

The WSFA Journal March/April 2017

Edited by Samuel Lubell



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WSFA Remembers BSFS' Martin Deutch

First Friday meeting in March, 3/3/17, began with President Bob presiding. WSFA's quieted down. "It's 9:15," said Bob. "George, tell us what you remember from the last meeting." George said there was no quorum, nothing significant sticks to his mind. No attendance. Sam S. for treasurer said \$XX,XXX.XX. We have 35 paid up members.

The trustees said we will have election in a couple of months. We are looking for new warm bodies to take over from old warm bodies. Bob reminded trustees need a slate by start of April.

Capclave Present: Cathy said Elizabeth has the plague. Cathy said, Elizabeth and Sherin Nicole are working on bookmarks. Tweaking it. We will have them by Ravencon/Lunacon. We sent out invites. Sam S said we have 80 paid members, about what we have normally. For Capclave Future, Cathy had nothing to report. There was a discussion of trying to talk to hotels.

For World Fantasy Convention, Bill said he straightened out bank stuff. Getting close on some guest info. Things are moving. On WFC news, there are now new award statutes; there was a discussion of artist who is making them. We are happy that have some registrants and have website up. People discussed how many people come from outside North America.

Capclave 2020, Bill continued. Make sure you get dues to Sam S. Paul will be sending out emails on the opportunity to vote for WSFA guest in 2020. Ann and Bill will talk about other things. It will be fun. Working on the hotel.

The committee to discuss SF said at the third Friday meeting, Ted Weber will read to us at 9:45ish. There will be a dinner before at the meeting at Yaya at 7:30. We will have a discussion on Hugo nominees. This month we will discuss the current issue of *Asimovs*.



For the Small Press Award, Cathy said we have 83 stories nominated with 70 up on website. Androids and zombies. We surpassed last year's number of publications. Paid up WSFA members can nominate stories until the deadline April 2nd.

WSFA Press not was here. Bill said we sold a few books at Mysticon. The Ken Liu book is proceeding nicely. Website is updated and the Nov/Dec WSFA Journal is up. For social media, dodos tweeted from Mysticon. We have two email lists. E-WSFA, will be for general email. Send Elizabeth your email to get on list.

No old business.

New business. The Secretary brought a card for the club to sign for Martin Deutch's death to be sent to Shirley. There will be a memorial for Martin on March 18 at BSFS starting at 1PM. Potluck. Everyone at BSFS is stunned said Steve who called Martin the heart of BSFS. Ann said everyone surprised, he was supposed to recover. Steve said the doctor the day before had told Martin that his health was looking good. Martin was president so an election will be held at BSFS' April business meeting to fill the President opening and Donna has announced resigning as secretary.

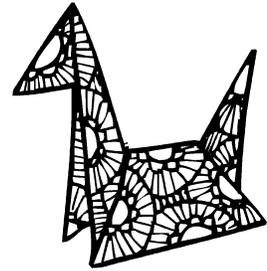


Sam L. said there is a fifth Friday this month. No one volunteered to run a party.

There was no more new business and no new people attending.

Attendance:

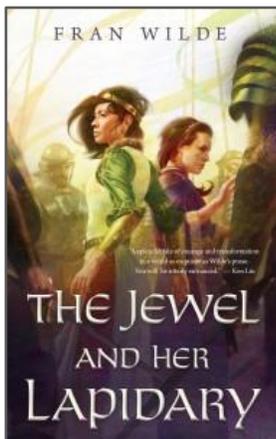
Announcements: Mark said he is home alone except for his lord and master, so will have a song circle on the Third Saturday in April. Sarah said Kosher for Passover Coke is in stores. With sugar not corn syrup. David K. said he is publishing stuff and will have something released every four to six weeks. He will co-edit the anthology *Worlds Enough*. Bill said that on Friday night at Balticon, he will organize offsite trip to Brazilian steakhouse. Kim said he has assembled a paper of origami animals on piano. He has copies of his book but only takes cash.



Meeting unanimously adjourned at 9:45.

Attendance: Courtni Y Burluson, Cathy Green, Kimberly Hargan, Frances Holland, David Keener, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Candy Madigan, Sarah Mitchell, Mark Roth, Judy and Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap, Sam Pierce, and Steven Joel Zeue.

**Review of *The Jewel and Her Lapidary* by Fran Wilde (published by Tor Books)
Review by Kimberly G. Hargan**



Capsule review: a novella jam-packed with the elements that make up fantasy. Highly recommended – if you get a chance, definitely read this one.

When aspiring young writers ask their literature professors what they should write about, the answer is often “Write what you know”. There are of course plenty of magic gems in fantasy, but Fran Wilde has a special perspective. While discussing the background of this novella at a reading for the Washington Science Fiction Association, she talked about her time as a lapidary’s assistant. She noted that she had seen how the wearing of different gems affected the temperaments of their wearers. (The one thing I recall from her talk is that no one should wear emeralds. Not ever.) She took that experience and based a type of magic on it, and thereby “The Jewel and Her Lapidary”.

The story: There is a valley, the Jeweled Valley, where magic gemstones have been mined for several centuries. The jewels have been used to protect the valley from outsiders and to grant a peaceful reign to the ruling class, who themselves are known as Jewels. The magic of the gems is dangerous – according to their classes, they express their own desires, which can come to possess a human being or drive him mad. The progenitor of the Jewels was the Deaf King, who could not hear the gems “speaking”. He collected those who could, named them Lapidaries, and bound them by vows to serve the Jewels, which helped protect their minds against the demands of the gems. The Lapidaries were not only servants, but advisors to their Jewels, the Lapidary to the King in essence being a minister of state.

At the time of the novella, the mines are playing out, and the older gems of power, through years of use, are losing their efficacy. The current Lapidary tried to get the King to “switch over” to a more normal type of diplomacy and foreign relations, but the King really only cared that his subjects within the valley were prosperous and happy, ignoring most of the rest of the world. The King’s Lapidary finally cracked, betraying the valley to the kingdom of the Western Mountains, a growing power with an eye on the gems of power and the excellent chain mail produced in the valley. He poisoned all the Jewels and their Lapidaries except for Lin, the King’s youngest daughter, and her Lapidary Sima, his own daughter. The general from the kingdom of the Western Mountains is a woman, who had agreed with the King’s

Lapidary that her son would get to marry Lin and that the Star Cabochon, a gem that compels obedience, would be turned over to her. With that, her son would be a king within the realm of the Western Mountains, and with the Star Cabochon they could set their sights on further conquests. Lin and Sima are captured, subjected to a harrowing time (all told two nights and two days), and in the end Lin escapes to rally the valley's people to destroy the mines, while Sima sacrifices herself and shatters the Star Cabochon, destroying the minds of all of the Western Kingdom's forces that were present in the throne room.

Analysis: Why is this gem of a story so good? (Pun fully intended.) If you will permit me, I will get a bit fancy-schmancy here. I have been reading *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997, chief editors John Clute and John Grant), which has provided me something of a crash course in what fantasy is all about.



The first thing to consider is what Tolkien called "SUBCREATION", the author's creation of a world internally realistic to the reader (actual creation of worlds being reserved to deity). Fran Wilde's kingdom of the Jeweled Valley is built around the presence of the magical gems that could be mined there. The culture of the ruling Jewels and their Lapidaries is built around the fact of the gems, and although the only characters we get see at length are Princess Lin and Sima (and Lin's remembrances of her family and court life), we get to see that culture through their eyes. They tend to see and react to people and things in a jeweler's terminology: a man's mind shattered like a broken crystal, Lin recalls her Aba's (grandmother's) lessons for being a Jewel (a member of the king's family), Sima recalls her Lapidary's vows as an internal argument, each vow being a set formula symbolized by and associated with the designs, chains and gems on the bracelets, anklets, cuffs and other pieces of "jewelry" permanently soldered into place on her limbs. It all feels like it is a real way of life to the characters in the story, as short as it is.

Next let's look at other storytelling elements as discussed in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (EF). The editors of EF distinguish among a number of sub-genres of fantasy. What they define as HIGH FANTASY (as opposed to S&S or genre fantasy) is set in a SECONDARY WORLD and deals with its fate. The central concern has to do with a LAND, not just as a background but almost as a character in the story. Wilde's Jeweled Valley is set in a medieval or late medieval world, but the valley and other named nations do not correspond with any geography of our world. The "whole world" for Princess Lin is summed up in the phrase "the six kingdoms". The rulers and subjects of the valley have their own culture, based on the land itself – because of the magic gems mined from the mountains surrounding the valley. Apparently the veins or seams that the gems are found in occur nowhere else, at least within range of medieval transportation means. The culture of the valley's people is unique because of the uniqueness of the land they inhabit and the influence of the gems on the people's minds. And of course the rulers' concern is to maintain and protect their land and its unique culture.

On top of that, the Jeweled Valley as a land represents something of a POLDER. The editors of EF define a polder as (generally) a territory that is closed off to some degree or other, usually by magic, from the territory around it. (Brigadoon, closed off from the rest of Scotland by timeskips, and Galadriel's Lothlorien, protected by her magic and the arrows of her subjects, are representative polders.) For the Jeweled Valley, the Opaque Sapphire, the Death Astrion, the Steadfast Diamond, and the Star Cabochon conceal it from inimical outsiders and protect it from their intrusions. The inhabitants are able to trade non-magical gems and mail beyond the valley, and the plans are for Lin to marry a prince of the Eastern Seas, so they are not completely cut off from the outside world. But nevertheless, with the destruction of the first three great gems of power the protection of the valley is also destroyed, and the valley's status as a polder with it.



According to the EF, a key concept in Western fantasy is THINNING, which is the loss or draining away of magic. Beginning with the Silmarillion, Tolkien takes the world through "generations" of thinning until, with the victory over Sauron, we reach the world that we live in today, without wizards, without elves, without magic. In the case of the Jeweled Valley, Sima's father, as a Lapidary, had recognized that the magical gems were losing their strength and that eventually they would no longer be able to protect the valley. It is possible from hints in the text that such gems had "worn out" before and been replaced by others from the mines, but now even the mines are playing out, the calling out of the gems to those who can hear them

ever fainter (because less powerful) and ever deeper in the earth, requiring more work for less return. The king won't listen to his warnings of the thinning, and so Sima's father takes matters into his own hands. However, doing so violates the vows with which he is magically bound by the stones, and it drives him mad, into betrayal and death. As mentioned above, Sima destroys the Star Cabochon, and the princess undertakes the ruining of the mines, essentially finishing the thinning of the magic of the Jeweled Valley.

Other concepts often found in high fantasy (but not necessarily always) are the sense of BELATEDNESS and TIME'S ABYSS. Belatedness is the sense that the old days were the golden days, the golden age. (Some say that much American fiction of all genres carries a sense of belatedness, stemming from the "closing" of the frontier.) It is a recognition that today is a grayer day, essentially as a result of the thinning. A sense of time's abyss tells us that that golden age was a long time ago, so that mostly all we have now are legends. At novella length, Fran Wilde rather wittily serves up belatedness and time's abyss by interspersing several excerpts from a "modern" guidebook among sections of the story. We find that Lin's and Sima's castle is now a place of ruins that are *reputed* to have been a castle, and the history of the magical gems is now a quaint legend from less enlightened times.



Finally, senses of WRONGNESS and BONDAGE are often central to high fantasy. In this story the very nature of the valley's peace and prosperity is based on magical gems that warp men's minds, both of the wielders and of the people they are used on. And at the time of the story even the protection provided by the magic is thinning as well, so things are not all as happy for the valley as it had seemed to Princess Lin over the course of her young life. And again, a great deal of that wrongness is the bondage of the rulers and the lapidaries to the stones, and to the means necessary for humans and stones to coexist. Lin is as much in bondage to her culture as any younger princess in history, and here it is symbolized by the precious metal mesh veil and other *jeweled* accouterments that she wears 24/7. Sima refers to the chained cuffs, armlets, anklets, earrings and such that she wears, also soldered permanently into place, as vows – as we see from her thoughts, they do not just represent the vows for her, but are the actual vows themselves. Being bound by the vows protects her (and any other Lapidary) from the oftentimes conflicting and selfish desires of the gems themselves – a protection which is also a bondage. With the sacrifice of Sima's life as the last Lapidary, and the lack of new gems of power, the bondage of the people to the land of the Jeweled Valley is broken, is brought to an end. Princess Lin takes on a new name, concealing her status as a Jewel, and so the people of the valley, regardless of what the future will bring them, are freed at any rate from the bondage of the gems.

So, in summary, Fran Wilde has provided us with a beautifully intricate piece of work, smelting together the elements that make up modern fantasy and using them to create a novella-length piece of jewelry for our enjoyment.

Ted Weber Reads to WSFA

The WSFA third Friday in March 3/16/17 meeting started early because of a guest, author T.C. Weber, author of *Sleep State Interrupt*. The minutes were waved. Sam gave the treasurer's report.

Trustees are talking among themselves. Cathy said if interested in running for office see a trustee. Bob said trustees need slate next meeting.

Elizabeth for Capclave Present said she has art for flyer. A lot of people are saying yes to coming, including Sarah Pinsker who is one of two people Ken Liu specifically asked for us to invite. Cathy said we are getting 40% response rate on invites. Email her with ideas for programming. Paul has put up list of program participants to website. Cecilia Tan suggested a workshop.

For Capclave Future, Cathy said she is talking to hotels and working with Collette. World Fantasy had nothing to report.

Talk SF shared its schedule. Social media is tweeting. Sam L. read email from Carolyn for the small press award. We have 100 stories, 90 are up. Bob said to tell her we wish her a speedy recovery.

Old business. There is a fifth Friday. No one offered to host. If anyone decides to hold one, share the email lists and website and secretary.

New business. There was a motion to send Carolyn a get well card. Secretary said he will send.

Kevin Foster is here for his second meeting, he is a retired historical archeologist. He heard about us through Meetup. David Holden is here for his 3rd meeting. Last time was in 2010 due to schedule problems with his job. He went to last couple of Capclaves.

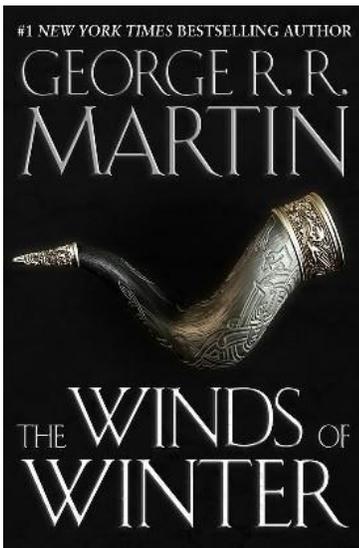
Announcements. Elizabeth needs someone who reads Japanese to help with game. Erica had cataract surgery and is wearing orthopedic glasses. She will have other one done next Thursday. Bill said there will be a WSFA dinner Fulgo del Chou at Balticon.

Michael said nominations for Hugo awards end at 11:59 pacific time. Artomatic is March 24 in Crystal City.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 unanimous.

Attendance: Courtni Y Bursleson, Rodger Burns, Erica and Lydia Ginter, Cathy Green, Kindra Gresham, Kimberly Hargan, Frances Holland, Michael Ikeda, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Candy Madigan, Sarah Mitchell, Barry Newton, Sam Pierce, Mark Roth, Elizabeth Twitchell, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap, Kevin Foster, Ted Weber, and David Holden.

**FORTHCOMING BOOKS
BY SAMUEL LUBELL**

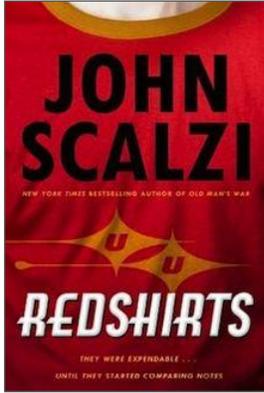


April 1, 2017-The following are the new books of interest to science fiction and fantasy readers

The Winds of Winter by George RR Martin. Unable to finish writing his version of his own story, Martin has been reduced to novelizing the HBO series that has now continued past the original source material. "I just watch the show, and write up what I see," said Martin. "It solves that messy plotting, dialogue, and visualizing the characters problem. But I still get to describe what the food tastes like; HBO can't deliver that... yet!"

Dresden Messiah by Jim Butcher. As a wizard, Harry Dresden can work miracles. And he's recently come back from the dead. So when a shortage of alcohol at his favorite bar causes him to turn water into wine, a group of Chicago winos proclaim Dresden the new messiah and start a religion worshipping him. This naturally gets him in trouble with both the White Council and the Catholic Church. But Dresden is really in for it when both the Faerie Queens grow furious at his seeming attempt to outrank them.

The Last Standalone Fantasy by Brandon Sanderson. For decades, the muse of Creativity has been running low on imaginum, the source of all new literary worlds. In recent years authors have been limited to just enough imaginum to create three worlds each, requiring them to reuse settings in neverending series. Now, the muse sets out to find a writer who will make the best possible use of the last grains of imaginum. Sanderson swears that this book has no connections to any of his series.



Roborevolt by Charlie Stross. In a future where robots have taken over all jobs and the few remaining humans beg in the streets, a new political leader has the key to defeating the robots...by telling them paradoxes until their heads explode!

White Armor by John Scalzi. The author had such great success writing a Star Trek spoof that he's doing it again, with the logical targets—the Imperial Stormtroopers. The umpteenth clone to wear the white armor is just slightly damaged enough to realize that he's in a movie and not the hero. He comes under suspicion for his uncanny ability to actually hit what he targets. Still, he saves himself from a force-choking by coming up with a brilliant plan to go back in time and stop George Lucas from making the prequel films.

And of course, April Fools!

Constitutional Crisis Tabled

The minutes for the April 7, 2017 First Friday were taken by Elizabeth Twitchell. Thanks Elizabeth!

Meeting called to order at 9:15 pm

- Secretary: Not present, no minutes
- Treasurer's Report: WSFA currently has \$XX,XXX and change
- Capclave Present: Up to 100 registrations, 10 more than last month. Over ordered Rack Cards, and they are available for all after the meeting.
- WSFA Elections: Reminder that everyone needs to pay their dues to vote. Trustees slate for 2017/2018:
 - o President: Bob Macintosh
 - o Vice President: George Shaner
 - o Treasurer: Sam Scheiner
 - o Capclave 2019: Sam Pierce
 - o Small Press Award Committee: Sam Lubell, Courtni Burleson
 - o Trustee: Roger Burns
-
- Capclave Future: Collette is working with the Rockville Hilton location; it should be a good deal if they can do an 18 +19 combo
- World Fantasy: Still on, new award pictures & announcement go live next week. 2017 is in San Antonio.
- Small Press Award: Currently 129 entries. 115 available now for the committee, the rest in a day or two.
- WSFA Press- The final cover image for Ken Liu's book will be arriving at the end of March, the book will arrive by Capclave. Storage Space- The prices are higher than we want, but Paul is continuing to look for space.

- Entertivities report: The Peale Museum in Baltimore has a very neat play HT Darling's Incredibule Musaeum Presents: The Treasurers of New Galapagos, Astonishing Acquisitions from the Perisphere". Plays till April 30.
- A constitutional crisis was created while trying to avoid new business. All eventually tabled, crisis resolved happily for all. WSFA continues apace.



Meeting Attendees: No one is here for their first or third meeting. For the second meeting Martin Wilsey, and Apurva Desai

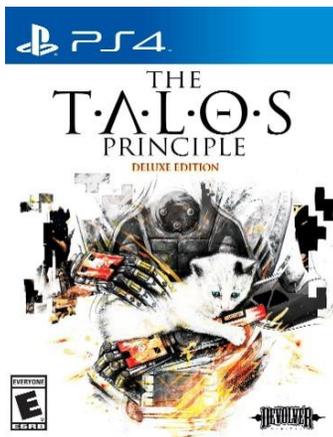
Announcements-

- Mark is having a house party/song circle April 14.
- April 22 – March for Science in DC
- April 29- Earth Day March for Climate also in DC
- Gayle and Paul have a new cat, Princess Quincy Feistypants
- The Committee to Discuss Science Fiction will be discussing the March/April issue of *Fantasy & Science Fiction*

Meeting ended unanimously at 9:41

Attendance: Elizabeth wrote, "I tried to take attendance, but that failed miserably."

Review of The Talos Principle
By Rodger Burns



In The Talos Principle, you control a humanoid robot that awakens in a beautiful but lonely ruined environment, set to solve puzzles by a disembodied voice that calls itself 'Elohim'. As you explore the world you find yourself in, you find messages from previous travelers, time capsules from the builders of the environment you're inhabiting, and other strange interactions. Before long, you find yourself asking not only "How do I make progress?" and "What is this place?", but deeper questions including "Why am I solving these puzzles?" and even "Am I human?"

The gameplay of The Talos Principle is not revolutionary - it involves puzzle-solving and exploration in a first-person environment, very similar to that of Portal and similar games. Its gameplay stands out, though, in that few if any puzzles are dependent on pixel-perfect precision or split-

second timing to achieve a solution; such tricks are sometimes possible, but a more relaxed and elegant approach invariably exists as well. Instead, the challenge in the puzzles of The Talos Principle comes from the need to examine the environment carefully, find ways to use tools to progress past multiple barriers at once or allow you to recover other tools used earlier in the puzzle, and otherwise think laterally to reach your goal. Exploration is somewhat open-world - puzzles can technically be tackled in any order, but some require tools that only unlock after earlier puzzles have been solved. The openness does mean that if one particularly frustrating puzzle is discovered, it's possible to spend time solving other nearby puzzles instead, rather than simply trying again and again until progress is found. 'Fatal' encounters with obstacles are also only a minor setback - Elohim rewinds time to return you to safety - encouraging experimentation and risk.

The structure of The Talos Principle's gameplay dovetails well with its approach to plot, world building, and story. A few key pieces of the game's storyline are directly revealed as you move from puzzle to puzzle, but most supporting details are optional and off the beaten path, uncovered only when you choose to go looking for them. In a less leisurely-paced game, this approach could easily strand a player without a vital plot point, leading to frustration and confusion, but in The Talos Principle it works well. The world building is by no means perfect; it draws on many areas of scholarship, from Greek and Egyptian myth to philosophy and information theory, but necessarily does so only shallowly. The illusion of interactivity offered by the game interface can actually emphasize these imperfections, teasing players with the chance to shape in-game conversations towards a particular topic but then blocking any deep discussion of key concepts due to limitations on conversational choice. At some points, the only feasible choice is to accept the least bad option from the palette provided by the game engine, allow the conversation to play out, and move on.



Even with these limitations, The Talos Principle still stands out, both as a solid game in its own right, and as a case study in using the toolkit of video game design to build a science fiction world and tell a science fiction story. It is recommended to both experienced fans of puzzle games, and to science fiction fans new to gaming looking for an entry point strong on story and with a forgiving learning curve in its gameplay. The Talos Principle is available through digital download for Windows, Mac, Linux, Android, and PS4. Retail price is \$39.99 US; online sales may offer discounts of 50%-75% off.

Capclave Won't Have Ken Liu's Star Wars Book

The Third Friday WSFA meeting on April 21, 2017 began with Prez Bob saying, "Ladies and gentlemen its 9:15, third Friday in April." Sec Sam said, "No one sent me minutes. Elizabeth took them and she's at a work meeting." There was no old business. Bill said there was a motion to almost have a motion.

For Capclave present, Cathy said we're chugging along. She is talking to program participants, getting workshops. There is concern over people signing in advance for workshops and not showing up. People value what's paid for like at the pound when you get a dog they make you pay for shots. So may have people pay to sign in advance, or not have people sign up in advance but only at the con.

For Cap Future, Cathy said she is talking to hotels. There are issues around rooms, requirement, and date. Bill asked about current hotel. Cathy said considering all options. Cathy gave lots of details about all the hotels she's considering.



Bill for WFC / Capclave 2020 said he is waiting on Balticon for some hotel stuff. WFC sent out invites to guests, waiting to hear back.

Trustees: Mike Walsh said slate announced at last meeting. The four main officers are a rerun. Trustees are Mark, Barry, and Rodger. For the Small Press Award Courtni has agreed to join, Sam L will run again. Capclave 2019 chair is Sam Pierce. Election will be held after the First Friday meeting. Anyone can nominate. Trustees' purpose is to make sure there is someone for all positions. Nominations are gladly accepted from the floor. Cathy said Trustee is an easy start place. Mike Walsh said that's it.

Small Press – Carolyn said 129 stories, most since she became administrator. Now job is reading them. Barry said that's what happens when you double the prize. Carolyn said that a lot are from anthologies done by Kickstarter. That's the most interesting thing. Lots of stories that someone thought was great.



Bill for WSFA Press said he had a conversation with Sean Wallace; things are progressing very well with the Ken Liu book, *The Man Who Ended History*. Bill has cover art. Waiting for some internal art, but on track for Capclave. Having the cover will help us sell the book.

Social media. It's there. Bill said, several of us will be at Ravencon and will be doing parties. Constitution committee has nothing. Committee to Talk SF discussed the schedule. No old business.

Entertivities: BBC is doing Doctor Who and a spinoff called Class.

March for Science.

No New business.

First Meetings: Andrew Johnson, live next door to Andrea, Nina was dragged by Andrew.

Announcements: Bill said we are about a month from Balticon. Will do dinner Friday night at the local Brazilian steakhouse. Kim has a novel, selling copies. Mike Walsh – Ken Liu has a Star Wars novel at the end of October, but won't have early copies at Capclave. UnBC has an exhibit of sf art.



Motion to adjourn at 9:45 passed unanimously.

Attendance: Courtni Y Burleson, Rodger Burns, Carolyn Frank, Kimberly Hargan, Frances Holland, Michael Ikeda, Bill Lawhorn, Sam Lubell, Bob Macintosh, Candy Madigan, Sarah Mitchell, Barry & Judy Newton, Sam Pierce, Deidre Tracy, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh, David Holden, Nina Gbaba, and Andrew Johnson.