



## DECEMBER 2010 NEWSLETTER

**All Roads Lead to Middle Earth:** Journey into the world of the fantastic as we explore the concept of fantasy worlds and realms. Middle Earth, Narnia, Alice in Wonderland - any and all fantasy realms.

### **That's Science Fiction**

**Tuesday December 7, 2010 – 7p**

Hillsdale Public Library

#### ***Prancer Returns***

\*Dining follows the movie.

### **Drawing A Crowd**

**Wednesday December 8, 2010 – 7p**

Fantasy Games & Hobbies

9 Miller Rd - Mahwah

#### ***Fantasy in comics/graphics***

For additional information click

[www.fantasygamesandhobbies.com](http://www.fantasygamesandhobbies.com)

### **Face the Fiction**

**Saturday December 11, 2010 – 8p**

Lutheran Church of the Redeemer

Ramsey, NJ 07446

#### ***Acting Out! Panel/Holiday Dinner***

\*Full details on p. 2

### **Suspense Central**

**Monday December 13, 2010 – 8p**

#### **\*Note location change**

Panera Bread Restaurant

165 Rt. 64 West

Paramus, NJ – 201.368.0752

#### ***Cemetery Dance by Douglas Preston & Lincoln Child***

### **Films to Come: 4-Star Movie Discussion Group**

**Wednesday December 15, 2010 – 7p**

#### **\*Note location change for December**

Panera Bread Restaurant

1300 State rt. 17 North

Ramsey, NJ 07446 – 201.236.6300

This group discusses the world of cinema and entertainment. Classic, current and upcoming

genre and genre-related films, TV, books and media happenings are discussed. If it deals with entertainment, our Master of Entertainment Moderator will cover it. \*Dining follows this event.

### **Rogue Trader: Wolves in the Fold**

**Saturday December 18, 2010 – TBA**

Fantasy Games & Hobbies

9 Miller Road, Mahwah, NJ

Rogue Trader is a game of space adventure, set in the grim darkness of Games Workshop's Warhammer 40000 universe. Are we the wolves in the fold, or merely the sheep?

### **Modern Masters**

**Tuesday December 21, 2010 – 8p**

Panera Restaurant

1300 Rt. 17 North, Ramsey, NJ

#### ***Implied Spaces by Walter John Williams***

**\*Note location & date change for this month only.**

***In addition, no pre-meeting. We will grab food at Panera and enjoy a fun meeting.***

### **Themes of the Fantastic**

**Tuesday December 28, 2010 – 8p**

Wayne Public Library

#### ***Magic vs. Science, witches in SF and genre***

[www.waynepubliclibrary.org](http://www.waynepubliclibrary.org)

please visit [www.sfsnnj.com](http://www.sfsnnj.com) for full details

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# SFSNNJ Face the Fiction presents: Acting Out Panel

**When:** Saturday, December 11, 2010

**Where:** Lutheran Church of the Redeemer - [www.redeemerramsey.org](http://www.redeemerramsey.org)

55 Wyckoff Avenue

201.327.0148

Ramsey, NJ 07446

**Time:** 6:30 pm

We hope you will join us for our annual Holiday Dinner/Meeting Event. This time around we have an *entertaining* evening lined up. Our guests represent various areas of the entertainment industry: **Rob Hauschild** is a New Jersey-based writer, editor and cult film purveyor. Rob also founded and published the cult genre magazine VeX (1995-2000), and is presently co-owner and producer for DVD label Wild Eye, focusing on offbeat horror and cult movies ([www.wildeyereleasing.com](http://www.wildeyereleasing.com)). Film teacher, writer, horror expert, public speaker and filmmaker - **Keith Crocker** - joins our panel. Also joining us is **Ed X Young**. Mr. Young will talk to us about Zombies, b-movies and special effects make-up demonstration. Mr. Young will screen a 15-minute short zombie comedy showcasing Mr. Young's SFX skills. **Susan** will discuss what it's like to be zombie fodder! Rounding out this stellar panel is **Brad Abraham**. Brad Abraham is a screenwriter whose work includes the recent SyFy Channel movie STONEHENGE APOCALYPSE and the 2000 miniseries ROBOCOP PRIME DIRECTIVES. As a freelance journalist, his writing has appeared in a variety of publications, most notably Rue Morgue, Fangoria and Dreamwatch magazines.

Of course, great food will be served as we enjoy the ins and outs of entertainment. We will also have our famous Swap Table! Bring something, grab something or swap something. Bring your movies, books, posters and more!

*Face the Fiction: Where imagination lives!  
Only at the SFSNNJ*

## **October Meeting Recaps**

### **That's Science Fiction! – Horror Hotel - Tuesday November 2, 2010**

A great time was had by all at the showing of "Horror Hotel" (1960) starring Christopher Lee. The witch coven portrayed was extremely effective, as was the overall creepy nature of the film. I was 9 years old when I first saw it, and am 59 now. Many times you see a film that you enjoyed at a young age, and see it much later in life and wonder, what did I ever see in that film? Not so here; the overall effect is still jolting. Ann-Marie brought up a good point. Unlike slasher films, this film had a scene where the victim was to be cut - but at point of impact, switched to a birthday cake being cut. No blood, but the feeling of dread is still there. Those not attending missed a real treat. **(Chris H)**

#### **Additional comments:**

Ah yes, the jazz horns. Interesting choice for should have been a frightening moment, but other than that it was a good movie. Well done and creepy. The fog, the creepy run-down town, the even creepier residents - never go to Whitewood (although I did put in a request to Todd that Whitewood be our next special activity outing - it could be fun in that *And Then There Were None* kinda way).

Before the movie started, Mike Piazza pointed out that *Horror Hotel* was one of his favorite horror films. He had seen it approximately 10 times! It certainly is a movie you could watch more than once. Very atmospheric.

The movie opens with accused witch, Elizabeth Selwyn, getting burned at the stake by outraged villagers. She calls out the name Jethro. Jethro denies any relationship but quietly asks Satan to help Elizabeth. Thunder rolls, lightning flashes, but the fire is lit and Elizabeth burns.

We then see Christopher Lee as college professor Alan Driscoll teaching a course about witchcraft. He persuades one of his students, Nan Barlow, to travel to a small town in New England, Whitewood, to do research for a paper. He tells her this is the perfect place as a witch, Elizabeth Selwyn, was burned there. He recommends Raven's Inn run by Mrs. Newles. Nan is eager and heads to Whitewood against the wishes of both her brother and her boyfriend.

Nan arrives to find a fog-covered village that looks frozen in time. Mrs. Newles is a 10 on the creep-o-meter. The Raven's Inn is next door to the graveyard. It always seems to be dark and foggy. The maid, Lottie, tries to warn Nan of danger but is terrified of Mrs. Newles. The only person in town who is friendly is Patricia. Pat is the granddaughter of the aging Reverend and has come to help him after her aunt passes away. Nan borrows a book from Patricia with the promise to return it in a few days. When Nan fails to return the book, Patricia becomes concerned and goes to the Inn. Mrs. Newles informs Patricia that Nan checked out and left without paying her bill. Check out she did... Nan's research led her into danger of the fatal kind. She had been marked for sacrifice by the town's coven of witches on their holiday - Candlemass Eve. Patricia is not satisfied with the explanation given to her by Mrs. Newles. As she is leaving, Lottie the maid, hands her an object. Pat sees that it is a charm-bracelet that belonged to Nan and goes to her brother with the information. When her brother Richard and boyfriend Bill realize something is amiss, they set out to find out what's happened to Nan.

We find out Nan was sent to Whitewood by her trusted professor! He is from Whitewood and part of the coven. Richard and Bill are not welcome in Whitewood. Even worse, Patricia has now been marked for sacrifice!

*Horror Hotel* has some neat surprises and cannot be beat for atmosphere. The ending is particularly well done. The imagery is powerful - this movie tells a good story and builds suspense without once resorting to gore or over-the-top violence. There is no need to show the stabbing. The film allows the viewer to imagine. Our imaginations provide a more frightening visual than if presented because each individual imagines what is most frightening to them.

Great start for what looks to be a fun month. **(AM)**

It was a truly good film, with great performances and some neat directing. The only complaint was the score. Light jazz is really not conducive to scaring folks. **(Todd)**

**Suspense Central – *Dead Witch Walking* by Kim Harrison - Monday November 8, 2010**

Whoooo-doggies, what a strange night it was last night. Before I get into the write-up, though, I have to warn you: I was dealing with multiple personalities last night as I was forced to channel Aurelia Long (she was stuck en route and could not make it to the event). Since the voices were fighting in my head, that makes the discussion very interesting.

The discussion started early with Kathleen and I talking about the book while certain people were busy discussing the Horror-thon at the Lafayette Theatre in Suffern. Chris and Deb were having a very nice discussion about the Horror-thon, which I very rudely disrupted with my asking of questions related to the alleged topic of discussion. Of course, I then joined in on the discussion of the Horror-thon, which I did not attend. As I pointed out, I very rarely go to the movie theatre, for many reasons, and I do not see the point in going to the theatre to see movies that are available on TV all the time. To me, the only things worth seeing on the big screen are special effects laden spectacles. Other than that, I prefer to save my money for my other expensive hobbies (being master of the 40K universe gets pricey).

At any rate, we were joined by Ann Marie who yanked us back on topic, which Kathleen and I reported that we were being good and discussing before being derailed by Horror movie theatre discussions. We started in on the book with Kathleen wailing, "No accumulated knowledge?!" This is a recurring theme and complaint about the book, wherein the protagonist, Rachel Morgan, who is ostensibly a smart investigator and savvy tracker, is constantly naive, consistently makes the same poor decisions, never seems to plan any of her actions, and for the most part solves all of her cases with luck. In point of fact if it were not for her companions it is fairly obvious that she would be very very very painfully dead.

Basically, *Dead Witch Walking* by Kim Harrison is a story ostensibly about a Witch working for a government enforcement agency dealing with supernatural beings. Now, granted, this is neither the first nor the last time this concept has been done, however Kim's universe differs drastically from those posited by folks like Jim Butcher, Simon Green, or Anton Strout, and bears some passing resemblance to the worlds of Mark DelFranco, Charlene Harris and Laurel K. Hamilton. The primary difference is that the world in *Dead Witch Walking*, and its sequels, has been greatly impacted by a plague that leveled the playing field between Inderlanders (fae folk, witches, vampires, weres, etc) and normal people. It is hard to get a feel for where this series takes place in relation to our own history, and where the branching point would be, all things considered, but suffice it to say that the world is a strange and hostile place run by completely amoral morons.

So, what did we like about the book? Well, we all agreed that the ancillary characters and supporting cast were great. In point of fact, it seems like Rachel Morgan was less important to the tale than most of the supporting cast. Kathleen, Ann-Marie, and I all agreed that a story about the life and times of Jenks the Pixie would have been far more interesting. The idea of a witch using transformation spells was interesting, as were the ideas of a 'living' Vampire, and the various governmental bureaus. I mentioned that I kind of felt like Kim Harrison was trying for a Chinatown Jake Gittes vibe with the Rachel character, but was really not carrying it off too terribly well. We loved the concept of the Hollows and the Turn, however the execution seemed a bit pale in comparison. All in all, we kind of agreed that the ingredients were all there for a great series, but somehow it had gotten under-cooked.

What were the big problems? Well, first and foremost was the problem that Rachel has no learning curve. We compared the characters of Rachel Morgan and Harper Blaine (from Kat Richardson's *Graywalker* series), and where Harper was learning on the fly, she at least takes the time and effort to find out what she does not know and learn from it. Rachel, for all of her Inderlander Witch upbringing, knows NOTHING about her neighbors, is woefully ignorant about the habits of the various other types of Inderlanders, and seems horrifyingly lazy in regards to her work. In all, it is pretty pathetic that Rachel, who considers herself to be one of the best Runners in the IS, does not know how to behave around a Vampire. Also, Kim Harrison seems to think that she is being pretty cagey and subtle, but she is really telegraphing her reveals way too much, thus ruining the surprise for the reader. Finally, the 'rivalry' described as inherent between the IS and FIB seems completely pointless since they do not even share any mission elements or concepts at all (in fact one might wonder why the word Inderland is even in the FIB's name).

The discussion ranged back and forth for over an hour about the book, with only minor divergences,

before Todd started talking about The Walking Dead, The Good Guys, and the collected works of Mercer Mayer. As Todd's nephew, Logan, has recently become enthralled by Professor Wormbog in Search of the Zipperump-a-zoo, Todd was constantly looking around for both the Kerplopus and the titular Zipperump-a-zoo the entire night. At one point, Todd even channeled the spirit of Aurelia in order to chastise himself for wandering off-topic (said channeling was double successful as it cause Aurelia to text Ann-Marie). We had a lot of fun, a lot of laughs, and a great time complaining about emo-goth Vampires, stupid witches, and bad bureaucracies.

Tune in next month as we delve into Cemetery Dance by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child...(Todd)

### **Drawing A Crowd – Wednesday, November 10, 2010**

Drawing A Crowd was the place to be last night. We spent over two hours discussing November's theme of all things magical and could have kept on going!

Haywood opened the meeting with 5th Dimensional characters like Bat-Mite. Bat-Mite is a DC character that appears to possess magical powers. He is an imp and idolizes Batman - much to Batman's chagrin. Bat-Mite is more of a nuisance than a villain, but sets up scenarios to see Batman in action that sometimes have bad repercussions.

This prompted Dave to contribute Emperor Joker. Joker tricks Bat-Mite into giving him his powers allowing the Joker to destroy Batman. Or does he?

Both Bat-Mite and Emperor Joker can be found on The Brave and the Bold TV series (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MyE2k30iFE>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsZVnRrs-gw>).

Todd contributed the notable mention of the night. Todd added Scarlett Witch into the fray. Barry told Todd that this Marvel character wasn't really magic per se. Todd declared she 'hexes' people as her super power and she has 'witch' in her name so she's a witch.

This led to a good point brought up by Barry about what qualifies as magic. Bat-Mite possesses what appears to be near-infinite magical power, but in reality is highly advanced technology from the fifth-dimension that cannot be understood by our limited three-dimensional views. In effect, Barry felt that highly advanced science was not magic. He felt characters based on mythology were of a magical nature (i.e. Wonder Woman, Thor), but not advanced science. It was a consensus that he not only had a sound point, but also was correct.

Haywood then mentioned the New Gods (Kirby's DC characters). They are clearly of the 'advanced science' category. Dave recalled a 'magical chair'. Barry tossed out Mobius Chair and that it was not so much magical as it was advanced. Mobius Chair allowed the user to traverse time and space instantaneously. All agreed Thor's Hammer was magical but not Mobius Chair.

This led to a fun discussion of magical objects and characters.

**Objects:** Mike P gave us *Cosmic Cube*: The power within the Cube allows whoever wields it to literally reshape reality around him. Virtually anything is possible, from the raising of mountains and commanding the power of the elements to opening dimensional portals and transforming your enemies. Mike also provided *Juggernaut's Helmet*. The helmet is made from a mystical alloy, prevents his mind from being read and a few other neat little tricks.

**Characters:** Wonder Woman (Barry), Thor, Loki were all mentioned because of their mythology-based origins. Other characters making the list displaying some magical power/ability were:

- Bat-Mite (Haywood)
- Sandman - fictional superhero appearing in DC Comics (Dave)
- Captain Marvel (Dave)
- Dr. Strange and Dormammu - Dormammu's a perennial foe of [Sorcerer Supreme](#) and maverick Doctor Strange (Mike P)

- Dr. Doom who fell into both magic and science - supervillain, archenemy, genius inventor and a sorcerer (Barry)
- Moon Knight, described by Todd as a "nutter", is a Marvel character who gains enhanced strength, endurance, and reflexes at night, reaching his pinnacle during a full moon (Todd)
- Mysterio "with his fishbowl head" (Todd's description of this great villain)
- Solomon Grundy, zombie supervillain in the DC Comics Universe (Todd)
- Juggernaut - Marvel antagonist to X-Men (Haywood)
- Golden Age DC characters Spectre - a spirit of vengeance, *Dr. Fate* - sorcerer and *Green Lantern* possessing both a magic ring and lantern (Barry, Haywood, Mike)
- Zatara the magician and his daughter Zatanna of DC universe (Barry, Haywood, Mike)

We next discussed characters that fell into the fantasy magic arena. Todd led the way with Dark Age of Camelot and Warhammer Fantasy. Magic is prevalent in both with magicians using powers of chaos. Haywood brought up that Merlin is a big recurring character whenever magic pops up. I added a Brave and the Bold episode that showcased Merlin.

Magic in anime/manga gave us Death Note (Barry) and Soul Eater: is a Japanese manga written and illustrated by Atsushi Okubo. Set at the "Death Weapon Meister Academy," the series revolves around three teams consisting of a weapon meister and (at least one) human weapon. Trying to make the latter a "death scythe" and thus fit for use by the academy's headmaster, *Shinigami* (better known as Death), they must collect the souls of 99 evil humans and one witch, in that order or they will have to restart all over again, *Soceros Stabber Orphen*: Orphen escapes the prestigious magic school, *The Tower of Fang*, to clear his name, and *Full Metal Alchemist*: alchemy. (Ann-Marie).

Todd and I brought in webcomics and indie comics. Todd gave us Anna Mercury, a British super-agent and Neo Nomicon: scientists try to explain magic using computers. I added Order of the Stick.

Page to Film had tons of titles. Ghost Rider (Mike P, Barry), Swamp Thing (Barry), Hellboy (Dave), The Stand (Dave), Dark Tower (Todd), Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (Barry), Electra, Mr. Stick (Dave, Haywood), and Spiderman's deal with Mephisto.

The above category brought us to TV turned graphic with Buffy's Willow character and Harry Dresden.

It was after 9:30 at this point and begrudgingly we headed out...to continue talking outside - lol. After a very brief chat we did say goodnight. Until next time... Join us in December for fantasy realms in comics/graphics/manga and more. **(AM)**

### **Face the Fiction: Laura Anne Gilman – Saturday, November 13, 2010**

Dateline Borders Ramsey

It was a crazy day for everyone on Saturday as we all raced to Borders for Face the Fiction's monthly author presentation. The beautiful weather of the day provided concealment for Loki, who was apparently running about and making everyone's life a bit more hectic than normal. Car problems, back-wrenching patio block installation, missing books, and allergies were just a few of the issues plaguing the attendees, but in spite of the machinations of Norse trickster gods, we managed to have a really grand night out.

Kate Landis and I arrived nice and early and were met by Gene McGrath. We helped the kind folks at Borders set up the chairs in what Bill Wagner referred to as a 'Bifurcated Arena' in order to make sure that Borders' customers were able to access the Psychology and Children Sections. Laura Anne Gilman arrived nice and early, no thanks to her rented Kia (which led to comments about the road-worthiness of the visor-less punchline-mobile), and as folks filtered in we began to discuss a variety of topics from automobiles, to evil delicatessens, to getting oriented in the City, to finding the best places to have fun

in the metro area. All the while, apparently the Borders team was being plagued by inventory elves that showed books on hand that never arrived in the store, much to our collective chagrin.

As many of us settled in, I gave Laura Anne a quick introduction (people were not there to see me after all), and the night took off like a shot. We started by talking a bit about the Retrievers series of Urban Fantasy novels and the concepts that went into that fun series. Laura Anne explained her process of world building and her need for a rational and scientific process behind the magic in her setting. For those who have never read the series, which is set in Laura Anne's Cosa Nostradamus universe (as Laura Anne pointed out, she is not averse to playing with a loaded pun), the magic of that world is based off the idea of electricity and something called Current. The idea is that the human body uses electricity and processes Current, but some special people can channel and direct that Current to perform magical actions. In the case of each of the protagonists in the Cosa Nostradamus Universe, they have a specific ability that they have learned to use in an interesting way.

The Retrievers, which I highly recommend as it is a great series which I highly enjoy, features the character of Wren Valere. Wren's main ability is in being unnoticed and unnoticeable. The way that it was described by Laura Anne: Have you ever met folks who just seem to appear out of nowhere or have been standing next to you for a while but you never noticed, well that's Wren. Finding a way to use her handicap for best effect, Wren realized that she could make quite the career as a thief, however as she did not want to end up on the wrong side of the law, she mainly gets hired to steal back items that have been wrongfully taken from their owners. This is an occupation that she is quite adept at, and with the aid of her business partner, Sergei Didier, and her demonic friend PB (a miniature red-eyed polar bear sporting a fedora and a wicked sense of humor). One of the recurring themes that we discussed at length was the concept of fitting in between human nulls (non-magical folk), human talents, and fatae (non-humans), and of bullying between the more powerful creatures and their less powerful neighbors (a subject that has been in the news a lot lately). We discussed a lot of Wren's adventures and the tie-ins to the P.U.P.I (Private Unaffiliated Paranormal Investigators) or PSI series featuring Bonnie and her pack of paranormal criminologists.

We wandered then into a long discussion of the whole PSI series. The second book of this series just came out (though it was in stealth mode due to Borders book elves and Loki's trickster nature), and so we were forced to imagine the cool cover art and awesome stuff inside. Thankfully, Laura Anne was a good sport and helped our imaginations with great descriptions of the characters, even more about the setting and its denizens, and a whole lot about the way in which she gets to have input in the cover art. The idea of the PUPI is that they are a scientific band looking to investigate, analyze, and solve mysteries of the Talented and Fatae, learning and expanding knowledge wherever they go. An interesting side-conversation here was about the character of Bonnie, herself, and her hedonistic tendencies, which Harlequin did not even bat an eyelash in allowing, in spite of their fairly conservative leanings. I won't give anything away, but I will say that I think that Bonnie is one of the most intriguing characters in an Urban Fantasy series to date, and a better role model for any teenager looking for a responsible and logical outlook on relationships would be difficult to find. This is based mainly on our discussion comparing Bonnie to Bella from the Twilight series by Stephanie Meyer and the horrid example that said character provides for teenagers in regards to relationships.

One important thing that we discussed in regards to all of the series set in the Cosa Nostradamus universe is the concept of universal consistency. As Laura Anne said during the event, she kind of wishes that she or one of the fans would put together a Wiki for her universe as it would make things a lot easier. Making sure that the laws and rules are consistent is fairly easy, but making sure that some of the smaller bits and bobs stay on track can be worrisome. As a game designer, I can completely sympathize with the intricacies of keeping macro issues in scope. It becomes problematic for Laura Anne in that she now has three series, which are going on side-by-side in the same universe. She joked that it was great fun stealing her own dialog for book three in the PSI series as the scene in which Bonnie and Wren are interacting was shown in one of the Retrievers books.

Yet another cool thing that got discussed profusely during the night was the use of the city as a character. As Thom pointed out, if you are in New York and not using the city as a character you are probably doing something wrong, a sentiment with which our guest wholeheartedly agreed. Laura

Anne explained the process of researching the Brooklyn Bridge, and of a Transit Security Officer in a booth watching her as she took pictures and made notes. When she introduced herself to the fellow in the booth and explained her purpose, said TSO regaled her with interesting tidbits and factoids (bet you didn't know that the underside of the bridge is purple, did you). As Laura Anne pointed out: it is the little things like that which have to make it into the book as they are just too cool not to share.

Having spent the better part of an hour on the Cosa Nostradamus, we turned our attention to the Vineart Wars series. The roots of this series can be found in a conversation between Laura Anne and her agent about finding ways to make a wine tasting event into tax-deductible research. While she did not get to write-off the wine tasting, Laura Anne did get to craft an amazing series set in a fantastical version of 14th century Bordeaux, France, where wine and the crafting of the vine are used for more than just something to go with delectable viands. An interesting insight came when Laura Anne explained the Dragon image on the cover having come from an awesome piece of art at the Louvre. It is so cool hearing about these little tidbits and anecdotal stories of what truly inspires an author. At any rate, we delved deep into the subject of wine, comparing some notes on varietals and the lamentable over-commercialization of 'white' Zinfandel from its amazing robust red stock.

At this point we realized that we had been laughing and having a great time for over 2 hours without surcease, and that the store would be closing soon (curse these new short hours at Borders). Several of us ran up to purchase our books and get them signed, and we slowly made our way out to chat in the parking lot until nearly 10:30. Sadly, several of us were under the weather, and I wound up not going to the diner, so I have no idea what shenanigans went on outside my presence. Kate and I chatted about music and books and art on the way back to Rutherford. **(Todd E)**

#### **Additional comments:**

- Laura Anne was a lot of fun. Gotta love a guest that throws things at her audience - Thom! That was hysterical, (tosses paper ball at Thom)"That's it! I'm not talking to you!" I think she included BJ in that as well. **(AM)**
- For the record...you snatched your copy of the book off of the table before the meeting was even over! Darn your close proximity! **(AM)**
- The only reason that I did not mention the paper-throwing was that it involved Bartles and James being referred to as wine, and BJ was similarly excommunicated when he brought up Ernest and Julio Gallo. Wine by the Gallon indeed. Harumph! **(TE)**
- That was no mere 'paper ball'. It was a deadly ninja throwing sugar pack. Ironically there was a wall of book armor giving me partial cover. Fortunately, Laura was unable to overcome the 50% miss chance, and I survived the encounter, gaining enough xp to attain 7th level in 'Bad Joke Slinging'. **(Thom Purdy)**
- ROFL!! Deadly ninja throwing sugar pack...too funny. Maybe you should mail her some Bartles and James - lol ;-) **(AM)**

#### **Films to Come – Wednesday, November 17, 2010**

Movies, TV, books, Oscar speculations, singing - yes, singing, some raucous behavior (I don't want to mention names...Todd), and tons of reviews all managed to be included in Films to Come last night. Sadly, no Kerplopus or Zipperump-a-zoo made a showing. Todd is valiantly holding out hope.

Wound up and let loose upon an unsuspecting group of attendees (who I swear were well-behaved, attentive and paying attention), our moderator came with an agenda...a full agenda. He wore himself out - that is our official story that we plan on sticking with.

Films opened with Barry bringing a cavalcade of DVDs, books, magazines, and graphics (no Kerplopus) for us to look over. First up was *Twilight* and its sequel *New Moon* on DVD for a special price (a veritable bargain). Although Barry insists *Twilight* was a decent film, there were no takers. *Scott Pilgrim*, *The Losers: Book 1*, *Jonah Hex: No Way Back* and *The Walking Dead* were passed around. *The Walking Dead* was a big draw. Todd, Barry and I all have been watching the series on AMC and are thrilled it has been renewed. If you aren't watching - you should! Very well done and genuinely terrifying at times. But, the real story is about survivors trying to come to terms with their new lives. The social interaction is fantastic.

All-Time USA Box Office was next. This is a list of movies that have grossed over \$100,000,000 at the box office during their theatrical runs. Not much had changed on the USA list. *Toy Story 3* was still top dog

earning \$414,638,013! Believe it or not, *Jackass 3D* made the list at #16 with \$115,025,104. The big change this time was in All-Time Worldwide Box Office. *Alice in Wonderland* was finally overthrown...by another Disney film. *Toy Story 3* made the jump to #1 pulling in \$1,062,638,013!

*The List* was next.

#### **October:**

*The Social Network* got thumbs up from Chris, Barry and me. Barry pointed out that one of the stars of *The Social Network*, Andrew Garfield, was the new Spiderman in that upcoming film. Director David Fincher will be making an English language version of *Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*, which will star Rooney Mara also starring in *The Social Network*. Interesting trivia.

*Let Me In* got thumbs up from Barry.

*Hereafter* got lukewarm thumbs up from Barry. He gave it a 2.5/3 stars out of 5 but added that it was not good/not bad/had some good scenes. Wait for DVD.

I did my part by warning people away - far away - from *Paranormal Activity 2* as well as *My Soul To Take*.

#### **November:**

*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1* was anticipated by almost everyone. Ana, Todd and Chris had read all of the books and were current on the films. Mike chimed in with his 1/4 read and 1/4 watched of both one book and one movie.

Ana and I are eagerly looking forward to *Tangled*. Looks fun.

Much discussion about *The Next Three Days*. This film is based on a French film. Todd had seen the French version and thought it was good. He was apprehensive about the US version. TNTD is about a married couple's whose life is turned upside down when the wife is accused of a murder. Husband decides a jailbreak is the only answer. Barry gave us a lecture about the difference between a French film and an American film. We are still not sure what that is, but we nodded accordingly.

*127 Hours* stirred conversation about James Franco and his roles.

*Faster* - Mike P learned Dwayne Johnson is no longer The Rock, which led to a brief aside about wrestling. Without having seen it, we decided *Skyline* was a dud.

#### **December:**

Ana was appalled that an attempt to remake *True Grit* was even thought of let alone done. Todd was ecstatic over Julie Taymor's *The Tempest*.

Ana's disdainful "Jack Black as *Gulliver!*?" was hilarious (the upcoming *Gulliver's Travels*).

*Black Swan*...hmmm.. This film is dark. Very much so. IMDb describes it as: A thriller that zeros in on the relationship between a veteran ballet dancer and a rival. It is also described as "a wicked psycho-sexual thriller." This film is by Darren Aronofsky, currently scaring the bejeezus out of us with *The Walking Dead*. Barry-Wound-Up-and-Let-Loose sang Rubber Woman to the Wonder Woman tune. Wow. I was for one was scared.

Ana and Todd both declared they would not see *Tron: Legacy*. Todd's reason, "bad movie with great effects."

Ana and Todd were excited about *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Both felt this book was the best in the series.

*Yogi Bear*...imitations of Art Carney...reminiscing for some and finally, a movie for Debbie M! It's not *Marmaduke*, but will have to do.

After exhausting *The List*, Barry took out Entertainment Weekly and made quick work of the December/holiday releases not on *The List*. *The Tourist* (Depp, Jolie), *Heminway's Garden of Eden*, *Frankie & Alice* (Halle Berry), *Biutiful* and *The Way Back* (Gulag rip-off). After a quick, "Oh thank god most of these were on the list," from our showing-signs-of-wear-and-tear moderator, we moved on to some other business.

Some Oscar chat...Chris thought Diane Lane was a shoe-in for *Secretariat*, while Barry disagreed and stated he thought possibly Naomi Watts. Announcements regarding Big Screen Classics and Rivertown schedules and films. Barry's parting shot was to show us two books - *150 Movies You Should Die Before You See* and *My Year of Flops*. Harrumph...the direct shot at my film viewing habits was not lost. Oh yeah! At least I knew the band was ELO Barry, ELO ;-)

We had a really good time, covered three months of movies, many laughs and Todd is still sitting waiting for a Kerplopus in the Kerplopus patch. Excellent! Take a bow Barry. Todd...keep looking, that Kerplopus will show up...soon...any minute now. **(AM)**

### **Themes of the Fantastic – Tuesday, November 23, 2010**

The topic was witches and the like. I brought a multi-page handout from [www.witchcraftandwitches.com](http://www.witchcraftandwitches.com) that was quite interesting. It started out: What Is Witchcraft? The art or practice of witches, the practice of sorcery, enchantments and intercourse with spirits; the belief in, or use of, certain kinds of supernatural or magical powers

Witchcraft in Popular Culture - Novels

[The Wizard of Oz](#); [Chronicles of Narnia](#); [The Devils of Loudon](#); [To the Devil a Daughter](#); [The Mists of Avalon](#); [Discworld](#); [The Witches of Eastwick](#); [Lives of the Mayfair Witches](#); [A Break With Charity](#); [Wicked](#); [His Dark Materials](#); [Harry Potter](#); [Stardust](#); [T\\*Witches](#)

[I added [The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane](#)]

Witchcraft in Popular Culture - Television

[Bewitched](#); [Free Spirit](#); [Charmed](#); [Picket Fences](#); [Buffy the Vampire Slayer](#); [Felicity](#); [Hex](#)

[Bill added [Sabrina, Teenage Witch](#)]

Witchcraft in Popular Culture - Films

[Haxan](#) (or "Heksen"); [Maid of Salem](#); [The Wizard of Oz](#); [I Married a Witch](#); [Bell, Book and Candle](#); [City of the Dead](#) (US title "Horror Hotel"); [The Witch](#); [The Witches](#); [Rosemary's Baby](#); [Witchfinder General](#); [Witches' Hammer](#); [The Devils](#); [Bedknobs and Broomsticks](#); [The Wicker Man](#); [Suspiria](#); [The Witches of Eastwick](#); [Witchcraft](#); [The Little Mermaid](#); [Hocus Pocus](#); [The Craft](#); [Practical Magic](#); [Halloweentown](#); [The Blair Witch Project](#); [Harry Potter](#); [Witches of the Caribbean](#) [Chuck added [Black Sunday](#)]

Quite an enjoyable discussion. **(Chris H)**

### **Modern Masters – Friday November 26, 2010**

Modern Masters met to discuss *Implied Spaces* by Walter Jon Williams at Panera's on Friday, 11/26/10. It was a very nice evening with a great turnout.

Walter Jon Williams (<http://www.walterjonwilliams.net/>) is the author of *Knight Moves* (1985), *Hardwired* (1986), *Days of Atonement* (1991), the Nebula nominee *Metropolitan* (1995) and its sequel, *City on Fire*, and the *Drake Maijstral Series* (*The Crown Jewels*, 1987, *House of Shards*, 1988, and *Rock of Ages*, 1995), and *Aristoi* among other books. He also has historical novels written as Jon Williams.

On his website, in his Adventure Diary (<http://www.walterjonwilliams.net/adventure-diary.html>), Williams states, "It's been my practice all my adult life to work hard and play hard. And sometimes, when I'm playing, I write things down." He brings a bit of this to his writing. His characters 'live hard and play hard' too.

*Implied Spaces* is billed as a novel of the 'singularity' and it fulfills this statement. There are AIs galore, wormholes as an everyday tool of civilization, uploading and downloading of personalities, and memes everywhere. Don't get us going about Pablo...Pablo Good, Pablo Bad...the most interesting man in the world (had to be there). Todd enjoyed the book, but thought its predecessor, *Aristoi*, was better. He felt the story was a reworking of the basic plot to *Aristoi*, but still would recommend *Implied Spaces*.

*Implied Spaces* opens with a swordsman in the desert encountering thieves; mysterious priests kidnapping people, and caravan guards led by an ogre. Pure sword and sorcery, right? Aladdin for grown ups? Yes, no, and so much more. We learn this mysterious swordsman is Aristide. The opening is fun and action-packed. All who had read the book agreed. When Aristide returns 'home' is when opinions begin to differ. By the end of that story, we know that the protagonist, Aristide, is a very old man in a culture with

near-immortality (based on mind-backups and reloads into new bodies). We also learn he's Pablo...not Aristide. If this seems confusing, it was a bit. One of the complaints about the book from several readers (myself, Liz B, Kathleen, Chris H) was that we felt Williams did not explain what was happening well enough. As Liz explains, "it's as if he dropped you into the middle of something you needed to know."

This culture is just pre-singularity, with the AI's providing the computational power to run things being kept just short of true sentience, or at any rate just short of freedom. Each AI maintains several worlds inside artificial spaces reachable by wormholes. Some of these are constructed as playgrounds. The title, "implied spaces," refers to the unexpected and sometimes surprising regions that arise in between well-defined areas in these artificial worlds: regions "implied" by the underlying logic that allows the intentional areas to exist. All agreed it was the only concept Williams explained fully and well.

When we learn about Pablo/Aristide, things become murky. The consensus was we all liked Aristide, but did not like or care for Pablo. We liked the Bitsy character - a cat avatar. The confusion over where the characters are, what the characters are and just how many Pablos are there, had us losing interest. As Chris points out, you just give up caring because "you're never sure who is who anyway."

The premise in *Implied Spaces* is that people are bored - "existential crisis" is an apt term. I guess when you're so long-lived things can get tedious. There isn't much more to learn, most of that learning is best done by the AIs, and the people are too lazy to want to learn anything new anyway. Death has been conquered, disease has been conquered. Even the AIs are bored! A shakeup is needed, but rogue AIs are a danger. Man found that out in a previous war (the control-alt-delete war) the hard way. Aristide discovers war is on the way again. People are being stolen and returned with their brains altered to worship a creature called Vindex. Boy will Cthulhu be mad!

The story moves at a quick pace and is an easy read (even with the somewhat confusing *tech talk*). Aristide reconnects with an old lover, Daljit, and they try to uncover the mystery surrounding Vindex. Mayhem ensues with travels to planets following clues and agents of Vindex. Will Aristide finally encounter Vindex himself? Will he learn the surprising secret behind his identity? What is Vindex up to?

*Implied Spaces* is fun. The setup allows Williams to play with a variety of settings and characters (some might say too many characters). *Implied Spaces* is hard SF, but readable to the non-SF reader. The main complaint was the lack of explanation - needed, especially for a story you are dropped into the middle of. **(AM)**

**Additional comments:** To follow up on some of Ann-Marie's comments, Gene and Barry brought up some good points. Gene mentioned that, unlike "Implied Spaces", where things seemed to start in the middle with no explanation, "The Wizard of Oz", as an example, wouldn't be able to get away with it. Barry mentioned that he thought that coming in the middle of things has been a trend lately. Overall, a spirited discussion on a book that left too much unanswered / unexplained. **Chris H.**

#### **Heroes & Rogues - Rogue Traders: Wolves in the Fold, Saturday November 27, 2010**

##### **Chapter 8: Something Rotten in Yois (868.861,M38) From the Journals of Wencisia Tremnar**

Just once, I think that I would like to spend some time on a planet with a decent climate. While I will readily admit that we have been increasing the size and presence of House Tremnar here in the Lupus Cluster, and enriching our great House and its allies, I will also readily admit that in my time aboard the Lady Malbec I have seen some of the worst planets that the sector has to offer.

We started off this most recent set of endeavours after finding some interesting information out about our friends in the Imperial Navy. When we arrived at the Naval Repair Yards at Shotra to unload the many tonnes of salvage that we had aquired in the debris fields left behind after the three major battles here in the Shotra system, I managed to make a contact with the local Imperial commander-designate. The fellow, a rather ancient Navigator-Commodore named Alloytious Benetek, a distant cousin of our current head Navigator, Lilith Benetek, declared that he was being deliberately beached here in this back-water outpost in retaliation by his rival, a younger Admiral named Justinian Spartavalcus. Spartavalcus, who was angry at being kept in the rear guard position during the initial assault on Hephaiston Station in the Thapsus System, took his command and quickly conquered Ancona, and a number of other worlds after a near-disastrous stalemate at Ve'Fros (which the

Commodore alleges cost him prestige when he was forced to clean up after Spartavalcus' mess). Spartavalcus was amply rewarded for his successes in the Commonwealth's backfield, and Grand Admiral Stellenhelm began to pay greater and greater heed to the counsel of the Admiral than some of his more senior and reliable officers. Commodore Benetek, it seems, believes that Spartavalcus may have made a deal with the Commonwealth to ensure his conquests went smoothly.

While vengeance is rarely a profitable motive, in this case, it appears to be a bit better than some others. Benetek, while fueled by anger and a desire to avenge the slight, is also willing to pay handsomely for our participation in uncovering the truth behind Spartavalcus' successes. When I discussed remuneration with the venerable Commodore, he indicated that if he was returned to his prior command, he would very happily garrison up to two worlds of our choice with complements of Monitors. This would free up some of our assets, and provide the veneer of Naval approval to our actions. Placing three Monitors in a system like Sparta Hill would provide us with an immeasurable advantage. My colleagues and I agreed to stop in at Ancona on the way to Ciria and see what we could discover. We were also provided a rare and expensive cheese from Holy Terra.

At Ancona we attempted in vain to find an adequate cargo, however interference from mercenaries of House Wolfe stymied Sarvus' attempts to negotiate a deal. Given his issues in dealing with the newly installed Governor Bernanrdus, Sarvus decided to focus his attention on the burgeoning slave camps at Bika. The previous Governor, Anton Hadd, granted House Kalbo a writ of trade to exploit the mineral wealth of Ancona. Kalbo, a rather small House originating in the Aurelian sub-sector, had traditionally used slavery in their prior holdings to ensure continuous production, had apparently pushed the slaves to such a point that they openly rebelled and caused wide-spread destruction all across Ancona. Only the depot at Bika was untouched by the uprising, which led to the execution of both Governor Hadd and the Marquis Kalbo. Sarvus and Jorn did manage to pick up a number of wealthy slaves from Bika, who offered to buy back their freedom if we could take them to nearby Yois. Meanwhile, Liana and Lorn were approached by a Commonwealth officer who offered to provide some information in exchange for a shuttle. He promised that the shuttle would be used only against House Wolfe's mercenary forces, and not against any Imperial assets, and so Liana agreed. In exchange, the fellow pointed us to the system's Oasis station, and its T-Doppler arrays. If anyone knows the truth of what happened here, it would be the folks on the station. He also advised our Captain that XYZ Corporation had a death mark on Spartavalcus' head due to his renegeing on their bargain.

Taking our slaves to the nearby station, Liana showed some business acumen in negotiating the return of most of the Commonwealth spacers and their survival pods, in exchange for a credit at a larger XYZ facility in Yois. The station manager, an XYZ employee named Gigi Tourneau, advised us that she would prefer we leave Spartavalcus alone, as he was a very valuable employee. The rumours of the Combine wanted Spartavalcus dead were, apparently, being circulated in order to throw the Inquisition off the scent if they ever decided to investigate the Admiral. XYZ, apparently, was working very hard to make sure that the war lasts as long as possible in order to reap the largest profit possible from the conflict. While dealing with enemies of the Empire is somewhat distasteful, it appears that we may be able to make a marked profit from these dealings.

Moving on to the Yois system, we charted a quick course and determined to visit the planet before moving on to the station at Mistula. Jorn and Lorn brought the first slave, a man named Otto Ulbrexis, to the First Imperial Banque of Yois, where he apparently contacted some friends and set up an ambush for us as we brought the next slave to the Banque. Liana, Lorn, Jorn, and I fought a pretty nasty ambush in the streets of Yois, with no assistance what-so-ever from the local governor, a Brigadier Shire of the 3322nd Fenksian Conservor Regiment. The freezing weather was an ally of the one of the huntsman, who scored a lucky hit on my shoulder, ruining my nicest fur, which another of the ruffians further destroyed by having the ill grace to bleed all over me. Lorn fared slightly worse, though, as some berserk madman with a chainsword and a bad attitude sliced him squarely across the middle. The brave warrior, by which I mean Lorn, fought on, scoring a shot to the villain's back as he attempted to menace Liana, who had dispatched another maniac with a lascannon. Jorn, who was apparently having a pleasant exchange with one of the snipers in an upper story room, eventually came to our aide, killing the madman with the chainsword and guiding the rest of us in spotting the other sniper, who we captured.

Liana, fit to be tied over the death of our prisoner, and deciding to make an example of the locals come what may, dashed into the Banque and had Lorn, Jorn and a complement of our retainers button the place down. After extorting the mortgages of all of the major estates of our slaves out of the Banque at half of their face value, the indomitable Captain allowed our prisoners to finish paying their debts to us. Sadly, in the confusion, we lost track of Otto Ulbrexus, but I have strong suspicions that we will be seeing the former head of Ancona Amalgamated Mining & Materials again ere long. Our detractors have a way of popping up to annoy me. We seized all of Ulbrexus' assets on Yois, and moved into his massive chalet up in the mountains. The place is like a fortress, and though I miss our hab-spire on Alactra greatly, I have never seen so magnificent a dwelling on so inhospitable a ball of ice. Jorn, Liana, and I agreed that this would be a good survival training facility, but equally, would be an excellent place to set up as a center of power and influence for our House. It even has its own independent shuttle pad and is a perfect stopover spot on the way from Ciria to lol, and since the system has almost nothing else to recommend itself, it is unlikely to attract too much attention otherwise.

Having settled some enforcers into the estate to ensure its orderly transfer to House Marioc control, we turned our attention to the XYZ outpost at the gas giant Mistula. The outpost was run by a Xeno race that we had hitherto never encountered: the Vauvasar. The Vauvasar are a hideous race, looking like over-sized frogs, with huge, bulbous spider-eyes. This particular creature, who insisted we call it 'Mr. Brown' as its own name was almost unpronounceable. We discovered to our delight that we would be able to make a profit off of pretty much any of the materials that they were offering for sale, and would still be able to pick up a few exotic goods for our own personal use. I, for my own part, selected a device I had heard of only in legend, called a Harlequin's Kiss. Liana, chose protection over offense requesting a suit of light power armour much like that worn by our assailant in the streets. Others are busy looking over their own needs and developing a shopping list, and I suspect that this may cut into our margins a bit. My one concern is that the station itself does not seem large enough to hold all of the goods it alleges are available for purchase. **(Todd)**

#### **SFSNNJ Member Reviews Books, Movies, TV**

##### **Todd on TV: The Walking Dead**

Sunday, October 31st, All Hallows Eve, the night of Brian O'Dell's Wedding, was probably one of the busiest days of 2010 for me. Luckily, I was able to top off a fun and fantastic day with the most ambitious premiere of a limited series to date. So, let's talk Halloween and the first true Horror series AMC has done.

As everyone knows, I love Halloween. Although I am not much of a horror aficionado, I do enjoy a good scare (heck, my favorite film is Ridley Scott's Alien), and I have been waiting for something interesting to show up on my radar this Television season. While there have been a lot of truly horrible shows (Undercovers, Chase, Law & Order LA), there has been little in the way of horror on TV. This is really nothing new. One might ask why, and I would have to answer that it is really hard to sustain the kind of energy that cinematic horror provides for more than a few episodes before one runs out of steam (The Gates, Haven, Prey, Wolf Lake, War of the Worlds). Sure there is the tried and true Horror Anthology Series (Twilight Zone, Outer Limits, Masters of Horror), but it seems like the TV audiences have gotten bored by these types of shows as evidenced by the abysmal ratings of the New Twilight Zone and Masters of Horror. So, as you can see, the landscape of TV Horror is a bit bleak already, but AMC is known for taking somewhat risky projects and running away with them. Thankfully, The Walking Dead is one such project.

What is The Walking Dead? Well, it is a limited series from AMC based on a long running comic book series of the same name. It should be noted that not only is it a long running series, but is one of the most popular Horror Comics around. This is, of course, a double-edged sword. The more popular a series is, the less likely the fans will be willing to accept any changes to their beloved canon. While I cannot say that I am all that familiar with the comic book series, I have heard a great many good things about it, and have the feeling that the material is pretty consistent (if only because the writer of the comic is one of the writers of the series).

So, let's talk turkey, what about the show? Well, in a nutshell, I liked it! I liked it a lot. Now whether this is because I am still shell-shocked by the awful premieres of September or if it is because the show is excellent is anybody's guess, but let me talk about what I liked and we can go from there. The show

starts off by showing us the landscape, with Sheriff's Deputy Grimes driving his car up to a gas station and shooting a little zombie girl. From that introduction we know that serious things are afoot, and will be dealt with in a rather serious manner. From this desperate opening, we flash back to the time before the Zombie Apocalypse, and follow Grimes through his injury and into the world gone mad that he awakens to. There are obvious parallels to films like 28 Days Later in the sequence where Grimes wakes up and starts wandering around town, but there are a lot of differences.

First is the lighting and mood. Unlike many zombie films, the world is not in a perpetual state of overcast and rain or fog. In fact, many of the shots seem like they are almost over-lit, especially in the night sequences. We are used to half-seen things shambling around in the background, or blurry and obscured horrors leaping out from behind things. Here, however, we have easily seen and identified monsters whose terrifying affliction is bared and plain for all to see. Equally, unlike most zombie stories, the protagonist knows how to ride a bicycle and a horse. These very useful conveyances are generally overlooked in most horror, which prefers people to try to keep their cars running in spite of the lack of efficiency in doing so (one rarely needs to change the oil on a Schwinn and breakfast is the best fuel you can get).

While the mood is more than a bit frightening, the story itself is more about the people and how they are dealing with the walkers (i.e. zombies). We see a young father and his son trying to get to Atlanta and stalled in Grimes' hometown, as they cannot abandon the last member of their family, who has become a walker and is terrorizing them every night as she tries to get in the building, they are holed up in. While the characters seem to have a distinct lack of empathy for the walkers around them, it is obvious that no matter how much they try to pretend the killing does not affect them, it is obviously still an issue. The tension mounts and we discover more and more about the world as the premier unfolds, but we never quite learn enough to feel like we just sat through a proper info-dump.

Darabount and his team have brought us a magnificent view of a horrifying subject, expanded in such a way that we can explore the devolution and evolution of the human spirit. I cannot wait to see episode 2.

#### **Additional comments:**

I enjoyed it very much, and I was pleasantly surprised how much they followed the original story, and how the changes that were made were very much in the spirit of the story. The dramatic scene of Rick riding into the city on a lone horse was straight out of the comic and followed things very well, but like I said there were changes, things like he found the horse in the barn not the field are minor. There are others like that, but nothing that was a major change to the story thus far. I wonder how far they will go though since the story is on going, though there have been deaths along the way I won't ruin it for anyone, but reading the comic books is worth your time and money. I was worried with the level of violence in the comic that that wouldn't translate to TV and still do the story justice, but they did and the characters are amazingly close to their comic book counterparts. I'm excited and I suggest others take a look at the series, because if it is like the comic books, you will want to know what's happening next by the end of every episode in the continuing story.

So, grab your photo albums, water, and your rifle, and hit the road. **(James Smith)**

#### **The 13 Scariest books of all time not written by Stephen King – post by Barry W.**

<http://blastr.com/2010/10/the-13-scariest-books-of.php>

#### **Additional comments:**

\*I've read all but one of the titles on this list. I don't know what's scarier - those books or that little tidbit!!

I also noticed that the majority of the books have film adaptations...hmmm...all things come back to Films...very well done Mr. Moderator of Films to Come, very well done indeed.

I was glad to see a nice blend of true ghost story type horror as well as psychological horror. IMHO, some of the books fall into both true ghost and psychological scares. I am not a fan of gore/slasher - that to me is not scary, simply gross.

That said, what makes a book psychologically scary to some? It's easy to say *The Exorcist* (Blatty) is scary on many levels...that horrible possessed face, that chill inducing voice, but is it also psychological? To some, yes. If the concept of possession is real to you, then it is psychological. The demon plays with the priests in such a way that the reader is running for cover and glad they aren't Father Merrin or Father Karras! Film adaptation (1973) is still terrifying people to this day and constantly makes the list for top horror movies.

The same could be said for *Ghost Story* (Straub). The story is a true ghost story which is scary and told well. But, the real fear comes from the psychological mind games Alma plays with her victims. When will she strike? Where? Is this really happening? Good creepy stuff. The film has some genuine jump-in-your-seat moments but was not as scary as the book - possibly because the book relied much on psychological terror.

*The Haunting of Hill House* (Jackson), like *The Exorcist* and *Ghost Story*, is both a true ghost story and a psychological trip. Each person in the "study" has emotional baggage that the ghosts use to their advantage. You are as scared of the ghosts banging on doors as you are about what might be behind the door as your imagination kicks in. This one has two movies, both decent. I think the original from 1963 does a slightly better job of scaring you.

*Rosemary's Baby* (Ira Levin) and *The Amityville Horror* (Jay Anson) fall into that category as well, at least IMHO. They offer up the traditional ghost or bogeyman while working on the reader's psyche. It should be noted that if you read *Amityville* as a stand alone book rather than a book attached to a "supposed" true haunting, you'll enjoy it more. *Rosemary's Baby*, like *The Exorcist*, is gold-standard horror.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, while not overly scintillating, is a good story. You journey with the characters. You believe Castle Dracula exists in those eerie mountains and that its occupants are strigoi...not the castle of an historical warlord.

I own *Hell House* and am a fan of Richard Matheson's work in general. This is a scary book and a pretty good movie as well. This one scares you but good on many levels.

*American Psycho* (Ellis) was a downright frightening book. Ellis did an interview when the book was released responding to the shocked reactions of reviewers to the violent content. Ellis called it both a psychological and satirical thriller. His main character, serial killer, Patrick Bateman is so twisted you're glad you don't know him (or pray you don't know someone like him). The real scary thing was Bateman was handsome, charming, accomplished...his victims never saw it coming. The film adaptation maintained the chills.

The big bad of psychological horror is certainly *The Silence of the Lambs* (Harris). You hear the words Chianti and fava beans together and huddle in the fetal position. Film was an excellent adaptation.

*The Ruins* (Scott Smith) - The book was a tad better than the crappiest movie, but I wasn't a fan of either.

Clive Barker's *Books of Blood* vol. 1-3...not scary, just gore. Stupid gore at that. *The Midnight Meat Train* was a film made from this set of volumes and starred Bradley Cooper. There are 6 *Books of Blood* in total that spawned a cluster of sub-standard horror films that even syfy Saturday would reject. Other films from *Books of Blood* vol. 1 - 6 include: *Rawhead Rex* (ridiculous - Rehead Rex, a Celtic demon, is so poorly depicted that you can see its eyes googling around in the cheap costume), *The Forbidden* known better as *Candyman*, *The Last Illusion* aka the movie that Scott Bakula pretends not to have made known as *Lord of Illusions* (1995), *The Book of Blood* (recently tortured syfy viewers) and *Dread* (2009).

*The Road* (MacCarthy) provided extreme psychological terror. Didn't see the film.

The recent monster-under-the-bed, *The Walking Dead*. On the surface this one screams monster scares. Zombies, everywhere! You slowly begin to realize just how scary the monster that is man can be as the survivors try to adjust to a new way-of-life. Chilling on both the traditional monster way and the deepest of psychological fears innate in man.

The only book on this list I have not read is *The Cipher* by Kathe Koja. From the description it sounds like *Pet Cemetery*. A guy finds a 'black hole' in his apartment and drops things down into it and they come

back violently transformed. I hear little Cole saying, "first I played with Mommy. Now I'm gonna play with you." **(AM)**

\*My two cents. I have seen more of the movies than read the books. The three I have read had varied success as movies. "Ghost Story" is quite frightening in that you don't quite know why Alma is doing what she does. The movie(1981), though decent, seems like more of an excuse to get four old-time actors together (Fred Astaire, his last film, Melvyn Douglas, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., John Houseman). Leonard Maltin gives this 2 1/2 stars out of 4 and justly so. "The Haunting of Hell House" is very psychological, and carries over to the film "The Haunting" (1963) quite well. Maltin: 3 1/2 out of 4. "The Exorcist" is one of the most terrifying books ever written. William Peter Blatty wrote the screen play for the film (1973) and captured that same horror. The way the demon plays on Father Karras' loss of faith, especially channeling his mother, is really the core of the film. Maltin: 3 1/2 out of 4. **(Chris H)**

### **Neil Gaiman - The Graveyard Book – Chris Hasselkus**

I had mentioned that I had seen an ad in the New Yorker about how this book won the 2009 Hugo and Newbery Awards and the 2010 Carnegie Medal. I wanted to read it and in fact just finished it. It's a children's fantasy novel about a boy named Nobody Owens (Bod) who, after his family is killed by a mysterious man, is adopted and raised by the occupants of a graveyard. It's really episodic short stories telling of his various adventures. Definitely worthwhile.

### **Another Silent Film Classic on TCM – Steve Spinosa**

On Monday night at midnight, Turner Classic Movies will show D.W. Griffith's 1915 film The Birth of A Nation. Over the years this film has been vilified as being terribly racist, but Jim believes that instead Griffith bends over backwards not to be racist He cites Lincoln's assassination as the key point, saying that without his powerful presence in charge, The Northern carpetbaggers & white Southern Congressman run rampant. Jim also says that the black man Lynch's only crime is there being a convenient cliff for the scared white girl to fall off of.

**Additional remarks:** go to our Yahoo forum for the complete thread in this post - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SFSNNJ/>

### **Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows - Part 1 – Chris Hasselkus**

Liz B. and I saw the film Friday night at the Lafayette in Suffern, NY. Nelson Page stated he thought there were about 500 people in attendance. And were they ever ready! Some even came in costume. As far as the film is concerned, I felt it was a bit deliberate in it's presentation. Liz welcomed the slower pace because she felt that in the earlier films things happened so fast that some of them were missed. The film, as the seventh book, took place outside of Hogwarts and relied on the three kids to carry it - they were never better. I guess it's not surprising in that they've been playing the roles for half their lives (10 years of age to 20 or so). I'm really looking forward to seeing Part 2 in July 2011. B+

### **Upcoming Conventions**

<http://www.scificonventions.com/> - take a look at this site for different conventions

<http://www.scifisource.com/> - great site for all things genre