

# time considered as a helix of semi-precious facebook posts



[ the white notebooks #10 ]



## Taproot

MY FATHER WAS, LIKE MOST PROUD DADS, a hoarder of all important family stuff. Since his passing, the five of us siblings have now inherited complete files of our school reports and any other information that shows what exceptional/average/poor students we once were. In my case, at primary school I was a straight A's kid, but moving on to secondary education saw a pretty consistent decline to the point where I seem to have done well if I got a 50% grade in anything. My term reports are peppered with scores like 25% for geography (something I'd now call my second-best subject) and 18% for history, although English was certainly my best subject with scores averaging around only the 60% mark: still, pretty poor, and I loathed English Literature lessons with its relentless focus on stuff fourteen year-olds have no interest in, such as Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. Reading Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* at age fifteen was a welcome relief. Looking back over these reports, I see that I *never* scored a decent 80% in anything.

Amongst all this evidence, that I will now be able to show to my kids with the proviso of *Don't end up like your dad*, was one item that I discovered my father had kept from October 1972, when I was twelve: a cutting relating to a prize I had won with the local Friday newspaper, the *Reading Chronicle*. They had a junior section called, appropriately enough, the Junior Chronicle run by a guy called, appropriately enough, 'Uncle Tim'. I had won the weekly quiz, the prize being a bunch of stamps for my Post Office savings book. When I received them, I wrote back to Tim:

"It was a lovely surprise when I saw that I had won a prize in the 'True or False' competition. The savings stamps will start my collection of books, and although I have no certain plan, they will probably go towards the new set of Puffin editions on space."

Tim commented on my letter:

"Is space your favourite subject? It is indeed a vast complex of fact, fantasy and supposition, and I would love to hear your views on interplanetary travel, life-forms on other planets, etc."

Well, I think that was my reading pattern for the next forty years set right then and there, and it must have occurred soon after my dad had bought for me the 1972 Puffin edition of Clarke's *Islands in the Sky*. Not long after, I was buying and enjoying books by Madeleine L'Engle, André Norton and Kate Wilhelm.

I never did reply to Tim's invitation to tell him what I thought about space. It might have been that word "supposition" that put me off, a word only bespectacled elderly teachers would ever use to a twelve year-old, and heaven knew I was already surrounded by enough of those (bespectacled elderly teachers *and* twelve year-olds). Maybe I should seek him out and send him a few fanzines to let him know his enquiries were not actually wasted on me.

Thanks, 'Uncle Tim', we never knew each other beyond the exchange of a few lines, but I now see you were clearly a formative influence on me, because, much to my shame, I had forgotten about you entirely.

*time considered as a helix...* [ the white notebooks #10 ] September 2560 / 2017  
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set in 9/12 Didot and Letter Gothic  
above: 'Struwwelpeter', Heinrich Hoffman, 1845



**First coffee, then your mundane bullshit**

IT'S 3AM AND I'VE JUST WOKEN UP in yet another hotel room somewhere around the world. Breakfast downstairs isn't served for another three hours. Yes, there is complimentary coffee here, but no, it is not always any good. *I know*. Here's the brief guide to some of those nasty little red sachets that can be found in the dark recesses of hotel rooms worldwide.

Donkey's years ago, when I first started bouncing around the planet, I used to have to stash my own jar of coffee (Red Mountain, if I recall correctly) and my own small travel kettle in my suitcase if I wanted something hot to drink when waking up in a different time zone while my body clock was dragging behind (or ahead) still on London time. I got a helluva lot of use out of that kettle and the one that replaced it, and the one that replaced that.

Then in the mid-1990s I noticed a gradual improvement in most major hotel chains' willingness to provide actual hospitality beyond the bed and the bathroom soap. Rumour has it that Australian law made it compulsory for all Australian hotels to provide tea and coffee-making facilities in every room, and gradually this filtered (pun intended) around to the rest of the world. At last, that kettle I was lugging around everywhere needn't be replaced. But given the generally bad quality of hotel-room coffee, it was a poor trade-off.

As I do not have a dispensable sub-editor to whom I can delegate this kind of work I will have to suffer this indignity myself, brought to you as a public service. Either that or I don't write anything, which ain't gonna happen because this fanzine needs copy.



**NESCAFÉ RED CUP**

**Ibis Styles, Krabi, Thailand, April 2017**

I'll start with the most basic, probably found in the majority of hotels around the world that provide free in-room coffee. I try to avoid anything produced by Nestlé, but when I'm on a mission as important as this, principles need to be compromised.

The sheer grot factor of the contents of your basic red Nescafé sachet is unsurpassed, and probably always will be. This stuff has all the early morning ambience of granules stuck to the boots of the night-shift

warehouse workers as they tend to the machines that produce the *better* coffee – you really feel like you're getting palmed off with the worst quality shit Nestlé could get away with. Another word that comes to mind, strangely, is "timeless", as in either 'once tasted, never forgotten' or 'produced in no time and with an equal amount of care'. Please avoid this coffee. I'll state that again: **Please avoid this coffee.**



**KENCO SMOOTH**

**Stacy Apartments, London, England, August 2017**

Hmm, average stuff, but only a level to two above your basic red Nescafé. I dragged myself out of bed at 3am for this? Well, in all truth it's only meant to keep me awake as far as the breakfast buffet at 6am and I'm giving this a D+ rating, because while it may provide a quick lift it still deserves a place on some sad bastard's list of bad coffee.



**MOCCONA CLASSIC BLEND SELECT**

**Novotel, Tehran, Iran, November 2016**

A pretty basic dark roast, actually not bad if a little less rich in flavour than I was expecting. I made the mistake of trying the decaf first which had the opposite effect of the one expected, keeping me buzzing well past lunchtime and wondering what is the Iranian equivalent of the Trades Descriptions Act. To do it justice I ought to give it another go, but this is a grungy sort of coffee that I would hardly go to the ends of the earth to find.



**CAFE PELE**

**Hilton, São Paulo, Brazil, March 2017**

To their shame, the country that produces the best coffee in the world has also produced something that is indistinguishable from Nescafé Red Cup. If I was once the greatest footballer in the world I'd want my name on a much better class of coffee than this.

## Markers

lightly edited



**WAHF...**

**James Bacon** (twice by postcard), **William M. Breiding** (see back page), **Nic Farey**, **Bruce Gillespie** and **Earl Kemp**.

Randy's leading letter below was sent to me not long after Corflu 34, only to disappear in my Mail file, in such a way that it was never visible in my Inbox and only discoverable if a search was made for the header or the sender. There may yet be a simpler explanation, but I'm pleased Randy let me know he'd sent it after seeing no acknowledgement of it in *TWN* #9. I'm glad I've since found his LoC, and my apologies again to you, Randy, for your disappointment!

**RANDY BYERS**, Seattle, WA; 4 May 2017

I confess that I'm still the kind of deadbeat fan who rarely downloads a fanzine and prints it at home, even when it's emailed to me directly. I don't know why I don't, since I have a color duplex printer that can handle the chore quite easily. Maybe it's because I get more fanzines than I can keep up with as it is. Still, I've enjoyed previous issues of *TWN*, and from the letter column I see that I clearly missed a good issue in #7. Between that, Andy Hooper constantly beating the drum about how good the zine is, and now the FAAn Award, maybe I'll finally find the round tuit to print future issues.

But you made use of proximity at Corflu 34 to hand me a paper copy of #8, and I read it on the way back to Seattle. Another brilliant issue, Pete! 'The Day I Built a Pyramid' has a haunting, elegant quality to it. The use of second person gives the memorial an intimacy that sucked me right in.

On the other hand, your complaint about Beyoncé's music (about which I'm agnostic, having listened to little of it) reminded me of the third of Adams' Three Rules That Describe Our Reactions to Technologies: "Anything invented after you're thirty-five is against the natural order of things."

Speaking of the various rules cited, Niven's Law #19, "Old age is not for sissies", should properly be attributed to Bette Davis. Or at least the way I first heard it attributed, and that's what comes up if you google the phrase. Maybe Niven was quoting her.

We conclude this brief epistle with a reaction to the reference to Ian Dury's 'Hit Me with Your Rhythm Stick', which when I was younger and randier inspired this fragment of filk:

Hit me with your rhythm stick.

Hit my nipples, hit my dick.

(But gently please!)

**STEVE GREEN**, Solihull, England; 7 July 2017

There's one crucial difference between the traditional fanzine and the 'round robin' or 'annual bulletin': the former rarely brags about good fortune, or announces bad news with the intention (no matter how unconscious) of attracting sympathy, rather events are generally presented cold with little aim beyond a desire to educate or entertain, sometimes both.

~ Yes, we perzine editors are an enlightened bunch... ~

**LIZ WILLIAMS**, Glastonbury, England; 9 July 2017

Many thanks for *TWN* #9 – an interesting read as always. Several years down the line, I appreciated your summation of the RH/BS issue. Although assisting with Laura's report took up a substantial part of my life at the time, I consider it well worth it, and not just for the need to deal with this particularly vile troll. Its lasting impact on me has been the friendships it formed for me with the other compilers, which cross age, gender, and racial lines and has put me in touch with some outstanding other writers. So thanks to the little cow for achieving what she sought so hard not to achieve. My concern remains for the people whom she did put off, bully and blackmail into giving up their writing. I hope they find their way back to it in the future.

~ [e-mail reply] As I said on page 10, it wasn't fun to write but as I'm looking at genre in Thailand generally working up to John Clute's invitation to do a summary on genre in Thailand for SFE it had to be covered. And once again, thanks for your support as always, and for how you helped fandom in its hour (or more accurately years) of need. ~

I wish I could say it was a pleasure to have dealt with her, but actually it was just a massive pain in the arse and should never have been necessary in the first place! Anyway, we move on. And I look forward to other Thai writers doing genuinely great things.

**JERRY KAUFMAN**, Seattle, WA; 10 July 2017

Got it, printed it, and thanks. Enjoyed it, too, despite the melancholy nature of some of your subjects. (I enjoyed your Corflu convention report in *Banana Wings*, by the way.) So what do I think of your piece herein about 'Last and First Fen'? The topic's been discussed in many zines and during panels at a lot of conventions. I used to argue that we had young fans still getting into fanzines, but I don't see any evidence of that – not even if I revise my idea of "young" (or Young, Pete) to include people in their 40s and 50s.

Why are we not seeing new fanzine fans, you ask? My opinion, based on no evidence, only conjecture, is two-

fold. One fold is the swift and easy access to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media. It doesn't make sense to spend money on paper, printing, and postage, especially if you're already spending money on a monthly plan for your tablet or smart phone. (Also, you may not have any physical mailing addresses for the people you would want to read your zine.) The other fold is that the bulk of new fans have no contact with fanzine fans or much information on what sf fanzines are or how to see them. So no examples.

Your piece about Wilkomirski was interesting, as his name and book were both entirely new to me. But oddly the thing that really caught my attention was the expression you used at the end "to be taken with a massive pinch of salt." I realized that I have no idea why this idiom is used to warn people to be skeptical. I would guess that adding salt to something would give it flavor and make it easier to eat. But why would you want to make something easier to read (not eat, in this context) if it's got suspect information or interpretation?

I was aware of the person you discuss Benjanun Sriduangkaew but as my online activity is slight, I never felt the horror as you did, and did not remember many details of this person's activity. I think it's just as well.

In the US we have constant shootings, whether accidental or purposeful, and constant disagreements about how to reduce them. I'm in favor of stricter requirements for people to own guns, but because we have the right to "bear arms" written into our Constitution, and interpreted to mean the right applies to guns and private citizens, gun ownership is never going to be banned outright. With that in mind, training children (and adults) how to handle, use, and care for guns is more likely to reduce accidental shootings or shootings by children who find their parents' or guardians' pistols or rifles. (Some of the more distressing shootings have been by children who shoot siblings or classmates because they don't understand the real dangers of firearms.)

I agree with you about *Crumb*. The movie was fascinating, as is its subject. (I loved a lot of Crumb's early work, which makes me a bit sick, and his more recent portraits of blues and other musicians.)

In the *Thai Literary Supplement*, you review 'The Greenest Gecko' by Ploy Pirapokin. Are you sure that "Ploy" isn't another pseudonym for BS?

**DAVID REDD**, Haverfordwest, Wales; 14 July 2017

Thanks as always for *TWN/TLS*. So punctual and readable at least something's going right in 2017. And congratulations re FAAn award. Although, re a Corflu comment of yours on the remaining fans now having a "surfeit of time and money", for some that's only a surfeit relative to previous situations.

In your fuller Corflu report, I liked Randy's quote "We were the cool kids, once," etc. But you're only 56. When someone my age was a kid, nobody was cool except a few jazz musicians.

*TWN #9* started light, got heavier and darker. That seems to be the way of the world now.

I've been dipping back into Philip K Dick's *Radio Free Albemuth* with its satellites beaming down fake sex

and fake news, as we've since had for years, and now you remind me quite forcefully that we also have fake people disrupting life; how PhilDickian is that? The Genuine Thai Fake piece reminds me that constant vigilance is the price of survival (another quote to look up sometime, along with etymologies of "cool" and "doxing".) How tranquil my own literary life must seem through avoiding on-screen discussion groups/ mailing lists/(insert 2017 term here). I have had my own "wish I hadn't done that" episodes in life, but the RH/BS activities were on a different level not temporary insanity but consistent evil. (As with Breivik whom you mention later. Basically the wrong kind of sane.)

Another sad reflection on our times: Lloyd Penney, someone of taste and ability who has brightened many lives for years, can only find work in hideous telemarketing. Sad and also ominous. If there are no proper jobs left, what are we all living on?

Thank you Steve Sneyd for the reminder of Liam Fox saying Duterte "shared our ideals". Segued nicely into your (Pete's) Combined Cadet Force musings, I'm afraid. Society has a long history of empowering the unloveable, of increasing population and using up resources, and on present form it's not going to end well. I share your wish that the next generations should be non-violent, although I have some worries that if things go belly-up they'll be less equipped to defend themselves. Not that I want to see my grandchildren as armed-to-the-teeth survivalists. I have not yet resolved this dilemma.

And so to the more relaxing and intriguing *Thai Literary Supplement*. Some overlap with work within the international overculture, I see. Somtow and Pirapokin unarguably produce work of Thai interest from nationality and of spec-fic interest from subject, but can that work be regarded as part of the Thai national literature? You'll have to wait for a verdict from history, I suspect.

**JOHN HERTZ**, Los Angeles, CA; 28 July 2017

The man I get automobile tires (or for you, "tyres") from is Armenian. A nearby Armenian bakery closed. A nearby U.S.-type coffee house remains; when I asked the owner, who brews espresso, if she made Armenian, and she said no, I got her a *jazveh* pot and a vacuum-sealed bag of pulverized coffee (because it had directions to remind her). When I couldn't bring her to brew it with me right then I knew, as John Scarne's memoir is called, the odds were against me.

I myself have been saying "Cypriot" coffee because both Greeks and Turks live there. I could say "Pontian" for its Turks, Greeks, and Armenians, but that would be worse I'm sure.

It's dangerous giving people things. No engagement. Of course no one at the shop knows anything about it now and the owner is never there when I drop in. Meanwhile the tyre man asks, "Has that woman learned to make coffee yet?"

Niven's Law against time travel may deserve explanation. He says I shan't use quasi-quotation marks because your zines appear electronically as well as on paper, and who knows \*\*If in Universe X time travel is possible, people will use it to change the past. They will

keep using it to change the past until the result is a state of Universe X where time travel is impossible.\*\*

I've heard his Universal Message of Science fiction attributed to John Campbell as the Essential Ingredient of Science Fiction, \*\*Minds as good as you but different.\*\*

I've been calling "90% of everything" Sturgeon's Retort.

How about Hardin's Warning, "Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent", *Foundation*, p. 84, (Asimov, 1951)?

I myself applaud Eric Temple Bell's "Only a principle of the utmost simplicity can dominate a multitude of diverse problems which on even a close inspection appear to be individual and distinct," *Men of Mathematics*, p. 155 (1937; ch. 10, Lagrange). You may object it was John Taine (who lived in the same body) that wrote s-f.

Atom's "Nothing interesting ever happens at a con after 2 a.m." was in principle, though we didn't think of him at the moment, the spark of the Prime Time Party which Becky & Tom Veal and I have been hosting at Loscons for the last dozen years, 1 a.m. Sunday morning until dawn.

LLOYD PENNEY, Etobicoke, ON; 4 August 2017

Thank you kindly for *The White Notebooks* #9. I have taken this day for writing letters of comment, and this one is the fifth one today. I can't usually do that, but I have to in order to get caught up with the flood of zines I have largely ignored as we get ready for various steampunk events in the Toronto and surrounding areas. There's one coming up in just over a week, and the last press is on.

I did read your Corflu 34 report earlier today, as I wrote a loc on *Banana Wings* #66. I still enjoy loccing fanzines, and participating that way. I think fanzine fandom shot itself in the foot some years ago because it was not accepting of other people with other ways to play

the game. Today, we want more people because our numbers are thinning, but who wants to deal with some of our cranky crew? Corflu 35 will be in Toronto, but given my current shaky finances, the earliest registration rate of Can\$100 puts it out of my range. (I see near the end of the zine that you might make it here. That would get me to the con, definitely. The hundred bucks will have to come from somewhere...)

The Sriduangkaew/Buranupakorn problem... as I read this, I still marvel at the duplicity and hatefulness of people when first they plan to deceive, use a series of fake names, and spew hatred at others. And there's so many of them, too. I enjoy what I do online, but there's too much to regular life to give so much of it over the Web, and rip apart others.

The locol... James Bacon in South Africa? I wonder if he visited with the members of Science Fiction South Africa in Johannesburg. They are a growing club, and they send me their regular zine called *Probe*. My loc... Yvonne is already saving to go back to England. She loved our trip so much, we've already discussed where we want to go, and for how long. The pain over the passing of Yvonne's mother will soon revived as near the end of the month, we will driving north to Cache Bay, Ontario where Gabrielle's funeral will be held. We did go to Michigan in July, fully informed about what US Customs agents might do, and it turns out the Canadian guards coming home were by far nastier. Still, we went down and had some serious fun, and we are already talking about returning next year. And, the job hunt continues still.

The heat continues here, as does the humidity you probably remember. We're still on The West Mall, not far from Pearson. Think you might come out to see the old neighbourhood? Let me know as it gets closer to the Toronto Corflu. If I can't afford to go to the con, maybe we could still meet. We will talk further, okay? See you with the next issue.

## More Bollocks



## Fridgeshanking

GOING THROUGH MY OLD Live Journal for good stuff to rescue from oblivion and reproduce in print here, I came across this conversation from August 2003. It began with my posting of a series of management questions devised by Andersen Consulting.

### 1. How do you put a giraffe into a refrigerator?

The correct answer is: Open the refrigerator, put in the giraffe, and close the door. This question tests whether you tend to do simple things in an overly complicated way.

### 2. How do you put an elephant into a refrigerator?

Did you say, "Open the refrigerator, put in the elephant, and close the refrigerator?" Wrong Answer.

Correct answer: Open the refrigerator, take out the giraffe, put in the elephant and close the door. This tests your ability to think through the repercussions of your previous actions.

### 3. The Lion King is hosting an Animal Conference. All the animals attend except one. Which animal does not attend?

Correct answer: The elephant. The elephant is in the refrigerator. You just put him in there. This tests your

memory.

OK, even if you did not answer the first three questions correctly, you still have one more chance to show your true abilities.

**4. There is a river you must cross but it is inhabited by crocodiles. How do you manage it?**

Correct answer: You swim across. All the crocodiles are attending the Animal Conference. This tests whether you learn quickly from your mistakes.

*PY:* According to Andersen Consulting, around 90% of the professionals they tested got all questions wrong, but many pre-schoolers got several answers right. Andersen Consulting says this conclusively disproves the theory that most professionals have the brains of a four year-old.

*SUSAN BAIRD:* I think it proves that the test designers (must be executives) think that any task – even “put a giraffe in the refrigerator” – can be simply accomplished, no matter how complicated the task actually may be.

*PY:* I thought that if the refrigerator is said to be big enough to take a giraffe, why can't it be big enough to take a giraffe and an elephant without having to take the giraffe out first?

*SUSAN BAIRD:* ::nods head:: Excellent point. The nature of the refrigerator is unspecified. As is the nature of the desired answers. Which makes the test the failure, not its respondents.

*PY:* I suspect you're right about that. Long-haired Fishlifter [Mark Plummer] was also saying at the Tun last night that, IIRC, he used to have a visual presentation of this quiz which also featured penguins... so quite what penguins were doing in the same location as a giraffe, an elephant and some crocodiles leads me to conclude that the Anderson consultants who wrote it also had the approximate geographical knowledge of a four year-old or w were very likely doing some seriously weird shit when they wrote it.

In fact come to think of it, they never say who the fridge belongs to either, which might have a bearing on the matter. Maybe it's what became of Ang Rosin's old fridge. I must ask her.

*ANG ROSIN:* As far as I'm aware the fridge is not being used for cold storage of big game. \*

Last time I visited it (about a week ago now) the fridge was looking a bit worst for wear, to be honest. The supports at the side for one of the shelves had buckled, and pools of water are gathering on the top. Caroline is muttering about a new fridge. A younger fridge – more glamorous – with an aluminium finish and ice-making compartment.

I fear the fridge may be coming to the end of its useful life. \*\* Sniff \*\*

\* Do giraffes count as game? I assume elephants do as they got shot a lot in Empire Days.

*PY:* Giraffes don't usually count as game but you can still eat them at restaurants across Africa, which means that before it reaches your dinner plate it will probably have entered a fridge at some point or another, either dead or alive. The 'Big Five' African game animals are lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo and leopard, which has always struck me as rather odd because giraffes are consistently much bigger than leopards, and leopards generally fit inside fridges much better. But make sure you leave the leopard inside the fridge long enough to chill out properly, because if you open the fridge door too soon it might still be a bit upset with you, which can make it rather difficult when you try to insert the elephant. At least that's what I've always found.

Perhaps it's time to get your old fridge shanked, if only so you can tell me what fridgeshanking actually entails.

*MIKE SCOTT:* I believe that long-haired Fishlifter's presentation was one that he did himself, and the penguins were merely because he didn't have any clip-art of crocodiles and thus had to use penguins with a speech bubble saying “We're crocodiles really”. This is thus one of the few things for which Accenture (Andersen Consulting as was) cannot be blamed.

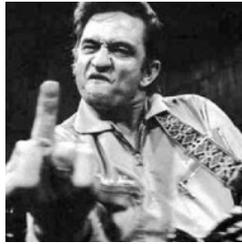
*PY:* Ah. Thanks for refreshing my memory, you're quite correct. I withdraw any inference, therefore, that I may or may not have made about “doing some seriously weird shit” while finding a perfectly proper and reasonable use for penguins... Stroke of genius, really, if only Andersen's had been as creative, etc etc...

*KIM HUETT:* Having given these questions of Andersen's a close look I can only conclude that their recommended answers are complete bullshit. The only sensible reply to the first two questions is to point out no answer is possible without further detail. Before I would even attempt an answer Andersen's would need to define what they mean by 'giraffe', 'refrigerator', 'elephant', and 'put into'. My answer depends heavily on whether the giraffe in question is a stuffed toy, a live animal, a dead animal, etc. And until the first two questions are properly asked and answered the other questions cannot even be tackled. All that I can conclude at this point is, a) those responsible for the questions are morons, b) those responsible for the proposed answers are lying, and c) both groups (if they are not one and the same) should be put into refrigerators and kept there to improve the gene pool.

*RICHARD STEPHENSON:* I think locking jungle animals in a fridge is politically unsound.

Anyway I still prefer to cross the river by bridge, not swim, as this shows my ability to assess the situation before diving in.

*PY:* Okay, Richard, no one likes a smart-arse...



## Unexpected Fen

SEVERAL YEARS AGO on a flight to Los Angeles, I was fortunate enough to have had a lengthy chat with **Mike McShane**, the larger-than-life improv comedian who may be most commonly remembered as Friar Tuck in Kevin Costner's film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*. Told him I was a fan of his, told him I loved the improv series he did with Tony Slattery called *S&M* (Slattery spent years as a recluse after that show), and of course we got round to talking about *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*, the improv comedy show that ran for many series in the UK and also had an American spin-off. One thing he did say was that the Culture novels of Iain M. Banks were passed around among pretty much all the regulars who appeared on *Whose Line*: McShane, Slattery, Greg Proops, Ryan Stiles and Colin Mockery. We then got onto the subject of Philip K. Dick, and the mystery of why nobody had yet succeeded in making a movie biopic about him, despite several aborted attempts.

While I never knew McShane was a fan of science fiction in some way it hardly surprised me, and I like coming across these unexpected validations of our genre from unlikely sources. For starters, the late British comedian **Bob Monkhouse** is thought to have had a large collection of SF, and is known to have attended the 1953 Eastercon.

Another fan is former London Mayor **Ken Livingstone**, who attended the 1987 Brighton Worldcon. He also interviewed Iain Banks [1] in 2009.

A few more British media personalities who have not been commonly known as fans of science fiction have also revealed themselves over the years:

British comedian **Ken Dodd**: "I love science fiction, I'm a sci-fi addict. I started with the triffids and Isaac Asimov... I devour science fiction. But I love *Doctor Who* because *Doctor Who* is a lovely mixture of science fiction and whimsy as well... there's a lot of comedy in *Doctor Who*, I think it's great fun." 1987 interview, while filming the *Doctor Who* episode 'Delta and the Bannermen'.

British actor **Warren Mitchell**, best known for his portrayal of Alf Garnett in the BBC comedies *Till Death Us Do Part* and *In Sickness and in Health*: "I was a science fiction reader so certain elements of Angela Carter came to mind, too." 2000 interview, commenting on the filming of the BBC's *Gormenghast*.

British singer **Cliff Richard**: "I love science

fiction, I read it 'til it's coming out of my ears." 1979 TV interview, promoting his album *Rock 'n' Roll Juvenile* which included the song 'Sci-Fi'.

I've also read music-press interviews with other stars such as **David Bowie** and **Gary Numan** that indicate a knowledge of the genre that goes beyond the superficial. There are stand-out musical genre connections like Jeff Wayne and Mike Oldfield who did concept albums based on well-known SF works, but I like to find the lesser-known stuff that show unexpected people who clearly read genre more widely than just the occasional book.

When Jack Vance learned that the British rock star **Robert Palmer** rated him as his favourite author, he repaid the compliment by name-checking Palmer in the first sentence of his novel *Night Lamp*: "Toward the far edge of the Cornu Sector of Ophiuchus, Robert Palmer's Star shone brilliant white, its corona flaring with films of blue, red and green color."

Musicians who have dabbled with genre inevitably have a presence on the ISFDB, several of whom I've found the necessity to add to the database myself. One source was the 2001 anthology *Songs Without Rhyme: Prose by Celebrated Songwriters* compiled by Roseanne Cash, daughter of **Johnny Cash** (above), whose unpublished 1953 science fiction story 'The Holografik Danser' made its first appearance there. Honestly, who'd have thought of Johnny Cash as a science fiction writer? It's perhaps unsurprising to also find the name **David Byrne** in this book, with his own SF story 'A Self-Made Man'. Another name to reckon with is **Lemmy Kilmister**, who has an ISFDB credit for 'Tear Away' - actually the lyrics to an imaginary, future Motörhead song to be recorded in 1997 - in the hard-to-find 1993 publication *The Wild Palms Reader*. (Lemmy also wrote the foreword to Joe Petagno's collection of SF-themed heavy metal art, *Orgasmatron*). This anthology of *Wild Palms*-related material also featured plenty of writing from **Genesis P-Orridge** of the British industrial band Throbbing Gristle.

However none of these references give any indication of how much these guys are/were actually readers of science fiction. I always like discovering unexpected actor/musician connections to SF, but this hardly beats the rare occasions where I am able to sit down and actually talk genre with them.

[1] <http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2009/09/livingstone-interview-culture>



The rains are late this year, the sky has no more tears to shed.  
 But from the air Cambodia remains a disc of wet green bordered by bright haze.  
 Water-filled bomb craters, sun streaked gleam, stitched in strings across patchwork land,  
 march west toward the far hills of Thailand. Macro analog of Ankor Wat's temple walls,  
 intricate bas-relief of thousand-year-old battles, pitted with AK rounds.  
**Bruce Cockburn**, 'Postcards from Cambodia', *You've Never Seen Everything*, 2003

This fanzine was assembled between 11 July and 30 September 2560 / 2017. The title comes from I know not where, but I have an nagging feeling an unknown friend may have used Delany's story title this way many years ago to reference their Live Journal posts. Or maybe it was indeed myself, back in the day when I used Live Journal. My LJ is now defunct but still present, and I've migrated all important stuff over to Dreamwidth (I was getting non-removable numerical tags placed on my posts by unknown Russians, and LJ refused to remove them). Facebook remains the only place I post socially and occasionally, and I still dislike the interface. This reason is also why you will never find me on the even less accommodating Twitter.

I have a number of priorities that may affect the quarterly schedule for next few issues of *The White Notebooks*: a) having bought a plot of land we are gearing up towards selling our current house and building our own place, b) consequently I really need to spend time and effort to improve my Thai, and c) now that *The Thai Literary Supplement* is also online I want to spend time developing it, however I still plan to continue producing the two-page paper/PDF editions as these are also distributed locally. Needless to say LoCs are still very welcome, and I will be endeavouring to stick to my usual quarterly schedule.

### Fridgeshanking

No PY series of fanzines would be complete without containing, somewhere, a discussion of Ang Rosin's fridge. I have yet to find a way of accommodating this inescapable fact into a future issue of *Big Sky*.

This month I tested this series of questions on Miles, who is now eight. It appealed very much to his surreal sense of humour.

### Unexpected Fen

There is of course no big deal to be found in what people are reading, but I certainly get a good overview of what Joe Public reads on my aeroplanes: *Fifty Shades of Grey* is read exclusively by women, Lee Child thrillers are read exclusively by men, and Michael Moore's *Stupid White Men* is read exclusively by Ghanaians, Kenyans and Nigerians.

### MORE GENRE FANZINES RECEIVED / READ IN 2017

*Alexiad* #94 LISA & JOSEPH MAJOR  
*Ansible* #361 DAVE LANGFORD  
*Askance* #39 JOHN PURCELL  
*Banana Wings* #66 CLAIRE BRIALEY & MARK PLUMMER  
*CounterClock* #29 WOLF VON WITTING  
*Littlebrook* #10 JERRY KAUFMAN & SUZLE TOMPKINS  
*Lofgeornost* #126 FRED LERNER  
*Nice Distinctions* #31 ARTHUR HLAVATY  
*Opuntia* #379-392 DALE SPEIRS  
*Rat Sass* #1-5 TARAL WAYNE  
*Spartacus* #21 GUY LILLIAN III  
*Vanamonde* #1234-1254 JOHN HERTZ  
*Vibrator* #2.0.41-2.0.43 GRAHAM CHARNOCK  
*The Zine Dump* #41 GUY LILLIAN III

### UNEXPECTEDLY RECEIVED IN THE POST THIS MONTH:

**William M. Breiding's** *Rose Motel: Fanzine Pieces 1980-2014*.

I was only familiar with William via his letters in *SF Commentary*, *Flag* and other fanzines, so receiving *Rose Motel* the day before my birthday was a very welcome surprise as we have never corresponded until now.

I dived into it the same day I received it while also watching my eldest son score two hat-tricks at a football tournament, and I kicked off with 'Hanging Out with Bill and Paul', a combined assessment of the virtues of William Least-Heat Moon's *Blue Highways*, which I enjoyed around 1984, and a number of titles by Paul Theroux, who I have had a more fragmented exposure to. Travel is the common theme, so outside of Bill's order of his Contents it was also a good way for me to start because his writing, while mostly autobiographical, roams far and wide. After first priming his readers on his family history and how he became aligned with fandom ('How I Got Here'), he then takes you further afield via anecdote, travelogue and good literary commentary. Wherever he goes in his writing, whatever experience he is relating, he takes you there too. Thanks very much for your gift, William, I enjoyed it very much and it's taking its rightful pride of place on my ever-lengthening 'fanwriting' bookshelf.

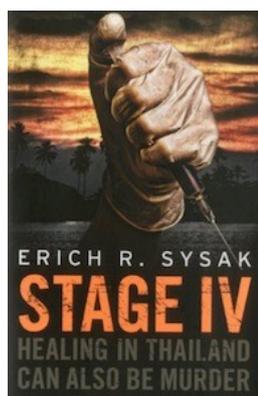


Much like death, taxes and overdue library book fines, it was always a bit inevitable. The *TLS* started with paper, moved on to being a PDF and is now a website: [thailiterarysupplement.wordpress.com](http://thailiterarysupplement.wordpress.com), where all reviewed books are categorised and tagged for ease of reference, with much more to come. Brought to you as a public service. You're welcome.

## Erich R. Sysak

### *Stage IV*

2011 | Monsoon Books, ISBN 978-981-08-5435-5, \$15.95



Lawson Banks is in a whole world of deadly trouble, but somehow he just keeps escaping the inevitable. As an ex-Hollywood actor suffering from stage IV of an irreversible cancer, he cashes in his life insurance policy to some Florida viatication speculators and disappears to Buddha Beach in Hua Hin, Thailand. His idyllic life with his Thai girlfriend Benz is suddenly thrown into chaos after a failed attempt

on his life. Then another, and another, and his suspicions can't fail to fall on Benz, who is also wrapped up in a huge family problem of her own with a crooked police colonel trying to save his criminal empire.

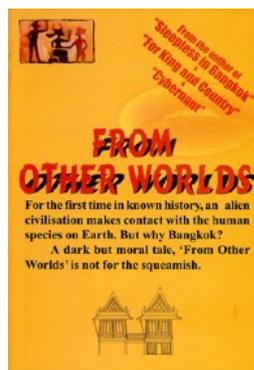
There are aspects of *Stage IV* that impressed me: Sysak's character building is worth giving him the time for; when he goes into the back-stories of the Florida 'death futures' speculators I found myself wishing the rest of the novel was similarly realised and equally well-paced. Which brings me to the aspect that didn't work so well: when action takes the fore, Sysak trips over himself in keeping up with the breakneck pace he has set for himself. Lawson Banks is pushed to the limits in staying alive from both the advancing cancer and the murderous henchmen who are after him, but it's hard to keep up with how, or sometimes why, Banks is actually able to remain alive. There also seemed to be scenes near the end where the continuity was awry, unless there were subtle details that again I had overlooked in the mad rush towards the finishing pages.

Sysak has one earlier novel set in Thailand, *Water Heart*, and I'm sure I will read it because despite the above and the occasional roughness of his prose, his is an interesting voice that suggests he has good stories to tell.

## Ian Quartermaine

### *From Other Worlds*

2004 | IQ Inc., ISBN 974-830-374-8



An alien civilisation from another galaxy has arrived on Earth in a fleet of spaceships spread amongst the cities of the world, but why have they chosen to focus their contact with humanity in Bangkok? And what will be the fate of the three children who've escaped the clutches of the human-yet-animal-like aliens – are things about to get very unpleasant indeed? Oh yes they are.

The enigmatic 'Ian Quartermaine' (you can read my article about him in *The White Notebooks #1*) employs some sleight of hand in a novel that intentionally blends *The Day the Earth Stood Still* with Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* and adds a side order inspired by a certain famous Damon Knight short story. Quartermaine quickly settles into an unchallenging yet decent enough y/a groove, and yet at two points in the novel he confounds the reader with some intentionally graphic and non-y/a material (the cover does warn the reader). This creates a dichotomy of which target audience is being addressed: is the novel actually intended as y/a or adult? Surely Quartermaine is self-aware enough that it's difficult enough to be both in this particular instance, and yet the question lingers.

Quartermaine wants to disturb our 'civilised' sensibilities and he breaks some unwritten rules in doing so, but when the true structure of the story is finally revealed it didn't satisfy this reader quite as much as the writer may have intended. It's clear that *From Other Worlds* was intended as a 'dangerous vision', and not all such stories can succeed on their shock value alone. This one certainly succeeds in that you *will* remember it, but it would also have benefited from more effort to better conceal those well-known sources of inspiration.

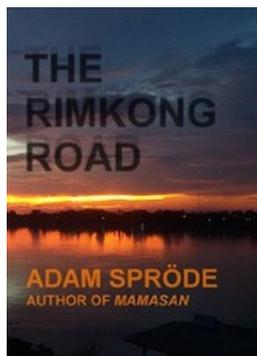
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Adam Spröde

*The Rimkong Road*

2015 | Punchy Content, ASIN B01416X0SW, \$0.99

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Good examples of how less can equal more are always good to find. Currently only available in Kindle, this brief short story quickly establishes its intent: to let the reader witness the distances between people who are supposed to be close. The unnamed narrator lives in Nong Khai on the Thai border close to the Mekong River and Laos; his life is in flux, being unable to decide whether to

return from a visa run and stay with his untrustworthy Thai girlfriend or go run a bar in Udon Thani. All of the small cast of characters don't really want to be where they are and keep each other at arm's length, and the dreamlike snapshots of tense moments in the various relationships somehow serve to raise the level of realism to lucid and perspicuous. This story is a lesson in economical, blunt and candid writing.

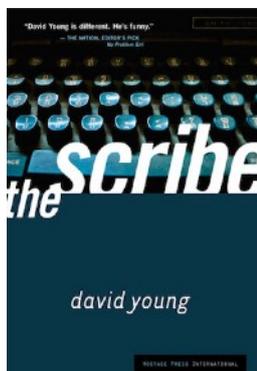
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David Young

*The Scribe*

2000 | Hostage Press, ISBN 974-243-104-315-0

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This self-published debut still has such a good reputation that it's more or less impossible to find in Thailand's secondhand bookstores. I should know, I've kept an eye out for it for a decade and have almost given up, buying the ebook instead.

American schoolteacher Henry Russell has a sideline writing love letters on behalf of Bangkok's prostitutes to their gullible Western boyfriends, but

when he gets snowed under with this kind of work and begins charging for his services, it all starts to go a bit wrong. Inevitable, really...

This novel sets out as a bar story of sorts, however the trajectory does indeed go higher than one might reasonably expect and Young keeps up the pace with some decent plot twists and many crises of conscience. It also helps that it's actually funny rather than merely wannabe-funny, and all the inherent -isms of Henry's situation, most of which concern his ex-bargirl girlfriend Fai, are well negotiated without deadening the humour, and this is a novel where just about everyone is trying and largely failing to escape the roles they've chosen for themselves. I'm glad I don't have to wait another decade to read it, but I still hope to stumble upon a good paper copy for the bookshelves because this one's a keeper.

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Saneh Sangsuk

*Venom*

2001 | Shine, ISBN 978-616-7939-05-6, 135 baht

*Translated by Marcel Barang*

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This is a trilingual edition in Thai, English and French of Sangsuk's famous novelette. There are a few too many grammatical or typographic errors for it to read smoothly, so I suspect this may be an old translation into English that could have done with a revision before going to press in this 2016 edition.

Sangsuk piles on the misfortune for his unnamed protagonist, a crippled ten-year-old boy who is unlucky enough to

have to literally keep at arm's length the venomous fangs of an aggressive giant snake for many hours. And once again, as with Sangsuk's novel *Under a Demented Sky* which also used a snake as a plot device, the boy is pushed to extremes of endurance to stay alive.

Despite the above problems, I did enjoy this story because Sangsuk is able to carry you along and bring out considerable sympathy in the reader. The background story of conflict with a local landowner is an aspect I would like to have read more about because it contextualises the boy's situation in an adult world, despite this really not being a story intended for children.

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NON-FICTION

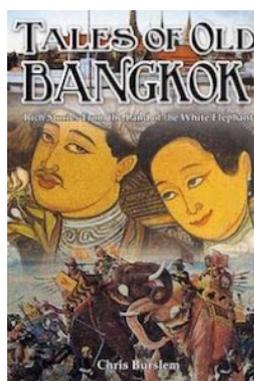
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Chris Burslem, ed.

*Tales of Old Bangkok*

2012 | Earnshaw Books, ISBN 978-988-19984-2-2

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This historical scrapbook is subtitled 'Rich Stories from the Land of the White Elephant' which, given the dual meaning of 'white elephant' in the West, suggests lost causes, expensive mistakes and outmoded ways of thinking. Chris Burslem must have had enormous fun piecing this volume together; just about every aspect of the city that makes Bangkok such a vibrant and frustrating place has made

its way into print somewhere in the last two centuries, and much of it has been assembled here in a very appealing way, heavily illustrated in colour and b/w with faded charm and cultural misunderstandings all preserved intact. The best inclusion is certainly 'Wild Night at the Erawan', a *Bangkok Post* article about a disastrous piano recital in which, for many in 1967, the satirical intent of the writer was completely missed. More please.

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