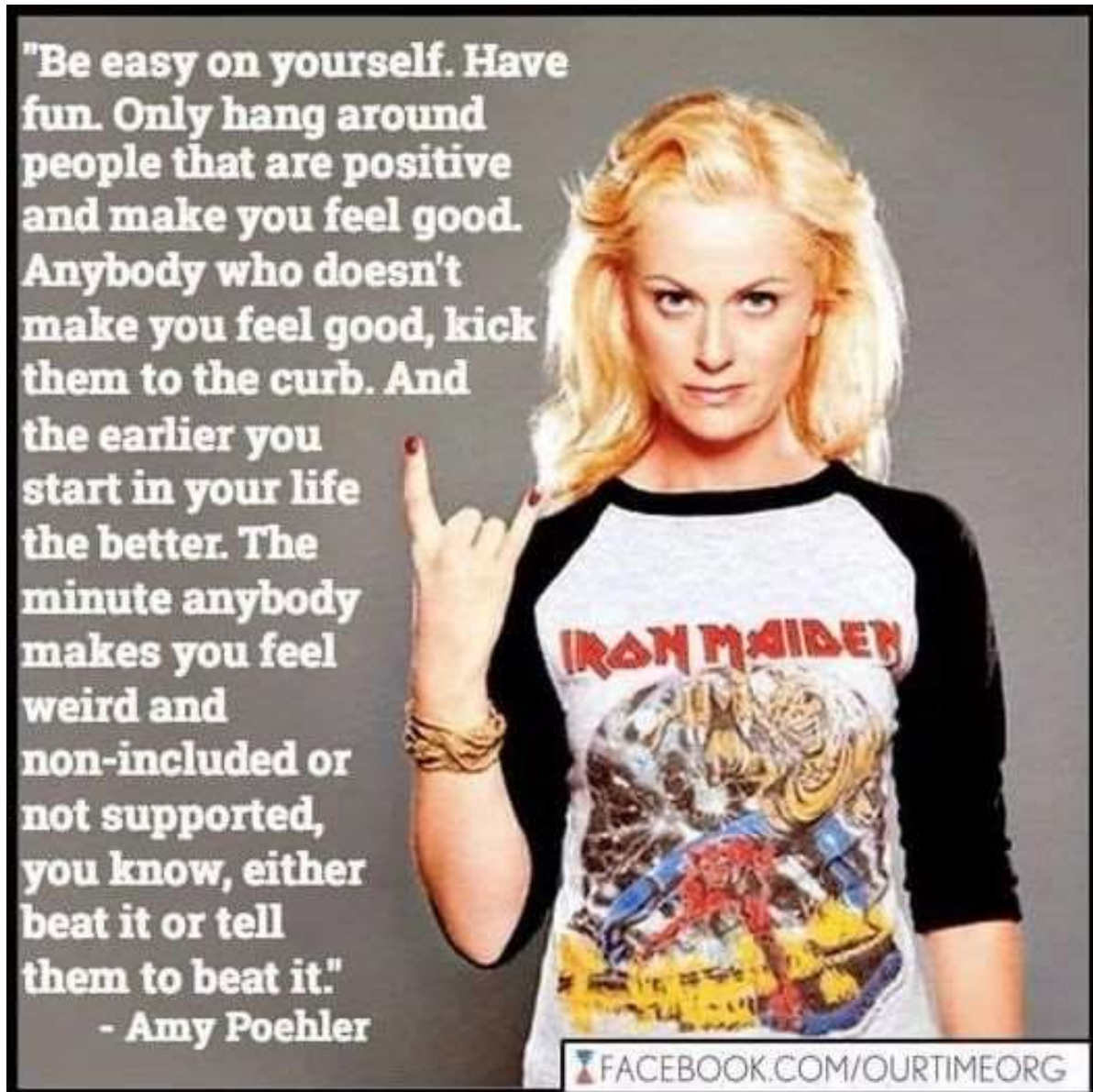


The Obdurate Eye

#19.5

A personalzine from Garth Spencer

September 2022



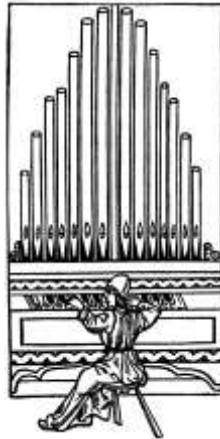
NEW CORFLU UPDATES!!

VCON 2022 CANCELLED!!!

INTERSTELLAR FAN FUND PROPOSED!!!!

MASTHEAD

THE OBDURATE EYE #19.5 (September 17, 2022) is what Garth Spencer does when nobody stops him in time. You can send letters, pictures, trade fanzines, articles, and suggested therapies to him by email to garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.



The organ of no clique or party

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Art Credits

Facebook memes cover, this page, p. 3

Local News

Corflu Pangloss Updates

CORRECTION: The Sands Hotel (hosting Corflu Pangloss on October 21-23) actually offers the convention room rate from October **18 through 24**, 2022. (That means a single/double room will be \$105 Cdn per night, plus tax; triple room \$120 CDN plus tax; and quad \$135 plus tax.)

As noted in the third progress report, the room block confirmation number is 4087. Guests may reserve on the convention's secured Web link or call 1-604-682-1831 or email sands@bwsands.com. Corflu Hotel secured booking link: https://www.bestwestern.com/en_US/book/hotelrooms.62025.html?groupId=N45ZU1Y9 .

NEW UPDATE: At <https://rusty-rose.creator-spring.com/> there are Corflu Pangloss mugs, tote bags, notebooks, and T-shirts available in a range of colours and styles, all featuring Dan Steffan's logo for Corflu Pangloss. Order now in time to show them at Corflu!

NOTE: The *Corflu Fanthology* (an anthology of great fanwriting from Corflu luminaries, past and present) will be available in either PDF or hardcopy format – please let the committee know your preference in advance

ALSO NOTE: Fran Skene is planning to hold Turkey Readings on the Sunday of Corflu Pangloss – readings of really bad science fiction – so that the audience can offer bids to stop the readings or continue. All proceeds go to benefit the Canadian Unity Fan Fund.

VCON: On Again Off Again

“VCON 2022 has been cancelled. It will not take place.

“Event Manager Chris Sturges sent me notification, which reads in part:

“I and members of my team have been down with Covid for most of August... I have been working hard to revitalize something that looks to me now that cannot be fixed. The complete lack of support from WCSFA made it very hard to have legitimacy in the eyes of sponsors. Two capital sponsors made a strong case that it would be better to rebuild this event from the ground up with proper business planning and financial backing. I believe that is the best case to move forward, but first I will have to clean up this. VCON 2022 will not be happening this year, I'm sorry. I have already protected WCSFA from the fallout, the 5-figure cancellation bill will fall on me alone. I will add it to the very large sums of money that I have spent on supporting VCON over the last 23 years and move on to a new event sometime in the vague future. I am processing refunds on all the purchased tickets...”

“So, VCON 2022 is dead. I’m not certain, but I think Chris is implying that whatever SF event he will attempt in the future will not be an effort to revive VCON, but something else entirely. This makes sense. In effect, VCON died over the last five years or so because the pool of volunteers dwindled to virtually nothing. VCON, as a project, no longer attracts fans. Neither does BCSFA. And I think WCSFA is struggling. What’s needed, in terms of the huge generation of current fen, is something contemporary attuned to their interests and needs. VCON simply doesn’t cut it. Hasn’t for a long time. A relaxacon revival might appeal to nostalgic VCON veterans but, frankly, I think a general interest convention is meaningless to today’s fandom. Modern fen have specialized interests. Niche cons are where it’s at. The classic VCON is dead.

“Meanwhile, I instructed Chris NOT to refund my membership fee but to consider it a donation covering a tiny portion of his out-of-hand expenses. A belated thank you for his efforts. You might consider doing the same.

“I’m guessing those who booked rooms should cancel immediately if at all possible. If it turns out not to be possible, then, damn it, hold a relaxacon together and salvage some joy out of this.”

In other news, www.vcon.ca is finally updated to show the convention is suspended for this year.

R. Graeme Cameron, in “Help Keep VCON Alive!” group,
Facebook, September 8, 2022

NASFiC 2023 in Winnipeg

“Pemmi-con 2023 is the 15th NASFiC (North American Science Fiction Convention). Pemmi-con will take place 20-23 July 2023, at Delta Hotels Winnipeg and the RBC Convention Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.”

For further news, email nasfic@winnipeg2023.ca.

<https://www.facebook.com/Pemmi-con-110701657830588/>

Are These Persons Actually Missing?

David Thayer is not missing; I was apparently slow in updating his email in my mailing list.

Graham Charnock is not missing, but my emails to him consistently bounce back.

Kevin Welch ... I’m not sure. Have you any clues?

Randy Barnhart ... I’m not sure. Have you any clues?

LoCs

(Re *The Obdurate Eye* 18)

Lloyd & Yvonne Penney penneys@bell.net, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B2, September 2, 2022

I am a little late, but then, I usually am. For responding to fanzines in a timely fashion. I may never catch up entirely, but I will catch up with you. Here come some comments on *The Obdurate Eye* 18.

I have seen pictures of cryptids (crab-like scuttling humanoid) in zines and online. I have no idea what the sudden fascination about them is, but there seems to be plenty of pictures and videos about them. Any commentary? I suspect these picture and videos may be doctored, but people want their own corner of the universe to be more detailed or bigger than everyone else's.

((Or, at least, more interesting than the changing conditions of life that we also can't do a damn thing about, I guess.))

At this time, I would have to agree with John Thiel's assessment that the N3F is where things are happening. True, fanac earns you no pay, and sometimes, no one shows any appreciation, but I think we do what we do for the value of participation and adding to the sum total of the activity. I won't get political here, for I do it elsewhere, but I agree with Guy Lillian about the state of American politics, and I expect it to get worse with time, and with promised actions by the current president and his Department of Justice and the January 6th committee. And the status of fanzines...I wish there were more, but at this time, I respond to those I can. My new budding editorial career is taking a lot of time away from other activities, like fanzines.



Is this Congress in session? Or Parliament? You decide

With all the VCON information you post, I hear from Graeme Cameron that Chris Sturges has largely disappeared, and will not respond to phone calls or e-mails. Graeme thinks VCON is dead, but I hope there will be a knight in shining armour who will come to save it. Ad Astra looks pretty dead here, and

it doesn't look like there are any conventions for anyone but comic book fans and anime fans.

((I guess your loc here predated the belated announcement of VCON news from Sturges, and the appearance of registration and program news the VCON website, followed by the subsequent announcement that VCON was called off.))

My loc... There are plenty of tired old ideas that will crop up from time to time, because not everyone thinks those ideas are old and tired. They will continue on for flogging and re-flogging, and there are times when you simply have to walk away and concentrate on what matters to you, what has importance and relevance.

Like I said earlier, our fanac is much simpler and cheaper than it used to be. As vendors, we have had a very successful summer, and we are looking to extend that success into the fall with more show to vend at. I have finished editing that major SF history book, plus another D.J. Holmes book, and more short stories for Scot Noel at *Dreamforge Magazine*, and my minor paying gig is at a business magazine in Toronto's east end. We also did our shows in London, Elmvale, Toronto (Anime North), and Coldwater, Ontario. We were fairly successful in selling the vendor's tables for Anime North, and we are going to do it again in 2023.

It is getting late, the nights are starting to cool down, and I really need to get a decent night's sleep for once, so I will sign off. Thank you for this issue, and I will look for the next one.

(Re *The Obdurate Eye* #19)

Bruce Gillespie gandc001@bigpond.com, **Sept. 2, 2022**

Thanks very much for the PDF of *Obdurate Eye* 10.

I'm disappointed, though, that you have not seen the latest issue of *SF Commentary*. I can no longer afford to send print copies overseas, but I would have thought you would have downloaded No. 110 automatically from efanzines.com.

((Mea culpa. I always feel there is something more I should have done, and now I see what it is. Or one of the things I forgot.))

To make up, I'm sending you the PDF of SFC 110 directly as an attachment.

((Thank you!!))

Taral Wayne, taral@bell.net, **Sept. 2, 2022**

Thanks. Not much new, is there? The world is shitty and might get shittier, and meanwhile we argue over how many genders we have! Phooey.

*((Taral, are you feeling all right? No, strike that, we're both too old to feel entirely all right. I keep telling myself the world is **the whole world**, all the wonderful and shitty and incomprehensible and beautifully logical stuff at once,*

everywhere. As a matter of course, people pay attention to just as much as makes sense to them, or doesn't challenge their worldviews and identities too much. It's a wonder we have survived so long, but then we never were particularly in control of events. The facts of life may or may not get better, but they will be decidedly different by the time we croak.))

We Also Heard From: Michaelann Dahlmann

Dreaming Is an Art Form

By Lyn McConchie (New Zealand), Sept. 5, 2022

I have always dreamed, long vivid lucid dreams, although some can be quite surreal. Several have ended up as short stories, one, *A Day Out Shopping*, wasn't only published, it was then included in a 'best of' anthology from that particular magazine editor.

In fact, it was why I moved on to my third and fourth post-apocalypse books – *Another Fire* and *Some Other Traveller* (Night to Dawn publishing in late 2021, early 2022.) I dreamed the main character/s in each, then sat down and wrote the books, and what started it for them. I planned to leave it at that – until further dreaming produced another two (under consideration) and now the final one I've just started (final perhaps, depending on my subconscious) which features 6 young teenagers, the Apocalypse - and a stolen cat. My subconscious leads its own life.

I have NO idea why this started. Why my dreaming mind is currently obsessed by the collapse of civilization – the series started well before covid. But it's always useful to be presented as an author with characters and a theme then left to get on with it. One of the nicest things too has been that with this explosion in theme, *Some Other Traveller* was my fiftieth published book, and a large local paper did a long article on my writing.

Complexity

As time goes on, either life gets more complicated; or else I just find it more challenging to keep track of everything in my life, much less to keep things straight. For now, let's assume that life really is getting more complicated and more challenging to live.

Of course, I'm talking about complexity in everyday life, not complexity as mathematically defined. No system theory here.

And, of course, the matter can just be the difference in what people need to know, from decade to decade and generation to generation – or, from place to

place. Some newcomers to Vancouver, for instance, are baffled by the transit system – not only do we have to press a button or pull a cord to indicate we want to get off at the next stop; we also have to press a bar on an exit door. This is not, apparently, a universal rule everywhere.

In my father's time, basic mechanical skills were considered common knowledge, and he could get extra work doing freelance handyman jobs, without having to get a Red Seal license or pass examinations. Today, basic electronics skills are expected of television and computer users. Yet I know a retired gentleman who needs to hire someone, just to make basic computer searches.

Once, at an automatic teller machine, I encountered a man who needed help making a withdrawal. I had to walk him through the steps of putting in his card, and entering a PIN, and immediately found that he didn't have the PIN - his wife had sent him to get some money and neglected to tell him, it was a four-digit number, and not the verbal password to the account.

There are people who have trouble finding letters they received just a few days ago, and yet numerous services – including medical and welfare services – seem to require people to have the same level of record-keeping skills as their office staff.

Losing your password, or even your username, for online service accounts is so proverbial that there are generally Web page buttons for recalling (or usually, changing) them. There are normally browser utilities, and now even programs for recording your passwords and sparing your memory the effort.

Some kinds of complexity are simply the number of steps a task takes, and the order you must take them in – as in operating a home computer, or an automatic teller machine. Simple repetition, and frequency, can impress such operations on your memory.

Some kinds of complexity have to do with unlike elements combined in unexpected ways. This is how I get confounded by tax returns – there are several different financial factors being considered, in different ways and at different stages: not only direct earnings, and investments, and EI and CPP deductions, and old age pensions, and charitable donations, and many other things that usually don't apply to me.

There are people who have trouble adding up a column of figures the same way twice, yet every citizen is expected to complete a rather sophisticated tax return every year – or pay a bookkeeper/accountant to do so. This process has become occult enough to create a whole occupational group.

I could adduce other examples, but I think you get my drift. We need a measure of a) how much complexity any given person can handle, b) how complex is a given task, or how complex are a normal life's normal tasks, taken all together.

People who want to go off-grid and live off the land make a little more sense to me now.

Anglic

I've been saying for some time that the English people speak and write is not the English language I was taught, either colloquially or formally. Maybe it's about time to relabel the modern language and not pretend anymore that it has anything to do with the textbooks.

Performing secretarial duties in a variety of offices brought home the fact that not only grown adults, but highly-paid professionals with business degrees, do not know Classical English – as I call it – any more than another obscure foreign language. (In fact, many fluent speakers of modern Anglic are fluent in languages ranging from Mandarin and Cantonese to Punjabi, French, German, or Japanese.) I'm not talking about people who have barely any English language skills, but people who express themselves quite clearly, whether they grew up in North America or not, without realizing what a different vocabulary, grammar and syntax they use.

Consider:

- English spelling, admittedly inconsistent and irrational, is not something everybody knows. So many adults can't tell the difference between "affect" and "effect" that they use the verb "impact" instead.
- More seriously, speakers sometimes can't remember which tense, number or person they started out using, often mismatching singular verbs with plural subjects, mismatching tenses, and sometimes referring to men as "her" or women as "he."
- The subjunctive – a verb form one step more hypothetical than "if" plus a past tense – is forgotten and no longer understood.

I might go on to list many examples of clumsy substitutions for forgotten proper terms ("bachelorette" for "spinster"), or common misnomers ("lay" for "lie"), but this would be immaterial. The point is that the modern language, in business and journalism and broadcasting, is not the language taught in English and literature classes.

The sooner we own up to this, I hope, the sooner we can start actually communicating.

Spoons

Recent conversations led me to realize that "spoons" somehow became a measure of our ability to tackle necessary tasks – usually expressed as "I haven't got enough spoons." (The source and derivation of the expression is beyond my knowledge.)

Let us consider this as a new and vital concept for our culture.

(Only consider that – allegedly – Mayan culture, for all its achievements, did not gain the ability to weigh a stone accurately; and that Roman engineers, for all their advances in engineering art, did not have accurate clocks, much less a way to measure water flow and the amount of water stolen from aqueducts.)

Despite our many gains in measuring and calculating time, motion, the ergonomic considerations of workspaces and office furniture, and the interpersonal psychology of workplaces, we have not quite had a means to measure motivation, or personal energy, or the capability to get up and tackle yet another day of housework, office work, or manual labour. I know adults who live in a mess, not because they are hoarders or ignorant of basic hygiene, but just because they are chronically exhausted and unready to pick up and put away everything. (Not having enough “aways” to put things to is a whole other issue.)

Of course, a lot of this can be explained by chronic fatigue syndrome, depression, or undiagnosed long-term illnesses. (How much illness goes undiagnosed, or misdiagnosed, is yet another issue, and I’m not about to digress here into the overload and diversion forced on medical practitioners.) This suggests at least one, and possibly several factors go into the definition of “spoons,” just as mechanical energy is defined by a combination of time, mass and acceleration factors. The point at hand is that there hasn’t been a measure of the motivation, or personal energy, or simple capability to carry out tasks – until now.

We have been approaching it, by stages. Several paid jobs require workers to account for time spent to accomplish projects, ranging from letters to long reports to kitchen renovations to new housing developments. Hateful as it is to account for every five minutes of your work, it is useful to see what time a job takes – and how long you take, at different times of day, or at different days of a week or month. (This was how I first became aware of a cycle of rising and falling personal energy that affected my voluntary work for a convention.)

I conclude that we are about to define “spoons” as an objective and measurable factor in human health, self-support, work productivity, and national welfare.

If we keep up this sort of research, we may even discover ways to define, measure and reinforce character, task orientation and integrity in public servants. But maybe I’m dreaming.

Fanzines Received

SF Commentary #110, July 2022, Bruce Gillespie, 5 Howard Street, Greensborough, VIC 3088, Australia. Email: gandc001@bigpond.com. A great 92-page review zine, well worth sitting down and reading at length. Which I

found myself doing one evening, instead of getting on with the rest of my writing. Read this zine!

Spartacus #58, GUY LILLIAN III + 1390 Holly Avenue Merritt Island FL 32952-5883 + GHLIII@yahoo.com – riveting editorials, reviews and letters.

The Balobius #9, September 2022, Taral Wayne, 245 Dunn Ave. Apt. 2111, Toronto Ontario, M6K 1S6, Taral@bell.net.

Tightbeam #336, September 2022, George Phillies ed., 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester, MA 01609, phillies@4liberty.net, and Jon Swartz ed., jon_swartz@hotmail.com - reviews and letters.