

(SON OF) THE WSFA JOURNAL

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Email Address: editor@wsfa.org Please put “Submission:” at the beginning of the subject line if it is to be considered for publication. Entries not marked this way may not get routed by our automatic filters.

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This and previous issues of the journal may be seen by going to www.wsfa.org

March was invented by the Vogons to control mankind more easily... Douglas Adams knew.

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From the Editor...

Hello, all!

Why “Son of”, you ask?

Perhaps it is:

- a) an homage to the great Universal monster movies of yore;
- b) an implication that this derives from the Journal but does not replace it (until it grows enough to overthrow the tyranny of the Journal and institute a reign of justice and mercy); or
- c) the editor felt like it.

Take your pick.

See you all soon!

Drew



WSFA Meeting Minutes

WSFA Minutes

First Friday

Scheiner's home, Virginia

March 2, 2007

CONVENED: The meeting convened at 9:18pm.

ATTENDEES: Drew Bittner, Katherine Bittner, Colleen Cahill, Adrienne Ertman, Will Frank, Cathy Green, Paul Haggerty, Bill Lawhorn, Ernest Lilley, Sam Lubell, Nicki Lynch, Rich Lynch, Bob MacIntosh, Barry Newton, Judy Newton, Kathi Overton, Judy Scheiner, Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Steve Smith, Lee Strong, Gayle Surrette, Elizabeth Twitchell, Michael Walsh, Ivy Yap

GUESTS: Jean Cook (1st), Gayle Dixon (2nd)

SECRETARY'S REPORT: The Secretary was late and offered no report. However, it is noted that 3rd Friday last month was not official as the meeting did not reach quorum.

TREASURER'S REPORT: WSFA has \$12,179.64 in its main account

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Capclave Past: officially closed

Capclave Present & Future: date is October 12-14; Rockville, MD is being considered as an alternate site, as it has comparable benefits for accessibility and is larger than our current space.

Capclave Far Future, DC 2012 and WFC: no report.

Datclave: no action taken yet by the committee

Publications: The February/March 2007 WSFA Journal was produced.

Entertainment: Will asked for members to join the committee. Will also spoke with Chris Christopher (he swears it's his real name), Dept of Homeland Security, about WSFAns attending a DHS Sci/Tech Directorate conference (go figure). Jonathan Coulton was once again in town 3/11. Kim Stanley Robinson was due in town 3/7 at Baileys Crossroads Borders. Nalo Hopkinson was coming to town for multiple in-store appearances.

Rules Committee: no report. Lee needs a copy of the Award Committee's final draft to include; we should also post this online.

Trustees: no report but we believe they remain trustworthy. (Remember to verify this later.)

Committee to Talk About Science Fiction: The committee intended to discuss the March issue of *Asimov's*. We think they did.

Awards Committee: now open, already taking on lots of activity. Send nominations (published in 2006) to the board. Guidelines are anything published by a company producing between three and

25 titles per year, magazines with publication under 10k or paying \$.01/word. Go online at www.wsfasmallpressaward.org.

OLD BUSINESS: none

NEW BUSINESS: none (we were all surprised)

ANNOUNCEMENTS: send email announcements to Drew. Host & hostess announcements. Steve Smith announced a free concert Saturday and Sunday at Montgomery HS. Judy Newton had tickets to her quilt raffle. Nicki Lynch mentioned Tanya Huff's vampire series would be *Blood Ties* on Lifetime and Charlaine Harris's vampires-and-telepaths *Dead* series would be *True Blood* on HBO. Jim Butcher's *Dresden Files* continues on SciFi.

Elizabeth T saw *Ghost Rider* and loathed it; Drew did not loathe it. Netflix has launched an on-demand service. Ernest L read a piece of iRobot poetry called "Scary Robot Lullaby." Mike W had books, including the Waldrop collection. Gayle noted that Ern had a good editorial in SFRevu, and Paul H noted that Hugo noms were ending on March 3.

Library of Congress – upcoming guests include Ed Lerner (3/30), Robert Sawyer (4/19), and Barbara Hambly (5/7).

ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 10:08pm.



REVIEWS

Please email reviews to editor@wsfa.org with the word "submission" in the subject line for consideration.

XXXHolic

by Clamp

Translated and adapted by Anthony Gerard

New York : Ballentine Books, 2004

A Review by Colleen R. Cahill

While many Americans are familiar with anime, most know little or nothing of manga, the print version of Japanese comics. The books are similar in style and themes to the movies, not a surprise as the movies are often created from successful manga series. For those English readers interested in manga, Del Rey has release some titles and I found the *XXXHolic* by Clamp to be the most fun of the lot. The mix of a sultry shopkeeper, a bad-tempered teenage boy, two very cute yet annoying children, and a big dash of magic tempered with a touch of humor creates a wonderfully amusing read.

Kimihiko Watanuki seems like a normal young teen, but he is plagued by spirits that only he seems to be able to see. While trying to avoid them, he encounters a strange house in the center of the city, one that literally drags him in and holds him captive. There he meets Yūko Ichihara, a beautiful and mysterious woman who, with her two child companions, runs a shop that grants wishes. Tied by the bonds of fate and his

desire to not be haunted, Kimihiro is gently railroaded in to joining the staff. His duties seem mainly as a cleaner and errand boy, but it is obvious he is learning a lot from Yûko and her other customers. The first is a young woman who recently has been unable to use her one of her little fingers. A strange ailment, but actually a symptom of a larger problem, one of character. Another customer is addicted to the Internet (something a few of us would understand), so much so that all other aspects of her life are being ignored. Yûko has means to grant all their wishes, if they are willing to take what is offered.

XXXholic is a story with many levels. There is the teasing relationship Yûko has with Kimihiro, which shows elements of a mentor teaching a reluctant student. Certain Kimihiro has to be dragged along at times. But these are not one dimensional characters: Yûko is mysterious, but also playful: Kimihiro's haunting makes him a tragic figure, but his stubborn nature often makes him an easy target for Yûko's little jokes. It is quickly obvious that she is trying to mold the young man, although her ultimate goal is not revealed in this volume. In response, Kimihiro sees his boss mostly as annoying and totally ignores her sultry side, but he is impressed her unusual and insightful advice to her clients.

Clamp, a group of four female Japanese manga artists, continue to produce the *XXXholic* series and Del Rey has plans to release English editions of all the volumes. Currently volumes 1 to 8 are available, with 9 and 10 to be released in 2007. The story touches on other Clamp creations, such as *Tsubasa*, but is designed to be a stand-alone story. I recommend you start with the first book in *XXXholic*, which is sure to hook you in a intriguing fantasy that touches on all the sides of human life, from dark tragedy to true friendship to silly pranks.

Pan's Labyrinth

Esperanto Films, 2007

Written and directed by Guillermo del Toro

Reviewed by Lee Strong

When asked about this Spanish language film during a WSFA meeting, I blew it a raspberry. Here's another one....

One of the main problems that I had with this film is its false advertising. It's billed as a child's escape into a magical otherworld during a continuation of the Spanish Civil War – somewhat like the Pevensie children reaching Narnia during World War II. Instead, it's about three quarters an ugly rehash of the Spanish war from the losers' point of view with the traditional fantasy element filing out the remaining quarter of the time. Both subplots are visually ugly and emotionally nasty. As a result, I didn't care much for either of them.

A short opening sequence establishes the theme that a princess of "the Underground Realm" got lost on Earth but might return in a new body. The scene then jumps to 1944 Spain when young girl Ofelia and her mother are en route to meet her new stepfather, a captain in the Spanish Nationalist Army. He proves to be more concerned with Ofelia's unborn brother and, indeed, the film's major plot is devoted to exploring how brutal, selfish, stupid, outnumbered and generally doomed the unrelentingly evil Nationalist forces are. In the real world, the Nationalists won the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 and modern constitutional Spain is descended from their victory. The blatantly

one sided picture director del Toro shows us makes it clear that he is indulging in his own *political* fantasy of a Loyalist victory that never was.

Meanwhile, in the film's minor plot, Ofelia escapes into a more traditional fantasy when a fairy leads her into an ancient ruin when she meets a faun very much unlike Narnia's Mr. Tumnus. (The Spanish title of this film translates as *The Labyrinth of the Faun*.) He reveals that she might be the missing princess and sets her 3 tasks to prove her identity. In the best fairy tale tradition, the tasks get harder as Ofelia proceeds, but she soldiers gamely onward. The climatic task includes a moral dilemma that many adults might fail but the conclusion is properly foreshadowed.

I found the acting adequate but the roles did not allow the characters very much emotional range. Ofelia's role was almost entirely action while the adult characters were badly stereotyped without the excuse of being elves or orcs. I had a lot of trouble with the internal logic of the film. For example, the second task seems to teach contradictory lessons: Ofelia locates a major plot device by ignoring one piece of advice from her guiding fairies but then gets into trouble by ignoring another piece of advice. There didn't seem to be an overarching standard of judgment and I thought the filmmaker was being weird without being good. And how does Senor del Toro square the royalism of the lost princess trope with the anti-royalism of the political story? Most importantly, this entire film is very, very dark, both emotionally and visually. Even a happy ending doesn't seem so happy when it's preceded by 2 hours of visual and moral mud.

I rate *Pan's Labyrinth* as 1.0 stars on the 5 star scale because its 2 fantasy stories are intellectually weak even without the false advertising and generally ugly qualities. –

LS