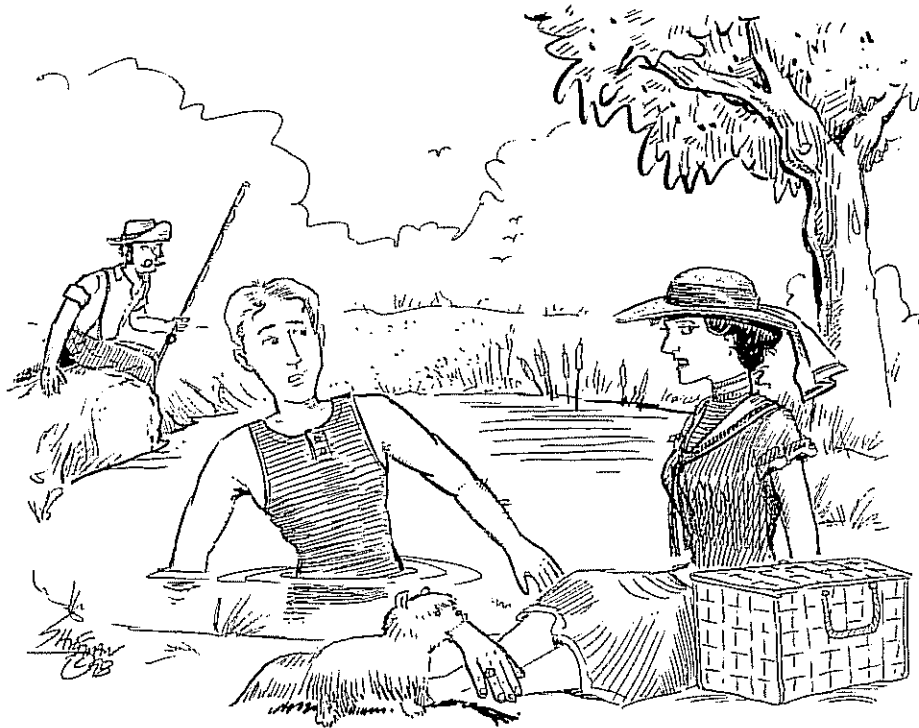


LATE BROOK



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Littlebrook 4

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Cover: **Brad Foster**

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BEWITCHED, BOTHERED & BEMILDRED

JERRY KAUFMAN

This issue doesn't exactly follow on the heels of its predecessor; the dust of Issue #3's passage has long since settled, and its footprints have washed away in the flash floods of Clarion West, various conventions, and the daily updates of Trufen.net. We've accumulated quite a good selection of material and one document that we're including as a rider.

The material includes pieces reprinted from LiveJournal, a website that allows its users to create journals for whatever their purposes, to design them to individual taste, and to share them with both friends and strangers. Other articles were written specifically for inclusion in *Littlebrook*. We enjoyed them all, whatever their origin.

The document is a Trans Atlantic Fan Fund ballot. If you examine it closely, you will see that one Suzanne Tompkins is a nominee. You may be unfamiliar with this institution, but I will not attempt to explain, except to say that TAFF trades "delegates" between North American fandom and European fandom. Fandom votes for their favorite nominee; this race will send the winner to the World Science Fiction Convention in Glasgow, Scotland, during early August 2005.

I think that Suzle is an excellent choice for TAFF, biased as I assuredly am, but the other two candidates, Chaz Boston Baden and Curt Phillips, seem likely lads. I suppose you can't go far wrong this time around.

I mentioned LiveJournal above; I started participating in that little universe around the beginning of this year. In addition, I started a journal at Trufen.net, Victor Gonzalez' website for the dissemination and discussion of all things related to science fiction and fandom. (My user name on LJ is "jerrykaufman", while my name on trufen.net is "Jerry K.") I've written on general subjects in LJ, particularly the mundane and trivial, and have contributed book and fanzine reviews, notes on conventions, and some miscellanea to my Trufen journal.

Most of my LJ work has been blather and pretty boring, although a few entries pleased me at the time I made them. Here's my favorite piece from there, a brief entry from early morning on May 1:

Imagine me, on a hill in Gasworks Park. There's an elaborate sundial there, worked out in stone and shell and other materials, and anyone

who stands in its midst becomes the gnomon, the upright part that casts the shadow.

Imagine it's about half an hour from now. Imagine that the sun has just come up. Imagine that sounds of traditional English village music floats up from a concrete platform alongside the lake, where a side of Morris dancers is jingling its way through a dance.

Imagine I've brought my frame drum. Imagine I can sing (this will be the biggest stretch of all).

Hul-an-tow (boom)

Jolly rumbelow (boom)

We were up (boom) long before the day-o

To welcome in the summertime

To welcome in the May-o

For summer is a-coming in

And winter's gone away-o (boom, boom, boom)

Now imagine yourselves having a fine May 1st. Be fertile—however you want that to manifest—and fancy free.

LiveJournal seems best suited to personal musings and records of quotidian events, though as always a few people exceed expectations. The journal entries I do for Trufen.net tend to be more memorable, at least to me. Here's a typical entry, in which I mention a fan gathering as a springboard to a book review:

I was talking with AP McQuiddy at the final Clarion West party last Friday. "I just read all your journal entries on Trufen," he said.

"I haven't written much recently," I responded. "There haven't been many fanzines in the mail this month, and I haven't read much sf. But I'm reading something now I can write about."

The book is *Revelation Space* by Alastair Reynolds. It was his first book, published in 2000 in Britain and 2001 by Ace in hardcover. It's big-galaxy space opera with a million-year stare and planet-busting technology and ancient mysterious cultures like the Shrouders, the Jugglers, or the Inhibitors.

The three main characters are Dan Sylveste, an archaeologist/political leader who's arrested at the get-go by a rival; Ana Khouri, a soldier forced by circumstance into being a hired assassin; and Ilia Volyova, a starship crew member looking to recruit a new gunnery master.

Though their stories begin decades apart, they eventually draw together (space travel is at sublight speeds) as they need each other to achieve their own goals and those of

something or someone else. Sylveste wants to continue his study of a race of aliens who disappeared nearly a million years ago. Volyova wants Sylveste's access to medical expertise to save her frozen Captain (Sylveste gets the know-how from his dead father's simulation). Khouri wants to assassinate Sylveste. It's all suitably big, mean, deadly and exciting.

The book shows some strain in getting everyone together, and I found the opening chapters, intercut between the various main characters in different times and places, confusing at first. However, once everyone occupies at least the same time, things become a lot clearer.

The writing often is a little stiff and unwieldy, and could have stood a good copyedit. I found the following Thog candidate on page 382 of the Ace hardcover: "What she was showing looked like a page from an etymology textbook: an array of metallic, differently specialised bugs."

Well, despite the above cavils, I enjoyed the book, and will look for more Reynolds, in the not unreasonable hope that he maintains the excitement and invention while getting rid of the bugs.

My heart, though, is still with paper. I think it was Terry Hughes who first said, at least in a fanish context, that a day without mail is like a day without sunshine. Nowadays, when so much mail consists of bills, solicitations, catalogs and other such unwanted or uninvited instant recycling, getting an envelope full of *Vanamonds* (John Hertz) with their cheerful little snippets, is a booster shot of photons. Goodies like *Bento* (David Levine and Kate Yule), *Lofgeornost* (Fred Lerner) and *Snapshot* (Ian Sorenson) are inoculations against gloom and still only available on paper, so far as I know.

Then there's the more surprising *Jupiter Jump* #59, October 2004, from Mark Manning (915 Queen Anne Avenue North, #506, Seattle, WA 98109). We haven't heard anything out of Mark for quite some time, yet here comes 48 pages (plus covers) of a fanzine he does for the Spectator Amateur Press Association, all fascinating material about his recent tour of Morocco. This is real sense of wonder stuff, as Mark runs into one culture shock after another, but seems to rise above them all. Does science fiction prepare one to meet alien cultures on their own ground? If Mark is anyone to go by, it does.

Mark does several things with his material I found unique. One is his practice of recounting in boldface a single incident, using it as a taste of what will be in the following segment, similar to the way magazines use quotations from the text as a graphic

element and teaser. (I have heard these called "callouts" or "pullquotes.") Mark freshens this technique by recounting the incident in much greater detail in the callout than in the body of the narrative. Another Manning specialty is to address us, the readers, during portions of the trip that would otherwise say simply, "We drove many miles through boringly flat desert." He uses these times to recount Moroccan history or geography as though we are riding the bus with him and he is kindly keeping us amused.

Well, Suzle and I were both amused. You should send for this zine—stick a buck in the envelope with your request so Mark doesn't have to pay for postage, or send him your zine in trade.

Speaking of words on paper, I'm reading my way through four years' worth of *Asimov's Science Fiction* in an attempt to find out what's been going on in sf short fiction from 1999 to now. I'm very pleased to know at first hand the pleasures of Charles Stross, for instance. His stories make my head buzz, and I'd like to get know those lobsters that seem to be the real heroes of the "Accelerando" sequence. Allen Steele is another writer about whom I've heard much. Before tackling *Asimov's* and Steele's "Coyote" sequence (like the Stross stories, these have now appeared in a single volume), I had read two novels by Steele. Both were reasonably entertaining, but neither stuck with me. The "Coyote" stories, however, have reached me on a number of emotional levels and nearly all are great examples of story-telling.

A third very good story-teller, Kage Baker, is a writer I might never have even tried, were it not for her *Asimov's* appearances. I can't recall reading about any of her books; I don't recall even noticing any of them in stores or ads. I admit that I often filter out information that I don't think would interest me, and I tend to pay attention to writers or critics I consider "literary." People whose taste I trust may not mention her because she's not a great stylist, but once I announce to a group of fans, "I'm finding that I really enjoy Kage Baker's stories," there's always a few others who chime in, agreeing. I need to clean my filters, evidently.

I'm not arguing *against* web-based fun like blogs, ezines, discussion lists, and so forth. I read them, too, and enjoy them. (Have you ever looked at Teresa Nielsen Hayden's "Making Light," for instance? What range! What immediacy! What, another entry on knitting?) But I'm of the Paper Generation; whether book stock, twiltone, or just white bond, paper's made a nest in my heart and a comfort in my hands, and I'm not letting go anytime soon. ☐

Rip Mix Burn the House Down

(or how to do New York on fifteen Euros a day)

Lilian Edwards



2002-2003 saw me shaking my Internet law boogie thing at conferences and seminars in Boston, New York, Oslo and Lisbon – plus a few one-day stands in London, Reading and Edinburgh. Even I am now officially sick of e-commerce, trust and privacy on-line (only a year after the rest of world.) Ah well, it's an ill dot.com wind that butters no credit cards. Or something a bit

like that! Bits below are freely adapted from Live Journal reportage du jour so if you think you've seen some of this before, then, well, Matilda, you probably have..

April 2003. New York, New York. Hnm. Get there too late Monday night to do any more than observe that although foyer of New Yorker Hotel is in grand chandelier style like one of the glorious belles maisons of Chicago art deco, the upstairs is skanky un-redecorated corridors reminiscent of nasty Best Westerns stayed at near various US airports. Oh well. And although have carefully brought two pin transformer/adaptor for clever phone, does not fit un-refurbished hotel's two prong thingies. Bah. Humbug. Sleep.

Tuesday. Breakfast in hotel diner with lovely Dutch pal Rikke, met while shivering on concourse at JFK. Granny apple pancakes with raisins, nuts and all the syrup and butter you can slurp. Ooooooh, American food. Insanely early hour to start conference (8.30am!!!): only jet lag has got me up in time. Amuhricans. Honestly. We go look for the first day workshops at CFP (Computers Freedom and Privacy – run for, by, and with geeks), but apparently they have all been cancelled “due to complications to do with Iraq.” Like, uh huh, right, and not because not enough people signed up to make them profitable, oh no. Rikke, who is on a scholarship for European human rights type people, and so feels Obligated, opts valiantly to go to the one remaining workshop, enticingly titled “Usage Log Data Retention Workshop.” I predictably opt to walk the two blocks to the biggest Macy's department store in the world and buy tat.

Lunch has been organised with miraculous efficiency by local sf fan Moshe Feder, last glimpsed probably at Seattle Corflu in 2000, who has not only tracked me down to my hotel without many clues, but also already surveyed all the restaurants within a mile of my hotel and decided on the only even vaguely acceptable one: which does soul food (man). I also get to meet up with Kate Yule and David Levine of *Bento* fame who are swinging through NY, seeing mostly free theatre, it appears,

with Moshe's partner Lise. Rather worryingly, K and D recognise me in the lobby despite the fact I've never met them before in real life. Surely I don't look like a fan? What me — with my impeccable taste in dress, no beer belly, no beard and a decent hair cut? "Well, maybe it was that you looked European," says Kate, kindly. Soul food turns out to be a bit like the kind of stuff Christina and I ate lots of in New Orleans in 88. I opt safely for meat loaf with cornbread and black eyed peas and rice (feeling ever so slightly Scarlett O'Hara); and don't quite dare try to find out what grits really ARE. And the peach cobbler is off. Nyuur. (So later I have blueberry pie in Bloomingdale's instead. Pig pig pig. Total oink in fact.)

Moshe then drags us all to Tor (the sf publishers where he works along with half of NY fandom, it seems) for a Royal Audience with Patrick Nielsen Hayden, who's far too busy returning phone calls from all major US media outlets asking him to tell them about war-blogging to bother with small fry like us. The Tor offices are, delightfully, in the Flatiron Building, which is the really famous thin triangular one which looks like it ought to fall over in a medium-nasty wind. The building is so narrow you can easily see from the window of the office on one side of the corridor to the window of the office across the way. It reminds me very strongly of the 13 and a half floor in Being John Malkovich, and Moshe's cubicle is also rather reminiscent of where Jonathan Pryce worked in *Brazil* (he really does share a desk through the wall with Patrick). I can't imagine what working there would do to you long term...

Moshe, even more wonderfully, piles me up with free books, lets me ring Orange in the UK to sort out recalcitrant tri-band phone, and installs me at absent Teresa Nielsen-Hayden's desk to check my email (CFP, being a conference by, with and from techies, naturally at this stage has no Internet access of any kind.) Teresa's desk sports a Jesus action figure — this seems to go with the territory. I accept the famously loggorrhoeic John Clute novel knowing full well I will never ever read it, even if I leave it in the toilet forever. "I bought that with my own money!" says Moshe indignantly. It turns out that I have drunk with, corresponded with, fought with, and in one particular case slept with, the authors of the various books I have piled up: but not actually read any sf since *Cryptonomicon*. How post literate am I then, eh?

Wednesday, things really get going at the conference — there are urns of free coffee and soda everywhere, the unmistakable spoor trails of the nerd at

home. The Americans attending CFP all look disconcertingly like sf fans (many or most are, of course) but are not as weird as I half expected. Apparently things were stranger in Berkeley/the old days. Very few really hilarious t-shirts (the best is a *Trainspotting* parody being sold by the Finnish Electronic Freedom people, which I instantly buy and have piccie taken as first customer, all the better as I am actually from Edinburgh to boot) and a surprising number of jackets and ties. I am in lawyer drag (skirt and jacket) but plan to, and indeed do, gracefully degrade to combat trousers and interesting ear rings over the next few days.

I tell everyone I meet that I am an academic, not an activist, and here on a sort of anthropological field trip. This is more or less true. Compared to IT law conferences I find a lack of substance — hard facts and law — and rather too much attitudinalising — but I guess this may be more my fault than theirs. Essentially this is the annual trade union congress of the geeks and tech community and I'm firmly on the penumbra as a legal academic and neutral in the crypto/privacy/digital rights wars. In fact the nearest comparison that occurs to me is being an embedded war correspondent in Iraq — I'm with these people but not fighting their battles. It's kind of a strange but not unpleasant feeling. At IT law conferences, people pretty much know who I am. Here I'm pleasantly anonymous but bolstered by the motley Euro crowd I've fallen in with via Rikke. The other core members of our group are Maurice and Saora, who run Bits of Freedom, a Dutch digital rights group ("They used to call me the bitch of freedom!" says Saora jubilantly over sake later), two Finns, two NY Chinese/Koreans, a Bulgarian who plans to run as mayor for Sofia and three British privacy guys all of whom seem extravagantly camp. I worry about stereotyping, but not very much. It's fun. I feel as free to be juvenile as one of my own Masters students.

At night, an endless series of awards for warriors of electronic freedom gets presented on the 80th floor of the Empire State Building. The Americans hug, schmooze and exchange PKI keys. But the Europeans are restless. Yes, the view's nice and the building's fab, but, let's face it, there's NO BOOZE. Diet coke and peanut butter cookies are the order of the day — nothing alcoholic or savoury, not even dips. The Euro civil liberties crowd cluck frustratedly at this total abrogation of their human right to drink. As soon as diplomatically possible, we dive into the nearest Korean restaurant and drink it dry of plum wine and

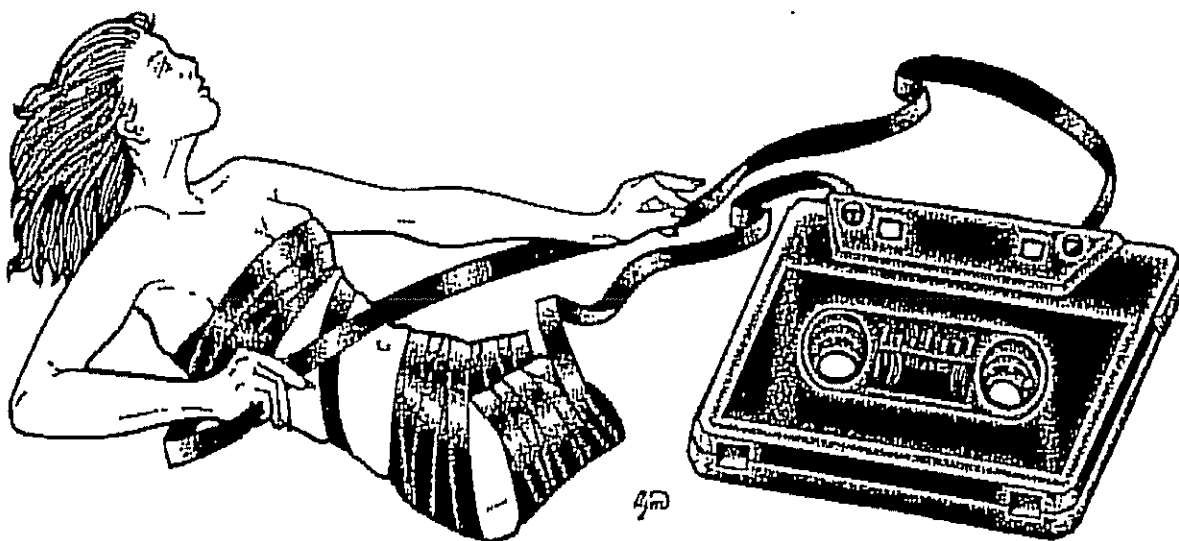
sake. I meet a cute bald lawyer from Toronto who looks a bit like Lex Luthor in *Smallville*, and who like every second person at CFP is Jewish. My ethnic roots are clearly showing, I think hazily — must remember to get them re-tinted.

The conference slowly becomes more surreal. We are taken on a tour of closed circuit TV cameras in the streets surrounding the conference hotel by an actor-cum-electronic freedom fighter who imaginatively organises anarchist playlets in front of CCTVs for the benefit of those monitoring them; he's so paranoid he makes Mulder look like Little Red Riding Hood. "Look at those cameras up there swivelling to catch a better view of you," he gestures, "Reaching their necks out like prehistoric raptors!" Interestingly, most of the cameras do not belong to the CIA, FBI, or even to aliens, but apparently to Macy's, the nearby department store, who are trying (fairly reasonably it seems to me) to make sure their employees don't spend too much time smoking behind the bikesheds. A fine example of capitalism in action. I retire to a jazz joint called Roses in Greenwich Village to meet Vicki Rosenzweig and Vijay Bowen, but before I get to hear the karaoke I've heard so much about, I'm overcome by a bout of nausea which next morning has transmuted itself into my first ever bouncing baby migraine. My irritation is split between losing a day when I could be shopping or even seeing my hero, Larry Lessig, lecture, and my fear that Vicki and Vijay will just assume that as a British fan abroad I was merely paralytically drunk. This seems

particularly unfair when I have been stuck at the e-commerce temperance camp for most of the week.

Eventually freed from the grip of the conference, the Euros and I plot to go to the notorious Belgian Trappist bar Maurice has found in his guide book where no-one is allowed to speak (what a great place to go on a first date!), but instead, rather more sensibly end up at the drag queen Chinese restaurant where all the waiters/"waitresses" look like Margi Clarke and my feet ache in sympathy for their Empire State Building-sized high heels. Men or not, no-one deserves that. A final day goes on posing for photos next to bits of Central Park where *Marathon Man* was filmed (the Dutch seem especially obsessed with this); taking in a strange Cronenberg-like exhibit at the Guggenheim (whose sloping, spiralling floor, largely stairless, delights me and reminds me of the Giralda in Seville); and watching the roller-bladers spontaneously disco-dance in Central Park to a ghetto blaster in translucent winter-spring sunshine. It feels a little like watching the Kids from *Fame*. I watch, tiredly but transfixedly, feeling for the first time like I really am in the mythic Hollywood version of New York, albeit as filmed by a British director, Alan Parker. Strange to be in a city which doesn't feel real till I feel like I'm watching it on screen as opposed to actually being there. ☒

November, 2003



Hooper at the Crank



The outlook wasn't brilliant for equality
of fannes
Once fuggheads raised the theory that
TAFF voting's in the glans
Poor Reason fled in tatters as the churlish cry went
up:
"Electin' girls ain't nothin' but a means to gettin'
tupped!"

Most wimmin fans dismissed it, if they thot of it at
all
While others felt our Cosmic Minds had grown
mundanely small.
Yet those fannes still prone to worry went and
worried what it meant
That disregard was our reward for fanac that we'd
spent.

The wise unslung their 'Umor, and polished up the
shield
But others followed Reason, grabbed their hats,

and left the field.
Who wants to stick around to be demoted to dé-
cor:
Just a prize to be awarded to some Alpha-Faanish
boor?

And though the stars and planets did not falter
over this,
Those who dream the dream of fandom knew that
something was amiss.
If a grrl can't stand on merit when she's standing
among fans,
Then we all must give up claiming it's a fact that
fans are slans.

So the ladies drooped, despairing, wond'ring
"What's a girl to do,
"When *we're* plainly ineffectual as the source for
this one clue?
"Our logic, reason, wit, and tact can matter not a
jot

Ulrika O'Brien

When lodged with guys who see us as just life-support for twat.”

But then Bloody Martin Smith done proved that bimbos can be male
While Tobes, we’re told, did *anything*, for whisky, wine, or ale,
Or gin, or rye, or methanol, or camphorated wax:
A sex-blind proof that everywhere our standards may be lax.

“Now, if only someone big and male would come to clinch the day!”
(Whose manly charms could not be blamed for holding any sway.)
“If Andy, Mighty Andy, would but pub his mighty ish,
We know those fans would change their minds as quick as one could wish!”

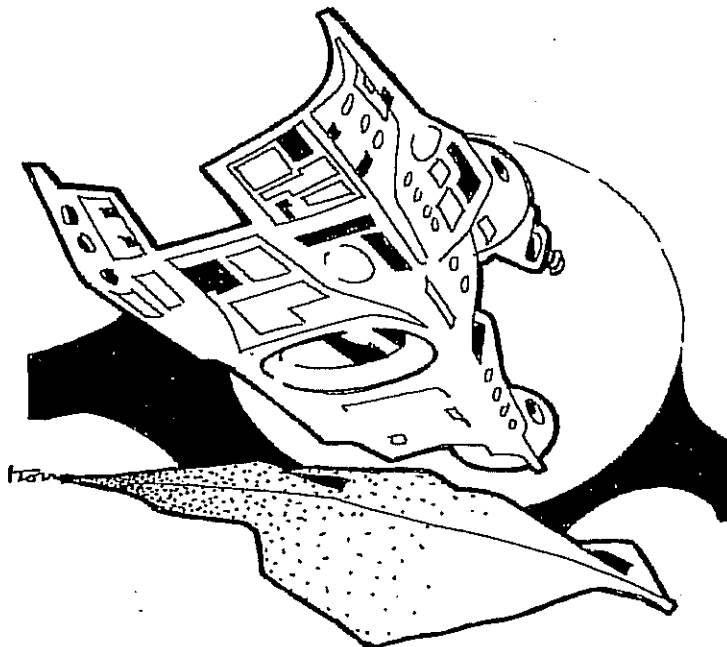
For, pace carl-n-Andy slash, we know it’s not just looks
That renders Hooper Superman in untold faanish books:
His zines! His pubbing speed withal! His magisterial grace
In stooping from the firmament to put you in your place!

Then a hush fell over fannedom as Hoop strode up to the plate,

Lubed his cranking hand with spit and passed a wrist across his pate.
Oh, we held our breath collectively, all waiting for the blow,
For the fields laid waste, the fans made paste, the transuranic glow.
But when Hooper then took crank in hand, wound up, and gave a heave,
No field flattened, no fan pasted, nothing blasted did he leave.
He finessed us with with his subtlety: his tactic was not frontal,
But sensei-like, went with the force, and skipped the contrapuntal.

“Yes, well, fine,” he cried, “It’s all just sex.” At first we were dismayed
Just until we saw the final card that Mighty Andy played:
That the ploy of Lysistrata may have had a lot to do
With the drift of Gonad Theory, ‘cause some gonads, they were blue.

Oh, somewhere fans are screwing, with slick, lubricious glee
And finding sex is part of life, along with zines, and tea.
Maybe other voters sometimes find that TAFfEn make them shout
But cold comfort that to those who cast their votes, but still struck out.☒



IT'S A PROUD AND LONELY THANG, ER, THING

or why being a country music fan is like being a science fiction fan

Andi Shechter

Gulp. So, um, I like country music. I mean, I really *like* it. I've attended bluegrass festivals, can sing harmony on a good number of gospel a cappella songs and track the country and traditional categories at the Grammy Awards. I know which cable channel Country Music Television is on. I've liked the stuff for over 20 years.

Being a science fiction fan is like being a country music fan. (Stay with me here for a sec, okay?) You see, being a country music fan involves explaining to non-fans how you like *that stuff* which the listener hasn't heard in 25 years (if ever) and how it's not all about a narrow outlook and a tiny range of subjects with a puny number of chords. This is very much like explaining how science fiction is a rich and varied genre, with lots for everyone and it's not all that Buck Rogers stuff, and it's not all about aliens and no, you don't believe in UFO's and no, you haven't watched every incarnation of the 823 versions of Doctor Who but you *are* a science fiction fan and the stuff's worth reading.

Folks, especially us educated, book-type nerd folks, I think, will tend to react to a mention of country music with "oh, I don't listen to that stuff, I don't like it" without knowing how it's changed and mutated and grown and expanded since the days of Hank and Porter and Merle and what I tend to refer to as "the whiny white boys" (many of whom could play instruments like god intended them to but oh, oh, *na-sa!*?! It hurts your *fillings* to listen to some of these guys). When I was a college student, my best friend and I bought a Tammy Wynette album solely to make fun of it; I thought then and think now that Tammy was awful and was everything that was wrong with country music. The song topics were dismal — 50's values of being "just a little woman" and how it's a woman's lot to put up with "cheatin'". Besides, she couldn't *sing* worth a damn. And the hair. Ye gods. And the jackets and the sequins and the rah-rah conservative values, and the let's get married and have a passel of babies. Right about that time, too, I discovered Dolly Parton¹ and *ha!* A voice, a song-writing style that kicked, and the ability to have more fun with herself than anyone 'til Cindy Lauper came on the

scene.

Okay, so look. You think "country music" and you think Nashville and "country-western" and bolos ties, maybe. You think maybe big hair (on the men yet!) and twangy instruments and songs where they drop the final "g" off every gerund. You might think really flashy clothes, and dumb "hee haw" jokes, and rednecks and overalls and trucks with gun racks and confederate flags. You might think four chords and two verses and a chorus, no bridge. And okay, yeah, well, that is part of country music culture. Just as rocket ships still appear on magazine covers, and sf still sometimes talks about space exploration, or involves goshwow weaponry or aliens from other planets and robots. And sometimes, there are novels that are space operas where women don't have a very big role, or the story focuses more on technology, or, well, fill in your favorite story line of the past. Sometimes the space operas are *good*, just like sometimes a song with a strong banjo solo about being lonely is a good one.

Some country songs *are* about rednecks and drinking and leaving 'cuz you no longer love him. Or her. But there *are* the other ones sometimes with real live chord changes and a bridge, and a chorus to rock you: about the woman who walks away because she can't stand her life as an appendage to her man anymore. About the friendship that lasts for years. About the girl who goes out on her own, and leaves the small town, or the lousy boyfriend. About the beauty of the hills where someone lives or the pride in how a town has lasted through hard times, when the mill shut down. And about doing the right thing, and learning the lessons that life has to offer. About love that lasts, and heartache and loss and having fun on Saturday night.

And what *about* those songs about leaving and drinking and rednecks? Well, right now, on the top of the charts are some doozies. Martina McBride currently has one out called "How Far," about a troubled relationship and how far she'll go to fix it before giving up. Sara Evans has a great one about how an 18 year-old girl just grew up. And drinking? Always.

Willie Nelson's "Beer for My Horses" rocks. Well, dammit, Willie's just GOT it. He's written some

¹ A recent "Crossroads" show on CMT was a concert featuring Dolly and Melissa Etheridge. It worked.

fantastic songs in a long career and he's still at it. (See "Crazy"; see "Always on My Mind"; see "Angels Flying Too Close to the Ground." And I'm still not entirely sure about newcomer Gretchen Wilson, who's got "Redneck Woman" out right now as well as "Here for the Party," but she struts pretty damn well. I like that in a, well, a chick singer. And I'm *not* a redneck woman, not hardly, but I "know the words to every Tanya Tucker song." (Hell, yeah.)

Being a country music fan involves explaining to non-fans how there's awfully good stuff out there for women to sing and hear and play. Hey look, strong women, just like in sf. It's gone from a strong almost-male only point of view to a rich and varied genre with strong women characters, and strong women authors and well, *you* know the drill.

Since I started seriously listening to country (and that does not include that horrific Tammy Wynette album, hnm, wonder where that is—wonder who got custody) I've heard artists like Kathy Mattea (who recorded my all time favorite song in the world²) and SheDaisy (whose harmonies and lyrics can rival the Roches for *good*) and yeah, the Dixie Chicks, in both early and late incarnations.³ And there are names some folks might know, like Canadian Shania Twain,⁴ a pretty successful crossover singer with some songs with great beats that make me wanna move like "Don't Be Stupid" (a song that says basically "I love you honey, but stop being so jealous"), "That Don't Impress me Much" ("Okay, so you're a rocket scientist"⁵) and "Honey, I'm Home" (a song about having hard day at work, yeah, but for once it's from the woman's side). And there's Faith Hill, and Terri Clark (another Canadian import) (whose hysterical "Girls Lie Too" is on the charts right now. "Yeah comb your hair over *that* way, that looks *good*") and Trisha Yearwood (her powerful interpretation of "How Do I Live" knocked my socks off, but I tend to like those overly-emotional ones). One of the *best* singer-songwriters around, I don't care what kind of music she's classified in, is Mary Chapin Carpenter, whose work I discovered in the mid-80s in a bargain bin in a two-bit

record store in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And for all the ballads and beautiful folk numbers, she's all over the musical map, but I'll argue that the rhythms and style of "He Thinks He'll Keep Her" are 100 percent modern country; and it's a feminist anthem. And if you don't know Patsy Cline, well, damn. You should.

There's Vince Gill, a fine musician who sings some of the best harmonies in music. Any music. There's Travis Tritt, that long-haired guy in the Blues Brothers all-star band. And yeah, I like Garth. So if you're thinking that it's still Flatt and Scruggs, and some of that there pickin' and grinnin' crap, nope. Not all, not hardly.

In our genre, there's still occasional "gee, Flash, what should we do now?" science fiction and there's "why I didn't realize that the famous doctor P. L. Bun-wrap was really a beautiful woman!" science fiction and tedious third-rate wannabe Tolkien fantasy and technobabble epics and sequels to books which should have gone toes up long ago and....

It's popular culture, books and music. Values change. Writing changes, whether it's in fiction or song. Times change. So science fiction isn't all [fill in the blank of your favorite cliché] as you have had to explain for *so* long to friends, co-workers and relatives. While we may be invited into the parlor for crumpets *with* our tea now, as one author put it years ago, we still aren't asked to stay to dinner. SF is, of course, everything from examinations of gender roles to cyberpunk to alternate history to space exploration to onion universes and wormholes and ecological catastrophe and bad puns to exploration of myth. As you tell all those friends...etc. 'til you're rather red-faced, and you find them patting you a lot, urging you to calm down.

I started seriously reading sf in the '70s. Like a lot of women, I had a hard time finding characters who interested me in mainstream fiction, which seemed about angst and divorce, urban life and brittle people, testosterone and war and spying and well, I wanted something else. I wanted strong women protagonists, people I could relate to. Some years later, when I

² Okay, since you asked, it's by California singer-songwriter Laurie Lewis and it's "Love Chooses You" a waltz of beauty and simplicity and feeling. Mattea also recorded songs by the late Kate Wolf, and Nanci Griffith, so she's 3 for 3 with me.

³ Their first albums did not include current Chick Natalie Maines, who can belt the hell out of a song, sometimes too much, and whose mouth has gotten her in trouble with the "patriots." The first incarnation of the band was wonderful, but never made it big. Their version of a song called "Thunderheads" is poignant and beautiful.

⁴ As the Arrogant Worms sing in their "Proud to Be a Canadian": "We'll give you Alan Thicke, but Shania Twain is *ours*."

⁵ Apologies to friends like Jordin Kare, who *are* rocket scientists. I really *am* impressed, you know.

started avidly reading mystery fiction, the reasons were the same: strong independent minded women who weren't looking for men to rescue them, who were doing what they wanted on their own terms. And over the years, as I've dug around in the country music bins, it's been much the same. Not all my reading is limited to those characters and issues mind you; not all of my listening is either. But scan the shelves and that's what you'll see reflected in the dust jackets and the jewel cases.

There's still Dreadful Country Music about oh currently it's NASCAR, and how "we're real and everyone else isn't" and jut-jawed, beat-up-the-peaceniks patriotism. And I sometimes laugh at the codes of dress I see: Alan Jackson? White hat. Clint Black? Black hat. But...in recent months, even years, I'm seeing a lot more long hair and earrings on country's male singers than I do in rock, or even, well, on the streets. That ain't all bad. Since I started seriously listening to country music, I've noticed that both the men and women write more about serious issues than they used to write. There is still a tired strain of conservative (read right-wing) "family values" in country music (do NOT get me started on Toby Keith), but even Nashville has been shaken up a lot. And the universal (or dare I say it, even farther?) themes that come through are exactly what appeals to me about music. Period.

And in that regard, here's a tangent that I find rather interesting: it's about "battered women revenge songs." For the last five years, I've volunteered in the office of a shelter for battered women. I do data entry that's not exceptionally difficult, just time consuming, so it's perfect for hooking up to the walk-thing and listening to cds. Recently, it dawned on me that many musicians have written and recorded songs about abused women and how, more recently, the songs have been more than just about "empowerment", but some are actual death and revenge ballads. (And lemme tell you, it's an odd realization to have in that environment.) This of course, has been seen in folk, and other kinds of music, but, because of that traditionalist bent in country, it came more to my attention. So just in case you're interested, here's what I found in relatively current country music. Some are more technically probably "cheated-on women revenge songs" too. (If you're interested, I strongly suggest the annotated list at a website for lots more that aren't country, including folk, punk, ska, Christian, rock, you name it. Check out <http://creativefolk.com/abusesongs.html#songs>.)

- "Independence Day" and "Broken Wing" both recorded by the very talented Martina

McBride

- "Buckaroo" recorded by Seattle's own Ranch Romance (a cheated woman r.s., it's way cool, local to Seattle for its setting at the Buckaroo Tavern and is an interesting twist; it's *not* the cheated-on wife here who exacts revenge...)
- "The Thunder Rolls" recorded by Garth Brooks - apparently there was a major controversy in country about this song. Big surprise; few men record such songs in country music but this one was pretty damn clear.
- "Black Eyes, Blue Tears" recorded by Shania Twain
- "Go Girl" recorded by Lila McCann
- "Me and Emily" a new one, and a good one, by Rachel Proctor

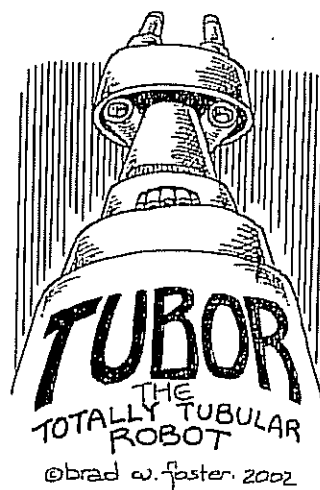
Two more country songs I found but have not actually heard are

- Faith Hill's "A Man's Home is his Castle"
- Reba McEntire's "(The) Stairs"

and the queen of 'em all

- "Goodbye Earl" written by Dennis Linde, recorded by the Dixie Chicks

I'm not saying you have to listen the next time you hear a country song, but do me a favor? Remember all those folks who looked at the cover of that copy of *Dhalgren*, or *Neuromancer* or, oh I dunno, *Mission of Gravity* or *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* — whatever you were carrying—and then looked at *you* with a curled lip. And then, note down the name of the singer or the band and come ask me about it. ☒





Many years ago I worked in an all-male office (we were specialists) and we obtained the reputation of being arrogant and sarcastic. When we went for our morning and afternoon canteen breaks, we took over a long table against a gable wall, and shouted ribald remarks about the various personages who walked past us to get to the serving counter, especially girls who possessed large bosoms. It will come as no surprise for my readership to appreciate that although I sat with these gentlemen, I was an unwilling participant in their relentless banter and attempted a “laid-back” hauteur of apparent indifference, hoping the persons being insulted would realise that I alone did not participate or agree with the personal verbal innuendos.

I was wont to purchase a Penguin to eat with my coffee...a pleasant chocolate covered biscuit wrapped in a colourful tinfoil wrapper. One afternoon I manufactured a rocket with the wrapper. I folded it lengthwise, pared one end and made four fins, and folded the other end over a couple of

times to make a counter balance.

I surreptitiously looked round the canteen, then flicked the rocket with my right hand, and in the same movement I lifted my coffee cup and sipped it innocently.

The rocket flight was wonderful to behold...it sped away at an angle of forty five degrees, straightened just below the ceiling, then dipped at the far end of the canteen and landed directly into the cup of coffee being held by the Chief’s secretary, and extremely efficient female, nicknamed for good reasons “Tin Drawers.” She was the only canteen visitor who was immune from the boyos’ coarse observations.

She stood up, her face like thunder and she shouted, “Attention please!”

Silence came down like a curtain as she held up her coffee cup, rocket fins rising rampant from the top of the cup.

“Unless the person who did this stands up and admits responsibility, I will make this canteen ‘out of bounds’ to certain individuals.”

Tightly held breaths eventually exhaled their

CO₂ like the hiss from a steam hammer.

But no one moved....

She threw her audience a look of utter contempt, and took her coffee cup to the counter.

Quickly I also returned my empty cup as she approached me.

"Miss Aggelthorpe," I breathed. "I flipped that rocket, but obviously I did not think it would land in your coffee cup."

"John," she smiled, "I know it wasn't you because as soon as it plunged into my cup and splashed hot coffee over my new jumper, you were sipping your coffee and looking in the other direction."

"No, honestly it was me," I panted, "and I certainly apologise most profusely."

"You are the one gentleman in that obscene ensemble, but I really appreciate your unselfish bit to defuse the situation."

"I, er...I..." I stammered, but she gave me a horse-toothed smile and strode past my friends, giving each of them a devastating glare, their repartee temporarily abated.

A couple of months later a promotion accrued in my office, and I lined up with the other knee-knocking hopefuls outside the Chief's office...he was a retired colonel from a

famous regiment.

Miss Aggelthorpe was the interview administrator, and ushered each of us in turn to be interviewed by Colonel Buchan.

As she took us to his office and knocked on the door she smiled, and, wait for it, actually winked at me.

The interview was brief, but the Colonel did not ask me any questions about my suitability for promotion. Instead, he stressed the ethics of gentlemanly conduct. "Esprit de corps and all that," he blethered. "Willing to sacrifice one's own good name for the honour of the regiment, as it were."

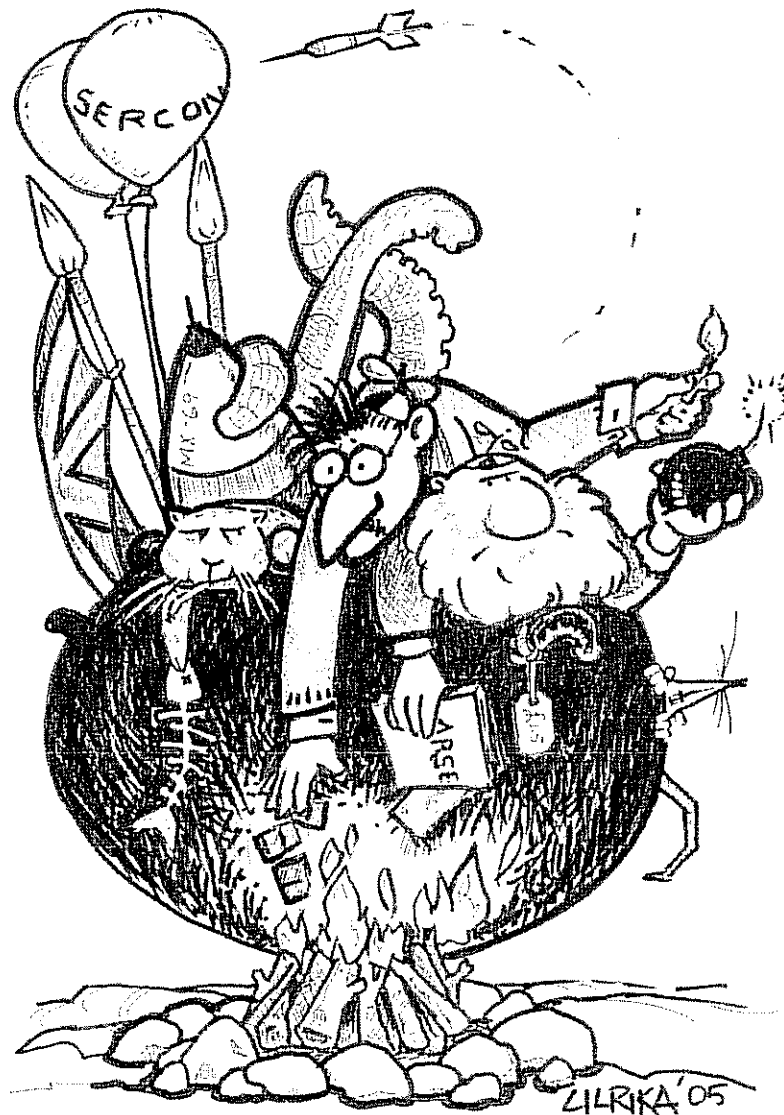
He shook my hand in a hard grasp, eyes moist...a vagrant tear dribbled down his whiskey-reddened left cheek as he gave me a knowing smile.

And, yes, I *did* get the promotion. ☑



A Swig of Fannish Juice

Peter Weston's autobiography
Victor Gonzalez



Perhaps as an opening disclaimer I should mention that Peter Weston is a chum of mine, that I've smoked many of his fine cigars, and that he's just promised me a mention in volume two. Or that — to my delight — a squib by yours

truly is the first hit on Google for the search "Peter Weston."

So my expectations were high that Peter would give accurate reportage, enlivened with witty statements and fannish anecdotes in *With Stars in My*

Eyes: My Adventures in British Fandom, the first volume of his fannish autobiography. But I also feared that those elements might not be enough to draw me in completely, that the 40-years-past characters that would jump to life *If You Had Been There* might seem to me no more than dusty names. I'm happy to say that Peter has done a fine job of avoiding that problem; rather than simply recollecting an earlier epoch, the story demonstrates the foment and clash of personality in the fannish cauldron, a soup startlingly similar in taste to today's. Peter's talent for sharp and telling details makes for quick reading as he enters the world of science fiction, and then fanzines, and then general fandom. His style is authoritative, but chipper, conversational and sympathetic, even to those, such as Charles Platt, who come in for a good bit of stick.

With Stars in My Eyes: My Adventures in British Fandom, by Peter Weston, is available from NESFA Press for \$23, and can be purchased online. It was published as one part of a four-volume set honoring the four guests of honor at Noreascon 4. Printed without a dustjacket in a foil-stamped blue hardcover, 20 chapters, two epilogues, a "Where Are They Now?" section, and even an names index bring the page count up to 336. Many of the illustrations are reprinted from fanzines; artists include Jim Barker (who was commissioned to do a number of originals as well), Harry Bell (the cover and a lot more), Steve Green, Arthur Thomson, Ivor Latto, and a bunch of others. There is also a section of black and white photos toward the end, and the cover of each issue of **Zenith/Speculation** is also reproduced in miniature near its mention in the text.

One's enjoyment of any particular volume of historical writing is likely to depend on various contexts. A book about hoplite democracy in the inland Attic communities doesn't have a great chance with someone who's got no idea of who Herodotus was. But, on the other hand, we all know that a good storyteller can overcome any barrier of learning. While some among my fannish elders gripe that younger fans have no sense of what came before them, and cannot really become fans until they become educated, I've always argued that fan history should be optional. In my own experience, while I am far from an expert on fan history, I have become quite interested in different segments of it, and have done considerable reading in those areas.

What got me started, what made the breakthrough, was excellent, gripping fanwriting. "Performance" by Don West, for example, which really made me want to know those drunken freaks. It wouldn't have worked if someone had handed me a book on "Early Fanoclast

Democracy," or even "Ah! Sweet Idiocy," if I hadn't had the proper context. For every Sandra Bond, who corrects faneds twice her age about *their own publications*, there are a hundred like me, who don't want to be told this stuff is essential for admission into the club, but still might find parts of it interesting.

Peter succeeds both because he draws his characters sparsely and well, and because many of the experiences fans have on the path toward full immersion are reflected by his particular route: a fascination with short fiction and magazines; finding a small group of friends interested in the same thing; joining the local club; pubbing the first ish; then going to the first con and discovering just how many more people, and how much more tradition and politics, the larger sphere of fandom really contains.

I laughed when I read about Peter and his local friends playing Risk to pass the time — I got my first invitation to a fannish party when playing Risk at an Orycon decades ago. The similarities of our teens, despite 20 years and an ocean's difference, made me think of what it took for Peter to not only reminisce, but to study those early years of his fan life. The idea of not just contemplating your first fanzine, but reviewing it honestly for an autobiography, is something most faneds would think twice about.

Peter pulls it off with a minimum of blushing, and much excellent scene setting. If you don't yet know much about Peter, here's a summary: He started off in the early 1960s with a messily-dittoed zine called **Zenith**, and some very sercon intentions. **Zenith** became **Speculation**, which went to 33 issues, drew dozens of the biggest names in science fiction, and eventually won the very first Nova Award. Peter won TAFF in 1974 (on his third try!) and traveled to the 1974 Discon, and later he chaired the 1979 worldcon, Seacon. In the late sixties he married the very beautiful Eileen and they started producing beautiful daughters. Since then he's retired, had a beautiful grandchild, etc., blah, Worldcon fan Guest of Honor, blah.

But back to the beginning. As I once insisted to the disgruntled astonishment of Alison Scott, even a fannish essay must have a conflict — and in the case of Peter's first few years, as he became better known and respected and was even nominated for a Hugo — Charles Platt provided one. It isn't so simple as the never-ending argument of fannish versus sercon, nor even that more central one of respecting tradition versus creating one's own, but it contained some of all of that; while Platt was part of the "New Wave" of faneditors who scorned the lack of a focus on science fiction among established fans such as Walt Willis, Pe-

ter himself tended toward the more serious and constructive — and yet still found himself despising Platt's arrogance and disrespect.

In a sarcastic takedown of a review Willis had written, printed as a letter to **Zenith**, Platt measured Willis's impact: "Well, after all, many people in Britain and the USA — perhaps even more than 500 — know about the legendary wit of Willis." Tom Perry later wrote that "Platt's sneer [...] is sickening in its cruelty." But the sea had changed, recounts Peter, and Willis withdrew.

The cast of the book ranges all over the place; Brian Aldiss, Beryl Henley, Brian Burgess, Platt, Rog Peyton, Harry Harrison, Darroll Pardoe, Michael Moorcock, Christ Priest, Graham Charnock. From Peter's view today, it was a time of lost opportunities and missed connections; at the time, he was nonplussed and upset by the venomous feuding which found form in his fanzine.

And while I was not there, and haven't done enough background reading to verify his accounts, it appears that Peter makes no attempt to simplify the situation into black and white; he admits at one point that his editorial judgment at that time was easily clouded by a Big Name, and that he himself was often unable to glimpse the misunderstandings behind the bad feelings.

There is a strong sense of veracity to what Peter writes. He worked from a variety of sources: his own fanzines and others published contemporaneously, the memoirs of other fans, plus interviews clearly done for the book itself. Quotes and accounts from other participants are frequently used to provide perspective.

At times **With Stars in My Eyes** gives me a sense of yearning, as though Peter might have thought that being an ambitious Serious and Constructive fan editor wasn't the most fun way to have made a career in fandom. He laments that he got into fandom just a few years too late to have received **Void**; he pinpoints missed chances to have become one of the Old Guard, more concerned with a Tower of Babel Cans to the Moon, or the Hum-and-Sway, than he was with the latest Heinlein novel. The early battles with Platt, and the later tensions between his work, a growing family, and his fannish responsibilities, make up the heart of the story that Peter tells. But, muttering from beyond the page, a subtext congeals when at one point he decided to "take stock" of where he was going with

Zenith:

After all, I now knew there were other ways of doing a fanzine. Two titles had been particularly instructive; the first being **Tensor**, from Langdon Jones, and the other was Roy Kay's **Chaos**, both scrappy but full of personality, showing how easy it really was to get into fandom. They simply wrote about their everyday lives, Lang Jones describing his tribulations as a musician in a regiment of the Guards, his tail-less cat, and his mother's efforts to get him to tidy up his room. Roy told us about life as a window-dresser in a department store, and about enrolling in a correspondence course on "How to Be a Writer." Simple stuff, really, with no pretensions, but it was interesting and amusing and people liked it.

It amazes me, for the millionth time, that fandom has changed so little; the new wave crashes up against the old, to paraphrase Peter. This conflict between "sercon" and "fannish" still sees circulation, some 40 years since Pete Weston faced it, and at least 60 since the first time it was raised. One has to laugh. The very worst fanhistory is about events that affected fewer than 500 people — and so is the very best. I disagree with Tom Perry: I've always taken that low estimate as something to be proud of. Fanwriting is a unique form because fanwriters know their audience, more or less explicitly — that's literally what makes it different from keeping a diary or producing for any paid market. While Peter certainly made his fannish reputation by publishing a fanzine that mostly talked about science fiction, and indeed made a true focal point for sf criticism in the U.K. in the 1960s, the care and conviction he put into this first volume shows me his love for fandom goes far beyond the restrictions of the genre. ☒

With Stars in My Eyes: My Adventures in British Fandom, by Peter Weston, is available from NESFA Press, NESFA, PO Box 809, Framingham, MA, 01701, U.S.A., and can be ordered online:

<http://www.nesfa.org/press/Books/Weston.html>
info@nesfa.org

[This article was originally published on Trufen.net.]

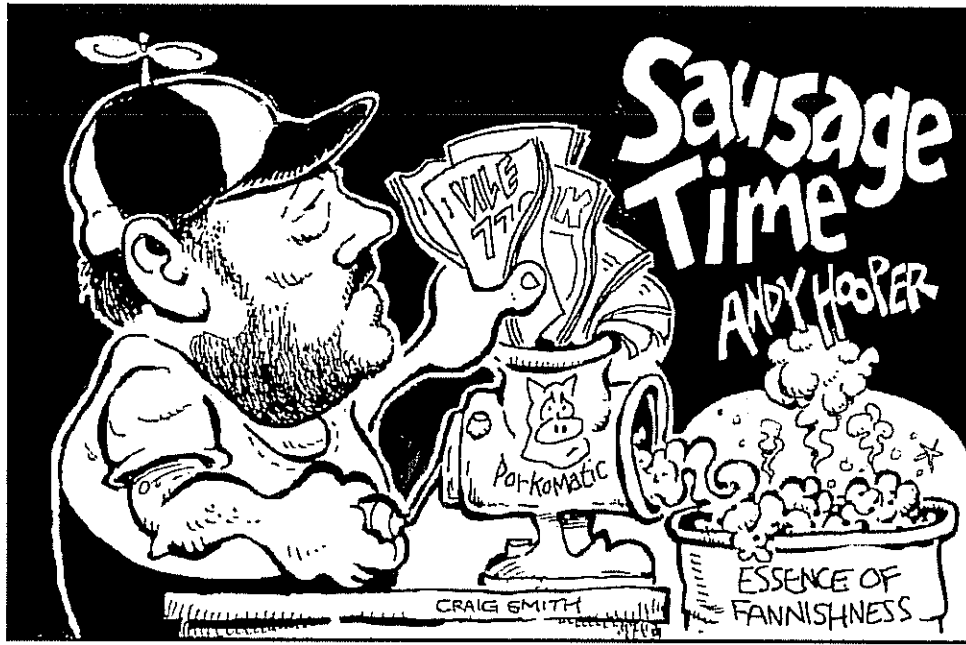
They say that fanzine fandom is dying.

The fact that they usually say this in the pages of a fanzine does serve to undermine this opinion to some degree. But it is a tenaciously held belief nonetheless. Every time a post appears on some fannish list that has nothing but a

fan's name as the subject line, our communal heart skips a beat in anticipation of another obituary, and the loss of one more person that remembers what a proud and lonely thing it once was to be a fan.

I remain unconvinced. I don't get very many fanzines mimeographed on twilltone anymore, and it has been a while since anyone asked me who sawed Courtney's boat. But I do see and read a lot of material published by people who call themselves fans, and a great deal of it still seems dedicated to documenting the things that are different – or even “special” – about science fiction fans and their lives. Fanzine fandom has changed dramatically in the years since an interest in science fiction became socially acceptable. And fanzines, fandom's most important gift to the culture, have evolved far beyond their original genre-based ghetto, to the point where it is barely any hyperbole to say that “all knowledge is contained in fanzines.”

Still, fandom's intimations of mortality have been histrionic enough that even someone publishing for the first time in 2004 understands and possibly agrees with this scenario. Which leads to some very curious things; neofans no longer explain why their zine is late, but rather why they are interested in participating in an obviously moribund sub-subculture. (Neofan is a relative term, and I use it here largely to define fans who have begun publishing less than, say, 20 years ago. In reality, anyone who creates a fanzine is no longer a neofan, because an understanding of the desirability of publishing within fandom indicates a more mature understanding of its culture and society.)



Take for example *Thought Experiments*, the very first fanzine written and published by Geneva Melzack of Manchester in the U. K. Geneva's opening editorial had two

points that struck me the most. The first was her clear distinction between the act of publishing a fanzine and publishing on the Web or Internet, and her enthusiasm for the former pastime. The second point was her assertion that she “needed” to pub her ish, and that at least a portion of her motivation was to be part of the ongoing history of SF fandom. This made her sound so much like an aging trufan's dream that I wondered if the author weren't a hoax of some sort, but so many British fans report eyewitness Melzack sightings that I conclude she must be real.

I've said before that one of the major changes in fanzines over my tenure within fandom is the general disappearance of crudzines of all kinds. Neofans and the semi-talented within fandom used to fill up our mailboxes with all manner of earnest but badly executed and even more badly proofread fanzines, so much so that many fanzine reviewers took it upon themselves to *punish* these editors for publishing material that wasted time they could have used to get drunk or read comic books. Printed digest-style on folded A4 paper, *Thought Experiments* is certainly simple, if not outright cruddy, with 20 pages of ragged right double-column layout unbroken by art or any great effort of design. And like a million fen before her, Melzack promises better work to come; by now, she should have made some progress toward publishing a new genzine to be titled “*Meta*” (I envision a cross between Terry Hughes' *Mota* and Rob Hansen's *Eta*, but probably shouldn't).

Melzack writes like a fan. She has an excellent

vocabulary, a rather dry sense of humor, and likes to wrestle with large ideas. Like many of us, she's come to terms with the fact that she's unlikely to write a great Science Fiction Novel, but can still find many reasons to go on writing anyway. I liked her assertion that religious faith and space opera arise from the same impulse (you can't really go wrong ringing the changes with the old sensawunda), and was even more taken with her discussion of gender and being a science fiction reader. But I genuinely **loved** her piece about technophilia and her love for her grandfather's typewriter, written on that very machine of course. There is no indication that another issue will follow, but I suspect she'll want to find someplace to print letters of comment on this material. For a first issue, *Thought Experiments* is close to brilliant, and I am very eager to see what the editor sends us next.

Across fandom's history, relatively few fan editors have been so successful in their first efforts; the classic model of the beginning fanzine publisher is a bright but unpolished teenage kid, who inevitably makes a lot of mistakes on the way to eventual improvement. It's been far less common for a fanzine publisher to bring talents already honed in other academic or professional pursuits to their fanac; perhaps the best examples of this are Dean Grennell and Calvin Demmon, both of whom had wide experience in writing and editing before they began to create and contribute to fanzines.

I'm somewhat inclined to count Pete Young in that same group. The winner of the 2004 FAAn award for "Best New Fan," Pete's career as a professional artist has clearly given him creative chops that few fanzines editors can bring to their work. (Of course, calling him "New" is a bit of a stretch, but perhaps we meant new to fanzine publishing.) The 5th issue of his fanzine *Zoo Nation* appeared in August of 2004, and if anything, exceeds his Nova award-winning efforts of last year. *Zoo Nation* is configured in the same folded A4 format as *Thought Experiment*, but is far ahead in graphic sophistication, starting with the cover illustration inspired by designer Boris Bilinsky's original poster for Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*.

Some of fandom's best writers contributed to this issue: Randy Byers and Curt Phillips offer eloquent writing on very different subjects, and Steve Rothman submits a "real science" piece with his examination of "Absurdity Theory." I thought Young's own book reviews were nicely done, and laughed several times at excerpts from Marcus Row-

land's "Forgotten Futures" role-playing game. I was not as impressed by Tony Keen's review of the "naked" re-release of The Beatles *Let It Be*, as I felt like I'd been reading material similar to his general indictments of Paul McCartney for the last 30 years, and I still can see no good reason for John Lennon to have turned the *Let it Be* session tapes over to Phil Spector. But even that got me thinking, and playing different versions of "Across the Universe."

And what exactly are we to say about someone who actually bought the rights to name a new star from a British Airways in-flight catalog, and made sure that in future, fans will always be able to gesture toward a dim point of light in the sky and say "That one is named *Jophan*?" Pete has some striking aesthetic gifts – you might say that he has remarkably good taste for a mere fanzine publisher. A lesser fan might have succumbed to the temptation to name a star "Foo Foo" or "Bergeron," but Pete knew who ought to be shining distantly on us from the heavens.

Fanzines that harness all their material to a common theme run the risk of losing some readers not compelled by the subject matter, but Young has chosen the Zen-like sub-title of "Being There" for *Zoo Nation* #5, making virtually any observational contribution apropos. Since timebinding starts from personal experience and observation, I'm not surprised this group of writers turned this into one of the best fanzines of 2004.

Both these fanzines are newer titles from editors with a great deal of energy and enthusiasm for fanzine fandom. They both appear to have avoided most of the trial and error attendant to the traditional fan publishing career, which we can only hope will help to extend their fannish energies. Fanzine fandom is unquestionably changing, as it has been since I first published 20 years ago. But the presence of fanzines like *Zoo Nation* and *Thought Experiments* give me considerable hope that it is not, in fact, dying. ☒

Fanzines Reviewed:

Thought Experiments, published by Geneva Melzack, 5 Brooklands Ave., Withington, Manchester, M20 1JE United Kingdom

Zoo Nation #5, published by Pete Young, 62 Walmer Road, Woodley, Berkshire, RG5 4PN, United Kingdom



Alexis A. Gilliland, 4030 8th Street S.,
Arlington, VA 22204 (March 31, 2004)

Thank you for *Littlebrook* #3, which arrived by mail. These newfangled ezines may be the coming thing, but hard copy was good enough for pappy, and by gum it's good enough for me.

A couple of comments: I quite like Teresa Nielsen Hayden's take on auctorial insanity, and Andi Shechter's article offered me a comment hook. I have heard variations of Teresa's comment: "It was somebody I've never heard of. What can they do to me?" And yes, it was generally being rude to lower echelon types. Which may be cultural, since self-expression is valued above politeness. Or, if you want to blame the media, such rudeness is probably the result of watching too many sitcoms. About writing fast, my best spurt was about 3,000 words per day. For my last novel, it averaged about 500 wpd, which is probably about what I do when I get my brain in gear. Lately I've done a few short stories which haven't sold, also about 500 wpd. If I knew how to write a trashy best-seller, I would first have to believe in the project. Readers can tell when the author is disrespecting them.

Discussing *Stars*, Andi notes that my cartoons didn't relate to the Janis Ian lyrics assigned them. True, but with an explanation. When Mike Resnick

introduced us at the Chicago Worldcon, we hit it off even though I wasn't one of her fans and we agreed that I would do some cartoons for the anthology. Subsequently I got a contract in the mail to provide four cartoons and Janis looked over a selection of maybe a dozen before picking the ones she liked. To which she assigned the tie-in lyrics she deemed most appropriate. Her favorite was "Upstaged by my special effect!" which wasn't associated with her lyrics at all but with some of the email backing and forthing we were doing. Janis is a nice lady, and reminds me a bit of Dolly, my first wife—who was also a musician and also Jewish. When *Stars* came out I attended the group signing at the following year's Worldcon. Toronto? Yes, Janis was excited about marrying her longtime companion since same sex marriages had just been made legal in Canada.

By the way, who did the art on pages 6, 12, 13, and 14?

{ {Anonymous, by way of a clip art collection we have. Jerry} }

Milt Stevens, miltstevens@earthlink.net
(April 2, 2004)

In *Littlebrook* #3, Suzle expressed surprise that a thirtyish friend had never heard of Janis Ian. As a matter of fact, I'd never heard of her either until

Mike Resnick mentioned her attending a worldcon. Of course, I've never paid much attention to popular music. The title "Society's Child" does sound familiar. I couldn't sing it, but I can't sing anything else either (or maybe that should be "shouldn't sing anything at all").

As it turns out, it's a good thing Mike Resnick did mention Janis Ian. When I was working on the first progress report for L.A.Con IV I had to deal with a list of 1800 names. To make things more difficult, the text file I received had the first names and last names run together, so I had to manually separate them. This wasn't usually a problem, since the first letter of the last names were uppercased. However, uppercase "I" and lower case "L" were confusing. Also, most worldcon members with names beginning with "I" seem to be Japanese. The Japanese names were a little bit challenging. My first try at the name Janis Ian came out as Jan Islan. However, the list was in alphabetical order by last name, and Islan would have been out of order. It was only after realizing the last name must be Ian that I remembered Mike Resnick mentioning Janis Ian. Gee, fanzines do occasionally contain useful information.

Teresa Nielsen Hayden certainly makes it sound difficult to be an author. I've always thought one of

the major virtues of a writing career was that most of your job was dealing with a word processor. That's easy. Dealing with people is much more difficult. I'd rather spend eight hours wrestling a computer two out of three falls than spend an hour dealing with people. It must be even worse when the people in question have egos bigger than a breadbox. Isaac Asimov used to say he had an ego as large as the Empire State Building. Others said he had an ego as big as New York State. That made other pros envious.

In regard to Jerry's future whitewater rafting adventures, I have only one comment. Mazel Tov.

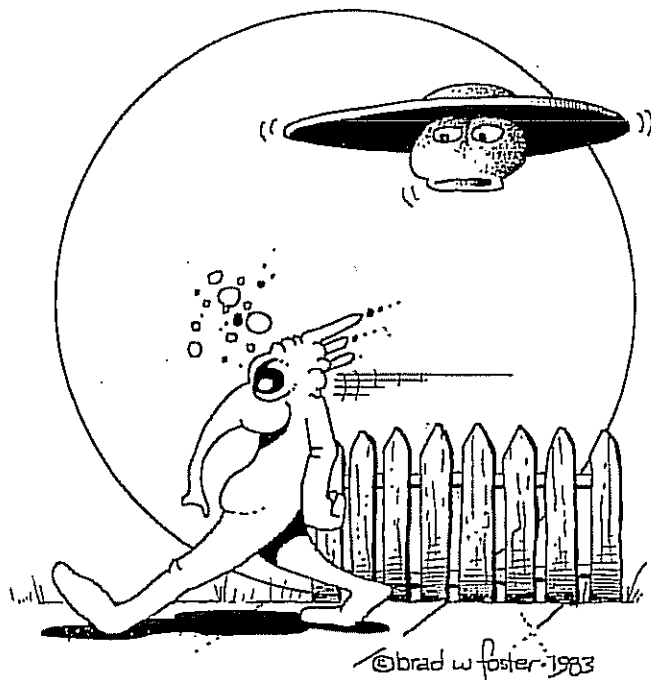
**Brad W Foster, PO Box 165246,
Irving, TX 75016,
bwfoster@juno.com (April 4, 2004)**

I was just thinking the other day how most of the zines that have found their way to my mailbox the past few months have either been clubzines or apazines, when *Littlebrook* #3 showed up. Not that there is anything wrong with clubzines and apazines, it's just kind of odd to get mostly those for so long, like everyone else had suddenly.... I don't know... just gone on line or something?

{ {See my editorial for comments on paper fanzines. Jerry} }

I can identify with your opening comments of a lot of little things having happened to delay publication, but nothing all that interesting. The story of our life the past year or two. Seems to constantly be something taking up time and/or money, but any individual item is really not all that big a deal. Life, don't talk to me about life.

The note there about the too-big portrait of Andy from the previous issue does remind me of one bit of good news: Cindy and I both started on the South Beach diet in mid-January, and even with my also having gotten a part time job at about the same time as a mystery guest for a fast food chain, I've managed to drop a little over 20 pounds so far. A ways



to go yet for our goals, but we figured this would be at least a year long project. And heck, for the first time in years, the weight is going down, not up!

Whitewater rafting? Glad you had a good time. Me, I don't even get on the rides at the local amusement park that end up splashing water on you. Guess it's the cat in me....

Loved the "Auctorial Insanity" article from TNH. I've heard many of those myself from author friends over the years, though I'd never reveal which said what. Let the guilty hang their heads in private acknowledgment.

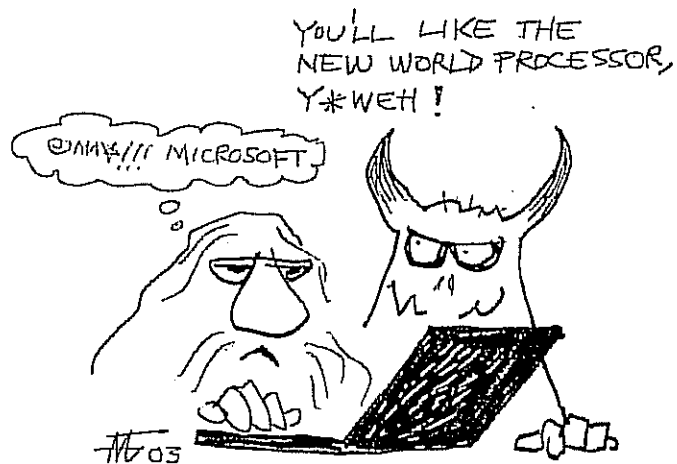
A good issue, though could have been made better with a fillo or two from that Foster guy. Oh well.

{{It was sadly lacking in Foster art in particular and fannish art in general. We hope we've made up for it this issue. Jerry}}

Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2E7 (April 4, 2004)

I haven't done any whitewater rafting, but I have watched rafters while hiking along the Kananaskis River in the Rocky Mountains adjacent to Calgary. There is a popular set of rapids frequently used by rafters, with such names as Widower and Santa Claus. The former name is a whirlpool that undercuts a cliff. The hiking path goes along the very edge of the cliff and is basically held together by tree roots. One false step and you have 50 metres to review your life before you hit the water. My belief is that Widower refers to the footpath, not the river. Because Calgary (pop. 1 million) is an hour's drive away, and the river is popular with Japanese and German tourists (who are the only ones who can afford the hotels), the rapids are heavily used. I've seen lineups of several different rafting companies, waiting to launch their boats. The Santa Claus rapids even have markers hanging down from suspension cables to show the lanes to be used by rafters. So much for getting back to nature.

The hummingbird ranch reminds me of the long-standing joke on the Canadian prairies about the rancher who advertised his place as the world's largest gopher ranch, with more than a million head



of gophers.

Jeanne Mealy, 1595 East Hoyt Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55106, jmealy-in-mn@comcast.net (April 8, 2004)

Thanks for *Littlebrook* #3. Seeing as how you did it just before Corflu, I'm going to do a LoC on Minicon Eve. (The LoC on #2 will follow RSN. Or Sooner.)

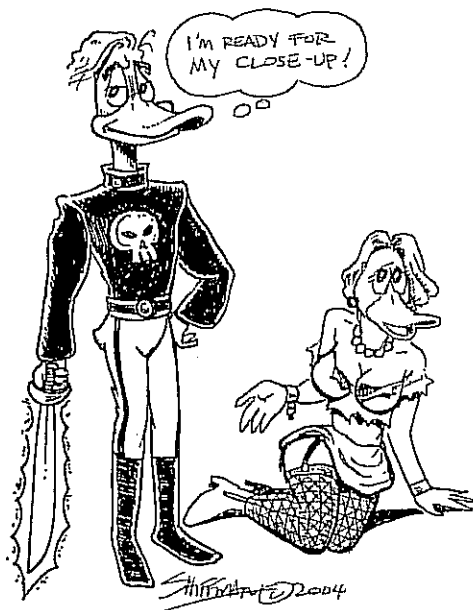
{{It followed a day later, for which we thank you. Jerry}}

Nice cover illo. Makes me think of some of the characters in *To Say Nothing of the Dog*, which I'm just now reading. Had a hard time getting into it, but now I get curious about what the characters are up to when I'm not reading the book.

{{I enjoyed Connie Willis' book, as well as *Three Men and a Boat*, by Jerome K. Jerome, which was her inspiration. Jerry}}

I liked the use of illos and the fancy font in the headlines and subheads. I especially love Craig Smith's "Backwaters" piece for the letters section.

Jerry, you went river rafting? Wow! I am truly impressed both with your guts and your rendition of the experience. I went on a smaller version in northern Wisconsin as part of the outing club that I joined in college. We paddled our own rafts. I knew my partner and I were going to die when we tried to move away from the dock and both paddled clue-



lessly on the same side, leading to a circular motion that wasn't getting us on our way. We had heard stories from other members of the club who had experienced this trip, and images of rocky passages, white-water, and waterfalls were dancing through our heads. And, yes, we did indeed encounter all of the above. As far as I can remember, we didn't lose anyone along the way. I saw many sights and learned many things. That night when we got back, I saw more tennis shoes around a campfire than I had ever seen before. And, I discovered that there is a limit to how many s'mores I can eat.

That was my first rafting trip on the Wolf River. I went again, probably the next year. While I can't always remember which year a certain anecdote dates from, I do remember many pleasant, exhilarating, and terrifying times. Thanks for sharing your stories, and for reminding me of mine.

VERY funny ad from Terry Garey for the Northwestern property now known as Hummingbird Ranch! She writes funny, doesn't she? (I'm typing this with a straight face. Why do you ask?)

I'm curious why Teresa's piece was titled "Auctorial" instead of "Authorial." I also wonder whether the examples of insanity listed were actual quotes from the afflicted.

Andi Shechter's article had me floored. Not only is it a good review of a book, it also revealed A

Major Truth: Janis Ian is a fan and has been to worldcon! I want to grab the time machine and scan the crowds. "There she is! Omighod, I walked right by her!" Actually, no, I didn't attend Philcon. Nor am I sure I'd recognize her. But what a neat thing to find out about! Thanks, Andi. I'll look forward to seeing you at the Seattle NASFIC. But first, I'd like to hear more about the hoax bids. Heck, sounds like a great fanzine article, eh, Jerry and Suzle?

{{Andi? Oh, Andiiii... Jerry}}

Henry L. Welch, 1525 16th Avenue, Grafton, WI 53024-2017, welch@msoc.edu (April 24, 2004)

Thanks for the latest *Littlebrook*. I really should take advantage of e-fanzines, both as a reader and a publisher, but web surfing just to see what is out there holds almost no interest for me. I use the internet as a tool, but only when I have something specific I'm looking for.

Whitewater rafting is a lot of fun. The logistics are complex, especially in the east when many trips have to be timed with dam releases. When I was in the Rensselaer Outing Club we had our own rafts. They were mid-size and were often a bit undersized for some of the trips we'd try to take them on. I recall one hole so big and nasty that it threw four of the six out of the raft and then it wouldn't let us go. We eventually got rammed by another raft, which freed us and kept them out of the hole. A larger raft probably would have been ok.

After driving the car this is probably the most dangerous activity I've ever done voluntarily. Others might argue about my caving, rock climbing, and winter mountaineering, but in all those activities you retain more control over the random elements.

Lloyd Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON, Canada M9C 2B2 (May 8, 2004)

Thank you for the third issue of *Littlebrook*. Good to see it, finally got some time to sit down with it and make some comments, committed to phosphor...

It must be quite a sight to see the annual herding of the hummingbirds, their tiny hooves drumming into the soil, raising miniscule dust clouds. Inspiring...if I recall, this annual event takes place around the same time as the regular spaghetti harvest. The joys of nature....

{{ You all know about the annual spaghetti harvest, don't you? Each Fall, Italian farm workers gather in the orchards to pick the long strands from the spaghetti trees. At least, this is what was portrayed in an early 60's BBC documentary, broadcast most likely on an April 1st, when the straight-laced network presented a serious study of this annual event.... I was lucky to see it on, I *think*, the Jack Paar Show. It was so clever I can still sort of see it in my mind's eye, and occasionally wonder if there are still some Britons around who believe that spaghetti grows on trees. SVT}}

I might have the temerity to make some comments on Teresa Nielsen Hayden's article, but most of them cut far too close to the quick with some authors I know. For the moment discretion shall have to be the better part of valor, except to say she's hit the nail on the head. Some egos are large enough to create their own weather patterns. I hope she enjoyed Ad Astra, by the way....

Hi, Andi...your friends miss you, too. I've chatted with Janis Ian through the chat area on her website a couple of times, and I saw her a few times at Torcon 3. (Trek fandom was my entry, too. I was shocked to see that Shirley Maiewski passed away a short time ago. She was the elderly lady who ran the Star Trek Welcomittee for a couple of decades up to the point where she shut the group down, citing that the Internet was now doing a far better job of disseminating news about Trek than the Welcomittee ever could.)

A new job for me! I now work at a company called CMI, Communicorp Multimedia Inc. It's in Markham, just north of Toronto, which means I now have that same two-hour commute to work that you have, Jerry...half of it is on the subway, and half on a crowded bus. I am the company's proofreader, and I now proofread all WalMart flyers for Canada. WalMart is CMI's biggest client, and thanks to them, I am now making more money than I ever have in my life. I'm slowly coming around to believing that the commute is worth it, but it will take some time yet.

Cy Chauvin is right...a paper zine is a gift. It is sent directly to you, and the faned intended you to have a copy. While I see the financial advantages of an ezine, a .pdf,, it is there for you to take, only if you wish. It seems slightly impersonal, unless there is a direct invitation via e-mail to inform you that the newest issue is there. Whatever era we live in,

it's never as genteel as the era before it.

{{I, too vastly prefer paper zines, and have to print out ezines before I can really read them. However, we are quite grateful that three of our Australian readers have requested that we alert them when *Littlebrook* is available on-line at Efanazines.com; it saves mailing costs of @ \$2 an issue.

Also, with the .pdfs, folks can print out zines exactly as they were meant to be seen. I had a problem before this technology was easily available, both with the idea that the zine one prints out may not be the zine as it was intended to look, and it put the burden of formatting, etc., on your readers. SVT}}

Jan Stinson, PO Box 248, Eastlake, MI 49626, tropicsf@earthlink.net (June 25, 2004)

Much enjoyed all the articles in thish. I'm particularly fond of TNH's piece on writer madness, and profoundly hope I will never be diagnosed with it nor show such symptoms.

Andi Shechter's comments on meeting heroes in person is good advice -- I hope I have the chance to use it some day with at least one person I admire. Actually, come to think, I **have** met at least two people I admire greatly for their talent. One was jazz/rock drummer Billy Cobham (of Mahavishnu Orchestra and various other musical groups, as well as session work), whom I met while reviewing a concert when I was in college. The man had arms like hams, they were so huge. Sweet guy, always smiling. I guess I can handle it after all.

Zara Baxter, PO Box 616, Marrickville, NSW Australia 2204, zara@zipworld.com.au (September 9, 2004)

I picked up *Littlebrook* #3 at Noreascon—my first US convention, and only my second worldcon. The joy of finding so many fanzines available in the fanzine lounge is quite indescribable. I was pleased to find yours especially, since it's similar in format and shape to my own *Vile Temptress!* making me feel just a little more like a real fan-writer instead of a wannabe.

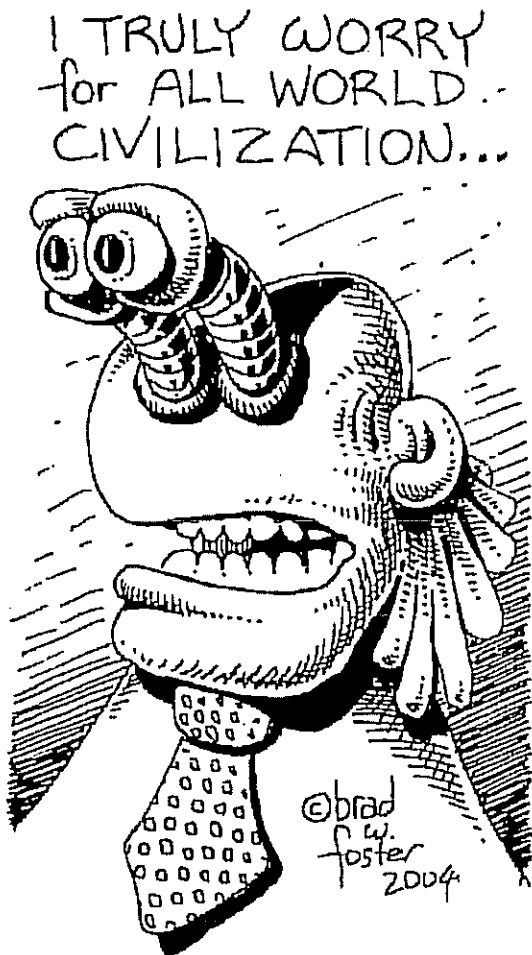
{{Now don't forget to send us a copy. Jerry}}

It was fascinating to hear that there's an anthology of stories based on Janis Ian's songs (*Oh, My Stars!* by Andi Shechter). I'm perhaps too young,

since I don't know any of Janis' songs -- although I might recognise them if you hummed them. Instead, I'm familiar with her views on intellectual property and downloading songs from the internet. They make for a very interesting read, at <http://www.janisian.com/>. Small strange world we live in. I'll have to see if I can find a copy of *Stars* ... and perhaps even some of Janis Ian's music.

Mark Manning, 915 Queen Anne Avenue North, #506, Seattle, WA 98109 (October 10, 2004)

I've been remiss in not having LoCed *Little-*



... UNLESS WE VOTE
SUZLE for TAFF!

brook #3 till now. What can I say? I was a little distracted.

What distracted me was preparing for a trip to Morocco. Between nursing various fee deadlines, recovering from vaccinations, cramming Arabic & French tourist phrases, and reading as much as possible about the history & culture of the cities on the tour, I didn't really have a lot of time for fanac.

Just got back. Morocco was surprising. I expected sand dunes & grinding poverty. And admittedly, I did join a touristic camel caravan across a part of an actual Sahara sand dune area.

But what I mostly experienced was a land of reasonably prosperous and often quite lush agricultural areas, a corner of the Sahara that mostly consisted of gravel-strewn plains on which only scrub grew, fewer beggars than you'd see in Seattle, thriving light manufacturing & handicraft industries, nighttime street-lamps in even the oldest medieval kasbah towns, and cities that were either quite modern or chockfull of well-maintained & gorgeous antiquities.

I expect to start a longish write-up of this trip for my SAPSzine today, which means this LoC will have to end quite soon.

{ {See my editorial for comments on *Jupiter Jump*, Mark's SAPSzine. Jerry} }

But before I sign off, I wanted to take note of your Leavenworth-based whitewater rafting excursion. This is a trip I've been pitching to a one-time sweetie for the past couple of years. She's very much involved in whitewater kayaking in the Appalachian area, as it happens, so ever time I suggest that she fly out here to sample the rapids on the Wenatchee River, she hints at the difference between whitewater rafting and whitewater kayaking. I gather that she considers her kayaking compatriots to be something of an elite. It is to shrug.

We Also Heard From: Sheryl Birkhead, Greg Bridges, John Berry, Jason Burnette (on issue #2), Cy Chauvin, Mog Decarnin, E.B. Frohvet, Anders Holmstrom, Janis Ian, Guy Lillian III, Jeanne Mealy (on issue #2), Ed Meskys, Sandra Miesel, and Lorraine Tutihasi. ☒

SUZLECOL

SUZANNE TOMPKINS

The fact that I still think of the computer I am using as our Brand New Computer (it is a year old) certainly speaks to the fact that time has been racing by. The last time I wrote anything longer than a few paragraphs for a fanzine, we had just moved into our “new” house and I described the hall of doors for you. We’ve been here for an astonishing 8½ years now and still haven’t finished painting that hallway... (which is okay, I guess, since now everything else needs repainted).

My slight presence in *Littlebrook* means Jerry has really been doing the brunt of the work, including cajoling contributors for their divers work, editing it, and putting it into Publisher where I do work on the physical appearance as well as some editing and polishing. This has happened, in part, because of the way we now produce the zine, with no stencil cutting and correcting or pasting in artwork (well, not with stencil cement, anyway) required. So, I’ve made a few comments and minicolumns along the way and am indebted to Jerry for making us both look good.

Most of my fanac has been in the form of working on conventions as hotel liaison or advising on same. Jerry and I are part of a fine group of Seattle folks who put together Potlatch, the convention for the readers and writers of speculative fiction with proceeds benefiting Clarion West, here in Seattle every two years (visit us again in 2006!); and then we (a fine but slightly different group of Seattle folks) held the 2004 Nebula Awards Weekend six weeks after Potlatch. 2004 was a whirl of activity.

Speaking of the Nebula Awards Weekend, our committee worked very hard and, from what I understand, put on a great event. Despite warnings that no matter what we did or how we did it, someone would complain – we had no real complaints, only compliments!

We used the 890 room, first class Westin Seattle, and were in the small fish/big pond situation. This was not unadvantageous, and the entire hotel

staff was more than courteous and helpful; they actually did their jobs! Since these days, I mostly work on small, cash-strapped cons, it was really a pleasure to work on a small, but have-some-budget con and work with a wonderful facility.

Of course, as the con runners amongst us know, the biggest concern is usually where will the wildly unexpected, out of left field problem(s) come from and how big will it (they) be? I was fairly confident that the contract was okay (a big thank you to Ben Yalow, who provided me with his expert consultation and advice). The Committee, inexhaustibly chaired by Astrid Bear, had cleared up a bevy of fairly complex issues and concerns, which included switching towers (the Westin has two), only to be blindsided a few days before the con by a letter from the hotel demanding that we agree in writing to not serve much in the way for food/beverages in the hospitality suites! This was, of course, so not what we had mutually agreed to in our Signed Contract. (And particularly irritating as we were spending quite a bit more on F&B at the Nebs Awards Banquet than we were obligated to do.)

All the suites had just been completely redecorated (as in two minutes earlier – remember that Tower switch) and someone in upper management apparently concluded that the Nebs must be some kind of “sci-fi” convention.... And we were suddenly convention-non-gratis. A lot of correspondence ensued. I had to imagine a worst-case scenario of our supplies being turned away, literally, at the Westin’s front door by the bellmen we were required to use to schlep materials to the suites. Everything did work out in the end. We signed the damned letter after a rewrite. The hotel staff was so friendly that bellmen actually replaced some of the Clarion West beer that was accidentally smashed on the way to the suite! They (Clarion West, not the bellmen¹) hosted the con suite one night.

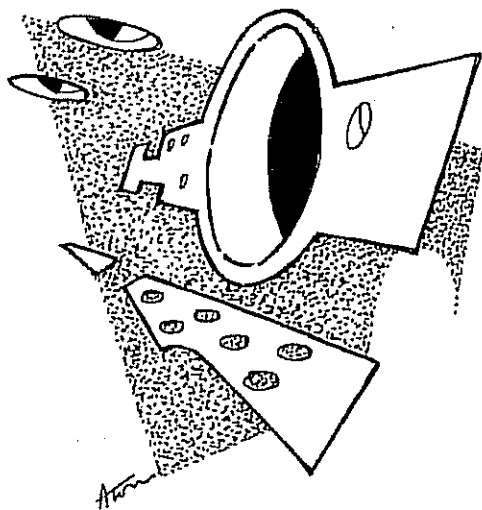
¹ I know, but bellperson sounds ridiculous and they were all, in fact, men.

And the only damage in our lovely two-story Rainier Suite was done by the, uh, err, hotel liaison....

Well, there was this sign, posted on a door from the main suite into one of the bedrooms. After a while, we stopped seeing it. During breakdown on Sunday, I carefully attempted to remove it, only to watch in horror as some of that brand new paint stretched out and pulled off the door with the sign! Jane Jewell was standing nearby and saw it, which is a good thing as we could discuss paying for the door repaint right there.

This was after the previous evening, when rushing to freshen up in my room, the second story of the suite, I dropped a full glass bottle of foundation makeup on the tiled bathroom floor. Of COURSE, it smashed and so conveniently right behind the toilet, leaching into the grout!

Here I should mention that two fine Seattle conventions, Norwescon and Cascadiacon, volunteered to host their own suites during the weekend; we were very appreciative. They were also caught in the "food/beverage" debacle and rose to the occasion with revamped menu plans. They also brought extensive cleaning supplies and freely volunteered them when the SFWA Suite had the usual share of dropped finger food, spilt wine (first carpet stain – 15 minutes after the suite officially opened – surely a record!), etc. And another big thank you to Doug and Pat Booze from Norwescon as well as our own Tamara Vining for essentially scrubbing my bathroom floor!



Twice! The makeup didn't completely come out!

I did volunteer to pay for the repaint of the damaged door, but with the realization that it was not, in fact, a NEW floor, didn't mention the other little accident which was practically invisible. We were not charged for the door, by the way. The Westin proved to be a class act all the way around.

There is one more item of fanac I'd love to do – winning the TAFF 2005 Race! I agreed to stand for TAFF after surprisingly little coercion. Once before, 25 years ago, Fred Haskell and I agreed to stand along with the assured winner, Terry Hughes, to go to the '79 Seacon. We nominated each other and tied for second place with the exact same number of votes, happy to have made it a real race and helped add some more income into the TAFF account.

So I think I'll try it again.

Ulrika O'Brien, in her column for Trufen.net², is doing a series of interviews with this year's three TAFF candidates, and has been asking us some good questions. In her first round of questions, she asked: What's the most important quality in a TAFF candidate? I replied: I think, hokey and self-serving as this may sound, it's reliability – to take the trip and get to meet as many host country fans as is feasible; to come back and administer the fund properly, including helping to repay one's own trip and add to the coffers; and to handle the race for the next v/i/c/t/i/m candidate.

I would also love to meet or reacquaint myself with the many British/European fans with whom we have been exchanging fanzines, seeing at North American cons, or just hearing about... I do plan to take notes and make a trip report as well, something that hasn't happened so much, and is one of the rather implied duties of a TAFF winner.

So, in short, Vote for ME! SHY, RETIRING, ME!!!

Besides, having four or five TAFF winners/administrators right here in Seattle is really convenient! ☑

² If you haven't seen it, do take a look – Victor Gonzalez is doing a heck of a job running a fine fannish web site complete with timely news, columns, blogs, and lots more -- <http://trufen.net/>