

SOUL RISER

August 2010

FREE

Vampire Love at the Merrill

Doctorow Goes *For the Win*

Lemire Gives the Merrill a
Sweet Tooth

Hill Shows off his *Horns*

We Reach for the Stars, and
Find Dragons Too

Scalzi's Up For, You Know,
Whatever

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Sol Rising

Friends of the Merrill Collection
Number 42 August 2010

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From the Collection Head

[On Hiatus]

By Lorna Toolis

This edition Lorna Toolis takes a much deserved break (it's been a full year) from her standby column and gives the floor over to our resident (new) editor. The column will return with the Winter edition.

From the Editor

By Michael Matheson

Before all else, a thank you to Sabrina Fried, longtime editor of *Sol Rising*. The last seven years of the newsletter have seen a series of gradual shifts under her guidance, but, as all editors must inevitably do, Sabrina has opted to move on.

Some of you may have noticed the rather abrupt shift of this issue. To a purpose, as opposed to a catastrophic upheaval. Yes, the Merrill Collection still stands, and is continuing to expand in both size and reputation.

The shift in format may for some of you seem jarring (the shake-up of routine is never easy to deal with), but is a logical step in the evolution of any newsletter or magazine. It would be unfair to both Sabrina and to the readers of *Sol Rising* to continue crafting the newsletter as it was - to continue walking in someone else's shoes if you'll forgive the cliché.

From here on in *Sol Rising* is a whole new animal. Oh, the bones may be the same, and the forest of the Merrill in which it lives and breathes isn't going anywhere; but this publication - the Friends of the Merrill's means of communicating with, delighting, and informing its patrons, as well as those who've yet to see the wonder that is the vaulted collection itself - is going to present something new from here on in.

It's a good sign that you've stayed along for the ride so far. There are worlds of wonder to cover within and without of the universe that is the Merrill. And all of the stars within its bounds shine so very brightly.

Welcome to the new *Sol Rising*.

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Hill Shows Off His *Horns*

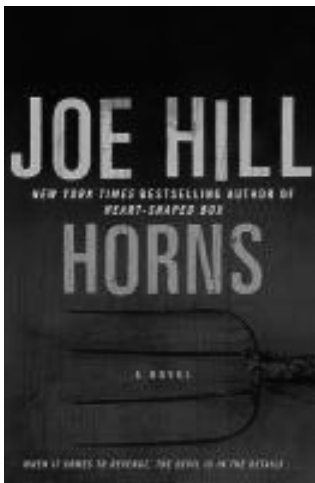
By Lorna Toolis



Sixty people came to listen to Joe Hill read from his new novel, *Horns*, on March 22. The reading was essentially part of a stand-up comedy act, featuring flashing red horns and a clever line of patter whenever the author was reading a section of the book which might upset either “sensitive people,” or the author’s mother.

The comedy shtick was well received by the audience, who asked a lot of questions when the routine / reading ended, before the signing began.

[Editor’s Note]: Waking up after a night of drunken binging with horns and supernatural



abilities? The editorial staff smells a tie-in to the works of Peter Molyneux. In the event we’re living in a dream of our own making (more than likely), we’re okay with that since we’ve got more of Joe Hill’s work to look at.



Aside from his first novel, the much lauded Heart-Shaped Box, Hill has also put out a collection of 15+ short stories, 20th Century Ghosts, and has had other work published in a variety of venues. Not to mention that the man writes comic books (Locke and Key). He also maintains a fairly voluminous and decidedly impressive looking website at <http://joehillfiction.com>.

Scalzi’s Up For, You Know, Whatever

By Lorna Toolis



Author and blogger John Scalzi was the 2010 guest of the Friends of the Merrill Collection. On April 22, over ninety-five people packed into the Merrill Collection reading room and listened to Scalzi talk about his science fiction writing, topics being discussed on his blog, and forthcoming novels.

Scalzi answered questions about science fiction, the impact of new technologies on contemporary culture and his own work. He read from a forth-coming novel; a re-visioning of H. Beam Piper’s “Little Fuzzy” books (*Little Fuzzy*, *Fuzzy Sapiens* and *Fuzzies and Other People*) written to appeal to a contemporary audience. The evening concluded with a signing.

[Editor’s Note]: According to the buzz on Scalzi’s blog, aptly titled Whatever, Fuzzy Nation is slated to be the title of his new book.

Interestingly enough, this is not the first Fuzzy

book to be written by someone other than Piper. After Piper’s death Ace Books commissioned William Tuning to write the third book in the series (Fuzzy Bones), before Piper’s own lost manuscript for Fuzzies and Other People was discovered, and Ace also later commissioned Ardath Mayhar to write Golden Dream: A Fuzzy Odyssey, which turned the entire series on its head by telling the story from the Fuzzy (or as they call themselves: “Ga’shta”) point of view.



Vampire Love at the Merrill

By Lorna Toolis

Vampire Fun was a part of the Toronto Public Library's Keep Toronto Reading series held on April 29. Chris Szego, store manager of Bakka-Phoenix, moderated a discussion between author Tanya Huff, on whose books the television series *Blood Ties* was based, Professor Elizabeth Miller, author of numerous books about vampires, and bookman Robert Knowlton. Professor Miller talked about the original legends of vampires, Robert Knowlton discussed how the vampire legend had been treated in fiction, Tanya Huff talked about the difficulties of translating print materials into television and sixty people listened and asked questions.

[Editor's Note]: One of the great things about vampires is that you don't have to explain to people what you're talking about when you say the name Dracula, although for some reason people still stumble over Alucard, no matter how many times the usage crops up. Go figure. At least it's easier than trying to talk to someone who doesn't read genre fiction when you start in on "mind flayers" ...

But vampires weren't the only stars at the panel. We managed to get some of the panel members to stick around and chat about this, that, and whatever else we could dig up.



Vampire Fantasy

Vampire Panel Interviews

By Chris Cunningham

On April 29 at the Merrill a panel of experts including Chris Szego, Tanya Huff, Robert Knowlton and Elizabeth Miller discussed the public's passionate enjoyment of blood-sucking monsters.

Questions With Tanya Huff:

The first *Star Trek* convention in Toronto was in 1976 at the Royal York. Shatner wanted too much money to attend and the event lost bales of money. There was no Trek event again until the 80s. At the Con was a life-size replica of the Enterprise Bridge powered by a car battery. Two years later that replica found it's way to a century old bank building at the corner of Yonge & Charles, as an



attraction of the newly opened and soon-to-become-legendary gaming store Mr. Gameway's Ark. The store was on the second floor, the Bridge on the third overlooking the intersection. At a time when role playing games were exploding Mr. Gameway's Ark was the largest and most comprehensive destination. It also became the sole supplier of Trivial Pursuit at its height. The store closed after Christmas in 1983.

CC: How did you get a job at Mr. Gameway's Ark and what was your experience working there?

TH: Oh dear lord, that was a lifetime ago! I have no idea how I got the job but I expect it was through SF fandom in some way or another. I do remember that I enjoyed working there a lot and that I once sold a train set to Börje Salming (Toronto Maple Leafs 1973 - 1989).

CC: What is it about a vampire that would entice a heroine?

TH: My vampires would require self-confidence, intelligence, and a sense of humour. Moonlit walks on the beach would be nice. Pretty much what people want in an eHarmony posting.

CC: (*Tanya had mentioned that vampire novels had paid her mortgage and bought her a truck*). How many books sold equal one truck?

TH: One. You just have to sell it to someone with vision and the fortitude to shepherd it through the financial labyrinth and pre-production quagmire that is Canadian television.

CC: You decided to start writing about vampires because you thought they were a bankable genre. How did you arrive at that decision while working in a science fiction bookstore?

TH: Working at Bakka (pre Bakka-Phoenix) I had the chance to observe what people were buying and to talk with them about how much they loved what they bought. Vampire fans were loyal to their genre and desperate to find something good. Write a vampire book and you have a guaranteed audience; write a *good* vampire book and you gain some of the most involved and loyal readers around.

Questions With Robert Knowlton:

CC: At World Horror 2008 in Toronto you were on a panel about book collectors. Is your own home forever short of space for books you gather?

RK: Boxes & bags, bags & boxes, running in front of shelves, down through hallways and snaking down stairwells. But I cull periodically, to open up shelf-space.

CC: What is it you liked about Fingerman's *Bottomfeeder*?

RK: I liked its macabre, often tasteless, sense of humour. And the vampire society is a carnival mirror reflection of our own, though not so aggressively grotesque as Derek McCormack's *The Haunted Hillbilly* or *The Show That Smells*. But then *Bottomfeeder* isn't about being cool; Merman is the Harvey Pekar of vampires. Which come to think of it, *is* kinda cool.

CC: Aside from *Bottomfeeder*, what are the three modern gems of vampire fiction that you'd recommend that people might not know of?

RK: *Bottomfeeder* is more of a diamond in the rough. But three more titles I can recommend without reservation are Tim Lucas' *The Book of Renfield*, John Marks' *Fangland* and especially John Ajvide Lindqvist's *Let the Right One In*. And going Letterman on you, here's:

10 GREAT VAMPIRE NOVELS NOBODY KNOWS

Anne Billson's *Suckers*
Jane Gaskell's *The Shiny Narrow Grin*
Pierre Kast's *The Vampires of Alfama*
Rachel Klein's *The Moth Diaries*
Elizabeth Knox's *Daylight*
Tanith Lee's *Sabella* - much better than her 'Blood Opera' sequence
Robin McKinley's *Sunshine*
Paul Monette's *Nosferatu*
Jody Scott's *I, Vampire*
Michael Talbot's *The Delicate Dependency*

Well, serious vampire wonks do know these titles, of course, but they're rarely talked about nor turn up on recommended lists. Certainly not often enough.

CC: What indicates to you that *Twilight* may be a phenomenon?

RK: *Twilight* has been done before - better - in L.J. Smith's *Vampire Diaries* series, before that in Annette Curtis Klause's *The Silver Kiss* (which is now recognized as a genuine classic) and first of all in Jane Gaskell's *The Shiny Narrow Grin* back in 1964. Nearly half a century ago it's all there: the girl on the outside looking in, drawn to the dark brooding boy whose archaic clothes are not a fashion statement and whose teen angst is frozen in time - never aging or maturing. The *Twilight* mythology is often "borrowed" from betters. But hey, so long as you steal from the best that's OK. Alas, Meyers' books simply aren't that well written, a prerequisite of an enduring classic as opposed to a phenomenon, only of the moment. The writing would have to match that of, say a Natalie Babbitt or an L. M. Boston to have a real chance of lasting. Mind you, these books weren't written at all to please an old fart like me who has read too much and remembered too much. Their best hope of a legacy is a tween girl reading and loving the *Twilight* books right now, and inspired in perhaps [a] very few more years to write her own stories. But unlike her mentor this girl's prose won't sparkle; it'll BURN.

CC: How do you think ChiZine was received at Brighton Shock (World Horror 2010)? Do you think they will add something unique to Canadian horror publishing?

RK: Very well, and at EasterCon too. They have already raised the bar in Canadian small-press genre publishing, in both design and content.

[Addendum]: Between Knowlton and Huff you should have a heavy reading list compiled, but if you're more inclined to stalk the undead in a cinematic light the editorial staff recommends the 1979 classic *Dracula* (starring the incomparable Frank Langella in the title role) and the film adaptation of *Let the Right One In* - though we're talking about the Swedish original (we're not holding out much hope for the North American soon to be remake).



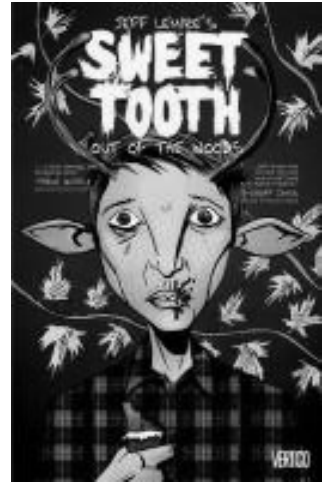
Lemire Gives the Merrill a Sweet Tooth

By Lorna Toolis



Artist Jeff Lemire, author/artist of *Sweet Tooth*, hung his art on the walls of the basement in the Lillian Smith building to illustrate his discussion about writing and drawing for *Sweet Tooth* and about his other graphic novels. Over sixty people attended the event on May 5, where Lemire explained the ideas and techniques behind the art he created for his graphic novels. The question and answer session at the end of the presentation was followed by a signing.

[Editor's note] Volume 1 of Lemire's latest opus, *Sweet Tooth: Out of the Deep Woods* (available as a TPB collecting the first five issues of the comics series) is currently available from the DC Comics/Vertigo label. Anyone who's a fan of apocalyptic, social commentary, or the otherwise dark (and somewhat urban) fantasy comic should do themselves a favour and have a look.



*Mad genius. Teller
of tall tales.
Possessor of the best
big fish story ever?*



*Yet more horns. We're
detecting a trend here,
or possibly a benign
conspiracy ...*

We Reach For the Stars, and Find Dragons Too

By Lorna Toolis

The Friends of the Merrill Collection sponsored a launch party for *The Dragon and the Stars*, an Asian-themed anthology edited by Eric Choi and Derwin Mak on May 13, in the Merrill Collection reading room. Seventy-one people attended the cheerful event as the editors talked about organizing the anthology and the contributors who were present read from their stories.

[Editor's Note]: For all those who haven't yet decided to pick up a copy, or at least peruse one, here are 18 reasons why you should:



*Tony Pi
Charles Tan
William F. Wu
Derwin Mak*

*Emery Huang
Crystal Gail Shangkuan Koo
Emily Mah
Eugie Foster
Melissa Yuan-Innes
Shelly Li
Gabriela Lee
E.L. Chen
Eric Choi
Susan Ee
Brenda W. Clough
Urania Fung
Wen Y. Phua
Ken Liu*

We could give you more reasons, but the anthology only had room for eighteen stories. Oh wait, Tess Gerritsen wrote the foreword. Well there you go.

Pulp Show and Tell

The 14th Annual Fantastic Pulp Show

By Lorna Toolis

A highlight of the Annual Fantastic Pulp Show was the presentation on pulp art given by Mr. Neil Meecham of Girasol Collectibles. The lecture took place in the Merrill Collection reading room during the afternoon of the Pulp Show of May 8.

[Editor's Note]: After 14 years I think we've said our fill on the subject, but there's a delightfully shiny article below dealing with similar material to distract, or, uh, entertain you.

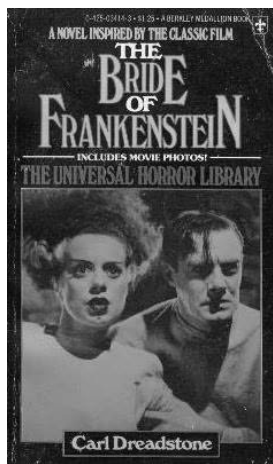
From Filmdom to Fandom:

The Universal Horror Library

By Jamie Fraser

The year 1977 saw many notable events: the infamous 25 hour blackout of New York City, the first use of an MRI to map the brain and body, the completion of the Alaskan pipeline and the arrest of the Son of Sam killer. But for fans of classic horror films 1977 will always be remembered for the launch of The Universal Horror Library from Berkley Medallion Books.

Released during a hot and turbulent summer it consisted of six lovely looking paperback books. Marketed to fans and collectors as "A Novel Inspired By The Classic Film" each book's cover was a production photo or still from the film. They also included plates scattered throughout - numerous black & white photos from the corresponding film - and even had the original movie posters.

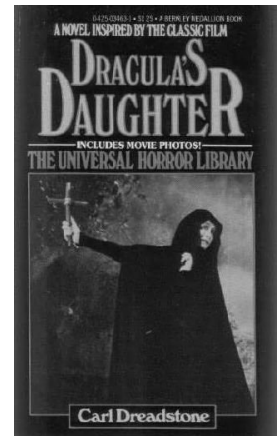


same film.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of this series are the wonderful introductions penned by Ramsey Campbell. In each book he covers the history of the film, from its beginnings through the production of the film. He writes about the

directors, writers, actors and their struggles in making what eventually became some of the greatest classic horror films. The fascinating anecdotes he includes in his introductions are a delightful treat for all fans of these horror classics.

One interesting piece of trivia is that according to Mr. Campbell the books were actually commissioned by the British publisher Star Books. But the books came out from Berkley Medallion in the US first. The later British editions lacked the movie covers and interior pictures and don't hold up well in comparison with the US editions.



While both versions contain much from the original films, each book is in fact an entirely new novel *inspired* by the classic film. Writers, like engineers, love to change things and this is one of the few gripes fans have with the series. Over the years the value of these books has steadily increased, and there are always new fans and die-hard collectors looking for the books, which have become scarce and over the years hard to find in good condition.

The six books in The Universal Horror Library are:

The Bride of Frankenstein (1977) by Ramsey Campbell

The Mummy (1977) author unconfirmed

The Werewolf of London (1977) by Walter Harris

The Creature from the Black Lagoon (1977) author unconfirmed

The Wolfman (1977) by Ramsey Campbell

Dracula's Daughter (1977) by Ramsey Campbell

Doctorow Goes *For the Win*

By Lorna Toolis

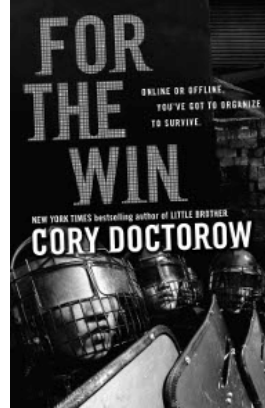
Cory Doctorow appeared in the basement auditorium of the Lillian Smith building on June 4, celebrating the book launch of *For the Win*, his new novel, sponsored by the Friends of the Merrill Collection. One hundred and fifty-eight people attended, asking questions about forthcoming work, copyright legislation and other issues of interest to people who follow www.boingboing.net. Copies of the novel were available, and the evening concluded with an enthusiastic signing.

[Editor's Note] The man lights up a room. And it isn't just the talk that resonates so well with an audience - though one is never disappointed



sitting and listening to Cory lecture. You know an event's going well when you have just about the entire audience lining up for a chance to chat with the author they've come to see - and get their books signed too.

Why there hasn't been a line-up running around and through doorways at the Merrill for an author signing since, well, actually it was the last time Cory was in the building (and we have the photos from the Winter '09 issue to prove it!). Sadly, it appears at this time that Cory will not be represented in the Winter '10 issue. We too are grieved.



Britain gets a Mecha, North America gets riot gear. I, for one, feel thoroughly cheated.

Five Minutes to Midnight At the Local Game Exchange Booth

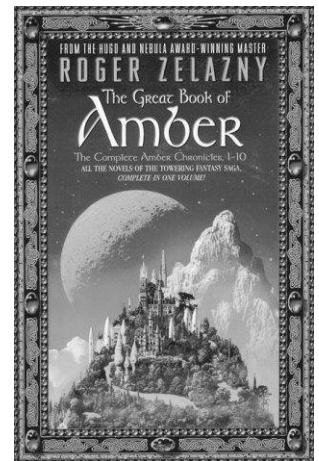
By Michael Matheson

The release of Cory Doctorow's *For the Win* is a potent reminder of just how much the modern speculative fiction culture owes to gaming in all its many aspects, and vice versa. Caught up with the notion of online gaming and its social and moral impact on culture, cross-cultural lines, and the future of societal and intrasocietal interchange - inasmuch as we are as a species seemingly perennially content to prey on the weak or the disenfranchised in one fashion or another, with other elements equally committed to combating such tendencies - Cory's novel not only functions as a thriving thesis on modern and post-modern gaming culture but also concerns itself with the stuff of high fantasy in a very urban, very modern understanding.

Literary high fantasy and gaming (RP and video) really are inextricably intertwined. Fantasy and its many, many subgenres run the gamut from the works of Andre Norton and Piers Anthony to Tolkien's masterpiece (which no article discussing the high fantasy genre can ever really avoid

talking about) to the prototypical hack and slash fantasy of Robert E. Howard's *Conan*, and on to Roger Zelazny's unparalleled *Amber* series, and still on to more names and worlds than we possibly have space to discuss here.

But, following those other movements it is the kind of Dungeons and Dragons model that swept open the floodgates to maximum capacity, allowing for people who would never have touched a "fantasy" novel to indulge in a setting and world they desperately wanted to know more about. D&D's various campaign worlds and settings and the books



Conceivably the greatest modern fantasy opus ever crafted.

that were written to expound on them literally spawned hundreds of licensed works written by the likes of Greg Keyes, R.A. Salvatore, Ed Greenwood, Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman, Troy Dennings, Elaine Cunningham, and a host of others.

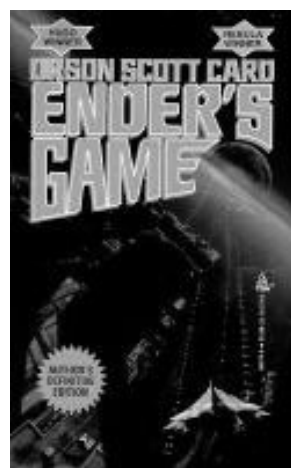
Though D&D has for the most part taken a high fantasy approach quite literally drawn from Tolkien's modern epic mythos, when Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson first began crafting their RP (roleplaying) system it was a Wargamer's concern.



Gone but not forgotten. And with covers like Gerald Brom's "Last Note" (pictured above) adorning the magazine, there's even more reason to miss it.

For those not familiar with the notion of "wargaming" as a quantifiable roleplaying term, the usage comes from an article penned by Robin Laws entitled "Logjam Busters" that appeared in *Dragon* magazine issue 281, in March of 2001, way back before Paizo decided to make the magazine an online concern and cease its physical print run. The article centered around an excellent understanding of the types of roleplaying RPer's typically fall into. As Laws had it, beneficial RP types (detrimental types were covered in an article in another issue) could be divvied up into six basic categories, with cross-pollination occurring on a regular basis, discussed below.

"Power Gamers": bigger spells, better items, level acquisition as key to success. "Steam Venters": they like to watch opponents drop and things blow up - non-fight sequences in their experience optional. "Wargamers": tactical roleplaying and a methodical and realistic approach to combat. "Method Actors": think Thespian, no breaking character *ever*. "Storytellers": drama and theme are the order of the day - is it exciting? Does it look and feel cinematic? And lastly "The Guys Who Just Sit In Their Chairs": they always show up and further the story - they have a good time but not at the expense of others, and in that sense probably contribute the most to any game or the arc of a story.



That probably seems like an awful lot of time to spend on something so seemingly tangential, but it is of course anything but. All of those classifications apply to more recent literary characters as well as the kind of RP characters one slays orcs and necromancers with.

What is Orson Scott Card's *Ender* series if not a Wargamer approach to

literature, using Game Theory as a springboard for a conjecture about the nature of humanity and questions of personal and greater destiny?

Simon R. Green's *Deathstalker* and *Nightside* series, among his others, are the proverbial Steam Venter/Power Gamer's wet dream. Even in the *Nightside* books where the series protagonist, John Taylor, uses his intellect and a coat that's reminiscent of a "Heward's Handy Haversack" more often than his "gift" to solve problems, truly epic conflicts - often incredibly blood-soaked and gore-laden - crop up every couple of chapters. Perhaps this occurs a little less so in the *Nightside* material than in the *Deathstalker* saga, but when *Nightside* series characters Razor Eddie (a personal favourite) or Susie Shooter step into the mix things get ugly very fast.



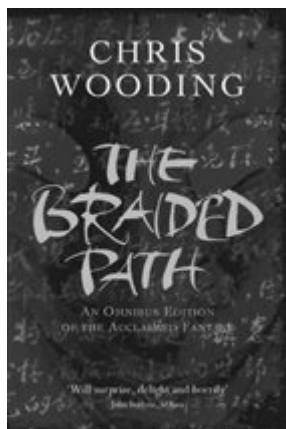
Jim Butcher's *Dresden Files* books play with material that is, as most D&D material tends to be, not even remotely accurate in context and usage, but that instead draws on the kind of "let's throw it together, boil it and see what kind of a party hat it makes" approach to gaming that D&D is famous for (nothing says accuracy like appropriating the Babylonian goddess Tiamat - an allegorical figure in same creation myths who wasn't "evil" but instead

a personification of nature who is destroyed by the personification of civilization, Marduk - and making her a villainous five-headed dragon). Dresden, the titular "wizard-for-hire" lead of the series, which I have to admit is a fairly compelling hook for a story, is a classic Storyteller/Wargamer figure: if there's a problem to be surmounted he's going to do it with a little flair, a little forethought, and here's hoping it pans out the way he intended it to.

Then there's James Clemens' *Godslayer Chronicles*, the books of which are so clearly rooted in the classic "previously unconnected individuals come together through incident and/or accident, discover they *need* to help each other to survive and [insert endgame here], and oh yeah the gods are at war again" storyline that crops up in so many places it's not funny (nothing wrong with that premise incidentally, I just find it annoying in its ubiquity), and yet somehow it all comes together. It's interesting that despite having fairly diverse backgrounds, all of his characters



seem to run toward the Storyteller category with a hint of Method Actor thrown in to keep things running smoothly. Everybody seems flashy, whether the characters should be or not depending on their supposed backgrounds and destined roles.



And then there's the slightly unusual instance of Christopher Wooding's *Braided Path* trilogy (*The Weavers of Saramyr*, *The Skein of Lament*, *The Ascendancy Veil*) where the main character is through the course of three books, surprisingly, a perpetual "Guy (or I guess technically "Gal") Who Just Sits In Their Chair". Possessed of power they absolutely don't want, they are dragged kicking and screaming into the storyline, and never move into

another storytelling category. Despite the fact that the central character is the (forgive the pun) thread that ties all three books together, it is the supporting characters who range through the other RP character types, with a heavy emphasis on Storyteller. Though I'm sure others would argue otherwise, I find very few true "Guy Who Just Sits In Their Chair" leads crop up as main characters in modern fantasy novels. Some certainly start this way, but invariably end up moving into Steam Venter or Storyteller roles, to the detriment of a most unusual device in fantasy: the character who is shaped by the story without actually shaping it.

One doesn't see the Power Gamer too often on that list, which I suppose is largely because characters whose primary goal in life is to find a better weapon tend to be rightly relegated to

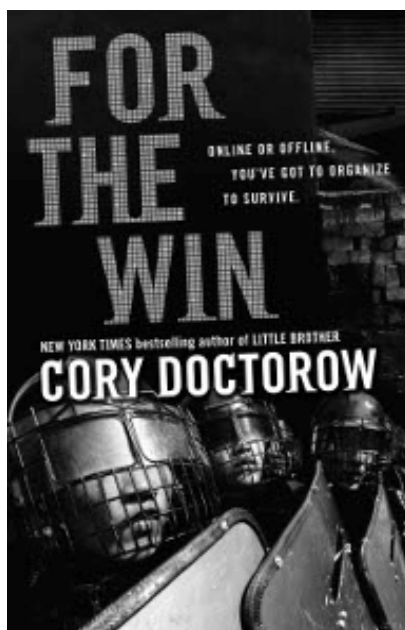
secondary character status. That's just not enough of a hook to hang a book, or two, or three on.

Even more interesting is that when the lines blur and video games get novel adaptations (who doesn't want tie-in money, I mean come on?) they may not often run through fantasy conceits - especially given that most video game adaptations are going to be science fiction - but they do still end up utilizing the archetypes. And even here, thankfully, we avoid the main character of most stories ending up being a Power Gamer. A Steam Venter? Probably. A Storyteller? God I hope so. There wouldn't be much else, except possibly literary skill and finesse keeping *me* reading a VG adaptation.

But even these VG adaptations are rooted in the roles and traditions, and god knows tropes, of high fantasy, because the games they're built from are *also* rooted in those same traditions and storytelling elements. The lines inevitably blur and fold back on themselves.

I don't really know where it goes from here. Maybe eventually we'll reach a state where we get an author writing something akin to a video game adaptation, but that rather than merely concerning itself with the notion of a storyline from a game looks at gaming and its cultural impact as a whole. Maybe something with a storyline that goes deeper and addresses moral concerns relating to the world(s) video gaming and the interactivity it brings have given us. Something that concerns itself with societal and intrasocietal interchange, and seeks to address the question of how video gaming as a cultural norm changes us rather than merely how we impact the industry's growth and progress by buying yet another tie-in.

Oh. Right.



Is this to be the shape and nature of our refusal from bad writing bent on wresting our time and monetary means through copious tie-in references and franchise abuse? It's a good start.



The Golden Age of SF, Fantasy and Horror On Radio!

By Jamie Fraser

When most people think of SF's Golden Age they think of the material published between the late 1930s through the 1950s, most of which appeared in pulp magazines like *Amazing Stories*, *Astounding* and the original *Weird Tales*. Other stories, published in hardcover books or paperbacks, didn't become popular until the late 1940s. But there is a lesser known and almost forgotten *Golden Age*, that of the old-time radio shows.

While the best-remembered shows are "The Shadow", "Burns and Allen", and "The Lone Ranger", there was actually a wide variety of genres: music and news shows, mysteries, soap operas, super heroes, westerns, comedies and much more. Among these were some excellent SF & Horror radio programs, shows like "Beyond Tomorrow", "Dimension X", "The Halls of Fantasy", "The Hermit's Cave", "X Minus One", "Doctor Weird" and "Space Patrol".

One of the earliest such shows, "Lights Out", ran from 1934-1947. It was a clever mix of grisly stories mixed with dark, tongue-cut-out-of-mouth humour. The most explicit and horrific show on the radio to date, its characters faced such grim fates as being buried, eaten or skinned alive - and then things got bad: torture, limbs torn off, beatings, decapitations, and even being absorbed by a giant slurping amoeba (and always with the appropriate blood-curdling sound effects). The macabre sounds were easily created and very effective. Pulling the leg off a frozen turkey sounded like an arm being pulled out of its socket. A raw egg dropped on a plate sounded just like an eye being gouged out. And adhesive tape, stuck together and then pulled apart, simulated the sound of a person's skin being ripped off.

"Lights Out" was so successful it came to television with four special live broadcasts and became a regular series. A number of similar radio shows followed: "Suspense" was known as radio's outstanding theatre of thrills and lasted 945 episodes; two standout episodes are adaptations of Curt Siodmak's "Donovan's Brain" and H. P. Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror". Its premiere episode, "The Lodger", was the radio

directorial debut of Alfred Hitchcock, who had already directed the film version in 1927.

"Inner Sanctum Mysteries" was another long running (526 episodes) anthology show which had chilling stories that mixed horror and humour to great effect. Its memorable and atmospheric opening featured a sharp organ chord followed by an eerie creaking door slowly opening to start the show. This particular sound effect became one of the most famous and frequently used sound effects in film, radio, TV, books and the theatre. One memorable episode was an adaptation of Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" that starred Boris Karloff. Other guest stars included Burgess Meredith, Helen Hayes, Peter Lorre, Claude Rains, Frank Sinatra, Orson Welles and Richard Widmark.

What made "Inner Sanctum Mysteries" unique among other radio horror shows was the host: a slightly sinister man with a droll sense of humour and a fondness for morbid puns and gleefully ghoulish humour. Introducing himself as "Your host, Raymond", his cheeky style and ghoulish relish for his own tales became the standard for other horror narrators to follow. His influence lives on today in such characters as Elvira and The Crypt-Keeper.

Another interesting show was the syndicated series "The Weird Circle". While it only lasted two seasons, or 78 episodes, it stands out for several reasons. Almost all episodes were adaptations of classic horror stories - and for some strange reason the majority were from French authors. And while the production values and the voice talent were solid, no organ music was used. This set it apart from all the other radio horror shows, but took

away some of the creepy atmosphere that the music usually provided. There is the possibility that another 78 episodes were produced but lost over the years, as it was a common practice to discard or tape over shows in order to free up space in the archives.

One long-running (370 episodes) show, "The Midnight Traveler", was so popular that it spawned a comic book, and then a digest magazine that mixed tales from the radio show with new stories. Sax Rohmer, Cornell Woolrich, Ray Bradbury and many other talented authors wrote for this



Though more in the action and mystery vein than SF, radio programs like "The Shadow" helped pave the way for later, more speculative programs.

magazine, and the covers were by pulp artist Norman Saunders. The radio shows started with the sound of a distant train, then the mysterious, malevolent narrator called The Mysterious Traveler invited you on another strange and terrifying journey.

The radio shows were not all fantasy or SF related, but they were all solid productions by veteran radio actors and had chilling sound effects. The quality of the shows was very good, with one popular episode, “Behind the Locked Door”, which took place in total darkness, repeated several times over the years: Two archaeologists find a hundred year old wagon train that has been sealed in a cave by a landslide. After their native guide is brutally attacked, leaving them lost in the dark, they conclude that the descendants of the train are still living in the cave.

There are two excellent shows that had shorter runs. “The Sealed Book” was a clever series of mystery and terror tales. Each week, after a loud gong, the host and the mysterious and silent Keeper of the Book opened the great sealed book which held all the secrets of mankind through the ages. Inside were tales of murder and madness, of strange and terrible dark deeds beyond all belief. The stories were usually quite good, but they tended to use the same names and some scripts were recycled from “The Mysterious Traveler”, which had the same two writers. The other show, “Dark Fantasy”, was a short series of “tales of the weird and adventures of the supernatural”. It was created and written by Scott Bishop who had written for both

“The Sealed Book” and “The Mysterious Traveler”. There were horror, science fiction and murder mystery episodes. The shows were excellent, with some stories ahead of their time.

“Exploring Tomorrow” was billed as the “first science fiction old-time radio show of science-fictioners, by science-fictioners and for science-fictioners”. It was narrated by SF legend John W. Campbell, Jr. As the editor of *Astounding*, he was able to solicit scripts from top SF writers such as Gordon Dickson and Robert Silverberg.

The most famous SF radio show of all time was the Mercury Theatre’s 1938 broadcast of “The War of The Worlds”, directed and narrated by Orson Welles. Performed in the style of a normal news broadcast, it caused widespread panic as listeners believed Martians were invading America. It remains a testament to the power of radio in those times.

[Addendum]: As the world is constantly changing, and radio itself has moved from the use of vacuum tubes to more sophisticated specimens, it should come as no surprise that Internet radio has become an excellent substitute for a standard receiver set.

However, the Internet comes with other benefits, such as like-minded individuals who share an affinity for, love of, and some might say obsession with preservation. Case in point: <http://www.oldtimeradiofans.com/>. Downloadable MP3 files of classic radio shows. Who knew?

The Spring of Schroeder Comes to an End

Writer in Residence Program at the Merril Concludes

By Lorna Toolis

The Merril Collection Writer in Residence Program concluded on May 31. As the writer in residence, science fiction author Karl Schroeder critiqued manuscripts submitted to him and discussed them individually with their authors.

He gave a reading from *Ashes of Candesce* in February and a lecture on Future Studies at the Toronto Reference Library, and three workshops in the Lillian Smith building

over the course of his residency. The workshops: *Integrating Idea and Story*, *Short Story Structure and Plot*, and *Wrangling Your Novel Into Shape*, were hugely popular, and the 25 places available in each workshop could have been filled four times over.



Karl spent additional time blogging about his residency on both the Toronto Public Library’s blog and on his own.

Karl reads from his novel Ashes of Candesce in February, shortly before the manuscripts start pouring in.

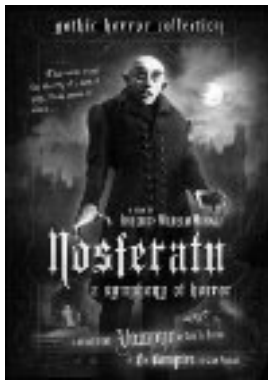
Immortal Love

The Inconstant Movement Toward Vampire as Seducer in Cinema

By Michael Matheson

It seems only appropriate, given the time and attention paid to vampires elsewhere in this issue, and the highly unusual situation of having an article attending to film elsewhere in the issue but in a sidewise fashion, to give the stage over, as it were, to the most prolific of night-gaunts.

Vampires have been enshrined in celluloid since the early portions of the 20th century. Not really surprising, is it? Photography, and by extrapolation moving pictures, has always been a way of clarifying and freezing in time those things that fascinate us. And what fascinates us more as a species than immortality? A tainted immortality, granted, but immortality nonetheless.



The early portions of vampiric celluloid history reflect that most potently I think. Albeit in several different fashions. One really has to start with *Nosferatu*. Before Lugosi ever took up the cape of Stoker's conflated character Dracula (a combination of at least two historical figures: the Hungarian Countess Erszebet Bathory, and the Romanian Vlad the Impaler) the film *Nosferatu* (1922), or *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* as it is more properly known, was using Stoker's work to craft a much more unsettling story. Murnau's early silent piece is arguably one of the most viscerally unnerving pieces of cinema from the era.

Whereas Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* two years earlier had shown us what German silent cinema could do with psychological trauma and issues of perspective, and Lang's *Metropolis* would do the same for societal trauma in a science fiction vein in a few short years, it was *Nosferatu* that was the most terrifying. It is largely due to the truly revolting presence of the film's main character. There is nothing of the suave (if still unsettling) elegance Bela Lugosi would bring to his portrayal of Dracula not even a decade later, or the truly masterful (and my personal favourite) portrayal of Dracula that Frank Langella gave in the 1979 adaptation of *Dracula*, which is arguably the definitive instance of Dracula as seducer.

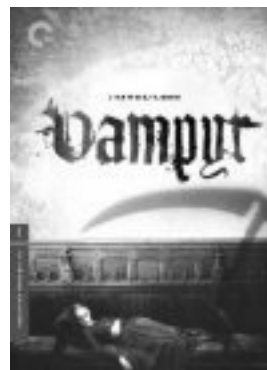
Indeed, there is nothing appealing about the version of Dracula in the original *Nosferatu*. The piece is intended as a horror film, and succeeds brilliantly in that respect. Even Werner Herzog's 1979 remake couldn't capture the utterly repellant portrayal of the Count from the original - and it wasn't for lack of excellence on the part of Klaus Kinski. Max Schreck's characterization was pitch perfect. And interestingly, the original *Nosferatu*, like all of the truly terrifying horror films,

did not need gore, nor copious amounts of dragon's blood exploding everywhere on screen. Instead, it relied on the same thing that makes us terrified to be alone in the dark: anticipation. *Nosferatu* relied on tension, and therein lay its strength.

There will always be an argument for gore and violence as the means to establish a horror movie as effective, or frightening (though I still can't fathom why anyone actually believes that to be true), but given our turbulent, and inherently unsettling, love affair with the notion of vampirism it is the act of seduction itself that is beguiling.

At their best, vampires, be they literary or cinematic, are seducers. They inveigh upon us to give ourselves to them freely. In the oldest legends one literally has to *invite* them in. It is an extraordinary metaphor for submission, and once vampires in cinema moved out of the 1920s and into the 1930s that notion became dominant, or more accurately started the long slog uphill to get there.

Though Bela Lugosi's version of *Dracula* (1931) is probably the most parodied, it is still one of the most effective instances of a vampire who utilizes charm and guile to win his victims. He is not a character of brute strength, nor of sudden rages or lusts. There is a cold and calculating air to the portrayal, underlying but never undercutting the charm he exudes. Were it not for the blood-drinking and the eternity of undeath we might well forgive him his vague aversion to garlic, sunlight, and all things wholesome. Oh yes, and that slight penchant for murder.



But like all cinematic movements and genre based sub-movements, even the notion of vampire as charmer and seducer was still a fledgeling when Lugosi took up the role. In 1932 the French/German production *Vampyr - Der Traum des Allan Grey* (or *Not Against the Flesh* as it was for a long time better known in North America) was released. Based on the Sheridan Le Fanu novel and directed by Carl Dreyer, it focused not on the role of vampire as subtle encroacher, but on the looming terror of the vampire's unseen but felt presence - which actually made a great deal of sense as the majority of Le Fanu's work concerned itself with atmosphere and the presence of the unnatural.

It was the American, not the European cinema that had fallen in love with the notion of the vampire as a symbol of intimacy that crossed the natural, and dare we say it again,

"wholesome" boundaries. American vampirism never really crossed the line before the Hays Act kicked in, so it was left largely untouched by the system of heavy self-censorship American cinema adopted.

Despite that largely fortuitous saving grace, vampires as seducers never really got off the ground in America until much later. There were some pieces related to the Bela Lugosi era of vampirism to be sure. Several in fact were directly linked to his portrayal of the austere and iconic figure (notable standouts might be films like *Dracula's Daughter* which is mentioned earlier in this issue in Jamie Fraser's article on the Universal Horror Library), but few really made an impact.

There were attempts here and there to produce passable vampire films during the 1940s, and very few attempts during the 1950s, at least in American cinema. And then in the late 50s something happened that blurred the lines between vampires as seducers and vile creatures out of nightmare: Hammer Studios put themselves in the mix.

Christopher Lee was an exceptional choice to play Dracula, but one never really got the impression that he was enticing his victims. Because he and Peter Cushing (as Van Helsing) were playing in what truly was a horror film Lee went around snarling and snapping his fangs at everyone and the entire notion of seducing his prey went right out the window.

And it stayed out the window.

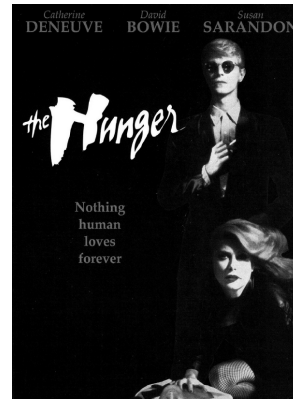
The 70s didn't help. There were some graphically disturbing horror films and a lot of nudity and copious amounts of gore, as well as some deeply depressing attempts to capitalize on the potential "exploitation" value of the vampire myth. That was, shall we say *less than stellar*?



literally ensorcell the audience.

It also has another claim to fame, which has to do with the film's resolution - seldom if ever used in a vampire film, though the choice of ending for this adaptation of the story is most decidedly fitting for a situation where Dracula is the dominant figure, bar none. The film also, obviously, has another recommendation in the form of the actor portraying Van Helsing: Laurence Olivier.

It is deeply unfortunate that Langella's portrayal wasn't the only vampire film released in 1979. It was, however, the only good one. And it would be four years before anyone managed to deal with vampires as seducers again. Thankfully when they did, the film was a goldmine.



Bauhaus' "Bela Lugosi is Dead" (Bauhaus sings it over the opening club scene, as the song fades in and out while the scene shifts back and forth between two sets of events).

It's unfortunate that in many ways *The Hunger* represented a leveling off of the ideal vampiric nature as seducer. The rest of the 1980s saw a general lack of ingenuity in terms of vampirism, though *Lifeforce* (1985) deserves kudos for managing to bridge the gap between science fiction and vampirism, if somewhat clumsily.

There have been numerous attempts in the intervening years to make vampire films, or rather I should say the emphasis was on making *profitable* vampire films. The one doesn't usually go with the other. There are exceptions. *Interview With the Vampire* (1994) comes to mind, and found in some aspects of its digressions into character a state or art of seduction, especially in the character of Armand (played by Antonio Banderas), who simply had to stand around to smolder.

Aside from those few there really don't seem to be many instances of seductive vampirism in modern filmmaking. We seem to have moved into a place where it's better to be angry and bare one's fangs than seduce and disarm. Films like the 1992 *Dracula*, *Underworld* (and its various follow-ups), John Carpenter's *Vampires*, *Blade* (and requisite follow-ups), *30 Days of Night*, and a host of other recent vampire movies have chosen violence and gore over substance and seduction. Though to be fair *Underworld* was going for a good time more than gravitas, and John Carpenter's *Vampires* was intentionally tongue-in-cheek. Still, the point stands.

Seduction and vampirism no longer seem to be a paired ideal. It really is a shame, because the cinematic vampire mythos benefits much more so from the presence of the charismatic and compelling figure than from the presence of copiously spewing lacerations and soon faded lipstick.

Volunteers Needed

If you would like to help with any of the following please contact Lorna Toolis at ltoolis@torontopubliclibrary.ca

Event Setup

In the hour or two before every Friends of the Merrill event (readings, Xmas Tea, etc.) there are minor jobs which need to be done (moving furniture, picking up catered snacks, etc.).

Event Notification

Before Merrill events it is necessary to email notifications to members, contact local weeklies (*Eye*, *NOW*) and local event websites (The Torontoist).

Staff the Tables

Help staff the Merrill promotional table(s) at events such as local sf / fantasy conventions and Word on the Street.

Merril Mailings

Help organize and carry out occasional mass mailings to members of the Friends (generally two to three a year).

Sol Rising

Write articles for our semi-annual newsletter, or help with proofreading, ad sales and/or graphic design.

Marketing/Promotion

Help the Marketing and Promotion Committee look at ways to increase the profile of the Friends and the Collection (among both individuals and corporations) and promote Merrill events. Requires being able to schedule attending periodic meetings and follow-up work to investigate options.

Fundraising

The fundraising committee looks at ideas to raise money to support the Friends and the Collection itself through merchandising sales, fundraising events and the encouragement of donations (personal and corporate). Attendance of periodic meetings and follow-up required.

That's a Wrap

Final Notes, Felicitations and Invitations

By Michael Matheson

First and foremost I want to thank everyone for sticking with us through the production delay. The newsletter may be a touch behind its time, but its in fine form I think you'll agree.

There are a number of things in the wind. We've got events and gatherings coming up and occasionally things get added with fairly short notice so keep checking the Events page on the Friends of the Merrill website (www.friendsofmerril.org) to see what's going on and stay in the proverbial loop. We'll try not to let it slip into a moebius on you.

And as of just recently it even looks like we're going to be resurrecting *Solar Flare* (the online newsletter). Speaking of which, there is a strong possibility that *Solar Flare* in its phoenix-like form will be catering to more academic pursuits, but the great thing about the online publication is that there's no space limitation. We can also produce copies of *Solar Flare* whenever we want because it was originally set up by Sabrina Fried to be an interstitial newsletter, produced as necessary - which is one reason why it's produced online; less hassle with the printing.

Now, given that, anyone reading this who has academically themed material that they'd like to contribute or coverage of a more academically minded event - the ACCSFF is something we don't normally get to cover in *Sol Rising* - can contact Lorna Toolis at the e-mail address listed at the top left hand of this page, just like you would for any other Volunteer activity.

I look forward to hearing from anyone who has ideas or articles to submit.

And with that, we're out. We'll see you all back here with the Winter issue. In the meantime keep sending any copy you want us to see about including. Please do continue to follow the guidelines listed on the Friends of the Merrill website (once again that's www.friendsofmerril.org) as regards content. We're always looking for volunteers, so if you think you can help with something don't keep it to yourself, use the contact listed inside the "Volunteers Needed" sidebar to your left.

And remember, you can always support the Merrill by becoming a Friend of the Merrill (buying a membership) or donating using the form on the back of this page.

Michael

On Display in the Reading Room

Dark Delights: Cemetery Dance Publications, a display curated by Annette Moeck. The exhibition celebrates a donation of Cemetery Dance books and periodicals by Mr. Eric Platt. The exhibition will conclude on August 21, 2010. The Merrill Collection is open on Mondays 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM, and on Saturdays between 9:00 AM and 5:00 P.M.

Upcoming Events

Chan Davis, author of *It Walks in Beauty: Selected prose of Chandler Davis* (Aqueduct Press), will be in the Merrill Reading Room on October 21, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

For more information on Davis' collection please visit:

<http://aqueductpress.blogspot.com/2010/04/it-walks-in-beauty.html>

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Michael Swanwick will be at the Merrill on November 18, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

The Friends of the Merrill Collection thank the organizers of SFCOntario for their kindness in allowing him to speak at the Merrill Collection as well as at SFCOntario.

For more information about the convention go to:

www.sfcontario.ca

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The Annual Friends of the Merrill Collection **Christmas Cream Tea** will be held on Saturday, December 4, 2010 at 1:30 p.m.

We look forward to seeing all those of you who are coming.

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For additional Merrill events and other events of interest, please visit:

www.friendsofmerril.org/events.html



All Great Houses Begin With A Strong Foundation



The Merrill Collection, originally the Spaced Out Library and later renamed for the late Judith Merrill, is the foremost North American public assemblage of Speculative, SF and Fantasy Fiction and is an invaluable tool for enthusiasts, researchers and authors.

The Collection houses a comprehensive array of over 68,000 (and growing) items. The reference stacks include hardcover and paperback fiction, first

and rare editions, TPB graphic works and comic collections, pulp and later era magazines, fanzines, research material and critical essays/reference works and compendia - as well as donated original manuscripts from authors such as Phyllis Gottlieb and Guy Gavriel Kay.

The Friends of the Merrill Collection is a volunteer organization that provides support and assistance to the Merrill Collection through paid membership in

the Friends, through donations, the sponsorship of related events such as readings, book launches and signings, panel discussions, and the publication of the newsletter *Sol Rising*.

Donations made to the Friends go directly toward the above services and the purchase of books for the Collection itself. We invite you to support the Merrill by joining or donating using the form below.

I wish to become a member of the **Friends of the Merrill Collection**. I have enclosed payment (if choosing a cheque or money order please make it payable to "**The Friends of the Merrill Collection**") for a year's membership fee as indicated (memberships run from January to December):

- | | |
|---|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$35.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (under 18) | \$20.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Institution | \$37.50 |

This is a:

- ☐ Membership Renewal
☐ New Membership

Name _____
Address _____

Phone _____ ☐ Cell ☐ Fax _____
E-Mail _____

Please mail to: The Friends of the Merrill Collection
c/o The Merrill Collection, Toronto Public Library
239 College Street, 3rd floor, Toronto, ON M5T 1R5

- ☐ In addition to my membership fee, I would like to make a contribution to the Friends. I understand that tax receipts will be issued for both my membership and contribution and that my contribution will go towards funding the Friends' activities \$ _____

All Information provided on this membership form is strictly confidential. The FOMC does not share/sell membership lists or email addresses.