

# THE ART OF GARTHNESS #12

April 2016



## Colophon

Welcome to *The Art of Garthness* #12, dated April 2016, a personalzine from Garth Spencer at 4240 Perry Street, Vancouver, BC CANADA V5N 3X5. You can also contact me at [garth.van.spencer@gmail.com](mailto:garth.van.spencer@gmail.com). This fanzine is available for contributions in the form of articles, letters, illustrations, or other fanzines in trade.

## Table of Contents

The Project.....	1
Letters .....	3
Feature articles.....	7
Fanzine reviews .....	10

## Missing, Presumed Fed

Where is George Phillies?

## Art in This Issue

Taral Wayne, “Indiana Bunns” .....	cover
Via Facebook .....	pp. 1, 10
Steve Stiles (with William Rotsler) .....	p. 3
Robert W. Sirignano.....	p. 7



“English”, of course, and as anyone who speaks English will more or less understand anyone else in the world who speaks English, Anglophones may more or less understand each other’s manners and unconscious assumptions.

That is, Anglophones will more or less understand each other, until one of them starts using purely local expressions like “Skookum” or “joss” or “galah”, or until a visitor to some parts of the Australian outback discovers that cats are considered vermin.

Am I wrong to find these breakdowns similar to the standard SF routines in which androids and aliens embarrass themselves socially? Or the rather less amusing incidents in which teenagers and autistic adults embarrass themselves and others?

If “Anglo culture” were described in a standard text, then by definition it has been a different culture in different places, and in different generations – and it has been *subliminally* communicated. Perhaps this mostly works, most of the time, in most cases. (Except that I, for one, don’t *get* subliminal communication; I seem to need a basic English text, that says what people don’t normally spell out.)

In the real world there are actually surprising numbers of people who missed lessons of standard Anglo culture. Looking at the daily news, we keep seeing stories of naïve people who *actually don’t know* that English-speaking countries are founded on secular constitutions - for very good reasons - and *not* founded on Christianity; that we are *and have always been* polyglot and multiethnic societies, not entirely Anglo societies; that social rules and ethics have entirely practical purposes, they aren’t simply arbitrary, without cause, or without effect; that *things add up*, not only with physics and engineering and appliances but in time and money, so that when you’re out of time and money and supplies, you’ve simply run *out*, and there’s no fast-talking around it; that any population you want to talk about, from Parliament to Muslims to American conservatives to native nations to the Intellectual Property Institute of Canada, is an incredible stew of different personalities and factions, each trying to pull the whole in a different direction.

At a guess, if there *were* a standard text of Anglo culture to refer to, we might discover that each of us got *only 75% or less* of the lessons - and much of what we learned is folklore, and urban myth, and common nonsense. Some of the nonsense is merely ludicrous, if we look right at it, and some of it is lethally wrong, as in anti-vaccination propaganda. This suggests to me that even the best-informed of us can benefit from an outright description of our contemporary culture.

This leaves entirely aside the needs of immigrants and refugees in Europe, in English-speaking countries, or other industrialized countries. Some people have put it to me, quite bluntly, that some new Canadians *need to be told* directly to learn the language, earn a living, and not assault normally-dressed women, under the impression that they’re available. (One of the people who told me this is himself a recent immigrant, which suggests that maybe he knows what he’s talking about.)

Naïve Anglophones – and any people born and raised anywhere else in the industrialized world, who happen not to deal with the outside world much – could stand to learn that their culture is only one among many, just as their language or

their country is only one among many. And the successful among us need to learn social responsibility, if they happened to miss that lesson.

Now I ask you: who *gets* the lessons they need, just to get through life in our times, and who doesn't? I say that subliminal communication or word-of-mouth doesn't cut it anymore.

What will follow is my humble attempt at a standard text ...



## Letters

### ***R-Laurraine Tutihasi, March 18, 2016***

*(to Art of Garthness #4)*

Good quote from Heinlein about voting ("Vote. There may not always be someone you want to vote for, but there's always someone you'll want to vote against"). This is a point that should be emphasized more. After all, if someone you abhor is elected and you didn't vote, you were instrumental in his election.

*((Voting by who you're against is, like, so Canadian.))*

Out of the long list of life skills you list, I cannot do several. I cannot navigate with an IRL map; I don't even know what that is. I don't know how to set up a wireless network, though I may be able to figure it out if necessary; I've just never had to do it; I leave those types of things to my husband. I cannot create a web site; again I've always left those things to my husband. I don't know what to do about red wine spilled on carpet; I've never had to deal with it. I don't know how to operate a fire

extinguisher; I hope I can figure it out if necessary. I don't know how to treat a bee sting, never having had to deal with one. On the other hand, I know where to get information about all the above.

*((I'm like you, except I have built web pages and web sites. In fact I have a couple to repair and update.))*

I think the world is slowly moving toward a *lingua franca*. Already English seems to have become established as a sort of universal language. However this type of things takes generations as opposed to years. It probably won't happen in time to help you personally.

*((There are about ten languages spoken worldwide, used for diplomacy, commerce, industry, finance, arts and entertainment, scientific papers, and probably drug-running and love letters. At different times the geographical range or number of speakers of English, Cantonese, Panjabi, Mandarin, Spanish, Arabic, Italian, French, Japanese, and Russian changes their relative rankings.*

*((The several versions of English are sufficiently different in different countries to require translation. Probably the versions of French and Spanish are similarly diverse. But this is a twice-told tale.))*

### **Lloyd Penney, March 4, 2016**

I'm relatively caught up, but I still have two issues of *Art of Garthness* to respond to! Sorry about that, time for even more catch-up. Here's comments on issues 10 and 11...

10...You're looking for mad scientists? Check with the local steampunk groups. I suspect they're all there, having a beer or two, and wondering how mad scientists in the 1950s movies were all weird and working on their evil laughs, but still had daughters who would help to bring down their nefarious schemes.

*((There is now a Mad Science forum on Facebook. My intent was to see if any contemporary science fiction fans are actually interested in getting into the science or the engineering that writers mention. I despaired of steampunk when I realized a) continually displaying gears and pistons suggests to me that many of us don't actually understand the electronics and chemical engineering we actually depend on, and b) steampunk fiction is not about alternative engineering, anyway. Maybe this despair is beside the point, now that "maker" culture has appeared. One awaits results.))*

Religions competing to out-good each other? That would mean that one religion would accept the other[s] as legitimate, and most religions see other religions as quite heathen, and Not The True Path. Good idea, but it wouldn't work in this dystopian future we live in.

*((That form of arrogance was mainly a Judeo-Christian-Muslim bad habit, and not even universal among all their sects.*

*((You may have seen a Facebook meme about the current pope actually saying out loud that all religions were paths to God. This from a Catholic pope, yet, while a number of American “Christian” denominations are still being exclusivist. Let’s just let that sink in, shall we?))*

I would like nothing better than to see public stupidity being a fad.

*((Is that what I wrote? Is the above quite what you meant to say? I’ll have to check back ... it seems from recent news that publicly displaying your stupidity is already a well-established custom.))*

I see most programming on television, and other events, as frippery meant to distract the average citizen from what’s really happening. Frippery in this case covers popular culture, which our science fiction arises from, and also the online life of video games and unfortunately, social media. If the general public had half an idea of what was really happening, they’d rise up to stop it.

Purina Bachelor Kibble...for a full year until he’s full grown. Some say bachelors never really grow up, so they may be eating bowls and bowls of this stuff for some time to come. Looks similar to Gopher Chow served up at SF cons.

Yvonne and I met at a disco. No, not dancing, but attending a special event premiering the very first *Star Trek* movie. I was invited to a party she held, we started dating, I moved in with her as I finished school, and we were married in 1983. This May, we mark 33 years.

I had such a good time with my Palm Tungsten, long gone. We recently bought ourselves a couple of Samsung Galaxy tablets, but it’s not the same. My Palm was my personal organizer, but rather than use the tablet, I have a simple Word document I update each week, as mentioned in my last loc, and in my opinion, does a far better job than a programme could. My mileage has varied, I guess.

“*Millennials do not volunteer to do anything*” ... well, the same could be said for several generations before them. This is why fan-run conventions are slowly going away. Everyone wants the good time, but few are willing to work for it. The idea of a convention with gophers or similar volunteers is becoming a thing of the past. Some years ago, I floated the idea of a nation-wide newszine for Canadian fans, along the lines of your old *Maple Leaf Rag*, but the vitriol that came through via e-mail put an end to that idea. These days, there are plenty of clubs for a myriad of interests, but they are all Facebook groups, where there are no dues to pay; setting up such a group is relatively easy; and joining is simply clicking the right box. It does provide a measure of community, but not like regular club meetings did. I truly feel old when something as basic of meeting to form communities seems so...vintage?

*((Apparently you have to ignore a lot of trolls to do any communication online, whether by email, text, Twitter, or Facebook. I guess it’s a Sturgeon’s Law sort of thing. Are you sure you were well-advised to pay them any attention?))*

*((More important than the trolls is the fact that there simply isn't as big an emotional investment for fans, these days, as in the decades when the people you could actually talk to were few and far between. That means that people aren't highly motivated.))*

I've read about micronations and the Republic of Talossa. Wonder if they issued postage stamps? Yes, they did! And coins and bills, too? There's a collectible. What about passports, and are they recognized by larger countries? Can we ship Donald Trump there? He could become the Grand Dictator there.

*((Who issues what depends on the micronation. I haven't seen Talossans produce anything beyond emails about make-believe elections and politics.))*

By the time one realizes what the General Rules of Life are, so much time has passed [that] many of those rules have changed or simply gone away. Those who do grasp all of the rules of life seem to be fairly successful. I like to think I have a fairly good grasp, but when I realize I don't, I am sure I look like an old fogey to some.

*((How much is enough to know? At what age do we expect somebody to know enough to be independent and self-supporting and even a good provider for a family? When we use the phrase "you ought to know by now", what are all the things we expect them to know? It isn't only autistic adults and new Canadians who are clued out; we are now in a situation where many grown adults, even in responsible elected positions, are perniciously misinformed about their own country's election process or constitution; teenagers entertain pernicious misinformation about what is a sexual act and what its consequences are; and educated professionals can be clueless about the office appliances they depend on.))*

11...If we ever are able to figure out everything we need to know, we will probably be quite advanced in our age. It's probably our biggest obstacle in life.

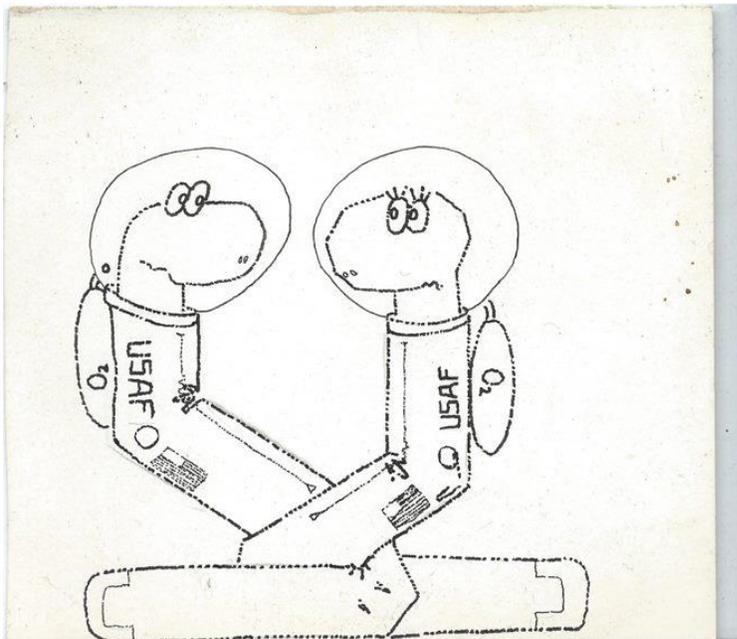
Deciding to be an adult...well, I have mostly done that. I have little plaques that say, "If you haven't grown up by the time you hit 50 (60), then you don't have to" and "Growing old is mandatory, growing up is optional". With that in mind, Yvonne and I are having great fun, and we look forward to what chaos and silliness the future will bring.

Old people repeating themselves...right now, Yvonne's mother is going through that, and so are we. We endure it because this is something she is going through, and may not be aware of it. She believes that Trudeau is the prime minister...Pierre, not Justin.

I need to nominate for the Auroras, and vote in the FAAn Awards and in TAFF. Whether I will actually get to them is another thing. SF has left me behind, and I am generally an ignorant voter. To me, that ignorance means I really shouldn't vote on what I don't know.

*((There is science fiction – and fantasy, and horror – and then there are various fandoms. Written words remain, and can be reread. The various fandoms – well, hobby groups – that form around entertainments are events, and they go through changes, and eventually they're over. Only took me a few decades to work it out.))*

*We Also Heard From: Cathy Palmer-Lister, Stephen Stiles, Lyn McConchie ("stoush' - kiwi for fight, with the sense that it may be a number of people, with situation confused"), Jose Sanchez, David Thayer, and Dara Korra'ti ("People on Tumblr talk a \_lot\_ about adulting, and really, \_I think that's about the same thing\_. Some of the posts and commentaries are specifically about the sorts of stuff you talk about. A lot of it won't apply to you, but I suspect pretty strongly that some of it \_will\_. You have to be willing to approach your late teens and 20s again, but since that's when humans get their social rules sorted out, that's... kind of okay, really. The tag "adulting" isn't entirely unuseful, and you can find some good blogs to follow that way, if you want to read people talking about these sorts of things.")*



## Feature articles

### **The Digital Life:**

Canada has its peculiar institutions in the new digital world; not only the Shaw email Internet service provider, not only the Fido cell phone service, but Kobo e-books, supported by the Indigo/Chapters megabookstore chain. I now find myself the owner and obsessive operator of a Fido cell phone operating the Android OS; a somewhat dated Kobo e-book reader; a Proscan minitab and an ASUS Eeebook laptop, both operating Windows 8.1; and a refurbished desktop from the local Freegeek store, operating the latest Ubuntu release (a Linux variant).

My cousin Michael has convinced me I should switch cell phone service providers, but I am undecided as to which would give me the better savings. I dislike having to juggle two or more factors when making decisions, and five or more variables seem to be involved in cell phone contracts. Perhaps the bottom line – the deciding factor – is the

way I keep looking at the cell phone for new messages, not only voicemail and text but emails and Facebook posts. It is like the way I look for more coffee.

Maybe I was smart to shop around, and acquire most items for under \$100 or \$125 each; but when I was ready for a new laptop I was fed up with being behind the curve, and nerved myself to shell out about \$250. On the whole I am very satisfied with the ASUS X205TA.

The minitabket I mostly use as an e-reader, in preference to the Kobo because I can download free e-books from Project Gutenberg and other resources. However, the Proscan's tendency to over-minimize \*everything\* onscreen gets a bit much, and it's painful to use the onscreen keyboard. I have to find the settings to expand the appearance of text, and I may have to shell out for a compatible external keyboard.

I have four email accounts, two at Shaw and two at Gmail.com, and I have two cobwebsites at the Vancouver CommunityNet (our local Freenet). It's long past time I got serious about updating the sites.

And here I spend my free time daydreaming about the lifestyle and faith of pre-Christian Scandinavians. Or speculating about how we're going to live, here in western Canada, when all the lights go out and the fuel and running water runs out. Am I silly enough yet?

### **Three Megabyte Opera:**

I think I'm going off television. Which is a strange thing to say, since I was basically a TV kid. I let favourite TV shows slide ... partly, I guess, because I get home a bit late to see the latest episodes.

But for this I might be watching any number of science documentaries, especially medical, archaeological or technology reports; *Vikings*; perhaps *X-Files*. Police procedurals and forensic shows used to engage me, but after a while the standard emotional hooks began to show. For some reason a lot of contemporary comedy leaves me cold.

### **Worldly Concerns:**

A few times I have contemplated emulating *I.F. Stone's Weekly* and doing my own, one-man digest of current events. The problem I discover, of course, is not the time and effort of gathering materials, but the time and effort to work my way through an embarrassment of online riches, and make any sense of it whatever.

So I guess I might as well make a facetious claim that *Interesting Times* is a standard global news source, but make it obviously the work of an opinionated crank with a few weird-ass obsessions, such as offering editions in English and Esperanto (and trying to offer Chinook Jargon and Welsh), or maintaining the idea that the newsletter is the organ of a world government. Headquartered in the utterly insignificant town of Spuzzum, B.C. Which, as we say in Vancouver, is "beyond Hope".

## **The Gelded Age:**

On appearance, the way our contemporary societies are structured allows average citizens every chance to be informed, participatory citizens. In effect, though, most of us have enough to pay attention to, just to maintain a home in driving distance of work, and keep ahead of bills and the interest on our debts, without reading three or four papers and monitoring the activities of elected representatives.

You may be way ahead of me, but I never learned to make sense of the finance pages, and the few times I tried to crack a basic economics primer, it seemed to start from unsupported premises, such as every consumer knowing and comparing the best prices for goods and services. If you're going to start from false premises, you're obviously going to arrive at false conclusions. My tentative theory these days is that economics performs the same role now, for managerial and chief-executive classes, that astrology performed for gentry and aristocrats four centuries ago. You are welcome to prove me wrong.

Little wonder if downsized industrial workers or displaced service staff feel their lives are at the mercy of forces they can neither identify nor control. Little wonder if popular politics is full of rage and conspiratorial drivel. And little wonder, nowadays, if the news coverage for an impending election is dominated by demagogues pandering to the lowest common denominator.

I'd like to blame the Belgians, or retreat to an anarcho-syndicalist commune, but that's just not on.

## **Do Some Writers Have a Lot to Answer for?**

Several times in my teenage science fiction reading, I realized I had mistaken some speculative future "science", invented for a story background, for established science in my real world. Of course I'm less credulous since I got out of high school, but then I finally got some of the background knowledge to give me some context.

It was one thing to realize that some of James Hogan's novels were based on pseudoscience, whether it was Velikovskian revisions of astrophysical and geological prehistory, or unsupported speculations about transferring minds from one body to another. I also realized eventually how dated some of the science and engineering was in Robert Heinlein's future-history novels: wire recorders in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, for instance, or "Thorsen tubes" directing household robots as we now do with programmed microchips.

It was quite another to realize that sometimes, a writer is showing his ignorance. In a novel about the discovery of a wrecked alien spaceship on Ganymede, James Hogan has his protagonists puzzling out an alien language from its digital records, approximating the patterns to linguistic structures and guessing at the meanings. Like as if it works that way. At one point a protagonist talks about the language "maturing over a long period of time", which is essentially meaningless, if you know anything about linguistics. Evidently James Hogan didn't.

It is another thing again to realize that many grown adults don't have any more context than I had as a teenager. How many are like the cab driver Carl Sagan met, who really didn't know that *National Enquirer* was not covering real science news? Or the earnest humorless fundamentalists who protested the film *The Da Vinci Code* as if it were a serious polemic, and not just another thriller?



## Fanzine reviews

**A Meara for Observers 20, February 2016**, Michael Meara ed. After nearly a year since the last issue, Michael Meara brings us a new edition. Michael Meara feels apologetic about the delay and the difference from his previous issues, but this is a loc-only issue, which solves his problem of how to handle a large backlog of letters. (Personally I'm fine with that; a large part of the delight of fanzines, for me, is the news and ideas that letters and fan articles offer.) For example, Mark Plummer expounds on having scotch for breakfast (because he fell asleep one night over *Jurassic Park*), personal fanzine style, sending zines to national libraries (Library and Archives

Canada invariably asked for copies of *BCSFazine* I had *already* posted to them – evidently they had an “equal opportunity” employee at their stated receiving address); Steve Jeffery on new printers that keep breaking down; Rodney Leighton on the way locating fanzines backfires for him; a prize loc from Jerry Kaufman, and the reliable loc from Lloyd Penney; and running through it all, reflections on mortality.

**Askance 36, March 2016**, John Purcell ed., 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845-3926 USA. John Purcell looks forward to his 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue; Mark Oshiro chronicles the bigotry he experienced, as Fan Guest of Honour, at ConQuest 46; Arnie Katz on old-time radio comedy, specifically the Lum & Abner show; John Purcell on being a peripheral comics fan; the New Orleans bid for Worldcon 2018; a survey of R. Graeme Cameron’s fanzines at [www.efanzines.com](http://www.efanzines.com); and locs, including the reliable loc from Lloyd Penney.

**Auroran Lights 18, March 2016**, R. Graeme Cameron ed. Much talk about the Aurora Awards, the Calgary convention hosting the next awards, Congress Boreal in Quebec, and a whole whack of SF market links.

**BCSFazine 512, “January” 2016**, Felicity Walker ed. A peculiarity of this monthly club newsletter is that the editor feels obligated to chronicle a great deal of detail in the calendar and club events, with the result that the official date on the current issue is for two months ago. Another peculiarity (based on some bad advice) is that the calendar doesn’t advertise events through more than two months (in the past), which is a problem for those of us who need to plan and budget congoing well into the future. With that said, this is a convenient zine to hold and read, being a 5.5”x8.5” newsletter, and there is a comprehensive listing of the month’s events by other clubs and fandoms in the city. Letters this issue include Taral Wayne’s cogent criticisms of the *Polar Borealis* venture, the reliable loc from Lloyd Penney.

**Broken Toys 47, February 2016**, Taral Wayne ed. 245 Dunn Ave., Apartment 2111, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1S6. Back issues of *Broken Toys* are available from eFanzines at <http://efanzines.com/Taral/index.htm> and from Fanac. org at <http://fanac.org/fanzines/BrokenToys/>. Writing, self-publishing, FAAn Awards, people who treat being furry as an identity like unto LGBT - are all subjected to Taral’s sardonic observation; Taral wonders why so much of his mail goes missing, and his friend Steven tells about an absurd attempt to plunder his luggage; letters from names both familiar and obscure, with the reliable loc from Lloyd Penney. (Are you beginning to see a trend here?)

**CounterClock 24, March 2016**, Wolf von Witting ed., Italy. This issue starts with Wolf’s research on the early SF fandom that arose in Germany, not between the wars in the form of a rocketry club, but as early as 1895. Interestingly, Wolf seems to organize his history in terms of prominent individuals, from Max Valier and Hermann Oberth through Willy Ley to the present. Amusing features in this issue include “Advice to Time Travelers”, such as what languages to speak and where to go if you can only speak English, an interview with a Perry Rhodan publisher; news about TAFF; news about IceCon, the first Icelandic convention, to be held October 2016 and the distinctive genre fiction coming out of Iceland; in-depth news about the group Genesis, and about upcoming European conventions; a loccol featuring Taral Wayne,

John Purcell, a host of others, and the reliable loc from Lloyd Penney. (Rumour has it that Lloyd is really the love child of two famous letter-writers of yesteryear, Harry Warner Jr. and Georgina “Dutch” Ellis.)

**CyberCozen, March 2016**, from the Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy. Naturally, the colophon is in Hebrew; but the rest of the newsletter is in English, including an editor’s speculations about his recent illness being an alien invasion, a review of Rebecca Ore’s *Being Human* (part of a trilogy published a few decades ago), and an article on the progress in inventing “metamaterials”.

**Enter At Your Own Risk 5**, Chuck Connor ed., [chuck.connor@india.com](mailto:chuck.connor@india.com). A selection of stories; stories about placing stories; letters from The Usual Suspects, unusually omitting Lloyd Penney.

**Opuntia 335**, “Leap Day 2016”, Dale Speirs ed., Calgary, AB, [opuntia57@hotmail.com](mailto:opuntia57@hotmail.com). Chinese New Year in Calgary! A suffusion of paper lanterns! Dale tells us all about CRYPTOLOGY! (I used to know all that stuff.) Even yet more Nero Wolfe stories! Abstracts from recent science papers! Letters! And a zine listing,

**Rodney’s Fanac 7**, Rodney Leighton, #11 Branch Road, Email, R.R. #3, TATAMAGOUCHE, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0; [rodney.leighton@gmx.co.uk](mailto:rodney.leighton@gmx.co.uk). Rodney’s life and readings and serious challenges in 2015 and 2016.