



May 2011 Newsletter

The Family Ties that Bind: Family in SF: A Family Affair: Blood may be thicker than water, but sometimes you just want to get the heck out of the family business, especially when you are related to conniving, backstabbing, crazies. True, some characters are looking for lost kin, but many cannot distance themselves from their families fast enough. There is nothing so important, or dear to us, as families, even when they are robots or monsters. Come what may, though, this month we will take a look at the Family in SF, fantasy and horror.

That's Science Fiction
Tuesday May 3, 2011 – 7p
Hillsdale Public Library
Arsenic & Old Lace (1944)
*Dining follows this event

Suspense Central
Monday May 9, 2011, 2010 – 8p
Panera Bread Restaurant
165 Rt. 64 West
Paramus, NJ – 201.368.0752
The Unit by Terry DeHart

Drawing A Crowd
Wednesday May 11, 2011 – 7p
Fantasy Games & Hobbies
9 Miller Rd - Mahwah
"Family" in SF
www.fantasygamesandhobbies.com

Face the Fiction
Saturday May 14, 2011
Well Read Books – Hawthorne, NJ
Daniel Rabuzzi
*Full details on p. 2

Films to Come: 4-Star Movie Discussion Group
Wednesday May 18, 2011 – 7p
Borders Books & Music
235 Interstate Shopping Center Shopping/Rt. 17
Ramsey, NJ 07446
This group discusses the world of cinema and entertainment. If it deals with entertainment, our Master of Entertainment Moderator will cover it.
*Dining follows this event.

Themes of the Fantastic
Tuesday May 24, 2011 – 8p
Wayne Public Library
"Family" in SF
www.waynepubliclibrary.org

Modern Masters
Tuesday May 27, 2011 – 8p
Borders Books & Music
235 Interstate Shopping Center/Rt. 17 South
Ramsey, NJ 07446
Newton's Wake by Ken McLeod

Rogue Trader: Wolves in the Fold
Saturday May 28, 2011 – time 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?

please visit www.sfsnj.com for full details

SFSNNJ Face the Fiction presents: Daniel Rabuzzi

When: Saturday, May 14, 2011

Where: Well Read Bookstore - www.thewellreadbookstore.com

425 Lafayette Avenue

Hawthorne, NJ 07506

973.949.3440

Time: 7:00pm

Join us as we welcome guest Daniel Rabuzzi (<http://www.danielrabuzzi.com>). Mr. Rabuzzi is a NYC-based author of sci fi/ fantasy. His fantasy novel, *The Choir Boats: Volume One of Longing for Yount* (Chizine Publications, Toronto, 2009) is the July Book of the Month at Wowio, the online e-book seller.

Daniel A. Rabuzzi's first novel *The Choir Boats*, put out by Chizine Publications, debuted at WorldCon 2009 in Montreal. His short fiction and poetry have appeared in *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet*, *Shimmer*, *Sybil's Garage*, *Chizine*, *Abyss & Apex*, *Mannequin Envy*, *Goblin Fruit*, and *Scheherezade's Bequest*.

Daniel majored in the study of folklore and fairytales as an undergraduate at Harvard, with a minor in comparative lit and history. He spent two years on fellowships at the University of Oslo's Institute for Folklore Studies, collecting oral histories in Norway and in England (with results published in journals of folklore in the U.K., Sweden and Denmark). He earned a master's at The Fletcher School at Tufts, and then a Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins in early modern German gender and cultural history. In all, Daniel spent eight years in Norway, Germany and France. He is married to the woodcarver and artist [Deborah Mills](#), who also illustrated his book. They live in New York City.

An executive at a global non-profit in education by day, Daniel explores a world called Yount by night and on weekends. He is currently working on *The Indigo Pheasant: Volume Two of Longing for Yount*.

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



New & Forthcoming Books in SF and other Genre

36 new books slated for May 2011 release:

<http://www.scifan.com/titles/forthcoming.asp?sort=bytitle&date=052011&covers=hide>

Upcoming Conventions

- ***This weekend is Chiller at the Hilton Parsippany in Parsippany, NJ!!**
<http://www.chillertheatre.com/main.htm>
- **Friday - 6 p.m. - 11 p.m.**
- **Saturday - 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.**
- **Sunday - 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

• **Horrorfind Weekend:** September 2-4, 2011, Gettysburg, PA: <http://www.horrorfindweekend.com/>

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

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

- **Confluence 2011 - <http://www.parsec-sff.org/confluence/>**

- Date: July 22-24, 2011
- Location: Pittsburgh, PA
- Venue: Doubletree Hotel Pittsburgh Airport
- Guests of Honor
- Rob Sawyer Guest of Honor Alexa Klettner Featured Filk Guest

- Art Auction, Art Show, Dealer Room, Guest Panels, Sci Fi Screenings

- **Worldcon - 2011: Renovation**, the 69th World Science Fiction Convention, Reno, Nevada, USA
Wednesday 17 August 2011 - Sunday 21 August 2011
email: info@renovationsf.org
postal: Renovation, PO Box 13278, Portland, OR 97123-0278
<http://www.renovationsf.org/>

April Meeting Recaps

That's Science Fiction! – *Battle Royale* - Tuesday April 5, 2011

All at the viewing of *Battle Royale* had a great time. Though grim, Mike P. enjoyed it, and Liz B. and I recognized a similar theme from our reading of *The Hunger Games*. Both dealt with putting people in games that one could only win by being the last one standing; the difference was that *The Hunger Games* participants were of various ages from villages, while *Battle Royale* were high school kids. Liz felt as we all did that the film was well done. The fun continued at the Ridge Diner, with discussions about television shows and films. A really enjoyable evening. (Chris H)

Face the Fiction Anton Strout – Saturday, April 9, 2011

Good morning campers, and welcome to the write-up for our meeting at Well Read Books with our good friend Anton Strout. The evening got off to an early start, with folks filtering in from the warm and sunny afternoon and browsing in mysterious ways throughout the store. Some of us who had the gifts of prescience (i.e. Todd and Ann-Marie) swiftly snatched up their books for purchase before folks could even hope to get their mitts on a book. Hey, it isn't our fault that we are just that good.

Anton arrived around 7:40p and after chatting with the Skees for a few moments, he sat down with the rest of us and started discussing all manner of stuff before the meeting. Much to our delight, we began slavishly reciting our favorite lines to the Simpsons' Monorail Episode, and discussing the pro's and con's of Interning and specialist dialog writers on shows like that. We talked about gaming and other assorted fun topics, and somebody quipped that if you were not quoting Monty Python at least once a game nobody must be having any fun. We also spoke of the dangers of vanity press publication and the issues of distribution, the strange world of e-Pub, and much more, including what sounded like an awesome panel on Gaming and Genre fiction that Anton was on with Jim Butcher and several others (I want to say Neil Gaiman, but I think that is likely wrong).

Around 8:15 we started the discussion proper, with me introducing Anton with a flourish of praise and a flurry of applause, mostly directed at me leaving the spotlight to the person that everyone was there to see. Anton was his usual bubbly and personable self, jovially pointing out that if he seemed a bit down, it was because he got two "One Star" reviews on Amazon from some guy. This turned into an interesting discussion of the merits of the rating system on websites like Amazon, B&N, and Borders, and a realization that sometimes folks grab these books and dislike them mainly because it is not quite what they were expecting. At one point, Anton explained that the fellow had asked why Jane, whose power is that of Technomancy (the ability to magically influence technological devices) could not just simply use her powers to get out of a specific situation in *Dead Matter*. As both Ann-Marie and I pointed out: the answer was explained in the scene before where Jane states that the high degree of technical sophistication of the building means that she needs to interface a central controller to do most of her tricks. It is also the main reason that she gets in trouble later in the same book. It seemed obvious to us that the inquirer had not read the book, or had not truly understood the practical limitations of the 'sorcery' involved.

The conversation turned to news that the fifth book of the Simon Canderous series may be delayed due to Ace not confirming that they will be definitely buying the book. Hint: BUY ANTON'S BOOKS! I must see what happens next! We then discussed the reasons behind the characters and their stories in the series, and Anton indicated that making characters too powerful (a la Superman) feels like a cheat, and having the characters behave in a more realistic manner, and get stuck with realistic issues, is much more understandable and engaging. I would have to agree completely, and would like to point out that this is an ongoing issue with characters throughout the genre: They start off with the best intentions and eventually become super-powered to the point where you wonder why they are having issues with some of the plot points. Anton provides a lot of good balance, and the characters' powers remain constant and easily explained throughout the series.

Next we moved on to some of Anton's new projects and a discussion of writing schedules. Anton has two sets of specs out for stories (in addition to the ongoing Canderous series), and he spent some few moments explaining his Steam-punk YA Ironman concept and his Gargoyle concept to us. Both sounded like a blast to read, and if told in the same manner as his Canderous books will be successful. Apparently, Anton respected our input enough that he wanted us to be part of his editorial process for a submission that he was working on for an anthology called *Weird West* that was due in a few weeks. He read his story, *Lowstone*, to a rapt audience, and then opened the floor up to questions, comments, and suggestions. The dialog flowed quickly as Don Smith asked about the reasoning of why these towns fell out of communication without some news escaping or the rail or other folks noticing (this was chalked up to issues of geography, lack of adequate railway personages, and the fact that folks on foot would likely have been overtaken by the zombies long before they made it to the next town a few dozen miles away). Aurelia pointed out a couple of dialog inconsistencies, while BJ praised the coolness of the steampunk 'gun arm' but wondered how the female gunslinger managed to make the device and still catch up with the monsters (horses was the explanation, IIRC).

We realized suddenly that the time was now 9:30, and we had been chatting, formally and informally for nearly 2 hours. We broke quickly so folks could buy books and get them signed (proving the efficacy of folks like AM and I in having already paid our way as I jumped to the front of the line and got extra 'D's in my name for my trouble). We continued chatting about panels, events, and other fun stuff until Bill kicked us out of the shop so he could close. We then retired to the sidewalk where we spent another

fifteen minutes gabbling before Thom, BJ, Gene, and I headed to the Land & Sea Diner to discuss our plans for global conquest...

Anyway, to conclude: it was a great evening, with Anton Strout shining for his supper, as always. Many of us are looking forward to Modern Masters' discussion of *Dead to Me* and I know that I will continue to be a big supporter and fan of Anton's work.

Join us next month for Daniel Rabuzzi, author of *The Choir Boats!* (**write-up by Todd Ehrenfels**)

Additional comments:

Anton was a lot of fun. He gave us a great preview of a story he's working on. His Simpsons knowledge was most impressive. "I call the big one Bifey!" A fun time was had by all! (**Gene McGrath**)

Suspense Central – *Interface* by Neal Stephenson - Monday April 11, 2011

The night was... hot?... humid?... sultry?... Well, whatever the bizarre weather, we met last night in the cunningly positioned Panera at the Kohl's Shopping Plaza on Route 4 East in Paramus, right across the street from my office, for another exciting installment of Suspense Central. All in all it was a cool assemblage of folks, and frighteningly 80% of us had the book read!

I arrived at Panera promptly at 6p, having driven the 80 meters from my office to the Panera at breakneck speed, and grabbed some dinner and set down to read Anton Strout's *Dead Water*. Around 7p I was joined by Dave Bristow, who had the evening free and wanted to enjoy a night with the group. Dave and I chatted about topics ranging from D&D to Tom Clancey's *Debt of Honor*, which is his first book to severely branch our history off from the Ryan Universe. Clancy had indicated a number of times that he did this purposely to thwart the efforts of Hollywood to ruin more of his Jack Ryan books by making them essentially unfilmable (the joke is on him; there is no such thing as an unfilmable book).

When Liz and Mike arrived around a quarter to 8p, and we stole the 'Reserved Room' because the group scheduled to meet from 7p to 9p never showed up. We chitchatted about a variety of topics before Chris and Aurelia arrived, followed by Ann-Marie, Josephine, and Kathleen. We then went over the schedule for the next several months (which can be seen online at <http://www.sfsnnj.com/groups/SC.htm>) before moving on to discuss *Interface* by Neal Stephenson and Frederick George.

Actually, before we started discussing the book, we really started with a discussion of who really wrote the darned thing, where the pseudonym under which it was originally published in 1995, and why it was published under a pseudonym in the first place. You see, in 1995, the novel *Interface* was published with a listed author of Stephen Bury, which is a combination of the beginning of the last name of Neal Stephenson and the end of the last name of George Jewsbury (Stephenson's Uncle). This was before Neal became really famous with the publication of novels like *Snow Crash* and *Cryptonomicon*, and so when the novel was re-printed, it was given a new Copyright date in 2005 and published under Neal Stephenson and 'J. Frederick George' (another of Jewsbury's pseudonyms which is just his name in reverse order). Suddenly it became clear why the book seemed sort of anachronistic and strange: it was not really from 2005, but rather the decade before.

This led into an actual discussion of the book, and keeping with the traditional Ann-Marie Brown philosophy, we started with the ending and the wended our way around the story. In an amusing twist, even Dave thought that AM's reading of the last page first was kind of funny. Of course, by starting at the end, it led us to the running gag of the evening, namely the karmic retribution of Dr. Radhakrishnan in the book, who gets his comeuppance by dint of a mob led by his failed experiment from earlier in the book who is capable only of saying, "Wubba-wubba-wubba-wubba." Obviously, we kept using the "Wubba-wubba-wubba" throughout the evening to lighten the mood.

We really kept our discussion focused on the book, and for almost two whole hours we discussed nothing but the story and characters. In spite of some of the strange anachronisms that cropped up in the story, the book itself was pretty believable, and made a consistent and coherent sense. The story starts with Illinois Governor Cozzano watching the *State of the Union* being given by President "Whose Name I Cannot Remember Since He Is Barely In The Story At All". President WNICRSHIBITSAA has just announced that the

new fiscal policy of the US government will include forgiving the American National Debt instead of bothering to pay it back, because after all, it's our money anyway. This angers a shadowy group that calls itself the Network, who are actually the moneymen & women behind the financing of the National Debt itself. A Plan is launched by Otho, the crazy old man in the bunker who manages the vast wealth of the Network, and Buckminster Salvador, one of the young turks in the Network, to put a person loyal to the Network's interests in the [Oval Office](#) to set the US back on course.

Using Dr. Radhakrishnan's experimental technology for Brain Repair, and Aaron Green's instant information gathering device for polling, the Network fixes up Bill Cozzano and begins the process of putting him up as an Independent candidate against the President and a Senator named Tip McClane. This is where things get really exciting and interesting as Eleanor Richmond makes a splash and gets nominated as Cozzano's Vice President (which is a vast improvement over her state at the beginning of the story). Things happen, and the plot begins to unravel as unemployed Guinea-pig Floyd Wayne Vishniak realizes what is going on, and comes to the (somewhat psychotic) conclusion that he is the only one who can stop it, with lots of bullets.

We took it in turns to describe a lot of the storyline, and there was a lot to describe, but our main thrust of discussion was that of characters. We all liked the crazy psychopath Floyd Wayne Vishniak, with his Jack-the-Ripper-esque letters ending with "You shall hear from me again soon, I am sure." and his irritation at the sensationalist bent of the reporting, that completely ignores facts to make things exciting (or to promote Cozzano as he comes to suspect later when he realizes that the newspapers must be in on the fix or they would easily have noticed the inconsistencies in Cozzano's anecdotes). Another universally liked character was that of Mel, Cozzano's friend/lawyer/fixer, who absents himself for much of the story in order to find a way to restore his former friend from evil mind control. Some of us had amused notions of Lady Wharburton, and a few were perplexed at Bucky Salvador's name.

I could probably go on for pages about all the various things we touched on during the discussion, but... "Wubba...Wubba...Wubba..." I know when to get out of Dodge and not get mauled by a maddened mob.

Next month's book is *The Unit* by Terry DeHeart and will be at the same place [on Monday May 9, 2011](#). Join us for a fun night! **(write-up by Todd Ehrenfels)**

Drawing A Crowd Government & Bureaucracy – Wednesday April 13, 2011

Fans of Marvel Comics were in for an action-packed night, as last night's *Drawing a Crowd* discussion of *Uncivil Service: Government and Bureaucracy in Comics* donned its power armor and blasted into Fantasy Games & Hobbies. As we sat on the main selling floor (as opposed to the lower level, where several games of *Warhammer 40,000* and *Magic the Gathering* were taking place), we traded quips and stories and a lot of fun while Mike tried desperately to keep us on topic.

Slowly we aggregated around the table, starting with Mike Piazza, Chris Hasselkus, and Dave Bristow, and rapidly joined by all manner of folk (truly they will let anyone into the store, including me). When Haywood and Aurelia arrived around 7:15p, we got off to a start, of sorts, as I got up to get a drink, and Ann-Marie, Moshe, and BJ arrived to take up station around the table. After a quick chat with Manuel about books for the *Rogue Trader* and *Dark Heresy* games, I sat at the table and Mike started us on the list of stuff that he wanted to discuss.

First was *The Hulk*, and his various misadventures with the Military and its infamous General Ross (later leader of the Hulkbusters as Dave pointed out). The Hulk destroys a Jeep and the troopers, who are supposed to be hunting the monster that Dr. Banner has become are cautioning each other, and nickname the beast "That Hulk." Mike did a great job of bringing in a foreign government on this one by relaying a storyline of the Russian agent, Gargoyle, who hypnotizes both Banner and Betsy Ross, and causes Ross to believe that the Hulk means her harm, thus manipulating General Ross into hunting the Hulk down.

Next was the Silver Surfer, and his misadventures in trying to get the governments of Earth to focus on him as a villain instead of fighting each other as a way of making peace on Earth. It did not work, mainly because the Silver Surfer is just too much of a goody-two shoes to really take seriously as an antagonist. Mike read a scene where the Surfer rescues a Marine Corps Colonel from drowning, thus defeating the bad-boy super-villain image he was trying to go for. Moshe, Dave, Haywood, Chris and I discussed the *Fantastic Four*

sequel film (though Dave admitted that he had not seen it), and we talked about how the military in that film behaved towards the Silver Surfer, and their dragooning the FF to help defeat the Surfer in the film.

Turning our attention from the Surfer to his former master, Galactus, Mike relayed a sequence from one of the 1970's Fantastic Four comics where Sue Storm confronts a viciously misogynistic Richard Nixon. This, of course, led to a discussion of The Watchmen, in which Tricky Dick is President well into the 1980's (term limits having either been repealed). We spent some time chatting about the Comedian and his role as Government enforcer, as well as Doctor Manhattan's role as unofficial policy spokesman for the administration.

Captain America (a.k.a. Capiiiiitaan Aaaaamerricaaaaa) and the Falcon were the subjects of the next few sequences in Mike's collage of caparisoned citations. The story of the defeat of Number One, leader of the Secret Empire (actually Nixon in disguise) was the center-point of the story this time. Captain America was accused of murder, and another 'super-hero' took his place, only it was actually a super villain working for the Secret Empire, and they had framed the good Captain.

As with any discussion of Governmental misdeeds, our attention was turned, almost inevitably to SHIELD and Nick Fury. As we discussed this, Haywood brought up a number of great points of comparison between the classic material and the movies. This led to discussions of Robots and Automata in Comics with Haywood and I waxing nostalgic for the Dreadnoughts, Ultron, and (of course) the Sentinels (to whom we would return later). Mike read a few interesting incidents out to us, as well as an impassioned letter from a fellow in North Haledon who was complaining about the Slumber Chair plot-line (Captain America is put to sleep and given subconscious instructions, which prompted me to ask "Why did they not just ask him, it isn't like the mission was that dangerous or unusual).

Namor, the SubMariner, took up a lot of our discussion, as attempts by Senator Winters to rehabilitate the Atlantean rogue's image and make him an icon for Environmental Protections. This led to a lot of discussion of Namor leading the Atlanteans on their near-constant invasions of NY. BJ made a joke about Historical Society plaques springing up around the city with signs like "Namor and the Atlanteans blew this building up twice during the third Atlantean Invasion." I, of course, countered with: "Well, they have to be careful about that, because then all the heroes would want historical plaques where they fought important battles, and you'd get signs like 'Spiderman and Mysterio might have possibly done something here, but we cannot really tell because it was Mysterio and he was probably just messing with our heads...' or "Doctor Strange /twenty untranslatable arcane runes/ Here..." or "The Green Goblin Monologued Here..."

At some point we discussed Iron Man, the Avengers, and their relations with the government, and this led to a lot of discussion of the Avengers, Captain America, and Thor movies due out soon. We moved on to the Superhero and Mutant Registration acts, and then back to the Sentinels, then Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers. Ann-Marie had asked Haywood if any of these stories had been made into Animated features, and Haywood indicated that the new Avengers series on Nicktoons is good for some of the older stuff, but they have mostly been focusing on current storylines in the 'movie-length' animated features. I also pointed out that the X-Men Cartoon from the 1980's handled the Sentinel stroyline pretty well. We just kept talking and talking and talking before closing up the shop. It was a great discussion, with a lot of cool conversation about all manner of things that occupied us well past the store's closing time. Even Manuel and his friend were obviously enjoying the confab from across the room.

Join us next month as Haywood and Mike focus on the family for our May Drawing a Crowd! **(Write-up by Todd Ehrenfels)**

Additional comments:

Mike did a great job discussing Government Bureaucracies within comic books. He wrote out eight pages of notes which included the military versus The Hulk and The Silver Surfer, politics involving Richard Nixon and Sen. Byrd, Tony Stark / Iron Man versus the government, S.H.I.E.L.D. - Nick Fury - Cap, Sub-Mariner with Senator Winters helping Namor, The Avengers with Gyrich trying to limit them to seven, and the Mutant and Superhuman Registration Acts.

Of course side conversations abounded (mostly on Topic). Ann-Marie was asking Heywood about whether there are television shows that show some of the topics discussed (there are); BJ and Todd talking about

politics, especially those of nations such as North Korea, Dave and Moshe asking questions, and Aurelia knitting with commentary. An excellent and freewheeling discussion, with Mike extremely well prepared. A fun evening. **(Chris Hasselkus)**

Films to Come – Wednesday April 20, 2011

Always looking to switch things up, keep us on our toes, and entertain us, our Films moderator once again provided a great meeting with a slightly different format.

A plethora of tie-in books, magazines, and graphics were brought to the table to add visual interest to the discussion. As the relevant topics came up, Barry would pass around the corresponding materials - some examples were a Thor hardcover graphic, Rue Morgue magazine, and Entertainment Weekly Summer Movie Preview issue.

The meeting opened with All Time Box Office lists from both the USA and internationally. We enjoy seeing what movies have grossed, what the differences are between USA and abroad, and what movies may have been added to or moved down on the list. This time the big surprise came from the new animated release *Rio*. Only in theaters for approximately a week, it is topping the charts with some big dollar amounts!

Next was the infamous "list", however this time; Barry concentrated on upcoming May releases. While he did ask if anyone had seen any recent releases, he only discussed the films that had been seen and asked if they were recommended or not. The May list did include films slated for release thru December 2011, but these were touched on briefly.

Chris, Liz and Bill had seen *Adjustment Bureau*. Chris enjoyed the film and would recommend it. After Bill's anecdotal story, I'm not sure if he liked the movie or not.

Chris is going to see *Fast Five* for "the acting". Mark, familiar with the Fast franchise (*The Fast and the Furious*, starring Vin Diesel & Paul Walker kicked off the franchise in 2001 about a group of illegal street racers) got a kick out of the 'realistic' attributes...yes, that was sarcasm. Ask Mark about Dwayne Johnson's epic journey to Tokyo thru the Mexican border...it's a head-scratcher. As Mark put it, "yeah...we're probably better off not knowing some things."

While going thru the May list, Barry incorporated the Entertainment Weekly Summer Preview issue for additional information about the films (premise, stars, director, etc.). People chimed in with various details or questions that Barry pretended to welcome - lol.

He gleefully told us about the film we are all supposedly waiting for but didn't know it - *Hobo With A Shotgun*. No joke. This stars Rutger Hauer and is a low-budget homage to the 80's violent action films. He here proudly displayed the cover of the recent Rue Morgue with said film on the cover. You gotta wonder what goes on in that head.

You know it would not be a meeting unless Bill added a touch of Burroughs - whether it fits or not!

Mike P had seen *Red Riding Hood* and answered several questions about the film including whether Amanda Seyfried was good as the lead and could carry a film.

The list was successfully completed - diversions, questions and Bill stories could not stop Barry! He took the opportunity to go thru some movie titles not on the list or in the Entertainment Weekly issue, asking if any of us had seen the named titles (*Lincoln Lawyer* had Bill confused). He mentioned Big Screen, Rivertown and a few conventions (Chiller - Debbie already has her ticket).

We had some time to talk TV (Dr. Who's new season begins this Saturday on BBC America), Bill's convention weekend, and other assorted little tidbits. In all, a good time and a great meeting. The night continued over food.

Join us next month as Barry explores all things celluloid and whatever else he wants.

Modern Masters – Dead To Me by Anton Strout – Friday – April 22, 2011

Borders Books and Music of Ramsey, a bookstore, a cafe, and a place where the supernatural comes out to play? Or any other night, probably not, but Friday? Oh, yes, yes indeed. How do I know? Because I was there, and almost everybody had read the book (well, at least 5 pages of it in some cases).

Amazingly, Liz and I started off the night with a fun chat about restaurants, and then we were joined by a horde of other folks, and so I ran off to get coffee. Spoooooooky, right? OK, seriously, we all started discussing the month's featured selection, *Dead to Me* by Anton Strout. Unlike many meetings, we actually started at the beginning, discussed the story, then worked our way around to other topics. More evidence of supernatural forces at work, maybe... In spite of sorcery we really did manage to have a wonderfully fun and evocative discussion of the book.

Dead to Me chronicles the first of the adventures of Simon Canderous, [psychometrist](#) (i.e. person who can read the past of objects through touch) and member of [New York City's Department of Extraordinary Affairs](#). Aurelia kept giggling about the references to the 'DEA', which she pointed out was probably better run than the actual DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency), and it would have been really funny if the two DEAs had encountered one another in the story (which does involve a strange supernatural narcotic). We spent quite a bit of time discussing the great ways in which Anton introduces us to elements of the Canderous universe. One thing that we all liked was the fact that Anton was good at showing how things work instead of telling us the mechanics in info-dumps all the time. The first scene with Simon and his girlfriend-of-the-day shows us how Simon's ability works, and the very next scene gives us a good relation on how Simon uses his abilities. We get shown, in good, well-developed scenes throughout the narrative, how the system of magic works. It is a well-constructed and thoroughly written book, and we had a great time discussing it. Here are some impressions of the book:

Todd: I'm sorry, I'm the Moderator, I don't do impressions... (Yes, I know that was lame)

I loved the description of how Simon came to give up his life of crime and join the DEA, so I read the sequence leading up to the advertisement for the job, as well as the job listing from the New York Times as it appears in the book.

Chris: Really enjoyed a lot of the interaction between Simon and his partner, Connor. He was also really a big fan of the ways in which Simon uses his powers and wanted to know if that remained consistent throughout the series.

Aurelia: Really liked the DEA and the sections in the Lovecraft Cafe. She really dug the whole cafe/movie-house setup and the big set of secret offices below ([Get Smart](#) references abounded). In addition, although there were a few sequences that drew her out of the narrative, Aurelia pointed out that Anton was really good about pulling you right back in, which is something that many writers fail at (I mentioned [Rachel Caine](#) to reinforce this point).

Liz: Really liked the idea of the Sectarian Defense League and their zombie office staff, and thought that the conflict between the SDL and the DEA was really well drawn.

Kathleen: Had a great time with all the characters, and thought that even the [minor characters](#) and villains were interesting and cool.

Josephine: Liked the opening scene!

Moshe: Thought it all sounded really interesting!

Deb: [Wanted](#) to know more about the story, and the climax at the [Metropolitan Museum of Art!](#)

We kept going throughout the evening, reading scenes, discussing plot structure, and analyzing the book until the store staff kicked us out! Scene economy and gamist narrative occupied a good chunk of our time. We discussed the various books in the series, and had a blast. If you missed it: well, there is

always next month! Join us in May when we discuss *Newton's Wake* by Ken MacLeod (write-up by Todd Ehrenfels)

Heroes & Rogues: Rogue Trader Session – April 23, 2011

Chapter 12: Errors and Omissions

From the Journals of Wencisia Tremnar, Executive Officer of the Lady Malbec, shipboard date 188.861,M38

These past few months have been amazing and terrifying in alternating turns, and some of the obstacles that we have needed to surmount have had less to do with the warzone than they have with the damnable Familia Marioc.

After all of Sarvus and my hard work in negotiating the agreement with House Shrek, we set about the salvage of the *Fairfield's Terror* and the *HMS Manticore*. Aboard the *Terror*, we managed to salvage stores, supplies, munitions, side arms, and a treasure trove of information. It appears that the *Fairfield's Terror* was Admiral Darien's command ship, and the main Fleet command for the Imperial Crusade. As such, we were able to salvage Operational plans, assignments, Proscriptions lists, and quite a bit of other data. We now know the timelines, supply logistics, and battle plans for the entire Lupus Invasion Fleet as of 800 watches ago! Undoubtedly Grand Admiral Jurek has changed a few of these plans, but simply knowing what transports and supply is available for the frontline units will provide us a major advantage over our competitors.

Moving on to the *Manticore* was an even greater opportunity. The Commonwealth, it appears, are big believers in the equalizing effect of small craft in the sphere of battle. We have seen few engagements involving the Commonwealth's through-deck carriers, but our analysis of the operational information on the *Manticore* means that we know what to expect should it come to it. In addition to data and supplies, we managed to acquire a rather large number of Commonwealth small craft. Exo-atmospheric Fighters, Bombers, and Shuttles as well as hybrid (endo/exo atmospheric craft). A complete list of fighters is appended.

As we completed almost two weeks of salvage operations, a new ship arrived, House Shrek's current Familial flagship, *Lord Malbec*, sister ship to our own *Lady Malbec*, our prize from early on in our career in the Lupus Cluster. The Captain, one Godastis Shrek, agreed to a meeting after receiving reassurances from our passenger, Gregorianus. Our meeting went well, with Gregorianus standing up for us and asserting control of the discussion quickly. It is reassuring to see that the portly little Shrek was as good as his word, and was more interested in keeping his end of the deal than shafting us at the first opportunity. In point of fact, as we completed our operations on the *Manticore* the Shreks sent over a formally documented contract constituting a Warrant, which could be filed and enforced by the Administratum itself, should we so choose. It seems evident that the Shreks are making moves to obtain an alliance with our House in order to gain access to the information in our Librarium. Either that, or they see potential for profit in our operations here. Either way it could prove most lucrative for us.

Unfortunately, it seems that this was not the only information that the *Lord Malbec* brought to Olisipio. Apparently, among the passengers of the recently arrived Marioc ships were members of the Grand Familia itself. This would normally not be unwelcome news, however the person in question was none other than my father-in-law, Augustus Marioc. While I would never admit this to anyone else, I find Augustus more than a bit worrisome. He is a firm believer in what he refers to as "Economic Evolution", the strongest traders survive, and the weakest are ground to dust. We Tremnars are familiar with this and have done more than enough grinding of our own over the years, but Augustus has a peculiar way of judging worthiness, so we could only hope that he would see the value in everything that we have done here. After conferring with Captain Harmon, we determined to expedite our journey to Ciria, but first we would need to stop off in Sparta Hill to drop off some of these fighters and shuttles.

When we arrived at the Coleo Base only to find that House Marioc's ships were not the only ones docked there. Ships from Houses Sanguarelli, Morescue, and Shrek were all in attendance at the station, and trade seemed to be proceeding apace. On our arrival, we met with Augustus, who invited

us to a formal dinner. My blood ran cold at the idea, knowing the kind of theatrics that Augustus could employ on such occasions. As it turns out, we were in for a less unpleasant surprise than I had anticipated. Augustus rewarded us, even adding Liana's name to the official Familia ranks as Liana Harmon-Marioc, and rewarding our new family members with platitudes and reminders of our House's thanks for their job well done with Coleo.

With the endorsements of Augustus ringing in our ears, we decided to make for Shotra to deliver some information to our friend Commodore Alloyitious Benetek. Unfortunately, the Immaterium had other plans. Our Navigators were blinded by some sort of disturbance in the Warp, and misjudged our course, sending us, not to Shotra, but many quadrants North to the world of Tontrinas. For months we had worried about how we could get to Tontrinas, and even whether or not it would be profitable to investigate this 'Path' that was described in the writings of Jeremius Mordanus-Shrek. While it seemed as though the Emperor was guiding our steps in this direction, for nothing ever happens without his guidance as Sarvus is so wont to say, Liana felt that arriving here at a time and disposition of our choosing, instead of by accident, would be a better benefit for us. Sadly, Admiral Westfeld of Commonwealth Carrier Group 319 managed to detect us in spite of Alequintus' deft maneuvering.

Liana agreed to send Jacob, Sarvus, Lorn, and I accompany Commonwealth Governor Caernyris of Tontrinas, a Naram, to the site that was described in the Librarium map and writings. Upon our arrival, we were beset by Eldar, set to guard the place and, one presumes, hold the keys to the next step on this mysterious Path. Though we were sorely tested, Lorn blew the head off of the Eldar Farseer and between Sarvus, Jacob, Lorn and I we managed to overcome the other villain. We had a clue now to the next step on the path, but it would not be an easy step to take. In fact, it would take us back to the maw of the Inquisition, their newest and most secure holding in the sector, the fortress world of Zama...(write-up by Todd Ehrenfels)

Themes of the Fantastic – Government in SF - Tuesday, April 26, 2011

True to my word and the powers of my great and powerful brain, I shall produce for you a write-up using naught by my elucidated memory and extraordinary skills of perception to weave a tapestry of tales from the evening just past. Basically I am going to write about stuff we talked about for over 2 hours on Tuesday. It should be noted that my boast of being able to make this write-up without the aid of notes was totally serious, and so here we go:

Bill started the evening off with his traditional question of "What is the theme again?" and when we all stopped laughing at him (I mean with him, fer sure), we determined that the theme for the evening would be the role of government in SF & Fantasy. This amused Bill to no end as we began cracking jokes about the cruel and heartless Tax Men of the future!

Getting the ball rolling, Bill pointed us in the direction of Game of Thrones, the new HBO series based on the NY Times Bestselling Fantasy series by George R.R. Martin. Barry quickly polled the group to see who was watching the show, and it turns out that 50% of the group was watching, while 50% were not (this ratio remained remarkably consistent even as new folks joined us through the course of the meeting). We spent a bit of time discussing the show and the books, and Barry pointed out that Jason Momoa (Karl Draigo) was supposedly involved in the upcoming Conan the Barbarian movie slated for release in August (the month where Summer Blockbusters go to die).

Chuck then broke out a few cool mentions of the Novarian Series of novels from L. Sprague DeCamp (The Unbeheaded King, the Clocks of Iraz, and the Goblin Tower). Obviously this was a fun light fantasy series, and it was a great way of getting a whole bunch of different governments in, as the protagonist, Jorian, is running from civilization to civilization on Novaria. The barbarians, of which Jorian the Clockmaker is one, have themselves a nifty little Republic based on the French model (villages elect headmen, village headmen elect regional leaders, regional leaders elect a Premier), but are considered inefficient and backwards due to their lack of a proper monarch. We all laughed a lot at Chuck's description of the various criminally inept forms of governance on Novaria, which included cutting off the King's head every 5 years and tossing it like the bouquet at a wedding, a group of mysterious unknown conspirators who run a nation but have no idea who each other are, a group somewhat akin to the doges of Venice, a more traditional monarchy, and several others.

Steve Ruben and I chatted about Coyote by Allen Steel, and its very silly supra-Conservative United Republic of America. The story revolves around a colony ship URSS Alabama whose crew attempts to slip the surly bonds of their authoritarian masters in the RSA. We laughed about the strange conception of the story and its ideas of 'conservatism' which most actual Republicans would find horrifying (two of the shuttles are named after Helms and Wallace who would likely spit on the URA if they lived to see such a thing).

Talk turned to Orwell's 1984, which led to Barry and I waxing eloquent on life and the government of Oceania. We discussed living in Airstrip One, and the whole concept of the massive bureaucracy of the Ingsoc government of Oceania, and then I brought up a friend of mine who wrote his Political Science Doctorate on the idea that there is only one Supernation in 1984 (the others are fictions, and he maintains that actual enemies are not necessary for the control mechanism to work).

Justin, who was knocking plaintively at the doors, hoping for entry to the library, joined us with some really great questions and ideas. Most importantly, he wanted to know of governments that did not follow the standard mold of Science Fiction (i.e. relying on a nifty technology or some manner of superhuman control). In answer, Steve Ruben and I trotted out the Praxis by Walter Jon Williams, and its domineering strictness which made non-conformity a capital crime as well as a few others.

In inimitable Chris fashion, our intrepid moderator of That's Science Fiction brought up Frederick Forsythe and the Day of the Jackal as an exercise in government in the genres. He also, very wisely, brought up recent guest speaker Anton Strout, whose book we discussed at Friday's Modern Masters (since we were the only two there, this was a good move as it allowed all the rest of the assembled masses know what they missed).

Ann-Marie, never to be outdone, mentioned the Lottery by Shirley Jackson, as well as the SyFy original movie Population 469. These are stories wherein the municipal governments of small towns enact horrible rituals to some unknown ends (actually, if memory serves there may have been a monster involved in Population 469).

Through the 2+ hours we discussed novels ranging from Frederick Forsythe to Anton Strout, Stephen Brust, Bruce Sterling, Star Trek, Star Wars, Dune (which I just recently re-read thank you very much), Warhammer 40,000, the X-Files, the Stainless Steel Rat, James Retief and the *Corps Diplomatique Terrestrienne*, Frank Compton and the Night Train to Rigel, and much more. Everyone kept coming up with so many cool and unique ideas and explanations that I think that we could have sat there until sunrise without pause.

Though many of the group went to the Parkwest Diner, I headed home, and have no idea what debauchery the rest of the miscreants got up to... mainly because I have not looked at the Police Blotter yet today...**(write-up by Todd Ehrenfels)**

Additional comments:

On Tuesday, 4/26/2011, we met to discuss government in science fiction. Quite a few examples surfaced. I didn't mention it, but Watership Down had a kind of rabbit leadership; When Hazel and Fiver try to tell the Chief Rabbit (voiced in the film by Ralph Richardson) of impending doom, they are rejected as being fanciful. Bill W. mentioned Game of Thrones by George R.R. Martin (as well as its HBO counterpart); I brought up George Orwell's 1984; Bill W-Logan's Run; Barry-Aldous Huxley's Brave New World; Chuck-the Light Fantasy Series by DeKamp; Todd-Steve Bruce and Anton Strout; Steve R. & Todd-Alan Steele's Coyote; Todd-Peter Hamilton; Steve R.-Star Trek/Peter David; Barry-X Files; Steve R.-Walter John Williams/The Practice; Barry-E.T; Bill W-Star Wars (especially the prequels); Chuck-Harry Potter and its Ministry of Magic; I mentioned Frederick Forsyth (not only The Day of the Jackal but just about all his books); Todd-Mark DeFranco; AMB-The Lottery by Shirley Jackson, and Battle Royale (our selection for That's Science Fiction!); Todd-Timothy Zahn and E.E. Knight; Justin-Warhammer 40K; Todd-William C Deats; Bill W-Robert Heinlein/Starship Troopers; Barry-David Brin/The Postman. Some of us continued the fun at a nearby diner. **(write-up by Chris H)**

SFSNNJ Member Reviews Books, Movies, TV

Modern Masters suggestion (and a short book review) by Gene McGrath

Hi folks - I don't know if all our upcoming Modern Masters selections have been made yet - but here's a very good book I just finished: How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe By Charles Yu (2010).

It's the story of a time machine repairman in Minor Universe 31 (MU31) who's literally, psychologically, and "chronodiegetically" stuck in a rut. It's a fun read, and it explores some cool themes. While doing his boring job of helping people who attempt to misuse their time machines (you can't change the past), he encounters his future self the minute he finally returns to "the real present" after a long period of solitude in his TM-31 Recreational Time Travel Device. "Chronogrammatical" high jinks ensue. The themes touch on the "big three" emotions that people associate with their journey through time (i.e. life:) regret about the past, fear of the present, and anxiety about the future.

Let me know if any of you know of or have read this book, and the possibility of adding it to the Modern Masters lineup.

Starship Troopers by Robert Heinlein – Chris Hasselkus

Initially we were supposed to read this book this month, but it was replaced. I had never read it, so I obtained a copy from our friend Bill Skees of Well Read Books in Hawthorne. He told me that, except for some short stories, he had read just about all of Heinlein, and enjoyed his work immensely.

A Hugo winner in 1960, "Starship Troopers" is odd in that very little battle takes place. The main character, Juan "Johnnie" Rico, starts off in a kind of boot camp and eventually becomes a career soldier. I found that there wasn't much growth - he simply reacted to what was happening to and around him. The book is quite pro-military, with it being a vehicle for Heinlein's political views, very little "story" being told. Large sections of the novel, lacking action, feel preachy. From my viewpoint, though influential, "Starship Troopers" is only somewhat interesting. Grade: B

Additional comments:

Mark Hershberger: I read the book in college in anticipation of the movie that was about to come out and had the same problems with it. It felt like a boring lecture on the politics of Heinlein's world. I remember one passage where the main character describes the differences between men and women, which seemed like more of a sexist rationalization than anything substantive. Plus Aliens ripped it off, and told a much more exciting story, which made the bug warfare in the book seem pretty dull. I really like the Starship Troopers movie though. I think it plays really well as a satire of WWII movies and militarism.

Todd Ehrenfels: I tend to feel that David Gerrold handled the construction better in this first War Against the Chtorr book (A Matter for Men), which I do not hesitate to recommend. I liked the construction of the book, personally, and felt that the classroom sections were well handled, if a bit over-long. Fleet Sergeant Ho's monologues, on the other hand, were blatantly obvious as to their motive and construction (i.e. to push the weaker, less committed folks out the recruitment center door). The problem is that the pacing suffers from the long classroom scenes, and there is not enough interstitial mayhem to leaven the book. When you are telling the tale of a young man at war, it helps for that war to be part of the story (i.e. All's Quiet on the Western Front or Red Badge of Courage).

What is crucial to note is that we can blame a lot of really bad Military SF on this novel (I am looking at you David Drake). Strangely enough, other than David Gerrold's Chtorr series, very few of the most successful Military SF series have any relation or dependence from Starship Troopers (and even the Chtorr books are more an indictment of the Starship Troopers mentality than a praise of the mindset). While Heinlein may have felt that expressing his 'pro-violence' agenda in the book, it seems that few of even the most militaristic writers have ever tried to copy it. Of course, the argument could be made that most Military SF is written by combat veterans (in whose number, Robert Heinlein is not counted as he never served in action), and for the most part recounts how horrible that can be while lionizing the men and women who band together to survive in the harsh environment. A lot of these books treat the warfare in the story as part of the environment, expanding the conflict matrix from man vs man to man vs his environment, and often this means that the protagonists wish for a cessation to the conflict and/or a return to their pre-conflict lives. Heinlein, on the other hand, moved the focus onto an absolute need

to strive and war (in fact, if you look at the Federation, without a massive war to keep its economy going, it would collapse fairly quickly).

As for the film: It was a thinly disguised Warhammer 40,000 film with very little actual content from the book included ;) I like to think of the movie as a book about a Tyranid invasion of an Imperial sub-sector, and it works well in that regard. The sequels even more-so. I also rank the movie "The Expendables" in this category. Fun popcorn flick that seems more like a tale of Schaeffer's Last Chancers than a modern day action movie.

Since we are not, in point of fact, discussing the book at the store on Friday, I would love to open it up to all those who would like to weigh in on the subject:)

James Smith: I thoroughly enjoyed the book and the film for very different reasons. The film came out while I was attending college and it took a good ten years for me to sit down and read the sci-fi classic, but I'm glad I did. The lesson is when you hear the film is based off a book just go to the library and read the book. One of the reasons I did read it was because I read another book by Loren W. Christensen titled Warriors, the author is a [Vietnam veteran](#), 28 year veteran of the Seattle police department and accomplished martial artist. In his book he puts together stories from police officers soldier and others who've dealt with combat and other intense situations. I particularly liked that Mr. Christensen puts martial artists and firefighters in this important group, sheep dogs that is.

One of his contributing writers was a combat helicopter pilot and son of a [Green Beret](#) and grew up in a neighborhood where every man wore a special forces patch on his sleeve when he went to work. The only man who didn't was a highway patrolman who would tragically be killed in the line of duty. All the members of the [special forces unit](#) paid tribute to their fallen comrade, and when the author than a young man asked him what it was all about he explained it and said he should read [Starship troopers](#). While he knew of the importance of the police and military he said he more completely understood it. He would go on to serve in the military with honor, but years later the the book would come back to him.

While serving in the first [Iraq war](#) he encountered an infantryman reading the book and commented that it was a good read. The soldier nodded and said yeah, a friend of his dad's told him he should read it when he got older. When he asked who his dad was the man explained his father was a highway patrolman who died in the line of duty. Small world.

The fact is there are some awful, violent, and aggressive people and you can't negotiate with them and walking away isn't an option. There are bullies, brutes, and killers and sometimes they end up leading nations and armies. The prey on the weak and they don't need justification. I saw the book as a chronicle of the life of a young man taking the journey to become one of the elite fighters who stops the worst of the worst. Taste is a matter of perspective, and I know I would have written some things differently, but the message resonated pretty clearly for me. Sometimes the only option you have is to use force and when you do, you'd better be ready to give it all you've got. Violence sadly will probably be with us always, may as well be good at it.

SFSNNJ Invades Great Books Group in Mt. Lakes – Steve Spinosa

Earlier this afternoon the Great Books group held their discussion of Edgar Rice Burroughs' classic novel TARZAN OF THE APES in the upstairs meeting room of the Mountain Lakes Public Library. As the group was getting settled, we were graced with the presence of our own Master Bill Wagner! After I introduced him to the group, Bob Wolfe (who co-leads the group with his wife Renee) started the proceedings by reading from the Wikipedia bio on Edgar Rice Burroughs (just like our Master Todd did during the days of the old Author Discussion group), then Emily Gianni shared some details from the Burroughs biography that she had been reading and showed some pictures of Burroughs & his family. Emily also read some bits from Gore Vidal's introduction that was in her copy of TARZAN. Bill also shared some biographical insights and showed off his editions of TARZAN & THE RETURN OF TARZAN. Bob then officially kicked off the discussion by reading a key paragraph from Chapter 1 and asked the question what were the flaws or the mistakes that led to John Clayton Sr.'s demise? The answer was John's refusal to tell the Captain about the stolen revolvers during the mutiny. As the discussion went on Bill stated that the general theme that Burroughs introduced was that superior breeding eventually conquers all, as young Tarzan was able to combine the physical skills he learned from the apes with his own human

thinking & reasoning abilities. We also discussed the love affair between Jane Porter and Tarzan, concluding that both were willing to sacrifice each other's natural environments to be with each other, but both rationalized in the end that it wouldn't work. At the end of the discussion we went around the room to share concluding thoughts about the book. Belle Norris said that Tarzan made the right decision but that Jane made a mistake. Our resident Frenchman Jean Bucquet said that Tarzan epitomized the natural man as defined by Rousseau. Jim said that the story lacked Irony, while Renee felt that Tarzan's rescue of Jane from the burning Wisconsin woods reminded her of Superman rescuing Lois Lane. Bob thought the most influential idea in the story was the discussion between Professor Porter & his secretary Mr. Philander about the worthiness of the Muslim religion. Afterwards Bill showed off his collection of lobby cards from the Tarzan movies. Overall Bill was a great addition to the discussion (as I knew he would be) and we were BOTH thanked by the members as the group headed out for the day. The next Great Books discussions will be Steinbeck's *The Pearl* on May 3rd and Ford Maddox Ford's *The Good Soldier* on May 17th. Hope to see you then!!!