

BCSFA NEWSLETTER #22

March 1975

This clubzine is edited by Mike Bailey on behalf of the British Columbia Science Fiction Society which may (P.O. willing) be reached at P.O. Box 35577, Station E, Vancouver B.C. V6M 4G9. Memberships in the association cost \$3.00 yearly and fees are due in May. Subscribing memberships are available for \$1.50. Advertising rates upon request. Copyright 1975 by Mike Bailey. A Mad Dog Publication.

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CONVENTIONS, MEETINGS, EXCUSES, Etc.

As most members know, Vcon IV occurred February 21, 22, and 23 at the Sheraton-Landmark. As expected and desired, it was a learning experience. 600 persons attended the three day affair which featured Bob Silverberg as guest of honour. Well known artist, Vaughn Bode, also made a brief appearance.

Financially, the con was a success, even though the committee spent approximately \$6.00 per attendee. A post-con report will be mailed to all attendees outlining the finances and listing the tapes of the con which will be available.

The questionnaire handed out proved one thing: a con committee can never please everyone. There was a complaint about almost everything to match along side the praise. The costume ball was the recipient of most of the criticism. It was delayed because the person in charge lost half an hour trying to calm the LSD-excited con member and then the hotel PA system was found to be inadequate and a jury-rig system was patched together. Because of the bad vibes, the Synergy Lady Dancers were asked not to perform.

On a scale of one to five, the overall enjoyment was 3.7 (median 4, mode 5) and the comparison of Vcon III to Vcon IV averaged 3.1 in Vcon IV's favour.

The committee knew in advance what Bob Silverberg was going to say and it presented a scheduling problem. When a major genre author quite writing at a convention at which he is being honoured, it is more than ironic. Do you clap when he says he is unappreciated? We scheduled him for Sunday and he handled himself well: we knew he would.

The next meeting of the BCSFA will be held at 8:00 PM on Saturday, March 22nd at Chuck and Edna Davis' house (1704 E. 14th Ave., Vancouver). As usual the meeting will be BYOB (and mixer) and BYOF(ood). A tape of the old radio version of Heinlein's "The Roads Must Roll" will be played. (Your harried Newsletter editor will likely not be there (missing his first meeting ever): he will be languishing in a bar in Montreal and praying that no firebugs are around.)

If you have any property which belongs to the club, phone Al Betz (733-7607) and inform him.

Reminder #1: Elections for the club executive will be held on May 24, 1975. All positions (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Information Officer, and Secretary) will be filled.

Reminder #2: Re the special referendum on the name change: the only way we can change the club's name is by a 2/3's affirmative vote -- 2/3's of all votings members, that is. So, if you didn't return the envelope enclosed in the last newsletter, you have cast a negative vote. The Association added approximately 40 new members during the convention,

so vote-gathering will be even more difficult in the future. If you still have that envelope, fill out the ballot and mail it in.

Reminder #3. Membership renewals are now being accepted by the Treasurer, Al Betz. (Mike Bailey)

FOR NEW MEMBERS

The executive committee of the BCSFA is made up of five positions:

President	Fran Skene
Vice-President	Gary Walker
Treasurer	Al Betz
Information Officer	Mike Bailey
Secretary	Rick Mikkelsen

A member is not eligible to vote until 3 months after joining the Association. (Note that elections are scheduled 3 months and a day after Vcon IV ended.) A member may not run for office until he has been in good standing for at least one year.

If you enjoyed Vcon IV, consider Westercon 28, (Yup, that's the 28th annual). The BCSFA is bidding to hold Westercon XXX in Vancouver in July, 1977. The voting for the 1977 site will occur this July at Westercon 28 in Oakland, California and the more people we can muster, the better. (Westercon 28, P.O. Box 24560, Los Angeles Ca. 90024 -- July 3-5 inclusive 1975 -- \$5.00 until May 1 -- Banquet \$10.00).

Confirmed panelists include Poul Anderson, Peter S. Beagle, Avram Davidson, David Gerrold, Jerry Pournelle, and Jack Williamson.

(Mike Bailey)

EXECUTIVE MEETING MINUTES

All members of the Executive present except Gary Walker, also guests (exercising the right of any member to attend such meetings) Ed and Norma Beauregard, Vickie Bushell and David George.

President Skene called the meeting to order at 7:50 PM.

The minutes were read and approved with the following correction: the Vcon IV committee, not the BCSFA, was responsible for the policing of the Con Suite.

The March meeting will be held March 22 at the Davis' house.

Regarding the Extraordinary Resolution: so far 25 ballots have been received, those plus others mailed and turned in at the March meeting will be counted. A two-thirds majority affirmative vote is needed to pass the resolution. An unreturned ballot is in effect a no vote.

Al Betz moved that we have a catered dinner for our May General Meeting, seconded by Mike Bailey and passed. Vicki Bushell volunteered to check for an available hall.

(Censored) is to be invited as Westercon XXX Guest of Honour.

Al Betz suggested that movies be shown at Club meetings two or three times a year, but with little time left for this executive to serve, it is suggested that the next executive consider it for some future club meeting.

Mike Bailey moved that the BCSFA purchase a duplicating machine which will be available to all members who supply their own materials, to be kept at the home of the information officer. Seconded by Al Betz and passed. Ed Beauregard and Mike Bailey will check on prices and servicing and report at the April general meeting.

It was suggested by Al Betz that a list of club properties be assembled.

The next Executive meeting will be March 31 at Mike Bailey's.
The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 PM.

(Rick Mikkelsen)

FIRST THOUGHTS ON DHALGREN by John Park

Dhalgren a novel by Samuel R. Delany Bantam \$1.95 879 pages.

I don't usually expect sf to scare or disorient me: Lovecraft bores, Poe leaves me cold; Philip K. Dick, a more relevant example, is an exasperation because his worlds are so insubstantial to start with, that I feel no sense of dislocation when he begins to subvert reality in them. But Samuel Delany's huge novel came close to giving me nightmares.

It exudes the almost supernatural fear caused by insanity in the world around us or in someone we know. In Dhalgren, the insanity is present in both forms, and is made more alarming by being set in one of the most solidly realised worlds ever created by a science fiction writer. Delany seems to have gone to some pains to achieve this solidity: the most prominent feature of his style is its meticulous transcription of reality -- particularly in details of human behaviour and reflection.

"The sky --

"He heard footsteps, lowered his eyes; the blond girl was hurrying down the street. Frowning, he looked up again. -- streamed with black and silver. The smoke, so low and limitless before, had raddled into billows, torn and flung by some high wind that did not reach down to the street."

This use of interjection is the only major stylistic innovation, and after a few chapters to get used to the density of the writing I found Dhalgren readable enough; even the intimidatingly fragmented final section develops more than enough tension to pull you straight through it.

The novel is set in the city of Bellona, abandoned, burning, occupied by a miscellany of drop-outs. The protagonist, Kid, has forgotten his real name, and, although more intelligent and sensitive than most of those around him, he sometimes fears for his sanity. The city reinforces his fears. He finds a notebook half-filled with poems and sketches by its previous owner and uses its empty pages to write his own first poetry on. He becomes leader of a group of 'scorpions', young scavengers whose only common trait is the use of laser-hologram carnival costumes depicting fantastic beasts.

Kid's life among the scorpions makes for some scenes of Ballard-like deadpan surrealism, and some of the most explicit and uninhibited sexual scenes ever presented in sf, in this instance centered on Kid's bisexual relationship with Lanya and Denny, ex-scorpion and scorpion respectively.

Over all this hangs the miasma of the city. It burns without seeming to be consumed; clouds constantly hide the sky; buildings seem to move from their remembered locations. Terrifying portents appear through the clouds, are accepted, ignored. Events, thoughts, conversations repeat themselves identically, indifferent contexts. Kid finds himself haunted by a nightmare(?) he had before entering the city; it

reverberates through the whole novel. He hears an impossible discord on Lanya's harmonica, days before multiple-track recording makes it real; he loses memory of whole days he has spent in the city.

Throughout most of the novel, Delany maintains this atmosphere of vague, brooding menace across scenes which are meditative, colourful and violent. There is one moment of pure terror when Kid, looking into a mirror sees someone impersonating him, and shortly later reads this:

"...suppose... the character should glance at his mirror and see, not himself, but the author, a complete stranger, staring at him, to whom he has no relation at all, what is this poor creature left...?" (p. 401)

At the end, the dislocation of time becomes part of the structure of the work, as the novel shifts fully into first-person narrative, and appears as fragments from Kid's journal, reproduced out of sequence. And the contents of the journal include the original contents of Kid's notebook from many days earlier; Kid's existence has somehow duplicated that of the book's unidentified owner.

The closing is unsatisfactory in that characters and themes are abandoned in chaos, but it remains convincingly final; it is eerie and disturbing, leaving ominous suggestions and questions that raise other questions. The list of names in the notebook that obscurely resembles the list of characters in the novel includes the name Dhalgren -- but who is Dhalgren? The horrible blood-red eyes Kid sees, sometimes, on some people are explained as red plastic contact lenses; but, more frighteningly, why do these people wear them, on no particular occasion, and for no apparent motive? There is no answer. The final scene reproduces, almost word for word, Kid's entrance into the city, and the interrupted, closing sentence seems to run straight into the incomplete, opening sentence 378 pages earlier.

In paraphrase it all sounds incredible; but it is too big, and too real; it disturbs. Delany can create a professional poet convincingly as a homosexual go-go dancer. The notebook idea is derived from many time-travel paradoxes, but it has never been used the way Delany uses it here; it is genuinely frightening to look back at those opening chapters and recognise the notebook passages that re-emerge as new during the narrative.

I can't really judge Dhalgren. I can list a few faults: the way characters are built up and then ignored, the near-impenetrable paragraphs of Kid's early reveries, the confusing mass of minor characters, some rather static sexual scenes and pages of discussion about art, the lack of definition of Denny's character... but I'm not sure whether these are real flaws, or necessities imposed by the atmosphere of the novel -- or other parts of its pattern. For I'm sure there is a deeper pattern than I've been able to pick out. I can see glimpses. The relation between art and reality is introduced in dialogue in the middle of the novel, and becomes part of its form in the closing sequence. There seems to be a religious framework underlying parts of the novel, culminating in a strange meeting at a monastery between Kid and Calkins, effectively the ruler of Bellona; the two are separated by the monastery wall so Kid never sees Calkin's face. "Is the Father ((of the monastery)) a good man?" Kid asks, and gets no real answer. Delany seems to intend this, perhaps half-jokingly, as a symbolic confrontation between Kid and his destiny. Somehow connected with this is the Daphne myth of Kid's initial nightmare, which is linked through two female characters to the portents that appeared in the sales of Bellona... But no, I can't follow it any further. It will need at least a second reading or a sharper

mind than mine to pluck out the heart of Dhalgren's mystery. Mystery is its strongest quality, the raising of questions which are the more disturbing because they seem almost answerable, almost to create a knowledge which is totally alien.

I don't know whether Dhalgren will make new friends for sf or for Samuel Delany; I suspect it will not convert any of his enemies, but it leaves me in a state somewhere between impatience and apprehension, wondering what he can possibly write next.

(John Park)

OUTSIDE NEWS

VERTEX is changing format and price -- to a ROLLING STONE 48 page tabloid priced at 75¢

E. Mayne Van Vogt died January 20, 1975 of cancer. She wrote SF under her maiden name, E. Mayne Hull.

Mike Bailey operates a book-buying service through which any in-print SF pocketbook or hardcover may be obtained for 20% off the American price. Contact Mike at 731-8451.

SCIENCE FICTION ON TELEVISION, Pt. 1 by A.R. Betz

There is, as yet, far less reference material on early television programs than for radio, because there are few collectors of tv programs. The main reason for this state of affairs is the very high cost of collecting anything on film. A six-hour tape of radio shows can be purchased for as little as ten dollars, but an original tv print on 16mm sound film, when available, goes for \$15 to \$25, or more, for one half-hour program. Duplicates of original films cost even more, say \$39 per half-hour, because of the cost of lab work. Some early tv shows, if they still exist at all, would be in the form of kinescope recordings. These films are showable on standard 16mm sound projectors, but the quality usually leaves something to be desired--they are often rather murky looking and short on detail. Original tv prints now seem to be becoming available, though I am not aware of any SF programs for sale yet. I have obtained two "Trouble With Father" shows from 1954 and one "Burns And Allen" show from 1958. Approximately one hundred "Ozzie And Harriet" shows from the middle 50's are now available, so perhaps there is hope yet that "Tales Of Tomorrow" or "Lights Out" may again be seen.

The following list, certainly incomplete, shows all the "Tales Of Tomorrow" programs for which I could find any information. Programs are listed chronologically by broadcast date, with title and the name of at least one actor in the show, not necessarily the "star".

TALES OF TOMORROW

31 Aug 51 "The Last Man On Earth" Cloris Leachman, John McQuade
28 Sep 51 "The Dark Angel" Sidney Blackmer
12 Oct 51 "The Crystal Egg" Thomas Mitchell
26 Oct 51 "Test Flight" Lee J. Cobb
23 Nov 51 "Enemy Unknown" Walter Abel, Edith Fellows, Lon McCallister
7 Dec 51 "Sneak Attack" Zachary Scott
21 Dec 51 "The Invaders" William Eythe, Eva Gabor
4 Jan 52 "Dune Roller" Bruce Cabot, Virginia Gilmore
18 Jan 52 "Frankenstein" John Newland, Lon Chaney, Jr.

25 Jan 52 "The Chase", Pt. 1 Bethel Leslie, Thomas Mitchell
 1 Feb 52 "The Chase", Pt. 2 Bethel Leslie, Thomas Mitchell
 15 Feb 52 "Age Of Peril" Phyllis Kirk
 22 Feb 52 "Memento" Boris Karloff
 29 Feb 52 "The Children's Room" Clara Luce
 7 Mar 52 "Bound Together" Eina Foch
 14 Mar 52 no title given, Franchot Tone
 21 Mar 52 "Fountain Of Youth" Tom Drake
 28 Mar 52 "Flight Overdue" Veronica Lake
 4 Apr 52 "And A Little Child" Frank McHugh
 11 Apr 52 "Sleep No More" Jeffrey Lynn
 18 Apr 52 "Time To Go" Sylvia Sydney
 25 Apr 52 "Plague From Space" Gene Raymond
 9 May 52 "The Golden Ingot" Gene Lockhart
 16 May 52 "Black Planet" Leslie Nielsen
 23 May 52 "World Of War" Victor Jory
 30 May 52 "Little Black Bag" Joan Blondell
 6 Jun 52 "Exile" Chester Morris
 13 Jun 52 "All The Time In The World" Luther Ralston
 20 Jun 52 "The Miraculous Serum" Lola Albright
 27 Jun 52 "Appointment To Lars" Leslie Nielsen
 4 Jul 52 "The Duplicates" Darren McGavin
 15 Aug 52 "A Child Is Crying" Bert Lytell
 5 Sep 52 "The Seeing-Eye Surgeon" Bruce Cabot
 12 Sep 52 "The Cocoon" Jackie Cooper, Edith Fellows
 19 Sep 52 "The Chase" Walter Able
 26 Sep 52 "Youth On Tap" Robert Alda
 3 Oct 52 "Substance 'X'" Vicki Cummings
 10 Oct 52 "The Horn" Franchot Tone
 24 Oct 52 "Many Happy Returns" Gene Raymond
 31 Oct 52 "The Tomb Of King Tarus" Walter Abel
 28 Nov 52 "Invigorating Air" Joseph Buloff
 5 Dec 52 "The Glacier Giant" Edith Fellows
 23 Jan 53 "The Picture Of Dorian Gray" John Newland
 31 Jan 53 "Two-Faced" Richard Kiley
 6 Feb 53 "The Build-Box" Glenda Farrell
 13 Feb 53 "Another Chance" Leslie Nielsen
 20 Feb 53 "The Great Silence" Burgess Meredith
 3 Mar 53 "Past Tense" Boris Karloff
 6 Mar 53 "The End Of The Cocoon" Nancy Coleman
 13 Mar 53 "The Squeeze Play" John McQuade
 20 Mar 53 "Read To Me, Herr Doktor" Mercedes McCambridge, Everett Sloan
 10 Apr 53 "Homecoming" Edith Fellows
 17 Apr 53 "The Rivals" Mary Sinclair
 1 May 53 "The Evil Within" Margaret Phillips
 8 May 53 "The Vault" Cameron Frad'homme
 15 May 53 "Ink" Mildred Natwick
 22 May 53 "The Spider Web" Nancy Coleman
 29 May 53 "Lazarus Walks" William Prince
 26 Sep 55 "The Horn" Franchot Tone

I can remember only two of these programs, although I probably watched most of them. In "The Cocoon", a pod, rather larger than a coconut, is found by a scientist at a tropical jungle research station. Within a few days the pod opens, but nothing is seen inside. Soon thereafter, the horribly mutilated bodies of some of the scientists

are discovered. It is determined that whatever kind of creature is doing the killing, it must be invisible. Through some kind of trickery I don't recall, the creature is captured and tied up with ropes, which are seen to move menacingly as the invisible beast within them struggles to get free. A plaster cast is made of the creature, so that the scientists can visualize their enemy. The cast reveals an extremely fierce and ugly little beast with very long, prehistoric-looking sabre teeth. Finally it dies. We're safe at last, say the remaining scientists. The camera turns from the celebrating group of people and observes the scene outside the window. Through the heavy rain we pan into the tropical jungle, focussing constantly on the jungle floor. Hundreds of identical pods are seen opening.

The program frightened so many people, in addition to me, that a sequel was written, "The End Of The Cocoon", in which the beasts were finally done away with. They shouldn't have bothered.

to be continued

A. R. Setz