

SOL RISING

Summer 2012

FREE

Patricia Briggs at World
Fantasy 2012 Courtesy of the
Friends of the Merril

Ray Bradbury: In Memoriam

New Art Acquisitions at the Merril

Celebrating the Centennial of Edgar Rice
Burroughs' *Tarzan* and *John Carter*

Sol Rising is the Newsletter of the
Friends of the Merril Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy

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From the Editor

One Letter at a Time

By Michael Matheson

There's something comforting about the blank page. Anything is possible with a tabula rasa, the waiting page overflowing with potential.

All artistic endeavour has that moment prior to inception where everything begins to come together and the work just gels. Of course, the wonderful thing about art is that the creation doesn't end when the first mark is made, or the first note found. That tentative stroke/line/note is the first step in a building crescendo; a rising shout.

Letter by letter, image by image, phrase by phrase, we are constantly shaping the world - both our own, and the world around us. We have impact through our work - an opportunity to speak and be heard.

We get to be a part of other people's lives in the most lasting way possible. We get to imprint on them.

Which is why it's so wonderful when people feel, and better still, acknowledge that connection. So, in turn, I want to thank everyone who was kind enough to toss an Aurora nomination vote our way earlier this year. It means a hell of a lot.

I'd also like to think that that Aurora nomination says something deeper about what the Merrill means to all of you; that through *Sol Rising* the Merrill itself and the wonders it is home to have touched you in some way. That the Collection, and the wonderful people who staff it, nurture it, love it, constantly shape and reshape it, have had an impact in your lives - be it immediate or long distance.

The Merrill *should* be about bringing people together. From its inception it has been a focal point for the kind of love lavished on the obscure, the numinous, and the glorious that makes conventions, gatherings, and fandom in general so wonderful to participate in.

The Merrill is also a home for the creators as well as for their works. Both those whose books have stood in the Merrill in their stead, and those who've been able to give of their time to come in person and walk the vault, and speak to both readers and others who've enjoyed their art: fans, disciples, devotees, and admirers all.

At the heart of it all, the Merrill is about finding one's home. Not always so much about fitting in - conformism isn't a vice we cater to. Instead, it's more about knowing that however you choose to be, there's a place for you here.

And I am so very glad you're all with us for the ride.

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Markus "malo" Lovadina's cover art, "The Meeting", appears courtesy of the artist, and is used with his permission.

Find more of his work at
<http://malosart.blogspot.de> and
<http://www.behance.net/malosart>.

Salvatore Vuono's digital artwork has been used in the production of this newsletter in accordance with the rules for art and stock use as set out by the Guidelines and Terms of Use published by www.freedigitalphotos.net



Ray Bradbury: In Memoriam

By Andrew Specht

Ray Bradbury, the corner newsboy, the last of the great *Weird Tales* writers, left us on June 5, 2012. I was lucky enough to have met Mr. Bradbury once, at a Learning-Annex event at UCLA in 2003. I shared Bradbury's lack of enthusiasm for air travel, but such an event drew me to Los Angeles, by plane, for all of 24 hours, just to meet the great man. We landed near LAX and stayed with the friends of a friend; only to go charging across the city in a cab to the UCLA campus where we immediately began asking directions to the college building hired for the night.

Fortunately we found it without too much trouble, and that was when the magic began: in the audience was Ray's long-time friend Forrest J. Ackerman, unrecognized by the other fans until Ray pointed him out. This was shortly after Forrie's 'reduction' of the Ackermansion to a smaller incarnation, but he assured me that the robot Maria from *Metropolis* and other treasures were all still in his possession.

I'd heard all the stories so many times before - about Mr. Electrico; how as an impoverished young writer Bradbury had written *Fahrenheit 451* in public libraries on rented typewriters, a few dimes at a time; but nothing could prepare you, or me, for actually hearing those stories from the horse's mouth.



Andrew Specht & Forrest J. Ackerman. ©Sarah Ennals

Question time came at the end. I asked about the story "The Dragon Danced at Midnight" and he talked for about twenty minutes about his love of old Hollywood films, finishing up with a, "So, to return to your question ...". I could tell I'd raised a favourite topic.

After the talk came the lineup for books to be signed. The sheer thrill of it! There was a one-book-per-person limit,



Andrew Specht and Ray Bradbury. ©Sarah Ennals

so my wife Sarah carried an extra book to be signed for me: we'd brought a 40th anniversary edition of *The Martian Chronicles*, and a Barnes and Noble *Dinosaur Stories*. When the line handler found out we'd come all the way from Toronto, she was truly startled as the others there were mostly local, or at least from within California. I had chosen to give Ray one of my own photos as a present - a picture of a broken widow's-walk I called "Gwendolyn Fell." Bradbury took one look and said "Hm - that looks just like a Joe Mugnaini illustration." At this point my head could not have been larger: my god had grokked my art.

"Do what you love," he said. "Do it every day when you wake up. Or I'll come back and kick you all in the ass."

And I believed him and continue to do so.

[Editor's Note]: Bradbury was such an enormous influence - and on so many fields - that there are very few of us indeed who have not felt compelled to share our experiences of the man and his work. But if you have not yet had the opportunity to read either Neil Gaiman's or Peter Watts' thoughts on Bradbury, you should do so.

Though the following two articles speak to largely different aspects of Bradbury's work, they both capture the man perfectly.

You can find Neil Gaiman's article, "A man who won't forget Ray Bradbury", (published in *The Guardian* newspaper) at www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/jun/06/ray-bradbury-neil-gaiman-appreciation. Peter Watts' article, "Aching to hear a voice cry back along the universal Mall", (published on Watts' blog) can be found at www.rifters.com/crawl/?p=3188.

Outstanding Acquisitions at the Merrill

By Lorna Toolis

The Merrill Collection staff were able to acquire two modern pieces of science fiction and fantasy art for the Collection when bidding in the recent Heritage Auction Gallery Illustration Auction.

The first piece (on the left) is by the highly regarded fantasy artist Tom Kidd, while the second (on the right) is the work of John Conrad Berkey.



Several other recently acquired works include pieces donated by David Warren (see page 8), who gifted a very impressive body of fantasy and sf art to the Merrill Collection, as well as a donation made by Mike Carey, following his visit to the Merrill Collection in October of last year, constituting several pieces of original works originally gifted to Carey by various artists with whom he had worked in the

[Editor's Note]: Though not as prolific in number as many of the other aspects of the Merrill Collection's accumulated works, the art collection is, nonetheless, highly impressive.

comics industry. Some of the Merrill Collection's artwork is on public display in the reading room, while the bulk resides in the Merrill Collection vault.

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Celebrating Edgar Rice Burroughs

Tarzan of the Apes, John Carter of Mars, and the 2012 Pulps Show at the Merrill

By Lorna Toolis

The 2012 Fantastic Pulp Show celebrated the 100th anniversary of two of Edgar Rice Burroughs' most famous creations: Tarzan of the Apes, and John Carter of Mars. Tarzan is the better known, but John Carter was published first, appearing in "Under the Moons of Mars," published in the February 1912 issue of *The All-Story*.

160 people attended the 16th annual Fantastic Pulp Show held in the lower level of the Lillian H Smith library, browsing the 32 tables filled with pulps and related materials. On the 3rd floor, in the reading room of the Merrill Collection, Neil Mechem of Girasol Collectables gave a combined lecture and slide show in which he displayed images of pulp covers from a century ago. Over the course of the slide show Neil

commented on the art on display, the fiction that accompanied and inspired it, and talked about some of the history behind Burroughs' work.

[Editor's Note]: Our in-house photographer Anne Dunford was on hand for both the Pulp Show, and for the lecture in the Merrill Collection reading room. We've compiled, from her work, several sets of photos for you.

Below, we present a selection of images from both Neil Mechem's lecture, and the "100 Years of Tarzan" display put together by the Merrill Collection staff. On the facing page is a collection of the wealth of material on display at the 16th annual Fantastic Pulp Show.



Lorna Toolis (far left) introduces Neil Mechem (not pictured) and provides preliminary details on the Centenary of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan and John Carter stories. The remaining photographs are 3 of the many slides Neil Mechem used to conduct his lecture/slide show.



The "100 Years of Tarzan" display on ... well, display ... in the Merrill Collection reading room.



Still More New Art

A Donation of SF/F Art to the Merril Courtesy of David Warren

By Lorna Toolis

Mr. David Warren, a long-time member of the Friends of the Merril Collection, has donated a significant collection of sf and fantasy art to the Collection. His donation included a line-drawing by Frank Kelly Freas (pictured right), originally intended for *Analog*.

It also included a large original piece in colour by Hugo-winning cartoonist Phil Foglio, a signed and numbered Gahan Wilson print, one of Charlene D'Alessio's charming costumed rodents, and Ron Walotsky's cover for the June 1975 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*.

Multiple pieces by fantasy artist Linda Michaels and sf artist Edie Jones were included, as well as a piece by Torontonians artist Elizabeth Pearse, and cartoon cells of Tweety Bird and the Bulldog.

[Editor's Note]: The Merril has been lucky enough to receive several donations of art, and acquire some additional stunning pieces through auction, recently. For more information on other acquisitions, please see page 5.



Patricia Briggs at World Fantasy 2012

Coming to a City Near You! (If the City Near You Happens to be Toronto)

By Lorna Toolis



When the Friends of the Merril Collection decided to sponsor a fantasy writer's appearance at the 2012 World Fantasy Convention, Patricia Briggs was an obvious choice. *Masques*, her first book, was published in 1993, and her fiction has been enjoying increasing popularity ever since.

Her fantasy is popular with the Merril Collection's reading room patrons as it features a good understanding of English and German folklore and is well-written. People begin by asking for her current series, the "Mercedes Thompson" books, and then work their way through all of Briggs' books.

The members of the Friends Executive Committee were delighted when Ms. Briggs confirmed that she will be able to attend the World Fantasy Convention, and we look forward to meeting her.

Books by Patricia Briggs:

Masques (a revised edition was published in 2010); *Wolfsbane*; *Steal the Dragon*; *When Demons Walk*; *Dragon Bones*; *Dragon Blood*; *Raven's Shadow*; *Raven's Strike*; *Hob's Bargain*

The Mercedes Thompson books (in series order):

Moon Called; *Blood Bound*; *Iron Kissed*; *Bone Crossed*; *Silver Borne*; *River Marked*

The Alpha and Omega books:

Cry Wolf; *Hunting Ground*; *Fair Game*

Year Out, Year In

The Inaugural Friends of the Merrill Short Story Contest, and Looking Ahead

By Michael Matheson

By now I think it's safe to say that if you're reading this then you're probably aware that the Friends of the Merrill have held our first annual Short Story Contest and declared the winners (if you have no idea what we're talking about, this will help: <http://friendsmerrilcontest.com>).

And the inaugural year of the Friends of the Merrill Short Story Contest (FoMSSC for short) was an unqualified success. Especially when you consider that the contest had a very small lead time between going online and the opening of the initial reading period last November.

That's in no small part due to the overwhelmingly positive and supportive response we received - both in financial terms and through an astonishing amount of goodwill. Not to mention the excellent works we had to choose from for the nine finalists, from whom we picked our three winners (see below). We were also extremely fortunate in having a first rate panel of judges in Leah Bobet, Chris Szego, Michael Kelly, and Sandra Kasturi, and, well, me - all of whom agreed to provide their time and expertise without expectation of remuneration, I might add - to pick those winners.

Speaking of which, the winners of the inaugural contest (2011-2012) were:

Sarah Ennals (The Emmet), First Place

Jason S. Ridler (Rikidōzan and the San Diego Swerve Job),
Second Place

Dr. Philip Edward Kaldon (Your First Real Rocket Ship),
Third Place

And the other finalists of the inaugural contest (2011-2012) were:

Colleen Anderson (The Ties That Bind)

James Bambury (The Mobius Garden)

Suzanne Church (Muffy and the Belfry)

Barbara Gordon (Climbing Boys)

Claire Humphrey (Weathermakers)

Kari Maaren (My Profit On't Is)

We had quite a list to pick from. In this first year we had over 80 entrants, ranging from people just at the beginning of their careers to some very accomplished long-time professionals. In total, we received 102 submissions, with a fair amount of variety in them. We've covered the full statistical breakdown of the first year's submissions on the contest website (<http://friendsmerrilcontest.com/2012/03/03/by-the-numbers-a-breakdown-of-the-2011-2012-contest-year/>), I've offered some thoughts on what worked and what didn't (<http://friendsmerrilcontest.com/2012/03/28/in-the-green-room-thoughts-on-the-2011-2012-contest-submissions-and-some-advice/> - if you're reading this post, read the comments as well). We're also considering changes for next year based on what we've learned from this inaugural outing. We're debating everything from structure to rewards (we'll make those decisions public once they're finalized) and we'll see what those rewards constitute once all the ideas currently being floated have been weighed and decided on. But no matter what we end up going with next year in terms of prizes, it's always the unseen rewards - those lovely intersections of time and opportunity - that make the best prizes.



Because one of our judges was Sandra Kasturi, co-publisher of ChiZine Publications and one of the people behind the Chiaroscuro Reading Series here in Toronto, paired with the fact that our first-place winner and many of the finalists were local, we ended up having a joint CRS/FoM reading series event.

Held on the 11th of July at the Augusta House, the event featured readings by Sarah Ennals, James Bambury, Suzanne Church, Claire Humphrey, and Kari Maaren. Several of the contest judges also gave shorter readings, and both Mike Bryant and Jason Taniguchi performed at the event. And Kari Maaren performed several of her own songs at the event, in addition to giving her reading. The event also doubled as a joint fundraiser for ChiZine and the Friends of the Merrill, with donations split between the two.

For any of you locals who've never been, the Chiaroscuro Reading Series is an awful lot of fun in general (they're held every second Wednesday of the month at the Augusta House, barring extenuating circumstances), and this one was no exception. We were delighted to be able to participate. And if you get the chance you absolutely should go. The reading series events feature readings from extraordinary authors, and are just a good time in general. But now with the (absolutely lovely) celebrations aside, we move on to thinking about the coming 2012-2013 Friends of the Merrill Short Story Contest.

As for what's coming re the Friends of the Merrill Short Story Contest, some things are still slightly up in the air. Confirmed is that we're bumping the allowable size of entries up to 5,000 words. The things we're undecided on mainly concern structural elements. This has, largely, to do with a debate about continuing or discontinuing publishing the winning stories. We heard your feedback on not being able to take a winning story and try to place it in a higher profile (and/or better paying) market. We also heard your concerns regarding more outlandish/experimental/harder content, and the possibility that such comment might be disqualified before the final stages because we have to follow TPL display guidelines as a library-affiliated Friends body.

There is also discussion as to the nature of the prizes, but I can't go into that here. Not yet, anyway. In the meantime, you can keep abreast of all the changes via the contest website (<http://friendsmerrilcontest.com>), and you're always welcome to send queries to myself, at fomsscontest@gmail.com. You can also follow our Twitter account (@fomcontest) for occasional updates. But, no matter what changes we make we'll be opening the contest up to submissions for the 2012-2013 year come November 15th. We're hoping to surpass last year's submissions total, because when it boils down to it what the contest is really about is supporting the Merrill. And we're absolutely delighted that people have been so generous with their time and their goodwill in doing so.

Further Reflections

More Thoughts on the 2011-2012 FoMSSC and Advice for New Writers

By Michael Matheson

When we started the Friends of the Merrill Short Story Contest we had several goals in mind: create an outreach tool for the Merrill, give writers another venue for their work, and give newer writers a place to hone their craft. And while we certainly accomplished the first two - again, a *huge* thank you to everyone who helped make this endeavour possible - we also managed to do far better with that last goal than we had expected. Of the 102 submissions we saw for the 2011-2012 FoMSSC, sent by some 80 writers, the majority were from newer writers. We had our fair share of pros, and writers transitioning from other fields into fiction for the first time, but what struck me about the majority of the submissions was that many of the entrants were new writers. Now, I can tell you exactly why all of the stories that didn't make it to the final rounds didn't do so, but it has primarily to do with a fairly recurring set of issues. And since these are things done primarily by newer writers, I thought I would talk about some of them here to help newer writers become aware of these potential problems. There are, of course, always exceptions to every "rule", but these are things you generally want to avoid doing until you've got a better handle on how to subvert these issues into effective storytelling techniques.

Any of you who are newer writers and recognize some of these things cropping up in your own writing shouldn't feel bad about that because I regularly see these issues (and a whole host of others we won't go into here) in the work I read in my capacity as a submissions editor with *Apex*. We're only going to cover some of the most basic issues, and we're going to do it in brief so that you can take this advice and begin applying it to your own writing all the sooner.

Variants and Retellings: There are always ideas that haven't been done yet, and never let anyone tell you different. In fact, the much popular ideology that "every idea has already been done" is both ludicrous and offensive - especially the latter since this argument is the sign of a lazy writer. However, most writers do reuse and rehash common concepts because we approach, and disseminate, ideas through association and synthesis, so writers often speak the same cultural, idiosyncratic, and symbolic or archetypal language when crafting their fiction, though the imagery and the cultural furniture change with the teller. This is by no means a bad thing, but it means the same ideas tend to crop up repeatedly. Tropes especially are prolifically reused. So much so that a



venue like *Strange Horizons* has an excellent list of tropes they're tired of seeing (this list holds true for most publishers, actually): <http://www.strangehorizons.com/guidelines/fiction-common.shtml>. Unfortunately, because tropes are such an ingrained part of our cultural language, sometimes writers - especially newer writers who haven't yet had the opportunity to read widely enough - craft stories that they think are brilliant only to find out that that story was already done X years (decades, centuries ...) ago. Variants, too, crop up fairly often. Though these have a tendency to be intentional whereas retellings often aren't.

Idea Stories: Ideas are a fantastic starting point, but the story can't stop there. A fair number of the stories that came to the contest were written solely to explore an idea, but did so at the expense of character, or any kind of appreciably developed setting. An idea itself is fascinating, but without supporting elements - or, dare I say it, plot - that idea is like bone with no tendon or muscle to gird it, or like a sketch that never becomes a painting; this is especially true when a central character is two- (or even one-) dimensional. This is the one single, truly unforgivable sin a story can commit: promising and not delivering. An editor, who has leeway to work with you on a story that's not polished enough, can help you flesh out a story like this, but it's rare that you'll find one willing to invest that much time in it because the slush pile is full of stories that are already fleshed out; the onus to write great fiction is on you, not the editor.

Disparity of Quality (Weak Sections in Strong Work): A story lives and dies by its core ideas, but it doesn't matter how exceptional the *individual* portions of your work are. If the whole doesn't maintain a high level of excellence, then the story doesn't come off. If it starts weakly, no reader is going to carry on unless they're forced to. If the middle is problematic, you risk a reader dropping out because they can't be bothered to find out what happens later. And if the ending is weak then the story has been a waste, and the reader feels cheated for having carried through with reading it (this, in case you were wondering, is the situation that is especially disappointing to encounter as a slush reader).

Though all editors are different, most know from the first line whether or not they will continue reading your story. Yes, the *first line*. This doesn't mean you need to start your story with a "grabber" (they're interesting when they work, but they fail as often as they succeed and can be an instant turn-off if done badly). You can, but three things determine a strong story in the reading: your ability to write prose; how deeply you invite your reader into the story through worldbuilding (referring to worldbuilding in the larger sense of *all* the elements you use to craft your story, which is what worldbuilding used to mean before it became roleplaying terminology); and your ability to show the effectiveness, or intriguing nature, of the idea at the story's core. Though any one of these three will suffice to draw the reader in, some of the best fiction utilizes all three in the opening line. This is, incidentally, why some of the best story openings aren't shock tidbits and one-to-ten-word phrases, but multipartite sentences instead.

Cliffhangers: If the protagonist's actions at the close of the story are not explicit, but instead inferred, that *can* be intriguing, and can propagate the story with a world that exists long after the tale is done - hell, you can even get away with giving the reader a situation where the protagonist is left with a choice to make (though this device fails more often than not) provided you do this well - but writing a proper cliffhanger is done incredibly rarely, and it takes a master craftsman to pull it off. Normally, when you create a cliffhanger what you are actually doing is alienating the reader. A reader, editor or not, is going to assume that you've provided a conclusion to the story they're reading because stories are for the most part not synonymous with the movie serials of American cinema, one of the few instances where true cliffhangers worked. But even those kinds of stories have a resolution somewhere down the line, or have given the audience enough material to work out on their own what comes after. In most instances, if you haven't spent sufficient time building your central theme(s) into the work, or building your characters, you're denying the reader the ability to infer for themselves what you meant to do with the story's ending by not explicitly stating what happens at the close of your story.

Problematic or Unrealistic Dialogue: Largely the product of stereotypical discourse, or forced statements intended to drive the plot forward, awkward dialogue makes a story unreadable. Unrealistic dialogue can refer either to speech that is inappropriate for a character to say (this is tied to characters having individual, or recognizable voices), or it can refer to speech that has no bearing on how characters should actually be speaking, which is the comparison between garbled language and stylized language. The former jars the reader out of your story, while the latter creates a very specific, and intended, experience. Although it is an imperfect comparison for several reasons, think of "garbled" dialogue as the product of someone who is not fluent in the language, and "stylized" dialogue as Shakespearian verse. Consider the difference: one is unintelligible to all concerned, while the other is perfectly natural in its native setting or era but slightly stylized to us, yet still understandable for being so. The main thing to remember is that dialogue is a form of prose, and the flow of conversation - or monologue as necessity demands - requires the same attention you give to the rest of your prose.

In the end, avoiding these (and other) pitfalls in your writing comes down to performing critical self-assessment. For all the talking we do about writing groups, and communal critique, and getting a "second pair of eyes" to look over your work (all of which are excellent by the way), the most important editorial tool for a writer is the ability to accurately judge his/her own work. In many ways it's best to finish the work and then sit down to edit it once it's complete if you're still new to writing fiction. Writers with sufficient experience are better able to edit on the go, but it can be extremely detrimental to do this while you're still learning the ins and outs of crafting fiction. And most important of all is to write the stories you want to tell; we're looking forward to seeing what kind of work those of you sending something to the coming contest submit this time round. We thoroughly expect to be awed.





The Artwork of Markus “malo” Lovadina

By Michael Matheson

From malo's website: malo is currently working as a Creative Director in the advertisement industry, as well as a freelance Concept Artist/Illustrator. Over the last years, he's had the opportunity to work for companies such as Acclaim

Entertainment, Activision and Intel. malo has also worked for a couple of movie projects and a variety of book covers too.

We got extraordinarily lucky when Markus "malo" Lovadina



said yes to letting us use his cover art. Not only because the piece itself, "The Meeting," is gorgeous, but also because malo is a gifted artist across a wide variety of subjects.

Given the different companies malo works with he is often called upon to create very different types of work, and his own projects introduce still more variety into the mix. And yet, there is a particular vein that runs through his work. In a sense it has to do with the awesome vastness of his imagery, even when malo is painting more immediate scenes. But it is his vistas that are the most compelling of his works.

There is a sense of the extraordinary; of being on the borders of discovery in the immense scope and deceptive emptiness that permeates malo's landscapes and his concept art. It's a sense of always being on the verge of something *other*.

I suspect it has as much to do with both the literal and implied presence of realities that bump up against each other and often bleed into one another in the most spectacular of ways. Which, really, is what speculative art, and

speculative fiction too, is all about: the fantastic intruding upon the "real".



Malo manages to capture that with the attention and detail of a master. And there is always something new to see in his work; some new detail that becomes apparent the longer you stare at what began as a seemingly simple piece. The depth of his work blossoms out of this false emptiness to overwhelm and captivate the eye. In the end it is hard to tell, in malo's art, where this world ends and the other begins. And therein lies the real strength of his work.

We've reproduced a clean version of malo's cover art, "The Meeting", in order to give you an unobstructed sense of just how much is going on in that gorgeous image. But malo was also good enough to grant us the use of several thumbnails so you could see more of his exquisite work. On the previous page: "Sunny Sunday," and "Landscape 28032012 Final". On this page: "Portal". All images used in this profile are © Markus "malo" Lovadina, and may not be used without his express permission.

Bad Movies We Really Love

Black Moon Rising: Tough Guys, Big Hair, and a Kick Ass Car

By Jamie Fraser

John Carpenter is best known as the director of such genre classics as *Halloween*, *The Thing*, *Escape From New York*, *Christine*, *Star Man*, *The Fog*, and *They Live*. All of which came out between 1978 and 1988. A true Renaissance Man, he created the eerie music for almost all his films, and most notably he wrote the story or the screenplay for *almost* all his films. Often he wrote both, and aside from those films mentioned he wrote the story and/or screenplay for many other films.



Tommy Lee Jones as the film's (anti-)hero, Quint

Carpenter had written a screenplay called "Black Moon Rising", a dark but stylish thriller, in 1980, but it took 6 years and many rewrites before it was filmed. The film featured a "who's who" of genre veterans: a young and pre-*Fugitive*

Tommy Lee Jones, Linda Hamilton fresh off *The Terminator*, Robert Vaughn, Richard Jaeckel, and William Sanderson (best known for his role as J.F. Sebastian in *Blade Runner*), among others. One of the more inventive action scenes in the film has Sanderson's character being scooped up by a garbage truck in the parking garage where Vaughn's secret headquarters /stash of stolen cars is located.

The plot has Jones in the role of a thief named Quint, working for the federal government, who hides the secret files he's been hired to steal from a corrupt company inside an ultra-sleek futuristic car that runs on a process fueled by tap water. Quint escapes the villains who are after him, but the car is stolen by Nita (Hamilton) - a car thief working for

Ryland's (Vaughn) immense and ruthless organization dealing in rare and expensive stolen vehicles - before he can recover the computer disc containing the files.

Quint has to somehow break into the heavily guarded base and retrieve the disc before the government, or killers from the corrupt company, can catch him. Along the way he gets help from old friends and the creator of the prototype high-tech vehicle, but the real challenge is convincing Nita to betray Ryland and help him get the car back. He does manage to seduce Nita and gain her help, which leads to numerous car chases and action scenes before we reach the film's climax.



Linda Hamilton in a ... questionable ... choice of wig.

The tag line for this movie was “You Will Believe A Car Can Fly,” and it actually does; the final high speed chase has the Black Moon leaping between two LA skyscrapers. It's a stunt that holds up remarkably well given the film's low budget: a modest 3 million. Despite its low funding, the film looks like it cost a lot more. But the low budget was enough to make this film work for a couple of different reasons:

Neither Jones nor Hamilton were big stars when the film was made; much of the film was shot at night by a non-union crew using more unusual and cheaper locations - such as many of the downtown underpasses of LA, an abandoned tire factory, and the (now infamous) gay leather bar, “Greg's Blue Dot”. And rumour has it there was some friction as the film's cast and crew rubbed the bar's regulars the wrong way.

Black Moon Rising could have been done more tongue-in-cheek, but for the most part the cast played it straight. This gave the film a grittier, more hard-boiled tone - the only exception being the money shot which was needed to justify the film's title.

Jones made his character, Quint, a fine anti-hero while still showing the dark humour and crankiness he'd become known for. The villains, with the exception of Nita, were all suitably sadistic. Hamilton made a good car thief, but lacked

the intensity that makes a good villain. Although that may have had something to do with her hair, which dominated the screen like a vintage DeNiro or Shatner performance.

And though Vaughn's character was rarely seen, his voice was heard throughout like an evil HAL. This was quite effective and served the film well, though it was likely another way to keep the budget down. The design of the car was impressive and I would have liked to have seen it used more often. Still, the film worked very well overall, and was a classic example of 1980s Popcorn Cinema.

Don't get me wrong, this is no *Citizen Kane*, or even a *Big Bad Mama*, but if you're

looking for a fun movie filled with good actors, action, and impressive visuals, you'll most likely enjoy *Black Moon Rising*. And afterwards you can Tweet your friends about this almost forgotten gem that John Carpenter created.

[Editor's Note] - Given how enjoyable a well done livetweet of a film can be (we owe so much to you MST3K), a la John Scalzi's livetweeting, or Leah Bobet and Chandra Rooney's joint livetweeting (and anyone else you can think of who does it brilliantly), Black Moon Rising would be an interesting candidate. Though, truthfully? I want to see someone Livetweet the Alien quintology. (Yes, I'm including Prometheus. It's set in the same universe, so I'm counting it.)



The Black Moon (the car) is still one of the best features of this film. And you don't have to be a fan of other vehicle-driven films and series involving high tech air- or landcraft like Knight Rider, Firefox, or even something like The Highwayman, to enjoy Black Moon Rising. Though it certainly helps.

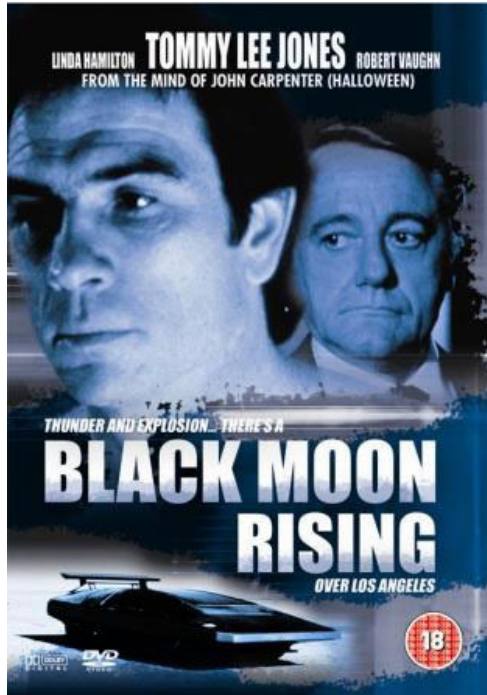
A drinking game would also not be out of the question in the case of Black Moon Rising. No, really, there are so many options for triggers in this film it's not funny.

Not that the film itself was intended as comedy (though some of it is decidedly tongue-in-cheek). Actually, Black Moon Rising had a fairly large promotional campaign behind it when it first hit theatrical release, and it's never really disappeared off anyone's radar. The latter probably has a fair amount to do with the fact that it's a John

Carpenter film, but between the theatrical promotional posters, and the various covers for home video and dvd releases, there are a staggering 14 North American

“cover images” for this movie. That’s not all that impressive now, but when you consider that *Black Moon Rising* came out

in 1986 the high number of different promotional visuals is slightly unusual.



Fourteen tries later and there still isn’t any really great promotional art for this film. But, hey, at least there’s variety ...

Jo Walton at the Merril

By Michael Matheson

On November 8th, 2012, at 7 p.m., the Merril Collection will be host to multiple-award-winning author Jo Walton. Walton will be appearing courtesy of SFContario, where she is the writer guest of honour for SFContario 3, which will be held November 9th through 11th.

Currently based out of Montreal, Jo Walton, in addition to her other work, regularly writes and reviews on Tor.com. She is also the recent recipient of the 2012 Nebula award for best novel for *Among Others*. Walton writes both poetry and novels, and has received accolades for both.

And for those rare few of you not already familiar with her work in some capacity, there are plenty of places around the internet to find out more about her, including, for starters, her Wikipedia entry (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jo_Walton), her SFContario 3 Author Guest of Honour promotional page (http://2012.sfcontario.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=56&Itemid=194), and her author profile at Tor.com (<http://www.tor.com/bios/authors/jo-walton>).



Moving Beyond Insular Headspace

Fan Culture, -Isms, and Fiction That Presents Honest Cultural Narrative

By Michael Matheson

There has been so much anger, so much vitriol, and so much absurdity that has loosed itself on the internet since mid-July. The situation we are now experiencing didn't begin with the harassment of Genevieve Valentine at Readercon (<http://blog.bcholmes.org/the-readercon-thing/>), but that did open wide the floodgates of misogyny, intolerance, racism, and any other -ism you want to chuck in there.

I would actually suggest that what started us down this path were the very apt comments about steampunk fiction and culture that Lavie Tidhar made on June 25th on his blog, in a post aptly titled "Fascism for Nice People" (<http://lavietidhar.wordpress.com/2012/06/25/fascism-for-nice-people/>). Technically, Tidhar made his original comment (*I see steampunk as "Fascism for nice people"*) on Twitter, but his succinct, and I would have thought quite clear statement, required a fair amount of follow-up.

I happen to agree wholeheartedly with Tidhar on the subject, by the way: the majority of steampunk (the bulk of which is a British preserve as regards content), concerned, as it is, with

the Empire in a Victorian context, reinforces some decidedly ugly notions about imperialism, colonialism, and racism. And if that statement looks vaguely familiar to some of you, that would be because I'm paraphrasing my own prior comments on the subject (for expediency's sake).

This phenomenon is not limited solely to steampunk. And, of course, the reason people got so upset with Tidhar wasn't entirely about steampunk itself. Not really. It's because Tidhar "attacked" (in the eyes of the wounded, anyway) *fandom*. Why did some elements of fandom take this badly? Because fandom has a very, *very* ugly side to it. It ties in, largely, to entitlement, and a strain running through fandom that this is a special preserve where the rules of ordinary social behaviour do not apply. I've said elsewhere (now directly quoting myself) that fandom breeds "[a] reprehensible tolerance for intolerance and clique mentality, and [provides] complimentary blinders to personal and cultural prejudices," and I stand by that.

For the record, I think people coming together to enjoy, and care about, the things that matter to them is wonderful. But I



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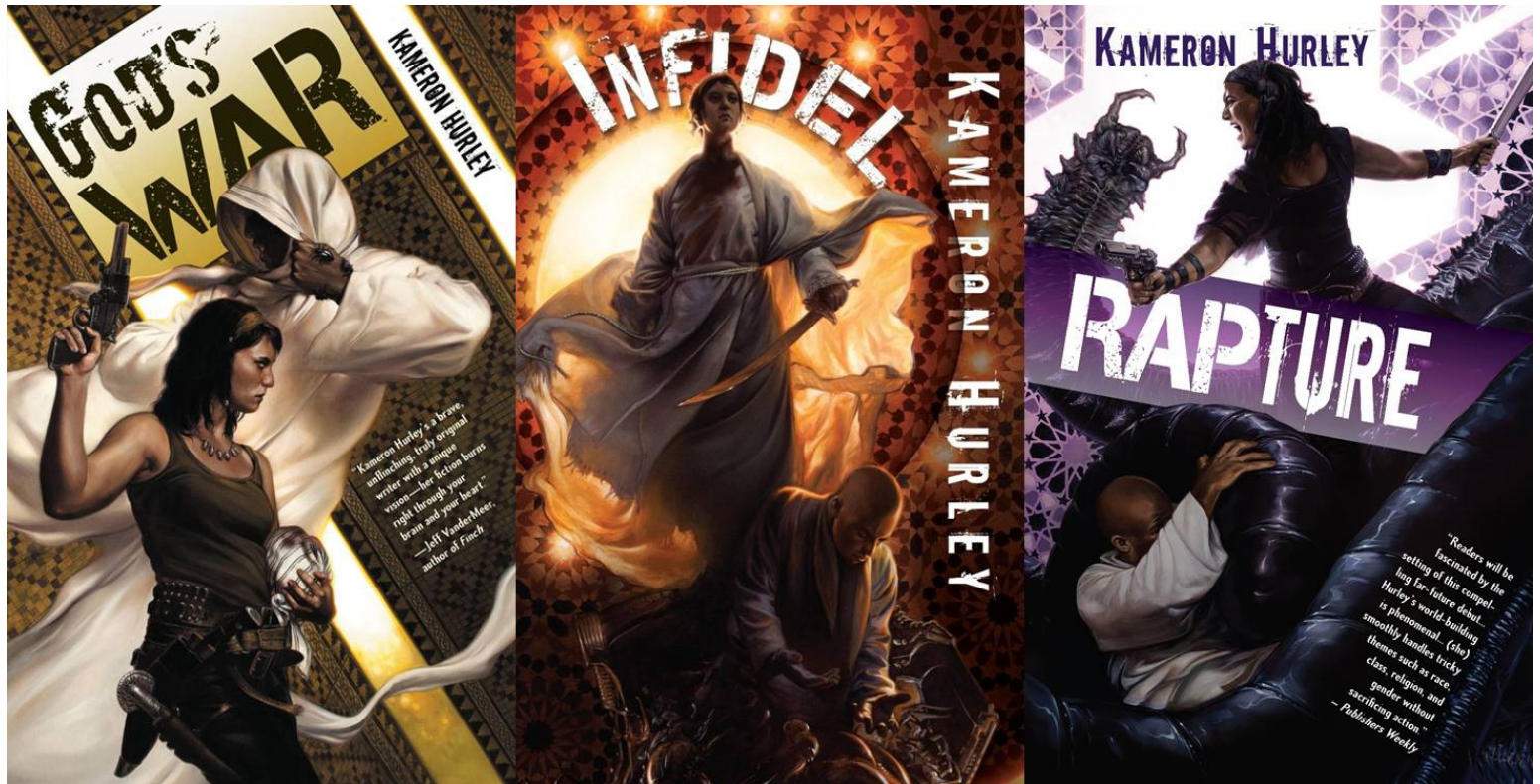
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also think we run into problems when we engage a clique mentality, which is what fandom unintentionally promotes. And the problem lies in the fact that there are two kinds of career fans: those who are fans to promote the things they love, and those who are fans to garner vicarious prestige and gain acclaim on the backs of others. I've met and interacted with both, at length. I love the former kind, and *loathe* the latter. There are also issues of group dynamics, self-esteem, and culture clash that feed into this issue, but, that's not what we're here to discuss. I just felt like clarifying my stance.

What we're actually here to talk about is a part of the point that Tidhar originally brought up: the notion that cultural dynamics and narrative are often badly handled in fiction (by people who are both within and outside of the cultural narratives being

of "oh, poor little white me." *I'm staring directly at you, "Save the Pearls" series.* Hell, I'm still having trouble believing that that series is an actual fucking thing, and not some horrible, horrible joke perpetrated in unbelievably bad taste.

In spite of such excruciatingly painful, and deeply offensive missteps - in the face of works that writers like Tidhar rightly call on their fallacies and insensitivities to the concerns of everyone who is not white and North American or European - there are, thankfully, writers who get cultural narrative right. Specifically, there are three series I would like to draw your attention to. You are hopefully already aware of these works, but if not, we're going to correct that. All of the following titles are exceedingly well-written, and each of them addresses cultural narrative intelligently, and adroitly.



Be still my beating heart. Dark, intelligent science fiction, with bug tech, that tackles issues of religious divide and a never-ending religious war, framed in terms of all too human relationships.

used). I would go a step further and say that that failure actually stems from carelessness, or laziness, in terms of research, and is often justified via one of two arguments: "Hey, this is *my* culture, I don't need to research it further. I already *know* it," and "The *entire* culture doesn't matter. I'm not disrespecting this culture by not paying attention to all of its aspects, I'm making it *cooler* by whitewashing [or other similar issue] the parts of it I don't like, or don't care about." And while we're on the subject, intentionally twisting a culture, or utilizing aspects of it to frame a different narrative can work, if you pay *careful attention* to the culture whose idioms and identity(ies) you are using.

There are other kinds of failures; unbelievable train wrecks of cultural prejudice, racism, bigotry, ignorance, and things I can't give voice to without screaming my lungs out - all in the guise

Kameron Hurley's "Bel Dame Apocrypha" (*God's War*, *Infidel*, *Rapture*)

Crafting dark, alternate tech, post-earth science fiction is no easy task. Even less so when your cultural/religious basis utilizes an Islamic structure. I've only read *God's War* as of yet (I'm in the process of getting my hands on *Infidel*), but that one book alone just blows away so much of the other science fiction in the current market. Hurley's series is confident, beautifully paced, emotionally raw, and utterly brutal. Jeff Vandermeer was entirely right when he called Hurley "a brave, unflinching, truly original writer with a unique vision[.]"

More information can be found on Kameron Hurley's website at <http://www.kameronhurley.com/>, or on the Bel Dame Apocrypha website at <http://www.godswarbook.com>.

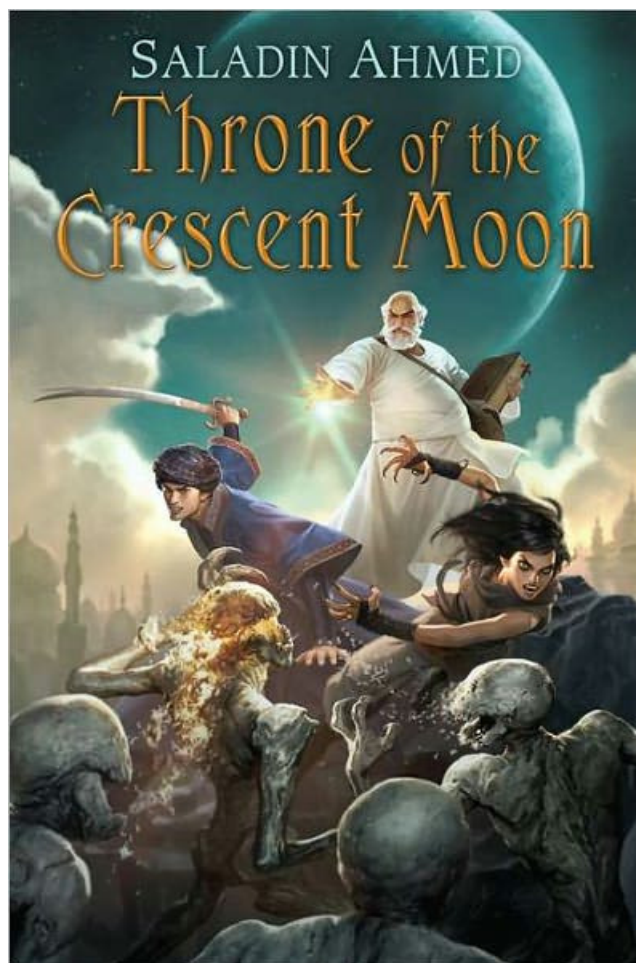
Saladin Ahmed's "Crescent Moon Kingdoms" (*Throne of the Crescent Moon*, others forthcoming)

A potent fantasy world that evokes the *Arabian Nights* to craft an extraordinarily well-realized second world pseudo-Middle Eastern setting, Ahmed subverts many of the popular tropes of fantasy (high and otherwise) in his debut novel. With a central character who is *not* undergoing a journey of self-discovery (the main character is in his 60s and confident in knowing himself), a group of protagonists who are *not* of royal blood, and depictions of religious and cultural choices and roles that are *not* one-dimensional, but instead very, very well fleshed out, what Ahmed has done is turn high fantasy on its head. In doing so Ahmed has created something absolutely wonderful that reads with an honest and authentic voice.

There's excellent information to be had on the novel on Saladin Ahmed's website at <http://www.saladinahmed.com/wordpress/>.

Aliette de Bodard's "Obsidian and Blood" - the Acatl Novels (*Servant of the Underworld*, *Harbinger of the Storm*, *Master of the House of Darts*)

Described by de Bodard as a series of Aztec mystery-fantasies, the Obsidian and Blood sequence is a highly complex set of historical fantasies - though de Bodard would be the first to point out that these novels are not the product of an attempt to depict an investment of archaeological work, but are instead an



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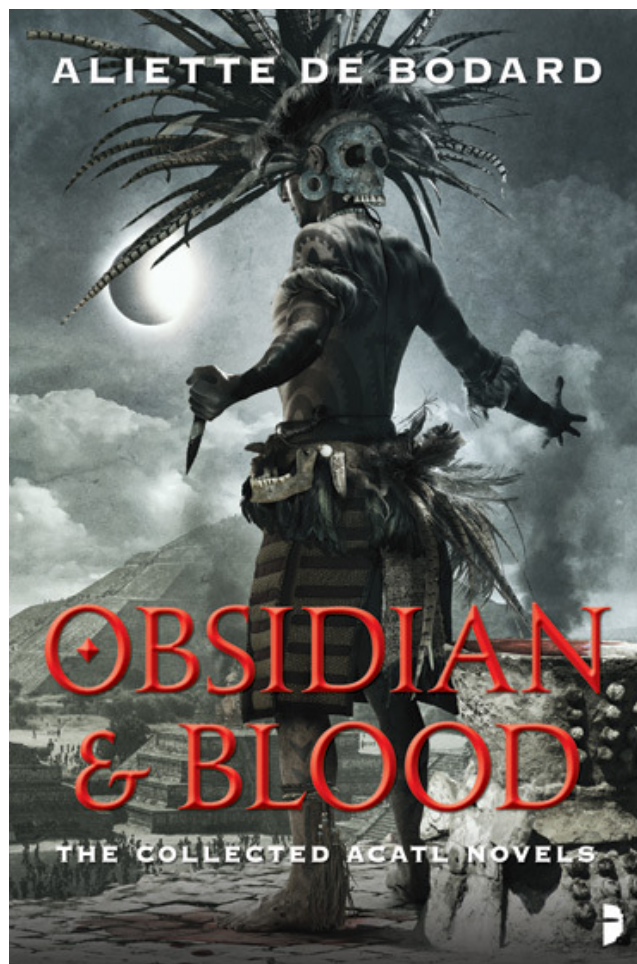
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attempt to capture a sense of the culture depicted without egregiously screwing up that presentation. Her work succeeds most admirably. The characters act, and engage their world, believably. It's a cultural perspective that may, or may not, be flawlessly accurate. In the end the depiction is crafted so respectfully - especially when you consider that de Bodard is working with a culture that is for all intents and purposes extinct in the form in which she is portraying it - that these novels feel like the product of prolonged and sustained research. And like Hurley's and Ahmed's work, de Bodard's novels are clearly the work of an accomplished writer.

More information on the world of Obsidian and Blood can be found on Aliette de Bodard's author website at <http://aliettedebodard.com/bibliography/the-universe-of-obsidian-and-blood/>.

There are other works that capture cultural narrative without falling into trope, stereotyping, and other disastrous pitfalls, but these three are the ones that have recently stood out for me. And in the end deciding how effective, or not effective, a tale's translation of cultural mythos, and/or ethos, is is a deeply personal choice. *But*, all works of fiction exist in a wider, multicultural context as well, so discussions like the one we're having in this article are about marrying internal and external views. As recent events have shown us, we need a better narrative, or at least a better conversational dynamic. And, in this community, that's going to happen through fiction.



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If you are thinking of submitting an article please read our guidelines carefully to ensure that your work conforms to the material we cover. Then query as to your submission.

Please *do not* send an article(s) in for consideration without querying first.

Please address your queries to:

Michael Matheson, at
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You can address general queries concerning the Friends of the Merrill Collection to

friends@friendsofmerril.org

We will respond as quickly as possible.

If you have not received a response within a reasonable amount of time please contact Lorna Toolis at

ltoolis@torontopubliclibrary.ca

That's a Wrap

The Potency of Words

By Michael Matheson

For those who know me it's not exactly a secret that Catherynne M. Valente is one of my favourite writers. Her work, both prose and poetry, demonstrates an exquisite affinity for language. There are many wordsmiths whose craftspersonship I admire, but I find myself again and again returning to Valente's work to pore over structure and word choice, metaphor and outright imagery.

And then I read posts like Valente's "On Usernames and Blame":

(<http://catvalente.livejournal.com/679023.html?page=4#comments>)

And I am reminded that the potency words bear can be used both to create, and to wound. And to wound deeply.

There is, as always, a difference between wit and crass showmanship; between élan and purely vituperative discourse. And more and more, in the speculative fiction community and outside of it, the latter seems to be the de facto kneejerk response to considered argument and reasoned discourse - especially when presented with those who comport themselves, as does Valente, without rancour.

Here, in *Sol Rising*, we have tried to use our words to their best effect. I know we do not always succeed, and for that I will offer you apology.

Because we do not stop *trying* to do right by you, our readers. And I can but hope that we get it right more often than not. As I said in the Editor's Note up front, we, all of us in the Friends, and myself perhaps most especially, deeply appreciate the vote of confidence that was the Aurora nomination. It is a lovely gesture. And much as the following statement has become marketing kitsch, it is no less true that we could not have done what we have been doing for more than 25 years without a supportive community in which to work; without all of you.

Twenty five years. It's quite an accomplishment, really, that *Sol Rising*, in myriad forms, has continued to provide commentary, communication, and an opportunity for us to come to you, and for you to come to us in turn.

It's a heady accomplishment, not least because the world keeps changing so incredibly fast - and that notion, too, became cliché long ago, though it is no less true for having become so - and I am of the opinion that it is becoming more and more difficult to move with the world as it shifts. Not in terms of couth or understanding, nor doing right by others;

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—
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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 is a simple task because it does not rely on external stimulæ. And when it takes a reliance on external forces to tell us when we have overstepped and wounded others, or when we have to *force* ourselves to aid others, then we've already lost the fight to remain humane.

No, it is keeping up with the battles that are being fought, to find ways to counter the bigots, the intolerant, and the hate-mongers who have found megaphones and abuse them freely, that is the seemingly insurmountable challenge.

And yet, the internet, perhaps most surprisingly of all, has proven to be a megaphone for positive change as well; a method for speaking wide and rallying support that not even Nikola Tesla could have dreamed of more than a century ago (which is so very little time, all things considered; the blink of an eye) when all his attention was focused upon the idea of wireless transmission of electrical fields. Tesla would, I think, have approved of, and been fascinated by, the internet had he lived to see it; though I do not doubt he would have done us several magnitudes of invention better, given the man he was, and the superb mind that was his to wield.

But the internet as we have it (irregardless of how it might have existed in other, alternate, progressions of history), is entirely about words and how we use them.

There are always battles to be fought. Utopias are an ideal, not a reality. And were the utopian ideal to become a reality I put to you that it would be dangerous, for in perfection there is only stagnation, while in imperfection there is the striving to achieve that which has not yet been done, nor even yet dreamed, that propels humanity forward; through which we reach for the stars.

We have seen the darkest side of those aspirations, true - war and conquest also breed innovation - but we create because we must. Because we are compelled to reshape ourselves.

That striving is why we use words. Because our words give us the tools to achieve better things: to understand, or define that which we seek, and to craft new language for the things we have not yet made, nor managed.

And those who question reasoned discourse, those who wonder why theirs is not the only voice that matters, those who honestly believe that theirs should be the only say and that others should engage only silence? It is in the face of the horrors those people represent - ignorance, intolerance, intellectual stagnation - that we build libraries, that we teach literacy, that we raise an informed and critically thinking populace. Or do our damndest to that end.

Because words have power. Because they shape us.

Without them we are nothing.

'Til next we meet in illumined pages, adieu.

On Display in the Reading Room

The Merrill Collection is open Monday - Friday 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM, and on Saturdays between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM

The Merrill Collection's next slated display is "Architecture of Dreams". For information on what is currently on display in the Merrill Collection Reading Room please see the Friends of the Merrill Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-the-Merril-Collection/102556649836415> or visit the TPL's Merrill Collection website at: <http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/detail.jsp?Entt=RDMLIB137&R=LIB137>

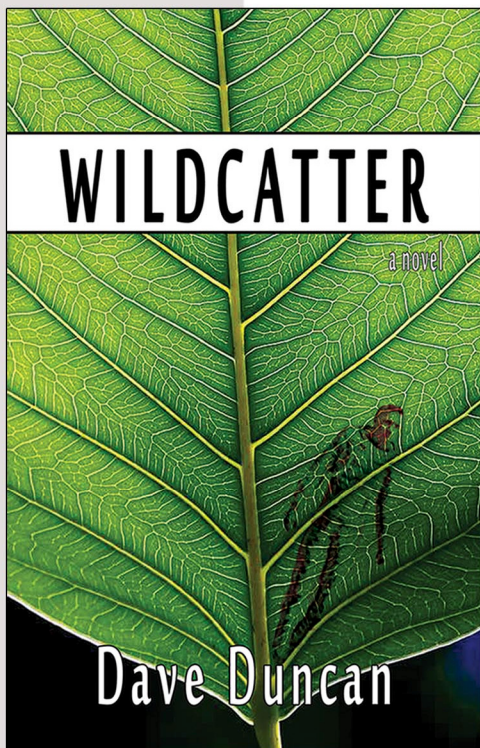
Upcoming Events

2012

This year's **OSRCon** will be held on August 10th and 11th. On September 8th the annual **SF/Anime Flea Market** will take place at the Toronto Reference Library, and will run from 10 AM to 4 PM. The Friends will be at **WFC2012** (November 1st through 4th), and have sponsored the guest appearance of Patricia Briggs for same. **Jo Walton** will appear at the Merrill on November 8th at 7 PM, courtesy of SFCOntario. On November 15th **Robert Douglas** will be at the Merrill to talk about his book, *In the Shadow of the Great War*. And in late 2012 **Diane Newell** and **Victoria Lamont** will be at the Merrill to launch their collaborative effort, *Judith Merrill: A Critical Study*.

2013

Tentatively scheduled for February, the Merrill will be host to **an evening of FILK with Peggi Warner-Lalonde**. And the Merrill will also be host to **Religion in Science Fiction: A Symposium** in the coming year. More info to follow on both events as they take shape going forward.



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WILDCATTER by Dave Duncan

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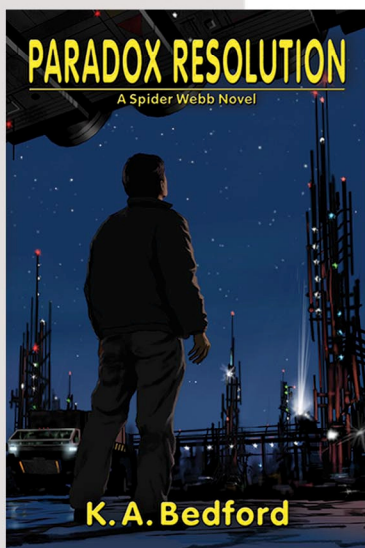
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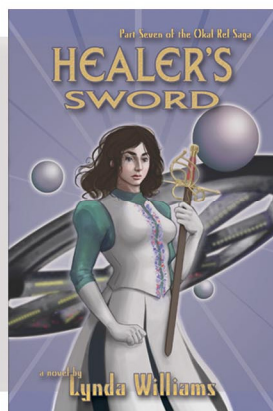
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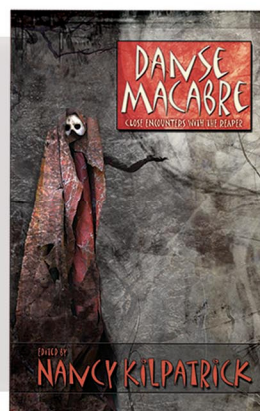
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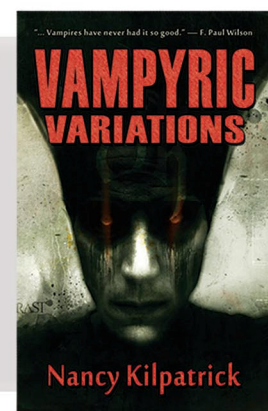
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The Merrill Collection, originally the Spaced Out Library and later renamed for the late Judith Merrill, is the foremost North American public assemblage of Speculative, SF and Fantasy Fiction and is an invaluable tool for enthusiasts, researchers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

The Collection houses a comprehensive array of over 72,000 (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):

- ☐ Individual \$35.00
- ☐ Student (under 18) \$20.00
- ☐ 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.