixth and most powerful and encompassing primary avatar, which represents the entire city, to awaken

All while discovering their super-powers and fighting the bad guys – Lovecraftian menaces which threaten not only New York City and its inhabitants, but the stability of the entire multiverse. There are lots of tentacles and slimy monsters in here and plenty of good vs. evil action scenes. As well as the rules of this dimensional “system” of birthing cities. A lot of information is sprinkled throughout about the city itself. Very cool and original.

Jemisin’s writing is stellar, illustrating why she’s won so many awards including three Best Novel Hugos in a row for an earlier series, something no other author has done. The characters, which include Sao Paulo, the avatar of Sao Paulo, Brazil, Hong, the avatar of Hong Kong, and a number of non-avatar characters, both good and bad, are very richly and fully developed. When I thought one of them had been killed, I was really upset. You really root for this sexually, gender, and racially diverse cast.

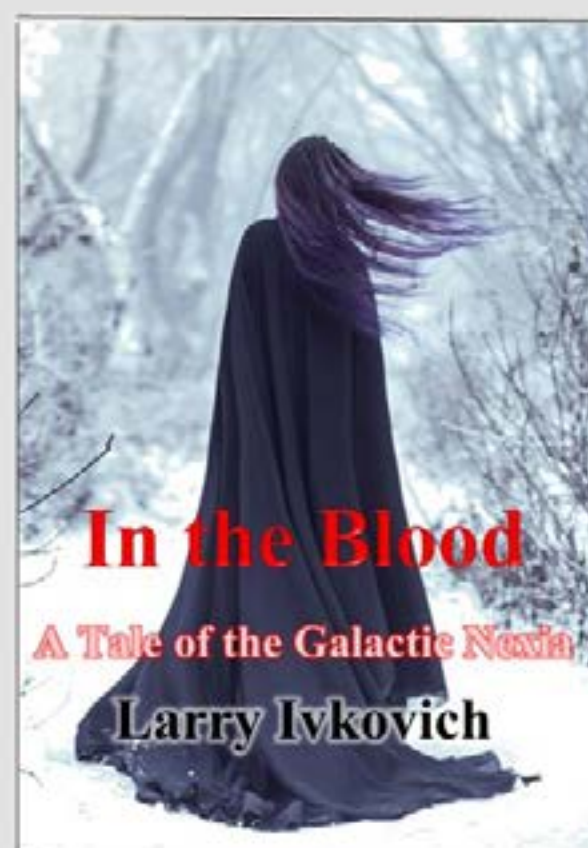
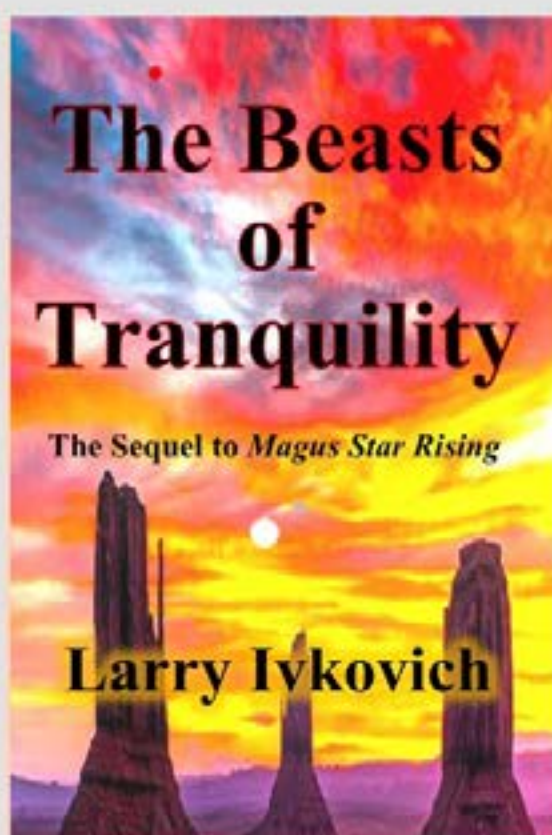
Some topical and uncomfortable aspects like Neo-Nazis, White Nationalists, social media as a weapon, are included in the story. But these serve as an anchor to reality within this fantastic setting, giving the protagonists more incentive to fight back.

A revelation near the end about a “city” caught me unaware and was really great.

One thing I was confused about was a transformation of one of the boroughs into their true self. It was very cool but I didn’t completely understand it. Minor quibble.

(A little factoid - the prologue of the book is actually a 2016 short story Jemisin wrote titled “The City Born Great,” published by Tor.com, which served as the basis for the novel.)

I’m looking forward to the next book in the series. Highly recommended and Hugo worthy.



Larry Ivkovich’s speculative fiction has been published in over twenty online and print publications. He’s been a finalist in the L. Ron Hubbard’s Writers of the Future contest and was the 2010 recipient of the CZP/Rannu Fund award for fiction.

His four-part urban fantasy series, *The Spirit Winds Quartet*, is published by IFWG Publishing, and the first two books in his independently published science fiction series, *The Magus Star Trilogy* (part of the Galactic Nexia universe), are available on Amazon.

I DON'T KNOW PHILLIP K. DICK ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION

By Marc Simon

*Marc Simon's short fiction has appeared in several literary magazines. Five of his one-act plays have been winners in various new works contests. His debut novel, *The Leap Year Boy* was published in December, 2012. In a former life Marc was a comedian in a sketch comedy group. Marc lives in Naples, Florida. View his work at marcsimonwriter.com*

Marc Simon is a long time colleague, and more important, a friend of mine. We performed in a comedy group that spanned the decade of the 70s into the 80s right here in Pittsburgh. The group managed gigs on FM and AM radio, and stage. I was reluctant to introduce Marc here, because he was always funnier than me. — Ed

I don't know Phillip K. Dick about science fiction, O.K.? I couldn't tell Isaac Asimov from Boris Badenov. And yet, for some reason known only to Joe Coluccio, Parsec President and Head of the Programming Standing Committee (as opposed to the Sitting Committee?) has asked me to make a submission to your esteemed Parsec Newsletter. Not that I know what a parsec is. I barely know what a newsletter is.

On the other hand, not knowing anything about what I am writing has never stopped me before. Science Fiction...well, according to Wikipedia, an information base that while not perfect is close enough, science fiction is "a genre of speculative fiction that typically deals with imaginative and futuristic concepts such as advanced science and technology, space exploration, time travel, parallel universes, and extraterrestrial life." Extraterrestrial life? Parallel universes? You guys actually believe in that stuff?

(Sorry for the break in writing. I had to answer a call from Planet Fitness. They want me to renew my membership but I'm holding out for a better offer.)

Upon reflection (don't you hate it when people use phrases like that, they sound so stuffy and pseudo intellectual), however, I suppose in my life, as opposed to my Doppelganger's, I have enjoyed any number of science fiction movies: *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (mostly for the stellar...get it, *stellar* acting and direction); the first *Alien* movie when that Smigel-looking thing pops out of the guy's stomach; *Blade Runner*, because you can't beat a sexy, leggy woman in a see-through raincoat; *Forbidden Planet*—I love a Leslie Nielsen movie—but monsters from the Id? I wonder what Freud would say about that. *E.T.* was good—hey, you can't go wrong with the bond between a boy and his pet alien. It was almost as good as *Lassie Come Home*.

Is the TV show *Cheers* science fiction? Because those pretty people definitely live in a parallel universe. Perhaps riding on the Boston MBTA constitutes time travel, because quite often time slows to a halt and when you wake up, you find yourself in an alien T-stop. I liked *The Twilight Zone* but Rod Serling smoked so much no wonder he had a heart attack. I've watched some episodes of *Black Mirror* which while innovative, to me at least has become redundantly innovative. And please don't hate me or attack Joe Coluccio with your light sabers or Jedi mind control for this, but I've never watched an episode of *Star Trek* or *Battlestar Galactica*. Does that mean my life has been shallow, transparent and meaningless?

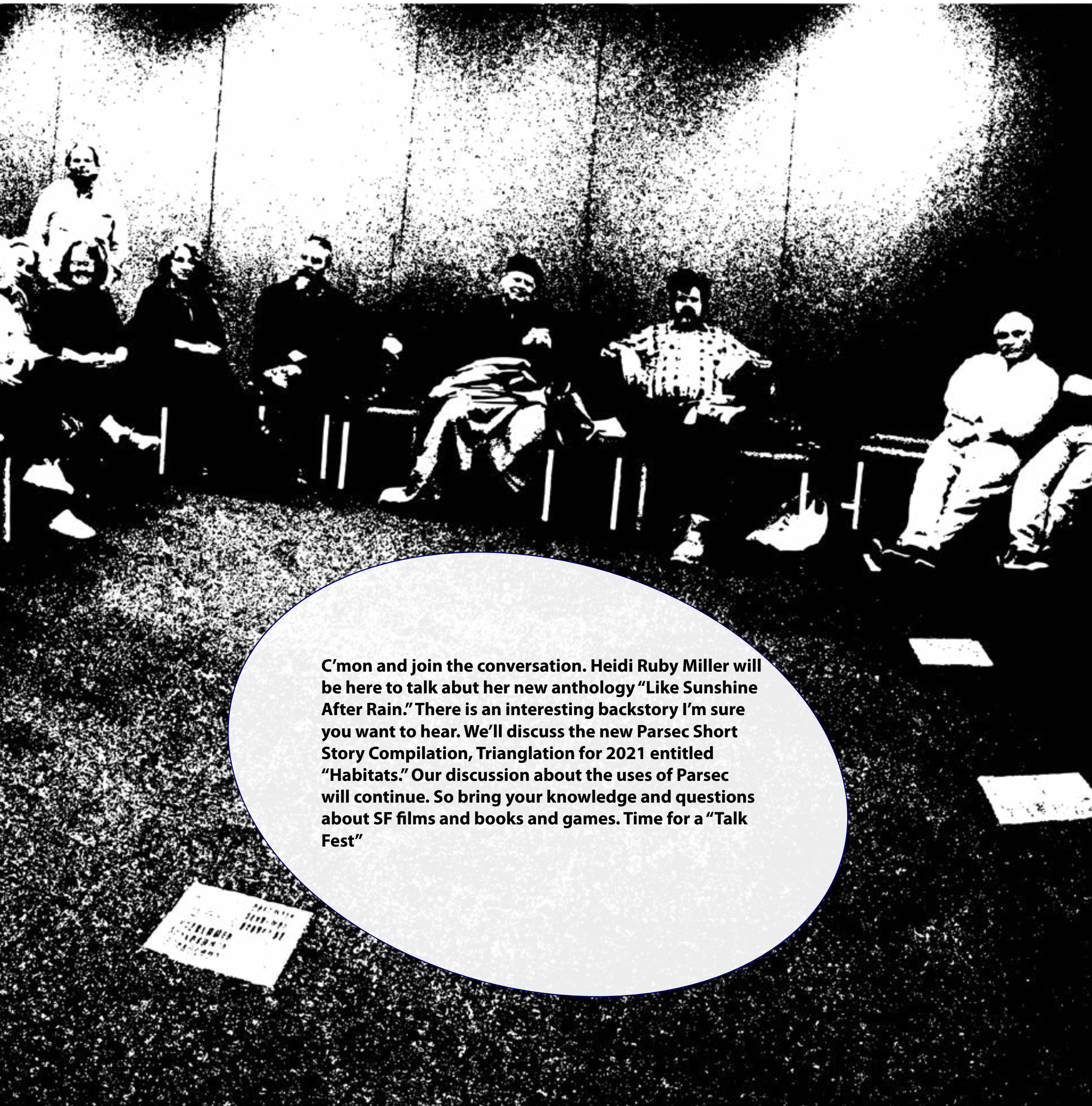
Let's see. I did read *Fahrenheit 451*, *Cat's Cradle* and *Goodnight Moon*. So did everyone else on the planet, and all the other planets. I don't remember much about the first two. I know they are classics, but sorry, they must have been required reading.

But maybe all the so-called science fiction I've consumed in my life isn't real deal science fiction, not in the way you Parsec-ers... Parsecanese would define it. Quasars, pulsars, Black Holes, White Holes (I just found out there are such things), A.I., The Butlerian Jihad, Null Space, and so on, that's the good stuff, right? Or not. Again, I am relying on the redoubtable Wikipedia. I do remember being quite saddened when they de-planeted Pluto. How dare they? What did Pluto ever do to deserve it? Next thing you know they'll tell you Matt Damon never went to Mars.

Hey, here's an idea for a science fiction novel—*The Omega Variant*. Makes the Delta Variant look like the sniffles. Well, maybe it's not an idea but it's a swell title.

Well, my flux capacitor has just about run out of flux. Thank you for the opportunity.
The end...or is it just the beginning?

Parsec Meeting Saturday, August 21, 2021, 1:00PM



C'mon and join the conversation. Heidi Ruby Miller will be here to talk about her new anthology "Like Sunshine After Rain." There is an interesting backstory I'm sure you want to hear. We'll discuss the new Parsec Short Story Compilation, Triangulation for 2021 entitled "Habitats." Our discussion about the uses of Parsec will continue. So bring your knowledge and questions about SF films and books and games. Time for a "Talk Fest"