

### Corflu 34: Last and First Fen

BY THE TIME YOU ARE READING THIS, I will have put together a more complete con report for *Banana Wings* and you will have had a chance to read it. But this editorial was written first. Fan writers have special dispensation to work that way. I offer my sincere thanks to everyone who voted for *The White Notebooks* in the 2017 FAAn awards, and don't believe all the negative stuff they tell you about "the greying of fandom". Corflu 34 may have had a 56 year-old Guest of Honor and a grand 80-something year-old Con Chair, and the four greying FAAn Award winners here present may all be in their mid-to-late fifties, but the enjoyment had by all present is indicative that there is energy yet in paper fanzine fandom to do stuff that is worthwhile and inspiring. Sure, the enjoyment we had relies on specialist knowledge in several areas — science fiction, fanzine production, fan writing and fan art — and sure, that knowledge is only acquired via personal attention to the details and histories of all those, but all fans present were aware of the importance that this knowledge is made available for future generations of fen and isn't lost. The timebinding goes on, and it takes both enthusiasm and energy to do so.

The kind of thing I put into *The White Notebooks* is often a little obtuse or irrelevant to science fiction fandom at large, but as it all appears in a perzine rather than a genzine or an academic journal, that doesn't — or shouldn't — really matter. Different kinds of publications have different editorial requirements for material that's included, and what goes into a humble perzine should emphatically not be seen as mere offcuts that would be

rejected from a 'higher' kind of publication. Thus, the way the material is received and commented on ought to bear some consideration for the nature of the publication itself: what's there may not (yet) necessarily be *meant* to have achieved the heights of academic rigour; what's there may even be a first draft or a test article destined for revision and tightening up later. It's not even a requirement to indicate such in a perzine, but I usually choose to. What goes into a perzine is at the whim of the editor alone — no one else gets to dictate, and as I indicated above, legitimate comment always ought to take into account the nature of the venue.

The science fiction perzine is also the distant cousin of the round-robin, end-of-year family newsletter. I've included some family stuff in *TWN*, and I'm aware that for some readers this is the stuff they'd prefer to skip over; for others this is the stuff that may interest them most. Whatever; I've had fun writing it, and if that's the case I'm at liberty to include it. The stuff I haven't enjoyed writing generally gets kept on file until I choose to take another look at it in order to consider another angle. All perzine editors go through similar mental processes when editing what comes out of their head and fingertips before finally choosing what to present.

But I reckon there is a similarity between what we as practicing genre perzine editors do and what non-genre paper fanzine publishers generally choose to do. The thing is, most fanzine publishers in the wider world don't go for science fiction as their focus or even their content, and science fiction is still niche in that regard. At Corflu 34 it

was pointed out by Ted White – I’m certain it was Ted, and it was probably not the first time he’s done it – that when SF fanzine fandom began it was all being done by enthusiastic but generally penniless guys in their teens or at least in their twenties. In 2017, evidently it’s all greying men and women in their 40s to 70s with a surfeit of time and money who are carrying the torch, but having seen how several new members of Corflu were welcomed and included in the small con program this weekend I can see there is still the required energy to carry our weird hobby forward. All it needs is still more people, and sharing our sense of inclusion with them.

It wasn’t just the ‘Best Pzine’ Award or the fact that I was guest of the Corflu 50 Fan Fund that led to my

own sense of inclusion being validated. Some of the time I still felt like a bit of a newbie – Randy Byers, for instance, is just a week older than me but has had far longer in fandom than myself – and the personalities from decades ago, mentioned and discussed in panels, mostly American but also British, were sometimes completely new to me.

So age, from my own point of view, really should not be the issue. There are younger fanzine editors than myself who have also had longer in fandom and thus have far greater knowledge of fandom than myself, and I’m therefore not trying to school anybody. But Ted’s comment stuck with me. Why are the teenagers of today, living in a science fiction-saturated world, not doing paper fanzines instead of blogs? Can they be attracted and welcomed?



## Benjamin Wilkomirski’s Fake Holocaust Memoir *Fragments*

FINDING GENERALLY AVAILABLE Holocaust memoirs published outside of Yad Vashem [1] is not always easy, and not made easier by questions about the authenticity of books such as Jerzy Kozinski’s *The Painted Bird* and **Benjamin Wilkomirski’s** *Fragments*, which is now recognised as a rather unfortunate work of fiction.

Wilkomirski’s now notorious 1995 ‘memoir’ had not been published for long in several other languages when, in 1998, questions were being asked by Swiss journalist Daniel Ganzfried about the authenticity of Wilkomirski himself. His investigations uncovered the likely perpetration of a deliberate literary fraud, and when the questions became accusations Wilkomirski’s literary agent commissioned Swiss historian Stefan Maechler to deconstruct *Fragments* and learn the truth about Wilkomirski. The ‘Wilkomirski affair’ is now well documented, but the potted history is that Wilkomirski was the son of a single Swiss mother who was given up for adoption at the age of two, is neither Polish nor Jewish nor had brothers (as he claims), had never set foot in a concentration camp, was brought up with the name Bruno Dössekker by a middle-class Zurich couple, and eventually worked as a classical musician. The best, ultimately, that can be said for *Fragments* is that it appears to be a misguided and unfortunate (perhaps even cynical) blurring of the line between metaphor and truth; at worst it may have undermined the reputations of several historians, educationalists and therapists who still believe it has proper contextual relevance and meaning, it provided fuel to Holocaust revisionists, and fooled a considerable number of people.

The book itself is a series of disjointed ‘recovered

memories’, a shaky enough foundation on which to base a Holocaust memoir. The premise of the book is that Wilkomirski’s true parents were murdered by Nazis in Riga, Poland, and he continued to survive alone as a child in Majdanek and Birkenau before being smuggled out to Switzerland at the end of the war. His adoptive parents claimed his concentration camp memories were just bad dreams that he must forget, but with help he was able to establish that these memories were ‘real’. *Fragments* was therefore driven by the need to fill a large hole in his past, which his adoptive parents refused to share with him. Why would Dössekker perpetrate such a fraud, when there appears to be no motive other than the attention-seeking behaviour of someone claiming victimhood? It is this that shouts loudest in *Fragments*, written with the tone of a scared child throughout, a persona which Wilkomirski/Dössekker carried through convincingly in his public appearances as the awards rolled in. In retrospect, with some self-imposed editing and revision it could have made a legitimate (if rather strained and brutal) work of children’s fiction, and Dössekker could have kept his credibility intact instead of being forced into hiding.

So knowing it’s a fraud, why read a book such as this? Mostly to view the tone with which it is written, to see if one can smell the rat and maybe see where Wilkomirski trips himself up. These ‘recovered memories’ are far too detailed to be authentic. The style is one in which almost every paragraph, filled with “shards of memory with ... knife-sharp edges”, craves sympathy for yet another hardship, yet another injustice or indignity, calculated to bleed you dry of emotion. Comparisons are sometimes made with Elie Wiesel’s *Night*, recognised as a

legitimate memoir but still with its own detractors, though Wilkomirski seems to want to go one better by delivering his points of impact with an overbearing intention to shock: adults are dangerous because they are best at fooling you, children stand in buckets of shit to keep their feet warm, babies die from gnawing their fingers to the bone for lack of food. At an early point in the book, presumably as a suppressed memory, Wilkomirski witnesses the murder of his father and from then on women are portrayed as stern nurturers and men as psychopathic murderers, a delineation that lacks balanced realism. This tells you it is not so much ‘us vs. them’ in the context of a Holocaust memoir, as ‘big vs. small’ or ‘me vs.

everyone else’, with only little grounding in verifiable fact.

It was a technique that in terms of literary style alone perhaps should not have fooled as many as it did, yet in other places, relieved of its unfortunate accompanying baggage, it is easy to see why *Fragments* initially received the accolades “small masterpiece”, “stunning”, “unforgettable”, and “morally important”. But in truth it is nothing more than a catalogue of invented horrors, supposedly unquestionable because of their sacrosanct location, and as a piece of holocaust literature *Fragments* is now worthless even as a legitimate novel, only worth reading for the curiosity value and necessarily to be taken with massive pinch of salt.

[1] <http://www.yadvashem.org>

## The Search for Genre in Thailand



### Genuine Thai Fakes: ‘Benjanun Sriduangkaew’

OH, LOOK. It’s *this* thread again.

Thankfully it has been mostly quiet around this neck of the woods the last couple of years, and I had hoped that enough time has passed to be able to look with some objectivity at the history of ‘winterfox’, ‘Requires Hate’ and currently ‘Benjanun Sriduangkaew’. But, like the Floating Turd That Will Not Flush, in February 2017 she was invited back to shit in our punchbowl once again when *Apex Magazine* announced it was inviting fandom’s most despised troll to head up a discussion on the subject she has proven herself to be most capable of wrecking, that of ‘diversity in genre fiction’. Fortunately the whole idea was scrapped as a result of the outcry against the absurdity of Sriduangkaew being involved in such a thing. It had been hoped that she’d finally disappeared from fandom as one of the most reviled fans ever (if not *the* most), so it’s good to know that collectively we have a longer memory than ‘Sriduangkaew’ would prefer.

A pocket history. Over the years she had three prominent personas amongst other assorted sockpuppets: ‘winterfox’ on Live Journal, ‘Requires Hate’ at her own blog and the most recent construct ‘Benjanun Sriduangkaew’; a writer, obviously a pseudonym, if not of just one person then at least one more. The person behind all these personas was revealed [1] in July 2015 to be the privileged-to-the-hilt Venesa Buranupakorn from a politically prominent Chiang Mai family. She was shown to have lied about herself repeatedly, and about others even more. My own thoughts about her can be summed up as ‘Requires An Intensive Course In Transactional Analysis’: the abuse, threats and dysfunctional vitriol Buranupakorn has dished out for more than a decade are now a matter of

record, documented in many locations on the internet but nowhere more comprehensively than in Laura J. Mixon’s ‘A Report on Damage Done by One Individual Under Several Names’ [2], for which, as a single piece of aggregated reporting, Mixon won the 2015 Hugo Award for ‘Best Fan Writer’.

Sriduangkaew’s stories were written and published, and people even liked them and nominated them for awards. She may or may not have written them all by herself; possibly they were the work of one other, or maybe written in partnership with at least one other. I had read two before the RH/BS connection was revealed and not denied: they gave the impression of an author who had done at least one creative writing course. ‘BS’, naturally, could never say she had done such a thing: that would imply other people would know her identity. Only a very small number of people have either implied or claimed to know Buranupakorn personally. But it’s my opinion that although the aimless vitriol and bile of ‘Requires Hate’ is the responsibility of one individual, ‘Benjanun Sriduangkaew’ is a different creation, a construct of Buranupakorn and maybe one other, initially intended as little more than an editorial identity, or ‘voice’, for the ‘Sriduangkaew’ websites and interviews.

Prior to the doxing of Buranupakorn (which I don’t endorse), searching the name on the English-language internet provided only links to stories and her Tumblr and Wordpress sites, plus other sites with extraneous comment. Even now, little more can be discovered that way. The person who doxed Buranupakorn in July 2015 maybe took a roundabout and lengthy route to their discoveries, but an online search of the name in

Thai that I made in late 2014 brought me to her front door in just a few seconds, via the Benjanun Sriduangkaew Limited Partnership [3] registered as a business in Thailand on 20 May 2014, with an office address of the Empress Hotel in Chiang Mai. This easily obtainable and openly available information was then matched by several genre professionals, and establishing the identity of RH/BS became a comparatively easy affair. *And still, there was no doxing*, this knowledge was kept purely for professional use.

Now, allow me to get personal for a moment, because I too was trolled by ‘winterfox’ [4, 5], and I’ll sum up my own thoughts on the legacy of this malevolent internet persona although I’m certainly not looking to have the last word on the RH/BS issue. Plus, no surprise, I actually prefer not having to live with the shamefully complicit and enabling behaviour of others who still regard monsterring as a spectator sport. Fandom is now enjoying not having to negotiate its way around this metaphorical steaming pile of shit that sat outside our fannish front doors every morning. With the revelation that RH and BS were one and the same, this elephant in the room had left one pile too many that forced fandom to say to itself, “We need to shovel this”.

I made my own reckoning on the shared identity of RH and BS back in Summer 2014, some time before it became public knowledge. I summarised as much in a Facebook post [6] on 15 October 2014:

“I made an educated guess about Requires Hate/Bees several months ago, simply because I noticed that the number of young women in Thailand who have a similar standard of English, an interest in SF/F *and* an English-language fandom profile, can probably be counted on just one hand – in fact, I reckoned, just one finger. I actively avoided reading RH if at all possible (because, you know, life is too short) but I was more curious about what RH *didn’t* say, and the separated internet profiles of both. BS never mentioned RH, and as far as I know RH never mentioned BS (corrections welcome). They were kept safely apart, when in fact, given the number of women in Thai ‘fandom’ such as it is, you would expect them to at least acknowledge each other’s presence online, positively or negatively. This always seemed noticeably odd. Occam’s Razor, people.”

When I published *Big Sky* #1 in March 2013, an issue looking at Asian genre fiction, *Big Sky* was to be an RH-free zone. What a damn shame, then, that I gave a small name-check to ‘Benjanun Sriduangkaew’ on page 5. As she sneaked in under the radar my forgiveness is in short supply, so I’ll try to keep further thoughts brief because I don’t want to run the risk of mixing even more metaphors.

There are after effects that still bother me, one being that other Thais who want to write genre in English may now have an extra hurdle to overcome as part of the backlash against Buranupakorn’s abuse, that issue of identity. Imagine another new Thai genre writer, male or female, a genuinely different one, and the problem s/he may now have to prove to a suspicious, predisposed Western readership that s/he is not RH/BS under a new guise. Would this be fair to that person? No. How much more damage could RH/BS have done? Well, there’s one small example. It was bad enough knowing that fandom’s most prominent hate-blogger identified as Thai (except when she shape-shifted into Chinese for convenience), so it’s a problem for everyone that fandom will likely never greet another new Thai writer with arms quite as open and wide as that writer may deserve. This I lament. The self-serving damage RH/BS did to the promotion of Asian genre writers in the West is now on record, not to mention the damage she has done to other, more serious and important causes. All in the name of her own attention-seeking behaviour, pathetic vanity, and long (and, by several accounts, continuing) history as a serial abuser.

Since that Summer of 2014, some have expressed a wish that she just go and do something useful with her life instead (“like fuck off and end it” – some anti-RH snark I’ve seen could accurately be described as ‘KTF’). Me, I couldn’t care less what she does as long as she stays away from fandom and doesn’t try a career in either education or politics, given her track record of racism (the cheap ‘no blacks, no dogs, no Irish’ variety that I grew up witnessing) and hypocrisy (as in attacking those you claim to speak up for). I made my own position clear in October 2014: while I am not in favour of blacklisting, any editor that has continued to publish her stories automatically loses a sale to me, and forfeits a possible review and any award nomination that may have resulted, and I will cancel my subscription for any online magazine that does the same. I’ve already had to act on that promise: once when Tor.com published a BS story in 2015 (email newsletter unsubscribed), and once when *Clarkesworld* did the same in April 2015 (unsubscribed and future financial support withdrawn). *Beneath Ceaseless Skies* also published a BS story in July 2015, and I have not visited that website since that time.

Whatever anyone’s position is on this issue, it’s none of anyone else’s business, including mine. No reasonable person wants to further any harm done by Buranupakorn, and yet a dwindling few continue to support her while hopefully we will see the final nail banged into this particular coffin. Fandom has learned a great deal from her decade of abuse in order to prevent a recurrence, and is now thankfully able to move on. She’s history, but you can always check out @creepalicious on Twitter if you really need updates.

[1] <https://winterfraud.wordpress.com/2015/07/05/requires-hate-revealed>

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

[3] <http://www.company-thailand.com/ทจ-เบญจนันท์-ศรีดวงแก้ว>, also <https://opencorporates.com/companies/th/0503557002948>

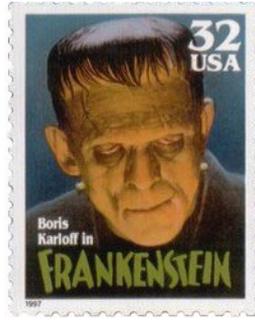
[4] <http://sf-with-bite.livejournal.com/166997.html>, thread started by Alex Dally McFarlane who has since deleted her LJ.

[5] Follow up at <http://peteyoung.livejournal.com/825386.html>

[6] <https://www.facebook.com/peter.a.young/posts/10154723131615084>

## Markers

lightly edited



### WAHF...

Elizabeth Billinger, John Bray, David A. Hardy and Farah Mendlesohn.

### RIP...

Rodney Leighton, of Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia, who wrote a couple of entertaining LoCs to me last year that appeared in *TWN* #4 and #5. Another voice sadly silenced.

JAMES BACON, Iver, England; 6 February 2017  
FROM THANDA, SOUTH AFRICA

I am on a trip to South Africa, evading work but busy with Dublin 2019 and fan writing. Well, I try, at least!

Sad news about Peter Weston. I am sure it brought to mind your own recent loss of your dad. That happens, I fear, although it's different for everyone. My thoughts are still with you, and your family with my condolences of course.

The A380 is a big bus! Smooth and huge. The top is a whole 777, I think, 2/4/2, same layout. Love it.

Post from South Africa seems very cheap, but let's see how long it takes to get there! ~ About one month. ~ Today it's big beasts, but I swam with sharks, nice bunch. Far nicer than the Business Meeting crowd, that's for sure!

Do you ever use the State Railway of Thailand? I see there will be high speed rail to China and bullet trains from Japan for some routes in the future. Fascinating stuff.

~ We used the overnight sleeper trains a few times to get between Bangkok and Bang Saphan (Benji's home town). A charming way to travel, and it reminded me of the old overnight Nairobi Mombasa trains in Kenya, although they were superior for comfort and even had a restaurant car serving soup in bowls (not ideal on a moving train), undercooked meals and, gasp, Kenyan wine. There has been talk for years of a high-speed connection between Hua Hin and Bangkok and to the far Northeast, but it's become one of those on-again/off-again, believe-it-when-I-see-it projects. Most of the land has been secured to do it, the Chinese have offered to build it, the government are see-sawing on whether there is enough money (easy answer: there isn't), and as is common in this part of the world corruption investigations (and probably a corruption investigation into the corruption investigations) are yet another reason why it's been shelved again for the time being. But who knows, next week it might be on again! ~

ANDY SAWYER, Chester, England; 10 March 2017

You probably have not got Sawyer's Laws of Genre Formation:

- 1) Fantasy: that form of literature which appeals because it is *TOTALLY UNLIKE ANYTHING YOU HAVE EVER READ BEFORE!* and, once read, makes you want to read something exactly the same.
- 2) Science Fiction: see Fantasy.

Or My Corollary to Clarke's First Law (what is mine what I wrote): "When a distinguished but elderly literary critic states that something is good, they are almost certainly right. When a distinguished but elderly literary critic states that something is bad they are almost certainly wrong."

And My Corollary to my Corollary: "In the unlikely event of my ever becoming "distinguished" (I am working on "elderly"), the second sentence does not apply."

Also, this is something I have seen several times in some form or other, but always needs restating: "Any sentence which begins "Everybody knows that..." is probably going to end with something that is untrue or nonsense."

~ Similar to the maxim that any news headline that asks a question (eg. "Does the UK have a snowball's chance in Hell of surviving outside of Europe?" the answer the reader must infer from the question is "No". ~

JUKKA HALME, Helsinki, Finland; 8 March 2017

Apologies for not being very responsive, I'm afraid I've become even more passive than before with my communication. I blame mostly the fact that I'm floored by the Worldcon 75, but also responsibilities at work are unfortunately getting more and more time consuming. And stress-inducing. My current relaxation seems to consist mostly of near-comatose Netflix-as-white-noise and trying to keep up a brave face.

Hence I was chuffed to receive your email and another *White Notebooks* (the one before spend many a week at the back pocket of my bag, until I found the printout), but, alas! No file. If this was your ingenious plan to make me respond to you, it worked.

JERRY KAUFMAN, Seattle, WA; 26 March 2017

Thanks for the new issue I read it several weeks ago, and then let it get buried in the pile of magazines, fanzines, and mail kipple that occupies the middle cushion of our sofa.

Now that I've dug it out, I see that I didn't have a

lot of comments, interesting or otherwise. About the eponymous laws, I can say that I remember when compiling such laws (and rules of thumb) was quite a fad, both in sf fandom and the larger world. There were pages and pages of Murphy's Law and its innumerable corollaries and special cases. My favorites, though, were the original law ("If anything can go wrong, it will") and O'Toole's Corollary (or was it Commentary?), to wit: "Murphy was an optimist."

LLOYD PENNEY, Etobicoke, ON; 27 March 2017

I have here *The White Notebooks* #8, and wonder of wonders, I have some time to actually respond. That doesn't happen much these days. Crazy days it is...

Cairo... that will have to be a virtual trip for me. Most of England is a virtual trip, so we have been watching a lot of BBC documentaries. We've made the decision that we'd like to go back to England, but we have to save the right amount of money first. We're thinking York and Bath, and maybe zip up to Edinburgh. I have distant family in Ayr, Kilmarnock and Irvine.

A marvellous list of laws... Arken's Law must be in effect right now, given how the current US administration is to the doublespeak of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Celine's Laws also look pretty familiar, what with I see in the news. Glicksohn's Maxim has been quoted a few times in some fanzines, especially by me: "IF<sup>3</sup>... If fandom isn't fun, it's futile."

And when it comes to Sturgeon's Law and 90% rule, we usually admit that Sturgeon was an optimist.

My letter... we're having our own family death problems. Yvonne's mother Gabrielle passed away just a few days ago, and she is the only dry-eyed sibling in a room of teary-eyed family. I miss her. Yvonne's sisters have been cruel to her, and me, over the last week or so, so I suspect there will be a change in relationships soon. We are expecting this as it comes close to the time of the reading of the will. I will admit that some of the preparations for Gabrielle's passing have been an education for all, something we will be putting into effect, seeing we're getting on in years myself. We are struggling with our wills right now. It does look like we will go to Michigan in July... the number of people coming from Canada and being stopped or turned back by US Customs is getting lower. Some of the reasons given for stoppage have been racist or sexist, but with the huge border we have, they simply can't stop us all. US Customs has to have a legitimate reason for stoppage, but if we have all our papers in order (convention flyer, hotel reservation, etc.), they have no reason to keep us.

You are very lucky to be going to Corflu 34 in the LA area. I've been to a couple where programming was light or non-existent; I'd like a Corflu with lots to do. Maybe I will be blessed like that in a future year.

Time to fold it up, and get going, and in a couple of hours I will be on my way to work. All I have been able to find after all these months of unemployment is an unpleasant telemarketing pit, making requests for charitable donations. Horrible place, so I hope I won't be there long. I am being considered for other jobs, so I hope they hurry up and make their decision. Thanks for this issue.

DAVID REDD, Haverfordwest, Wales; 20 March 2017

Many thanks for *TWN* #8 and *TLS* #8. Sorry brain feeling too stodgy for proper LoC. The usual excuse, all sorts of Real Life intervening. Won't mention how after all that fuss arranging fixed-term Parliaments Mrs. May calls a snap election anyway. Mustn't grumble. I could be a 5-year-old cobalt miner in Africa. Here, I have health and food and the leisure to read fanzines, which puts me among the more privileged of this world.

A few comments, though. The *TLS* is very welcome. Glimpses into different worlds like the glimpses of different universes in P Schyler Miller's "Reference Library" book reviews years ago not much hope of reading the actual books, but the capsule descriptions fascinate.

Your pyramid turning into an indecipherable message strikes me as deeply metaphorical. Provided the meaning remains unknown. Any translation, even "Look on my works ye mighty!" would be a let-down.

Great list of laws. The genesis of Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics (according to Sam Moskowitz, well-informed but nit-pickable) came after Asimov submitted the short story 'Reason' to *Astounding*. Allegedly Asimov walked into Campbell's office and had them recited to him. "Asimov claims that Campbell invented the laws, but Campbell asserts they were implicit in the story, as indeed they were." I do love these Moskowitz versions of history (in his *Seekers of Tomorrow*.) As for Clarke's laws, the continuing riffs on his Third Law in particular suggest that Clarke was pretty close to the truth there. Haldane his *Possible Worlds* essay-collection contains further eye-popping stuff beyond Haldane's Law, including a pre-Nazi view of "Eugenics and Social Reform." But the cream came from Arthur Thomson with Murphan's Laws, notably nos. 2, 7 and especially 12.

Agree with James Bacon that Flann O'Brien was enigmatic (his *The Dalkey Archive* sits on my bookshelf daring me to understand it), but then O'Brien threw off enigmas like dandruff. I have an interest in the old multi-author Sexton Blake thrillers; O'Brien liked to pose as one of the pseudonymous hacks. He convinced some people that he did write Blakes, even though the evolution of his daydream into legend follows the same mythic path as say Charlie Chaplin's jest about lowering the castle drawbridge and putting out the milk bottles: a jokey suggestion successively elaborated until finding its way into history as "fact". But the Flann O'Brien stamp was genuinely well-deserved, and I hadn't known about it appearing a day late. Perhaps the lateness was well deserved too.

~ The one Flann O'Brien enigma I want answered one way or the other is his suspected authorship of 'Naval Control' which appeared in *Amazing Stories Quarterly*, April 1932, as by "John Shamus O'Donnell". While no archival material has emerged to prove as much, it was nevertheless included as Appendix II in *The Short Fiction of Flann O'Brien* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2013) purely on the strength of the circumstantial evidence. ~

MARK PLUMMER, Croydon, England; 1 May 2017

I feel as if I have to some extent just spent the weekend in your company, as one of the participants in ‘Robert’s iPad Event’ as Corflu 34 manifested in the livestream bolstered by a steady stream of emails and photos from Spike.

We’d been watching bits of panels and the auction on Saturday, and then tuned in yesterday evening hoping to catch Randy’s GOH spot before we went to the pub. We arrived in the stream to find it pointing at you and Randy – oddly, and I can’t account for this, I didn’t recognise you at first – and then you promptly both got up and walked away, leaving us looking at a can of Canada Dry, a baseball cap and a pair of sunglasses.

~ ...which ended up on the cover of *Vibrator* #39. I don’t know why Rob would have thought a stream of me and Randy doing brunch would be so entertaining. He simply plonked his iPad on the table in front of us and wandered off to get brunch himself before Randy and I could say anything. Me, I just avoid photographing people eating – no one ever looks good. ~

So we watched that for a bit with a hubbub of voices in the background, and then you came back with brunch. As Claire said, it was tempting to wave hello even though it wasn’t a two-way process. So we watched you eat brunch as we ate dinner, and then saw Randy’s GOH spot and the awards before heading down to our local where they were serving an APA called Sumo – the \$ is deliberate apparently – from Mad Squirrel. A perfectly pleasant Sunday on a bank holiday weekend.

I had wondered if this year might be your year, having seen the positive notices of *TWN* in Flag #19, and then Guy’s *The Zine Dump* #40 landed, lauding it as ‘literate, readable, mature, occasionally exotic’. Perhaps you should get that put on a t-shirt.

~ I most certainly will. ~

And now I seem to have slipped into a wholly welcome pattern of writing to you to congratulate you on something. Last time it was the Corflu 50, and this time it’s the FAAn Award for *The White Notebooks* and the past presidency of fwa. Perhaps I should just congratulate you on one of them for now and save the other for next time, just in case you don’t do anything congratulatable between *TWN* #9 and #10.

~ I am eternally grateful to Rob, you and Claire, and everyone in the Corflu 50 for getting me to Corflu in the first place... Rob and I even thought we were on the same Virgin flight home, until it transpired that I was in fact on the later flight. But that wasn’t before he was able to sneak me into the excellent Virgin club lounge at LAX for a pleasant couple of hours unwinding until his flight was called. ~

I doubt I can add anything to the list of ‘Eponymous laws’ in #8. Of course I started out thinking ‘I wonder if he’s got xxx?’ and then inevitably you had and much more besides. And that’s a lovely story about your foray into pyramid building, even if the result doesn’t have quite the enduring properties of its larger inspiration.

STEVE SNEYD, Huddersfield, England; 3 June 2017

I feel terrible about this – you took all the trouble to print dead-tree editions of three issues and they’ve been sitting here for ages with no response/thanks from me. It’s no excuse but I seem to be totally behind with things, buried in heaps of sorting that requires paper, and generally deprived of will/energy by Trump, the election, Brexit etc., (re. the latter, the farce of all claims it will make this country “independent”, when all it really means is even more crawling to try to get trade deals, to Trump, to King Salman of Saudi Arabia to buy arms to bomb Yemeni hospitals and buy property in London, Russian oligarchs, Modi, even that extrajudicial killer the Philippines President Duterte that Liam Fox said “shared our ideals”, etc etc.) The only contrasting good news in ages: our footie team, Huddersfield Town, getting back to the top tier after forty-five years via a nerve-biting penalty shoot-out, and with a team that is apparently the least costly ever to make it into the Premiership.

~ I watched it from 2 4am at home, complete with match commentary in Thai, and witnessed for myself Reading’s disappointment. I also saw Patrick Stewart in the stands for Huddersfield – his Picardian “Make It So” resolve was obviously at full strength that evening. Seriously, well done Huddersfield, and I’m not a sore loser, honest. ~

I do intend real responses to the three issues – I suspect I will offer comments on the GUP – the Great Unread Pile, bookwise – mine is similarly horrendous and made worse by the way they vanish and reappear like ghosts. One way I get rid of some once-read books is via our local bus station which now has charity book-swap shelves – you can leave them there and if you take any, leave a donation.

Your very interesting article sourcing various SF quotes reminds me of one I came across recently: that “multiverse”, which I’d long thought was from John Couper Powys’s *Porius*, in fact predates that book via Henry James’s philosopher brother, who coined it (unless he in turn got it from elsewhere?) to express the way each person has a separate universe in the brain. Plus, one quote (not SF) I’ve never sourced, a life lesson learned far too late: “You earn the right to do something by having done it”!

~ I’ve just enough space here to excerpt from the Online Etymology Dictionary’s entry, which has this:

**Multiverse** (n.)

1895, William James’s coinage, an alternative to universe meant to convey absence of order and unity.

“...Truly all we know of good and beauty proceeds from nature, but none the less so all we know of evil. Visible nature is all plasticity and indifference, a moral multiverse, as one might call it, and not a moral universe.” [“Is Life Worth Living?” address to the Young Men’s Christian Association of Harvard University, May 1895]. ~

Anyway, a small apology for the delay and a complimentary copy to you of one of the remaining copies of my SF poetry collection *Mistaking the Nature of the Posthuman*, and thanks also, by the way, for the poetry collection you sent me.



### Conflict Resolution vs. Teaching Kids How to Kill

At depressing times like the Virginia Tech shooting of 16 April 2007 [1] or Anders Breivik's rampage in Oslo on 22 July 2011, I have found myself reverting to the admittedly rather simplistic notion that 'weapons will find a way of being used', and most especially this might apply to guns. It certainly may not be accurate in the strictest sense, but if the global arms trade ever needed an all-encompassing motto this would suffice more than adequately. If only the weapons sales brochures available at any Arms Fair could reassure buyers of their product with such confidence! I often feel it's the existence of the weapons themselves that are the problem, to which the usual reply/non-answer/excuse might be "guns don't kill people, people kill people", which is equally inaccurate in the strictest sense when seen from my side of the argument.

On that day in April 2007, as I arrived at San Francisco airport and before I'd even heard about the Virginia Tech shooting, I was counting the number of people I saw carrying guns: as far as I could tell, all police and customs officers. About twenty, in a not very large area of a few hundred square metres. Walking through American airports sometimes feels like walking through a militarised zone, and I often wonder what are these people's individual relationships with the guns they carry: do they like them or hate them, carry them willingly or under duress? Do they get a kick from the weapons training they receive, or only do it because it's part of the job? Do they have guns at home as well?

These people also have psychological evaluation as part of their weapons training. Seung-Hui Cho, the 23 year-old South Korean who pulled the trigger so many times at Virginia Tech, actually got his two weapons a couple of months before his mass murder by slipping through the state's evaluation net, and then getting in some practice at a local shooting range first before killing thirty-two and wounding seventeen people. He was an entirely self-taught killer who believed he was in conflict with others when in fact he was entirely in conflict with himself but, of course, it was others who had to die. No doubt the two people who sold him the ammunition over eBay both have entirely clear consciences.

Gun culture in America is not a subject I feel any need or desire to have a detailed knowledge of, just knowing it's a huge problem is more than enough. I don't know if American kids are given weapons training in any context. Britain has had its own school killing

sprees which were equally bad, notably Dunblane and Hungerford. We abhor this kind of violence when it is used against kids, but at the same time we continue to put guns in the hands of children and teach them how to use them.

Nations have different responses to mass shootings, including the mostly successful gun amnesties of the UK and Australia. I am attracted to what is going on in Norway, which is making more effort than probably any other country in instilling conflict resolution skills in its children, and this is brought into sharp focus when we consider Norway's own recent episode in the tragic excesses that an overfamiliarity with guns can inflict. The murder of seventy-seven people by Anders Breivik in Oslo is somehow especially disturbing because its perpetrator seemed to lack any empathy, being logical and rational, identifying with no religious cause other than Islamophobia. He was declared exempt from conscription to Norwegian military service on the grounds of being deemed "unfit for service" and instead, still in his early twenties, he got paramilitary training at a camp in Belarus that was run by a retired KGB colonel. He attended a shooting club between 2005 and 2007 and acquired his guns legally in Norway in early 2011. He declared that the main motive for his murder of seventy-seven innocents was to market his political manifesto. After many (sometimes conflicting) psychiatric evaluations and assessments, Breivik's trial began on 16 April 2012, coincidentally (or not?) the 5th anniversary of the Virginia Tech shootings. His maximum security incarceration and his various appeals against his treatment ever since can provide an interesting if morbid diversion from other recent gun atrocities around the world, if the reader feels so inclined.

What is my own relationship with guns? This comes in two parts, but it goes back to my school years in the UK. When I was 14 in 1974 I was pressed by my own school into joining the voluntary Combined Cadet Force [2], the national 'kid's army' recruitment drive to induce children into a future military career. Its current stated aim is "to provide a disciplined organisation in a school so that pupils may develop powers of leadership by means of training to promote the qualities of responsibility, self reliance, resourcefulness, endurance and perseverance" (no mention of weapons). In 1974 this was done by means of playing at soldiers in khaki uniforms, square-bashing in the school playground, and gun training with both blank and live ammunition. I

refused to attend after a few weeks. When it came down to it, they were legally putting weapons of death into the hands of children, and for all I know the CCF may still do so now. I was being taught how to shoot (and, by extension, kill) two years before I was even allowed to legally have sex, and four years before I was allowed to vote. This is the kind of thing we abhor when we see guns put in the hands of press-ganged children in Africa, so it's something of a hypocrisy to turn a blind eye to a similar exposure to weapons when it goes on in your own country. Our kids are not being given a gun and told to go out and kill, so why give them this knowledge at such an unnecessarily immature age, knowledge that they may wish to use either in or out of the military or other armed public services if they can get access to guns? There are nonviolent means of teaching children the qualities the CCF aspires to without the automatic inclusion of guns, so guns clearly do not need to be involved. It's stated aim is therefore disingenuous, although I doubt any parent would claim they did not know the CCF uses weapons training with their kids.

The second part of my relationship with guns is what I have learned about the right behaviour when guns are pointed at me, which has happened three times so far in my life: once from several soldiers in Kenya, once by a policeman in Morocco and once courtesy of a traffic cop

in Los Angeles who thought it was an appropriate tool with which to let me know I had been jaywalking. The best response, I have found, is to be direct with the person pointing the damn thing at me, and if there are several (as in the case in Kenya) establish who is boss and talk *only* with that person in charge – hold onto some control of the situation if you can. It is not a time to be afraid, it is a time to be assertive and show you are *not* afraid. Your aim is to resolve this conflict as quickly as possible, and it won't be solved by the *use* of a gun.

For thirty years now I've also been saying if I ever have children I will not buy them toy guns. Now that I have kids, Miles at age 7 already knows this. He has an acceptance of cartoon gun violence but, judging by how he uses YouTube, he shies away from witnessing anything too realistic. If I achieve the same result with Sky (now one year old) I'll be happy with that.

A personal relationship with violence is something I have long tried to minimise in all forms after various exposures at a younger age, and for more than two decades it has also come right down to what I eat and wear. Whenever there is a mass shooting anywhere, particularly when a surplus of children are the victims, it always feels like a good time to look inward again and ask "what is my personal relationship with violence?", and ask if I/we can still do any better.

[1] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/6563565.stm>

[2] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combined\\_Cadet\\_Force](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combined_Cadet_Force)

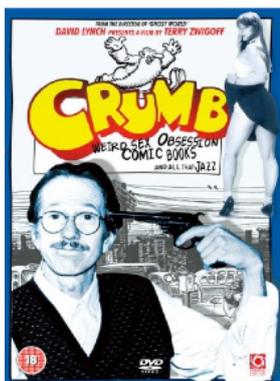


## Biopics



### Crumb

1994, Terry Zwigoff



This award-winning documentary on the comic artist **Robert Crumb**, produced by David Lynch, has always left me with a kind of bittersweet aftertaste that has actually made me watch it at least three times. Crumb comes across as remarkably affable and sane despite the various ways he has expressed his troubled perception of and hostility towards women, so it was interesting to see how much women love his art as well. He's not interested in how people try to psychoanalyse him and he doesn't bother to try it on himself either, even though he goes a little way into his troubled relationship with his violent father and his own racism in the 1960s. He appears, now, to have always been a creative guy just living out his own inner nature through the various dark filters and troublesome influences he has always surrounded himself with, and in spite of all the other self-inflicted pitfalls he's had to navigate his way through he has ended up a relatively happy man now living in semi-seclusion in the south of France. It's the way the film has drawn me back in so frequently that probably accounts for why I consider this to be an excellent biopic.



So I open my door to my enemy / And I ask could we wipe the slate clean  
 But they tell me to please go fuck myself / You know you just can't win  
**Pink Floyd**, 'Lost for Words', *The Division Bell*, 1994

This fanzine was pieced together between 3 March and 30 June 2560 / 2017. The rather heavy nature of the subject matter (for which I don't apologise) was decided upon by events in February and March 2017 that were either personal or fannish in nature or context.

### **Benjamin Wilkomirski's Fake Holocaust Memoir *Fragments***

This discussion of Bruno Dössekker first appeared on Live Journal in January 2005, in a post that received precisely zero comments. However I have seen that post linked to positively in another review of *Fragments* on Goodreads (but which has since disappeared), and occasional online discussion of the book prompts me to point to its presence at my review website [Fictionstream](#).

### **Genuine Thai Fakes: 'Benjanun Sriduangkaew'**

Not pleasant to write, and I'm well past the need for more catharsis, but the subject is relevant to this series of essays. The first draft was written in December 2014, when Chris Garcia and James Bacon were contemplating an 'RH/BS' issue of *The Drink Tank* after Laura J. Mixon's full horrifying report was released. I let Chris and James have the essay if they wanted to use it, but I also urged against doing such an issue which I believed would keep the whole RH/BS thing alive, with more rehash of the same entrenched viewpoints when all that was really needed at that time was to just, y'know, let it die off and some healing happen. There never was an RH/BS issue of *The Drink Tank*, and the essay as it appears here has been considerably revised since Buranupakorn's doxing in July 2015 and her brief re-emergence in February 2017 courtesy of *Apex*. Buranupakorn continues to write and blog as 'Benjanun Sriduangkaew', thankfully with comments disabled, constantly complaining that she now has to reap what she sowed while inevitably blaming everyone else, just as you'd expect from an over-privileged cockwomble. After being exposed as a total hypocrite she's since been pretty much banished to the outer limits of the fannish solar system. Three Bronx Cheers.

### **Conflict Resolution vs. Teaching Kids How to Kill**

First thoughts on this topic were given reign in a Live Journal post in April 2007, which I have used as the basis for this new essay. A future consideration for my kids, which I may write about soon, is what to do about military service in Thailand, which young men of a certain age are required to make time for.

### **GENRE FANZINES RECEIVED / READ IN 2017**

- All New or Reprint* #1 PAUL SKELTON  
*Ansible* #357-360 DAVE LANGFORD  
*Askance* #40 JOHN PURCELL  
*Banana Wings* #65 CLAIRE BRIALEY & MARK PLUMMER  
*Chunga* #25 RANDY BYERS, ANDY HOOPER & CARL JUAREZ  
*Counterclock* #27-28 WOLF VON WITTING  
*Data Dump* #222 STEVE SNEYD  
*Flag* #19 ANDY HOOPER  
*Inca* #8, #13 ROB JACKSON  
*Littlebrook* #10 JERRY KAUFMAN & SUZLE TOMPKINS  
*Opuntia* #369-378 DALE SPEIRS  
*Random Jottings* #12 MICHAEL DOBSON  
*SF Commentary* #94 BRUCE GILLESPIE  
*Spartacus* #20 GUY LILLIAN III  
*Vibrator* #2.0.37-2.0.40 GRAHAM CHARNOCK  
*The Zine Dump* #40 GUY LILLIAN III

A few more words on fanzines at Corflu 34. Marty Cantor brought along a number of fanzine reprints of Art Widner's *YHOS* and Bill Rotsler's posthumous *Masque*, available for a few dollars each. I purchased the first of the fifteen *Masque* issues, whose liberal — or perhaps that should be liberated — spirit might serve as an inspiration for other fan-ed's to do their own take on the format. It serves as a scrapbook of found stuff and written-out memories that Rotsler found interesting enough to want to assemble somehow into *Masque*, yet death got in the way of him completing the long journey into print for this large file of unpublished work and it was his friend Bill Warren who took it upon himself to complete the task after Rotsler's passing. I like to think of *The White Notebooks* as being somewhere within that lineage of fanzines that assemble random genre and non-genre stuff, hopefully in an entertaining way although I could hardly replicate the organised chaos that is on display in any issue of *Masque*. Any attendee at Corflu will spend part of their time there learning by osmosis and that was certainly the case with me, so I look forward to the experience again, hopefully at Corflu 35 next year in a city where I could once loosely term myself as a resident, Toronto.



At first I thought smugly that I was bringing democratic freedom of speech to a group that knew only oligarchy and dictatorship, but as the classroom discussions deepened I found with enforced humility (I was clobbered) that somehow I had become the learner and my students were on the pedagogic end.

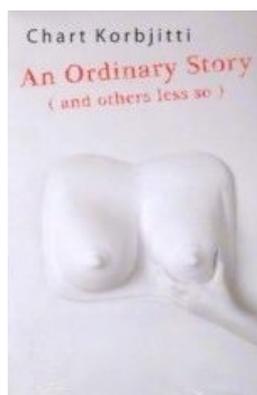
Carol Hollinger, *Mai Pen Rai Means Never Mind*, 1950

### Chart Korbjitti

*An Ordinary Story (And Others Less So)*

2010 | Howling Books, ISBN 978-616-90474-2-1, 260 baht

Translated by Marcel Barang



This collection acts as a small retrospective of Korbjitti's short fiction from 1981 to 2006. The title novella has a neat and well thought out first-person perspective, that of a deliberately detached man living in a Bangkok apartment in which another tenant is dying of breast cancer. He's an awkward and rather anti-social type, offering constant justifications for his remote and self-prescribed 'spectator' status, but as the

story progresses and the interactions with other tenants mount up the reader is able to discern why he feels he has to be that way, even though it does not make him especially likeable. It's also an interesting example of an author trying to shift a reader's perspective on his story's protagonist.

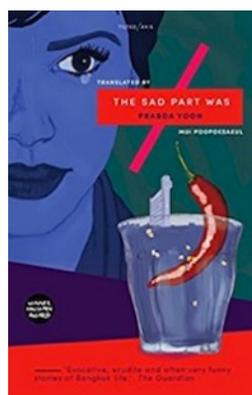
Korbjitti is always rigorous in thinking through the message of his stories, but at times he can be more experimental. 'Disappearance' is a case in point, half composed of emails concerning a man's unexplained vanishing. I was also pleased to find some genre on the menu, notably with 'Our Future' which gives free and disturbing reign to what children would do if their toy guns were real and instead loaded with live ammunition. By far the most visceral story is 'The Personal Knife', one of the most disturbing stories of cannibalism you may ever read and one in which Korbjitti again lets you discern his politics by letting you see which strata of society are the bad guys. The best story of all for me was 'Shamgri-La', in which a grandfather who had long ago inexplicably disappeared and was presumed dead returns to his family with a story of living among a community of ghosts in a cemetery. It feels like a traditional ghost story, but there are Asian ingredients that make the recipe intoxicating.

### Prabda Yoon

*The Sad Part Was*

2000 | Tilted Axis Press, ISBN 978-1-9112-8406-2, £8.99

Translated by Mui Poopoksakul



*The Sad Part Was*, I am reliably informed (and from my own explorations I also believe to be true) is the first ever translation of any Thai fiction to be published in the UK, a fact I find simply astounding in 2017. This collection won the 2002 SEA Write Award, and the translation into English for this edition also won the English PEN Award. Everything here seems well overdue, but I'd also say it's been worth the wait.

Yoon is also a filmmaker, graphic designer and translator of fiction into Thai (*A Clockwork Orange* and *R.U.R.* being just two spec-fic titles he's completed) and he has a reputation in his own fiction of both pushing boundaries and unlocking aspects of Bangkok and Thai life. There's a temptation to say his approach to his various fictional subjects reminds me of Haruki Murakami, but while there's a similarity to the themes of their fiction I'd need to read quite a bit more Yoon before making that assertion. There's plenty in this collection to get a grip on, but first you have to figure out how Yoon looks at the world, to work out his sideways point of view. Most stories are centred around odd conversations and encounters that exist just this side of possibility, and there's an element of challenging the reader to work out where a story is likely to be going, or what those vague elements of humour are actually conveying (they are certainly there). Some stories may even seem truncated or cut short, and it's a teasing move on Yoon's part. My favourite is the distinctly strange 'Something in the Air' in which a couple talk to each other like lawyers or even robots after discovering a dead man while having sex on their roof. It's almost Kafkaesque in its set-up, but don't hold that against him.

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**OThiam Chin**

*Now That It's Over*

2015 | Epigram Books, ISBN 978-981-4757-28-7, S\$25.00

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This novel shows a rather different O Thiam Chin from the experimental collection *Under the Sun* which impressed me with its diversity of subject matter, including short ventures into genre. *Now That It's Over*, which took four years to write, goes from O's native Singapore to Phuket in Thailand following two couples who are holidaying, having arrived just in time for the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami

that kills one of the four people. It traces the extent the survivors go through to find one another, and the grief and remorse they experience in finding resolution and closure. I'd have liked to see more use of foreshadowing, and the four points of view, both before and after the event and seemingly randomly sequenced, turn the novel into something of a jigsaw at times. But the tsunami and the Thai people (or are they in fact spirits?) that we encounter make a good backdrop for the drama. We have four people unexpectedly cut adrift by nature while trying to piece it together again, and the fate of Ai Ling, who still has a presence in the book beyond her death, is described with equanimity and prevents the book from becoming too sentimental. *Now That It's Over* is a successful slowburner.

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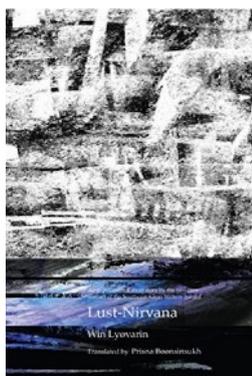
**Win Lyovarin**

*Lust-Nirvana*

1992 | 113 Company, No ISBN, \$1.25

Translated by Prisca Boonsinsukh

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When Lyovarin's 'Lust-Nirvana' first appeared in 1992, it caused a small seismic shock in Thai literature. In the same way that anyone these days can't fail to be aware of Prabda Yoon's style, Lyovarin in his early days had the same effect on his own readers, incorporating elements of graphic design and typographic innovation. Here you have two stories of the same young protagonist set side by

side, the first story has him visiting a sex worker in a brothel, while the second story relates his earlier encounter with a monk as he joins a monastery. In the way the two stories are compared side by side, Lyovarin is able to show how there's plenty that unites the two trades, with the seemingly admirable and single-minded pursuit of nirvana actually being as selfish an act as seeking sexual gratification for its own sake. The question one is left with is what to do after this conclusion has been reached.

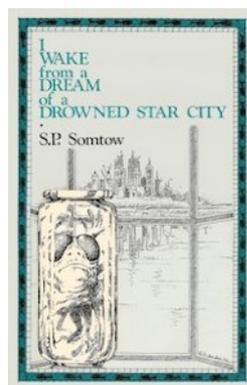
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**S.P. Somtow**

*I Wake from a Dream of a Drowned Star City*

1992 | Axolotl/Pulphouse, No ISBN, \$35.00

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Somtow's novella of a cloned and alien-educated adolescent boy ascending to the royal throne of a far future Earth is most notable for its use of incest as a plot device. As a coming-of-age story there's much Freudian symbolism at play here, and also a significant use of class and underclass within the cloned family themselves. The future Earth is unrecognisable yet the visual aspects to the story are strong – the society it depicts

and the location it inhabits does indeed feel inward-looking and thoroughly 'drowned'. Somtow's prose doesn't gloss over the sexual aspects of the way the story is rooted in adolescence and family ties; it makes for a weird read at times but the details are not dwelt upon. One thing I would have like to see more of is the bottled alien that acts as teacher; it adds a science fictional touch to something that more accurately resembles a good immersive fantasy.

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**Ploy Pirapokin**

*The Greenest Gecko*

2017 | Tor, ISBN 978-0-7653-9393-7, \$0.99e

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One of the most recent in the series of Tor Originals ebooks, Pirapokin's novelette is not her first published work but she is happily a new Thai name on the spec-fic scene. It's set in either an alternate-present or near-future South East Asia; I'd hesitate to specifically say it's modelled on Thailand, although the parallels are implicitly there with the situation of a much-loved President of a country

known as Bankim being succeeded by his playboy son, and the nation's propensity for superstition being exploited by the country's Ministry of Merit. There are references to a Third World War in the West and the President himself also being Lord of All Orbiting Planets. What sets the story off is the random interaction of one gecko with the ailing President, something that was perceived as particularly fortuitous and something that the Ministry wants to be duplicated at a later date. But for Fon, the lady put in charge of the whole strange project, things do not go according to plan; indeed she has no idea that her life is actually in peril. The story (slightly re-edited from its first appearance online) has a neat structure and a central absurdity that I found humorous and attractive, and I'd like to read more from whatever universe this is set in.