

TYPICAL BRITISH FAN GROUP MEETING, WITH SOME OVERSEAS VISITORS ABOUT TO DROP IN

CHUNGA # 5

CHUNGA

'Ow ya goin', mate, orright? *Chunga* is a back-stabbing dingo on the Great Barrier Reef of love — a bit of mutton dressed up as lamb. Come in, spinner. No wuckas! *Chunga* is brought to you by Andy Hooper (Prime Aperture), Randy Byers (Nexialist), carl juarez (Utility Infielder), and our multitudinous esteemed contributors, listed below.

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Tanglewood

The Feast of All Chunga

I think we've set another new record for the total number of contributors and participants in this issue of *Chunga*. It includes all the fans who shadowed Randy's TAFF trip, combined with all the people who wrote us letters, multiplied by the number of people who spilled beer in Dave Hicks' presence at Eastercon, less the number of Potlatch committee members who were unmoved by my impassioned plea for James Blish, but then adding all the artists we've scattered liberally throughout the issue.... One quickly reaches the point where almost no one reading the fanzine is precisely a passive consumer, which is an exhilarating state to achieve.

Every fanzine I've ever published has gone through the same process of accretion of participants—the fanzine starts out as the vision of one or two fans, but then hopeful contributors and hardened letterhacks quickly appear in the background, like the evening-costumed extras who populate Rick's place in *Casablanca*. It's the middle of World War III—but play another hand of Faro, and order up a bucket full of gin. If we're smiling a little more desperately than normal, it might be because we're trying to come up with a slate worthy of all the praise we've received, including the FAAn award for Best Fanzine. You are, as ever, too kind.

Well, most of you. I felt that I'd really arrived as a fanzine publisher when I heard that someone was discarding our work unread. These foolish, if not perverse whims of distribution are an expensive indulgence, and I've promised my partners I'll curb them henceforth. But my fantasy is that somewhere Walt Willis is smiling, confident that the return of the Campaign to Clean Up Fandom cannot be far behind.

—Andy Hooper

It seemed like a good idea at the time. Even before I won TAFF, I decided that if I did win, I'd include Corflu Badger in my itinerary. Since Corflu was held the weekend after Eastercon, that meant my TAFF trip would come before Eastercon. That part of my plan worked wonderfully well, but I had failed to account for the fact that the trip and first convention would leave me so worn out that I wouldn't have much energy for Corflu. I ended missing half the convention simply by going to bed at 9 or 10 each night.

I'll cover my TAFF trip in the trip report, of course, but I don't want this Corflu to get lost in that noise. While I was running at a low ebb, I still had a great time hanging out with old friends and making new acquaintances. It also gentled the transition of returning to the States, since there were a handful of Brits in attendance, all of whom I'd spent time with on the other side of the Pond. I failed to acquire any of the terrific zines available in the auction (including a nearly full run of *Pong* and the *Second Fannish* with the mock-*Playboy* cover featuring Trina Robbins), but I did pick up a handful of new zines. I was honored to win the FAAn Award for Best Fanwriter against folks like Claire Brialey and Andy who produced some great writing this past year.

But aside from merely personal (if not particularly sybaritic) pleasures, it seems to me that Tracy Benton and Bill Bodden and the rest of the committee deserve great praise for the organization of the convention. Like Sting in Lynch's *Dune*, the convention was smooth, well-oiled, and armed with a wormtooth knife. There was some grump-ing about the lack of a live auction, but the paper auction seemed to do very well. The consuite was well-stocked with beer and munchies, and as someone with a room two doors down who tried to go to bed early, I can confirm that the conversations in the consuite roared, so conducive was the setting to uninhibited gab. There was an ice cream social and also dead dog sub sandwiches that disappeared in a happy flash. Attendance was up from the last two years, with something like seventy people. Guest of Honor Dan Steffan gave a charming speech at the banquet, and the softball game was—dare I say it?—surprisingly good, with some great plays and a come-from-behind one-run victory.

I've been to the last four Corflus, and I've had a wonderful time at all of them. I hope you're thinking about going to the next one, which is in Las Vegas. (See Ulrika's column for full details.)

—Randy Byers



Chunga, your one-stop source for Futurian slash porn and speculative history



Two Names Twice:

James Blish and *Cities in Flight*

by Andy Hooper

The last century was the winter of the West, the victory of materialism and skepticism, of socialism, parliamentarianism, and money. But in this century blood and instinct will regain their rights against the power of money and intellect. The era of individualism, liberalism and democracy, of humanitarianism and freedom, is nearing its end. The masses will accept with resignation the victory of the Caesars, the strong men, and will obey them. Life will descend to a level of general uniformity, a new kind of primitivism, and the world will be better for it....

—Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, 1922

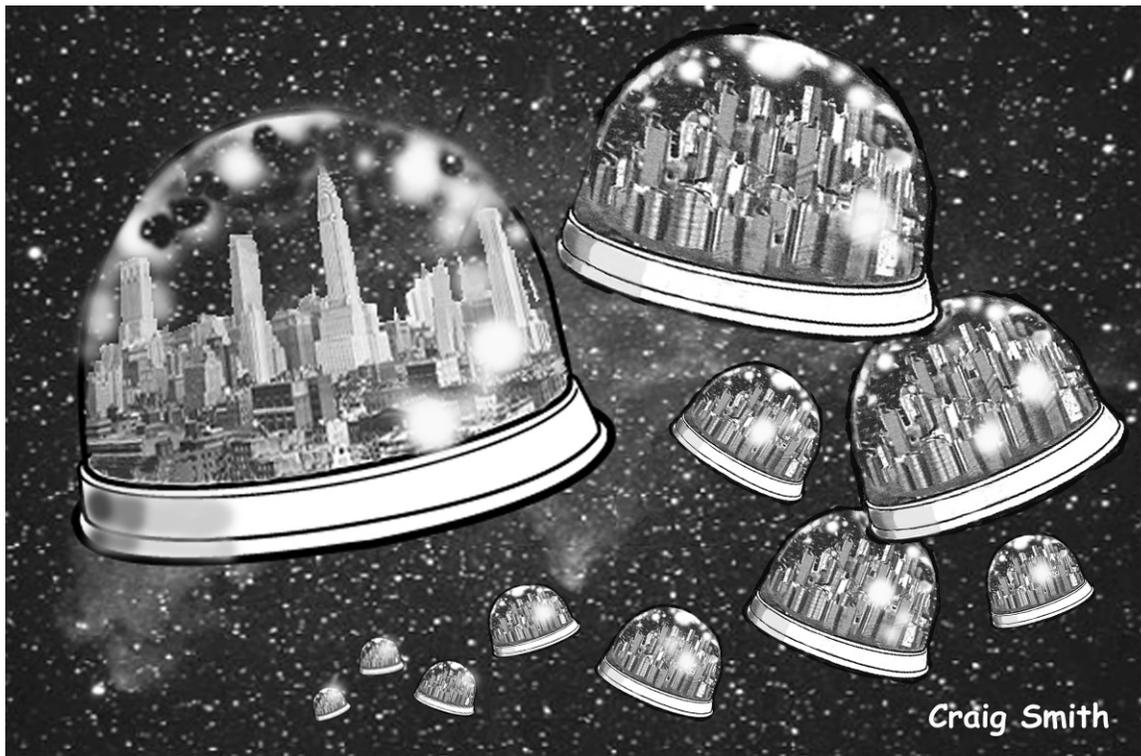
Potlatch is a small convention, a gathering of science fiction fans interested in literary and artistic issues of the genre, organized as a benefit for the Clarion West Science Fiction Writers Workshop. The convention has a tradition of choosing a “Book of Honor” as a means of setting some partial focus for the convention. The book is usually a work of science fiction or fantasy by a deceased author, and serves to bring some new scrutiny to important works in the history of sf, as well as saving money on airline tickets and honorarium payments. This year in Oakland, the Book of Honor was *The Rediscovery of Man* by Cordwainer Smith, while previous years featured Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, H.G. Wells’ *War of the Worlds*, the original video production of Ursula LeGuin’s *The Lathe of Heaven*, and *Thunder and Roses* by Theodore Sturgeon. Most of the time, the selection arises from one or two fans’ passion for the book in question, and they gradually get other people excited about the possibility, until the project just clicks.

Early this year an email from Luke McGuff invited me — and a lot of other people on his mailing list — to make suggestions as to what should be the Book of Honor for lucky Potlatch 13, to be held in Seattle in 2004. I asked myself — what work of science fiction did I most want to encourage people to re-read, what book would I most envy the opportunity to read for the first time, what did I want the chance to read again for myself? It came to me easily, without even the need to comb between the dead and living: *Cities in Flight*, by the late James Blish.

Given that the bulk of the stories that make up the novel are set in New York City, it was easy to see what probably drove my choice — the terror attacks of September 11th, 2001. *Cities in Flight* is among the most powerful of all wish-fulfillment stories from the school of science fiction that thrived in New York from 1940 to 1960 — in it, New York itself becomes capable of visiting other worlds, and its inhabitants blessed with virtually eternal life. Ever since 9/11, I have been haunted by memories of certain passages in *Cities*, mental images of the skyline in silhouette against exotic gas giants and the engine flare of vast Vegan battleships. (Once upon a time, the word “Vegan” made us think of proud aliens from the stellar empire of Vega, rather than people who retch and call you a Nazi if you give them a piece of cheese. But surely, I digress.)

When I think of “space opera,” this is the book I think of first. It had a strong effect on me, in a way that other classic works read in the same period, such as the *Foundation* trilogy, and Clarke’s *Rendezvous with Rama*, did not achieve. When I first read *Cities in Flight*, sitting in a cabin in northern Minnesota in about 1975, I imagined myself traveling to New York, living there long enough to receive the first anagathic drug treatments, and thereby experiencing all the events described by the four books. As a child born in 1962, and raised with a fascination for and faith in the United States space program which bordered on religious zeal, I firmly believed that an immortal life spent hurtling between the stars was potentially within my grasp. Blish had the ability to make that half-imagined possibility both more attractive and real.

Blish’s work encompasses a complete future history that begins with human civilization in stagnation after the colonization of the rest of our solar system. Earth’s culture nearly collapses, but is saved by the development of the Dillon-Wagoner Graviton Polarity Generator, known more popularly as the “spindizzy.” This device makes possible both extra-light-speed travel, and the maintenance



After the threats of barbarism and empire are overcome, Amalfi discovers that immortality has a disturbingly short definition, as the Universe is scheduled for inexorable destruction in the year 4104.

of infinitely powerful “force fields” that can serve as the “hull” of a spindizzy-powered body traveling through outer space. Powered and protected by the spindizzy fields, the great cities of the dying Earth leave it behind, becoming nomadic elements in a loose society of hobo or “Okie” communities that travel from star to star offering skills and labor in exchange for the raw materials they need to survive. Ultimately, this wandering convocation of humanity evolves in dangerous directions and returns to threaten its birth planet.

The protagonist of this struggle is the city of New York, and the hero that personifies the city is Mayor John Amalfi. After the threats of barbarism and empire are overcome, Amalfi discovers that immortality has a disturbingly short definition, as the Universe is scheduled for inexorable destruction in the year 4104. Clear-eyed to the point of caricature, Amalfi arranges to smear his and his companions’ DNA around the event horizon of the collision that will consume existence, hoping that their complex organic molecules will help seed life into the new being/nothingness to come. Blish presents a future in which humanity’s persistence will ultimately trump its own stupidity, then questions the fundamental value and benefit of our survival as a species.

I think *Cities in Flight* also holds a signal position in science fiction history because it’s one of the most impressive examples of the form known as the “fix-up.” Composed of numerous stories assembled from diverse sources, it shows Frankensteinish bolts and seams between its chapters, yet still forms an admirable whole that takes the reader

literally to the death and rebirth of the Universe.

It actually features four short novels presented in the order of their internal chronology: *They Shall Have Stars*, *A Life for the Stars*, *Earthman, Come Home*, and *The Triumph of Time*. But Blish wrote them in this order: 3, 1, 4, 2, and most critics and readers have agreed that *Earthman, Come Home* is by far the most entertaining and inventive title in the sequence. And this too came together from a series of perfectly polished components: The novelette “Okie” appeared in *Astounding Science Fiction’s* April, 1950 issue, and was followed by “Bindlestiff” in November of the same year. “The Sargasso of Lost Cities” came next, in the Spring of 1953. Roughly the last half of the book appeared as a novella with the title “Earthman, Come Home,” in the November 1953 issue of *ASF*. Two years later, Putnam published the four sections together under that same name.

Blish paused the *Cities* narrative to write and assemble the stories that became *The Seedling Stars* in 1956. By now, the art of stitching together his short stories into novel-length works had become familiar, and Avon published the first prequel under the title *Year 2018!* in the year 1957. The title was later changed to a line by Dylan Thomas, *They Shall Have Stars*, another indication of Blish’s tendency to regard all his works as remaining in progress beyond their first publication. *The Triumph of Time*, also from Avon, followed quickly in 1958, with an ending that seemed to cap the sequence at the destruction of the universe. The first title in the series to be intended and written as a novel from its

The city inside the perimeter of raw earth was wavery and unreal. It did not hum any more, but it gave a puzzling impression of being slightly in shadow, though the July sun was still blazing over it. Even in his grief and anger, Chris was curious enough to wonder at the effect, and finally he thought he saw what caused it: The heat waves climbing the air around the town seemed to be detouring it, as though the city itself were inside a dome. No, not a dome, but a bubble, only a part of which was underground; it met the earth precisely at the cleared perimeter.

The spindizzy field was up. It was invisible in itself, but it was no longer admitting the air of the Earth.

Scranton was ready.

—*A Life for the Stars*

inception, it was also considered a relative disappointment, particularly when compared to *A Case of Conscience*, the surprise winner of the Hugo Award for Best Novel at the 1959 Worldcon.

Despite all these relative inducements to stay away from the sequence, he returned in 1962 with another barely book-length story that was intended as a young adult novel, taking place between the events of *They Shall Have Stars* and *Earthman, Come Home*. *A Life for the Stars* appeared to open the door of further such adventures by introducing the city of Scranton, Pennsylvania, and young Chris DeFord, a potential new series protagonist. But no such volumes followed; and when Avon assembled the four novels in their internal sequence for the first time in 1970, Blish killed Chris off in a single sentence of the new introduction to *Earthman, Come Home*.

James Benjamin Blish was born in East Orange, New Jersey in 1921, and died at home at Henley-on-Thames, in Great Britain, in 1975, within weeks of my first reading of *Cities in Flight*. Although he passed at a relatively young age, he was 15 years removed from his best-regarded work, and had already begun to fade from the stage of contemporary sf. Cancer curtailed any chance of a return to his early form. His best remembered work after 1960 consisted of adapting the original *Star Trek* scripts, which began the long tradition of talented writers tilling that particularly stony field. At the end of his life, the pain of his illness was such that it was impossible for him to write, and several of the high-numbered *Star Trek* fix-ups were completed by his second wife Judy Lawrence, with assistance from her mother.

Before that, of course, Blish was a Giant with Chops. He was a Futurian, and one of the prime representatives of the Campbell era of science fiction in New York. Within fandom, we also remember him for such milestones as the foundation of the Vanguard Amateur Press Association, an early rival to FAPA that helped popularize filking, (for better or worse). His first appearance in print, at age 11, was in the letter column of *Astounding Stories* magazine. He had a genuinely impressive intelligence, and completed a degree in microbiology at Rutgers University before World War II diverted him into the army for several years. When his service ended, he had a real chance to write his own ticket; and instead of returning to school to pursue a Master's degree, he chose to make what he felt was a financially responsible and more personally satisfying choice, and devoted himself to writing and editing full time. There were unques-

tionably social attractions that drove that decision too; Blish's marriage to Virginia Kidd began in 1947, and if he lacked the swash of Heinlein and the color of Asimov, he was still a compelling figure, able to discourse on virtually any aesthetic, technical or ideological issue. Fandom and science fiction offered him status that would have been far more challenging to achieve in a purely academic or industrial milieu. But his first significant editorial position was at the house organ for Pfizer pharmaceuticals, and remarkably, the greater part of his science fiction was written in the spare hours after his "day jobs" of marketing and technical writing.

If he was prone to brevity in his longer works (all four *City* novels put together barely crack 600 pages), it might have been because there was simply so much work in so many different forms and fields that James Blish wanted to complete. He is justifiably given absolutely equal status for his criticism on science fiction as for his work within it; his work under the critical pseudonym William Atheling Jr. is still some of the most legendary analysis ever given to the genre. Early in his career, he frequently undertook summary papers and analytical projects for corporate clients in New York, and could fairly be called a pioneer in scientific consulting. He was also a prolific poet, and wrote on issues of ethics, social advocacy, and music appreciation with considerable zeal.

Still, I find I have suspicions about James Blish, as I do about anyone hailed as a polymath in the contemporary era. His prose seems polished and carefully composed, and he took some pains to suggest that lengthy research and analysis were behind many of his works. But he admitted that his work habits were far from controlled; he had a tendency to attack the narrative with only a vague sense of where he was going to go, and wrote in long, passionate passages, struggling to complete stories before his energies flagged. This seems like the more plausible model of composition when looking at a fix-up like *Cities*, perhaps not least because it matches my own disorganized methods.

Blish had the skill as a writer and researcher to present summaries of technical issues that were worth a corporate stipend in the early days of his career. But as his own experimental and academic experiences receded further into the past, his currency as a technical writer must have faded. As a young man, he had a vaguely reactionary affectation that I suspect may have been inspired by his interest in the works and personality of James Branch Cabell; as he grew older, this hardened into noteworthy outbursts against "empty" aesthetic trends, such as atonal music and some experi-

mental fiction. At times, his passion for the music of Strauss seemed like a perfect summary of his weakness for manners and morality at the expense of the excesses of invention.

If I call Blish a reactionary, I'm far from the first, but I mean to apply the title in the most objective sense. He consumed the work of other artists voraciously, in the manner of most trufen. He read widely in his chosen field as well as many others; he saw what he liked, as well as what other readers rewarded with their sales and praise. He used this experience to filter his prolific imagination, and what resulted is still regarded as some of the most finely crafted science fiction ever written.

Despite his weakness for composing his stories in a desperate rush, the background research and imagination behind them could often stretch on for years. He was equally imaginative in the research and background that he brought to his fiction. *Cities in Flight* is heavily inspired by the work of historian Oswald Spengler, particularly his 1922 masterwork, *The Decline of the West*. The temptation to make comparisons to Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy, and its evocation of Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* has been irresistible for nearly 50 years. In such a comparison, Blish definitely wins points for choosing a more complex and mature model of cultural interaction. Spengler makes distinctions between periods of human endeavor that he terms "Culture" and "Civilization," and the latter proceeds directly from the death or conclusion of the former. Therefore, when Blish makes reference to the end or death of the Earthmanist Culture in the chronology of *Cities*, he doesn't mean or refer to the actual extinction of all that culture's participants or members. He means the end of the expansive, inventive, contentious and dangerous adolescence of a society, and its transition to a complex of traditions and values that characterize a mature civilization. What Blish seems to postulate is that mature civilizations have the potential to create new cultures through their combinations and conflicts, bringing rebirth to societies that might otherwise face extinction, as is certainly the situation which confronts humanity throughout the novel sequence.

Blish is of the emancipationist school of science fiction — he envisions technological advances as freeing mankind from all the limitations of life in space, in order to create a culture that can survive across the long stretches of galactic time. He proposes three major tools for achieving this: the spindizzy, which provides limitless power, energy and structure to the peripatetic cities, the Dirac radio, which allows them to communicate instantly with any point in the Universe, and anagathic drugs

and therapies that eliminate the need for biological death as a consequence of aging. It seems fitting that he would later be involved with the *Star Trek* novelizations, as *Trek* is so dependent on a similar set of technical impossibilities presumed solved — faster-than-light travel, controlled manipulation of gravity, and the instantaneous transformation and transmission of matter.

Like many writers of his era, Blish has one truly notable weakness in his treatment of female characters. In *Cities*, he has a few sequences that seem to point at the stupidity and inefficiency of sexism, but the women that populate nomadic New York still approach the proportions of a cartoon. Even when he stepped well away from "hard" science fiction or space opera, in works like the *After Such Knowledge* quartet, Blish tenaciously avoided writing any female protagonists or even many noteworthy female characters. Some of his more thoughtful works feature a *Rashomon*-like sequence of perceptions by a series of narrators, but still, virtually all of those narrators are male. Biographers have drawn connections between this and a difficult relationship with his mother that supposedly left him alternatively dismissive and tentative in any efforts to portray women. But it also reflects a general climate of easy misogyny that prevailed in the editorial culture of the time.

It is unsurprising then, that there are also homoerotic themes running throughout *Cities*, sublimated into relationships of patronage and apprenticeship, and given dramatic expression through the draconian consequences of abrogating city regulations — banishment from the city, or more floridly, execution. People routinely prove their love

A spindizzy going sour makes the galaxy's most unnerving noise. The top range of the sound is inaudible but it feels like a multiple toothache. Just below that, there is a screech like metal tearing, which blends smoothly into a composite cataract of plate glass, slate, and boulders; this is the middle register. After that, there is a painful gap in the sound's spectrum, and the rest of the noise comes from one's ears again with a hollow round dinosaurian sob and plummets on down into the subsonics, ending in frequencies which induce diarrhea and an almost unconquerable urge to bite one's thumbs.

The noise was coming, of course, from the Twenty-third Street spindizzy, but it permeated the whole city. It was tolerable only so long as the hold which contained the moribund driver was kept sealed. Amalfi knew better than to open that hold. He surveyed the souring machine via instruments, and kept the audio tap prudently closed.

—*Earthman, Come Home*



The image of New York preserved in a figurative bottle with its automats and matinees intact is so irresistibly romantic that Blish must have known he had a winner from the moment he began to write the story. Who could blame him for lingering more than 20 years at the task?

and devotion to humanity by conduct calculated to result in their own deaths, as if no lesser act is genuinely worth writing about. And there is unquestionably one relationship that is directly reflected in the narrative of *Cities in Flight*, particularly in *Earthman, Come Home*, which is the feeling Blish held for John W. Campbell, to whom the volume is dedicated. If it is disarmingly convenient to say that John Amalfi is in fact John W. Campbell made immortal and set loose to wander among the stars, it also feels remarkably true. Amalfi's physical girth and size are not expressions of Campbell's own physique, but rather of his stature within science fiction, his relentless leadership of the field and appetite for its advancement and success.

Of course, the New York of Blish's narrative deviates from reality no later than the 1940s, so it is a city that never had a Knapp Commission, no *Annie Hall*, no Grand Master Flash. Neither John Lennon nor Richard Bergeron enjoyed residence in the Dakota building. And it never lost its two tallest buildings to a pair of airliners used as suicide bombs. It's not a city that has a Puerto Rico Day parade, or 5,000 cab drivers from Karachi and Lagos. Although Blish was writing about a city hundreds of years in the future, it still has the character of the mid-20th Century New York, largely because he avoids too many specific references to the inevitable changes in the city plan. The spindizzy allows the city to carry hundreds of feet and millions of tons of bedrock along with it, so the beloved subways still run beneath its streets. But many other practical questions are unanswered. What happens to the harbors and sounds of the island city when severed from the sea and the rivers? What provides water for the millions of New Yorkers when the vast tunnels that serve the city are cut off from their New England aquifers? Does the spindizzy's bite include Liberty Island, or is the statue left to the mercy of the tides and Charlton Heston?

Blish applied his energy to making us believe in the economic feasibility of a life wandering from star to star, and allowed the reader's own image of

New York to fill in the corners of his setting. If you wanted to believe that the New York of the future still featured Checker cabs with big fenders and street corner hot dog vendors, Blish had no intention of discouraging you from that. His point was to establish the enduring value of human life and labor, and he used the pinnacle of human civilization — as seen by New York SF writers, circa 1949 — to seduce the reader into following his reasoning. The image of New York preserved in a figurative bottle with its automats and matinees intact is so irresistibly romantic that Blish must have known he had a winner from the moment he began to write the story. Who could blame him for lingering more than 20 years at the task? Dozens of writers have undertaken the destruction of New York City and mined it for all the pathos and horror they can manage; but relatively few have proposed its perpetuation into the different future, and none up to the putative destruction of the universe.

Perhaps even more romantic than the preservation of New York itself is Blish's view of its persistence as a titan among cities into the distant future. When Amalfi wants to let another human know the city he represents without revealing it to alien observers, he asks, "What city has two names twice?" The listener knows instantly what city he's speaking of, and they are overwhelmed by the realization.

After sharing most of these sentiments with the Potlatch 13 committee, I discovered there was already a groundswell building to choose *The Shockwave Rider*, by John Brunner, as Book of Honor for 2004. That book is a great choice as well; and taking a more palpably dystopian view of technological innovation and cultural change, it would probably fit the general attitude of the committee better than Blish's brash vision of humanity triumphant. One other reason to avoid choosing *Cities in Flight* is that there is no paperback edition currently in print, only a stylish hardcover edition issued in 2000 by the Overlook Press. And it took a few stops to find a used copy that I could peruse before writing this article — my own 1975-era text is somewhere buried deep in storage with a lot of other SF writers whose names begin with "B." When I finally tracked down a much-loved copy on the shelves of the Couth Buzzard Bookshop on Greenwood Avenue, the clerk didn't want to accept any money for it. "It looks like it has maybe one good read left in it," he said, "enjoy it!"

I put a dollar on the counter as I headed for the door. "Enjoy yourself," I said, "I'll bet that I can get more than one reading out of it."

I'm looking forward to winning that bet.

Republic of Fremont, July 14th, 2003



The Shadow TAFF Report

“Sounds like a cunning ploy to get other people to write your TAFF report for you,” wrote Graham Charnock when I asked him for a contribution to the shadow TAFF report, but I’m the editor, so I cut that part out. Even so, it’s not strictly true. The shadow report was Andy’s idea to begin with, and I think he was reacting to the little stories he heard from various Brits who attended Corflu Badger on the heels of my TAFF trip. The idea was that we would collect short anecdotes from a bunch of people who had met me in my wanderings across the UK and cobble them together to create a complement to my own TAFF report. Of course, as I struggle to write something even remotely worthy of past reports, the possibility of substituting the shadow report for my own is beginning to look like salvation.

However, I was less than methodical in collecting these anecdotes, and not only do I fully expect to get reamed out by the people whom I didn’t pester for contributions, but I am also faced with the fact that the bits I have in hand don’t cover my whole trip. There’s nothing here about my visits to Tonwell, London, Bristol, Cambridge, or Beaconsfield. Most of these anecdotes are, in fact, from the Eastercon, and even folks who saw me elsewhere tended to write about the convention. Ah well, such are the elisions and distortions we’re forced to live with in this post-modern world—or such is the magic of Hinckley.

I started to feel grumpy at one point on my trip because everybody I met insisted that I was so very, very nice. Not witty, not well-spoken, not charming, not incisive, but *nice*. Can one be damned with fainter praise? What’s particularly disappointing, in looking through these anecdotes, is that I seem to have been so mind-numbingly nice that even the normally caustic Brits couldn’t be bothered to take the piss out of me. Can’t squeeze piss from a turnip, I guess.

In any event, we begin with Steve Green, who lured me to a Brum SF Group meeting in Birmingham and then promptly failed to show up for dinner just because he had to attend a funeral. When I hassled him about this, he explained that it would have been bad form to leave the funeral with the excuse, “Sorry, I’ve got to go have a curry!” *Hmph*, said I, he could have told them it was official TAFF business.

—Randy

Steve Green

It was with much trepidation that the Birmingham SF Group awaited the arrival of Randy Byers at its April gathering. After all, the grotesque appetites of visiting TAFF delegates are legendary, the kind of Grimms’ Fanfiction used to scare young neos on Halloween. Who could forget the tobacco-crazed Victor Gonzalez and his suitcases stuffed with Havana cigars, or Avedon Carol’s insane demand for a sacrificial virgin (unexpectedly, she relented and married him). Worse, this latest emissary from

the Former Colonies wouldn’t even come to us part-sated by the depravities of Eastercon.

To our surprise, Mr Byers’ “rider” for his Birmingham appearance proved less onerous than anticipated: a life-sized iron statue of himself, raised upon a marble plinth and erected on the steps of the city’s world-famous art gallery (recommendation © Jae Leslie Adams). True, it would suck in every penny of profit from Novacon for the next seventeen years, but by the group’s ingenious

by Green, Gonzalez, West, Keen, Max, Weston, Charnock, Brialey & Bacon; intros by Randy



failure to point out its guest's contract neglected to specify a nameplate, locals simply assumed the rusting hulk was a souvenir left over from Lenin's farewell tour with the Moscow State Barber's Shop Quartet.

I met up with Victor Gonzalez in Keighley, outside of Leeds, desperate to hear a few words of American. "Ginnel," said Victor, "Snicket." He said these words over and over. That's not so unusual, but what really surprised me was that D. West turned out to be a cross between Stan Laurel and Foghorn Leghorn. Maybe that's just a tad provincially American on the part of my universal character-type translation mechanism, but really, he smiled way too much for a man of his fierce reputation. Whatever the case, the true belle of the Yorkshire ball was Hazel Ashworth, who is beautiful, gracious, smart, and energetic. Nice, too. She took us for a drive.

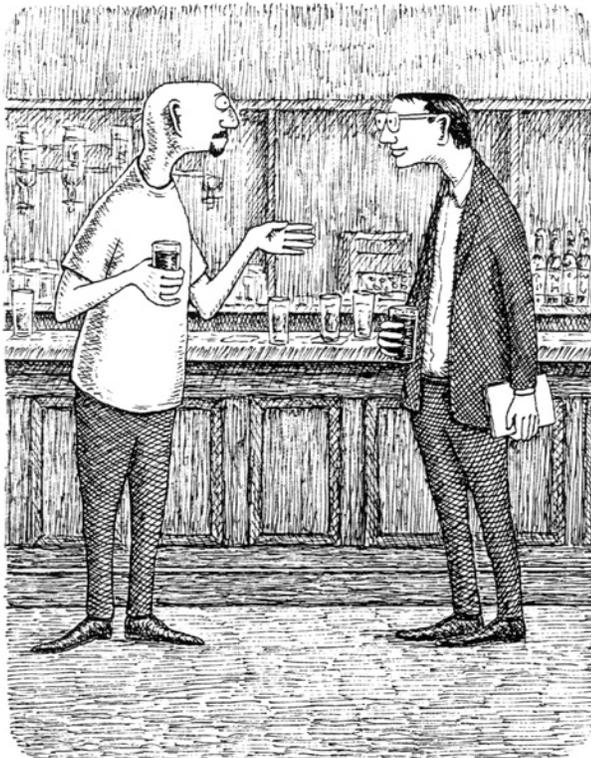
Yorkshire Tail End by Victor Gonzalez

It was late afternoon in our Yorkshire day tour when Hazel Ashworth asked Randy if he'd like to see a 400-year-old grammar school. A short drive later we were out of the car in the town of Burnsall, stretching our muscles in the sun. Don West commenced to roll a fag while I communed with sheep grazing in a miniature pasture just across the road. Hazel and Don had been critical of the warm April

day, awarding the unnatural sight of blue sky many a squinting grimace—but that hadn't stopped them from picking up two TAFF winners at the Skipton station, and guiding us from river to vale. We had been impeded only by half-dressed locals, who biked and hiked and fished with dangerous bedazzled abandon, as though the days of the Sun-King might never return.

Hazel introduced us to the young headmistress of the two-room schoolhouse, Sheila. She still taught in the white-plastered building (finished around 1600 and dedicated to a "Lord Crauen") while it was restored and expanded. Sheila cheerfully led us round the school via makeshift construction platforms and latticed scaffolding. Her short, limber body weaved the maze skillfully, and her white T-shirt and jeans shed the thick plaster dust. The four of us followed with somewhat greater difficulty. Don occasionally grunted. Two busy construction workers gave no objection to Sheila's tour, and even offered to clear a path. I waved them off and seconds later thumped a plank with my head. As I ruefully rubbed the bump, we saw how the new school wing was cleverly fit in around the older structure, preserving the original look but not replicating the five-foot-tall doorways, nor the hand-finished timber frames and beams. We climbed back down, and then took turns dusting Don, whose blue jacket had gone nearly white.

Sheila then offered to take us "up to the bell tower." This confused me, but we assented and were led up the road to the Parish Church of St.



EDWARD GOREY DISCOVERS ◇ TAFF ◇

*Alas, regardless of their doom,
The Fan Fund winners play!
No sense have they of ills to come,
Nor care beyond today.*



Wilfrid, parts of which antedate the school by 500 years. At the end of a path of old headstones was the large main entrance. Sheila stretched to her tippy toes reaching over the door's thick wooden lintel, the rising tail of her T-shirt baring smooth white skin, the falling sleeves revealing firm triceps, and came back down with a heavy iron key in her hand. She led us round the side of the church by another path, and fitted the key into a diminutive wooden door.

Don glanced in at the dark narrow upward spiral of stone steps, glanced back at the four of us with eyebrows raised, stood aside, and commenced to roll a fag. I shrugged, stuck my head in, and immediately crowned myself on the rough-hewn ceiling. This hit stunned me for a moment; when the laughter died down I led the way upstairs, until we reached a small landing. We went through an iron-reinforced door with a peephole ("It was from a prison," said Sheila), into a square room with six pair of stout ropes hanging from the room above, through holes cut in the 12-foot ceiling. On each cord was fastened a colorful tufted handgrip, called a "sally."

Then we walked back up the tight spiral to the chamber above. Six large church bells hung from a ponderous oak frame, amid a tangled antique engine of wood and iron: wheels, ropes, spokes, sliders and stays. Sheila brightly explained how the lines below rotated the wheels, which turned the bells. A two-by-four wedged by hand between a stay and a brace played a key safety role; fatalities could result, if one were too close, and unlucky. I rubbed the growing bump on my head. I couldn't imagine how it would look in action. But, thinking of the lesson our guide had just given, I jumped to a conclusion:

"How long have you been ringing?"

"About 30 years," Sheila said, with a smile. It turned out she tutored the local children in ringing, and had built a bit of a following. "I wouldn't be surprised if some of them showed up," she added with a chuckle as we descended to the ringing room. We watched as she grasped the sally. Her hands started far above her head for each pull, her body stretched vertical and taut like an archer's bow. She swung her arms down and released her grip when her hands were near her knees. A thick void shielded us from the belfry, muffling the ringing. The rope slipped back up, pulled by the wheel above, and she clamped her fingers down at rope's end just as the tension changed, and sprang up again, as though a hot-air balloon were hauling her aloft, again and again. The white cotton T-shirt slithered over skin. From ankles to neck, her body

felt for strain and resistance and relief. Her fingertips listened for the right moment, and she buoyed and crouched as she dampened the mechanical energy, cycle by cycle. The single bell fell silent.

Then she offered us a try. Randy and I chickened out—I figured any one of those swings might wreck my back; Randy, as we know, is too precious for campanology. But Hazel (also a Yorkshire school headmistress) was up to the challenge, and soon had the bell rhythmically calling the town. Her dress waved and swished as she heaved the rope and deftly caught it. Sheila, her height matched by a wooden block, stood facing. At first Sheila spotted Hazel's motion, the two figures cresting and ebbing in close order, like hill and vale. Hazel swiftly apprehended the shifts in tension, and Sheila released her fingers, ghosting the motions without touching the rope.

The audition ended, and we climbed down the spiral into the early evening sunlight, where Don greeted us. We thanked Sheila for the most impressive demonstration and ambled toward the car. I looked to see if we would be swarmed by 9-year-old medievalist musicians. None appeared. Don muttered that he wouldn't have climbed that spiral staircase for a fresh tin of tobacco, and re-lighted his fag.

"I think you might have enjoyed it," I replied while rubbing the still immature bumps on my head. "It was cool. I mean, I'm a big fan of old churches, but I've never been in a bell tower before." I described the huge physical movements involved. "I've heard the bells, I've appreciated the sounds, I've even read the history," I continued. "I've just never put it all together. It was strangely spiritual."

Don leaned over, as though he wasn't sure what he was hearing. He raised his eyebrows and stared at me unblinking from above the frame of his glasses.

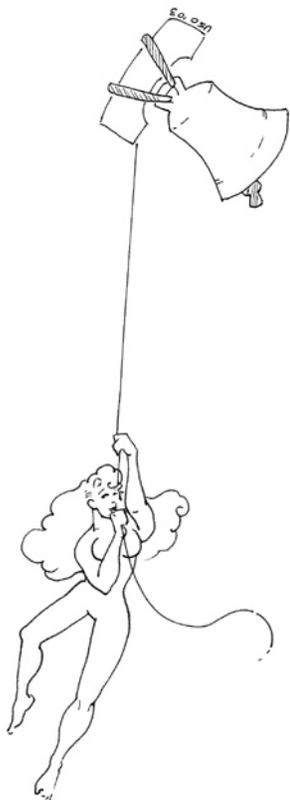
"Are you okay? Should we take you to hospital?"

"No," I replied, rubbing my head and looking back at the bell tower to make sure there was just the one. "No, I'm okay. But I am left with one prominent thought...."

"Eh?" He stubbed the butt and opened the car door.

"I'd sure like to see a woman do that naked."

Tony Keen is one of the many red-hot It boys I found squirming across the fecund, swampy landscape of UK fandom. Is it something in the water? Alison Freebairn explained that Tony can only be found surrounded by tall, gorgeous women, and it's true that this was the case when we had dinner with him in London. One



of those beauties, his girlfriend Kate, explained to me that the fascinating new architectural artifact on the London horizon is in fact called the Erotic Gherkin. Seattle has Selig's Phallus, but I suppose that buildings aren't truly funny unless they're green.

How I Never Quite Talked To The 2003 TAFF Delegate by Tony Keen

I would have loved to go to the party Steven Cain and Alison Scott threw for Randy. Unfortunately, we were in Whitby that weekend, for the Whitby Gothic Weekend.

But salvation came in the form of Alison Freebairn. Kate and I and Kate's best friend Fiona were having dinner with a few others before heading off for different pursuits. I asked Alison to come, she said, "Can I bring Randy?" Of course. Sorted.

Except, for complicated reasons I probably shouldn't go into now I got sat at the other end of the table from Randy, and had to devote my attention to the people at my end, so we did no more than exchange a few words and a handshake (though Kate talked to him a bit). I couldn't go to the pub afterwards. Never mind, I'd talk to Randy at Eastercon.

Except that never quite happened either. I always seemed to be rushing about at Seacon, and never really sat down and had a proper talk with anyone — I was renewing a lot of old friendships, distributing fanzines, worrying about neglecting Kate on her first Eastercon (unnecessarily, as it turns out — she took to Eastercons with an ease I haven't managed over fifteen years). Randy and I did have a brief chat one night in the bar, but there wasn't a free seat, so I moved on somewhere else.

It's no good. I'm just going to have to come to America.

Max insists on describing me as quiet, but I don't think I've ever heard her speak a word herself. However, it was a great comfort to me to see her and Tobes in London, Cambridge, and Hinckley. I don't think they were stalking me, but it couldn't have been *entirely* coincidental. Tobes has no problem speaking out, although some people claim they can't understand a word he says. Bosh! He taught me how to pronounce Calvados, which is not an easy thing to say ... or drink.

Max

When the TAFF winner comes to town you have to make him welcome. I don't know whether we lived

up to that when we put Randy in the back of a van, but he was really rather accommodating.

A few days earlier we saw him in Cambridge at one of the local regular meetings. People pointed out that he was very quiet, didn't live up to the typical American stereotype and tried to give him the floor, but Randy didn't say an awful lot whilst smiling genially and savouring the local beer.

All the same, quiet or not, if people want to put you in the back of a vehicle and you are reluctant, you protest. Randy didn't so we can conclude that he probably enjoyed it. To be fair, we did put seven other fans in the back of a van at the same time and none of them complained either. Neither did the one in the front, though to be fair it was all his idea and he was the one holding the keys.

It was somewhere around 2am when the incident occurred on the first night of the 2003 Eastercon. An extremely large proportion of the convention attendees had disappeared, we presume they had retired to bed though with hindsight I realise we have no proof they weren't in the back of other vehicles in the car park. In search of fun and excitement most of those remaining awake in the bar followed Tobes outside when he announced that the way to go was to hold a van party.

For a while I stayed inside. It was cold out there. I couldn't imagine it was going to be all that much fun. However, it was rather quiet inside so I went out to see how things were proceeding. Quite quietly, was my conclusion. The white van was all closed up and there was no sound to be heard from across the carpark. As I wandered closer I noticed it was rocking slightly as the people inside shuffled around. I shivered a little and continued to approach. Upon arrival I was greeted warmly by calls from the back and climbed into the passenger seat, my teeth now chattering. Everyone huddled in the back seemed warm enough, and quite squashed. The collective breath of ten fans slowly steamed up the windows as they continued to chat and share around hip flasks and bottles of dubious liquids. Glasses were raised, van parties were toasted along with the convention, TAFF and M'hinge. Sandwiched between Brits, Randy looked mildly bemused but quaffed and cheered along with the rest. Shaking my head and still shivering mightily I wandered back inside, leaving the van party to their own devices. The party had gotten into its swing and now voices could be heard, muffled and incomprehensible, from across the car park.

Before too long the party came back inside. We tried fitting everyone into a phone booth. They were rather large phonebooths and it wasn't difficult. Pictures and mirth ensued but it didn't match



surreality of a van party. Things moved on to downright mundane by the time a room party was being suggested and throughout the rest of the con nothing really did match the oddness of a TAFF winner sitting drinking in the back of a van in a cold dark carpark. Even more oddly, as far as I'm aware nobody ever got around to making the joke about getting randy in the back of a parked vehicle.

Tobes wasn't the only other former TAFF winner I met on my trip. I'd actually met Peter Weston once before, at Corflu Valentine, where he made a splendid gangster in Ian Sorenson's musical, *Booze Brothers*, but Eastercon was the first time I actually talked to him at length. A charming gentleman of the old school, always well-dressed and not uncomfortable with a cigar. He doesn't look like an *X-Files* fan, but he certainly has some funny ideas about alien influence on human history. Of course, that could be explained by the sorts of people he hangs out with.

The Graham Charnock Story by Peter Weston

You asked about the incredible return of Graham Charnock. He came up to me in the bookroom, I was a friendly face, probably one of the only people he knew at the convention. He said "Hello Peter" quietly, and I greeted him with enthusiasm, "Roy, so pleased to see you again" (no, I didn't actually say that, wish I had).

We chatted amicably for a few minutes; last time I'd seen Graham was in the early 1980s, when he was lean and wiry, played lead guitar with The Burlingtons, had just taken on Responsibilities, got married, started a family, become manager at a Marylebone bookshop. Now, here he was in the Future, son grown-up, fatter, balder, out-of-touch, wondering what he was doing at Hinckley, just like the rest of us sixties retards.

"Er, fancy a drink?" I said, "let's go into the bar," and he shyly followed me into the Snooty Fox, full of people who were more-or-less strangers to Graham. I bought him beer. I introduced him to all my friends, to Ace whizz-kid Victor Gollancz, to TAFF-man Randy Byers, to his old pal, Rich Coad. In no time at all Graham was yelling down Victor's cell-phone to an incredulous D. West, handing out copies of *Vibrator*, talking loudly, regaining his confidence and being rude to me, just like old times. Welcome back, Charnock, who next, Kettle? Roberts? Jackson? They can't keep away!

I've actually read a couple of issues of *Wrin-*

***kled Shrew*, but I reckon nothing can prepare you for Graham Charnock in the flesh. He upheld the British tradition of homoerotic male humor, although he stopped short of donning a dress, at least in my presence. In fact I'm not sure I saw any men in dresses on my trip. Is that even remotely possible in the U.K.? Well, anyway, he took it all too far, but boy could he play guitar.**

Graham Charnock

Shy, retiring, probably stoned most of the time. Nice military moustache. Didn't rise to my gay-mode taunts. (Sorry, I always do that, especially with Americans, and sometimes even with members of my immediate family, it's a kind of death-wish thing. Tried it with Mary Burns. Didn't work at all). Came to my gig and was one of three people who laughed at the right moments. In fact he clapped and hooted and soiled his pants. Okay, fairly mediocre stuff so far really, and only 90% true. This is what you really want to hear: Randy Byers and I hung out until dawn most nights of the convention, quaffing real, or possibly false, ale and smoking joints and seeking poon-tang. Many times, usually on the hour, every hour, I invited him back to my room to view the brick wall from my window, but he always found something better to do, usually involving Chris Donaldson's bust, or huge blown up photograph's of the same, which suprisingly were readily on sale alongside copies on *The Sun* in the hotel's concessionary shop. On Saturday night, just before the Masquerade, I caught him searching for gossamer cast-offs in the famed room 13. I have a picture of him watching Wendy Dope's late night strip with his eyes bulging from his sockets. Unfortunately they were his arm sockets. In the morning, once we'd towelled down after our swim in the pool, I asked him if he'd found any poon-tang. He looked at me, with his eyes (what other way was there, except these eyes were exceptionally soft and milky), reached for a copy of a Larry Niven novel, and fall immediately asleep. In my arms. Randy Byers, folks. You voted for him.

One of the great bits of serendipity of my trip was to run into Rich Coad at the Eastercon. Last time I saw him was on the deck at Jerry and Suzle's place, when they still lived above Stu and Andi right here in Needle City. Rich was a slightly less fabled a creature to me than Graham, but only because I'd actually met him a time or two before. He still represents the era of fandom as I first encountered it—an almost mythical figure of great power and accom-

plishment in a young neo's eyes. On the other hand, somewhere Nigel Richardson is muttering something about fans and dancing.

The Rich Coad Story **by Peter Weston**

For a big man, Rich is pretty light on his feet. Nice mover. He's got rhythm. Now, the so-called 'dance' on the Saturday night was a pretty damp squib, which was a pity because John Harvey and the Wallbangers (as I like to call the group) were belting out some good stuff in Gregory's former Fan-Room, but no-one was taking much notice. I'd have liked a dance but usual partners like Maureen Kincaid Speller were conspicuously absent, preferring to talk about science fiction. Finally they started in on 'Johnny Be Good', and I couldn't stand it any longer, jumped up and started leaping round like that mad little German in the sports-coat, only to find my hand seized by Rich Coad who was pounding away in an equal frenzy.

Well, where I come from Chaps don't dance with other Chaps, let alone hold hands, but Rich is from California so I took no notice and we arm-wrestled our way round the floor, each one of us trying to be The Man and make The Girl do the under-the-arm bit, both resisting, until we simultaneously decided "what the hell" and did it together, at the same time, nearly dislocating our shoulders in the process. End of dance. I wonder if there are any pictures?

Claire Brialey had her arm in a sling when I saw her at the party that Alison Scott and Steven Cain threw for me in their Walthamstow mansion. At one point, Pat McMurray bumped into it, and Claire for a moment lost some of her natural reserve. She also turned a very interesting shade of white. But as soon as I mentioned that I'd heard there was a bid for yet another Hinckley Eastercon, in 2005, she wheeled around to Pat and Noel Collyer and began to formulate a counterbid. Not that it did them any good, but she looked frighteningly powerful there for a second.

Claire Brialey

I'm still not sure Randy was actually at the Eastercon. He says he was. Other people said he was. But I can't really remember. Mark claims to have talked to him over the free fanzines table in the dealers' room. I may have seen him briefly and blurrily in the bar once or twice. I couldn't swear to not having seen him dancing to John Harvey's band — or was he just watching British fans dance as if (understandably) he couldn't believe in it all

either? And maybe he wasn't there. Maybe he was still in Yorkshire, shunning us all. Maybe the whole concept of Randy Byers on his TAFF trip was just a mass hallucination, or an idea in the mind of a whimsical god.

Yet I'm convinced he was in Walthamstow the weekend before Easter, and he was definitely at Heathrow a few days after the convention, as we headed out to Madison for Corflu, and yet for the period in between it all seems less clear. But this could be more to do with the Eastercon than of Randy himself.

The most detailed sighting may explain something of this effect. On the Tuesday morning, as fans began to gather together their belongings and their travelling companions and any brain cells remaining to them after the weekend, we saw Chris Tregenza at breakfast. He was moving quite slowly and communicating in a less than enthusiastic way. Jess Bennett explained that he'd been up drinking with Jim until dawn and it was amazing, really, that he'd got up for breakfast at all. Chris commented that they'd ended up sitting on the stage talking bollocks.

Later that morning, as we were waiting for our taxi in reception and contemplating opening a book on the longest time taken for check-out and the largest number of errors in any single room bill, we saw Jim de Liscard wandering about. He was less than entirely co-ordinated and sounding less didactic than usual. Meike Benzler explained that he'd been up drinking with Chris until dawn, and it was amazing, really, that he'd got up. Jim ventured the information that Randy had been there as well, providing an audience for their rambling.

Two days later, as we surveyed similar scenes in Heathrow's Terminal 3 and wondered whether it was really a good idea to keep going to conventions on different continents on consecutive weekends, we saw Randy in the coffee bar. He mentioned that he'd taken a day out entirely to recover from Eastercon, the Monday night having been the final straw. He'd been sitting up drinking with Jim and Chris until dawn and it was amazing, really.

It seems that in the early hours of the morning, Randy had decided it was time to go to bed. Unfor-



tunately it was only at this stage that he discovered that his room key had been reprogrammed, possibly under the erroneous impression that he was one of the people who had left on Monday. There was no one at reception. There was no one in the bar. There was no way into his room. So he went back to the dead dog party in the Lakeside Suite, where only Jim de Liscard and Chris Tregenza remained, getting sercon. They had concluded that the table on the stage would be helpful for this, and decamped there. Finding a panel, and a sercon one at that, Randy took a seat.

It all makes perfect sense. Assuming, of course, that he was really there at all.

Speaking of frighteningly powerful, I'd venture that if Ireland could find a way to tap into the fannish enthusiasm of incipient truf James Bacon, their energy problems would be solved for a generation. James tried to teach me how to say some kind of Celtic party word—something like *M'hinge!*—but I was feeling a bit precious about that. A bit too nice, I suppose. He later confessed that the zines of a certain well-known British faned made him feel sad and want to shag her. Thus was born the concept of the Shag of Comment.

Expecting someone, well, a little Different....
by James Bacon

Having been what I consider a serious protagonist in the battle to get Tobes elected for the TAFF trip to Worldcon, I had expected some sort of severe act of retribution from the Americans.

Sending such an obvious drunken reprobate over to the States could only be construed as an act of heresy, nay terrorism, a blunt attempt to brutalise fans with a most heinous weapon, a weapon of mass drunkenness. I knew that sowing this wind would only end up with the reaping of a whirlwind that would shatter those of us who had ejaculated this Jersey man across the ocean.

I mused on the matter. This Randy fella would be An Anti-Tobes, was my first conclusion.

Randy would be totally opposite to Tobes in every way. He would have to be boring and tedious, lifeless when it came to excitement. His presence could induce a negativity that would dull room parties, a sort of Black Hole for fun. He would suck the will to live from partygoers' souls, if he got their ear. He would be an expert on the politics of Fred Pohl novels. Randy would be well armed, he would have a palm pilot that catalogues among other things the meetings he had with BNFs, his whole



collection of pulp fiction, which would be the third largest in the universe, and of course the dates and names of the women he'd slept with, well, hoped to at least, and of course a picture of Mary Rotten-Crotch who was kind enough to give him a reach around, once.

Randy would have to be wearing cords, I mused, and of course a nice shirt, buttoned to the collar, about XXXL, and a baseball cap, and tennis shoes. This fan of course, would love the French, their food, and their men, and would have a large collection of French SF, also catalogued on the palm pilot. An active member of Delaney's Children, he would contribute to charities and pray for the souls of 'fallen women'.

This Anti-Tobes, would have to be from the Bible Belt, I imagined, a good god fearing fan. Randy would have the gospels on the old pilot, and would be of high moral fibre. No drink would ever pass this fan's lips, no siree, this fan was a Tee-Totaller. In actual fact Randy, I speculated, would persuade the committee to actually close down the bar.

I wondered about the fannish end of this TAFF winner's character, and immediately Filk sprang to mind. Yep, he'd be a filker, and no ordinary filker, Randy would also have his banjo and be able to do a little knee-kicking dance. He would probably bring his books of Filk songs, themed with a mixture of Pohl and God, to hand about.

Jaysus, what had I done, I started to regret the whole Tobes for TAFF thing, like it was a great laugh and all, but my active imagination was whirling away at light speed, and the conjured images were absolutely hideous. This fella Randy would have to be killed.

I made some enquiries. Tobes had voted for someone else, which made sense; I don't think he even voted for himself. The general feedback was good, and started to blunt my negativism.

Then the feedback became a little bit too earnest. 'You'll Love him James, he is great, likes a good party and is a bit wild.' I again started to muse. Sounded like a party animal. More good stuff was forthcoming, and then the worst: I heard from the friend of a friend that Nic Farey said he was a great laugh and a good writer.

Jaysus, I reckoned that was just too much, we were being sent a bleedin' Uber-Tobes.

Like I know there had been much disappointment over Tobes' visit among American fans. I had set up his trip website, and had agreed to manage it with James Shields throughout. Knowing Tobes' penchant for not emailing, we set up a system where people could mail the website information and updates about our Hero's voyage across the USA. Unfortunately some people must have thought it went directly to Tobes.

Mails such as 'How dare you refuse a Blow Job, you have ruined my TAFF record,' 'Nice one, that was a clanger at the Hugos,' and 'We love you: the two Marys,' amongst many many more indicated a shock wave emanating around our delegate, a shock wave of disgust and disdain.

Now it was the ultimate in retaliation, we were going to get some drug crazed lunatic gonzo journalist, who was going to rampage through our women, men folk, disrupt Eastercon, and no doubt play practical jokes on those of us who had helped

the Jerseyman. I immediately put superglue remover into my bag.

No doubt Randy was a nickname. From now on, I expected the ladies would mock all fans on this side of the Atlantic, as soon as they dropped their pants, such a pitiful effort compared to 'RANDY'. He would be super handsome, the life of every party, a charisma that just has women wetting themselves, and porters running for mops.

Randy-Uber-Tobes would have room parties that disintegrated into orgies, one man shows, with baths full of champagne, go-go girls swinging their go-gos to a live band, probably something awesome like Nirvana, lead by the real Elvis, who was a friend of his. He would be *au fait* with all the cool SF, like Burgess, Burroughs, Dick and Ellison, not collecting their books, but getting written manuscripts off them.

This would be a worse situation, the guy would turn up in a Ferrari, wear Gucci suits, or even worse, be super cool and look like someone out of System of a Down. His room parties would be legendary.

Randy would be an active Satanist, and be able to perform Magick. He would own a weapons factory, enjoy eating rare and protected species, race cars for a hobby, and occasionally play guitar with some rock band like Metallica.

His drug habit would put any Hollywood star to shame, and he would treat cocaine like we treat salt, spreading it liberally over fresh meat, uncooked, but very hot. His joints would be about two feet long, and would be made up of the finest grass.

Us ordinary blokes would be left aghast, as he showed all and sundry his party trick 'The rectal examination with a guitar and Big Name Filker'.

How would we compete? I contemplated suicide.

So as I walked into the bar at Eastercon, I braced myself, *Anti or Uber, Anti or Uber*, around and around it went in my head, like a mantra. I sat down clutching my beer, next to Rowser, and gave her a kiss. Sitting next to her was this nice chap, neat, cool looking, and friendly. So after a while I asked her where is the TAFF winner, and immediately she introduced me to Randy, who was the bloke sitting next to her.

I sighed a brief sigh, and wiped a bead of sweat from my brow, loosened my various sphincters and relaxed. It was a close run thing; no uber or anti Tobes was this TAFF winner, just a decent fella. They aren't so bad after all, them American lads, I tell ya.



Holdstock and Two Smoking Barrels

by Dave Hicks

“If they ask me to do this again,” said Tony Keen, referring to his programme item *I’m Sorry I Haven’t A Clue* and the decision to hold the Eastercon at the same place in 2005, “then they’ll be out of luck. There’s nothing more to be said about Hinckley.” As the latest exponent of game show parodies, Tony takes his art seriously and had researched Hinckley’s local history, such as it was, for a humorous introduction in keeping with the real show’s host’s habit of taking the piss out of wherever they’re performing that week. He did not find a lot of material.

Incidentally, the aforementioned host, Humphrey Lyttleton, venerable jazz trombonist and comedian, had, allegedly, recently told the dirtiest joke ever heard on British radio, but none of us has since been able to find out what the hell it was.

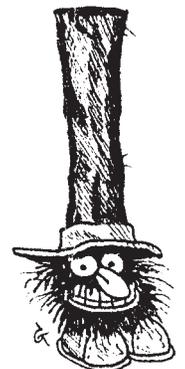
Hinckley seems to have gripped fandom with what, even for our community, is a bizarre fascination. The thrilling prospect of the bright lights of Hinckley was too much for Cat and I. A conference hotel on a motorway junction is more than enough to keep us amused for four days, so our only view of the delights of Hinckley came when in 2001 we drove from South Wales to London, caught a plane from Heathrow to Sweden, settled into a convention hosted by a major arts venue slap bang in the centre of Stockholm and sat down to watch a slide show of Hinckley town centre, its fine railway station, its lovely shopping street (among other things), narrated in Swedish.

Perhaps refracted through the exotic lens of a distant fan’s experience, the most mundane of locales can acquire colour and interest. Thus your editor has commissioned a convention report from someone who lives 6,000 miles away from him.

That’s actually a cruel indulgence in not missing a good line, I had fun at Seacon. To provide a

broad, balanced picture of the event, I never left the hotel. To provide that authentic British Trufan perspective I endeavoured hardly ever to leave the bar. To the alarm of certain readers I must nonetheless warn you I spent a lot of time there talking about science fiction. Well, I say science fiction when I really mean *The Years Of Rice And Salt*. In an age when fans have increasingly few books in common that were written after 1960, everybody seemed to have read it, everybody had an opinion on it, and everybody’s opinion seemed to be “Yes, but...” Stan, of course, has stated he’s not likely to visit this side of the Atlantic until his family’s older. Never mind, as I write fresh slagging-off material in the form of *Pattern Recognition* has just come out and Bill Gibson’s live in Britain on the radio, giving the dullest, most media-ed out, jet-lagged, comatose travesty of an appearance I’ve heard since Robert Mitchum went through an entire interview answering nothing but “Yup” and “Nope”. Greg Pickersgill recently argued with me about the significance of the convention scene to author sales, that it mattered not a jot to the sales figures. I’m still of the opinion that authors at a convention do like to see their work moving — *Felaheen*, for example, was sold out before Saturday lunchtime — even if it’s only a few dozen copies, on the grounds that every little helps. If I’m right, the only way for Gibson to recover after a public performance like that is come to Glasgow in 2005 and fellate British fandom in its entirety.

“Yes, that’ll do nicely,” was, however, the verdict on the beer. Tasty, cool and reasonably priced. If only the bar management had listened to the committee and ordered enough of it, we wouldn’t all have been reduced to drinking those obscure green and pink rum and vodka mixers that were all they had left. When everyone’s used to controlling their drinking by counting pints, the switch to obscure-



“So you’re cool with being fired out of that cannon at the closing ceremony, then?” I asked.

sized bottles of liquor of indeterminate strength can have unforeseen consequences. At least that’s what I told the judge. What? I’m supposed to continue the literary diatribe? Nah mate. Randall Byers did not approach me about a con rep whilst I stood in the dealers’ room debating the relative merits of subscribing to *Foundation* or *The NY Review of SF*, he loomed through the fog in the bar, across a table loaded with beer glasses, and interrupted me in mid-obscurity.

Anyway, you’ll be wanting a convention report.

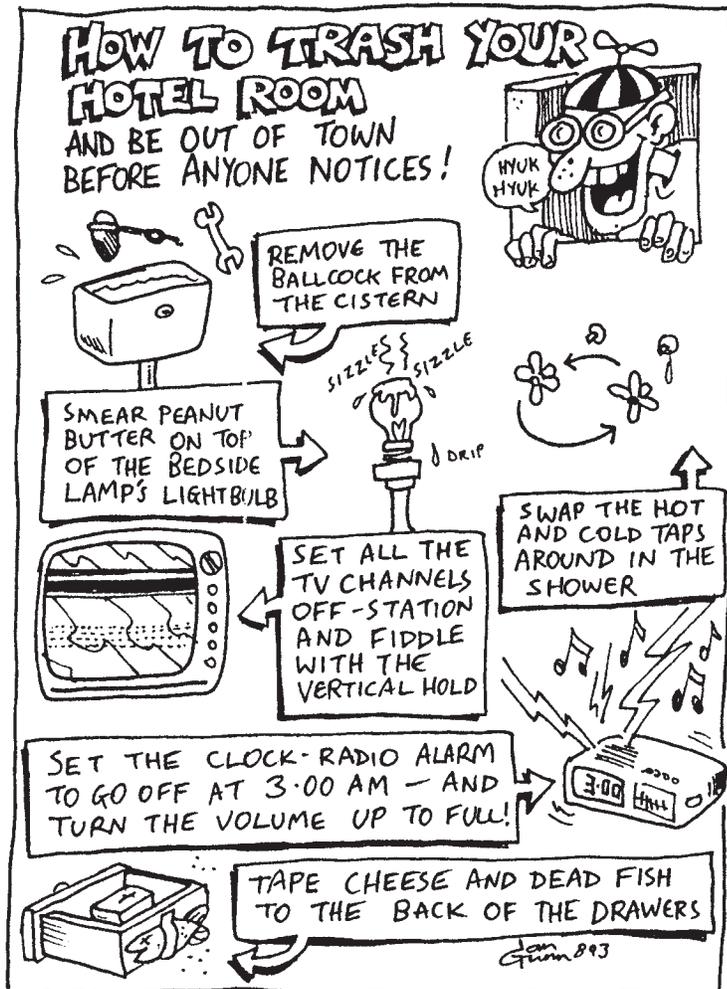
It’s been established since his bravura performance as game-show host at Contextt, the Unicon in Cheltenham last summer, that Tony Keen is the New Dave Hicks. That weekend Cat and I also adopted him as our idiot son, but that’s by the by. As soon as we arrived and registered at Seacon I became the new Spike Parsons. At least, they gave me a letter beginning, “Dear Spike, you have agreed to appear on ‘Milestones of 20th Century Fandom’”. In fact I was on the fanzine review panel scheduled a little earlier on Saturday. Randy had been put on both, and was uncertain if he had anything to say, but gamely accepted that

once you’ve won TAFF, your ass belongs to the host convention. “So you’re cool with being fired out of that cannon at the closing ceremony, then?” I asked, before assuring him that any panel with Helena Bowles, Mike Abbott, Pam Wells and me on it would find enough to talk about for four or five hours even if he didn’t feel much like chipping in.

The following day, when describing Kill The Fuckers fanzine reviewing for the uninitiated during the panel, it occurred to me that some of the targets of that vitriol, in a now-vanished era when some fanzines really were irredeemably bad, could have been titled Millstones of 20th Century Fandom. I declined to single out Keith Walker’s *Fanzine Fanatique*, or the apotheosis of crap, his 1981 effort *Brighton Rock* not because time has passed and healed old wounds, not even because Keith was actually sat six feet away from me, but because he never says a bloody word at these things when he’s in the audience. It would have been like kicking a puppy. I reprised instead some classic Joseph Nicholas ego-shredding of American fanzines circa 1979 published by the estimable and charming Rich Coad in my favourite fanzine, *Space Junk*. Rich was back at his second successive Eastercon, his good time last year compounded by my ass-kissing delight at finally meeting him in Jersey. I debated going up to him at a busy time in the bar and embarrassing him by loudly demanding he sign my copy of his fanzine, which, in a moment of synchronicity, also contained an article by the young Bill Gibson.

Spike herself was fine about being replaced. “This means I can stay in the bar.” Spike was conducting a massive survey of British fandom, not along the lines of Wendy Graham’s Sunday night survey of male undergarments every Novacon, but with a massive questionnaire for her planned game show at Corflu. I can see it now: “We asked fifty British fans the following question — what do you think the most popular answer was?” “Fifty different drunken smart ass quips.” “Correct!”

Apart from the fanzine panel, my other unwarranted intrusion on fans’ valuable time came in the form of *I’m Sorry I Haven’t A SFing Clue*, which had worked so well at the Unicon the previous summer in Cheltenham. The real reason I’ve endeavoured to give up doing game shows is the preparation/performance ratio. If you’re on a panel it’s because you already know stuff and have opinions, and maybe you’ll need to re-read a book or a few fanzines you’d have got round to enjoying again sometime soon anyway. You don’t have to fart around with cardboard, script 150% as much material as you’ll use, and then make judgement



calls on the fly as to which items to ditch in the middle of the show, as Tony Keen was doing. Your working day isn't disrupted by striving for ammunition in the form of bad puns like the title of this piece. And strangely I never actually laid eyes on Rob Holdstock all weekend although I know he was there. You don't sneak off and make miniature Daleks, like Alison Freebairn and Neil Johnston did only for them to be in one of the items Tony unilaterally drops. You don't have to sing one song to the tune of another, such as Marina from *Stingray* to the tune of *Star Wars*. For musical support, Ian Sorensen brought out his trusty organ and...oh God, we'll take the rest of that sentence as read, okay? The problem was that Ian plays by ear, and couldn't remember exactly how the theme went. Neither could the rest of us. Thus he started with something that sounded like a combination of the theme from *Superman* and the German national anthem before recovering his composure and doing the business.

I also had a small supporting role in Ian and Phil Raines' latest Reductio Ad Absurdum production, *The Matrix: Remaindered*. Well, I say small, it was really more of a nanorole. Apparently only a talented fan artist would do. Unfortunately Sue Mason was in America so they asked me. Since they were combining *The Matrix* with *Men In Black*, they needed a prop for the shoot the head off/watch it re-grow routine using silly faces drawn on balloons. Who knows—maybe next time they'll get the drawing on the balloon facing the audience. As I've mentioned elsewhere, my own debacles leave me as one of the last people to criticise anyone else's attempts to be funny on stage, and it did have that 'first time out' feel that was a long way from the hyper-slick production of *Carry On Blade Runner* back in '97. It also featured a pun that was, even by Ian's standards, painful, but I won't mention it as it's his to re-use, or, more accurately, re-inflict as he sees fit.

Earlier in the weekend, Jae Leslie Adams was nervous. Instead of her normal British convention experience of hanging out and drinking beer, she was part of the Tiptree Award ceremony and would have to make a speech. At dinner with her, Farah Mendelsohn, and other Tiptree people a small man with a grey pony tail joined us. I'd never seen him before. "Who was that?" I asked after he left. "M John Harrison," they said. How embarrassing. Except it isn't, it's what conventions are all about. One of the joys is the lack of celebrity culture, I don't go to gawp at the famous but to share a good time with people I like. Sometimes they're authors, but at the '99 Eastercon, when the badges were

illegible, I got to know a guy named Ken who was interesting and fun and it was another year before I discovered his surname was MacLeod.

Jae acquitted herself splendidly, and John Harrison looked marvellous in his winner's tiara, proving that getting away with wearing glittery jewellery isn't about feminine charm but having the right mischievous gleam in the eye to complement the twinkling gems.

The star of Friday night, though, was Ellen Klages. As someone who's died on his arse on stage at conventions more times than you've sat vainly trying to decipher the bills in Chinese restaurants, I can imagine all too clearly how scary it could be to step up on stage in a foreign country, before a virtually unknown audience, and be expected to be instantly entertaining. As Ellen went into her act I was laughing with her, not just at her jokes, but at the bravura of her performance, admiring her composure and self-possession.

New talent, new people, new to fandom or just new to me, is, of course, one of the reasons I do this stuff; it's like enjoying the blues, the same familiar riffs, but every so often some fresh twist on a theme you'd not thought of. This is, by pure coincidence and not stretching the same tired old metaphor again, the rap I always use when describing the virtue of convention reports and fanzine reviews, which I enjoy as a classic literary form far more than for their utility as a guide to conventions and fanzines. (Blues? Rap? Okay Hicks—go on, let's see ya get jazz funk in there as well...)

For all Ellen's panache, the star of the weekend for me, and a breath of fresh air in a fandom perhaps a bit too stale and familiar, was a young tyro by the name of Graham Charnock. Graham didn't know many people at the convention, so he set out

MOVE TO DISMISS THE
CHARGES AGAINST MY
CLIENT ON THE GROUNDS
THAT THE ARREST WARRANT
FAILED TO HYPHENATE
"VICE-LORDS!"



I can imagine all too clearly how scary it could be to step up on stage in a foreign country, before a virtually unknown audience, and be expected to be instantly entertaining.

The all too familiar
faces of modern
British fandom:
Jae Leslie Adams,
Victor Gonzalez,
Anders Holmstrom,
Erhardt Leder,
Cardboard Buffy
and so on.

to make as many new friends as possible on Saturday afternoon by becoming spectacularly drunk spectacularly fast. Trust me, I've done this, it works, you make an indelible impression on whole rooms full of people; and as long as it's a metaphorical indelible impression, as opposed to the sort that makes your dry cleaner scream and flee in horror, that's all right. Of course, afterwards, Graham didn't remember whom he'd met, but they remembered him. Graham was part of a vigorous new crowd you don't often run into at a British convention these days, as opposed to the all too familiar faces of modern British fandom: Jae Leslie Adams, Victor Gonzalez, Anders Holmstrom, Erhardt Leder, Cardboard Buffy and so on. Along with his mates Greg Pickersgill, Chris Evans, Rob Holdstock, Rich Coad and John Jarrold I reckon we could be in for some lively times ahead.

Graham and Chris were responsible for the highlight of my and many others' weekend. *Deaf Lemon Astral — The Astral Leauge Comeback Tour* occurred after Graham had gone and had a nice twenty four hour lie down. Graham talked, Graham sang and played guitar, including a new song about noticing his best friend's wife in inappropriate ways. Then Graham hauled Chris Evans from the audience, reminding us that the Astral Leauge had given much more to fandom than the mere spectacle of a pissed Yorkshireman trying to bugger himself with a broomstick without taking his hands off either end, and asked him to read a little something Pat Charnock wrote in 1977.

Have you ever had a heart attack? Me neither, but I'm given to understand that it involves one's vision swimming, loss of control over one's motor functions, great chest pain, and much gasping for breath. Now imagine a room full of thirty people all going through that at once. I thought I was going to be sick. Across the aisle from me I saw Sandra Bond desperately trying not to fall off her chair. We laughed, we cried, we begged for mercy, but Evans continued reading *The Descent Of Women: Telling All About How They Came Down From The Trees* in his stern South Wales voice, not pausing, not laughing himself, but with a baffled rage at being asked to read this drivel that made it all the worse for the rest of us.

Graham kindly distributed copies of various Astral Leauge publications so I'll quote a little — verbatim — from the original text: *Women hung in trees to protect their children from armdillos.... For example, hanging upside down as they were, xan you imagim what happen when they gave birth to little ones? Why, the babies were ejected with such force from their upside-down*

mothers that they flew up into the air!... it might happen that a passing pterodactyl mihgt catch the baby at its highest tradjectory in its mouthand, amidst mighty belchings swallow the poor little one whole. This was a factor in the extinktion of the pterodactyl, as its constitution was not suited to an aerial dinner, and the effect of belching was to cause it to plunge helplessly earthwards.

Meanwhile, also on Sunday I had to be sober business fan and meet Jon Courtenay Grimwood, Guest of Honour for Novacon in November, Britain's premier November convention called Novacon, and bound to be bloody good if I have anything to do with it, which I do. Oh good grief, do I actually have to say it? Join Novacon now, and send in your bloody hotel forms. Alarmingly, the Seacon committee had scheduled Jon for three serious and constructive panels in five hours. Insanely, he had said yes. We met at the bar and I looked into the eyes of a man who has discussed The Meaning Of It All too much, and come out the other side. "Would you like," I asked "to have a break and do this later?" "Yes," he blurted plaintively. Later he recovered his composure and posed for photographs with an instant serious demeanour I could never hope to muster if I ever got published, I'd crack up as the photographer was about to snap the 'mean and moody' shot. Fans in general are like that, they don't take themselves too seriously. Which is where the accusations of frivolity come from, I suspect, because that doesn't mean we don't take fandom seriously.

Which brings me to filking.

On (I think) the Saturday night, I went looking for the LiveJournal party. You know what it's like late at night at a convention, technical concepts like left and right become hazy as one devotes all one's remaining brain cells toward the more important platonic ideal of upright versus landing face down on a table as drinks fly over twelve total strangers. Anyway, the point was I took a wrong turning. I'd not been active on LJ for a couple of months, my free time while unemployed being devoted not to all my suppressed creative urges, but to idleness. As Alun Harries said from the couch in the bar to which his arse had become adhered after three days: "What people don't understand about unemployment is that sloth expands to fill the time available." Quickly followed by: "Oh, are you going to the bar?" Thus I wasn't sure what the current composition of LJ was, its agendas, its active membership. I concluded it had gone horribly awry in my absence. There was no sign of Max. People wearing pointy suede boots sat round with soft drinks in their hands, quietly appreciat-

ing a couple displaying their dubious virtuosity on acoustic guitar. The scream was just forming in my frail chest when Alison Freebairn walked past in a corset, said “What the hell are you doing in there?” and hauled me off to the real LJ party. I was so shaken I had to sit still and have several drinks poured down me before I could get up and look for some other way to make a fool of myself.

But what, exactly, is filking? I’ve never hung around long enough to find out. Cat maintains it involves far too many “minor chords” and there are definitely overtones of folk music, which I’ve always found as relevant to my modern, urban British upbringing as the shipping forecast. I suppose I generally think of it as just something my kind of fandom doesn’t do. It’s not as if I can sing anyway, as anyone who attended *I’m Sorry I Haven’t An SFing Clue* will gladly testify. I suppose the unspoken consensus among the sort of fannish fans you’ll find still in the bar late at night is that it’s definitely not our sort of thing, whatever our sort of thing may be. And before the accusations of elitism begin to fly, let me assure you that a) I am elitist, and so are you; and b) if you hit me with that guitar you’ll be all night getting the thing tuned again.

Further, I’d imagine there would be an even stronger body of opinion that it’s definitely not the sort of thing hard-drinking, hard-fanning, hard-

back book-publishing John Jarrold would ever indulge in. So what was he doing at 3 am in the bar on Monday morning?

At the other table of people still up, I was despatched as the fan still possessing the use of his legs to investigate. Along with young, gifted editor Darren Nash (Grimwood’s editor), and young(ish), gifted(ish) fannish superstar Phil Raines, Jarrold had taken over a corner of the bar, and having consumed God knows how much drink, had burst unstoppably into song. Show tunes. You know — like they taught to secret agents in *Spies*, the lamentable Sutherland and Gould follow-up to *MASH*, so they could resist torture. Obviously I’m not talking Andrew Lloyd Webber here, but *Summertime* And *The Living Is Easy*, *Luck Be A Lady* Tonight, *One More For The Road*, and so on. Because of his dissolute reputation and party animal charm, it’s often forgotten that Jarrold has a frighteningly prodigious memory. More pickled than some things you’ll find in vats, he was word perfect, for hours. I have to admit I sort of loitered, and sort of joined in. Although, obviously, when they inevitably ran out of material and commenced *The Boxer* at about six o’clock I fled.

Nonetheless, it was a stylish musical extravaganza of an ending to the convention. And definitely not filking.

Oh good grief, do I actually have to say it? Join Novacon now, and send in your bloody hotel forms.



The Cartiledge Files

Essays in Alternative History

by Graham Charnock



That's Zhukov Not Zarkov

Marshal Georgi Zhukov, and not Dr Zarkov from *Flash Gordon*, commanded the Red Army from 1941 A.D., which would appear to be a year in the Christian calendar, which takes its base, of course, from the date of the supposed birth of Christ. Why this should happen is something I've never entirely understood. Why not date your calendar from the birth-date of Arnold Pegley, a strict Lutheran, who established a Mole Museum in Swanage in the year 32, that being 32 years from the date Arnold Pegley was born. If you want to see the history of moles through the ages, I can't recommend this venue too highly. The British Tourist Board has given it three stars, which considering they gave the Wax Museum of Vincent Price, located in a garage lock-up in Leytonstone, only two stars, is recommendation indeed.

I repeat, Marshal Georgi Zhukov commanded the Red Army from 1941 A.D. That's the Russian Red Army, of course, and not any army of ants, or indeed a small army of model lead soldiers who just happened to be painted red. Historical accuracy is everything in a case like this. Otherwise we will be held accountable by our fathers (if we have two) and our offspring, but possibly not in the same time-line. Just in case you were confused.

Now the thing about Georgi, or Marshal Zhukov as his mother was wont to address him, is that he never really meant to command an army. He sort of wandered into it, through a career path that he was never really in control of. Isn't that so often the story of all of us, or perhaps, each of us?

Now it can be revealed that all his life he really wanted nothing more than to be a professional accordion player. If he had any ambition at all it was perhaps to one day play third lead accordion in a travelling band working around the Irkustk area, perhaps venturing out into the Novaya Zemla peninsula if the Ford Transit was up to it.

But after an adolescence spent scavenging for wheat and bulgur on the steppes of his local supermarket, he was convicted for stealing two beetroots from an itinerant gypsy juggler. Since the beetroots represented 2/3rds of the tools of the juggler's trade, it was regarded as a serious crime. He was sentenced to serve 16 years of community service. It was whilst serving his time in a small commune outside Grovelsky (famous as the birthplace of filmmaker and rocketeer Konstantin Tsiolkovsky), he

just happened to meet a psychopath called Stalin.

Stalin had been wounded by a splinter in his big toe whilst kicking in the head of a peasant, and Zhukov extracted this for him. Later when Stalin was looking for someone to command his troops on the Western Front he remembered Zhukov's kindness and appointed him to the role. He figured at least he'd keep the splinter aspect of the job covered.

Zhukov performed impeccably, slaughtering thousands of people, including a few of the enemy, and personally removing thousands of splinters without the aid of costly anaesthetics. But his mind was never on the job. In fact he wrote in his diaries: "Every day spent in the service of our nation is a day spent away from my study of the accordion. Sometimes it's all I can do to keep up the practice on the finger work. Of course I try to practice daily on my fake abalone and tortoise shell fingerboard, but the serfs complain the clacking keeps them awake. There is not even time to catch up on my back issues of *Soviet Accordion Monthly*. Life is so unfair."

He sent a recording of his playing to President Eisenhower who replied, saying, "This is the best damn polka music I've heard either west or east of the Urals, depending on where you are standing. Keep killing those Nazis."

After the war he bought his daughter, Era, a Royal Standard accordion and they played together at Bar Mitzvahs and Briss Parties. She would later say of her father, "No one could phrase an E Major chord or slice through a prepuce like him, unless you count Gandhi."

In his book, *At Ease*, published in 1967, Eisenhower observed:

The Marshal had scant patience with political opponents who had never learnt to play the accordion. Once I wanted to talk to him about a military matter but had not bought along an advisor who could play the accordion. I added that his advisor could still play the accordion if he liked. "No," Zhukov replied. "If you are not bringing an advisor to the table who can play the accordion, then I am going to throw mine out." He turned to his advisor, Andrei Vyshinsky, and said "Get out, I don't want you here. And take your accordion with you."

Vyshinsky's body was later found in a bath-tub in Koblenz.

Georgi Zhukov died in 1974. He was given a hero's burial in a field outside Moscow. Andrei Vyshinsky's widow did not attend the funeral, since she had re-located to Santa Monica to make porn-movies. An accordion band played the Last

Eisenhower, Zhukov, and Montgomery Cliff meet at the 1945 Annual Accordion Fest in Frankfurt-am-Main.



I love poker music.

That's polka music you fool.

Mine's a B-flat.

Yes I'd noticed.

Post and then selections from *The Neil Diamond Songbook*. This was a bold gesture considering The Cold War was still going on Big Time.

His daughter Era, went on to make an accordion-rap crossover album with Miles Davis. She is currently living in Pendulum, Illinois. She says about her father, "If only he had had the chance to

see Don Johnson in *Nash Bridges*, everything could have been so different. He would at least have worn the sleeves of his denim jacket rolled."

The author is indebted for the substantial content of this story, to Albert Axell's condensed article on Marshal Zhukov in History Today Volume 53, June 2003. A damn fine magazine.

MORE FANZINES FROM PLANET X

1001 Croydon Nights

written and edited by Gary Gregor

In 25 years as a science fiction fan, I've seen a number of parodies and hoaxes that actually fooled me in some way on first exposure, but nothing has shaken me like the unbidden arrival of this hoax TAFF report. The foreground is almost entirely filled with local New Orleans fan politics, and I was lulled into a kind of dull acceptance until I hit a reference to the decision to hold over TAFF funds for 1989, following "the death of one candidate and the crestfallen withdrawal of the other." I had very specific memories of Robert Lichtman out-polling Luke McGuff in the 1989 TAFF race, so it actually panicked me for a moment wondering which of my friends had been dead since 1989. Then other references to the 1988 Worldcon suddenly jumped out at me, including a nod to *Lan's Lantern* winning the best fanzine Hugo — something else which never happened. From that point, I realized the entire report was a sly hoax. The mind behind this imaginary fan "Gary Gregor" spends several pages to establish the usual parochial U.S. club fan context, with tension over conrunning vs. fanzine fandom, but really referring to a fandom subtly different from our own. Gregor's world is one where neither Ted White nor Terry Carr died in the mid-1980s, where J. Michael Straczynski never gave back his Hugo award, and where the *Last Dangerous Visions* has never been published. These seem like major deviations from reality, but "Gregor" throws them in so obliquely amid all the travel problems and pontification on British beer that the reader tends to let them slide by. And then I was brutally disappointed when the 46 page fanzine ended the day before the 1990 Eastercon began, and promised a second volume, *Naught by Nottcon*. The fact that the 1990 Eastercon was held at the Adelphi in Liverpool, and not in Nottingham, leaves me wondering what to expect, and where to write to ask for it.

—Andy

Rain City Tangler

by Ulrika O'Brien

PANDORA'S WEB—Judicious googling on the string "Gestetner 320" led Colin Hinz to announce on the Memory Hole e-list that these mighty engines of fanac might still be purchased, new, along with ink and stencils, from the manufacturer. From Gestetner, India. An excited Geri Sullivan contacted the international sales rep only to find that regretfully, that outlet no longer carries the grail either, due to a sharp drop in demand. His advice was to seek supplies and new mimeographs from Gestetner, South Africa.

BURYING THE LEDE—Full disclosure requires the *Chunga* news desk to reveal that, in an unsurprising coincidence, the news desk works in some collusion with *Chunga* and its editor, Randy wossface, to produce these little columns. As an unpaid and minor drudge in the vast *Chunga* publishing empire, however, the desk feels reasonably objective in relaying these results of the 2003 FAAN Awards, as announced at Corflu Badger: Best Fanzine: *Chunga*—R. Byers, A. Hooper, and C. Juarez; Best Fanwriter: Randy Byers; Best Fan Artist: Steve Stiles; Best Letterhack (Harry Warner Jr. Memorial Award): Joseph Nicholas; Best New Fan: John Teehan; #1 Fan Face: Randy Byers. Woot.

SHRIMP BROTHERS' REUNION—Corflu 21 returns Corflu to the happy fanning grounds of Las Vegas, NV, home of Vegrants and gloriously excessive seafood buffet. Corflu Blackjack will be held March 19-21, 2004, at Jackie Gaughan's Plaza Hotel. For further information, including convention and hotel rates, contact the committee c/o Ken Forman: Ken.Forman@verizon.net.

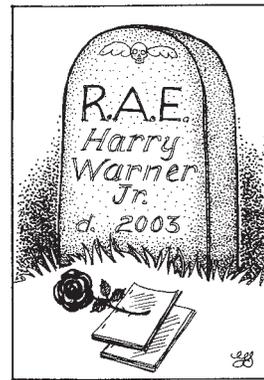
HAGERSTOWN SAGA—Richard Lynch reports on the disposition of the Harry Warner Jr. fanzine collection: progress was much set back when the church that is the primary beneficiary of Mr. Warner's will recanted its initial intent to abide by Mr. Warner's wishes that the collection, and \$10,000 earmarked for its maintenance, be given to the UC Riverside library's fanzine collection. The church, and the attorney handling the estate, concluded

that the Warner collection might bring a monetary return as high as \$750,000 if sold, a supposition fueled by receipt of an erroneously inflated valuation of the Bruce Pelz collection. In Mr. Lynch's estimation a turnover of the collection to Riverside will still eventuate, once the fiscal realities of fanzine collections impinge on the principles. How soon this may be is an open question.

FANNING HIS AC TO THE LAST—Fandom said sad farewell to long time *Dynatron* editor, 1976 TAFF winner, and founding father of Albuquerque fandom, Roy Tackett (1925-2003) on May 23. Paralysis from stroke lately having confined him to a wheelchair, Mr. Tackett pursued fanac via e-lists, corresponding on MemoryHole and Trufen even unto his death bed. He dictated his final farewells days before succumbing to heart failure. Mr. Tackett long enjoyed the nickname HORT—Horrible Old Roy Tackett—bestowed on him by Bruce Pelz, whom he had irony enough to survive. Goodbye, RoyTac; the desk owes you a fanzine.

FANED MYSTERY SOLVED—Tracy Benton reports that E.B. Frohvet ceases publication of his fanzine, *Twink*, with issue 30. In a simultaneous move, Gregory Pickersgill has withdrawn his supervision and his football moniker from the Yahoo! Group formerly known as MemoryHole. The obvious conclusion is left as an exercise to the interested reader, but certainly the *Chunga* news desk has never seen Mssrs. Pickersgill and Frohvet in the same room. Fans wishing to take part in the group that dare not remember its name, but still discusses fanzines, should now seek it by the name of fmzfen, on the web at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fmzfen>, now under the guiding hand of Bill Burns. No speculations offered on where to stick the quarters.

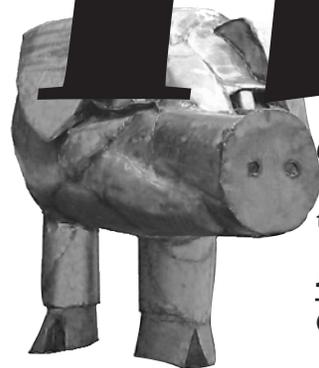
CUNNING BLANDISHMENTS—Apparently what it takes to coax notoriously fan-shy Neal Stephenson out of the woodwork is offers of China Miéville, as witness this season's Clarion West cycle. Society hostesses take note.



I SAID WHAT?—*BCSFAzine* editor Garth Spencer joins the innovation sweepstakes in issue 361, offering heavily redacted or rewritten news squibs lifted from the *Tangler* (and other sources) over misleading or outright false bylines, having bypassed the tedious impedimenta of yesteryear, such as asking permission, or making distinctions between quotation and paraphrase. Readers who respect the wishes of living authors will get their tanglings from this fanzine, and no other.

ANOTHER FRIEND LOST—Late word that Martin Smith has died of liver failure at age 40. This is heart-breaking news, and we will have a proper remembrance of Martin next issue. Meanwhile, condolences to his family and to his many friends in fandom.

The Iro



Our correspondents span the extreme latitudes of at least three continents, so we'll start from the literal top of the world:

Jukka Halme

Greetings from Finland,

My name is Jukka Halme and I'm a thirtysomething SF-fan from Helsinki, Finland and EU. I've been a fan of SF/F from an early age and more or less active in the Finndom from the late 80s. I've been a writer and an illustrator, reviewer, cover-artist and done lay-out, chaired clubs, panels and meetings, all the usual stuff.

I've been reading *Chunga* from Bill Burns' excellent efanazines.com website since the beginning.

#1 had great pieces by Lesley Reece and Max. The Tobes for TAFF appealed to me especially since last year I was the NoFF representative for Finland (as in Nordic FanFund) to Swecon. As a fan of White's *Sector General* books, I was glad to see them mentioned in such a positive way. I discovered them only few years back and I did start from the most recent ones, but then have managed to track out and purchase all of them. And then there's the Helicon Fanzine Blues. Best bit in the mag. Bravo.

I wasn't as much taken by the #2, but it was good reading too. #3 was evidently speedily produced and quickly distributed, but I liked it more than #2. Randy's TAFF-reasoning was entertaining and informative, and I saw lot of myself from that description.

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Comments by Andy
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My personal favourites have been Festoon/Fromagerie/Foreign Affairs and those narrow columns on the side of normal articles. Reminding me of a fanzine I did in the early 90s (*Hobittilan Sanomat*, literally *Hobbiton News*) where I had same-such lay-out. And it's always good to see Rostler/Gilliland illos.

Jerome Van Epps

At CorFlu 20, sandwiched between the two Madison Conventions—Odyssey and WisCon—I received from Andy Hooper the first four issues of *Chunga*. After having gone through the series, I thought I would comment on my own meetings with two persons who were mentioned. Dick Flanagan — also known as “Mr. Mephisto” (issue #2: Mr. Mephisto and Autumn of Monster Culture), and Tobes Valois — also known as “the drunken fuckwit” (issue #1: Tobes for Taff: What have we done?).

Mr. Mephisto's “day job” was being the co-owner of a recording studio, which primarily did radio commercials. I met him in the early 80s shortly after he had been bumped out of his late night Saturday fright show spot, but he was still primarily known around Madison for having been Mr. Mephisto. One Saturday, a couple of my college actor friends who worked with him took me over to his studio. (Has anyone else ever wondered why the second season of *Space 1999* is so different from the first? But I digress.) My basic impression was that he was a lot less impressed with being Mr. Mephisto than just about anyone else, and he would much rather talk about what was going on at the studio, or what a pain in the ass it was to work for Crazy TV Lenny. Questions about Mephisto came back with a sort of “Yeah right, kid” response. He was a big, hairy guy, who sort of looked like Wolf Man Jack, and had a voice that sounded like a thousand miles of Marlboros. I was impressed with his recording studio. You really have not had an opportunity to appreciate what recorded music can sound like until you have listened to Emerson, Lake and Palmer's “Lucky Man” blasted on a full studio set-up with a ready case of cheap beer.





n Pig

As for the infamous Tobes... On his whirlwind tour, Tobes Valois had landed in Jae Leslie Adams' lap for the weekend in Madison, and she was in the need for Tobes suitable entertainment. That weekend I just happened to be throwing a combo birthday party for Tom Havighurst and a going away party for a sociologist friend who was off to Kuala Lumpur for a year, so I had a house full of sociologists and assorted non-fans. Jae and Tobes showed up toward the middle of the evening, "My name's Jerome. You must be the drunken fuckwit?" I said with the solemnity of Stanley meeting Livingstone. Jae had warned me that Tobes' Isle of Jersey accent was barely comprehensible even to many British, so there was a lot of nodding and smiling at his comments by everyone. But he was a great guest, whose charm seemed to peak at about the fourth drink. He was a wealth of information about British fandom, most of which seemed to consist of the inside story on who was shagging whom. And he had great interest in America, especially relative penis size. He had no tolerance for "fawkin SMOF-ing," and threatened to forcibly eject me from my own house for talking about convention business. I tried to explain to my sociologist friends how among a certain select tribe, this person was world famous, and how by drinking his way across America he was somehow spreading peace between our two great nations. As sociologists, they were used to hearing such things, and nodded knowingly. I should mention that at the party we had Malaysian food, featuring for desert the notorious durian. The durian is a football-shaped and sized fruit with the surface texture of a spiky hand grenade which when you crack it open is full of a soft sweet custard that also happens to smell like a dumpster on a hot summer day. Metaphor, anyone?

Jerry Kaufman

The last time, years ago, I was at Minicon, I was also involved in those games with flashpaper and static electricity. I remember a big roll of plastic wrap, too. The flashpaper fell into the category of

"Don't try this at home." I couldn't find flashpaper, but a magic supply house had flashcotton. It's not the same; I gave my wrist a mild burn. (Yes, my wrist.)

Lesley's just jumping on the McSweeney bandwagon, I fear. I have their *Mammoth Book of Riproaring Yarns* or whatever Michael Chabon called it. It's supposed to embody a return to storytelling values, with beginnings, middles and ends. Quite possibly in that order, too. I'll give you a report someday.

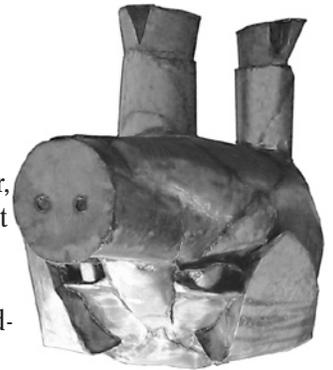
In the lettercolumn, I find my head spinning after reading Carl's response to Joseph. He's so deeply—in fact unfathomably—ironic. And I can't quite tell if John Foyster was praising me, insulting me or some mixture with his remark about my fanzine reviews. But I've had that feeling before when John's addressed me, and I'm just sorry it'll never happen again.

I loved Ulrika's column of news and gossip, her drawing on page 4, Craig's cover in which our local icons are depicted—even resurrected—to be smashed by a ferry dreadnought, and Stu's Marxist revision of *The Smirk of Zorro*.

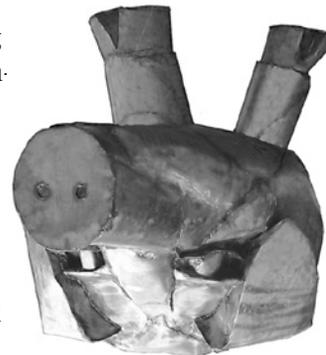
Ray (the beret) Nelson

You guys have a monthly meeting of a science fiction club (Vanguard) and you're still looking for a place to socialize? My envy knows no bounds! Here in the Berkeley, California area we used to have 2 big monthly clubs and lots of little beer and bragging meetings, not to mention our own officially recognized church (The Brotherhood of the Way), and now we have nothing.

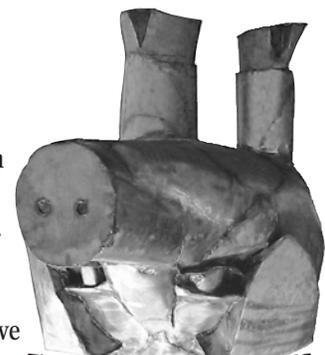
Even our local professional writers have abandoned science fiction and defected to mysteries, journalism and true crime. I and a handful of creative old coots now gather at a senior center on Friday afternoons under the title of "Living Philosophers," but never even mention science fiction. We are the debris that has washed ashore on the mud flats of the San Francisco Bay from the final explosion that utterly destroyed the fan world as we



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They Shall Have Chunga • 25

knew it. We don't wear propeller beanies and drink beer. We wear French berets and drink cheap red wine.

I hope you true fans appreciate what you've got. While it lasts!

Wow, cautionary words indeed! If the actual inventor of the propeller beanie can't find any fannish friends to hang out with, things have come to a pretty pass. On the other hand, you're publishing again, receiving our fanzine, and sending us LoCs, so there must be some spark of fannish feeling still extant in your breast.

Tim Marion

Excellent writing by Andy Hooper — "Gonad Roads." I liked the following, "Fandom has always attracted the under-socialized, and provides opportunities to develop an adult personality, but that process takes time, and some people prefer to remain focused on more innocent pursuits." Good analysis. I guess this is what happened to me, someone only a scant few years older than you guys, who was originally a child in fandom — my focus stayed on relatively innocent pursuits. Today, I can't even imagine meeting someone interesting at a convention. About the only meaningful exchange I have with women at conventions is just looks, and usually such a woman is already with someone. I can't even imagine approaching a stranger at a convention unless I've read something they've written (fanzines or fiction).

"Celluloid Fantasia 2003" by Stu Shiffman reminds me of how much I have missed his alternative history writing. His melding of Marx Broth-

ers and Zorro was very clever and appropriate in places, even seamless sometimes.

This is the first fanzine writing I have read by Ulrika O'Brien — she's a very good writer.

I appreciate the compliment, Tim, and also appreciate how far everyone's sexual mileage may vary. If I could change anything from "Gonad Roads," it would be to observe that actually having sex with someone you have just met is as unfashionable at conventions as it is in most social circles today. It's far more likely that conventions — and fanzines, apas, LiveJournal and Regency dancing — allow you to create a circle of recurring acquaintanceship, which has the potential of lurching into sexual and romantic congress through repeated exposure. There was a notable incident of this nature on Sunday evening at Corflu Badger, when a newly-ignited couple shoved us out of the Smoking Lounge well before 4 in the morning, so they could "clean up." I regard the long-distance phone bills that they are reportedly now generating to be fit punishment for such hubris.

Steve Jeffery

It's quite strange to be sitting on a bus to Wallingford, a few miles on from where I get off for work in Abingdon, reading an editorial written three thousand miles away talking about getting the bus to Wallingford.

The English Wallingford, in leafy (although currently rainy as well) Oxford, I learned recently was where William the Conqueror (or William the Bastard) had to trek to from the battle of Hastings to cross the Thames and then double back into Cambridgeshire and London. Some trek, for an army who had just spent a full day defeating Harold's Saxons. It is also, for this reason, the site of one of the earliest motte and bailey forts in Britain, the Normans, understandably, feeling their presence might not be greeted with overwhelming joy by the natives, and wanting to have a bit of solid earth and wood between them and the great unwashed. History doesn't record whether it was also noted at the time for its brewpubs, although it's possible that may have influenced the decision to march all the way up there, rather than cross the river some miles further down.

I think a lot of people go through that lowering of the brow that Lesley mentions in "How Now, High Brow". In my case it seems to be a periodic thing, either born of frustration with popular culture or some misguided Adrian Mole-like notion that I am an unrecognised Intellectual, and should

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therefore be reading *Improving Books* by people like Herman Hesse and Thomas Mann. Like all resolutions it didn't last long, and I lapsed back into sf/fantasy again. I agree with Lesley over Martin's *A Game of Thrones* and the whole *A Song of Ice and Fire* sequence to date. I was intrigued enough by the first one to continue, and the second volume really gripped me.

Nice to see some more of Gunny's cartoons turning up.

David Sucher

In some otherwise extremely perceptive writing on the Tangletown neighborhood, *Chunga 4* tosses off one small error in its discussion of the Tangletown pub:

You wrote: "They were taking over the space of the old Honey Bear Bakery, which was a somewhat fabled establishment in its own right that had moved to a different location a couple of years ago in search of lower rent."

It is true that the Honey Bear was fabled; it is not true that it left because of lower rent. I am the landlord of the building. The Honey Bear Bakery was shut down by Mr. Ron Sher hurriedly and with no announcement until the very morning it closed and with absolutely never a discussion of rent. Mr. Sher, the owner of the Honey Bear, explained to me emphatically that he had to close the Honey Bear because it was simply losing too much money. Honey Bear's financial statements corroborate that while it had sales of over \$1.7 million (combined) in 1999 and 2000, it lost a total over \$200,000 in that time.

The Honey Bear's management company wrote that *The Greenlake location has for a number of reasons seen a loss of almost 10% per year in revenues since 1998: Increased competition in the form of a coffee house offering an almost identical product line that opened in late '98 or early '99 is one factor. A generally run down facility wanting for repairs and deferred maintenance is another.* [Note: interior repairs & maintenance were the obligation of Honey Bear; I painted the building's exterior in '98. —D.S.] *These factors along with absentee ownership unable to offer a clear sense of direction to management and staff have all contributed to these losses of revenue.*

I thought that Mr. Sher was making a mistake by buying the business in the first place because he had no experience in the food business and I was worried for the future of the Honey Bear. But I personally liked him throughout his near 3-year ownership of the business and was very sorry he couldn't make it work. It pains me however that the

wife must be the biggest doormat on the North American continent.

AND NOW THE AWARD FOR BEST PIECE OF FAN ART NEVER TO SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY WHEN THE EDITOR PROMPTLY GAFIATED, CEASED PUBLICATION, CHANGED THE LAYOUT OR "DIDN'T GET THE JOKE"!!!



demise of the Honey Bear is even remotely blamed on the property owner.

I certainly apologize for passing along what amounts to neighborhood gossip, but I'm delighted that we can be the conduit for a corrective to that gossip. Hope your new tenants make a better go of it. I'm probably more interested in Belgian-style beer than in cinnamon rolls anyway. Here's to the Tangletown, and to a healthy business relationship.

—Randy

Alexis A. Gilliland

Thank you for *Chunga #4*, with the Craig Smith cover of Popeye touring the Pacific Northwest in his SUV, a Ford Fanboy from the look of it. Most to my taste in the issue was Stu Shiffman's "Celluloid Fantasia 2003" reminding me that even the lesser Marx Brothers work was not without a certain charm. I was unaware that Jack Williamson's *The Legion of Space* had been made into not one but two movies. Perhaps in an alternate universe one could get hold of the remastered DVD with W.C. Fields as Giles Habibula.

The FAAn awards process probably needs rethinking, and may need to move away from a strictly hard copy *modus operandi*. Perhaps a website displaying the best of the candidates, or links to zines already on the net, would entice the voters to come out in scores rather than dozens. British

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participation could be encouraged by including the Nova Awards shortlist automatically. Charging the voters a dollar to vote so that the winners could collect a small prize might help, too. Or perhaps S.C.I.F.I., the Southern California Institute of Fan Interests, would make a contribution if Andy approached them. The best fanwriting is good writing, regardless of whether it mentions your name, or gossips about your friends.

It's not like I haven't made some efforts in this direction in the past, Alexis. This year, Bill Burns was kind enough to put up major links to the FAAn balloting site that Victor Gonzalez and the Corflu Committee both worked on, and that definitely produced some extra votes. A few years back, I was actually bold enough to publish a small fanzine called *The Gafiate's Fakebook*, which listed a whole lot of eligible fanzines, writers and artists, starting with text from my *Fanzine Countdown* reviews from *Apparatchik*. Later, when I was administering the awards, Victor and I published Robert Lichtman's list of fanzines received, and that caused some upset because Robert omits fanzines published in FAPA from his list, and Arthur Hlavaty took great offense at being left off of it.

Steve Green has offered to give me some help publicizing the award in the U.K., and it would help to put more ballots in front of people. I think I need a party not directly connected with the balloting to maintain some sort of list or index of material published in a calendar year, to which people might go if they needed help remembering what they enjoyed from the previous year. But I'm very much against connecting the award to a cash prize, and charging people to vote will ensure that no one ever participates again. I think we took some nice steps this year to making the process more fun—a bunch of people helped me tabulate



the final results at Corflu, and putting the ballot on the web definitely got some people to vote.

As soon as we put this very large and rather late issue to press, I hope to compose a one- or two-sheet fanzine that I'll send to all the people who voted in this year's balloting, and I'll also make it available to Bill Burns for posting at eFanzines.com. I'll raise some of the issues you suggest and see if there are others with similar sentiments.

Jim Caughran

Thanks for giving me *Chunga 4* at Corflu. I came away from Corflu filled with fannish energy, ready to loc each fanzine in the big pile, encouraged to pub my ish.

Of course, it promptly evaporated. With mundane things like looking for a job, doing taxes (still haven't done that, in fact), and just living. Reality set in all too quickly.

And I find that I somehow have an aversion to doing things I'm obligated to do, like taxes or, it seems, locs. I'm not sure why my hobby falls into the "obligation" category. Maybe I feel guilty for not writing locs. I guess I should feel guilty, and therefore I avoid writing them.

All of which is a rather circular argument. But if anyone asks why I haven't written a loc, it's because I should write locs.

Your editorials confirm my image of Seattle, rather than the rationally named and numbered array that some would believe the streets follow. With all its hills and lakes and unreachable connections, I find Seattle confusing.

Do neighborhoods have ethnicities in Seattle, or is everything American bland? This is the Greek neighborhood of Toronto, which means that all the Chinese and Portuguese and Italians who live here can eat souvlaki nearby.

Rotsler said, "You go to a convention, you get laid." But that was Rotsler, who probably could get laid walking down the street. He said that in the late '50s, before people went to bed with the ease they had later.

In fact, for the virginal young fans in Los Angeles and Berkeley, it was all rather forbidding. Rotsler talked openly and easily about sex in a repressed age, and those of us raised in the prevailing hypocrisy were a little flabbergasted. And wishful; when I went to a convention, I didn't get laid.

Is Reece confessing to reading junk or confessing to not reading junk?

"Writing the report is the fun part of TAFF, fer Ghusakes." Our subculture is founded on writing,

and conventions are a secondary activity. Yet we procrastinate, we don't write our reports. I think I've gone back to the beginning of this letter.

Nice paper.

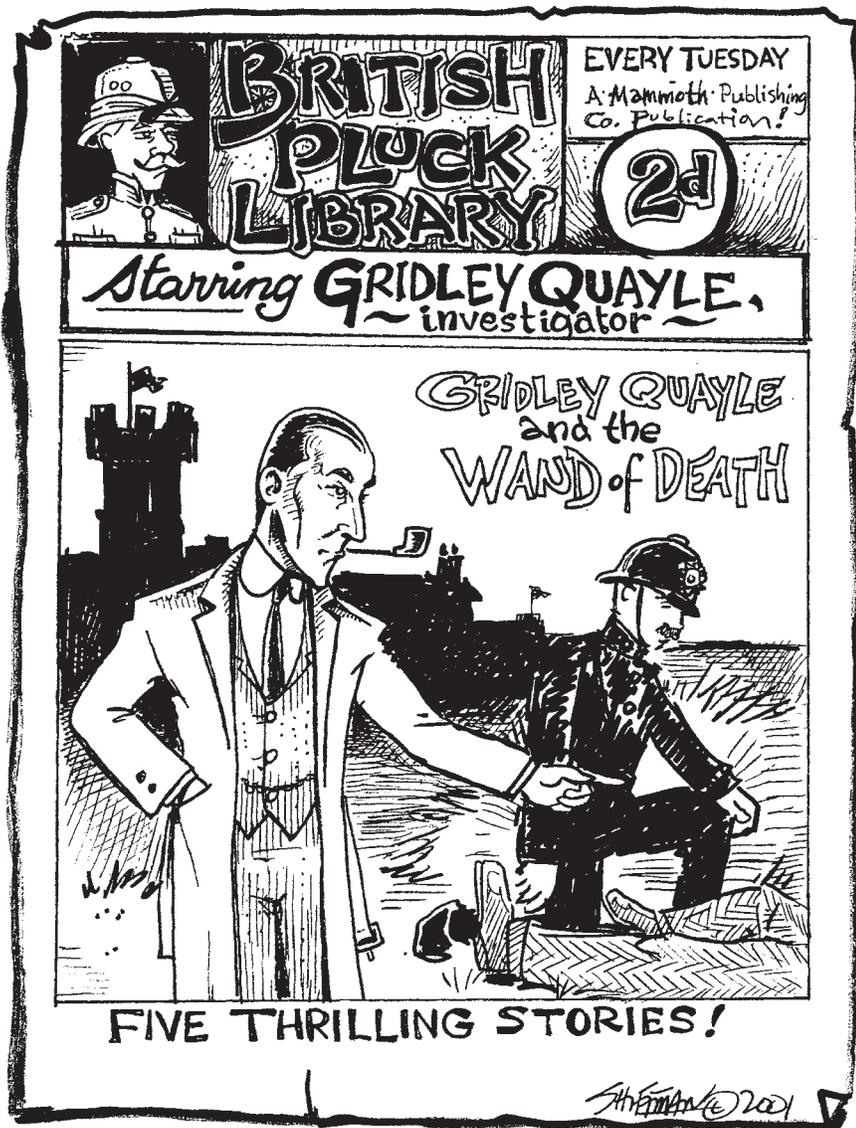
Oh Good Ghu, Jim, how can anyone stand being so glacially cool? But perhaps you might like to amend your query about our urban ethnicity to suggest we are "North American Bland." I've seldom been as tortured by culinary banality as during a recent visit to Southern Ontario. But Seattle is as heavily influenced by its location on the Pacific rim as famously diverse Vancouver, and certainly reflects it in the variety of food, art, music and other trappings of culture that we enjoy here. You can definitely recognize some ethnic gravitational points in the city, such as the section of Aurora Ave. where every sign is printed in both Korean and English, or the circle of Northwest African men who gather outside the Starbucks on Northgate Way every late afternoon. But our neighborhoods may well be too bland to completely embrace geographic divisions as ethnic borders. Despite weird stories that we hear about neighborhood councils that keep people from putting up Christmas light displays and noise disputes that escalate into combat with framing hammers, I think a great majority of Seattle residents cherish the notion that they are free to live in any neighborhood they like. All they need is the income to cover the rent/mortgage in question. It is a young city by almost any standard; no more than a few generations have established themselves in any part of it. There are still plenty of ethnically Chinese residents of the International District, and lots of Swedes in Ballard. But our ethnic divisions have long since become even more confusing than our topographic boundaries, and I think we generally like it that way.

Brad Foster

A fourth *Chunga* has come forth to entertain and enthrall, and maybe even confuse now and then.

I *think* that wonderfully drawn Smith cover is something about big bad downtown Seattle expanding out into the 'burbs, but maybe I've got that all wrong. Like all great art though, I guess we should just bask in its presence and not worry about what it has to "mean".

And while we're talking art, along with lots of fun stuff from the much-missed Gunn, everything in here is such a kick, but standouts for me were the little robo-waitress by O'Brien, and that way-too-coolly-drawn fish on the back by Helley. Just



doing a quick flip through the issue, love the variety of art, the layouts...hey, this thing is *designed*, isn't it?

You're so kind to notice, Brad! Actually, when I approached Craig about doing a cover for us, I suggested that he might try to take off from the cover art that Stu Shiffman created for issue #1, possibly continuing the Space Needle as Martian War Machine motif that characterized that work. But there was also a lot of other talk about the devastation of the city's artistic and cultural soul that I didn't really pay too much direct attention to until he turned in the finished art. It isn't what I had in mind, precisely, but I'm actually pleased about that—now I can go on buttonholing artists until I get what I'm looking for. For the record, I think this is also a minor homage to Derek Parks-Carter.

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Joseph Nicholas

Thanks for *Chunga 4*, and for publishing my previous letter therein.

I have read and re-read (and re-re-read) Carl Juarez's response to that letter, and I can't decide whether he's making a genuine point or being sarky at my expense. Given the previous (albeit very short) history of relations between the two of us, I think I incline slightly more to the latter than the former....but not strongly enough to be interested in pursuing the question further. Besides, it's only *Star Trek*—or Noddy And Big Ears In Outer Space, as some wag dubbed it when it first appeared over here.

More importantly, and as zillions of people have doubtless already rushed to tell him, we have Andy Hooper's dreadful, dreadful blunder over the identity of the actor who plays Spike in *Buff*y. It's not James Marsden, chum, it's James Marsters! Tut tut tut—damned poor show there, Hooper. Take five hundred lines: "I must ensure the future accuracy of my cult television references".

I should probably say more. But it's a fine weekend—the sun is shining down outside, the birds are flitting back and forth from the feeders, and it's time to go and lie in the garden and toast one's buns.

I appreciated that pair of *IRGs* you sent after our encounter in much-missed *Attitude*, but despite my best efforts (and two readings of each) I couldn't come up with any comments worth the time for me to write or for you to read. I'm glad that time has rectified this.

As I usually re-read my prose quite a lot before I expose it to others, in this case I thought I was being perfectly clear in saying that, contrary to your assertion, *Star Trek* in its original form was self-reflective enough

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to repeatedly critique the US misadventure in Vietnam, the putative absence of such self-criticality you offered as a ironic contradiction to the, shall we say, sparse set dressing and snazzy lighting of the series (unlike *Space 1999*, I suppose). A quick query at Vanguard shortly after we received your letter brought up three episodes featuring Vietnam in five minutes, of which there was space to mention one. I do apologize for a certain repetition in my imagery that was induced when I tried to condense—I had drafted a less concise answer, about twice as long in fact, that concluded in my realization that Gene Roddenberry was the last effective big-L liberal (in the US) and the true heir to Campbell, but I couldn't fit it in...and we ran out of time before Corflu.

Then—to grind on—I marveled that we were exchanging long sercon prose about *Star Trek*, fer chrissake, given that the very concept had been ridiculed in *Apak* just a few years ago by nearly all involved (much like your ridicule of the Internet back then, though apparently now everything's lovely in your LiveJournal garden*), and followed up with an suggestion that it may be possible your preferences in speculative futures might largely be a matter of fashion, combined with a jibe at writing that conceals emotive humanity with a spurious rhetorical assertion of ultrarational cognitive transparency. (I call Godwin—on myself! Answers on a pocsarcd.)

—And oh yeah, there was a definition of science fiction in there somewhere...

So I guess the reason you couldn't come to a conclusion is because both possibilities were true. Did you know "sarky" comes from Nad-sat? I didn't.

—carl

Peter Roberts

Well, thanks for all the *Chungas*. As it happens, Frank Zappa waved to me a long time ago, so that's all right.

I have not been living in Seattle for the last twenty years, but I visited it once about twenty years ago, which is nearly the same thing. I didn't find Tanglewood either, so that's a coincidence. I did look for a pub in Pimlico a while back. It was reputed to be the only place in London where you could buy a pint of perry, of which I have grown fond in my dotage. Only trouble was, I thought Pimlico (and Limehouse for that matter) was a

* caution, *Space Junk* reference



place that only existed in old movies and second-hand novels. Not a real place, surely. But I found an old map with it on and set off from Victoria station. The shops rapidly became seedier, then metal-grilled, then boarded up. Shadows lurked below flickering streetlights. Eventually I came to a whole block that was boarded up, which is strange since London doesn't have blocks. This was a sort of proto-block, irregular, amorphous, and menacing. There was even a single light in an upper window, like the cover of a cheap Gothic romance. A couple of alleyways later, I finally found the pub which was all stripped pine and classical music. It was populated by a few primly dressed pensioners sipping wine who looked like they were refugees from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and some Dickensian labourers gripping tankards of cider. Strange place. Nice perry. I tried to take a friend to visit it a few months ago, but the angles were all wrong in the daylight and the alleyways had disappeared.

When I'm in the more familiar alleyways of Soho-cum-Covent Garden, I keep stopping outside Lee Ho Fook's with the intention of once eating there, as a salute to the Excitable Boy. But it looks very ordinary, slightly up-market, and rather dull. The best restaurant out of the thousands around Gerrard Street is one that I visited with some Chinese friends, who inevitably knew a cousin who had a neighbour who knew the owner's auntie, or somesuch. Excellent meal. But that's another place that's got lost. Along with the Lamb & Flag. Another pub I once visited that's disappeared down its own alleyway.

Is Don West really an abductee? I met one at a *Fortean Times* Unconvention, but she seemed very ordinary and didn't hum or glow or anything. Probably a regular at Lee Ho Fook's. As for myself, I keep hoping. Each time I drive at night from Devon to London, I pass Stonehenge, where the sky is vast and full of the Milky Way. I park in a layby, get out of the car, and shout "here I am then", but so far nothing.

Tomorrow night my luck may change.

The *Fortean Times* is a good bet for the most fannish nonfanzine published in the world. Jon Singer, Cuyler Brooks, Owen Whiteoak, Denny Lien, as well as the other D•L• who cannot be named have adorned its columns and lettercol in the last few years, and the *Fortean* outlook has of course a vivid similarity to that of spec fic, from *Sinister Barrier* to —lately— Ken MacLeod.

—carl

Gregory Benford

Another outstanding issue. I especially liked Andy's artfully arch take on sex & fandom. "Partners who celebrate their new intimacy with rounds of vomiting punctuated by uncomfortable silences. Ah, school days." Now that's writing!

Simiarly, Lesley Reece (who she?) catches just the swift breezy over-sophisticated air. I'd like to see her on sf alone, since she seems to be most canny. Great Bill Kunkel cartoon on p 8 for this, by the way.

Stu Shiffman is spot on as well. This is one of the best extended pieces in fmz I've seen in years, a real *tour de force*. If only Hollywood had taken print sf as its model, instead of bad scriptwriters' imaginations...

Andy, I'll have to write up my *Trek* adventures when they're done. The show is even more chaotic & befuddled than you'd guess.

I was in Seattle 3 weeks ago, but had no time to get in touch with fans; I was there to have dinner with Paul Allen. Not just me, of course, the whole board for the SFX, SF EXperience Museum Allen's funding to the tune of \$20 million.

Dinner was in Allen's own restaurant, and he proved to be your standard technonerd with \$20 billion. Greg Bear's the Board Chairman and Brin & I are on the board, with Mike Whelan, Tim Kirk, & assorted scientific & museum types. Larry Krauss of *Physics of Star Trek* is among them. He knows nothing of sf and indeed had never watched *Trek* when he proposed the book, to make money. He now writes about the science/sf boundary for *NYTimes* etc and knows little about it. Though he is a good physicist. He played dog in manger, maintaining that scientists didn't get ideas from sf. I countered with a half dozen examples & Krauss answered *Anecdotal evidence*, so I said, *That's what we call data*, getting a laugh.

SFX opens next summer so there's lots to be done. Hope you enjoy it — it's in the same building as the Pop Music museum, also Allen's, where I embarrassed myself by playing electric guitar for the first time ever (my training was in acoustic) — two chords, for the "band" made up of the Board. At least I knew the lyrics.

Lesley Reece was the Best New Fanzine Fan of 1997 (FAAn Award of 1998) and a regular contributor to, and doyen of, *Apparatchik*. She has lately also had a fine piece published in Jerry & Suzle's *Littlebrook*. You kids who weren't around in the glory days can find some of the later issues of *Apak* on the Web at efanzines.com.

—Randy

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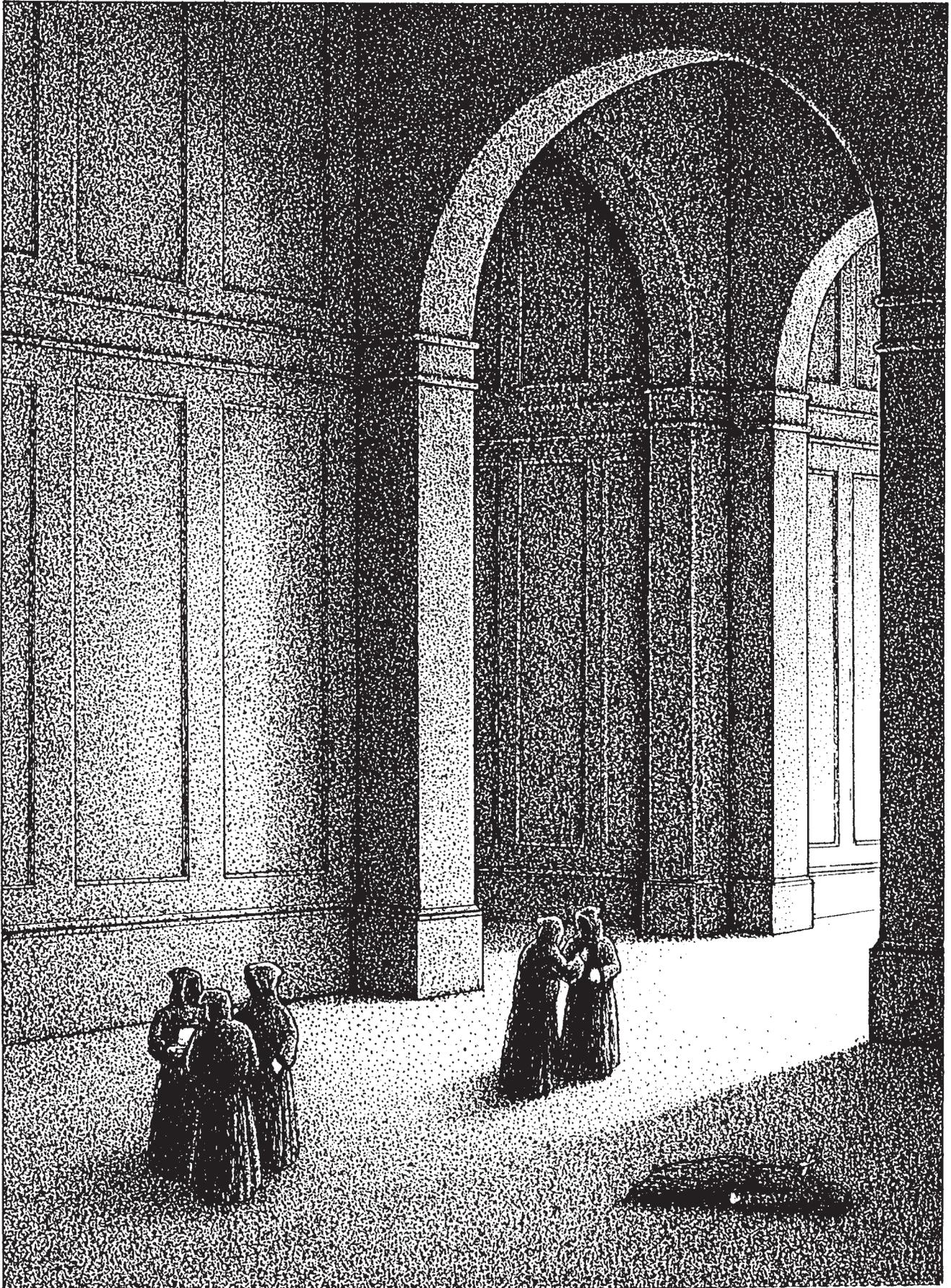
WAHF

John Hertz:

U O'B is quite right about a Pelz memorial (2 Ts in Moffett). ¶ You are all quite mad. And a good thing, too.

D. West:

I expect there will be speculation regarding the cover character, particularly the lower right. Well, it's not me — no cigarette.



A LITTLE LATER, IN THE BACK ROOM, THE DISTRIBUTION OF AWARDS IS DISCUSSED