



Peregrine Nations Vol. 7, No. 4 January 2008



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This issue is dedicated to: My readers. Thanks for the great ride, and I hope to see you in the pages of Steam Engine Time and Ribbons.

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Official Eastlake Village Turtle Rescue Member



Silent eLOCutions

[Editorial comments look like this.]

Sheryl Birkhead

Nov. 2, 2007

I see mentions every now and then about the reports from the Nippon Worldcon but I must be reading the wrong zines since I think I have seen two actual Worldcon reports. I have not gotten any sense of the mesh/conflict of cultures -- not sure of what the attendees thought so I am not sure of the

correct term. I hope **John Hertz** puts out some report that lets us all know the flavor and personality of the first eastern Worldcon. [See his loc later in this column.]

Ned Brooks

4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, GA 30047-4720

on PN 7.3:

What do you rescue turtles from? [*Humans and their machines.*] I took a photo of a large (12-inch) slider here back around 1999. It seemed be digging for egg-laying on the sunny side of the house, but I never saw it again, or any young. Georgia law forbids "interfering with" a box turtle but I have had to remove one from the garage and others from the path of the mower -- I doubt they felt seriously interfered with.

I am looking forward to the Gilliland website! [See Alexis' loc later in this column.] As for scanning old printed material

with show-through, I have found that if a piece of black paper is laid behind the target image on the scanner, most show-through will be suppressed.

There is a book-club edition of Dickens' Bleak House often found in thrift stores that has Edward Gorey illustrations. And the great Mervyn Peake did a set -- which were somehow never used in an edition of the book.

Sorry to hear this is the next-to-last issue!

Paul Di Filippo

Jan. 20, 2008

A bittersweet issue, this penultimate one. Still and all, I think you're making a smart, bold leap.

My dad died in mid-November, so our holidays too were shadowed by loss. All my thoughts are with you for your future happiness!

Chuck Connor's shopping anecdotes should have been soundtracked with the Clash's "Lost in the Supermarket"!

Brad Foster

<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com/>

<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Quadrant/1956/>

While I always love to get more issues of just about anything, lover-of-print that I am, I can certainly understand and support your reasons for bringing it to an end. Hey, even give you major points for announcing it, and having a final issue. Many publications (both pro magazine and fannish zine) simply cease publishing without any word, and you never know if you're just missing issues, or been dropped from mail list, or whatever. [*I felt I owed it to my readers to both announce the final ish and then actually publish it. And, as has been my bad habit, the final ish is also late.*] Plus, as you noted, you are

keeping your hand in with *Steam Engine Time*.

Alexis Gilliland

4030 8th St. S., Arlington, VA 22204 / Jan. 24. 2008

Thank you for *Peregrine Nations 7.3*. We get few enough paper fanzines these days so that the departure of any of them is regretted. Still, one can't argue with the proposal: "If it ain't fun, it don't get done," when it is applied to what is essentially a hobby. Depression doesn't help, either, sapping one's energy and enthusiasm. Lee has a seasonal affective disorder, which meant that she tended to be down in the winter, and we coped with it by increasing the light level, so that the photons chased away the Blues. However, there are other kinds of depression, and a lot of them do tend to manifest themselves at Christmas time.

My oncoming Web site is www.alexisgilliland.com, which is taking longer than expected for a variety of reasons. As, for instance, the number of cartoons now looks to be above 10,000 instead of the earlier estimate of 3,000. Since I am still cartooning, it is possible that it will not be finished -- as in totally completed -- during my lifetime, but we are aiming to have a launching party at Lunacon the weekend of March 14th.

There are about 200 cartoons on Twiltone, which I will be redrawing because [it] is an order of magnitude faster than Lee cleaning them up with Photoshop, on which she is working with the rest of them. It may be that eventually all my stuff will go on the Web site, from which faneds may select the ones they like. So far, no decision has been taken.

Amy Harlib

Sorry to discover that this issue of PN is next to last but I totally understand about health issues taking priority. Vibes and

hugs you feel better soon. [*Thank you, and I do, vastly.*]

Meanwhile, please keep sending me *Steam Engine Time* and *Ribbons*. How much for a complete run of all the back issues of *Ribbons*? As a huge Cherryh fan, I'd love to catch up with this zine. [*Both are freely available on the Web at efanzines.com.*]

Thanks for using my artwork. I enjoy all the letters, reviews, cartoons and **Chuck Connors'** adventures in PN.

John Hertz

236 S. Coronado St., No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057

Thanks for Perry 7/3 and your kind words. Indeed I turned in a longer Nippon 2007 report to *File 770*, where it was promised. It should appear soon.

But corrected is what Jack Speer did to my misspelling of "pocsarcd" as "poctsacrd.: Hilgefühl!

One gets a supporting membership to support. Thinking of it as a voting fee is mean-spirited, indeed feeble-minded (much the same thing). [*Beg to differ. Mean-spirited implies intent where feeble-minded has none. I take your point about the purpose of supporting memberships, but can you also see mine concerning how requiring a supporting membership for the Worldcon in order to vote in the Hugos disenfranchises a large segment of fandom that cannot easily afford that*



membership?]

I think some stand-alone publication will come out of my Japan trip. *Dancing & Joking* and *West of the Moon* are still raising money for TAFF and DUFF. [Yay!]

I've never heard of perry (pear cider) distilled to brandy, but I'm sure it could be; in southeast Europe a favorite is *šljivovica*, a brandy from plums. [Yum. Will have to look around for some...thanks for the tip!]

Lyn McConchie

Peregrine Nations Vol. 7 No. 2 wandered in the other day and I read it on the spot. Some nice artwork, love the cover -- but then I'm a wolf fan -- and the page 11 worms. Now, comments:

Cy liked my review of Posted to Death; yes, it's a fun book and so are the other three out in the series thus far. But, while it may sound odd to have vampires that in a way aren't 'vampires' it does make sense. After all, how many vampire books/TV series have had the unfortunate vamps trying to become human again. The fact is that according to the system very, very few vampires are that by choice. Having them able nowadays to use a blood substitute **if they chose**, gives you a useful twist where some do, some don't, there's conflict, and anyway, using it still leaves you with the strength and speed of the original vampire. Yes, the books are witty, amusing, and easy to read, but there's dark corners here and there.

Jan, you disagreed with my review of Dead Witch Walking and that's fine. What you get in most reviews is a personal opinion. I really didn't like the characters [and] I thought the book wasn't well written. That's what makes horse races. On the other hand I did agree with your review of the Misty Lackey "Diana Tregarde" books. I have them all and enjoy them. And if

you like those, you might also like to take a look at Tanya Huff's "Blood" books which are a similar series -- and in my opinion (again) just a fraction better.

Alexander R. Slate

Jan. 24, 2008

Ah, well. Another fanzine leaves just when I was trying to get better about keeping up with the fanzines I get. But I can understand your reasons. It was that and the cost (but mainly the former) that pushed me out of editing. Though I keep saying I'm going to get back to it, but then I keep saying a lot of things. Good luck with your writing.

One thing about Mel Brooks' "Silent Movie." I believe there was only one word spoken in the entire movie, not really near the end, but closer to the end than the beginning. Ironically, that single word "No" was spoken by the late Marcel Marceau. Typical Mel Brooks humor.

Anyway, again, best of luck. *Peregrine Nations* will be missed.

Joy V. Smith

<http://journals.aol.com/pagadan/JoysJournal/>

I really enjoyed John Hertz' mini-worldcon report! And that was such a great opportunity for him to visit the spot where Basho's cottage stood. (I've got to share that with the Scifaiku list.)

"Granite of the Apes, part #5" was enlightening and hair-raising. I am much more grateful now for shopping at Publix and going to show at the 8-plex or 10-plex! Among other things. It sounds like such a hard place to live in. And I'd like to see a follow-up report on how he enjoyed being back home-- and what he did first for fun, etc.

YAH, IT'S SMALL FOR A
CELL PHONE, BUT I HAVE
THE NEW NANOTECH VIRUS
PHONE! THE ONLY PROBLEM
IS I HAVE THIS BUSY SIGNAL
IN MY
EARS



Ah, when it's a chore, it's time to stop and concentrate on all the other things you want and need to do. (Some things you don't have the choice to stop doing.) Eventually you'll find yourself wondering what happened to the extra time you thought you'd have! I'll miss *Peregrine Nations*, which I always

enjoyed; it has lots of fun articles, reviews, LOCs, etc.!

Peter Sullivan

I suppose that the last issue of *Peregrine Nations* means the end of my printing and posting duties, at least for the moment. It's been a nice hearkening-back to the days when I did a postal games fanzine -- except that running copies off on the laser copier is an order of magnitude easier than the old struggle with the mimeo. Collation is still just as tedious, though.

It's also given me a chance to re-acquaint myself with some of the dustier details of the Post Office guide, trying to work out the easiest and most cost-effective way of getting the overseas (to me) copies of the fanzine out. Sometimes it was cheaper to send it as a letter, sometimes as printed matter. But I always put postage on to send it by surface mail - and (almost inevitably as far as I can tell), the Post Office seems to have sent it Air Mail instead. Either that, or they have some very fast ships.

Of course, there was that one time that the Post Office returned just **your** copy of *Peregrine Nations* -- quite why they chose that copy, rather than any of the other 30-odd, I don't know. Unless they specifically picked out the one where the addressee name was the same as the return addressee name just to make a point. Anyway, it came back with a big red sticker on saying it had "Insufficient Postage for Airmail." Which wasn't really in dispute, in that I had calculated it for surface mail -- if they happened to send it Air Mail by mistake, so be it.

I took it to my local sub post office, where they tried to convince me that you actually need to put "Surface Mail" on if you want it to go surface. Which I'm fairly sure isn't right -- why would you need those sticky Air Mail labels for air mail if it's the default? Anyway, being a nice chap, I didn't argue the point, and we agreed to write "Surface Mail" in big friendly letters on the envelope and it went back in the bag. A few days later, it was returned yet again, so I took it back to the post office yet again. They scribbled something else on the envelope which I couldn't quite see (quite possibly "This man is a dangerous nutter. Please deliver his letter, just to stop him keep coming into my shop."). Whatever it was, it seems to have worked, in that it didn't come back again.

Dave Szurek
505 North F # 829
Aberdeen, WA 98520-2601
Feb. 11, 2008

Thanks for keeping me on the mailing list despite my inactivity. I don't remember locating your previous ish, but since I'm the WAHF, I'm not going to call you a liar.

Sorry the zine has to go, but if it no longer gives you pleasure -- indeed, stands in the way of other things you wish to do -- so be it.

I think there was a French film of In the Days of the Comet never shown in the U.S. (probably not Canada, either), but I suspect Frohvet is referring to the RKO cheapie eventually released as -- get this -- "Valley of the Dragons." In that one, the "new land" is composed of giant lizards, cavemen and so much "One Million B.C." stock footage that a critic or two griped that Victor Mature should have been listed in the acting credits. According to what I've read, this started off as a low-budget version of the Verne story but, by the time the final script was reached, studio executives decided to change the name, recognizing for a change that it no longer resembled the original whatsoever.

Chuck Connors' tales of Gibraltar have been interesting and entertaining. [*Speaking of whom, look what's next...*]

Fire Light, Fire Bright... (Confessions of a Stormchaser) Granite Of The Apes #6 by Chuck Connor

There had been little rain over the summer and even the previous normally-wet February had been drier than usual.

Summer had gone on longer than September, with some blissfully warm days in October, and even some in November, when the sun finally cleared the top of the Rock

Now, in December, it was pay-back time, and with a vengeance. So much so, in fact, that at times it felt perpetually damp and I dragged one of the portable heaters we have into my room in order to fight off the mildew which had started to appear on the bits of my uniforms that were made of cotton or fine wool serge — appearing in all the places where it had had regular contact with my skin, such as collars of shirts, pocket flaps of jackets, the tops of trouser legs.

And then it started to rain....

I've written before about the state of things here in Gib when it rains — the flash floods in Main Street, the overflowing storm drains along Queensway, the brain-deads in cars who don't see the need to reduce their speeds — but to help give you some idea, the first 30 minutes of one cloudburst was okay, but from then on there was enough water in the roadway outside our flat to stall cars trying to get through it. Not helping matters was the fact that the cloud was coming down off the Rock and the best visible light was that tense, murky grey half-light where your depth of vision seems to become distorted even though you half close your eyes in an attempt to compensate for it.

With the cloud coming down the air pressure goes crazy and the Lavantia effect takes over. Tempers become short, people become agitated and aggressive to some degree, not helped by the regular power cuts either due to water seeping into the cable system or brown-outs caused by too many people and offices turning on extra electrical equipment. And once those start happening things like the Nynex telephone system come crashing down, radio reception goes into static as the signal:noise ratio turns topsy-turvy and the fire service are over stretched due to the amount of domestic callouts from candle-started fires. And if you're caught out in it then you just dive for the nearest doorway, and cross your fingers that the sewer system isn't going to back up and overflow, because the only way to get back to your home is by foot, and you just didn't bring your waders....

I think it had been raining constantly (varying between a heavy drizzle to an out and out downpour) for three or four days before the storm came to visit the Rock. I'd slept in late that morning (I'd finished my last day shift the Friday night, 22nd December) getting up at 0800 and just couch potato-ing in front of the TV until 'brunch' and mail office opening time — 'brunch'



is the chief caterer's way of doing breakfast & lunch at 1045 but only really supplying breakfast fare. Several of us have walked in

another night in front of the TV, listening to the rain, and wondering when Christmas was going to arrive.

We had wine and dined (well, dined anyway) and it must have been about 1830-ish when I started to notice noise lines on the TV (don't ask what programme was on, it was just moving wallpaper) and flashes of light in the sky through the curtains. A storm was on the way up.

Storms have always fascinated me for as long as I can remember. There's an attraction to them that I cannot pin down exactly. They're unpredictable, the more violent and spectacular the better I like them, raw and elemental. Maybe it's a racial memory thing (but in which case, whose?) but there is a smell to them, a feeling that gets transferred to me from the air, a sense of uncontrolled power that not only gives you the sight of it in the form of lightening, the metallic taste of it coupled with the sharp, clean smell of it, but there are the sounds of the storm as well. Far away storms, storms on the horizon or seen in the distant sky only produce a yearning from within that they will come overhead, give me a chance to get out into it, take it on and survive it when it has either blown itself out or moved on. I don't know if this is a common reaction or not — I know that when I'm out and about in it I don't seem to see anyone else (at least not stopped and appreciating the events around them) — and it's only storms that get to me this way — high winds, heavy rain on its own, overcast sky, absolute nada. It could be something triggered by the lizard brain (provided you adhere to the three levels of brain activity — reptile, mammal, human) I don't know. All I do know is that I'm probably a closet stormchaser (as the Americans call those people who follow the lightening storms in the US — as opposed to 'twisters' which are the people who follow the hurricanes and tornadoes) a weather twitcher, is all.

At first it didn't appear to be much, mostly sheet lightening high up in the cloud levels, only a little background

with both plates and doggy bags in protest at this, but after 16 months of it you get used to it. Chewing gum and string....

From the mess it was a bit of a fast walk/slow jog through Edinburgh House married patch (it's called Ed House but it consists of about 6 separate blocks of 4-storey flats) to Safeways and the first of the pre-Christmas essentials gathering — mainly the old 'reduced goods' scramble before they closed the supermarket down on the evening of the 24th.

By the time I got back to the flat it was raining heavily again and the clouds were starting to move in from across the bay (Bahia de Algeciras — well, that's what the Spanish call it), towards the Rock from the Spanish coast. Not good. There's a refinery in Algeciras that seems to be running 24-hours a day, normally belching out heavy pearly grey smoke. With the clouds and wind coming in from that direction it normally meant that you grabbed your washing off the line (we have a line in a sort of utilities room that has one side open, which is where the soot and airborne crap comes in to leave little tarry flecks on white shirts and the like.) The light was also going down rapidly and I have to admit that I had resigned myself to it being just

rumble of thunder and the seeming ever-present drizzle. The sort of depressing teasing that said the San Bernabe range (I think it's them to the back of Algeciras) was getting a good belt while the rest of the lowlands just looked on. I walked out onto our balcony area with little hope of anything worthwhile happening, but with the weather you just never can tell. It was a slow build-up really, which is why, I suppose, it caught me a little by surprise. Slowly, as my night vision improved, I was able to make out details from the coastline across the bay; the black-on-black silhouettes of the massive smokestacks, tipped with little flashing rubies to warn aircraft of their presence, the hazy light pollution from the motorways and general outbuildings around the complex, and backdropping it all was the mountain range that helps define one of the bay's (as opposed to the much smaller harbour's) arms. The spacing between the flashes and the thunder itself was getting slowly shorter and although I wasn't sure of it at first, I'm sure it was about this time that I started to see 'finger' or 'strand' lightening — disembodied bolts that seem to appear and disappear in amongst the clouds without striking down to ground themselves on the earth.

The rain had been steadily increasing, the wind had picked up and I was starting to get that jittery urgency — I wanted to be out and about in this, even if it did turn out to be just a fringe passing. Time to get myself together. Picked up my heavy uniform coat (a long one that lets the rain roll down to the bottom hem so that it can spill into your socks rather than the short three-quarter stuff that just lets the rain waterfall off the coat and onto your knees), a towel to act as a scarf, tea-towel for wiping face and glasses, door keys and several carrier bags — one to cover my head if I felt like I needed it, and a couple for sitting on.

Out the door, down the stairs and out the front door, left down Queensway and left again just after the library down the

short cut. Up Johnson Steps, cross the road —no traffic to worry about at this time of night — up by the Bristol Hotel, cross Main Street, up George Street, right along the tag end of Engineer's Lane, up by the cable car stansions, and onto the little pathways that run ribbon-like over the Rock itself. Height. You need height, height and more height, damnit!, away from the main buildings of the town itself. Find a place, turn away from the wind, clear a patch on the outcrop of rock, pull the carrier bags out, lay them on the rock and get your arse down onto them as quick as possible to prevent too much rain getting onto them.

Should another show form up then I know exactly where I'm heading next time, and no mistake. A clear view right across the bay without the interruptions and obstructions of the surrounding buildings. I found out later that I could have gotten something similar if I'd just gone up the steps that lead to the top of the Rock itself, but that's beside the point now.

The thunder was coming in quicker by this time and was also starting to bounce off the Rock giving a curious pop-echo, and the lightening was now shaping into definite forks running either to, or near to, earth. Sharp blue-white runners that backlit the massive chimneys over in Spain and gave the impression of an other-worldly scene, something set in an industrially decaying wilderness akin to some of the Bladerunner footage, or something from a George Alec Effinger 'Gravity' cyberpunk novel, or even that weird, extended aerial opening to The Blues Brothers. I make no bones about it, the atmosphere was getting to me, adrenaline was on the increase, night vision was perfect and there was a tang in the air. Serious primordial, isolated down to just me and 'it' and I didn't care what it decided to do because I wanted it worse, full tilt, head on and running.

The lightening/thunder delay times were getting down to around a second or two at the longest when it seemed to

suddenly stop. There is that classic line of “The roaring sound of silence.” and yes, it is so true, like the old automatic gain control on the early cheap cassette recorders that used to increase the recording level slowly to maximum when there was no signal/sound present to sample it. It’s that sort of steady build-up of tape hiss that makes you realise just how tense and pent up you’ve become, how on edge.

I don’t know how long I sat there, forcing myself to relax and power down, but it could have been no more than about thirty seconds. Time is subjective to the kind of experience, the more tense/powerful the event the slower time seems to run for the individual, but it could not have been much longer than thirty seconds at best, then the world seemed to blow up in my face. A massive, double-rooted fork of lightening grounded itself somewhere just off the edge of the bay area, out at sea — I swear I could hear the thing scream as it burned its way down — and the thunder was virtually instantaneous, an almost physical soundwave that hit from the front, ricocheted off the Rock and hit from behind, double echoing off the Algeciras mountains to languidly roll back against the Rock again.

I admit it here and now, as soon as the first ball of sound hit I curled up where I was sitting against the Rock, trying to make myself as small as possible, waiting for the rockslides to start. And I’ll also add that I was surfing the biggest rush of adrenaline I’ve ever know happen to me, the slap of cold sweat, the looseness of joints and muscles where the body cannot decide whether or not Fight or Flight is the best course of hide-saving action, the works. As I say, one hell of a rush... oh, if only I could’ve bottled it to savour it later on.

It was almost 2100 when I got back to Flat 13, the flat from Hell, soaking wet through to the skin only to find the power was off again. There had been no more lightening to follow the final bolt, only incidental sheet lightening high up in the clouds and the onset of a light but steady and persistent rain. I

grabbed some carrier bags and my box of emergency candles from the kitchen drawer, stripped off by candlelight, put the wet clothes in the carriers so they wouldn’t drip all over the place, and took a long, hot bath (the hot water tank is hard wired and seems to give us hot water 24 hours a day rather than being on some kind of timer circuit.)

Later, in the lounge, wrapped up in sweatshirt, tracksuit bottoms, laying on the sofa with a second glass of a ten year old white Bordeaux to sip over, I started wondering what the hell I was playing at. At my age I’m supposed to be married with three kids (one of each), a mortgage, car and a mid-life crisis under my belt, getting ready for the onset of the male menopause. Not running around in the rain, chasing dreams and getting high on body chemistry.

I blew out the candles, finished off the glass of wine, re-corked the bottle (which I was supposed to be saving for Christmas Day, damnit!) and went to bed early, happy in the knowledge that I’d gotten my Christmas present about 36 hours early.

And as to whether my actions on that night are considered ‘normal’ or not? Quite frankly, my dears, I just



couldn't give a damn.

It's now New Year's Eve and the rain still hasn't stopped falling long enough for the runoff to completely disappear. On the radio the local met office boys (or the one whose been pushed forward to act as their spokesman) are doing the usual thing with statistics that seems to be the accepted norm for the 'end-of-the-year' shows throughout the world. Apparently this December has produced more rainfall than the previous 13 months put together, giving a rainfall figure of 319.7mm over the regular 143mm. Oddly enough I've been thinking of going down to the local marina when they go back to business just after the New Year. Well, I figure it that it's been ten days of serious, heavy rain so far, and who knows? It might just carry on for another 30 — and I'm not going to be the one caught napping, no sir!

Fanzines Received

The Reluctant Famulus #63 from Thomas D. Sadler: Tom Sadler has retired to the environs of Kentucky, but that doesn't mean he was the only fanned living in Michigan; someone in another fanzine said he was the last fanned in Michigan, and there are at least two of us.

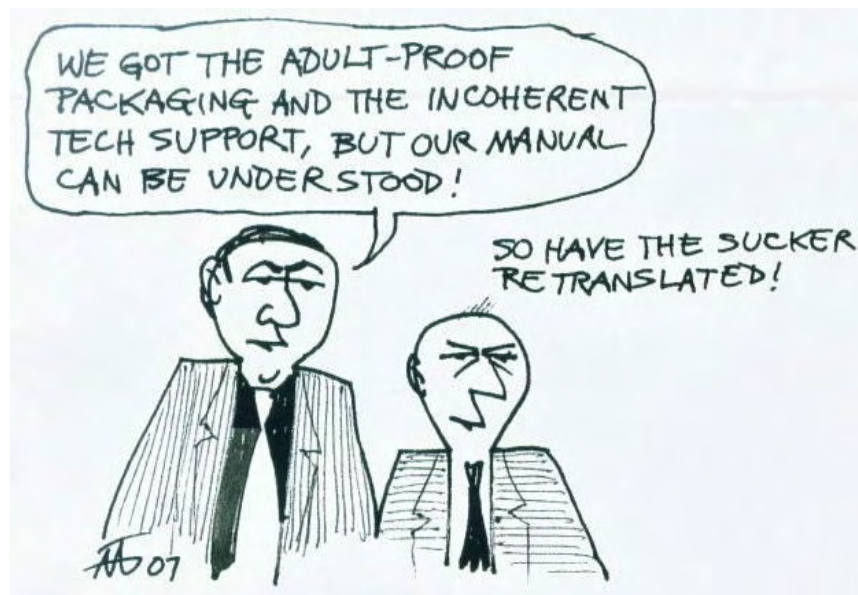
File 770 #151 from Mike Glycer, Oct. 2007: The standard (whether some like it or not) of U.S. fandom news, replete with items on fan living and passed, fanzines, cons, and locs. With a wonderful Grant Canfield cover and reports on Westercon, Ditto and Novacon F770 continues its chock full o' goodies tradition. My only complaint is its infrequent appearance.

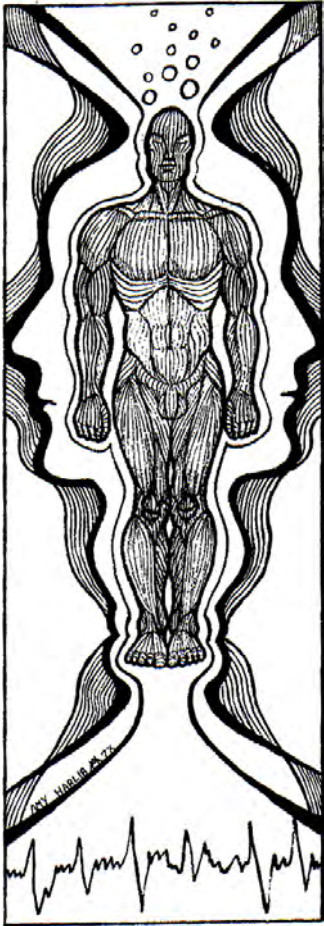
Sense of Wonder Stories #1 from Rich Coad: Wonders never cease. Seems moving house shakes loose fanzines, too; Rich and Stacy have relocated to Santa Rosa, CA and purchased a house to boot. Apparently, this fanzine has been in

the works for some months, as it's a first ish and already has locs, but then Cy Chauvin mentions another ish of this fanzine with orange stock for covers, and different art from what's on the cover of this one. Maybe it's a numbering glitch? Rich intends this to be a serconzine, he says.

Knarley Knews #127 from Henry & Letha Welch: Thish features Alex Slate on money, Sue Welch on a car-eating bear, Tom Sadler on personal genealogy, Jim Sullivan on obesity riots, and Terry Jeeves' "Carry On Jeeves" installment, along with a wad of locs. Henry still claims I'm going to write some interesting articles for him. Oh, dear. Actually, he's right, I did say that last year in an email...

Vanamonde #718-722 from John Hertz: Always cleanly edited, always convivial, always readable. This will hold me over until his conrep on the 2007 Worldcon comes out. Brad Foster's annual masthead change is always a joy to behold.





A Feast of Jackals

book reviews by divers hands

From Lyn McConchie

No One Noticed the Cat by Anne McCaffrey.

The copy I bought of this just recently is copyrighted as June 2007, but it also lists a 1996 publication. It's a paperback and by my calculations about 30,000 words. However it's been run out to 180 pages more or less and is sold as a book. Here I paid only a little less than ordinary paperback price and might have complained save that I was seduced by the characters, the writing, and the story.

Yes, it's a cat tale. The wise regent of Esphania has died, the heir now ascends the throne, but will he rule wisely and what of the lands across the border where the ruler would like to rule Esphania as well? Enter the regent's

cat Niffy. A creature that seems to have acquired many of the regent's skills and diplomacy, as well as her own abilities that she uses to protect the prince as her old master would have wished.

30,000 words or not, Anne McCaffrey has managed to tuck a very pleasant fantasy into that word count, along with a smart cat, a couple of romances, a wicked ruler, lots of derring-do, adventure and excitement. Well worth the price.

If Wishes Were Horses by Anne McCaffrey

This is a sort of companion volume to No One Noticed the Cat and of still shorter length. I'd say around 13,000-14,000 words. I purchased the hardcover volume in ROC and worth it for the quality of the booklet alone. The cover painting is beautiful and the presentation highly attractive. The story's excellent again as well.

Lady Tallerie Eircelly has the healing touch - along with a wealth of good solid common sense. Again there is trouble with a neighboring kingdom and Tallerie's home is in the path of any invader. Her husband answers his ruler's call to arms, and she is left to run his estate and protect her children and the tenants and servants.

All that Tallerie can cope with but her twins are approaching their sixteenth birthday. For the girl, Tirza, who has almost certainly inherited her mother's gift, Tallerie has a suitable present waiting. But her son, Tracell wants a horse, and not just an ordinary mount. He wants a horse fit for a young knight and the estates are being stripped of wealth and beasts by the war. Where is she to find his desire?

How Tallerie manages to find a mount, how the war ends, and the stratagems she is put to before she succeeds in surviving and seeing that all she loves also survive are a clever and touching story. I knew the author could write good books and fine short stories. This pair shows that she can take the intermediate lengths and do even better.

Worldweavers: Gift of the Unmage by Alma Alexander. HarperCollins, hardcover, 2007.

I read Alma's Changer of Days duology several years ago and fell in love on the spot. She has the ability to take an old tale and make it new again, to take the "usual characters"

and give them a new twist. Changer of Days was fantastic, I've read it at least three times and like it even more each time. I'm not crazy about oriental fantasy however so never read her next work, but when I found that she had a new "straight" fantasy beginning, I was at once on the alert.

Yes, it's the story of a young girl who doesn't fit in and how she learns to cope with her differences. But Alma has, as with the previous story, made something new and riveting about of that. It's the first book in a trilogy about Thea of whom great things are expected. Thea is the seventh child of parents who were each a seventh child. As a double seventh she is expected to have fabulous abilities and when it seems she has none at all her parents are bewildered.

After many efforts to bring out her gifts -- and many failures -- Thea is sent as a last resort of a special Academy where those who have no magic may learn more mundane pursuits. Thea however has discovered that she has enemies who are after her, and they'll make no allowances for a magicless girl.

This is the story of a girl who is nothing like her family's expectations, yet unlike young women with that problem in other books, there is no doubt that Thea's family loves her, she is not cast out, not rejected. And, despite what they may fear, it is possible that they are wrong and that her very powerlessness may in itself be power.

This is a solid book, the characters are well drawn, the plot inventive, and the story well written - as I would expect it to be from this author. I finished reading Gift of the Unmage through with considerable pleasure in knowing that it's only the first of three. If the



other two volumes live up to the first then this is going to be an excellent trilogy.

The Compass Rose by Gail Dayton, Luna, March 2005, trade paperback

I have a simple system. When I have money I buy new books. When I don't, I re-read some of the 7,000 volumes I already own. Rose arrived as a result of receiving unexpected royalties late May for one of my books in the USA. That paid for the next convention (June) - and also for a phone call in July to my favorite bookshop in Auckland when I said, "Send books."

They know that plea. It means I have cash, nothing new to read, don't have any specific books I want, and am prepared to take a small parcel of half a dozen books -- their choosing -- that they think I may like. They've been selling to me for years and have a fair idea of my tastes. They disappear into the shelves where they have either mysteries or fantasies that have been around a year or two. I get these at slightly cut price, they get them off the shelves, and sometimes I strike a new author that I'll go for.

In fact that was how I turned on to J.D. Robb's futuristic series. By picking a cheaper one to send me, they've subsequently sold me another twenty plus. It was also how I started reading Jill Churchill's Jane Jeffries mystery series. So when the next parcel arrived I fell on it with hope and fingernails. The Compass Rose was the third book. I liked the other two sent, by a different author, but not sufficiently to continue looking for others of their books. This one I emphatically did like and I'm hoping the author writes more.

It may be a little more of a woman's book, but the writing is good, the story solid, and the characters engrossing. The book opens in the middle of a war. Captain Kallista Varyl is defender of her city against an invader. Her city is losing the battle, and desperate, with the walls about to be overrun Kallista invokes

the gods, offering to do or be anything they wish if they will only save those she protects. And in that second she is "godstruck."

But this is also the tale of a woman from the invaders -- where women can be used as any man wishes. Aisse dreams of a different future and when Kallista's powers strike and the invader camp is in disarray, Aisse takes the chance to flee to the other side - where she has heard that women have freedom to be themselves and belong to themselves.

Kallista, godstruck, filled with strange, new, and very strong, abilities she is unable to control, is sent to the city where she'll be taught to harness her powers. And Aisse, who may be useful in teaching her new people about her old ones, is moving in the same direction. Yes, in many ways the mixture as before, but like Alma Alexander's *Worldweavers* trilogy, it's a case of "everything old is new again."

In other words, a writer who is good enough can take an old theme and make it something sufficiently new to catch a reader. And Gail Dayton caught me. I **liked** these characters. I wanted to read more about them. And that's the sign of a good book. As is my intention, that as soon as I've finished reading the large new stack I bought last week, I'll be rereading this one -- only 2-3 months since my original reading.

If you like fantasy with a strong female angle, this will suit you. Luna Books is bringing out some very good books in this line and I've decided to keep an eye on them. There may be others as good as this.

The Lies of Locke Lamora by Scott Lynch, Gollancz 2007

This volume, apparently the first in a series/trilogy, is sub-titled "Book One of the Gentleman Bastards Sequence." In some ways, it's the flip side of Compass Rose. Locke is a plague orphan, he manages to join a number of other children intended for sale to a Fagin-like master, and happy to get

something for nothing, his new master keeps the boy and says nothing -- for a couple of years.

After which he finds that the boy is trouble with a capital T and either he kills or sells him. He chooses to sell Locke to the priest of a small obscure sect who isn't what he seems anyhow, and Locke settles in. The boy makes friends, grows older and, learning all the time, is becoming a master thief and trickster. But war is coming and neither Locke nor his friends want to be caught up in that. Not that war -- or the nobles of the city -- care for what some young thieves in the slums want.

For me this book was on the cusp of a "keeper." It's well written, but I wasn't happy that the author chose to kill off, at the end of the book, most of the main characters I'd come to like. One, I'd have accepted. Three was a couple too many and I also disliked the publisher's excerpt from the next book. This, at the end of Lies, indicates that of the two remaining characters, one may betray his best friend. Probably the betrayer will turn out to be only appearing to commit betrayal, but it still left a nasty taste in my mouth after the deaths of too many likable characters in the last chapter of book one. I'm holding Lies until I can get a proper look at the next in the series. If that doesn't improve, I won't be keeping Lies either.

The Man With the Golden Torc by Simon R. Green, Roc, June 2007, hardcover

I grabbed this when it arrived in store, not even waiting for a paperback copy. I can't swear to it, but it could be that this is the first in a new series, like the "Hawk and Fisher" or "Nightside" series'. I have all of both and they were excellent, Green writes great fantasy including the *Blue Moon* and *Shadows Fall* books, (although I'm not so enamoured of his SF work.)

But this started out as absorbing. *Eddie Drood* is a killer, not

of people -- although now and then someone gets in the way -- but of the nasty creatures that walk in the shadows. He believes he's a hero, defender of humankind and honored by his family for the work he does. Until he finds out that some of his family have been using him, he's been marked for death, and now he's on the run from everything he's always believed in. Worse still, his enemies may be the more honorable.

Eddie isn't happy and he intends to find out what's going on, who's betrayed him and blackened his name. But he'd better find out fast because the family has a few effective killers of their own besides him.

This is a fast-moving book, chases, deaths, action and adventure and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I did feel that perhaps it would have been even better if it had been edited down a fraction, but that's just my opinion. Otherwise I recommend it to anyone who likes Green's other fantasy works, or possibly Nikki Kiriki Hoffman's books. There was a faint feeling in there of her "Thread That Binds the Bones."

If Green does more books about Eddie Drood I'll be buying them sight unseen and in hardcover, better than that I cannot say.

Tamsin by Peter S. Beagle, Firebird, 1999, paperback

The thing about ghost books is that they are also invariably a mystery as well. To have a ghost someone has died, and you usually get a ghost only when they died violently, often by murder. So when my friend in Korea sent me Tamsin, recommending it highly I expected to find a good mystery as well as a ghost.

In which I wasn't disappointed, there was a ghost, Tamsin. There was a mystery, it wasn't her murder, but the disappearance of her lover several hundred years ago just before she died, not that a mystery buff will be short of murder in this,

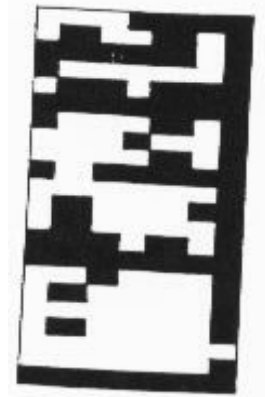
not in any way. But the book is an excellent fusion ghost tale and of a contemporary teenager being moved from New York to live deep in the English countryside because her mother has remarried.

So as one half of events you have Jenny learning to cope with a new country, two stepbrothers, a new stepfather, and rural Devon when she's always lived in the heart of a major city. And the other half of events, her meeting Tamsin, gradually learning her story and deciding to help her.

This book was conceived by the author around 1985 when a Disney executive suggested to Mr. Beagle that they might like an original tale to do as a special project. It was never picked up and fifteen years later the author rewrote it as a book. Frankly I'd have said it would have made a great movie or mini-series, but then that's film studios for you.

Tamsin's own background is the Monmouth Rebellion and the Bloody Judge, Judge Jeffreys. It is against the brutal trials and unjust judicial executions of those days (Judge Jeffrey was sent to the area to punish the people for not having upheld the man who won, and there was very little justice involved in anything done there) that Tamsin lost her lover and died. Now in order to set things right for her Jenny must find out exactly what did happen to Tamsin, to her lover, and what part the Judge played. In the course of this, she'll face the Wild Hunt, the Black Dog and a number of other Devon legends.

My friend was right. This is a brilliant book. If I find other used copies I plan to grab them and send them to various friends too. It could be loosely described as a cross between genre ghost tale and history mystery, and as such Beagle has done a great job that's very evocative of



the times, both then and now.

Ruins -- Terra, an anthology edited by Eric Reynolds, Hadley Rille Books, Kansas, USA. Introduction by editor, 26 stories, cover by Bob Eggleton.

This is the definition of class from a small press. Stunning cover, no typos, quality layout and presentation, and a fine lineup of stories from a very wide selection of authors. And no, I'm not just saying that because I have a story in it.

The cover is honestly stunning, in shades of green and brown it's the epitome of the title reminding me somewhat of some paintings I've seen of old British castles where only a wall and part of a tower remain standing. It's the perfect cover for the anthology.

This is the second small press American anthology I've had work in recently and while I was moderately happy with the other, this one is a standout in quality. I noticed no typos at all, there may be one here and there, but certainly nothing hit me. The print is a good compromise between too small and over-large, it's smallish, but very readable. Presentation is clear and unfussy, each author has a paragraph about them before the story begins, and there's a short appropriate introduction by Eric that makes the basis of the anthology obvious in an interesting way.

And best of all I liked almost all of the stories. I judge an anthology mostly by what I call, "would buy if ." That means that I would buy the anthology for this story alone. A reasonable anthology will have 3-5 stories that fit that category for me. This one has thirteen.

I would mention in particular Ann Walter's "Rising Tide," F.V Edwards' "Rock Visions," and Adele Cosgrove-Bray's "Seagull Inn." But then that's because the stories are to my own taste, more fantasy, gentler, and with a smooth, satisfactory

ending. Other stories are less gentle and more edgy, well written, but less to my personal preference. In that category I would mention Kate Kelly's "Icebound," Stefan Pearson's "The Last King of Rona," and Ivan Sun's "After the Stonehenge Bombing."

In some ways it isn't surprising that there are so many good tales. Eric Reynolds managed to collect a number of experienced writers, there's Jenny Blackford from Australia, Angeline Hawkes, Joel Arnold, Ted Stetson, Brendon Connell, and Ann Walters. All have had a considerable number of published works in a variety of markets. He's also managed to attract less experienced writers who have nonetheless done some excellent work -- and all praise to Eric who made good choices.

Building a theme anthology is more an art than a science. It does not solely consist of tossing together a bunch of stories on the same theme. Nor of asking a number of good writers to submit their best story, lumping them all in and calling that an anthology either. The art consists of choosing stories that don't shout at each other. Works that give a smooth glide along as you read with a feeling of progression. A true anthology is more than the sum of its parts. I was proud to be in this one, and I'm hoping Eric will edit more of them -- and that I may be in one or two of those was well.

On the Prowl, four novellas by Patricia Briggs, Eileen Wilks, Karen Chance, and Sunny; Berkeley Paranormal Romance/ Dark Fantasy, August 2007, paperback

This system is one common to the romance genre. The idea is four novellas around 70-100 pages each by a different author and put together to form a single paperback. It actually works well, there's sufficient of a story to please a fan of any one of the authors. And you'll read the other three because

they're there -- and may find a new author to buy.

This particular group was a fair representation of that. I disliked only the final episode, but have decided next time I have money spare to take a look at a full length book by each of the other two -- I bought it for the Patricia Briggs section. That one is good, it follows on from two of her urban fantasy books, both of which I like and have, and notes that a third full-length books will be out in January. I'll be grabbing that!

Anna is a newly created werewolf used and abused by a pack that seems to have gone mad. Then the son of the werewolf's grand leader comes to town to find out what's going on and rescues her. There is a note the next book in the series will be out in April and I'll be watching for it. Brigg's work is solid and I love her characters - and that there is usually a good mystery along with the fantasy.

Eileen Wilks has the next story with Kai, her part Native American woman who has an odd gift of seeing many things in colors others can't see. Her best friend is Natham -- who isn't quite human. So what will Kai do when a strange killer beast comes through a rift from another world and only she and Nathan can stop it together -- but stopping it may cause his death?

Again this was a well-realized background and there is another book about the characters and events due out soon. I really liked this tale and will put in an order for the new book.

After that we had a story by Karen Chance, this too was very readable but perhaps not quite as good as the first two. The author has several books already published in the series and I will pick up one to see when I have the -- um -- chance.

This is very much urban fantasy, with Claire, a redhead from an odd family, finding that one of the items up on the block at the auction house where she works is Claire herself. She runs, and is followed by a man named Heidar. Claire then finds that she isn't quite as human as she'd always assumed, and her



family from the other side claim her as sister and kin.

I felt that perhaps this background would work better in a full length book so will give the author an opportunity to show that when I can buy one. However the characters and background were good, the writing is competent, and I could suspend my disbelief long enough to enjoy the story reasonably well. It just didn't grab me quite as much as with the previous pair.

And the final tale by "Sonny." I groaned when I discovered that this author apparently writes under this single name. That sort of thing is usually pretentious and authors of that stripe are often poor writers. Sonny isn't that poor, but in the opinion of this reader she is insufficient.

Mona Lisa is a moon-child of mixed blood, Human and Monere. She has succeeded to the throne in her portion of the country having murdered the previous queen. This tale seemed to be a mix of sex, violence, and most of that irrelevant with no particular plot. Whatever plot did exist wasn't enough to draw me in, I felt that her characters were insufficiently realized, and her dialogue while sometimes acceptable, was too often unbelievable or boring. I found in places that her writing style

seemed to be clumsy, and the background just didn't make me suspend my belief.

To my surprise I found listed at the end of this section that she has several books out already with at least a couple more to come so this may be only a matter of preference.

Reviews by Sharman Horwood

Cauldron by Jack McDevitt. New York: Ace Books, 2007.

For those familiar with Jack McDevitt's previous Priscilla Hutchins adventures, you will welcome this new novel in which she again flies ships into the deeps of space. However, this novel doesn't follow the usual pattern. In fact, it's more of a transition novel than a typical adventure sequence, yet still well worth reading.

The first half of this novel is about the quest for a new drive that will take ships further and faster than the Hazeltine drive of the subluminals can. Jon Sylvestri, the surviving partner of a research team has continued to develop and perfect the Locarno drive which, when complete, should be able to take a ship from Earth orbit to Pluto in six minutes. At this time, people have lost interest in deep space travel; they've found no other intelligences to communicate with, just extreme environments and planets that are not welcoming to humankind. Exploration companies are closing their offices, no new ships are being made, and the near-Earth space station is barely being used.

With the continuing support of Hutch and her colleagues at the Academy, the Locarno drive in place, a group of five people set out to solve some of the unanswered questions raised in the previous five books (The Engines of God, Deepsix, Chindi, Omega, and Odyssey): the makers of the Chindi, the black hole near Tenareif, and to the Mordecai Zone near the center of the galaxy, looking for the makers of the

omegas (giant clouds of dust and energy launched to travel through the galaxy and set to destroy anything remotely like a civilization). They're left with some answers, some new questions, and a wholly Star-Trek-ish ending to their adventure.

The first half of the novel is definitely not as interesting as the second half, but still worth reading. Several McDevitt fans have expressed their disappointment with this novel on Amazon.com, but most transition novels are usually working very hard to set the groundwork for the next story, and there are enough loose ends in this novel for that to be the case here, such as what happened to the race at Sigma 2711 (were they wiped out by an omega, or did some survive elsewhere: they had space flight at the time). Even with the novel's light weight beginning, though, the second half and ending are well worth a reader's patience.

A Companion to Wolves by Sarah Monette and Elizabeth Bear. New York: Tor Books, 2007.

This is one of the most unusual books I've ever come across. But, like Cauldron, the first half of the novel is problematic, while the second half presents a brilliant story.

In a far northern land, villages and halls are protected by wolf-bonded men. They have established their "wolfhealls" and with their giant wolf companions, guard the nearby populations from trolls and wyverns. These periodically travel south, feeding on the people, destroying their homes and fields. Isolfr is the young son of a nobleman, and when the tithe is requested from his father — young boys to bond with the young wolves — his father refuses to send him, but Isolfr goes anyway. The reason his father doesn't want him to join the wolf-bonded is because of the sexual side of the bonding: these wolves at times will mate with more than one of the pack, and that means that their bond-brothers must mate with the male companions as well.

Isolfr is taught by some of the more gentle men how to accept what will virtually be the series of rapes he will have to endure. The wolf who has chosen him is a young konigenwolf, one of the uncommon females who will one day lead her own pack.

The first half of the novel deals with the sexual issues of the story: does this mean that the men are homosexual because they must also mate with other men? (The wolves mate male to female, but the wolf-bond is only with male humans. This is the basis for Isolfr's father's objection.) Does their coupling have to be as savage as the wolves' is? Does it in any way constitute a strong emotional bond for the humans? It is pack behaviour, and they are after all, members of the pack through their bond. I should point out that these wolves do not behave as the wolves we know.

However, mid-way through the novel, people begin to realise that they are facing a war with the increasing numbers of trolls coming down out of the north. The wolfhealls must join to form an army, to fight at the side of the nobles and their men, to fend off the increasing number of trolls assaulting their villages. On one sortie, Isolfr dives down a hole pursuing a troll, something he knows he shouldn't do but his wolf has given chase and he must follow to protect her. Deep underground, below the troll passages and caves, he finds the troll. He also finds the svartalfar, a race that is something like elves, but who live underground like dwarves.

This novel is mainly a coming-of-age story with rather a big difference, and although it tries very hard, the first half of the novel isn't convincing: Isolfr doesn't adjust to the sexual habits of the pack, or ever come to accept them; he merely endures them, as he does the unfair treatment of his father. However, the second half of the novel, the surprising svartalfar and their role in the war, is brilliant. It is an unusual twist on traditional views on elves — or dwarves — and well developed. With any luck, there will be a sequel to this novel.



Silly Kitty

*Hand-crocheted hats, scarves
& critters in a variety of yarns & colors
Origami creations
Photography*

*Sari // PO Box 240934 //
Brown Deer, WI 53224
trinlay63 at wi.rr.com
stores.ebay.com/Silly-Kitty
or
trinlayk.etsy.com*

The Real Swamp Thing Has Left the Ship

It's March 2nd as I write this, a sunny but still wintry day in northern Michigan. Coming to the end of my first fanzine venture has taken longer than I expected when I started it, but I think this is as natural a point to stop as any.

To all the readers, writers, and artists whose works have graced the pages of PN, I send my humble thanks and appreciation.

Life has been much better since Christmas Day; not perfect, but noticeably improved. The novel has been started, growing slowly while I finish projects that lay fallow and try to grow two businesses at the same time. Peregrine Editorial



Services has a Web page which will come up in a search engine, and Shirley's Daughter will soon have a Web site as well. The latter is my jewelry and yarn goods business, and all the items sold through SD are hand-made.

I've said pretty much all I intended to say, so I'm yielding the balance of this column to Lyn McConchie's article, which she sent me last autumn. I don't know if it's particularly pertinent, but I like its ideas, and so, here it is.

LOSING HISTORY by Lyn McConchie

As usual this year, I had a bout of expensive and irritating computer problems. It cost me some \$600 to get them fixed and they lasted on and off for several months until I could get a technician out to my rural fastness to do the work. It was irritating, but it was also outside my usual book-writing period, so I settled down and spent many happy hours instead in reading and re-reading books I'd picked up -- and occasionally other items. Amongst them, over twenty years worth of an old friend's letters.

It was then that this occurred to me: in future, less and less will this be possible. This writer disliked her computer. She used it towards the end of her life for some of her professional writing, but as a lady of the old school she believed that personal letters should be personally written. I have no problem with a computer for letters but my letters are still printed out and posted.

I'm 61 and still prefer to post hard copy letters, even if done on and printed out by, computer or word processor. But those who are younger than I am are mostly an e-mail generation. And e-mails by their nature and general usage are ephemeral.

They are also more often very short. I write long personal letters. Those that go to friends average three pages. I do e-

mail, but most of those are brief notes intended to reply specifically to a point and immediately. Many of them are business replies to editors, publishers or my agent in America. Or to acquaintances from who I hear now and again, maybe 2-3 times a year and who are asking a question that needs an answer fairly quickly.

It is to my old friends and regular correspondents that I write the longer printed-out letters at least once a month. These contain publishing news -- or failures -- farm events, what my current cat is up to, what some other friends are doing, and how my life is generally, along with the occasional reflections on life and writing. One Australian friend who has kept all these, has some 25 years worth in a massive file.

But the point of musing on my own letters is that writers tend to write. There have been many biographies of writers, some dating back a very long time indeed. But they were made more possible because writers wrote to each other, also to friends, to relatives, and to the authorities. When a famous writer died, all a biographer had to do was write in turn to his subjects' correspondents and request copies -- or the loan of originals -- of all the letters by the subject that they had in their possession. This would provide both an excellent framework for the biography, and a selection of amusing anecdotes to make them more human to the readers.

But how many writers still write and post letters? How many of their letters if sent in scrappy notes via e-mail will ever be retained? E-mails are a nuisance to print out each time, a bigger nuisance to retain in a special file. And when last in conversation with several writers I asked if they did retain e-mails from well-known writer friends, I was told that no, they didn't retain them much beyond their reply.

And so it is likely to be that the interesting portions of biographies, the items that give us best a look at the real person, will be lost. How can it be otherwise? What will be left

are perhaps a few e-mails to agents, editors, or publishers, printed out and retained for business purposes. Possibly the occasional personal e-mail to a friend, retained for usable information or something sentimental, but nothing more.

A biography will have those, along with the records of contracts, the personal memories of friends and family, but nothing will remain from the person's own casual and uncensored words. There will be nothing left of the sort of personal connection that is so delightful in the biographies of older writers.

But the bottom line is that in becoming computerized, we are losing history, not the wider sweep of events, but the small personal items and recollections that give clues to the outcome. Nor will we have the memories from those on the spot that give a contemporary picture of how the events were perceived.

A friend's great-aunt who was living in an area of New Zealand when the Tarawera eruption occurred sat down two days later and wrote a long letter about it to her sister. A copy is now in the Turnbull Library. Nowadays, if that happened, the eruption's human neighbours would write a quick half-page email, mostly to let friends and family know that they'd survived. After that phone calls would cover the details. Friends and family would receive the e-mail, read then delete it. Even if some passed it on to others, they would take similar action, and the contemporary personal record of the event would be lost.

Friends regularly tell me that computers are a wonderful invention. That they speed up writing, make editing easier, improve communication speeds, that they cut down on paper and workload, and are generally incredibly useful. I have to agree with most of that, but the one thing they are also doing is losing our history, all the small things, the looks into personal lives, and sometimes the real roots of an event.

We know so much of the minutiae of the planning during WWII because Winston Churchill wrote letters extensively. So

many of the soldiers, sailors, and airmen, the Wrens and the Waafs wrote letters that have been preserved. And we know about murders because many long ago murderers wrote letters that their families retained.

And then too, writers write to other writers. They complain about the slowness to pay by their publishers, the demands of their editors, and how they wish their agent would reply sooner. In the case of one writer whose autobiography I have read, he saved and used his copies of his older letters sent and the editorial replies to them to prove events in an autobiography written more than 30 years later.

The letters showed clearly the background to alterations that the editor forced this writer to make so that the ending of one of his best known books was substantially different from his original intended work. E-mails almost certainly deleted from one side or the other would not have upheld this, and writing events without proof could have lead to a lawsuit.

In the future biographies will be the poorer for this lack of "real" letters -- so will history and so will we. When nothing exists that is left to say in the person's own words why they took a certain decision, what motivated or influenced them. When we readers no longer have that feeling of connection to the biography's subject through their personal letters. Then that will be a great pity -- and a solid weight on the other side of the "usefulness of computers."

