

Journey Planet

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Page 1: Table of Contents

Page 2: THE LONG TRIP HOME by Max

"I explain that it's been an... interesting trip."

Page 6: ALICE IN SUNDERLAND: AN EXPLORATION by Niall Harrison

"What you get is a narrator and a historical lecture..."

Page 13: LONDON TOWN by John "The Rock" Coxon

"Well, I'm not the sort of chap to turn that down, you know."

Page 17: DO YOU LIKE SANDMAN, THEN? COMMENTS FROM A NIHILIST by James Bacon

"So I engorged myself on comics, my only limitations being lack of funds."

Page 23: EDITING JAMES by Yvonne Rowse

"The words come out in a stream of consciousness, or maybe a turbulent waterfall of consciousness with recursions..."

Page 23: A NOTE FROM IAN SORENSEN

"But mono is a less happy word."

Page 24: From FLICK

"Sadly, Tobes says he's too old and boring to be a content provider any more."

Page 24: MY FRIEND ED by Stef

"My friend Ed does smell a bit."

Page 25: JOHN SCALZI ON FANZINES AND FAN WRITING. In discussion with James Bacon

"What would really be interesting is what will happen when the first podcaster gets nominated for fan writer."

Page 27: Best Fan Writer Nominee Christopher J. Garcia interviewed by Evelyn Aurora Nelson, age 8

"OK, after cartoons."

Page 29: IF IT'S BIRMINGHAM I MUST BY TRAVEL SICK by Ang

"Getting the train should be a noble experience."

Page 32: THRITY YEARS AGO by Dave Langford

"Unfortunately the pundit's next word was invariably, 'But...'"

Page 33: Two Pieces from Peter Sullivan

"I appear to have acquired a fannish dog."

Page 34: Jim de Liscard and Gerald and Neil

Gaiman and T'Pub and a 24-Hour Comic

"It's a good comic for people who don't read comics"

Page 35: NEVERWHERE: THE FIELD TRIP by James Shields

"The girl in the Angel T-shirt got off at Earl's Court and disappeared immediately."

Page 37: THE SIXTY YEAR OLD TWINS by

Christina Lake and Lilian Edwards

"It's too hot to type."

Page 38: NEVERWHERE by Tubewhore

from her LiveJournal

"A large part of the drive behind the project is to see these places that exist only as names on a map."

Artists This issue

James Shields - Cover and Back Cover

Neil Gaiman - Pages 6, 7, 8, 10, 19, 30

Mike Scott - Pages 3, 4, 23, 26

Chris Garcia - Pages 2 & 28

Jim de Liscard - Page 34

Neil Gaiman & Jim de Liscard - Page 18

James Bacon - Pages 14, 16 & 29

Tubewhore - Pages 11 and 39 through 50

Anna Raftery - Page 5

Emily Stokes - Page 12

D West - Page 32

Emily Raftery - Page 31

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THE LONG TRIP HOME

by Max

“You can’t harm me!” shouted James Bacon, wielding his wedding ring. “I have the Power of Two!”

Looks like he’s enjoying married life so far. It was a fun wedding. The ceremony, often painfully solemn and full of trembling fingers and voices from the couple at the centre of the attention, was actually a good laugh. At the point where the assembled audience was asked if we had any reason why James and Simoné shouldn’t be married, Stef, the best man, cast a long, hard, careful stare around the room while few of us managed to keep straight faces. Later, when naming the man she was promising herself to, Sim took care to add his surname. “There are a lot of Jameses in the room,” she whispered by way of explanation when the registrar smiled. “I want to make sure I get the right one!” The registrar thanked us all for making the wedding ceremony such a happy one and stated that it had been a pleasure to perform.

The party was a great time, the buffet was lavish and the venue was well chosen, but for the distance from the ceremony. It was a great day until we came to leave, and for once the meat of the fanzine article is best placed in the

Mike Scott - “This is slowly spiralling out of control.”

Chris Garcia - “Whaddya mean, slowly?”

journey.

That night, I was staying at James and Simoné’s home in Croydon while they spent the pre-honeymoon night in a central London hotel. This was of mutual convenience because it left me able to leave the party later than if I was going home, and it meant that James Shields would be accompanied when dealing with their dogs by someone the dogs would recognise. We were to travel in James Bacon’s car, driven by Shieldsy, taking Mick along with us to drop at his hotel in Croydon. We were also taking Dani back to James’s. She’s one of the YAFA kids that we’re still in touch with and Stef, on realising she was in the country, insisted she come to the wedding. At around 11.30pm it became clear that Mick would do well to be dropped at his hotel as soon as possible, having become rather tired and emotional. I’d spoken to Meike earlier in the evening, wondering if we might fit her into the car as she knows the route from Canary Wharf, where the party was, back to Croydon whilst we had only an A-Z to work with. Sadly, though, given the size of James’s car and the sheer distance between these points, we couldn’t manage a comfortable journey this way and we left Meike behind.

We also left Tobes behind. Somewhere, somehow – possibly due to a conversation with Shieldsy – he had picked up the idea that he would be travelling with us. “So yeah, anywhere you can drop me would be great,” he slurred enthusiastically to us. I broke the news that he wouldn’t fit in the car and his face fell. “No, no, it’s OK,” he insisted, with a mild case of “kicked puppy” dancing across his face. “That’s fine.” Then John Coxon stepped in, challenging him to a race to the nearest train station, and we watched them head off into the distance at speed while we helped Mick across the cobbly pedestrian zone outside the bar.

Mick walks with a stick, usually. This evening he was walking with a companion, another companion, and

somebody to hold the cane. We steered him slowly and awkwardly back to the car park and got into the car, bundling him into the passenger



seat and doing the old clunk-click. In retrospect, I'm not sure that was the best of ideas, but I do recall that somebody specifically told me, "Make sure you get him strapped in well at the front, there."

While we deliberated over the map and I regretted not bringing along a satnav device, Mick dozed off. This was something of a relief since he'd spent the lead-up to this continually thanking James Shields for the lift that had been planned a week before when Stef did the car organisation. Shieldsy seemed reasonably confident that once we hit a main road it would all be fine and we'd find copious signposts to follow. I was less certain but had no time limit on arriving at our destination so I went with the flow and we set off, Dani peering at the



map and James driving like a pro. It was when Mick opened his eyes that things began to get more interesting. I wouldn't say he woke up; it was a strange state he was in – oddly lucid but not quite on the same plane of reality as us. He stared, glassy-eyed, at James and looked for all the world like he was concentrating in the belief that hard enough concentration would grant him the power of telekenesis. While he stared he neither spoke nor moved, not even to blink. It was quite disturbing and I looked away, trying to make amiable conversation and also watching the road signs fly past, rarely giving us the pointers we wanted.

The staring without movement didn't last but the staring didn't cease. Instead, Mick started to look around himself, still not blinking, with an appearance of some panic. He reached out towards James and I intervened, thwapping his arm back into place. "Mick, don't do that while James is driving," I said in my best babysitter voice

"The London Underground is not a Political Movement." - Jamie Lee Curtis in A Fish Called Wanda

of kindly authority struggling not to sound openly patronising. Mick settled back down, even blinking once or twice. Then, from the depths of a pocket, he pulled out a hip flask which he opened and started to swig from.

"Mick," I ventured, "I'm not sure that's really a good idea."

Mick looked confused, peered down at his drinking vessel, and held it out

to me with a nod of generosity and raised eyebrows indicating that I should take some. I declined. Then Dani declined a similar offer, before I declined again, this time on behalf of James who, as I pointed out, was not going to have any because he was *driving*. Mick was, at this point, much more lucid than he had been and he slumped into

the seat and seemed to doze. Before long, he started, sat upright and began a whole new round of staring. We took to largely ignoring him and I watched car after car whizzing past us along the road. James announced that we ought to be hitting Brixton any time soon but he'd not seen many signs indicating such.

My phone rang. It was Stef. After some initial confusion over a dropped line he greeted me. "Are you nearly back yet?"

Um, no... were we supposed to be?

"Listen, you know how you're in James's car? Well, when you get a moment can you check if there's a suitcase in the boot?"

Okaaaay.

"Now, it's not completely urgent, but James is going to need it by 10 am tomorrow. He needs to repack it before they go from the hotel. It might not be with you, we might have it in one of the other cars but I couldn't see it when I went to mine and I don't think Elvis switched everything across when he was organising earlier. Where are you up to anyway?"

I explain that we think we're



near Brixton and we end the call with a promise that I'll call back when we get into the house. Shortly afterwards Mick asks if we can stop. He insists he's all right but needs to stretch his legs, so we stop and help him out of the car, watching nervously as he totters along the curb and then returns to lean on the car. While he is leg stretching and I am worrying, James is looking at the map. When we regroup inside the car he points out that he believes we've just gone through Lewisham, which is well off our planned route, but he thinks he knows where we went wrong. He offers us the choice of going back along the main road and this time veering right instead of left at a point where we'd previously peeled off, confused by the signage, or of cutting through numerous streets to put us back on track. We decide the main, large, road is the best bet but we're well out of our way. And meanwhile I've checked the boot and confirmed that we are carrying unfortunate luggage which is going to have to go back.

We set back off and Mick, who had been seeming quite sane and only normal after-party levels of drunk, goes back to his catatonic staring. Then, without warning he reaches towards the steering wheel. From my seat behind him, I restrain his arm and firmly tell him that he can't do that while James is driving. He seems wordlessly hurt and immediately tries to exit the car. I slam down the lock mechanism, and restrain him again. "We need to pull over," I tell James urgently while he's trying to negotiate lanes and ignore the drunkard beside him. "Turn left into that side street."

We pull over and Mick no longer seems to want to get out. "Are you all right there, Mick?"

"No."

"Do you want to get out for a while?"

"I don't know." He seems close to tears. "I don't know where I am."

"We're going back to Croydon." Mick looks quizzical. "We're taking you to your

hotel."

"I don't know where I am –" he starts again, and checks himself. "I don't know if I'm just lost or full of vortex." He shakes his head dolefully with this revelation. James

Shields agrees that he might well be full of vortex.

"We're somewhere in the region of Brixton," I try by way of explanation.

"I don't know what I'm doing here."

James tries to pick up the thread.

"We're going back after James's wedding. Do you remember the wedding?"

Mick grins widely. "Ah yes, James and Simoné. They're a great couple."

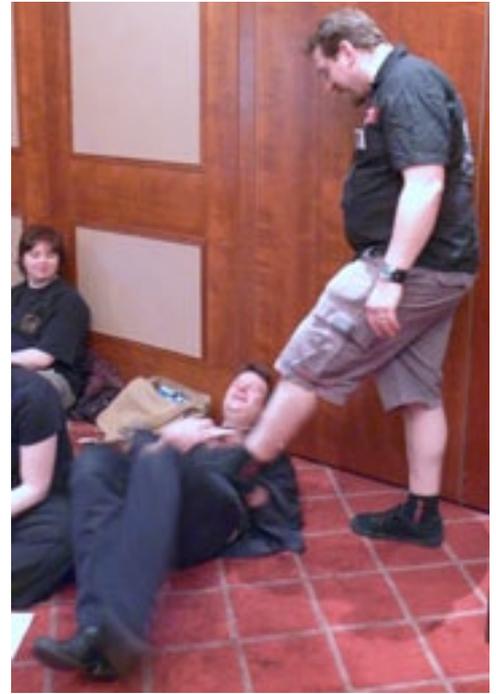
"You remember the wedding then?"

"Aye." Now Mick looks surprised, looks as though he suspects that perhaps we don't recall it. "It was lovely. I wish my wife was here."

"Do you want to get back in, now?"

James suggests. Mick obliges. When he settles he starts staring again. It's an intense gaze, accusing and unmoving. He stares hard at James, and then he falls asleep. When he next rouses we're much closer to our destination. This time he requests that we stop and let him get out. He refuses help getting out this time, clambering through the door and walking unsteadily towards somebody's front garden wall, where he stands with his back to us. Five minutes pass. Awkward minutes full of uncertainty. He looks just like a drunk bloke stopping to take a leak, except for the taking a leak part. He's

standing, legs apart, hands in front of him, head down with his back to us and he's not moving. Dani and I muse on whether he's asleep or



The late Tupac Shakur was a member of the Oakland-based Rap Group Digital Underground.



has a shy bladder. I wonder if there might be any other reason for the stance. It's worrying for a few tense moments, but then he makes a puddle and comes back to the car.

We hit Croydon eventually. It's about one thirty, we should have been here a long time ago, but the journey isn't over. We now need to find Mick's hotel. We have the name of it, and we have a crude map with big black splodges indicating roughly where the hotel is believed to be. What we don't have is any visible roadsigns, much less signs we can match with the map. We eventually have to stop yet again to try to get our bearings. Mick takes this opportunity to get out for a smoke and I go with him to hold him upright as he makes his way towards a cold park bench. He tells me again how he misses his wife and now I feel like I need to respond but I'm not sure what to say. I only know Mick peripherally, having been in the same rooms at the same conventions many times, but rarely speaking. I don't know why he misses his wife – has she left him? Is she dead? Has she just not made it over on this trip? I've been avoiding asking since he first mentioned it and this is not merely the second time, so I venture a query. "Why is she not here?"

"We have dogs. Lovely dogs. Collies. She's got to stay home to look after them. I miss her. I wish my Phil was here. I want to go home to her."

Relieved that I'm not dealing with resurfaced grief, I ask some more about her. Mick tells me how long he's been married; it's some phenomenally high number of years. "I don't think I could put up with anyone for that long!" I tell him. A wide grin makes way for laughter that sees him doubled up in seconds and now he seems more with us than previously. He doesn't stop mumbling over how he misses his Phil from this point, but he does it quietly and calmly.

All the same, when we get back into the car, Dani and James having jogged off in different directions and then back to get an idea of where we are, Mick makes it clear that he is still very, very drunk. We drive around

Croydon backwards and forwards, getting caught up in a confusing one-way system and repeatedly seeming to come back to the same place, never knowing which way we're facing when we manage to identify a road. "I think we're definitely hitting the Vortex," James muses with a knowing glance in Mick's direction. We find the hotel but we find it from the wrong side of the road, and lose it again briefly when we manage to turn around. Mick keeps telling us he knows where he is and it's fine, he'll get out and walk the last bit. Frankly, I doubt he was capable if he had known the way. Finally, at about 2 am we deposit him, wobbling unsteadily and continually thanking James for his kindness, in front of the hotel and watch him go in, doors closing behind him as he makes his wobbly way to the lifts.

From here it's not too difficult to get to James's house and I call Stef to confirm that we do have the suitcase and plan the means of returning it. "Jesus," is Stef's first word when he picks up. "Don't tell me you just got in!"

I explain that it's been an... interesting trip.

The next morning the journey's curse continues as we call a taxi that goes to the wrong place. The replacement also goes to the wrong place and the driver calls us to say he's outside. "No, we're outside and you're not here. Cromwell Road. No, not Cromwell House..." But finally we are picked up and we part ways at the train station. I head to Peterborough via Victoria while Dani begins the next leg of an epic journey that will end in Germany and James dashes across London to drop off a suitcase.

Next time I'm taking the Tube.



The Weather Underground is a documentary about the Weathermen, a terrorist/protest group.

ALICE IN SUNDERLAND: AN EXPLORATION

by Niall Harrison

The most interesting review that I've seen of *Alice in Sunderland* (and there are plenty to choose from) is probably that by Steven Flanagan at Gad, Sir! Comics!¹. It's done as a comic in the same sort of style as *Alice*, and so gives a better idea of what the book is *like to read* than any of the other reviews. Flanagan, like pretty much every other reviewer, and like me, rates the book (although he has some valid criticisms, one of which Talbot responds to in a comment), and is probably better at articulating *why* than I'm going to be. But for the record, here's my take.

Alice in Sunderland is an argument about history, couched as a lecture in a dream. It is, specifically, an argument about the history of Sunderland, or perhaps at a stretch the history of England – to paraphrase Crowded House's marketing people, according to this book you know more Mackems than you think you do – but in its general form, as a provocation to think about who writes history and what they write and why, it could be applied to just about anywhere. From a stage in the Sunderland Empire, and in another guise (referred to in the text as "the pilgrim") wandering around Sunderland itself, Talbot narrates, explores, and invigorates the history of the city he has made his home with a fluidity and range of reference that is dizzying, and certainly more than I can decode in one reading. Some individual stories or legends are highlighted, such as the story of Jack Crawford, Hero of Camperdown (and source for the phrase "nailing your colours to the mast"), or the Legend of the Lambton Worm; these are generally presented as traditional panel-driven comics, some with

guest art or script by such luminaries of British comics as Leo Baxendale. For the most part, however, *Alice* is a work of collage, a tremendous mish-mash of many different styles of artwork. The signature look is a black and white line-drawn figure against digitally manipulated photographs of the area being discussed, perhaps with other elements – manuscript pages, older artworks, and so on – overlaid. Such a variety of styles is no doubt intended to reflect the variety of ingredients being thrown into the melting point that is Sunderland's story, but without pictures, it's hard to convey how ambitious some of the layout is, nor how playful it can sometimes be.

It's an approach that allows Talbot to bring many different versions of history, intimate conversations and epic battles and everything in between, convincingly to life in a way that, yes, is not possible in a prose work. Which is not to say the script isn't important. Throughout the book, Talbot keeps the narration in present tense – that's one of the things Flanagan expresses reservations about, but on balance I think it works, giving the whole book a panoptic quality, all of its events taking place at the same moment, seen from a god's perspective. It's not so much a



criticism as an observation to say that the book lacks a strong narrative; it doesn't do anything so obvious as run through Sunderland's history from its early days to now, and Talbot is forever freewheeling (or so it seems) off to riff on some seemingly tangential element. Sometimes it's hard not to feel he's reaching a bit – to imply that Sunderland University is an older centre of learning than either Oxford or Cambridge



The Washington Metro subway system has 557 escalators, including the longest escalator in the US at Wheaton, which takes four minutes to ascend.

because it's built on the site of an earlier monastery seems a little tenuous, while the explanation of how to "read" pictures, and the repeated justification of comics as a serious medium feels a bit unnecessary in this day and age, particularly when the book itself is the best justification you could ask for. Talbot, for example, links Sunderland to the creation of the Bayeux Tapestry, which he calls "the birth of British comics"; this strikes me as about as useful as some of the claims for Greek or Roman texts as the first science fiction novel.

But looked at another way, the digressions and six-degrees-of-separation revelations are part of the point – you can find interesting facts about anywhere, if you put your mind to it, the book says, and more often than our brains expect everything is connected to everything else. (I have a connection to *Alice in Sunderland*, as loose as some of the connections made in the book: a couple of the people who contributed photographs of the area are acquaintances.) Moreover, Talbot quite reasonably points out that, thanks to heavy bombing in World War II, much of Sunderland's history is invisible even to most of its current inhabitants. Perhaps some excess in bringing the history back is forgivable. And if it means the book is best read in small doses, which it is, and that it can get a bit wearying towards the end, which it does, well, those are prices worth paying for the many pleasures *Alice in Sunderland* offers along its way. It is many things – informative, funny, inventive, argumentative, beautiful – but perhaps above all, as the cover declares, "an entertainment".

So read it for all those reasons. Of course, I read it because it's on this year's shortlist for the British Science Fiction Association Award for Best Novel, which is an interesting way to come at the book for a couple of reasons. Look at it this way: any description of a book is in part about expectation management. If I enthuse to

you about a book enough, I can probably persuade you to read it, but I don't want to do so if it means raising your expectations beyond what the book can meet, or actively misleading you about what the book contains. Equally, shortlisting a book for an award acts of a description – it says, this book is eligible for this award – and similarly generates expectations. Admittedly this is more true in the case of a juried award, where you can probably assume a degree of intentionality (say, considering *Quicksilver* to be a science fiction novel; or considering alternate history to be science fiction [or not]) than in a popular-vote award like the BSFA, which exists to reflect the taste of a diverse group; but still, expectations are set. All of which is a long-winded way of saying that because I came to the book the way I did, I couldn't stop thinking about what *Alice in Sunderland* is, and is not, instead of just being able to enjoy it as what it is advertised as.



The dangerous world of illegal underground table tennis is documented in the film *Balls of Fury* starring Christopher Walken. It was released in 2007.



Underground pro wrestling exists in at least 27 countries, including the UK. Few of these wrestlers ever make money, but some of their videos have made millions.

The appearance of *Alice* on the shortlist constitutes an argument that it is a fantasy novel, which does give you pause when you first think about it, if only because it's not even clear that it's fiction. Oh, it's framed as a story, as I suggested – it opens with a man walking into Sunderland's Empire Theatre, and ends with Bryan Talbot waking up at the end of a performance of *Swan Lake* taking place in the same venue, realising that the previous 320-odd pages were all a dream – but for most of the book the frame is irrelevant. What you get is a narrator and a historical lecture; a lecture that often takes the form of a story, and indeed includes sub-stories, but a lecture that we're told is entirely true (to the best of Talbot's ability to determine such things). That means that the fictionality of *Alice in Sunderland* inheres entirely in its frame; it seems to me you might almost as well call Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* fiction; after all, it uses a similar type of narrator in its exploration of how comics work.

But say we accept *Alice in Sunderland* as fiction; and accept it as a novel, although you could probably argue that it's better considered as an anthology; and accept that a graphic novel is comparable to a prose novel, although that's not an unproblematic stance. We're left with that question: is it fantasy?

Again, technically, yes: as I said, the ending reveals that it's a dream-story, even if a dream of things that are true.

Underground Comix are small press or self-published comic books that began to appear in the US in the late 1960s. Trina Robbins, Kim Deitch, Vaughn Bode and Robert



It's also true that there are occasional moments when, presumably to break up the lecture, Talbot has one or another historical (the White Lady who is meant to haunt the Sunderland Empire; or, from more recent history, Sid James) or contemporary individual (in one of the book's most interesting sequences, Chaz Brenchley and Colin Wilbourn turn up to explain the genesis of a riverside sculpture park), or even fictional character (mostly from *Alice*), butt in, somehow, and assume an equal level of reality to Talbot-the-narrator. These are, effectively, moments of fantasy. But even when they add something to the book's general argument they are also,

by and large, intended first as jokes, gimmicks, momentary diversions from the main thrust of the book. Of course, one of the threads that runs through the book, as the title implies, is an investigation of Charles Dodgson's life, and how wrong the popular portrait of him as a dreaming spires recluse is, and of course *Alice in Wonderland* is a key text of the surreal and absurd fantastic. Being *about* something, however, is not actually the same as *being* something; put another way, although *Alice in Sunderland* is at times *about* fantasy and mythology, it is not itself either in more than a trivial sense. Moreover, the fantastic elements are not nearly as central to the book as a whole as is the concern with story more generally, and how story becomes history.

So despite the fact that it's led me to a good book that would otherwise have

Crumb were all central figures. Many point to San Francisco as the epicenter of the Underground Comix scene.

taken me longer to get around to reading, I feel a bit *mis*-led by the shortlisting of *Alice in Sunderland*. It seems to me that while technically supportable, the implicit description of the book that this shortlisting provides is not a *Quicksilver* case, is not something that makes us think about what we mean by “fantasy novel”, because *Alice in Sunderland* is not trying to be either fantasy or a novel. Indeed, to think of it in such a way almost seems to *miss the point*, to miss what’s good and important about Talbot’s fascinating, if at times frustrating book. Looked at one way, of course, in the end it doesn’t matter, because *Alice in Sunderland* teaches you how to read it, and even I managed to forget my genre-quibbling ways, which means that most people probably won’t think twice about the issue; and though the detail won’t stay with you (the detail overwhelms), the overall impression will, the passion and the *exhilaration* of its best moments. But this recommendation does it no favours.

The above review appeared on the Vector Editors ‘Torque Control’ blog; the web address is below. Vector is the critical journal of the British Science Fiction Association and Niall is the editor of said magazine. Interestingly, following on from this, Bryan Talbot and others initiated some discussion about the review and also the graphic novel in question. We have edited to concentrate on the discussion solely between Niall and Bryan, but you can see more online.

Bryan Talbot writes:
(26 February 2008; 2.43 am²)

A friend pointed me in the direction of this review. Let’s not be vague – blame Chaz Brenchley, damn his eyes! I don’t know whether me posting a comment here is going to help or hinder this debate but, bugger it, I’m doing it anyway.

First off – what a wonderful review! I’m really glad that you liked the book. Many thanks for the very kind words. Cor blimey. If

I’d been able to read this before I started, which I obviously couldn’t, it would have encouraged me immensely during the cold, bleak wilderness years of the saga that was working on *Alice in Sunderland*.

I’ve always thought of it as multi-genre, or cross-genre, or even (godhelpme) mainstream.

It’s no coincidence that the material is presented to the reader in the order it is, that the multitudinous story elements enter the narrative at the exact moment they do. No accident then, that they are all meticulously foreshadowed to enter at exactly the right point in the narrative. The complexity of material demanded a framework that was flowing and easy to follow. The model I was emulating was, of course, Carroll’s *Alice* – but that didn’t deal with the sort of intertwined multiple stories that I wanted to tell here. That’s one of the reasons why I structured the work around an imaginary theatrical performance.

Thirdly (if anyone’s counting) there’s this debate about whether *Alice* is in the “Fantasy Genre” or not. About this I don’t know and care even less. I’ve always thought of it as multi-genre, or cross-genre, or even (godhelpme) mainstream. But there certainly *is* lots of fantasy in the book. The longest self-contained sequence is The Legend of The Lambton Worm – it’s about a bloody big dragon and a dragonslayer – high fantasy or what? I tried to write the old legend as if it was an “Arts and Crafts” comic strip (though there never was such a beast). Another Sequence is an adaptation of Carroll’s *Jabberwocky* in the style of John Tenniel. There are also ghost stories, *Boy’s Own* adventure etc – and the story itself is a dream, as with the original *Alice*. There are at least five different versions of myself in the story, not to mention the characters from *Alice* who wander in and out. The whole is inspired by a mixture of myth and reality but the book is a work of the imagination. Whether or not that constitutes “fantasy” I leave to

you.

Stretching it for the sake of debate – it could actually be construed as science fiction



(depending on the flexibility of your parameters) if you take on board the fact that all the book is narrated in the present tense – even the “real time” historical sequences. I do address this in the book and how it relates to my admittedly vague idea of time theory, of how all events, past, present and future, are happening right now and the passage of time is simply down to the flow of chronon particles and our limited perception of it.

I don't know who wrote the review (is it Niall? He seems to respond to the following postings as if he did – sorry – I don't read fanzines or blogs except when they're stuck under my nose) but it's a fantastic review and very astute. I'm very happy that you enjoyed the book.

I'd like to point out that I never set out to describe a realistic version of Sunderland and its history. I wanted to paint a magical portrait of the city, doing with images exactly what prose writers do with words. As I say in the opening pages, storytellers have always brought out the magic in the places where they live. And they will do so, ad infinitum.

Now, it appears, I'm moving to Nottingham this year. And, yes, don't worry, I've already bought the DVDs of the Richard Greene *Robin Hood* TV series...

...all four of them.

Bryan Talbot

PS: The bit about Sunderland being an older centre of learning than Oxford is a joke. HA HA ha... er, please yourselves. The Bayeux Tapestry, on the other hand, is the first known example of words and pictures used in unison to tell a sequential visual narrative (AKA: A COMIC) in Britain. Like it or lump it, that's a fact.

Niall writes:

(26 February 2008 at 12:14 pm³)

Hi Bryan – thanks for the comment.

Yes, the review (and any confusions/insults arising from it) is mine. To take your postscript first:



The bit about Sunderland being an older centre of learning than Oxford is a joke. HA HA ha...er, please yourselves.

Ah. My Oxford partisanship may have been acting up at that point ...

The Bayeux Tapestry, on the other hand, is the first known example of words and pictures used in unison to tell a sequential visual narrative (AKA: A COMIC) in Britain. Like it or lump it, that's a fact.

Yes... but my quibble is whether it's a *useful* fact. Lucian of Samosata wrote about a trip to the moon in the second century, but I don't think it's particularly useful to call that book “science fiction”, because it's clearly not part of a tradition that gives rise to modern SF. (It anticipates SF, sure.) I admit I resist claiming it because it seems to be straining for a legitimisation that I don't think SF actually needs.

I also freely admit I know much less about comics than about prose SF, but it does seem at first glance that there's as much in common between the Bayeux Tapestry and *Alice in Sunderland* as there is between *True History* and *First Men in the Moon*, and I'm afraid on that point *Alice* didn't convince

me otherwise.

On the fantasy question, there's certainly room for reasonable people to disagree. I still find it a too-narrow way of looking at the book, but as Alex said, it's the only option BSFA members had to recognise it, and I can't begrudge them wanting to do that.

There are at least five different versions of myself in the story

Dammit, I only counted four ...

Bryan Talbot writes:
(27 February 2008 at 3:56 am⁴)

Niall – I still stand by the blandly uncontroversial assertion that I make in *Alice* that the Bayeux tapestry is the first known example of British comic storytelling. This isn't at all like saying that SF was invented by the ancients because some bloke wrote a story about going to the moon 2,000 years ago. The Odo embroidery is a comic strip. It tells one story using words and pictures in a continual sequential narrative, the buildings and trees etc. acting in exactly the same way as panel borders do in comics today, to divide off one scene from the next. No, it isn't printed on paper and stapled in the middle but it's a comic strip nonetheless. And, no, they didn't have the term "comic" back then, but neither had Mary Shelley heard of SF. I think that it would be a bit different if I was trying to claim that the BT was the first known example of television, but I'm not.

Because *Alice in Sunderland* is about storytelling, I thought that I should address the medium in which I was telling the story and that's why I evoke the history of British comics in the book. The tapestry is the starting



point simply because it's the first known example.

There is no parallel here at all with SF in that what we now call comic storytelling has been around for centuries longer than the current tradition of SF writing, longer than the novel in fact. Some 16th century political propaganda broadsheets are almost identical to modern comics – panels, speech balloons, sequential narrative. The difference is that SF is a genre and comics is a medium. I'm sure you wouldn't argue that Vegetable Samosa, whatever his name was, writing about visiting the moon in Roman times was not part of a history of people telling stories using words. It's just that he wasn't the first known example. When it comes to Brit comics, the Bay Tap indisputably *was*. It's nothing to do with giving comics a legitimacy, it's just stating a bald fact. There just isn't an earlier example of telling stories using sequential pictures in the British Isles that we know of.

"On the fantasy question" – I don't know if *Alice* is fantasy or what but it's certainly not realistic by any definition.

Yes, there are at least five versions of



The average Londoner spends roughly three weeks a year on the Underground. That's roughly the same as Los Angelinos and San Franciscans spend in their cars.

me in the book: the Plebeian, the Performer and the Pilgrim, as advertised on the frontispiece, the supposedly “real” me that wakes up in the middle of the book, the “uber me” that’s seen pulling the strings of the Performer on stage and the “meta-me” (oh dear, there’s no “mini-me”) that wakes at the end to realise it’s all been a dream, even the bit where I woke up in the middle. There’s also the “historic” me (at four different ages) that appears in the bits where I’m talking about my Grandma.

Oh, bugger. It’s nearly 3 o’clock. I’ve gone and done it again. You swine!

Bryan

Niall Harrison writes:
(27 February 2008 at 11.01 am⁵)

The difference is that SF is a genre and comics is a medium

Yes, you’re quite right, of course. A better comparison would have been with the first novel – as far as I know we don’t have a clear answer there, even for the first novel in English (Wikipedia seems to back me up⁶, at the moment at least) so I’m still surprised that it’s so clear-cut with the BT. But as I said in my previous comment, my knowledge of the history of comics isn’t that great, so I shall take your word for it that it is.

We are very grateful to both Niall and Bryan for this. Check out the full conversation and further writings by Niall at <http://vectoreditors.wordpress.com/2008/02/20/alice-in-sunderland>; the magazine he edits, Vector, has a website (<http://www.vectormagazine.co.uk/bsfa.html>) but it is a print magazine. Details of the BSFA are online at www.bsfa.co.uk; the editors of this zine encourage membership of this great association.

Bryan Talbot’s work, Alice in Sunderland, is fantastic and not to be missed. A detailed website with much more information, some excellent galleries and also artwork for sale is maintained by James Robertson and can be found at: <http://www.bryantalbot.com/>

References

- ¹ <http://gadsircomics.blogspot.com/2007/04/review-alice-in-sunderland-part-1.html>
- ² <http://vectoreditors.wordpress.com/2008/02/20/alice-in-sunderland/#comment-33245>
- ³ <http://vectoreditors.wordpress.com/2008/02/20/alice-in-sunderland/#comment-33270>
- ⁴ <http://vectoreditors.wordpress.com/2008/02/20/alice-in-sunderland/#comment-33312>
- ⁵ <http://vectoreditors.wordpress.com/2008/02/20/alice-in-sunderland/#comment-33328>
- ⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_novel_in_English



The Underground is a Christian-affiliated concert venue operating in Forest Park, Ohio. It’s a No Smoking, No Booze Nightclub. Yes... I’m serious.



Underground Operations is an indy record label out of Toronto. It features acts such as Protest the Hero, Bombs Over Providence and Hostage Life. Good stuff.

LONDON TOWN

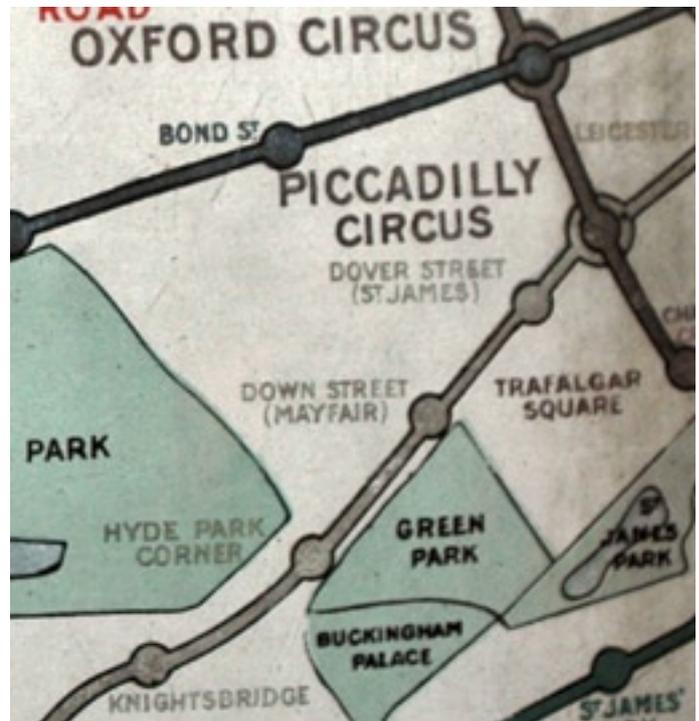
by John Coxon

It's always difficult for me to say No to James Bacon. It's even more difficult when he uses a phrase like "Chris [Garcia] and I are doing a fanzine at Orbital as a programme item and we want to get some shit hot writers on board beforehand, so can you do an article?" Combine that with the fact that every time I publish a copy of my own fanzine, *Procrastinations*, Chris refers to me in terms that would make Jesus blush, and you have a couple of people for whom I'd write an article on almost anything.

So, this article is about London, as that's where Orbital is based. In fact, it's about three specific experiences I've had in London that are to do with fandom; in this instance, it makes most sense to start with the second one, and the fannish event that really introduced me to fandom outside ZZ9 (and, probably, introduced me to people who weren't paying attention even though they were in ZZ9).

That event was, in case you weren't there, <plokta.con> π: The Dangercon. It was all in aid of TAFF: a mad idea to combine the closing of voting and a swift announcement of the result while raising funds. It was a very good one-day convention at which I went to two programme items and spent the other nine or ten hours in the bar – one must always start as one means to continue, we are told. Now, if you weren't there, you might not know that it was held at the Horseshoe Inn, a rather nice pub (which has since, I gather, gone downhill) which is nearest to London Bridge Tube station. And if you've never been to London Bridge, you might not know that they extremely carefully modelled the place on a labyrinth and so I very easily got lost.

So, there I am: I'm in London, I'm sixteen, the only other Peterborough fans likely to be attending (Max and Tobes) were otherwise occupied with something-or-other, and I am totally and completely lost. And I see two people who look like fans crossing a



bridge, so I catch up with them and ask, nervously, "Excuse me, but are you SF fans?"

Those two people who "looked like fans" were Claire and Mark and, as it turned out, they were fans (I was extremely pleased) and so I followed them to the convention. When we arrived, I got out some copies of *Procrastinations* #1 and I gave them one, thus putting me on the *Banana Wings* mailing list. I promptly gave everyone at the con a fanzine – people who were within ten metres of me at Contemplation may also remember this sort of behaviour – and got very drunk (if you don't believe me, I think Bug will be able to recall...) and very loud and was on the stage twice and had a very good time.

That was my first one-day con, and the first time I'd met people like Bug and Mark and Claire, who are (obviously) well-known in British fandom and also happen to be thoroughly lovely people.

So that was my first fannish London experience. For seconds, I could talk about the London ZZ9 events I've been to, or describe the two Picocons I've attended, but instead I'm going to talk about something that happened just before the TAFF event: a performance, in the



Underground Lava is called Magma. This is one of thousands of facts I only know because I learned them from *The Simpsons*.



really interesting; but I didn't get to ask my question. So, at the signing (at which I got the programme signed, having spectacularly failed to bring my copy of *Neverwhere*), I asked Neil what he thought, and he said it wasn't the way he'd have done it but he was still pleased with the result, and I walked away very happy.

And then, fifteen minutes later,

Lyric Hammersmith, of *The Wolves in the Walls*, a play adapted from the book by Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean. It was a good play, although I must confess that I personally felt I was a little too old for it. This did not stop me buying a T-shirt (see *Procrastinations* #1).

However, the play wasn't really the highlight of the day for me. Four people were going to London: myself, my mother, my brother and my then girlfriend, Jessica. We had to co-ordinate with her as to which days were suitable and then we cross-referenced that with which days were good for us whilst bearing in mind the days on which the cheap performances were available. And then, after we'd somehow decided on a day to go to see it and a time on that day which would be a good plan, Neil announced that that show would be the one he'd chosen to do a Q&A.

So, naturally, I was excited. By that point I'd read *American Gods*, *Neverwhere* and the first three or four volumes of the *Sandman* graphic novels and I'd thought they were all genius (this is partly because they are, I suppose), and I wanted to get his opinion on the new *Neverwhere* comic, written by Mike Carey, which at that point was still being released.

The day comes, and I watch the play and enjoy it, and then it's the Q&A. The audience is roughly 50: 50 kids to SF fans, I'd have guessed, and so the variety of questions was

I queued up again, because I'd forgotten to get a picture taken with him. That's how cool I am. The picture is genuinely awesome, though.

Finally, the last London event I went to that really stands out in my mind wasn't really an event. During August, I got bored. I'd had a lot of summer holiday, and I was feeling restless. Recombination had finished and so the convention season was over until *Orbital* for me; but the First Thursday meeting was coming up, so I expressed the thought on my LiveJournal that I might turn up and distribute *Procrastinations* #4 to people there. James, being ever excellent, commented saying, "Well, if I got the day off, we could go comics shopping and hit some bookstores and have a couple of drinks and stuff."

Well, I'm not the sort of chap to turn that down, you know. So I get into London fairly quickly and James and I quickly hit around fifty bazillion comic and book stores, all of which were really awesome. We hit several stores and I wound up coming home with about ten new books, including one by Tanith Lee, since I wanted to read something she'd written before *Orbital* – and, at the time of writing, have still completely failed to do so (uni involves

work; who knew?).

James will, undoubtedly, write a short paragraph to supplement this to tell you all the book and



comic stores we went to – there were many, many shops and all were excellent and I can't remember the names of any of them. However, there were other really cool places we visited. For instance, there was the Gate bar in Notting Hill which had done the whole place up as a beach over the summer and so we had fun sitting in a deckchair and drawing our names in the sand and having a glass of some foreign lager.

The second place we visited was a café near Kim Newman's apartment, and (as you might have presumed from my way of referring to it) we met Kim Newman there. Now, Kim is a chap who writes reviews for *SFX* magazine, has written a couple of *Warhammer 40,000* novels for Games Workshop and also wrote some books such as *Anno Dracula* and *The Night Mayor*, the latter of which I had read on the train that morning.

One of the main characters in *The Night Mayor* is an actor who is sent into a virtual world to combat a dangerous criminal who has hacked the computer of a prison and turned it into a *Sin City*-esque world. As it turned out, the chap who Kim had based the character on (and had named the character after) was with him at the time and so I got both of them to sign my copy. Which was, as you could probably guess, genius.

And then James and I strolled down a street and saw a branch of Hotblack Desiato, which was the inspiration for the name of the dead rock star in the Douglas Adams novel, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*. I got my photograph taken outside, grinning inanely.

Eventually, after some more comic stores and a meal at a very nice Italian place, we actually went to the pub and did the First Thursday thing. This was the first pub meeting after the Japanese Worldcon and so there were plenty of fans (well, Flick...) sharing stories of Japan and showing off kimonos and the like, which was very cool, also. Eventually I went home

with Max – she'll tell you a funny story about me catching London buses, if you ask her...

A FAN'S GUIDE TO LONDON

London has a host of shops that might be of interest to fans. There are no shortage of second hand bookshops, although they are not as plentiful as they once were. Yell.com is pretty good for finding bookshops within a given borough. Charing Cross Road still has about half a dozen bookshops that sell bargain and second hand books, but SF is thin on the ground. The massive Waterstone's in Piccadilly is worth a visit just for the ambience. Here, though, are the shops that John visited and enjoyed: some have books, some have comics, and some have both; hopefully they will be of interest.

The Fantasy Centre. 157 Holloway Road, London N7 8LX. books@fantasycentre.biz 020 7607 9433. Nearest Tube is Holloway Road or Highbury & Islington.

London's greatest second hand science fiction and fantasy bookshop. Also stocking unusual publications from smaller and specialist publishers. There are thousands of books here, from top of the range first editions to regular paperbacks; the bookshop is the science fiction fan's dream and a must for any visiting fan. <http://www.fantasycentre.demon.co.uk/>

Book & Comic Exchange. 14 Pembridge Road, Notting Hill W11 3HT. Nearest Tube station, Notting Hill, is around the corner from it.

The shop is all second hand but gets a lot of review and unsold comics. Great selection of comics and good value graphic novels. They bought in a load of science fiction about two weeks ago; it's got its own narrow corridor section just for SF/F, above the stairs. Basement is crazy – all books 50p.

The 1995 Underground (from Serbia) was originally supposed to be 320 minutes long! The producers required the director to trim it to almost half its original length!



The Underground is a grassroots organization, based in New England, of landscape designers, landscape architects, horticulturists and other subterraneans.

Forbidden Planet. 179 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8JR. 020 7420 3666.

London's premier new shop for all things SF. It's always worth a visit, while some bargains can also be had considering this is the main new store in London for SF. It's probably got the best imported selection of SF available. Lots of good signings, and also some oddball characters work there which makes it feel better.

Orbital. 148 Charing Cross Road, Covent Garden, London, WC2H 0LB. Entrance down Dutch stairs next to the barber's. A relatively new comic shop that now has two other branches, including a shop exclusively to Manga on St Martins Lane.

They have vast back issue bins, with grab packs and many bargains. They have the best stock of indie, underground and small press comics.

Gosh Comics. 39 Great Russell St, London WC1B 3NZ.

Perhaps one of the finer comic stores in the whole UK. Comics are an art form and to be totally appreciated in this well stocked shop. Staff are amazing resources. Basement is full of European gems. Comics arranged by author and is a must for any fan. And around the corner on Bloomsbury Street is an Oxfam (charity/thrift) bookshop, well worth a browse as well for all types of books.

The fastest anyone has ever visited every station on the London Underground was 18 hours, 25 minutes and 3 seconds, by two Swedes. The first person to do them all since they opened Heathrow Terminal Five's station was Jesse Hynes, an American who did it in just under 20 hours. USA! USA! USA!



DO YOU LIKE SANDMAN THEN? COMMENTS FROM A NIHILIST.

by

James Bacon

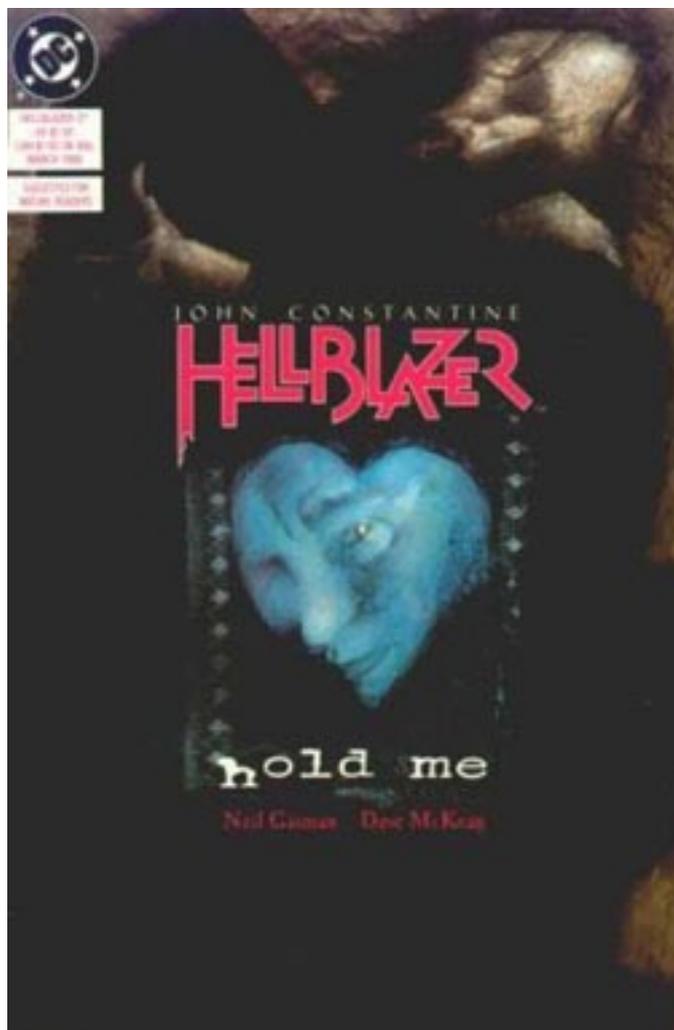
I can remember quite vividly my friends talking quite enthusiastically about *Sandman* in 1989. They were all a mite older than me; I was fifteen, a *2000 AD* hardcore reader, yet to be inducted into the pleasures of reading American comics and too naive to recognise that authors from my favourite British comic regularly worked on the smaller US contemporaries. So it was; I may have been reading Ennis, Morrison, Milligan and have read Moore, Delano and perhaps Gaiman in back issues, but I suppose I was not yet ready to make the jump to more mature comics – although there is no shortage of maturity in *2000 AD* at times.

Then a catalyst occurred, in the form of Belfast man Garth Ennis. He was at a science fiction convention in Dublin, at Trinity College, and the students had invited many guests: John Brunner, Greg Bear, Harry Harrison, David Wingrove, Steve Dillon and John McCrea as well as Ennis, who signed my comics and was just very kind to

me. He produced a Glenn Fabry cover for a future issue of *Hellblazer* and gently suggested I read *Hellblazer*, which he was writing; and so Garth Ennis started a whole new world for me.

Hellblazer was easy enough to find; at that stage it was at about issue 48, and it was relatively easy to go back and find the Ennis issues, which started at issue 41. It opened a floodgate of sorts and soon I was reading quite a lot of American titles, and my friends released a huge sigh of relief as I at last opened my mind to other comics. This meant there were soon no end of reads being recommended again. So I engorged myself on comics, my only limitations being lack of funds – such is the schoolboy's life – and friends running out of recommendations.

It was a great time; I spent two afternoons a week hanging out in the coolest little second-hand



comic shop in the world, Fantasia in Temple Lane, Dublin. This is in the now famed Temple Bar tourist hub, but this was when the area was mostly old warehouses; and the comic shop was really the hallway to an old warehouse, the rest of which was a recording studio with poor sound insulation. It was an odd place – an underground business, I reckoned, not very kosher at all – but for years a gathering place and a warm dry spot away from the horrors of teenage reality and violence and religious doctrine of school.

There were a number of “employees”; Mick, who was recovering from a major bike accident and smashed hip, was the Tuesday and Thursday man. He warmed to me and so nurtured me, introduced me to people who would become great friends, and was just a kind, wise, well-read science fiction and comic reading man; nineteen years later, he is still one of my best

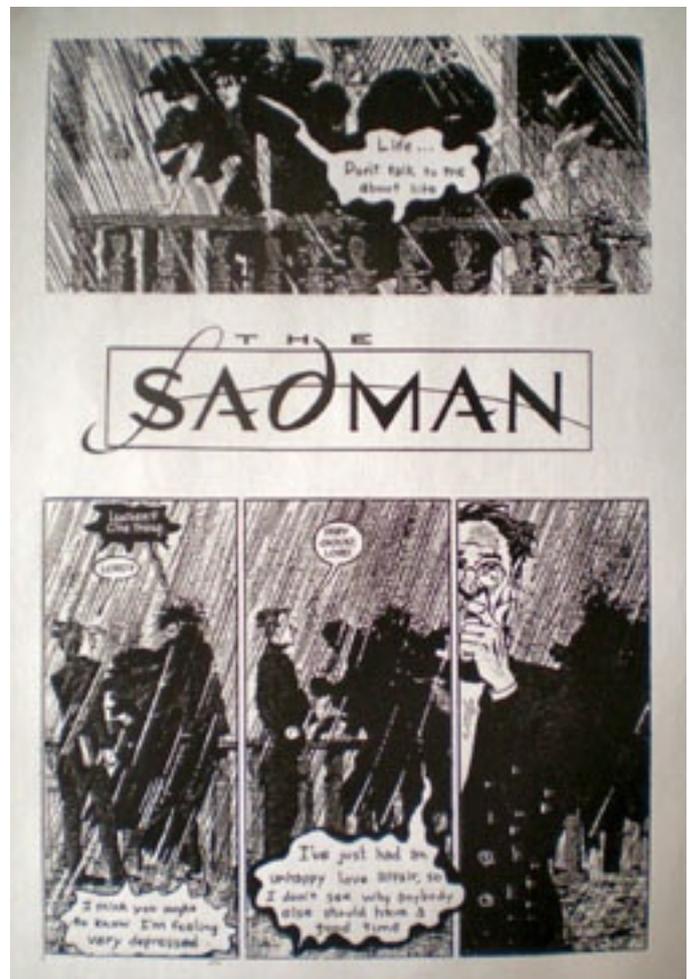


friends in this whole world.

Two days a week, I would drink coffee, chat about comics and buy some and just lap up the whole experience; even today, I must admit that I often find a special solace in comic shops, at least one that's right, with good staff and a nice atmosphere. When I lived in Dublin and something was up, coffee with Mick would also be a solution to help my head find its right place in some moment of calamity. Mick was quite happy to show me the section where *Hellblazer* resided and so I read many stories of John Constantine: wide boy, smart arse, magician and shyster.

Hellblazer led me immediately to *The Books of Magic*, my first Gaiman comic. Although I say that, I must already have read his short stories in *2000 AD*, since I had the respective issues. *Books of Magic* was very good; I especially liked the four differing artists on each book. Tim Hunter, a possible threat and danger, is taken on a tour by "the trench coat brigade" of Mr E, Dr Occult, The Phantom Stranger and John Constantine. It's quite funny as Constantine is really portrayed at the top of his game, full of sarcasm, cynicism and common sense. I especially liked John Bolton's artwork and, in descending order, Scott Hampton, Paul Johnson and Charles Vess. I must admit I find Vess's work, which is delightful in a fantastic way, nonetheless a bit too waspish for my liking. It was a great comic, a real journey, and enlightens the reader as you go. It was a great read for me at that time; Gaiman has always had great appreciation for the past of the DC universe and really shows it here.

From there it was onto another DC character that Gaiman had redone. I picked up the three-issue mini-series of *Black Orchid*, in prestige format. Now, this blew my mind a bit. I was obviously aware of Dave McKean's artwork – I had read *Arkham Asylum* just beforehand, written by Grant Morrison – but the artwork in *Black Orchid* is incredibly realistically detailed and beautiful. It's a great story, with appearances by a number of DC characters including

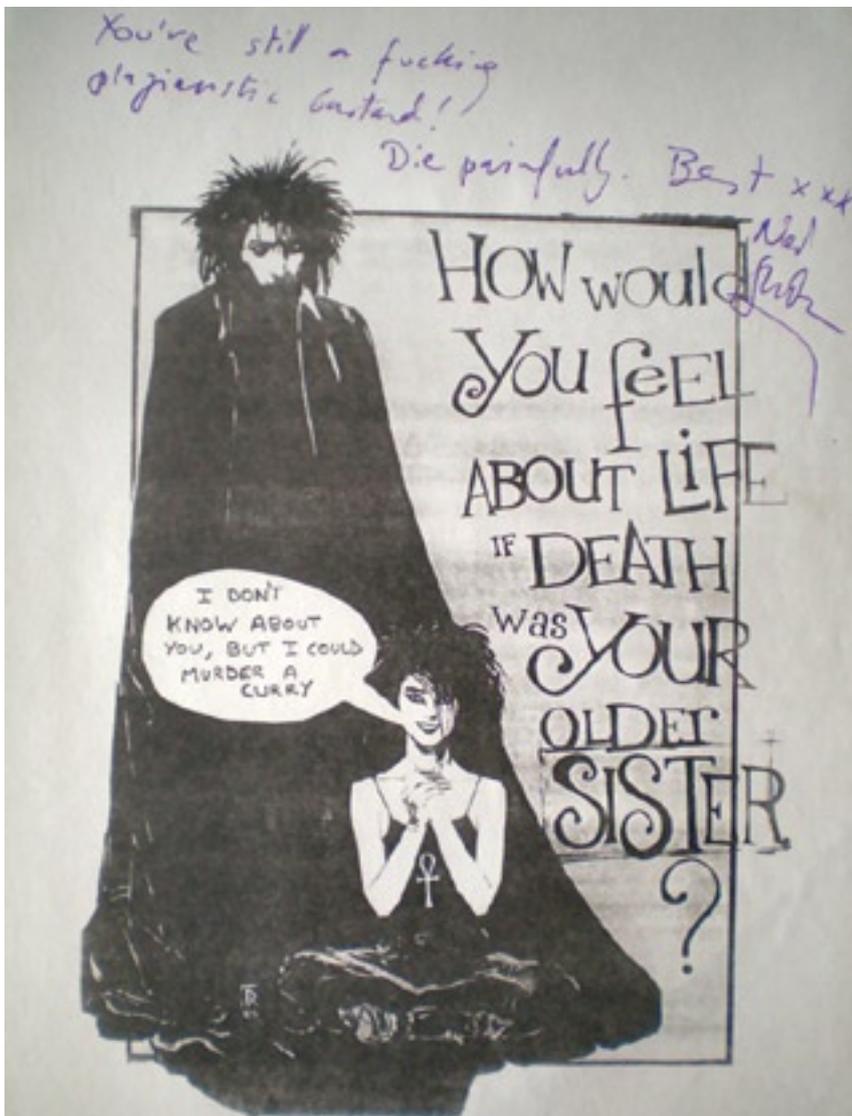


The Batman and a chilling visit to Arkham Asylum. It made me think a bit more than usual (but not too much. I am of course a philistine and most importantly a Boy).

I also knew McKean's artwork from *Hellblazer* covers, as I had managed to find most of the back issues at that stage and took the sound advice that the Titan Books black and white reprints of the series were just not the best. I had done well and a new shop (Ummagumma Rose) had opened and sold a load of *Hellblazer* back issues to me fairly cheap, and it included issue 27, which featured Gaiman and McKean. This was a good issue in my opinion and was better than Delano for sure, but it wasn't as ballsy as the Ennis stuff or the Morrison/Lloyd two issue. I wondered if I was becoming discerning.

So when it came to the *Sandman* comics, I had read some of Gaiman's work and particularly liked it. I remember *Sandman* being a secretly talked about

gem, something that few knew about, but those in my circle of friends all discussed and loaned and borrowed. I suppose I hung



dull but with warm coffee, and there were boxes being unloaded. I gave a hand, as that's what you do. It was some stock that the owner had done a deal for, and it was a great selection. Unfortunately, at some stage, the bottom of one of the boxes had soaked up some liquid from the back of the van, so there were a few comics and graphics which were water damaged, including some *Sandman* graphics. There was much cursing and tightening of jaws, which everyone sort of found funny except the owner, Terry.

A couple of days later when I popped in, the *Sandman* graphics had been put to one side. Terry had initially wanted to sell them, much to the annoyance of Mick, who reckoned that was a disservice to customers; there was some sort of row, and the books had been put behind the counter. Mick had then put them on a radiator, with toilet roll at key points to help the process; once

about with some fairly sound people. I can remember the first *Sandman* graphic novel coming out, as it was a big deal, but it wasn't the beginning of the series. Then two graphics, *Preludes and Nocturnes* and *Dream Country*, were released in a slip case. The slip case was available to buy on its own and people were popping in *The Doll's House* to have it filled. I remember being in the Crane pub when a number of friends proceeded to show me this slip case concept, new to me at least, and I wondered would there be many in the future. It was a big deal to have the series in order, although we all wondered about *Dream Country* and the way that it was a bit short, but then it was reckoned the demand was so much they needed to get it out fast.

But I had looked on through all this, interested but not that much. It was later that I came to *The Sandman*. I was in Phantasia one pissy afternoon, cold and grey and

dried, they had that wavyness along the bottom that shows the ultimate nemesis of paper has attacked, but they were eminently readable, and the only really bad damage was that the back cover got stuck to a back page. In a rushed movement of clandestine activity the graphics went from behind the desk into my school bag, a canvas affair adorned with a variety of comic logos and images. "I'll tell Terry I sold 'em for a few quid, but give them a read; you won't regret it." Money went into the till, whatever I had spare, and I was in proud possession of the comics.

I enjoyed them, and it was relatively easy to catch back issues at this stage – although the earliest ones were already reaching astronomical prices, which today they just can't realise; popularity is such a strange thing in comics and very fickle. I didn't understand all the references but my friends helped where they could and, as I went from schoolboy to working, the comic grew on me

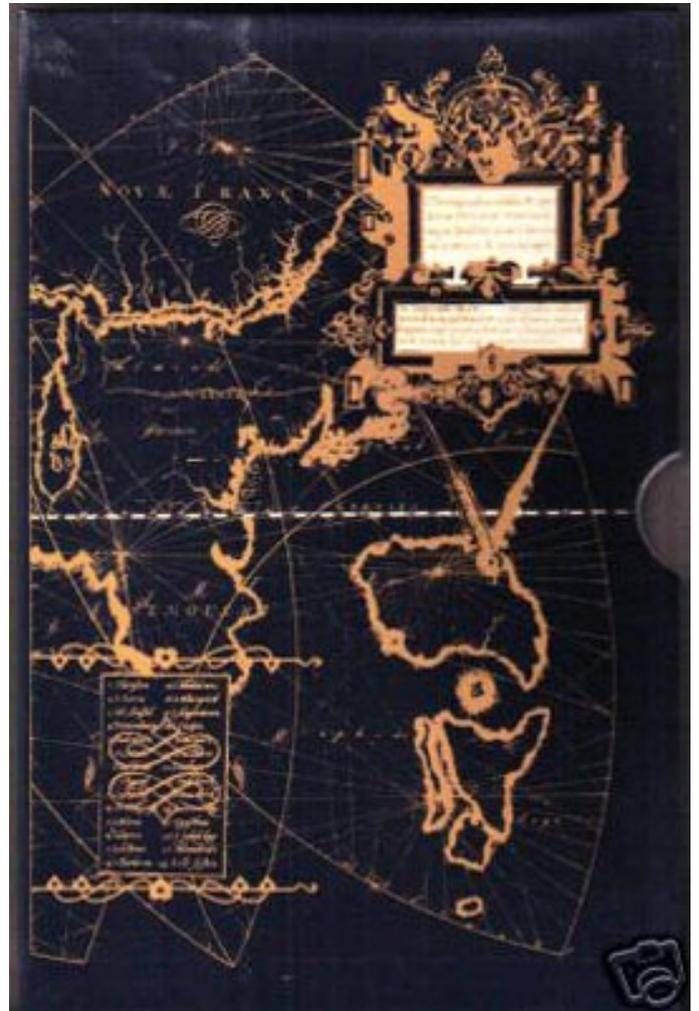
quite a bit. So I read *Sandman* and enjoyed it. Death was cool and I liked the AIDS special; she was a pretty girl and to me a lot less complex than Dream. I also enjoyed the mini-series that Gaiman wrote in about 1993, and another in '96. This was a good time and I remember my friend Maura McHugh dressing as Death for the Irish national SF convention.

It must have been an amazing time to be a *Sandman* fan – as opposed to just a reader, which I felt I was; *Sandman* was selling in huge quantities and the amount of merchandise that was available was just shocking. Death tattoos, Tarot cards, trading cards, T-shirts all flowed from the DC machinery. I wasn't so much into the Goth scene and was much more a metal fan, so I wasn't the perfect target market which was probably an older Cure-liking man; I never wore an ankh, thank god.

At some stage, I upgraded from water-damaged graphics to comics. A friend of a friend was trying to sell his back issue collection and was offered a derisory price by Terry, which caused a row and considerable umbrage. Mick knew the guy and suddenly a private deal was on. I was missing a good load from the early days, issue one upwards, to somewhere in the early thirties; I must have jumped on in the *Game of You* story, after I got the graphics to start me off. So a deal was done on the phone. And I got a call, and Mick and myself met a man under the Harp Clock on the south side of O'Connell Bridge, and Mick bought quite a bit and I bought the early *Sandmans*. Now, I am unsure what prompted the deal exactly – I suppose there was a loyalty owing to Mick – but I got a really good price; I think I was initially offered a price of less than £2 a comic, which was close to retail, but there was a sliding scale where issue one was a tenner. I walked away with a stack of comics and I think it cost me about £40. Now, this was a huge amount of money for me, but with some horsetrading about what Mick was buying it was a real bargain.

I enjoyed the comics. I read them a number of times and got most of the references, and even when it felt a little wanky I reckoned

it was worth it as the visuals and overall story was quite good. I must admit that after issue 50 it started to slide for me a little bit; I had by that stage clued in that it should be finishing at some stage and I had been expecting an ending, and I just started to feel a little dislocated at some



stage following this issue.

It seemed strange that I felt like this; so many people raved about *Sandman*. Yet my friends had advised me on many more titles and authors by this stage and I was also discovering more Gaiman, which was very pleasing. I especially enjoyed *Violent Cases*. I was lucky that a good friend and comics advisor was clearing out his comics, and I managed to buy a full set of *Warrior Comics* and also *Epic Illustrated*. I was moving on to other authors and writers and was enjoying them. Garth Ennis was remaining a favourite, with Alan Moore on his heels and Frank Miller and his *Sin Cities* proving amazing. The introduction to *Marvelman* would later stand me in good stead.

Then *Sandman* ended. It was

OK. I was sort of happy it ended. Time for something different and new, I felt, and about time. It would be wrong to deny that this was one of the most amazing comics series of all time; it is fantastic, but by the end I was tired of the hype. I knew it was a good read and didn't need to be retold how amazing it was and how I should buy a statue, or plastic figurine or action figure or watch...

Since I didn't mourn the demise of *Sandman*, I made a bit of a pact at the time when the likes of *The Dreaming* came out, which was based on the world of *Sandman*,

that I would leave it alone. Having bought a few issues of the *Books of Magic*, which would go on to to sell 75 issues in total, I had realised that although Gaiman had reused other DC characters he had a rare skill in being original with his storytelling. Other authors could sometimes fall into a very derivative mode of writing, with nothing to capture my imagination; so something based on Gaiman's work by someone else – although Gaiman did have a consultation role in *The Dreaming* – was too much.

Anyhow, Garth Ennis had begun *Preacher*, which was like a Tarrantino Del Torro version of *Sandman* scripted by Gonzo Thompson and souped up on poiteen; well, it was for me and I was hooked on this comic.

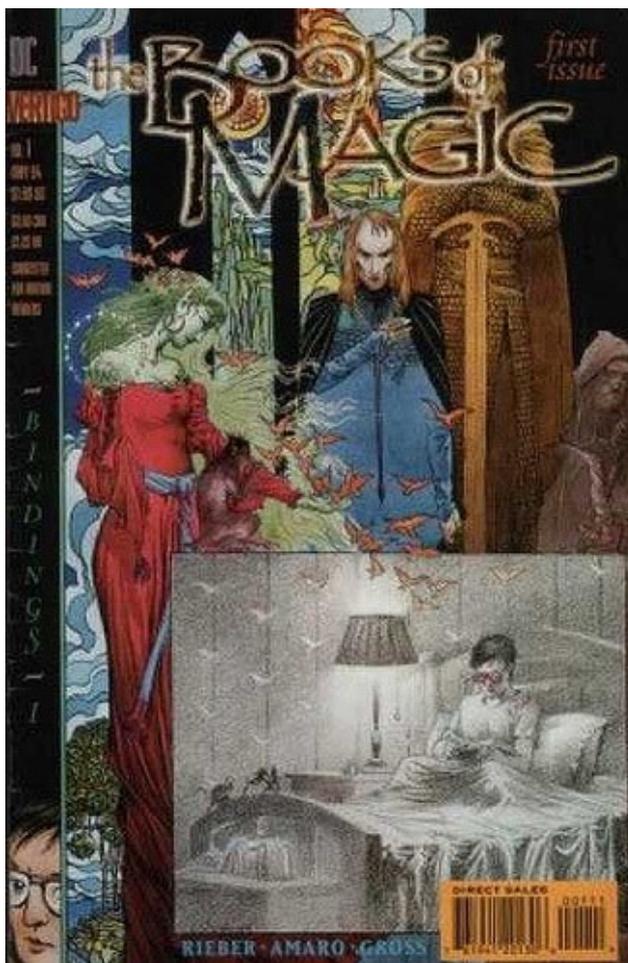
Sandman didn't rest really; I read the first issues of *The Dreaming* on loan and left it there. It ran for a further five years. In time to take over was Mike Carey's *Lucifer*, another character from Gaiman's world. Now I like Carey a lot and he is quite a good writer, although I didn't enjoy his run on

Hellblazer as much as others did, but I didn't start with *Lucifer* at all; it just feels like trying to get something that had a time and moment but is now in the past.

Carey has also written a comic series based on Gaiman's other work *Neverwhere*, and I have actually found this a quite enjoyable read. It's amazing, though, that two series of comics – *Books of Magic* and *Sandman* – in total under eighty individual comics, have resulted in over two hundred comics based on the characters in their pages. Although K W Jeter's *Mr E* was good. This was a four-issue series that DC

brought out, and it was quite stylised and very weird and well worth a read, although not as popular as it perhaps should be.

I am fortunate, though, in that as time went by I would keep finding Gaiman stories in comics that would be either brilliant or just very entertaining. *Miracleman* was one such comic: originally *Marvelman* and an Alan Moore story, published in Warrior Comics and republished by Eclipse Comics, I had read the beginning and was lucky enough to pick up graphics of Gaiman's run before they became so hard to find. The

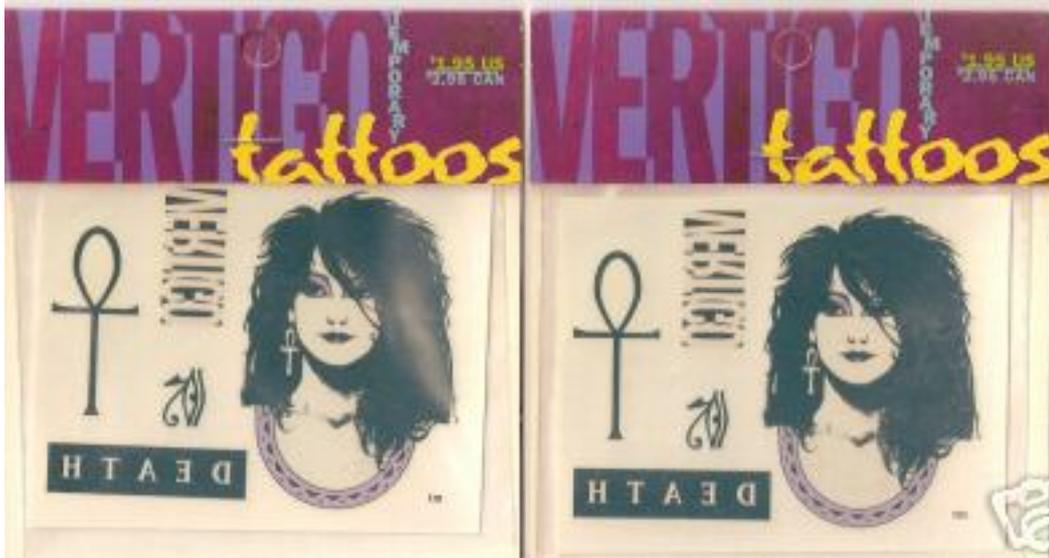


ownership of *Marvelman/Miracleman* has been a major dispute and a fine example of the way that, no matter how some people portray themselves to be artists or in the industry for the love of it, money is after all what matters. Both Moore's and Gaiman's work on this comic is a must for anyone who enjoys stories in the superhero genre, but are looking for intelligent and original



I'm all about the Underground sound. You know, Jan and Dean, the Beach Boys, Dick Dale and his Fabulous Deltones.

- Miles Davis



viewpoints.

Gaiman regularly turns up in anthology selections too, which I would be buying anyhow; these included the A1 series which I really liked, two of which featured stories by him, and also *It's Dark in London*, an anthology edited by Oscar Zarate in 1996. Then in *Batman Black and White* he has quite a funny conceit on the classic battle between The Joker and The Batman, drawn by Simon Bisley, that just always brings a wry smile to my face.

When I got enraptured in the Matrix franchise, I just found it such a cool science fictional proposition and really loved what the Wachowski brothers were doing; I was chuffed to see Geoff Darrow involved, but then online Gaiman wrote a story that fitted neatly into the world of The Matrix and this was later published in *The Matrix Comics*, again a selection I was always going to buy.

In 2003, to help fund the ongoing legal issues related to *Marvelman*, Gaiman wrote a wonderful alternate history version of the Marvel Universe. Set in the Elizabethan year of 1602 amongst recognisable historical personages, we find Marvel characters involved at various levels in the activities of the royal court and an adventure begins. It's a wonderful realisation of the effect and actions of Marvel characters in a totally different time, some four hundred years before they existed.

One doesn't need to know much about the Marvel universe to enjoy this comic and at eight issues it was a very neat and enjoyable

over.

You like Sandman...

First off, read Paul Gravett's *Graphic Novels – Stories to Change your Life*. It is the ultimate reader's guide to where to go next, in coffee table form; it is full of illustrations and insights, explanations and most importantly sound recommendations.

Jeff Smith's *Bone* is a very popular comic among female comic fans, and one would have to say that shares a commonality with *Sandman*. It's also a fantasy and full of humour and realistic feelings. A great comic, well worth giving a try.

You can find *Hellblazer 27* in *Neil Gaiman's Midnight Days*, an interesting collection of various Vertigo/DC mature pieces that Gaiman wrote, now all in one place, especially for the collector.

Miracleman comics do turn up. The earlier Moore issues are not hard to find and sell at about £5 to £3; the later Gaiman ones can also be found, but the graphic novel collections are difficult to get, I'm afraid.

Violent Cases is readily available, as is *The Books of Magic* and *1602*, each now collected in one single edition.



"Underground" is a song from David Bowie that was used in the movie Labrynth. I often say that if you squint and color-correct enough, Gaiman looks like Bowie.

story, with great artwork from Andy Kubert. This series really impressed me a lot; for me, it is Gaiman at his best – although I recognise that not everyone would agree. There were quite a few *Sandman* fans who expressed disappointment at the time, which I felt they should get

EDITING JAMES

by Yvonne Rowse

I knew my attention to detail was insufficient when Alison Freebairn and Maureen Speller took me to one side, on quite separate occasions, to offer to proof-read my fanzine. I'm a bit slapdash. I always mean to spend some time spell-checking and, more importantly, meaning-checking my writing – but it's always last minute and there are always mistakes that I notice once the document is printed.

My most recent fanzine had a contribution from James Bacon. I've read his contributions to other zines and been impressed by the liveliness of his writing. I hadn't realised quite how much editing it required before printing. I have actually become quite geeky about the whole process.

The idea of editing a person's writing is to make it more readable whilst retaining all the ideas and the spirit of the writing.

You have probably heard James speak. He writes in a similar style. The words come out in a stream of consciousness, or maybe a turbulent waterfall of consciousness with recursions, blind alleys, questions, unrelated flights of fancy and occasional show-stopping statements that can take your breath away. It is fabulous stuff.

How to deal with this raw material? There are a number of options. The first is just to copy and paste it whole into your fanzine. This is probably the best option when you want to give an audience a real understanding of Jamesness, spontaneous and exhilarating. However, the piece he wrote for me was an opinion piece and in order for the opinion to fight its way out of the words some editing was required. And a bit of spelling/punctuation triage. There was also an element of self-interest in this; I had a limited number of pages available.

I spent quite some time on this and sent the result to James who agreed that that was pretty much what he had meant and although the

essential Jamesness was diluted his message was clearer.

I am a little uncomfortable with changing people's words like this but I get a huge amount of satisfaction from hacking the true substance out of the raw material and then polishing it. It is not something that you can do really well without talking through with the author what he meant, but when the message is worth reading it is worth trying to make it as clear as possible. I will always choose the message and will leave it to someone else to properly distil the true essence of James.



And a note from Ian Sorensen

This is a multi-world. We have the overt multis like multicultural and multiverse, with multipacks and multigrain all sharing a positive aura.

But mono is a less happy word. Monomania, monotonous and monochrome conjure up a less pleasant world. I think we need to strike a blow for mono-culture and reclaim the sunny uplands of public regard for mono.

A monologue can be enjoyable and holding a monopoly can also be fun, so let's hear for the One and not the many. And don't think I'm only saying this because I'm writing this single-fingered on an iPod touch keypad.

That would be multi-stupid.

FROM FLICK

We're fifteen minutes into the Fanzine In An Hour, and so far there are three articles ready. James is being the Bad Cop, and Chris is being the Good Cop, which suits their relative styles well: James gets to run around shouting; Chris gets to sit in the corner (well, middle) of the room and eat raspberry flavour M&Ms.

We've got about twenty people here, but only half a dozen laptops. This means that James is running around the room throwing people at keyboards and then replacing them with other people before they've had a chance to start typing.

Mike is running around taking photos, and Chris is just about to start editing the articles into something a bit more coherent. But probably only a *bit* more.... [Claire comments, several weeks later: How very, very true.]

James, in an attempt to get the content flowing, has just instructed Tobes to dictate an article to Max, but Tobes says he can't because Iain Banks stole all his best lines. Max claims that her editorial standards are too high to include that, but mine are obviously lower. John wants Max to tell the story about the bus, and sex it up by having John in a leotard, which is all rather mysterious and disturbing; but he soon sidetracked himself by talking about how much he likes playing Scrabble with large groups of his close personal friends. Apparently, that's both a euphemism and true. There was a very scandalous story, but it's far too embarrassing and inappropriate to appear in a fanzine, so you'll all just have to wonder. It doesn't mean anything to Jim, though, and it's absolutely not about Douglas.

Across the room, Ian Sorensen's dulcet tones float: "Give it to me, big boy," he cries, and seconds later Chris replies, "I'm going to have to wash my hair now. With bleach."

The Plokta corner of the room is, as ever, communicating via Sub Etha Edit. Attempts to encourage the rest of the room to join in have been met with blank stares, cries of "I don't have wifi", and, most horrifying: "But I'm using a PC!"

Lilian says she's the geriatric corner of the room, and is writing an article on John's laptop. John's a bit scared by the close proximity of a glass of wine to Lilian, and therefore his laptop. It's OK, though, 'cause he's distracting himself by reading over Flick's shoulder. Apparently, James has some really weird pictures on his camera, but none of them are naked.

Sadly, Tobes says he's too old and boring to be a content provider any more. This will, we're sure, be a great relief to the people in the room next to his, who can sleep soundly in the knowledge that, as an old and boring person, Tobes wouldn't dream of having a room party that went on until 6 am.

"My Friend Ed" by Stef

My friend Ed is special.
My friend Ed is odd.
My friend Ed does smell a bit.
My friend Ed is dead.
My friend Ed has rotting flesh.
My friend Ed has awful breath.
My friend Ed has torn clothing.
My friend Ed is dead.
My friend Ed 'lives' in Uxbridge.
My friend Ed 'lives' in my shed.
My friend Ed likes 'company'.
My friend Ed is dead.
My friend Ed gets horny.

IS IT WRONG TO FUCK
THE DEAD?

www.zombiecon.co.uk

24

I once tried to convince people that my house had been the least used station on the Underground Railroad. At least three people bought it. I rule.

JOHN SCALZI ON FANZINES AND FANWRITING

In discussion with James Bacon

So John, do you read fanzines at all?

I have to say that before I was nominated for fan writer last year I had not read many fanzines, save *Ansible*, to which I had subscribed for some time in e-mail form. After I had been nominated, however, I did feel an obligation to check them out – aside from wanting to know who the competition was, of course, I was reminded there was a whole slice of the SF community experience I was woefully ignorant about. I started with the nominated fanzines when they were available online and then went backward in time, thanks to the [fan publications archive online](#). I had had a historical

knowledge of fanzines and APAs and etc., but this was the first time I had seen (virtually, anyway) some of the 'zine efforts going back decades. I found them fascinating, especially the ones from the 1980s, which is when I first did my serious SF reading.

I've enjoyed reading current fanzines quite a bit, but I do find formatting to be an issue sometimes. One of the great things about blogs/web pages is that they're designed to be read online; many of the fanzines I read online are in pdf format – which gets the job done but can be like banging a round peg into a square hole. Since by necessity most of my fan reading is performed online, this does mean I am generally a creature of blogs and web sites.

That said, I think the distinctions are increasingly blurred – many of the most prominent fan writers and fanzine editors (or, I should say, the prominent ones I know about, which

may not be the same thing) have blogs or LiveJournals as well as their 'zines. And overall there's enough fan writing online – in whatever format – that the major issue is trying to filter, so you don't spend all your waking hours reading fan writing (instead of, say, writing fan writing, or stories).

When you checked out other fanzines last year, were there any titles in particular that impressed you from the past?

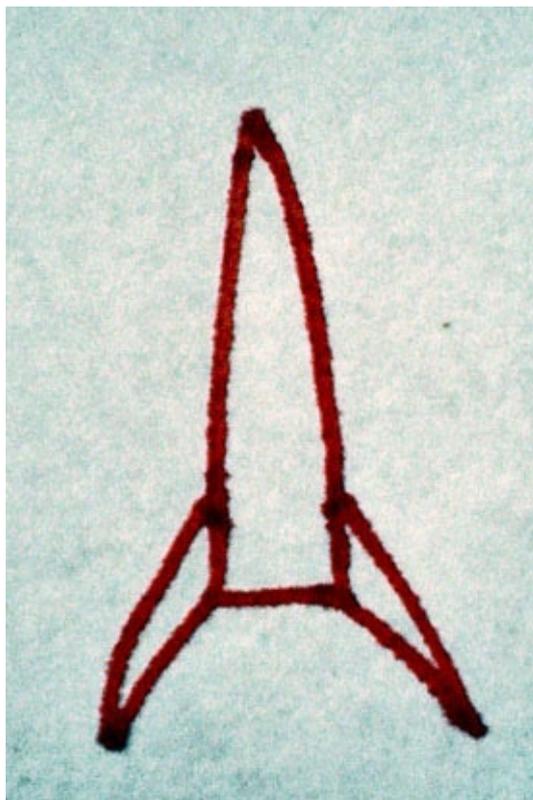
Well, as noted, I focused mostly on the '80s, and there I quite enjoyed *Cheap Truth*, which features the cyberpunks in their proto-mode, demanding change in SF. You've got to love anything that begins, "As American SF lies in a reptilian torpor, its small, squishy cousin, Fantasy, creeps gecko-like across the bookstands."

I also very much enjoyed *TAFFluvia*, albeit not for its subject matter but for personal reasons – those being that its co-editors, Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, would become my editor (in PNH's case) and good friends (in both cases) nearly two decades down the timestream. One of the great things about fandom and fanzines is that I get a chance to see how the people I like were long before I knew them. That's pretty neat.

I know you were happy to be nominated as best fan writer last year in the Hugos; do you hope this will happen again?

Well, I certainly wouldn't mind, and if nominated I would quite happily accept the nomination. But in the run-up

to the Hugo nominations deadline, I mentioned both on my site and in interviews that I thought if people were interested in nominating me,



they should first look at other folks who I thought were (and are) doing a bang-up job writing about science fiction and the SF community. One of my criticisms about the fan writer Hugo category is that it's pretty static – not only because Dave Langford has won it for two decades straight, but because the same few names seem to perennially appear. From my own reading online I know there's



I think there's an excellent argument that it is both, just like your household cat is both a mammal and a carnivore. One definition does not necessarily preclude the other; both can be equally true.

Do you think it's time that the Hugos recognised "best web site" and "best blogger" permanently?

a huge diversity of people doing what is recognizable as fan writing, and I'd like to see the category open up a bit to include these compelling voices.

So, in short: yes, I'd love a nomination, and yes, if nominated, I'd be happy to win, thanks. But if I were bumped out of a nomination slot by someone who was new to the category, like I was last year, I wouldn't complain; indeed, I'd see it as a positive for the category.

Many people had opinions on your nomination, but do you recognise that many fans were quite pleased regardless of the voices who were doubtful about the validation?

It's kind of you to say. I do think the benefit of my nomination last year was that it raised a whole lot of discussion about the category and about fandom. I do think fandom and what it means to be a fan is evolving just like everything else in science fiction, and I'm really happy that quite unintentionally I was able to be a catalyst for discussion about that evolution. I think we'll see those discussions continue – I hope they will, anyway.

Do you think *Making Light* is an online fanzine, or is it a blog?

Why does it have to be one or the other? Why can't it be both?

Well, I think it's more to the point that people need to recognize that web sites can be zines – both fan- and semipro – and that bloggers can be fan writers. I think that a major thing last year that was overlooked in the discussion of whether I was too "pro" to be a fan was that I was nominated as fan writer solely for writing I did on my blog. I may arguably be the first (although I believe Steve Silver did quite a lot of online writing too, which contributed to his first fan writer nod) but I rather seriously doubt I'll be the last.

I'm not a very big proponent of expanding Hugo categories without excellent reason (the ceremony is long enough as it is), and I think that there's no reason to add web site and blogger categories when there are categories that are sufficiently capacious to include them. Now, it may be that people will complain that web sites are not the same as 'zines and bloggers are not the same as fan writers, but to my mind this goes back to the point that everything about SF is undergoing evolution. These categories are just another example.

Are you happy being labelled a fan writer and the medium being irrelevant?

If I wasn't happy being labeled a fan writer I would have looked like a hypocrite accepting the nomination



last year, that's for sure. Yes, I'm happy about it, because when I write about science fiction, SF writing and the SF community, that's what I am. I certainly agree with the people who hinted last year that I'm not the standard issue "fan" – there's no doubting that. But there's also no doubting I care very passionately about SF and its place in the world, and not simply for the mercenary aspect of looking out for my own career. You know, every pro writer's career goes through a lifespan; if the pro is lucky, that lifespan is longer than his, and he spends his career



happily plugging away. But it's more likely that the career winds down and settles into a low-energy state long before that author shuffles off the mortal coil. And yet, they are indisputably still part of the SF community. If I was no longer able to work in SF, I would still be part of SF, because I love the genre and I really like a lot of the people in it. I'd still be a fan. So to

say I'm a fan writer now is axiomatic. I'm happy I'm another sort of writer in the genre, too, but that takes nothing away from the fan writer aspect.

I don't think the medium is particularly relevant, save for the fact that fan writers have to write – that is, put words down into their medium of choice. What would really be interesting is what will happen when the first podcaster gets nominated for fan writer. Podcasting is undoubtedly a fannish activity, but is it writing? Personally I'm inclined to say no, but I think there'd be a hell of a row about it on both sides of the debate.

Your blog pre-dated your published SF writings; do you think it is a good parallel to those writers who were fan writers in zines in the '50s and '60s before they went on to be published themselves?

I'm not sure. *Whatever* was originally started because I had been a newspaper columnist and a humor writer in the early and mid '90s, and I wanted to stay sharp in that sort of form while I was between paid gigs. The science fiction aspect of it didn't really become a major component until after I had sold *Old Man's War* to Tor (and *Whatever* sort of outgrew its original mission in any event). I do think there's a parallel in that the popularity of the blog helped members of the SF community learn about me even before my books

came out, just like many of the fans know of each other prior to whatever professional publishing they did. But I think it would be a little much

Best Fan Writer Nominee

Christopher J. Garcia interviewed by Evelyn Aurora Nelson, Age 8

Evelyn Nelson - Are you commercializing me?

Chris Garcia - No, Evelyn. I'm just trying to do an article for Journey Planet. Now, ask a serious question.

Evelyn Nelson - What's Journey Planter?

Garcia - Journey Planet, little girl. It's a new fanzine my friend James and I are doing.

Evelyn Nelson - OK.

Garcia - Go on, ask a new question.

Evelyn Nelson - ...

Garcia - Evelyn?

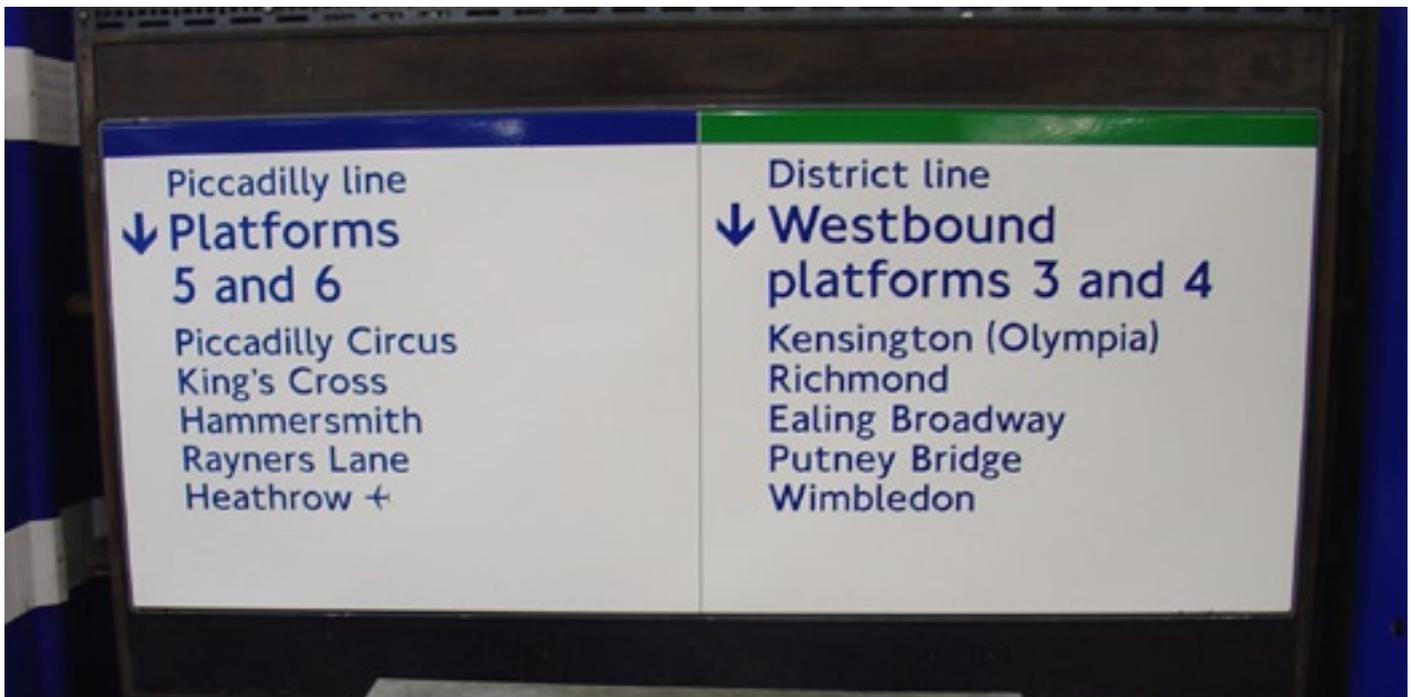
Evelyn Nelson - I wanna watch cartoons.

Garcia - Come on, I've gotta fill more space.

Evelyn Nelson - OK, after cartoons.

Garcia - Fine.





to suggest that in starting my blog, I was saying, “Look at me! I’m a neo-Futurian!” The skip into SF was rather more about luck than any long-term strategy (or even hope) featuring my blog.

What three blogs do you think are worth reading at the moment – blogs that would be of interest to fanzine fans and SF fans in general?

I think the blogs that most closely resemble fanzines are the group blogs, in which several SF-focused writers join together to write on the subject. Some blogs of that description are [Deep Genre](#), [The Inferior 4 + 1](#), and [Futurismic](#).

What fanzines do you currently look at as well as *Ansible*?

Not to butter up your co-editor, but I’ve quite enjoyed *Drink Tank*, and I enjoyed *Argentus* and *Plokta* too, and would recommend them to anyone as fan and interesting reading material. Last year I also enjoyed *File 770* #150, particularly pages 17 and 18.

Chris Garcia and Steve Silver both also have their own LiveJournals, so you can get them both in html and pdf form, and it’s fun to note how the two forms dovetail into each other for a total fan experience.

Science fiction author John Scalzi was nominated for a Hugo last year as best fan writer, due to his popular blog <http://scalzi.com/whatever/> Although some people were quite excited to see such a refreshing choice for fan writers, some fans felt that it was not the same as fan writing in a fanzine and his “fannish” status was also questioned. We thought it would be interesting to chat to John about fanzines.

Publications and blogs mentioned:
<http://scalzi.com/whatever/>
Fan publications archive online – <http://fanac.org/fanzines/index.html>
Taffluvia – <http://taff.org.uk/reports/ptnh1.html>
The Inferior4+1 – <http://community.livejournal.com/theinferior4/>
Deep Genre – <http://www.deepgenre.com/wordpress/>
Futurismic – <http://futurismic.com/>
Argentus – <http://www.sfsite.com/~silverag/argentus.html>
Argentus editor Steven Silver’s LJ – <http://shsilver.livejournal.com>
The Drink Tank – <http://efanzines.com/DrinkTank/index.htm>
Drink Tank editor Chris Garcia’s LJ – <http://johnnyeponymous.livejournal.com/>
File 770 – <http://efanzines.com/File770/index.htm>

IF IT'S BIRMINGHAM I MUST BE TRAVEL SICK

by Ang

If you live in the north-west corner of a country and a lot of your friends live in the south/east then you spend a lot of time travelling. I think I've got around the British Isles now by the major methods and I'm looking forward to one day hovercrafting to Octocon or perhaps hot air ballooning to the next British Worldcon. I know that it's considered bad practice to spend most of your convention report talking about how you got there and back, so I'm going to avoid this by hardly mentioning conventions at all.

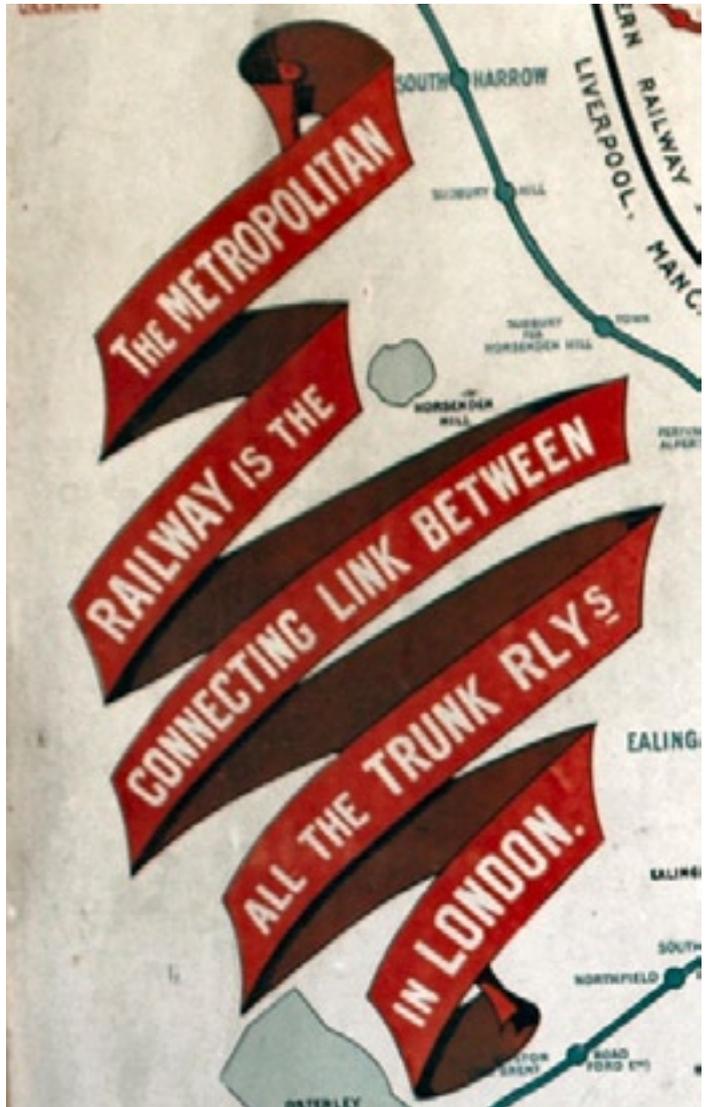
Car

I'm going to cover this quickly as nothing that amusing has happened to me when driving to a convention. Oh, there's the roundabout (Novacon), ring road (Derby Large Event), and Lord Mayor's Parade (Dangercon) problems, but you've either heard those before or seen my pink and frazzled face as I've walked into the room. I only drive now if it is significantly easier than public transport.

Plane

Only really an option if the convention is happening overseas. Before last year I'd only travelled to two conventions by air, both of which were in Ireland. I remember that the trip to Dundalk involved getting the bus to Liverpool Airport, a lot of walking with heavy luggage from the hotel and to the station, a lot of nutters shouting at me and that's about it. Octocon I remember a lot more about 1) because it was only about 18 months ago and 2) because I wrote about it on my LiveJournal:

I decided that I'd pop over to Ireland for Octocon, the Irish National SF convention. It's something I've wanted to do for a while as I've a few friends in Irish fandom who I wanted to see. It helped that the hotel appeared to have a nice pool and health suite associated with it and I decided to treat the trip as a short break rather than a convention. I wasn't actually sure I was going to make it, right up to five days before. Because of a lack of leave I



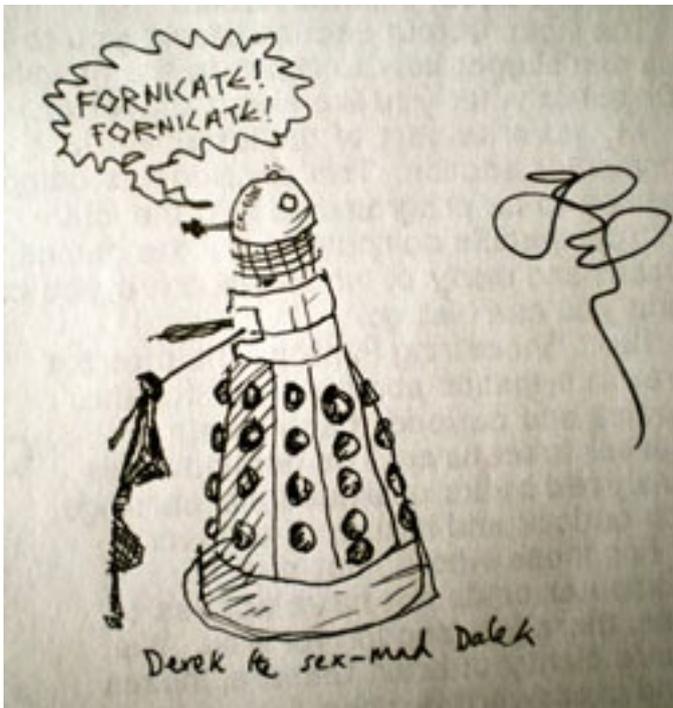
was travelling at 6.50 in the morning to Dublin on the Saturday, and back at 22:50 on the Sunday and this was starting to look completely insane, even for me.

The trip to Liverpool Airport was as uneventful as you would expect a motorway journey to be at 5 am. I'd pre-boarded, or whatever it's called, meaning I only had to get to the airport 30 minutes before the flight but I'd still, cautiously, decided to

Bill Gates' 60 million dollar home in Washington state is mostly underground. That's a lot of money to live under a bunch of dirt.

29

Underground gambling brings in 25 billion US dollar a year. To give you an idea of how much that is, it works out to roughly 17 UK pounds.



give myself an extra hour. This turned out to be a really smart idea as the airport parking refused to take my credit card, and then I drove round trying to find a parking space. Once into the airport it took another 20 minutes to clear security, leaving me 15 minutes to grab some breakfast before we started boarding the plane. I was in Dublin Airport by 7.30, and standing in Dublin city centre by 8.10.

Unfortunately the train to Maynooth leaves Connolly station at 8.11 and the next one isn't until 9.22, so I sat around in a cold station café waiting for the next train and watching a gathering of Scouts, obviously on their way out somewhere, become more and more bored until a group of Cubs tried to board a train without being instructed to do so. The coldness of the café obviously deadened my brain because a mere...

At which point I obviously got fed up with my *own* travel story because the entry finishes and is private. If I hadn't wandered off to do something else (plant some broccoli, eat some cheese) I would have gone on to say that ten minutes later I found myself on the wrong train.

I think, anyway, because I'm starting to wonder if I did. I do remember turning up at Maynooth and ranting

about Connolly station's boarding announcements but I don't remember why. I blame a lack of drugs. The Ryanair flight to

Dublin was just after it was discovered you could build a bomb from baby food and toothpaste and also just after they introduced charges for checked luggage, so I wandered around Dublin at 8 am. trying to buy toothpaste. It could be worse.

The only other time I've tried to travel to a convention by air was the 2005 Glasgow Worldcon. They cancelled the route a few months before and refunded me my ticket money so I had to get the train, four hours to Glasgow with a smell of vomit and no heating.

Train

Getting the train should be a noble experience: you relax and enjoy a coffee while enjoying the view from the window. At least you did in 1953. Nowadays you crush yourself into the luggage rack while trying not to catch the eye of the old lady with the cat in the basket and pray you don't need the toilet and confuse the disabled alarm with the lock. I travelled to London a few weeks ago on a train crowded with football fans. They'd decided to outsmart the seat booking system by ripping the little slips from the back of the seats. Overcome with rage at this injustice I interrupted the argument they were having with the legal occupants meaning I was immediately labelled a "grass" and was warned that "grasses disappear". Then the young men walked slowly past my seat looking at me. It was fortunate they were Tranmere Rovers fans and had to change at Crewe or I doubt I would be here to write this. But I wasn't on my way to a convention then.

I did get the train to and from Blackpool in 2004 which meant I queued at the station for 20 minutes for the last train before being herded on to the last train to Liverpool stuffed with the cream of north-west society. I thought that my experience of three pregnant teenagers arguing about being allowed to smoke was the most unusual but sitting next to Hoggy just now I found out that:
Rather than just head straight to Blackpool, we'd stopped off in

Manchester, thinking we could see some friends and reduce the stress of travelling by breaking it up. Big mistake really, as Blackpool's kind of a popular destination for an Easter break for the good people of Manchester. Well, some kind of people from Manchester. There was that special kind of heart-sinking feeling that British public transport does so well, as the two-carriage train pulled up to the packed platform. Still, me and two friends got seats together and sat facing another group of young men. As they discussed how much they were going to drink, fight and shag, we had an argument over whether or not there was Jesus/Judas slash which was settled by

googling on the phone. I guess this is one of those "Gosh, we're different from normal people" stories but, to be honest, I'm not sure which group was the normal one.

Coach

All of this was what encouraged me to take the overnight coach to this year's Eastercon. This combined the worst of all experiences: vomit, disturbed sleep, drunken fellow passengers. It would have been easier just to come to the convention a day earlier.

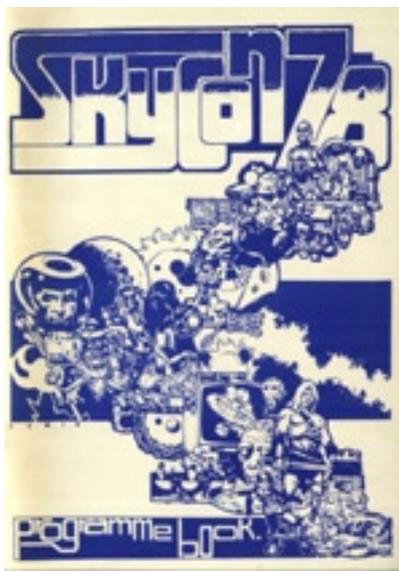


Thirty Years Ago

Dave Langford

Did I really once run an Eastercon? I did the publications, anyway, and was vaguely cheered whenever some fan pundit admitted that these were pretty good. Unfortunately the pundit's next word was invariably, "But..."

Skycon 1978 was the first Eastercon to be held at Heathrow, in what was then the Heathrow Hotel but has wisely changed its name. The other committee members were Kevin Smith (chair, 1982 TAFF winner, and long gone from fandom), Martin Hoare (hero Hugo-accepter who gave me a lift to Orbital), Liese Hoare (no longer with us, alas), Dermot Dobson (famous Mad Scientist and Person of Average Height), Stan Eling (forced away from fandom to care for his wife Helen), Keith Oborn ("has laboured long and hard not to look like John Brunner" – *Skycon Programme Book*), Ian Maule (now a fannish recluse but rumoured to be attending Orbital), and Eve and John Harvey (about whom it has so often been said, but never proved).



Leroy Kettle was our fan guest of honour, a career boost which may have helped him – decades later – to become an OBE. Robert Sheckley was the main guest of honour, which I hope very much didn't contribute in any way towards his becoming, in 2005, the late Robert Sheckley. He gave a terrific Skycon speech (published in *Vector* #89) that revealed his infallible cure for writers' block: making himself type 5,000 words a day, any words so long as he met the quota, grimly bashing out stuff like... *Oh words, where are you now that I need you? Come quickly to my fingertips and release me from this horror, horror, horror ... O God, I am*



MR KETTLE COMPOSING ONE OF HIS FAMOUS SENTENCES

losing my mind, mind, mind ... But wait, is it possible, yes, here it is, the end of the page coming up, O welcome kindly end of page.... Days of this led to the great revelation that it was now actually easier to write a story than go on suffering.

The Skycon programme was OK, I think (Bob Shaw also gave a fine speech), and Chairman Kevin's on-the-spot accountancy led to a very happy hour when he worked out that in spite of ruinous function space costs, we had a profit that could be squandered on a free bar for members. Hundreds were trampled in the rush. But despite honeyed words beforehand, the Heathrow Hotel management had some nasty surprises for us when the convention began. They ignored block booking arrangements and scattered rowdy fans among rooms where exhausted air-crew were sleeping, so room parties became a major problem. They neglected to inform us that the corridors were patrolled at night by airport security thugs with draconian powers of offensive rudeness and room-party closure. There were frantic committee negotiations in the small hours. Argh.

A low point came when the authorities decided to discourage all this promiscuous late drinking by closing the main toilets, just downstairs from the lobby. One fan who had better be nameless – but will

I think be with us this weekend – heroically protested by pissing on the stairs. If Orbital were being held in that same hotel, which fortunately



it isn't, it would be tempting to announce a mass anniversary re-enactment of this civil disobedience.

Skycon also got criticised for its remote location: "...the hotel was isolated, the prices high, the staff rude, and the management indifferent," quoth Peter Roberts in *Checkpoint #88*. Little did the knockers know that the future of Eastercon contained that even remoter hotel at Hinckley. To this day the Skycon committee still renounces all responsibility for the Bad Sight of the convention: the late Brian Burgess, veteran of many a nudist camp, appearing in the Fancy Dress clad only in a minuscule posing pouch. If there was any announcement of what SF character he was supposed to be, it was drowned by the crash of audience eyes slamming shut.

Still, some people must have had a good time, as suggested by D West's helpful fanzine comment that – here I quote from memory – "John Harvey and Dave Langford seemed perfectly happy, and perfectly drunk, for the entire convention."

Afterwards, the consensus of fandom was clear and unanimous: "There will never be another Eastercon at Heathrow." This tells you all you need to know about the awesome predictive powers of science fiction. All the same, in a perverse and masochistic way, organising Skycon was fun.

Chris, you're totally mental, but you do have nice hair.

-John "The Rock" Coxon

And now... Peter Sullivan!

I appear to have acquired a fannish dog.

A and I have been thinking about getting a dog for a while. Oscar came into our lives two weeks ago. He is, of course, the most beautiful and clever West Highland White Terrier of all time.

However, I hadn't realised until today (Eastercon Saturday) that we now have a further fannish presence in the household. I texted A an "enjoying myself, but missing both of you" message before the FIAWOL/FIJAGH panel. (The result of which was, I believe, a score draw.) Checking the phone again afterwards, I had a reply: "WE MISS U 2 LOL OSCAR."

With this level of literacy at just 19 weeks, can a "future of fandom" piece in *Banana Wings* – or at least a letter of comment to *The Drink Tank* – be far behind?

Moments later, Peter Sullivan grabs James's laptop to add...

I've never been someone to do things conventionally, even within what passes for convention within fandom. So, for instance, this Eastercon I've managed to combine both the wowgoshboyohboy of it being my first convention with already being a semi-established part of the fanzine side of fandom, in various lettercols if nothing else. So, for instance, I could legitimately go to the "So this is your first Eastercon" session, whilst still wondering why "How to avoid getting drafted by the Fishlifters into moderating a panel on Sunday" wasn't covered in Chris O'Shea's (otherwise excellent) bit of scene-setting.

Wandering into the atrium for the first time, I still had that fannish squee of realising that all these other fanzine fans were actually real people. Look, there's Famous Dave Langford; wish I'd brought my copy of *The End of Harry Potter?* so that I could do the "rare unsigned copy" joke. Look, there's Famous Bug Bradshaw. And someone (presumably Avedon Carol)

wearing an Avedon Carol name badge. There was even someone who looked just like the more believable photographs of James Bacon.





JIM DE LISCARD AND GERALD AND NEIL GAIMAN AND T'PUB AND A 24-HOUR COMIC

Jim rambles and James Bacon writes it down.

I got into doing my fanzine, *Gerald*, because I was pissed at a convention and had fun. I'd been given copies of *Fermat*, another zine, previously in the pub and I thought, "I could do that sort of thing," so I gave it a go. Then I handed it out to people in the pub who had been at the convention and they seemed to like it and asked if I was going to do some more, so I did. It was intended as being a lot more throwaway than some people seem to now think; it was a laugh and I didn't consider at the time that people would be bothered about it after reading it.

I used to go to a lot of cons around 1990; there were a lot of them going on and Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett were guests at several of them. *Sandman* had been going for a year or so and it wasn't yet the success it would be, and they had just done *Good Omens* together. They were not wildly successful yet and spent a lot of time in the bar hanging about, just being really sociable. Both of them, though particularly Neil, would often doodle on the back of flyers,

con posters or anything else lying around. After seeing Neil sketching I asked him if I could have the doodles and he said sure. The first issue of *Gerald* had a page ripped off from *Sandman* with the

dialogue changed a bit to fit the fanzine. I gave him a copy of it at a convention and asked if he would draw a Sloth in a Box for me, which is what Gerald is, and he did. I also got quite a few other pieces from him, mostly whatever he was drawing. I formatted the front page of one issue around a sketch of Death (chap with a scythe rather than goth girl) that I got from him. At this point the zine was all low tech; real cut and paste and a manual typewriter.

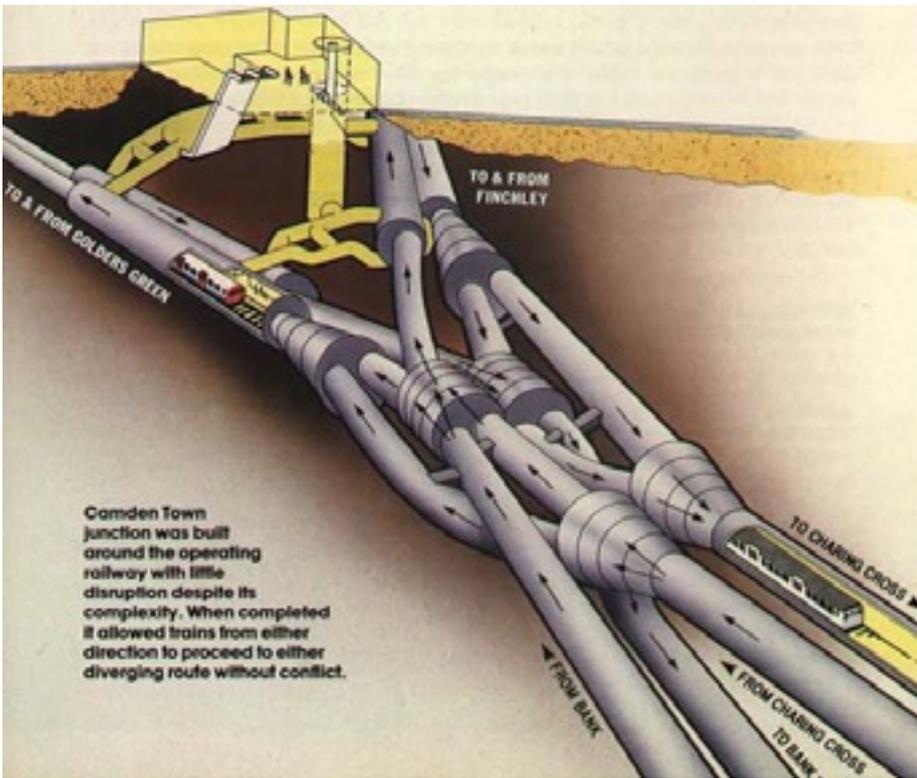
I can't draw myself but it was nice to have artwork in the fanzine to liven it up. So although I wrote all of them myself I needed someone else to do the art. I thought it was really cool to have sketches by my favourite comic writer; the fact that it was art, rather than the writing he's known for, also appealed to my perverse mind.

Sandman was my favourite comic at the time. I spent an awful lot of time getting people into comics by forcing the first half dozen issues of it on to them. It took a while before the phenomenon that was *Sandman* really kicked off; it was popular to an extent, but it hadn't yet gotten the goth girly following that was to form or interest from other people who were not comic readers. It was about two years before it really seemed to get huge; the World Fantasy Award seemed a key point.

It's a good comic for people who don't normally read comics – and potentially any readers, especially fantasy and SF readers, although I'm not a huge fantasy fan myself. It appeals to anyone with a vague interest in magic or paganism or odd alternative stuff. The whole thing is mythology really, so anyone who read Greek stories as a kid, say, would like it. If you want to see more of Neil's artwork I strongly recommend you search out his one-man 24 hour comic, *Being An Account Of The Life And Death Of The Emperor Heliogabulus*, originally published in the back of an issue of *Cerebus* but I've just found a copy online at <http://www.holycow.com/dreaming/helio/>. Good stuff, and somewhat unknown.

Jim still had the artwork, and we sought his permission and Neil Gaiman's to reprint in this zine. As you can see it's exactly what Jim says, an interesting selection of doodles and jokes; we also reprint a number of straight rip-offs of Sandman to humorous effect.

If you want to see more of Neil's artwork I (Jim) strongly recommend you search out his one-man 24 hour comic, Being An Account Of The Life And Death Of The Emperor Heliogabulus, originally published in the back of an issue of Cerebus but I've just found a copy online at <http://www.holycow.com/dreaming/helio/> Good stuff, and somewhat unknown.



Resisted the urge to hurl coins at him.

2. Knightsbridge - Earl's Court

There's a girl sitting on the train wearing a tee-shirt with the word "Angel" in the London Underground symbol. I don't intend to ask her if her name is Islington.

3. Earl's Court - Russell Square

The girl in the Angel T-shirt got off at Earl's Court and disappeared immediately. I decided to get a Coke and a chocolate

bar at a nearby newsagent. As I was paying for them, the Angel girl walked in. I'm sure there must be some significance there, though I didn't talk to her. Russell Square is the nearest station to the British Museum, so that's my next stop. There's a guy sitting opposite me, having a conversation with some German tourists, half in German, half in English. He looks for all the world like Geoff Ryman (another writer who wrote a novel set on the Tube). If he was a tiny bit taller and he dressed a bit cooler, he'd be him for sure. He gets off at Green Park. The Germans get off at Leicester Square where there is an announcement that the train isn't stopping at Holborn and to get to the Central line by changing to the Northern line. I'm not going to the Central line. The train slows going through Holborn but does not stop. I can hear announcements from the platform but can't make them out over the train noise. Found the British Museum. There was an exhibition running called "Ancient Faces". Unfortunately the gates were locked, so I couldn't dance on the steps. I was amazed to find I could walk through Russell Square itself. In Dublin

Neverwhere: The Field Trip by James Shields

I really enjoyed *Neverwhere*, the novel and TV series by Neil Gaiman. When I found myself stuck on my own in London one evening, I thought it would be interesting to visit some of the places, and make a few notes as I went.

I. Bond Street - Tottenham Court Road - Leicester Square - Knightsbridge

Got a train from Bank earlier. The announcement said, "Mind the gap!" Good advice. The trains on the Northern and Piccadilly lines are not as new as those on the Central line. However, the electronic signs on the platforms do tell you where the next train is going, not just "see front of train". Should have been able to change straight to the Piccadilly line at Holborn, but Piccadilly line is not stopping due to escalator maintenance. Knightsbridge is where Richard went to the first floating market. Regret to report I found neither the market nor the bridge.

Note: there was a guitarist on the platform playing alluring music.



even if you could get into parks at night, you never would.

4. Russell Square - Kings Cross -

Angel

The next train is in six minutes - the longest I've had to wait for a train so far. There's a Flamenco guitarist playing in a tunnel behind me, the sounds drifting eerily onto the platform. I know I'm on the right track - there's a sign outside Angel station saying "Welcome to Islington."

5. Angel - Bank - Monument - Blackfriars

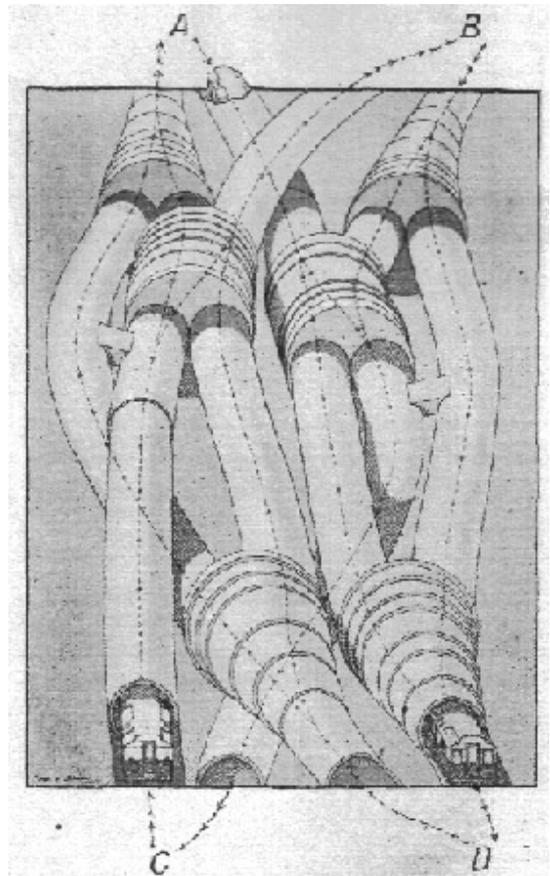
The people sitting opposite are talking about the show they've just seen. It must be getting late. Stopped at Moorgate, where the train doors opened and closed several times. Perhaps invisible people getting on at the last moment. I noticed no warning to "Mind the gap" as I was getting off at Bank. Changed to Circle/District (District as it happens) and suddenly found I was no longer in Bank but in Monument. This time there was the warning of gaps. Walked half way over Blackfriars Bridge and looked out over the Thames, which was jam-packed with river-boats, but failed to find any friars, black or otherwise. Found no keys except for the one to my hotel room, which doesn't really count as that was in my pocket.

6. Blackfriars - Tower Hill

Off to the next market, which I believe is at Belfast. Taking the District line to Tower Hill and walking over Tower Bridge to the HMS Belfast. Hopefully the Marquis will finally turn up. There's a couple of guys down the other end of the train I don't like the look of. I really hope that's just a hot-dog the tall one is eating. Crossed Tower Bridge and walked down the Thames to HMS Belfast, which is closed, although there seems to be some sort of function on board. Resist the temptation to try and sneak on board and hope no one notices. At this point I've gone about as far as I can go. I've no idea where Down Street could be, and I only know of one labyrinth in London and that one's not very scary. I continue along to London Bridge and over to Monument and Bank.

7. Bank - Bond Street

No time given for the next train. Not very helpful really. There's a lot of people in Bank station holding heads and looking as though they've indulged in a little too much merriment. I am reminded that I haven't had a drop all evening. While any sensible person would be getting well drunk, I've spent the last three and a half hours careering around London on underground trains and getting very sweaty. The train eventually arrives, and as I get on I'm reminded to "Mind the gap". So was it worth it? Well, I've certainly got value for my £3.20 all day Tube ticket. It was an interesting way to spend an evening and see a different perspective on some of the sights of London. I think it's the sort of tour that has to be done by night to get the right atmosphere. The man sitting opposite me looks just a little like the abbot from Blackfriars. "You are all very stupid and you don't know anything," I imagine him saying.



The Sixty Year Old Twins write their last fanzine article before they withdraw life support
by Christina Lake and Lilian Edwards

This Never Happens again reprised. What if we had laptops in 1980? Would we have bothered to run for TAFF? Could we have done the whole American thing on LiveJournal? Are we insane, in a coma, or just making this up as we go along? Or as China Miéville once said: Virginal fiction hasn't had sex with the world.

Let's have a heated debate! (another ancient cultural reference!) Let's have the be-nice-to-Narnia campaign (cf one pound coins, the biggest mistake we ever made! Now we have two pound coins and my purse can't cope!)

LILIAN: That's actually quite germane to modern fanac. Communicating in a room with a bunch of fans who are more interested in having sex with their laptop than each other seems a tad... frustrating.

christina (uncapitalised, and also very poor): But we used to have sex with our duplicators all the time? Actually this reminds me of doing convention newsletters back in the '80s. Lilian now wants to do a newsletter. And she's discovered that she's not in a coma, but in an episode of *Lost*. Chris Garcia is Hurley, but where is Sawyer?

Lilian Ang would have to be Kate – she's definitely the competent one.

christina: Are you saying she's a mass murderer?

Lilian: No, I'm just saying I've invented a fictional Tube station called Tampax Turnpike.

Christina: It's too hot to type.

Lilian: You always say that.

L and C: We only came to watch Chris and James Bacon make arses

of themselves! We want our grots back! (Um, groats. Two pound coins. Something grottled this way comes.)

Christina: Let's find another China Miéville quote before this goes completely random.

Lilian: Protecting the mytheme of the innocent child is a sclerotic society's way of avoiding dealing with the reality of hoodies. Actually I really hate teenagers playing music on the tops of buses. It's not about hatred of children self-actualising, it's about the desire for a private space in public.

Christina: But that's what iPods are for.

Lilian: But they hurt my ear drums. I can't deal with these in-your-ear headphones.

Christina: Why don't you get the over-the-ear sort?

Lilian: Because I'd look like a total dork. All right, smart arse, you disagree with something China Miéville said.

Christina: But I didn't disagree! I thought he was so right about Doctor Doolittle.

Lilian: But why didn't he mention the racism of C S Lewis? Gender roles, myth of innocence etc.

Christina: Because he was trying to save time for Mary Doria Russell and anal sex.

Lilian: What about Ezra Pound then? And the aboutness cluster – which ought to be an alien race in an Iain Banks novel or a film. No, a novel: the unbearable aboutness of everything. We ought to have a *Dune* reference now.

Christina: Didn't we ever have a campaign to save the semi-colon?

Lilian: Nowadays it'd have to be about saving the apostrophe. Don't try marking first year essays while running with scissors!



Cabanas.

Christina: So, Lilian, has Neil Gaiman still got it?

Lilian: Got what? My underwear from 1984? (Gratuitous slur.) Have you noticed, by the way, that I'm actually wearing my slutty 1980s off-the-shoulder bra-strap-flashdance *Ashes to Ashes* outfit? Do we all agree that Annie was way sexier than Shazza and that John Sims was much better at flirting with Gene Hunt?

Christina: I disagree. Gene is way sexier in the '80s, and it's all the fault of D I Drake's mad obsessions with perms and blue lagoons. And what were those sweets we had in the '80s?

Ian: Prize Bars, Star Bars and Copa

Lilian: You're living in a parallel universe. Anyway, back to Sawyer lookalike Neil Gaiman (in another parallel universe). I love the idea that *Neverwhere* was written so foreigners could come over and go Ooh at the fact that those Tube stations with mad names actually exist. (And yes, he has still got it!)

Christina: I loved the line about he writes to fuck with your mind! That's the one thing China Miéville missed.

Lilian: This isn't a very good ending. But in the words of China Miéville, we are all constructed by our own mytheme.



Tony Hawk's Underground is a skateboarding video game by Acclaim. It's a part of the Tony Hawk Pro Skater line and it got its own sequel. I thought it sucked.



TUBEWHORE / NEVERWHERE

As a kid, I was always keener on dinosaurs than ponies, read *2000 AD* when the other girls read *Jackie* and was taunted by my class mates for being weird when I was just being me. I can't say how I didn't turn out like other kids, why I was into science fiction and Hammer Horror and two-headed pigs in jars rather than mooning over boys, but as it naturally fell out that way it's hardly surprising that eventually people start asking, "Are you a goth?" After all, I wore a lot of black velvet, kept bugs and skulls, read a lot of 19th century literature and listened to The Cure. This was just me doing my own thing, before I even knew there was this sub-culture filled with people who liked the macabre and beautiful decay. So "goth" was a label put on me to help other people make sense of me, that I chose to embrace because I liked the other people hanging out at the party. Hell, at least I didn't have to explain the references all the time and no one minded if I still watched *Doctor Who*.

All this happened growing up in Cornwall, a place where legends are embedded in the place names, where it was taken for granted that giants piled rocks to make Helman Tor and Arthur built castles. Looking outwards, my place of mythical land was London. A place where there were cybermen hiding in the sewers, where Quatermass discovered rocket ships from ancient Mars and angels lived at Islington... I left for the big city when I was 18, and fell in love with the fantastical Underground, this

marvellous subterranean world... and years later, one random conversation on the way to a Bauhaus gig led to an idea to finally conquer all the magical place names on the map, and thus Tubewhore was born.

The project has been running since August 2006, mostly because I live 300 miles away back home in Cornwall, and as of March 2008 I'm 202 stations in. It's been a voyage of discovery to new places and my own history of a life in London as well as learning a staggering amount about the Underground, its infrastructure and architecture. I've made some wonderful new friends and baffled my old ones. It's a guilty confession that I'm enjoying it far more than I perhaps I should be... but then I've always been an escapist and this is an opportunity to play Victorian Adventuress exploring a magic realm, or at least as far as zone six on my Travelcard. Other people may think it's silly, but I've never been one to worry about public opinion; hell, I wander about pretending pink hair is natural.

Find the blog at
<http://tubewhore.livejournal.com>

202 stations is some achievement; Tubewhore looks at them with her own special and, one could say, sarcastic artistic eye. She seems to catch certain moments that hundreds just whizz by. From her journal we're reprinting a selection of stations which are also name checked in Neverwhere – except Farringdon, which is a bit further than St Pauls to Old Bailey but is a wonderful station. Sometimes what Tubewhore noted is just an observation or a photo, but it's so much more than the daily drudgery.

Tubewhore wrote @ 2006-08-08, 12:13:00

I get these mad obsessive ideas sometimes...

It began, the germ of the idea, on getting out at Kentish Town to



go to a Bauhaus gig – coz I’m a saggy old trad goth – and realising I was not where I thought I was. I was totally disorientated, expecting to find a pub that didn’t exist because I was thinking it was here when it was somewhere else, most likely Chalk Farm or Tufnell Park, and realising that in all my years in London I had actually never been in Kentish Town before. This sense of disassociation sparked the enquiry of just how many of the Tube stations had I been to in twenty years as a Londoner... and in the same thread of enquiry just how many Tube stations were there? The idea wouldn’t let me go... what began as a puzzlement became A Mission. What other secret places and traditional haunts had I managed to miss over the years? Like the Tower of London or Tussauds? Conversely, what strange wilds had a life of temping sent me out to where most people had never ventured; Stonebridge Park seemed to qualify on that score. How far can you get on the Tube? All the way to Watford it would seem.

The Tube is such a part of London living, something we assimilate and learn to forget to see, and suddenly, intensely I wanted to really see it again. It seems so much the daily fabric of life and yet we blur it all out.

And then the question, of all the Tube stations, how many of them *have* I actually been to – not just travelled through, but actually popped out in? What percentage of the network could I tick off this imaginary list... and if you set out to do it, how long would it take to complete the set... especially if you decide to set on said pointless task when you don’t actually live in London any more.

The idea morphed – firstly a suggestion of getting a photograph of oneself at the platform at every station. The photo must feature the station name as “proof” that one’s feet did actually land on the platform, but this seemed too easy – a case of pull in, jump off train, snap, and jump back in before the train set off again... you could do a whole line in one frantic afternoon... no, it must involve seeing the station.

A large part of the drive behind



the project is to see these places that exist only as names on a map, and to see the difference between one’s expectation of them and the reality – are there smouldering trees at Burnt Oak? Nothing but tennis at Wimbledon? London names have a magical potency to a girl brought up in rural Cornwall – they have evocations, they have the weight of expectation and imagination and history... time to explore that.

Travelling, living in London, means a fraught relationship with the public transport system, a Tube map in one’s head, an interlinked web of buses and trains overlaid, the misery and entertainment of having to travel with thousands of others all at the same time – all this complex interaction, all that swearing and frustration when it doesn’t work, and the thankful prayers to the bus gods when a 432 arrives just as you’ve got to the bus stop after a trip down the Victoria line. The stories, evenings out, job interviews, that are connected to trips to unfamiliar stations. Popping out in new spaces, ascending from the underworld... will it be different when the journey is the only object, and traveling loses its timetabled meaning? Will this way of traveling change how I use the Tube?

A plan emerges; a set of Rules and Aims:

1) I must pass through the ticket barrier to properly collect a station.

2) I must get a picture at every station, both on the platform and exterior, featuring myself and the station name to act as proof that I



really have visited each station.

3) To make 274 pieces of art to represent the total number of actual Tube stations. There won't be a piece of art for every station as some are just beyond my capacity to find inspiration, and conversely some stations are too exciting to limit to just one piece, but eventually 274 pieces there will be...

Beginning here and now, tonight, at Kentish Town...

...reading from a free London Transport Tube map, I can be positive about having used 103 of the 274 stations in my life already – plus at least one of the Actons but I don't remember which – but that still leaves well over half the network a mystery... what adventures lie ahead? What memories will returning to places long unvisited bring back, my history of twenty years in London. I realise that perhaps only I will care – I am but one of thousands of economic in-comers, who then choose to leave again... but hey, it gives me something to do...



Tubewhore wrote @ 2006-11-20, 21:00:00

Saturday – Guerrilla Tactics... (Hammersmith)

It was decided to devote a day to collecting stations. From this decision several conflicting plans emerged; to leave things to chance and draw stations' names from a bag, to chose a section of the line and hit it station by station to grab as many places as

possible in the shortest time, to travel out to the furthest reaches of the District Line and explore a little of Epping Forest.

Plan B wins, after considerable debate. Hammersmith and City Line gets the guerrilla treatment as I want to get my nails done at Shepherd's Bush anyway...

Hammersmith is actually two stations as you have to pass out of the ticket hall and walk across a busy road to get between the Hammersmith and City section and the District/Piccadilly lines, so take Piccadilly there to begin the assault. The ticket hall is vast; one wall filled with beautiful tiled picture of the bridge in reflection. The fact that parts of the original fabric have been salvaged and incorporated into the new hall appeal greatly to my sense of the melancholic, *Waste Land*-style shoring up of fragments; a heap of broken images...

Tubewhore wrote @ 2006-11-20, 22:49:00

Green Park Time Tunnel

Photo taken walking between lines at Green Park (not, as I first thought, Oxford Circus). Blue and white tiled walls...



Lovely "time tunnel" effect, especially as bundled up in extra-long Dr Who scarf... Dum de dum. Dum dee dum... dum dee dum... woooOoo eee Oooooo... oo ee ohhh.

Next time I'll paint my face silver and wink at the camera.



It is estimated that between 15 and 35 people die every year as a part of underground boxing in Mexico.

Tubewhore wrote @ 2006-12-22, 19:58:00

Eastbound on the District and Circle (Black Friars)

...from Temple, up to another of my traditional temping grounds, Blackfriars. I spent far too many evenings as a student photocopying in law company basements in the City of London. Don't feel any need to explore old haunts. The City of London is a very specific entity. I can't be arsed to discuss it right this minute, but only a very small geographic area is actually "The City". Hence the lamp posts have griffons, or somesuch, and there are large shields on the wall.

Tubewhore wrote @ 2006-12-23, 17:08:00

Knightsbridge

Heading from King's Road take the 11 bus to Knightsbridge to get Piccadilly Line to KX for a day over in Cambridgeshire with G. I hurry past. Harrods are evil. One of my first jobs in London was working there over one Christmas. It's ruled with the iron fist of dictatorship, meaning staff going into the shop by anything other than the staff entrance are liable to sacking if caught. Shoplifters are treated as though



they are childkillers. It is a bizarro world of its own, with even a hospital for minor surgeries upstairs as well as the biggest staff restaurant I've ever been in. I didn't fit in. I was taken off-floor once and told in no uncertain terms that my hair was not up to Harrods expectations of the grooming of the staff. I've never had corporate hair, even when it was a natural colour. Even when I try to pass, my tentacles show.

Photo is eventually taken for

me by studenty type in need of warming up, who is waiting outside the station for a rally to protest at Harrods re-opening their fur department. He tries to convert me, giving me an anti-fur leaflet – perhaps I looked a little too much a fashionista in vintage '40s dress to care about the evils of the fur trade – and I tell him that the only time I've come close to being arrested was for bricking a fur shop window in Plymouth as a nipper.

Basically, it was a Comedy of Timing – I throw the brick, brick arcs through the air, the window goes booOomcrashtinkle, most impressively, and a hand lands on my shoulder. These things seem to happen almost instantaneously with each other. I look up over my shoulder to see a very large policeman behind me. He seems

impossibly tall to my fourteen-year-old self. I am, as they say, bang to rights. Fuck.

He leans over and whispers in my ear: "Run for it love, I'm on your side."

I don't need telling twice.

Anyway, once underfed protester has decided I am not a Pawn of Evil, and we've had a good chat about consumerism and clothes production, he consents to doing the pic for me. Sadly, since I am enjoying our mutual ranting session, I have a train to catch, so protester

waves me off, actually bumping fists with me and saying, "Solidarity!" as I head underground.

Tubewhore wrote @ 2007-01-02, 21:44:00

Life in thread



Behind the pointlessness of this project, the "doing-it-because-I-can"-ness of the thing, there is also the drive to produce art

from it. Art based on ideas of our own psychogeography, of the stories embedded in the journeys of our lives. Oh, that sounds so grand and high falutin'...

Tubewhore wrote @ 2007-01-13 13:14:00:

Baron's Court

Last week I was overtaken by a sudden need for movement, for travel simply for travel's sake. I know why, it's one of my reactions to grief, and last week was a grieving week. Chose to deal with the restlessness with a spontaneous trip to London...

...The problem now, though, is having eliminated so many of the inner London stations, all this journeying around town had not added a single new station to the list. The obsessive in me needed to get at least *one* for my day in the Capital, so headed back to South Ken via Baron's Court on the Piccadilly Line. Upstairs Baron's Court is absinthe green Edwardian tiling. These are always my favourite finds. Dressed in pseudo Edwardian clothes I felt I matched the Sherlockian atmosphere.

I love the completely unnecessary swoop of the bracket, the font styling... all these little design details... yummy! Off course it was late in the evening and no one there to get a picture of me in the ticket hall. Back on the platform, I accosted a helpful woman who waved the camera in my direction. I could tell from the way she was failing to hold the camera steady that the shots would be useless in the low light levels, but she was having fun, and some of the

blurs were quite entertaining...

She was happily snapping away when her train came in and she dashed off and I took a clearer picture of the signage myself. As I did so, a chap who had been watching the proceedings asked if I'd got what I wanted. I explained the project and he happily did me a clearer shot with me in frame with the station name before our Piccadilly Line service arrived. We then boarded together, and talked of art as we trundled eastwards. London can be so utterly hostile that these chance encounters with strangers are thrilling.

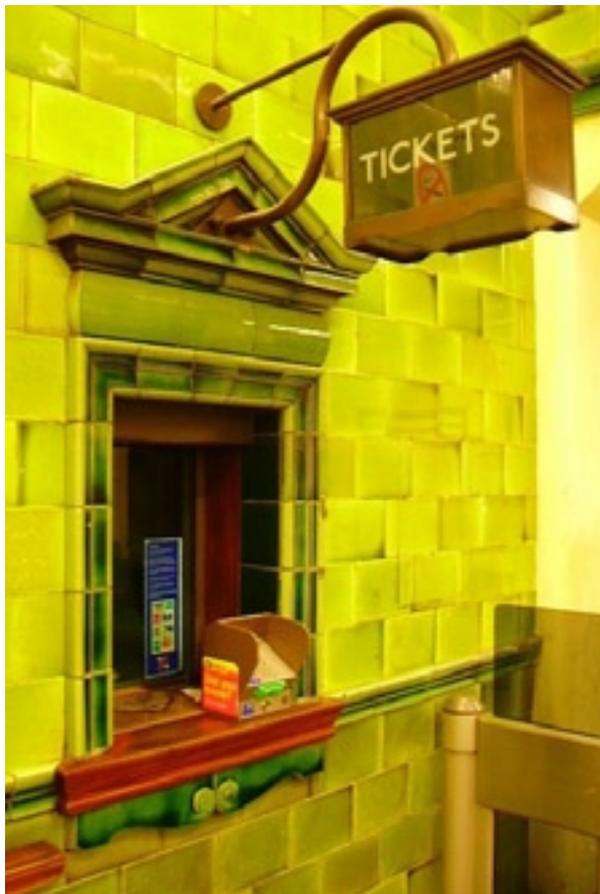
Tubewhore wrote @ 2007-01-13, 22:55:00

Euston, Warren Street, and Highbury & Islington

...I know people who live at Highbury & Islington. The last time I was here it was to do a wedding dress, the most technically complex dress I've ever made. It took nearly five hours just to hand roll the hem, as well as nights of anxiety dreams about the cowl draping going wrong and the bias cutting going badly; it was terrifying to do... the stress of that dress is one of the reasons I've decided not to do wedding dresses again unless a) I get a huge amount of money for it b) I really, really love the person who's getting married. Otherwise, wedding dresses are just too emotionally draining, people have so much invested in them the pressure is enormous... it's way too late to visit them anyway, so I don't call, instead just a quick "upstairs-and-about-face" trip.

Aboveground my

stomach growls at the heavenly site of the Highbury Creperie. I get the nice chap running the stand to take a picture as I lean on the counter.



He snaps me while the halloumi cheese for my pitta bread grills.

I'm not usually one for fast food, but this is just so good, having that extra savour that the perfect solution to rampant hunger often has. I am very happy stuffing it in my face as I walk back to the platform, where I am just about the only person there.

As the only other people waiting are way down the other end, I just have time to get a shot of the tiling before the train pulls in...



Tubewhore wrote @ 2007-01-28, 16:16:00

Latimer Road to White City and the Actons

An unexpected phone call from the Beeb with an offer of a day's costuming work, followed by some frantic organising of life and train tickets, saw me heading up to town last Thursday evening for a flying visit. Even better than earning my licence fee back was the prospect of collecting White City,



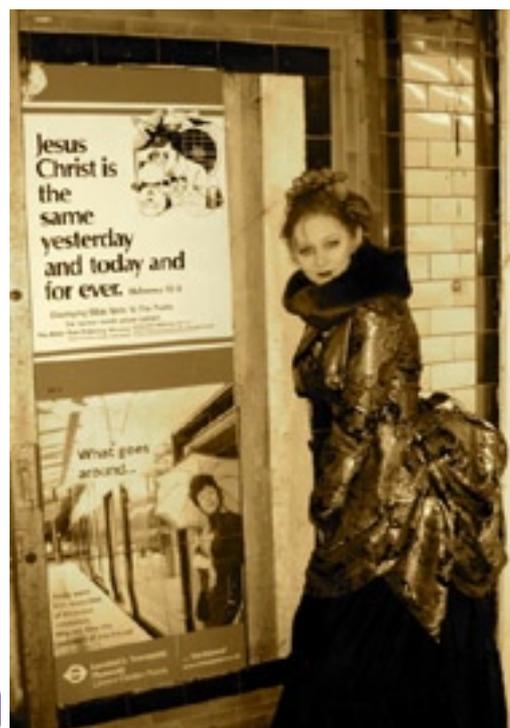
the quintessential BBC station, into the bargain.

Tubewhore wrote @ 2007-02-28, 22:06:00

The District Line spur to Kew (Raven's Court)

Our journey takes us back up the District Line, and so we close up the next gap in the map at Ravenscourt Park. I have visions in my head of what I'd like to find here based on the poetry of the collective nouns for birds; a "murder of crows", a "parliament of rooks" etc. – traditionally it's an "unkindness of ravens", rather than a "court". While the weather was certainly being unkind, all we found was a "rusting of skips".

While there might not have been corvidea, there certainly was song in the air! Puccini, I believe, possibly *Turandot*, being played over the tannoy... I asked the chap in the ticket booth what the music was, and he hadn't a clue – but he did tell us it's a new thing on trial at certain stations and the music is piped in from a central location – the only control they have was to be able to turn it on or off. This explains the music at Latimer Road. Chap is very smiley – he seemed happy to have opera belting out, filling the afternoon with opera at top volume.



And finally for the day, we finishing the whoring at West Kensington where I find I match the advertising...
Tubewhore wrote @ 2007-04-04, 14:21:00

Earl's Court

The vast amount of tramping about the Tube network I've done in recent months has brought about the destruction of a favourite pair of boots, so I'd been forced to buy another pair on my way to meet up rather than spend the day in distigrating footwear. The first job of the day at Earl's Court was to dispose of the broken boots, too knackered for a charity shop, and then scout about for a location for photos as I had not been able to get a passing stranger to help me last time I was here.

As we walked out of the ticket hall, G said, "I'll find a bin, you look about for nice places for pictures," and I was only able to make a tiny squeak of a reply as struck dumb in wonderment at finding an actual TARDIS sitting just outside the station...



Tubewhore wrote @ 2007-04-05, 20:06:00

Finishing up the Victoria

...finally, on this leg of the Victoria, Seven Sisters turns out to be a magical wood! Exploration online later turns up the tale that trees on the site were planted and replanted by groups of seven sisters in both the 19th and 20th centuries to replace the original ancient elms. Of course there are seven sacred trees in pagan mythology, although there's a large debate as to what those seven trees are; opinions vary widely. Perhaps the original name was a reference to the seven sisters that accompanied Artemis, as the site has long been held to be an ancient pagan grove. As a added irony, the site was later used for witch burning.

The design here is beautifully simple



– scaled down it would make a gorgeous textile print; easy enough to screen print in just the two colours.

One of the recesses has a small brass plaque in memory of Kevin James Goulder. Not seen a commemoration like this before – of course the fire victims have a plaque at King's Cross. I wonder who this person was? What was his connection with Seven Sisters?

So there we are; arriving

upstairs at Seven Sisters marks the Victoria Line as completed. Two lines done, even if one of them is the Waterloo and City!



Tubewhore wrote @ 2007-05-21, 20:23:00

Farringdon

I won't be alone in this; the sinking realisation that the new job you left your old job for, that promised so much, and you were so excited about, has turned out to be A Horrible Mistake. That was my time in Farringdon. Nine months that felt like an eternity, of a miserable commute between Crystal Palace and Hatton Garden, to drag myself up the hill to endless days of dreariness. Days that stretched out, vistas of empty time willing the clock to speed up. The same day, over and over again. And the absolute

horror of it stretching ahead for years and years, the fear of getting too dependant on the wage to risk leaving...

I have written before in this journal about yelling at the zombies that pour through London Bridge on their way to terrible jobs, and I have struggled through

erable temping assignments that you only deal with because it is a finite amount of time to sacrifice, but this is the closest I've come to Roethke's sentiments:

Dolor

I have known the inexorable sadness of pencils,
Neat in their boxes, dolor of pad and paper-weight,
All the misery of manila folders and mucilage,
Desolation in immaculate public places,
Lonely reception room, lavatory, switchboard,
The unalterable pathos of basin and pitcher,
Ritual of multigraph, paper-clip, comma,
Endless duplication of lives and objects.
And I have seen dust from the walls of institutions,
Finer than flour, alive, more dangerous than silica,
Sift, almost invisible, through long afternoons of tedium,
Dropping a fine film on nails and delicate eyebrows,
Glazing the pale hair, the duplicate grey standard faces.

– Theodore Roethke

However, this day I quite enjoy returning, knowing I escaped, that it's all a distant memory, and we can instead enjoy the day and play silly buggers in silly hats. Especially given that it's a Sunday and so mostly abandoned. See, this is what happens when you give art students Travelcards...

I admit to having a habit of flouncing out of jobs that annoy me with little thought of where the next one might appear from, but through sheer grit I pulled myself through each day in the diamond trade

without defenestrating anyone. Not that the people were bad, quite the opposite, it was just unbelievably dull. It was really well paid, but that alone could not make up for the screaming in my head as the alarm went off each day. I took a ten grand pay drop to get out that job. Yup, TEN FRIGGING GRAND! What did I do? I counted diamonds. Little packets of sparkly things arrived in the mail, and I counted them out into other little packets and sent them off to fulfill their destiny. So, my major job skill was counting to ten and I'd mastered that particular ability before going to school. I put on my CV that the only thing I learnt in that job was that diamonds are pretty but overpriced. I once held a 6 carat emerald-cut stone – big, rectangular thing; its trade value was pretty much the same as my annual salary. It plopped into my palm, and I sat there thinking that despite its cost it was still small enough to shove up my nose. (This is, for some bizarre reason a measure of value for me – the feasibility or not of an object's nasal insertion capacity). So I did. And then of course was the issue of getting it out again before anyone noticed I was getting snot on the stones. So I closed one nostril with a finger and huffed that fucker across the room – spanged off the light fitting and disappeared inside – had to get on a chair to get it out again. You just try dismantling a light fitting because you've lost a seriously valuable but still relatively tiny object without attracting the attention of them in charge...

Still, lunchtime walks meant I got to know the area well and there are some fascinating bits as St Paul's, Smithfields, Blackfriars, London Wall and all manner of fascinating nooks and crannies are within a gentle stroll.

I took a nostalgic perambulation up Gresham Street, with L, along Hatton Garden and Leather Lane and up Chancery Lane, then down to Holborn Viaduct through King Edward Street and through Postman's Park – it's one of those funny little hidden places that London does so well, proper little gothy gem, and a favourite place of mine to picnic featuring a memorial to those who

died in heroic self sacrifice. On one hand it's Victorian sentimentality at its zenith, with tales of people drowning after saving people who fell through the ice at Highgate Ponds, children saving playmates and succumbing to exhaustion, people running into burning buildings and pushing people out of the way of trams only to get smushed themselves, but it's also very moving, the very best of ordinary people who get forgotten in the face of the Great March of History. Better this than the unusual bronze statues of military generals on horseback.

And I can also say that I have wandered these streets with close on quarter of a mill's worth of rocks rattling around in my coat pocket. This is not unusual – the Hatton Garden community places a great deal on trust and people do just pop from office to office with packets of terrifyingly expensive crystalline carbon in their jackets. I've skipped down the road a-tisket, a-tasket, swinging my little purple basket, stuffed to the brim with tupperware boxes full of gold as I trotted to the assay office to get it stamped as The Real Thing. The only thing my boss said was don't take the same route two days in a row, and don't go at the same time every day, but apart from that I wandered quite freely with thousands of quids worth of





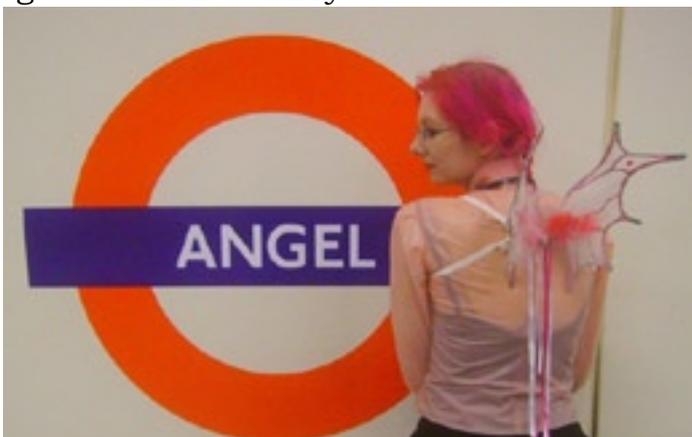
running today, Golders Green, and working our way back towards Chalk Farm. A one-way system operates on the weekend through Camden Town – up on the escalators, trip tripping down via the 94 stairs in trailing skirts.

Camden is tiled in soft china blue and cream, with the station name in the tiles. This will prove to be a theme for the day...

Tubewhore wrote @ 2008-01-15, 20:12:00

Angel

Awake at six in the morning, I lie in the pre-dawn gloaming listening to the irregular drip and splash of rain through guttering and downpipes. A sky pearl grey and bleak, a damp-in-the-bones sort of day, of wet streets and people scurrying for shelter and pedestrians dodging the malice of taxicabs driving too fast through puddles. Restless, I borrow a brown astrakhan coat against the weather and set out into the drizzle to run errands far too early before a date for lunch at Angel with girlfriends at midday...



...going to Angel demands wings...

Angel is full of the most marvellous antique shops filled with the most enticing of sparkly things, shops with stuffed swans wearing tiaras and windows of beautiful jet jewellery... we press noses to the glass and sigh... and stroll on to find somewhere to eat. We settle for a Turkish place; from every inch of the ceiling hangs a lamp in coloured glass and pierced metal or swirling coloured ceramic. Tables and shelves are piled with

precious metal about my person. I remain amazed that given the amount of currency sloshing about the streets there isn't more street crime in the area.

Tubewhore wrote @ 2007-11-20, 23:31:00

Northern Line: Camden to Golders Green

...Poor Camden is not looking its best, hidden under scaffolding.

A small rant: Camden is only a little station, and it gets really crowded at weekends, so why do people, especially people dragging wheelycases, insist on stopping dead as soon as they step off the escalator forcing those immediately behind them into doing a quick two-step to avoid getting mashed into the machinery. Happens to me every time. Is the experience of arriving at Camden, goth capital of the world, just so overwhelming? And why do I always end up standing behind the gobsmacked noob. Grr!

Before you give in to the "omigod, I can't belived i'm like rilly rilly here, man" slack jawed dribbling at the awesome moment of your arrival, get out the damn way of everyone else who already have their Travelcards/Oystercards ready for the barriers before you cause an accident, or worse, scuff my pointy shoes!

...There's the usual tide of people piling past us, so we decide on heading up as far as the Tube is

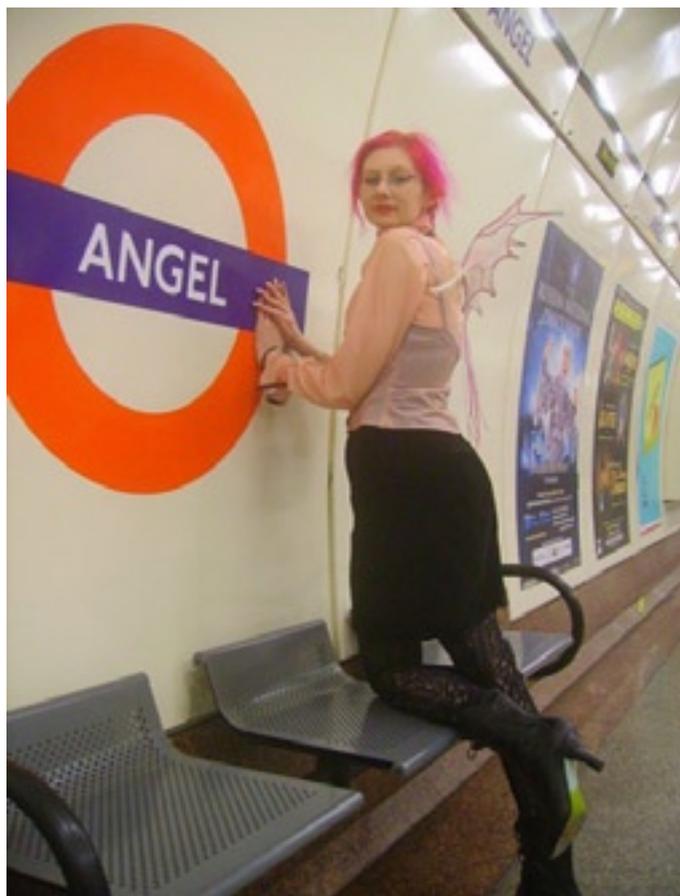


strange objects and kilim rugs. We settle in to graze through plentiful meze and girl talk...

...Much later, and fuller, we stagger out into unexpected sunshine, and across the road I notice something to cheer the stoniest of geek hearts.¹

...Angel is only on one line, the Northern. It is an oddity in that one of the platforms looks three times wider than the other. You could play cricket in all that space... Very peculiar to disembark and have acres of room. Angel also has the longest escalator, a fact exploited not so long ago when a chap skied down it. There's video footage of it on YouTube. Oddly, when I was actually on it, it didn't feel any deeper than normal, but then we were talking about shoes and pillow fights.

Look, any excuse to get the fairy wings on, OK...

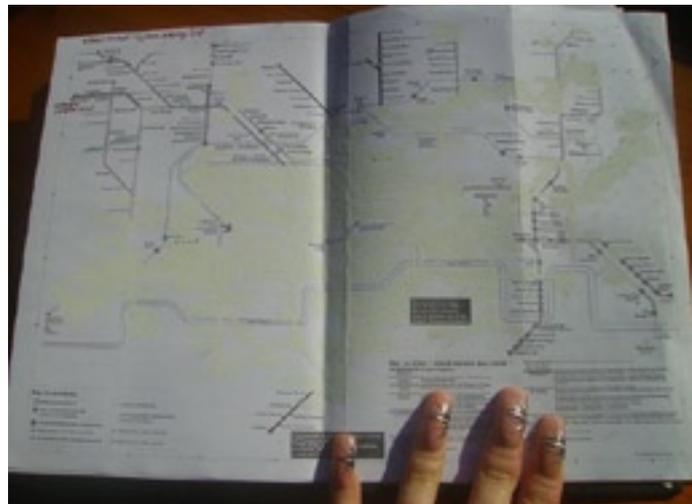


Tubewhore wrote @ 2007-03-08, 21:34:00

The Map is Wrong!

Oh the horror, the horror...
I've been updating my statistics, and trying to establish

dates for each station. I should have done this before. Currently 111 stations in and realised I had no specific record of dates and order of doing – thought I'd better start sorting it out before it gets even more unwieldy. During this research I discover I have no evidence for Stamford Brook – I must have tippexed it in error! I'll never sleep now – there's an unexpected hole in the District Line all of a sudden...



Tubewhore wrote @ 2007-01-30, 22:48:00

Baron's Court / Holborn

Eager followers of my daring escapades may remember the photos I took of the ticket hall at Baron's Court.

Well, from that photo I've developed a black and white line drawing, and another based on one of the fascias at Holborn that have proven to be such a source of inspiration.



So, as this is supposed to be an art project, what do people think so

far? Would anyone actually part with money for such a garment?
Note: I'm not actually asking people to give me money, just curious in

theory as to whether they would consider it marketable quality? If they saw it in a shop would they pick it up? As well as T-shirts, I am also planning on getting the prints onto fabric metreage so I can make more interesting garments incorporating the images and appliques of the mummies.

And bloody hell, but my wrists ache with drawing for about three hours solid this evening. Still, I am determined to not let having a full-time job take over my life – I am actually doing more work now in the evenings than I did in the year of not having a salaried job to be slave to. I feel more like myself, more able to cope and be active again. Foolish...

See also <http://www.waitingforlunchtime.co.uk/tubegame.html>

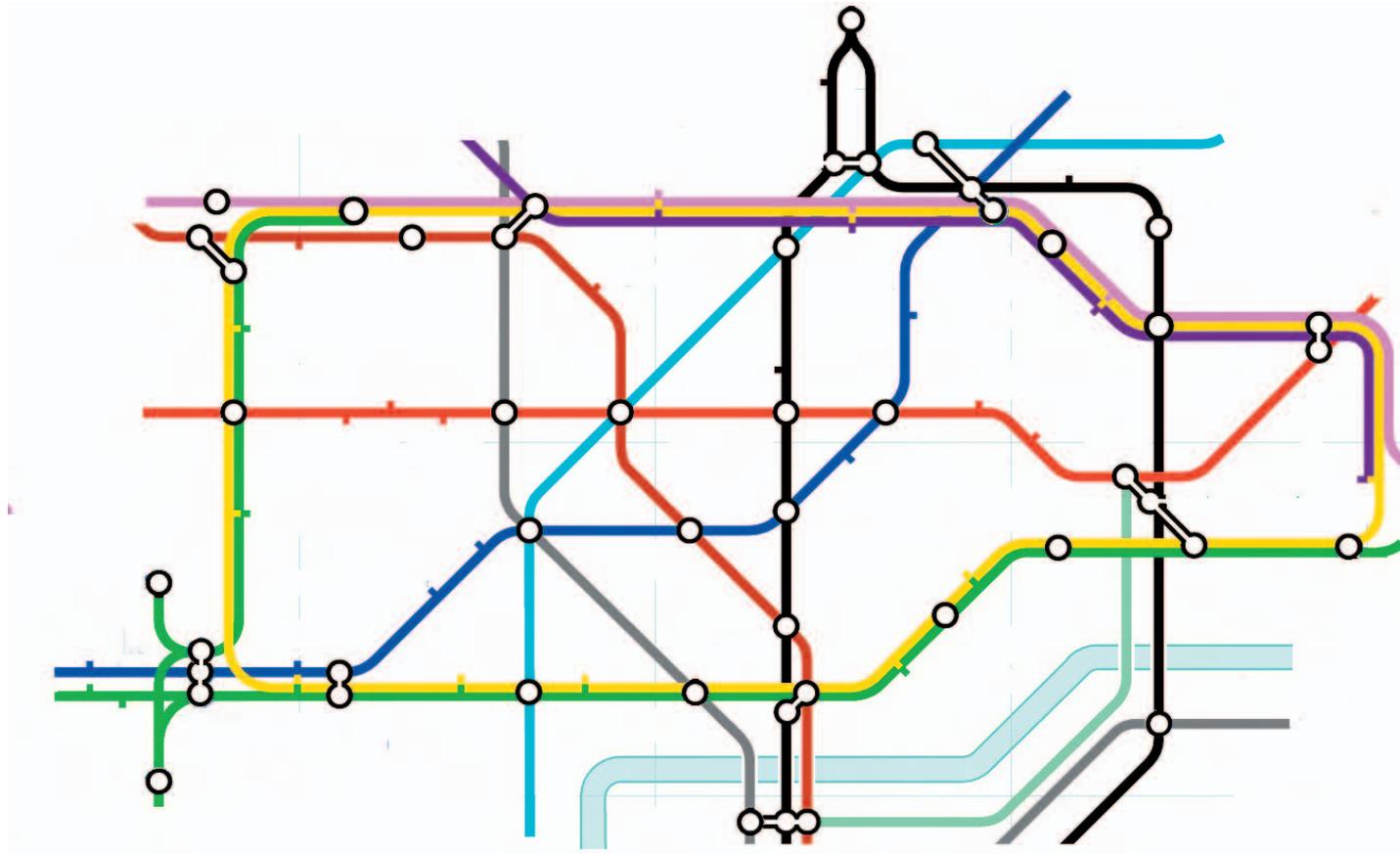


And That's the first official issue of Journey Planet. Stay tuned for our further adventures and feel free to drop a line to our official gMail account: journeyplanet@gmail.com

This zine was started as the Fanzine in an Hour panel at Eastercon and reworked in the weeks after...with Claire keeping us from looking like a couple of chumps!



PLANET YOURSELF



MADE UP PLANET

