



April 2011 Newsletter

Uncivil Services: Government & Bureaucracy in SF: Government: Did you fill out your 22-4-z form? If not, don't worry; we won't report you to the department of records. This month we explore the byzantine labyrinth of Government in SF, fantasy and Horror. From the Laundry to the Droids, from Brazil to 1984, and from Singapore 3 to the sands of Arrakis, the wheels of governance turn on and on, and the men and women who serve the system are often the only things making the system work.

That's Science Fiction

Tuesday April 5, 2011 – 7p
Hillsdale Public Library
Battle Royale (2000)

Face the Fiction

Saturday April 9, 2011 – 7p
Anton Strout
*Full details on p. 2

Suspense Central

Monday April 11, 2011, 2010 – 8p
Panera Bread Restaurant
165 Rt. 64 West
Paramus, NJ – 201.368.0752

Interface by Neal Stephenson & J. Frederick George

Drawing A Crowd

Wednesday April 13, 2011 – 7p
Fantasy Games & Hobbies
9 Miller Rd - Mahwah
Men in Black and other agents
www.fantasygamesandhobbies.com

Films to Come: 4-Star Movie Discussion Group

Wednesday April 20, 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 April 22, 2011 – 8p
Borders Books & Music
235 Interstate Shopping Center/Rt. 17 South

Ramsey, NJ 07446

Dead To Me by Anton Strout

Rogue Trader: Wolves in the Fold

Saturday April 23, 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 April 26, 2011 – 8p
Wayne Public Library
SF and government
www.waynepubliclibrary.org

please visit www.sfsnj.com for full details

SFSNNJ Face the Fiction presents: Anton Strout

When: Saturday, April 9, 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 Anton Strout (<http://www.antonstrout.com/>).

“Fantasy author **Anton Strout** was born in the Berkshire Hills mere miles from writing heavyweights Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville and currently lives in the haunted corn maze that is New Jersey (where nothing paranormal ever really happens, he assures you).

He has been a featured speaker and workshopper at San Diego Comic-Con, Gencon, New York Comic-Con, and the Brooklyn Book Festival.

He is the co-creator of the faux folk musical *Sneezin’ Jeff & Blue Raccoon: The Loose Gravel Tour* (winner of the Best Storytelling Award at the First Annual New York International Fringe Festival).

In his scant spare time, his is a writer, a sometimes actor, sometimes musician, occasional RPGer, and the worlds most casual and controller smashing video gamer. He currently works in the exciting world of publishing and yes, it is as glamorous as it sounds.”

Mr. Strout is the author of **Dead Matter, Deader Still, Dead To Me, and the latest Dead Waters.** They make up the Simon Canderous urban fantasy series

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

March Meeting Recaps

That's Science Fiction! – Young Sherlock Holmes - Tuesday March 1, 2011

That's Science Fiction launched our International gods month with great fun.

Todd started off the evening by providing a background of the film - it sat on shelves for some time while the powers *that be* tried to decide how to market the film, there were some title changes and the original people involved with the film were gone by the time the movie was released. We are glad the movie finally made it to theaters/DVD! All who attended enjoyed the film.

Young Sherlock Holmes is a 1985 mystery/adventure film directed by Barry Levinson, produced by Steven Spielberg and written by Chris Columbus, based "respectfully" on characters by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. All went on to great things in the industry and watching this movie it's easy to see why. The film was well written, engaging, had beautiful scenery/settings and was just plain fun.

The movie sets up the life-long relationship of Holmes (Nicholas Rowe) and Watson (Alan Cox) as they meet as young boys in boarding school and wind up solving a particularly vicious mystery involving murders and disappearances. Although Doyle introduces the two as adults, it is pointed out in the film that this was a "could have been" scenario. It was quite interesting to envision that the accoutrements Holmes had as an adult came about the way they did in the movie. The deerstalker cap, the pipe, his solitary existence...all explained in such a believable way that you can't help but think it did happen just this way.

As stated, Holmes meets Watson at boarding school. They form a fast friendship. Holmes is an outstanding student with a reputation for being brilliant, which peeves fellow classmate Dudley (a rather nasty prig) who constantly tries to get Holmes in trouble. Holmes is friendly with Waxflatter, the resident inventor/retired professor...eccentric is a nice way to describe him...who spends his retirement inventing gadgets. He is a mentor to Holmes. Living with Waxflatter is his niece Elizabeth..the love of Holmes life.

Holmes and Watson go about being students until Holmes figures something out...young girls have gone missing. Several wealthy men of the London ton die by what the Yard claims is suicide or accident. The Yard doesn't believe them to be connected. Holmes, however, sees the patterns and implores a detective at Scotland Yard to investigate. The detective wants no part of it and thinks Holmes is a smarmy, arrogant little annoyance. Then Waxflatter is murdered. When no one listens, it is up to Holmes, Watson and Elizabeth to solve the murder. The investigation leads them to an Egyptian cult so brutal and forbidden they are feared in their native Egypt. They worship Anubis...god of the dead. They also have no problem with human sacrifice.

What follows is twists and turns, some laughs, some tears, good action and lots of adventure. Excellent way to begin the theme of international gods. We all enjoyed the "pastry" scene which led to Watson talking to a french pastry..."I have nothing to say to you Mr. French pastry." Maggie liked the twist with Moriarty. Good film, good fun.

Join us next month for Battle Royale...this government has a unique way of dealing with errant teens!
(AM)

Medium Screen Classics – Incoming! – Saturday March 5, 2011

Bad films and good friends - no better way to spend a Saturday! "Watch out for the gadgets on their chests!" "How do I tell them my son's a Hawkman?" Legends of the Superheroes - the Star Wars Holiday Special for DC comic's fans! **(Gene McGrath)**

And, "Help me! Heeelp Me!" a la "The Fly" was heard faintly in the room toward the end of Legends of the Superheroes... .as most present were wondering, "when will this torture end?" ;)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqYDRxdgnC0> **(Gene McGrath)**

Medium Screen classics completed its winter run with Incoming! A Day of Bombs....and were they ever! As Jo wept, "My god, they went from bad to terrible," Gene tried calling for help on his laptop. No one came to help...all we had was the sad little voice crying, "Help me! Heeelp me!" immortalized in the film The Fly. Did we have fun...understatement!

First up was Menace From Outer Space, a 1956 SF adventure in space. This film was actually a two-part episode of the sci-fi TV series [Rocky Jones, Space Ranger](#), released as a feature.

The characters had names like Rocky and Winky...yes, Winky (who was a grown man BTW). Everyone wore skintight polyblend 'spacesuits'...and capes. Apparently capes are quite the thing in the future. Jo provided this number (thanks Jo) that had Rocky Jones Space Ranger (Yes, you know Jo and I shouted, "Like Buzz Lightyear!") and his sidekick Winky traveling to a distant planet to find out why they sent a really crummy effects rocket to earth. They bring Vena Ray, young Bobby, and Professor Newton - get it, Newton. Hey! That's as good as it gets! They arrive to find the inhabitants - wearing capes too...and odd Egyptian looking headgear - are friendly but being misled by an evil scientist from Earth. He wants to destroy Earth and has fooled the friendly cape-wearing dwellers into believing they must destroy Earth to remain safe. It's up to Rocky and friends to save the day.

Capes, names like Winky, really bad "special effects" described by Barry as, "This was the first movie to use CGI. You know clay, graph-paper....." Clay would have been an improvement. As Debbie M pointed out, "It was very 50's TV."

Then our pain truly began.....

The next movies were *thoughtfully* provided by Barry - Wild, Wild Planet (1965) and Legends of the Superheroes (1978). Where to begin....

Wild, Wild Planet. Put it this way, we had less than 10 minutes left in the movie and Barry says, "I have no idea what's going on. Is something going on?" Gene, trying to provide a morale boost, provided hilarious commentary to help ease our pain. We had MUCH fun with this one. This one was sooooooo bad it made Menace From Outer Space look high-tech. Gene pointed out that the rocket and electric company were clearly stolen from the first film. It's true - those items were identical!

From what would could piece together, yet again a mad scientist is out to do harm: "A deranged scientist is using his employer's top-secret bio-laboratory to engage in clandestine eugenics experiments." Evil Mad Mr. Nurmi sends out pairs (the pairs are made up of 1 woman and 1 sunglass-wearing guy) to shrink people he has selected for his experiments. Uh huh...they go around shrinking people to Barbie-doll size, putting them into satchels and taking them away. In one particularly funny scene one of the evil pairs is interrupted by the victim's granddaughter so his "shrinking" is stopped too soon and he's now dwarf-sized. He rolls around on the grass moaning while we laughed non-stop.

After they shrink them they bring them back to normal size. We have no idea why. We gave up trying to figure it out because in addition to the shrinking thing going on, this movie had "theater" - people dressed up in butterfly costumes dancing in circles on a stage flapping their costume wings. Toss in dialog so ridiculous it hurt, rockets that looked like they were stolen from the first movie, even worse "special effects" than film 1, dolls in cases that you were supposed to believe were shrunken people and absolutely no clue what was going on...good stuff...good stuff. Jo commented, "It cannot get worse than that."

Little did we know our pain would soon be compounded....

Finishing up our line-up of bombs was Legends of the Superheroes. THERE ARE NO WORDS!! Truly. We weren't scarred enough from Wild, Wild Planet....no! OMG! This was the coup de gras. If only it had killed us instantly. That horrible thing dragged out our pain for what seemed forever. This one had live-action Superheroes in two segments. The first segment had Superheroes trying to stop Villains from using their Dooms Day Machine. The second segment had the Superheroes being roasted by the villains (too bad it wasn't literally roasted over a fire pit). I think I heard Jo whimpering behind me. The table near me tried to kill itself and collapsed. Gene kept looping "Help me! Heeelp me!" Ghetto Man stupefied Liz. Barry finally figured out the calls of distress were coming from in the house....

In all, the PERFECT line-up, perfectly displaying bad at its best! We laughed til it hurt and continued over dinner.

Medium Screen returns in the summer...what horrors await us? **(AM)**

Drawing A Crowd – Wednesday March 9, 2011

Excellent DAC! Haywood and Mike had a great meeting lined-up on international gods complete with handouts, extensive lists of gods/deities, videos and tons of interesting information. This one was good even if you don't consider yourself a comic-book fan - it had history, myth, lore, artwork, videos - the variety was well done and informative for all.

Mike and Haywood gave everyone a handout listing the Agenda for the evening - it made it easy to follow along, jot down notes, and clarify names/points easily.

Agenda:

Speaking of the gods, Let's Talk Wonder Woman, Captain Marvel & Thor Comics - all have a heavy emphasis on gods/deities. Wonder Woman - Greco-Roman gods are pervasive, Thor - Norse, and Captain Marvel - Greek.

Thor:

- A very interesting discussion about the relationship between Thor and Odin
- Hulk vs. Thor - we viewed a portion of the Hulk vs. Thor cartoon. Things didn't look good for Thor!
- Fun aside about what does and does not qualify as arrogance and who was more arrogant Thor or Hercules.

How Many Gods, Demons, Demi Gods and Deities We Talkin' Bout?

Haywood, using the awesome projector he brought, displayed an extensive listing of the above from various cultures, countries, and religions. Many we'd never heard of before. Very informative.

Gods VS. Heroes

We were treated to another video - this one was Superman vs. Darkside. Darkside is a DC universe god. In the clip we were shown, Superman finally unleashes his full potential of power on Darkside and it gets ugly! Intense is a good word..riveting as well. We were then shown a clip with Superman and Shazam battling it out with Black Adam.

* Haywood told us the name Shazam is an acronym of the gods embodied in young Billy Batson: S/Solomon, H/Hercules, A/Atlas, Z/Zeus, A/Achilles, and M/Mercury. I found this interesting, and never knew that. Oddly, Legends of the Superheros shown at Medium Screen Classics just the Saturday before never said that...hmmm._

In The Media

The various gods in comics be it in comic book form, TV animated or graphic form.

Are The Cosmic Entities Gods?

- What is a god? In the DC/Marvel universes, characters Lex Luther and Thanos try to attain godhood but are not gods. We watched a clip, All Star Superman, in which Lex Luther has taken a 24-hour Superman elixir giving him the power of Superman for the time. What will he learn from gaining godlike powers?
- In the Marvel universe, Ares is now a superhero. Is he still a god?

I really loved Beth's anecdote about ice diving, she had us in stitches pretty much the entire way through. Before the meeting I apologized to her and said, we are a pretty rambunctious crowd, and her only response was, "Oh, really? I guess I will have to tell more rowdy anecdotes, then."

Another nice thing about Beth is that she told some more unusual stories of how to get oneself published. In her case, instead of looking for an agent to represent her directly, she instead found a book that she liked, whose author had thanked their agent, then went to the author's book signing and asked him to please introduce her to his agent.

I was also really impressed by Beth's energy. She adapted quite well, and was very quick with smart answers to our questions. There was never a dull moment as we laughed our way through the evening. We even got a preview of the new work of speculative fiction that Beth was working on! It was a pretty awesome evening, and more thanks go to Bill and Maryanne Skees for being such wonderful hosts, and AM and Jo for coordinating all the things that went into making the evening a success. **(Todd Ehrenfels)**

Suspense Central – *Anansi Boys* by Neil Gaiman - Monday March 14, 2011

Dateline: Paramus, NJ

Audiences were shocked last night as the planned Suspense Central meeting ended up discussing a whole bunch of things totally unrelated to the subject at hand. When approached for comment about the event, Neil Gaiman's sole response was, "What the heck are you talking about? Who are you? Get off my lawn!" This stunning development follows news that social groups do social things in social places. Shocking, just shocking...

OK, now that that silliness is done, I suppose that I should get on with the actual write-up. This might be easier if I had gotten more than 4 hours of sleep, but I guess I shall just have to fake it.

Aurelia and I started the evening off a bit early... well, OK, I started the evening a bit early having made the long 50 meter commute from my office to the Panera at 5:30p, immediately following work. I had a chance to sit back, relax, eat some dinner, and finish reading *Interface* by Neil Stephenson and Frederick George (next month's Suspense Central title) and begin re-reading Frank Herbert's *Dune* (not a selection for any group, just a book I really like). Anyhow, Aurelia joined me around 7:30p and we chatted until 8p when we moved into the Community Room, which had signs up that some other group had reserved it from 7p to 9p (it should be noted that no other group showed up during that time).

We started the official discussion of Neil Gaiman's *Anansi Boys* with a discussion of Neal Stephenson's *Interface*. That's right, we took a detour to discuss next month's selection before we discussed this month's selection. That's just how we roll! After a few moments of this diverting diversion, we wandered on into the story.

Liz, Chris, Kathleen, Aurelia, and I all agreed that the book was a lot of fun, and a great read. Fast paced, with diverse and interesting characters, and a great storyline that was simultaneously challenging and easily accessible. The plot of the book is based around the concept first posited in Gaiman's *American Gods*, which is that all of the various ethnic deities exist and are part of the vast melting pot of America. One such god is Anansi, the spider god of Africa, who is renown as a trickster god. Anansi's son, Fat Charlie Nancy is getting ready to be married to his beloved Rosie in jolly olde England, when his somewhat estranged father up and dies while singing karaoke at a bar with some buxom coeds. Fat Charlie must go to Florida, where Mrs. Higglar and her coffee klatch (which includes the witch, Mrs. Dunwoody) explains to him that he has a brother named Spider that he had hitherto never known. Fat Charlie summons Spider, who, much like their father, takes the business of being the embodiment of tricky cleverness to a whole new level: causing Fat Charlie no end of misery at work, in his love life, and even in his home. In an effort to rid himself of his troublesome brother, Fat Charlie strikes a bargain with the Bird Woman to get rid of Spider, and hijinx ensue as the children of the Spider God Anansi struggle to come out on top and defeat the Bird Woman and Tiger.

While it was very twisty and complex, the story itself boils down easily into three layers:
Layer 1: The Midsummer Night's Dream storyline between the star crossed lovers of Fat Charlie, Rosie, Spider, and Daisy. When we first meet Fat Charlie, he is engaged to Rosie. When Spider arrives, he takes Fat Charlie's out for wine, women, and son to grieve the passing of their father, and takes home

Daisy Day, who wakes up Charlie, though she obviously liked Spider a bit more. Spider takes Fat Charlie's place at work, causing Layer 2 to kick off, and sweeps Rosie off her feet during his lunch break. Layer 1 of the story resolves with Fat Charlie and Daisy coupled and Spider and Rosie coupled and all romances finalized on the sunny island of Saint Andrews by the end of the book.

Layer 2: The Financial Caper storyline involves Fat Charlie's boss, Grahame Coats, and his embezzlement from his wealthy clients, especially Maeve and Morris Livingstone (this name is an intentional pun). Spider discusses the embezzlement with Grahame, who thinks that Spider is Fat Charlie, and Grahame Coats sets off an investigation with the aim of implicating Fat Charlie in the embezzlement and giving him enough time to flee England for sunny Saint Andrew's island. Maeve, who is not quite as dim as Grahame believes, figures this out and confronts Grahame, who murders her (proving that maybe she is as dim as he believed). Amusingly, the young lady that Charlie and Spider picked up in the bar early in the book, Daisy Day, turns out to be the cop investigating the crime. While Fat Charlie is the easy suspect, she twigs to Grahame Coats' culpability early on, leading her to abandon her post in pursuit of the oily criminal.

Layer 3: The Metaphysical Battleground storyline involves a power struggle between the gods of creation, embodied by various Animal avatars including Anansi the Spider, Tiger, Bird, and Monkey. Anansi's sons are put in a position of defending the legacy of their godhood and defeating both Bird and Tiger. Spider is kidnapped by Bird, tortured, and eventually saved by Fat Charlie when he realizes that Spider did not really get 'all the power' in the family. This was the most complicated section of the story because it interleaves the other two and allows for the cross-pollination of the plotlines (oooh, Todd is bringing out the big guns for this one).

We laughed ourselves silly recounting various scenes and sequences, especially those involving the Lime, Mrs. Dunwoody, or Mrs. Higgle's crazy family. It was universally agreed that we liked this book. Chris brought up the ideas of turning this into a movie, and that Gaiman was working on a script for Hollywood to ruin. We also discussed varied subjects, like Mantracker, Real Cowboys, Top Shot, V, Castle, and Detroit 1-8-7. It was a fun time, and we all enjoyed ourselves precipitously!

Seriously, though, if you were not there, you missed out on one of the more hair-raisingly hysterical meetings of Suspense Central ever...

Tune in next month when we discuss *Interface* by Neal Stephenson and Frederick George.
(Todd Ehrenfels)

Additional comments:

Anansi Boys by Neil Gaiman was the selection this month. Just about everyone had read the book and liked it. I have read "Neverwhere" and "The Graveyard Book" as well, and have liked Gaiman's writing in all of them. His sensitivity is very different from most other authors, but engaging nonetheless. In "Anansi Boys" Gaiman makes a reference to "Life is a Rock (But the Radio Rolled Me)" which was a one-hit-wonder by a group by the name of Reunion. Obscure things like that show how hip and in touch Gaiman is. The whole plot of the novel is hard to describe, but suffice it to say that it was a really enjoyable read, with much humor along the way. **(Chris H)**

Films to Come – Wednesday March 16, 2011

A valiant effort was put forth by our moderator...truly valiant. Todd and Bill had other plans...

The meeting opened with a discussion about the Academy Award winners. There was some debate - again - about 'is it' or 'isn't it' genre with some liberties being taken to bend things to fit the genre category. A discussion about interpreted screenplay and what the Academy means to be an interpreted screenplay and why sequels like *Toy Story 3* fits that character.

The popular All-Time USA Box Office list saw several changes since Barry last presented the list. *Toy Story 3* (\$414,984,497) & *Alice in Wonderland* (\$334,185,206) still help positions 1 and 2 (in that order), but *Iron Man 2* (\$312,057,433) had moved up to #3, *Eclipse*/#4 (\$300,523,113), *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1*/#5 (\$294,713,608), *Inception*/#6 (\$292,568,851), *Despicable Me*/#7 (\$251,501,645), *Shrek Forever After*/#8 (\$238,371,987), *How To Train Your Dragon*/#9 (\$217,387,997) and *Tangled*/#10 (\$196,675,983). *Tron: Legacy*

made the list at #12 (\$171,590,201) and *The King's Speech* hit #19 (\$129,349,879). *Black Swan* #25 (\$105,928,217).

This was followed by the All-Time Non-USA Box Office. This list is always interesting in the differences. For example, on this list, *Alice In Wonderland* is #1, *Harry Potter* #2 and *Toy Story* is #3! *Harry Potter* jumps from 5th place to second. On the USA list *Despicable Me* is #7 but does not make the top ten of the non-USA list. Interesting to note, *The King's Speech* and *Black Swan* did about the same on both. *The King's Speech* was #18 on the non-USA and #19 on the USA, while *Black Swan* was #27 on the non-USA and #25 on the USA.

Once again we enjoyed the new format Barry has been using. The infamous "list" began with current releases and had anticipated theatrical releases thru December 2011. As we move thru the list, Barry intersperses details and info from Entertainment Weekly and doohickey.

First movie on the list this time was the much-discussed *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*. More trouble for Captain Jack Sparrow in this extremely popular franchise.

While discussing movies, Todd proudly displayed his awesome magical abilities with his *magic movie list* - he was able to make his list stand up all by its self...until Bill moved and made it fall down. Boy did he get the skunk eye.

- *Dark Shadows*: another Johnny Depp film coming soon - I want to see it!! No release date yet.
- *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows: Part 2* - tentative date of July 15. Thanks Todd and Jo for the spoiler alerts :(
- *Justin Bieber: Never Say Never* - I am not allowed to write anything as Barry, in a bold move as moderator, forbade us to speak of the Bieber. No Bieber talk. It is forbidden.
- *Rango, Hall Pass and Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1* were touched upon briefly.
- *Scream 4*: 10 years after *Scream 3*, Wes Craven returns to the franchise. Jo had seen 1 and 2; Todd and I had seen all 3. Barry described Wes Craven's films as, "weird and not that good."
- *Rio*: Todd said he saw this when it was *Happy Feet*. We were a tad confused as one takes place in ice and the other in the tropics. Liz decided Todd just doesn't like penguins - funny!
- *Kung Fu Panda 2* led to an aside about how many genre movies Jack Black has made and whether or not he has talent. There was some debate.
- *Rise of the Apes*: prequel, release date 6/24/11.
- *Captain America: The First Avenger* - release date 7/22/11. This one had Todd recalling a *Captain America* movie he had seen that left him thoroughly confused. In the movie he saw, villain Red Skull had an Italian accent (rather than being a Nazi like in the comics) who went around saying, "Capeetan Ameerica"...hmmm. We'll pass on that one.
- *Red Riding Hood*: Mike P gave it an A-. He thought it made more sense than the original fairytale. Chris thought it might be better if Amanda Seyfried sang ABBA songs.
- *Water For Elephants*: (4/22/11) based on the popular book. Bill asked how many 'elephant' movies we could name. We came up with *Operation Dumbo Drop*, *Dumbo*, *Jumbo*, *Jungle Book*, *Elephant Boy*, *Elephant Walk* and *Hatari!*.
- *Tyler Perry's Madea's Big Happy Family* (4/22/11): Todd was trying to explain how Perry is similar to Blake Edwards in that Edward's has a formula and consistency to all of his work as does Perry. You know what to expect as every film includes certain elements. Of course Bill had to respond

with, "Blake Edwards does Mary Poppins," to which Liz hysterically yells out, "Mary Poppins was GOOD!"

There was some ongoing confusion over Ryan Reynolds vs. Ryan Gosling (and then Todd threw in Ryan Phillippe).

We actually finished the list and had time left! Barry took the opportunity to wrap up by adding several films not on the list and asked if anyone had seen the films. *Sanctum*, *Cedar Rapids*, *Unknown*, *Of Gods & Men*, *Mars Needs Moms* (written by the grandson of HG Wells), *Jane Eyre*, *Adjustment Bureau*. Finally someone had seen one of the films. Bill had seen *Adjustment Bureau*. This film is based on a Philip K. Dick short story, which of course led, to how many Dick films could we name...all but two. Pretty good. *Battle Los Angeles* was the last film Barry brought up and Bill had seen that as well. He felt it had good special effects but stupid people doing some stupid things. Oh, and Bill is obsessed with Aaron Eckhart's chin.

Throughout the many, many asides...throughout the seemingly random reviews (yes Bill we are looking at you)...Todd's magic movie list...Bill's detours...moderator Barry kept things moving and interesting. Great meeting, lots of information, and many films to look forward to. Good job. **(AM)**

Themes of the Fantastic – Tuesday, March 22, 2011

A fun and informative meeting. Chuck G. and Steve R. brought up examples of God & religion in science fiction. Authors such as Stapleton, Niven and Zelazny were mentioned. I brought up [Richard Adams](#) second book, *Shardik*, about a kind of bear-god. Chuck reminded me that in Adams' first book, *Watership Down*, the rabbits worshiped a sun god by the name of Frith. Bill W. mentioned Burroughs (shocking, I know). The second [John Carter](#) book was called *The Gods of Mars*, which he also supplied a handout. A second handout mentioned Mars re mythology, first as the [Greek god Ares](#), whose myths were reinterpreted in Roman literature and art under the name of Mars. There are many other examples of Gods / religion in science fiction that anyone is free to add. **(Chris H)**

Modern Masters – The Spy Who Haunted Me by Simon R. Green – Friday - March 25, 2011

So, what can I say about a meeting about a book about a subject that is difficult to define? Well, we followed in Zelazny's footsteps and had a strange and almost lyrical discussion, moving deftly through memes and concepts like a ballet dancer along a stage of stars... OK, who am I kidding, we laughed and joked and made pithy comments about how strange this book was.

Todd and Jeremy started things off chitchatting about movies and comics, and such, while the group aggregated around us, slowly accreting like the rings around a gas giant... Hmm, I should probably stop referring to myself as a gas giant, though most would say that I am full of hot air. Anyway, once we had a quorum, we quickly moved on to the subject at hand and began to discuss the month's selection, *Creatures of Light and Darkness* by [Roger Zelazny](#). Kathleen, Chris, Aurelia, and I tried, vainly and valiantly, to explain the story to the rest of the assemblage. It was a lot of fun trying to explain the strange twists and turns of the road that Zelazny was taking us down, and so I will attempt to recount the highlights... in the form of epic poetry....

OK, maybe not.

So we started off with a discussion of how this book came to be. Apparently, Zelazny wrote the book as a developmental exercise, and Chip Delany (*Dhalgren*, *Babel-17*) liked it so much that he pushed Roger Zelazny to get it published. This effort was rewarded with a lot of head-scratching and some critical praise. People were somewhat confused by the book, which has been labeled as everything from [Space Opera](#) to Cyberpunk to Neofantasy. This touched off a quick discussion of Cyberpunk, and its roots, between Barry, Ann-Marie, and myself, as we discussed the origins of the sub-genre. Somewhere between [Bruce Sterling](#) and John Brunner, though, we realized that we should probably get back on task... and so we did.

Aurelia started explaining the beginning of the story, and walked everyone through Wakim's day in the House of the Dead, working for the God Anubis. The Naming Day of Wakim was discussed in great detail as well as the... shall we say Lo-Bobbit-izing... of the poor servant. We moved through Temporal Fugue and fighting, and the Steel General, and the Prince Who Was A Thousand, discussing the myriad

characters and interactions, and the ways in which they interacted. We also discussed the lives and loves of Horus and Megaera, as well as the strangeness of Thoth, the interesting bits about Madrak, and how Typhon fits into the whole thing.

While it was universally agreed that we all found parts of the story interesting and enjoyable, Kathleen, Chris, and Aurelia all indicated that the storytelling style of the book was a bit off-putting. While I did agree, I was able to pull out my trump card: Carpet made of human nerves and speakers. Jeremy was taking notes on this and looking for schematics. I would really hate to be the one to get on his bad side: he is smart enough to build this, so beware. Bewaaaaaare!

We all had a great deal of fun going back and forth on the book, and discussing the vagaries of Zelazny's style in a number of different books. We went through the Amber series, and most of Roger's other works (yes, I can call him Roger, that's just how I roll). In the end, we were shepherded out the door on the verge of the store closing, then stood around discussing [Caprica](#), Blood and Steel, Warehouse 13, and SyFy's strange priorities in the freezing cold. Some of us (me) were too exhausted to go diner-izing, so we all wended our way home after a poetry-packed evening.

Next month, join us for Anton Strout's debut novel, [Dead to Me](#). For reference, the book is 368 pages and is a quick and enjoyable read (apparently page count is an important consideration for some folks). Read it early and you can chat about the book with Anton at Face the Fiction on the 9th! **(Todd)**

Heroes & Rogues: Rogue Trader Session – March 26, 2011

Chapter 11: Order of Priorities

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

In my life, I have traveled the galaxy, from the Calixis Sector to the Lupus Cluster, and seen a great many things. I have borne witness to great battles, and seen xenos both benign and malicious. I have seen the heights of nobility and the depths of depravity amongst my enemies and allies. Nothing, however, could have prepared me for the shocking horror that I was about to experience on the planet Olisipio.

We came to this world at the behest of my cousin Sarvus, the ship's resident theosophist, High Chaplain, and Purser. Information had come to Sarvus that Olisipio, a miserably frozen wasteland with little to recommend it, was the home to a Feudal culture adopted by groups of people who wished to live a more simple life than the hurly-burly of the Commonwealth would normally allow. While several of us were skeptical of the utility, Sarvus was eager to attempt to recruit mercenary household troops for possible commercial export.

When we arrived in the system, we were brusquely directed into a parking orbit, which was suspiciously vacant in spite of the world's recent fall to Imperial forces after bitter fighting between Commonwealth ground and air elements and Imperial Guard Regiments with Naval Support. In spite of the theft of a dozen Deathstrike Missile Launcher units from the Imperial Guard by insurgents on the ground, Sarvus was determined to make planetfall, so we negotiated a landing position in the commercial capital of York, across the Sea of Taubitz from the administrative capital of Trent.

We were greeted on the landing pad by a large party of local Nobles, including Burgomeister Claire Colonna and Margravine Brunhilde Yamamoto, and Domenica advised us that several of the people on the landing pad were Pskers, though most seemed latent and undeveloped. Domenica and Jacob seemed as nervous as I have ever seen an Astropath act in all my years aboard the ships of Houses Tremnar and Marioc. The longer we were exposed to these strange people, the more I came to share the apprehensions of my companions that there was something just plain wrong about this place.

First, in spite of its seeming antiquity, the buildings all seemed to have been constructed using high technology, and included amenities like modern plumbing, auto-starting gas lamps, and even clear plaz-glass windows. When we went out to do some shopping, we realized that the shops that sold food

were closed for business due to 'rationing' while the luxury good shops all seemed to be operating at peak efficiency. In fact, they seemed to operating more efficiently than their seemingly Luddite ways would account for.

We came to discover that this planet had been colonized by a group that wished to re-enact what they felt were the best parts of ancient Terran society, without the drawbacks that such civilizations had to suffer with. In addition to this, we discovered that, as Domenica pointed out, this was a planet of complete phonies! Not only were their titles, ranks, and even their society completely fabricated from whole cloth, but their accents, attitudes, and even opinions rang inutterably false. Leave us not mention their reliance on Nano-assemblers and high tech Fabber units, which were at total odds with the Town Criers every few blocks, horse drawn carriages, and other anachronisms that seemed to have been installed simply for ambiance rather than practicality.

After purchasing some items to help us fit in, most notably a nice dress for Domenica with a veil to hide her eyes, we watched as residents of York gathered at the Town Criers and got their ration cards stamped, then proceeded to the commercial district where they were issued food by jezail-toting militiamen. We hurried along to the dinner party being held at the High Duke's palace in York, pending the odious cretin's coronation to King. In addition to ourselves, a number of other off-worlders were present, including a trio in the colors and livery of House Shrek!

Given the fact that Duelling is not only legal, but encouraged, here, I was somewhat shocked when Sarvus walked up to the pudgy little Shrek and struck up a conversation. According to Gregorianus Shrek, he was glad of somebody to talk with who was not one of these dull locals. Indeed, he suggested that there may be ways that our Houses could help each other in as that the people of Olisipio were downright hostile to any attempts at trade and negotiation. The members of the Administratum seemed disinterested in conversation, however several of us managed a few interesting conversations including a discussion of the variety of wines, and an example of puppetry by Benito Wachs' Servo Skull. The party was, by all accounts, a dreary affair, and worthy of the name 'party' only in that it allowed us some social interaction with our peculiar hosts.

After the party, Domenica journeyed across town with Lorn and Jacob to a meeting with the group calling itself the Sowing Circle. Domenica, who had received a mental communication when we arrived, had been specially invited to the group, which she surmised was likely made up entirely of Psykers. As it turned out, she was correct. Lord Hakkido, the apparent leader of the Sowing Circle, explained to Domenica that she and the rest of us ought not to waste our time as the people of Olisipio had no desire for off-world contamination of any form. They were, or so they said, pursuing a rigidly ordered life based on the Eldar Path in order to prevent a great and terrible thing from emerging from the planet. Given our recent encounters at lol, the idea of some horror being held in check only by the ordered discipline of the people on the surface seems terrifyingly believable. Lord Hakkido waxed eloquent on the subject of the Slaan and their creations, stating that this was world and its weapon was one of their failures as a super-weapon to use against their enemies. Hakkido did, however, provide us with information that was interesting in that he stated that the Path, the one guarded by the Eldar at Tontrinas and spoken of in the maps and logs in the Librarium, led to the greatest weapon the Slaan developed to use against their enemies.

Realizing that there was no way that we were ever going to make a profit from this frigid world, we completed our meetings with the maximum efficiency possible to avoid affront. Strangely, Gregorianus Shrek had an opportunity for us in spite of our enmity with his House. In exchange for passage offworld, Gregorianus would provide us the location of the wreck of the Imperial Dreadnought *Fairfield's Terror*. While he stated that he would be just as happy to be marooned on the vessel, allowing him to claim it as salvage for House Shrek, he would be happy to allow us to salvage whatever components and valuables we could from the wreck.

Upon arriving at the wreck of the *Fairfield's Terror*, we discovered a second wreck, the Commonwealth Strike Carrier, *HMS Manticore*. Gregorianus Shrek, who was apparently in a generous mood with other peoples' salvage, offered to help us in the salvaging of these two ships, neither of which was properly repairable. In addition, he offered to negotiate an end of the hostilities between Shrek and Marioc in the Warzone. He offered generous shipping rate reductions for transshipments from Sparta and Pisae

through Ciria, where Marioc would take a cut, and on through to lol and Fager. We countered with an requirement of a free and clear docking slip to be held for House Marioc business at all times in Fager, and he agreed in exchange for a docking slip to be held for House Shrek at Ciria.

Negotiations completed, we concentrated on the salvage ahead...(Todd Ehrenfels)

SFSNNJ Member Reviews Books, Movies, TV

The Adjustment Bureau – Chris Hasselkus

Liz B. and I went to see The Adjustment Bureau at Clifton Commons. Her reaction was that the film was more about religion than science fiction. I don't know if that's true or not, but I generally liked it. I had heard that the chemistry between Matt Damon and Emily Blunt was really good, which it was. By the end, I thought the resolution felt like the Beatles song All You Need Is Love. Would you believe it: I listen to Breakfast with the Beatles on the Q 104.3 FM on Sunday mornings from 8 - 10 AM; the first song played was All You Need Is Love. Must have been part of the plan! Grade: B+.

"V: The Second Generation" by Kenneth Johnson - A Review – Chris Hasselkus

This sequel to his 1983 mini-seies was released in 2008. It disregards both The Final Battle of 1984 as well as the subsequent weekly series, which had been made without Johnson's involvement.

"V: The Second Generation" is set 20 years after the original miniseries. Earth is under control of the Visitors, with the Resistance carrying on as best they can. An alien race called the Zedti, who had earlier barely defeated the Visitors, come to the aid of the Resistance. The big question is what their help will cost the Eatrh and its inhabitants.

The book is a real page-turner, with cliffhanfgers at the end of each chapter. Not everyone survives to the end, making the read a poignant one. Highly recommended!

Upcoming Conventions

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

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