

WSFA Journal July/August 2012



"I Have to Learn How to Spell That?"

The 6/1/12 June First Friday meeting opened without a leader. In the absence of prez and vice, Sam offered Steve his choice of taking notes or chairing the meeting. He chose to chair.

The meeting was held upstairs meeting because downstairs at the Madigans was flooded. "Whatever passes for a meeting first Friday in June is called for what passes for order at 9:19 pm," said the acting chair. The last meeting was at the Nebula awards so there was nothing to read. The President was not here. The VP doesn't make it this far. The Secretary read a letter to WSFA. Treasurer gave his report. Our <bank> CD came due and was cashed. We can put into our main account or find a CD with better interest rates for two to three years. Jimmy suggested a bond account. Third option, use it as seed money for new set of bank accounts. This is about \$moola. We're being nibbled at by our current bank <of fish?>. He needs to talk to <bank>. The trustees had an election. Now we have a completely new set of officers. Cathy said meet the new boss, the same as the old boss.

Steve asked about Disclave. 25 cents fine for mentioning the con that dare not speak its name. Cathy said publicity continues. We handed out about 200 flyers at Balticon. We sold 11 memberships so are on pace with where we're supposed to be. Not in a danger red <shirt> zone. There will be a table at Worldcon. Lots of WSFans will be there so everyone should put in an hour or two. We get a lot of people stopping at our table and need to convert them to members. Bill has a programming meeting at his place on Sat the 9th at 1 pm. He is pushing programming up so can get it done early.

Dis... er Capclave Future. Mike said he is investigating hotels with Cathy and George. For our current property, the issue is space with more people. "If turns out Gaithersburg will be it, we will need to cap membership." Things are progressing. Hopefully by Worldcon we will have a sense of where it will be. Albacon moved off Columbus Day weekend, so if we can get good rates for that weekend, it gives us the benefit of Monday as a holiday so people can stay late Sunday. He emailed to George who is agreeable any weekend in October. Candy said would make her choose between Vad or Capclave and makes money at Vad.

Capclave far future. Bill said, "Robocon 2015, Detroit, it's not as bad as you think. There will be a weapon policy." Bill is stalling on a big announcement, drawing out suspense. Connie who? Based on

his comment about calories, the Guest of Honor is Pablo Bacigalupi. “I have to learn how to spell THAT?” said your humble editor <who indeed did have to look it up>. Bacigalupi is the author of *The Windup Girl* and a new book just out that is a children’s novel about baseball team fighting zombies. <That would make the sport more interesting>. He is looking at Columbus Day Weekend. His second guest is still out there. The theme will be YA. Stomp on that theme. Cathy will be programming person. They will have a YA writing workshop. Rope bondage jokes. Late night S&M. Will have disclaimer about sprinklers being for decorative purposes only.



Ernest walks in and is attacked by an Attack Chihuahua. There will be a literary award committee meeting tomorrow. Shortlist soon. No names attached. Cathy said, “Don’t be a dick and look them up online. One of the things people like about the award is anonymous. No one knows who wrote it. Sometimes you may recognize it from something you read, but generally list where people don’t know where come. Sometimes big name authors have not made the final cut. We don’t get a lot of crap. A lot comes down to this being already culled, achieved publication somewhere. We do our best to spread the news far and wide. Not dealing with crap. But, not every story to everyone’s taste.” Jimmy said, just in his one year of being here, he has heard people say “I know who it is and since famous not voting for them.” Cathy said, “Judging by who won, this didn’t happen. Just judge the story fairly.”

On electronic resources, there was nothing from webmasters. They still haven’t put up journals. Steve said they are doing a pile of work. We asked them to do a bunch of priorities and there were the Nebs. Ernest volunteered to help Sam. Steve said our Facebook site is chugging along. Meetup has 120 people. WSFA list. The Committee to talk SF will discuss F&SF. Jimmy said his podcast for third Friday will be up in next week. He will put some golden age sf up.

Activities. There’s a tornado. Ernest asked who works near the Capitol. Before next meeting, there will be another blockbuster movie, *Prometheus* or *Aliens -1*. Would anyone be interested in a trip?

No old business. New business. Ernest was thinking.

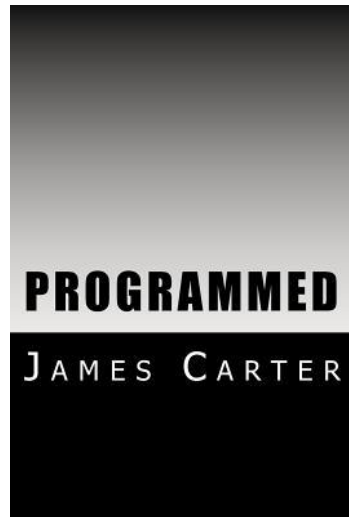
People present for their first meeting: Karen, works at Goddard. She was at Balticon and signed up for our convention. She Was told that Capclave was smaller and more literary. Here reading is 50% SF and other miscellaneous. She also reads usual Amazon stuff for book group.

Announcements: “It was a dark and stormy night,” said Bill. It is wet downstairs. Jenna is still alive. Watch out for the bunny. New Yorker has science fiction issue. Saturday strawberry festival and flea market. Jimmy has 100 word story in the Drabblecast. Candy vending at Glen Echo folk festival. The meeting unanimously adjourned at 10:04.

Attendance: Cathy Green, Bill Lawhorn, Ernest Lilley, Sam Lubell, Candy & John Madigan, Sarah Mitchell, Evan Phillips, Jimmy Rogers, Mike Taylor, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh, and Karen North.

Programmed by James Carter
Reviewed by Sarah Mitchell

Programmed starts out as a promising sci fi thriller about a Navy crypto analyst, Lt. Alex Gardener, on his way to a top-secret assignment in the Nevada desert. The assignment has some unusual security arrangements and later he with a Marine mathematician and an Army archeologist learn the reason for all the secrecy.



Gardener and others must decipher a plate recovered from a UFO that landed in Roswell, New Mexico. Gardener becomes obsessed with the symbols on the plate and is on the verge of discovering it's meaning when the officer in charge of the project, Colonel Powers, abruptly cancels the assignment. Gardener works to decipher the symbols on his own, but is pursued by an evil shadowy organization but is unable to complete the meaning. Years later Alex's granddaughter, Kate, finishes Gardener's work and makes a discovery that will affect all of humanity. She recruits an UFO investigator, Brian, and with the help of his colleague, Roger, manages to make contact with the aliens on December 21, 2012.

Unfortunately Carter tries to take many tropes from sci fi such as Roswell, alien encounters, MiB type organizations, government conspiracy, and even the 2012 Mayan apocalypse into a story that seems more like an anti corporate manifesto at times. The character Roger seems more a mouthpiece for the author's opinions on the environment and how corporations are destroying the world than an actual character. In one scene he lectures Suzee, Brian's cousin that her consumer lifestyle is programmed and she is simply a mindless drone that exists for corporate profits.

Character development takes a back seat to Carter's message more likely than not. Gardener's coworkers quickly became Character A with quirk A and Character B with quirk B. The main characters do not fare much better. Kate is often defined by her difficult upbringing with an alcoholic mother and her abusive boyfriend. Carter often spends paragraphs describing how other people perceive her as trailer trash and see no need to give her an ounce of common courtesy. While reading the book I felt no reason to worry when the Black Falcons, a shadowy MiB type organization, or cheer when she manages to escape.

Rather than spend time on character development Mr. Carter decided to focus on describing long passages where a character monologues about a specific event when Carter effectively and accurately described the scene and let the reader draw their own conclusion. In an early scene Alex endures a very drastic and dehumanizing security check that at moments gets a bit graphic. Carter's narrative is very effective in showing how Gardener and the others are very uncomfortable with the security checks and that he becomes suspicious that Powers has something malicious in mind.

Shortly after the security scene Powers has a long inner monologue where he describes the security check for Gardener and the others is intentionally designed to dehumanize and degrade the men. It serves no other purpose than to humiliate the men and guarantee their cooperation. I half imagine Powers as a supervillain from the movie *The Incredibles* describing his latest plan to destroy Metroville.

Overall *Programmed* is a great start to an interesting thriller about a young woman continuing her grandfather's life work. I believe that novel and author could benefit from the services of a professional editor to make *Programmed* into an interesting novel instead of a manifesto disguised as a novel.

Invited the Devil

The 6/15/12 Third Friday meeting was short since there was no quorum, perhaps due to the switch. VP Sam S presided. It was announced that Elspeth's father had passed away. Barry is bringing a card to sign.

Capclave: George said the program meeting last Saturday went well. There was a provisional order for gifts for GOH. He will talk to hotel to firm up what rooms we have and when. Sam S. said there was no post-Balticon membership bump. We had maybe 10 new members join at Balticon. Our total is 117. We're a little behind the pace.

Capclave Far Future: Bill said we have Paolo who is a great guest. He invited the Devil, but don't know if he will come. Tried to stop the show.

Old business: There is a Fifth Friday in this month, if anyone wishes to host. No takers.

Announcements: John and Kathei's Fourth of July party. The Fourth Friday podcast discussion will take place after the meeting. WSFA invited to the BSFS picnic. Bill said Fandom is just a hobby. Sam L. said the 2012 journals have been sent to webmaster. Meeting adjourned. 9:26.

Attendance: Alisha Brown, Carolyn Frank, Charity Helton, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Sarah Mitchell, Jimmy Rogers, Judy & Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Laura Somerville, Ivy Yap, Teresa Telsco.

Science Fiction Versus Fantasy

By Samuel Lubell

At Worldcon I attended a panel on why fantasy outsells science fiction (sources vary, from three times to 10 times). Daniel Abraham, at Worldcon, said one reason is that science fiction has become too self-referential, and too difficult for new readers to understand without having read older science fiction. He said science fiction has become fusion jazz that only appeals to a narrow audience. That's why he said fantasy outsells SF. However, he admitted that the work he co-writes as James Corey greatly outsells his most recent fantasy.

Another possibility is that fantasy is better escape reading than science fiction. Certainly there is a lot of science fiction with equations and authors trying to explain the science (even though it is made up.) Fantasy has the advantage of letting things happen as if by, literally magic. In Still there is plenty



of space opera sf that makes no attempt at plausibility. Much fantasy still has larger than life heroes and villains and plots that, while writers throw in twists, typically boil down to kill the Dark Lord to rule the kingdom (or in urban fantasy, kill the crime lord/vampire/evil dude to get the girl/guy). Another possible problem is science fiction's current fad for rather depressing dystopias (although the Hunger Games set is a dystopia were hugely popular).

So what can be done? If Abraham is right and much of recent science fiction needs an understanding of older sf, it would be helpful to make the classics of sf more available. A few publishers like Baen are doing their part, but more still needs to be done. The genre classics should be put out on ebooks. Tor has made YA versions of *Ender's Game*, how about similar releases of other books? David Weber is writing YA novels set in his Honor Harrington universe, other writers might consider similar works as gateways to their more adult work. And publishers could consider allowing popular fantasy writers to write sf under the same name they use for fantasy so that fantasy fans will follow them into science fiction, and maybe decide they like it.

Last of the Resnicks Sold

The 7/6/12 First Friday in July meeting took place just a couple of days after the Fourth. "WSFA has melted, no quorum," Someone said. There was a 21:19 call to order by President Barry. There were no minutes because Sam's computer is in the shop. For cash, not much said Steve. He still has not deposited the wreckage from the CD we didn't roll over. Current interest rates are about a third of a percent so not missing much. Steve gave total. There were two trustees. Cathy said the trustees had nothing at the moment, just had the election in May. The Capclave 2011 chair should be removed from the website. Paul asked Steve for the membership list clarification.

We are still selling WSFA press books. We received the contract from Valente for the reprint so can pay her. We sent check to cover artist and printer. We sent messages to booksellers that previously bought WSFA Press books, and five told us they would purchase \$moola worth of books including old books. <Club cheered>. We are selling well on the Valente. We even sold the last of the Resnick so can do no more bundle sets with the old books. Now we are doing a bundle with all the new books since Turtledove.

The WSFA Facebook page is active and people posting. 152 people joined us on Facebook. There has been no progress on getting our logo up on website; it will take two to three hours. Tedious. Cathy said, "And we keep making other things priority." Sarah is running twitter feed <with the dodos>. Cathy has been sending stuff for Sarah to put in the Twitter limit. Carrie Vaughn is on awards committee for Andre Norton award. Gayle asked for more pictures of authors with Capclave dodos <for blackmail purposes, no doubt!>.

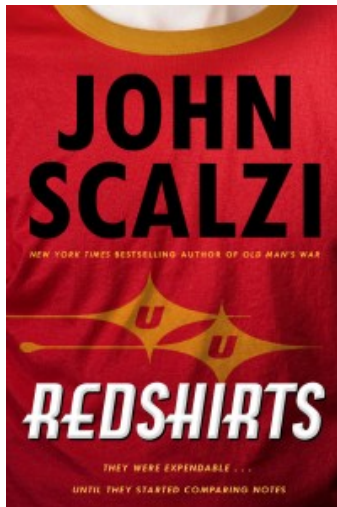
Capclave 2012. George said we had a programming meeting. He needs to get back to hotel to confirm rooms. George has been sick. Sam S. said we did not get the usual post-Balticon membership bump. We will have a table at Worldcon, so if each of us can put in a couple of hours, we can staff it. There was no 2013 report. Cathy said we are still doing hotel search. So no date. We should have it locked by end of August. Bill suggested checking the Reston hotels since the Silver Line might be going that far. Some concern as to whether Maryland people would be willing to go that far south. So the deal would have to be very good to make up for that membership loss. The room rate may be able to go under \$\$\$\$. Steve Stiles can mock up the 2013 ad. It should be easy enough to block the space for the hotel and date. There

was discussion about artwork for bookmark and rack card. Gossip. Capclave 2014 is exploring secondary guests including a multiple Hugo winner.

The Committee to Talk SF will discuss the Hugo nominees. Small Press award – Voting has started. Paul sent out emails to people on Steve’s list or who might be members. If you did not receive it, you are not listed as a member or don’t have email, see him. He can give out passwords. We had 85 stories. The committee picked eight. These are given to the whole club with the names of authors are hidden. We have blind judging. We are extending the deadline to Sunday August 5th, at midnight. Then we send out the press release with the nominees and the winner is announced at Capclave. Paul said there is a bribe: Cathy’s slave labor. Cathy explained, if 70% of club members vote, Cathy will make fudge. 80% she’ll make cheesecake. 90% both. 100%, cheesecake and individual packets of fudge. In five years, we never got < treat >. The award getting more prestige and attention. Paul said *Locus* announces award and how to submit. Paul said the committee is voted on during election for two-year term.

No old business. No new business. Al Katerinsky is here for his third meeting so can join. Announcements: Meeting adjourned unanimously 21:58.

Attendance: Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Bill Lawhorn, Brian Lewis, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Sarah Mitchell, Barry & Judy Newton, Judy Scheiner, George Shaner, Steve Smith, Gayle Surette, Ivy Yap, Alan Katerinsky



Short Reviews

By Samuel Lubell

Redshirts by John Scalzi. This is a very meta book. It’s about ensigns on a starship much like the Enterprise who discover that the reason why everyone on the ship except the top officers is afraid of away missions is that the non-officers keep dying. And that’s because a poorly written Star Trek show in the early 21st century takes them over, except for commercial breaks when they can think for themselves. The solution is to go back in time and stop them. But the novel ends with 80 pages of codas with different present day characters influenced by the time travelers. It was a fun book, and deeper than one would suspect with some philosophy on the nature of reality. Still a quick read with not as much staying power as some of his other books.

Remake by Connie Willis. A love story to the movie musical. In a future Hollywood where movies are an endless stream of remakes using digitized actors of the past, a man who has the job of digitally altering classics to remove the smoking and alcohol (science fiction then) falls in love with a woman who wants to dance in the movies. But no movies are being made. Then he starts seeing her in the chorus line and even leading roles of classic movies. A wonderful short tale with lots of the Connie Willis humor that was mostly missing in her *Blackout/All Clear*.

The Kinsman Saga by Ben Bova. This is the story of an astronaut who in a cold war space dispute kills a cosmonaut only to discover that she is female. This sets him on the road to reject military uses to space and when he becomes administrator of the U.S. moonbase, makes peace with his Russian counterpart and tries to make the moon an independent state. It is amazing how much older SF resembles alternative history. I don't think I'd trade lunar colonies by 2000 for the dismal future and cold war in the book. There is great characterization of Kinsman and his best friend Colt, but not for the female characters.

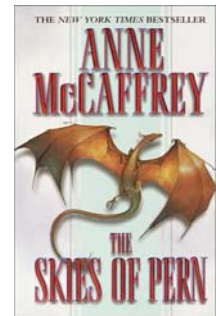


Leviathan Wakes by S. A. Corey. This is excellent space opera. It moves very quickly and jumps from location to location. There is a very complex plot. Although it is the first book in a series, it has a real stopping point at the end, not a cliffhanger. I liked how neither of the main characters were perfect but made mistakes and frequently disagreed.

Boomsday by Christopher Buckley. Very very funny except for the part that the government isn't able to do anything to cope with the retirement of the boomers and the huge expense this will cause. This book may turn out to be more prophetic, than funny.

To Say Nothing of the Dog by Connie Willis. This is a very funny book about time travel. I loved all the literary references and the fantastic characterization. The descriptions of being time-lagged were great. Hopefully the author's *Blackout/All Clear* has allowed her to get the WWII blitz out of her system as it kept popping up here even though this is mostly about the 19th century.

The Skies of Pern by Anne McCaffery. I had stopped reading the series after *Dolphins of Pern* and this book shows I made the right decision. Basically in this volume of the long running series, the people of Pern grow concerned about asteroids (despite being on the planet for hundreds of years without them being a problem) just when dragons began to develop the ability to move things with their minds. Throw in a few attacks by a few anti-progress mobs and the mauling of two dragons (and riders) by the local version of lions and a once-proud series is clearly limping along here. And yes, I still maintain this series is SF, not fantasy. The people got to Pern via space travel, genetically engineered dragons, and in this book are still dealing with the effects of the rediscovery of an artificial intelligence computer.



Dodo Rain Dance for Paolo

The 7/20/12 Third Friday meeting was called to order at 21:18 by President Barry. Sam L. showed the scroll from Locus honoring WSFA Press for publishing *Silently and Very Fast*. Madeleine suggested we put it in a frame. Brian seconded. John M had a frame and said he had tools. He will frame it. Sam L. said he had a new WSFA Journal from last month. Trustees said we have a new member. It is never too soon to think about becoming a trustee at elections. Sam L. said Catherine Asaro is doing a *Diamond Star* concert tonight and Sunday. Judy said Olney is doing *Little Shop of Horrors*. Brian asked about a Medieval Times trip.

Brian said voting for the small press awards closes Aug 4th at midnight. Sarah said "Twitter is tweets." Michael Dirda wrote an article about Readercon that also mentioned Capclave. John M. said there are 127 souls on Meetup. <But maybe some of them are soulless or sold their souls off?>

Capclave: There will be a Capclave table at Worldcon. If everyone puts in an hour we can man the table without anyone being too inconvenienced. Brian offered to drive stuff. Capclave 2013 still looking for hotels in the middle of October. Barry offered to help. 2014 had the dodos do a rain dance for Paolo and it worked.

Talk SF will talk podcasts from last month. Jimmy said to find the podcasts that will be discussed visit scienceismagic.com or see the WSFA list or Facebook. He usually posts this within ten days of the month. He has a new logo from Tom Woldering.

Small press literary award committee told people to read the stories. Cathy said her bribes are if 70% vote, WSFA gets homemade fudge, if 80% chocolate cheesecake, 90% both. For 100% she will make individual packets of fudge. Last year just short of <treat>.

No old business. New business. August has a Fifth Friday.

First meeting: Crystal. On being asked she said she is a relative to Crystal Pepsi, she says she owns it all. She used to read it a lot as a kid and trying to get back into it. Jimmy brought her in. Second meeting. Teresa. She came on her own. She did an Internet search and stumbled across it. Then she met Jimmy.

No third. Announcement: None. Meeting unanimously adjourned at 21:44

Attendance: Alisha Brown, Carolyn Frank, Erica Ginter, Cathy Green, Charity Helton, Bill Lawhorn, Brian Lewis, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Candy & John Madigan, Sarah Mitchell, Barry & Judy Newton, Shirl Phelps, Jimmy Rogers, Mark Roth, Mike Taylor, Meagen Voss, Eva Whitley, Thomas Woldering, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh, Michael Ikeda, Alan Katerinsky, Christel Gesterling, Teresa Telesco, and Barbara Locklin.