

BCSFAzine #347

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The monthly newsletter of
the British Columbia Science Fiction Association

Something to interest everyone!

Vol. 30 No. 4 April 2001

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AURORA AWARD ELIGIBLES!
HOW TO INVENT LANGUAGES IN 20 SIMPLE STEPS!
WHERE ARE THE FRIENDS OF THE MERRIL COLLECTION?



BCSFAzine

Something to offend-interest everyone!

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F.R.E.D., the weekly gathering of BCSFAns and all others interested, happens every Friday at 8:00 p.m. at the Burrard Motor Inn, opposite St. Paul's Hospital (in downtown Vancouver), 6 blocks south of the Burrard Skytrain Station, 3 blocks west of Granville (where many buses run). NOTE: on the Friday before long weekends, FRED will be at the lounge of Bosman's Hotel. This is two blocks east and a part of a block north of the Burrard Motor Inn (actual address is 1060 Howe St.).

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Art Credits

This month's cover artist: Taral Wayne

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Expiring in April 2002:

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Expiring in June 2002:

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Oh, jeez, I haven't renewed my membership, have I?!

Plain Speaking

Guest Editorial: SO MUCH FOR INDEPENDENCE

*One grey temple of an awful rite
Ring within ring of wizard stones
Circled about some central place
Every circle an initiation
Every initiation eternal loss*
Arthur Edward Waite, *The Hill of Dreams*

The other day I was contemplating an advertisement for David Icke's lecture in Vancouver – you know, the guy who claims our world is under the control, not simply of some big conspiratorial organization, but of a small clique of disguised reptilian aliens? – and I recalled a host of paranoid American B-movies, arguably culminating in the cult classic *They Live*, which also showed up a little while ago, on Space. Naturally, it occurred to me that films of this sort and conspiracy theories of this sort make pretty much the same assumptions.

Then I went on, to ask myself ... “Who *cares* if aliens control our world? Is that any different from regular, standard foreign domination ... or from the bureaucratic rule-by-a-distant-clique we take for granted already?” Honestly, I don't see much difference.

Ask yourself this question. Say you found *your* life turning into a bad *Flash Gordon* knock-off, and *you* ended up faced with an Evil Sinister Criminal Mastermind cackling over his world domination plans (*while subjecting you to endless Howard Cosell videotapes!!*); what would *you* say to him? (Or her.) I think I would ask, “Okay, do you have any promotional literature? Have you applied to start your own political party? Who makes up your constituency?”

I arrived at this position of indifference for a variety of reasons. One of them is that I'm not convinced our species is really capable of managing its own affairs. (Never mind whether we deserve to.) There is plenty of evidence that we're not really a viable species, actually. Consider the way that we persistently colonize, then destroy habitats. On very bad days I have wondered whether we are, in fact, an intelligent species; just consider our predilection for overgrazing, overforestry, overfishing, pollution, overpopulating any environment where we plant a city, and turning over half of any population into a permanently poor, disenfranchised, underemployed class. The bottom line seems to be, we *don't* foresee, we *don't* weigh, and we *don't*

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take responsibility for the consequences of our actions.

You might argue that this sort of issue has little to do with our species, and much to do with our contemporary culture, and its compulsions. I think that's a quibble. The important question remains: don't you think we *should* be put under care?

An interesting idea, which strikes me as foreign and a bit quaint, is that it is better to be ruled by your own mistakes than by anyone else's wisdom. That seems to be one of those American sayings, the sort of thing I never heard of until my late 30s. If truth be told, individualist ideas like this didn't really emerge until the last 500 years or so, and they're still foreign to three-quarters of the world.

So maybe alien conquerors *would* have a constituency. Maybe independence is overrated.

Actually, of course, we are *already* under new management! That's another reason I'm not real excited about Evil Sinister Alien Conspiracy stories. They're redundant.

You wouldn't know this, but the ultimate masters of every conspiracy are now meeting in Vancouver. Weekly. At a coffeehouse. On Main Street.

These are the masterminds who brought us Starfleet™ fandom – on a bet. It is rumoured, but not proven, that they started Scientology on another bet. These are the people responsible for the modern predominance of anime and gaming fandom. If you sometimes think modern life is a little absurd, too much like a surreal parody, or like a science-fiction story, even, these are the evil geniuses responsible.

And now they are starting a membership drive!

There's another American saying, “If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.” If *you're* into world domination plots, or what would make humanity a viable species, or at least tossing creative ideas back and forth in a verbal tennis match, why not show up at Bean Around the World on Main Street and 20th? The Western Fandom Illuminati and Sock Puppet Society gather every Thursday at 8:00 p.m. Just look for those Sensitive Fannish Faces.

Hrothgar Weems

Letters of Comment



Lloyd Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON, M9C 2B2 <penneys@netcom.ca>, March 20, 2002

The deadline looms, so I have *BCSFAzine* 346 with me, as well as a computer and a little bit of time. I will mix all of the above, stuff it all in a hot place, and try to provide you with a half-baked loc.

Many fans I know have several interests in fandom, and describe themselves by that interest. They might be anim  fans, filk fans, Trek fans ... all these interests are now so deep and involved, it's difficult to have an interest in a variety of them, and simply call yourself a fan. It's simpler, and easier on the wallet, to specialize. Not what I'd prefer, but that's the way it looks to me.

I saw your question about who was in charge of the Auroras on the TT2000 committee a couple of years ago ... it was Aaron Yorgason.

I hope there will be once again a national fan news zine. And this time, given costs, it would have to be an e-zine, and not a paper one, as much as I prefer paper. This e-zine could go to hundreds of people across the country and elsewhere in trade, and go to all members of any given club. It could do more to unify Canadian fandom with sheer numbers than anything else I could think of. Only problem ... who's going to put it together? Those of us who are busy are very busy, and I hope there'd be someone who could fit it in their schedule. (And I don't want to hear, "Good idea, YOU do it ...")

(Editor responds: Other possibilities: starting another national apa; or starting the online equivalent, a Canadian national message-board. For a while, an SF Canada message-board sort of served in the second role.)

I am mystified that a member of the club would object to you expressing your opinions in the zine. Such is the editor's prerogative. By expressing those opinions, you invite discussion from those who agree or disagree; that's one of your duties as editor. You know all this; I thought most other people would, too. Or do they simply want a zine that lists straight news, with no personality? This would get boring, real fast.

(If you do decide to list birthdays, mine is June 2.

And as Harry Warner's loc says, Yvonne's is on December 19. I'm a hoopy frood at 42, and will be 43 in less than a few months.)

(Editor responds: My birthday is January 5th.)

Conventions ... I have learned recently that the World Mystery Convention will be returning to Toronto in the autumn of 2004. Bouchercon 23 was held at the Royal York Hotel in October of 1992, and set a record of 1200 attendees. The Bouchercons have grown, and the 2004 event is expected to have from 2500 to 3000 attendees. It will be held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, with surrounding hotels, including the Royal York, providing the sleeping space. I don't think there's a website just yet, but keep watching for news of Bouchercon 35, and I'll present it as soon as it's available.

Ray Seredin's "Media File" proves what I've said for a long time ... the press is not your friend. They are not there to represent what you see yourselves to be. Instead, they write about what they see themselves, and they are unfortunately prone to fall back on tired stereotypes, which are carried on ad infinitum in newspapers, the radio, television, etc., until they are so familiar as to have a genre of movies play off them, like Trekkies, *GalaxyQuest*, etc.

(WE CAN GET GOOD PRESS IF ONLY WE DEVOTE SUSTAINED EFFORT AND ATTENTION TO PRIMING, AND PREPARING, AND BRIEFING THE PRESSCRITERS BEFOREHAND. There's no secret about how to do that; Richard Brandt wrote a detailed article some years ago, about "Care and Feeding of Press Flacks". It is chiefly because I do not expect fans to sustain any such effort – from year to year, and every year – that I keep boring people about cutting back our activities to what we can actually maintain, instead of boring them about maintaining good press.)

A marvellous story of Nils Frome. I've seen it on Graeme's website, too. Graeme, as soon as I can get some time, I plan to delve into my fanzine collection, now in storage, and write up additions for your great website. I might not have any grand Canadian zines of the past there, but I might be able to fill in some gaps, and I'm willing to give it a try, as soon as time allows. RSN, I guess.

SOME WORDS FROM OUR ADVERTISERS

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Easter Carnival!

Come one, Come all to the ***Fourth Annual Easter Carnival and Slave Auction! April 13th at Chris & Nikki's Place!*** (235 Liberty Place, in Burnaby). (N.B.: we've moved it later by one week, so I can wrap the movie I'm working on, and still have time to work on the party... If you haven't heard from me in awhile (ok, a year or two!) that's why!)

Enjoy an Easter Carnival for adults, including Carnival Games, Blackjack, Poker, Roulette (hopefully), and even an Easter Egg Hunt! This year's event is ***to benefit VCon 26/VCon 27*** so there will be a \$10 per person cover, and that gets you \$100 of 'our' money (artfully reprinted with only the most tasteful of alterations...NOT!) and the ability to lose or win your money, and bid in the slave auction! After an evening of games and gambling, we start the Slave auction, featuring a bevy of beautiful women (and anyone else we can blackmail into it!), as well as a full assortment of 'accessories'... <evil grin>. There will be some light munchies, but please BYOB and bring some munchies to share... The fun begins at 7 pm, with the slave auction starting around 11 pm...

If you have any questions or feedback, drop us a line!

OUR CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL 2002



Saturday April 13 at 7:00 pm: **Feeding Frenzy** at The Budapest Restaraunt and Pastry Shop, 3250 Main St., Vancouver. Proof that Hungarian food comes in large portions and is very very good.

Saturday, April 13, from 4:00 pm on, **Burnaby SF & Fantasy writers' group, potluck**, drinking, get-together at the home of Allan Lowson, 4661 52A St. Ladner. His phone no is 6049462427. Or you can email me back if you want more info. Allan has recently taken a retirement package from his employer and has been doing the "I'm a cook, and I'm okay" thing the past few weeks. So he promises to cook up a bunch of stuff for us. There's a shopping mall and liquor store within an easy ten minute walk of his place. He also is offering to fire up the hot tub for us. I hope Doug, Lisa, and Fran will also pass on this message and invitation to anyone else of like mind.

ken strang <ktran@vcn.bc.ca>, Mar. 22/02

April 13 (7:00 p.m.): **Fourth Annual Easter Carnival and Slave Auction at Chris & Nikki Sturges' Place** (235 Liberty Place, in Burnaby). \$10 cover.

Sunday, April 14th, 11 AM to 4 PM: **Toy, Model & Collectables Show** at the Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street (Main & 15th Ave.), Vancouver, BC. Buy, sell, and trade character toys, action figures, Beanie Babies, toy cars, Star Wars, model kits, trading cards, comic books, Barbies, games, and more! Admission: \$2.00 (\$1.00 for kids under 14). Dealers' tables: \$35.00/\$40.00. For more information about either show, please call 604-322-6412 or e-mail

BCSFAzine is on sale at

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email whitedwarf@deadwrite.com

lswong@uniserve.com. See also
<http://mypages.uniserve.com/~lswong/Comicon.html>

Apr. 19: *BCSFAzine* 348 deadline



Saturday April 20 at 1:00 pm (twelve noon is fine too): **BCSFA Meeting** at the Residence of Doug Finnerty, 113 Ovens Ave, New Westminster. If weather permits, the outdoor barbecue will be up and running, so bring things to cook if you care to indulge. Anyone so inclined is encouraged to bring their own programming items (i.e.: games to play, movies to show, topics to discuss, baggage to handle). Doug Finnerty will be attempting to facilitate a few rounds of "Typewriter Wars". **ALLERGY ALERT!** We do have a cat on the premises. It is also possible that one or two dogs might be visiting our back yard during the proceedings. **TRANSIT INFORMATION.** The three closest bus routes (in order of distance) are the #154 (22nd St. Station/Coquitlam Rec Center), #108 (New Westminster Station/Eight Avenue), and #102 (New Westminster Station/Fraserview). For more precise details consult your usual Translink sources, or as a last resort, call Doug Finnerty (604) 526-5621.

April 26: *Jason X* premieres in movie theatres.

APR. 26-27: **Dak Kon VII** in Comox, BC; Vancouver Island's wargame con. Advanced Dungeons & Dragons; Warhammer 40,000 Tournament; Magic; the Gathering Tournament; Warhammer Fantasy; 6th Edition Tournament. Info: Members.home.com/baddog117/dakkon.htm

Apr. 26-28: **SakuraCon 2002**, an anime convention at the Seattle Airport Hilton & Conference Center, 17620 Pacific Hwy S, SeaTac, WA 98188-4001. Guests will include: Hiroki Hayashi; others TBA. (This is the fifth outing for what is without a doubt the anime convention in the Seattle/Tacoma region.) Registration US\$50 at the door, children 6 to 12 half-price. Write to Sakura-Con-Registration, 900 Meridian Alocaion East #19-407, Milton, WA 98254-7019, tel. (253) 503-2233 x 1675, email lappleby@backtalk.org, or see URL <http://www.sakuracon.org>.

Apr. 26-28: **Game Faire 2002** at the Student Union Building, Spokane Falls Community College, Spokane, Washington. (A gaming con.) More info coming; see URL <http://www.gorillabobs.com/gf2002.html>

MAY 2002

May 1: May Day; International Day of Labour Solidarity. Hurray, hurray, it's the first of May, outdoor f***ing starts today.

May 3: *BCSFazine* 348 production

May 3: *Spiderman* premieres in movie theatres.

May 5: **Alberta Comic Collector's Association Comic & Toy Show**, Red & White Club, McMahon Stadium, Calgary, AB. Guest: Randy Emberlin. Memberships: TBA. For more information, www.cadvision.com/acca/

May 16: *Star Wars II* premieres in movie theatres.

May 17-19: **Keycon 19**, Radisson Hotel Downtown, Winnipeg, MB. SF convention. Guests: Pete Abrams, Charles deLint. Memberships: Can\$40 pre-registration, Can\$50 at the door. For more information, keycon2002.tripod.com.

May 21: *Dinotopia* premieres on ABC.

May 24: *BCSFazine* 349 deadline

May 24-26: **Enfilade!** in Tacoma, Washington. (A gaming con.)

Sunday, May 26th 2002: V-Con Society meeting. The primary purpose of the meetings (except for the last one – which is the AGM) is to review the progress of VCon 27.

May 26: **Vancouver Comicon**. For more information please call 604-322-6412 or e-mail ls Wong@uniserve.com. Also see <http://mypages.uniserve.com/~ls Wong/Comicon.html>

May 31-June 2: **ConComCon 9** at the Ellensburg Inn, Ellensburg, Washington. A conrunners' convention. Major sponsor this year, SWOC (?); Presenting sponsor, ANCEA (?). Memberships: preregistration US\$25 to May 1, US\$30 at the door. C-Cubed, POBox 44976, Tacoma, WA 98444. Tel. 253-503-2232 x 8779.

May 31-Jun 2: **C^3 2002**, the Convention Committee Convention, in Ellensburg, Wash., at the Ellensburg Inn, 1700 Canyon Road, Ellensburg, WA 98926. Ph: (509) 925-9801; Fax: (509) 925-2093. ellensburginn@yahoo.com. Room Rates: Single Room \$55.00, Double Room \$60.00. Be sure to mention C^3 when you request your rooms. Send memberships to C^3, P.O. Box 44976, Tacoma, WA 9844? Or

Phone: 253-503-2232, X 8779. Also See URL <http://www.swoc.org/ccubed>.

JUNE 2002

June 7-9: **Prairiecon XXIV**, Brandon University Gym, Brandon, MB. Gaming convention. Guests and memberships: TBA. For more information, www.prairiecon.com/home

June 21: *Minority Report* premieres in movie theatres.

June 22: Summer Solstice

June 23, 1:00 p.m.: **VCon 27 benefit barbecue & auction** (location to be announced)

JULY 2002

July 3: *Men in Black II* premieres in movie theatres.

July 7: **Toy, Model & Collectables Show**. For more information please call 604-322-6412 or e-mail ls Wong@uniserve.com. Also see <http://mypages.uniserve.com/~ls Wong/Comicon.html>

July 26: Another bloody *Austin Powers* movie. Mike Myers is EVIL. He must be STOPPED, and I have to

AUGUST 2002



Aug. 9-11: **ConVersion19, a.k.a. CanVention 22**, the Canadian National SF Convention. The Calgary Metropolitan Centre (333 Fourth Ave. SW, Calgary, AB) & Westin Hotel, Calgary, Alberta. SF/F/Anime/Gaming/Costume convention. **PRIX AURORA AWARDS AND BANQUET**. Guests: George R.R. Martin (Guest of Honour), James Alan Gardner (Canadian GoH), Geoffrey A. Landis (Science GoH), Lar deSouza (ArtGoH), Robert J. Sawyer (Toastmaster). Local guests include Rebecca Bradley, Dave Duncan, Marie Jakober. More guests to be announced!

Hotel prices are \$99 per night at the Westin.

Memberships are \$40 until July 31 (no incremental increases!), \$50 at the door (full weekend pass). Check www.con-version.org for more information and updates. URL <http://www.con-version.org>. Write Con-Version, P.O. Box 20098, Calgary Place RPO, Calgary, AB T2P 4J2. Fax (403)277-4251.

Media File



(from the *Made in Canada* online newsletter)

Media Happenings

Production on the new series *The Dead Zone* started in March at the Lions Gate studio in Vancouver. The series is headed by long-time Star Trek producer Michael Piller and stars Toronto-born Nicole deBoer (Ezri Dax on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*). *The Dead Zone*, based on the Stephen King novel of the same name, tells the story of a young man, Johnny Smith (Anthony Michael Hall), who awakens from a coma with a supernatural power. USA Networks picked up the pilot and ordered 22 additional episodes. The series is expected to premiere this summer.

A \$150-million state-of-the-art film and TV studio has been approved for Toronto. If there are no delays, construction could begin in March of 2003 on the 112,500-square-metre facility, which will be the largest studio in Canada. The developer will be an international consortium led by global film studio Pinewood-Shepperton.

William Shatner says he's still mystified by the enduring appeal of *Star Trek*. "Everybody watches it for a different reason," Shatner told CNN's *Larry King Live* in February. "There was science fiction, there was adventure, there was philosophy. There were the family of characters that they fell in love with. And yet, cancel that family of characters and bring in another family of characters and you've got another hit series called *Star Trek*, so I don't know." Shatner was promoting his new video, *Mind Meld: Secrets Behind the Voyage of a Lifetime*, in which he and Leonard Nimoy talk about the show and its effect on their lives.

Final Destination II began shooting in Vancouver in February. Producer Craig Perry says the sequel will intersect with and expand on the original supernatural movie. A "bunch of people meet because of a traffic accident due to a premonition by a freshman in college," said Perry. "What transpires is a rush to save the life of an unborn child with the help of Clear Rivers, [played by] Ali Larter from the first movie. The current movie and the events of the first movie unexpectedly coincide and intertwine to create a bunch of very interesting surprises and revelations about Death and its plans on Earth."

The New SF series *Firefly*, now in production in Vancouver, has a number of Canadians in the cast, including B.C. native Jewel Staite, who will play Kaylee, the mechanic of the spaceship. Staite has done a number of roles for Vancouver-based productions such as *Seven Days*, *The Immortal* and (in the third season) *The X-Files*. *Firefly* is the brainchild of Joss Whedon, creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*. The series has been picked up by Fox.

Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines will now shoot entirely in Los Angeles. The Arnold Schwarzenegger sequel, which is in preproduction, had been slated to shoot about 60% of its 100 days of principal photography in Vancouver, but director Jonathan Mostow reportedly balked at the idea of shuttling between the two cities.

Winnipeg director Guy Maddin's offbeat SF short film *The Heart of the World* has become one of the most decorated and popular Canadian movies of recent years. In February, *Heart* won a Genie Award for best dramatic live-action short drama. The U.S. National Society of Film Critics voted it the best experimental film of 2000, and numerous newspapers and periodicals put it in their top-10 movie lists for 2001. *Heart* can be viewed here. On March 12, Zeitgeist Films will release it on DVD with two other Maddin features.

Vancouver native Hayden Christensen says he had a bit of a struggle to find the arc for his character of Anakin Skywalker in *Star Wars: Episode II: Attack of the Clones*, opening May 16. Lucasfilm and 20th Century Fox have announced that on May 12 there will be charity previews of the movie in 11 cities. The sole Canadian city on that list is Toronto.

On the Box

The Gunmen will make at least one more appearance, on the April 21 episode of *The X-Files*, "Jump the Shark," before the series ends.

Paul Gertz, executive producer of Gene Roddenberry's *Earth: Final Conflict*, says the final episodes of the series will have some surprises, but he believes fans will enjoy the way it ends. All the key players will "get their moment to shine," Gertz said. While Kevin Kilner (William Boone) won't return in the final episodes, other key players will. The syndicated series is in its fifth and final season. "It's been great, but it hasn't been the easiest show," Gertz added. "Part of the challenge was everybody had a view of what they wanted the show to be, and since it was created by Gene Roddenberry, who is no longer with us, he wasn't there to say, 'Well, this is what I meant it to be.'"

Book Reviews

by Donna McMahon



TANGLED UP IN BLUE, Joan D. Vinge (Tor, July/00, mm, 293p)

ANGELMASS, Timothy Zahn (Tor, Sept/01, hc, 430p)

BELARUS, Lee Hogan (Roc, Feb/02, mm, 398p)

Nyx LaisTree and his brother Staun are police officers in the rough port city of Carbuncle, on the planet Tiamat. Frustrated by their inability to enforce smuggling laws because of corrupt authorities, a bunch of cops organize vigilante warehouse raids on shady operations. But one night a raid goes terribly wrong.

When Tree wakes in hospital he discovers that he is the only survivor – his brother and the other off-duty cops are dead. Worse, he is embroiled in a lethal intrigue involving a mysterious group called the Survey, the Snow Queen herself, and perhaps even senior officers in the police force. All of them want to know what happened at the warehouse and they think Tree is lying when he says he can't remember.

Joan D. Vinge does a good job with her characters in this book, especially Tree, who staggers through the novel half stunned with grief for his brother, Staun. His raw anguish and the bleak situation Tree finds himself in gives the book a grim edge which is only partially leavened by a pleasant (if improbable) romance between Tree and a high-priced courtesan who wears a “full body sensenet” that allows her to change appearance at will.

Tree also finds himself forging an uncomfortable alliance with Sergeant Gundahlinu, a high caste officer with an inflexible dedication to rules. As is inevitable in the mismatched cop partner formula, their differences are ultimately less important than their commitment to the finding the truth.

TANGLED UP IN BLUE is set in the same universe as Vinge's Hugo-award-winning novel *THE SNOW QUEEN* (1980), and the plot is complex, especially those elements involving the Survey (think of a cross between the CIA and rogue Freemasons). Approaching *TANGLED* without having read the other books, I found that there were some background details that didn't make much sense to me, such as how the low-tech ruler of a backwater planet could possibly control access to a genuine source of immortality.

Still, the novel stands on its own. My partner, Clint, found Tree's grief tiresomely unremitting, but I found it credible and effective as a focus and motivation for a protagonist. This is a solid book, with eye-pleasing cover art by Michael Whelan.

* * *

Timothy Zahn, best known for his Star Wars books, can write a very competent shoot-em-up space opera. While *ANGELMASS* shows many of Zahn's strengths, it left me feeling that it simply wasn't as good a book as it could have been.

The plot of *ANGELMASS* focuses on Chandris, a 16-year-old street kid on the run, and Kosta, a twenty-something doctoral student who has been sent to the Seraph system by the warlike Pax government to spy on Angelmass, a peculiar black hole. For the last twenty years, people in the Seraph system have been harvesting “angels” (subatomic particles) from the hole and wearing them as necklaces. Allegedly, wearing an angel causes human beings to become good, ethical, and honest.

Kosta doesn't believe that angels are “particles of good” – he thinks they may be a subtle alien invasion. But as he starts amassing evidence to support his view he is faced with a credibility problem – who in the Empyreum is going to believe him when they discover that he's really a Pax spy?

In many ways *ANGELMASS* is a formula space opera, with much of the story hanging on coincidence and improbable plot points. For example, Chandris – a street urchin – is able to learn to pilot and repair a spacecraft in a couple of weeks. Another story thread involving a giant Pax warship, is much too obviously there to fill pages and mark time until the big climax. And the racing-the-clock plot wore thin for me well before the novel's end, in part because of a barrage of technobabble that reminded me of a *Star Trek Next Gen* episode.

Still, Zahn has moments. Probably the strongest feature of this book is its ambiguity. It is not clear which empire is good or bad, who is right or wrong in their interpretation of “angels” and what exactly is best for society anyway. And hard SF fans are likely to enjoy the details about black holes and particle physics which seemed – to this non-technical reader anyway – to be credibly done.

Zahn also creates interesting and personable characters. These include Hanan and Ornina, a middle-aged brother and sister who operate a huntership, and Ronyon, a deaf and mildly retarded man who works as a political aide. Kosta, too, gets in some amusing moments as a nerdy academic who makes a very inept spy. Unfortunately, Zahn resolves most of his character problems before the end of the book, robbing the last few chapters of much potential punch.

I started *BELARUS* with high hopes. A cast of Russian protagonists promised a refreshing change from the usual Americans-in-space fare.

Andrei Mironenko, a member of one of the powerful families that controls the galactic Republic, is fulfilling the dream of his 337-year lifetime as he leads a fleet of colony ships to settle the newly terraformed planet Belarus.

Also fulfilling her career dreams is world engineer Tally Korsakova, but Tally is worried by the abandoned alien spaceships orbiting Belarus. Although the damaged hulks are twenty thousand years old, Tally isn't sure their alien builders are dead. Perhaps they will return. Or perhaps the aliens, shielded by an advanced technology, are hiding somewhere on Belarus....

BELARUS is a novel with a bit of everything. It has a tsar, insectoid aliens, intergalactic war, the Baba Yaga (a Russian legend), space colonies and a network of biomachines that have formed an artificial intelligence. What this book doesn't have is focus.

The biggest problem with *BELARUS* is that the characters exist to serve the story, and they are

tossed around by circumstance instead of moving events. Even a romance between the two protagonists is sandwiched halfheartedly between the action. Hogan relies on his plot to generate tension and fails to give the reader any compelling human conflict to connect with.

The characters have a further problem – they come across as Americans in ethnic costume, rather than people from a foreign culture – and the planet is a much too convenient recreation of nineteenth-century Eastern Europe, minus all the intervening history. I found this particularly hard to swallow. For example, why would anybody in the 30th century volunteer to live as a low-tech peasant under a tsarist regime?

This isn't a terrible book. The writing is solid. The characters are competently drawn. And there's lots of action. But it comes across as an unhappy mishmash of Russian history, space opera, and *Silence of the Lambs*, while lacking the sly black humour that real Russians excel at.

Comments? Questions? Rebuttals?
donna_mcmahon@sunshine.net

VCon 27

(Vancouver's oldest annual science fiction convention)

October 11-13, 2002

at the Sheraton Guildford Hotel in Surrey, B.C.

15269 - 104 Avenue, Surrey, B.C., Canada V3R 1N5

URL: <http://www.sheratonguildford.com>

(Call 1.604.582.9288 or 1.800.661.2818 for room reservations - mention VCon 27)

Guests of Honour:

Tim Powers (author of *Declare*, *Last Call* and *The Anubis Gates*, etc.)

James Blaylock (author of *Homunculus*, *The Last Coin*, *Winter Tides*, etc.)

Gary Gygax (creator of "Dungeons & Dragons", "Legendary Adventure" and other role-playing games)

Alan Lee (artist for *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Mabinogion*, *Merlin Dreams*, etc.)

Other guests: **Ryan Nicholson** (Flesh and Fantasy Inc., one of Canada's premier make-up/prosthetics/FX houses); **John Gajdecki**; **Don DeBrandt**; **Matt Hughes**; **Spider and Jeanne Robison**, **Jonathan Tweet** (Wizards of the Coast).

Featuring: gaming, artshow, dealers' room, anime, video room, writers' workshop, programming/guests, volunteering. For more specific information email vcon@shaw.ca or see <http://www.v-con.ca>.

Memberships: US\$20, C\$35 until August 31; US\$30, C\$45 at the door; children under 12, half-price.

Write: VCon 27, c/o Main Floor, 2116 Macdonald, Vancouver, B.C. CANADA V6K 3Y4; see URL: <http://www.v-con.ca/index.html>; or email vcon@shaw.ca.

ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS

Northwest News

VIKINGCON 19 CANCELLED

John Tossey, the VikingCon chair, wrote: "VikingCon has been cancelled this year. Too few people, a limited budget, and we ended up facing having to run a split-location Con, when housing fell through on the dates we wanted for Con space."

*John Tossey <jackthespoon@hotmail.com>
via Palle Hoffstein <pallehoffstein@hotmail.com>
March 16th, 2002*

Jacqueline Bartels, a previous VikingCon chair, also wrote: "If you haven't heard yet, VikingCon 19, previously announced for July 26-28, 2002, at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington, has been postponed until next year. Due to construction and numerous other conferences on campus this summer, we were unable to find a date during which both conference space and on campus housing were available. VikingCon 19 will be held sometime during the summer of 2003, and we'll announce specifics as soon as we can."

Jacqueline Passey Bartels, March 27th, 2002

JON GUSTAFSON?

There have been a lot of conflicting reports about Jon's progress. I'm still straightening them out. Stay tuned.

Club / Local News

A NON-MEETING OF MINDS

Lorna Appleby tried to arrange a meeting of SakuraCon leading lights with VCon leading lights, on March 10th at Simon Fraser University, but things got gobbled. As it was, Palle managed to meet the visitors at the Radisson, but only Ray Seredin showed up at SFU.

MEANWHILE, BACK IN COQUITLAM

On the evening of the 16th, a VCon 27 benefit auction was held at Steve Forty's home, and raised \$340.00. Palle later commented that he would be satisfied if the next benefit auction, in June, raised as much money.

Graeme took this occasion to hold the much-belayed BCSFA general meeting, for club executive elections. All incumbent executives were confirmed by acclamation.

NOT QUITE READY FOR YOU

The V-Con Society held a brief meeting following the VCon 27 committee meeting on the 17th, at the Surrey Sheraton. Proceedings will be published as soon as I've checked with the recent VCon 27

progress report, and with the V-Con Society president, for factual validity.

Canadian Fan News

WE HAVE A CUFF WINNER!

Colin Hinz of Toronto is the 2002 Canadian Unity Fan Fund (CUFF) winner. Murray Moore writes:

"Colin will travel to Calgary, Alberta to attend the Canadian national SF convention, Convention 22. The 2002 Convention is hosted by Conversion 19, Aug. 9 through 11, 2002. The Conversion 19 web site URL is <http://www.con-version.org>.

"Colin was acclaimed, a not unusual outcome for CUFF winners. Here is Colin's election platform: 'Running back to...Calgary? Sure, Saskatoon would be true to the song and faithful to my roots as well, but Calgary was where I was corrupted back in 1985. And in fact it was at an earlier Con-Version, the second of now nineteen of 'em, where I lost my convention virginity. I went through a long semi-gafiated period in the 1990s, and thus I lost track of many wonderful Western Canadian fan friends. I'm hoping to go back and re-ignite these friendships – and with luck make many new ones – should I be chosen to be this year's CUFF delegate.'

"Convention is the annual physical expression of the Canadian SF professional and fan community's appreciation of the best of Canadian professional and amateur activity in the previous year.

"The English-language and French-language winners in each professional category and in each fan category receive the recognition of their peers, represented by a trophy, the Aurora Award.

"CUFF's connection to the Convention is that the CUFF fund pays the travel expense and the hotel room expense of a fan attending the Convention.

"In a country in which business travel and personal travel increasingly is north and south, CUFF encourages the linking of fans on the opposite sides of the Manitoba-Ontario border.

"The CUFF delegate attends the Convention as an ambassador of one part of Canadian fandom to another part of Canadian fandom."

(Write: 1065 Henley Road, Mississauga, ON L4Y 1C8, or phone 1-905-281-8540)

*(via Murray Moore, March 21, 2002)
2001-2002 CUFF Administrator*

CAN FAN FUNDERY

LASFS / SCIFI changed their rules, to pay only for *inter*-continental fan fund reports (after Garth

Spencer attempted to raise CUFF funds by offering them trip reports from years past). However, when Murray Moore inquired if the most recent CUFF trip report (his) was eligible for FANAC funds, Joe Siclari replied that indeed it was.

"A Trip Report Found in a Plain Manila Envelope, sub-titled Being a True Account of the Adventures in May 2001 of Murray Moore of Mississauga Who Traveled to Exotic Vancouver and to Fabulous Seattle, is more than 10,000 words, includes an index, cartoons by B.C. native Scott Patri, art by Craig Smith, and a sheet of full-colour photographs of fans at VCon. VCon in 2001 hosted the annual Canadian national SF convention, the Convention. All proceeds go to CUFF, \$5 Canadian and \$5 U.S. U.S. dollar cheques are good. Cheques payable to CUFF, please. "

(Write: 1065 Henley Road, Mississauga, ON L4Y 1C8, or phone 1-905-281-8540)

The FANAC organization may be contacted c/o Joe Siclari <jsiclari@earthlink.net> at 661 Hanover St., Yorktown Heights, NY 10598 USA. See also www.fanac.org.

(via Murray Moore, March 21, 2002)

Further Afield

R.A. LAFFERTY, R.I.P.

R.A. Lafferty has died. He began his literary career as much in the little magazines, writing mostly tall tales and fantasies for the likes of *New Mexico Quarterly*, as in the SF and fantasy magazines. [It was] famously noted that his writing helped take up his post-retirement time that might otherwise be devoted to alcoholic libations. He had been ill for some

time, but left an impressive legacy (some back in print from small presses, not a little considered too idiosyncratic by large commercial publishers and largely published by the likes of Chris Drumm Books in pamphlet form or the folded Broken Mirrors Press). A great loss. I'll probably always remember his story in Ramsey Campbell's anthology *The Far Reaches Of Fear* (a.k.a. *Superhorror*), "Fog in My Throat". "Eurema's Dam" is one of his lesser works; at his best, he was one of the best short-story writers of the last century, and an ambitious novelist.

*David Glenn Anderson <dander2387@aol.com>
copied to c-cubed@yahoogroups.com, March 25, 2002
From a post to SF-LIT*

THOG'S MASTERCLASS

Dept of Temporal Science. "The remains gave off a strong earth smell. It suggested great age, century piled upon century in which this jumble of now articulated bones had lain forgotten in the volcanic silt of John Day Canyon. They had been ancient already when Christ reportedly spun fishes and loaves from thin air. Older still when Moses allegedly parted the Red Sea."

(Kirk Mitchell, Ancient Ones, 2001)

Dept of Splendid Simile. "He sounded like a dead child discovering that eternity is some buzzing, languorous dream of Bath."

(M. John Harrison, "Running Down", 1975)

Dept of Strange Endowments. "Her slender chest rose and fell gently and slowly with her sleeping inhalations, her small breasts and rather larger nipples outdenting the flimsy fabric of her ragged tunic ..."

*(Fritz Leiber, The Knight and Knave of Swords, 1988)
Ansible 176, March 8, 2002*

THIS SPACE FOR RENT - PHONE 604-325-7314

CREATIVE NATIONALISM

The Kingdom of Talossa, other micronations, and can you start your own country these days?

by Garth Spencer

Just over two years ago, I indulged in some Web surfing, which immediately led to quaint and curious adventures; for one thing, I found myself applying for foreign citizenship ... in the Kingdom of Talossa, based in Milwaukee.

There are quite a number of micronations, as it turns out. ("Micronations" sounds better than "invented countries", which I was going to say, and anyway "micronations" is a term in common use already.)

NOTA BENE: Let's just clear up a point of confusion about the word "nation", shall we? English speakers use the words "nation", "country" (or "land") and "government" almost interchangeably; but speakers of French and other languages are likely to mean "people," even "race", when they say "nation". This connotation has a bearing on some of the less positive attempts to start a new country.

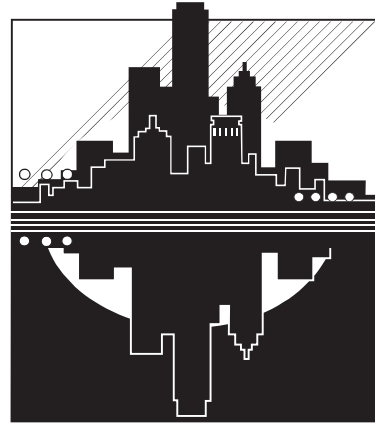
1: Fictional Nations as Game Settings

If you do a Web search, you are liable to find a number of imaginary countries invented for computer games, and fantasy-role-playing games. Those most closely related to Real Life include "The Embraced: Masquerade" vampire role-playing settings, or those for cyberpunk and cybermagic games. Some of which include versions of present-day or future Seattle, Portland or Vancouver which are *not quite* like our own; those most distant from Real Life include the Tékumel/Empire of the Petal Throne heroic fantasy world.

2: Micronations

The focus here, however, is on the scores of micronations exist which lay claim to some territory or other – or (in recent years) *only* to a constituency, which in that case consists of "cybercitizens".

Such micronations offer citizenships, currency, passports and stamps of their own design, for nomi-



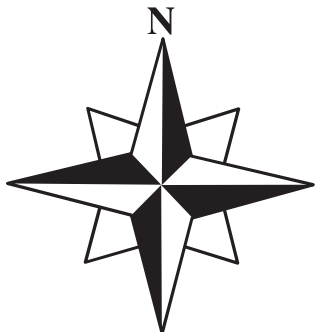
nal fees; but they're not advocating secession or anything. Arcadia, for instance, is a "country" claiming most of the states and provinces in the Pacific Northwest (although it doesn't declare independence from Canada or the United States). Other examples are Outer Baldonia, an island off Canada's east coast, over which an American millionaire used to claim sovereignty, and the Kingdom of Loges des Corbeaux, between B.C. and Alberta.

In the case of Loges des Corbeaux, the original Dominion surveyors made a number of mistakes in surveying the provincial borders which remained on the map, partly because of the difficult terrain and partly because of the low priority Ottawa gave the border disputes. A city clerk in Fernie, B.C. discovered by the early 1970s that about 5.5 square miles was assigned to the wrong province; he declared The Kingdom of Loges des Corbeaux; he invented a story about a prospector named "Wisukitsak" claiming the mineral-rich territory, and getting elected King by the miners and trappers he invited in.

It is an open question whether the famous Emperor Norton was proposing a bug nation. (He was Joshua Norton, the 19th-century street person in San Francisco, who declared himself "by Grace of God and the National Will Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico".) Perhaps the main difference between Emperor Norton and most micronations is that the Emperor represented only himself, albeit he became a celebrity and most San Franciscans humoured his delusion.

3. Idealist Groups, Secessionist Groups and Intentional Communities

Based on the foregoing, you might think that micronations are usually lighthearted, harmless games that small groups of people play for fun. But it appears that some people do make serious attempts to start real countries, as sovereign as the USA, as Canada, or as Lichtenstein and Monaco. These micronations have a wide variety of motivations and constituencies; they range all the way from Ayn



Rand's Objectivism, libertarianism, or some utopian or religious idealism ... even to neo-fascist, racist, survivalist militias and "Christian Identity" groups.

The Kingdom of Talossa

As R. Ben Madison describes it, Talossa (*el Regipäts Talossán*) is an independent, sovereign nation in North America, which seceded peacefully from the United States in 1979. Ben declared his bedroom to be a new nation when he was thirteen and alienated from the mundane society around him. Unlike other projects a thirteen-year-old may start, Ben's creation caught on with an expanding number of friends, despite some occasions when Ben (now styled King Robert I) lost interest himself. Talossa now claims at least the east side of the city of Milwaukee, plus an island off of France, and a chunk of Antarctica, respectively comprising seven provinces (named after various dictators) and the territory of "Pengopäts". The Kingdom's website FAQ (www.talossa.com) stresses that Talossa is *not* a computer game, nor an FRP-game fictional world.

Since the U.S. federal government has never disputed Talossa's territorial claims, it can be argued that Talossa is not an imaginary but a real country.

The stated philosophy of Talossa ("Derivatism") is that:

"The Kingdom of Talossa is a community of persons having fun by doing things which are reasonably similar to what other ('real') countries do, whether for reasons of tourist nostalgia, out of a lust for power, in pursuit of parody, or – yes – as nation-building."

Other philosophies that have held sway include World Singular Secession, the idea that *everyone* in the world ought to secede and declare their own independent country, and Spiritual Plasmatism, which is hard to define.

Today, Talossa has somewhere between forty and eighty members in Milwaukee, and around the world ("Cybercits"). The parliament (*el Ziu*) operates as a constitutional monarchy, and as an unusually participatory democracy: anyone can assume any political posture, even at variance to the one they hold outside Talossa, and in fact Talossans are quite free to form their own political parties, even if they are the only member. (One is strongly encouraged, however, to *wait* until he finishes the citizenship process and understands how the system already works. The reasons for this go back to some personality conflicts in early Talossan history.) Existing political parties include the the Progressive Conservatives (sounds Canadian, doesn't it?), the Communists, and the newly-formed "Rebal Alliance" and "Talossan Imperial New Order Party".

Several online Talossan newspapers were founded, but most of the online activity now occurs on "Wittenberg", a message board (named after the town where Luther posted his 95 Theses).

The monarch and his friends even went to the extent of creating their own language (*glheþ*) for Talossa, basically the kind of Romance language that might have evolved in Northern Africa. This segues into one of Talossa's cultural distinctions, an "inexplicable and inextricable connection with the Berbers". This was elaborated in 1984 and 1985 by "The Berber Project", Ben's "ancient history" of North African Berbers sailing to North America and in fact building the Indian mounds in Wisconsin and the Mississippi drainage basin; the Berber Project, like the unfinished saga of The Brothers Asbad, is posted on the Talossa website. Talossan documents are available at purely nominal cost from *La Cudëscheria* (the online bookstore). Other offerings include *The Lexicon of Talossan English*, the *Scurznia Gramatica*, the *Corpus Scriptionum Talossanarum*, and *Invasion of the Androids*. Most of the offerings are written by Ben Madison or John Jahn.

Microhistory, "Bug Nations" and Little Wars

Judging from Talossa's history (*Ár Päts*), it seems that Talossans invested as much *sturm und drang* in their micronation as science fiction fans did in fandom, from the late 1930s up to the present. (Harry Warner remarked that if you go from reading the history of World War II to reading Sam Moskowitz' *The Immortal Storm*, the fanhistory doesn't come as an anticlimax.) Some of the conflicts were between personalities. Some were between their philosophies. Some of the battles ... well, King Robert I tells me: "Technically a 'Bug Nation' is a micronation that is obsessed with Talossa – one that attacks Talossa, comments on Talossan affairs, or actively seeks to get either 'recognition' from, or declare 'war' on, Talossa. It's a term Talossans invented." (March 29, 2002) Talossa's consensus now is against recognizing other micronations. It all reads a bit like fanhistory. Perhaps that's normal small-group dynamics.

I'm still learning to grasp the ambience of *Talossanismeu*, and maybe the way Talossans express things is a send-up of contemporary political language. One of the things I'm trying to assimilate about Talossa is the apparent interest in 20th-century dictators. J. Eiffler responded:

The King and several of the citizens in this country have post graduate degrees in history, and more than a few of us have a great interest in it as well. Combine that with a spirited interest in politics ... The things that make the great 20th Century dictators of such interest to us isn't necessarily about what they preached, but how they preached it. Captured on film and audio tape, most of these men are more easily accessible to us so they get more attention. We can actually see how they used their charisma to move millions of supporters into believing their very perverted philosophies and strategies.

If you still don't follow, find some stock footage of Mussolini giving any speech from his balcony and tell us that you are not intrigued by his mannerisms alone.:-) Now do the same thing with footage of a Nazi rally

featuring Hitler barking, pounding, and spitting all over the podium and the people around him. Recognize the passion they had for what they believed was the truth and how they presented it. [Now] Think about how bland most of the leaders of the current day are in comparison.

JEiffler on: 03/27/2002

The Talossan FAQ sheet says their major issues include: their relations with other micronations; the composition of their supreme court, given the factions competing for seats; exploring the mystical Berber heritage; what to do about inactive citizens (now *that* sounds familiar); who should be the “national entertainer” – Gloria Estefan? (or anyone?); and whether Talossan and English should both continue to be official languages, or whether to recognize “Talossan English”. (People keep peppering their English with expressions like “Amish” for non-cybercitizens, “Azul” for “hello”, “*Cestoûr*” for non-Talossans in Wisconsin, and “Zooks!” (Zux!) as a general exclamation.

To apply for Talossan citizenship, go to the Citizenship Information page at <http://w1.2312.telia.com/~u231200029/im/>. Prospective citizens are required to purchase *Ár Pāts*, and study it carefully. Prospectives must then send Ben Madison the MC-95a application form in *Ár Pāts*, plus a “What Talossa Means to Me” essay and a very brief autobiography, plus proof of identity with a postal address and phone number. After the above is submitted, a multiple-choice Civics Test is sent to prospectives, which can be answered from *Ár Pāts*.

How to Start Your Own Country

This small-press book by well-known fan and anarchist Erwin Strauss lists about 100 new-country projects (I counted), and he concentrated mostly on projects in action since 1960. No wonder there was an International Micropatrolological Society. It is interesting to notice what Erwin includes in his list, such as “mouse-that-roared” nations that never quite attained a state of existence, or the Society for Creative Anachronism. (Granted that this medievalist group designates regional branches as shires and baronies and so on, and draws maps dividing up the known world among them, still I wonder if Erwin is stretching a point.)

Erwin discusses a number of motivations people display for new countries, such as founding a new kind of society (or returning to some “traditional” values. He also discusses five approaches people use in trying to establish new countries:

- traditional sovereignty - claiming some turf and holding it against all comers;
- ship under flag of convenience, just outside anyone’s territorial waters;
- litigation, for example “Prince Roy” Bates’ tactic of claiming an abandoned offshore anti-aircraft platform, dubbing it Sealand, and battling in court

with the government of the United Kingdom for operating a pirate radio station and refusing to pay Inland Revenue taxes;

- “vonu”, out of sight, out of mind living: i.e., paying no taxes, accepting no government services, educating your own children, ignoring draft registration ... and depending solely upon yourself. Parts of British Columbia, Oregon, Dakota, and the Pacific are favoured for this “mountain man” lifestyle;
- declaring a “model country”, i.e., unilaterally declaring your home to be an independent nation, and proceeding from there. Alphistia, The Kingdom of Talossa and some other places fit this description. Many such exercises send notices of their existence, and requests for recognition, to the United States government; the Office of the Geographer of the United States (at the State Department, in Washington) files these notices, but no action is taken on them.

Erwin’s last edition was produced in 1984, so there is some question how current its information is. It seems curious to me, but Strauss’ book (last edited in 1984) lists a whole lot of politically-motivated, even fascist and racist micronations, such as the United Kingdom of Arya.

New Lease on Life: Data Havens

One of the latest updates to the story of micronations reprises the story of Sealand, the North Sea platform. Apparently a former MIT student, Ryan Lackey, approached “Prince Roy” about the idea of hosting a data haven at Sealand. “HavenCo Ltd.” was born in 1999. Now, havenco.com is an outlaw data storage business.

This should remind you of the online data haven/Internet bank that motivates much of the novel *Cryptonomicon*.

(Christopher Shulgan, “Offshore Computing”, *Shift* V10.1 Mar/Apr 2002)

Sad But True

The next thing that can happen is that some people abroad don’t know your newly-declared country is any different from Canada or France, and they want to immigrate. In the middle of March 2002, one of BCSFA’s outlying members, John Bartley, brought to my attention a story about Pakistanis trying to emigrate to a micronation. Lars Vilks set up “Ladonia” in 1996 as a protest against Swedish authorities who removed two large works of art, or installations, in southern Sweden. About 6,000 people had registered as Ladonian citizens when a flood Pakistanis inquired about citizenship, wanting to know where Ladonia was and where to locate their embassy in Pakistan.

King Robert I of Talossa comments: “This has happened with Talossa. Over the last two years there was a flood, behind the scenes, of immigration applications from Nigeria.” (March 29, 2002)

Lists of Other Created Countries

Somewhat more up-to-date lists of micronations than Erwin Strauss' are posted online, as on the "Rittergeist" website and many other websites. But these are not all-inclusive, and the Rittergeist page itself says it only lists micronations with websites. (I have starred the micronations which also appeared in *How to Start Your Own Country*.) These include: Aeldaria, Empire of; Aerican Empire; Alphistia; Alderra, Kingdom of; Anaceron, Commonwealth of; Ansonia, Republic of; Ark, Federation; Arteña, Communist Nation of; Asphynxia, Dominion of; Aveshira, Kingdom of; Bahoudii, Kingdom of; Baja Arizona, Republic of; Baldonios, Republic of Greater (?); Barnstovia, Republic of; Bluffington, Hindu Republic of; Blum, Republic of; Brindabella, Commonwealth of; Cabal, Federal Republic of; Cherusken, Kingdom of; Choconia; Communicatia, Peoples' Republic of; Conch Republic *; Confederated Online States; Confederated Territories, The; Corvinia, Sovereign Principality of; Cyberia, Virtual Commonwealth of; Cyberia, People's Democratic Republic of the United Provinces of East; Elgaland and Vargaland, Kingdoms of; EnenKio Atoll; Falkenberg, Kingdom of; Flanders, Republic of; Flat 24, Republic of; Freedonia, Kingdom of; Freedonia, Principality of; Freelonía, Sultanate of; Freistaat KLE; Frioul, Free Republic of; Grogardia, Grand Duchy of; Haren, Grand Duchy of; Havenport, City-State of; Howland and Baker Islands, Republic of; Hutt River Province, Principality of *; Identitem de Lati, Empire of; Island, Genial State of The; Homeland; Jamptland; Kadin, Kingdom of; Kaliopé, Civilized State of; Kisone, Republic of; L'Anse-Saint-Jean, Municipality of; Ladonia; Lafartia, Glorious Empire of; Landreth, Kingdom of; Laputa, Free Republic of; Lautenia; Lectoria; Liverpool, People's Democratic Republic of; 'Llome, Republic of; Lobster Nation, The; Lomar, Republic of; Lothlorrien; Ludonia, Kingdom of; Malveale, Sovereign Republic of; Mapulto, Sovereign Republic of; Marajo; Maya Republic; Melchizedek, Dominion of; Merovingia, Kingdom of; Minbari Federation; Monastico, Serene Principality of; Morovia, Kingdom of; Motolia, Republic of; Mowameddo Regime; NetCity, Republic of; Neufünfland, United Anarchic Monarchies of; New Worcester Kingdom; Nova Roma; Oceana *; Orange, Principality of; Oscania, People's Confederation of; Ottawak, Dominion of; Patria, Inner Realm of; Penguinia; People's Socialist Republics, Union of; Port Colice, Commonwealth of; Portinópolis; Porto Claro, Republic of; Porto Claro, Kingdom of; Ratelon, Democratic Union of; Refugee Republic; Reisenguthland-Ellermark, Kingdom of; Reunion, Holy Empire of; Riesenguthland-Ellermark, Kingdom of; Roadkills-R-U, Republic of; Saint-Paul's Island Kingdom; Santa Clara, Republic of; Scotland; Sealand, Principality of *; Seborga, Principality of; Sedang, Kingdom of *; Somtovia-St. Papinian, United Zoe Katholike Patriarchate of; Stoner Homeland; Syntagma, Kingdom of; Telusia, Barony of; Terra Novum, Republic of; Textor; United Protectorate of Earth; United Space Federation; Utopia, United Provinces of; Valsgrafenstein, People's Republic of; Vanesia,

Sovereign Order of; Vivaldia, Republic of; Washitaw de Dugdahmoundyah, Empire of; Web Island; Zaire, Kingdom of; Zugesbuch, Principality of; Zzanduria. I make that 116 micronations. (I counted.)

Conclusions

From Erwin Strauss' viewpoint, micronations express a recurring wish for personal independence, even for sovereignty up to and including anarchism; but most such micronations have failed. Maybe the founders couldn't pay some high legal startup costs, or they couldn't interest enough people, or couldn't fight off a larger country's takeover, or the founders couldn't even build the islands or platforms they needed.

From my viewpoint, the serious attempts to start new countries look a lot like the attempts to start intentional communities – which predate the mid-20th-century commune movement, and go back at least as far as the European settlement of this continent.

Because I'm absolutely unprepared to make such an attempt, I'd like to propose that we split off some Western states and provinces, and form a new nation in the Pacific Northwest. I favour the snail as the national bird, Chinook Jargon as the national language, and for a national anthem, I suggest Mark Knopfler's theme from *Local Hero*, as performed on the bagpipe. Also I propose that we go back to driving on the left, just like the Rhinoceros Party suggested. I propose that we call the new nation *Snass Illahie* (which means "rain country" in Chinook).

You are probably aware of the similar recurring idea of "Ecotopia" or "Cascadia"; you may know at least that Northwest people often find more in common with each other than with the other regions, or with the federal governments in Ottawa and Washington. You may also be aware of the resentments and frustrations that Western Canadians nurse against high costs, low service, and lack of response to their needs, shown by both the government bureaucracies and the private corporations centralized in Ontario. Now, I confess, I don't know any conditions under which the U.S. Army and National Guard would permit states to secede today; although I have an idea that the Canadian Armed Forces are organized by regional regiments, and some might join their provinces' cause. You tell me if I'm full of it.

I also propose that we institute an elective monarchy, on the Polish model practised before World War II. Or we could construct the world's first libertarian socialism. But what I'd really like to do is to set up an anarchosyndicalist thing, as attempted in Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War. I mean, we've had every *other* kind of country – monarchies, dictatorships, democracies, fascist states, communist states – so isn't it about time we had an anarchist country *somewhere*? (Well, no, I'm not convinced it would work – but hey, it would be *different*, wouldn't it?)

Why am I proposing secession, secession and revolution? Well, it was a boring Sunday, and it was raining outside, and there was nothing good on TV ...

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CREATIVE LINGUISTICS

Constructed Languages and Science Fiction



by Garth Spencer

About two years ago I mentioned among friends that I was thinking of an essay about language, at least the semi-creative way languages have been used, or pictured, in science fiction and fantasy. One of my friends mentioned that she would like to see that. Well, it's taken rather longer than I expected. But here it is.

There seem to be three topics on my mind at once.

Firstly, natural human languages are complex, dynamic systems, in fact there are several interacting systems in natural languages. I can sketch out for you the way language works from conventional linguistics, and incidentally point out some ignorance and misconceptions people persistently hold about language, some of which pop up in SF. Secondly, a lot of SF writers just incidentally make reference to foreign, alien, or future languages – and they end up looking a lot like intentionally-created languages. Another notion that appears, most frequently in fantasy, is the notion of an “original” or “perfect” language, the language of the angels or of True Names; Le Guin's Earthsea trilogy probably dealt with this most effectively.

But there's a third thing on my mind. I don't think language works, actually. We *don't* communicate. For communication to happen, you have to have speakers speaking and listeners listening, you have to have speakers and listeners attributing the same meaning to what is said and heard, and mostly I don't see these things happening.

Just one of the critical details of world-building for SF is constructing a language, or languages. But there are several critical errors that people keep making, quite independently, and they are easily preventable. Even a superficial knowledge of linguistics, the study of language, will prevent a lot of problems.

Depending on what you're trying to accomplish by making a language part of your story, you could just make a few offhand references to invented words or turns of phrase; or you could construct a whole language from the ground up. If you were going to go whole-hog, you would have to consider at least four levels on which language operates: the *phonological*, *lexical*, “*grammatical*” and *semantic* levels.

On each level, a language is a system of many elements, which combine by certain rules. What makes a language complicated is partly the way these systems interact with each other, partly the way the whole thing changes over time ... and partly, the way normal language fails to work.

A few figures may give you a sense of proportion about the work. The number of different sounds that a language uses is somewhere between 11 and 38, roughly. The number of different words that a language uses is at least 1500 to 2500. The number of stated rules in a language can vary a lot; the 16 rules stated for Esperanto can be taken as a minimum. The number of different languages spoken in the world has been estimated as high as 8,000, or as low as 3,000, and is decreasing as a result of modern communications and industrialization. The list of the ten most commonly-spoken languages around the globe features many European languages, such as English, French, German and Spanish, but English is no longer in first place. A list of the concepts signified in language is a subject of current artificial-intelligence research.

Myths about Language

There has been some ongoing confusion, not to say superstition, about the reasons why different people think and act differently, and why that seems to be associated with the groups they come from. One urban legend had it that Ojibway (or Chippewyan) had only 500 words; even an informed writer such as L. Sprague de Camp made similar disparaging comments about Chinese.

In fact, as F. Ogden showed when constructing *Basic English* (), any given language probably has a “core” vocabulary of at least a thousand words or so. (Basic English, his answer to the perceived need for a world “common tongue”, featured 850 words in the “core” vocabulary and several technical or occupational vocabularies of a few hundred words each.)

One of many urban legends about language says that Eskimo (Inuit, these days) has many more words for “snow” than English has.

Another story: Out of two mothers playing a ball game with their children, an English mother would say “Ball!” where a Navajo mother would say, “Rolling.” English children learned to distinguish between

grammatical classes for things according to number and gender, where Navajo children learned to distinguish by shape or colour. There is something profoundly, basically different at issue here.

Yet another: the idea that there are “primitive” languages spoken today, on modern Earth. In point of fact every extant human language seems to be capable of expressing as much as any other human language, even if you have to work up a phrase rather than a single word to translate it. If anything, the languages of hunting-gathering societies, with little traditional technology, have *more* specific terms for everything in their environment; the main difference from the languages of agrarian or industrial societies is a lack of *generic* terms, for classes like *fish*, *fowl*, *tree*, and so on. But here’s what H. Beam Piper wrote, in *Little Fuzzy*:

“I saw a man shot once on Mimir, for calling another man a son of a Khooghra,” Jack said. “The man who shot him had been on Yggdrasil and knew what he was being called.”

“I spent a couple of years among them,” Gerd said. “They do build fires; I’ll give them that. ... I learned their language, all eighty-two words of it. ...”

“Can they generalize?” Ruth asked.

“Honey, they can’t do nothin’ else but! Every word in their language is a high-order generalization. *Hroosha*, live-thing. *Noosha*, bad-thing. *Dhishta*, thing-to-eat. Want me to go on? There are only seventy-nine more of them.”

(Piper, *Little Fuzzy*, New York: Ace, © 1962)

To come up with a great long list of language myths:

1: Somewhere, in the Ozarks or in Derbyshire, there’s a village where people still speak unaltered Elizabethan English.

2: There exist primitive languages. To these are variously attributed such characteristics as a tiny vocabulary supplemented by grunts and gestures, the absence of words for abstractions or generalizations, the virtual absence of any grammar, or a strange grammatical system based upon distinctions among several different kinds of mysterious natural forces.

3: All languages are striving toward perfection, and some languages (especially mine) are much closer to this goal than other languages, which still have a long way to go.

4: Some languages are much older than others. (Don’t know what this is supposed to mean, but most people appear to believe it anyway.)

5: The ancestral language of all humankind is still spoken today in some privileged corner of the earth. (Not so common today, but a pervasive belief among scholars in the past.)

6: Basque is a uniquely strange language of fiendish complexity. It is so difficult to learn that no outsider has ever succeeded in learning it. (And all Basque verbs are passive.)

7: Certain writing systems, including the Chinese one, do not represent speech or language; instead,

they represent thoughts or ideas directly, without the mediation of language. (This one largely succeeded in blocking the decipherment of the Mayan inscriptions for a generation.)

8: Most of the languages I don’t speak are guttural (or perhaps I should write ‘gutteral’).

9: Black people speak English with a funny accent because their lips are too thick to pronounce it properly. (Outrageously offensive, but believed by more than a few people.)

10: When people have a cold, their speech becomes more nasal. And French has nasal vowels because the north of France is cold and damp.

11: Castilian Spanish has a dental fricative in place of the [s] of other types of Spanish because one king of Castile had a lisp and everybody imitated him in order to be polite.

12: English has practically no grammar, and Chinese has no grammar at all.

13: French is more logical than other languages. (Many French people believe this firmly, and will argue about it.)

13: There is a language called ‘Indian’, and it is spoken by American Indians. (Other interesting languages I have seen mentioned include ‘Belgian’, ‘Welsh Gaelic’ and ‘cuneiform’.)

15: Women interrupt far more than men. (The very reverse of the truth.)

16: Shakespeare had a BBC accent, and the Americans (and, I suppose, the Irish) have bugged up the pronunciation.

17: Everybody has an accent except me and my friends; we don’t.

18: Lots of people (for example, in Africa) don’t speak a language; they just speak a dialect.

19: In Britain, dialects are only spoken in rural areas.

20: Almost all language change is corruption, and the language is daily becoming more corrupt and less suitable as a vehicle of communication. Most of this is the fault of the Americans.

21: English has a verb-form called the ‘infinitive’, which always has a ‘to’ in front of it, and breaking up this sequence is ungrammatical or even immoral.

22: There are exactly eight parts of speech, and anything that gives trouble is an adverb. (Look at most dictionaries of English.)

23: One more, not a widespread myth, but something I’ve heard from a student: Europeans speak from left to right, while Arabs speak from right to left.

Torkel Franzen <torkel@SM.LUTH.SE>, 16 Dec 1998

Even a writer professionally educated in linguistics (J.R.R. Tolkien) displayed in his writing a tendency to attribute to race, or “higher”/“lower” breeding, features of speech and behaviour that might best be attributed to environment and cultural background. Tolkien should hardly be blamed for exhibiting assumptions and attitudes common in the 1930s, and far from rare today. If anything, his fantasies offer us a ready example of popular fallacies and common errors, which is no small favour.

Phonology

Spoken human languages are built basically from three or four interacting systems. The most visible and obvious is the system of sounds, which is subtly different for each language.

You may wish to make a decision about how many phonemes make up your phonetic system; this means deciding how many sound distinctions are made.

If you listen to various people, from different ages, backgrounds and ethnic groups, it becomes clear that different people make different distinctions between sounds; equally, that some languages distinguish more sounds than others. Japanese and Chinese are famous for not distinguishing “r” and “l”, or Continental Europeans for having difficulty with the English “th”; but have you considered that English has about twice as many vowel sounds as our alphabet is equipped to represent? Or that Finnish and Turkish distinguish between rounded and unrounded vowels, and English does not? Asian and some African languages are well-known, in addition, for distinguishing between some words solely by tone, or pitch.

George Bernard Shaw already played with phonetics issues in “Pygmalion”, but can you use them for your own story purposes?

Like the realm of meaning, the realm of language draws more or less arbitrary divisions; any speaker of a given language will recognize some areas as different sounds, and will not recognize the difference between others. Sounds that speakers consider different are *phonemes* in a given language.

Every language distinguishes units called “phonemes”, sounds that are treated as the same sound. Most human languages use between 11 and over 30 distinct phonemes. Speakers of one language may have difficulty distinguishing some phonemes in another language, as Japanese and Chinese speakers have difficulty distinguishing /l/ and /r/, or many Europeans have difficulty distinguishing English /s/ and /th/. It appears that different languages distinguish more vowels and consonants than others; Polynesian languages are well-known for distinguishing /k/, /p/, /m/, /n/, /l/, but not other consonants, while some languages, such as French, German, and especially Hungarian and Turkish, distinguish rounded and unrounded vowels (/o/ from /ö/, /u/ from /ü/, etc.), which English speakers may have difficulty keeping straight.

One of the first mistakes a language builder can make is to confuse a *writing* system with the basic *sounds* in a language. Repeat after me: *they are not the same things*.

Languages are *not* based on alphabets. I have in my possession a “Vulcan Language Guide” produced by some group of Star Trek fans. They first wrote that Vulcan is written in a syllabary, rather than an

alphabet ... then produced a list of syllables, transliterated in an alternative *alphabet*. I couldn’t read any further.

A writer can do every other kind of research, and still have a simple foible such as a one-to-one correspondence between the English alphabet and a constructed alphabet. Clive Cussler came close to this, in the opening pages of *Atlantis Found*: he published a table in which progressive combinations of geometric figures – symbols used by the lost “Amenes” – matches the sequence of the English alphabet, with some omissions.

Mild variations in phonemes always occur in different places – the beginnings, middles or ends of words, or after some consonants and not others – and these are called *allophones*.

Linguists who analyze speech distinguish phonemes by comparing words that are alike, except for one sound. The International Phonetic Alphabet offers a tool for recognizing and analyzing speech in this way. Different sounds that are treated as the same sound, but always occur in different places – the beginnings, middles or ends of words, or after some consonants and not others — are called *allophones*.

Different languages distinguish different phonemes. A chart that showed how children distinguish between more and more sounds, as they get older, would closely resemble a chart showing how some languages distinguish between sounds that speakers of another language consider the same. Speakers of one language may have difficulty distinguishing some phonemes in another language, as Japanese and Chinese speakers have difficulty distinguishing /l/ and /r/, or many Europeans have difficulty distinguishing English /s/ and /th/. You may or may not be aware that English generally distinguishes ten or twelve vowels, compared to five vowels in most Continental languages; or how many more rounded and unrounded vowels Finnish or Turkish have than English. It appears that different languages distinguish more vowels and consonants than others; in fact, different languages have different total numbers of phonemes, which is why Polynesian languages are well-known for distinguishing k, p, m, n, l, but not other consonants. Asian and some African languages are well-known, in addition, for distinguishing between some words solely by tone, or pitch. You may wish to decide how far your subject language goes in distinguishing between sounds, and decide in this way how many phonemes make up your phonetic system.

Phonetic Fallacies

In Robert Heinlein’s novelette, “Gulf”, and in Samuel Delany’s novel *Babel-17*, protagonists discover logically-constructed languages built up from *phonemic* roots (rather than from arbitrary syllables). The problem with this is that the least number of fundamental concepts in a language is a few *thousand*, greater than the largest number of phonemes by at least two orders of magnitude. (Most human languages use between 11 and over 30 distinct

phonemes.)

Jack Vance, in his novel *The Languages of Pao*, seemed to think that sounds influenced attitudes:

“The syllabary will be rich in effort-producing gutturals and hard vowels. A number of key ideas will be synonymous; such as *pleasure* and *overcoming a resistance – relaxation* and *shame – out-worlder* and *rival*. ...

“Another area might be set aside for the inculcation of another language ... In this instance, the grammar will be extravagantly complicated but altogether consistent and logical. The vocables would be discrete but joined and fitted by elaborate rules of accordance. What is the result? When a group of people, impregnated with these stimuli, are presented with supplies and facilities, industrial development is inevitable. ...”

Jack Vance, *The Languages of Pao*, pp. 58-59)

Writing Systems

As to writing systems: if your target language is a written one, the written form may be ideographic, syllabic or alphabetic – your choice. But the alphabetic form will be simplest. If you are working up an alphabet unrelated to the Latin or Greek ones, you may wish to go right back to the earliest picture-writing and decide what pictures to modify into letters – and how.

It used to be asserted that the earliest writing systems were logographic, or ideographic – one symbol stood for one idea, or word, at a time, and sometimes the same symbol meant different things in different context. In places such as Egypt or Babylonia, there gradually evolved a syllabic system, if words generally consisted of one consonant plus one vowel, repeated any number of times; and alphabets appeared after syllabaries.

(There is a new thesis that a system of trading tokens, geometric shapes arbitrarily signifying traded goods, was used in the Middle East from Neolithic times; and this, actually, evolved into cuneiform and hieroglyphics. For what it's worth.)

There are signs that such systems developed in Mohenjo-Daro, in western India, and also on Rapa Nui (Easter Island). But the remaining inscriptions have not been deciphered.

Ideographic writing is still used for Chinese and Japanese. It represents a challenge to the student because he or she must learn thousands of signs, one for each new word, even if many signs are developed from simpler ones.

A step towards a simpler system was taken in the Fertile Crescent, in Egypt, in Mesoamerica (as we have recently discovered), and in the 19th century for

writing Cherokee. This system was the syllabary, a system in which one sign equals one syllable. For languages such as Cherokee or Hebrew, in which words are mostly built of compounded open syllables, this is entirely appropriate. The set of symbols can be reduced to about 60.

But for many languages, such as pre-Mycenaean Greek or modern English, a syllabary simply doesn't answer. An alphabet has to be developed, because there are so many consonant clusters and other exceptions to the open-syllable rule.

Various alphabetic systems were independently invented; those invented in Thailand, Korea, and India are still in use today. There is a move afoot to write Japanese entirely in a phonetic, rather than the current system (a mixture of Chinese ideograms and *two* syllabary systems). Some alphabets were devised that have not survived, for example Ugaritic cuneiform. However, most modern alphabets derive from the classical Latin and Greek alphabets; they and several other alphabets derive ultimately from a Punic (Phoenician) alphabet. The number of letters in an alphabet, like the number of phonemes, can range from 11 to over 30.

Most of us have heard the phrase “phonetic writing” at some point, as if some writing system represented the sounds of language more objectively than a given alphabet. In fact, the International Phonetic Alphabet offers a tool for recognizing and analyzing speech in this way. Linguists who analyze speech phonetically distinguish phonemes by comparing words that are alike, except for one sound.

Out of perhaps 8,000 languages on the Earth, an undetermined number have yet to be recorded in writing. Of all the major languages in the world, the vast majority are written in alphabets, systems in which one sound equals one sign, usually.

Modern languages vary a lot, in their spelling system, from the way they are actually pronounced. Modern Spanish and Polish are relatively phonetic; Modern English, French, and especially Scots Gaelic are much less so. Apparently languages must change over time, and the longer ago the spelling was standardized, the more differences it bears to the spoken form.

If your target language is a written one, the written form may be ideographic, syllabic or alphabetic — your choice. But the alphabetic form will be simplest. If you are working up an alphabet unrelated to the Latin or Greek ones, you may wish to go right back to the earliest picture-writing and decide what pictures to modify into letters — and how.

(to be continued)

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TREASURER'S REPORT

Higher Rates, Thinner Clubzine, Entirely Online Publishing – or a Membership Drive?

Part One

by Doug Finnerty

Some time last year, the *BCSFazine* editor requested that I provide him with some budgetary information on the maximum amount he would be allowed to spend on the *BCSFazine*. And like a fool, I kept putting off this reasonable request for ... well, it seems like forever, don't it? So here is the information in a nutshell.

The renewal rate for a single BCSFA membership is \$25.00 Canadian. Please note that this is the basic renewal rate for the entire planet, and not just those who reside within Canada. Amazingly enough, we've had a few instances where some nice American members renewed their memberships by sending in American money at par! Part Two of my report will address the can of worms that these acts of good faith have opened up.

So what a \$25.00 renewal rate means is that the maximum amount of funds the club spends per member per month is \$2.00. You'll note that twenty-five divided by twelve leaves you with a little more than two, but I think that a conservative estimate is in order. There may be a few rainy days ahead that we should be planning for.

So that's \$2.00 a month per member. What to spend on the printing and mailing of *BCSFazine*? Since we probably will be spending money on things in addition to *BCSFazine*, my suggested limit is between \$1.50 and \$1.75! Now, let's look at some past issues and what they cost.

For basic postage (i.e.: 0.48 cents to send a *BCSFazine* anywhere in Canada), the package must weigh thirty grams or less. Thirty grams or less means a *BCSFazine* with twelve pages double-sided. This is what the membership has been getting for most of the past couple of years. The total print cost per issue (each print run per month is 110 copies) works out to just under a dollar. So printing and postage together, the costs work out to \$1.48 to send the issue to anywhere in Canada and \$1.57 to send it anywhere in the United States. Send a *BCSFazine* overseas and we start losing money (i.e.: the overseas postal rate took our costs way over \$2.00). Currently, our overseas commitment is two *BCSFazines* to Australia in exchange for

trade. But before you start demanding that we start jacking up our rates to penalize anyone living outside Fortress Nord Amérique, consider the following. First of all, the Australians referred to would laugh at us since they're not paying us a cent, they're sending us their zines in exchange. Secondly, it was my understanding that part of *BCSFazine's* mandate was to promote communication among fandom. AND THAT MEANS ANY FAN WHO WANTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH US NO MATTER WHERE ON THE @#*&% PLANET HE OR SHE LIVES! So long as we keep the combined foreign and American membership content at perhaps twenty percent (which means if a lot of foreigners decide to sign up for *BCSFazine*, we'd better be signing up four times as many Canadians), the money we take in from the Canadian memberships should be enough to cover for this "loss".

And for those who recite the mantra about running things like a business, let me point out that there is a business term that describes this practice. The term is "Loss Leader". That is a product that is deliberately sold at a loss (or offered even though selling it isn't cost effective), because it generates goodwill. In most circumstances, a business textbook will consider a Loss Leader to be a VERY GOOD THING because the goodwill generated will also generate enough secondary business to allow for any losses to be more than adequately covered.

Speaking of added costs, you will note that the cover pages of recent *BCSFazines* have been using colours other than white. This adds two cents to the final cost of each *BCSFazine*. We are not losing any money over this, and besides people think this looks really cool. If the editor were to start running every page of the *BCSFazine* with coloured sheets, I would start screaming very loudly. But only because readability of the *BCSFazine* would start to be a problem. You will note in *BCSFazine* #346, the review of *De Profundis* #349 referred to it as the *PINK* issue for good reason.

So let's look at *BCSFazine* #346 which ran approx. 24 pages double-sided. If you look at #346 (and #345) and perhaps the issue you are reading right now (which should be #347) I'm sure you'll agree that this is the size of *BCSFazine* that the membership should be getting. Given a choice, would you really want to go back to 12 pages double-sided? There might be a problem.

The printing costs for *BCSFazine* #346 took us to \$157.44, which worked out to \$1.43 per

issue. So far so good. Even if the total weight was under fifty grams (which is the “next highest” postal rate) the resulting thickness suddenly puts us over into non-standard oversize rate territory. Try to get an envelope that will cancel out the thickness, and suddenly the acceptable limits on the size of envelope is out of whack. This is all thanks to the new postal rates that came into effect in February, and I suspect they actually planned it that way. So let’s look at total printing and postage costs, shall we? For somewhere in Canada, the cost to send out *BCSFAzine* #346 is \$2.39.

For the United States it is \$2.88.

For overseas it is \$4.43.

If you want a *BCSFAzine* you can afford, than you’d better settle for a twelve-page zine. Because any extra page will bop the weight classification over thirty grams, which does not get us the 30 - 50 gram rate but shoots us up to the under 100 gram oversize rate. However, I do have some ideas on getting us the *BCSFAzine* that the membership deserves, rather than one that the club can currently afford to produce.

So here’s one option. Raise the single Canadian renewal rate to \$30.00/year. This would give the club a maximum of \$2.50 per member per month to play with. It is assumed that most of this will go to printing and mailing *BCSFAzine*, while a little left over will be tucked away for a rainy day. But what would a family membership rate be raised to? Perhaps we should consider charging the same rate for single and family memberships, owing to an ageing fan base (i.e.: which means more “younger” fans starting families) and the basic principle that two can live as cheaply as one. But what do you think of this little brainstorm?

While you think about that one, I have another option for you to consider. But first, let me pass on two suggestions from some of our members. The executive has been begging for years for members to put forward some ideas. And thank goodness, some people have been willing to take some time out and answer the call.

One suggestion is in regards to our PDF format. The suggestion being to encourage everyone in the club to switch over to this electronic format, and after a while begin enforcing 100% PDF format compliance. In other words, those who cannot or will not switch over to PDF format will not be allowed to renew their membership. Or put it this way. They CAN renew their membership, but they will no longer be getting a *BCSFAzine* in the mail since a hardcopy version of *BCSFAzine* will no longer be available.

Where the membership fees will go to paying for and whether a sharp reduction in membership dues would be in order are items that would surely be discussed, I’m sure.

The second suggestion is to raise the membership/renewal rates to between \$50.00 and \$60.00 CDN per year. That way, we will have the budget needed to produce a much more “professional” looking monthly newsletter whose quality would be comparable to that put out by general interest clubs like the “Inside Edge” and the “Westcoast Activities Club”. The finished product would look like a mini-booklet with proper binding, and would contain fifty or more pages of interesting articles — all of which would be freely contributed by the membership to be gratefully collated by the single editor. And by possessing this zine, you will have the honour of belonging to a prestige organization. Keep in mind though that the two clubs I refer to have memberships exceeding 1,000 people (which means better rates on printing and mailing costs), an objective that might be worthy for our club, depending on where the membership wants to go and what they think the club should be. Which means that each club does (in theory) have a small number of volunteers who can be relied upon to help the editor put the zine together on a monthly basis.

Do either of these ideas appeal to you? I hope there is some response, because the executive will be making some decisions soon. I know the people who put these ideas forward will want to write in because I think I’ve distorted their proposals beyond all recognition and they might want to clarify things.

So here’s my other idea. The 100% PDF compliance suggestion had me thinking about using a few carrots before bringing out the big stick. Besides, I can think of a few people who’d use the 100% PDF compliance suggestion as a hoop to make people go through. And then start coming up with more hoops just for fun.

I believe that one way to keep the membership rate from rising while producing a zine the membership deserves is to encourage as much PDF switchover as possible. But with the following incentives. 1.

For those who switch (or have already switched) over to the PDF format, cut the renewal rate. The INITIAL RATE FOR NEW MEMBERS would remain the same regardless of which format chosen, and perhaps it is the initial membership rate that can be raised since that would be a one-time only affair. I would suggest cutting the renewal rate for those who go with PDF to between \$10.00 and \$12.00 CDN,

regardless of where in the world the member lives. However, one person I spoke to felt it might be wiser to start at \$15.00 CDN and take it from there. Anyway, I think of this as a way to reward those who have already gone PDF out of sheer loyalty to the club. Each PDF membership costs the club nothing. In fact, it's like getting free money. For each member who goes PDF, it will cost money in saved disks, paper and ink cartridges. 2.

I've been advised that most of the *BCSFAzine* back issues have been saved onto disk. Unless that was some hallucination experienced on my part, this means that anyone with such a disk and the computer to run it on would instantly have access to most of the *BCSFAzine* catalogue. That if you cannot find a certain issue on this disk, you probably can't find it in the BCSFA archives either. So if such a disk does exist, it would make much sense for anyone who has switched over to PDF (and went to the trouble of procuring the proper computer equipment in order to do so) to have a copy of such a disk mailed to them. 3.

Have a PDF version that is different from the hardcopy mailout version as follows. The PDF version would contain as many pages as the editor chooses that particular month. The hardcopy mailout version would be restricted to just twelve pages. But the hardcopy mailout version would include a list of every article and loc in the electronic PDF version, thus informing the reader what they are missing by not switching to PDF.

In short, those who make the switch to PDF should receive a superior product at a sharply reduced renewal rate. And you thought life was supposed to be fair. HA!

However, there is a way to make this bitter medicine go down a little more easily among the membership. Each month, as the *BCSFAzine* is printed, print off twenty-five hardcopies of the PDF version to be distributed as follows in the following order.

1. One issue goes to Harry Warner Jr., in acknowledgement of his status of perpetual loccer. Lloyd and Yvonne Penny would also have qualified, but they already get the PDF version.
2. PDF hardcopies should also go to places I've designated as "Archival" (which will be discussed in Part Two of my report), such as the BCSFA Archives and the National Library of Canada.
3. Anyone who sends an article or artwork gets the PDF hardcopy version as his/her contributor's copy, whether they are a club

member or not. As far as I'm concerned, it is those who contribute that should be getting the grease while the squeaky wheel should be removed. And if we cannot get our BCSFAzine articles from amongst the membership, perhaps we should be casting our nets farther afield.

4. Anyone who shows up to collation night FRED will get the PDF hardcopy version, since they are saving the club postage. If we start running out of PDF hardcopies at this stage, then perhaps we can increase the number printed next month.

5. If there is any left over at the collation night FRED, put the current membership list into a hat (or some such container) and do a random draw up to five times. Naturally those who already get the PDF format will be excluded from this draw. The five winners will have the PDF hardcopy mailed to them IN ADDITION to their normal copy. A little gesture of goodwill that might just persuade someone to make the PDF switch.

6. Should there be any left over at this point, the final number shall be divided up between the Keeper of the FRED and any BCSFA executive member present on a 50-50 basis. In other words, the Keeper of the FRED gets half and odd numbered amounts are resolved in his favour. The BCSFA executive member(s) present will ensure that the hardcopies entrusted to them will be displayed at BCSFA meetings for whoever wishes to look at them.

Well, that's my suggestion. While we're on the topic of PDF, I've been hearing talk that some PDF users might still be having problems with this format. I would suggest that rather than dumping these problems onto the lap of the *BCSFAzine* editor (or any single individual), that anyone experiencing problems with their PDF formatted issues post their concerns on the BCSFA online discussion group. After all, I'm sure there are some very tech-savvy people out there, and it is probably better if the group can work together or pass on advice in solving such problems rather than delegating one person. We are a COMMUNITY aren't we?

Next issue, I will be giving part two of my treasurer's report, in which we will be taking a look at current finances, US currency exchange rates, why we haven't already switched our business over to the Bank Of Ethel, and club demographics. Or lies, lies, more lies and statistics.

(to be continued)