

PARSEC Meeting Schedule

May 2005

Date: May 14th 2005 - 2 PM
Topic: Your favorite book discussion group lead by Dan Bloch
Location: Allegheny Branch of the Carnegie Library

June 2005

Date: June 11th 2005 - 2 PM
Topic: (Tentative)
Dr. Gerald Myers of LBF Books on the perils, policies and pleasures of running a small press
Location: Squirrel Hill Branch of the Carnegie Library

July 2005

Date: July 9th 2005 - 2 PM
Topic: Science fiction and fantasy on Radio: 1955 to the present by David Brody
Location: Squirrel Hill Branch of the Carnegie Library

The Carnegie Library, Allegheny Regional is approximately 1 mile north of Downtown Pittsburgh. Situated in Allegheny Center in the Central North Side neighborhood, Allegheny Regional lies just behind Allegheny Center immediately beside the old Buhl Planetarium. For Directions please refer to the Parsec web site: <http://www.parsec-sff.org/meet.html>

The Squirrel Hill Branch of the Carnegie Library is at the corner of Forbes & Murray in Squirrel Hill.

PARSEC

The Pittsburgh Area's Premiere Science-Fiction Organization
P.O. Box 3681, Pittsburgh, PA 15230-3681

President - Kevin Geiselman	Vice President - Sarah Wade-Smith
Treasurer - Greg Armstrong	Secretary - Joan Fisher
Commentator - Ann Cecil	

Website: <http://www.parsec-sff.org>

Meetings - Second Saturday of every month.

Dues: \$10 full member, \$2 Supporting member

Sigma is edited by David Brody
Send article submissions to: sigma@spellcaster.org



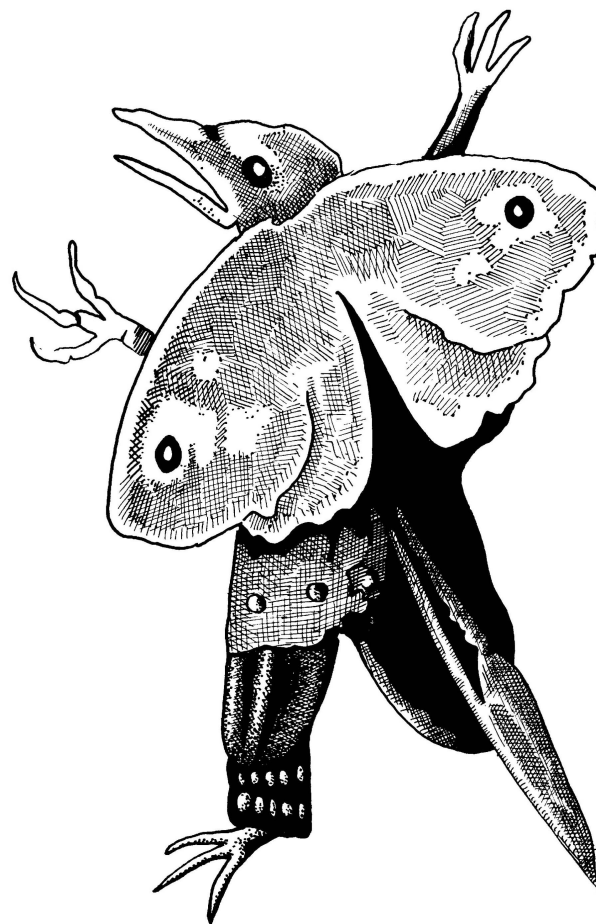
SIGMA

The Newsletter of PARSEC • May 2005 • Issue 230

Wade-Smith on Armstrong

Cecil on Teideman

Brody Can't Help Himself





View From the Top

The President's Column - Kevin Geiselman

Writer's Block

My writing typically happens in one steady disgorging of ideas. I'll have an idea and write it all in one sitting with very little difference between the first draft and final form. My decent grades in school prove out that this form of writing isn't inherently bad. You may or may not have noticed that the reviews and president's columns I've presented here are cranked out in

one take.

The other way that I write involves no actual writing at all. There is a story in my head that keeps being edited and reworked over and over again. The time during my bicycle commute is a continual internal dialogue between characters.

Unfortunately, there is a vast wasteland between those two ends of the writing spectrum. Without the inspiration, I find it hard to force something onto the page. And even though I've composed page upon page of dialogue in my head during my bike ride, when I finally sit down to put it on paper it doesn't sound the same.

I tried some techniques to try to fight this impediment. I told myself that I would sit down at a certain time or on a certain day and force myself to write. I told myself that I would put it down no matter how badly it came out and fix it later just to get the damn thing out of my head. Of course, that time or that day never came. I usually just ended up checking my e-mail or surfing the web. At one point I got a tape recorder, believing that I could simply turn the dialogue in my head into something I could transcribe later. That idea didn't produce a minute of tape.

A blog. How about if I use a blog to get in the habit of writing. Within a fairly short period of time, my employer blocked the website and by the time I got home in the evening, the ideas that came to me during the day were no longer the same. And besides, I had to check my e-mail.

This column doesn't have a good ending. The brief spurt of inspiration that allowed me to crank out this article at the last minute has only held long enough to get to the bottom of the page. Beyond that, the scenes keep playing in my head during my ride home.

Short Story Contest Update

The PARSEC Short Story Contest received 39 entries this year from 19 U. S. states, one A. P. O., and one from the U. K. Initial screening is currently underway, and the expectation is that the top dozen or so stories will be going out to the judges in mid-May. The judges this year are Fruma Klass, Julie Czernada, and David Barr Kirtley.

Ann Cecil

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were different from what men were writing. They wrote for different needs, and focused on different things than men. An alternative science fiction culture created by women.

Weird Tales is different from *Amazing Stories*, because it is fantasy and predates *Amazing Stories*. *Weird Tales* lasted from 1923 to 1954. During its first existence 13.5% of the stories were written by women. They wrote a total of 365 stories, and those stories were written by 127 women, or 17% of all the authors whose work appeared in *Weird Tales*.

Many people believe C.L Moore made her debut in *Weird Tales*, November 1933, and submitted under that name because she was a woman and she would not be accepted. However when you look at the list of the names of the female writers, only 2 used ambiguous names. She was working in a bank, and was afraid that she would be fired if her boss found out she was writing for these magazines.

The first woman to appear in *Weird Tales*, was Meredith Davis. She appeared in the first issue, which was published in March 1923.

There were 117 issues and women appeared in 107 of them, by the time C.L Moore debuted in 1933. *Weird Tales* had a long history of accepting and publishing female authors.

63 female poets appeared in the magazine or 40% of all poets it published. They contributed 170 poems which is 30% of the poems published. Not one used initials or ambiguous names.

The editor of *Weird Tales* from 1940 until 1954 was a woman. Women painted the cover of *Weird Tales* for 39 consecutive issues. Margret Brundish(sic) painted the cover art for the Conan stories. Of the letters written to *Weird Tales* magazines, women wrote 382 or 26.6% of all letters. Of 5 random issues, 2 from 1947, 2 from 1949, and 1 from 1952 there were 381 members in the *Weird Tales* club. 100 were women or 26.2% of all members.

There were sexist magazines and stories, but women were not invisible. They were present from the very start. Most people in present day are not exposed to the magazines that showed the presence of women in science fiction. Even historians and those who write on the genre are misinformed, and date the first presence of women as the '60s. If anyone 'gets any exposure it is in reprints from the 60's and 70s.

Women were present as writers, editors, artists, letter writers, and fanzines, both as subscribers, and fanzines written and put together just for women.

As a note- At the height of the meeting there were 14 men, and 15 women present.

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from Victorian London (in an episode that co-stars Charles Dickens), to near future Utah. For those who crave the wacky improbable bad guys of the original, there's even a Dalek, and this time we learn how it is that those curiously menacing tin cans on casters manage to get up and down stairs.

All and all a compelling diversion from my obsession with politics. Although, even here I have a reason to blame George Bush for something. During the recent shakeup in the BBC's senior management team, largely perpetrated by Mr. Bush's lap dog Tony Blair in an effort to muzzle the BBC's coverage of Blair's Iraq war related lies, the man largely responsible for keeping Doctor Who off the air for much of the last 16 years was put back in charge. He's known for hating the series and has made it clear that he is allowing its revival to continue only reluctantly. Russell Davies' obvious skill as a writer and producer may confound that reluctance. We'll see.

Apologies to Geis if I duplicated any of his excellent review in the last issue.

Notes From the Maintenance Department

The Editor's Column – David Brody

Forgive me while I gush. No, not about politics. My little dust up with Mr. H. and others on the parsec-talk list convinced me that some world views will simply never converge. So this month I'm going to talk about SF. Fancy that.

First of all, let me make it clear that I'm a devoted Doctor Who fan. Its unique mix of whimsy, implausibility and character driven weirdness hooked me back in the late 70's and I've been addicted ever since. When the series faded into BBC limbo in 1989 I became a junkie in search of a fix.

A few years ago my need was somewhat satisfied by Big Finish Productions' admirable audio versions of the Doctor's continuing adventures that featured actors from the TV series, but along with so many others, I yearned for the real thing. When the Fox/BBC television movie came out in 1996, I hoped that it meant that the Beeb had finally come to its senses and that the Tardis would return to a regular spot on their schedule.

No such luck.

Then it happened. The announcement was made last year that the Doctor was coming back, this time under the guidance of Russell T. Davies. Davies is the creator of the original British version of *Queer as Folk*, the ground breaking series that proved that realistic and sensitive depictions of gay sexuality wouldn't undermine the moral underpinnings of civilized society. OK, good deal, but what did he know about science fiction? After all, during its original 26 year run Doctor Who had been enhanced by the contributions of such brilliant minds as Douglas Adams and Terry Nation, science fiction writers to the core. What did this Davies character know about SF?

I awaited the Doctor's return with anticipation and dread.

(The gushing begins now.)

The new Doctor Who is among the best SF TV series I've ever seen. It ranks with the best of the original and is, in the words of the 9th Doctor himself, "fantastic".

It stars Chris Eccleston, the mad army officer from *28 Days Later*, (one of the best horror movies ever and second only to Pittsburgh's own *Night of the Living Dead* in the canon of zombie flicks). Eccleston, as the Doctor with no name, is suitably eccentric, wonderfully emotional and in many respects the most believable of all the fine British actors who've played him up until now. I was disappointed to learn recently that he will be leaving the show at the end of the current 13 part run and being replaced by David Tennant for the next series, but if Davies' current job of casting is any indicator, I'm inclined to give his new choice the benefit of the doubt.

Unlike the 2, 4 and 6 part story arcs of the original, the current show is made up of single episode storylines in 45 minute episodes (although as of this writing there has been a two part episode.) The stories themselves are as wide ranging as the original, taking the Doctor from modern London, to the end of the world;

Reviews

Books

Women of the Otherworld

by Kelly Armstrong

reviewed by Sarah-Wade Smith

I am, admittedly, a sucker for werewolf stories. I seem to feel the same attraction for them that other women feel for vampires. Which is how I got into this series which has so far run four volumes:

Bitten, *Stolen*, *Dime Store Magic* and *Industrial*



Magic, with a fifth, *Haunted*, due out in a few months.

According to her website, Canadian author Kelley Armstrong originally intended *Bitten* to be a stand-alone werewolf novel. When approached about making it into the start of an ongoing series, Ms. Armstrong decided that werewolves would get boring. So, she came up with the idea of a series of "braided novels", with a interlocking cast of various continuing supernatural characters with the focus shifting between them.

Thus, the first two of the series are told from the viewpoint of the world's only female werewolf, Elena Michaels. The second two shift to the viewpoint of a young witch, Paige Winterbourne who was introduced in *Stolen* with Elena and her friends making guest appearances as supporting characters. The fifth book will shift again, to the story of the ghost of Savannah Levine's dead mother.

One thing I like about the books is that the lead characters are very different people. Elena Michaels is a thirty-something tomboy who describes herself as "femininity challenged" and has a more or less successful career as a freelance journalist specializing in Canuck politics. She is extremely independent, athletic and self-confident. Paige, a 23 year old computer geek/spellcaster, is a very unselfconfident young woman suddenly saddled with her mother's position as coven leader and the job of foster mother to a rather dangerous young teen-ager and not at all sure she is prepared for either one. And they both work.

As I mentioned, Elena is the only female werewolf in Armstrong's supernatural world. This is because the gene that creates a hereditary werewolf is on the Y chromosome, so it's only inherited by males. However, you can also become a werewolf through being bitten by a werewolf; an inconsistency that does bother me. After all, if the condition is genetic, how would a bite change the victim's DNA? However, the rest of the book is good enough to overlook it. Women can become werewolves, but only through being infected by a werewolf's bite.

That is not as easy as it sounds. Werewolves bite to kill. If the prey does somehow survive, and also survives the stress of the transformation the werewolf usually makes a point of tracking down the wounded victim and finishing the job.

Elena was unusually lucky having been bitten by a werewolf who wanted her

to survive. Meet Clayton Danvers, himself one of about three surviving bitten werewolves in the world. Nobody really knows where Clay came from. He was bitten about age five and lived from age 5 to 10 in a swamp as a feral wolf before being "rescued" and adopted by pack leader Jeremy Danvers. Despite having the good looks that only a male romance novel lead could have, Clay also has a brilliant academic career in sociology. Nevertheless, Elena insists that Clay is still more wolf than human in his thinking and he does not play at all well with normal people. In fact, he bit Elena specifically in order to give himself a girlfriend who wasn't human. Nice guy.

When we meet Elena, she has left the Pack to assert her own independence and is living in Toronto with a very sweet, gentle boyfriend and pursuing her journalism career. Of course, she still has to shift to a wolf every two weeks or so, or else! The "or else" being enforced by her own body.

When Jeremy Danvers, all-around nice guy and Pack alpha as well as Clay's adoptive father, asks Elena to come back to the Pack's estate near Syracuse to help with a problem, Elena is reluctant. She left, after all, because she was tired of dealing with the Pack wolves' attitudes which started with being highly over-protective and got harder to deal with from there.

However, she owes Jeremy for his help in overcoming her condition's murderous side and she did promise him to return and help if truly needed. Besides, despite his cluelessness about women, Jeremy is one of the sweeter guys she knows and something of a surrogate father to her.

The problem turns out to be a group of non-Pack werewolves, called "mutts" who are beginning to move against the Pack's turf. They are targeting and killing locals and dumping the bodies on the estate, threatening to expose the Pack. Elena is finding herself in an escalating war among wolves that will cost her several friends and maybe her own life into the bargain.

Stolen, the first sequel, finds Elena more or less reconciled with the Pack and with Clay. Following up on someone who seems to know way more about werewolves than is good for the Pack, Elena finds herself meeting with an elderly witch named Ruth Winterbourne and her young "niece" Paige.

Ms. Winterbourne wants to warn the werewolves that someone is kidnapping supernaturals and to invite the lycanthropes to an "Interracial Council meeting" at a town community center in rural Vermont. After leaving the Winterbournes, Elena is attacked by very professional and very well armed mercenaries.

When she, Jeremy and Clay show up for the Council meeting, they are attacked again by the same squad. Infuriated, Jeremy chews the witches out for being incompetent enough to let themselves be tailed, and severs contact with the council, warning them that the wolves will look out only for themselves.

However, as they return homewards, Elena is ambushed when she allows herself to become separated from Clay. Ambushed, drugged and abducted, she finds herself in a very secure prison, guarded by the aforementioned mercenaries and run by scientists who want to know what makes supernaturals like her tick. They are financed by a computer genius who wants to acquire the supernaturals'



March Minutes

Joan Fisher & Sasha Riley

April 9th - The meeting started at 2:30 with Kevin announcing that there was no topic for the next several meetings.

Sasha came up with a topic for the next meeting but we are still looking for the following months if anyone has any ideas.

The treasurers report was given.

It was then discussed that the library was now charging a \$30 clean up fee and was requiring a contract to be signed for each month. And we will be needing a new location for the PARSEC Library. Several ideas were battered around.

Kevin announced several movies that were coming out.

There was a call for more art for the Parsec calendar

Maxine Oleyar won the raffle and took the book *The Spheres of Heaven*

Eric Davin began his presentation by saying that science fiction is not science. It is the fiction of science.

Fantasy and science fiction is popular culture.

Science fiction has been seen as dominated by a patriarchy.

Amazing Stories was the first science fiction magazine they also had the first female SF author.

People think that women on the covers of old science fiction magazines are always damsels in distress. Women were shown as powerful and dominant. At times with men, in the positions of "damsels in distress". Women and teenagers would see the covers of the magazines, and would feel drawn to them and become fans.

Many people believe that women "showed up" in science fiction magazines in the 60's, however the first women appeared in 1926. An article appeared in 1950 stating that women had been in science fiction magazines since the 1930s.

It's argued that women were outnumbered in the world of science fiction 1 to 22. The 1960 World Science Fiction con, was chaired and organized by a woman. It was the second to be so. The first was in 1952.

Bidding for the 1960 World Con was arranged so that slowly during the bidding other cities would drop out and the only city left was Pittsburgh. Many women worked on the convention, and there were many women in attendance on panels. 24.24% of the paid membership of the 1960 World Con were women.

In the 1960 fan directory 20% of all the names were women, and in 1955 a survey was done of 1800 active fans, 20% of those were also female.

The misrepresentation of women in science fiction could be due to the fact that the women in the 1960's claimed that they were the first to push through the wall of the "man's world" of science fiction.

Ann suggested that when the men came back from the second world war there was a push to return to the "women in the home" ideal and that it pushed women away from the science fiction movement, for a number of years. Leading women in the 60's to think that they were the first to be in science fiction.

Feminist, feminism was first discussed in the 1920's, and in the magazines there were stories about feminist utopias in the late 20's and early 30's.

Women authors during this period were ahead of their time, and wrote stories that

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aster for the Armada because of the unexpected intervention of the seti, but the Secessionists cannot rejoice too quickly: seti politics are not simple, and their allies must withdraw. There are indications that the Armada knew this would be a disaster, and set up the Commander who knew too much about past misdeeds on the Armada's part.

Cira survives by virtue of resourcefulness, courage, and dumb luck. She gets help from one of the sickest villains I've read: Hil Venner, who is all the more repulsive because he is clearly human. Alexan lives, but gets his mind-wiped, by the man he trusts the most: the father he wants so badly to please.

It's fairly clear from the outset where this battle is going, but there are a number of twists among the revelations and fast-moving action, along with some real depth to the characters that take this book above the standard space opera genre.

Peace and Memory happens a century or so later, and concerns the efforts of the now successful rebel worlds to come to terms with the Pan Humana. Earth and its Solar System possessions, having cut themselves off from the new and different, have grown corrupt and stagnant. One of the founders of the Commonwealth Republic, as the rebel coalition calls itself, has died. Or has he? Power brokers are keeping his body alive, so that his will cannot be executed, breaking up the corporation he built. He has downloaded his personality into an AI on his spaceship, and he also put some of his own DNA and a personality inlay into a young man who had lost his own memory in a spaceship accident.

Benajim Cyanus, who is driven partly by the grafted on memories, and partly by his desire to know who he used to be, brings the last request of the dead founder, Sean Merrick, to a lady pilot who was an old friend of Merrick. Merrick wants to be buried on Earth, in his family crypt. Tamyn Glass reluctantly takes on the job, even though she realizes the difficulties. She has to break into Merrick's highly protected headquarters, steal the corpse, smuggle it out of the republic, cross illegally into Pan Humana space, and then dodge the fortifications of Earth to land in the cemetery, open the crypt, bury Merrick, and then get out alive.

Glass and Cyanus join forces, and collect a mélange of interesting helpers, including a seti and a prophalactic (some kind of cyborg bodyguard). In a series of exciting maneuvers, they succeed in their task, learning new and interesting things about the workings of the Pan Humana, human greed, and what's been going on in the Republic as well. It is the get out alive part where they start having trouble. *Peace*, it turns out, has a very different meaning in this universe.

Tiedemann raises interesting questions about responsibility, moral and legal, in both these books. He is careful to include the shades of gray that plague real life. Both books (still available on Amazon, or through Meisha Merlin Publications directly) are highly recommended.

powers and is prepared to quite literally take them apart. In the meantime, he'll settle for simply hunting down and killing whoever is deemed to have outlived his usefulness as a lab rat.

To further complicate matters, Ruth Winterbourne has also been abducted and is trying to somehow shelter Savannah Levine, a 12-year old fellow inmate.

Savannah is almost as anomalous as Elena herself. Her late mother, killed when an abduction team decided she was far too dangerous to simply hold captive, was the daughter of a powerful witch and demon. Gaining powers from both sides of her heritage, Eve Levine was banned by the Winterbournes' coven for her willingness to use dark magic. Savannah is her daughter by an equally powerful sorcerer and is herself showing signs of having serious power. If you can imagine a nuclear power plant in the form of a temperamental 12 year old girl, you've got Savannah, and there are a lot of parties who want to get their hands on her.

Then there is the scientist who injected herself with Elena's saliva in an attempt to become the second living female werewolf. She succeeded and now suffers from attacks of homicidal rage and, of course, blames Elena for all of it.

With the third book, *Industrial Magic*, the focus shifts to the younger Winterbourne, Paige. Her mother's death in the last book has made her the titular head of the North American coven, but the elders who actually run the coven have no intention of paying any mind to the 23 year old. They certainly have no intention of changing in the slightest the way their grandparents did things just because Paige thinks they are living in the 21st century.

On top of her new responsibilities and frustrations, Paige is also having to deal with being the guardian of a dangerously precocious Savannah Levine, and she has exactly the wrong man on her doorstep: Savannah's natural father, Kristof Nast. Nast wants custody of his daughter and has more than enough lawyers, guns and money to take her, not to mention being able to offer Savannah the sort of fairytale princess lifestyle that Paige, a struggling web site designer, can only dream of.

If this weren't bad enough, Nast soon outs Paige as a "wiccan" and Paige's lawyer is murdered by obviously supernatural means, making Paige the chief suspect. Her coven is falling over themselves to control the damage by divorcing themselves from Paige and her problems and insisting Paige give Savannah up to Nast to protect her sisters.

Paige's only ally is a bespectacled lawyer who is almost as good a sorcerer as he is an attorney. However, Lucas Cortez is also the illegitimate son of the magickal version of Don Corleone and Paige isn't sure if she can trust him or how far. His very presence drives even more of a wedge between Paige and her coven.

Industrial Magic, the most recent entry in the series, finds Paige trying to settle into her new life, same as the old life, in Portland. Banished from Massachusetts by her former coven mates, she is trying to rebuild her web design business with some success and to start a new coven with unaffiliated witches with zero success. In large part, this is because she is living with a sorcerer,

Lucas Cortez, was kicked out of her old coven for endangering them, and is the guardian of a 13 year old who still scares everyone. Despite this, Savannah is actually mellowing into a fairly sweet teenager and Paige's romance with Lucas is blossoming.

Then the wrong man turns up on her doorstep. In this case, Lucas' father, Benicio Cortez, head of what amounts to a cross between Enron and the Yakuza plus black magic. Lucas has nobly dedicated his life and law practice to fighting the Cortez cabal. Despite this, and his illegitimacy, Benicio has named Lucas his heir as head of the cabal, much to the fury of Benicio's wife, and their three legitimate sons, most of whom have already tried to have Lucas killed.

What Benicio wants is Lucas. More specifically, he wants Lucas and Paige to take a case for him. One of the few nice things about the cabals is that they do protect their loyal employees. Now someone or something is stalking and murdering the runaway children of the cabal's supernatural employees. Something has to be done to stop it and Benicio wants Lucas and Paige to be the ones to do it. In part, this is because he wants to use the case to mend the rift between him and Lucas.

I have to say that Lucas is about my favorite character in the series. Where Clay is matinee idol handsome with a bad-boy attitude that just won't quit, Lucas is a straight shooting Mr. nice guy, who can stand his own ground when he has to. He is an ordinary looking guy who wears wire-rims in preference to contacts, but who rides an antique Harley he has lovingly restored. He shrugs off mob hit men and takes on longshot cases pro bono to prove his abilities as an attorney. Lucas is the guy you really want to cuddle up to.

Another favorite of mine is the vampiress Cassandra DuCharme, a blood-sucker in Italian designer fashions, Prada pumps and a makeup application that only 300 years of practice could perfect. I mention Cassandra because she contributes a lot to making *Industrial Magic* the funniest of the series. Just watching her try to deal with Jamie, a necromancer, who keeps pointing out that Cassandra is, well,...dead, is delightful.

Then there is Cassandra and Paige's encounter with the New Orleans vampires, a coterie of blatant Lestat wannabes. Among them is John, who prefers being called Hans. John also insists on flirting with all the boys even though he is totally straight, because he thinks it makes him look cool. The description of Paige and a mortified Cassandra exploring John's beyond tacky vampire fetish house never fails to send me into helpless spasms of ROFL no matter how many times I reread it.

Yet, there is a poignancy to it because Cassandra's comical self absorption stems from the fact that her long undeath is slowing coming to its own end. Cassandra is, in effect, dying.

And yes, Elena, Jeremy and Clay are back as supporting characters.

Nor is genuine horror missing from the series. Elena's original decision to accept Jeremy's help came because her inability to control her condition resulted in her killing and eating two innocent people. She still grades mutts into the

"The Good, the Bad and the Ugly". The good ones can resist the urge to kill, the bad ones can't and the ugly ones don't see any reason to try. Cassandra and her ilk may not be the nightstalking terrors of a Dracula flick, but over a multi-hundred year life span, they still fill a graveyard with victims to preserve their own lives, and the cabals are perfectly prepared to use human sacrifice if that's what it takes to close the deal.

And amazingly, it all works. In four books, Armstrong has run us through bloodshed, horror, pure evil, slapstick, true love, etc and has done it with a butchy tomboy, a romance novel bad boy, a plump insecure 20 something, a nice guy who wears glasses and has the family from hell, and a vampire who has trouble thinking about anything else but her. She's made us love all of them, even some of the bad guys.

The next novel in the series is to be called *Haunted* and will again shift the focus, this time to the ghost of Savannah's dead mother, Eve Levine who has revived her old affair with Kristof Nast in the afterlife.

I'm looking forward to it.

Metal of Night and Peace and Memory

Two Novels in the Secantis Sequence

by

Mark W. Tiedemann

reviewed by Ann Cecil

Mark Tiedemann explains in the beginning of each of these books that he is writing a sequence, not a set of sequels. The books are set in the same universe, and characters in one book sometimes appear in another, but each book is a stand-alone novel. It truly can be enjoyed on its own, without reading any of the other books in the sequence.

And I am happy to report that "enjoy" is the right term for these books. While the politics are different, they have something of the feel of Ken McLeod's books: large canvases, major events, a good sized cast well handled and questions of ethics and principles examined in some depth.

Metal of Night is my favorite. This is a story set during a war, but it is much more than a war story. The tortured and conflicted Cambions: an ambitious father, his conscientious son and a mind-wiped fake son are the center of the story, even though much of the book is told from other points of view.

The book is set in a future where mankind has gone to the stars and found that they are not empty. Those living on Earth and the planets in the Solar System have become xenophobic: they form the Pan Humana, and want nothing to do with seti. They are ready to kill any humans who consort with the extra-terrestrials. The humans who have pioneered settlement in farther worlds have a very different attitude; they trade with seti, and plan to continue doing so.

The Pan Humana sends its military force, called the Armada (not the first name to hint of the author's sympathies). In the battle of Finders, two young pilots are shot down: Cira Kalinge and Alexan Cambion. The battle itself is a dis-