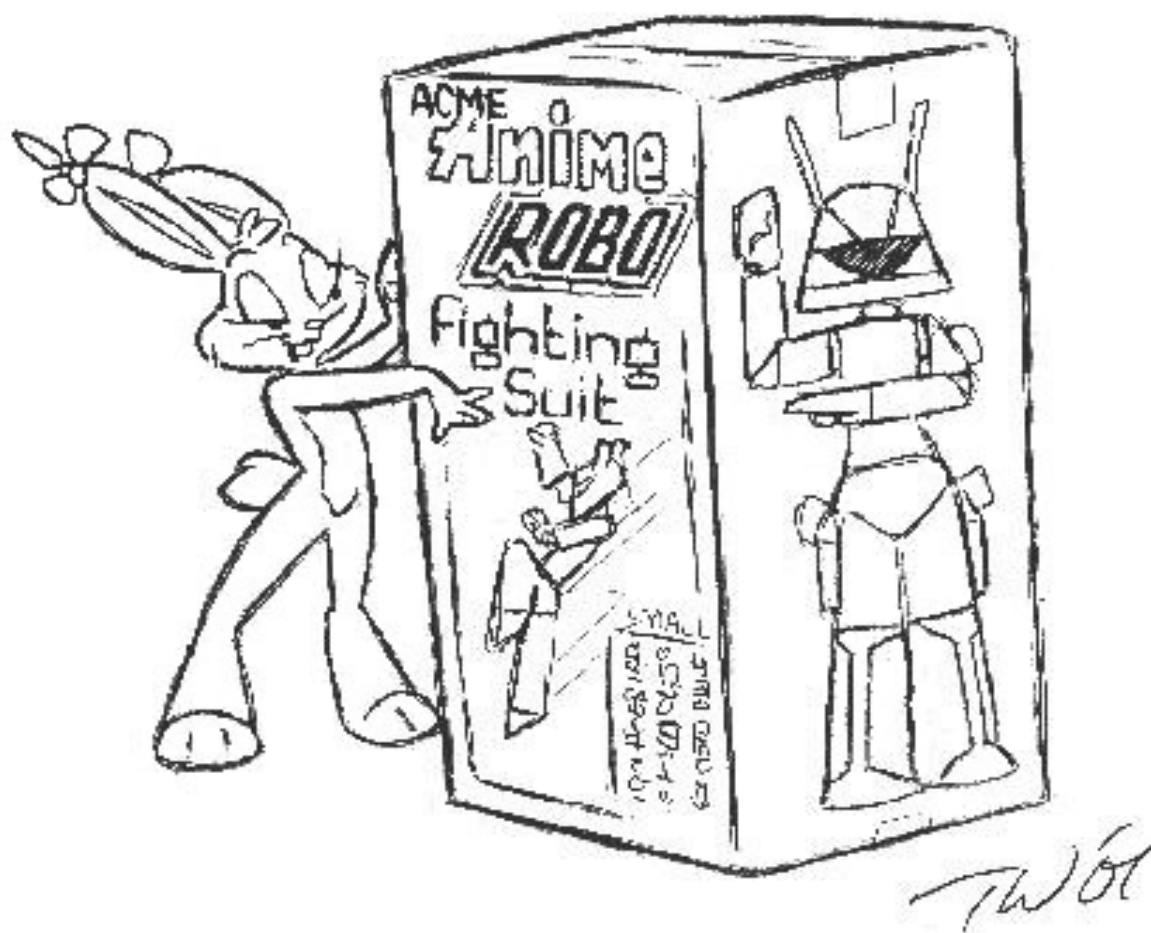


BCSFAzine #342

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BCSFAzine
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the British Columbia Science Fiction
Association

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BCSFA's Web page may be viewed at <http://www3.telus.net/dh2/bcsfa/>.

The V-Con Society's Web page may be viewed at <http://www3.telus.net/dh2/vconsociety/>.

BCSFAzine is also available by e-mail as an Adobe Acrobat .PDF file. (Please e-mail hrothgar@vcn.bc.ca if you wish to receive the magazine by e-mail.)

F.R.E.D. - Every Friday: The weekly gathering of BCSFAns and all others interested in joining us for an evening of conversation and relaxation, with pool table option. At the Burrard Motor Inn opposite St. Paul's Hospital (Downtown Vancouver) 6 blocks south of Burrard Skytrain Station. 3 blocks west of Granville (where many buses run). #22 Knight/ McDonald bus along Burrard. Begins 8:00pm. On the Friday before long weekends, FRED will be at the lounge of Bosman's Hotel. This is two blocks east and a part of a block north of the Burrard Motor Inn (actual address is 1060 Howe St.).

Whose Membership Is About to Expire

Members expired as of October 2001: Howard Cherniack & Laurie Kahn, Jeff Hartt, Jim Johnston, Andrew Kacerik, Delphine Kelly, Duncan MacGregor, Tim Yip

Members expiring as of November 2001: Randy Barnhart & Brenda Corbett, Andrew Brechin, Linda Earl, Peter Halasz, Palle Hoffstein, Sidney Trim, M. Beulah Wadsworth

Members expiring as of December 2001: Stanley Foo; and I don't know when Brenda Carr's membership expires.

BCSFA Executive

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This month's cover artist: Taral Wayne
page 3 Linda Hardy
page 7 clipart
page 14 Michael Skeet

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Interesting Things:

November 4, 4:00 p.m.: VCS Executive Meeting at VPL Main Branch Blenz cafe, to hear VCon 27 bid.
 November 10, 7:00 p.m.: Feeding Frenzy at The Afghan Horsemen, 445 West Broadway, Vancouver. Never tried Afghani cuisine before? Here's a hint. *The Georgia Straight* (Vancouver's entertainment weekly) helpfully classifies this restaurant as "Mediterranean". Anyway last month's attendees insisted that we try this place again to the extent that Doug will be making reservations. But no need to RSVP. Just show up hungry.
 November 17, 6:00 p.m.: meeting at The Graeme's place, 86 Warrick St., Coquitlam. Directions: get off # 154 bus at Cape Horn & Mundy, walk East downhill on Cape Horn for two blocks, turn left on Warrick, #86 is third house (& green painted) on left atop steep driveway. By car just get on to Brunette Ave, follow it till it turns into Cape Horn, follow Cape Horn two blocks past Mundy as above.
 Contact (604) 526-7522 or <rgraeme@home.com>

Upcoming Dates to Watch:

Deadline: November 16
Mailout: November 30
Deadline: December 21
Mailout: January 4, 2002

PLAIN SPEAKING

BCSFA: Dead, Dormant, Or Just Drifting?

by The Graeme, Our Fearless Leader

October 2000 was our last general meeting and election. At the request of Clint Budd, President of the V-Con Society, our 2001 election was postponed to avoid conflict with their October General Meeting. After all, there is only so much Fannish enthusiasm to be garnered in a given month (or year, or decade), which is very much the point of this article.

Are we not Fans? Perhaps a review of this last year's activities will tell us.

October 2000: AnGen elections at my place. 12 members attended. Not bad.

November 2000: BCSFA party my place. 11 people. Pretty good.

December 2000: Annual BCSFA Christmas party my place. One member showed up. Abysmal.

January 2001: Welcome the new century party my place. Nobody came. Sad.

Alyx and I were disappointed. The house we rent is large enough for a good-sized crowd. We were hoping it would become party central for the club. But evidently our location in Coquitlam is inconvenient, which is odd, because we're on the same bus route as Steve Forty and he was able to throw myriad successful parties in the past. So, the logical thing to do

February 2001: Movie night at Steve Forty's. I couldn't make it due to ill health. Steve went all-out with cool recent films and food, but only a few people appeared, fewer than he was hoping for, so he was disappointed. Not the revival anticipated.

Then a miracle. Claudette Martin of the Planetarium Space Centre offers free use of their 100 seat auditorium if we can come up with something to attract the public. I suggest I give a lecture series on SF films, showing short video clips to illustrate my points. We work out a deal where the lecture fills the first hour and the club can use the second hour to amuse the captive audience already lured in. The Planetarium charged \$2 for the lecture, but the afterwards event was free so that club members who didn't want to spend money could nevertheless get involved. I scheduled these events on the third Saturday of each month (the traditional date for club stuff) to emphasise the club nature of these events. I had visions of talks by authors, panels by BCSFAns, all kinds good things, all benefiting from free publicity via Planetarium press releases, and all leading to a fresh infusion of new members. Free publicity in a free public venue! What could be better?

The series began slowly (in February), but thanks to press exposure like a half-page interview on the front page of the entertainment section of the *Vancouver Sun*, I was

getting as many as 100 people by the end of the series (in June). Unfortunately the only fans to actively participate were members of Monster Attack Team Canada who put on several wonderful model displays. I had asked for ideas and proposals for BCSFA activities, but nobody came forward. The film series was a success (almost, I might write an article about the wee problem that cropped up) but the club revival aspect was a total flop.

Of course the bus strike which began in April didn't help. (It certainly hurt VCon 26 last May.) And May/June was when circumstances dictated an emergency declaration of bankruptcy on my part with the result that most of my time and thought was and is taken up by my financial worries.

Fortunately Cindy Turner stepped in and offered her condo apartment as a meeting place.

July 2001: Barbecue party at Cindy's. 8 people present to eat, talk, & watch the very first Tarzan movie starring Elmo Lincoln. OK, a good start.

August 2001: Cindy's again. Fewer people. I couldn't make it as I spent the day in bed suffering from exhaustion.

September 2001: Cindy's again, only one person showed up. (I was flat on my back with a migraine this time.)

October 2001: Nothing, for reasons mentioned at the beginning this article.

Couple of patterns emerging here. First, real life lately drains me such that I have little energy left for club matters. Secondly, I've run out of ideas for club events. Perhaps it's time for me to step down as President and let someone filled with enthusiasm and exciting new ideas take on the task of reviving the social aspects of the club. Any takers?

But does the club need reviving? Is our lacktivity normal? Are we dead, dormant, or just drifting?

Well, we're not dead. We're supposed to promote SF, and I think my lecture series accomplished that. There's *BCSFazine*, one of our traditional strengths, with many members renewing simply in order to continue receiving it. Garth has injected a nice fannish flavour which, while not as technically sophisticated as John's editing artistry, is perhaps more approachable by virtue of being a traditional style. And then there's VCon. Many member's primary interest is VCon. The next VCon, set for October 2002, is forging ahead with many hotels currently under consideration. The club is very healthy there, for all BCSFAns are members of the V-Con Society and can take part and vote in any of its meetings. Not to mention volunteering for the ConCom. (There are a few BCSFAns labouring under the delusion that BCSFA is no longer connected to VCon. Nothing could be further from the truth. *We are ALL voting members of the V-Con Society!*) In fact every aspect but one

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LETTERS OF COMMENT

"Lloyd&Yvonne Penney" <penneys@attcanada.ca>, 11 Oct 2001

Many thanks for issue 34 of *BCSFazine*. I am finding that fannish pursuits and hobbies are a welcome respite from the sudden insanity the world finds itself in. Sure, I watch the CBC and CNN, but the "Bush and bin Laden Show" gets a little dull after a while. Anyway, time to relax, take a short vacation from harsh reality, and dive in with a loc.

If any of us had a solution to the terrorist problems we're facing, we'd have a shelf of awards and medals on our mantelpieces. September 11 is our modern Day of Infamy, but how can we honestly react to such terrifying destruction without descending to the terrorists' level? Muscle-flexing can only do so much; our covert operatives and our funding of opposition groups may help, but then, it was American money that funded and brought the Taliban to power. I must wonder if the Northern Alliance, should they come to power, be any better? What about the old Afghan king, willing to come back and rule again? All I can think of is to protect ourselves as best we can (although some of our precautions seem tinged with paranoia), help the Afghan people find some level of democracy, and choke off terrorist funds wherever they are stored. We truly live in interesting times.

(Let's see if I can get myself arrested for telling bare naked facts: We all live in a worldwide anarchy, what we call governments evolved out of the Neolithic forebears of biker gangs, the difference between governments and terrorist gangs is a meme called "legitimacy" which you are free to disbelieve, there's nothing surreal about the September 11th kamikaze attacks, it's just Real Life Out There coming to visit North America for a change, our local gangs governments are prepared for conventional ground war but seem neither equipped nor imaginative enough to cope with terrorist organizations at their roots, we're pretty much on our own but haven't as much to worry about as the media would have us believe, and we have as much domestic terrorist threat to deal with as we always had, coming mainly from racist and political as well as religious fanatics.)

Years ago, the annual general convention was sufficient to allow fans of all SF and related interests the chance to get together and indulge themselves, network and have fun. Their numbers swelled to the point where they felt that the gencon didn't cater to their interests enough, and they started their own specific-interest conventions. Now, those numbers are dwindling, thanks to the ageing of fandom, the lack of sufficient numbers of newcomers to the field, the reluctance (or inability) to spend large amounts of money,

and the lure of the Internet and World Wide Web. Now, it appears we must bring those specific interests back together again for a general convention, and hope they can live together. It may be a case of united we thrive, divided, we go broke. Is it the time of the general convention again? Do we gather together again to survive and have a convention to at least try to cater to all? Or will fannish ego keep the groups apart and independent, convention-less and isolated? The choice is ours. This is why I think it's vital that clubs talk to not only its members, but to fellow clubs in the area, in all fannish and SFnal interests.

How is Graeme doing? I used to keep in regular touch, but other interests and real life have pulled us away. It's a shame he had to sell off a lot of personal treasures, but I hope that he's been able to sell to friends, and give those treasures a good home. I must also give my CUFF fanzine list an overhaul, but it would seem that I have a lot of fanzines and other amateur zines no one else wants. (I see you've printed your list of stuff to sell for CUFF...if I got my own list updated, would you willing to print that list, too?) I have also been able to sell enough of our CUFF trip reports to get halfway through the print run, but am still wanting to get rid of them and get the money to CUFF. I gather that Murray Moore is still working on his own CUFF trip report, and will print it up fanzine-style, as we did.

The café-style readings Anthony Furey started may not continue, thanks to nearly no attendance. The weather was poor and cold the day of the readings, so he might try again. For Ray Seredin, Who Party 13 will take place on November 17 in Toronto. (That means for me and Yvonne WFC in Montréal, PriMedia/Conthulhu in Toronto and Who Party 13, three conventions on three straight weekends, as I thought.)

Great article/interview with Taral. With his general withdrawal from fanzine art and concentration on anthropomorphic zines, it's good to see that he has received several Hugo nominations over the years.

New bookstores are opening? Frabjous day! That's rare news indeed. I think Vancouver may be the only Canadian market where new bookstores are opening; I haven't heard of any opening in Toronto in years, with the exception of a few Chapters and Indigo megastores. How do you end up with a million dollars running a bookstore? You start with two million...

Crank Theories...I know there are UFO research groups still active in the United States, but...how many sightings have there been in the last decade or so? The last major sighting I'd heard of was in Ottawa some years ago. Perhaps the little green men have finally decided there's no intelligent life on this planet, and have gone off to explore other worlds.

SOME WORDS FROM OUR ADVERTISERS

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I can pass on some personal news...at the beginning of this month, I found an ad on the website of one of the local entertainment papers...it asked you to call if you wanted to audition for roles on a spoken-word horror CD. On a whim, I called, and I got the chance to audition. I haven't done any voice work in about 20 years, so I thought I'd do this for a lark, have some fun, and if I got a role, big bonus. Well, I just found out yesterday that I got that bonus...I have been invited to perform on the CD, and recording will start this coming Saturday. The details... the CD is a spoken-word anthology of horror stories converted to radio-style plays. The stories are from Canadian horror writers like Nancy Kilpatrick, David Nickle, Edo van Belkom and others. The production company (and possibly the CD) is called Fears for Ears. As more information comes about, I'll let you know. I may also be working with the production company on marketing and selling the CD, or at least passing along some ideas.

Time to wrap...many thanks for another fun and informative zine. Take care, and see you all next month.

((Is there any truth to the rumour you are being paid to deny?))

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We also heard from Cindy Turner: "I was very unhappy with the zero turnout ... IF people would like to have a meeting... and IF there are confirmations ahead of time that people will be there - THEN I will consider having a meeting again."



AND NOW THE NEWS

VCON 27 BID: THE HOTEL HAS BEEN DECIDED!

VCon 27 will be at the Guildford Sheraton Hotel in Surrey, in early October, 2002. An Executive Meeting of the V-Con Society will hear the current bid, led by Palle Hoffstein, on November 4th at 4:00 p.m. at the Blenz cafe at the Vancouver Library Main Branch.

Palle wrote: "the Sheraton offered us \$95 [per room night] including parking, a slight increase from last year for a better hotel.

"The Sheraton gives us:

Almost all of our function space on one floor.
 Many rooms allowing for easy re-arranging of functions.
 Wide hallways for lots of traffic and club tables.
 Secured underground parking.
 Good large hotel restaurant with reasonable prices.
 Many restaurants, liquor store and shopping mall nearby.
 Easy access from the border.
 A fairly central location.
 Room to grow if we stay there in following years and need more space.
 A hotel that has hosted many gaming, anime and TV show cons in the past.
 A room rate under \$100/night.

"What might have been the clincher was, while many hotels wanted 1/3 down, or \$1000 down, and a credit check, the Sheraton has asked for only \$500 down. Which leads me to...

"To book the hotel we need to raise \$500. For the rest of October we will offer a registration of \$20/person, same as if you pre-registered at the last VCON. So 25 memberships will do it; more gives us money to get Progress Report # 1 out. If our current list of Convention-committee and volunteers pay their memberships that'll do it.

"I'll be arranging our first big meeting, perhaps in conjunction with a hotel tour, for sometime in the next couple of weeks. Expect to be badgered by me for \$25 (unless you've already got a membership). ..."

VikingCon 19

BELLINGHAM - VikingCon 19 is scheduled to take place 26-28 July 2002, acting chair John Aho announced Wednesday.

The convention program space will be the Viking Union building at Western Washington University. This space has been used for several previous VikingCons, including 15 (1994), 13 (1992), 12 (1991), and 10 (1989). In the intervening time, the space has been renovated and expanded.

VikingCon housing (guest rooms) has yet to be announced. Typically, housing has been in adjacent resident halls, providing a tight and fun environment for the attendees.

For those of you familiar with VikingCon, the Viking Union complex (now one building) is at the North end of Western's campus, as opposed to Fairhaven College at the south end. At whichever location, many convention members have asked why we were not at the other end of campus. Both venues have been used for popular conventions. VikingCon 18, held this year in Fairhaven, proved cozy and pleasant. VikingCon 19 set out to take advantages offered by a different venue, including a larger space for the dealers room and the art show.

-Paul M Carpentier, Oct. 26, 2001

SPECIAL PRE-PUBLICATION OFFER ON THE DOCTOR WHO PROJECT SEASON 30 OMNIBUS. Preorder your copy of the SEASON 30 OMNIBUS before November 15, 2001 and your name will be automatically entered in to our PRIZE DRAW competition to win: a 2001 Official Doctor Who Calendar, a copy of the TDWP Season 29 Omnibus and a BBC Doctor Who Novel.

The Doctor Who Project is the award winning Canadian based Doctor Who fan fiction series centering around the continuing adventures of the alternate Eighth Doctor and his companion former British secret agent, Tamara Scott. Each season concentrates on delivering a collection of short stories that sees the Doctor facing new and original situations in time and space. The Season 30 Omnibus features eight original new stories and will be published in December 2001. Pre-orders will be shipped at that time. (Please note that we still have a very limited number copies of seasons 28 & 29.)

For more information on Season 30 and The Doctor Who Project visit our website at <http://thedoctorwhoproject.freesevers.com>. You can email us at: scifiboy@telus.net, or write to us at: TDWP Season 30 Omnibus Offer, 1408-1005 Jervis Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6E 3T1

From: Bob Furnell [BFurnell@providencehealth.bc.ca],
 October 30, 2001

Parsec Puff

Parsec, the glossy letter-size Canadian sci-fi news-stand magazine, sent us the following:

"Greetings here's the latest on our winter issue.....ships in December. We've added lots of good stuff and exclusive interviews.

Last-minute changes to our line-up: Interviews with Mark Alaimo, Dean Cain and Mika Akitaka have been pulled.

We added are (*sic*) interviews with:

The Hildebrandt Brothers on their 25 years with Tolkien, Hobbits and superheroes
Part two of our interview with *X-Files*' John Neville

Deep Space 9 clone Jeffrey Combs
Earth Final Conflict's finale....Jayne Heitmeyer,
 Von Flores, Melinda Deines and the series' brand new aliens
 Marvel artist Kaare Andrews
 Artist Logan Lubera - *Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Oz and Outlaw 7*
 Scott MacNeill
Dragonball Z's
 Chris Sabat
 Eric Johnson

And

“Interviews with Malcolm McDowell on the 35th anniversary of Clockwork Orange; famed author Neil Gaiman; makeup master Tom Savini, actress Brinke Stevens; *Star Trek's* top Cardassian Casey Biggs; the guy who puts the “Dork” in Dorkboy, Damian Wilcox; writer Jeph Loeb... Plus: coverage of anime, manga, comics, books, music, videos, the Internet. It's almost too much to be squeezed between two covers.

“And short stories by Eugene W. Roddenberry (yes, the name should sound familiar) and Cory Doctorow.

“For updates: visit <http://www.parsec.on.ca>. We're available at Chapters and Indigo books in Canada (if you don't see us, just ask) and through comic shops around the world (again, just ask...the shopkeeper can find our listing on page 330 of the latest *Diamond Previews*.”

Parsec magazine <parsec@isys.ca> 8 Sep 2001

((Does everybody else here but me know what this press release is talking about?? -Ye Ed.))

The Isaac Szpindel Saga

On the 8th of August, Don Bassie in Ontario wrote, “It looks like Isaac Szpindel is becoming a regular TV star. He will be appearing live again on another segment of ‘Talk TV’ TONIGHT at 9:00 pm.”

When I asked Don who Isaac Szpindel was and what Talk TV was, he wrote:

Isaac Szpindel is Canada's ‘Buckaroo Banzai’. He is an electrical engineer, a neurologist, a Science Fiction writer, a screenwriter, a film producer, a story editor for an upcoming animated series, reads and writes six languages and knows 5 styles of martial arts. He is a regular speaker at conventions and knows his stuff. He is also a great guy and a good friend of mine.

Don went on:

You can help Isaac get a Science Fiction segment aired by emailing Talk TV at chatroom@talktv.ca and asking for more Dr. Szpindel segments.

You can find Talk TV on channel 75 on Rogers Cable in the Toronto area. For other channel information check <http://www.talktv.ca/gettalktv/default.asp> or check your guide. For more info on ‘Talk TV’ and ‘The Chatroom’ check <http://www.talktv.ca/home.asp>

The shows tend to start a little early so tune in early and get more Banzai for your Buck!

If you can ever get him west to a con you wouldn't regret it! (his link - http://www.geocities.com/canadian_sf/szpindel/index.htm)

For stations and channels out west for Talk TV try <http://www.talktv.ca/gettalktv/default.asp>

Don Bassie (8 Aug 01)

WORLD FANTASY AWARDS

“The final ballot for the 2001 World Fantasy Awards has been announced. Canadian finalists include Sean Stewart's *Galveston* and Guy Gavriel Kay's *Lord of Emperors* for best novel, Nalo Hopkinson's *Whispers from the Cotton Tree Root* for best Anthology, and Robert Charles Wilson's *Perseids and Other Stories* for best collection. Winners will be announced at the World Fantasy Convention in Montreal, November 1 - 4, 2001.”

Made In Canada Newsletter, Issue #16 - Aug 6, 2001

SMALL PRESS SF MARKET NEWS:

“PAM KEESEY has a fairly new site: MONSTERZINE.COM (<http://monsterzine.com/>). It takes a more intelligent approach to monster movies but still shows true love of the genre. There's also a related site BioHorror.com (<http://www.biohorror.com/>). What's biohorror? Find out!

“THE CARTHEDRAL (<http://www.carthedral.com/>) Created by Rebecca Caldwell, “Carthedral is a rolling Gothic Cathedral complete with flying buttresses, stained glass windows, and gargoyles.” The car of your nightmares! You no longer need imagine was would have happened if Ed “Big Daddy” Roth had gone Goth.

“GHOUL BRITANNIA (<http://www.edhouse.clara.net/ghoul.html>) A temple to the

continued on page 12

NORTHWEST CONVENTIONS

NOVEMBER 2001

Nov. 1-4: **World Fantasy Convention 27** at the Hotel Delta Centre-Ville in Montreal, Quebec. GoHs: Fred Saberhagen, Joel Champetier, Charles de Lint. Rooms: \$98/CS148; tel 1-800-268-1133/514-879-1370, fax 514-879-1761. Dealers' table deposit \$50/table, limit 2. Memberships: \$125/CS175 to June 30, 2001. Write 2001 WFC c/o Bruce Farr, P.O. Box 7191, Chandler, AZ 85246-7191; tel (602) 395-1945; email brucex.farr@intel.com; www.wordfantasy.org/wfc01.html.

Nov. 9-11: **Orycon 23** at the Doubletree Columbia River, Portland, OR. GoHs: Melanie Rawn; Laura Anne Gilman; Real Musgrave. Rooms: call (503) 283-2111. Memberships: \$40 to Oct. 31, \$50 thereafter. For more information see www.orycon.org/orycon23, email david_schaber@hotmail.com, or write to P.O. Box 5703, Portland, OR 97228-5703, U.S.A.

November 18, 11am to 5pm: **Vancouver Comicon** at the Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street (Main & 15th Ave.), Vancouver, BC. Special Guests: Mike S. Miller, penciller of *Adventures of Superman*, *JLA*, *Wolverine*, *JL Aliens*, *Black Tide*. Ian Boothby, writer of *Simpsons Comics*. Owen Plummer, creator of *Rubber Popsicle Factory*. Pia Guerra, artist for White Wolf's *Masquerade* and *Werewolf* games, *Legends of 5 Rings* cards. Admission: \$3.00 per person; free for kids under 14 Dealers Tables: \$45 per centre table/ \$50 per wall table. Free autographs, giveaways, and hourly door prizes. Buy, sell, and trade comic books, action figures, sport, non-sport, and gaming cards, and other collectables. For information about either show, please call 604-322-6412 or e-mail lswong@uniserve.com. <http://mypages.uniserve.com/~lswong/Comicon.html>

Nov. 16 - 18: **AKA KON 2001**, "Western Canada's Largest Anime Convention" at the Delta Pacific Hotel in Richmond, B.C.

Hotel: Delta Pacific Hotel, 10251 St. Edwards Dr., Richmond, BC V6X 2M9; tel (604) 278-9611 from Vancouver, or Toll-Free: 1-800-268-1133. Ask for Aka Anime Productions' discount rate when reserving! Room rates: \$105.00 Cdn per night for a single or double, max of 4 people to a room; taxes are not included. For more info on the hotel please go to: www.deltapacific.bc.ca.

Registration: At the Door: 3-day pass, \$45/\$25; 1 day, \$25; Child's Pass (3 Day), \$35 (Canadian funds). Tickets sold at Bassix, West Hastings St., and Book + Comic Emporium, 1247 Granville ST- no refunds issued for convention passes. *PLEASE NOTE* Only 150 one day passes will be sold a day at the Kon! To register, send a cheque or money order to: AKA ANIME PRODUCTIONS,

163 W. Hastings - Suite #104, Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 1H5. Please include the registration form (from xls format or PDF Format). (<http://www.akaanime.com>)

DECEMBER 2001

December 7-9: **Smofcon 19** at the Monkbar Hotel, York, U.K. - Additional info: The Monkbar Hotel, Monkbar, York, YO31 7JA UK; 01904 638086. Membership: \$40/ £25. UK Contact: KIM Campbell, 69 Lincoln St., Leeman Rd., York YO2 4YP UK; US Contact: Ben Yalow, 3242 Tibbett Ave., Bronx, NY 10463. E-mail: Smofcon19@hotmail.com (info derived from *ConNotation*)

JANUARY 2002

January 11 - 13: **Rustycon 19** at the DoubleTree Hotel Bellevue in Bellevue, Washington. Writer GoH: David Gerrold. Artist GoH: Ellisa Mitchell. Fan GoH: Ann Prather. See www.rustycon.com. Rooms: DoubleTree Hotel Bellevue, 300 112th Avenue S.E., Bellevue, Washington 98004, 1-800-222-TREE or 1-800-222-8733, (425) 450-4119 (Fax); Rooms \$105.00 + Tax and up. Please mention Rustycon when registering with the Hotel to receive these rates. Rustycon Membership Rates: Pre-registration Rates \$40 April 22, 2001 to November 30, 2001; After November 30, 2001 the door rates will be charged. At the Door Rates: \$55 full Weekend; \$25 Friday only; \$35 Saturday only; \$20 Sunday; Progress Reports; Children under 6 Free; Children 6 to 12 are 1/2 the current rate. To Register for Rustycon, please send a check or money order for the appropriate amount, to: P.O. Box 84291, Seattle, WA 98124-5591, U.S.A. If you are paying by Visa or Master Card, please fill out the credit card portion of the registration form and submit it with the membership portion.

FEBRUARY 2002

February 15-17: **Radcon 3B** at the Pasco, WA Double Tree Inn. RadCon's Artist GOH—Theresa Mather! RadCon's Science GOH—Les Johnson RadCon's Writer GOH—Kay Kenion! RadCon's Fan GOH—Edgar and Norma Lincoln! RadCon's Special Science GOH—CatTails! The Pasco, WA Double Tree Inn is the same hotel that we have been in for the last four years. Rooms will go fast, so please make your reservations early! Hotel Info: Pasco Double Tree Hotel, 2525 N. 20th, Pasco, WA; Reservations: (509) 547-0701. Be sure to mention that you are part of RadCon for our special rates! Membership Prices for RadCon 3B are as follows: After Halloween, 2001, \$20.00. Write to RadCon, PMB #162, 2527 West Kennewick Ave., Kennewick, WA 99336-3126, U.S.A.

FANZINES

by Ted White

Fanzines are a basic part of science fiction fandom, having been in existence as long as fandom itself – the past 70 years. Fanzines are a reflection of many fans' interest in the printed word and amateur publishing. The publication you are reading this in is a fanzine, but a specialized one. A variety of other fanzines are also available – many of them by request – and this column will cover some of them each issue.

All fanzines are published as a hobby and lose money. Their editors appreciate money to defray their expenses and sometimes list single-copy or subscription prices, but they appreciate even more your written response – a Letter of Comment, or LoC. Feedback – better known in fandom as “egoboo” – is what fanzine publishing is all about.

Check out the fanzine below and broaden your participation in fandom.

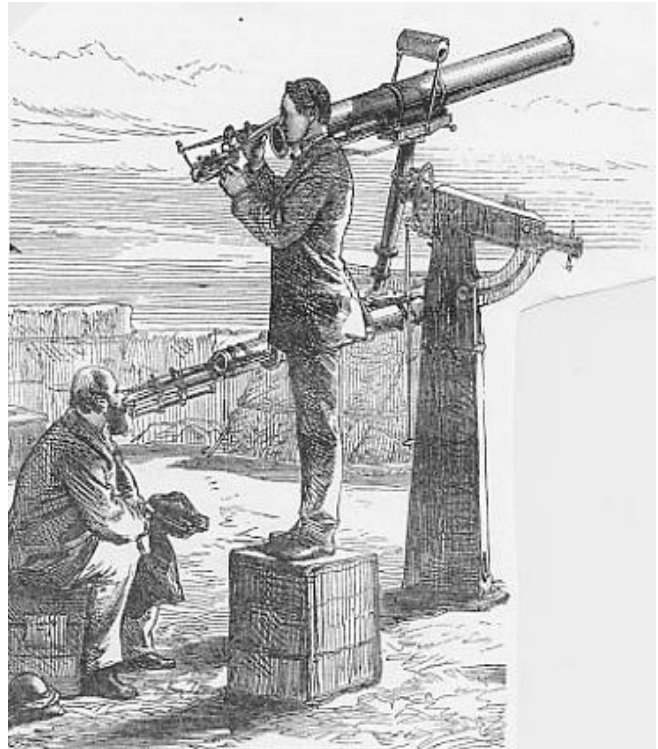
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PLOKTA (Steve Davies, 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, Berks RG30 2RP, UK & Alison Scott, 24 St Mary Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9RG, UK editors of the paper version; Mike Scott, 9 Jagger House, Rosenau Road, London SW11 4QY, UK editor of the web version at <http://www.plokta.com>, email locs@plokta.com; available for letters of comment, fanzines in trade, contributions, “editorial whim, or for a baby-proof reset switch for Steve’s computer;” no price given)

Plokta is a clever fanzine. It flashes its cleverness at you visually with studio-professional-looking design and layout, taking full advantage of the potentials of DTP. The cover of the latest issue, #24, is a clever mockup of a cereal box – perhaps more recognizable in its parody to British readers, since this is a British fanzine – and chock-full of clever puns and allusions (starting with “Universal Cereal Bus” and the USB symbol and including “With Added Thionite” and “Free! *Plokta* Action Figure writes! prints! collates! staples! Nine to Collect!”). The two *Plokta* children, in Teletubby guise, are the central figures under the motto, “Wireless Networking for Kids,” with lightning striking their head antennae.

This is carried over into a box on the contents page which tells us that “Serving size” is “16 pages,” “Servings per packet: 1,” and a list of percentages: “Bollocks - 100%, Babies - 120%, Strontium-90 - 50%, Angst - Trace.” Thus are life’s domestic joys – babies, children – mixed in with computer-cleverness, a fair indication of what this fanzine is made of.

The actual written material would read well in any fanzine, but seems almost incongruous in this setting. The editorial describes life in a tent at a music festival –



complete with photos of the tent being erected. Jaine Weddell describes acquiring a bread machine, likening her cooking to alchemy. Alison Scott writes about the invasion of her house by a mouse and pigeons. Sue Mason tells three short anecdotes about long-lost items returning to her via circuitous routes. Steven Cain writes about bicycling. Steve Davies describes getting lost in Hyde Park. And amid these close-focused, personal pieces the issue’s centrepiece is Alasdair Mackintosh’s “If Life Gives You Citroens, Make Lemonade.” This piece reads like it was written for a professional magazine – *Time* or *Newsweek*, say – and is an excellent (if brief) story of the invention and history of the Citroen DS, a revolutionary car of the mid-’50s which is now obsolete but still fascinatingly unique. I have no idea what this piece is doing in *Plokta*, or indeed in any fanzine, but I was glad for the opportunity to read it.

There are in addition clever little bits scattered through the issue under the title of “Bollocks,” three and a half pages of letters (in four narrow columns of type per page), and the backcover presents captioned photos from the wedding of Jo Walton and Emmet O’Brien in Hay on Wye.

In past issues *Plokta*’s cleverness has included CD-ROMs and its website has always been an active adjunct to the paper fanzine. For what it is, *Plokta* is probably the most accomplished fanzine I’ve yet reviewed in this column.

—Ted White

We also received *FOSFAX204* (via email)

V-CON SOCIETY EXECUTIVE MEETING

of September 11th, 2001

at the Peter Kaye Room, Vancouver Public Library Main
Branch.

Present: Clint Budd (President), Palle Hoffstein (Vice
President), Garth Spencer (Secretary), Lorna Appleby
(VCon Webmistress), Dawna Read, Barb Dryer.

The meeting was called to order at 1:25 p.m.

There was no reading of the minutes of the previous
meeting.

Three items of business were on the agenda, all to be
presented by Palle Hoffstein:

- A motion on the future date of VCon;
- A motion or report on the location of VCon 27;
- The presentation of the VCon 27 bid.

Clint noted that these items were presented in this
order partly because it is the vice-president's job to research
venues, and the scheduling of the convention is the job of
the board of directors; and partly because, properly, Palle
has to step down as Vice-President before presenting his
bid. The bottom line is, our Society must be fair in its
consideration of bids, and must be seen to be fair.

Date for VCon 27 (*et alia*)

Palle presented his case for moving the date of VCon
to early October. He noted that he has heard no opposition
to the change of date, and he can advance the following
reasons for it.

Firstly, holding our convention in May means continu-
ing conflicts with several other Northwest conventions, and
with the SCA's May Crown event, not to mention with final
exams at UBC. Secondly, in May a convention has the
summer hike in hotel rates to contend with. Thirdly, Palle
needs a full year to prepare for VCon, and we are only now,
nearly in October, getting around to hearing a bid.
Fourthly, this VCon will be starting out in the hole, finan-
cially; some fundraising time is called for. Perhaps a final
argument for the date change is that the 2002 Canadian
Thanksgiving/U.S. Columbus Day is one of the very few
long weekends in the year for both Canada and the U.S.

One argument against a change in date is that a stable
convention date is desirable, but Palle has received no
protests on this basis.

Garth moved we accept the proposed date change for
VCon. Lorna seconded. The motion was carried unani-
mously.

Venue for VCon 27

Palle then reported on his search for a venue:

First choice is the Executive Plaza Inn in Coquitlam,
near the Lougheed Mall (designated "EP" for the rest of
these minutes). Palle gave the hotel management VCon's
needs, and named some of our recent hotel venues. NOTE:
the EP's proposal will be available no earlier than next
weekend.

The EP offers several advantages, not least that by
October 2002 it will be near an operating Skytrain station;
relatively central with respect to transportation. It is of
immediate interest that the EP offers over 200 underground
secured parking spaces.

As to food options, the EP has an affordable open
lounge, and an Irish pub with smoking and nonsmoking
areas; it is also near the Lougheed shopping mall, a
Denny's, and a beer and wine store. There is enough
convention space for our needs; all rooms have microphone
and high-speed Internet access, plus everything is concen-
trated in one locality. The guest rooms are nice and mod-
ern, and there are connecting rooms on each floor. They run
around \$99/room night, which is still a pretty good price.
The function space is no cheaper than last year's hotel, but
there is more space in one place. However, there is no one
space that immediately says "Hospitality" to Palle.

As for overflow, the EP is near a Best Western – and
the EP has another hotel at Brentwood Mall, and shuttle
buses thereto, and can offer the same room rates there. The
EP staff seemed enthusiastic at the prospect of hosting a
VCon.

Another possible venue is the Guildford Sheraton
(Surrey). This hotel is bigger than we need, and not central,
and its ballroom is massively expensive; but it offers 250
rooms, and is near the Guildford Mall. It is no cheaper, but
offers bigger rooms. Other hotels with more than 150
rooms are way out of our budgetary league.

Palle will go for the Executive Inn *if* it costs the
same as last year's hotel; but he'll walk away from the offer
if it's much more. He will tour a couple of others, e.g. the
Surrey Sheraton, plus one in New Westminster (cheap
rooms, but little function space).

Garth wanted to digress about what categories of
mundane conventions we most nearly resemble; Palle
returned the discussion to the subject, e.g. banquets.

Bid for VCon 27

Palle didn't feel able yet to frame a motion to authorize
[his bid? -GS]. Clint suggested accepting the report of the

continued on page 12

CRANK THEORIES

by Garth Spencer

(Part IV in a serial)

Ancient “High” Technology

I left a question hanging a while ago. The conventional definition of technology seems to be *any craft at all*, starting with cracking flints and sharpening fire-hardened sticks. But Atlantis theorists and Erich von Daniken and pyramidologists seem to think that a technology is anything that involves refined metals, and high energies, from the steam-engine level on up to atomic energy.

As previously indicated, there *are* puzzling anomalies that turn up in the archaeological record. Most can probably be explained in natural ways. Those that cannot be explained ... don’t add up to a consistent picture, and aren’t numerous enough to force us to a shift of scientific paradigm. Yet.

Frequent entrants in the lost-art sweepstakes include the Egyptian pyramids, with Mesoamerican pyramids and various ancient Asian sites as close runners-up. Three of the most frequent claims made of pyramids can easily be dismissed. We keep hearing that their proportions encode the value of π ; well, designing a stable pyramid from a square foundation naturally leads to such a proportion. The reason why pyramids are found in diverse locations is that pyramids are some of the easiest initial structures to form. In fact, pyramids form naturally, given natural earth forms and erosive forces. Finally, pyramids and other massive stone structures do *not* all date to the same, nearly Pleistocene era.

Less easy to explain are the astronomical alignments found in many ancient stone monuments, or how Neolithic and Chalcolithic societies shaped and moved massive stones. I’ve seen the conventional documentaries, and I must have missed the part where the precision shaping of e.g. Teotihuacan and Incan stonework was explained. There is, quite simply, no agreement – between conventional archaeologists, anyway, and writers such as Graham Hancock and Herbie Brennan – as to how ancient engineers moved massive stones in Egypt or Teotihuacan.

Writers who point to man-made wonders sometimes undermine their case by claiming that extraordinary lost arts, or even mystical powers were at work. Herbie Brennan, for one, makes claims for “sonic” and “psychotronic” technologies, in ancient Egypt and Atlantis, which are hard to credit.

The Wandering Pole

Imagine this: the surface of the earth starts moving, slowly, so that the ice caps are moved closer to the tropics ... and nobody notices, or understands what is happening

... until with a tremendous JERK, the poles shift a good two thousand miles, in a day or two. Much destruction of life and habitats ensues.

Charles Hapgood, a careful academic, came to the conclusion that this has happened to our world, not once but several times, and that a mass of evidence points to the North Pole inhabiting a range of locations, scattered over northern Canada and Siberia (*The Path of the Pole*). He also analyzed some ancient maps which appeared in the medieval era, far too sophisticated and accurate to be produced by medieval, or even Classical cultures (*Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings*). He concluded that there was an unknown seafaring culture, predating all recognized civilizations, which accurately charted much of the globe and in fact mapped the coastline of Antarctica before it was obscured by the polar ice cap.

There are some troubling consequences to a theory like this. One is that the evidence for past Ice Ages would have to be reassessed, as it might mean only that the polar ice caps were in different places, rather than reaching to different latitudes. Another is that it might mean sea levels did not rise or fall nearly as much as previously thought. But the most important consequence, and hardest to take, is that this sort of planetary catastrophe could happen to us again; in fact, we might be overdue now, and living on borrowed time.

These claims ended Hapgood’s academic career. They also spawned a perennial story that keeps showing up in crank-theory magazines; and they inspired at least one novel, Allan Eckert’s *The HAB Theory*.

A different version of the past is constructed in Herbie Brennan’s books; he considers that a distant astronomical catastrophe led to a fragment of a supernova passing close to the Earth, about 9,600 years ago, creating immense tidal waves drawn to the northern hemisphere, distorting the face of the Earth and creating new mountain ranges, destroying such civilizations as existed, and leading to worldwide Flood legends.

A lawyer, or former lawyer, in the United States published a book-length argument, *5/5/2000*, that another catastrophic pole shift would occur in May 2000. Well ... we’re still here. Even before the Tremendous Jerk was to occur, I found the lawyer’s argument ... um, ill-constructed. He seemed to flit back and forth between two or more lines of reasoning, and to treat Biblical citations as equally conclusive with geological or astronomical evidence.

Atlantis in Antarctica: The Hancock - Flem-Ath - Wilson Synthesis

The latest version of “I’ve found Atlantis!” is a theory by Rose and Rand Flem-Ath, on Vancouver Island: that

before the last alleged shift of the poles, much of Antarctica was free of ice, temperate and subtropical, and home to a rather advanced seafaring civilization. In *The Atlantis Blueprint*, co-written with Colin Wilson, this case concludes with an actual latitude and longitude for the city of Atlantis:

81° 52' 5" South, 111° 18' 10" West.

Today, there seems to be a synthesis of Bauval's, Hancock's, Hapgood's, and the Flem-Ath's ideas. In this synthesis, there was an antediluvian civilization, they were worldwide mariners, they were based in a temperate or subtropical Antarctica before the last pole shift—and they established observation points all around the world, to check earth movements against celestial transits.

If you grant any of the foregoing premises, then the idea that such observation points were established, in the late Pleistocene or early Holocene, at points all around the earth might make you think: "Well, places that had any monuments from that early, or were known as somehow special to later newcomers, might seem like good places for later cultures to put their temples." So you might rationalize that massive monuments on these special points, dating to many different centuries, might simply point to later populations taking over earlier sites. But it would *be* a rationalization, and it *would* depend on the prior premises.

Taken in isolation, Robert Bauval's and Rand Flem-Ath's theses can seem pretty convincing. I am somewhat less convinced by Graham Hancock's presentations. The bottom line, though, is that they don't meet the criteria of mainstream, conventional anthropology and archaeology. Evidently the bar for extraordinary evidence is set fairly high.

A version of this modern synthesis has spawned at least one novel, Clive Cussler's *Atlantis Found*. Cussler's novel, like Herbie Brennan's version of prehistory, rests on a different astronomical catastrophe (a comet strike on what is now Hudson Bay, in Cussler's case). Unlike *The HAB Theory*, Cussler's story does not close with an impending catastrophe threatening the Earth again.

Where Did They Come From?

One of the counter-arguments I have *not* seen advanced, against the Atlanteans-originated-everything idea, is based on emerging evidence about the descent of languages and populations.

Research into the human genome and some research into the relationships of languages have discovered quite a high correlation between humans' genetic profiles, and the languages they speak. This is extraordinary, in an age of worldwide transportation and communication; but it does appear that most people speak the languages their physical forebears spoke. Merritt Ruehlen goes beyond this to trace, tentatively, the movements of population beyond ancient history, into prehistory.

Nothing in their evidence particularly suggests that there was a missing period of human evolution, when early

humans must have developed in lands that no-one can find now. Especially, there is *no* suggestion that blond Caucasians must have originated in Antarctica, which is one reading that crank theorists put upon the legends of Viracocha/Quetzalcoatl.

Conspiracy Theories

No, I'm not going to repeat *ad nauseam* all the conspiracy theories I surveyed at length, in a previous serialized article. What I'm going to do is to make a few general observations ... starting with the observation that conspiracy theories, properly speaking, are a special subset of crank theories.

Let me repeat here something I said at the beginning of "Crank Theories": it isn't even an issue to me whether any of the assertions in a theory are true or not. I barely notice how well or badly it's argued, though the leaps of illogic of an earnest nut add to my enjoyment. What I like is the absurdity and surreality—and the imaginative originality—of a good crank theory. It's *entertainment* to me.

Jonathan Vankin and John Whalen, who compiled *The 60 Greatest Conspiracies of All Time* (later online as "The 70 Greatest Conspiracies of All Time"), observed that a classic conspiracy theory presented "fact mixed with conjecture, blended with error, and expressed with certitude". They were speaking of the Key to the Gemstone File, but as they said, it was classic conspiracy theory.

There are a lot of criticisms that can be levelled at conspiracy theories generally, regardless of their content, on the basis of their form. We can cite poor scholarship—citing secondary sources at best, or reasoning from mere speculation with no facts; we can cite poor reasoning—a failure either to face standards of evidence or to stick to rules of probability; and we can cite the frequent failure to present extraordinary evidence for extraordinary claims ... which may boil down to a failure to recognize how much people can, or cannot believe.

Come to think of it, the same criticisms that can be levelled at conspiracy theories can be levelled at crank theories generally.

My own observation is perhaps superficial. In the late 1980s through the 90s, there was an upsurge of interest in conspiracy theories; at least, they made more of an appearance in public media, and on bookshelves. At about the same time, there seemed to be an upsurge in "new religions", too; in cults, in New Age beliefs, and in occultism. This rise in interest in conspiracy theories might have been linked to the rise in interest, or paranoia, about natural threats such as floods, earthquakes, droughts, unforeseen or unlikely threats such as alien abduction or meteor impacts. We've seen all this before, of course—about a generation earlier, in the late 1960s through the 1970s. And in the 1920s and 30s, and in the 1890s ... I ask myself, is some irregular *cycle* at work here?

(to be continued)

BOOK REVIEWS

by Donna McMahon

DREAMER, Steven Harper (Roc, Sept/01, mm, 360p)
 FOOL ME TWICE, Matthew Hughes (Warner, Aug/01,
 mm, 287p)
 VENTUS, Karl Schroeder (Tor, Dec/00, hc, 477p)

NOTE: The strange new codes above translate as *hc* = hardcover, *mm* = mass market paperback, and *trade* = trade paperback (that's those outsized paperbacks that combine the happy features of costing more than a regular paperback, not having the durability of a hardcover, and not fitting in your pocket – but don't quote me to my publisher.)

The reason for this extra info is that I have entered the ranks of reviewers at www.sfsite.com. Check it out!

Oh, and about reviewing *Harry Potter* this month – I lied. Next month.

###

I picked up *Dreamer* because the cover art (by Paul Youll) shows a black protagonist. Anything other than a WASP hero/ine still being unusual on a cover, I had hopes of an original perspective from first time author Steven Harper.

Sejal is an angry young man who has just made a very old discovery. He can earn two *kesh* in three hours busking on the street corner, or he can earn 70 *kesh* in twenty minutes selling his ass. It's too much temptation for a troubled teenager on the planet Rust, where an invasion by the Empire of Human Unity twenty years before wrecked the world and turned the inhabitants into a permanently impoverished underclass.

Sejal has lots to worry about, but overshadowing all his concerns is the fear that he's going crazy because he's started seeing strange visions. What he doesn't know is that he's a Silent – a person with the ability to communicate through a shared dream world with humans and aliens across the galaxy. And he's the strongest Silent ever to emerge, so all sorts of interested parties are racing to Rust. Rival governments want to use him or kill him, while the Children of Irfan, a monastic order, may be able to protect him – if they can find him first.

There are many things to like about *Dreamer*. Sejal is convincing as a rebellious teen, and his resentment of his strong mother, Vidya, is very well-drawn. Their relationship is paralleled among the Children of Irfan by the young galactics, Kendi and Ben, and their Mother Adept in the religious order, Ara.

Dreamer opens very strongly, but I found myself losing interest before the end, and the problem is structural. Like a lot of writers, Harper tries to do too much in one novel. The

initial focus of the book is on Sejal, but when his immediate crisis is largely resolved half way through the book, the story loses impetus, particularly since Sejal's role in the ultimate action turns out to be less than crucial.

Meanwhile, centre stage shifts to a large cast of secondary characters and great cosmos-shattering events which lack immediacy and involvement since our protagonist has little personal stake in them. And the actions and motivations of the characters in the last few chapters were simply not credible, leading to an unsatisfying conclusion.

Harper is a promising writer, and I enjoyed *Dreamer* for some of its outstanding bits, especially the prologue, which is a grim echo of current world events. Long after I forget the rest of the novel I will remember Sejal's parents pushing their last few belongings in a wheelbarrow along roads packed with starving refugees, praying they will find food in the city – and willing to pay any price to survive.

###

The back cover of *Fool Me Twice* compares Canadian writer Matthew Hughes to Douglas Adams and Terry Pratchett, but I found his satirical wit far more reminiscent of Jonathan Swift.

Filidor Vesh is the foppish, self-indulgent nephew of the Archon, mysterious ruler of Old Earth. Although Filidor is officially the Archon's Apprentice (a post he attained at the end of the previous novel, *Fools Errant*) he neglects his duties and education in favour of riotous high living and the sort of parties that make frequent veiled appearances in the gossip column of the Olkney Implicator.

His carefree dissolution is brought to an abrupt end when a righteously-outraged citizen pummels him to the ground and steals his official plaque and vigil. What begins as a straightforward pursuit to retrieve it becomes a desperate adventure when his major-domo plies him with Red Abandon and pushes him off the stern of a ship at sea.

As Filidor stumbles his way through absurd adventures, the pirates, vagabonds and gadabouts he meets are all happy to share their philosophical musings. Two cutpurse brothers, for example, chat as they divide up their ill-gained boodle:

"It is always a comfort when we have struck a small blow against the pernicious cult of private property," said one of them, holding up a glittering item of some kind. "Instead of hiding in some selfish own-it-all's pocket, this piece will soon be circulating again throughout the world, bringing delight to all who see it."

"As ever," returned his brother, "you erect thin and reedy concepts whose only foundation is the

continued on page 14

VCS minutes, continued from page 8

Vice-President on candidate hotels, but the final decision [*on the location? Or the bid? -GS*] must be left to the General Meeting to be held near the end of October 2001.

Lorna moved to accept the Vice-President's report on available hotels, pending further review. Garth seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

We had a short digression now on missing Society executives—where is treasurer Jeff Hartt? Has he been inaccessible, or just not answering email?

Palle now described his bid to hold VCon 27 in October 2002, albeit he was prevented from formally submitting the bid by the delay in a hotel's proposal. Palle has confirmed two Guests of Honour, fantasy writer Tim Powers and FRP game designer Gary Gygax. Palle is awaiting confirmation from Jim Blaylock; if he does not confirm, Palle wants to invite another writer. He also has invited an artist guest, and wants a Canadian guest, such as Adrian Kleinbergen. (Kleinbergen, as fan, pro, artist and writer, is sort of an all-purpose GoH.) Palle would like to emphasize a fantasy theme with this VCon. He would also like to incorporate some new groups, e.g. film, Lovecraft RPG, and SCA groups. Garth mentioned some of the failures of communication which have occurred with the SCA in the past, meaning some fence-mending may be required.

Palle listed some of the people he has on board his convention committee: Les Shewchuk, as registrar, who has served in a variety of positions with past VCons and the Vancouver NonCon; Charles Austin, as treasurer, a generally experienced nonprofit-event organizer with experience especially with the Vancouver Light Opera Society (and he lives near Palle, too, which facilitates accessibility); Palle, Dawna, and BJ Allen (Mensa) are to work together on programming; Sean Szwaba, Andrew Brechin, Rick Arino on gaming; the well-known and experienced Chang [*does he have a *real* name?? -GS*] will work on the Hospitality bar with Robin Kileen and Charles Austin, and Karen Yee and Shelly Morrison, whose experience is on other volunteer events, will work on other sides of Hospitality; Chilam will work on the Art show again; Paul Carpentier is to work on the Program Book; Greg Cairns will work on the dance again; Lorna will work on the Video Room; Lisa Gemino will cover on-site operations; Fran Skene will work on the writers' workshop again; plus there are seven or eight more unassigned people. Thus at this point, 13 months before the convention date, the bid has over twenty people with relevant experience.

Clint mentioned he would like to see the Art Show expanded, and volunteered unofficially to solicit high schools and art colleges especially for an artshow and writers' workshop set up specifically for them. Clint is contemplating some logistics issues here, since it appears to be necessary to go to these schools and meet face to face with the art and writing teachers themselves, rather than

rely on flyers—and to expect little support from school boards. It also appears necessary to have one person to approach each school, e.g. Sylvia Skene might approach Langara.

Clint moved that we provisionally accept this VCon 27 bid, on the condition of presenting it again to the General Meeting, with a budget (which depends on the hotel). Lorna seconded. The motion was carried by all, only Palle abstaining.

Palle is to continue as VCS Vice-President until a hotel venue is confirmed, and is then to step down.

Clint asked, who on the committee objects to having their picture taken for the VCon website? Lorna suggested that some people may prefer to be represented by a silhouette. Garth said something about portrait sketches (or cartoons).

Palle wants to hold a full VCon meeting no less than two weeks after meeting with the hotel; in fact, holding an invitational VCon 27 launch party.

Clint mentioned to Lorna again the "staff" thing, about the misnomer on the committee-only email listserv. Lorna puts this among the online/website tasks she has coming up.

Clint mentioned the need for a way to contact people who are NOT on email, and the need to construct a telephone tree. (Not only did one member of the v-con / v-con-staff listservs not even see an email notice of the previous VCS meeting, but Barb Dryer had received no word of the change in the August meeting's date.)

Palle mentioned a point about membership and dealers' fees: while he wants to hold off on a membership rate hike, which normally has to be scheduled at some point, he wants also to graduate the fees for dealers, over the course of time.

Barb mentioned a useful reference book in the GVPL: the *Handbook of Grants and Subsidies* (Dewey 361.6H 236.1).

Clint mentioned Ed [*Beauregard?*]'s discourse on the option of registering as a charitable organization. Barb mentioned what a nightmare of auditing such registration entails, which was Ed's point.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

News, continued from page 5

House of Hammer and Brit horror films with a definitely cool title. This site is still lacking content, but, if developed it could prove interesting.

"GOODBYE! THE JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY OBITUARIES (<http://www.goodbyemag.com/>) Plenty of postmodern postmortem prose. Sorry, you missed the Third Great Obituary Writers Conference (June 3, 2001 in Las Vegas)

Plain Speaking, continued from page 1

of our club is doing fine, that one factor being our social activity.

There's FRED, of course (weekly gathering at a lounge), but technically it's not a club activity because it's open to anyone – which is a trifle odd, as our club events are open to anyone as well. In any case I can never make it because of my working hours, which is maybe another reason for me to step down as President, since it would seem logical for the chief exec. to at least show up at the one ongoing regular activity of BCSFAns.

The way I see it, if we are just a social club then we face the problem of how can we possibly attract new members -- if all we offer is something they already do with

 continued from page 12

“MUSEUM OF DEPRESSIONIST ART (<http://www.dearauntnettie.com/museum/>) We should all have a broad knowledge of the visual arts. My personal favorite here is “Self-Portrait of the Artist with His Ex-wives” by Boogaloo (<http://www.dearauntnettie.com/museum/museum-ex-wives.htm>). And who can forget Claude Moanet's “Under the Waterlilies” in which we glimpse Ophelia going under for the third time?

“SURVIVOR: MONSTER ISLAND (<http://www.destroy-all-monsters.com/kaijusurvivor.shtml>) It's more like WWF than SURVIVOR. Classic Japanese movie monsters are pitted against one another. Godzilla, Mechagodzilla, King Kong, Mothra, Gamera and the rest of the gang compete weekly to win a Chevy Outback SUV.

“TOWER OF LONDON (<http://www.tower-of-london.com/>) Executions, terrified prisoners, torture, ghosts... all in one place. What more can history offer?”

From *Daughter of DarkEcho* #3, Paula Guran, darkecho@darkecho.com, 24 Jul 2001

“*Aurealis* [the Australian semiprozine - ed.] has announced a new editor, but no clear statement as to whether or not the magazine has actually been sold. Keith Stevenson will take over the running of the magazine after double issue #27/28 in October. From 2002, publication will be biannual in April and October. The editors are reading for issues #29 and #30. Chimaera Publications will also continue to run the *Aurealis* Awards and plan to increase their Internet presence. Phone enquiries and phone subscriptions: 03 9504 1516= Faxes: 03 9504 1517. Email: keith.stevenson@optusnet.com.au; Website <http://www.sf.org.au/aurealis>; Postal address PO Box 2164, Mt Waverley, Vic. 3149, Australia. Subscriptions\$38.50/4; \$20.30/2; \$12.50/1. *Aurealis* is looking for contributors to a multi-media column and for people willing to send news for their e-news section. Email Keith with personal details and a short review/ critique show casing your style.”

The Australian Science Fiction Bullsheat #174,
August 3, 2001

their friends? Even our own members don't seem to want to socialise with each other these days. I can think of numerous reasons: they can no longer stand each other, they're tired of the same-old same-old, have better things to do, never seem to find the time, don't need the club to socialise with the friends even though they met them through the club in the first place, etc., etc.. And then there's the fact the average age of members is twice what it used to be. When I first joined the average age was 20 (approx.), now it's more like 40. This makes a huge difference in energy and enthusiasm, methinks. Have we sunk to the level of being a bunch of boring old fharts who aren't of much interest to each other anymore, let alone to newcomers? If so, then Ghu help us!

Mind you, even if we do nothing, the club will probably survive, BCSFAzine and VCon will see to that. But is that what the members want for their money? To do nothing, get *BCSFAzine* in the mail once a month, and attend VCon once a year? Is that all there is to BCSFA?

I think we should inject a little SF back into our club. For example:

The S'Hariens have a weekly book discussion gabfest over coffee in a bookstore. It is apparently quite successful. There must be some people left in the club who actually read SF. Surely we could manage a monthly book discussion?

I, of course, love B movies. Fewer and fewer people do, it seems. Still, I could hold a monthly movie night apart from the 3rd Saturday, say on the 2nd or 4th Saturday, or even on a Sunday, which people could attend or not as their whim dictates.

A very few of us are fanzine fans. I can envision a monthly fanzine fan session with such activities as pubbing a joint limited-edition fanzine, reading assorted zines in the club archive, plotting to become SMOFs in the fanzine world, etc.

Maybe a gaming night once a month, playing some SF game or another.

Maybe the above could alternate.

The way I figure it, being a general interest club, not many of the members have much in common. But if we divide up the activities of the club so as to appeal to each interest in turn, maybe we could get somewhere.

What do you think?

Come to our next meeting, at my place on Saturday, November 17th beginning at 6:00 p.m. We can thrash out what we want to do in the coming year, figure out when to hold elections and decide what to do for Christmas. But mostly, let's just meet and talk about the club. Let's talk about US! And OUR future as a club!

And if you can't make it, send me an email filled with your ideas to < rgrame@home.com > .

Or send Garth a letter to put in *BCSFAzine*.

After all, it's YOUR club! You don't want it to die, do you? What do you want out of it? What are you prepared to

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put into it? You must have some ideas!
Are we not Fans?

(I seem to recall sending out a questionnaire a year ago, with the first issue of BCSFAzine I edited, trying to survey what our members' current range of interests is ... I got one response back.

((Guys, are you aware of the concept of making your entertainment? Doing something participatory? -GS))

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thickness of your brain. The effect of our work is to take those things which were widely held, that is, by several attendees at tonight's performance, and happily concentrate them in our pockets. The gain is ours and it is private."

Readers who enjoy an apt word and elegant turn of phrase will have a lovely time with this witty book, which is dry and clever rather than hilarious. And considerably to my surprise, the cynical Hughes even provides a happy ending for his eminently fallible hero.

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Ventus is another of the novels that made the shortlist for the Sunburst Awards this year. (That list also included *The Black Chalice*, reviewed last month, and *Galveston* by Sean Stewart, which won.)

This impressive venture in world-building has one fascinating difference from all the other original worlds I've read—*Ventus* is a terraformed world gone haywire, where the human colonists have lost control over the massive, intelligent network of terraforming machinery that runs the planet. In fact, as centuries passed, they even forgot that the "Winds" were AIs, and now they worship them as gods in a culture that has regressed to medieval technology.

Young Jordan, a newly-qualified stonemason, is having strange visions—episodes so vividly real that for a few seconds or moments he sees through the eyes of General Armiger, a man fighting a war in another land. Jordan has led a simple rural life, so he is bewildered when he is kidnapped by strangers (Calandria and Axel) who say they must use him to find Armiger, because Armiger is not truly a man—he's a cyborg extension of a rogue AI that nearly destroyed the galaxy.

Both the galactics and Armiger are also searching for the answer to an old question: what happened to the AI's running the planet, and why can't the colonists communicate with them any more? If Calandria and Axel can find the answer, they may be able to rebuild the world so that humans no longer need fear the capricious, destructive

attacks of the Winds. But if Armiger finds the answer first and takes control, the AI's will "cleanse" Ventus and start a new war against all humankind.

This is a very brief introduction to an enormously ambitious book with an immense cast and many, many plot threads. Nonetheless, to Schroeder's credit, I didn't have trouble following the action. All of his characters—major and minor—are wonderfully well drawn, with stories that tie together into a complex tapestry.

There is also a great deal of well-considered science underlying this book. Readers who are tired of nanotech as a plot device, should nonetheless find the issues of artificial intelligence and its ultimate evolution to be very well considered. And, for the most part, Schroeder shows his technology and its consequences through the action of the novel, rather than resorting to large swatches of exposition.

I still had a few problems with this book. There are not only a great many characters, there are a great many viewpoint characters—by my count five major viewpoint characters and half a dozen minor ones. With so much leapfrogging first person narrative, I eventually found there wasn't enough focus on any one single protagonist for me to get emotionally involved. The maturing Jordan fades into the crowd, and is also overshadowed by his nemesis, Armiger, whose evolution as a human is simply fascinating. Finally, I felt that some characters spent too much time immersed in internal contemplations towards the end of the book when I was impatient to get on with the action.

Still, this is a most impressive novel, better than many of the epics currently being produced by the Big Names in the field. I'll make room on my overcrowded bookshelves for this one.

Comments? Questions? Rebuttals?
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