

NOTE: SEND ALL COMMENTS ON THIS E-VERSION TO < rgraeme@shaw.ca >

BCSFA NEWSLETTER #8

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This newsletter is written, typed, run off, collated and mailed by Mike Bailey (#4 – 2416 W. 3rd Ave. Vancouver, B.C. V6K 1L8 731-8451 or 666-6604) – this time with some help – on behalf of the British Columbia Science Fiction Association. It is the only official disseminator of convention news. Standard terms: people who attend our meetings and are members receive the BCSFA newsletter, others either trade, respond, or pay (\$1.50 for twelve) for it. Generally 3 free issues will be sent.

CONVENTION NEWS

In case you haven't joined yet, the rates are \$5.00 for a membership and an additional \$7.00 for the non-obligatory banquet. There is a choice of menus. Guest of honour is Frank Herbert. Other authors who have joined up to this time include Michael G. Coney, F.M. Busby, Mildred Downey (Bubbles) Broxon, H. Warner Munn and Eileen Kernaghan. The convention takes place February 22-24 at the Georgia Hotel.

We will be setting up Friday morning in order to open at 1:00 PM. The hospitality suite, art show, and special displays (space war, computer hookup, Fanweb, laser display, electronic music, etc.) and registration will open at this time. When you come, go to the registration desk and receive your program book and tag. If someone paid for your membership, advise the registrar.

So that working people won't miss any scheduled events (remember Seattle-ites, we're on standard time) we won't program anything until after supper. However, Frank Herbert will make his presence known by circulating and meeting people in the hospitality suite.

Friday evening, Frank Herbert will give his guest of honour talk "Science Fiction And The World In Crisis." (Although I'm going to avoid mentioning times in this article, it will be either 7:30 or 8:00 PST) There will be a hotel-catered cash bar and a masquerade following this. A convention-operated cash bar will be held in our hospitality suite. (Note: fire regulations permit only 50 people in this suite at one time. This is the one reason we suggested that locals rent rooms – especially on the 12th floor. That is, if 150 people want to circulate in the hospitality area and a few additional rooms are open or private parties are in progress, then the pressure will be off.) Our main programming concept for Friday is that people should get to know one another.

Saturday morning the art show and display room will be open at about 10:00 AM. At approximately the same time there will be either an author's panel or a short talk by Frank Herbert. Following this Crawford Killian will speak of "Fascism in Science Fiction." He is sure that he will raise a few hackles with this talk.

Saturday afternoon kicks off with the clarion panel. This panel will reconstruct the Clarion method of teaching SF writing, by dissecting a couple of volunteered short stories. If someone runs screaming and sobbing from the room, he/she is one of the secret volunteer authors. Copies of the stories will be made available to the audience and a question period will follow the panel.

Dr. Mason Harris will give one of his lively talks on H.P. Lovecraft after the Clarion panel. (You haven't heard this talk before. The one he gave at V-Con 1 was virtually an on-the-spot talk. He had had no time to prepare.)

The banquet (baron of beef or stuffed breast of chicken) will follow and the Elron awards will be given (but probably not accepted.) If you don't attend the banquet you can still see the Elron presentations; banqueters will have the choice seating, however.

In the evening, Fritz Lang's 1926 film, Metropolis will be shown. This is a silent film, but there will be much volume. Ed Hutchings, our film man, has researched the music with which Metropolis was originally presented and this music adds significantly to its impact. As far as we know, nowhere else in North America can you experience Metropolis in this way.

There will also be cash bars and an open hospitality suite for most of the day.

On Sunday morning, there will be a fan panel. This panel is for locals who wish to learn more about SF fandom and perhaps become professional amateur fans themselves. Chuck Davis will interview the panel (perhaps for use on his radio show) which includes Hugo Winner Susan Glicksohn, Boy Fan Frank Denton, Elinor Busby, and, if worse comes to worse, myself. (How about Mike Horvat? Or, if by chance Bruce Gillespie is in the neighbourhood...)

Following this Dr. Mason Harris will give a short talk on the works of Phil Dick.

People who wish to subscribe to this newsletter or become members of the BCSFA may do so at the con.

This article is not intended to be a program, but merely an outline. Consult your program book. Things may come and things may go – and people too.

The Official Mike Bailey Guess of Final Convention Membership Total: 246.

MEETING REPORT

Our January meeting took place at Chuck and Edna Davis'. About 30-40 people turned out. It wasn't too long ago that I was castigating people for not turning out, but now we're reaching house capacity and there may be a problem in the future.

Anyway, we wish to thank Edna Davis for being an excellent hostess (I sure liked those marinated uh, whatever-they-weres) and for putting up with the midnight daylight lagging time exit of some of the laggards.

Don Glover and some people from Seattle attended and said that our meeting was better than the recent Nameless Ones (pretty snappy name, isn't it – I still think Seattle Seagulls is snappier though) gatherings. I think this is in part due to seeing so many new faces – probably something the Nameless Ones needs. I'm sure we have Seattle-ites coming to our convention who have never heard of organized sf fandom in their city – 27 paid memberships from Washington State so far.

A good time was had by all and I had a chance to talk to many new people and absorb new ideas for the future.

Rob Scott showed up, but I didn't bother bragging to him that I had picked up The Destruction of the Temple by Malzberg; The Book of Fritz Leiber; Hawkshaw by Ron Goulart; Polynath by John Brunner; Into the Aether by Richard Lupoff; and Hello Summer, Goodbye by Michael G. Coney.

OTHER NEWS

Arkham House author, Vincent Starrett died recently in Chicago. His real-life occupation was reporting.

A 23-volume series entitles Science Fiction Classics has been published. The volumes are reprints of old, out of print titles such as Darkness and the Light by Olaf Stapledon. These books are available through my book buying service.

Fax is publishing five Robert E. Howard hardcovers. About half of the stories in these books have never been published before, and titles include Swords of Shahrazar, The Lost Valley of Iskander, and Son of the White Wolf.

L. Sprague De Camp has completed his biography of H. P. Lovecraft and it will be published in June. The title, if my memory is correct, is An Eldritch Yankee Gentleman.

Susan Glicksohn is reviewing SF fanzines for Amazing.

Frank Herbert advised me that Dune has not been made into a movie, yet. However filming may begin in Turkey this summer.

Meanwhile, Michael Moorcock's The Final Programme has been released as a MGM film starring Jon Finch as Jerry Cornelius. Sterling Hayden also appears in it.

British horror film company, Hammer, is combining with Hong Kong's Shaw Brothers to produce "The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires." I wonder, will this film cause a worldwide shortage in fake blood?

The Caves of Steel by Isaac Asimov is to be produced by Columbia Pictures.

Letters I receive show some interest in SF films, so I included the above. I could write more. If you're interested (or not) let me know.

CORRESPONDENCE AND ODD NOTES

From Waterloo, Ontario, Ken Biebar writes *“Greetings, to the Western bastards who want to let us Eastern bastards freeze!”* Ken goes on to describe the formation of a club on the university campus and then on to our Westercon in '77 bid. *“However (as Dan S./ mentions) you'll have to become a BCSFA, rather than a 'Vancouver SFA', in terms of of active support, and somehow get support from Dan and friends. Lotsa luck!”* Ken, our newsletter goes to people in Chilliwack, Squamish, Victoria, Gibsons, Winlaw, Agassiz, and Kamloops, in addition to the lower mainland. However, more on Dan Say and the naming of names in a future issue.

From Victoria, Julian Reid sends a pithy comment, *“...maybe you should tell us how APECON came out. How about holding a retaliatory KONGKON in memory of a real classic sf movie?”*

Overheard in the halls at Torcon after the Hugo awards were given out, from David Gerrold (who was a runner-up to Asimov) *“Next year I'll pack the convention with Trekkies and they'll never have heard of Isaac Asimov...”*

Also at Torcon from Mike Coney, after being advised that the bars would be closed on Sunday and you could only drink with a meal *“Yes, but surely they can't expect you to eat all day.”*

Angus Taylor (of Toronto) mentioned in a letter that he is writing a pamphlet entitled *“Philip K. Dick and the Umbrella of Light”* for T-K Graphics and wonders When a Scanner Darkly will appear. Spring '75 I think.

Fran Skene, who works in the main branch of the public library, says that more SF books are ripped off than any other genre. She asks people to donate SF books they no longer want, *“Do people want books at home which they have already read or more new titles available at the library?”* As the rapacious owner of a 1000 or more SF books, I looked around and found a few that I could donate. Remind me.

“OKAY! I'm responding, I'm responding!”

“I assumed I was getting BCSFA NEWSLETTER because I'm God's gift to fandom and sf. Gee, you sure know how to deflate a guy.” – Richard E. Geis (P.O. Box 11408, Portland 97211) AKA* Peggy Swenson, who quarterly ejaculates THE ALIEN CRITIC AKA RICHARD E. GEIS (which he'd probably rather forget.) Dick, you really know how to inflate a guy. Sure you can reprint my “Flying Sorcerers” article. But I think it's unfair for a fanzine editor to offer money to professional authors in return for articles. On that basis I'd have to refuse a request to reprint Philip K. Dick's “The Evolution of a Vital Love” (a sort of sequel to his Vancouver talk) when LAGNIAPPE comes out.

“Any Elwood nominations for the Elron have my enthusiastic second. I still think John Norman of Gor should get at least a bronze lentil, for relentless effort in the cause of semiliterate fetishism.”

“Love and a smashing con to you all” – Ursula Le Guin.

“Believe David Bowie tabled his plans to do Stranger. Pity. I would like to see how ol’ Weirdo would have handled it. (Must say, though, that Heinlein would probably have cried all the way to the bank.)” – Elinor Busby (from Seattle)

Mike Coney mentions that the March Galaxy will contain his second “Peninsula” story (the first one is in the current Galaxy). AQI also DAW has bought a collection from him to be titled Monitor Found in Orbit.

And in another letter *“...I have decided that I will be damned if I will lie down under the insulting accusations of Don D’Amasso in GRANFALLOON. I intend to write them a violent letter of condemnation together with a reply to Ms. D’Amasso’s charges.”*

“I have won a minor battle for the freedom of the individual; Dan Say has written to my wife apologizing for addressing her as Ms. – and actually forcing himself to pen the dreaded letters Mrs. In his classy calligraphy.”

From Winlaw, B.C. *“thanx for sending the newsletter. I guess I’ve been gaffiated (Editor’s note: getting away from it all) a long time – the newsletter stirs the blood a bit, the brain bubbles and fond memories gurgle up to the surface.”* – George Metzger, who is familiar to those underground comics enthusiasts who have seen “Moondog” *“...Phil Dick to have an interview in a forthcoming issue of VERTEX...being a bit of a rabid P.K. Dick fan how might i go about obtaining a copy?”* You can buy a copy on the newsstands in Vancouver when you come to the con, George.

From Port Coquitlam, Jim Maloan writes, *“Re, The Coney Controversy. I read Russ’s story and was unimpressed by it. The situation was contrived and the message is no more mature than that of any pulp SF story dealing with women... why it won the Nebula is beyond me. I also considered Harlan Ellison the most overrated Fantasy writer in existence.”*

“I’m going to be watching for Phil Dick’s The Man in the High Castle when it is republished. Tell him he has an assured sale resulting from YOUR newsletter.”

“By the way, who is Mildred Downey Broxon and what kind of title is “The Danaan Children Laugh.”?” Bubbles Broxon is our Seattle con hustler, Clarion panel co-ordinator, and SCA Lady. As for the story, why don’t you ask her when you hug and kiss her on behalf of Phil Dick for becoming a pro.

“So you need a snappier name, eh, and vanquished won’t do for alliteration? How about vainglorious?”

“I don’t suppose I’ll be able to come to your con, but I sure wish I could. Problem is, who’d want to pay the round trip for a slightly shop-worn Swedish TV executive.” – Goran Bengston, Stockholm.

BOOKS

I am always suspicious of translations. I wonder what may have been lost in the process. In the case of Memoirs Found in a Bathtub by Stanislaw Lem (a Pole) I suspect this is a translation of a translation.

(Polish to French to English.) Christine Rose is credited as being one of the translators and I met her at LA Con, a pretty French girl who was mystified by the convention. However, in spite of the possible loss in quality due to translation, this remains a good book, even if it does become murky at the end.

A society gone paranoid – so paranoid that order and reality is lost. This is the theme. A massive bureaucracy whose purpose is to defeat espionage has been built into the military establishment. A veritable maze of confusing power structures, each denying the other's existence, has been built. Everyone has a secret safe filled with empty secret files. Everyone speaks in code. Communication is vertical and not horizontal. The bureaucracy has been designed so that it is purely chance that the right document lands on the right desk. Espionage in such chaos is impossible.

But what is the plot? A man is told he's on a secret mission, but not what the mission is. He spends days wandering around in a Pentagon-like building, being shuffled from Department to Department, becoming more and more confused, terrified...there is a razor blade...

I was wrong about Berkeley's Canadian release of Heinlein's *Time Enough For Love*. It's out now. I originally read this novel last May, wanting to do an early review of it, but I found that I couldn't separate his subject matter from his writing. Why should I condemn a well-written book because I didn't like his philosophy? Or why should I praise a poorly-written book because of the philosophy? Anyway, if anyone wants to contribute a review....

I admit to having a fondness for A.E. Van Vogt (and Damon Knight, too). His current novel Future Glitter has the interesting concept of pervasive communication in it. (A Watergate Inspiration?) What occurs is that a despotic world dictator suddenly finds his image, complete with sound, appearing on every plastic surface in the world and, day or night, there is no way he can shut it off. His every action and statement are monitored. In such a situation a despot either becomes a good guy or loses his support and becomes an ex-despot. Van Vogt's writing doesn't glitter, but his ideas do.

REVIEW

"I must myself apologise that I was not able to say anything more constructive and appreciate that you may not want to use what I have written. I found the book very heavy going...sort of vomity... Joanna accused me of being naïve; well perhaps she's right after all... Sure, Image of the Beast is powerfully written in parts; but then, so was When It Changed."

THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST Philip Jose Farmer

This book was presented to me as pornography, and in the postscript Sturgeon refers to it as pornography, so that is what it must be. Since I understand that the purpose of pornography is to corrupt me I imagined I would judge the quality of the book by the strength of the erections it bestowed – an erection being about as corrupt as I can get, these days. These erections I decided to grade from 1 to 10, like the Beaufort scale.

Alas... Although by page 8 I had achieved what might optimistically be described as a Force Three I must attribute this to the unusual experience of reading pornography rather than the subject matter.

Worse followed. The horrifying events described on pp. 13 and 14 not only provoked a Force Minus or Retractive situation, but goddamned near sent me vomiting to the can. Recovering, I sped through to p. 110 with hardly a twitch to betray the passing of events, and gathered that I was reading a detective story. The private eye was hunting down the weirdos – who killed people in unusual sexual circumstances and filmed their crime in detail. My interest was hovering just this side of disgust, like when eating liver. The events on pp. 110 to 114 I would class as Force Five; but this may be unfair to Farmer since I suspect I am getting old.

In subsequent pages the hero met the weirdos, was captured by them and dealt with by them, and got away from them. Some of the images were remarkable, brilliant, masterly, shatteringly unusual. But they all had this taste of sick-making nastiness which effectively prevented any further tightening in the crotch and so, as pornography, I must judge the book a failure.

The fault may lie in my definition. Maybe our enlightened censors no longer look on erections as corrupt anymore, and pornography has become something different. But my idea of pornography is something dirty. And I know what I mean by dirty. I mean like THE HAND-REARED BOY or BLUE MOVIE, where erections are interspersed with laughter, when the thing is filthy but fun. Where the paper is often crumbly and the print smudged and the edges uncut. Where schoolkids gather round and snigger. Where an expert stands up in court and calls it literature. That's a dirty book. I like dirty books.

So what is Image of the Beast? It is a powerful evocation of menacing and sadistic sexual images which at times become surreal. When the plot takes over, the writing is hack. When the images begin, it is brilliant. It is not a dirty book. That is why it fails. It is, quite simply, not entertaining.

Michael G. Coney

Anyone want to review the sequel, Blown?

Farmer plays with names – for example, in one of the Riverworld books, a negro named Elwood Hacker is a character (Eldridge Cleaver.) In Image of the Beast he also plays with names like Woolston Heapish (Stan Woolston, George Heap) and Forrest J. Ackerman. The classic is Winnegan's Fake (from "Riders of the Purple Wage")

Anyway, Image of the Beast I found shocking. Something like The Exorcist. A shock is titillation (even those "retractive" ones) and titillation is an art form. The book is a success. Think about it.

Last issue 170 copies. This issue 300+