

WARP 65

How we spent our summer vacation...

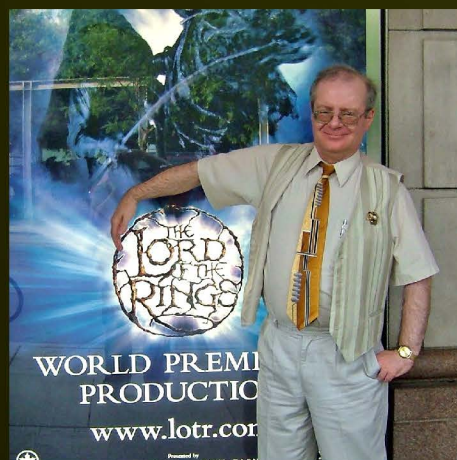


Burnt offerings: President leads MonSFFA prayer meeting *page 26*



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MonSFFA's Executive:

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Vice-President

Sylvain St-Pierre
Treasurer

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PR, Membership, editor of *Impulse*
Keith Braithwaite

Web Master
Bernard Reischl

Audio/Video
Wayne Glover

Editor of WARP
Cathy Palmer-Lister

Board of Advisors (BoA)

All members in good standing! Please
help us plan our activities!

On the Cover

Photographs of MonSFFen at play
courtesy of Josée Bellemare &
Sylvain St-Pierre

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MonSFFA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Except where noted, all MonSFFA meetings are held
Sundays at 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM
at the Days Inn, St-François Room,
1005 Guy Street, corner René Lévesque.

Programming is subject to change!



December 9, 2006

**Christmas Dinner & Party
Details to be announced**



See our web page for complete schedule of events!

2007 Convention Calendar

Ad Astra 26 March 2-4: Crowne Plaza Toronto Don Valley, Toronto, ON. Guests: TBA. www.ad-astra.org.

FilKONtario 17, March 23-25 - Delta Toronto Airport West, Mississauga, ON. Guests TBA. www.filkontario.ca.

World Horror Convention 2007 Mar 29-Apr 1 '07: Toronto Marriott Downtown Eaton Center, Toronto, GoHs: Michael Marshall Smith, Nancy Kilpatrick. AGoH: John Picacio. www.whc2007.org

Anime North, May 25-27: Toronto Congress Centre & Doubletree International Plaza Hotel, Toronto, ON. www.animenorth.com.

Otakuthon, Concordia, Hall Building, Montreal. Details TBA.
<http://www.otakuthon.com>

Toronto Trek 21, July 6-8: Doubletree International Plaza Hotel, Toronto, ON. Guests: Torri Higginson, others TBA <http://www.tcon.ca/tt21/>

Westercon 60: Gnomeward Bound July 6-9 '07: DoubleTree Hotel San Jose, San Jose CA. GoH: Tad Williams. AGoH: Theresa Mather <http://westercon60.org>

Archon 31 – the Ninth Nasfic Aug 2-5 '07: Gateway Center / Holiday Inn, Collinsville IL. GoH: Barbara Hambly. AGoH: Darrell K. Sweet. Media GoH: Mira Furlan. Gaming GoH: James Ernest. www.archonstl.org/31/

Anthrofest: Details TBA. <http://www.anthrofest.org/>

Nippon 2007 / Worldcon 65 Aug 30-Sep 3: Pacifico Yokohama, Yokohama, Japan. GoHs: Sakyo Komatsu, David Brin. FGoH: Takumi Shibano. AGoHs: Yoshitaka Amano, Michael Whelan. www.nippon2007.org

Con*Cept 2007: Tentatively booked for October 12-14, very tentatively...

World Fantasy Convention 2007 (Nov 1-4 '07) Saratoga City Center and the Saratoga Hotel and Conference Center, Saratoga Springs NY. GoHs: Carol Emshwiller, Kim Newman, Lisa Tuttle. SGoHs: Barbara & Christopher Roden, George Scithers. MC: Guy Gavriel Kay. www.worldfantasy.org

The Real Fine Print: WARP is published quarterly by the Montreal Science Fiction and Fantasy Association (MonSFFA), a non-profit organization of fans interested in sharing their love of science fiction and fantasy. The opinions expressed in WARP are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect those of MonSFFA or the editor. To reprint any article, please contact the writer, or ask the editor to pass on your request. The use of copyrighted material is generally discouraged, but it's hard to talk about Star Wars without stepping on toes; our apologies to the copyright holders, no serious infringement is intended. This is an amateur production, your tolerance is appreciated by your fans.

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MONSFANDOM

- January 2006 to March, 2006 / 26



.Dear MonSFFen:

Many thanks for another issue of Warp, this time issue 64. TT20 is just a few days away, so I thought I'd get this to Cathy asap. (As I type this, the shuttle Discovery has just launched flawlessly. Whew!)

My letter...no, I'm not gafiating at all. I'm just changing my activities, that's all. We find that every so often, Yvonne and I change our activities in order to keep things fresh, get rid of things that we may be tiring of, and see what else we can do with our efforts.

Like Garth, I reveal my opinions and prejudices when I write these letters, or just talk with people. Don't we all? Conventions are much like

businesses in that the people running the convention try to decide what market they want the convention to appeal to. It must focus its product, the convention itself, towards a particular group or groups. Ad Astra aims towards a literary market, but also aims at fun and space/science interests. Toronto Trek aims at the media fan. Con*Cept has a wider aim for multiple markets because of a smaller potential membership, and the interests within it.

Given my own interest in fannish history, it would be great if all fans knew about Forry Ackerman, Bjo Trimble, who held the first convention, where the first Worldcon was, etc., but given how long ago these things took place, perhaps there no reason why they should. For most, fandom is fun, conventions, club activities and good friends. For me anyway, all conventions are worthwhile as long as there is a social aspect to it. The more opportunities there are to get together with old friends and make a few new ones, the more worthwhile the event is to me. There are events where the main focus is to sell merchandise and jam as many people in to a venue as

possible, using an actor or other famous person as a marketing lure to get people in the door. I've never found those events much fun. (Cathy...do you have any particular ideas for an article you might want on conventions?)

Hmmm...I don't think I've ever read any fanfic about Doctor Who meeting Superman. All these galactic aliens have to stick together, I guess.

This past Canada Day, Yvonne and I spent a good portion of the day at the 2nd annual Casa Loma Renaissance Faire, held in the castle's back garden. It was a fun day, mostly because we're getting to know some of the people who participate in the faire. One news item that came from the faire was that from the ashes of the 10 years of the Ontario Renaissance Faire in Milton, and from the one-year-only Royal Abingdon Faire in the Hamilton-Burlington area last year, there is now the announcement of an as-yet unnamed renfaire that will start up in Mississauga next year. A local group called Canadian Faire Entertainment Inc. is the parent group for the faire, and their website is at www.canfairent.com. Let's hope this will re-launch a decent renfaire in the

Toronto area again.

I see in the fanzine list that De Profundis is trading with you. Yvonne was in Los Angeles at the International Space Development Conference in May, and she attended a LASFS meeting. She may be mentioned in a future issue.

Gaylaxicon 2006 was held in Toronto in June, and approximately 200 people attended. Nothing is firm yet, because the final books are yet to be worked on, but it seems to have been a popular success. The big Tolkien convention took place this past weekend, and I've yet to hear anything about it. It was priced a little out of my range, and we are saving for LAcon IV this August.

Originally, I told people that we would not be going to Toronto Trek this year...after some negotiation, and the desire of the convention to honour all of its past chairmen, Yvonne will be honoured by the convention as its founder. So, we'll be there all weekend, or at least most of it.

I'm trying an experiment...as of July 1, I will be posting any and all letters of comment on my LiveJournal. Yes, in spite of what I think of the way it's used, I decided to use a LiveJournal as a public library for all my letters. Once this is e-mailed out, I will post it on <http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Near the end of the day, so I guess I'll see a lot of you next weekend at TT20, and I will wind this up. Take care, and see you soon.

Yours,

Lloyd Penney.

Hi, Lloyd!

*So nice to hear from you again. As you can see, Warp is late. The editor was occupied with Con*Cept, so we have jumped straight from spring to autumn, but you'll see lots about our summer activities in this issue.*

I've popped into your Live

Journal, and enjoyed reading your letters to various fans. I think this is a great initiative.

I think a series of articles on various Canadian conventions would be very interesting. I'd like to see something on the history of the con, its movers and shakers, its members, and activities. Getting the SMOFs to find the time to write about their cons is proving problematic. But then again, I haven't had time to try very hard, either. Maybe you could pass the word on to the con-runners you know?

Say hi to Yvonne – maybe we will see you both at Ad Astra?

Yours in fandom,

Cathy

Note to our readers: Lloyd's live Journal is a collection of his LOCs. It's a great place to browse if you are looking to learn more about fandom and fannish interests.

<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>



Hello Cathy,

This is Mireille, the newcomer of this week-end, remember?

I just wanted to share one or two thoughts in regards to the exchange of opinions about fanzine that was published in the latest warp.

Of course, being part of the 'new' blood and younger wave, I'm aware that my point of view will probably be better kept silent, but I just wanted to share it with at least you and those responsible of the group's publication. In other words, I won't take exception if you don't post those in the next Warp because the last thing I want to cause is a ruckus

So, I read all the very interesting comments about the world of fanzine and as someone who has had her first contacts with fanwork through the

internet, I, for one, don't see the world of fanzine on the decline, but rather evolving with the modern age.

After all, considering our new means of communications, as well as our decade's growing concern about the environment and our usage of its resources, it might be part of a natural process of evolution that what used to be only available through written and printed material now becomes available also in an electronic format, or even only in an electronic format. Yet, the way I see it, the fun remains the same, the inspiration and passion that draws people around a common interest is still as strong as before, and the content of the publication is still as enjoyable and creative as it used to be.

Anyway, that was just my two cents as a 'kid' from the electronic age of fandom

And, as someone who really believes in saving and recycling paper as much as possible (or developing ecological habits in any possible way), I would like to suggest an option for the future issues of Warp. Considering the cost of the paper and the printing process, perhaps it would be a good idea to offer the option for more electronically-inclined members to receive the Warp in PDF only (or electronic format similar to PDF and easily readable). I, for one, would prefer it very much that way as reading electronic format is something I have learned to do both at work and at home for texts like Warp. Furthermore, it would leave my 25\$ membership free to pay for the rental of the rooms and other great things that you guys do for all the members of the group.

Just a thought from an eager new member

– Mireille

Hi, Mireille!

Thanks so much for your comments on WARP and fanzines in general.

And don't worry about causing a

ruckus – what's fandom without a ruckus or two? (Grin)

Many fanzines are now available electronically, not only to save on the paper, but also to cut down on postage costs which can be prohibitive.

The idea of producing WARP in pdf format has been raised before at various times, but many members wanted paper copies to keep in personal archives, and the size of the files was so large as to scare off anyone with a dial-up connection.

However, Berny and I have been talking about it again. More members have high-speed access now, and there are new ways to convert to pdf without expanding file sizes to astronomical proportions. We still have a couple of small bugs to work out, but it looks likely that WARP will be available for download by our members in the next year.

Yours in fandom,

Cathy

Our readers may be interested to know that Mireille is the author of Atlantis 2, under the pen name of Meryl Heavens.

http://www.geocities.com/meryl_heavens/



Warp Spring 2006, Vol. 30 02 /
Cathy Palmer-Lister, MonSFFA, P.O.
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4A7 Canada /. www.monsffa.com/ /
cathyp1@sympatico.ca / Any zine which opens with a lettercol in which The Zine Dump is quoted is okay by me, but as I'm a big fan of Warp, I'd be cheering it anyway. The quarterly pub of the Montreal club, Warp has dropped its predilection for parody covers ("It was fun," says editor Cathy, "but I was running out of ideas!") but the variety that's marked past issues continues to distinguish the present. Barbara Silverman's "The Other Jawa" is an archaeological piece about a (practically) prehistoric town in Jordan. "Jurassic Beaver" is not about what you're thinking, but concerns a creature called *Castoracauda lutrasimilis*, apparently an extremely early mammal. Keith Braithwaite wrote the article on it. Another long chapter of a fantasy, The Last Mage, follows, preceding a nifty section on the work of Ray Harryhausen, again by Braithwaite. I must offer special thanks for this article. It brings to mind the 6-year-old GHLLIII watching in terror a TV trailer for *It Came from Beneath the Sea*: a giant wormy tentacle lashing into upper-story windows and crushing pedestrians on a city street. How would it have affected that cringing brat to know that he would someday meet the man who made that tentacle -- as I did, at a New Orleans convention in the '90s. Anyway, the zine goes on to offer a fascinating 1913 tale translated from the French, an irresistible fan fiction melding *Dr.*

Who with *Smallville*, a couple of fanzine notices, and club news. We've got to get up to Montreal sometime, because MonSFFA works it on out!

Hello, Guy!

Many thanks for another wonderful review of WARP! I must tell you how very fortunate I am in having such talented contributors. MonSFFA members have far-reaching interests, and WARP never goes begging for content!

I enjoyed reading the latest *Challenger*, especially the articles and poem about New Orleans, the delightful "The More Things Change / Not a Moment Too Soon", and "The Lord of the Rings: Notes Towards a Symphony". I often hear music when I read books; I'm relieved to know I am not the only one!

Yours in fandom,

Cathy

Guy H. Lillian III is the editor of Challenger, one of our trade 'zines, and a frequent Hugo nominee. The current issue is at <http://challzine.net/index.html>. Be sure to read the articles on New Orleans. For more of Guy's reviews, go to the Z i n e D u m p : <http://zinedump.blogspot.com/>

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The Apis Bulls of Ancient Egypt

The day was hot. The overhead sun beat down upon the funeral procession slowly creeping along the Avenue of the Sphinxes. In the front walked the priests, chanting the appropriate prayers. Behind them the mummified body, properly prepared for eternity, on the way to it's last resting place. The atmosphere heavy with the grief of mourning.

Passing the two pylons, they continued without stopping. On through the entrance hall, then into a descending passageway leading to the subterranean vaults. Once inside the catacombs, the group made its way to the stone sarcophagus, silent and waiting. As the body was carefully laid inside, the priests continued their endless chanting. The only sound in the dead quiet.

Then, with the grating of granite upon granite, the cover was hauled into place. With a loud thud, the sarcophagus was now tightly sealed for the coming ages. The final prays said, the procession made its way back up the inclined passage. As the last of the priests exited the sacred tomb, they sealed the entryway with a huge sandstone door.

Another Apis bull had been laid to rest.

From Neolithic times onward, in many ancient cultures, gods often appeared in the form of bulls. Generally representing virility and power, they probably started as fertility god concerned with grains and herds.

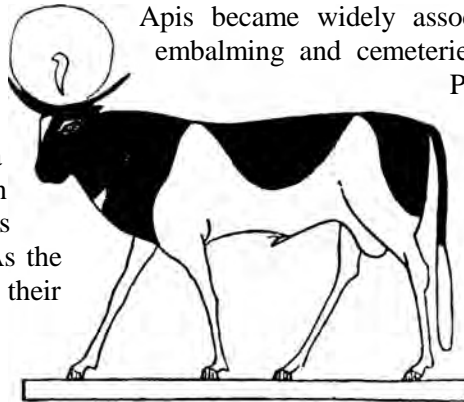
In Ancient Egypt the deification of animals was very common with its roots extending well before 3100 BC. One of the most important animal cults was that of the bulls. Representing the personality of the kings, they symbolized courageous heart, great strength, virility and fighting spirit.

Of the three divine bull cults - Apis, Mnevis, and Buchis - the Apis bull of Memphis was the predominate. Considered the most sacred, writings concerning the Apis reached back as far as the 1st Dynasty (c.2950-2775 BC). There is the possibility, that worship of the Apis bull may even have extended back into the Arcadic or Pre-Dynastic period.

Usually depicted as bull with special markings and a sun disk between its horns, its image has been found in multiple locations. Several wooden coffins, such as the one from the Late Period (c.700 BC) now housed at the Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim, contained painted pictures of the Apis on the bottom floorboards. Statuettes were made to honour him, and he graced many wall paintings and pottery.

The Apis bulls were originally considered to be the incarnation of the god Ptah, who was the creator of the

universe and master of destiny. Like many of the Egyptian gods, over the years the Apis mythology underwent changes. At one time he was connected with Atum, as Apis-Atum, and associated with the solar cult. Later on Apis became widely associated with Osiris, god of embalming and cemeteries. Becoming known under Ptolemy I (305-285 BC) as Serapis.



Since there could be only one sacred Apis at a time, only upon its death would the priests begin an immediately search, throughout the land, for a replacement. Believed to have been conceived by a ray of light, the birth of an

Apis was a time of great celebration. For once again a living god dwelled among the people.

An Apis calf was defined by certain markings. It had to be all black except for a white mark located on its forehead. The hair had to be arranged in such a way that an image of an eagle appeared on its back, and the tail had to contain double the usual number of hairs. Under the tongue there was a mark in the form of a scarab, so named after the sacred insect connected with Ptah.

Once found, a special house facing the east was built. Here the Apis calf resided for four months being nourished by milk. After which, at the time of the new moon he was transported by boat, with a specially constructed golden cabin, to Memphis and the Apieum. A palace complete with courtyards for him to walk in, drinking fountains to quench his thirst and a herd of cows reserved for his pleasure. Throughout his life he enjoyed the best of care and excellent food. Here the Apis would spend its days, until upon death, he was conveyed to the sacred catacomb tombs in Saqqara known as the Serapeum.

The mother, referred to as the Apis Cow, was also considered sacred. Part of the temple was set aside for her use, and a priest was attached to her service. Upon death, the Apis Cow had her own burial tombs at Saqqara, near where the Apis were laid to rest.

The Festival of the Apis Bull, a celebration of it's birthday, coincided with the rising of the Nile and lasted for seven days. During this time, the priests would lead the sacred bull in a hallowed procession, through throngs of eagerly awaiting crowds. It was believed, that if a child smelled the breath of an Apis then they would be able to

foretell the future.

The Apis were themselves considered to be an oracle. The bull would be asked a question, then offered food. If the food was eaten this was a good omen. If the food was rejected this was considered a bad omen. There were two special chambers at the Apieum. If Apis entered one, it was a sigh of good fortune. If he entered the other, bad fortune. Should a visitor have his clothing licked by the Apis, then that person would have a short, but tranquil, life.

The first burials were very simple, gradually increasing in magnitude. Until the time arrived when the Apis were embalmed and entombed with the great ceremony, and expense, of royalty. The embalming took place in Memphis, and it was here that a specially designed temple was built by Shoshenq I (c.945-925 BC) for this purpose. The internal organs, as with a pharaoh, were placed in canopic jars and after the embalming process the bull was then placed with his legs folded under him.

After the bull was carefully bandaged, artificial eyes were inserted. The horns and face were either gilded or covered with a gold leaf mask, then he was covered with a shroud. The Apis mummy was now ready to be transported to the Serapeum catacombs, where he was enshrined in a sarcophagus, weighing up to sixty tons, cut from one huge slab of granite.

The existence of the Apis bulls was first brought to light in the first century AD. Strabo, a Greek author, wrote about a sanded up avenue of sphinxes leading to the Serapeum or the burial place of an Egyptian god known as the Apis bulls. However, the tomb itself, lay hidden for over 1700 years.

Even the army of the emperor Napoleon attempted to find this sacred crypt. However, they fared no better than the others, their search was also in vain. Then in 1850 Auguste Mariette was commissioned by the French government to visit the Coptic convents of Egypt. His assignment was to inventory Oriental language manuscripts, fortunately, his studies led him to Saqqara and the discovery of the avenue containing over one hundred sphinxes.

On 12th November 1851, Mariette finally gained entrance to the catacombs, into the section which came to be called the Greater Vault. Built without any planning there were in fact three distinct tombs, covering in total 350 meters/1150 feet. Early 1852, he discovered the Lesser Vault, then, later in that same year, Mariette entered the third tomb. It is of interest to note that he discovered the tombs in exactly the reverse order that they were used.

The third vault which Mariette found turned out to be the earliest known burials of the Apis bulls. These ranged from Amenhotep III (1390-1353 BC) of the 18th dynasty, on into the 19th dynasty. Each bull had a separate chamber, cut at random out of the rock. Two of the coffins, Apis VII and Apis IX were intact.

The Lesser Vault, instead of isolated tombs, was a long subterranean gallery with side niches. Here the Apis bulls were buried in huge wooden coffins. Begun by Ramesses II, also known as Ramesses The Great, of the 19th dynasty (c.1279-1213 BC), it was used until Taharka (c.690-664 BC) of the 25th dynasty. The burial of Apis XIV from year 55 of the reign of Ramesses was intact.

The third section, or Greater Vault, was also a long gallery with side chambers. But on a much more elaborate scale than either of the other two. Containing twenty-four granite sarcophagi, this section was the last to have been used. Inaugurated in the 52nd year of the reign of Psammetichus I (664-610 BC) of the 26th dynasty, it was utilized until the end of the Ptolemaic period 30 BC.

Unfortunately, as it was with most of the Egyptian tombs, all twenty-four of the sarcophagi had been looted in the long ago antiquity. This gallery, 195 meters/640 feet from end to end, proved to be the largest, and grandest, of the Apis tombs. Enlarged as the need arose, it had been cut at right angles to the Lesser Vault.

On certain days, or on the death of a bull, inhabitants of Memphis would pay a visit to the Serapeum. As a record of their pious devotion, they would leave a stela inscribed with a homage to the god in the name of his visitor and his family. These were then placed in the tomb walls. As there were approximately 500 mostly in their original position, each dated with the year, month and day of the reigning king, for students of ancient Egypt these prove to be invaluable.

However, the Apis bulls did not rest alone. Constructed northwest of Djoser's Step Pyramid, the Serapeum is actually a complex of chapels and smaller temples built around the catacombs. It is here that we find the tombs guarding the mummified remains of the Mothers of Apis. While in another set of underground catacombs, at the north end of site, the most important cult animals were buried from the Late Period 712-657 BC onward.

It is suspected, that somewhere around Saqqara, there are the tombs of the Apis Bulls which preceded the construction of the Serapeum. However, to date these have not been found. Likewise it is believed that the calves of the Apis bulls may also have been buried nearby.

The exact reason why this area was chosen as sacred animal necropolis, is not known. It might be due to the traditional connection with Imhotep. Imhotep, architect of Djoser's Step Pyramid, became identified with Thoth who was the god associated with baboons, ibises.

The catacombs served a dual purpose. They offered a burial place for Apis, while allowing for a shrine to be built aboveground. The birth of an Apis brought great cheer, its death great sorrow. Worshipped and revered by the ancient Egyptians, for three thousand years the Apis bulls lived the life of a god. ★

Continued from WARP 64:

Brother Levrai's Strange Adventure

from Joe Trimborn (1913)

also p. 73-87 in *La Belgique fantastique avant et après Jean Ray*
(1975, Verviers, Belgium: André Gerard)

When we last saw the unfortunate Brother Levrai, he was being dragged back to the jungle by his confessor, Father Paled, who was furious when he heard of Brother Levrai's encounter with intelligent, though inarticulate, ape-men, possibly the last of the pithecanthropes.

"What you have done is a crime. You have betrayed the Church's eternal truth for the adulterous love of worldly truth. You have picked the forbidden fruit and I understand that you would wish other men to bite into it. For the sake of simple scientific curiosity you would abandon all your spiritual learning. This will not happen! Even if it is the death of me, I will save the eternal truth. Follow me!"

And now, the tragic conclusion to Brother Levrai's Strange Adventure....

It would take too long to tell of this expedition. Every day they got lost, the brother could barely make out where he was going now that the monkeys were no longer there.

What was it then which cried betrayal from the bottom of his heart? Yes, he was committing an act of betrayal, and though it wasn't clear to him if he were betraying the ape or science, he understood that he had not behaved in a loyal manner. But his soul was that of a child and the hard, severe monk was pressing upon it with the fierce ardour of his faith.

The few times Father Palud broke the silence it was to utter harsh rebukes:

"What exactly drew you to that damned couple?"

"It is said that we descend..."

"Ah! I know! Common ugly traits have led atheists to believe...But it is rank falsehood! It contradicts the Scriptures."

"I believed I was drawing near to the Truth, that is God himself."

"Shut up! God cannot contradict the Church, and that truth, differing from that of the Church, can only be in opposition to God!"

"But, Father, can there not be two truths?"

"Indeed! There is the devil's truth; and there is that of God! Mere physical appearances can be deceiving, but the latter is nothing before the one, clear, eternal truth of the Church. This truth is simple, well ordered, complete; it forms a system which has passed all the tests the best scholars have put it to. And what are your scientific observations, those hunches of the intellect, those dispersed crumbs, compared to the bastions of theology, built upon the greatest minds?"

"Father, I thought that the eternal truth was made up of thousands of small truths that one gathers up along the way like little white pebbles, as Tom Thumb did in order to find his way, and that these small truths, they too, were eternal; that they fill the world and surround us, but that we don't always perceive them, undoubtedly because of their very smallness."

"Blasphemer! Those are material truths, truths of the flesh, truly pebbles compared to pure crystal; in a word, the devil's work! God's truth cannot be found on the open road, but in the soul; not in Nature, but in the purely spiritual."

"Yes, but, Father, it is precisely that I perceived the soul of my two friends being in some many ways akin to the human soul. Thus, when I preached to them..."

"Eh! what, you dared bring the word of God to such creatures?"

"Did not St. Francis preach to the animals?"

"Yes but they were birds, chickens, ducks, geese, all sorts of inoffensive lower forms of life, simple farmyard animals, and not huge, vile apes, barely covered with hair, abominable brutes, entirely abnormal creatures which resemble man!"

"This is true," the brother had to agree, in spite of his scientists' hopes.

"But I am thankful that I am mistaken," added the monk, "how could you have spoken to apes?"

"I admit it was difficult; but through gestures..."

"Oh! gestures, they are meaningless..."

"That's to be seen. To my mind, it was through gestures that they best understood me. In this regard, I often wondered if it is not rather with gestures than words that one should try to convey the Infinite. This is to some degree what people do anyway, for, have you not noticed how

quickly one reverts to gestures in exchanges of this sort? Thus is it not clear that the symbol and image are but thoughts which make motions and would well love to be understood? When I want convey by speech what transcendent inspirations reveal to me of the absolute, I first realize that the words' meaning changes as they flow from my mouth; my sentences obscure the precision of my thought and in the end come to express the opposite of what I thought myself to be revealing. Thankfully the arms got involved and at least indicated the general direction of my thought; were one to simply add a few images and symbols which, in turn, display gestures, things would be much clearer."

"He is insane," thought the monk. "He is a simpleton. God will pardon him!"

The brother put a finger to his lips; the monk understood.

The moment grew in solemnity; the time was coming; they were coming to the end of their expedition.

Though they had not crossed through the crypt – the brother had more than once lost his way – the bower, the famous bower opening on the clearing was only a few steps away. They took them, these steps, but how slowly and carefully were they taken, in what silence! Both their hearts were beating and a light sweat cooled the monk's brow.

Suddenly, a shot went off, over the brother's shoulder and the pithecanthrope which had just appeared between the parted branches of its suspended home, dropped, face forward, at the foot of the family tree.

The brother caught the monk's arm, wishing to protect the one he believed still hidden, but not another leaf stirred.

"Father, what have you done?" the brother asked sadly.

"I have saved God's creation."

It was only after a long search that they found his mate, but she was dead and lying on a bed of leaves, her head resting against a tree, still holding tightly in her hand the tiny crucifix, which the brother, naïve as he was, had left her upon his departure, after explaining to her as best he could the salvation that would come to her through it.

"A profanation!" Father Palud screamed, while the brother, unsophisticated, was already rather proud to see that his mission had not been entirely in vain.

There was nothing further for them to do there, they had only to make their way back.

And so, there followed the return to Pontianak, a mournful, silent, lugubrious trip, during which the brother saw the strength of his apostle's faith dwindle little by little. No longer knowing where his duty lay, in doubt as to whether he had sinned or acted meritoriously towards God, he had lost from his soul that clarity which calls and guides vocations through great sacrifices, like the little light in the woods which brings hope to the lost. The brother wept more than once for himself, the fruitlessness of his work,

his shattered faith and the growing antipathy between his conscience and science.

Disillusioned, wishing only to rest, like aged sailors after their last trip, he asked to be repatriated and donned once again the robes of a parish priest, hoping to find, as a country vicar in some remote provincial place, forgetfulness of his adventure and aspirations.

Unfortunately, his sufferings were not over, and the last trial would be the hardest.

Barely disembarked in Marseilles, he found out that an anthropological congress was to hold an extraordinary session and that brother Buissonnière would be the speaker, and that was enough for him to wish to attend.

When the day arrived it was clear that the assembly was prey to an extraordinary excitement. An unforgettable day was to be inscribed in the annals of anthropology. So, when brother Buissonnière rose, a stirring of attention, like a wave on the sand, expired into silence; the very air of the hall seemed steeped in solemnity.

Having quickly reviewed his previous discoveries; after saluting the authors which led him to them, brother Buissonnière began the description of his own finds.

Levrai was worried, he wondered if the speaker had indeed remained the orthodox brother which he had known, or if, like so many others, he had ended up falling into the Darwinian abyss. His worry was short-lived; Buissonnière, as if he had sensed it, quickly dissipated it.

"But before I tell you what my discovery was, I feel I must clear up a certain amount of ignorance, which while absent from those assembled here, nonetheless merits attention and are worthy of the respect of a priest, such as I am."

"Some overzealous polemist, neglecting to keep up with the new teachings of Rome, go from door to door spreading their hatred and contempt for evolutionism."

"It is time that they learn that this theory is now nothing less than highly orthodox, and that it is the opinion amongst our best theologians that God might well have contented himself in creating the first cell, foreseeing in his wisdom and eternal will, the successive stages through which his creation would evolve over the passage of time."

"I wished to bring this up, to restore things to their proper perspective, and avoid that, in the future, God's ministers, such as myself, do not pass in the eyes of certain among the faithful as impious or renegades, and become victims of an underhanded persecution, when they undertake the noblest function of their calling, preaching the truth."

Levrai was crimson! So, his perilous travels in the jungle, the pithecanthropes cemetery, the days spent among his hosts, all that was not the devil's truth, as Father Palud had stated. Instead it was his second expedition and the ensuing massacre which were affronts to the truth?

Levrai thought he would choke.

"Are you feeling poorly?" asked his neighbour.

"Its nothing, just a little dizziness."

"This isn't all," continued the orator," and if I thought it necessary to admonish rather severely those on my side, I have a few words for those – in the other camp – who make themselves out as the virtuosos and cultivators of doubt.

"Certain scientists are averse to any new theory, simply because it is new, or because it too closely describes factual observations and Nature. They will gladly accept a philosophical principle as long as they believe it to be a simple witticism, that is to say doubtful, but they rebel as soon as they are asked to admit as genuine, facts and phenomena whose recognition would make a scientific truth of the theory, to the exclusion of all other systems. Oh! then they retreat in orderly, serried ranks.

"Thus was it that, at first, they found evolutionism rather to their liking; however, they added that such a theory would not be of value until specific facts came to confirm it.

"And they dozed off, convinced that such facts would not be forthcoming, since nothing of the sort had been seen in centuries.

"Man, one might say, fears the truth; his instinct is to avoid any knowledge of it; he avoids it as much as he can, with the excuse that doubt is the scientist's top attribute. He denies like someone on the stand, demanding proof and more proof, only giving up when he senses himself caught in the web of truth, like a fox in a trap or the starling in a snare.

"Truth be told, truth envelops us on every side in a huge net of which natural phenomena form the mesh. However, this mesh is not so tight that the rankest stupidity cannot escape. Must we have counted one by one all the elements of the mesh before agreeing that the net exists?

"There are theories before which one is struck by a sense of their truth, just as one has feelings of love when presented with Beauty. Indeed, such feelings are not sufficient to consecrate theories, for, in such a case, the faith of a coal-miner would be a sufficient criterion, but it is not rash to assert that, without this sense, no intellect is capable of understanding, completely and in its universality, a concept of such scope. The entrenched sectarian doubt is a form of mental short-sightedness which bars one from distinguishing simultaneously the whole and the details of a concept.

"It has been said that to believe or to deny everything are equally easy, for they dispense with thought. They are the two subterfuges of the lazy – and, it is time to state it – man bears in his inherited traits the monkey's main fault: laziness.

"But let me return to my subject.

"We were told: Show us vestiges of the intermediate race, and we will believe. Until then nothing will fill the abyss which separates man from the beast, and this abyss is as unbridgeable as the faults which split open entire mountain ranges, forming with their debris the continents between which, today, the Oceans circulate. And the scientists dozed off again with the conviction, the great number even with the hope, that the absence of proof would wear down with time the grandeur and the attraction of the Darwinian principle.

"To better circumscribe the problem, with the ulterior motive of rendering it unsolvable, they went as far as outlining in advance the conditions of their surrender.

"You know these conditions: walks upright (*erectus*!), cranial volume, etc.

"And the faithful disciples began to look. They scratched through, one after the other, so far as to wear down their nails, the geological strata, which for so many centuries had come to accumulate on the primitive Earth."

The brother outlined chronologically the remarkable discoveries made in the last fifty years, a half-century of heroic patience.

"But," he added, "all these skulls, all these sets of bones, as convincing as they might be, had the defect of presenting themselves completely naked, without any accessories which might denote some progress towards civilization, as, for example, a tool, a weapon, in a word, an irrefutable vestige of comfort and intellect.

"Well, I won't hesitate to state, I believe I have found it.

"It is in the mysterious Corrèze cave, near the Monkey's Chapel, that I discovered the venerable remains which are now before your eyes!

"For years I had been searching, I dug carefully with my hands in the sands and silts which the tides of the seasons had brought there, when, O tragic moment! I saw the remains and that in circumstances of remarkable interest.

"In a long rectangular trench, clearly dug by a human being, rested a skeleton lying on its back, oriented in an east-west direction, the head raised up against the wall of the grave, which proves overwhelmingly that, following a custom still alive among some races, one had placed the deceased facing the east, as if one had wished to signify by doing so that another sun, the sun of a new life, would rise before the deceased's soul. Flint and quartz tools, those which he had no doubt used to sustain and protect his life, were arranged around him, as is still done today, with the weapons and medals of honour of our dead. Besides this, the abundance of bones told of the diverse fauna which has been partaken of in the funerary banquets which the anthropoids gave, as we do, in honour of their departed parents.

“As you can see, there were there the hints of a budding civilization. Like us they avoided solitude and silence; like us, they ate and pondered things in a group; like us, they called upon their dead to preside over the principal actions of life.

“But they were men, you will say! Eh! well, no! For there to be no possible doubt, one need only carefully consider these remains from a morphological point of view. The features of the skull are bestial; all the traits of simians are present together; the cranium was flattened, the prominent brow, and beneath the superciliary arch, the nose was separated from it by a deep depression resembling the notch of an axe. To all of this, add a facial prognathism even more hideous as among the descendants of Charles Quint. So tell me, does there remain any doubt on the simian identity of our precious subject?

“You see, gentlemen, if, for years, we have searched, our ancestors now, after ten or twenty thousand years of sleep and waiting, seem to be rising from their graves to claim from their descendants the recognition of their paternity.”

Brother Levrai thought he was dreaming. We would not have described it otherwise if he had had to give an account of what he had recently seen in Borneo. What to do? Would he speak of his own discovery? His faith no longer stopped him. But how could he confess to his pointless crime? Also, he thought, the question is resolved, and it would be rather poor manners, not being registered as a speaker, to get involved in a discussion wisely organized in advance.

Already the illustrious Dr. Moyen had reached the podium.

This professor enjoyed a most envied reputation as a prudent scientist, resistant to immoderate enthusiasm regarding bold theories, faithful to the wisdom of learned men of the old school.

“I shall begin by paying homage,” he said, “to my eminent colleague; it is our duty to encourage the researchers whose discoveries are the very spring from whence science drinks. However, let us not be carried away in our desire to attain certainty. Truth is not so simple. As long as it was only a theory, one could close one’s eyes and let young minds get heated through its contact, but today, when events appear to confirm their thesis, we must see things in another light. Besides, it would be unworthy of a scientist to believe for an instant that truth could let itself be

captured.

“But, especially consider the noble and genuine monuments of intellect, which such a truth would undermine to their ultimate collapse. What would become of the admirable inventions of the philosophers and creators of the book of Genesis? Let the members of this assembly take hold of themselves and return to a wiser conception of things.

“Why, then, would these discoveries that one cannot deny not incite us to proclaim that these half-simian, half-human remains, those of a lost species, a species which would stand – I would propose officially – the happy medium between man and ape, an inferior race not ascending but parallel, and which would be to the human being what the curate is to the priest, the clergy to the bishop, or in a well-structured society, the poor to the rich.

“Man would thus remain the centre of the universe.

“This is a new theory, you will say, yes, but a theory which leaves the question open and does not rattle too forcefully the doors of the sanctuary within which we must leave truth inviolate.

“Nothing,” he added, “would allow us to settle the question today. The proof has not been made. What have been brought are, I will admit, suggestive hints, but doubtful, incomplete hints. I believe I express the opinion of the majority in affirming that true scientists will only face the facts when one among us will come and tell us: I saw him with my own eyes, I touched with my own hands *Pithecanthropus erectus*.”

“I am the one,” Levrai cried out, “no longer able to silence the truth which leapt from his heart to his lips; I have seen it, I have touched it, I have spoken to it, I have even killed it.”

The rest was lost in the general din and indignation.

The most charitable among them thought him mad.

The ushers drew around him quietly; they took him away; he allowed himself to be taken, already regretting the scandal he had caused. It was only in the cabin where the Brothers of Charity locked him up that he finally understood the reality of things.

The kindest care, the most persuasive treatments were never able to overcome his insanity, and, many years later, his keeper, more in compassion than in irony, would still tell visitors who felt sorry for the meek and taciturn man:

“That one, he’s the man who has seen truth.” ★

The Last Mage: The Dragon's Mouth

Nikolai Krimp

The story so far: Jennifer Wells works for a bio-hazard lab located deep inside a mountain just south of Seattle, Washington. Following a car accident during a mysterious storm, she awoke in the body of a young elf called Shannon. In the company of Shannon's friend, Roma, and a hobbit, Treymane, she finds herself caught up in events resulting from the finding of a box in the ruins of the "Cave of the Ancients"—Jenny's former laboratory.. While trekking through forests that now grow where highways once ran, Jenny was attacked and nearly killed by a marsh cat. The companions have finally reached the haven of Shannon's home, but they must now journey on to find Teagan, Shannon's aunt, and the only one likely to be able to explain what's been going on.

Meanwhile, Malador is on the move....

Chapter 3

While enroute to Water's Edge, Malodor had picked up three more ships to help in his plans for Enderby. Calling the captains and senior officers to his quarters, he laid out his plans for the siege. Two of the ships along with one thousand orc soldiers were to attack the city, while the third vessel, with another five hundred soldiers would sail farther south and there lie in wait for the army from Montrose to arrive. It was their job to keep them busy so that he could enter Storr and get the information or even retrieve the box itself.

Leaving the three vessels, Malodor ordered the Midnight to sail even farther south towards The Great Marsh. By the next evening he had arrived. Finding the hidden entrance to Harlan's Bay under a moonless sky took some searching. The captain sent out a half dozen sailors in each of the two lifeboats to find the mouth of the bay. Hours later the huge ship entered the bay and dropped anchor. On the shore stood Timothy Harlan, straining his eyes to see who had entered his domain. He didn't like unannounced visitors. He was a loner, never venturing to the big city. The last time, he recalled, it landed him in jail. Something about a bar fight and a woman. Exactly what, he couldn't remember. It was too long ago. Then he saw the black ship; a cold shiver ran down his spine. Malodor had paid him a visit in the past. To secure his co-operation, Malodor and his orcs built the house and stables that Timothy occupied. Now they had come back to collect for that favour.

The two smaller crafts remained in the water and began transferring the black druid and his men ashore. Tim greeted his company with the greatest respect, but with caution. Once all were ashore, the druid ordered Timothy to feed and provide drink for his men. He then had his captain follow him into Tim's house, where he could rest and make plans, before continuing on in the morning.

As streaks of light illuminated the eastern horizon, Malodor prepared to leave. Dropping a small bag filled with gold coins into Timothy's hand he said. "I'm leaving twenty men here to protect the ship. See to it that they are well looked after. Also no one is to know that I am here so there is to be no leaving until the ship and I have gone."

Nodding in agreement, Timothy watched as the druid and his men rode out.

It was just after midnight when Annabelle woke the three. All was prepared as promised. Jenny didn't want to get up. It was the most comfortable bed she had slept in for some time, but seeing the worried look on Annabelle's face made her hasten out from under the warm duvet.

The old woman looked at them and said, "Rolf is out back with horses for all of you. He will lead you out of the valley and then return. From there on you go on foot. Malodor has landed and is on his way here. You must be far away from Storr when he arrives. It is not safe for you in the valley, so that is why you will go by horseback to Bottom Lake. Don't waste time in the valley for the dark druid is only two to three days away."

The four loaded their backpacks and made their way down into the Tiber Valley as fast as the old plow horses could go. They kept up this grueling pace until the first signs of light hit the eastern horizon. They were about half way down the mountain trail and faced another full day of travelling before they reached the lake. How different it all looked from this high up, with the mountains reaching up to the sky behind them and a forest as far as the eye could see below them. They ate their breakfast on the backs of the horses, not wanting to stop until they were further down the valley. By noon, the trail began to level out and broke the animals into a fast trot. Stopping only to eat and rest the horses, the three kept mostly quiet not wanting to talk much. Jenny had wanted to stay a little longer with Annabelle to find out more about what had happened to her and where all this was taking her, but with the arrival of Malodor in Enderby, she would have to wait until she reached Teagan's place.

It was late in the afternoon when they finally came out of the Tiber Valley. Now here on the eastern side, in the foothills of the Coastal Range, the four came to Bottom Lake. Saying their good-byes to Rolf, they watched as he escorted the horses back up the trail and out of sight. Tired from riding, they made camp. The three ate and lay down. Within minutes all were fast asleep. When the morning light broke, Jen woke to find her two friends busily making a fire to brew some tea.

"I could eat a horse!" Treymane exclaimed. Seeing the wide stares he got from the two girls he quickly added. "All right, a small horse. O K ?"

Everyone laughed and after drinking their tea, they broke

camp and set off.

For the next two days they followed the road through the forest stopping only to eat, hunt and sleep. The afternoon of the third day the skies clouded over, as they emerged from the trees and out onto the grasslands. After a whole day of marching, they prepared for the night. After their evening meal, Treymane asked about the box. Jenny explained that the magic was potent and had to be brought to Teagan as fast as they could. When the hobbit questioned them further, they pretended not to know any more, other than to keep it quiet. All they knew was to bring it to Teagan. Satisfied, the little man agreed to keep their secret and walked out of camp and took the first watch.

Just after midnight, Jen felt a gentle nudge on her arm. Opening her eyes, she saw the smiling face of the hobbit.

"All's quiet," he said as he threw another log onto the fire, crawled into his bedding and went to sleep.

Jen rose and left the camp. She found a large boulder and sat down. Soon a gentle snoring could be heard coming from where her companions lay. Staring at the sky, her thoughts turned back to the world she knew and loved. She was happy working at the Bio Lab. She was even looking forward to a raise that was due her next month, but nothing had prepared her for this. One thing was for sure; it would be nice to sleep in her big waterbed again, instead of this hard ground. Jen thought of her parents. What would they be doing right now? And what of her brother, who was just starting a family? Bob and his wife, Lucy, lived just outside of Vancouver. Would she be back in time to see her niece coming home for the first time? "I'll be glad when I can pay them a visit," she thought. Then her thoughts turned to Shannon. How was she coping in Jenny's world? Jenny noticed the lack of modern conveniences in this world. How would Shannon display her lack of knowledge of these things? In any case she was sure that her counterpart back in her world was doing her best. Shannon was the one person she would like to meet if it were possible. Jen's thoughts kept rambling on, when she heard Roma approaching.

"I'll take over for now," Roma said as she sat down beside her. "You get some more rest."

Breakfast the next morning consisted of hot tea and cold rabbit, left over from the night before.

The rain that held off during the night now began to fall. First a light drizzle and then a steady rain. The deep rutted road, which they had been traveling on, soon became very muddy. This slowed their pace. They had hoped to reach the main north/south crossroads before noon, but were well short of it by the time they stopped to eat. They chewed on the last of the meat and drank some cold water, as there was no dry wood around to light a cooking fire. Taking refuge under a hastily constructed lean-to, the trio huddled together and waited for the rain to stop. Treymane had done a good job of weaving the wet grass until he made a piece large enough for them to huddle under. It leaked in several places, but it kept them fairly dry and warm from the blowing wind. On several occasions, the strong winds almost blew their protective shelter away. The rain kept up until the early evening, so there was little they could do but spend the night where they were.

Roma elected to try and catch a hare or two while Jen and the hobbit prepared the camp. Treymane quickly went and cut

tufts of grass that he wove into what looked like long baskets. He worked quickly, and Jen saw that this wasn't the first time he had done this. The hobbit explained how his father had taught him to weave long basket-like sleeping bags while on hunting trips. There never had been a tent or any other structure in which he could stay warm and dry, so his job was to weave these sacks for the men. Jen cleared an area on which she could build a fire. The wind was still strong and dried the tall grass quickly, making it easy to light. By the time Roma returned with supper, she found a small fire burning and three grass sacks lying next to it.

Bending down to examine the bags, Treymane said. "They won't keep out the rain, but they will keep you warm."

Nodding their approval, the two girls turned in, while the hobbit took the first watch.

Wrapping herself into a blanket, Jen slipped into one of the bags. The hobbit was right. It was a lot warmer in the bag than out. Using her backpack as a pillow she soon fell asleep. Jenny dreamed of home and her family. She dreamt that she was sitting around the table with her parents and brother's family. In a corner stood a tiny bassinet with a newborn in it. "This must be my niece or nephew," she thought, but as she bent over to look at the baby, it was her own face that she saw. The words that were forming seemed to say, "Please Hurry!" She stared in horror at herself, realizing that she was in a dream and none of this was real.

The night passed quickly and soon it was Jen's turn. The fire had died out during the night because there was no wood about. Happy to be awake, she grabbed her bag and walked away from her friends. To her amazement, the grasslands were just as alive at night as in any forest. Every once in a while, when an animal came within earshot, Jen would cough softly and the animal would scurry off into the night. The clouds had disappeared during the hobbit's watch, but no moon had risen this night. Looking up into the sky, she was amazed to see millions of stars. Even in the mountains back home, she had never seen so many. This truly was a virgin world.

After breakfast the three were off again. During the early hours of the day, it clouded over again and began to rain. The dirt road turned muddy and slippery, causing them to lose their footing in the deep ruts.

Suddenly from out of nowhere came a thunderous roar of horses' hooves. There was just enough time to jump aside, as several hundred-horse soldiers, in full battle gear, rode by. They were heading in the same direction they were.

"That's the King's Guard!" exclaimed Roma. "It must be quite important for the King to send his elite."

"Maybe there's trouble in Water's Edge," stated the hobbit.

"I hope you're wrong," said Roma. "Where else can we hire a boat to take us to Caldor?"

By the time the cavalry and its supply wagons rode past, the three were splattered in mud from head to toe. Jenny looked up to the sky and laughed. It was the first time she had ever taken a shower with her clothes on, she thought; for the rain came down so hard, it didn't take long for the mud to wash off.

Towards noon with the rain letting up, the trio came upon an overturned wagon. Four women dressed in brightly colored clothing were running around picking up pots and pans that were

strewn all over. Treymane approached them carefully, as there wasn't a sign of any men about.

Roma cautioned Jen. "They could be hiding in the grass," she whispered. "Keep your bow at the ready," she advised, as her hand gripped the hilt of her sword. "They're Highbinders," Roma continued, "nomads, and usually on the wrong side of the law."

Jen looked around, but couldn't sense anything. She was sure that they were alone. No one else was about.

"Hello!" shouted the hobbit. "Is there anything we can do to help?"

"Not unless you've got some horses with you to help put this wagon back on its wheels," the eldest replied.

"I'm sorry," the hobbit answered, "but we don't have any. Can you tell us what happened?"

"When the soldiers rode past," the old woman continued, "they ran us off the road, overturning our wagon. The horses broke loose and ran after them. My husband and sons have gone to bring them back."

"From where do you come?" he asked.

"Water's Edge," she answered. "I'd turn back if that's where you're heading. It's under siege by a great army of orcs." With that said, the old woman turned her attention back to picking up her belongings.

"Can you tell me more?" Treymane asked.

"No!" she said angrily, without turning around. "If you can't help us, then leave. We have more important things to do than to stand here talking."

The three continued and when they were out of sight, they stopped to rest. They ate some cold meat left over from the night before and drank some water.

"A nice juicy steak and a tall glass of beer would taste better than this," stated Jenny.

"Beer!" exclaimed the hobbit. "How can you think of beer and food at this time?! Besides, elves aren't supposed to like ale. They only drink wine."

"Well," continued Jenny, "this elf comes from a time, where beer and steak went together and when I get a taste for it, that's what I eat."

"When we get to a village with an inn, I'll buy you the biggest steak and a barrel of beer," said Roma, "but for now, we have to change our plans about Water's Edge. Does anyone have an idea?"

Everyone thought for a moment, but nothing came to any of them. Then the hobbit remembered and told them that he knew some one, a Timothy Harlan, who lived on the shores of Harlan Bay, next to the Shadow Forest. He also owned a small boat and for a few copper pieces he would probably take them to Maitland. From there they should make it to Caldor. It would be a longer route but a safer one.

"How far is this friend of yours?" asked Jenny.

"A good three or four days walk from here," was the answer.

It was already late afternoon when they reached the east/west junction and turned towards the east. The road here was much narrower than the one they had been on. Here two wagons couldn't pass each other. A feeling of uneasiness came over

them. Roma unsheathed her blade and cradled it in her arms. The hobbit carried his two daggers in full view while Jenny notched an arrow and kept another at the ready. The grass grew right up to the side of the road making it very easy for an ambush.

They trudged on all afternoon, until their long shadows told them it was time to stop for the night. They had pressed very hard this day and would camp just inside a small grove of trees. Treymane and Roma began setting up their camp while Jenny took her bow and scouted around for some food. She was gone about an hour and was heading back towards camp with a nice fat rabbit, when a strange feeling came over her. The hairs on the nape of her neck stood straight up. The grasslands were deathly quiet. Not a sound could be heard anywhere.

Jenny notched an arrow and slowly made her way back, keeping low in the grass and making no sound as she moved. After what seemed to be an eternity, she came to the side of the road. Carefully she poked her head out, half expecting to see the flash of steel in front of her eyes. There was nothing. No one in sight. Studying the tall grass on the other side, Jenny determined that it was safe to emerge from her place of hiding. As she neared the camp she heard a low noise that sounded like a groan. Slowly Jen sheathed her arrow and pulled out the short sword. She knew that in close combat her bow was useless, but with her blade she could skewer the first person that came at her. Roma had taught her well. Stealthily she moved forward.

As Jenny closed in on the camp, she became aware that there was no smoke coming from the campfire. She moved to the side of the road so that she would still be hidden from anyone in the camp. Just a few more yards around the bend and she would be there.

Suddenly from out of nowhere there arose a loud drumming and something flew past her face. Jenny jumped back and swung at whatever it was, but missed. After her heart resettled back to where it should be, she realized that she had flushed a grouse. Wiping the sweat from her brow and shaking her head in disbelief, she continued. As she came within sight of the camp, Jenny stopped. She could hear nothing. Not a chatter from her two friends, nor any crackling of a small fire.

Finally she reached the camp. There she could see the small figure of the hobbit lying near the side of the road. Jenny looked around for her friend Roma, but didn't see her. Nervously she approached the little man, her eyes flashing everywhere, ready to move at a second's notice. Jen wanted to call out to her friend Roma, but thought it wise to keep silent. She bent down and touched Treymane. A low moan escaped his lips, as his eyes blinked open. Jenny could see a deep gash on the side of his head. Someone had hit him and left him for dead.

"What happened?" she whispered.

"They've got Roma," he mumbled.

"They?" She asked. "Who's they?"

"Slavers," he answered. "We've got to save her!"

"How did this happen?" Jenny asked.

The hobbit pulled himself into a sitting position, while Jenny did her best to stem the flow of blood with a bandanna. Meanwhile, Treymane explained that a wagon, much like the one of the Highbinders, came by and stopped to ask for directions. Suddenly three men jumped out and overpowered Roma. One of

them hit him on the side of the head with a hammer and that's all he could remember.

"Do you know where they are taking her?" asked Jenny.

"Probably to the Shadow Forest." Treymane winced, as she applied pressure to his wound.

Jen knew that he would not be able to travel without a good rest, so she suggested that they rest half the night and then go after Roma. She knew that the wagon wouldn't travel at night. They too had to sleep. Risking a small cooking fire, Jenny roasted the rabbit and then doused the flames. No sense in attracting any more unwanted guests. Then the two lay down, but neither could sleep.

Roma's head hurt as she came to. She tried to move but her arms and legs were tied behind her back. Calling out was no use either for a gag in her mouth prevented that. Besides, who would hear her anyway? Her captors had put her on the floor of the wagon and seemed to be in no rush. She could feel the pace was slow by the way her prison bumped along in the ruts of the road. She wondered about the hobbit. Was he OK? Or was he dead? She had seen one of the slavers hit him. Why hadn't they brought him with them? Was he in another wagon that she couldn't see? Her own head began to ache again, as the many thoughts raced through her mind. What about Jennifer? I have to help her. It was then Roma began to plan her escape. She knew that with the hobbit dead, Jenny wouldn't find her way to Teagan's and might be captured herself. She lay there quiet and tried to listen for any word about her friends, but these people were silent as they rode along.

It wasn't until well past dark when the wagon came to a halt. Roma could hear some muffled sound coming from outside. They were talking about where to set up the camp for the night, for she could make out several of the words. Moments later a pair of rough hands seized her and dragged her from the wagon. She was carried over to a large tree and secured to it. They left her gagged and unable to move. Roma wondered if they would feed her for her stomach was beginning to make all sorts of funny noises. She didn't have to wait long for her answer. The moment a fire was started, one of her captors, the oldest, began to cook. Soon the smell of boiling potatoes and pot roast filled the entire camp. While the men ate, they talked. This time Roma could make out their conversation. It seemed that someone had forced these men to become slavers and was holding their women captive.

"And what are we to do if they don't give us back the girls?" asked the oldest of the men.

"Then he leaves us no choice, but to go in and get them," replied the pacer who never tired. "I'm quite sure with my blade at his throat, he will see things more to our way."

"I hope you're right. Just hope you're right," the eldest repeated. "Anyway, we can't go to Harlan's place, since that druid burned the place to the ground. Even his boat he sank. So we better find us another place to hide, once we take our women back."

She almost felt pity for them. Finally when everyone was finished eating, they sent the boy over with a bowl. He put it down in front of Roma, removed the gag from her mouth and turned to go back to the campfire.

"How do you expect me to eat, trussed up the way I am?" asked Roma in a calm voice. She didn't want to anger the boy, for her hunger was too great.

"I'm not supposed to untie you," he answered. Looking around for an answer, he finally sat down and began to feed her.

"Do you think you'll get your mother and sisters back by exchanging me for them?" Roma asked quietly.

"My father," the boy answered, pointing to the older man, "doesn't believe that it will happen, but my brothers there, think so and will stop at nothing to get them back. I'm sorry that they took you."

"You can always loosen these ropes and let me escape," she said.

"I don't think so," he answered as he got up and walked away.

Roma tried to move. Her legs had fallen asleep from the rope that held her. She continued to work on the knots, but to no avail. Whoever tied her, knew their knots and after some time she fell asleep.

It was past the middle of the night, when Jen roused the hobbit. He had a fitful night in and out of consciousness. Still a bit feverish upon waking, Treymane insisted that they start searching for their friend.

Time passed quickly, and it wasn't long before they came upon the wagon. The camp was off to the side in a little clearing. The light from the campfire showed that Roma was secured to a large tree. Her head was bowed and she was fast asleep. Pacing back and forth with a staff in his hand was one of the Highbinders.

The two watched for some time, hoping that the man would sit down and fall asleep. They waited and waited, but their luck was not to be. This one just wasn't tired.

As dawn approached, Treymane motioned to Jen that they should fall back a bit so they would not be discovered. The two faded into the deep shadows of the trees and stayed just out of earshot of the slavers. From this distance they followed the wagon all day as it slowly meandered down the narrow forest trail, stopping to eat only when the wagon stopped. By the time the kidnappers stopped for the night, Jen and Treymane were also very tired. Snacking on some wild blackberries during the day, the two weren't very hungry so there was no need for a fire and a warm meal, although a nice hot tea would have felt good to Jenny. Again the two weren't able to get near Roma, for her guards didn't seem to tire. This night though, there was no pacing.

So for the next two nights they took turns watching and sleeping, for they still couldn't get near Roma.

On the afternoon of the fourth day, it began to rain. At first light drizzle and then a steady downpour, slowly soaking the two to the bone. At times the rain came down so hard that Jen couldn't see the road, which was just a few feet away. The rain also made walking through the forest very slippery, so they took to walking on the road so as not to get lost in the trees. This involved its own dangers, though, as the last thing they wanted to do was to run into Roma's captors.

As evening came, Jen and the hobbit found a fairly dry spot under a large oak tree and from this vantage point they could see the wagon and all that was going on. They watched as the horses

were unhitched, tied to a long rope and left to feed in the long grass near the camp. No fire this night, because there wasn't any dry tinder to be found.

Soon the door of the wagon opened and they could see Roma being dragged out. She was chained by her ankle to the wheel of the wagon and given a blanket, which she wrapped around herself and huddled there under the flooring, out of the rain. Sounds of drinking and loud laughter could be heard coming from the wagon and echoing through the silent forest night. This night even the forest creatures stayed home. During the evening someone checked on Roma every hour or so, but when the lights went out, the three men and the boy in the wagon fell asleep. It was time for the two to make their move.

Treymane devised a plan where Jenny was to untie the horses, and lead them to the river not far away. Explaining that his talent for picking locks would be the best chance of freeing their friend, he convinced Jenny and the two moved out into the dark.

The hobbit couldn't help but keep a thought on Jenny's plight. She had to lead three horses out of the camp without making a sound. Who knew how deeply these people slept? Even if they drank a lot, he knew that his job wasn't any easier. He had to crawl under the wagon, wake Roma and then pick a metal lock all without making a sound. Hopefully, the sound of the rain beating down on the roof of the wagon would deaden any sound he would make. It was slow going, but silently and painfully he made his way through the wet grass and shrubs until he got within a few feet of his goal. He froze when someone inside the wagon coughed, but after several minutes with no more movement coming from inside, he continued until he was able to touch his captured friend. Roma awoke with a start, but calmed when his gentle hand covered her mouth. Quickly he set upon picking the lock. This was a good one for it didn't pick easily, but he proved his skill, for a few minutes later a slight click was heard and the lock snapped open. The two froze and didn't move until they were sure that no one inside woke up. Stiff and a little weak from her captivity, Roma needed Treymane's help to climb out from under the wagon. Once they reached the road, they made off in the direction of the river to meet up with Jenny and the horses.

Jenny made her way slowly and carefully past the wagon and over to the horses. The animals were huddled together under a tree, which offered little or no protection from the rain. One foot in front of the other, she approached the three steeds. She spoke softly to get their attention, as she reached out and took hold of the ropes that held them. Caressing the first one's forehead, she stepped in front of the animals.

It was then that she heard a cough coming from inside the wagon. At the same time, one of the horses snorted. Jen held her breath. She was sure that some one had heard the animal and would come to investigate. The girl stood there calming the steed and trying to focus on the wagon to see if anyone had noticed. Nothing moved and after a few more minutes, Jen began to untie the horses.

Quietly she led them away from the wagon, towards the river. She hoped that Treymane had good luck as well. Once she was far enough away from the wagon, Jen led them to the road where it was easier to walk. They followed her as if she owned

them. "This was easy," she told herself.

After some time, just before dawn the rain began to ease up. This pleased her for she had never been so wet in her life. Jen kept looking back to see if her two friends were behind her, but saw only a dark road leading deeper into the forest. A short time later she began to hear the sound of rushing water up ahead. "Maybe they're already there waiting for me," she thought. This made her break into a run with the horses. When she reached the river, she found that she was quite alone except for the three animals. She stopped and tied the horses to a tree and searched the area, but all she found was rain and the rushing waters of the river. It was still a few hours before daylight, so her friends could still be coming. Jen sat down on a large boulder by the side of the road and waited.

Her eyes searching the road caught sight of one of the horse's ears pricking up. Someone was coming. Notching an arrow, she slid from her perch and hid behind it. She could now hear the footsteps herself, but whoever it was stayed out of sight and off the road. Raindrops mixed with sweat rolling down her face as she waited. The sounds came ever closer and still no one was to be seen. Jenny wanted to call out, but thought twice. What if it wasn't her friends and was the slavers? Maybe the two were in chains by now. Could she take on three grown men and a boy? The sound was close now. She could see some movement of shadows in the forest. Finally someone stepped out onto the road. Two figures emerged from the trees. One tall, and the other about half as high. Slowly Jen lowered her weapon, as she recognized the hobbit leading Roma.

Dropping her bow, Jen ran over to Roma and hugged her. "I thought I'd never see you again," she whispered, as tears of joy ran down her cheeks.

"And you, my friend," Roma said in a low voice, as she crouched in front of Treymane. "I also have you to thank. I didn't have much faith in a rescue, for I thought you were dead."

"I hate to ruin this wonderful reunion," said the hobbit, "but we'd better get going before those boys back there wake up and find a few things missing."

Everyone agreed and tried to mount the animals. The horses wouldn't allow any riders, for they kept stepping away. Finally it came to Roma, who explained that these horses were trained to have only one master. One could pet them, take them for a walk, but the moment you let them go, they would return to their masters.

"If we hurry," explained Treymane, "we could cross the river and take them as far as the cross road. There we'll tie and leave them. If they are found, the slavers won't be sure which way we went."

"I agree," said Roma. "During my capture, I found that they were not vicious and probably will not pursue us."

"Do you know where they were taking you?" asked Jenny.

"Somewhere in the Shadow Lands," answered Roma.

Treymane looked shocked as he heard the Shadow Lands. "Why not stick to our original plans?"

"I'm afraid your friend is no longer there," Roma interrupted. "According to our friends back there, the cabin's been burned to the ground and his boat was sunk. Where Timothy is, no one knows. Our best bet now is through the Shadow Lands

and into Maitland as fast as we can. We can get through it in one day, if we don't waste any time."

Jenny agreed with her friend, though she didn't have a clue about what she was getting herself into. All she saw was Treymane shaking his head and when he looked up, she saw the fear in his eyes. That's when she questioned Roma.

Roma explained that although one can survive the crossing, the utmost care must be taken so none of the shadow creatures finds out that they were there. Many an adventurer went into the Shadow Lands, but few ever came back out. Of those that did, all swore they would never return. Most retired after their experience in that land.

"We can't have a fire," Roma continued. "We'll have to eat a warm meal a day before entering it. Once we are close to the river, we won't want to attract any attention. It's in, across and out the other side as fast as we can."

"One other thing," interrupted Treymane, "from here on we stay off the main road. We'll follow the edge of the swamp all the way to the river."

"Any danger from the swamp?" asked Jen.

"Could be," answered Roma, "but nothing as bad as the Shadow Lands; the swamp, we can handle."

Everyone grabbed a horse and crossed the river. Once on the other side, they began to realize that there was nothing to tie the animals to. This land was fairly flat and grassy and there were no trees or large bushes to tie them to. So back across the river they came and tied the animals to a tree and then swung south to follow their laid out path.

The next three days were spent putting as much distance as possible between them and Roma's captors. They didn't even light a fire for the first two nights, because they feared it might be seen. On the afternoon of the third day they stopped earlier than usual to make camp. Roma explained that she wanted to backtrack a bit to see if they were being followed, but Treymane wouldn't hear any part of it. He had rescued her and it would be he who kept her safe. He then stood up and left the camp. In the meantime the two girls searched for firewood. All they found was a few twigs and some old rotting logs, which they brought back to camp.

It was well past dusk when the hobbit returned. He too had his arms full of branches for the evening's fire.

"No one around for a good half a days walk," Treymane said. "We can risk a small fire to cook supper and tea, but that's all."

With that said, he pulled from his knapsack a large plump hare.

"I just hope we have enough wood here to cook that little monster," laughed Jenny.

Later that evening, after supper and tea, they let the fire burn down and go out. It felt good to have a warm meal after so many days on the run and eating nothing but berries and some roots that tasted like old potatoes. The three huddled around the dying embers of the fire and began to talk.

"Have any of you ever been in this Shadow Land before?" Jenny asked.

Roma shook her head, but Treymane spoke up. "I knew some one who passed through there once. He said he was lucky

to get out alive. He spoke of small creatures, not more than one-foot tall, who chased him all the way across from one side to the other. Of course, no one believed him. Imagine little creatures like that scaring a big man like Jonathan."

No one laughed and the hobbit's smile disappeared. Could it be true?

After that the three lay down on a soft carpet of grass and fell asleep. Each dreamed that they were somewhere else. Roma was back in Storr and helping her father tend his fields. He grew some of the finest eating corn in Enderby. She remembered the tall stalks towering above her as she ran down the many rows that he had planted. Soon she would have to help in reaping the harvest.

Treymane dreamed that he was lost in the great forest of the Shadow Lands, chased by all sorts of vicious and ugly little creatures bent on having him for dinner. He woke several times during the night until he gave up his sleep and decided to keep watch. Standing up, he left the camp and walked towards the road. A few paces further he almost stumbled over Jenny, who also was unable to sleep.

"You having nightmares too?" he asked.

"No," she answered, "but a recurring dream, that someone's coming down the road."

The hobbit strained his eyes to see, but all that was there was darkness.

"No silly," Jen laughed when she saw him rise up on his tiptoes and stretch his little neck. "If anyone's coming, it will be when daylight is here."

The little man sat down beside Jenny and looked at her. Finally as if he had just met her, he asked. "Well, what do you think of our way of life?"

Shocked by the question, Jen tried to understand, but failed. Again he asked.

"I can't give you an answer," she began, "because ever since I arrived in this world we seem to be hiding or running from someone or something. I really haven't had a chance to see anything yet. I haven't seen any large city. You do have them?"

"Shhh...someone's coming..." Jen started to say, but fell silent. Drawing her sword, she turned towards the sound. For a few tense moments she was ready to spring at the form advancing towards them, when she heard the familiar voice of her friend softly call to them.

"So you couldn't sleep either," said a very relieved hobbit.

"What are you guys doing way out here?" asked Roma.

"Jenny's had a dream that someone's coming," he answered as he pointed up the road.

Roma turned her attention to Jenny and asked. "How many?"

"I don't know," she answered. "Three, maybe four, but no more. Also they're moving fast."

"Following us?" Treymane asked.

"No," was the answer, "but we'd better find a place to lie low until they pass."

The three found a deep gully near the road, where they lay until dawn. Roma recalled that whenever Shannon had a feeling about something to come, she had usually been right. Perhaps

Jenny had retained that ability. So without question she grabbed the hobbit's arm and dragged him into the gully.

As the light climbed higher in the sky, Jenny crawled from their hiding spot and up a small hill. There in the distance she saw the dust cloud. "Riders are coming," she called back. She stayed as long as she dared before returning to the others. "It's the same ones. Three horses with four riders, but I don't think they're looking for us, unless they plan to run us down."

Treymane thought it was funny, but didn't laugh for just then the thunder of hooves roared past. No one moved until the sound of the horses had completely dissipated. When they thought it was safe to leave the gully, they returned to camp, gathered their belongings and set out after the riders. Everyone knew that they couldn't catch the horses, so they stuck to the road.

The next three days were quite uneventful and on the fourth, just past the noonday sun, Roma called a halt. She pointed straight ahead and said, "Just over that rise lies the West Shadow River. We should camp here tonight and attempt to cross tomorrow at first light. This way we might make it to the East River before nightfall. It's too dangerous to cross after dark. Too many dark things about and they hunt mostly at night."

Treymane agreed. He'd heard stories from some survivors. Jen also agreed and said that she would like to see who her attackers were and not be surprised by them. They also agreed that it would be best not to make a fire, so that they would not be seen from the other side of the river. Quietly the three roamed about picking and eating blueberries that seemed to grow in abundance so close to the river. They drank the rest of their water and settled down on the top of the grassy knoll that overlooked the fast running river.

Soon the sky grew golden as the sun slowly sank in the west. It was one of the most beautiful sunsets Jen had ever seen. She was beginning to like this uncomplicated New World. Her new friends seemed so grateful for the simpler things in life. Not like the world she had left. She remembered the traffic jams heading in and out of the city, the smog, the noise and all the other pollution that was slowly killing her world, but still, she hoped to return to it soon. Jenny missed her family and friends. She was startled back to reality when a gentle hand rested on her shoulder.

Jen began to say something, but Roma put a finger to her lips, motioning her to be silent. The sun had gone down and the last of the long shadows disappeared.

From the eastern banks of the river, came a reddish, orange glow from a huge bonfire. There was someone camped on the other side. As night settled in, Jen's sight could make out dozens of tiny forms, all hooting and howling as they danced around the great fire. They seemed to be celebrating something.

Treymane slid back down the hill and removed what remained of his brightly coloured robe. He was dressed in black underneath it. He grabbed a canteen and slipped away into the night.

"Where's he going?" asked Jen in a low whisper.

"To find out what is going on," replied Roma, "but don't worry, hobbits know how to sneak around in the dark. They're used to it."

Time passed, but the little man didn't return and both girls began to worry. Maybe something did happen to him.

It was well past midnight and the dancing continued across the river. Just then an agonizing scream was heard. Both girls' blood ran cold. Straining their eyes they could just make out something small being turned on a spit, next to the fire. The screams went on for a minute or so and then died. The two girls looked at each other in horror. Could that have been Treymane?

"He knew the risk involved," said Roma, with tears running down her cheeks.

Jenny took her friend and hugged her. Both girls now were crying and did not hear the approaching footsteps.

"A fine lot you are," said the voice. "I leave you two alone for a while and when I come back I find the two of you in tears."

The two grabbed the little man and embraced him, then lost their footing and tumbled down the hill. At the bottom they stopped and began to question him. Treymane explained that all the slavers were dead. Apparently they tried to cross at night while riding their swift steeds, but they were not fast enough to outrun the poison tipped arrows of the Blood Imps. He found out that this was a hunting party that was heading towards the Saradan Sea. So with luck they should be gone by morning. ✱

The Last Mage continues in WARP 66.

SFF SIGHTINGS *Guess what Berny did on his summer vacation?*



WHAT WE DID ON OUR SUMMER VACATION...

Photos courtesy of Josée Bellemare, Lindsay Brown, Wayne Glover, Cathy Palmer-Lister, Fern Novo, Theresa Penalba, Bernard Reischl, & Sylvain St-Pierre

WE TREKKED TO TORONTO





WE MADE A BIG SPLASH!



WE WENT TO THE PARK!



Reviews of Some of the Fanzines Received by MonSFFA in Trade for Warp

(Part 3 of a Series on Fanzines)

Keith Braithwaite

In my article “Fanzines: The Fourth Phase of Fanac,” published in Warp 63, I chronicled in brief the fannish tradition of “zine pubbing” and offered my thoughts on the state of the fanzine today. Warp, of course, is a fanzine, and more specifically, a “clubzine.” As the label suggests, a clubzine is a fanzine produced by an SF/F club. Such a periodical generally caters to the activities of its sponsoring organization and features the contributions of the group’s members. Many of the ’zines MonSFFA receives in exchange for Warp are clubzines, such as the two I reviewed in this space last issue—BCSFazine and De Profundis—and the three examples I’m covering here:

In Spero Ad Astra

P.O. Box 11685, Main Post Office
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
T5J 3K8

Clubzine

Quarterly Newsletter of the United Starship Bonaventure, NCC-1845, Edmonton Star Trek Society
Edmonton, Alberta
Editors: Barry Yoner and Shelley Ann Jensen

A hefty 40-plus page package of late, *In Spero Ad Astra* showcases the “adventures” of this busy group of Edmonton-based *Star Trek* fans. A healthy number of the club’s members regularly contribute to the ’zine, resulting in a publication that serves the group exceptionally well, providing plenty of club news and information, and much interesting and entertaining reading.

Penned, often tongue-in-cheek, from the perspective of Starfleet officers serving aboard the starship *Bonaventure*, the various department reports—command, sciences, engineering, medical, ship’s services, etc.—amount to announcements or recaps of the group’s activities, personal stories and comment on local goings-on, or *Star Trek*-related news written by the club’s officers. Borrowing from the *Trek* universe in defining the society’s organizational structure, the group’s president, for example, assumes the mantle of captain and contributes a “Captain’s Log” to each issue of *In Spero Ad Astra*. The editors chime in as well, usually on some aspect or other of producing the ’zine. Also included is an events calendar and crew roster.

An *In Spero Ad Astra* feature article might recount a memorable vacation by a club member or offer an overview of a particular genre television series. Often, the ’zine publishes comprehensive how-to articles. Co-editor Barry Yoner’s copiously illustrated “Gluetube and Starship” column runs regularly, detailing, step by step, the process of building *Trek* and other science fiction-themed scale model kits. “Replicator Recipes” is another regular feature, recent menus having included

such cosmic culinary fare as Mock Klingon Gagh and Romulan Rotee among more down-to-Earth dishes as Saskatoon Muffins and a Green Bean Casserole. “Colin’s Quadrant,” meanwhile, offers four reviews with each installment—book, movie, game, and CD. Large, well-reproduced photos throughout provide an extensively illustrated record of the club’s activities.

The ’zine is printed on 8.5X11-inch stock and corner stapled. Covers splay the *In Spero Ad Astra* masthead across the top of the page, feature a large, black and white and sometimes full-colour photo mid-page, and the club identification at the bottom of the page. Interior layout is commodious—bold-type headers over page-wide standard body text amply illustrated with photos and dotted with small line illos. Page count is usually north of 40.

The tone of this ’zine is very much that of a social group and reflects the camaraderie and fun-loving nature of the *Bonaventure* crew.

Subscription to *In Spero Ad Astra* included with Edmonton Star Trek Society club membership. For more information, e-mail: uss.bonaventure@shaw.ca

Statement

Ottawa Science Fiction Society
18 Norice Street
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
K2G 2X5

Clubzine

Newsletter of the Ottawa Science Fiction Society (OSFS)
Ottawa, Ontario
Editor: Sandi Marie



For many years, goldenrod covers were the signature of the Ottawa Science Fiction Society’s *Statement*, one of Canadian fandom’s best known clubzines. Having published close to 350 issues to date, the decades-long run of this ’zine is even more remarkable when note is made of its industrious publication schedule.

Numerous OSFS members contribute brief news notes, comment, or reviews to the effort. The *Statement*’s regular features include a local events calendar, a list of upcoming genre conventions across Canada and parts of the U.S., the society’s “Mailbag” column, and the club president’s word to members, dubbed “Subspace Chatter.” Concise reports on recent OSFS activities accompany information on a variety of club and other events of interest to society members.

The ’zine exhibits a penchant for things scientific and often features space science news clippings in particular, along with regular columns “NASA News” and “For Your Viewing Pleasure,” authored, respectively, by MonSFFA’s own Charles

Mohapel (a former Ottawa resident and OSFS member) and NRC astronomer Ken Tapping. Sheila Currie Alder volunteers advice on how to “Tame Your Computer” while Janet Hetherington provides periodic dispatches on the comics industry and the “Comedy Korner” offers readers a chuckle or two.

A few years ago, OSFS opted to produce an electronic version of the *Statement* in order to keep escalating production and distribution costs in check. Many clubs have implemented similar strategies for the same reason. Traditional paper copies of the *Statement* remain available, however, to OSFS members who so prefer.

A typical issue of the *Statement* is printed on 8.5X11-inch stock, corner stapled. The *Statement* masthead is positioned across the top of the cover page while the OSFS logo occupies the upper left corner. Information on upcoming club meetings runs below the logo and a large black and white photo or illustration is set under the masthead. The club’s information directory runs across the bottom of the page. Interior pages utilize a rather compact, two-column layout; items are separated by decorative-font title splashes or bold-type headers; ’zine is sparsely illustrated with tiny photos and drawings.

Page count: 6-8, The *Statement* manages to pack a lot of club news and information, along with articles of general interest, into its few pages, thus delivering to OSFS members that which any good clubzine should.

Subscription to *Statement* included with OSFS membership. Electronic editions obtainable in .pdf format; for more information, e-mail: osfs@ncf.ca

SF Vortex Magazine

SF Vortex
c/o Marc Nadeau
12830 René-Lévesque
Montréal, Québec, Canada
H1A 5E7



Clubzine

Magazine of SF Vortex, a Club of Fans of Science Fiction
Montréal, Québec
Editors: Marc Nadeau, Chantal Brodeur, and Manon Dozois

Published every few months or so, SF Vortex’s clubzine is the monumental undertaking of a small, local band of media-SF/F enthusiasts, this group having risen from the ashes of the now defunct Warp 9 club which operated in Montreal in the 1990s. (A few SF Vortex members are also MonSFFA members, incidentally, including *SF Vortex Magazine* co-editors Marc Nadeau and Chantal Brodeur. Many Montreal fans are members of more than one area organization, much to the benefit of the local SF/F community.) Tens of thousands of words and hundreds of images, collected by Vortex members largely from the Web, are arranged in an orderly layout for consumption by the eager fans of, for the most part, televised sci-fi that constitute the prime readership of *SF Vortex Magazine*. Some issues easily reach 100 or more pages!

While English is the ’zine’s prevalent language, French is present as well, not surprisingly in that the mother tongue of many of the club’s principals is French. The awkward syntax we find in this neck of the woods when a French-speaking person writes in English crops up here and there but is quickly overlooked and does not detract terribly from the enjoyment of taking in the ’zine’s voluminous content.

Club news, editorial comment, and mail from readers are featured first and a calendar provides members with information on upcoming events—Vortex’s main activity seems to be group “movie nights,” but theme meetings are also on the agenda from time to time. The bulk of the publication is devoted to the many items culled from the Web on pretty much any and all aspects of the genre entertainment industry, from casting news, interviews with actors, and the latest on the TV sked to movie reviews, box office figures, and news of awards. SF/F television and film is the predominant focus of the ’zine, but other areas of interest—science and technology, for example—are addressed as well.

The sheer volume of material contained within an issue of *SF Vortex Magazine* mandates that a team of editors tackles the job. The process is divided into what has been termed “editing levels,” from collecting and sorting material to the final layout of the ’zine. Each of the editors is typically responsible for one of these levels. An interesting note: as a means of encouraging submissions to the ’zine, club members who contribute receive a credit applicable toward the annual cost of renewing their memberships.

SF Vortex Magazine is printed on 8.5X11-inch stock. A standard three-hole punch is applied, allowing pages to be placed sequentially in a binder to complete each issue. A typical cover is made up of a montage of black and white photographs, captioned with tag lines, representing the issue’s featured subject matter. The small, oval-shaped SF Vortex logo is positioned at the top of the page. Interior layout is a clean, three-column arrangement, dividing lines and bold-type headers separating each item. Small photos are notched into the columns of body text as illustration. Look is akin to that of a commercial magazine and print quality is excellent, with most photos reproducing well. Page-count is customarily in the neighbourhood of 80, give or take a dozen.

Information on the activities of SF Vortex ahead of a font of data on all things media-SF/F make for a good example of a clubzine that serves the members of its sponsoring organization above and beyond the call. The only shortcoming regarding such news-oriented ’zines I can proffer is that in this Internet age of instant communication, the information conveyed by these publications is often out of date by the time they are printed and distributed. Still, the vast amount of information collected and organized by *SF Vortex Magazine* does result in a rich archive and valuable resource for those interested in SF/F television and film.

Subscription to *SF Vortex Magazine* included with club membership. For more information, e-mail:

nadeaum@grics.qc.ca (include word “Vortex” in subject line).✴

Lord of the Rings Musical

Reviewed by Sylvain St-Pierre

Given all the hype about this show, it was hard to resist the temptation to go see it, especially since I was already going to



Toronto for TTrek. As it turned out, a few other Montreal fans were also interested, so it was only logical to make it a group outing. Fernando Novo got us excellent balcony seats and he, his sister Alice, Cathy Palmer-Lister and myself had an excellent view of the stage.

And what a stage it was! A marvel of engineering, the thing, when at rest, looked like a giant tree stump, but was divided into

many sections that could rotate as a whole or individually move up and down. As the play unfolded, the floor became a forest clearing, a grandiose meeting hall, a tormented mountainous landscape, a town square and the mouth of a volcano.

Masterful use of lighting draped an unending array of colours and textures on the itself unchanging material of the stage, making it look in turn like grass, stone, wood, water or lava.

There were also several other interesting effects, such as blowing bits of black paper to simulate smoke in the Balrog scene. We were well over a hundred feet from the stage, on the second balcony, and still got showered with the stuff! The tavern walls that turned into benches were also very clever, as was the construction of the Wraith Riders and the Ents. My favourite scene was set in the Elf Kingdom, a dream place of glowing trees that almost brought tears to my eyes.

Not everything was perfect though, most noticeably the Balrog itself, which looked like a cheap imitation of a Transformer robot from where I was standing. Musically speaking, the presentation was somewhat uneven. Generally good, with some excellent songs and a few forgettable ones. It should be noted that on the evening we went, several of the actors were understudies, and this may be why the performance was a bit of a lackluster as far as the sound was concerned. Given that this was a musical, the acting felt perhaps a bit exaggerated, with the Gollum character being quite outstanding in both voice and body posture.

Darren Aronofsky's "The Fountain".

Reviewed by Bernard Reischl

Stars: Hugh Jackman, Rachel Weisz, Marcello Bezzina, Alexander Bising, Ellen Burstyn, Cliff Curtis, Mark Margolis, Donna Murphy

Writer/Director: Darren Aronofsky

Story by: Darren Aronofsky and Ari Handel

Producer: Eric Watson, Arnon Milchan and Iain Smith

It's been a long time since I went to see a film that made one



Finicky fans that we are, the big question we were asking ourselves was "how the heck are they going to fit the whole trilogy in one evening?". Would even three full hours be sufficient? In my opinion, the writers did a commendable job. There were of course some unavoidable omissions, but the gist of Tolkien's story was there. I can however understand that the show must be very confusing to somebody who is not familiar with the work. Fortunately, it was not absolutely necessary to have read the actual books in full; for the treatment of the musical is somewhat closer to that of the movies, which are probably more familiar to a lot of people.



The action being live, rendering some of the scenes did require a bit of complicity on the part of the audience, and may have turned off some of the less imaginative people. The city of Minas Tirith, for instance, was pictured by attendants holding long poles topped with exquisite miniature buildings and moving about to depict winding streets. It was perfect, as long as your mind's eye did not need corrective lenses.

Whether the utter lack of a souvenir book was due to financial considerations or a fanatical desire not to release pictures I cannot say, but not being able to gaze upon memories of this wonderful evening was certainly a major disappointment. What merchandising was available in the gift show was, in the opinion of many, quite expensive and not all that desirable. Hopefully, they will do better in London, England, where the production will be moving next, after some re-writing and tightening up.

Despite overall very decent reviews, the Toronto production closed down in September, much earlier than expected. A few critics have voiced their dislike of the musical, but attendance has been quite good even with Americans being allegedly afraid to travel. However, given the high cost of setting up and running such a lavish show, it would apparently have required fully booking each and every single performance to make it a profitable venture. This is the third show that I have enjoyed at the Princess of Wales Theatre; the other two being *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*, both also outstanding in my opinion. ✱

sit and take notice of things around you. The whole theatre was quiet throughout the whole film and when it ended only then did the filmgoers slowly react and talk amongst themselves. It's not a light film, nor a happy film, but not sad either. No shoot-em ups, no light sabres, no alien creatures in latex masks, just a film about human beings. Hugh Jackman shows his depth and range as an actor and proves he has what it takes to carry a film on his own.

All I can say is to go see this film with an open mind and be prepared to question things in your life.

Our thanks to the folks from Warner Bros. and Promo Avenue for the passes to see last night's premier. ✱

Anthrofest 2006

Reviewed by Sylvain St-Pierre

Of the many sub-genres of Fandom, furrries probably fit in one of the more specialized niches (see Furrries, WARP 57, Spring 2004). Still, the organizers of Anthrofest managed to find enough interested people to hold a convention in Montreal.

Held on August 11-13 at the Plaza Hotel, this was small affair – they reached one hundred attendants by making the hotel manager an honorary guest – but it was nevertheless fun in an almost familial sort of way.

The whole thing was pretty much informal, with very few structured panels, but there was a small Dealers' Room, a small Art Show, and some wicked games. The furry version of Twister, for instance, was quite simply hilarious: "Left forepaw on red... Tail on yellow... Muzzle on...".

Costumes ranged from simple tacked-on ears or tails to

rather extravagant – and probably very warm – full fur suits. Part of programming was in fact devoted to the creation and maintenance of such garments. Some of the participants were also quite cuddly, and it's easy to understand why this genre's lovers have a certain raunchy reputation amongst fans in general.

While I found the offerings a little sparse, I did like the overall relaxacon-like atmosphere and enjoyed the opportunity to talk with authors I had known about for years but never met. Most furry comics are spread through the Web, and it was fun to be able to put a real flesh and blood (and fur) face next to names that until then had only been a bunch of pixels on a screen. Anthrofest's organisers obviously did their homework, and several of their Guests are quite well known in the field. Montreal being a welcoming city, it looks like they all enjoyed themselves.

I am told that this year's convention ended up financially in the red, but that a repeat is already scheduled for next year. ✱

"Some of the participants were also quite cuddly..."



Sylvain St-Pierre

Appearing in each issue of Warp, "MonSFFAandom" collates abridged versions of the news and activities reports published over the last few months in Impulse, MonSFFA's monthly news bulletin.

Items published in the May through October 2006 issues of Impulse have been collected for this edition of "MonSFFAandom." As usual, we've placed in chronological order and held for last the monthly MonSFFA meeting summaries for this period.

We begin, then, with a case of déjà vu. The May Impulse reported that mail destined for MonSFFA had been erroneously returned, an annoyance which had plagued the club once before:

MonSFFA Mail Returned in Error

The club has again experienced a problem with mail reception. It seems that at least one letter addressed to us was returned to sender with notice attached of MonSFFA having abandoned its post office box. We can affirm that this is *not* the case! MonSFFA's address remains unchanged. In fact, we recently renewed our lease on the P.O. box for another year.

We have received other pieces of mail without problem and can only assume that this particular letter was returned in error by an inattentive Canada Post employee. We have notified our post office branch of the incident and are assured that all is in order. To make sure, however, we have mailed a few letters to ourselves to test the system. Should the post office fail this test, we just might have to go...well, *postal* on 'em!

MonSFFen may recall this very same problem having occurred about a year ago. We certainly hope this isn't going to become an annual thing....

Happily, the error was not repeated and everything has since been operating as it should.

May's issue also made brief mention of Keith Braithwaite and Charles Mohapel's trip to Ottawa to present to OSFS, the Ottawa Science Fiction Society, Keith's retrospective of master stop-motion animator Ray Harryhausen's career. Keith had given this same lecture to our membership at MonSFFA's March meeting.

June's issue of Impulse announced plans for the 2006 edition of MonSFFA's annual summer barbecue...

MonSFFA's Annual BBQ Set For End of July

The club will again host a summer barbecue open to all MonSFFA members and their families and friends. We plan to occupy our usual spot at Parc Angrignon in Lasalle. Look for us on the picnic grounds behind the Angrignon Metro Station a few hundred feet from the parking lot adjacent the park's petting zoo.

The event is scheduled for Sunday, July 30. We expect to set up around 10:30AM and enjoy a relaxing day at the park. Bring your own food and drink; the club will supply a cooking grill. Should the weather prove inclement, we have selected the following Sunday, August 6, as our rain date.

...and while on the topic of summer barbecues, ran an invitation to the OSFS barbecue for the benefit of any MonSFFen who might find themselves in the Ottawa area over the Canada Day weekend:

MonSFFA Members Invited to OSFS BBQ

Speaking of summer barbecues, we pass on to our membership an invitation from the Ottawa Science Fiction Society to attend their annual barbecue in Ottawa on Sunday, July 2, beginning at 2:00PM....

Note that MonSFFA is not in a position to provide group transportation to Ottawa; MonSFFen thinking of attending are responsible for arranging their own rides.

The June issue also quickly covered a couple of downtown movie premieres co-sponsored by MonSFFA—The Da Vinci Code and X-Men: The Last Stand—reminding members that "MonSFFA is often a co-sponsor of local

genre movie premieres and as such receives complimentary passes to distribute to club members."

An announcement concerning the addition, on September 17, of a fund-raising auction to MonSFFA's 2006 calendar closed the issue, asking members to set aside "a few extra dollars to bid on items!" All money raised, the notice went on, "will be directed to defraying the club's operating costs. MonSFFen wishing to donate to the cause SF/F books, videos and DVDs, collectibles, etc. are asked to bring these in to the club's June 11 or August 20 meetings."

July's Impulse reiterated the announcement of MonSFFA's annual barbecue.

Further, brief note was made of the club having co-sponsored a few more local movie premieres—Superman Returns, My Super Ex-Girlfriend, and Lady in the Water.

It was also reported that a "healthy contingent of MonSFFen enjoyed the 20th anniversary edition of Toronto Trek early in July." The club sold off much of its overstock of raffle/auction items at the con and some \$200 was raised for a special party MonSFFA is planning in celebration of its own 20th anniversary next year, members were informed.

The July issue wrapped up with another reminder of the club's upcoming September 17 fund-raiser.

August's Impulse offered a review of the club's well-attended barbecue:

Perfect Weather Blesses MonSFFA BBQ

MonSFFA held its annual summer barbecue this year on Sunday, July 30, at our usual locale, Parc Angrignon in Lasalle. Some two dozen club members and their families and friends enjoyed a warm, sunny day moderated by a gentle, cool breeze. We could not have asked for better weather!

Our group occupied several picnic tables under a copse of shady trees

adjacent a wide expanse of meadow. Conversation revolved around some aspect or other of SF/F as we shared a spread of summery salads, snacks, and refreshments while hamburgers and hotdogs sizzled on the grill. A few folk had their young children in tow and the kids pursued each other across the field in an improvised game of tag, or joined the circle of MonSFFers tossing a U.S.S. Enterprise Frisbee about. Afternoon wind conditions proved favourable for the launching of a couple of small, battery-powered radio-controlled airplanes supplied by Mark Burakoff. Kids young and old took turns at the stick and piloted these featherweight craft far and high, just missing, on a couple of flights, crashing into nearby trees or splashing down in a small lake. Several of our complement capped the day with a visit to Parc Angrignon's petting zoo, just a stone's throw from all in attendance.

MonSFFA's 2006 Summer Barbecue was a wonderfully fun and relaxing day at the park for all in attendance.

In thanking everyone who turned out, we offer a special nod of appreciation to club president Berny Reischl for again organizing the event, as well as a nod to those members who pitched in to help.

The issue also advised members of a slow-down at "MonSFFA headquarters" due to the...

Hazy, Lazy Days of Summer

We expect that our many members and friends are enjoying these hazy, lazy days of summer. With the warm weather comes Montreal's many festivals, days spent at the pool or beach, evenings quaffing a cold one sitting under the awning of a downtown *terrasse*, and of course, vacation. We at MonSFFA headquarters are no less inclined to take it easy during the summer months and for this reason, we trust you will understand that things move a little less quickly than usual over the July-August period. We do not anticipate participating in any of our regular movie premieres, for example, until, probably, mid- to late-September. The club's Web page likely will not be routinely updated during the summer, and applications for membership or membership renewals received at our P.O. box *may* take a bit longer than usual to process. Rest assured, however, that our

team of volunteer-organizers *will* attend to these and other duties just as quickly as their summer schedules permit.

Members were reminded once again of the September 17 fund-raiser and the issue quickly covered MonSFFA's Wayne Glover's "annual pool party for club members wishing to further enjoy what summer has to offer," reporting that a "good time was had by all."

The August Impulse's final note recounted that the club had received "positive response to the recent interview with MonSFFA president Berny Reischl published in the Montreal Mirror...." Berny had "trumpeted the club to the Mirror reporter, offering that one of MonSFFA's strengths is the hands-on creativity of its members and an infectious sense of fun...."

September's Impulse offered information on two genre conventions upcoming, one of which was about to premiere

:New Gaming Convention RoyalCon Launches This Month

RoyalCon is a new Montreal-based gaming convention, the first edition of which debuts in less than two weeks. RoyalCon 2006 is set for Saturday and Sunday, September 23 and 24, at the Days Hotel and Conference Centre, 1005 Guy Street, downtown, the familiar site of both MonSFFA's monthly meetings and Montreal's annual SF/F convention, Con•Cept

"We are dedicated to role-playing diversity," state the con's organizers on RoyalCon's Web site, "encouraging all genres of play using any role-playing system." MonSFFA's own Christopher Hammock, who happens to be chair of RoyalCon 2006, outlines for us an event that will host many role-playing, board, card, and war games, and include a live-action RPG scenario.

Several discussion panels are also planned featuring local industry notables such as *GURPS 4th Edition* co-author and line editor Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch, Dream Pod 9 president Robert Dubois, Steam Logic president Francis Larose, and freelancers Marc A. Vezina and Lucien Soulban, the latter known for his numerous contributions to *White Wolf*.

Other features of the con include a

Public Apology

I, Alice, hereby beg forgiveness to Berny, for saying that Presidents just sit there and look pretty.

I know he works very hard and takes his job seriously, Cathy please insert lots of appreciative words in this here section)

Gosh, if eyes could kill, I'd probably be one of these poor Japanese people getting squashed by (Keith please insert name of really evil looking Japanese Monster with those red eyes shooting death rays at people.)

Please, Berny forgive me and let me live, (Cathy please, please use lots of begging and pleading words to save my sorry ass.)

Therefore let it be known, that I nominate **Berny, PRESIDENT FOR LIFE !!!** (Please anyone reading this clap loudly and say RIGHT ON really loud.)

Please forgive me Bernie ... **PLEASE !**

Alice who is forever in Klingon

(Humm... please insert Klingon word for hell... anyone ?).

con suite, the "Gamers' Garage Sale," and a fully-stocked dealers' room.

... The pre-registration rate for the weekend is \$20; at the door rate is \$25. Saturday- or Sunday-only registration is also available at \$15 and \$12, respectively. Cash only at the door, please. GMs are sought and a discount on the registration charge is offered them.

For more information, visit the RoyalCon Web site: www.royalcon.ca

Con•Cept 2006 Unfolds Next Month

This year's installment of Con•Cept, Montreal's only annual SF/F convention, is scheduled for the October 13-15 weekend at the Days Hotel and Conference Centre, 1005 Guy Street, downtown, and will feature honoured guests Steve Bacic (actor, *Andromeda*, *Stargate SG-1*, *Blade*, *The X-Files*), Robert Charles Wilson (author, *Darwinia*, *Blind Lake*, this year's Hugo-winner *Spin*), and perennial Con•Cept MC Larry Stewart. Also scheduled to appear are directors David Winning (*Earth: Final Conflict*, *Andromeda*, *Stargate Atlantis*) and Brett Kelly (*The Bonesetter*, *The Feral Man*, *My Dead Girlfriend*).

In addition to such familiar features as the dealers' room, masquerade, art show, model competition, Saturday night dance, and Con•Cept's well-regarded track of panel discussions and presentations, the con is this year including a display of costumes and props, and expanding its con suite to accommodate a "chat room." This chat room will host small groups for fannish debates, spill-over panel discussions, gaming, book launches, and so on.

Of special note are the video track, screening unique fan-made films; a fund-raising auction, which will contribute a portion of proceeds to a local school library; and Con•Cept's innovative "Sci-Fi Garage Sale," at which attending members of the convention may sell off a few of their surplus SF/F collectibles courtesy the con, which staffs a special sales table for this purpose.

Con•Cept has always succeeded in packing a lot of fun into a small space and as founders of the con (back in 1989), MonSFFA is pleased to take part.

The full weekend pre-registration rate is \$45.... MonSFFen benefit from a \$5 discount off that rate with proof of club membership.

Hotel room rates are \$85 single/double and \$95 triple/quad...

For more information on Con•Cept 2006, visit the con's Web site: www.conceptsf.ca

Write to Con•Cept at: Con•Cept SF & F, P.O. Box 196, Ste-Julie, Québec, J3E 1H6; or e-mail: conceptsf@conceptsf.ca

The October 2006 issue of Impulse

reported on both *RoyalCon* and *Con•Cept*:

Days Hotel Hosts Two Local Cons Within A Month

The downtown Days Hotel has, for over a decade, served as the locale for many area SF/F events, including MonSFFA's monthly meetings. Most recently, the hotel hosted two local cons within a month of each other, which can only bolster the facility's standing as Montreal's SF/F meeting place.

RoyalCon

On Saturday and Sunday, September 23 and 24, the hotel welcomed a new fan-run gaming convention to the local scene. RoyalCon successfully unfolded that weekend, entertaining by early estimates over 250 gamers. In addition to the wide variety of game play scheduled, the con also featured guest speakers, a dealers' room, and a well-stocked con suite.



MonSFFA was pleased to attend RoyalCon and we thank our promotional booth crew—Keith Braithwaite, Fernando Novo, Barbara Silverman, and Maureen Whitelaw—for helping to advance the club at this new convention.

RoyalCon chair Christopher Hammock, who happens to be a member of MonSFFA, tells us that the con was well received and covered its costs. We congratulate Chris and his concom on the premiere edition of RoyalCon and look forward to a sophomore edition in 2007, which, indeed, we are told is in the works.

Con•Cept

This year's installment of the long-running Con•Cept took place over the weekend of October 13-15 at the familiar Days Hotel, which has been Con•Cept's home for many years. The popular, fan-friendly con, known for interesting and entertaining English- and French-language panel programming among other things, drew folk from as far away as Norway! About 300 people, by some

estimates—perhaps a few less—were onsite. (Official attendance numbers and financial information have yet to be released.)



Honoured guests included 2006 Hugo-winning author Robert Charles Wilson (*Darwinia*, *Blind Lake*, *Spin*); acclaimed Quebec SF/F writer Élisabeth Vonarburg (*Reine de Mémoire* series); actor Steve Bacic (*Andromeda*, *Stargate SG-1*, *Blade*, *The X-Files*) and director David Winning (*Earth: Final Conflict*, *Andromeda*, *Stargate Atlantis*); Ottawa-based independent filmmaker Brett Kelly (*The Bonesetter*, *The Feral Man*, *My Dead Girlfriend*); and perennial Con•Cept MC Larry Stewart.

Con•Cept again succeeded in packing a whole lot of fun into a full weekend, offering attendees no less than four tracks of hourly programming, a dealers' room, collectibles auction, Con•Cept's signature "Sci-Fi Garage Sale" (attendees are given the opportunity to sell a small number of their collectible items through the auspices of the con), an art show, model competition, displays of fancraft, a masquerade, dance, and con suite. The con's "chat room," an innovation this year, provided table space for small groups of fans to launch a fanzine or self-published book, for example, or get together for a discussion, gaming session, or special interest group meeting.

MonSFFA booked a promotional table at Con•Cept, from behind which our crew talked up the club and sold MonSFFA memberships, MonSFFilms DVDs, and back issues of *Warp* to the tune of \$170 worth. The club thanks those MonSFFen who staffed our table: Keith Braithwaite, Fernando Novo, Barbara Silverman, and Josée Bellemare. And, we offer a special nod of thanks to member Alice Novo's young son, Alex, who helped out at the table for a few hours.

Con•Cept attendees are often effusive in their praise of the con's always-fun, packed schedule and friendly atmosphere, and the crowd this year was no different. It is this, probably more than any other factor, that consistently rates Con•Cept a great party for so many con-

goers.

The convention, however, has been chronically understaffed for many years and from time to time, *acutely* understaffed. Con•Cept now faces an uncertain future as few local fans have stepped up to replace seasoned concom members who have either scaled back their involvement or gafiated after years of service to the con. Chair Cathy Palmer-Lister, who has helmed Con•Cept for longer than she considers wise, is the most recent to retreat, indicating that she will not return as chair. We applaud her tireless dedication to Con•Cept while appealing to local fans—particularly those with the necessary skills and experience—to become involved in the planning and running of the con, as did MonSFFA a half-dozen years ago following the cancellation of Con•Cept 2000. The scrubbing of the con in 2000 was but one of several instances over the years that saw the event cancelled as a result of local fandom's apathy. We may well see present circumstances dictate the same again, *and perhaps for good*, which would be an awful shame.

We can step into our time machine and jump ahead several weeks at this juncture so as to inform readers that both conventions reported having covered their costs. RoyalCon recorded an attendance of 280 while at 228, Con•Cept's numbers were down by about 100 or so over 2004's edition of the con (Con•Cept did not hold a 2005 convention). It has been postulated that the concom had difficulty managing and promoting Con•Cept this year as effectively as in years past because of a dearth of staff. Considering that the 2006 concom was greatly overburdened almost from day one, it is a testament to this tiny group that Con•Cept 2006 was very well received and as fun and entertaining an event as ever.

October's Impulse also offered the club's condolences to MonSFFA's Nick Krimp and his family on "the passing in August of Roland Krimp, Nick's beloved father," and was pleased to pass along news of a fresh award for MonSFFA's fan film, Beavra:

Beavra Elron Award-Winner

MonSFFan René Walling returned from V-Con, Vancouver's SF/F convention, earlier this month with news

of an award for *Beavra*, MonSFFA's 2003 fan film. *Impulse* readers may recall that a copy of *Beavra* was mailed to Vancouver fans this past summer for viewing at a meeting of the local SF/F club and at V-Con.

René, on behalf of the V-Con folk, presented the "Elron Award" to MonSFFA at Con•Cept 2006 in the presence of MonSFFA president and *Beavra* editor Berny Reischl and club vice-president and *Beavra* writer/director Keith Braithwaite. The tongue-in-cheek Elron Award honours annually the "worst" in science fiction and celebrates all that is cheesiest about the genre. The award is, appropriately, a bronzed lemon set atop a paperback edition of one of John Norman's *Gor* novels.

Officially accepting the Elron on behalf of MonSFFA was *Beavra* himself, in the form of a hand puppet scheduled to star in the upcoming *Beavra* sequel, *Beavra Las Vegas*.

Our thanks to the V-Con committee for the "honour." *Beavra* can now be legitimately advertised as a *multiple* award-winning film! We plan to produce an explanatory plaque to accompany the award and proudly display it at club functions.

We close this installment of MonSFFandom with Impulse's monthly MonSFFA meeting reports, April through September 2006:

April MonSFFA Meeting

25 or more folk attended MonSFFA's April 23 meeting. The originally scheduled presentation on Superman having been postponed at the eleventh hour until a later meeting, a quickly concocted game testing club members' arcane knowledge of SF/F was slotted in as replacement. But opening the meeting were Khoba Sysavane and Christopher Hammock, who offered their "Case for Life on Mars."

Scientific and pseudo-scientific theories of life on our planetary neighbour were discussed, including supposed proof of some Martian civilization once having thrived on the Red Planet. The photographic evidence cited in support of this infamous theory was presented to the group. While the "Face on Mars" appears to be a monumental carving of a humanoid face staring up at the stars from

the planet's surface, subsequent photos of the same area suggest that this "face" was formed by a simple trick of light falling upon a rock formation. Nonetheless, the notion of an ancient alien race having populated Mars cannot but stir the imagination of science fiction aficionados.

Our imaginations are also stirred by the prospect of a manned space mission to Mars. The details of a few proposed Mars missions were outlined for the group. One bold plan involves unmanned cargo runs and landings in advance of a manned mission. The idea here is that a base would be set up on Mars in anticipation of the arrival of a crewed excursion. Robotic machines would tap the Martian environment to manufacture livable conditions for the coming astronauts and fuel for their return trip. Once established, the base could host numerous manned missions over the years.

Among the items up for grabs during the mid-meeting raffle were passes to the Montreal premiere of the non-genre Robin Williams comedy *RV*. "Not since *Star Wars* has there been a science fiction film like *RV*," quipped club VP Keith Braithwaite, his voice irony-tinged as he announced the inclusion of the passes as raffle prizes. Keith was presiding over the meeting in the absence of MonSFFA president Berny Reischl, who was home sick.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to our substitute programming item, a game dubbed "One of These Things is Not Like the Others" and run by Keith with help from Lindsay Brown. Two teams were formed and challenged to identify which of four selections from a series of groups did not belong with the others for obvious—and sometimes not so obvious—reasons. The game drew from SF/F literature, film and television, and comics. A sample question: Which of these four actresses does not belong with the others?—Teri Hatcher, Kristin Kreuk, Noel Neill, Margot Kidder. Answer: Kristin Kreuk, who plays Lana Lang on *Smallville*. The others all played Lois Lane in various screen adaptations of the Superman story....

Thanks to our panellists and game hosts for handling the afternoon's programming. A nod, as well, to all who helped plan and run this meeting, with a special tip of the hat to Gord Morrow for stocking our snack table with some two

dozen tasty hotdogs.

Ottawa Fans Welcomed to May MonSFFA Meeting

About 25 folk were in attendance at the club's May 28 meeting, including a contingent of Ottawa fans—members of OSFS, the Ottawa Science Fiction Society—who had travelled to Montreal to visit MonSFFA. A few system bugs had to be worked out before the meeting's lead presentation, on sci-fi's coolest "hotrods," could begin, so the afternoon's programme was shuffled. Parking the hotrods while misters Scott and La Forge ran a level-three diagnostic on their software, we opened instead with a screening of recent second-season *Doctor Who* episodes, these in place of the fannish game that was listed as the meeting closer. Said game, however, had been incorrectly slated as part of our May meeting's agenda (it is planned, in fact, for November). Thankfully, the good Doctor was able to step in at the last minute to fill the bill.

Our mid-afternoon BoA (Board of Advisors) meeting was held as scheduled but trimmed from its originally allotted 30 to a quick few minutes. We took this brief time to update our meeting programming for the remainder of the year, rescheduling a few items, dropping a couple, and adding anew.

The meeting recessed for 10 minutes during which our usual raffle was held, various announcements of interest to MonSFFA made, and a gift bestowed upon our own Keith Braithwaite by the OSFS folk as thanks for his having brought his Ray Harryhausen retrospective to their club meeting the previous month.

A workable fix having now been made to his file, Fernando "Fern" Novo was ready to present to the group his slideshow on sci-fi hotrods. Fern had assembled hundreds of design sketches, blueprints, and photos of the science fiction genre's many souped-up vehicles. These included not only speedsters like Mad Max's super-charged *Road Warrior* interceptor and the deadly transcontinental racers of *Death Race 2000*, but such all-terrain vehicles as the 6-wheeled mobile laboratory of the post-apocalyptic future depicted in the short-lived 1970s SF TV series *Ark II*. Certain spacecraft, as well, fit Fern's broader definition of a hotrod,

probably the best known of these being Han Solo's swift *Millennium Falcon*.

Fern offered tidbits of behind-the-scenes information on each of the vehicles he showcased. The imposing super-charger on Max's interceptor, for example, was, in fact, non-functional, and *Ark II*'s titular vehicle was made of fiberglass modules affixed to a garbage/dump truck chassis.

An existing car or truck is often modified, explained Fern, to arrive at the fictional vehicle required for a television series or film. *Knight Rider*'s computerized super car, K.I.T.T. (Knight Industries Two Thousand), is a customized 1982 Pontiac Trans-Am. Less recognizable after its conversion into the APC (Armoured Personnel Carrier) used by the Colonial Marines in *Aliens* is a special heavy-duty tractor once employed at Heathrow Airport to tow jumbo jets.

In some cases, vehicles are built from scratch, as was *Damnation Alley*'s Landmaster, an articulated ATV with a unique arrangement of 12 wheels mounted in four triangular assemblies that allowed the 11-ton vehicle to easily maneuver on rough terrain, and in sand, mud, or water. The Landmaster, built by Hollywood car customizer Dean Jeffries, proved rather more interesting to watch than the movie in which it was featured!

Jeffries and the famous "King of Kustomizers," George Barris, were responsible for television's most memorable vehicles of the 1960s, including the Green Hornet's Black Beauty and the most celebrated of Barris' designs, the 1966 Batmobile. A hefty Ford V-8 rocketed Adam West and Burt Ward to the scene of the crime each week in this modified 1955 Lincoln Futura concept car. Barris' Batmobile was equipped with an array of crime-fighting accessories, including a chain/cable cutter, battering ram (Bat-Ram), and a lever with which to release a pair of drag 'chutes and execute an "Emergency Bat-Turn." Barris' shop also supplied the Munsters with their wheels. The family Koach was made from three Model T Ford bodies and fitted with a 289 Cobra mill lifted from a 1966 Mustang GT. Grandpa Munster's Drag-U-La, meanwhile, was literally a coffin on wheels powered by a 390ci engine. Zoom Zoom!

Scale models are employed, as well,

to represent sci-fi vehicles. British television producer Gerry Anderson's many genre series featured a variety of tricked-out cars and trucks like the SPV (Spectrum Pursuit Vehicle) and Joe 90's jet-car (capable of land, sea, and air travel). Time, unfortunately, did not permit Fern to showcase Anderson's numerous hotrods but he promises a future presentation focusing on these alone.

Our usual thanks to all who helped plan and run this meeting, with special nods to club president Berny Reischl, who provided the *Doctor Who* episodes, and featured panelist Fernando Novo.

June MonSFFA Meeting

25 or so folk were on hand for the club's June 11 meeting, programming for which included our revisiting of a spirited discussion we had held at a previous meeting. We again explored issues regarding the measure of reading in modern society and asked whether on-screen pleasures such as movies and video games have usurped the written word as entertainment.

Panelists Cathy Palmer-Lister, Yolande Rufiange, and Keith Braithwaite moderated the debate, which proved as lively this second time around as it had been the first. With every opinion proffered, hands shot up requesting the floor to either support or, more often, challenge the speaker!

While statistics suggest that fewer people are reading these days, it was postulated that readers, perhaps put off by the high price of books, have moved to the Web. Fan fiction was brought up. The many Web sites dedicated to fan fiction are a font of fresh genre material for the reader seeking greater variety than is generally available at a typical bookstore. But fan fiction is merely a niche, came the counter-argument, serving those who yearn for more, *more* of a favourite established character or storyline than is obtainable commercially. And let's not forget that so very much of fan fiction is utter garbage, it was opined. True also of the professionally published stuff was the retort—Sturgeon's Law! This got the group off on a bit of a tangent discussing really bad novels read and actually *enjoyed* for no other reason than their laughable plotting and prose.

It was then put forth that the decline

of specialty bookshops, like Montreal's now-defunct SF/F oasis, Nebula Books, has contributed to the decline in reading. Big book retailers like Chapters cater to the mainstream and thus niche interests are ill served, with little diversity and fewer titles stocked than might be found in a smaller specialty shop. And, it was added, staffers at the big bookstores are rarely as knowledgeable about a given genre as are the folk working in a shop devoted to that genre. As well, big retailers provide scant opportunity to discover new writers.

Some audience members cited the failure of our schools to instill in youth a passion for reading. Much of today's entertainment is image-based, added others, delivered to youngsters on a screen of some kind—home computers, video games, DVDs. Words on a page seem rather quaint by comparison.

Another angle explored was the tempo of modern life, quicker than in decades past, it was noted, thanks in large part to technology. People have become conditioned accordingly. Attention spans are shorter, for instance. We have precious little time to enjoy a good book so instead, we'll catch a quick movie. The idea of leisurely reading a book is alien to many today. And yet, that leisurely read is so very rewarding, avowed several audience members. There is much the written word can convey that a picture cannot. Said picture is often *not* worth the proverbial thousand words. We are definitely missing out when we do not take the time to curl up and enjoy a good book.

The latter part of the meeting was dedicated to a critique of contemporary Hollywood's many sequels and remakes. Keith Braithwaite led the discussion and

the group began by speculating on why so many producers choose to rework or serialize existing properties rather than introduce fresh material. Listed were those rare examples of worthy sequels and remakes—*Aliens*, *The Thing*, *King Kong*, to name a few. In the end, the discussion boiled down to those few reasons that justify the production of a sequel or remake. The group concluded that a sequel should only be made if the original tale is furthered by means of exploring a completely different story angle. And a remake is warranted only if an essentially good story that was poorly told the first time is “done right,” or if the “reimagining” of an existing film provides the opportunity to apply the superior production values and convincing visual effects that the original lacked.

The MonSFFilms team gathered about an hour before the meeting to plan for restarting production on their *Timeline* project, begun last spring. The full-scale sets initially conceived and built having proven problematic in early shooting, the crew decided to start from scratch utilizing miniature sets. Actors will be shot against a green-screen and this footage composited with footage of the miniatures.

Our thanks to all who helped plan and run this meeting, with a special nod to our panellists.

August MonSFFA Meeting

The room was full for MonSFFA's series of SF/F-themed crafting workshops on August 20. The club's meeting this day was entirely devoted to a number of hands-on workshops on such fancraft as costuming and scale-model building.

After a general introduction to the session by club president Berny Reischl, each discipline was briefly highlighted and the seminars began. Tables had been set up around the room to accommodate each workshop and folk were free to circulate and explore, in addition to the aforementioned costume craft and model-making, beading, woodcraft, origami, and computer graphics. One or more MonSFFen specializing in the given craft staffed each table, outlining the basics for interested observers, answering questions, and offering hands-on demonstrations of techniques. Projects both finished and in the works were on display and people were invited to try their hand at some of the crafts.

The afternoon was enjoyed by all participants, proving a learning experience for budding sci-fi crafters and offering journeymen the opportunity to talk shop, and exchange ideas and tips.

We thank very much our designated workshop hosts and those who joined them behind the tables: Miranda Feenstra, Marc Durocher, and Josée Bellemare (costuming); Dominique Durocher, Mark Burakoff, Daniel P. Kenney, Wayne Glover, and Phil Simard (scale-model building); Alice Novo (beading), Cathy Palmer-Lister and Lindsay Brown (woodcraft); Cathy again (origami); and Berny Reischl (computer graphics).

Our usual thanks, as well, to all in addition to the above who helped plan and run this meeting.

A club BoA (Board of Advisors) meeting scheduled for the morning immediately prior to the club meeting was postponed.



Bernard Reischl

MonSFFA Fund-Raiser Nets Club Over \$450

A MonSFFilms production meeting opened the club's well attended September 17 gathering, which was otherwise entirely devoted to MonSFFA's annual fund-raiser.

Fabrication of scale-models for the film unit's *TimeLine* project was the focus of this production meeting. *TimeLine* writer/director Keith Braithwaite outlined the process by which footage of actors would be laid over background plates of miniature sets to arrive at a convincing composite of the script's characters stepping in and out of a time machine during a futuristic TV game show. Keith produced design sketches of the sets and set pieces required and the club's model-

makers were charged with the construction of these. It is expected that filming on the project will begin early in the new year.

Our fund-raiser followed, beginning with a raffle and moving presently to an SF/F collectibles auction. Over 40 lots were on the block. Items included numerous videos and DVDs, T-shirts, toys, games, model kits, posters, and books. Unique SF/F-themed articles hand-crafted by MonSFFA members were offered along with such collectibles as a reproduction of the One Ring and a Ferengi shot glass, the latter procured from Las Vegas' Star Trek Experience.

\$80, paid for a DVD set of the complete original *Battlestar: Galactica* television series, was the afternoon's

highest winning bid. Other high bids ranged between \$18 and \$36. The average bid worked out to just over \$8. The auction netted \$362 for the club!

"Bargain Table" sales of paperback books, magazines, movie memorabilia, etc. were ongoing throughout the meeting and increased the afternoon's tally by a few dollars more. In all, our 2006 MonSFFA fund-raiser added over \$450 to the club's coffers.

We thank, first of all, those members and friends of MonSFFA who donated items to the cause, as well as those who bid on these items. Thanks, also, to our auctioneer, Keith Braithwaite, runner Lindsay Brown, and cashier Mark Burakoff. *

"The afternoon was enjoyed by all participants, proving a learning experience for budding sci-fi crafters and offering journeymen the opportunity to talk shop, and exchange ideas and tips."



Sylvain St-Pierre & Lindsay Brown

The Last Words!

The Fernster

Okay, here we are again with the 5th issue of The Last Word, and we are now including The last words from a wider field of films. Most of the movies will still be from the worlds of Science Fiction, but from now on other film genre will also be included.

Try your hand, on the following... of course we will start with an easy one first.

The Last Words #5.

- 1) "Follow meeeee....." (2 pts)
- 2) "Will you all follow me." (5 pts)
- 3) "Now we're free. I will see you again.... But not yet, not yet!" (5 pts)
- 4) "And so he slept, waiting for the moment he could walk the Earth again." (3pts)
- 5) "I'll make you famous!" (5 pts)

1) Smeagol/Gollum - The Two Towers - Lord of the Rings
 2) Air Stewardess - Those Magnificent Men and Their Flying Machines.
 3) Juba - Galdiator
 4) Hannibal - Ryan Reynolds
 Blade Trinity
 5) William H. Bonney/Billy the Kid - Emilio Estevez - Young Guns II

Score Card:

- 0-2 You're in trouble...go back to bed...
- 3-5 You're still not ready for the big time...
- 6-10 You'd better start going to the movies...
- 11-15 Average movie-goer...
- 16-20 Top notch movie freak! You scare me...
- 21+ Hey, You cheated!