

Colophon

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To post a message, email BCSFA@yahogroups.com

The shortcut URL to this list is <http://www.yahogroups.com/group/BCSFA>

F.R.E.D., the weekly gathering of BCSFAns and all others interested in coming, has been meeting at the Denny's on Davie at Thurlow.

BCSFA's Web page may now be viewed at <http://bcsfa.bcgreen.com>

The V-Con Society Web page may be viewed at <http://www.v-con.ca/society/>

VCon's Web page may be viewed at <http://www.v-con.ca>

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BCSFAzine is also available by e-mail; please email the editor at hrothgar@vcn.bc.ca if you wish to receive our newsletter this way.

Why You Got This:

- | | |
|--|---|
| — You feel like chicken tonight. | — You pronounce karaoke "ka-LA-oh-kay" |
| — You have lipstick on your teeth. | — You said you'd move to Canada |
| — You spoke of the Devil, but he was appearing on a talk show, | — if Bush won his election. |
| so he sent this instead. | — You stole the draft before we saved the document! |



#379

\$3.00

December 2004



Contents:

Rantings and Ravings	1
LoCs & Quays.....	3
Members' Birthdays.....	14
Advertisers	16
Calendar	18
Great Wars of Europe (faanfic)	21
Crazy Mixed-Up News	27
Media File (R. Seredin)	38
Ray's Suggestions for Vcons (R. Seredin)	39
Book Reviews (D. McMahon)	41
Kaffeeklatsch (G. Spencer)	47

Art Credits

Felicity Walker.... cover, pp. 3,4,5,14,15,16,26
Joe Devoy..... pp. 14, 15
Tara Wayne and Joshua Kennedy...p. 14

December Events

- Dec. 3 **End Is Nigh/ Work Less Party** 8 p.m. at the Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street, Vancouver; A fundraiser party to rebuild the Vancouver Indymedia network; Tickets \$10 at the door. More information at www.worklessparty.org. (New this week: **WLP three-day-work-week calendars!**)
- Dec. 6 **Richmond Writers Group** meets every second and fourth Tuesday of the month, 7:15 p.m. to 9:15 p.m., at the Richmond Arts Centre, 7700 Minoru Gate; Contact Bill Marles at bmarles53@yahoo.com or (604) 277-6775
- Dec. 7 **Lisa Smedman at VPL** 7:30pm at the Central Library, Peter Kaye room - Lower Level; 350 W. Georgia St. - Phone: (604) 331-3603 - Admission Free Lisa Smedman reads from her novel, *The Apparition Trail*.
- Dec. 10 **BCSFAzine** deadline At FRED (the Denny's on Davie at Thurlow)
- Dec. 11 **BCSFA Xmas dinner party**, 6:30 p.m. at Urban Buffet (996 Homer St., downtown Vancouver). Please bring a wrapped Christmas gift costing no more than \$5.00 for the grab-bag gift exchange. Urban Buffet offers an all-you-can-eat meal for \$14.95, not including drinks.
- Dec. 11-12 **VFur Furry Meet** location To Be Announced. For more information, see www.livejournal.com/community/vanfurs.
- Dec. 13 **Spider Robinson at VPL** 7:30 p.m. Spider will be reading from his latest novel, *Very Bad Deaths*, and from my first nonfiction book, *The Crazy Years* (a collection of his *Globe and Mail* columns).
- Dec. 14 **Richmond Writers' Xmas Party** – see Calendar
- Dec. 16 **Book discussion** 7pm at Our Town Café, 845 East Broadway; book to discuss, Lisa Smedman's *The Apparition Trail*. Contact Doug Finnerty at (604) 526-5621 or Darthbuddy2000@yahoo.ca.
- Dec. 17 **BCSFAzine** production See Garth and Doug at FRED.

Coming Next Issue: *Final information on VCon 29! * Bid selection confirmation on VCon 30! * Fan Slanders Column Returns! * Garth reviews some Lynda Williams novels (held over)

This issue is brought to you by the letter G, the number 3, and a hyper-intelligent shade of the colour blue!

Rantings & Ravings

By way of experiment, I'd like to offer you two different editorials this issue, then let you vote on which you think is more worth publishing here.

Fellow Travelers

There's a concept I've been trying to get across, which usually goes under the name "fannish". As Karl Johanson once put it simply, this means having fun and doing neat stuff. Sometimes people have the impression "fannish" just means anything of or pertaining to fans, and fandom as they know it. Sometimes fans even get the impression it just means an unsupported elitism, cliquishness and arrogance.

I think we can ignore elitism and cliquishness the way we treat most mental disorders, with a sort of kindly condescension.

My own impression of this spirit was actually formed in the first place *outside* of fandom, by university undergraduates. The first time I saw the student newspaper at my university, it carried a front-page hoax article, about the excavations around the Student Union building: the diggings showed no rhyme or reason, they claimed, so they must be the work of mutant giant moles that escaped from a biology department experiment. They had a picture of the editor pointing down at one of the holes and everything. Later, I read about the Legion of Dynamic Discord, and the pranks they pulled in public.

This was the sort of thing I recognized in fandom – at least, in histories of *fannish* fandom.

"Fannishness" seemed to mean the same spirit, as exemplified in Karl Johanson's "Worldcon '89 at Myles' House" hoax bid; or in the original meaning of filksong, folksongs about the foibles of fans and fandom. Some of us even remember the fannish hoax religions of the 50s and 60s, like Herbangelism, GhuGhu, FooFoo and Roscoe, the patron rodent and protector of good faneditors everywhere; a few of us preserve the memory of the Knights of St. Fanthony, who inducted neofans into the mysteries of Trufandom before the Star Trek Welcommittee was thought of.

Who are the most fannish groups nowadays? Again, ironically, groups *outside* of fandom. I commend to your attention the Cacophony Society (with a branch in Vancouver), now apparently dormant but celebrated in the bOING-bOING website, and the *Happy Mutant Handbook*, for various public pranks and practical jokes; the Discordians, or Legion of Dynamic Discord, whose *Principia Discordia* (famed in the Illuminatus! Trilogy) propounds a religion disguised as a complicated joke, or vice versa; the "Red Army" gang founded by Ashton Green in Vancouver; and the "Work Less Party", which now holds various events in our fair city. The last gag they pulled was "The Rat Race", in

which a number of be-suited and be-whiskered characters ran some obstacles like verbal abuse by a manager, and a PowerPoint presentation from Hell, and literally jumping through hoops.

Their next event, by the way, is an Indymedia fundraiser to be held December 3rd at the Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street.

I invite all fannish-spirited members to support and attend these groups. We should get together and have some fun.

... Your Feast Days

I don't know about you, but in my experience, annual occasions like Remembrance Day and Christmas are fraught with tension. Maybe contemporary families are not overburdened with interpersonal skills; you don't have to watch Jerry Springer, just read the daily news, to get the impression that we were all gradually losing "common courtesy" and "common sense", through the 20th century.

Or maybe I'm just projecting my own problems. Probably I've talked about this before, but ... I *never* know when something embarrassing or humiliating will happen – meaning, when I'm going to put my foot in my mouth. Honestly, I have *real trouble* telling what people are sensitive about, or what not to say and when not to say it. (I could list here my social gaffes, both within BCSFA and out, but on second thought that may not be appropriate.) So people convinced me, years at a time, I was sort of retarded. I was also convinced for years that people maliciously withheld things from me, then embarrassed me for having "no common sense": to take just one example, no-one *telling* me for fifteen or twenty years what the Remembrance Day motto "Lest We Forget" stood for.

Of course a disinterested observer might ask me why I need things spelled out, or can't always observe things for myself. The fact is, I find people and their behaviour too baffling, inconsistent, and uncertain for me to rely upon them. Even the things they *do* say are a lot less straightforward and upfront than we like to think the English language is. But I could write a whole essay on that subject alone.

Why talk about this here? Well ... it isn't as if I were the only one in BCSFA, or in fandom generally, who kept offending others and embarrassing himself. You can think of other people who go into this act continually.

NOTE that my focus is on our activities, our behaviour, *not* on our persons: I'm fascinated by the similar things that entirely unrelated fan groups do, even if they've never heard of each other ... especially, the mistakes that different people make, at different places and times.

For a good many years I've been mulling over the shortcomings regularly attributed to fan activities, from conrunning foibles to club politics through the uneven publicity for SF awards – and nominees – to the regular allegations of our general geekdom. A good two or three years ago, I was preparing to preach about the need to support our, well, our less "equally yoked" members in fandom. This year, some friends and family have pretty much convinced me that I have Asperger's syndrome.



Hans Asperger

Asperger's means, among other things, a disability when it comes to appreciating what other people feel, or mean, or imply – just the sort of thing I have trouble with.

People just *aren't* going to spell things out. Though it takes only a minimal effort, stopping to examine your assumptions and stating them out loud is more than people will do. Maybe I should accept that fans just *aren't* going to support the dyslexics in their midst, or the manic-depressives, or the high-functioning autistics or Asperger adults: it would take a minimal extra effort, but that's more effort than people normally give.

Besides, this is *fandom*, something we do for *fun*. One fan wrote to me twenty years ago, something you do for fun (he wrote) shouldn't involve *work*. I guess that's the general sentiment.

So much for the fannish spirit. Or the Christmas spirit.

Locs & Quays

(letters from our readers)

Lloyd&Yvonne Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B2
<penneys@allstream.net>, 11 Nov 2004

The future is an interesting place. Is this the expression of hope, or the Chinese curse? The future can hold so much promise and threat, and I pray that we can work towards the promise, one of a utopia. With war in Iraq and the Middle East, and sudden conflicts cropping up in of all places Ivory Coast, this world is looking more dystopian all the time. Anything can happen, sure...it all looks bad right now.

((The cliché "May you live in interesting times" actually derives not from an ancient Chinese curse, but from a 1950s pop literature imitation thereof. Nevertheless I will use the 1950s imitation for yet another fanzine.



Eric Frank Russell – first known user of the “interesting times” curse

((I want to pick up Dr. Gwynne Dyer’s latest book, Future Tense; he seems to have the most level-headed assessment of our politico-military prospects. I think the world will survive the current American administration, I mean, the current mid-East conflict. If Dr. David Suzuki has another book out, assessing the probable ecologic-economic future, I want that too ... but I know the general outlines, as in David Brin’s Earth; I do not look forward to living in an overheated, polluted world, where most currently arable land is undersea or turned to desert. Is that why I never married and reproduced, I wonder?))

Al Betz...ALL that good equipment is gone? I can’t think that past VCon committee members have inadvertently taken it. I would wonder if hotel staffers, thinking that any good quality microphone on a stand belongs to the AV closet, would put it away.

((Good thinking. I’ll bring that to the VCon 30 committee’s attention. But Al has lost equipment before; getting the word out as widely as possible, hopefully to a wide selection of former VCon concommers, might turn up some misplaced items, or previous VCon venues to contact. Or maybe we should just replace his equipment at our expense.)

My loc...the job hunt continues. I have had some great interviews, but the decision is slow in the making. Wish me luck. Yvonne’s company has told me they are not interested in having me as an employee, and one large financial printer would like to have me, but cannot give me a shift I can manage.

Is Montreal fandom ready to mount a Worldcon bid? They say they are, but I have to wonder about their ability to campaign and finance the bid. They saw that Torcon was vaguely hostile to outside help, so they intend to be the opposite, to ask fandom as a whole to help out, so that gives me some reason to be optimistic. Both John Mansfield and Robert Sawyer are firmly behind the bid, so there are more reasons.

((If fans MUST do this Worldcon thing ... I would consider Robert Sawyer an asset, if only because he grasps the value of promotion, to say nothing of his name recognition value. John Mansfield’s strengths lie in getting things done, in organizing people, but if I were ~~bid chair~~ God I would rather he not do public relations.))

The mention of Spider Robinson reminds me that for Ad Astra XXIV this coming April 8-10, 2005, Spider and Jeanne will be GoHs of the convention, with pulps editor Don Hutchison and wonderful author Nalo Hopkinson. Tom Smith will be the filk GoH as well. All this is info for the listing...the Ramada Plaza Hotel Toronto Airport East has been rebranded as the Days Inn Toronto Airport.

((Right now I’m actually concentrating on Pacific Northwest conventions that most of our members can get to, but thanks for the information anyway. Is anyone doing a newsletter for fans in Toronto, let alone the environs? Conceivably there is a need and a purpose for one.))

Yvonne and I rarely hit the movies, but given Disney’s and Pixar’s track record, we had to see *The Incredibles*, and we were not disappointed. Great plot, great “what if” hook to it, great characters, great animation, and you could tell a lot of the action was influenced by the other movies ILM has worked on, namely the Star Wars movies. I will happily see it again, and I am waiting to see if a “bloop reel” is tacked onto the end. Should be a great time.

Yes, I do send letters of comment to *Probe*, the clubzine for Science Fiction South Africa in Johannesburg. I’ve been receiving *Probe* for more than a decade now, and there is a Canadian connection to it...when I first started getting them, the editor was a Tony Davis, who was a Canadian who moved to SA years earlier. Tony now lives just north of Toronto, but I have been getting *Probe* ever since. I purchased a membership to the club at Torcon, so SFSA has foreign members.



Toronto has a large and fannish GLBT population, and every year at Toronto Trek, members of this group stage a huge party, and all are welcome. There are a number of transgendered fans, some are drag queens, and some are working towards their ultimate conversion. I am thinking of the harsh treatment Felicity received at the hands of some fans...I would have thought something like this would be better received on the West Coast, but you can’t anticipate these people until they arise to insult you. I’m glad this hasn’t put [her] off conventions; they are our main social venue to meet with friends and create the fandom we enjoy.

((Toronto fandom sounds rather like the largely furry- and gay/transvestite group now appearing at FRED. I wonder where everybody else went?

((Abuse is everywhere in our society. We have to learn to deal.))

Garth, could you publish the actual list of Aurora winners? I have seen the list in few places, and the word about that should get out, too. Also, I have heard nothing from Lyndie Bright about CUFF...I hope this hasn't died.

((The 2005 Aurora winners are announced in this issue. Mind you, I had to go look them up.

((Maybe it's past time to profile current Canadian spec-fic writers and artists, on a regular basis?

((The last you heard about CUFF here was the last I heard about them; Lyndie Bright intimated she was suspending the fund for 2004, to give more time to work up funds and gather nominees, in time for the 2005 Convention at the Calgary Westercon.))

Thanks for the market addresses...there are a couple of magazines here that I didn't even know existed. I'll see if I can pass on some of this information to Ad Astra and see if perhaps we can include these folks in our programming.

((After publishing that short list of Canadian specific markets in BCSFAzine 378, I yielded to temptation and got the annual Writer's Guide for 2005. Immediately I found a number of Canadian SF markets not on my current list. However, they still listed The Books Collective as the home of the Tesseract imprint, and did not have a couple of the periodical markets on my list. NFG Magazine got back to me with a recent online update to submissions guidelines. I'll have to do some more online research for a future BCSFAzine.))

I can't think of anything else to talk about here...the pub nights are continuing here, and it looks like our main pub night, the First Thursday, may have settled on a new home, the Duke of York, just steps away from the University of Toronto. This weekend is Con*cept in Montréal, and we can't go because of finances, and it is getting cold here. It sure isn't summer any more...*grump* .

((Next time you go to First Thursday, could you start asking people from various fandoms how they would feel about a general Toronto fan newsletter? Just to keep people informed about upcoming cons, SF book releases, the awards, and maybe each other's activities? Apart from your letters, we don't get any Sfnal news from southern Ontario, anymore than the Maritimes.))

Julian "earthfurst" Castle <earthfurst@yahoo.ca>, 11 Nov 2004

Garth Spencer wrote:

> [..]the deadline is this Friday,
> and I have received NO letters,

Yikes! Various comments come to mind ...

Re: LOC section. Please keep including the "(letters from our correspondents)" subtitle after the LOC section's title-of-the-month.

Re: "Creative Typing (stories & Art)" section: I enjoy the new section, thank you Garth.

Re: "Snup Chapter 4": I hope Jack is at the house just in case Foof does show up at 6 p.m.

I'll have more to say after I've slept.

> and no book reviews.)

I'll try to whip one together for *Comic Book Digest*.

Felicity Walker, BCSFAZINEzine, Volume 1, Number 27.378, Thursday 11 November 2004

Cover: I liked the parchment-esque paper used for the cover!

In the Future: My dad told me about Jane Jacobs many years ago. I remember him liking her thesis that "an economy is like an ecology." There was also something about ancient Italian cities trading leather for spices—I believe Jacobs was saying that the cities needed to specialize and then trade with the outside world in order for the concept of money to have any meaning.

Epistolarian Art - Greg Slade: Re Bill Paxton: "Randy Barnhart said: '...the marionette is a much better actor than Paxton, and those who have seen *Twister* and *Aliens* will probably agree.' " I'll grant Randy that *Twister* was a bad movie (and misandrist) but Bill Paxton is cool! He was the best thing in bad movies like *The Dark Backward* and *True Lies*, and good in adequate-to-great movies like *The Terminator*, *Weird Science*, *Aliens*, *Next of Kin*, and *Predator 2*.

This doesn't mean I'm going to see *Thunderbirds*, though.

Re Jonathan Frakes: "I nominate Jonathan Frakes as the Ed Wood of the 21st century." I wish there was an Ed Wood for today. Wood's movies were fun because they were so sincere and unironically earnest, which isn't possible for filmmakers today. Also, they were made with practically no budget, giving them nicely runchable production values and inspiring all of us amateurs. (And indeed I note that Greg says it's "sad, because Anderson's vision was squeezed through a tiny kid's show budget, while Frakes, apparently, had gobs of dough to play with."): Also, I wonder how Frakes would look in drag? ("Angel One" doesn't count.): "Obviously, he loves science fiction..." Not according to his 1991 interview on *The Arsenio Hall Show*: "There has been criticism aimed at the *Spy Kids* style plot...Also, like *Spy Kids*, the story got pretty heavy-handed with the message." Also, the movie *looked* like a *Spy Kids* movie!:

Felicity Walker: "I miss the eighties." *((My God, why??))* You mean I never told you?

Words from Our Advertisers: I see that the tables are closed this time. ☺:

Imperial Hobbies: I haven't checked my box in months. I need to get down there.

Calendar of Upcoming Events - Norwescon 28: I have failed to set aside the daily budget I needed to save up for this. October was an expensive month.

Newslike Matters - More on BCSFA : Christmas Dinner: Minor correction - the name of the "Wayfarer Restaurant" at the Richmond Inn is the Wayfaring Tree. Barb and I talked about it more at the last FRED, and I've confirmed that it takes reservations and has more than enough large-group seating for all of us. It also has a regular menu and a dinner buffet. It occurs to me that because I've been going there for twenty-five years as a male with my parents and all the staff know me very well, and my parents continue to dine there very regularly, I should attend the BCSFA Christmas Dinner as a male if we do decide on the Wayfaring Tree.

Build Your Own Hallucination Machine!: "An effective 'flicker machine' can be constructed with a 78-rpm record player..." Yeah, but who owns a record player anymore? "Cutting carefully spaced apertures in the board and wrapping it into a cylinder, sitting on the player and rotating around the light bulb, should produce the stroboscopic effect." Well, OK, but I think the light bulb is going to burn my anus.

((Um, I didn't think I created a Thog-ism; it seemed to me clear that the sentence indicated the cylinder was sitting on the player. I did provide the URL for Maisonneuve, www.maisonneuve.org, with the directions for building the machine properly.))

Zinelike Matters: Xtra West: Vancouver's Gay and Lesbian *(cough)* Transgendered *(cough)* Biweekly #293, 11 November 2004, contains an article, "Our battles, our own battlefield," by Michael Harris, about ASK newsletter, an underground gay periodical with (in my opinion) zine-like properties. "Typed, photocopied, and illustrated with felt-pen, the ASK newsletter was first distributed in April 1964. A mimeograph and the use of a lesbian couple's new electric typewriter were their mode of production," according to Harris. "When ASK started, the model was clearly the Mattachine Society in San Francisco," [says Douglas Sanders, former ASK president and editor]. ASK swapped newsletters with the Mattachine and 'sent copies to the Institute of Sex Research in Indiana.'" ((This, I take it, is your contribution to zine history?))

Richmond Writers' Group Report: There were four writers in attendance, three reading and one auditing while rejoining the group after a long absence. One of the members attended both the most recent VCON and a science fiction writers' conference recently, and is putting the finishing touches on a kick-ass, mind-blowing science fiction novel. Garth, you should drop in at the next meeting and talk to the group about your knowledge of writers' markets, what you look for as a faned, and whether anyone there would be interested in contributing to

BCSFazine (some of the writers in the group are pros-in-waiting and would want to be paid, but others may enjoy sharing short bursts of their talent in column form).

She Says She's Innocent: If you've ever wanted to see who would win in a fight between Leela from *Futurama* and the EMH from *Star Trek: Voyager*, today (Nov. 11) was your day, when KVOS unexpectedly aired this 1991 TV movie in place of its scheduled content. Robert Picardo again plays a doctor, but this time one who tries to kill a pregnant Katey Sagal.

((For half an instant I misread this, and thought you were offering the spectacle of mud-wrestling between Princess Leia and Lieutenant Saavik. For this, I would have stopped house-cleaning, and ignoring Remembrance Day ceremonies on TV.))

Taral Wayne <taralwayne@3web.net>, 13 Nov 2004

I'll go along with Fruvous on most of what he says about furies, but there is one thing about which he is mistaken. Understandable, since he wasn't at dawning of the fandom, and the nature of it changed rapidly. But furry fandom could quite easily exist without the Internet for the simple reason that for a few years, at the beginning, it did. The Internet was something quite exotic in the mid-80's, and not many fans of any kind had computers. I still recall talking with Mark Merlino around 1988 or '89 and being astounded by the idea of a MUCK. I hadn't heard of such a thing. While I had earlier used a Commodore '64 as a word processor, I didn't own a computer. I knew few people who did. I don't know if anyone I knew was on the Internet as early as '88 - surely not more than one or two. I myself wasn't on-line until for another four or five years. In this respect I think I'm more typical of the founding furies than not.

Yet we managed to have a fandom in spite of it all. Fanzines, lots of art, even a convention... but inevitably the Internet era blossomed around us and absorbed many even of the most obdurate of pre-microprocessing furies.

Many, but not quite all. I know at least one major figure who is still a computer virgin, and has no on-line presence at all.

I'm not quite sure the change has been entirely for the good either. There are no fanzines any more. Art is posted to sites on the Internet, and it's not the same. We have more cons than we used to, but they're full of people who don't remember the days of paper and staples. I couldn't see going back to the old days - the immediacy of correspondence is a pleasure I'm not prepared to do without. More important, I find commissions and work to do on-line. But a web site is just not the same as a fanzine.

((There are lots of fanzines around, both on paper and online. Did you mean you know of no current furry fanzines on paper anymore?))

Johan Anglemark, johan@anglemark.se, Nov. 1, 2004
(of the Talossan Science Fiction and Whisky Society)

Garth Spencer wrote: *I would like to join the Talossan Science Fiction and Whisky Society, and receive Spaceships and Distilleries.*

Duly noted. I'll add you to the page as soon as I remember to, and dig up those issues of S&D.

Would you like to receive the monthly clubzine I edit? BCSFAzine is now emailed in PDF form, as well as mailed by regular post, but recent issues have sometimes exceeded 1 MB in size, so I really ought to ask you first.

Yes, please!

Randy Barnhart, 1-1565 Heron Road, Ottawa, ON K1V 9V1,
randy_barnhart@hotmail.com (Nov. 19, 2004)

BCSFAzine 378 was truly excellent. Sorry I wasn't able to get back to you sooner, but I went in for a spot of dental surgery right after VCon 29 and really haven't felt like doing much of anything until now. Tylenol 3 doesn't leave much mental room beyond cruising the ozone.

Interesting Story: on our way home from VCon, Barb and I went through the usual security check at Vancouver International Airport and met perhaps the MOST officious security guard on the face of the earth. It should be noted neither of us set off any alarm, nor do we resemble any variety of terrorist. Anyway, after barking orders at us, dumping the contents of my carry-on all over the counter and generally acting quite the Gestapo agent, I finally asked for her name and ID Number. She announced she didn't have to provide me with that information. I replied that she was either a peace officer with powers of search and detention, which meant that, by law, she had to provide this information; or she wasn't, and she was committing an illegal act by pawing through my goods. After a most exciting hour, we were permitted to board our plane. The matter, as they say, is being investigated.

I note that BCSFA might be holding the Annual Xmas Thingy on December 11, which is somewhat serendipitous in that I might (repeat: might) be in Vancouver on business around then (actually, it's a trip to Prince Rupert, but if ya visit Rupert, ya gotta go through Van). I'll let you know closer to the day.

((As noted on the inside front cover, the Annual Xmas Thingy has become definite, and will be held that evening at the Urban Buffet.))

And of course you were dead on about SF and predictions. I have long held the belief that anyone who depends on SF for an accurate picture of the future is playing a mug's game. I remember a newspaper

article around the time of the Faux Millennium (January 1, 2000) complaining that Heinlein never predicted the moon landing would be televised. Never mind that "The Man Who Sold the Moon" is a lyrical piece of fiction about obsession and redemption that takes place during the first moon landing. Nope, the Admiral forgot the television coverage, so SF is bunk. Brilliant.

((There's some apothegm about popular culture and the lowest common denominator of intelligence, waiting to be enunciated. You know and I know that SF never was about prediction, but a whole lot of people don't know that. Do newscritters know anything, ever?))

Greg Slade: I am certain the reason Jonathon Frakes left in so many shots of the Microphone Boom in *Thunderbirds* was because that boom had more screen presence and acting ability than the entire cast. No kidding, I hear the boom is up for an Oscar. Sort of gives a whole new meaning to that old command, "Fire at Will!" Anyway, the film was very disappointing for reasons you have already dealt with most excellently.

The Penneys: I kid thee not. When Barb first saw the picture, she shouted, "Oh my god! It's Yvonne and Lloyd!" Sure they love you, bud. Fandom has long been known for being goofy and "hurtful." A friend once told me the only group more insular and full of personal vendettas than SF fans are actors. No matter how others may carry on, I think I speak for a lot, if not most folks when I say you and Yvonne are still A-1 in our booklets.

My neighbourhood skunk family has either gone into hibernation (yes, I know skunks don't go into hibernation, but torpor) or just blown town, but whichever, I am pleased. For about a month there, dogs, cats and kids were closely guarded and the local pet shop brought in anti-spray shampoo. After extensive experimentation with some local dogs, I can tell you tomato juice, sauce or what have you does not take away the stink. The search for a perfect anti-stink mixture continues.

On the other hand, your recent comment about more wild animals coming into town for food is probably correct. But I would like to add that sometime loss of habitat is also a problem and may explain our new visitors. Recently, some wetlands near us were drained and a housing development slapped together. Now, I believe I mentioned sometime ago that Ottawa was built on a swamp, yes? So the very first heavy rain we get, the wetlands revert to form and every basement in the housing development flooded. The city and province gets involved and soon, the developers are losing money hand over fist putting in a brand new, government-mandated, super-doooper, huger-than-the-Pyramids drainage system. Traffic is now completely tied up and the skunks are probably hiding in the bushes, laughing their little striped butts off.

((Has anyone done lightbulb/blonde/Irish jokes about real estate developers? Or newscritters?))

Felicity Walker: Thank you for your most interesting take on VCon 29, and your kind comments about my "sparkling conversation." I must say I was most surprised to learn that many fans could be so unkind in

that manner. I've been involved in a fan feud or two, but nothing that viscerally mean. May I suggest liberal usage of bear spray on the next doofus who feels s/he has the right to comment on your business without invitation?

Another former rasslin' fan! Once upon a time, TV rasslin' had no connection to reality whatsoever and we loved it. I mean, who could ever forget the Ulllllllltimate Warrior (too bad about the steroid arrest)? Or Macho Man Randy Savage? Or Jake the Snake Roberts? It's sad that WWE is trying so hard to fit into the new Middle America paradigm by hiring all these boring rasslers who bring nothing to the ring except a certain amount of heft and the blandest personalities achievable. Even the Undertaker is now...merely boring. Personally, I think it has to do with the recent attempt by the American FCC to reduce the electronic media to pabulum.

((Maybe we should do like the Mexicans and elect our TV wrestlers?))

VCon 29: This was my first con as a Guest and everyone was very, very nice. No kidding! Of course, the funniest thing of all were the folks who saw the Guest ribbon and literally turned their brains upside down trying to figure out who I was and wondering if I merited accosting.

It was grand seeing old friends again. Those who passed on the con missed the opportunity to see Garth working the BCSFA booth in an eye-catching yellow and powder blue camouflage ensemble (which rather defeated the point of camouflage, unless it was for a planet that has yellow and powder blue foliage).

((That's the famous Royal Swiss Navy field comedy uniform. Didn't I tell you all about that sometime? It's called "Hawaiian pizza camouflage": the whole point is that every piece clashes with every other piece, and with every conceivable background.))

I also ran into Graeme, and we spent an engaging half hour discussing the new and old Latin pronunciation systems: how does one pronounce Scipio anyway? I wanted to say hello to Fran too, but unfortunately, she was busy right to the end and we could only grab a few minutes with her during Monday breakfast. Still, it was great seeing you all again.

((That's "SKIPPY-OH". ~~Evil Twin of Julius~~))

The folks I shared various panels with were very kind to a newbie and were all wonderful to work with. Being a Guest also gave me an opportunity to chat with two of my favourite writers, Hiromi Goto and Larissa Lai. We had a good time at the *Other Directions in Speculative Fiction* panel, and I can say I learned a lot.

Sitting up front gives one an utterly new perspective. For example, every panel has someone (s) who wants to take over the discussion, ignore the niceties of debate and generally monologue *for hours*, right? I've never noticed it before, but I've discovered that person(s) invariably sits in the front row, stage right. It was weird, but no matter the topic, the chatty person was always sitting there. Most strange.

((My own Panel Hell occurred at one Con-Version, where I was part of a fanzine panel, and some oldphart started mouthing some interminable and unintelligible monologue, and I snapped at him after he'd enjoyed the sound of his own voice for ten minutes. Couldn't make out a damn word he said.))

Oh, and thanks to wireless PDAs, people are also able to surf the web during a panel. One fellow made a comment with which everyone disagreed, so he spent the rest of the hour struggling with his PDA trying to hunt down a reference that would support his view. It's a little disconcerting looking down and watching someone frantically scrolling through hundreds of web pages. I don't know if he found what he was looking for, but he did triumphantly wave his PDA at the crowd as they filed out.

((Oh, yeah, I guess that accomplished something.))

If I ever do the Guest thing again, I think I'll ask folks if they can put their cellphones, radio, PDAs, and other electronic gadgetry on stun during a panel, unless they're a doctor on call or a clergyperson. I mean, there we were, listening to Peter Tupper give us the inside story on why Fox-TV is such a mess, and someone's cell phone goes off playing an aria from Madama Butterfly and blows everyone's train of thought. So please: next time you're at a con, turn them off during panels or presentations.

Films? *The Incredibles* is just that. While kids will love it, this film is aimed at adults and it is great. I recommend it highly. Books? Right now I am reading *The Risen Empire* series by Scott Westerfeld. This is the new breed of space opera and god, this guy writes so good, I predict he will soon win the animosity of other SF writers everywhere.

Ah well, Ottawa is rapidly filling up with loutish types who appear to live for nothing more than tanking up on cheap beer and blocking traffic. It seems they are here for something called the Grey Cup, which I understand is some sort of sporting event.

((I still think All Sports Are Evil, and cause brain damage. Ray Seredin has countered by proposing that 43-Man Squamish, the impossible sport promoted by Mad Magazine, be adopted as the official sport of the Royal Swiss Navy.))

We also heard from: Greg Slade, Al Betz, Steve Samuel (When I asked "How come I keep finding things I'm looking for in the last place I look?" he replied, "Because you're not stupid"), Johan Anglemark again ("I don't find them even there, but sometimes they turn up years afterwards"), David Manning out in Creston ("I hope everything is going well with you folks on the West Coast. From everything I read and hear, I'm guessing that the recent V-Con was a big success"); and Shar O'Brien, Publisher, NFG Magazine, www.nfg.ca

Email corrections made for: Randy Barnhart, Lynda Ciaschini

Members' Birthdays in December

8: Mohammed Witherspoon-Li used to feature as a bumbling foreign villain in a late-60s TV cartoon series, constantly foiled by a talking moose and a flying squirrel. He now remarks that such a feature couldn't be pitched today, his ethnic character would be too politically incorrect.

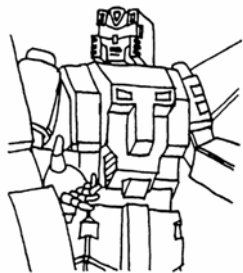


11: Kay Briggs had a bit part in Canada's worst SF series, before she moved to Vancouver and changed her name. She doesn't like to talk about it.

16/18: Steve Forty doesn't know that I discovered his secret past: the hidden years with Mossad, and then with the CIA detachment in Montreal, the one that conducted illegal mind-control experiments on Canadian subjects. His family history, BCIT training, even his appearance are entirely fabricated. Not that you should believe me, I'm an asshole from another planet.



17: Allan Kelly actually emigrated from Australia, after his fellow descendants from Ned Kelly worked him over and strongly suggested he go abroad and change his name. We don't actually know why, but since the lingering medical problems are such a compelling argument, we won't argue.



17: Debbie Miyashita has something to do with horses in Whonnock. She also introduced me to some of the former members of Bellingham fandom.



18: Fran Skene, who secretly orchestrated the more extreme splinter groups of local library staffs, has also had undue influence on local fandom, the local SCA, and most recently the local folk song scene. In former days she was known for one of the most extremely personal zines in fandom. No-one else has attained her fannish *bardo*.

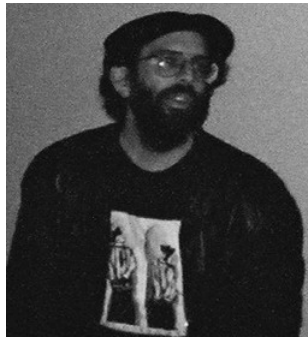
20: Barb Dryer is one of Canada's strongest proponents for a reformed spelling system. I have evidence that she does not read commercial magazines.





21: Stan Evans is one of the few people I know who left Canada for the United States, rather than the other way around. This had something to do with love and the Moscow, Idaho fan community. I am NOT going to say anything about the recent U.S. election, I am not, I am not ...

20: Colleen Harris is the obscure but powerful matriarch of the influential Harris Clan in British Columbia. Her extensive coverage in the files of CSIS and the RCMP are CLASSIFIED UNDER THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT.



22: Jonathan Rose used to run Bakka Books in Toronto, which is sort of like White Dwarf Books in Vancouver, only now he appears to run the Sunburst Awards. There is no truth to the rumour he is being paid to deny.

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

Listen to THE ONOMATOPOEIA SHOW, CITR 101.9 FM (or <http://www.citr.ca/live.rm>) * Thursdays at 2:00 p.m.; Contact Robin at betafishblue@hotmail.com

Listen to HI SCI FI, CJSF 90.1 FM * Fridays at 5:00 p.m. You can also contact Irma Arkus at 604-291-5797 or hiscifi_cjsf@yahoo.ca

December 2004

Dec. 3: **Work Less Party**: 8 p.m. at the Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street, Vancouver (tickets \$10 at the door), featuring various bands; "To commemorate the United States losing yet another election, we are throwing the ultimate party." A wild fundraiser party to rebuild the Vancouver Indymedia network; featuring live entertainment, including bands, burlesque and dancing; showcasing the activist band "United Sheep", along with Slow Nerve Action, CR Avery and Flags Kill, Megan Rose, The Happy Workers dance group, and DJ Girl as MC; burlesque artists include Your Little Pony and Lola la Bouche. Advance Tickets \$6 to \$10 at Our Community Bikes, 3283 Main St. More information at worklessparty.org. (NEW this week: Work Less Party calendars!! With like adults-only illustrations!)

Dec. 7: (7:30 p.m.) **Lisa Smedman reads** from her novel, *The Apparition Trail*, at the Central Library, Peter Kaye room - Lower Level; 350 W. Georgia St. An alternative historical fantasy, it looks at what happens when magic suddenly awakens in the Canadian West of 1884. Settlers are disappearing from the North-West Territories (Alberta and Saskatchewan) and Corporal Marmaduke Grayburn of the North-West Mounted Police must unravel the mystery of the powerful artifact known as the Manitou stone. Phone: (604) 331-3603 - Admission Free - <http://www.vpl.vancouver.bc.ca/YSP/adultevents.html>

Dec. 10: release of the next *Blade* movie.

Dec. 11: **BCSFA Christmas dinner party and gift exchange** at Urban Buffet, 996 Homer St.; see events list on inside front cover

Dec. 13: **Spider Robinson reading** at 7:30 pm at the Vancouver Public Library. "I'll be doing a public reading from my latest novel, *Very Bad Deaths*, and from my first nonfiction book, *The Crazy Years* (a collection of my *Globe and Mail* columns.)" (Spider Robinson, relayed by Donna McMahon, Nov. 20, 2004)

Dec. 14: **Richmond Writers' Group Xmas Party**: "Instead of our usual meeting at the arts centre, The Richmond Writers' Group is having a potluck party at 7 p.m., Tuesday, December 14 at my house at 4340 Coldfall Rd., near Number One and Blundell Road in Richmond. Bring your own bottle and food item to share with others. I will require people to phone me at (604) 277-6776 or email me at bmarles53@yahoo.com to confirm they are coming by Sunday, December 12. This gives me a needed idea of how many people to prepare for." (Bill Marles, Nov. 24/04, forwarded by Felicity Walker)

Dec. 31, 2004 to Jan. 1, 2005; **Fest of Rohan**, a costume event for over-21's. "Advance tickets" (!?) available at Sonic Boom Records outlets in Seattle (206-568-BOOM, 206-547-BOOM, or 206-297-BOOM), and through TicketWeb (1-866-468-7623). See also www.middleearth.com.

Man-Thing was original scheduled for release in December 2004, but has been moved to 2005.

January 2005

Jan. 14-16: **Rustycon 22** at SeaTac Radisson Airport Hotel in SeaTac, Washington. A General SF convention. Special GoH: C.J. Cherryh. Writer Guest: Jane Fancher. Artist: R. Stephen Adams. FanGoH: IKV T'Mar (a Klingon costuming group). Room rates To Be Announced (last year's was \$94/night); Phone SeaTac Radisson at (206) 244-6000 (800-333-3333). Group rate expires by December 21, 2004. Memberships \$49.50 at the door. Write Rustycon 22, P.O. Box 27075, Seattle, WA 98165-1475. URL: www.rustycon.com.

Jan. 29 (11 am - 4 pm): **Comic Book and Toy Show** at the Capitol Hill Community Centre, 361 South Howard, North Burnaby (off 5500 East Hastings); free parking, free admission, and snack bar; dealers' info - 6-foot tables for \$35, telephone 604-521-6304; see www.geocities.com/turnbuckle99, or email funpromo@shaw.ca.

February 2005

Feb. 18-20: **RadCon 4A** at the Red Lion Hotel, Pasco, WA. GoHs Patricia Briggs, Toni Weisskopf. Room rate \$74/night for 1 to 4 (mention Radcon to get con rate); phone (509) 547-0701, or write Red Lion Hotel, 2525 North 20th, Pasco, WA 99301. Memberships \$30 for a full weekend, \$15 for Friday only, \$20 for Saturday only, \$5 for Sunday only; Children ten and under free with adult member. See www.radcon.org. Write RadCon, PMB #162, 2527 West Kennewick Ave, Kennewick, WA 99336-3126, U.S.A.

March 2005

Mar. 24-27: **Norwescon 28** at the Doubletree SeaTac Hotel in SeaTac, WA. GoHs: Writer Guest of Honor: Michael Bishop; Artist Guest of Honor: John Howe; Science Guest of Honor: Suzette Haden Elgin; Spotlitged Publisher: TOR Books featuring Tom Doherty; Special Guest of Honor: Alan Dean Foster. Norwescon is the host of the Philip K. Dick Award. I think it is still the single largest annual convention in the Pacific Northwest, but anime conventions have been reaching or exceeding their attendance level.) Rooms: \$99/night for 1-5; phone (206) 246-8600, or fax (206) 431-8687; the DoubleTree SeaTac Hotel is at 18740 International Boulevard, SeaTac, WA. Memberships TO BE ANNOUNCED. Phone (206) 270-7850 or write Norwescon 28 Pre-Registration, P.O. Box 68547, Seattle, WA 98168-0547.

Mar 25-27 (Easter weekend): **Game Storm 7** at the Doubletree Columbia River hotel in Portland, Oregon. Memberships over \$20 since October 31. Write Game Storm 7, P.O. Box 764, Portland, OR 97207, U.S.A., or see <http://www.gamestorm.org>.

April 2005

Apr. 8-10: **SakuraCon 8** at the Seattle Airport Hilton and Conference Center AND Marriott Hotel, SeaTac, WA. An anime and gaming convention hosted by ANCEA. Guests TO BE ANNOUNCED. Memberships: \$40 to January 1, 2005. phone 1-877-873-3317 or write Sakura-Con, 3702 South Fife St., Suite K-2, PMB 78, Tacoma, WA 98409 or see www.sakuracon.org. (NOTE: Anime fans do things

differently; the SakuraCon website lists "staff positions" and even has a page for "Job Openings". [!?!])

May 2005

May 19: release of *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith*

May 20-23: **Keycon 22**, Radisson Hotel Downtown, Winnipeg, MB. SF convention. Guests: TO BE ANNOUNCED. Memberships: \$35 until January 1, 2005. For more information, see www.keycon.org.

June 2005

June 3-5: **ConComCon 12** at the Seattle Radisson, 17001 Pacific Highway, Seattle, WA 98186. Memberships \$25 to May 10, \$35 at the door. Room reservations 1-800-333-3333 or (206) 244-6000, fax (206) 246-6835. c/o SWOC, P.O. Box 1066, Seattle, WA 98111, U.S.A.

July 2005

July 1-4: **Westercon 58** at the Westin Calgary Hotel in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. A traveling general SF and major regional SF Convention. Author GoH: S.M. Stirling. Canadian Author Guest: David Duncan. Publisher guest: Tom Doherty (TOR). Editor guest: David Hartwell (TOR). Science Guest: Dr. Phil Currie (archaeologist). Artist guest: Mark Ferrari. Fan Guests: Cliff Samuels & Eileen Capes. Rooms C\$120 + tax per night; contact 1-800-937-8461. Memberships range up to C\$80 (adult). Write Calgary in 2005, P.O. Box 43078, DVPO, Calgary, AB T2J 7A7, or email info@calgaryin2005.org.

August 2005

Aug. 19-21: **Anime Evolution 9**, Hotel TO BE ANNOUNCED, Vancouver, BC. Anime convention. Guests & memberships: TO BE ANNOUNCED. For more information, see www.animeevolution.com.

September 2005

Sept. 1-5: **CascadiaCon 2005**, the 2005 NasFic, at the SeaTac Hilton & Conference Center in Seatac, Washington. (The General SF convention North Americans hold when Worldcon goes overseas.) Writer GoH: Fred Saberhagen. Artist GoH: Liz Danforth. Editor GoH: Toni Weisskopf (Baen). Fan GoH: Kevin Standlee (chair of Con Jose). Scientist GoH: Marc Abrahams (founder of the *Journal of Improbable Research* and the Ig Nobel Awards). Rooms \$109/night for 1-4 people; phone (206) 244-4800. Memberships: \$85 (full adult). Write Seattle NASFiC, Box 1066, Seattle, WA 98111, U.S.A.

Sept. 23-25: **Foolscap VII** at the Bellevue Sheraton, Bellevue, WA. GoH: Harlan Ellison. "Foolscap VII will continue the tradition of featuring original artwork from professionals and newcomers on an invitational basis. To be considered for invitation, prospective artists may submit samples of artwork to our jury." Memberships now \$40. Mail deadline: Sept. 10, 2005. Mail to Foolscap VII c/o Little Cat Z P. O. Box 2461 Seattle, WA 98111-2461. Email www.foolscapcon.org.

October 2005

Oct. 7-9, 2005 (tentative); **VCon 30** in Burnaby, BC. Venue and GoHs tentative as yet. Dealers tables: \$60 for first table, with 1 included membership; \$50 for additional table, with 1 included membership; \$30 for each additional membership. (Dealers' Liaison: Greg Slade.) Registration: until December 31, 2004, adults \$35, children under 13 (with accompanying adult), \$17.50; until June 30, 2005, adults \$45, children \$22.50; until September 15, 2005, adults \$50, children \$25; at the door, adults \$60, children \$30 each. Payment accepted by cheque, money order or Visa. Write to VCon 30, c/o #209 – 2166 West 8th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V6K 2A4. Day memberships are available. See www.v-con.ca for updates.

November 2005

Nov. 11-13: **Orycon 27** in Portland, Oregon. More details TO BE ANNOUNCED at the Orycon and SFNorthwest websites.

2007

July 5-8, 2007: **SPACE WESTERCON COMICS featuring DIAMOND MEL and her SPACE VIGILANTES**, A Bid to Host the 2007 Westercon in Portland Oregon at the Jantzen Beach and Columbia River Double Tree Hotels. The Vote for the 2007 Westercon will take place at Due North Con in Calgary in 2005. This bid is sponsored by the Oregon Science Fiction Conventions, Inc. / OSFCI (<http://www.osfci.org/>). "What is a Westercon?", you ask? See <http://www.westercon.org/>. Memberships: Pre Support \$10.00, Friend of the Bid \$50.00. If you wish to help prevent the spread of this Debilitating Social Disease, a Pre Oppose costs \$15.00. (*One presumes these fees are in U.S. funds?*) Write to OSFCI, PO Box 5464, Portland Or 97228. If (on the other hand) you want to help, email <mailto:mel-content@comcast.net>. (*Note: Westercon is a registered servicemark of the Los Angeles Fantasy Society, Inc.*)

Why the Great Wars of Europe Had to Be (faanfic & fanart)

RAJIV'S FIRE DRILL

By Garth Spencer

Rajiv Witherspoon-Li was preoccupied one evening with abducting domestic cats and dogs for the less scrupulous pharmaceutical labs, so at first he did not realize someone was trying to kill him.

"Pss, pss, pss, pss." He twiddled his outstretched fingers invitingly. The overstuffed Persian watched him from the unlit backyard, and didn't approach. "Hello, puss, puss. Puss-y! Want to say hello?" Rajiv tried to look dumb and innocent and harmless, which was how he usually evaded trouble, but the cat evidently wasn't buying it. "Maauw?" Rajiv said in falsetto. That didn't work either.

Rajiv was squatting, rather than kneeling, and now he lost his balance; his ass smacked the broken alley pavement and he went "Oof."

At that moment something went V-W-W-I-I-P past his forehead, right through the space his head had occupied. Rajiv flailed his hand around, trying to brush away what he thought was a mosquito. He didn't see or hear the hole that appeared in the fencepost beyond him. The Persian had vanished when he looked up again.

Rajiv sighed, got up and dusted off his jeans. Tonight was obviously a bust. He wasn't going to have any experimental subjects to call in on his cell, not from this borough anyway; the most gullible and vulnerable pets must have been hunted out here already.

Turning, Rajiv spotted a gray, foreign-looking vehicle moving out of a cross-street into the alley. He froze for a second, then relaxed. City people usually ignored each other, and if someone actually inquired what he was doing, he could say quite truthfully he was on his way home. If they asked about his overtures to the cat, he could even say he was trying to make friends, which was even true.

Rajiv shrugged and turned to go.

It was three or four blocks later, standing at a darkening bus stop, that Rajiv saw the unfamiliar vehicle's outline again. For a paranoid second he wondered if a plainclothes outfit was tailing him; then he shrugged it off.

When he saw the same gray vehicle a third time, after getting off his bus, Rajiv was certain.

Without a change in step or a turn of his head, Rajiv marched past his street and back to the nearest commercial zone. It had more than a mini-mall and convenience stores; it actually had a supermarket, bookstore, cafés and a single-feature movie house, unusual in a suburban neighbourhood, and therefore a high-traffic area. Rajiv walked into a café as if it were his original destination. He spent a half-hour there pretending to read his textbooks, then went to the movie house and bought a ticket he couldn't afford. Halfway through the movie slipped out, intending to zigzag home.

They caught him in the first alley he entered.

Rajiv never knew why he ducked. Something spanged off the bricks above him, and fragments stung his neck. He sped behind a dumpster and tried to spot the shooter. No movement; no sound.

He counted to fifteen, then tried to dash for the man-high recycling bins. V-W-W-I-I-P – no luck.

Rajiv thought faster than he had ever done. Then he called "I'm coming out! I surrender!" and inched up slowly, putting his hands up first. No shots yet ... nothing yet ...

V-W-W-I-I-P – and he was crouched behind the dumpster again. He didn't even remember getting there.

"Stop that!" he yelled. "I'm unarmed!"

"Sure you're unharmed," an accented voice called, "if we got you you couldn't talk!"

"I'm NOT ARMED, I said! Who are you, anyway, and why are you shooting at me?!"

"Never you mind, just come out of hiding!" a harder voice commanded.

Dark as it was, Rajiv thought he could spot the shooter now, on a fire escape ... and then he spotted two more man-high figures, one standing in shadows at each end of the alley.

So this was it. Rajiv felt more pissed off than anything, because this end was *pointless*. That faintly surprised him.

He stood up and stepped out, not bothering to raise his arms until the nearest figure stepped up to pat him down. Rajiv saw a husky figure dressed in drab black clothes, wearing black gloves and a balaclava; his partners looked just the same. The big man pulled out Rajiv's wallet, pulled his knapsack off his shoulder, then stepped back to examine the contents with a penlight. The shooter approached. Rajiv didn't recognize the weapon, any more than he had recognized the make of vehicle.

"Tempus fugit, guys," the remaining team member called.

"Yeah, yeah ... it's him ... funny! Don't see the notes for his paper here." The penlight turned and glared in Rajiv's face. "What are you studying?" the hard-voiced man demanded.

What was he *studying*? Rajiv knew this kind of heat couldn't be motivated by his catnapping; so what *did* ...? "Uh ... sociology, mainly, since I quit Fine Arts. Some make-up courses in hard sciences ..."

"Found'em," the hard-voiced man said. "Applied logic, and a psychology elective. But none of his theory yet; we're just in time."

"In time for *what*?" Rajiv was bewildered. He was almost ready to be killed, but not ready for this craziness.

The hard-voiced man silently produced a plastic bag containing a switchblade. As he opened it, the shooter said conversationally, "To stop you from inventing –" and the third man growled, "Shut up!"

Rajiv felt flooded with relief. He said, "Oh, you mean that crank theory about sociology? I burned the manuscript."

There was silence for a time in the alley.

The hard-voiced man said furiously, "Jesus, I *told* you to transpose us –" and the third said "Shh!"

"It doesn't matter," Rajiv said. Ridiculous as the situation was, he knew where he stood. "You thought I was going to originate the first rigorous theory of human behaviour, did you? You thought I would explain, and predict, and even control behaviour, from mass actions right down to individuals, at least within limits of tolerance? Hell, lots of people have had the idea, but almost everybody discounts it ... and I sure as hell can't get it together."

The hard-voiced man said, "Oh yeah? Then what about your courses?"

"That was my brother Ari's idea," said Rajiv. "I had to make up my course deficiencies somehow."

The shooter had lowered his weapon at this point. He said doubtfully, "Hang on. You said *lots* of people had this idea ...?"

"Sure," said Rajiv. "Look it up in any science fiction section."

There was a somewhat longer pause.

"Science fiction section," the hard-voiced man growled. He cradled his face in one hand. "I wondered if we were at the wrong address."

"*Time*, guys!" the third man said insistently.

"Are you worried about the cops?" Rajiv said brightly. "I think you've got a good half-hour's wait. We haven't made much disturbance, and even if anyone *has* noticed us, this is a quiet, relatively upscale neighbourhood. The cops in this city take a while to believe that shootings or knifings happen here."

The third balaclava-face asked, "And you know this because ...?"

"I've been working with the police for a year now," Rajiv said simply. "I'm infiltrating a catnapping and dognapping ring, posing as a dirt-poor student trying to work his way through college. I joined the force just to work as a clerk-typist, but because I *am* a dirt-poor student working his way through college, I got reassigned. While I was still at the precinct, though, I overheard a lot from their dispatch centre."

The three men groaned with disgust and turned to their vehicle. The one with the weapon and the one with the switchblade practically threw them into the back. The third man silently handed back Rajiv's possessions.

The third member of the team entered first, and put his head out again to announce, "Yeah, we're off our coordinates. We're at -" and the hard-voiced man said "Shh!"

The man who had been designated shooter paused, and turned to Rajiv. "We can leave you alone," he said, "partly because you burned your manuscript, and partly because you report that your theory is a science-fiction idea ... but mostly, because you're working with the police."

"My cognates don't do that, eh?" Rajiv said interestedly.

The shooter froze.

"You found the name you expected on my ID," Rajiv said. "and outside of the arts community, who's going to have a name like mine? You found the course materials you expected in my pack. You were assigned to eliminate a threat, though I hadn't done anything threatening ... yet. So I had to conclude, 'time travel'. And *still*, I wasn't the Rajiv you were sent for. So I have to conclude there is more than one timeline, and you aren't in quite the right one."

A police siren began to emerge from the urban background noise.

"I shouldn't pursue my crank theory again. You know where to find me," Rajiv added. "And I can't say anything about time travel either, for the same reason. Is there anything you *would* prefer that I do?"

The man in front of him relaxed, and punched him lightly on the shoulder. "You could have helped to create a slave society, and destroy all the chances and choices people could have. Or you could open up choices and opportunities." He nipped into the vehicle and closed the door before Rajiv could respond.

Both the vehicle and Rajiv were gone when the squad car arrived.

Build Your Own Robot! (Taral Wayne & Joshua Kennedy)



Snup (Chapter 5)

by Felicity Walker



Jack thought about Labobol “Rob” Funslup.

Jack met Rob in computer science class in high school. Through Rob, Jack met Rob’s ex-girlfriend, Jonna Plupplefoonsnup, and with Rob’s blessing, Jack and Jonna became a couple. Jack and Jonna’s relationship lasted about a year; Jack and Rob’s friendship last about two years, and then Rob started acting weird.

Rob would pretend to be free to hang out with Jack, but would then make other plans. Rob would play a game where if Jack could get to Rob’s house before Rob’s other friend Slarpy got there, Jack could hang out with Rob, but if Slarpy got there first, Rob would go out with Slarpy and Jack would have to find out from Rob’s parents that Rob had lied about being free. Jack stopped calling Rob.

A few years ago Rob had come to Jack and in a very sentimental moment had told Jack that his family was moving but that he wanted to stay in touch. Rob promised to write. Rob wrote one letter, which Jack answered, and then Rob stopped writing.

Jack had assumed that Rob had moved to the city and become an accountant, as he’d often said was his dream. Lately Jack had heard something about Rob being fired.

“Rob’s not that great a guy,” thought Jack, “but then neither’s Foof, and I invited *him*.” So Jack tracked down Rob’s number and left a message about the party.

Alberta Tube-Fleming, on the other hand, was definitely invited. In high school, Alberta was a jock and a rocker, brush-cut and powerfully built—but she used her strength for good. She liked being with the intelligent and artistic people, and she protected everyone from bullying. Jack remembered when Rocky Choo was walking home from band practice, and Martin Superbaby and three of his friends beat up Rocky

for being gay, and Alberta fought them all off. Alberta was *always* welcome.

Jack knew that his friend Nyet-Fwaxa Plaufberg would agree. In high school, Nyet-Fwaxa was chubby and wore horn-rimmed glasses, and suffered from depression because she was teased constantly by Daisy Static, a trashy but popular bitch. Nyet-Fwaxa was near suicide before she met Alberta. Alberta scared off Daisy and helped Nyet-Fwaxa restore her self-esteem and discover her talent for illustrating. Nyet-Fwaxa had grown up to be a beautiful, exotic sex kitten, and a secretary for the glamorous and aristocratic publisher Ruby Rice-Oxford. Nyet-Fwaxa Plaufberg considered Alberta Tube-Fleming to be the most important person she had ever met. If Jack could get Alberta to come, Nyet-Fwaxa would definitely be there.

Crazy Mixed-Up News

In this issue we provide a miscellany of science, SF and fannish news, with almost *no* discernible organization, in order to *play a game with you!* Try and classify each of the news items that follow! -GS

PRIX AURORA AWARDS 2004

English Categories:

Best Long-Form Work in English / Meilleur livre en anglais

Blind Lake, Robert Charles Wilson (Tor, 2002)

Best Short-Form Work in English / Meilleure nouvelle en anglais

"Scream Angel", Douglas Smith (*Low Port*, Meisha Merlin Publishing.)

Best Work in English (Other) / Meilleur ouvrage en anglais (Autre)

Julie E. Czerneda, editing Space Inc., DAW Books Inc.

Artistic Achievement / Accomplissement artistique

Jean-Pierre Normand

Fan Achievement (Publication) / Accomplissement fanique (publication)

Made in Canada Newsletter, Don Bassie, ed.

(www.geocities.com/canadian_sf) [webzine]

Fan Achievement (Organizational) / Accomplissement fanique (Organisation)

Martin Miller (Toronto Trek)

Fan Achievement (Other) / Accomplissement fanique (autre)

Eric Layman, fan writing / écriture fanique

French Categories:

Meilleur livre en français / Best Long-Form Work in French

Phaos, Alain Bergeron (Alire, 2003)

Meilleure nouvelle en français / Best Short-Form Work in French

«La Course de Kathryn», Élisabeth Vonarburg (*Le Jeu des coquilles de Nautilus*, Alire)

Meilleur ouvrage en français (Autre) / Best Work in French (Other)

Solaris, Joël Champetier, réd. (Les Publications bénévoles des littératures de l'imaginaire du Québec)

From Don Bassie's Made in Canada special-issue newsletter online,
Nov. 8, 2004

NEXT CONVENTION?

The host convention for the 2005 Auroras will be Westercon 58, July 1 to July 4, 2005 in Calgary, Alberta.

Dennis Mullin's Aurora Awards website, November 8, 2004

Digitized Medical Records of the Beast

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved as of October 13, 2004 an implantable microchip device from Applied Digital Solutions (Florida), about the size of a rice grain, which can be inserted under the skin and allow doctors access to a patient's medical history. The microchip would contain a code to reveal the information, but the medical records would be held in a secure database.

CBC News Online
Forwarded by Sandi Marie McLaughlin
To Ottawa SF *Statement*, Nov. 2004

Let's Get Postal

After some voluntary research I determined that the Canada Post airmail deadline for Christmas cards and gifts going overseas is December 6th, and their airmail deadline to the States is December 10th.

On January 1, 2005, Canada's minimum-weight postage rates go up to:

50 cents in Canada, 85 cents to the United States, \$1.45 overseas.
(Garth Spencer, from Canada Post literature)

BCSFazine at FRED

As an experiment, the editor brought a draft printout to FRED of the upcoming *BCSFazine*, and explicitly encouraged people to mark it up and pass it around. This experiment in participation elicited a good many emendations and additions, including a whole new column for next issue, "Ask Fan Slanders" (a revival of the column previously appearing in the celebrated and much-missed *Neology*).

MARGARET FAMOUS THE ATWOOD CORNER NEWS

"MARGARET ATWOOD, who famously does not write about talking squids in space, was surely pleased by Suzi Feay's description of her as a likely Booker International nominee in the *Independent on Sunday* (10 Oct): 'Canada's ice queen is formidably gifted, her oeuvre ranging across styles and genres.' Though perhaps the close of the next sentence was less appreciated: 'As well as sharp feminist fables, she has written poetry, criticism, historical and futurist novels, and has recently

colonised the world of sci-fi.' At least, in defiance of the usual newspaper stylebook, it didn't read '... beamed down to Planet Sci-Fi.'"

Ansible 208, November 2004

Nukes in Space?

There is some question whether the Bush administration will continue U.S. participation in an international treaty which bans nuclear weapons in space.

The 1967 United Nations Treaty on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, ratified by all the major space powers, was negotiated at the height of the Cold War, and prohibits any nation from declaring sovereignty over an extraterrestrial body. Now, the U.S. government objects to proposals to change the treaty and ban all kinds of weapons in space.

The United States withdrew in 2002 from the 1972 Treaty on the Limitations of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, citing a need to pursue missile defence.

The Bush administration is reported to plan for NASA to return humans to the moon by 2020, and the plan depends heavily on commercial investment.

(Frank Sietzen, co-author, *New Moon Rising*, Apogee Books: July 2004)
To Ottawa SF *Statement*, Nov. 2004

Comic Book to Feature HIV-Positive Hero

"LOS ANGELES - Along with fighting alien menaces and criminal masterminds, the *Green Arrow* comic book will now feature a sidekick engaged in a more personal struggle - this one against HIV.

"It's the first major comic book to deal with HIV, and a dose of hard-edged reality to the usually fanciful world of costumed crime fighters.

"In the latest issue of *Green Arrow*, set for publication Wednesday, a teenage runaway named Mia - who has been in the care of the title hero for two years - discovers that her time spent as a street-dweller and prostitute has resulted in her picking up the virus. ..."

By ANTHONY BREZNICAN, AP Entertainment Writer
Forwarded by Felicity Walker, Oct. 15, 2004

THE FAN ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

"used to be the Fan Activity Achievement Awards; perhaps this name change is a hint that appropriate feats of inactivity also deserve to be honoured. On-line ballot page under construction at ...

<http://www.corflu.org/faan.html>."

Ansible 208, November 2004

Subject: New Nova Awards (UK) Page now on line

"Steve Green has written a summary page for the Nova Awards, giving the 2003 winners and the list of eligible fanzines for the 2004 awards. Now on line at eFanzines.com: <http://efanzines.com>"

Bill Burns <billb@FTLDESIGN.COM> to Timebinders, 2 Nov 2004

Subject: Arnie Katz's Flicker #4 now on line

"The latest issue of Arnie Katz's *Flicker*, #4 for November 2004, is now available at eFanzines.com.

"Arnie notes: 'The 4th issue of *Flicker*, Fandom's answer to Beauty and the Beast, is now ready for perusal. It contains numerous essays by me, a column by April Hunter about her adventures South of the Border and a letter column. Yes, there are new photos of fanzine fandom's most breathtaking columnist.' On line at <http://efanzines.com>

Bill Burns <billb@FTLDESIGN.COM> to Timebinders, 3 Nov 2004

Subject: Watt's Out for October 2004 now on line

"The latest issue of Ron Clarke's book review supplement, *Watt's Out*, is now on line: <http://efanzines.com>"

Bill Burns <billb@FTLDESIGN.COM>, 7 Nov 2004

California Webmaster Chaz Baden Starts a New Fanzine

"My first issue of *A Bear Went Over the Mountain* will be ready to mail by the day after Loscon, or possibly the day before if I get lucky. (It'll be ready to hand out at Loscon.) If you'd like a copy, send me a mailing address and I'll put one in the mail to you.

"(I'll also make PDFs available, for those who really prefer them.)"

Chaz Baden, Timebinders, Nov. 13, 2004

Chunga 8 now on line

"The September 2004 issue of *Chunga*, #8, edited by Andy Hooper, Randy Byers, and Carl Juarez, is now on line at eFanzines.com in low and high resolution versions: see <http://efanzines.com>"

Bill Burns <billb@FTLDESIGN.COM>, Timebinders, Nov. 13, 2004

NEW SFNORTHWEST ONLINE FORUM

"If you get this more than once, please disregard. I just wanted to announce that I have initiated forum software on [sfnorthwest.org](http://www.sfnorthwest.org) that can now be found at <http://www.sfnorthwest.org/forum/>.

"I, a moderator, have control over the category areas of discussion, but any and all can initiate different forums on the forum under the existing headings of General Discussions, Conventions and Fannish Groups. I have pro actively started some forums including Rideshare and Room Share Announcements under General Discussions and Socials and Parties under Fannish Groups. Feel free to start your own. I will be adding directories of avatar graphics so people can customize their personas. However, give me time as I work this out.

"I have a separate ongoing forum called Writers Notebook located at <http://www.sfnorthwest.org/notebook/> that is now up to 150 members from all over the world. Hopefully this new forum can grow to rival or surpass it."

Contact Jack Beslanwitch either through the Northwest Science Fiction Resources website, <http://www.sfnorthwest.org>, or telephone (206) 723-9906.

Jack Beslanwitch, to SFNorthwest & other listservs, Oct. 24, 2004

ONLY APPARENTLY REAL

"Here's *Focus* magazine (not the BSFA one) on the BBC *Space Odyssey: Voyage to the Planets*, a dramatized documentary: 'But science fiction it isn't. Impossible Pictures, *Space Odyssey's* maker, has created the most authentic vision of humans exploring our planetary neighbours ever.' [NA] For certain values of 'authentic'...."

Ansible 208, November 2004

Talossan Highlights of the Week

Ye Ed. is now on the email list for *Qator Itrins*, a monthly newsletter from the Republic of Talossa, and for *Seifetziesca*, its weekly update. Some highlights from this independently-created nationette, with its own language even:

"(MPF) Last week saw the second highest number of posters on Wittenberg [the Talossan message board - GS] since the secession of the Republic: 18. The most active week was the week ending on June 17th, with 19 posters.

"*Qator Itrins* #3 was published! The Third *Qator Itrins* was published this week. You can read it online here:

<http://www.talossaonline.com/qator.html>"

Seifetziesca #6, Nov. 4, 2004

A Moving letter from Tric'hard Forfesc on the future of Talossan

(This letter was posted on the Talossan Language forum by Tric'hard Forfesc at this address: <http://www.talossaonline.com/6.37.0.html>)

"[...]Outsiders can participate in *glhetg* [language, in Talossan - GS] activity within the Republic, but cannot within the Kingdom. We *could* post in their fora but there is no activity there in the language ... This means that outsiders are *de facto* going to use the Republic forum dedicated to the language. There may only be two of us so far - Jan and myself - there are likely to be more in the future. ...

"A set of *glhetg* lessons will form the basis of a "Teach yourself *glhetg*" - created by the volunteer professionals, refined by students worldwide - which will IMHO in the long term be a more important learning resource for Everyman than the current grammar. All of these will tend to fix today's *glhetg*, *glhetg* 2.0 if you will, as a literary standard, and probably sooner than you'd believe. While it would IMHO be regrettable if it were necessary to write a new dictionary, based on existing literary resources and current usage, this also would come under the headings of 'regrettable', 'inconvenient', 'tiresome', rather than 'difficult' or 'impossible'. ..."

"Meanwhile a new language forum has been created, the *Glheþ Glheþsons* forum on the Talossan language, on October 25th. At the time of writing these line 38 messages has already been posted in what is essentially a very specialized forum. While permanent professors are still request, Miestrã Schivã has already published a first Talossan Lesson on pronunciation. "

Seifetziesca #7, Nov. 11, 2004

AIRHEADS

"Two girls at Greenfield Junior High School in Gilbert, Ariz., were setting up the decorations for a school dance and got the idea of inhaling the helium they were using to fill balloons to hear themselves 'talk funny.' Principal Jill Bowers noted the school district's policy that prohibits the 'non-medical use of drugs' also includes inhaled drugs, and suspended the girls for five days. 'If it's such a dangerous substance,' complained one of the girls' fathers, 'why weren't they supervised? I think they went a little bit overboard and took the zero-tolerance policy to the extreme.' Bowers relented, reducing the suspensions to one day. (Arizona Republic) ...Whew! Now they'll be able to squeak by the seventh grade."

This Is True, October 17, 2004

Goth House Newsletter: 22 Oct 04

"At last, the Mary & George conclusion: <http://www.gothhouse.org/>

"It turned out to be a much longer series than I originally intended.

So what else is new? ...

"One more thing. Goth House Central has just gotten a cable modem. It is hooked up to the eMac you might have read about in the previous Goth House Technology Corner, which means that instead of sending this newsletter out from my beloved old Eudora Lite interface, I am sending it out from a brand new Eudora OSX free-with-ads-in-the-corner interface.

"If that bums you out in any way, let me know and I'll take you off the e-mail list. Also, apologies in advance for any transitional awkwardness (duplicated e-mail and so on)."

From Julie McGalliard, Oct. 28, 2004

EVEN YET MORE AWARDS

"World Fantasy Awards were presented on 31 October: NOVEL Jo Walton, *Tooth and Claw*. NOVELLA Greer Gilman, 'A Crowd of Bone' (Trampoline): 'I'm thunderstruck. I'm told there are blackmail pictures of a gibbering woman.' SHORT Bruce Holland Rogers, 'Don Ysidro' (*Polyphony* 3). ANTHOLOGY Rosalie Parker, ed., *Strange Tales*. COLLECTION Elizabeth Hand, *Bibliomancy*. ARTIST (tie) Donato Giancola & Jason Van Hollander. SPECIAL, PROFESSIONAL Peter Crowther for PS Publishing. SPECIAL, NON-PROFESSIONAL Ray Russell & Rosalie Parker for Tartarus Press. LIFE ACHIEVEMENT Stephen King, Gahan Wilson.

"Deutsche Phantastik Preis. Winners of this German award include J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter und der Orden des Phoenix* as best international novel, and Stephen König (I mean King) as international author of the year.

"British Independent Film Awards. The zombie horror spoof *Shaun of the Dead* is shortlisted for best film in these awards' seventh annual presentation, scheduled for 30 November. [SG]"

Ansible 208, November 2004

Gareth von Kallenbach's next book out

(but we don't have the title, here at BCSFAzine staff headquarters)

"I wanted to let you know that my 2004 edition of my book of film, game, DVD, and travel reviews and interviews is out now. In addition to all of the reviews, the books contain interviews that your readers will enjoy such as: Peter Mayhew (Chewbacca), Jeremy Bulloch (Boba Fett), Natalie Portman (Padme), Charlie Hunnam (*Cold Mountain*), Nia Varadalos and John Corbet (*My Big Fat Greek Wedding*), Manu I. (*Star Trek Voyager*).

"The 2004 Edition has: Kevin Smith (*Jersey Girl*), Chase Masterson (Lyta From *Star Trek Deep Space 9*), Kerry Conran (*Sky Captain*), Stuart Gordon.

"The above are just a few examples of the interviews contained within. The books can be ordered at the link below and any site that promotes them will be listed in the 2005 edition of the book." See <http://www.lulu.com/sknr>

Fran Skene to BCSFA listserv, Nov. 5, 2004

Cirque du Soleil Convention

CirqueCon Montreal 2005 is "The Second Unofficial Gathering of Cirque du Soleil fans", happening April 22-24, 2005 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Cirque fans from across North America and even Europe and Australia will be gathering to visit Cirque's International Headquarters and take in the new touring Cirque show on its world premiere weekend.

"If anyone out there in sf/f fandom might be interested, we have a website dedicated to the endeavor at www.azlance.com/~richasi/Cirque/cirquecon.htm. You can find information on such convention stalwarts as memberships, a special ticket offer to the Cirque show, and even Hotel info.

"If anyone has questions, you can contact me at tourdemondo@yahoo.com."

Keith Johnson, to SFNorthwest listserv, Nov. 11, 2004

Hasbro sues 3H Productions re Transformers figures (Oct. 5/04)

"Hasbro has filed suit in New York State Court, Monroe County, against 3H Productions in an effort to ensure that collectors of Transformers toys and other merchandise who have paid 3H for certain Transformers branded merchandise receive their products or are refunded their monies.

"We are pleased to tell you that we have retrieved the Sentinel Maximus figures from 3H. Because 3H did not have the packaging printed, we are in the process of doing so. Upon completion of the packaging, we will ship the Sentinel Maximus figures to all fans who ordered and paid for them per 3H's records. We expect the printing to be completed in approximately four to six weeks, and the figures will ship thereafter.

"We appreciate your continued patience and will keep you posted on additional details as we continue to work towards resolving these issues."

Forwarded by Felicity Walker, October 16, 2004

(Hasbro is the company that makes Transformers toys and 3H are professional convention organizers who have been holding Transformers conventions for several years. -FW)

[Next issue will feature a bit of Botcon history, supplied by Ryan Haawe; I had hoped to pair it with the foregoing news, but ran up against space restrictions. -GS]

Let's Party at Rustycon!

Bobbie Dufault posted the following to the NWConLeague listserv:

"We have some special things planned this year to encourage parties of all types. The most notable is our contest for the BEST party. We actually will have several different categories for all types of parties to compete for. Here is a PARTIAL list of these categories:

- * Party Mavens Choice Award
- * Best Party Rustycon 22
- * Best Adult Party
- * Best Party for All Ages
- * Best Use of the Convention Theme
- * Best Private Party Crashed

"Just to be fair to everyone The Party Maven has Secret Squirrels to help decide the awards - and to make it more interesting the Party Maven can be bribed. (Good thing we have those squirrels isn't it?)

" (We reserve the right to adjust categories as necessary due to lack of participation in a category.)

If you have suggestions or other cool ideas pass them on to the maven@rustycon.com."

Bobbie added more information and suggestions to facilitate room parties. For more details, write Bobbie DuFault at [<bobbiedu@hotmail.com>](mailto:bobbiedu@hotmail.com).

From: NCL listserv, 10 Nov 2004

Lucas is the Latest Star for AFI Life Award

"George Lucas will be honored as the 2005 recipient of the American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award, which will be presented to him at a tribute dinner in June.

"Lucas' selection as the 33rd recipient of the award was announced Friday by Howard Stringer, chair of the AFI Board of Trustees.

By Gregg Kilday, Saturday 16 October 2004
Forwarded by Felicity Walker, Oct. 17, 2004

THE HOWLING

"Animals at the Dogs Home in Battersea, England, kept getting out of their cages. Not knowing how, the staff set up a video camera. 'There are lots of stories about Battersea being haunted,' spokeswoman Becky Blackmore explained, 'so we wanted to make sure that there was an explanation for what was going on.' The resulting footage captured the culprit red-pawed: 'Red', an impounded stray, had figured out how to let himself out of his kennel. After escaping, he also released 'a group of chosen companions' for an overnight raid on the food storage area. It is

amazing really because lurchers aren't particularly renowned for their intelligence,' Blackmore says. (AFP) ...Yes, well, that's what they wanted you to think."

This Is True, October 24, 2004

LITERARY CORNER.

"Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever may be dead but he won't lie down; it was my joyous duty to read Stephen Donaldson's new Covenant book *The Runes of the Earth* for review in *SFX*. To be fair, that famously knurled and argute vocabulary has been somewhat toned down since 1983, but statistical analysis of favourite words this time around led me to predict that the sequel must be titled *The Eldritch Phosphenes of Formication*. (In fact it's *Fatal Revenant*. So much for prediction.) Thog's favourite metaphor is drawn from plumbing: 'If she did not discover some clear answer to her questions soon, the cistern of her soul would crack open.' But there's little joy here for clench-racing fans, despite page 32's 'Her stomach clenched'...."

Ansible 208, November 2004

STRANGE & NORRELL GO HOLLYWOOD

"I understand that New Line have bought the film rights to Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*. Ah yes, I can see it now. Johnny Strange (Keanu Reeves), an American teenager, travels back in time to medieval Britain where he engages in thrilling magical combat with Nor-El (computer-generated Marlon Brando), an alien from the planet Krypton who has captured and impersonated the wizard, Merlin (Ian McKellen). Strange is recruited by King Arthur (Sean Bean) to combat the deadly threat. He is aided in his quest by his pet raven, Geordie, who speaks with a Cockney accent and is voiced by Michael Caine; by Arabella (Britney Spears), a blonde barbarian princess from far-off Cimmeria who has a penchant for chain mail bikinis; and by Milton Keynes (David Suchet), a fat English monk with a passion for Belgian beer. Strange is forced to battle hordes of villainous Yorcs, a twisted and deformed species that lives in vast coal mines beneath gloomy Northern cities such as Leeds, Slough and Basingstoke. Sean Connery makes a guest appearance as the voice of Jock, the whisky-sodden dragon.

"Memo to Susanna and Colin: Take the money and run."

Cheryl Morgan, *Emerald City* #110, Oct. 24, 2004

PROS GET FANNISH

"Pat Cadigan breaks it gently: 'I always love *Ansible*, so I feel a bit petty about making any criticism. But for some reason, I just can't help it: why didn't you mention Peter Weston's book? You dog.'

"Mark Olson confides: 'Pete [Weston] was wondering why his book never gets mentioned in *Ansible*.'

"Peter Weston, author of a book, writes: 'You swine, Langdorff! I kill you deadly. No free beer for you at Novacon.'"

Ansible 208, November 2004

MOVIE MONSTER GODZILLA TO JOIN STARS ON HOLLYWOOD'S WALK OF FAME

"TOKYO (AP) - Godzilla, the fire-breathing movie monster born in a nuclear accident, is joining Hollywood royalty with a star on the Walk of Fame.

"A ceremony will honor the giant lizard in front of Hollywood Boulevard's famed Grauman's Chinese Theatre on Nov. 29, the world premiere of Godzilla Final Wars, Toho Pictures Inc. president Shogo Tomiyama said Wednesday. The movie, the 28th in the series, will mark 50 years since the genetically altered dinosaur emerged from the sea. ..."
Forwarded by Ray Seredin, Oct. 20, 2004

GIVE ME LIBERTY, OR GIVE ME SCHOOL

"Joshua Phelps, a 17-year-old senior at Pine Bush High School in Crawford, N.Y., was looking for an extracurricular activity to participate in to round out his college application when he spotted an ad for the school's Civil War Club. He signed up and spent a weekend in a mock battle against Confederate soldiers in a replay of the 1863 Battle of Chancellorsville. Back at school, a security guard noticed something in Phelps' car: a militia uniform, complete with a (gasp!) fake musket. The guard called police, who arrested Phelps on weapons charges. In addition to criminal charges, the school has suspended Phelps for five days pending an expulsion hearing for violation of its zero tolerance weapons policy. Police Chief Daniel McCann calls the bust proper. 'The musket was found in his car on the high school grounds and could have been used,' he says, perhaps to fire a small rock or something. (Middletown *Times Herald-Record*) ...Surely no one there has any spare rocks in their heads that he could use for that, though, right?"

This Is True, October 17, 2004

END-OF-THE-WORLDCON

"I was reminded the other day that the Mayan Calendar predicts that the world will end on December 23rd, 2012. A few years back some entertaining folks did some hoax bid parties for Chichén Itzá in 2012, but then 2012 seemed like a long way off. Now, however, there are rumors of extant bids for 2011. I think it is time to stake a claim to the year. Cancun has one fairly successful (though losing) bid behind it. It has good facilities and is only 2 hours' drive from Chichén Itzá. We can't miss this one, folks. Cancun in 2012, the End-of-the-Worldcon. Start bidding now."

Cheryl Morgan, *Emerald City* #110, Oct. 24, 2004

CONTAGIOUS

"People with health problems should be careful when researching their symptoms on the Internet: what they find might not be accurate. An 18-month study by England's University of Derby found that web sites of health societies, charities and professional associations were generally accurate, while sites put up by individuals were more likely to be inaccurate. Still, people don't discriminate well enough between the two,

with predictable results. 'The health profession has coined the phrase 'cyberchondria' for people using the Internet for self diagnosis,' said research leader Dr Neil Coulson. (AFP) ...Any readers who think they have cyberchondria are advised to consult Google to help confirm it."

This Is True, October 24, 2004

TROOPS II?

from <http://www.dreamchaos.org/artist.php?item=movies>

"[someone...] suggested [...] to make a *Star Wars* / Some-other-show crossover. [...] and thus, *Troops* was born.

"[...] Then one day, someone with a lot of money, probably named George, said 'Hey! This is pretty cool! I'd pay to see more!' And so, the call went out again, this time to an old cement factory near Monterey, and filming once again happened. Well it just so happens that yours truly was on the second film [crew] So WHEN THEY EVER FINISH IT, I'll put *Troops II* up here ;>"

"Rubio says '[...] As far as TROOPS II goes, I've kept out of it. All I know is that they're hung up in post production, and that it's reported to be over 60 minutes in length.' from

http://www.echostation.com/interview/kevin_rubio.htm ..."

Forwarded by Julian Castle, Oct. 30, 2004

That "Rare Comics" Guy Again

"It's that time of year again and Mark's Rare Comics is your one-stop shop that saves you gas, time and energy to do all of your holiday shopping needs, all in the comfort of your own home. And it's completely safe!

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Mark Arnold, Oct. 31, 2004

Sources:

Mark Arnold, Julian Castle, Julie McGalliard, Ray Seredin, and Felicity Walker; *Ansible* #208, November 2004, Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, <http://ansible.co.uk>; *Emerald City*, Cheryl Morgan ed., cheryl@emcit.com, <http://www.emcit.com/>, UK: 07742 196 331, US: (650) 722 1413; *Ottawa SF Statement*, c/o OSFS, 18 Norice St., Ottawa, ON K2G 2X5; *This Is True*, Published weekly by ThisIsTrue.Inc, PO Box 666, Ridgway CO 81432 USA, © 2004 by Randy Cassingham

Media File

“Cosmic” Ray Seredin

Still no word on what J. Michael Straczynski is going to do after the *B5* movie. According to some websites, he’s looking over many interesting possibilities, but no one is saying what they are.

Pixar is separating from Disney. After December 2005’s *Cars*, the company is going independent, and is already doing well on Wall Street.

In local sci-fi news, season one wrapped on *Battlestar Galactica* on the VCon weekend. Production on *Andromeda* is continuing with their wrap date in the first week of December. It’s still unclear whether *Andromeda* will go on to a sixth season. Their ratings are still high, so the possibility remains good. The shooting of the *Fantastic Four* feature film is bringing some major excitement to downtown Vancouver. Riding the bus to Richmond on November 6th, I saw two overturned New York police cars next to the smouldering remains of a fire truck. On the evening of the 4th they needed a crowd and gathered over 4,000 Vancouver residents to play New Yorkers, even recruiting people at the Metrotown Skytrain station. It looks like the scene is a spectacular night battle between the *Fantastic Four* and *Doctor Doom*. It will all end on a life-sized partial replica of the Brooklyn Bridge, built in the same building that built the notorious FastCat ferries.

The latest coming out of the BBC on the new *Doctor Who* series is that it will begin airing on BBC1 on the second Sunday in March. It’s unclear why the BBC is delaying *Doctor Who*; perhaps it’s to have the entire series completed before the first airing, or that the other series that shares *Doctor Who*’s time-slot (*Wonderful World of Disney*) will still be airing new episodes on the original mid-February air-date.

The CBC is a bit up in the air because of the hockey situation. If the strike is to continue after March, the CBC will likely air the series three days after the BBC. If hockey has started by then, the CBC will delay the broadcast of *Doctor Who* until what the network calls its summer festival, meaning it will likely be July before we see it.

In Stateside *Doctor Who* news, the Sci-Fi Channel is a bit leery of some of the characters in the *Doctor Who* universe. Regular series character Mickey Smith is a black man who happens to be a loan shark. Sci-Fi is worried that black viewers in America may take this the wrong

way. Add to this that he’s the boyfriend of the Doctor’s companion Rose, who is a white woman; this may cause some minor ripples in the Bible Belt of the southern United States (I can’t believe I’m writing this in 2004). Because of this, the Sci-Fi Channel has not committed to picking up the new series. Many feel the decision should come through before Christmas, but when they will get the series itself in the US is anybody’s guess. However, just before deadline time, the high-end pay TV cable super-station “Showtime” is showing great interest in buying *Dr. Who* (both the classic and the new series), thanks in part to *Six Feet Under*’s producer Bob Greenblatt.

Some of you may have seen the new series Daleks, who are not too different from the old Daleks. Yes, now they can fly, but they still stay true to their original shape. However, it’s still unclear if they will say “ex-ter-mi-nate” again.

Star Trek: Enterprise is getting a lot better, if you haven’t been watching. They have taken some of the good ideas from both JMS and Joss Whedon and are making some tremendous improvements to the series’ storytelling, such as fast-moving multi-part stories, which to me was like riding the lead car on the PNE rollercoaster.

The other series I liked this season, *Lost*, has been renewed for the whole season, and the mystery on the island will continue.

That’s all for now. Have a Merry, Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, and I’ll be seeing you in 2005.

Ray’s Suggestions for Future VCons

by “Cosmic” Ray Seredin

Short-Term Ideas (One to Five Years Down the Road):

* Assign volunteer shift work for hospitality. I know that Chang was rather busy Friday afternoon pouring cement, and of course work comes first. However, for next year I’d like to see a group of people running hospitality from when the convention opens to at least 1:00 a.m. when we can no longer sell liquor, then have the consuite open on Saturday and Sunday morning by at least 9:00 a.m.

* Have “Breakfast of Champions” in hospitality on Saturday morning: sugary cereals and classic cartoons. With hospitality opening up early on Saturday morning, this would be a fun event to have, especially for members who grew up in the 1970s and 1980s, who remember such cartoons as *Janna of the Jungle* and *The Transformers*. To be fair, we’ll ask TOPS to provide us with some non-sugary cereal for the people who have to lose weight.

* A party board to go along with the message board. One problem this year: I didn’t know where too many of the parties were. So why not set up

a party board? It could break up parties between drinking and non-drinking. It would be a great way for people to know where to find a spot to hang out after 1:00 a.m. when hospitality closes.

* If possible, stay at the same hotel, the Hilton Vancouver Metrotown. It's ideal for a 400-to-800-member convention. It even has a few spaces that we can use in the future, like the lounge on the eighteenth floor. It's also centrally located for most of the Lower Mainland, as well as BC and the Pacific Northwest.

* Move the damn art boards out of Steve Forty's place. Either we find a member who has the space in his or her house or better yet rent a storage unit from a storage unit warehouse. The latter idea has another advantage—the boards will be not in the home of a person who may be called away by a family emergency the week of the con. It's only about \$65 a month plus GST/PST, and since we're already paying more for next year's convention anyway some of the money would be well-spent on storage.

* Get the word out. I know it's going to be hard, but if we get volunteers to go to most of the comic shops, gaming shops, and hobby shops in the Vancouver area it would likely draw in a lot more members. As well, we should get a concom member to appear on the breakfast show on City TV, as well as on community TV on channel four. We should also mail material to the comic, gaming, and hobby shops throughout BC and the Pacific Northwest. I like Palle's idea of holding a party at next year's Norwescon. It would also help if we got information spread at gaming convention, the comic cons, the SCA, as well as mailing media kits to other local TV and radio stations.

Long-Term Ideas (Five to Ten Years Down the Road):

* Two hospitalities. Since the hotel has a nice lounge sitting on the eighteenth floor, unused on VCon weekend, why not make it into a second hospitality room? The present one can be used to serve non-alcoholic drinks and food between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m., while the one up on eighteen will be open only from 5:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday, while serving as the consuite for the dead dog.

* A second video room. One room can be dedicated to hard-to-find science fiction movies (e.g. *Star Wars* before the special edition) and hard-to-find science fiction TV series (example: the British episodes of *B5*). The other room can show fan films, 1980s cartoons¹, and *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*. (¹ "Breakfast of Champions" will have famous classic cartoons like *Transformers* while the second video room will have hard-to-find or obscure classic cartoons.)

I hope you consider these ideas and make VCon even better. I'm very happy to provide them to you. After being in convention fandom for the last sixteen years I have a *lot* of ideas.

((Editorial comment: each of these sound like good ideas, and some have in fact been considered. The upcoming VCon 30 bid is proposing the Hilton as the next venue, actually. Paid storage, like other options, appears to be unavailable to us because of our restricted finances. The hurdle to organizing the at-the-con options appears to be limited manpower, or time, or sustained attention. How do we propose to overcome these hurdles? – GS))

Book Reviews

SO LONG BEEN DREAMING, eds: Nalo Hopkinson & Uppinder Mehan (Arsenal, Oct/04)

DREAMS OF THE SEA, Elisabeth Vonarburg (Tesseract, 03)

THE MAGISTER'S MASK, Deborah Fredericks (Dragon Moon, Aug/04)

THE ALCHEMIST'S DAUGHTER, Eileen Kernaghan (Thistle-down, 04)

* * *

Email apology: I've removed the f word to avoid censoring by overzealous email nannies. You can figure out where it goes.

I discover this month that the four books in my backed-up reviewing stack have interesting coincidences. All are published in Western Canada. All are wholly or predominantly by women authors. And all, to some extent, involve dreams.

I didn't plan this, really.

SO LONG BEEN DREAMING, eds: Nalo Hopkinson & Uppinder Mehan (Arsenal, Oct/04)

Reviewing a multi-author anthology is a difficult task, especially when the whole point of the book is to assemble a wide range of voices, perspectives, settings, and styles. However, *So Long Been Dreaming* is a collection deserving of attention.

For all that SF claims to deal with new and challenging ideas, the field is still dominated by white male writers in the tradition of Wells and Verne who – like all of us – have trouble thinking outside of their own cultural boxes. And that's the point of "postcolonial" SF written by people of colour. Or as co-editor, Nalo Hopkinson put it: "...stories that take the meme of colonizing the natives and, from the experience of the colonizee, critique it, pervert it, f with it, with irony, with anger, with humour, and also with love and respect for the genre of science fiction that makes it possible to think about new ways of doing things."

Roughly half of the stories in this collection are literary – heavy on style and metaphor, and light on linear narrative. Take, for example, the opening paragraph of “The Forgotten One” by Canadian author Karin Lowachee.

"In the twilight, my brother Hava's eyes glow red. Before the old women of Rumi village were washed from this life, they said it was the spirit of blood in him, my twin. I do not have such spirit. I am the silent breath, the old women said, she who walks behind the blood and is last in the sand before death. Death is the final hand that smooths your tracks beneath the waves. And before death there is the silent breath, and before the silent breath there is the blood. And my brother's eyes glow red with it."

If you are the sort of genre reader whose first reaction to this type of prose is to flee, I say to you: Halt! Don't give up on this anthology or you'll miss some gems. Start reading at Section IV (half way through). Then you can go back and take a shot at the preponderantly literary first half.

My favourite story in this book is “Native Aliens” by Greg van Eekhout. Using two story threads he contrasts a grim and very realistic account of the expulsion of the Dutch from Indonesia after World War II to a future scenario where Brevan-Terrans are being repatriated to Earth. Through the use of innocent child characters he very successfully captures the colonial clash of naïveté and bitter resentment, and portrays the permanent dislocation of people banished from the lands they were born in, only to become aliens "back home."

Also very strong is Vancouver Island writer Celu Amberstone's tale of human refugees living on an alien planet under the supervision of alien Benefactors (“Refugee”). Amberstone does a nice job of painting the shades of grey in her paternalistic society. Humans who have lived on Tallav'Wahir for centuries lead peaceful and happy lives, but they are utterly dependent on aliens to make all the decisions about what is in their best interests. And when a new shipment of refugees arrives from a dying Earth, their assumptions and their security are badly shaken.

Other memorable stories include “Trade Winds”, in which an interpreter must communicate and trade for the first time with an entirely space-faring race of aliens; “Lingua Franca”, a tale of disruptive cultural change brought about by contact with off-worlders; and “Deep End”, a story of convicts shipped off to colonize a new planet – wearing cloned bodies, in which they will breed the genes of the upper classes who banished them. All these stories are notable for their intelligent and complex portrayal of culture, race and class.

Finally, I wanted to mention Vancouver writer Larissa Lai's Asian-flavoured riff on Philip K. Dick's replicants (“Rachel”). It will work well for SF fans, as most of us are familiar with *Bladerunner* and/or *Electric Sheep*, but might be a bit confusing to mainstream readers.

I'm sure it's no coincidence that *So Long Been Dreaming* was the brainchild of two Toronto residents (Nalo Hopkinson and Uppinder Mehan) and published in Vancouver – two cities in which the legacy of

the British Empire and the accelerating dizzy collision of Earth's races and cultures is visible on every street.

So Long Been Dreaming raises the bar for intelligent depictions of that hoary SF theme: humans colonizing the galaxy. And that's long overdue.

* * *

THE MAGISTER'S MASK, Deborah Fredericks (Dragon Moon, Aug/04)

In the city of Chalsett it is traditional that an apprentice who has finished her training shall be assigned the very next case that requires a magister. But Shenza Waik, humble daughter of an illiterate fisherman, feels far from ready when that case turns out to be the horrifying murder of the First Lord of Chalsett by magical fire.

Nonetheless, Shenza dons her gleaming new magister's mask and sets out, trying not to be daunted by how much rests on her investigation. The spirits of this world are all too real – and all too angry. They want vengeance on the First Lord's killer, and if Shenza does not find the assassin quickly they will take out their wrath on all the humans of Chalsett.

This is the auspicious start of *The Magister's Mask*, a smart and entertaining Fantasy/Mystery set in a world somewhat reminiscent of Earthsea. In her first novel, new author Deby Fredericks has got a great many things right. Shenza is a compelling, sympathetic protagonist, very believable as a shy and excessively conscientious young woman determined to succeed in her new career.

While the setting is in many ways a standard medieval fantasy with magic, Fredericks takes the interesting tack of treating magic scientifically. There are, for example, sorcerers who specialize in criminal investigation (magisters) and curomancers, who systematically combine magical healing with medical/herbal skills.

The book's backdrop is not cardboard, either. Fredericks has thought out the politics, geography and economy of her society, and the people feel very real. Shenza's family members turn their hands to whatever seasonal, temporary, or piecework jobs are available, in a constant scramble to afford their modest home. And when Shenza declares the port closed so the assassin cannot flee the island, the decision has an immediate impact on everyone in the city, including her own brother who is thrown out of work at the docks.

Fredericks also highlights the uneasy balance between policing and justice through Shenza's adversarial relationship with Chief Borleek of the Peacekeepers. Borleek wants to find a likely culprit and take immediate action; Shenza demands a painstaking investigation of the facts. And neither of them have the authority to make ultimate decisions – that rests with the new Lord of Chalsett who is an unknown quantity.

There are some weaknesses in this book, which are generally symptomatic of a first novel. Fredericks has a bit of trouble handling viewpoint. Most of the narrative is told from Shenza's perspective, but a few scenes are related through her former teacher, Laraquies.

Unfortunately, Laraquies' view does not add much to the story dramatically, and the transitions are awkward enough that they jar. It feels suspiciously as if he's popping up to tell us things that the writer hasn't figured out how to convey through her protagonist.

The last scene of the novel is also weak – conveying information in a stilted way and lacking that emotional punch we need after having travelled so far with Shenza. And finally, the author contrives a few too many excuses to get her heroine into peril, but what the heck. I got hooked on the story early on and happily skated past the occasional excess of heroic naïveté or improbable coincidence.

This is a very good read and I look forward to more.

* * *

DREAMS OF THE SEA, Elisabeth Vonarburg (Tesseract, 2003)

Dreams Of The Sea has been sitting in my office for a very long time while I debated how and whether to review it. On the one hand, it's by a talented Canadian writer, some of whose previous work I've liked a very great deal. On the other hand, this is such a complex novel, and so far outside the SF genre "norm" that I actually went out and googled to see how other reviewers had tackled it, and whether they had left me anything to say. I'm still not sure I can do an adequate job, but I shall plunge in and review it from the standpoint of readers accustomed to the conventions of popular SF and Fantasy.

A large expedition from Earth is in the process of settling Alpha, a planet orbiting Altair, when disaster strikes. As its twin planet eclipses the sun, a mysterious blue "sea" of mist rises, covering all the low-lying areas of the continents. None of the colonists submerged by the sea survive, and those on higher land find that a mysterious force is neutralizing all electrical energy, and the technology they depend on suddenly doesn't work. Without flyers they cannot even evacuate to their ship in orbit.

Now that it's too late, the surviving colonists understand why the ruins of a long dead civilization show that the ancients fled their coastlines and rebuilt on the uplands. But this doesn't explain why they eventually abandoned all their cities – as if every inhabitant simply got up one day and left. Even as the humans struggle to survive and reshape this planet to their needs, a few colonists search for answers to the mystery of their alien predecessors.

Meanwhile, an alien dreamer, Eilai, dreams of the future and the past. She dreams of her own people and their relationship with the sea, but she also dreams through the eyes of humans who will come and settle her world.

Vonarburg (who writes in French) comes at her fiction with a distinctly European sensibility – in naming conventions, character backgrounds, and social attitudes. This is refreshing for the English reader, and her alien culture is also well thought out. The atmospheric abandoned cities of Alpha reminded me a little of Bradbury, and Eilai's journey through the ancient lands made me think of LeGuin.

Dreams Of The Sea has no straightforward story problem or plot thread; instead it is a complexly braided narrative involving dozens of characters of two different races in timelines that jump back and forth by years, decades and centuries. Frankly, I couldn't keep it all straight and eventually I lost patience with trying. The closest thing to a protagonist is Eilai, the dreamer, but she dreams through so many different eyes that her own story is almost submerged in the mix.

The colonists' initial stranding (which, I notice, is the easiest plot thread to summarize for purposes of reviews or cover blurbs) is not treated in a conventional SF manner, to put it mildly. Vonarburg offers few details of human technology or the alien ecosystem, or indeed, of anything that's generally assumed as an integral part of world building. The author seems to have no interest in science (abstract or applied, human or alien) and uses it only in the vaguest way. Not only don't we hear any details about how the humans survive on this new world, but their impractical behaviour makes it hard to swallow that they would survive at all.

This novel is all about metaphor. That's fine, but as a reader I wanted the surface story to succeed, and it didn't work for me because I was constantly jarred by ridiculous details. For example, nobody who was scrabbling to survive with minimal supplies on an alien planet would have the time and equipment – never mind the inclination – to weave bed sheets!

Moreover, most of the characters are intellectuals – passive, obsessively introspective and emotionally distant (if not downright depressed) – so I found it hard to care about them and their relationships or to get excited by scene after scene of people pontificating at gatherings reminiscent of tedious faculty parties, or going for long brooding walks.

Which isn't to say that Vonarburg can't write characters. She does a fine job, for example, with Tige, a poor young man from a miners' family who is trying to become an urban success against huge odds. Vonarburg catches his awkward balance of passion, ambition, uncertainty, anger, and fear, and even moves successfully between two versions of the young Tige and his middle-aged self.

Literary readers won't be bothered by the SFnal lapses, the narrative complexity, or the lack of resolution of almost everything. They'll enjoy the imagery and the writing style and probably have great fun probing the hidden depths of Vonarburg's sea dreams.

Genre readers, on the other hand, are likely to find this novel slow, talky, confusing, and desperately lacking in scientific and logistical credibility. It opens with a crisis of great dramatic potential which is then utterly ignored. Heck, we don't even see these stranded colonists trying to survive on a strangely haunting alien world. Instead, most of the action takes place offstage and they TALK about it later. Argh!

* * *

THE ALCHEMIST'S DAUGHTER, Eileen Kernaghan (Thistledown, 04)

Finally, a quick look at *The Alchemist's Daughter*, a new young adult novel by Vancouver writer Eileen Kernaghan.

The setting is Elizabethan England under threat of invasion by the Spanish Armada, and our heroine is Sidonie, who is, as the title suggests, the bookish daughter of an impractical and largely unsuccessful alchemist. Always convinced that the transformation of base metal into gold is imminently within his reach, Simon Quince has begged financing for his experiments from Queen Elizabeth, in return for a promise of gold to finance her war efforts. And Sidonie is terrified. What will happen to them if he does not succeed?

Determined to do what she can to help, Sidonie uses her gift for scrying and has a vision of ruined abbey she's sure is Glastonbury. So she decides to go there, in search of magic red earth for her father. As no woman can travel safely alone, she inveigles her friend Kit, the son of an apothecary, into helping her make a journey fraught with more difficulties and dangers than she had ever dreamed.

Eileen Kernaghan is a skilled wordsmith, and she has created characters who are very real, yet slightly whimsical, in a setting that feels historically accurate. Without going into too much detail she manages to convey the technological and social flavour of 1587 in a way that young 21st century readers should be able to grasp. There are a few magical elements in the story – such as Sidonie's scrying abilities – but this is for the most part a historical novel.

And that may be its weakness. In order to work the story around real events and characters (such as Elizabeth I, Dr. John Dee, Lady Mary Herbert and Sir Philip Sidney) and within the pacing of an age when journeys were completed on foot, Kernaghan sacrifices a certain amount of story tension. Sidonie encounters a series of challenges and is pulled through the story by events, but without a focussed plot problem for her to resolve, the story loses momentum at times.

I didn't find this book as strong as Kernaghan's last young adult novel, *The Snow Queen*, but Kernaghan wasn't working with such strong epic material this time. Nonetheless, this is an entertaining, well-written tale, once again presented very handsomely by Thistledown Press. (The multiply pierced ear of the medieval girl on the cover is a delightful touch.)

Kaffeeklatsch of October 30, 2004

Notes by Garth Spencer

Present: Garth Spencer, Julian Castle, Ray Seredin, Doug Finnerty.

Although people started filtering in from 7 p.m. on, we didn't get started until 9:10 p.m. At first we looked at some of Garth's fanzines, waiting for Julian and later Joe to arrive. We also talked about the

hurdles and possibilities of raising BCSFA's and VCon's profile, with like our own radio/TV show (see "Ray's Suggestions" above); one suggestion was to ask Paul Carpentier about getting a "Radio Free Canada" show on Bellingham cable TV. (Apparently Canadian community access is much restricted now.)

1. *We've probably already covered the question of what work of SF or fantasy should be made into a movie. So what work of SF or fantasy would you like to see get its own set of action figures?*

Julian added, or maybe a comic book? (He prefers something readable and more affordable.) Garth prefers *active* figures to "action" figures, and suggested the War on Terrorism should have its own action figures. Or comic book. Ray suggested action figures from *The Left Hand of Darkness*, specifically the ambisexual Gethenians. Doug suggested various military SF series, such as David Drake's "Honorverse" or "Hammer's Slammers".

2. *What if you had a hologram of William Shatner that could do the delightfully campy acting and show up at cons, but omit the obnoxious off-stage personality? a) Is this a good idea? and b) whom else would you make holograms of?*

Doug asked practically, how would you avoid a lawsuit? (*Actors treat their face and voice as intellectual properties, meaning they're copyrighted or trademarked or something else that means money.* –GS) E.g., apparently Ben Affleck had some complaint about being lampooned in *Team America*. Julian added, how would you avoid their demand of a cut? Garth babbled about intellectual property and came round (in time) to the point that some court would eventually judge against you. This somehow segued to into a discussion of Canadian versus U.S. elected representatives being lampooned with hologram appearances.

We have then to ask, what if there were (someday) such a thing as *authorized* holograms? We didn't fully explore the "copyright" restrictions that would be placed on the use of holograms.

3. *Shall we have fanzine nights, where we might bring a zine apiece and talk about what you like about it, or produce a zine together, or sit and read zines together? (We can't really do this at FRED, we're too busy socializing.)*

In effect we had done that earlier this night, to the extent of reading Garth's fanzines, and his reading aloud a Victor Gonzalez fanarticle from *Chunga* (Seattle). Since mimeography ceased to be an available, well-supported medium by which faneditors could publish by themselves, it has become rather more *difficult* for two or more people to share typing, layout and production tasks; fans sometimes used to get together to do a "fanzine blitz" and go from writing and drawing to cranking out copies, all in one night, but desktop publishing has actually made it easier to do

the work all on your own. According to Garth, anyway. Discussion segued to Julian's oft-touted favourite, the *Zine Guide*; Garth queried about its (in)frequency, and was told that it's approximately annual. We also discussed the feasibility and cost considerations of a fanzine diorama display. Julian mentioned, in fact recommended, a small online Vancouver group which arranges faneditors' meets, <http://zines.meetup.com>.

4. *It looks like VCon 30 is already coming together nicely. If you had a say in running VCon 31 or VCon 32, what would you do [with it]?*

Garth suggested the sort of ideal-con things he suggested before: dance music by Weird Al Yankovic, videos devoted to the entire *oeuvre* of David Lynch, panel titles with the repeated punch line of "[Libertarianism/ American democracy/ War on Terrorism/ Space colonization]: science fiction or fantasy?"; filk singing that's actually *about fandom*; a Spandex weight-limit enforced on the costume masquerade; and, of course, invitational hot tub parties.

Doug demurred at the thought of the Spandex weight limit. Julian thought that a *cooperatively*-owned hotel-convention centre with a pub could allow both alcohol and youth. Garth then discoursed on the Tucker Hotel of fannish memory, and the current "No Fun City" reputation and the Vancouver police's crackdown on crowding in bars. Ray wanted to count on the video room running *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and/or the dance playing "Rasputin" about midnight. In fact, Ray suggested that there be two video rooms, divided between the best SF/F, the not-so-best, the B-movies (see "Ray's Suggestions" above); and Julian suggested including anime videos and hard-to-find features. Someone suggested a morning "Good Morning VCon!" show on the hotel cable system, for e.g. providing program updates. Rather than invitational (and cliquish/elitist) hot tub parties, Doug suggested that everyone have access on a lottery system; Julian suggested that different tubbers' access be time-limited. *[Nobody said anything about close encounters, nobody said anything about cleaning the pool and replacing the filter – GS]*

5. *Do you feel that Space: The Imagination Station is now catering to mainstream viewers, and less to the 7.5% of viewers who like science fiction, or the 1.5% of viewers who are hard-core SF fans? (The latter would be fans who write mail asking stations to buy series that they will watch, or those who spend numerous weekends at SCA events, or at SF conventions.)*

Garth thought "Space" was not terribly mainstream; it was just TV-esque, that is, disappointing as SF. Ray thought Space started out hardcore, then went soft; on one occasion, instead of a spectacularly bad Shatner film, the station even ran *The Yearling*, something not SF whatsoever. Discussion segued to B-movies and Shatner, then to ICTV and CFRO, and to politically incorrect content.

6. *If or when aliens are recognized as persons before the law ... does that stretch the definition of "human", or confine it?*

Ray thought, yes, this would expand the definition of "human". Garth amplified on both the criminal and intellectual-property considerations he deduced. Doug, on the other hand, saw immigration implications, and thought Canada would be more open than the States to admitting aliens as new citizens. Garth started another digression on Canada's lack of an explicit oath of allegiance, or grade-school citizenship classes, *à la* the United States, and the need therefor, if in fact we are serious about doing this nation-state thing. Ray digressed on Australian vs. Canadian immigration law, at least as reported by the local controversialist Rafe Mair.

7. *Do vampires and werewolves and supervillains symbolize unidentified real villains, who prey on us and drain us of life? Who might the real villains be?*

Doug and Joe digressed about political satire disguised, in classical days, as Greek mythology. Joe mentioned a Fruvous cartoon which featured George Bush as a vampire. Someone opined that Mr. Cheney comes across as a cyborg, or Svengali-like figure. The sense of the gathering was that "Dracula" was a metaphor for the bloodthirsty ruler. Garth speculated that as we come to experience a more hard-grained reality in North America, *i.e.* as vulnerable to car bombs and acts of terrorism as London and Belfast and Paris and Madrid and Israel in general, that there will be rather less market for horror, in fiction and film and television. Doug demurred, saying that some of the *best* horror film originated in the 1920s, right after World War I.

We segued to semi-political natter, proposing a "Dracula for Prime Minister" campaign, Garth's Surrealist Party or the International Humorist Conspiracy Party. Julian wanted to do something similar, along the lines of *The Doom Patrol*, or *The Tick*. The unfortunate current funding bar to Canadian parties was mentioned, but someone also mentioned that if a new political party could show that it obtained 5% support in the popular vote, it could obtain public funding.

Exeunt omnes, laughing, about 11 p.m.