

ashore no more, unbound anew,
where turtles swim, a splash of blue

[the white notebooks #11]



We Return to the Water Randy Byers: A Valediction

WHAT CAN I SAY about **Randy Byers** (1960-2017) that has not already been said by many and with more eloquence? Randy is a guy who deserves to have whatever is said about him be thoughtful and kind as it's abundantly clear that that is how he approached his friendships, therefore it ought to be no problem for anyone who writes anything about Randy to simply stick to the facts.

I started this essay when Randy was still alive. ("It saddens me enormously, and I am certain many others too, that Randy is probably approaching the end of his life." I'll leave that part in.) At that time, mutual acquaintances on Facebook were posting images of sea turtles, his favourite animal, and of Randy himself, all as a disparate collection of memories and farewells. At times like this — the passing of D. West also comes to mind — it actually felt like a proper communal use of social media.

My first meeting with Randy was at the 2003 Eastercon in Hinckley. After attending a panel discussion, in the bar I found a space at a table full of beers and wine glasses, and while catching up with a bunch of rowdy fen I noticed the guy in the colourful shirt sitting next to me, who I didn't know and who was politely keeping his counsel. I felt it would at least be polite of me to turn and introduce myself. "Randy Byers," he said. "Aha!" said I, showing what I thought was a required modicum of fannish deference, "*The* Randy Byers!" Well, he was the TAFF delegate for that year. There could have been better ways for me to break the ice, but at least the blank slate was blank no longer, with me still pretty much a neofan and Randy a BNF whose reputation for consistent good times preceded him, having had a couple of decades head start over me in fandom despite us being born only a week apart. I expect it was always thus when Randy met new

people: it's easy to imagine how they were all pleasantly surprised at his unassuming nature and how *interesting* they found him as a result. He simply exuded the kind of knowledge and intelligence and communicative ability that you hope to encounter in any new fannish acquaintance, yet somehow rarely do. Or maybe I'm just showing bias towards *my* kind of open communication, because I felt Randy and I had that, and as a result I have probably felt more kinship with Randy than any other American fan. We both had an abiding interest in Taoism as it applies to the spirit, and when that awareness creeps into any friendship it is always good. ("So I will soon feel that I have lost a kind of brother." I'll leave that part in, too — Randy jokingly referred to me as his twin brother in his recently-published recollections of this year's Corflu).

My favourite memory of Randy goes back a dozen-or-so years. On a visit to Seattle some time in the mid-2000s we spent an afternoon at the Science Fiction Museum. He drove us around the city in a Chrysler PT Cruiser, also dropping in to say Hi to his favourite book dealer Bob Brown, and it was from that afternoon onwards that I reckoned there really ought to be a photo of him, sitting on the road in front of this car with its licence plate RESIST, jeans and t-shirt and sneakers and cap *sur tête*, a complex attitudinal cross between Karl Marx, James Dean, Kurt Cobain and some obscure, nameless French philosopher. Such an image, which I may assemble some day, would sum up Randy's character for me.

I wanted to get these words down while Randy was still alive. I am alas too late, and his final return to the shore was too sudden. I don't think I will ever meet another guy like him. See you where the turtles swim, my good friend.

ashore no more... [the white notebooks #11] December 2560 / 2017

a print perzine for limited distribution, available for 'the usual'

also at efanzines.com. email: peteyoung.uk@gmail.com

136/200 Emerald Hill Village, Soi 6, Hua Hin, Prachuap Khiri Khan 77110, Thailand

set in 9/12 Didot and Letter Gothic

(cartoon of Randy: Ulrika O'Brien, 2003, reproduced with permission / title bar: Deb Nystrom, cc-by-2.0)

in memory of Randy Byers



Do Not Disturb Famous Bestselling Author While Being Famous

SO LET'S SAY you're just doing your own thing, minding your own business, when suddenly a familiar face glides past. Not one you encounter on a day-to-day basis, not one you'd call family, just *familiar*. It could be anywhere: in the street, in a café or in a room full of other famous faces you're not actually acquainted with, but wish you were.

This happened to me a few times at Loncon 3 in 2014 in the pre-Hugo Award party for nominees, when I had my wife Benji and 4 year-old son Miles along. "Look," I said, "There's David Tennant," "Who?" said Benji. "Exactly. The Doctor." And I wanted Miles to go up to him and say "Are you really Doctor Who?" and Tennant would beam at him, "Yes, I am!". Miles unwisely declined the suggestion, but all was not lost: minutes later, while official photos were being taken, someone even more famous sailed into view. "Look," I again said to my wife, "There's George R.R. Martin." "Wrote *Game of Thrones*," I pre-empted. "Really? I'd like to have a photo taken with *him*," she suggested.

Now, this was going to be tricky. Mr. Martin is famously *not* keen on people coming up to him for impromptu selfies; in fact he is known to have once said "Sometimes I wanna kill 'em." So if this was to succeed, it might only work with a direct approach. "Mr. Martin," I asked, "My wife would love to have her photograph taken with you." He looked at her, paused for half a second and said, "Yeah, alright..." They're now close, personal friends.

Elsewhere in this fanzine I recount an incident where I met another well-respected author for the first time. It went exceedingly well, and, well, we were already linked via social media, just not in real life. The author in question was obviously feeling gregarious enough to game a chance encounter with this unknown person who was calling him over. Drinks were bought, good conversation ensued. It's the kind of thing that also happens at science fiction conventions, especially ones like Novacon in the UK, where authors mingle with fans on a basis of equal status. But this was at a famous library's book sale, sitting in the shade in the garden on a pleasantly sunny Saturday afternoon, so it was a pretty easy risk to take.

I do the kind of job where I'm often forced to talk to famous people from all walks of life, even if it's just to ask if they'd like tea and biscuits to alleviate the boredom of staring out of the aeroplane window or to accompany good words found in a good book. I have to assess whether they want contact or just be left alone: often it's the latter, but not always. Or to put it another way, famous people can be surprisingly human, but not always. I could tell you my George Harrison story or my Madonna story or

my Cher story or my Steve Bannon story, but it would be unprofessional to do it here, in a semi-public forum. Ask me in private and I might tell you if you had a particular interest in that person. All I will say is that while I appreciate that everyone is entitled to a bad day, I just prefer it when people don't overdo it.

So for all of us it's a judgement call: should we walk up to a stranger and say hello just because we recognise their face? I don't mind when it's done to me and I welcome it, largely because I'm far from being widely known and don't have that flashing sign 'Famous Person' and a downward arrow floating invisibly above my head. However celebrities getting accosted in the street, either for praise or abuse, doesn't sit well with me. I prefer to just get to where I'm going and say to whoever is there, "I saw X in the street today." That usually satisfies the need that we all probably have to tell others we occasionally get to flirt with the rich and famous. Once on the same shift I was looking after the world's most famous geneticist, and a porn star (note the careful insertion of a comma there). Both were very nice people, but I wondered what it said about me that I'd rather talk to the geneticist than the porn star. I've never told anyone who the porn star was, yet I've told a few in private who the geneticist was. (Sad person, I hear you say.) So now I'm going to briefly recount the time I passed up the chance to say a few words to Mr. Jonathan Franzen.

In early December 2017 I'm sitting in a sparsely-populated Starbucks in Heathrow's Terminal 5B waiting for my flight home to be called, when in walks Mr. J.F. It is certainly he, and he looks a little flustered. He's dressed smartly, clearly a man who likes to travel well. He sits down with his coffee and immediately pulls from his bag a book on Tibet, which he reads for around thirty minutes.

As much as I would like to have done, this was an occasion when I absolutely would not wish to say hello, as it would clearly be intrusive. He just wanted to sit and read his book, and I must be sensitive to silent refusals of contact. However I did discreetly take the above photo to send to Mike Dalke, who was enraptured by Franzen's *The Corrections* last time I saw him, and even then, when taking it for Mike it did make me feel a little stalker-ish.

Mr. Franzen, I apologise. If you ever get to read this, please feel at liberty to upbraid me on a breach of etiquette, but I hope I did the right thing by you. I sincerely hope you had a good flight and I look forward to welcoming you on board one of mine, when hopefully we will be able to chat about books to our hearts' content.



Two Days at the 2017 Singapore Writers Festival

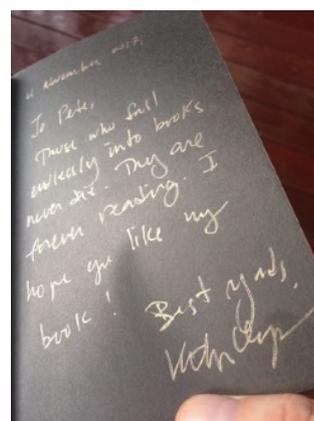
THE 2017 SINGAPORE WRITERS FESTIVAL [1] had a focus on speculative fiction this year, so I caught an early bus from Hua Hin to Bangkok then a Cathay flight to Singapore just to catch the last two days of the Festival from the 11th-12th November. It was well worth the trip.

I made it just in time to the Arts House for the last panel of the day for the 11th, 'Writing Between the Genre Lines', featuring **Aliette de Bodard**, **Jason Erik Lundberg** and **O Thiam Chin**, moderated by **Desmond Kon Zhicheng-Mingdé**. Each writer read an extract or short story, then discussion focussed on a range of subjects with questions from the audience. While it's always good to hear writers read their own words, I'd have preferred more panel discussion and less time spent on the readings which took up almost half an hour, but it was getting late and the audience seemed to relax nicely into the whole thing and the discussion was good-humoured and lively.

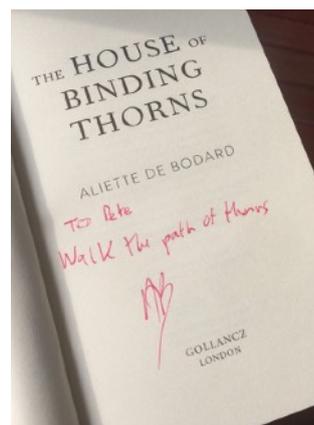
I met up with Jason afterwards while he was signing books, and he introduced me to the genial **Victor Fernando R. Ocampo** who was hanging around nearby. Victor's collection *The Infinite Library and Other Stories* was a book high on my list of those to look out for and as I'd actually just bought it in the Arts House bookstore, Victor obligingly signed and inscribed it. There are about half a dozen of Victor's stories in this collection that I'm not yet familiar with, but that won't be the case for long as he's one of my favourite reads, these days.

On the 12th the main draw for me was Aliette's talk "Not Everyone Is Oppressed Equally" Why We Should Look Beyond the Merely Heroic', it was a packed out venue with extra seating provided in an adjoining room, and Aliette came across loud and clear. The point to her talk was that there are ordinary people struggling through oppression who get overlooked for simply carrying on through impossible circumstances, and that this needs to be recognised in fiction as well as fact.

As I expected I would, because I am hopelessly bound to buying books, I spent a lot of time in the Arts House bookstore which for the event also doubled as a 'dealer's room' for local publishers. I bought twelve books in total, and Aliette also inscribed for me her recently published *The House of Binding Thorns*. It was a shame I



never got to meet up with **Dean Francis Alfar** and **Nikki Alfar** as we had hoped, and I'd love to have also had a chat with O Thiam Chin to let him know how much I appreciated the subtlety of the supernatural elements in his novel *Now That It's Over* – and perhaps to point out to him the novel's one minor diurnal error.



There were of course plenty of interesting speculative fiction events during the week that I never got a chance to see, but I look forward to doing this again in 2018 when hopefully there will be a similar presence of spec-fic in the programming and I'll be able to spend more time in Singapore, and therefore also spend more dollars in the Arts House bookstore.

[1] <https://www.singaporewritersfestival.com/nacswf/nacswf.html>

The Search for Genre in Thailand



A Day at the Neilson Hays Library Book Sale, Bangkok

IN NOVEMBER I MADE a quick round trip to Bangkok to **The Neilson Hays Library** [1] for their two-day Book Sale. This was my first visit to the Library which adjoins the British Club (where, circa 1990, I was lucky to have had a few tennis matches on the only remaining grass court in the entire country).

The Library itself has History with a capital H. The book sale was out in the gardens of the British Club, but before heading there I took a look inside the Library itself. It felt like a trip back in time, with all the atmosphere of a mid-20th Century non-academic library that is there to be enjoyed, filled with dark corners that might make a small problem for the Dewey system, and heavy, wooden, glass-encased shelves containing twenty-year-old, slightly foxed hardcovers, plus light slanting through high windows illuminating the knowledge held at floor level. There was hush everywhere, and the clientele, formerly genteel ladies in pencil skirts and gentlemen well-dressed for a tropical clime, had been replaced over the years with children and teenagers doing their reading on giant bean bags or perhaps lying anachronistically in colourful track suits on the brown, panelled wooden floor itself. I had only a few minutes inside, but with that brief time I felt able to bring to life some of the library's History in my mind's eye. Follow the link below for more.

But, to the Book Sale. I was also here to meet up with a fellow science fiction fan, **Mike Dalke**, who I had first met online a few years ago and later in person when he was visiting Hua Hin. I've also been following Mike's

review blog *Potpourri of Science Fiction Literature* [2] since around 2014. When I arrived Mike had already picked up an ancient copy of Ian Watson's *The Embedding*, and we soon ended up sitting in the shade to have iced drinks. I'd say 70% of our conversation is about science fiction, and 70% of that today was the exchange of book recommendations and book warnings, reminiscences of books we've read but can't remember anything about, and a mutual dismay at finding nothing but crime and y/a in Thailand's secondhand bookstores. And then, out of nowhere (well, okay, out of the British Club car park) into the gardens walked a man who at first sight bore a striking resemblance to **Collin Piprell** [3], the well-travelled Canadian author and long-time resident of Bangkok. We'd been in touch recently via Facebook and exchanged a few messages. I had already read, admired and reviewed two of his mainstream books, and he was currently engaged in promoting his science fiction trilogy set in Thailand, the second volume of which had just been published... yes, it had to be Collin. I called to him and he joined Mike and I at our table.

I think Collin was actually glad to have found a couple of guys with whom he could talk about science fiction, even though he knew neither of us beyond mere first acquaintance. Mike eventually wandered to browse some more as his time was limited, and Collin and I eventually did the same. Mike finally had to leave, and Collin and I decamped to the British Club's pool bar for coffee and Earl Grey tea, where we chatted for half an hour about the pros and cons of thousand-page books; this moved on perhaps inevitably to Neal Stephenson, plus Alan Moore's recent magnum opus *Jerusalem* (which as an aside I was amazed to find two copies of in my local branch of B2S recently) and, by way of alien linguistics, China Miéville's *Embassytown*. As much as I could have happily talked more with Collin, I wanted another half-hour's browsing before leaving, so Collin and I parted with an engaging 'to be continued' hanging between us.

I came away with a dozen books, none of which are speculative fiction yet all of which have Thailand as their location. I'd like to visit the library again in the near future: it looks like a place worth exploring in some depth.



[1] <https://www.neilsonhayslibrary.com>

[2] <http://sfpotpourri.blogspot.com>

[3] <http://www.collinpiprell.com>

Markers

lightly edited



WAHF...

Claire Brialey, Nic Farey, Alison Freebairn, Bruce Gillespie, Amy Harlib, Earl Kemp, Robert Lichtman, Dave O'Neill and Alan Sullivan.

JERRY KAUFMAN, Seattle, WA; 13 October 2017

A quick note of thanks and appreciation? Yes, probably.

I recognize the source of your title [‘TIME CONSIDERED AS A HELIX OF SEMI-PRECIOUS FACEBOOK POSTS’], and have seen others use it in a similar way. I may even have done so myself for one or another APAzine title. Too bad I barely remember the original story, which means it’s about time to re-read it.

~ The thing with Delany, especially his non-fiction, is that if you asked me the day after I have read it what it was all about, I could probably give a decent summary. If you asked me after two weeks, I wouldn’t know where to begin even though I know it’s sort of lodged up there somewhere. I find this particularly true of his later science fiction, such as *Triton* or *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*. ~

I was a little surprised when I first noticed sugar in small skinny tubes (similar to the coffee packets you picture and talk about). It took a moment for me to figure out what they were. I don’t recall seeing coffee packaged that way, but your description of their quality makes me think I haven’t missed anything. When I’m at a convention or otherwise on a trip, it’s generally with Suzle. Because she sleeps later than I do (she goes to bed later), I almost never make coffee in the hotel room – instead I quietly dress and descend to the hotel coffee shop or out to any nearby Starbucks or local cafe. A trivial fact but true.

I enjoyed the Andersen Consulting management questions. I’m not sure that I would have answered correctly, though. These nonsense questions require literal answers, ones that need the ability to continue to be literal all the way through the sequence. I kept expecting each question to require an answer that shrugged off the cute nonsense of the preceding.

It’s not surprising that David Bowie was an SF fan, and his use of SF tropes in his songs and stage performances (not to mention his appearances in SF and fantasy movies) got him selected as an inductee in the Science Fiction Hall of Fame (housed in Seattle in what is now called the Museum of Popular Culture (MoPoP for short).

I’m glad William sent you a copy of *Rose Motel*. I always thought he is a good writer, although I thought he was too focused on very personal writing. But reading all those pieces together has changed my view a little. Now I think he’s a very good writer, and his subject matter is well

matched by his style. He’s always written just what he needed to, and should have written. I hope that he’ll continue to write. [~As do I!~]

DAVID REDD, Haverfordwest, Wales; 16 October 2017

Sorry to hear your dog Cookie died. Dogs really do become family members. Only recently a local young farmer with depression problems lost the dog who was his best friend, and came to end his own life. After Meriel died I moved in with my daughter Bethan’s family and brought our two dogs to join theirs. All four decided my bedroom should be the new kennel. They kept me company every night for the years. The last, an aged rescue Jack Russell we called Mog, left me only a year ago through a final injection when medication failed to cure his problems. His walks had become shorter and less frequent and his eyesight had started failing. I’d see him twitching in his sleep and feel sorry for him, dreaming of rabbits in sunny green fields then waking up to this grey world of snuffling along the path. No more dogs.

Nice public-service warning about hotel coffee sachets – but you confess to liking Red Mountain? You drank *that*? (I’ve had people recommend RM to me, but only on construction sites.) More happily, in Ireland years ago, Bewley’s coffee sachets would help me wake up.

Your mention of Bob Monkhouse stirs a memory: someone suggested Monkhouse might have written or attempted sf pulp paperback originals in the early 1950s. Never saw that confirmed or refuted. I also recall Marc Bolan as deep in sf (Bradbury) and fantasy (Tolkien). Just checked on the internet: it’s true. *Clarkesworld* #111 has a good article about his sf connections, including his long-standing but unfinished book-and-album project *The Children of Rarn*. A week before he died Bolan was praising a new sf film, *Star Wars*.

JOHN PURCELL, College Station, TX; 30 October 2017

I wish I had the chance to meet you at the most recent Corflu, but my wife and I were saving up for my TAFF Trip earlier this year, so that accounts for that missed opportunity. Then again, the upcoming Corflu is in Toronto, Canada, and I have no idea if your plans include being there. [~Corflu in Toronto is certainly in my plans for this year.~] We are thinking of it, provided we can swing it financially. At present, Corflu 35 is on the probable list of conventions to attend next year. That list, by the way, does include the San Jose Worldcon, along with a few other notable cons in our area. We shall see.

Your musings about how your father influenced your reading habits and success in school is much like mine. Both of my parents were avid readers, with my dad’s favorite genre being mysteries. He had a few hundred

mystery novels on a few bookshelves at home, and I frequented those shelves a lot as a teenager. Mom was into historical fiction and more literary type tastes, and once in a while I read something from her books, which were not as numerous as dad's stash, but it was not insubstantial. This resulted in my reading novels and stories ranging from Agatha Christie to Somerset Maugham and Thomas B. Costain, then returning to Ellery Queen, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and venturing off to Leo Tolstoy or Charles Dickens, all the while maintaining a steady diet of Asimov, Clarke, Dickson, Simak, and other science fiction writers from my own growing sfnal collection. If you described me as wide-read or having eclectic reading tastes, you would be right. I even started in on dad's ten volume set of Will and Ariel Durant's 'The Story of Civilization' tomes. I actually made it through the first five before switching to something else to save my sanity. As far my studies went, I was a solid B+/A student. If I had really applied myself and been more diligent in school work habits I could have been an A student. As it was, my grades and school activities landed me in the National Honors Society and a merit scholarship to start college as a music major at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. Yay, me. All in all, I wasn't a total nerd - played junior varsity baseball, hockey, and soccer while being in the marching band and also on the Quiz Bowl team - nor a complete jock since I didn't hang out with the varsity sports crowd. High school for me was fun and survivable. What more could one ask?

I've always liked a good coffee and tend to steer clear of instant coffees, especially those little packets like those you reviewed. Oddly enough, in our posh hotel in Paris - L'Hotel Opera de Richepanse, a short walk from the Jardines de Tulliere and the Louvre - the in-room coffee service was one of those fancy pocket drop coffee makers, where all you had to do is place a single-cup pre-measured coffee blend into it, close the lid to pierce the packet's seal then push the single-cup button, and in a minute you had a freshly brewed cup of say french vanilla blend, or push the espresso button if that type of coffee was your preference. Pretty fancy. Most of the time we passed on the room coffee packets wherever else we went, opting for the downstairs cafe for the quality java with a full breakfast. While we stayed with Claire and Mark in Croydon we got hooked on cold-brewed coffee. That was really good! Now we're going that route ourselves. Nonetheless, thanks for the travel coffee packet reviews. Always a good tip for those who do a lot of traveling.

~ I've found a lot of three-to-five star hotels are now going up-market and attempting to be coffee-serious as opposed to coffee-simplistic. I usually try whatever's on offer, usually flat black, but occasionally I have to use powdered creamer to improve/conceal the taste of bad coffee. I know it will never happen, but I'm probably one of the few people who'd appreciate it if hotels could find some jiggers of soy milk instead of that indigestible UHT stuff. ~

I thank you for posting the fanzine; as usual, I printed it off like a proper paper fanzine as reference for when I compose these little literary epistles. Valerie and I hope to meet you someday soon. [~ Likewise! ~]

LLOYD PENNEY, Etobicoke, ON; 24 December 2017

My own marks in school were just shy of 80% for everything, but as much as I tried, I never got better marks than that. And, I found that better marks never really got me anywhere. I guess I stopped trying around the time I got to Grade 12, and mailed it in for Grade 13.

Coffee is something that seems to be special and possibly crap wherever you are, yet it is everywhere. MacDonald's here actually has fairly good coffee.

~ I actually agree about McDonald's coffee, but the only time I ever go in there is when Miles insists on a burger and fries. I prefer not to give the world's biggest factory farmer my money, and when I get home I usually have to listen to Rage Against the Machine all over again. ~

Starbucks seems to be everywhere, but I won't touch the stuff. It tastes burnt to me. The other chains around here are Timothy's Coffees of the World, and the Second Cup Coffee Company, and both are pretty good. Is there that much coffee in the world? The answer appears to be yes.

~ There is indeed a huge amount of coffee everywhere: Vietnam is the second biggest exporter of coffee after Brazil, and it's traditionally served through a slow-drip filter with condensed milk. Thais are generally serious about coffee and there are some decent ones produced in the north, but they are usually marketed in 3-in-1 sachets which people seem to prefer. One has to search that little bit harder to find really good unadulterated Thai coffee. ~

It's a shame about the passing of Randy Byers to brain cancer. Indeed, I think it's social media that makes communications near instant, but also means a paper publication of any kind, be it fanzine or magazine or anyzine, is purely archaic.

David Redd, you honour me with your words. I did telemarketing only because I had to. This past September, I finally did find some editorial work, but it is for written reports for a mystery shopper company. At least now I have some money coming in, and I can have a Christmas. I have found other jobs to apply to, but I will continue to look, and see if I can find something better. It's just another step upwards. Editorial work here is difficult to find, but now I can look further.

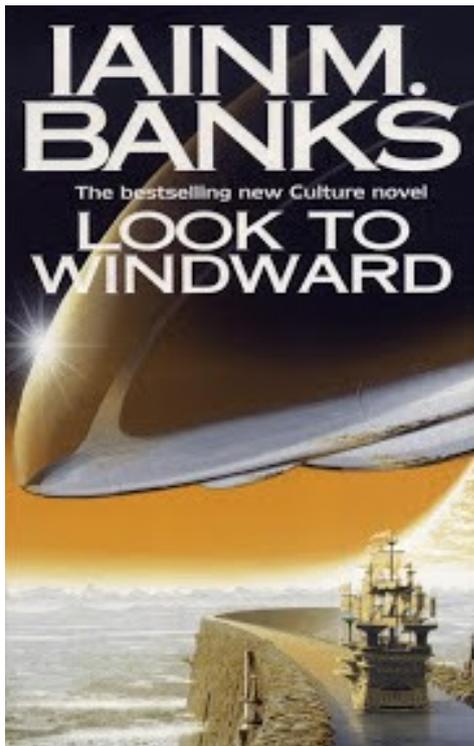
We were in Cache Bay for Yvonne's mother's funeral. It wasn't the best of times, but at least Gabrielle is laid to rest. We plan to return to Michigan to go to the 2018 version of their steampunk convention, and have some more fun. Corflu gets closer, and a decision must be made on my part.

I never thought I'd see the name Colin Mochrie in a fanzine. [~ Thanks for correcting my spelling of his surname. My bad. ~] He currently lives in Toronto. He is originally from Kilmarnock, Scotland, where my uncle John lived for many years.

Time to fold it up, and get it going. Many thanks for this issue, and please do let me know if you do intend to come to Toronto for Corflu. Looks like there's lots of interesting names coming. Maybe I can go, and enjoy the chance to see people I may never see again. Take care, and see you soon, I hope. [~ Yes I am planning on Corflu this year. Hope to see you there! ~]



Mark Salwowski's cover for Iain M. Banks's *Look to Windward*, 2000

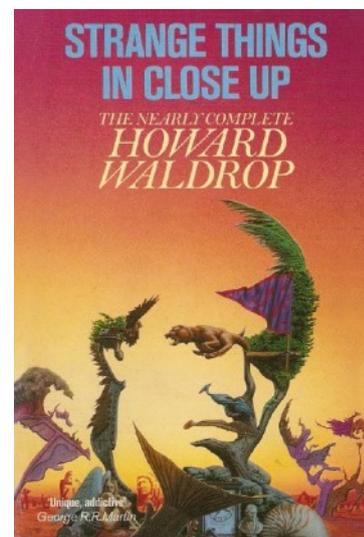


IAIN BANKS ALWAYS MAINTAINED he didn't care what was on his books' covers, but I've a strong suspicion he was having us on. He precisely described the scene on this cover, in one self-contained passage towards the end of *Look to Windward*, in a way that suggests the description was added *after* he had seen the cover art for the book. Perhaps someone should have pinned him down on this.

Cover artist **Mark Salwowski** [1] is the man who is the other half of this equation. This arresting image is striking because of its sense of scale, not just in size but in history: the strangeness of the shiny, featureless Culture ship in contrast to the ancient and ornate canal ship is a strong pointer towards the Culture's diversity and playfulness. The image was guaranteed to please Culture fans, hence its widespread use on a range of promotional materials that have since become minor collectors' items.

It was a measure of Salwowski's experience as a long-established airbrush illustrator that his transition from paint to digital images was completely undetectable. *Look to Windward* is purely digital. Conceptually, with a graphic designer's eye Salwowski had always refined his images to a point of almost obsessive simplicity, and yet he is still able to maintain a surreal and particularly vivid quality to his art. Look at his cover for Howard Waldrop's *Strange Things In Close Up* (below), which exemplifies this perfectly.

The amount of time and care Salwowski puts into his covers is also worth commenting on; you can see Salwowski often thinks twice as hard and with twice as much originality as other commercial artists about what he wants to put on a book's cover, something which will make an artist a sought after one: his selection to be the cover artist for Bank's science fiction books up to *Look to Windward* was appropriate and the pair were always a good match. Salwowski is a Brit but trained in Sydney, Australia, though he was back in the UK for many years being represented by the Sarah Brown Agency before eventually returning to Australia. He's been less prolific on book jackets in recent years due to ill health, so it would be good to find out in what medium he is most active now.



[1] <http://www.salwowski.com>

[2] Complete original art at http://www.salwowski.com/Gallery-normal/Salwowski_Waldrop-StrangeThingsInClose-up.jpg



“This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilisations heal.

I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also crucial not to succumb to its malevolence. Like failure, chaos contains information that can lead to knowledge – even wisdom. Like art.”

Toni Morrison, 2004, following the presidential re-election of George W. Bush. Widely re-circulated in 2017.

This fanzine is now a week late and a dollar short, and was compiled between 2 October 2560 / 2017 and 4 January 2561 / 2018. I needed a few extra days to finish a couple of books for *TLS* – I don’t think anyone except myself is gonna give me a hard time when it comes to slipping a couple of days past a December deadline.

The title is a farewell to Randy Byers, partly inspired by the song titles of Susanne Abbuehl. I was often listening to her 2013 album *The Gift* as I was assembling this zine (I think you call her kind of music ‘chamber jazz’).

Thanks to Luke McGuff, Ulrika O’Brien, Curt Phillips and Mark Salwowski for help with some details and images in this issue.

Do Not Disturb Famous Bestselling Author While Being Famous

One other encounter with Famous Bestselling Author that I like to recall was about ten years ago on a flight from Johannesburg to London in the company of Wilbur Smith. “My mother loves all your books,” I had to tell him. “Please tell her she’s got very good taste,” he said with a courteous and gentlemanly smile. My mother was delighted.

A Day at the Nielsen Hays Library Book Sale, Bangkok

I expect the Nielsen Hays Library has had just about every Bangkok-based crime novel ever on its shelves at some point. I’m whittling down my unread non-crime fiction books so I expect I’ll be reading a bit more crime in the near future. Bangkok is seemingly forever ripe for this genre.

Mark Salwowski’s cover for Iain M. Banks’s *Look to Windward*, 2000

My apologies for the less-than-perfect cover scan of *Look to Windward*. My copy is 6,000 miles away while my scanner is here, and the internet is only providing images that are either too small or contain annoyingly pronounced moiré patterns. I considered a slightly out-of-focus image less problematic to the eye than a poorly reproduced image that had been sharpened beyond any practical use.

MORE GENRE FANZINES RECEIVED / READ IN 2017

Alexiad #95 LISA & JOSEPH MAJOR

Ansible #362–366 DAVE LANGFORD

Askance #40–42 JOHN PURCELL

Askew #20–22 JOHN PURCELL

Banana Wings #67–68 CLAIRE BRIALEY, MARK PLUMMER

Beam #12 NIC FAREY & ULRICA O’BRIEN

Broken Toys #50 TARAL WAYNE

Challenger #41 GUY LILLIAN II

Claims Department #22 CHRIS GARCIA

CounterClock #30 WOLF VON WITTING

Iota #11–13 LEIGH EDMONDS

Journey Planet #35–36 JAMES BACON, CHRIS GARCIA ET AL

Nice Distinctions #32 ARTHUR HLAVATY

Nowhere Fan #4 CHRISTINA LAKE

Opuntia #393–400 DALE SPEIRS

Rat Sass #1–6 TARAL WAYNE

SF Commentary #95 BRUCE GILLESPIE

Spartacus #22–23 GUY LILLIAN III

Vibrator #2.0.44–2.0.46 GRAHAM CHARNOCK

The Zine Dump #42 GUY LILLIAN III

I HAVE A GOOD IDEA for another double-issue of *Big Sky* – you know, that other fanzine I produce on a far less regular basis. It will involve as much work – if not more – as that previous double #3 & 4, the ‘SF Masterworks’ issues, for which Malcolm Edwards kindly offered for Gollancz to finance a print edition. However the Masterworks series continued and I knew the project would very soon be an incomplete, out-dated publication. Maybe if there’s another pause in the series, it might be worth doing a complete print edition then.

What I anticipate producing for #6 & 7 is a history of British Space Opera, once again in the form of reviews, completed in time for the Dublin Worldcon in August 2019. If you have reviews or short articles you think might be at home in such a fanzine, do please let me know. I’m sure I’ll be contacting the reviewers who participated in #3 & 4 individually to request their participation again.

It will be hard work, but I’m sure it will also be a lot of fun, and I’m not averse to either.



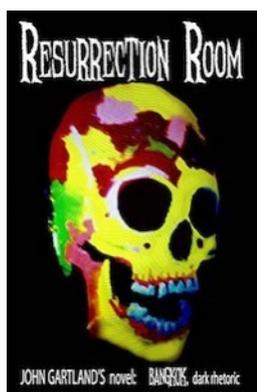
“When you ain’t being slowly grilled at a thousand in the shade, you are sousing in floods, or the house is falling about your devoted ears in a thunderstorm ... There is a filthy old river, the colour of milk chocolate, flavoured with the juices of countless defunct and deeply lamented household pets, and one’s servants consider this liquid such sacred nectar that they will wash your socks in it, and then make your tea with the same ... Otherwise, of course, the place is all right.”

Eric Read, *Chequered Leaves*, 1913

John Gartland

Resurrection Room

2016 | Lizardville Productions, ASIN B01EB8POSE, £2.65



There was a news story in the UK two decades ago about how the many unfinished novels being written by Civil Service employees in their lunch breaks were taking up so much computer memory that they were slowing down the whole system. I have no proof, but John Gartland’s first novel *Orgasmus*, published in 1986, might well have been one of those novels, such was the vibe it gave off of frustration with

British Civil Service bureaucracy. Gartland now has a reputation as a somewhat avant garde poet on the Bangkok expat arts scene, and *Resurrection Room* is his second novel. A long time coming, sir.

I read *Orgasmus* sometime in the 1990s and it didn’t necessarily help to have read it before taking on *Resurrection Room*, although it did give me an idea of how Gartland would interact with his new *bête noire*, the Bangkok TEFL circuit, a milieu which he evidently now inhabits. The story takes place in Lizardville, a kind of alternate Bangkok, and it’s notably engaging the way it meanders seamlessly between narrators and threads, with good dialogue and a colourful chiaroscuro. It can feel aimless at times with no detectable destination, but that problem is negated by simply trusting in the narration of this fever dream and adjusting the tempo of one’s reading. Any novel in which office politics rubs shoulders with an immortal Lazarus shows an author exercising some *laissez-aller* with his own work, so to read it is also to participate in a novel that is in the process of finding its destination. The whole experience is actually quite fluid – don’t expect a straightforward narrative when an alternative can be this creatively inspiring.

Win Lyovarin

Man Alive

2011 | 113 Company, No ISBN, £5.00

Translated by Prisna Boonsinsukh

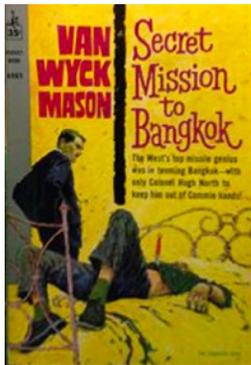


There are not enough short story collections from Win Lyovarin available in English. His inventiveness with the structure of the short story and his willingness to innovate and experiment with both style and content appears to be a constant pursuit, and *Man Alive* serves as another good showcase of his thoughtful creativity.

‘Adulterer’ is the first story, a tricky one that connects moments in an affair, with a twist at the end. Lyovarin has basically stripped out the prose, presenting us with a series of points from which we construct the imagery. ‘Sin City’ is a series of conversations held by a Bangkok taxi driver with his rides, each of which give an impression of the city’s darker and less welcoming side. ‘Game’ compares the narratives of a boxer in the ring with a hunter who won’t kill anymore as he leads others on a tiger-hunting expedition. ‘The Last Twenty Years’ is an interesting story, as two ex-soldiers meet and one reveals himself to now be a writer, while the other is now an editor. I had read the discomfiting story ‘Doll’ before in another translation, but the translation in this volume lacks the childish curiosity that I reckon Lyovarin was trying to impart. Setting aside the fantastic novella ‘Rart Eikkatheit’s Three Worlds’, which I reviewed positively in *TLS* #6, the best and most caustic story is ‘The Potted Plant on the Windowsill’ in which a paralysed man and his nurse exchange their viewpoints on the world via an almost telepathic dialogue.

Lyovarin is the Thai author I would most like to see have a bigger presence on literature’s world stage – the world’s readers would not be disappointed if they had more opportunities to discover him in translation.

Van Wyck Mason
Secret Mission to Bangkok
1960 | Doubleday, \$3.95



I read this in the 1961 Pocket Books edition, which is of course the proper format for adventures bound between suitably garish and tacky covers. Hardcover editions just don't cut it when reading pulp fiction.

Van Wyck Mason wrote many thrillers in his 'Colonel Hugh North' series, clearly modelled on Fleming's James Bond but perhaps offering a little less action and a little more

whodunnit. I have seen *Secret Mission to Bangkok* described elsewhere as a rather tricky book, but not having read others in this series I can't honestly compare. The plot is certainly a whirlpool of intrigue: Dr. Hans Bracht is America's foremost expert on missiles and space travel (based loosely on Werner von Braun) and a circus of espionage surrounds him as his Thai wife is held to ransom. Hugh North must secretly accompany him to Bangkok to ensure his safe return to America after he intends to pay the ransom, but the flight into the city has half a dozen other shady characters, all of whom have a part to play in the murder and mayhem that is to come.

Quite how all these people with an interest in Bracht ended up on the same plane from Hong Kong in the first place is something of an unsolved mystery of Mason's plotting, but at least it serves to get the ball rolling. Hugh North in this novel is a bit of a cardboard cut-out character, efficiently working out who are the fakes and who are the real threats. Most interesting of all are the Chinese tycoon with strangely impeccable English and a past he wants kept hidden, plus the American film director and his troupe of errant actors, there to make a movie but all of whom also have a furtive interest in Bracht. Sometimes it all seems a bit much, everyone's efforts to get at Bracht are so tightly intertwined that it's a major job for Hugh North to figure out what's going on while keeping everyone at bay. Much of the action takes place in a swanky Bangkok hotel with connecting rooms, covert surveillance and wild parties. North himself gets several offers of fun and games from a couple of liberated women (in the 1960s sense), but the author can't afford to let Hugh North enjoy himself too much or let things get completely out of hand there is a plot to solve, after all!

As much as I love the pulps, I doubt I'll be reading any more Hugh North novels. *Secret Mission to Bangkok* may have been the wrong book with which to discover North, because everything here seems so formulaic and you never get to know what makes North tick. There's no past hinted at, no troubling quirks of personality, no expression of interests outside his job other than learning languages. A made-to-measure international spy, in other words. This novel was mostly a big long yawn, but it does have its occasional, bright moments.

Len Webster
What We'll Leave Behind
2015 | self-published, ASIN B00ZUUMFWG, £0.99

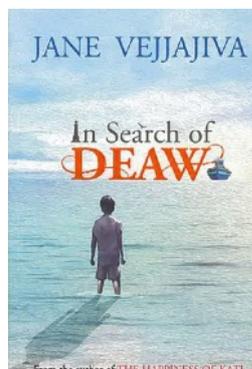


Don't be fooled by the name: Len Webster is a mid-twenties Melbourne-based Thai writer of modern chick-lit. She writes in English and her romances sell by the truckload.

The novella *What We'll Leave Behind* is a prequel to *What You Left Behind* and a further series of novels. This one does have a vague Thailand connection, but only as a backdrop. Two fresh-out-of-uni

Australians, blue-eyed Julian and blonde Stephanie, meet on holiday on the beaches of Phuket. He knows he's stalking her but can't stop himself; she knows she's being stalked but can't fight being a willing victim. They both flirt with endless suggestions of love and hot sex—they're just 'holiday friends' after all. The flirtatious dialogue might not be out of place in a daytime Australian soap. They get tattoos, they get to the sex, but not the love. They part in the end... but of course you already knew that.

Jane Vejjajiva
In Search of Deaw
2009 | Piggy Bank Press, ISBN 978-616-92064-1-5, 350 baht
Translated by Nalin Vanasin



Vejjajiva's second novel published in English takes on the emotionally difficult subject of child abduction. It begins with some children daring each other to enter a 'haunted house', which is in fact occupied by a couple who are living reclusive lives after the abduction of their only child, a boy named Deaw, seventeen years earlier. The children come to learn the reason these folk appear so

haunted, and the couple are befriended by the parents of two of the children. Their kindly impulse to do some research and find the boy so many years later gathers pace, and this is where the novel finally comes into its own.

As with Vejjajiva's first novel *The Happiness of Kati*, this is middle-class Thailand yet it does have a slightly more cutting edge to it. The pain endured by the the boy's parents, Roj and Napa, is noticeably well articulated without being mawkish. The number of family digressions that couch the story in everyday life lead me to conclude this was written with teenage readers in mind, as things never become as discomfiting as a novel aimed solely at adults would be. But the conclusion is interesting and feels right. This would make a good television drama.