



Littlebrook 5

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Artwork by Brad Foster (page 1, 13, 18), Alexis Gilliland (page 7), Stu Shiffman, (page 3, 12), Craig Smith (page 8) & Arthur Thomson (page 16).

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BEWITCHED, BOTHERED & BEMILDRED

JERRY KAUFMAN

“The seagulls in Glasgow are noisier than New York gulls,” Andy Porter observed. Andy turned up constantly as I moved around the Moat House and the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre during Interaction, the World Science Fiction Convention. Being alongside the River Clyde, we saw a fair number of gulls, but surprisingly few Klingons or other costumed visitors from other continua. (I have heard reports of a Klingon in kilts; because I saw famous science fiction writers like Charles Stross in kilts, I believe them.)

The aliens I met, however briefly, were usually from perfectly mundane regions like Poland, South Africa, or Finland. Despite being real people, fans in other countries are still exotic beings, aren't they? In Finland, Jukka Halme told me, the major convention is supported by government grants and corporate sponsorships. Attendees get in free. Jukka switched with ease from English to Finnish as other Finnfans asked him questions. I sipped from my vodka and lingonberry juice as he joked in the tongue of the *Kalevala*. (The party was sponsored by Finlandia vodka: the liquor flowed freely.)

“Mundane” in its newest flavor of meaning was a major topic at Worldcon, as well as at Clarion West parties last summer, and at the J. Easton Conference before that: near future, bound by the laws of physics as we know them and not as we wish them to be, dealing with problems we face now. (Go to www.mundanesf.com for Geoff Ryman's Manifesto and discussion of this concept.) Avoid time travel and faster-than-light space travel. Write about the consequences of what's developing right now, here on Earth: deforestation, rapid technological change, shifting economies.

Discussions of this idea tend to focus on the cognitive dissonance between Ryman's definition and the several others we as fans recognize; and on the identities of writers who may be said to write Mundane SF. I also wonder whether Mundane SF can be entertaining as well as enlightening. The Manifesto makes it sound earnest and grim. In the hands of a good writer, of course, fiction can be enthralling and appalling at the same time. Are there SF writers that can manage both?

Getting back to our trip, we managed to visit a couple of Glasgow's tourist attractions, as well as ones in Birmingham, Cambridge and London. The Willow Tea Room, the Floozie in the Jacuzzi, Kings College Chapel, the Tate Modern and the Victoria and Albert were just a

few, although to me staying in a Kensington hotel opposite Alfred Hitchcock's apartment held the most sense of wonder. We also worked in some time with groups of fans in the latter three cities. Full details will be forthcoming in Suzle's TAFF trip report, but I'll throw in thanks here to Steve and Ann Green, Austin Benson and Caro Wilson, and Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas for getting people together and, in the latter case, hosting a party.

I've recently reignited my interest in current popular music, though the groups or performers I like aren't as popular as, say, Kanye West or Jessica Simpson. Suzle bought me a small CD player/radio combination to use at work, and I've been able to pull in KEXP-FM, a community-supported indie station that plays an extremely eclectic mix of indie rock, singer-songwriter, hiphop, electronica, alt-country, jazz, punk, et cetera. One of my aims for the trip was to come back with some new British music. (I knew that some of it would be available in the US, but I felt buying it in Britain would give it a certain indefinable authenticity.)

It proved to be difficult to get the time to seek out any CD shops, so I was very pleased when we reached Cambridge to find that there would be a CD and Record Faire in the Guildhall on the Saturday. We weren't planning to leave for London until midday; I'd have an hour to visit it. That's usually enough time, because I don't buy vinyl anymore, and I skip the real rarities, looking instead for bargain CDs.

Although the building itself was a novelty to me, having been built in the 1930s on the site of a 18th century predecessor (the dedication stone from the earlier building was mounted on one wall), the Faire itself was much like the ones I attend in Seattle, with box after box of 33-1/3 and 45 rpm records and smaller boxes of CDs filling table after table, with here and there collectible magazines or videos for variety. I homed in on one table that included some British folk music, finding June Tabor and Eliza Carthy items new to me. Other tables served up used copies of bands like Radiohead, Franz Ferdinand and Blur. (Blur's no longer together, one of its members having gone on to create the “virtual” band Gorillaz.)


I'm afraid none of these were real bargains in US dollars, but the prices were good in pounds; and I came across an album by delightful and obscure Athens, Georgia band Of Montreal, for a single pound. (I have no idea why they chose that name). This brought down my aver-

age cost per CD and made me feel like a mighty hunter, while giving me many hours of listening pleasure.

But what was the *real* pleasure of the trip? Was it the books, the CDs, the noisy seagulls, the architecture and famous landmarks, the train trips, the double decker buses? No. Cliché though it might be, I enjoyed the people most. Some were old friends like Dave Langford of Reading or Joe Siclari and Edie Stern of New York; others were folks I've met before but barely knew, like Damien Warman and Juliette Woods of Adelaide. There were even a few like Max of Petersborough or James Bacon, late of Dublin, whom we'd never previously laid eyes on. (These two go together on my mental shelf, as they each had bleached their hair not long before the con. That reminded me of when I dyed my hair black back in 1984.) I hope to see them all again.

Reading *Littlebrook* is an adventure. You'll never know what you're going to find – or not find. As long as Publisher keeps surprising me (I'm being charitable to myself), bits are going to disappear behind frames somehow. Last issue, I managed to “disappear” several lines from Lilian Edwards' “Rip Mix Burn the House Down.” Here's the missing material, with complete sentences to give con-

text: “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.”

Not even the PDF version at efanazines has the complete text, but when we send the PDF of the issue you have in hand, we'll send a corrected version of issue 4 (and we'll fix the title on page 1, which somehow inverted itself when transformed from Publisher). In the meantime, the first among you to find missing material this issue will win a lifetime subscription. It's our version of *Where's Waldo?* 



THE MYSTERY OF THE GREAT WALL OF SCOTLAND JIM YOUNG

The unknown lies heavily on the land, yet few are sufficiently curious to recognize it when they see it.

Charles Fort, of course, was one who dared explore the world's mysteries; and so are the intrepid adventurers, Suzanne Tompkins and her stalwart husband, Jerry Kaufman. For, after a dashing expedition to the World Science Fiction Convention in mystic Glasgow, Scotland, the two returned to the United States and developed the photographs of their trip only to discover among them a picture that, to the unaided eye, closely resembled the Great Wall of China.

Many might view this development as a mere error in the sorting software of a computer filled to capacity with photographic data. Others might express wonderment at the curious juxtaposition of the prosaic architecture of the Glasgow convention center and the rolling landscape crowned by the crenellations of the massive wall undulating off toward the edge of the photograph.

But others would ask, “Isn't it possible that the photograph has identified for the first time the Great Wall of Scotland?” For this is not the image of some sixpence restoration of Hadrian's Wall (or for that matter the less well known Hafnium's Wall, which is only a fraction of the size of the former), but instead is a life-size depiction of a monumental architectural treasure that is — three inches long.

Yes, dear friends, we have in this photograph the first evidence that the Wee Folk visited China and, in their inimitable fashion, had reproduced a souvenir in the vast plains of Victoria Square in deepest, darkest central Glasgow. *The Fortean Times* and the Woo-Woo Channel will no doubt carry full details sometime in the near future.

— 9/4/2005

All too true. Sizle delivered a disk of selected digital photos, taken on our Worldcon trip, to Costco, to be printed. She picked the prints up a day later, and headed to NASFiC (CascadiaCon, in Seattle three weeks after Interaction) without really looking through them. That evening, as she was showing them to Jim, they discovered the Great Wall of Scotland Jerry

AFTERLIVES

LUKE MCGUFF

[Editors' note: There are many ways to react to the death of an elderly friend or relative. In dealing with the possessions of two women, Luke explores two ways. These pieces were published originally online in November and December 2003 in Luke's LiveJournal.]

I. The Safe Deposit Box

Aunt Mary had a safe deposit box in a Ballard branch of Key Bank. The annual bills started appearing for it August of '99, after the rest of the estate had been settled. The bank said they needed a death certificate and letter testamentary [a court document giving the bearer a power of attorney] to allow me to open it. I thought we were out of letters testamentary, and it would cost a couple hundred dollars to get more (lawyer's fees, filing fees, etc.) So I just paid the bill, meaning to look into it later. Every August, it would appear again. By that time, I'd have forgotten about it and would just pay it again (it was cheap, at least).

Finally, as part of moving back in with Jane, I decided to do whatever it took to find out what was in the box. Even if I did have to re-open the estate and pay the fees, just to resolve the issue and close that chapter.

The lawyer had one last letter, just what I needed. So, today I went over to the bank.

Safe deposit vaults have the mystique of gangster movies (cf. *Sexy Beast* as one of the most recent) and of very secret treasures. Jane, Denise, and I were speculating on what could be in it: Gold coins? Jewelry? Probably just birth certificates, death certificates. I worried that there might be some hand written document that totally contradicted what we'd done with her estate.

I went to the bank, chatted with the clerk about Thanksgiving while she filled out the paperwork. There was the card Aunt Mary filled out on the day she got the box, August 24, 1994. There was another card, to log every time somebody accessed the box. There was only one entry on that card -- for the day Aunt Mary got the box.

The clerk let me into the vault. She had to chase out a couple coworkers, which amused me. Then we had to find the D bank of boxes. B, C, and E were all clearly labeled. The vault manager found it for us. The box took two keys to open, mine and the vault manager's. I hoped we'd have to count down and turn at the same time, like in *Terminator 2* and other movies. No such luck.

I couldn't figure out how to open the box for a second. Finally, I got it. It was empty. The clerk hadn't even left the vault yet, so we just closed up and put everything back.

Driving away, I felt a little let down. I thought briefly that maybe I should have just left it a mystery. No, one mystery resolved just lead to further questions: Why had

she gotten it? Was it shortly after Uncle Charlie died? Was it an impulse that she then completely forgot about (the fee payment was automatic)? What had she thought to put in it? Was it something Larry wanted her to do?

Those questions, I'll never be able to answer.

II. Emptying an Apartment

[Luke is helping a friend clean out her mother's apartment.]
There's a certain freight to carrying a stack of flattened boxes into an assisted care living facility. People rarely move *out* of such a place voluntarily. Maybe they have a stroke or another change in health that means they have to move to a hospice. Or maybe they die.

In any case, there was a line of women waiting for the house shuttle to take them to a Seattle Pops concert. And I didn't want to barge past them with a load of flat boxes. Still, one of them saw me standing behind a corner, and commented to her friend.

There's a similarity to the experience of packing up an old woman's belongings, the things you're very likely to find. Photographs of people no one recognizes. A large shopping bag filled with smaller shopping bags and gift bags. The Vita-Minder (a seven-compartment plastic lidded tray, the lids labeled S M T W T F S). Vita-Minders come in a variety of sizes. Aunt Mary had one that was not only the days of the week, but Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, and Bedtime. From where I found it, I think it was a Thoughtful Gift and not something she actually used.

There is also the small object you stopped seeing dozens of visits ago, that when you touch it, it comes back into your consciousness and triggers a flood of memories and associations that make you pause, and feel slower, and weighted with memories.

Children move fast because they have no such weight. Everything is the future, life is an eternal summer of can't wait can't wait can't wait. Old people move slowly because they have nothing but the vast weight of memories.

When I helped pack my aunt's effects, I was in an emotional turmoil for other reasons. Jane and I were just about to separate, my life had changed from my first trip to Burning Man (trite but true), and other things were going on. When I helped pack my mother's effects, I displaced my grief into anger. It was too big and scary for me to feel all at once, so I dribbled it out for months and months.

But the packing I helped with Saturday came at a time of relative emotional calm. It came at the same time of year (just about exactly the second anniversary) of my mother's death, and helped reacquaint me with what I'd been feeling in 2001 ♫ ☺

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

JOHN BERRY

In Holmdel, New Jersey, USA, in 1964, Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson were using a large wavelength receiver, and heard a continuous strange noise, rather like bacon sizzling in a frying pan. Initially they attributed the sound to local natural causes, but in due course both scientists received Nobel awards for discovering the sound was actually the echo of the Big Bang.

I have written a long narrative about my father, Jubilee Berry (he was born in 1887, the Silver Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign — his parents were dedicated loyalists). The article was titled "Nor the Years Condemn," in which I detailed how he spent a great deal of prime time with me when I was a youngster. (It is alleged in the media nowadays that fathers are far too busy to spend time with their offspring.) I also detailed his life-long experiments attempting to create perpetual motion. My father was always kind to me, he never shouted at me. He died in 1961, and I think about him quite often. This remembrance occurred to me recently during the early ayems when I couldn't sleep.

One day, circa 1935, I was sitting with my father in the garden of our council house in Acocks Green, Birmingham, when my mother, looking exasperated, announced that a lorry had arrived with equipment for my father.

"I've been waiting for this, sonny boy," he beamed. (He always called me "sonny boy.")

He and the lorry driver dragged in a long pole, with a coil of wire and lengths of wood.

My father dug a deep hole at the end of the garden. He nailed a large wooden crosspiece near the top of a pole, and threaded wire through a loop at each end, the wire dragging on the lawn. He levered the pole vertically, and placed rocks and stones around its base, patting soil on top to make it tidy.

Smiling with delight, and giving me a running commentary on his actions, he pulled two lengths of wire down the garden to the yardway under my bedroom, which was immediately above the outside toilet. (I tried not to succumb to diarrhea in the winter months.)

He gave me a ball of thick twine.

"Go up to your room, sonny boy, open the window

and drop the end of the twine down to me. But keep hold of the ball of twine."

I did as bid; he tied the two ends of the wire together with the twine, thumped up the stairs, grabbed the ball of twine, and pulled the wires through the open window.

He placed a wooden table against the wall, flashed me confident grin, left the bedroom and quickly returned with a wondrous device that he placed on the table.

The device consisted of a thick wooden base with a dozen valves sited in little metal bases via bayonet fittings. These valves were rather long and came to a spike at the top like a German hussar's helmet. On a slab of bakelite at the front he had numerous ribbed dials, each one associated with what he called "condensers" — several flat aluminium sheets were fixed together on an axle, and when the dial was turned, they vertically intertwined.

He attached the ends of the wires from the pole into recessed and screwed them tightly. He rammed a plug into the wall and connected it to his diabolical contraption.

He opened a box and produced two sets of ear-phones, which we excitedly placed on our heads, and he plugged the leads into the humming device.

"What can you hear, sonny boy?" he asked.

"Dad, it sounds like mom frying bacon."

He gritted his teeth in frustration.

"You should be hearing voices and music," he frowned, and he turned the condenser knobs, making sure that each valve was firmly ensconced.

"What can you hear now?" he breathed.

"Frying bacon," I whispered.

This happened for several really frustrating nights. As soon as he came home from the factory and had his tea, my father hied to my bedroom, sat in front of his primitive console and feverishly manipulated dials and knobs. Eventually one night, we did hear crackling voices.

He raised a triumphant fist in the air.

"What do you think of that, sonny boy?"

"It works, dad, I can hear music and funny voices."

"Thank goodness I got rid of that sizzling noise, whatever it was," he shouted.

If only he'd known... Ω ☉

AWAKE AND ASLEEP AT THE MIL

BRUCE TOWNLEY

Near where Montgomery, Post and Market Streets intersect in downtown San Francisco there's a nine-story building. Its address is 57 Post Street. Its exterior is designed in a kind of dowdy, generic Victorian. Its interior appointments are comfortable, if well-worn. This is where I spend most of my weekday lunch hours.

Once inside one of the reading rooms on either the second or third floors one can see stacks of books, large windows that open onto striking views of San Francisco's Financial District, computer terminals for internet access (usually with the same damn six or eight oddballs habitually using them), magazine and newspaper racks and a number of comfy chairs that are scattered about. Most of those overstuffed chairs usually contain seemingly engrossed readers. The place has about it something of the air of a vaguely stuffy private club. It's home to a membership library and chess room called the Mechanics' Institute Library.

When I first started hanging out at the Mechanics' Institute I noticed this one fellow who looked to be in his late 50s. Slightly built, but with something of a pot-belly, he had a ruddy complexion and his noggin was topped with what I believe to be a rather well-made toupee (that is: when you looked at it you thought something like 'Hey, *pretty good* for a rug!'). He was *always asleep* when I went in there. Never saw him reading or even holding a book, magazine or newspaper. He didn't snore or otherwise call attention to his dozing. Wasn't that obvious he'd nodded off. He just sort of listed to one side.

I was a little flummoxed the one time when I saw this same guy outside of the library. It was on a bus going across town. Almost didn't recognize him because he had his eyes open and his mouth closed.

Used to think it was, well, odd, that this guy would go to the library just to nap. As I say, the MIL is a membership library. Such memberships aren't restricted but one does have to pay an annual fee. Why would you plunk down cold cash each year just to snooze it away?

Haven't seen the noontime napper for a couple of years now. Maybe he found a better place to sleep lunch off. Of course now that I've been a member of the MIL for some time I, too, sometimes snooze away the noon hour. Perhaps there's a newer member who comes in and thinks, "There's that big, fat, bald guy again! He's *always sleeping!*"

The main difference between me and the pretty good toupee guy is that I snore occasionally. Sheesh.

In January of 1906 the Mechanics' Institute merged with the Mercantile Library, rounding out the Mechanics' strong collection of technical works with those in the Humanities from the Mercantile. Unfortunately, to say the

least, the Library's building and collections were then completely destroyed in the April 1906 earthquake and fire. Not for nothing, however, does the seal of the City and County of San Francisco feature a phoenix rising anew from a fiery ruin. Much like the city around the MIL, the Library came back strong. Construction was completed on the building at 57 Post Street in July of 1910, quite soon after the devastating earthquake and fire. The Library was then installed in this building (which the MIL now owns entirely). By 1912 the collection totaled some 40,000 items including works on engineering and architecture that the head librarian had requested by telegrams sent to book dealers in the Eastern states on the first day of the fire. These volumes were intended to help rebuild the city.

The Library was first organized in 1854 as a center for technical and cultural improvement. Now one can check out books (and magazines and books-on-tape and CDs and videos) ranging from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* to *Tom of Finland*.

I used to go to the public library every week, usually picking out four or five picture books, art books, books loaded with illustrations of historic cars and locomotives, animal behavior, cartoons, a variety of topics. Liked to go to a library in a different neighborhood each week. Made a little adventure out of it. While the collection at the West Portal branch wasn't anything special it was kind of fun to get over there from my apartment. The trip involved a ride on the trolley car, one of the underground segments of the line (which exits to the open air near the library, hence the name "West Portal"). Then the challenge was to find something on the shelves there that I hadn't already looked at.

Some years back San Francisco suffered a budget crunch. City libraries were hard hit by this. Because it took too much precious time, I guess, the clerks no longer stamped the due date on a tag in the back of the book but gave you a small print-out that was usually dim and hard to read (and easy to lose).

What really got me out of the public library habit happened one day while I was browsing through the stacks in the Main Library in the Civic Center. Turned a corner and spotted this guy down at the other end pulling books off the shelf. What he'd do is, he'd yank a book off the shelf, glance at it and then dump it on the floor. I probably should have said something but it was just weird enough behavior that it set off the nut-case alarm in my head. This now finely tuned sense usually allows me to avoid unpleasant encounters while out and about in my fair city. It just didn't seem likely that he'd graciously thank me for pointing out what a jerk he was being.

My sister, who works in a university library, de-

scribed one of her favorite ways to discover new books. She uses a kind of structured serendipity. That is, locate on the shelves a book you already know and like (this really only works with non-fiction, of course). Then look at the books shelved around it. If one catches your eye this way then you're letting the Dewey numbering system do the work for you.

I was wandering the MIL's stacks one day, putting this premise to work, when the title on a book's spine caught my eye. It was *Tiger of the Snows*. I took it off the shelf and started leafing through it. It is the autobiography of Tenzing Norgay, the Sherpa who along with Hillary conquered Everest. Sounded like it'd be a good read, a ripping yarn filled with adventure and daring. I made a mental note to look it up later when I noticed that there was some writing on the book's title page. Was at first disgusted that a library member had marked the thing up. Then I examined the page a little more closely. It was a dedication with Tenzing Norgay's signature. The Library's circulating copy of *Tiger of the Snows* had the author's autograph.

I told John, a fellow MIL member I'm friends with, about my discovery in the stacks. John, who is kind of a book nut, fumed at the thoughtlessness of the MIL, letting such an interesting (and possibly valuable) book out where so many people could get their smudgy fingers on it. Me, I'm still impressed that one can check out a book of such historical interest.

Another friend of mine, Linda, who is also a MIL member, told me about one of her favorite encounters there. Once she happened to sit down near an elderly, shaven-skulled, fellow with an enormous walrus moustache and a monocle. Believe Linda said that this was the first (and possibly only) time she'd ever seen a man wearing a monocle as an everyday thing. For some reason they started chatting (quietly one assumes). The monocled one described himself as a Cossack and a former member of the Czar's Imperial Army.

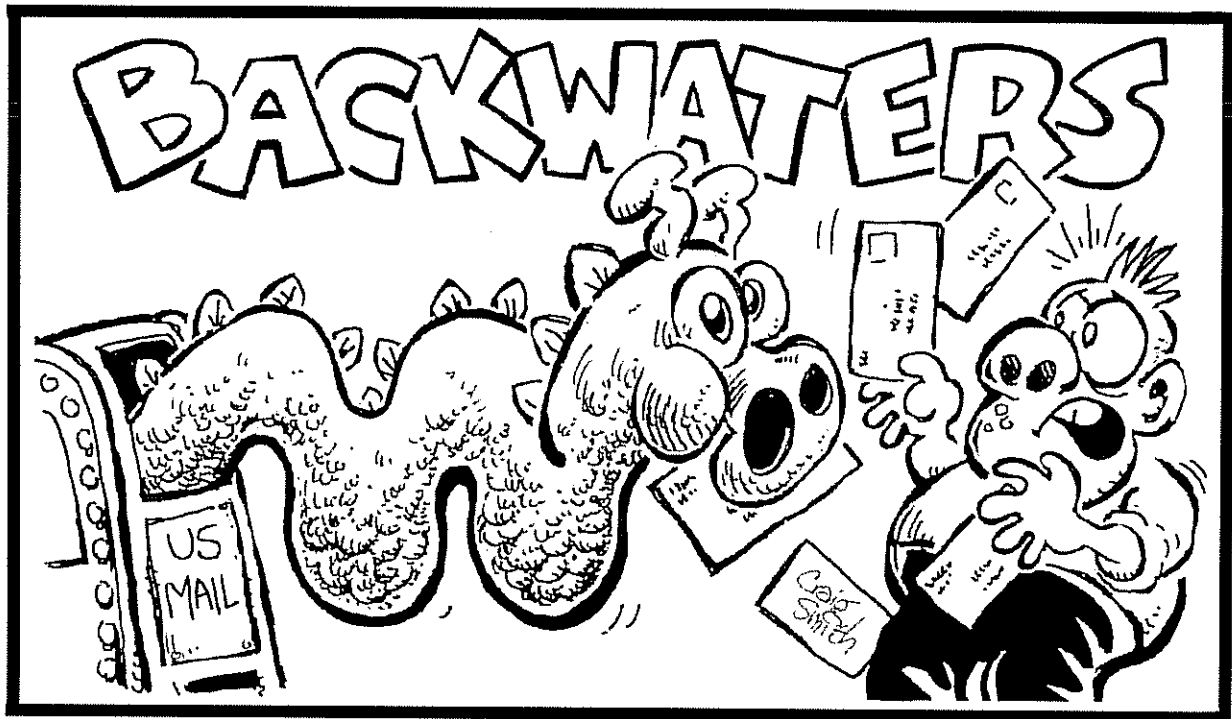
I've got a tiny apartment crammed with books and other reading material and yet I check out books to read from the MIL. With impressive regularity the MIL already has on its shelves a title that I've read a review of. Was just on the verge of ordering a copy of *The Eighth Continent: Life, Death and Discovery in the Lost World of Madagascar* by Peter Tyson from Amazon after reading about it in *Scientific American*. Turns out it was already in the Library's collection. When I checked it out one of the MIL's Reference Librarians did the honors. She told me she was also the one who had ordered the book. I complimented her on her good taste. Sometimes you *can* tell a book by its cover, particularly if it has a photo of a snarling gecko on it.

While the reading rooms of the MIL are reassuringly stacked with books (what I find dismaying about the San Francisco Public Library's Main building, as imposing architecturally the place is, it does appear to be uncluttered by, um, *books*) there's also what they call the basement stacks. Members can only browse there virtually, by the on-line catalog. To get their basement book selections patrons contact the Circulation Desk and tell them what titles they want to be retrieved from downstairs and then checked out.

It's well worth a look, however. The books down there tend to be older and kind of, well, quirky. Some titles do catch one's eye. The following, for example: *Criminal Investigation: A Practical Textbook for Magistrates, Police Officers, and Lawyers, adapted from the System der Kriminalistik of Dr. Hans Gross*; London, Sweet & Maxwell, limited; 1934. Then there's 1967's *Unnatural History: An Illustrated Bestiary* by Colin Clair. There's also *On the Trail of Ancient Man: A Narrative of the Field work of the Central Asiatic Expeditions* by Roy Chapman Andrews and published in 1926. As the title indicates, Andrews was hoping to find the remains of dawn humans when he charged into the Gobi with trucks and lengthy camel trains. What he found there was even rarer: the first dinosaur eggs. If one looks at a photograph taken of Andrews while on one of these expeditions, one can see the inspiration for Indiana Jones.

Also in the MIL's collection is a work by Nicholas A. Basbanes entitled *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books*. I'm reminded of this work when I see people in enforced idleness, waiting for their clothes to get done at the laundromat or for their flight to be called at the airport and *they have nothing to read*. No chance of that at the MIL. ☹ ☹





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Thanks for emailing #4. It and *Lofgeornost* were the first two items I read on a new toy I just acquired, "Book Port." It is the size of my wife's Palm Pilot but instead of a screen has 18 buttons, patterned like a telephone dial with two more rows of three labelled A thru F. It came with a CD-Rom with software for transferring text files to it and text files of 1752 public domain books...probably taken from Gutenberg. It has a speech synthesizer and you can read faster or slower, skip ahead or go back in various increments. Memory is on a 64 MB chip that slides out of its side, and can be replaced by a higher capacity one. (I have temporarily blocked on what these chips are called.) Anyhow, I downloaded the two fanzines and took it with me when I was due to sell paperwork for bingo at my local Lions Club. During breaks I read the two zines.

I enjoyed *Littlebrook* as before but have little to say. My wife, Sandy, used to listen to the local C&W station but stopped about a decade ago. She says she got away from listening for a short time and when she went back the songs were totally different. None were songs she knew. Or, says she, perhaps she changed. I am tone deaf and lack musical memory so I listen to very little. I like the "color" of some classical music, and will listen to some folk...especially Tom Paxton. I also like musical comedy and operetta like Gilbert & Sullivan where the music tells a story.

I really enjoyed John Berry's short piece about confessing to a prank and not being believed after doing too good a job of dissembling.

The fanzine reviews made both zines look quite good

and I plan to send trade copies of the last *Niekas*, which is now two years old. (February 17, 2005)

Chris Garcia, garcia@computerhistory.org

Andi Shechter's article on being a country fan in the world of Science Fiction fandom is an interesting take. I'm a big lover of old country. In fact, I once said that country music was buried alongside Hank Williams Sr, but have long since retracted that statement. I'm currently loving old Country Swing (Bob Wills) and lots of Dolly Parton, Kenny Rogers, Patsy, and a bit of Alt Country, or as the kids are all calling it, y'alternative. Hank3 is a worthy follow-on to his father and grandfather. *{They're also calling it Americana. Jerry}*

As an e-zine guy, I call us E-sters, who has only recently gotten his hands on paper fanzines again after a long time away, I can actually understand the love and connection to paper-based fanzines. What I love about the e-scene (perhaps I'll use the e- prefix before everything) and I don't mean just the passing the costs along to the consumer, but the fact that the process can be sped up greatly. Perhaps it's the fact that, theoretically, you can finish your ish, send it on wire to any number of locations, get it read and have comments in hours instead of weeks. I've gotten LoCs for *The Drink Tank* as quickly as 45 minutes after Bill Burns gets the issue up.

Brad Foster's cartoon for Suzle for TAFF is easily the best one I've seen. Victor and Andy's work is up to their usual levels, which is far beyond most of us simple humans who have no uber-brilliance to tap into. (February 27, 2005)

Mike Deckinger, mike2004@aol.com,
649 16th Ave. San Francisco, CA 94118

I agree with you that paper fanzines are the only *true* fanzines, despite the advances made with electronic publications. I like the tactile relationship you establish with a tangible fanzine, and feel robbed of the experience when dealing with one crossing my computer screen, no matter how sophisticated. I don't think there will ever be a total cessation of paper fanzines, but I do anticipate their numbers dwindling as on-line resources become cheaper and more accessible to even the most unskilled hand. *{As much as I like paper, I didn't exactly say they were the only true fanzines. I wouldn't go so far. Jerry}*

High-tech graphics are fine in certain mediums, but in the fan-world, I much prefer hand sketches from the like of Rotsler, Eddie Jones, Steve Stiles, Greg Foster et al.

I salute Ulrika O'Brien's very clever take on "Casey at the Bat."

I always scan the obituaries in *Locus* with mingled dread, and the hope that there will be no recognizable names. I've reached the stage where my contemporaries are departing in wave after wave. It's no fun to know I've outlasted some worthy folk whose career trajectory I followed closely from inception to culmination.

Mention of a star named "Jophan" reminds me that there's a crater on the moon named after Willy Ley. It was so designated shortly after his death, and received prominent mention years ago for reason I can't recollect.

I agree that dealing with people can be vexing and infuriating and I would have considered myself the perfect misanthrope, content to barricade myself from the crush of humanity. However, my profession requires me to interact closely with other persons, often in the most critical of circumstances. In those instances, where my intervention can create a positive impact on their lives, I am both grateful and humbled to have been available, and would never regard isolation as an acceptable alternative.

I once commuted between San Fran and San Jose daily. On-road commute time was 75 minutes each way. Rather than listen to music, which I don't even do at home, I subscribed to a Books-On-Tape program that sent me new taped volumes, which I kept as long as I wished, and then replaced them upon return of the former tapes. It was my first experience at having a book read to me, instead of me doing the reading. Included were some sf, spy thrillers and Stephen King. Use of the tapes made a mad-deningly uneventful commute much more bearable, and allowed me to cram some books I had been hoping to approach, into my already cluttered schedule. *(March 9, 2005)*

Jan Stinson, PO Box 248, Eastlake, MI 49626-0248,
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Thanks for letting the cat out of the bag concerning

Jupiter Jump — now I have another fanzine to acquire, and I'm still recovering from the explosion of fanac recently on efanzines. Yikes!

Since there are so many fen and writers who have LiveJournal accounts these days, it seems to have become a symbol of sorts. Of what, I'm not sure. The only online journal I have is at trufen.net, under the name Peregrinator. Of course, you knew that, Jerry, as you've kindly left comments on my entries in that journal. I should probably make more of them, and more often.

I confess to some confusion after reading Ulrika O'Brien's "Hooper at the Crank." After subsequent perusals, though, I think her point was that while it may be true that some (I'm being diplomatic here) male fen only voted for female TAFF candidates in the hope of "getting closer" to said females (euphemisms, they're so handy), most of them had their hopes dashed in most cases. Andy Hooper's /a/d/m/i/s/s/i/o/n/ opinion that this was indeed what went on provided a hidden point: no good did it do the perpetrators in their shameful quests. TAFFfemmes of the world, I think, can now be at ease. And it was a funny poem, too. *{This all started with Ted White's comments about TAFF on various email discussion lists about the "Gonad Factor," and Andy Hooper wrote a response in an issue of his fanzine Chunga (if memory serves), so Ulrika was herself responding to a chain of debate. Jerry}*

Andi Shechter, I salute you! Country music is, indeed, a great and glorious thing, and highly varied in its output. I hope you had a chance to see the fine documentary narrated by Lyle Lovett called "Lost Highway: The History of Country Music." I saw it on TV some months ago and enjoyed it greatly. Anytime you want to talk country with another fan, I'll be happy to jaw with ya. I'm not a "redneck woman" but I understand the sentiment. That "Crossroads" episode with Dolly Parton and Melissa Etheridge did more than work, it *rocked*! Their duet on "Jolene" was great.

The "battered women revenge songs" are, I believe, a natural outgrowth of the increased presence of women (both singly and in groups) in country music in the last 10-15 years. Natalie Maines said in an interview for a TV show (can't recall the overall title, but perhaps it was one of the "Shocking Moments" variety) that the Dixie Chicks were surprised at how vehement the opposition was to the video (as well as the song) for "Goodbye, Earl." She said that country and bluegrass music have a long tradition of "murder songs" (where the man shoots someone, usually another man over a woman or an unfaithful woman) written and performed by men (and some women), and that the Chicks saw nothing wrong with the female perspective in this subgenre. I found the Chicks' video nearly slapstick (no pun intended) compared to Johnny Cash's video of "Delia's Gone" (haunting and spooky).

In the art category, Brad Foster's cover and illo on p. 20 are particular faves of mine, partial as I am to dragons

and the Keep On Truckin' Dude. I wonder if anyone else will notice the resemblance of the illo to that once-famous counterculture symbol. (March 11, 2005)

Rich Coad, richcoad@comcast.net

Thanks, Jerry and Suzle, for keeping on sending me *Littlebrook* in spite of so little response on my part. I've enjoyed all the issues but, right now, Andi Shechter has got me REALLY EXERCISED. You see, I too am a country music fan — a biography of Patsy Cline is on the TV as I write this — and I can see Andi's point. Too many people think that country music is all about bible-thumping, right-wing ideology with a laid back beat and big hats thrown in. The problem I have with Andi's article is that I LOVE THAT STUFF TOO! The best song I've heard this year is "Come to Jesus" by Mindy Smith which is just as straightforward and unironic and purely powerful as the title suggests. I mean, I don't even like religion beyond thinking that it's nice for my mother to have friends and activities in her church. I believe solely in a mechanistic universe of physics and biochemistry but damn that old time religion in song gets me every time. And I don't care how politically incorrect it may be, "Stand by Your Man" is one of the best songs of the latter half of the twentieth century.

Just don't get me started on Hank Williams. Here is Andi dissing the man who is half the reason (along with Howlin' Wolf) that I decided I really DID want to become a US citizen rather than remain a resident alien indefinitely. Maybe his voice is a tad nasal but the songs he sings, the songs he wrote, are just transcendent. Songs like "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" or "Hey Good Lookin'" are as much a part of the milieu that makes American culture what it is as "Hellhound on My Trail," "Jeepers Creepers," or "Beat Me Daddy Eight to the Bar"!

I wonder if Andi ever saw Cheryl Cline's fanzine *Twangin'* from the late eighties wherein Cheryl wrote about some of the new country music starting out about that time. Lynn Kuehl and Cheryl actually attended a Van Halen concert to see the opening act — Steve Earle, who is about as far from a right-wing bible-thumper as it's possible to get. It was a great 'zine and Cheryl may have some spare copies available.

Women have been producing great country music from the very beginning — Maybelle and Sara Carter come immediately to mind. Has Andi heard Buddy and Julie Miller or Lucinda Williams or Gillian Welch? I think she'd like them. The best album I heard last year was Loretta Lynn's *Van Lear Rose*, which proves that you can still rock out as you approach seventy.

One of the weirder groups I've seen described as country are The Drive By Truckers, who sing about much of the same subject matter as typical country songs — incest, killing bankers, Buford Pusser — but the music is pure guitar driven rock (three lead guitarists!). I think

they're great but I'm not sure they're country.

Anyway, I'm glad that Andi has come out. It's so empowering to be able to be yourself! The last time I kept closeted about a musical enthusiasm it was for all the right reasons — not wanting to subject Stacy to the virulent homophobic and misogynistic lyrics. Then one day I came home to hear, blasting out from Stacy's computer, "I'm Slim Shady/The real Slim Shady..." Now we happily listen to Eminem together and pick up on his wit and clever word play, not merely the received wisdom of the defenders of the oppressed. You know, Andi, I bet we country music fans are legion. (March 16, 2005)

Mark Plummer, mark@fishlifter.demon.co.uk

I do periodically get this urge to reconnect to modern short sf through the medium of *Asimov's* (your — Jerry's — editorial) although I have to say that the last couple of times I've tried it the result has been disappointing. Is it me or is it *Asimov's*? I have no idea, but the few issues I've read over the last four or five years rarely contain anything that interests me.

What has worked, though — and I say this very much as a member of the paper generation, like you — is the web. Last year, as we were going to the Worldcon and thus had Hugo votes, I downloaded all of the stories on the three short fiction lists. I am sufficiently twentieth century to prefer reading on paper to computer screen so I dumped the whole lot into a Word file — 190,000 words or thereabouts — and formatted it so that it would fit on a reasonable number of pages (I got it down to 120 or so). Claire and I were both able to read through the lot and thus make informed votes that almost entirely failed to coincide with the opinions of the rest of the Hugo voters.

You've probably noticed that most of the stories on the Hugo lists are still drawn from the traditional print media — in most cases from the three digest magazines which are, perhaps not entirely coincidentally, the only publications to explicitly label their stories 'novella', 'novelette' and 'short story' — and to be honest many of them weren't that impressive. It took me a while, though, to fathom that as the best of the lot — Jeff Ford's 'Empire of Ice Cream' — came from the *SciFiction* website then maybe that might be worth checking out more generally.

Actually, no, it wasn't just that. Niall Harrison — one of the Third Row Fandom people — had been enthusing about *SciFiction* for most of last year, but I suppose I was at least partially displaying my general prejudice against reading on screen. Still, the experience with the Hugo short-list suggested that I could fairly easily convert the web text into a sensible print out by running a macro over it, so earlier this year I decided to explore the *SciFiction* backlog.

And this was something of a revelation. I admit that I've been cherry picking, going mostly for authors that I'm reasonably confident will produce something worth-

while — Bisson, Murphy, Sterling, Walter Jon Williams — with the occasional seduction of an unusual title ('Of Imaginary Airships and Minuscule Matter' by Gary W Shockley) but the standard was pretty good. It really shouldn't have been a surprise, but it was all the same.

So now I have become an enthusiastic reader — and indeed printer — of *SciFiction*. And bizarrely the printing bit is important, because of readability and portability, yes, but also because I think it satisfies the collector urge. I file the print outs for further later perusal — yes, yes, I know I can always get another but I've printed it once so I may as well hang on to it, you know, just in case... — so it's really not that unlike collecting *Asimov's* and *F&SF*. And the weekly format suits me too. In case you don't know, *SciFiction* publishes a new story every Wednesday and an additional reprint every other Wednesday. I know there's no logic to it, but reading them as individual components is easier to fit in than reading monthly periodical accumulations.

Oh, and at Corflu I was able to confirm the existence of Geneva Melzack for Andy Hooper. Really, she does exist. In fact only last Saturday she was sitting just *there* (I know you can't see where I'm pointing, so I'd better explain that it's to a spot in the living room, just in front of the bookcase with hardback fiction M-R). She's the future of fandom, apparently. I know this because James Bacon told me so. In fact, he's made her a sign for Eastercon. James Bacon is the future of fandom too, although I don't think he has — or indeed needs — a sign. Probably just as well because if he had one, and if he'd typed it himself, it would probably say 'teh futur of fnadom'. Pete Young's the future of fandom as well. You too could be the future of fandom but you'd better sign up now because there seems to be a queue at the moment...
(*March 18, 2005*)

Brad Foster, P.O. Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016

Always a kick to actually get the zine with a piece of my art on the cover. I mean, I know what it looks like and all, of course. But it never is really "real" until it is printed and stapled to the rest of the zine.

Getting this issue even got me inspired to take the time to finish up a few of the rough sketches I've had sitting here for awhile, so enclosed are three new fillos I hope you will be able to use, freshly drafted off the drawing board.

I too still want to get my fix of words-on-paper in the mail, rather than words-on-screen on the net. I get lost in the sheer volume of material that floods the net, whereas if someone has taken the time to select specific items to print and send me, that is already a form of editing that shows they feel this is their best, rather than sending me a URL that contains every letter they've typed in the past year and a half, and requiring me to click on innumerable screens to try to see it. The beauty of the net is the lack of

restrictions on space. That is also the curse. Sort of like when people discover they have access to several thousand different typefaces, and decide they have to use them all, concurrently if possible.

In fact, kind of like Lilian's article here that she notes has major parts "freely adapted from LiveJournal reportage..." I have noticed a number of zines I've gotten recently contain much material that the editor notes came from some web source, being that self-imposed selective editing that I look for. And Lilian, you really should have tried the grits. I love them myself, whereas the lovely Cindy can't see how I can put them anywhere near my taste buds. But she also eats vegetables that I think were mistakenly pulled from the ground next to the actually edible plants, so, as they say, different strokes for different folks. (*March 22, 2005*)

Milt Stevens, 6325 Keystone St., Simi Valley, CA 93063, miltstevens@earthlink.net

Littlebrook #4 starts off with an excellent cover by Brad Foster. At first glance, it looks like a reasonably impressive dragon. On second glance, you notice it is really a Texas Longhorn Dragon, an increasingly rare breed. You can judge how rare they must be by how often they show up in western movies. This dragon is obviously trying to do something about that by adding to his western skills.

In his editorial, Jerry mentions participating in LiveJournal. That seems to be happening a lot lately. That and blogs. I almost but not quite regret not having the time to look into those forms of fanac. Even being retired, I seem to have no trouble occupying all of my available time with two apas and whatever paper fanzines come into the mailbox. OK, in between times, I do try to read a little science fiction just for old times sake. Later in the issue, Andy Hooper mentions the belief that paper fanzines are moribund. For things that may be moribund, they certainly have a tendency to stack up all over the place.

Andy mentions that fanzine fandom has changed dramatically in the years since science fiction became socially acceptable. I doubt that science fiction becoming socially acceptable had much to do with it. (Granted, fandom was a lot more fun when we were just a small group of weirdos.) These days just about everything is socially acceptable. This leaves the youth of the country in a horrible situation. What can they do to shock their elders? Faced with an insurmountable problem, many have resorted to doing absolutely nothing.

Like Andi Shechter, I like country and western music. I particularly like the humor element of it. You just don't find songs similar to "Boy Named Sue" or "Mississippi Squirrel Revival" in other genres of popular music. Or lyrics like,

Let's do something cheap and superficial.

Let's do something we might both regret.
Let's do something shabby and insensitive.
It might be the only chance we get.

There used to be funny rock songs, but somehow they disappeared years ago. I'm sure somebody could write a dissertation on exactly why. I don't think there's much doubt as to why there aren't many funny rap songs. You just can't milk much humor out of a song like "Ahm Goin' To Kill Yo Ass, Muhfuh."

Like Lilian Edwards, I didn't know what grits were for many years. I was too embarrassed to ask, because it even seemed to me that all Mercans should already know. So finally, I resorted to ordering some. I would describe grits as a thin version of hot cereal. That puts it in the general category of being mush. I don't know about you, but I'm not very likely to get excited about mush. (*March 23, 2005*)

Kate Yule, kyule@spiritone.com

Re your comment on *Making Light* — "What range! What immensity! What, another entry on knitting?" — personally I think that for a web log subtitled "Reality-based language, fraud, folly, truth, history, and knitting" it doesn't have nearly enough of the latter.

Andi's piece on country music doesn't have a wrong note.

I don't follow the last stanza or two of "Hooper at the Crank" -- but I trust they would make sense if I had some missing fannish tabloid tidbit, because up to there it is genius.



Overall, congratulations on legible fonts, crisp repro, content-specific art, and generous white space. For *Bento* we always seem to be faced, after initial layout, with the choice of losing 2 pp. or gaining 6, and out comes the shoehorn. I would like to see the names in the lettercol more clearly associated with the letter fore or aft, instead of hovering precisely balanced in between... *{I'll see what I can do. Jerry}*

"Everything else needs repainted," says Suzle. Ah, the rhythms of home.

David and I recently saw a piece appear in the local paper's Home & Garden section about my blogging of our kitchen remodel. The reporter seemed incredulous that I don't "want to be a writer." Bits and snippets on LJ are one thing. The thought of anything more sustained — and that includes *Bento* — makes my stomach hurt, and the cry goes out, "But I have nothing to say!" But as long as David keeps mentioning it in the bio-squibs whenever he gets a story published, and misguided souls like you keep praising it in print, I guess I'll have to think of something.

p.s. I had too met Lilian Edwards before, at a World-con party ten years ago and probably also at Seattle Corflatch, whenever that was. The "free theatre" she mentions was a musical originally produced by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in 1937, enjoying a brief revival at what my brain insists on calling the Fred & Ethel Rosenberg Community Center. Within three hours of my landing at Newark, Lise was introducing me to the house manager as "This is Kate, she flew in from Oregon to ush tonight" and we were rearranging their signage for better traffic flow.

Hmm. I sense myself ready to witter on about more of that NYC visit, like the Magic Word that will lure TNH to follow you anywhere, and Lise asking me "Say, you like naked men, don't you?" Gosh wow Sparky, maybe I have a fanzine piece after all. (*April 2, 2005*) *{You do indeed; send it to us. Suzle}*

Lloyd Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON, CANADA M9C 2B2, penneys@allstream.net

First of all, congratulations on the TAFF win! The finances didn't allow me to participate this time, but I was following the race as best I could. Well done, and tough competition all around.

My heart is still with paper, too. I'm a journalism grad from a pre-Internet time, and I took some courses on publication design. I am pleased to see so many fully-designed e-zines on eFanzines.com and elsewhere. An eye-pleasing design adds to my enjoyment of the zine, paper-based or not.

Country music...I do not listen to it myself, preferring folk and 60s/70s, but it is popular in Canada, with homegrown talent like Shania Twain, Terri Clark, George Fox and many others making a success of their talents. There's lots of country radio stations, and

there are several country music digital TV stations. However, except for those digital stations, there's nothing country in Toronto. Maybe it's just a city thing, dunno.

Janis Ian made her partner very happy at Torcon 3. Yvonne and I attended the wedding of 8 men at the convention, and four couples walked out very happy indeed. I thought that was the idea, to join with the person you love, and live together to make each other happy. Same-sex marriages are legal in most of Canada, and I heard there were other quick marriages in Toronto during the Worldcon. Two local fans got married during Torcon...Paul and Janet realized they may have been the odd couple that weekend.

My loc...yup, know all about the annual spaghetti harvest. Seen it somewhere, but knew it was a BBC prank. That's why I mentioned it in my loc, same tongue planted firmly in cheek. {Yes, Lloyd, I assumed that YOU knew its history; I was filling in information for the majority of our readers who might not. Suzle}

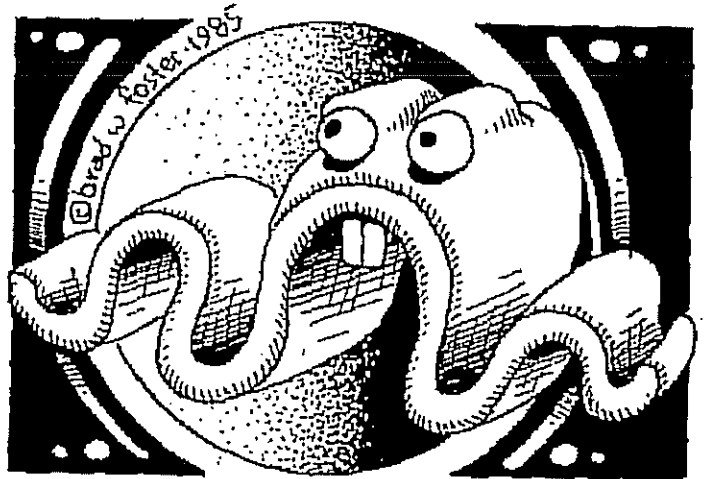
Work comes and goes. I am now several jobs past the one at CMI, and I now have a permanent part-time job doing data entry work with the *Globe and Mail* newspaper's website. Also, I have been working with a registration company called BBW. After working registration at cons for decades, I now do it at trade shows and conferences, and get paid for it. (April 28, 2005)

Alex Slate, lslate@earthlink.net

Just saw *Littlebrook* for the first time on efanazines.com, heck I just only recently learned of efanazines.com. (For an engineer, I am a remarkable techno-avoider, technophobe isn't quite true — of course my kids keep me off the web by basically hogging the computers a majority of the time.)

It is a good zine, the kind of which I see less of these days with the loss of *Mimosa* and *Twink*. I also appreciate that it is a paper-zine put on the net. I have seen, but am not as enthusiastic as many, about *Emerald City*. Seeing it on the computer though without an 8-1/2 x 11 inch screen just isn't the same as actually holding paper in my hands. Heck, I still write out the first draft of a lot of my professional articles longhand first.

I can sympathize with Andi Shechter. I have been a country music fan for about 30 years now, but unlike Andi, it seems, I actually enjoyed *Hee Haw*. Truth be told, I wasn't always a country music fan, but I have always been a bluegrass fan, and therefore always enjoyed Scruggs and Flatt. Country music itself, back then it pretty much came down to two different types, Country Swing and twang-twang music. Twang twang music is the type (not heard nearly as much these days) that basically consists of one guy and a guitar singin', "My darlin' left me (twang-twang), and I'm drinkin' heavy (twang-twang)" Sometime in the late 70s (or really the early 80s)



“

this started to change and you started to get cross-over from pop into country and back. I think that Dolly Parton had a lot to do with this, particularly with her collaborations with Linda Ronstadt and Emmy Lou Harris. There is a lot of really good stuff out in country music these days. The bad side is that you don't get to hear a lot of new blue grass, and I'm still a blue grass lover in my soul. (April 5, 2005)

Eric Mayer, maywrite2@epix.net

A rather belated note on *Littlebrook*. I wonder, are belated locs becoming more common? With zines being available for years, as good as new, on efanazines, there's a possibility of getting locs indefinitely on every zine one produces. Theoretically, if I had uploaded an issue of *Groggy* in 1980 (provided efanazines, and the internet and all that actually existed) I might still occasionally receive a loc. (After all, the issue would not have faded into illegibility) It could be an endless stream of egoboo... although I understand, in electronic practice, the reality is somewhat different. At any rate, I feel like I should from time to time at least acknowledge that I read and enjoyed an ezine since the practice seems much neglected, even if my loccing muscles have become too atrophied and aged to do more than type out a shaky "thanks."

Reading Andy Hooper's thoughts on fanzines, along with your opening remarks, got me thinking about the whole paper zines versus electronic zines thing. As already remarked, the electronic ones don't seem to generate as many locs (or so I've been told) perhaps because of the method of free distribution or maybe their insubstantiality. They are just among all those things you download off the internet. But *Littlebrook* still doesn't look like anything but a fanzine. Wonderful cover by Brad Foster and terrific interior art by Stu and Craig. Does this just look like "fanart" just because I have seen stuff by these guys in fanzines? Maybe, but I don't know when Craig Smith

started appearing and I'm sure I don't remember his work from the zines I used to get way back when and it surely fits in a fanzine.

But I prefer ezines. I really don't harbor any desire to return to paper. For one thing, knowing all too well how I can allow my interests to get out of hand, I resolved to limit my fanac 100% to the electronic realm. Of course, I didn't realize that eFanzines was going to come along and enlarge my fanac beyond what I'd envisioned. Mind you, I like the idea of fanzine as artefact. Zines, whether mimeoed or dittoed have a different physical aspect than any other publications I've come across. But for me distribution was always a hassle. Printing and postage was getting expensive even 30 years ago. Electronic distribution is far more democratic. A fanzine editor's potential readership is no longer limited by his or her finances. I loved the idea that fanzines were totally free and noncommercial (available for the usual) but the flip side was that some editors were severely limited in largess.

Even today, laying out a zine like *Littlebrook*, assembling all the articles and artwork and editing locs has got to be a major undertaking even if you don't have to pay for paper and postage. (And maybe the work involved is as much, or more, of a deterrent as the cost because I haven't seen an electronic explosion of genzines) At one time I would've probably liked to have given it a try but not now. I'm content just to type a couple paragraphs into my blog and hit "save." As much as they seem like perszines though, blogs are different. One nice thing about a zine is that each issue is a finished thing, self contained, a small (or large) work of art. Even a perszine, with no art, would, usually, have some edited locs and layout. The entries I have been writing for my blog are often exactly what I'd write for a perszine but the effect isn't quite the same. (*May 31, 2005*)

**Claire Brialey, banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk,
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Thanks, properly this time, for *Littlebrook* #4. I was interested in Jerry's mini review of Mark Manning's *Jupiter Jump*, since I thought I'd spotted a trend in fanzines published in the past few months: a contribution from Mark in the letter column, explaining that he's been to Morocco and drawing out an anecdote or a thought inspired by that trip relevant to whatever fanzine he's written to. I note you have one of these, although now I quickly skim what I've read in the past few weeks only *Chunga* appears to support my theory – and I'm not sure that two letters are enough for a trend! They clearly made an impression on me, though. *JJ* sounds like a fascinating travelogue, including the technique you describe for enlivening the flow of the less riveting sections inherent in a linear narrative with elucidations of background information. I like good travel writing, especially with a fannish connection; you've sold me on this one and I shall send off for it.

I, too, am of the paper generation, which suggests it may not be entirely a time-bound generation. (Indeed, since Gene Melzack is probably another member and is more than a decade younger than me, I'm certain of that!) Nonetheless, I find I don't have time even to read SF magazines; short fiction would pass me by entirely until it's time to spend several days reading the Hugo award short fiction nominees (or a little less time, mercifully, on the BSFA award short fiction shortlist), were it not for Mark's hunter-gatherer behaviour in bringing a few home every now and again. The most easily accessible are, I find, the ones collected in anthologies; book form is still my preferred format for reading, although small-format fanzines – and presumably digest magazines – are at least as easy to fit into my handbag. But because Mark now regularly trawls online sources of short fiction (especially scifi) and converts the stories to neatly printed and thus readily accessible temporary versions, I'm now reading enough good short fiction to feel able to nominate some of it for relevant awards. And reading one short story at a time, rather than ploughing through an anthology, often provides just enough reading material for a brief train journey.

However, my short fiction reading fell off again after we got back from Corflu and Potlatch – as did my long fiction reading, for more weeks than I care to contemplate – because all my train journeys were taken up with reading and responding to fanzines. (Although this is 'responding' in the sense that I've only now got around to transcribing the letters I was scribbling on the train in March and April.) It's partly that there's a backlog, and partly that some fans – particularly those publishing on efanazines, who don't even have to pause for printing and mailing – are publishing quicker than I can keep up. (In the case of Arnie Katz, and given the relatively limited time I've had for the fun stuff in fandom between work, home, Worldcon, Eastercon, more Worldcon, the fan funds, even more Worldcon, and an occasional inability not to succumb to sleep, this is quite literally true.)

Meanwhile, despite their length and complexity and occasional clunks from too much plot colliding with superfluous technology, I'd strongly recommend you stick with Alastair Reynolds. *Chasm City*, his second novel and the one volume of the Inhibitor sequence that can most easily be read separately, was the best SF novel I read in 2001. And *Century Rain*, his most recent book (which seems genuinely to stand alone) is also well worth taking the phone off the hook for the weekend.

I was fascinated by Andi Shechter's piece on country music, much to my surprise. It was a neat device to point out early on the parallels between this music and SF as a literary genre; it hooked me and I'm glad I read on. I suppose the real test of success is whether I'm going to go and listen to any of the recommended tracks now. As it happens, we have a Dixie Chicks CD, bought in solidarity after they said something sensible about your President

and apparently suffered commercially in their home state of Texas as a result; I listened to it at the time but without much attention, and I am at least persuaded to try again properly now. If that works for me, at least I now know – all knowledge being contained in fanzines – where to go for further recommendations.

Further up and further in, I'm pleased to see Victor Gonzalez recommending Peter Weston's 'fannish autobiography', *With Stars in My Eyes: My Adventures in British Fandom*, and delighted to see Andy Hooper recommending two British fanzines which I also rate very highly: Pete Young's *Zoo Nation* (which is my personal favourite British fanzine of the moment) and Gene Melzack's *Thought Experiments*, of which the second issue came out at Easter. I hesitate to load relatively recent arrivals to fandom with the full weight of my expectations, but Gene is a fanwriter I admire greatly and who I hope will continue not only to take such thought-provoking pleasure in fandom, fanzines, and science fiction but also to write about it. I understand entirely Andy's suspicion that such a fan can only be 'an aging trufan's dream', and am happy to be able to shed light on the mystery: Greg Pickersgill revealed at Eastercon that he had in fact made Gene out of Plasticine without realising it.

I had a moment of cognitive dissonance when Andy described *Thought Experiments* and *Zoo Nation* as 'being printed digest style on folded A4 paper'; I hadn't realised that A5 fanzines so rarely make it across the Atlantic these days that the size needed describing. I noticed some months ago that the British fanzines I was most enjoying – *Zoo Nation*, *Thought Experiments*, and Tony Keen's *Halo of Flies*, now joined by *Meta* (edited by Gene but a product of Third Row Fandom generally) – all came in that size, and I can only assume it is an indicator of being The Future of Fandom, in the UK at least. By this token, I recall that I myself had potential to be The Future of Fandom in the autumn of 1995 (no copies of my A5 fanzine, *Waxen Wings*, made it across the Atlantic either; I had a print-run of about 50) but then teamed up with Mark and went A4; we managed to go from having great potential to being boring old has-beens without any apparent intervening stage...

Meanwhile, Flick has just produced an A6 fanzine, i. e. folded A5 oriented portrait-style. Whether this marks her out as the ultimate future of fandom (along with *Bento* on your side of the Atlantic, I guess) is unclear; after a favourite *Father Ted* joke we cite far too often, it's easy to get confused between things that are very small and things that are far away. Being hand-stitched along the spine (yes, really) *Shiny!* has an even tinier print-run, but may be available electronically. Check it out if you can. {Flick ran a poll in her *LiveJournal* to select the fans most deserving of her last few copies, and I came out high enough to win one. Like Flick herself, it rates a 10 in the style department. Jerry}

As a 'thirtyish' person myself (35 several days ago) I've been kind of relieved to see a succession of other people admitting that they, too, had never heard of Janis Ian until she popped up as an SF fan and everyone seemed to be familiar with her as a musician. I wondered if being British was a further impediment in this respect but Mark (who is now fortyish) and our friends of his age seem not to share my ignorance.

And belated formal congratulations to Suzle on her TAFF victory. What *is* it about fans based in Seattle, hmm? Look forward to seeing you both again in the summer; and thanks again for *Littlebrook*. (May 31, 2005) {We did see Claire and Mark at Worldcon and then again in London where they met us in the Lounge at our hotel for drinks and talk. Then we all went to dinner at a nearby restaurant where the conversation and company was really much better than the food. Suzle}

**Sheryl Birkhead, 25509 Jonnie Court,
Gaithersburg, MD 20882**

Nice Foster cover - the guy does ghodd work (but that's not news)!

Ah – seeing the fanartists listed – brings back names that I want to get into the fanartist "showcase" – so they will not be forgotten now that they have moved on – or at the very least a little way away! I did not peek – but I hope the addresses are in the zine – but that is probably too much to hope for – we shall see....

Quite a few years ago, the most popular local radio station retired their most popular announcers. I didn't like the ones that stepped in to fill in the void – and began station surfing. My father was raised in Kentucky and I remembered the country and western music he had played when I was little – so I was a bit uneasy about listening to the music that had my mother wincing. Boy, things have changed – the line between mainstream and "traditional" has really blurred (hmm – does that sound familiar?). I found I could actually make out the lyrics and almost all the twanginess of the music I remembered was gone. I actually hung around and listened to the current "changes"...then I found books on tape and have been sticking with that ever since – ah, the power to actually listen to what I WANT to – okay, everyone out there is screaming – ever heard of things like iPod? Okay – next confession – I am NOT a music junkie. Sorry, but I use music as a background and not a primary listen – sigh – there, I've admitted it.

Uh – John – remember that no ghodd deed goes unpunished. Despite the way things appeared to your colleagues, I am sure it will come back to nip you on the hinderparts. But hey – it worked! I am sure you take the compliments well about your character with the total aplomb of total truth – take the praise and run!

Just an observation about pubbing – it APPEARS to me that those faneds who "pubbed" their ish on the Inter-

net have never actually had the (visceral?) experience of turning the crank (so to speak). It would be interesting, but pretty much impossible, to see if these same faneds actually got into the trenches and put out a paperzine... gathered a mailing list...and read the locs as the popped over the transom. Ah yes, the sweet feeling of...well... creating something truly tangible (might be fleeting, but tangible all the same).

Congrats, Suzle (belated though they are) – my Mac is five years old and I STILL think of it as the new computer. But you do realize that with your pubbing history this sets the bar pretty high for the quality of your trip report.... Let all of us close and personal friends know all about it! (June 24, 2004)

**Mog Decarnin, 521 N. Sweetzer Ave., #1,
West Hollywood, CA 90048**

Watching reruns of *Kojak* these days, with episode titles like “Elegy in an Asphalt Graveyard.” Which is *quite* relevant to why this is such a belated loc to *Littlebrook* 4. Color me hyp-motized.

I smile at Jerry’s reference to the “little universe” of LJ and intuit the line was written some time ago. My Flist [Friends List] alone intimidates me (it’s limited to slash fans and even so, is small as these things go). Have you ever tried that link that lets you read *all* the latest posts, from any and all users (except locked ones)? I recommend it, it’s absolutely amazing what’s out there: the trivial, the annoying, the funny, and the everyday profound suffering. An unbelievable documentation – ephemeral as a breath.

I have written to Mark Manning to request his Morocco issue – hope he still has some. I researched the place a bit for a fanfic, and got interested. For one thing, it showed me how little access the poor have to the Net, in

the extreme paucity of Berber presence there. Of course, I might see more if I read Arabic! But still. I have a good guidebook to Morocco and indeed, the photos are largely of barren rocks....

There was a line or three missing in Lilian Edwards’s piece, as you no doubt know by now (top of page 6, if not), but it was very charming and made me want more. Hmm, I wonder if anyone has ever skated the Guggenheim. I expect the guards are fairly beady-eyed about what comes in. (June 24, 2005) {See my editorial for the missing lines. Jerry}

We asked **Andi Shechter** for her response to the many people who wrote about her article. She wrote:

Taste is taste and sometimes it doesn’t make sense. But there it is, we all like some stuff that other people dislike. As a knowledgeable fan of ballet and dance, I get in trouble because I don’t think George Balanchine is god. He bores the bejesus out of me and that, to some folks, means my other opinions are valueless. Can’t help it. It’s how I feel. It’s what I think.

I cannot listen to many of the older performers of country music – new or classic – because I think many of them sing between the notes. And I won’t start another round of this by naming names but there are folks out there who sing flat. And it hurts.

I think there is bad music, although maybe “badly done” is a better term. I think, Rich, that you and I connect on a number of levels; I know way more gospel songs than I should (I’m a non-observant Jew, and I still recall, with great pleasure, Sunday mornings at the Grass Valley Bluegrass Festival.) I respect Hank Williams or Bill Monroe. I respect that they started something but I don’t *like* their stuff, or their sound. I wish they did, and I’m not being facetious when I say that. And yes, I have tried.

I’m pretty staggered at the response to my piece - thank you. And no I never *did* see Cheryl’s zine. Darn.

We Also Heard From: Jae Leslie Addams (with a letter on an old issue of *Mainstream* —she really liked Ole Kvern’s “alphabet dogs”), Tracy Benton (a very nice note about *Littlebrook* #3, on Catwoman stationery), John Berry, William Breiding (who compared dismissing Porter Wagoner to dismissing Murray Leinster), John Hedtke, John Hertz (who noticed the missing lines in Lilian’s article), Sue Jones, Dave Langford, Timothy C. Marion, Sarah Prince, Jeff Schalles (with compliments on our mimeography – wait until we tell him we’ve been photocopying), and Tom Whitmore. ☺ ☺



SUZLECOL

SUZANNE TOMPKINS

I won TAFF! As many of you know since the race ended last April, we went to the UK in August, and now, magically, it's December. Jerry and I did attempt to get this issue out in time to take with us to hand out at Worldcon and on our travels (or at least take it on a CD to print out in Glasgow), but it wasn't possible to finish in time. Also, in retrospect, given our location at the Moat House in Glasgow, adjacent to the Convention Centre, but far from anything else, we were lucky to not have it with us as we'd have spent more time than we had free arranging to get *Littlebrook* copied (at what would have been too high a price). Thus, we had the "saved" time available to run in and out of Glasgow city centre trying to replace items Jerry needed when British Midlands lost his luggage for a few days....

Since our return, I've published my first TAFF Newsletter (*Two Year TAFF-Life*) which some of you have received if you voted in the 2005 TAFF race or have since made a contribution. In it, I summarized our trip. Here are some edited excerpts and additional material:

Last March, a large bunch of Seattle Fans and a few out of town visitors gathered at the Doong Kong Lau, our favorite large-fannish-group-with-out-of-town-visitors Hakka Chinese restaurant. After the fortune cookies and orange wedges arrived, we played the Chinese fortune cookie game just as we used to do when we lived in NYC and went to the Chuan Hong, our favorite New York large-fannish-group-with-out-of-town-visitors Sechuan Chinese restaurant. It involves everyone taking a cookie but not opening it right away. One person chooses another at the table and asks them a question. They then open their cookie and read the response, often to hysterical results. You go around the table taking turns until everyone has asked a question, opened a cookie, and read the response. (Sometimes it just doesn't work at all, of course, but our favorite example is when just before the 1976 Worldcon, someone asked Jerry if we would win the Best Fanzine Hugo for which *The Spanish Inquisition* had been nominated, and Jerry's cookie said, "Every fool will find another fool to admire him." Alas, however, we didn't win.) Of course, I was asked at that March dinner if I would win the TAFF race. My fortune cookie said, "You will be called to fill a position of high honor and responsibility." Just so.

Last March now seems like a long time ago. After finding out that, somewhat to my surprise, I had won TAFF, there was a flurry of immediate activity like mak-

ing the flight reservations (on BA – they have the ONLY non-stop from Seattle to the UK (London) these days. More on this fun experience will appear in my TAFF report...); trying to come up with an itinerary that would allow us to get together with as many British fans as possible who might have any interest whatsoever in a TAFF visitor, and on and on....

Jerry and I only had two weeks for the trip; we would have loved to spend much more time there, but his vacation time was limited. I started out at Sea-Tac Airport earnestly making notes for my report. After our fun-filled 9-hour flight in a British Airways sardine tin, we made our way through Heathrow to British Midlands and a short flight to Glasgow, during which BMI lost Jerry's main piece of luggage, and thus our adventure began.

After registering at the con, I again earnestly sat down and made a few more notes on the trip. This was to be essentially the last time I made any substantive notes. Period. I realized that I could either be at the con or write about it. But we had a four-hour train trip to Birmingham coming up and I was determined to spend part of that time catching up. Didn't remember after more than 16 years since taking a major train trip that I get violently motion sick if I try to write while the train is moving. We were riding backwards. Jerry took lots of notes. TAFF report is coming, really.

All the fan fund delegates were given first class treatment by Interaction, like guests of the con although we weren't actually, of course.... And awarding the Best Fanzine Hugo was the highlight of my trip. The Interaction Hugo team generously offered to let the fan fund winners (TAFF and GUFF) present Hugos. The entire production was handled with great planning and care and it really showed. I just wish I could have heard the introduction that Lars Olav-Strandberg, my co-presenter, and I were given. I was waiting, sans glasses so that I could SEE the nominees' names and the short piece on the importance of the fanzine Hugo that Jerry had written for me, and was also concerned as I needed to shepherd myself and Lars onto the stage, but I couldn't HEAR Kim Newman's intro, which I could tell was funny. If anyone knows where I can find a transcript, let me know....

Jerry and I both had a marvelous time at the Hugos, in general at Worldcon, and in Glasgow and England; exhausting though it was.

As mentioned, we went on to Birmingham after Worldcon. Steve and Ann Green arranged a fan dinner at

their favorite “Balti” restaurant where we were introduced to the wonders of bedsheet naan and Balti-style Indian/Pakistani cuisine. Pete and Eileen Weston joined us and we met several other local fans, including Kevin Clark. Afterwards, we were treated to a ride back to our hotel in the Weston’s Jaguar.... We saw as much of Brum as we had time for. I did notice that there were many changes since we attended the Mexican there in the 80’s. After leaving Birmingham for Cambridge, I again tried note-writing during the train ride and discovered that even riding forwards doesn’t help.

We were enthralled by the ancient city of Cambridge, and again a fan gathering/dinner was arranged for us, this time by Austin Benson, who had changed the night of the “Cambridge Blue” meeting to Friday to accommodate returning Worldcon attendees and us. One of our regrets is not having anywhere near the amount of time we needed to explore; but we made do with seeing several of the Colleges and Cathedrals, including King’s College Chapel, visiting museums, and dining along side, but not punting on, as Jerry had planned, the Cam.

Then on to London and more adventures, including a fine and well-attended Post-Worldcon Party hosted by Joseph Nicholas and Judith Hanna.

My advice would be to never plan a trip that involves hitting a world-class city at the very end of it! I knew this would be trouble, of course, but to get to our planned destinations, the order in which we traveled was pretty much dictated to us. I’ve visited London on four other

occasions, and this was the only time I was continually exhausted and not able to enjoy the experience as much as I wanted to. Not that we didn’t have a good and educational time seeing places that we had not previously been to, like the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Science Museum, and a number of places that simply weren’t there on the last few trips: the Tate Modern, the Millennium Bridge. And it seemed that using the tube in the wake of last July’s frightening bombings wasn’t nearly as problematic for me as the series of long staircases to get in and out of them. I lived in NYC of course, which has an identical situation, at least in the really deep northern Manhattan train stops I was used to, but I’d rather forgotten about it....

More on my TAFF trip — fans seen and spoken with, places visited, escalators descended with too much luggage, Worldcon attended — later.

Enclosed with this issue as first mailed out are two flyers: a TAFF Ballot, of course, and information about a collection of John Hertz’ fan writing, *Dancing and Joking*, published by Westercon LVII (2004), which John is distributing for the benefit of TAFF and/or DUFF.

And, speaking of other fannish pursuits in which Jerry and I are involved, we want to encourage all of you to attend **POTLATCH 15**.

P15 is being held February 24-26, 2006 here in Seattle. We have some wonderful program items planned; a fine, hand-picked dealers room; a play by Andy Hooper, based on material from our book of honor *The Avram Davidson Treasury*; a great auction for the benefit of our sponsor, Clarion West Writers Workshop; a Pacific Northwest themed luncheon banquet; and much more, all crammed into a three-day con at a great and reasonably priced hotel in downtown Seattle, near the Seattle Center and within walking distance of the Experience Music Project and the Science Fiction Museum!

Here is how we describe Potlatch for those who aren’t familiar with our small convention:

Potlatch 15 offers the chance for both serious opinionating and frantic fun; for writers to brainstorm together, for readers to understand writers, for writers to appreciate readers; for fans to enumerate, elaborate, berate, be great; for book buying, outbidding, intense dining, barnstorming in the bar, connecting to the interweb; for dancing in the ‘hood, experiencing music, projecting personae; and for giving generously while supporting the Clarion West Writers Workshop.

To see our recently posted PR #2, which includes all the info you will need, go to the Potlatch 15 website: <http://www.potlatch-sf.org/>. ☺ ☻

