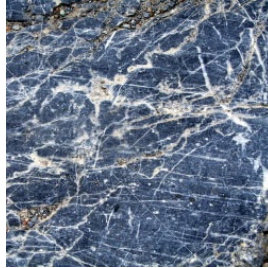


trols to the left of me,
assholes to the right, here i am,
stuck in the middle with you

[the white notebooks #1]



This Ain't No Party, This Ain't No Disco

SO AM I KEEPING NOTEBOOKS AGAIN? You will need to read my short essay 'Castles in Spain' in my forthcoming zine *Big Sky* #5 to get the background on this, but to summarise here: in my late teens and early twenties I religiously kept blue notebooks. All of them were given different (usually long, and weird) titles, inspired by the off-the-wall imagination of American writers such as Robert Anton Wilson and John Sladek. But to cut to the chase, the *next* issue of this periodic fanzine will, in similar fashion, have a different title to this one. That's how it works.

I ended up accumulating a drawer full of those old blue notebooks, although I now have none and I don't know where they are. Actually, that's not strictly speaking a lie; I know exactly what *happened* to them think of a line from a Talking Heads song so they are both anywhere and everywhere. They were full of crap, anyway. As much as I miss those notebooks, I don't miss their navel-gazing contents.

If you recognise the blue pattern above and on what kind of notebook it appeared, you may even know what they looked like. The titles were written in blue biro on the blue cloth that wrapped around the spine. None of this fancy, self-important Moleskine shite for me, oh no.

So I'm considering these issues to be notebooks again, only this time on plain white A4 paper. They function that way in my head although they might not particularly look like, y'know, 'notebooks'. It's a reboot for the twenty-first century of an old habit, and I hope whatever appears here will be better written and more enduring.

There is another fundamental difference between then and now: before, it was a private thing when I opened those pages and wrote; this time I'm using it as a communication tool. So what has inspired me, you're probably not asking, to do this as a fanzine? Inspiration in no specific order of merit includes: Andy Hooper's excellent *Flag*, Taral Wayne's *Broken Toys*, Joseph Nicholas's one-off *The Night Is So Black That the Darkness Cooks*, the Fishlifters' *Banana Wings* and *BW*, Fred Lerner's consistently enlightening *Lofgeornost*, John Hertz's *Vanamonde*, Pat Charnock's *Raucous Caucus*, Graham Charnock's *Vibrator*. And others. Plus, constantly at the back of my mind, Ted White's comment to me that I ought to write about life in Thailand.

All the above fanzines are what have inspired me as to what I could be doing other than what I already do with *Big Sky*. As for the reasons, there are several. The way genuine paper fanzines have been crowded out of their own category in the Hugo Awards tells me they may deserve a place on fandom's version of the 'endangered species' list. *Journey Planet*, which I have occasionally co-edited, has once again appeared as a finalist for the second year running, and is once again the only real *fanzine* on a shortlist otherwise full of blogs.

At Corflu 32 in Newcastle this year, concern was raised about the number of people voting in the FAAN Awards, which is far more specifically related to fanzine activity than the Hugos. Are fanzine fans with an interest in the heritage of fanzines really a dwindling group, holding onto paper fanzines as artefacts from history? I've said many times and in many places how necessary

trols to the left of me... [the white notebooks #1] June 2558 / 2015
a print perzine for limited circulation, available for 'the usual', also at efanzines.com.
edited by Peter Young email: peteyoung.uk@gmail.com
136/200 Emerald Hill Village, Soi 6, Hua Hin, Prachuap Khiri Khan 77110, Thailand
set in 9/12 Didot and Letter Gothic

fanzines are to us as opposed to PDFs, yet I haven't actually been financially able to produce and distribute a paper fanzine since *Zoo Nation* #7 in April 2006. Hopefully I'm now in a position to remedy this. Going up to someone at a convention or pub meeting and physically handing them a fanzine has, believe it or not, actually been important for me. But speaking as yet another fanzine producer who these days produces PDF zines specifically to avoid the cost of print and postage, I (probably like many other fan-eds) feel a little like Aron Ralston, the climber trapped halfway down a canyon in Utah, who had to cut off his own arm in order to survive.

Also, it now it seems the Nova Awards are no more, announced at a time that many thought it was an April Fools joke. I know I have not been eligible for the Novas since moving to Thailand and haven't been able to attend a Novacon since 2006, but I lament this decision and I'd like to see it reversed, even though I once won two Novas and at the 2013 and 2014 awards I was (rightly) excluded from eligibility.

I have no answers for what to do about any of this other than To Pub An Ish. Show that perhaps paper fanzines are not as endangered as we might fear, and that there's still enthusiasm for them. If more fans did the same we might even see a renaissance in paper fanzines,

which is what fanzine fandom probably needs right now.

As for the layout of this zine, in some ways it's an opposite reaction to the design philosophy I've adopted for *Big Sky*; a push in a simpler direction that allows for less genre-oriented pieces when I want to include them. It is also deliberately under-designed, and shorter, as well as being less illustrated which means the words have to work harder. It also has the added benefit of *giving myself space to write*, with hopefully a shorter span between writing an article and its publication, which a bigger project like *Big Sky* doesn't really allow for. I like the layouts and design philosophies of both these fanzines for each of their virtues.

I'm also enclosing with this fanzine another, briefer one: *The Thai Literary Supplement* #1. It's my latest attempt at finding a home for my reviews of books on Thailand other than at Goodreads, Live Journal or Fictionstream, where they mostly languish unread. I'll include a few fiction reviews every issue – not wishing to bore people senseless about Thai literature and Thailand in general, but I do find it a subject well worth covering.

This is not produced for an APA, but I'll aim for a quarterly schedule anyway. And Letters of Comment are of course always very welcome!



The Search for Genre in Thailand



The Almost-Secret Science Fiction of Tony Bitch

ONE OF THOSE QUESTIONS I guarantee no one but me ever asked is, "Whatever happened to Tony Bitch?"

...I rest my case.

Well, I'll tell you anyway.

TV viewers in the 1970s in the British Isles and the Commonwealth may remember a comedy show called *The Goodies*. It featured comedians Tim Brooke-Taylor, Bill Oddie and Graeme Garden, a bunch of guys who got into many surreal scrapes while dragging the studio audience behind them in fits of lafftrack mirth. Every episode had a cast of supporting actors paid ridiculous sums of money to trade their dignity for laughs at their own expense and play along with the hilarity.

One such actor was Jake Anthony, who in *The Goodies*' 1976 sixth series episode 'Hype Pressure' [1] had one of the more memorable roles even though his screen time could be counted in mere seconds: Tony Bitch, a talent show judge based on the composer Tony Hatch who regularly tore into below-par contestants on the UK talent show *New Faces*.

Ditto for Tony Bitch (see photo above), well-

spoken and well-groomed, dressed in a smart beige suit, sporting a fashionably chunky tie knot, and also notably acerbic with his words.

Nothing came of Tony Bitch beyond his initial fifteen seconds of fame, and Jake Anthony himself seemed to disappear out of the media spotlight for the next few decades. Indeed, except for a couple of minor film roles visible at IMDb [2], he appears to never really have sought the spotlight ever since, instead concentrating on journalism and penning a line of holistic health books you can now find as Kindle e-books, with titles such as *Big Pharma's Experimentation on Our Children*, *The Guerrilla Guide to Aids* and *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Sex*.

However, the way I came to discover Tony Bitch's connection to genre fiction in Thailand is one of those serendipitous things that only came about as a result of being an ISFDB editor.

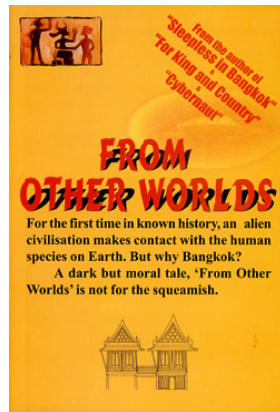
In 2011 at a small bookshop in my home city Hua Hin I came across a science fiction paperback called *From Other Worlds*, by one Ian Quartermaine, a writer I had never previously heard of. The cover blurb describes

a story of alien invasion in Bangkok, in which children are abducted and sexually experimented upon. There is also a warning about the graphic nature of some of the scenes.

A week later, I also discovered an earlier science fiction novel by Ian Quartermaine, *Cybernaut*, and a few months after that I discovered his thriller *Supertanker* (which I foolishly didn't buy), a novelisation of Bangkok-based Australian producer Ric Lawes' unfiled screenplay of the same name, in which a giant oil tanker is commandeered by terrorists with ambitions beyond 9/11.

All these titles are self-published by IQ Inc. (IQ=Ian Quartermaine), probably in small print runs. Certainly their presence on store bookshelves is short, and once sold they never appear to be restocked. In other words: they're rare.

When entering a new author into the ISFDB we try to establish some details about him or her. Googling for 'Ian Quartermaine' only produced one significant hit at the website Magick Papers [3], but that was enough because it



conveniently joins all the dots connecting Tony Bitch, Jake Anthony, Ian Quartermaine... and, surprisingly, Pixar.

His most high-profile activity of recent years was undertaken with his full name, Jake Mandeville-Anthony: he's also the guy who took on both Disney and Pixar in the California courts in 2011 for copyright infringement and breach of contract, concerning his idea of anthropomorphic cars that resulted in the worldwide hit movies *Cars* and *Cars 2* [4]. He lost the case. The Magick Papers article cited above states that his idea was Part Three of a series about sentient beings in non-organic forms, the first two parts being *Cybernaut* and *From Other Worlds*.

Jake Anthony is probably in his late sixties or early seventies now. I don't know where he lives or indeed anything else other than what I've covered briefly here, but it's evident he has strong connections with Thailand two other mainstream novels *For King and Country* and *Sleepless in Bangkok* are also set here. It would be interesting to find out more about him.

- [1] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbKMOOrDpYyg>, from 4:28
- [2] <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm3627092>
- [3] <http://www.magickpapers.com/blog/?p=757>
- [4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandeville-Anthony_v._Walt_Disney_Co.



Travels



A Word on a Map

Quietly,
The dripping of spring water on moss between rocks,
My hermitage is not big enough to hold it all.
Saigyô

SEVERAL YEARS AGO I once heard the actor Ian Holm narrating a documentary on wildlife in the remote Scottish Highlands. With bleak, unforgiving mountains as a backdrop, a lone male reindeer with huge antlers was seen standing at the edge of a thick, verdant forest, took one look behind him, and entered through a gap in the

trees. "The deer", noted Mr. Holm, "seek out places akin to their own fierce spirit."

That sentence and image have remained in my mind over the years, and I have found myself following that sentiment a few times, often leading to remote places in lands I never saw, where the spirit can breathe and get

Above: The Hermitage, 1884 (photographer unknown)

a little closer to nature.

The idea of living a solitary and simple life, pretty much alone with your surroundings, was one I knew well back in the 1990s. It appeals to men and women alike: no stress, no kids, no fuss, no TV, no taxes. Just peace, nature, and maybe a partner to share it with. There may be no escape from yourself, but the need to get away from society can often lead the more sensitive amongst the human race into deciding on a kind of self-imposed seclusion from the outside world, and many people make that leap.

During the 1990s, quite by chance I came across several solitary places in the UK called Hermitage or The Hermitage, quite apart from the Berkshire town of that name. Coincidentally, at that time I had also come across

mountains, I pictured a tiny, almost desolate village high up in the Southern Alps at the end of a dirt track, a settlement that had slowly built up around one or two solitary buildings; then, struggling to keep going, gradually fell into disrepair as people left, one by one, to return back to civilisation.

Over the following months, the more I thought about the real possibility of visiting it, the more it began to take on the air of something I had to do, akin to some kind of pilgrimage to a specific, unknown and remote place. But I wanted to do this with as little reference to guide material as possible: even a Lonely Planet guidebook listing might provide too many clues as to what I would find there. One hundred years ago, such a journey to one of the most remote places on the other



the poetry of the Japanese hermit Saigyô, as well as a superb book called *Road to Heaven* by Bill Porter, in which the author went in search of, and found, Taoist and Buddhist recluses in the high Chungnan mountains of China. The book was quite influential on me. Exploring the idea further, one evening at home I pulled from my

bookshelves my forty year-old Wonder Atlas. How many other places in the world had started from such isolated beginnings? Because places called Hermitage were often, back in history, just that: hermitages.

In this old atlas there was only one entry for a Hermitage, almost as far away as it is possible to get from England, way up in New Zealand's Southern

Alps at the foot of Mount Cook. Next I turned to a more detailed and modern atlas, yet there was no Hermitage to be found there, as if perhaps the place was simply no longer inhabited. Of course, I became curious. What was this place, what had been there? And if I were actually to go there, what would I find?

Perhaps fuelled by images of solitude in the

side of the world would be something that came about through hard effort, planning, foresight and timing; if I could, I wanted to capture as much of that kind of spontaneity in the two days I had available after I had landed in Auckland.

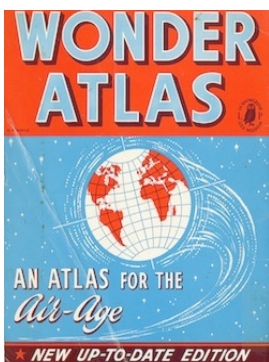
Comparatively, a hundred years after the Hermitage was established, for someone who flies over ten thousand miles almost every week of the year, the whole journey turned out to be a very easy trek.



In a time when intercontinental travellers complain if their champagne is insufficiently chilled, it appears that they haven't given a single thought to the human ingenuity and sacrifice that has enabled others to show hospitality to them in such an unlikely place, many kilometres above the surface of the earth. So it's perhaps worth putting my journey into some kind of present-day perspective.

On Christmas Day 1894, Tom Fyfe, Jack Clarke and George Graham became the first people to climb Mount Cook, with barely adequate equipment, battling against gravity, sub-zero temperatures, frostbite, fatigue and rarified air. Why? Probably because it was there.

In June 1994, I arrived a hundred years too late to watch them do it, but it took me exactly seven hours from the time I left my hotel room in Auckland to the time I arrived at the foot of Mount Cook. I had travelled over



650 kilometres to Christchurch in just over an hour non-stop by air (impossible in Fyfe's time), then 322 kilometres by road, good tarmac all the way (in a vehicle that could do more than a 150 kilometres in a single hour), on wide, straight and empty roads. It was mid-winter in June, two days after a 6.7 earthquake had set off avalanches throughout the Southern Alps, and I feared that roads might be closed – as it turned out, there wasn't a cloud in the sky all day, and the roads are kept well away from the snowy mountainsides. But it was far from being a boring journey.

There is only one route from Christchurch to Mount Cook, and the road ended there. The first two hours drive are along fairly flat land, but after the town of Fairlie the Southern Alps come into much closer range and the scenery is beautiful on a clear day. Two more hours of good roads and great sights while cutting through the mountains alongside Lakes Tekapo then Pukaki, and one arrives at a simple T-junction. I began to suspect that the roads were probably kept in such good condition for a purpose... to the left was signposted a Travelodge, but to the right, the Hermitage.

Perhaps the Travelodge should have given me some sort of clue as to what to expect. After one last kilometre I pulled into The Hermitage – and perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised. Before me was a large, pleasant, friendly-looking wooden hotel, set at snow level between a range of mountains and glaciers, with the twin peaks of Mount Cook set not too far in the distance.



There is a history to The Hermitage [1] that goes back more than one hundred years, but not quite the history I had conjured with. The first Hermitage was built in 1884 as the Mount Cook National Park Administration Centre, but it also doubled as a kind of hotel and expedition base. Little more than a glorified tin shack, it survived until 1914 when it was destroyed by floods. A second Hermitage was built the following year, this time on a different site, further up the mountainside, and also much larger. In this form it survived as an exclusive hotel until 1957 when it was completely destroyed by fire, but again rebuilt, this time on the same site. It was re-designed and re-opened and remains intact to the present day.

It has since acquired a reputation as New Zealand's most famous hotel. So, now that I was finally there, why not stay the night? There was probably nowhere within a thousand miles that was quite so ruggedly picturesque.



The hotel still retains some of the expensive airs of its past, but is now more down-to-earth in its expectations of its clientele. I was offered a room in the '800 guest wing'; these premium rooms have the best views over Mount Cook. Downstairs, a large bar, warmed by a log and coal fire, looks out across the bottom of the Tasman Glacier.

Many times that night I was awoken by the what sounded like thunder, which struck me as rather odd in the middle of winter. The next morning I was told I had heard several avalanches overnight; there had been at least three a day since the recent earthquake had loosened up the snow on the mountainsides. I had seen many photos of a typical Southern Alps sunrise, so I had awoken early as I didn't want to miss seeing one for myself. But mid-winter doesn't bring the best weather to South Island, and it had changed drastically overnight; there was now an inch of snow everywhere as I pulled back the curtains. It looked magical and ethereal, but Mount Cook itself had now disappeared beneath a grey curtain of low cloud. This, I was reminded, is June in the Southern Alps: inhospitable, barren and unforgiving. What on earth makes people want to live in a place such as this, and to cap it all, then set up a five-star hotel, all in one of the most remote places in the world?

So this was the real Hermitage; It had never been a place to escape entirely from the world, as I had once imagined. I wouldn't say I was disappointed at all. I had to admit I was pleased to see a different kind of Hermitage alive and well, within reach of those who wish to withdraw for a while into some of the most spectacular scenery New Zealand offers.

Overall, my visit made me feel both humbled and impressed: one of the great things about the human race is that in spite of the often huge geographical or technical difficulties that we must first struggle to overcome, when it's all accomplished we still wish to provide hospitality to each other in the unlikeliest and remotest of places.



[1] An expanded history of The Hermitage can be found at www.hermitage.co.nz/en/about-us/hotel-history

The Hermitage, Private Bag, Mt. Cook Alpine Village, New Zealand, tel: +64 (0)3 435 1809.
email: reservations@hermitage.co.nz. 322km from Christchurch, or 4½ hours drive.



All This and Fanwriting Too: Jim Godbolt

IT WOULD BE REMISS not to point out to the British fan community that **Jim Godbolt** (1922-2013) may be one of the finest fanwriters many of us will never have heard of.

That's because Jim Godbolt's sphere of interest was British jazz, and not science fiction. He had a patchy career as a writer, only achieving success and publication in his later years of life with the two-volume, often quirky *A History of Jazz in Britain, 1919-1950*, but it was as the editor of the regular newsletter *J.A.R.S.* (Jazz At Ronnie Scott's) that, on my frequent visits to Ronnie Scott's in Soho's Frith Street in the 1990s, I repeatedly encountered what a great fanwriter he was. In true fanzine tradition *J.A.R.S.* was a free publication, and apart from the descriptions of upcoming acts at Ronnie's, Godbolt would fill the remaining pages of *J.A.R.S.* with his jaundiced looks at life, often nothing whatsoever to do with jazz. He appeared to have everything I liked in fanwriting: wit, flair; a confident humour; frequent self-deprecation, surliness and some occasional despair at fast-approaching deadlines. One of the funniest pieces of fanwriting I have ever seen in any genre was in *J.A.R.S.*, concerning Godbolt's amusement and frustration about the misspelling of his surname ('Goldblot', and so on) in correspondence from just about every company he had ever dealt with. He even included photocopied examples just to back up his complaints with the evidence.

He also wrote three memoirs, *All This and 10%* (1976), *All This and Many a Dog: Memoirs of a Loser/Pessimist* (2007) and *All This and Slowly Deteriorating Fast* (2013), which came with a 20-track CD of his favourite music. They variously covered the periods of his life from being a meter-reader for the London Electricity Board and a Navy trawlerman, to the booking agent for Ronnie Scott's and finally as a noted jazz historian.

It's to my shame that I only discovered about the death of Jim Godbolt two years after his actual passing in April 2013, half a world away from the venue I used to haunt every few weeks, and where I'd occasionally, and unexpectedly, have my table reserved right at the front when booking over the telephone, having the same name as a famous Jazz FM presenter was once a great perk.

The British jazz musician George Melly described Jim Godbolt thus, in his own memoir *Owning Up*: "Thin and tense, his head with its pointed features crouching between his shoulders as though emerging from its



burrow into a dangerous world, his eyes as cold and watchful as those of a pike in the reeds. Around this thin, heron-like figure a whole comic tradition of disaster then descended." [1] He was also caricatured in the *Daily Mail*'s strip-cartoon 'Flook', drawn by Trog with text also by George Melly.

There is a collection of Jim Godbolt's fanwriting for *J.A.R.S.* in the form of the large hardcover *Ronnie Scott's Jazz Farrago: Compilation of Features from Jazz At Ronnie Scott's Magazine*. [2] It's jazz he wrote about, but the question of "So was he really our kind of fanwriter?" becomes void after you read of his surly, self-effacing 'outsider' status in his chosen subject, something that seems to define any fan culture. He might have been a bit puzzled that he actually had fans like me of his own writing, but that's testament to the *summa* of his life's work: jazz mattered to him, and he helped it matter to the rest of us. He was often an awkward bugger and his own worst enemy, as he himself would attest.

There. Words of praise at last committed to paper, something I had hoped to do at least in his lifetime even if he would never have read them. He was a minor influence for me, and yet another voice that was a great example of what you could get away with if, and when needs must, you dared to wing it.

[1] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/culture-obituaries/music-obituaries/9827854/Jim-Godbolt.html>

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronnie_Scott%27s_Jazz_Farrago



Plagued By Acronyms The Puppies and Wombats That Will Kill Us All

SP/RP, SJW, CHORF, RH/BS, BBAALSSS.

“Balls?” That’s ‘Boring Badly Assembled Acronymically Laughable Self-Serving Shite’, to you.

Listen up, mate: it’s my word, and my word only. No one else has permission to use it, so piss off right now if you were planning on nicking it. You can’t.

Theres a gradually lengthening history behind this minor rant you are currently reading.

Back in March 2015, Brad Torgersen (SP) had a crack at acronym-coining, coming up with CHORF: Cliquish, Holier-Than-Thou, Obnoxious, Reactionary Fanatics [1] to describe how he sees the SJW militant tendency dominating the left in the current, long-running episode of All Fandom Plunged Into Holy War (that’s, presumably, AFPIHW Se25 Ep43). Hoping that it would spread far and wide he even claimed of CHORF that “It’s a word now” in a 31 March 2015 blog post. Oh dear, how ‘self-aggrandising’... Is that a word too, Brad?

Actually, Brad (I don’t actually know you, except that everyone knows you now so may I call you Brad?), CHORF is not a word. Apart from it actually being, you know, an FLA, accepted *words* generally have wide currency, whereas you still appear to be the only one using this rather clumsy creation because no one else, even among your fellow SPs and RPs, thinks it’s sufficiently cool. Admit it: it doesn’t exactly roll off the tongue in conversation, does it? Kind of gets stuck around your lips and your teeth and goes no further. I feel like some kind of overprivileged public school idiot with embarrassingly rich parents when trying to pronounce it (“Chorf. Chorf? Chor-f. Chorf. Er...”) Take a leaf out of my book, Brad: keep it to yourself, and leave the CAC (Crap Acronym-Coining) to the professionals, yeah?

This nonsense isn’t all the doing of those on the political Right, of course. Those on the Left have their fair share of blame in how our language is getting mangled with acronyms and neologisms that either don’t work at all or don’t work as well as they should. The big acronym under question here is of course SJW: Social Justice Warrior, coined to describe those well-meaning but permanently, *visibly* angry people who brought us the Tone Argument, Cultural Appropriation, Cis-, etc., plus who could forget Racefail? It’s an all-encompassing acronym designed to include even those who have no desire to be included, but nevertheless have individual social issues

that they are addressing discreetly (as opposed to loudly). It comes with no get-out clause.

Last year, in an online discussion of the ‘worst of the worst’ trolling behaviour fandom is ever likely to see (and that ostensibly came from a supposed SJW source in Thailand), British fan Simon Bradshaw, a barrister, discreetly coined the accurate term ‘Social Justice Outrage Junkies’ in November 2014 [2] as a vernacular replacement for ‘Social Justice Warriors’. SJW is not actually a recognised pejorative term among fandom at large, nor should it ever be. Simon also coined it *without* further condensing it into an acronym for the rank and file to disseminate, and it has never appeared thus, which of course further indicates there is no actual conspiracy of the Left in the whole Hugo Award ~~debate~~ slanging match, and instead Brad himself appears to be the one playing Language Policeman here to *his* rank and file. In fact, I’ve never seen SJOJ employed as an acronym *anywhere* until my unfortunate use of it in this very sentence.

Back across the Pond again, on 5 May 2015 Ulrika O’Brien added her two cents by varianting SJW to coin the term Social Justice Wombats [3]. I like this because it reflects just how disillusioned and dare I say *impatient* I myself am getting with the *whole bloody left-wing/right-wing farrago* in fandom, because we’re all SJWs in our own way, depending on which of our buttons get pushed. Believe it or not, wombats have an ecological niche and a function to fulfil within nature, and in exactly the same way that SJWs have supposedly forced their way into the Hugo Award nominations process thereby crowding out every other sub-species of SF that’s not about SJ issues, it’s now become like the grey squirrel/red squirrel problem we have in the UK: if there’s nothing left for the red squirrels to eat then they die off (except that, hang on, the aggressive grey squirrels were introduced from North America, so maybe that’s not the best analogy. More CAC – Crap Analogy-Coining). SPs/RPs are one thing, but they themselves perceive that the other half of fandom’s current problem is caused by the Social Justice Outrage Junkies, and as we all know wombats are simply *the* rage junkies of the animal kingdom, no question. QED.

So... promote the acronym ‘CAC’ (inevitably pronounced ‘cack’) as a warning not to meddle with this stuff? Nah. CBA (Can’t Be Arsed).

[1] <https://bradrtorgersen.wordpress.com/2015/03/31/chorf-its-a-word-now>

[2] <http://laurajmixon.com/2014/11/a-report-on-damage-done-by-one-individual-under-several-names/#comment-99>

[3] <https://www.facebook.com/ulrika.obrien.1/posts/10206712264744396>



GO WHERE WE WILL, ALL OVER THE WORLD, WE SEEM TO HAVE BEEN THERE BEFORE.
John Muir, *Travels in Alaska*, 1915

In an uncharacteristic burst of unprecedented, manic, frenzied and spontaneous fanaticism, this fanzine was pieced together between 23 April and 16 May 2558 / 2015.

I wanted to publish this in May 2015, but the printer I intended to use gave up the ghost a couple of weeks into the month. Instead I printed it at home in Hua Hin in June and have mailed copies upon my return to the UK. I have made sure that Bruce Gillespie in Melbourne is likely the first person to receive it.

The title is a comment I left on Dave O'Neill's Facebook concerning the various Floating Turds That Will Not Flush currently vying for fandom's attention, sung to the tune of 'Stuck In the Middle with You' by Stealer's Wheel (1972).

The Search for Genre in Thailand

In 2014 John Clute asked me to research genre in Thailand with the aim of including a summary in the SFE, which is, to say the least, a bit of an exacting undertaking. I expect I will be writing here frequently about my experiences in researching this subject both positively and negatively. It often feels like a genre wasteland in Thailand but there are points of light too: we still have one solid touchstone in the form of maestro Somtow Sucharitkul, but few others who are known either inside or outside Thailand. In this column I hope to expand on the generally available knowledge on the subject, with reference to genre fiction by both Thai and non-Thai authors.

A Word on a Map

An older version of this article first appeared in BA's in-house *Contact* magazine. I had already done a dozen cover illustrations for the magazine and wanted to write about something that crew could achieve on their stopovers, if they cared to make use of the time available. I visited New Zealand four times in the 1990s and my sojourn to The Hermitage was made on my first trip there. On my second and fourth visits I stayed in Auckland, but on my third visit I once again ventured to South Island for some whale-watching at Kaikoura, staying in the local Youth Hostel. There were still remnants visible of the old whaling industry that had prevailed there a hundred years earlier.

Plagued By Acronyms & All This and Fanwriting Too

Is this the only fanzine ever in which the word 'farrago' has appeared more than once? AOAPP.

Fanzines read so far in 2015

- Alexiad #79** LISA & JOSEPH T. MAJOR
Ansible #330 334 DAVE LANGFORD
Banana Wings #58 59 CLAIRE BRIALEY & MARK PLUMMER
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Maybe one day I'll get round to sending some overdue Letters of Comment, something I know I've been generally crap at, given that my focus has always been on producing my own fanzine and, more recently, entering others' fanzines into the ISFDB.

Hence I'm all the more appreciative when others send LoCs to me. I'll be trying to LoC at least one fanzine a month from now on – hardly at the letterhack level of someone like Lloyd Penney, but hey, it's a start...



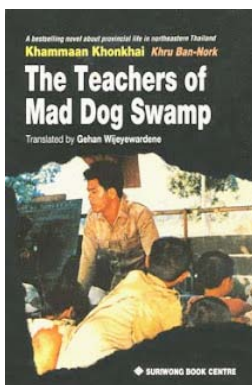
CALL THIS A SHAMELESS ATTEMPT to interest recipients of my fanzine *The White Notebooks* in Thai literature and literature about Thailand. Here will be fiction and non-fiction, genre and mainstream, by both Thai and non-Thai authors, a handful per issue. Some reviews will have already appeared on the internet and elsewhere, but I'll gather them here anyway. Also, I fully expect I will include reviews and articles by others in future issues.

Khammaan Khonkhai

The Teachers of Mad Dog Swamp

1978 | Silkworm Books, ISBN 974-7047-05-5

Translated by Gehan Wijeyewardene



There are few novels available in English that also function as Thai examinations of Thai identity (S.P. Somtow's *Jasmine Nights* also comes to mind) but this is one of the more famous. Sompong Palasoon (his pen name being Khammaan Khonkhai) began it as a film script, filmed as *Khru Ban-Nork* (*Rural Teachers*), and the book came later with its more colourful title being

used for the English translation. Set in a jungle village in Thailand's far north-east, it has to be said this isn't a gripping read so much as an ethnographically interesting one: little happens in three hundred pages apart from a minor teacher/pupil scandal, some celebrations about the building of a new classroom and the discovery and consequences of an illegal timber trade, but, as the translator Gehan Wijeyewardene says in his introduction, "the author sets out to describe the way of life of poor village folk of a remote area of the northeastern region ... He details their speech, their economy, their technology, their festivals and their food ... He glories in the environment in which they live, the cycle of seasons, their knowledge and adaptation to it."

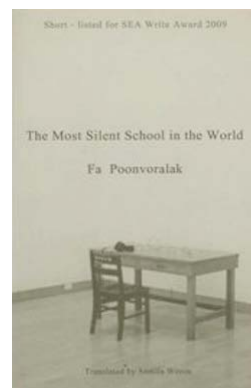
The characterisation is mostly well done if a little on the shallow side, and this kind of story is often more familiar to Western readers when played out in an African context, and indeed the kind of dramas described seemed rather continentally interchangeable as well. This was first published by an academic press, and is still a great book for reference if you want the minutiae of daily life in Thailand's remote north-east.

Fa Poonvoralak

The Most Silent School in the World

2009 | Kodji, ISBN 978-974-225-401-8, 250 baht

Translated by Samila Wenin



While experimental fiction gets as fair a shout in Thailand as anywhere else in the world, as far as I can see (and, given that I don't read Thai, maybe I can't see far enough) the country isn't really on the map for wildly imaginative speculative fiction, let alone science fiction, fantasy or slipstream. So when something comes along that is unusual and category-defying it's

rather unexpected, particularly considering that *The Most Silent School in the World* was also shortlisted for the 2009 SEA Write Award.

It's the story of eight schoolchildren of mixed ages at a riverside school in rural Thailand; they turn up when they want, night or day, there are no teachers, they play games with each other, not a great deal happens that's different from one day to the next and they're not being groomed for a life in society. That's because in our plane of existence they're not really children at all: they're the eight Trigrams of Taoist cosmology, given English/Thai names like Water Nam, Mountain Pukao and Sky Fa. Then they are visited by eight more 'echo children' from the Moon who are all subtly different, then more children arrive from the rings of Saturn, the Oort Cloud, the Sun and various other places around the solar system. They speculate if their school may in fact be some kind of spaceship. They've finally multiplied to sixty-four – the same number of pairings that make up the Hexagrams of the *I Ching* – and the physical dimensions of their school keep on growing, instantly adding more rooms as new children arrive. How they all interact may be meant to

reflect the inherent interactive subtleties of the *I Ching*'s Hexagrams; although this seems to be the intent it was often difficult to figure out beyond the characters of the children/Trigrams themselves.

All the above is not actually a spoiler as it would have helped to know something of the structure of the book before beginning it. It's also rather inconclusive, but then this story was written more along ancient Eastern lines than that of a linear, modern Western text, with the analogy of the 'Silent School' probably meaning the life situations contained in the *I Ching* itself, and the physical school representing an expansion of an octagonal *ba gua* arrangement of Trigrams. This book is both perplexing and entertaining, and for someone who's long been interested in both creative fiction and the inner working of the *I Ching* it's also a rare and valuable find, but regrettably one that will not show up at many bookstores outside Thailand.

Chart Korbjitti

Time

1993 | Howling Books, ISBN 974-91385-2-X, 240 baht

Translated by Marcel Barang



A Thai film director goes to the theatre to see what has been billed as Bangkok's most boring play of the year, in which half a dozen elderly women live their usual uneventful day in a care home for the aged. That may sound like a dull premise for a novel, and perhaps it is, but deliberately so.

Time earned Korbjitti his second SEA Write Award, and to find out why means ploughing through

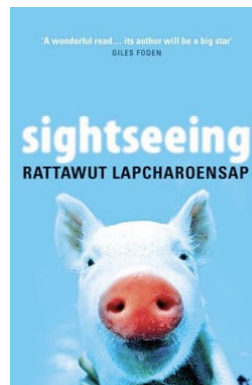
two hundred pages of rather mundane dialogue mixed with some minor personal crises. There are some winning passages in which Korbjitti gets people to look at their own lives in relation to what's being acted out on the stage; these are the novel's most interesting aspects as the sheer dullness of these ladies' existence as people essentially discarded from Thai society makes for tough reading because there is so little in what they do that will engage a reader. We often don't expect to encounter such uninteresting everyday activity in a novel let alone on a stage, so it's only the varieties of circumstantial self-reflection and analysis that Korbjitti puts a few of his characters through that gives *Time* its value.

Does he succeed? Within such a deliberately uneventful book it's the journey's end here that matters, and I doubt I will read a book this year that has a better ending. Its conclusion was so unexpectedly moving, as well as being downright clever, that it left me speechless, making me pause for five minutes before I could do anything else. *Time* may have an empty vacuum at its heart, but it's a worthwhile and rewarding experience and after some further introspection only a *superficially* hard journey getting there.

Rattawut Lapcharoensap

Sightseeing

2004 | Atlantic Books, ISBN 1-84354-372-9, £7.99



A lively, colourful collection of stories of everyday Thai life, all set in either Bangkok or the beaches of Thailand, where the demands of Western tourism define the lives of some of the disenfranchised locals. Lapcharoensap, an Americanised Thai, writes in such a refreshing and uncomplicated way that even the worst fates to befall his colourful characters are somehow given a

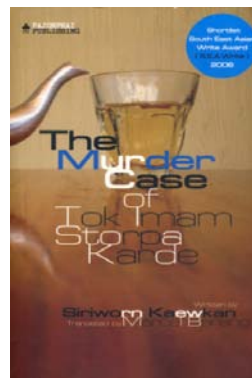
redeeming twist, portraying his people as unremittingly optimistic in the face of considerable personal adversity. One drawback is that several stories are left open-ended and feel like the opening chapters of unfinished novels, nevertheless, he's clearly a promising writer to watch.

Siriworn Kaewkan

The Murder Case of Tok Imam Storpa Karde

2006 | Pajonphai, ISBN 978-616-90197-1-8, 245 baht

Translated by Marcel Barang



I know of no other novel in English that explore the separatist terrorism affecting the three small Thai provinces that border Malaysia, and this one, shortlisted for the 2006 SEA Write Award, quickly became required reading that year with this English translation following four years later.

So who killed the much-loved imam in the small village of Tanyong Baru, right outside his own mosque? Terrorists or State officials? Soldiers or police? Is there a suspicious connection with a neighbouring Buddhist village? And why are the villagers closing their doors to an actual investigation? The reader's guess is as good as anyone else's, which indicates the clever structure of this tale of deflections and half-truths that inevitably views the subject from an outsider's perspective, yet at the same time lets the story's participants speak (seemingly, often less than truthfully) for themselves.

Kaewkan simply provides the necessary pieces to the jigsaw then lets the readers assemble it in a way that indicates there's an inevitable collective madness going on here. There are a number of possible courses of events discernible if this short novel is read closely, which is easily done in one sitting just don't expect a straightforward whodunnit.