



June 2011 Newsletter

The Golden Age of Science Fiction: While we look firmly ahead, to the future, it is important to remember where we came from. The roots of the genre are long, deep, and strong, and this month we take a trip down memory lane and look at the men, women, and stories that boldly went where no one had been before. Groundbreaking, Earth shattering, and trailblazing, these books and movies shaped the genre and made it what it is today.

That's Science Fiction

Tuesday June 7, 2011 – 7p

Hillsdale Public Library

Fantastic Voyage (1966)

*Dining follows this event

Drawing A Crowd

Wednesday June 8, 2011 – 7p

Fantasy Games & Hobbies

9 Miller Rd - Mahwah

Golden Age of comics

www.fantasygamesandhobbies.com

Face the Fiction

Saturday June 11, 2011

Well Read Books – Hawthorne, NJ

Joshua Shifrin

*Full details on p. 2

Suspense Central

Monday June 13, 2011, 2010 – 8p

Panera Bread Restaurant

165 Rt. 64 West

Paramus, NJ – 201.368.0752

The Illustrated Man by Ray Bradbury

Films to Come: 4-Star Movie Discussion Group

Wednesday June 15, 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.

Modern Masters

Tuesday June 24, 2011 – 8p

Borders Books & Music

235 Interstate Shopping Center/Rt. 17 South

Ramsey, NJ 07446

Foundation by Isaac Asimov

Rogue Trader: Wolves in the Fold

Saturday June 25, 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?

Themes of the Fantastic

Tuesday June 28, 2011 – 8p

Wayne Public Library

The Golden Age of SF

www.waynepubliclibrary.org

please visit www.sfsnj.com for full details

SFSNNJ Face the Fiction presents: Joshua Shifrin

When: Saturday, June 11, 2011

Where: Well Read Bookstore - www.thewellreadbookstore.com

425 Lafayette Avenue

Hawthorne, NJ 07506

973.949.3440

Time: 7:00pm

This month we welcome guest Joshua Shifrin (<http://www.shifrinbooks.com>). Dr. Joshua Shifrin is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist living in Northern New Jersey and the author of the newly released psychological thriller titled, 'Chasing Victory'.

Visit his website: <http://www.shifrinbooks.com> to read the first three chapters of his book Chasing Victory!

Chasing Victory is the story of William Victory, a young man struggling with a severe learning disability who forms a relationship with a brilliant psychiatrist named Julia Perlman. When Dr. Perlman makes a pharmacological breakthrough that can potentially change William's life, as well of the lives of the countless individuals suffering with learning disabilities around the world, she is initially euphoric. Yet when you combine a desperate patient with a lack of FDA approval, the unthinkable can, and does occur.

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

May Meeting Recaps

That's Science Fiction! – *Arsenic and Old Lace* - Tuesday May 3, 2011

Arsenic and Old Lace was a fun choice to kick off (pun intended) our Family in SF month! Everyone enjoyed the movie and we had fun using our favorite quotes.

Todd held court before the film began as he regaled us with stories about his 'acting' days in school. Ask him to say "Charge" while running up hill. Chris started the film a bit earlier to accommodate the 118-minute running time. We sat down and had much fun with this delightful movie.

Arsenic and Old Lace (1944) stars Cary Grant as the beleaguered Mortimer Brewster. Today is a special day - it's Mortimer's wedding day! He's excited, happy and looking forward to his honeymoon in Niagara Falls. He brings his new bride Elaine (Priscilla Lane) to meet his beloved aunts. There ends the happy and begins the surreal.

Poor Mortimer discovers his sweet, maiden aunts have a nasty little hobby...murder...by way of a dead body hidden in the window seat. Aunt Abby (Josephine Hull) and Aunt Martha (Jean Adair) believe they are doing a good thing, calling their hobby "a charity". They firmly believe they are helping "lonely" older gentlemen find "peace".

Up to this point, Mortimer believed the only nut in the jar was Uncle "Teddy". His uncle thinks he's President Teddy Roosevelt (John Alexander) and spends his time digging the Panama Canal in the basement and blowing a trumpet. The digging project works out wonderfully for Abby and Martha - they have Teddy bury Yellow Fever victims in the canal. They even have 'services' for the Yellow Fever victims (who have actually been poisoned with spiked Elderberry wine) - wearing full black funeral attire and signing from hymnals.

Cary Grant does an exceptional job. His faces are hilarious as he tries to set things right. He's trying to get Uncle Teddy committed to a 'rest home' and tried to get his aunts to promise not to let anyone else in the house. No such luck. While he's out getting papers signed to get the ball rolling on Uncle Teddy, Mortimer's brother Jonathan (Raymond Massey) shows up with his toady sidekick (Peter Lorre). Jonathan is not nice and seems to have inherited the family's penchant for murder. He and his sidekick (who goes by the alias Dr. Einstein) are hiding from the law after leaving a string of bodies. Dr. Einstein has done plastic surgery on Jonathan's face. The result is a great running gag - he looks like Boris Karloff - everyone who sees him responds with, "Where have I seen that face?" This angers Jonathan.

Mortimer returns home, papers in hand, thinking he's one step closer to sanity to find the evil Jonathan has taken up residence...and has put his own dead body in the window seat!

One of the funniest moments in the movie results from this two dead bodies situation. Jonathan's body is a Mr. Spinowsa. Abby and Martha feel he's a foreigner and not fit to be buried with their dead body, Mr. Hoskins "a perfectly good Methodist" - they threaten to go the police! You have to see Cary Grant's features as he tries to explain to Abby & Martha why they cannot do that.

The movie is 118 minutes of hilarity. The gags are well done and range from sight, to physical to quite subtle (Aunt Martha opening up a cupboard that is filled with the hats of their gentlemen). It's a delightful movie that is highly recommended.

We were sorry to see this one end. We had much fun talking about and quoting our favorite moments. "Insanity runs in my family. It practically gallops." Great movie, even better time.

Join us next month for the classic 1966 SF film, *Fantastic Voyage*. **(AM)**

Suspense Central – *The Unit by Terry DeHart* - Monday May 9, 2011

Greetings from the Beyond, oh wise and witty sophonts everywhere. While a bit behind the times, here is the write up for Monday's meeting of Suspense Central at Panera Bread on Route 4 in Paramus.

The evening started early, with Dave, Aurelia, and I chatting about books that we had read or were reading (Dave is working through Dan Simmons Hyperion, and I have pledged to put it into the Modern Masters rotation for next year). We were joined by Liz, who was sipping at an absolutely delicious looking smoothie (I should have grabbed one for myself as I have a free one on my Panera Card, cursed hindsight), and Chris, who grabbed some yummy Roasted Potato Soup and a half sandwich. I probably should avoid doing these write-ups before lunch as all I can think of right now is what everyone was munching on, but I digest... er, digress....

We launched into a discussion of the book around 8p, and the talk was very lively. Not terribly complimentary, but definitely lively. Aurelia opened the talk with an apology, comparing *The Unit* to the awful Tananarive Due book that we had done many years prior. While I did not think that it was quite that bad, I will readily admit that it was pretty bad, but for different reasons. Tananarive Due's *The Living Blood* was dry, tedious, and poorly paced (the momentum and intensity built up in the prolog immediately dissipates and the book plods along after) while Terry DeHart's *The Unit* is crackling and intense, and a quick easy and fun read. The difference is that while the *Living Blood* may have been a tedious and joyless enterprise for the reader, it was very well plotted and thought out, and the story made sense, as did the characters and their actions and responses, while *The Unit* felt like a badly scripted Hollywood blockbuster that kept the pulse pounding during the reading, but upon reflection was imminently ridiculous.

The Unit follows a family in the immediate, or possibly semi-immediate as the timeline seems to twist like a pretzel, aftermath of a nuclear attack on the USA. The book, which seems to have been patterned after the WWII novels following survivors in Germany during the Allied invasion, and focuses on the trials and travails of possibly the most incoherent and idiotic family on the West coast. No, that is not hyperbole. These folks are at best, the most inconsistent assemblage I have ever seen: They are both security conscious and paranoid, but ultimately naive and easily duped.

The story structure is well thought out at first glance, with each chapter corresponding to the point of view of one of the members of the family unit, and several of the chapters giving us the point of view of the primary antagonist (Bill Jr) and his father (unsurprisingly Bill Sr). This is a great concept when it is well executed, but sadly it was not all that well executed here. During the discussion Kathleen observed that the characters all seemed very similar, there was no real distinction in their voice, and the mother seemed like she must be bi-polar or just plain crazy as she oscillated between Mother of the Year and Psycho Suzie (which might have made sense if she were going Psycho in defense of her kids). Aurelia was angry at the inclusion of the Bill Jr/Bill Sr chapters, mainly because the introduction of Bill Jr was simply a ham-handed foreshadowing of the upcoming rape of the Melanie character.

As for the characters themselves, well, we had almost no sympathy for any of them. They were a completely and totally uninspiring lot of B movie archetypes, barely padded out in any way shape or form. They were caricatures of actual people, and their actions and motivations were radically inconsistent from scene to scene, seeming to behave in the manner that they did solely to advance the story in the direction that Terry DeHart wanted. One glaringly obvious issue was that of Bill Senior, who is depicted as a vile and reprehensible guy early on, but turns out to merely be a neglectful and lazy jerk. His insistence that he

cannot flee the juvenile delinquents led by his son because "Rifles can bring down a small plane..." flies in the face of reason since the Juveniles are constantly sending him off on 'patrols' to find victims for the gangs, and since he can fly faster than they can drive, it would be simple for him to go out on 'patrol' and never return.

Another unbelievable issue in the book is the evaporation of any form of government. Early on we have an idea that there have been a lot of nukes going off (later we learn that only 7 cities were hit, which means that the Nuclear Winter described in the story makes no sense at all), but that does not account for the absence of municipal, county, and state officials. Mayors, Governors, Police, Sheriffs, etc would not simply disappear with the outbreak of war, in fact, many of these types of Alpha personalities would be trying to consolidate their own power in the aftermath, as pointed out by Aurelia and Liz. The idea that the US Government is so incompetent that they would issue orders for counterstrikes, and then just sit around for several months before trying to re-establish services and order is ridiculous. I pointed out during the discussion that simply going to his local county government and asking about disaster planning would have helped him enormously.

While all this is going on, though, it is the manic pace of the story that keeps things interesting for the reader, and distracts the reader from the patently absurd holes in the fabric of the narrative. Like most modern movies, the characters fall from situation to situation haphazardly, however the issue here is that many of the decisions made by the characters are counter-intuitive as reasoned responses to the situation. The father (Jerry) decides to do a lone commando raid on the juveniles instead of bringing his wife (who is a terror with the shotgun). Susan (the mother) decides to fire off her pistol in the cockpit of the small plane, allowing her to be easily disarmed by Bill Senior while everyone is stunned (this makes even less sense when you consider the fact that the muzzle of the pistol was next to Bill Senior's head when the gun went off, and he would thus be the most affected).

All in all, it was agreed that the book was a fun read, but like any action-packed blockbuster, could not suffer the scrutiny of analysis. I did not even scratch the surface on the scathing reviews that we mounted. What is perplexing is that we all agreed that this was an entertaining beach read book. On a scale of Demon Island to 10, though, it rates a solid 3.

Next month join us for the classic short story collection by Ray Bradbury, *The Illustrated Man...*(Todd)

Drawing A Crowd Family in Comics – Wednesday May 11, 2011

They say you cannot pick your family, and nowhere does that seem more true than in the realm of super heroes and their kith and kin. Mike and Haywood came prepared to strut their stuff and show off their knowledge of all things comic book on Wednesday and boy did they succeed. Armed with papers and pictures from all around the industry, the intrepid duo thrilled us with stories of families from across continuities and around regions.

Mike started off the discussion by reading from his handout and describing the surrogate father relationship between Alfred Penniworth and Bruce Wayne (aka Batman). In the aftermath of his parents' murder, Bruce Wayne turned to his loyal butler and manservant. Alfred provided direction and discipline for the growing boy and made Bruce the man who would be a force against crime in Gotham. One nifty snippet read

from Mike's handout referred to Alfred as 'Batman's batman', and I explained the reference, which was to a personal servant/driver/valet/bodyguard/spy of an officer (though I incorrectly referenced Gunga Din, who was a bhisti, not a batman).

Next up was the 'Batman Family Tree' with Haywood taking the reigns to explain the characters of Batman, Batwoman (Earth 2 Selena Kyle post-Catwoman), other Batwomen, Robin, Nightwing, Batgirl, and so many more. One interesting aspect was the resurrection of Jason Todd (infamously blown up by the Joker in *The Killing Joke*) by Ra's al Ghul, which led to a whole side conversation about why the Lazarus Pit was a bad idea. Unbeknownst to us, it was not, in fact, Ra's who brought Jason Todd back to life, but Superboy, apparently altering reality from the Paradise Dimension... who knew?

We spend some time with the Gordons, learning all about the Commissioner and Barbara. Mike read some snippets dealing with the father-daughter relationship, and Mark, Haywood, and I discussed the issues of Barbara and her crippling in *The Killing Joke*. This led to comparisons between Barbara Gordon and Batwoman, and their motivations for what they do, and why Barbara would eventually take the mantle of Oracle while Montoya would be a bit different. Another cool bit that Haywood showed off was an Animated sequence showing the introduction of another version of Batwoman, a brutal and vicious character who intervenes in a fight against the Riddler.

We then moved into the realm of Superman, which prompted a lengthy discussion of the Superman 'S' on the shirt of Jor'el during the Krypton sequences in the Donner film. Barry posited that the S was there as a boost to Marlon Brando's ego, while Mark pointed out that this was not indicated in the Director's commentary of the film, and that the family crests of the Kryptonians all seem to be based on Earth Symbols in the film. This also prompted Mark to laughingly parody Marlon Brando's consistent mispronunciation of Krypton (here we are, on Krypten, doing Krypten things, my son). We jumped around a bit discussing the Kents as well as the Kryptonians in the storylines, and eventually got onto the subject of Superman's various parental reboots including a version where an alien rejuvenates the elderly Kents and the whole Red Son alternate reality, which we thought was an interesting diversion from the regular storylines.

Supergirl was up next, and this is where things got a bit silly (OK, who am I kidding things were silly to start with). We discussed the first appearance of Supergirl, and her "Hey look it's a Kryptonian family tradition to launch our children into space" origin. Some folks have bar Mitzvahs, some have first Communion, others launch their children in rickety spacecraft to less-evolved planets. The adoptive parents of Supergirl were discussed, as was the storyline in which it was revealed that her real parents were alive after all (bloody Kryptonians always pop up at the silliest times), and Aurelia thought that it was really unrealistic to expect that Supergirl would just up and abandon her adoptive family. Apparently Superhorse had something to do with this, but we were all so busy laughing that we couldn't stop!

We touched on Aquaman and the poor portrayal of underwater storyline in Comics. We also delved briefly into a few other characters and their families, but we were busy running out the door as it was near 10p and we had been chatting for almost three hours! Join us next month as we discuss the Golden Age of Comics!

Face the Fiction Daniel Rabuzzi & Deborah Mills – Saturday, May 14, 2011

Daniel and his wife gave a very insightful presentation followed by a great Q&A session... Another great meeting! **(Gene McGrath)**

It was another excellent evening with our friends from Well Read Books, and I have to take a moment to thank our gracious hosts for more than just the regular hosting of the event. You see, Bill Skees took the time to print up an awesome review of Daniel's novel, *The Choir Boats*, and read it before the assemblage in preparation to the event. This served as a great counter-point to my own rambling introduction which somehow involved Charcuterie (shÄcr-kÄ«tÉ™-rÄ““, -kÄ«tÉ™-rÄ““) and my stint at Johnson & Wales in that it actually had something to do with the topic at hand (while the book on Charcuterie was interesting it had no lbo counting or crutched men). Gamely, though, Daniel suffered my bizarre introduction before he and extra special Guest Deborah Mills, gifted artiste and illustrator of *The Choir Boats*, launched into a nice presentation and discussion of their work.

To start, Dan recounted how he came to write a novel for ChiZine Publications (CZP), a small press out of Montreal. CZP had been in the magazine publishing business for some time, and had been publishing short pieces from a variety of writers, when they contacted Daniel and asked if he had a novel-length piece just sitting around. Like many of us, he did, and had been shopping it around with little traction, so Daniel and the folks at CZP worked together to put the piece into production. This, of course, led us to a discussion of how publishing really works, and some really great dialogs with his editor at CZP. One subject that we talked about was how the larger publishing houses determine what books to go after, and basically, from a financial point of view, how books like *The Twilight Saga* fund the mid-list. Spawning more discussion was the side-topic of distribution and the support of local small business stores (“Sure I’ll open a low margin bookstore in the teeth of the worst recession in a hundred years, what could go wrong?”).

We then turned to the art of *The Choir Boats*, and Deborah took the spotlight. We learned about the process that Dan and Deborah went through to collaborate on the carving for the cover art, and the work that went into the symbols that greet the reader at the start of each chapter. The cool lbo references made the culture of the story jump out, and the magnificent drawing of the nefarious Owl figure took a goodly portion of the discussion. It was great to hear about Deborah's education in Norway, and very amusing moment was had when Mike P. asked if a drawing was done with a Quill Pen (it was, good eye Mike!) and Deborah mentioned that she always things of the tools in their Norwegian names and tends to forget their English ones because of her training. This was a really cool insight into the way in which the art developed and fed into the story because you have an American trained in Norwegian wood-cutting and art making different types of central African art (lbo is from Nigeria in Western Africa, which is where the character of Maggie was from).

We switched focus back to Daniel for a moment, and he read the opening from *The Choir Boats* as Deborah showcased the Drum with the Brown Eye of Wisdom from the Chapter Heading (Chapter title: Two Streets in London). Opening with a young West African Woman in London counting to herself as a meditative exercise is one heck of an impactful opening, and Daniel made the most of it, detailing the scene and making the occasional side comment about it, almost like a director's commentary track for the book.

Next up was a protracted Q&A session with all of us taking the opportunity to get in a few really fun questions. Kate Landis started off with a question about why the Owl's nickname (Wyrm) which led to a discussion of the stories of Herr Doktor Professor Wyrm. We also discussed the origins of the name of the crutched man, which dealt, actually, with one of the streets in the opening scene (Mincing Lane), which was devolved from the old English for Minking Lane, and was so called because of the Monks who called the area home, and the crutched was a devolution of the Olde English for crossed (I really hope I got that

correct, I do not want to get an F).

Kate and I, who had both had the opportunity to read the book, proceeded to pepper Daniel and Deborah with questions about the characters, story, and process. For those who know me well, the traditional Todd Question was asked (yes, they both write to musical accompaniment, though Daniel prefers music without lyrics, and Deborah must use an iPod due to shared space issues with her work area). We also delved into the reasoning behind the use of the Ibo culture and how Maggie would have come to London in 1812. Digging into Daniel's Professorial roots, we explored the history of Maryland and the lore of Europe.

Though we probably could have continued on for hours and hours more, Dan and Deborah needed to catch a train back into the fabled and semi-mythical city of Manhattan (whose existence we proved at some point in the discussion, though some of us are still skeptical). It was a fun night with some great folks, and a topic that many of us were utterly fascinated by. Aurelia, Mark, Pam, Kate, Gene, and I stood around outside chatting away for a good 45 minutes before chill and rain forced us to retire for the evening.

Join us next month for more fun and excitement at Face the Fiction at Well Read Books! **(Todd)**

Films to Come – Wednesday May 18, 2011

So, I don't normally do the write-up for Films to Come, and I think that I may have been having an out-of-body experience during the meeting, so if this seems strange and out-of-sorts: blame me :)

I arrived late (circa 19:30), a circumstance, which prompted the ever-gracious moderator, Barry Weinberger, to await my arrival. In hindsight, I am betting that he wishes that he had not, in point of fact, done so. I sat down at the Right Hand of Barry (note caps), and began chit-chatting with Liz, rudely interrupting her attempt at reading a magazine while waiting for Mark and Pam to return (they were in the cafe obtaining quaffing materials). Chris, Liz, Moshe, and I chatted about inconsequential stuff until the meeting began.

Barry launched the meeting with a recap of the \$100M movies of 2011. Topping the list was Fast Five in the US and Rio in the International market. This led to a discussion of the way in which movies are being made, and the fact that they are targeting more international box-offices as it has apparently dawned on some folks that more than 6 billion people live outside the US, so making films that appeal to them would probably be a good way of ensuring they spend money on your movie. This is obvious from the robust box-office totals in the international market, and the fact that they are increasing every year, and at a more rapid pace than American box offices.

Moshe then brought up a question about the differences in the ratings between Bridesmaids (R) and Priest (PG-13). The debate raged for some time, and thankfully Barry had a good handle on the pros and cons. Mark pointed out that as a culture we tend to take sex a lot more seriously than violence because, well, kids are more likely to have sex than kill Vampires. Barry agreed with this and brought up a number of different lines of reasoning in support, he also pointed out the difference between being desensitized to images of violence and being desensitized to violence. Moshe countered that his opinion was more that both should be R rated, one for sex and one for violence. I retorted with a mention of my good and dear friend Mike Stackpole, who has written hundreds of essays debunking the idea that violence in the media equates to changes in behavioral norms becoming more violent. In point of fact, it can actually be shown that in spite of the fact that it seems like the world has become a more violent place for teens, the reverse is actually true, with fewer reported incidents of violence at the elementary and high-school level (per capita) over the past 10 years.

At this point, Barry instituted the Inception rule, and stated that if we get more than four degrees of tangent off the main topic he would put a stop to the tangent. We all laughed, and Chris started looking for a top to spin.

We proceeded through the May and June movies, discussing Pirates and Thor and Hangover II and much more. Frankly, my pauvre Swiss Cheese brain cannot remember even half of what was described, so I will be forced to wing it:

Chris, Mark, Pam, and Barry all liked Thor. Barry brought up some neat points about the depiction of Thor's armour (scale mail), and Mark mentioned that there was a rather odd fellow at the Hawthorne Comic Convention hollering that Thor is not Thor without a helmet!

Chris thought Fast Five was a lot of fun, I thought it had a lot of great eye-candy and I would likely watch it with the volume off to avoid screaming at how stupid Paul Walker's character always is (Mark referred to him as the worst undercover cop ever). I do recall a debate about the implied hook-up of Paul Walker's character and Vin Diesel's character's sister, but I stopped paying attention, as I was too busy daydreaming about Vin Diesel...

Liz chastised me for harping on Game of Thrones (is it really wrong to be happy about a show this good?!)

Moshe, Mark, and I discussed the pros and cons of bad movies (specifically Legion)

We learned that Moshe had some insider information on 3D camera technology that would allow people to film and view in 3D right on the camera (it is great when we can get some nifty precursor information about cool upcoming tech that nobody could afford, lol).

Marvel Thor vs. SyFy Thor!

So many discussions, and so little time to write them all up in. Great work Barry, and keep up the fantastic work.

Tune in next month when we pierce the fourth wall and descend to the next state of dreaming...(Todd)

Additional comments:

Our intrepid moderator Barry W. held court once again to discuss films - past, present and future. He tried to put a limit on how many tangents the discussion could take, but to no avail. He began by mentioning some of the heavy hitters, both domestically and internationally. Fast Five and Thor both were well over the magic \$100K mark. After going over the biggest moneymakers, Barry went over upcoming films, with the fourth Pirates film and last of the Harry Potter being the most anticipated. The May 2011 releases, some which have opened, included The Hangover 2, The Beaver, Hobo with a Shotgun, Kung Fu Panda 2, Jumping the Broom, Priest, Bridesmaids, Midnight in Paris, The Tree of Life, Something Borrowed, Everything Must Go, An Invisible Sign, Last Night, Passion Play, There Be Dragons, Go For It!, Hesh, Skateland, The Big Bang, The First Grader, The High Cost of Living, and Cost of a Soul. Other highly anticipated films included Cars 2, as well as comic book based ones such as X-Men: First Class, Green Lantern and Captain America. Time constraints (not to mention those tangents) ended the discussion; afterwards which some of us continued the merriment at the Stateline Diner. An enjoyable and informative evening. (Chris Hasselkus)

Themes of the Fantastic – Family in SF & Genre - Tuesday May 24, 2011

Family in science fiction, fantasy and horror was the topic for the evening. I'll begin by listing the participants:

CH=Chris H; TE=Todd E; CG=Chuck G; BW=Barry W; SR=Steve R; JB=Jo B [In spirit:WW=William W;AMB=Ann-Marie B]

CH: I started things off in WW's absence with Tarzan, Jane and Son (Boy or whatever his name was in the books);

TE: C.S. Lewis-Pevensie children in The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe; CG: The Simpsons (i.e. Rapture);

CG: John Carter's family; TE: Family Guy; TE: Flintstones/Jetsons; CH: Anime-especially the Miyazaki films;

CG: Astro Boy; Anime-No Good Daddy; TE: TV show Heroes; Caprica; CH: (for AMB) Supernatural; CG: Skywalkers;

CH: Addams Family / The Munsters; CH: Pixar-The Incredibles; CG: Fantastic Four; Carrie; Hamlet; CH: Lost in Space;

CH: Newton's Wake by Ken MacLeod (our Modern Masters pick for the month); TE: Star Fraction by Ken MacLeod;

CH: Watership Down (Hazel and Fiver are brothers); SR: Elizabeth Moon series; TE: John Twelve Hawks trilogy; CG: The Wizard of Oz; JB: No Ordinary Family; TE: SyFy's Tin Man; BW: Frankenstein (re "Bad Parent"); Superman Family; Batman Family; Captain Marvel & C.M., Jr.; SR: Film - Mystery Men; CH: Wolfman and his father; TE: Cyteen by C.J. Cherryh; Also his Chanur series; SR: Also his Foreigner series; CG: The Boys of Brazil; TE: David Brin books; TE: Dune; Indiana Jones; Ryan family in Tom Clancy novels; BW: Star Trek-Next Gen; TE: Deep Space Nine; Stargate Universe; Raising Abel by the Gears; CG: Red Dwarf; JB: Beetjuice

A fun and informative discussion. Highly enjoyable. (Chris Hasselkus)

Modern Masters – Newton's Wake by Ken MacLeod – Friday – May 27, 2011

Well, another month of Todd in the barrel, being beaten up for his choice of book. Oh, woe is me, that I should have to put up with such criticisms and complaints from a prose-weary audience, but still I soldier on. Thankfully it was not all doldrums and misery for the intrepid Moderator as the book was judged to be 'more readable' than Ink or Vellum. You know, these uppity group members should remember that if they don't like the selections they can make recommendations, and if they don't recommend books they have nobody but themselves to blame... well, OK, I suppose they *could* blame me since I chose the book... still, all's fair in love, war, and Modern Masters!

The evening started with a pre-meeting dinner at Mr. D's in Mahwah. Liz graciously shared her sweet potato fries and Barry graciously tried to share some of the enormous half-rack of ribs he got (looked delicious, but the rest of us were quite thoroughly stuffed). We discussed all the great topics of the modern day, such as which is better: *Sponge Bob* or *Yo Gabba Gabba*. The entertainment on the TV at Mister D's was an odd choice of Nick Jr., thus prompting discussions of the network's other blockbuster programming. Barry and Ann-Marie discussed *The Killing*, and Chris brought up *CSI: Miami* to which I responded that until and unless Horatio Caine actually gets killed I will not watch that tedious show. We also discussed a number of other topics, though I cut the Game of Thrones discussion short, citing the fact that those of us watching the show had discussed it at every meeting this month and were likely starting to become firesome to those that were not watching the show. Remember kids, a little consideration goes a long way! As do deep fried hot dogs, but that is a discussion for another time.

After a nice relaxing meal, we ran over to Borders for the discussion, and were joined by Debbie, Kathleen and Josephine, as well as Alesia, a member of the Barnes and Noble Book Club to which Chris and Liz belong and who thought the group sounded interesting. Given the breadth of discussion I think that 'interesting' is likely not the adjective that would have handily described the meeting. We began with me reading the author's biography, and discussing some of MacLeod's other works. We touched upon *The Star Fraction* and *The Stone Canal*; I tried valiantly to avoid discussing *The Star Road* (which I thought was a silly book), jumped into *The Cassini Division*, and finally got to talking about the *Engines of Light* series, which I thoroughly enjoyed. I did remind folks that many years ago we had discussed the *Star Fraction*, but as only I remember doing so, it is likely that it was just some AI's messing with us...

We turned our attention to *Newton's Wake*, this month's selection, and I explained my reasoning for selecting the book. The theme for the month is Family in SF, and since the story of *Newton's Wake* deals with a family of scavengers... er... I mean 'ARCHEOLOGISTS'... well, technically combat archeologists... I selected this book. I remember the book fondly as a fun and entertaining read. Apparently my definition of entertaining and fun need refreshing, as I was the only person who graded the book higher than a B.

The overall consensus was that the book was a bit stilted and had the feel of a number of cobbled together stories with an odd bridge device. The protagonist, Lucinda Carlyle, was considered overly weepy and incompetent, the fact that this was her first mission in command and that she pooched it by the numbers, getting her grandmother's current incarnation killed in the process, seemed not to ameliorate the feeling that she was, at best, a weak character. Many of those in attendance felt that the explanations and data dumping was a bit over the top, and that the author should have confined

speculation to smaller tracts of text. Another complaint was the lack of satisfying denouement, but that harkens back to the earlier issues with story structure.

So, what did we like about *Newton's Wake*? Well, there were a lot of great scenes, and characters throughout the book. The folk music duet of Winter and Calder were fantastic, the unforgettable Benjamin Belami with his crazy vid productions, poor Higgins with her human head and robot body, and, of course, the poor schlep stuck on the starship *Dragon's Egg* with no recourse but to sit and watch. We discussed portions of the book with zeal and relish, laughing and reminiscing about the stuff that we enjoyed (and in spite of the complaints this is what really took up the two hours of discussion). Liz asked if Ken MacLeod had written a lot of other books, as she did like most of the book and was interested in reading some of his other works, and I recommended *Cosmonaut Keep* as it is a fantastic read and has one of the most ambitiously strange conceits in a Science Fiction novel.

All in all we discussed the book for nearly two hours, with only minimum side-tracking (not that Barry did not try to get us off onto tangents in an effort to have us get it out of our systems before the next Films to Come, good luck on that). Conversation continued out the door and into the humid, buggy night. I would tell you what else we talked about, but then I'd have to kill you!

Tune in next month when we read *Foundation* by Isaac Asimov as our selection for The Golden Age of Science Fiction theme. There is currently a wager that if Barry does not read *Foundation* he will lose the bet and pay Todd \$25, and if he completes reading *Foundation* in time and on budget, Todd owes him \$5 (reflecting the 5:1 odds against him not reading the book). Join us to see if Barry or Todd will be forking over the moolah!

Heroes & Rogues: Rogue Trader Session – May 28, 2011

From the Journals of Wencisia Tremnar, Executive Officer of the *Lady Malbec*

382.861,M38

I am beginning to wonder if this ship has some manner of unlucky curse. In truth, being the previous property of House Shrek was likely the first indication of the sort of turbulence to be associated with the *Lady Malbec*, but ever since we took control of this benighted vessel it seems that we have fallen from one disaster to another. It is just as well for us that we are resourceful and able to turn these upsets to our advantage, else we would be dead a hundred times over by now.

After our unanticipated detour to Tontrinas and our encounter with the deadly Eldar warriors guarding the first step on the path, we returned to our original destination of Shotra. Upon arrival, Captain Harmon-Marioc dispatched Alequintus DeMarke and Eladio Marioc in a shuttle to try to locate the presumably jettisoned artificial intelligence from the Commonwealth Battleship that we had attempted to salvage during our first visit here. It took several hours, but eventually we were able to locate what we presume to be the device. In spite of our repeated attempts at jamming, it appears to be attempting to make contact with us through the Vox network on the ship. Both Engineer Micro and I have urged the Captain to jettison the foul thing, but she seems to have a plan. At least I hope that she has a plan, though it is hard to tell with those Harmons.

Eventually we met with the Commodore Benetek and provided him with the intelligence needed to take down his rival, Admiral Spartavalcus. Benetek seemed pleased by the data and indicated that he would need to authenticate it, and present it, then provide a plan for dealing with the rogue Admiral. This process could take anywhere from three to eight months, by his reckoning, and after that it might be an additional few months before he could make good on his promise of payment. We indicated a desire to leave three Monitors in Sparta Hill and three Monitors in Ciria, though I am wondering now if having a Monitor or two at Yois might not be prudent. I suppose we can always let him know if plans change.

There was much debate over where we should next concentrate our efforts, with a great deal of news having coming in throughout the warzone in the past few weeks. Wuj was determined to be a good priority planet, but when Domenica Wayne attempted to contact the planet via Astropathic communication, the connection was strained and there was a feeling of a Warp Storm brewing in the area. Between this and the barely disjointed communication from the *Hapsushant*, it was determined to wait on providing assistance to Wuj for the time being. Instead, discussion raged back and forth between approaching the wrecks of the Imperial bases at Sutherland, visiting the recently conquered world of Deiop, and turning back to the Western spur and approaching Kalapana. In the end it was decided that Sutherland offered the least possibility of problems and so we set course for that ill-fated system.

We arrived at Sutherland with all due haste to find the system being picketed by a skeleton force of three Frigates and several cargo ships salvaging the bases further into the system. We were hailed by Captain Charles of the *Lodestone*, and asked if we had anything to trade for information on the Carthage system, which might help us in our endeavour. The Captain, as it turned out, was quite mad, his ship having been corrupted by the malign forces of Chaos when his salvage teams returned from the base at Anvil III. Apparently they had picked up a group of passengers: traitorous Chaos Space Marines of the Alpha Legion, who quickly twisted the ships' crews to serve them. Their goal in sending Charles aboard our vessel was obviously to spread their malignant beliefs to our ship, but thankfully we were spared infiltration by the quick actions of Lorn, Jorn, Ramhat Singh-Modar, Micro, Alequintus, and Jacob Dreer. The two poor possessed mutants on the shuttle were dispatched and Charles was taken as prisoner. It was only through the urging of Liliith Benetek and her odd Staking the Deck powers that we were able to escape completely unscathed and travel to nearby Mavinav.

The Mavinav system, recently declared as a base of operations for the newly forming Lupus Cluster Brotherhood of Inquisitorial Ordos, had few ships or resources to offer, however two Inquisitorial Black Ships were maintaining orbit around the primary planet, and we were ordered to take up position between the *Shroud of the Emperor* and the *Vigilance of the Astronomican*. Summoned aboard the *Vigilance* by Inquisitor Paifer Segovia of the Ordo Fideii, we quickly found ourselves escorted to his throne room for an audience. While he admitted that his own resources were presently too few to deal with the situation on Sutherland, he would see to it that the issue was resolved promptly by the Ordo Malleus and the Ordo Hereticus. In the mean time, he requested that we develop a warrant of trade to resupply Mavinav as a reward for our faithfulness, and further he requested that we bring several Cursors and Proctors of the Administratum Terra to the recently conquered world of Deiop. We agreed, and in exchange, Captain Harmon-Marioc was granted a token of purity from the Ordo Fideii.

Setting course for Deiop, we sped our way there as though the hounds of the Immaterium were hot on our trail. Upon arrival in the newly conquered system, we were commanded to take up a specific flight plan by the Dark Angels' Battlebarge *Doom of Kaliban*, and advised that deviation from that plan would result in our destruction. When we were firmly in a position that Alequintus indicated would put us in range of every gun in the local fleet, and would mean that abandoning ship would strand us in the uninhabitable polar zone, several assault shuttles launched and approached. The lead shuttle requested to land, and we, wisely, acquiesced. The shuttle disgorged a squad of Deathwing Terminators of the Dark Angels, as well as the Interrogator Chaplain, Uriel Iannos, himself. Taking Liana, Sarvus, and myself in confidence, he commanded us to hunt down the base of the *Tremnar's Profit* that the rebels may be dealt with. He implied that they were harboring some manner of fugitive from their justice, and given what we saw on Deiop, I have no desire to stand in their way should that be the case. Though I regret sacrificing my kin to such as these Space Marines, it may be that the further glory of House Tremnar can be salvaged from their martyrdom, such as it is.

We conducted a bit of business on Deiop, trading what little cargo we had available for full holds of lumber, furniture, and some recently abandoned Samura Limited Communications Systems. After filling our hold to the brim, we turned our prow back to Mavinav, then set about making the jumps from Mavinav to Thapsus. At Thapsus we resumed our relations with the Governor-General Thoreson, whose command of the Imperial Occupation Forces in the sector was proving a very lucrative contact indeed. We learned that he suspected the nefarious forces of the XYZ Combine of the recent attempt to assassinate him, and

was looking for a way to strike back at them hard. Liana traded the location of the XYZ base in Ancona to him in exchange for considerations in future dealings, a trade with which I wholeheartedly approve.

We moved on to Fager, and our second visit to the system. While our reserved berth was unavailable due to construction difficulties, we were given a priority orbit to the planet Fager. We saw the glories of the city of Fager (referred to as Fager Cubed due to its being the City of Fager on the Planet of Fager in the System of Fager), which appears to have been a human construction pre-dating both Imperial and Commonwealth presence in the sector. The writing is an odd form of Gothic that we have come to refer to as 'Precursor Gothic' and is essentially gibberish to us. We negotiated good deals on buildings with Tobias Flynn, the Fager Cubed representative of the newly forming Border Worlds Exports Chartered Corporation. With luck, these contacts will serve us well, but I somehow suspect that ill fortune is not far off our track, and that the forces of fate may be looking to hand us another setback...

SFSNNJ Member Reviews Books, Movies, TV

Chris Hasselkus reviews:

Richard Matheson wrote ***Bid Time Return*** in 1975; he then wrote the screenplay for *Somewhere in Time* in 1980. There are differences between the two. I just finished the novel, and Richard Collier goes back in time from 1971 to 1896 (75 years); in the film he goes back in time from 1980 to 1912 (68 years). More importantly, Robert Collier, his brother, is the framing device in the book in that he reads from Richard's notes. The thrust of the book is that Richard Collier has a brain tumor and eventually dies from it, with his time travel adventure perhaps simply a hallucination. In the film, Christopher Reeves' Collier sees a picture Jane Seymour's Elise McKenna and wills himself back in time, as in the book, but in the film has no brain tumor. This makes the book less fanciful and more realistic than the film. I had never read the book before, and wanted to see how it stacked up versus the film, which I have always enjoyed. In that Matheson wrote both, he probably felt a brain tumor would be a downer for viewers, and he wanted to concentrate on the love story more. Both the book and the film are well done, regardless of the differences.

I just caught ***Fast Five***, with those immortal actors Vin Diesel and Dwayne Johnson. Entertainment Weekly gave it a B+, which is about right. But it's truly one of the greatest pure action movies I've ever seen. Lotta fun.

Kenneth Brannagh has always been considered a good director. I remember seeing *Dead Again* with his then wife Emma Thompson and enjoying it. His Shakespeare is highly regarded as well. Chris Hemsworth as ***Thor*** was great, as was his father played by Anthony Hopkins. Entertainment Weekly gave it an A- which I would agree with.

Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides opened Friday, 5/20/2011. I had seen the previous three films and enjoyed them. Johnny Depp as Captain Jack Sparrow is always entertaining; one can tell how much Johnny Depp enjoys playing the role by his performance. Entertainment Weekly gave it a C; I would go with a B-.

Sunrise at the Loews Jersey City - I attended the showing Saturday, 5/21/2011, at 8:15 PM. It was great to see this masterpiece in 35 MM. The film has its own soundtrack (sound effects and the like). Because the Loews has an organ, they had the movie accompanied by it, other times by its own score. It was a bit offputting to hear the organ in that I'm used to just listening to the original track. Even the DVD I have of *Sunrise* has an alternate track. I saw a couple of guys who attend screenings at the Lafayette, as well as Asta and her husband, who were SFSNNJ guests in December 2010. It was a great experience to view the film with an audience. And it's STILL 94 minutes!

Steve Spinoso reviews: I've been watching an Intermediate Algebra DVD that I got out from the library. The packaging says "Dynamic Teacher explains Algebra", but the guy doing it is so laid back, he makes Chris Farley's "Matt Foley" character look good! "if you don't learn Algebra, you'll end up LIVING IN A VAN DOWN BY THE RIVER!!!"

This was pretty good although the first two were funnier. Jim liked the bit about the Ewoks plan will work, given that "they had five minutes to put it together". The center of the piece was Darth Stewie and Luke (Chris) Skywalker going at it over Seth Green's career, which I thought distracted from the story. Even at the end Peter and Chris were disputing the merits of Green vs. McFarlane (with a slap at Buffy thrown in for good measure). Are either/or both of the two Seth's planning to leave the series? Grade: B

New & Forthcoming Books in SF and other Genre

59 new SF and fantasy books listed for June 2011:

<http://www.scifan.com/titles/forthcoming.asp?sort=bytitle&date=062011&covers=hide>

Some titles from our favorite authors – click on the title for a description of the book:

Heartless by Gail Carriger

Something Deadly This Way Comes by Kim Harrison

Unnatural Issue by Mercedes Lackey

Fuller Memorandum, The by Charles Stross

For Heaven's Eyes Only by Simon R. Green

Upcoming Conventions

• **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/>

