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Issue Eleven

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Editorial

The day James and I arrived back from our three week holiday:

“So what was it like? Was it really weird? Were the people friendly? Could anyone speak english? What was the culture like? Did you catch any strange diseases? More importantly, did you get laid?”

“Havana was the most wonderful experience in my life...”

“Fuck Havana, I’m talking about Corflu!”

This was going to be the special Corflu issue - the idea was for a retro look fanzine cut from stencils, reproduced on Walt Willis’ old duplicator and full of fannish articles about this and that. We were even going to eschew DTP for once and perhaps have a stab at doing our own dodgy artwork. But in late February Tommy got a job, James and Mark went to Cuba and Eugene had to work nights, so Retro Götter #11 never appeared. Instead what you’ve got is the post Cuba/Corflu issue- a down-shifted attempt to at least do something to lift our current state of gloom and ‘affected disaffection’ (© James).

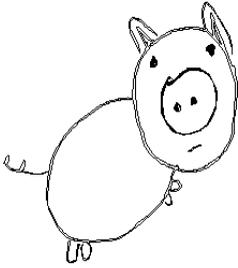
Thanks to Julia Daly, Joe Nolan and Lesley Reece for their articles. Also thanks to everyone who we met in Corflu for being so friendly. We had a great time and, who knows, we might even go to another convention in the future and perhaps bring Tommy along next time. Talking of which...

Corflu Blues.

All the talk of the boys’ trip to Cuba bought lots of memories for me, equally wonderful and horrifying at the same time. Their tales of torrid exploits in Havana brought forth memories of wonder and woe that I had similarly undergone. The conversation was



Maureen Speller Kincaid for TAFF



strained though, as they had heard all that before and now it was their turn to re-live the wonders of that amazing country. I held my piece and listened to the joys of a Cuban trip with little or no hardships and the wonders of, if not modern, at least a spacious new flat.

As the weeks since Cuba, and indeed Corflu UK, have passed both of the guys (more especially Mark) have become really down. The grim Belfast weather, unending cycle of violence and complete nonsense that is continually being reported in the news here is enough to get anyone down. However they seem especially fond of the phrase: 'I just don't care!' but actually mean it. It is enough just to be able to drag Mark out for a pint of a night, and James just point blank refuses to step out the door at night.

However it has to be said that post Corflu they have really jumped on the fannish bandwagon. This new issue of Götter is the inspiration of "That Man McCann." My new job has left me knackered most nights and the fanzine reviews contained are as much as my little fannish heart can manage. The job is going well, I hasten to add, lots of hard work and new skills. But staring at the PC screen all day and then... but you've heard all that before.

So what exactly is a 'Database Co-ordinator?' After four weeks I'm still not sure. I'm learning to write SQL code for the company's database, whilst answering telephone queries from clearly insane people looking for the S&M section of the personals. I do a lot meetings, have a lot of lunches and get to mess about with some seriously sexy computer gear – though no email at work (yeah, they're no that stupid.) Hard work, enjoyable but it doesn't leave much time for pursuing that ultimate dream of enhancing my fannish career much.

I'm happy to say though, that Julia Daly, and Mark himself lift the contents above the ordinary. We've been hanging onto this trip report from Julia for, well ever since she came back, and have finally been able to find the space necessary to print it. Mark promises the last ever, no really, Cuban article in Götter; although his talk of a return trip at the end of the summer belies this somewhat. A real coup: the first article from 'Best New Fanwriter' of the Corflu awards, Lesley Reece (who will be visiting Belfast in June.)

This has meant that Götter 11 has a slightly more fannish bent than is normal from the 'Götter Crew,' no more deep winter angst from darkest Belfast, no more tales of woe from Tommy's love life and, well, still nothing from James. I hope you enjoy it and remember: locs only cost the price of a stamp. Hey, you know you want to... 

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GEEK GRAVY

by Lesley Reece



About a year ago I was out on a date with this guy I was sort of trying to impress. He took me to a fairly upscale bar and we sat there drinking Guinness. Well, I was drinking; he was telling me about all the reading he had to do to get his degree. Quite a list. I sat there nodding. I'd had to read a lot of the same books myself.

In the middle of a thread about Milton, he suddenly asked, "So have you been reading much lately?"

"Um," I said, "Yeah." What a stupid question to ask an English major. Of course I'd been reading. It was just that after a discussion about Milton, I didn't want to tell him what. I examined the foam on my Guinness. It was perfectly smooth except for the lip print I'd made in it.

"What have you been reading?"

Okay, I thought, I'll just say it and see what he does. "A casebook of essays about cyborgs," I said.

"Cyborgs? You mean, like..."

"Cybernetic organisms," I said. "Part biological, part technological." I waited, still looking at my pint.

"I didn't know you liked..." I looked up. Yup. He was making an 'eeyewww' face. I knew it.

"Science *fiction*," he finished. My reaction surprised me. I didn't apologise. I went on the offensive.

"Yeah?" I said, as snippy as I could make it. "So?"

The guy was no fool; he knew he'd just lost at least a hundred points on the date-o-meter. For the next half hour, he sat there back-peddalling so much he was practically beeping, while I thought about what I'd just done. I'd defended science fiction, in front of an academic, an academic that, until this turn of the conversation, I'd found reasonably attractive. I could have lied and told him I was reading Alexander Pope or *Pamela* or something. It wouldn't have been that tough. But I hadn't.

I knew what that meant. I was a fan. How had this happened to me? I'd been very reluctant to get involved.

Victor Gonzalez introduced me to Andy Hooper, and I started hanging around drinking beer and unwittingly providing linos while they were putting *Apparatchik* together. Eventually, they started trying to get me to write for them.

I kept saying no. At the meetings, I folded and labelled while Victor hammered and expostulated - "There's

no reason for you not to write for us; we want you to; you have to do it,” and Andy suggested and hinted - “Well, think of how nice it’d be to make new friends and get fanzines; think of how much less work it’d be for me and Victor.”

I honestly wasn’t into it. I had a lot of reservations. D.West’s *Performance*, which the guys loaned me and told me to read, actually caused most of them. I don’t have my own copy, but I remember the general tone - there are rules, but we’re not going to tell you what they are; when you violate these rules you aren’t aware of, we’re going to snicker at you and tell you that you suck. That didn’t sound very fun. I wasn’t afraid of people snickering at me and telling me I sucked - I’m sure it’ll be mostly fans reading this, so I don’t even have to go into how I was a total geek when I was a kid. I’m less geeky now, but a lifetime of exposure to unfounded execration has toughened me against such pettiness. It wouldn’t have been anything new.

The thing with having rules didn’t bother me that much, either. If fandom was a competition, then of course it had rules. It just seemed like people were going to be looking sideways at me no matter how well I wrote, because I hadn’t been around as long as they had. I thought that was sort of undemocratic.

It was my choice to play or not, so I decided I’d stay out of it. I’d always written. Back then, I rarely showed anything I wrote to anyone, so I wasn’t doing it for money or recognition. I wasn’t even sure I liked doing it; all I knew was that I wrote. I wasn’t about to ask D.West (or anyone else) for his goddamned permission to keep going. I didn’t need it, any more than I needed some bunch of strangers looking at me sideways because I couldn’t figure their stupid rules out.

I said as much to Victor, and he was incensed. “You’re wrong!” he cried, waving a fanzine in the air. “There’s no Fannish Rule Book!”

I wasn’t buying that. If there are rules, there has to be a rulebook, even if it’s only in people’s heads. I told him he was full of shit. I don’t know why the Apparatchiki kept trying to change my mind after that. I guess they thought it was a challenge or something, because the discussions continued for a few more months. Finally, I caved in when I realised the truth of my own argument. If I truly didn’t care about getting permission, I had no reason not to publish. If criticism really wouldn’t bother me, I had nothing to lose.

I’m glad now that they didn’t give up. Writing for a biweekly (and later triweekly) zine was good for me in terms of discipline. Getting feedback from my very talented editors didn’t hurt, either. I hadn’t expected any “real-world” benefits in return for getting involved with fandom. That was gravy.

Even better, though, I’ve found that fandom is a place full of other people like me, people who actually want to have two-hour conversations about cyborgs, or Philip K. Dick, or any of the other stuff I think is really interesting and cool but bores most other people to tears. These are people who read what I write, and some of them like it and say so. It isn’t like a family exactly, but it doesn’t seem like a competition either, at least not compared to the rest of life, where you have to watch what you say and lie about what book you’re reading in case someone might think you’re a geek.

I think that’s great. If you disagree, and you’re currently unattached, I know a very nice guy you could go out with. He’s probably still single. 🍷

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Oh, Canada

by Julia Daly

I met Tommy Ferguson for the first time in the summer of 1996 at Albacon in Glasgow. We had a most enjoyable conversation or two and, due to a vastly amusing fiasco in my personal life which was some of the best entertainment at that convention for those in the know (and which I have no intention of going into right now), we began to engage in correspondence. I tried not to take it personally that a mere two months after meeting me he felt compelled to accelerate his emigration to Canada. Magnanimously, I therefore decided to visit him.

Arriving in Canada, my first major worry hit me - would I recognise Tommy? Would he recognise me? Would he take one look at me and just leave the airport in horror? I had only met him once.... oh dear.

I went through immigration. "What is your reason for visiting Canada?" "To see a friend." "What presents have you brought for your friend?" "Well, I was going to buy him a bottle of whiskey, him being Irish," I said, "but there were so many varieties, and I know nothing about whiskey, so I've brought him nothing at all. Perhaps I'll take him out to dinner." The immigration officer smiles and says "That'll probably be OK." and waves me through.

I wander through customs like an anxious lost soul, peering through the glass veil that separates the new arrivals from the inmates. Do I know anyone? A tall slim guy of about the right age wearing glasses waves frantically at me. OK - I'll assume he is Tommy and go with him. Fortunately, he *is* Tommy and gives me a big hug and takes my big heavy rucksack from me, whilst I anxiously witter that he doesn't have to, and is he sure, and, and, and... It *is* too warm to wear my new coat.

Tommy explains the subway system to me as we change trains. Having spent years on the London Underground ("Not a resistance movement, I looked it up!"), it seemed ludicrously simple, but hey, if something works why fix it. We get off at Christie Station, at the junction of Christie Street and Bloor Street. Tommy explains that Bloor Street goes all the way to the centre ("to infinity and beyond" even). We walk one block up Christie and then two blocks down another street parallel to Bloor Street.

Tommy's flat is accessed up a dark stairway with no natural light. The house is a large one that has been converted into three flats. The owner lives in the bottom flat. Tommy lives on the first floor with his flat mate (not a hedgehog, the other kind of flat) called Mike. Mike is tall, with Amerind good looks and a very melifluous voice. He greets me in a friendly manner and then Tommy and I go out to eat.

As I had told the immigration officer, I treated Tommy to dinner. Interesting meal. Tommy and I barely knew each other and therefore had a "you can ask any question and I will answer as truthfully as I can - or not but you won't know the difference" kind of conversation. We took turns. I find this kind of thing difficult, as people tend to tell me all about themselves without me asking usually. Brainstorming to think of things to ask brought some bizarre, but fascinating insights into each other - fun. We played a variation

on this game a few days later with asking each other about “firsts” (ie, the first time you did x or y, etc). The weirdest question I came up with was “Tell me about the first time you won a game of chess against Attila the Hun.” Tommy told me about the only time he played chess against Attila the Hun - and that he lost. Apparently, the conversations we had stirred up all sorts of memories for him and caused him to have some weird dreams. Both of these conversations took place in The James Joyce, Tommy’s local. It is an Irish pub and the staff know him by name and happily run a tab for him. (*They what!?! - James & Mark*)

After our visit to The James Joyce we moved on to another bar where once again Tommy is well known and liked by the staff. A live band kick off there with some good music which renders almost all conversation impossible. At the end of their first set Tommy regretfully takes me back home. I could stay up longer but it is now midnight-ish which is 6:00am back home and I have now been on the go for 24 hours.

I found myself mildly bamboozled by Tommy’s gentlemanly behaviour. Most of the men I associate with nowadays tend to treat me as an equal and therefore we take turns opening doors and wander down streets in whatever order we fall out of the pub. Tommy insistently and consistently beat me to it on the door opening front regardless of what he was carrying and must have constantly scanned the street for bad things to protect me from - he always walked between me and the traffic unless he spotted a drunk in a doorway in which case he would whip round to my other side. Sometimes it made me quite dizzy. However, it was quite pleasant to be “protected” in this way, for a change.

The next day I woke up at 13:30 - unfortunately, this was English time and therefore about 07:30 Canadian time. I sat around for a while, ate the last portion of Tommy’s breakfast cereal, had a coffee, read a book, checked with Mike that it was okay to have a shower (he seemed quite bemused by the whole concept of limited hot water supply and immersion heaters and electric showers. “You just turn the tap and hot water comes out,” he said giving me that look which respectfully reminded me that I have three heads and come from Vulcan), had a shower, got dressed, read a bit more. Finally, about 12:30, Tommy materialised and set about having a shower and getting ready to take me into Toronto to show me around.

I must admit that by that time I was champing at the bit somewhat. I would have been quite happy wandering off and exploring on my own, but I didn’t know Tommy and didn’t want to hurt his feelings or upset any plans he might’ve made. So I greeted him with a cheery grin. “I’ve eaten your breakfast,” I said and apologised with insincerity oozing from every pore.

We looked at the Parliament Buildings on Queens Park and wandered around downtown Toronto for a while. Tommy seemed a bit taken a-back by my utterly un-trendy “I am a total tourist” outfit, and the fact that I kept stopping and pointing at bits of architecture above eye-level saying “Oh isn’t *that* nice, you know, the way it squiggles” and other similar technical statements. However, he nobly bore with me and even joined in. We decided to go to the Tourist Office to get details on car rental for a trip to Niagara planned for Saturday (ie, the next day). Unfortunately, moments after we got the information Tommy turned white and green and had to sit down. I enquired about toilets - sorry, wash rooms - and was told “out the door, turn left, down the corridor, you can’t miss it”. When I went back and asked for a plastic bag and began spreading newspapers around Tommy who was making interesting gagging movements, they relented and allowed us to use their facilities.

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Minus the contents of his stomach, a much less green but still rather pale Tommy accompanies me to a few more buildings. I then suggested that I go see the CN Tower (open!) and Tommy return home for a rest as we were going out to meet fans that night.

The CN Tower is tall. You can see a lot from it. I couldn't cope with the glass floor concept - an item to encourage children to accidental suicide if ever I saw one. I went on the simulator ride in the basement. The guide book recommends this ride entitled "Tour of the Universe". They don't do that one any more. Instead, you get to experience the "joys" of a ride through a pinball machine. It was very bumpy and the only interesting bit was when it broke down. On the whole, I'd rather destroy the Death Star at MGM Studios or go Back to the Future at Universal Studios in Florida. I vote this experience a miss. Had a good burger in the basement for lunch, though.

I returned to Tommy's without a hitch. I didn't have his telephone number, but had I got lost I could remember his address and would have got a taxi, thereby making it someone else's problem. No worries.

My worries were on a different sphere. Tommy had copied me his E-mail inviting some Toronto fans to meet with me at a pub that night. Mike expressed some doubts about me enjoying socialising with them. However, after listening to his descriptions of them they sounded pretty much like the usual mixture of people you get at any science fiction fan group meeting I have ever attended and so I felt no concern from that point of view.

What did cause me some trepidation was meeting a group of people who would expect me to be a fan, and a British fan at that. One of the major groups I socialise with were (not that long ago) the young, fun-loving, drink-a-lot-and-fall-over people sternly disapproved of by "established" fandom. We were (and still are) interested in having a laugh and didn't give a wet slap about fannish tradition, etc. The group is, as is the way of these things, becoming more and more "establishment" (eg, two of them won Nova for best new fanzine at Novacon last year) going from maverick club and con-runners to respected pillars of (salt?) the community - old age is a terrible thing. Despite this progression we all still claim "neo" status, and one of the greatest compliments that can be paid is to be proved a "fake fan"; likewise, to be accused of being a "truffan" is a severe insult. My fear was that the Toronto fans would be expecting a British truffan with all that entails, ie, beard, weight problem, glasses, passionate interest in real ale, equally passionate interest in SF magazines of the 1950's and a vast knowledge of fanzines and who wrote them. 1 out of 6 ain't bad, I guess - if only I hadn't waxed my beard...

Tommy seemed to be feeling much better and we set off to the bar. I had changed into one of my smarter outfits - oh, the fear of meeting strangers. After searching the ground floor of the bar, we located the group upstairs in the piano bar, sitting round the piano (which was not being played). To my relief things seemed pretty low key and I quickly got chatting to various members of the group. They seemed like a nice bunch of people, but I was sadly not able to hear as much as I would've liked of the conversation due to background noise - my brain unfortunately has a faulty filter system and my lip-reading is poor to non-existent. This was also a problem for Catherine who turned up later, and shortly after her arrival a number of us went back to her house where she kindly provided home-made beer, wine for me (beer is abhorrent) and a joint. It was a pleasant night and included a couple of piano solos from Richard, one of the other occupants. Tommy and I strolled away sometime after midnight through the slightly frosty night air looking at the stars and

discussing comets. (NB: this was not the romantic, misty-eyed star-gazing of hand holding lovers, but the clear-eyed child-of-the-universe enjoyment of natural beauty - just in case anyone was confused.)



Saturday dawned fairly bright. Up at 07:30 - *again*. I had washed dressed and cleared away the sofa bed by the time Mike materialised. He suggested that I might have a long lonely morning ahead, to which I responded that I had already planned to go out. I wrote Tommy a note and set off to wander the mean streets of Toronto. I spent the day vaguely wandering, getting the feel of the city and eventually sauntered down most of Spadina Avenue from Bloor Street to King Street West. The tramps seemed to like my T-shirt (0 to Bitch in 4.5 seconds). I bought postcards and stamps and window shopped in China town. I sauntered back home, catching a bus some of the way as my feet hurt but feeling quite pleased with myself.

The house was silent but the door was unlocked when I returned at about 14:00. Tommy was still sound asleep. Mike arrived home and expressed concern at Tommy's somnolent state. I went into his room and checked he was still breathing and that his colour was okay (through the gloom) and decided to leave him. Tommy surfaced about 17:00 feeling much better than the day before - obvious, really, with that fair skin, must be a vampire; how cruel of me to expect him to leave the house before sunset! We went out, ate, and drank a lot.

Sunday. A MIRAGE? Tommy was up around 8:30! And the hour had changed, too. Mike had re-set the clock on the video, but forgot to do his alarm clock. He had been going to stroll down to the car hire place with me on his way to work - as it was he booted me out of his still moving taxi as we flew by. Typically, the people running this place found I was English and instantly had to try to have a conversation about football with me. ("You're from Sheffield? Do you support the Owls or Wednesday?" - Huh?) WHY DO THEY DO IT? I have no interest in football or any other sport whatsoever. I do not look like the sort of person who is interested in sports. What is it with these people? Never mind. They were very nice and gave me a lovely little car - I would recommend them to anyone (Rent-a-Wreck on Dupont).

Got back to the house, picked up a conscious Tommy (not with my bare hands, you understand - or in a dating kind of a way...) and off we went. The drive was fine, and we only got lost once - luckily I had Tommy to direct me, and therefore to blame when it all went horribly wrong. The sun shone. The sky was blue (definitely not the right weather for my new coat). As we crossed the bridge to get onto the Queens Express Way leaving the centre of Toronto I was struck by how closely the CN Tower and the Dome resembled pictures of the 1950's concepts of the "City of the Future" - really quite beautiful - aesthetically pleasing, anyway.

It was sweltering by the time we got to Niagara Falls. Leaving everything but our cameras and money in the car we headed off to look at the Falls. It was lovely being splashed by the cool spray of the falls. And, my oh my, are they big ... very impressive what a lot of water ... hmm very white with ice bergs plunging over the top big and , um, very wet, indeed. After about half an hour I reached saturation point - if you'll forgive the pun. The sort of waterfalls I am used to are smaller and pretty. You can climb up or around them and in some cases sit under them and get your shoulders massaged. There was no real way to interact with

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Niagara Falls, to make it real. After a few minutes of listening to the roar of the water and watching it fall and looking at the area of ice where the current from the two sets of falls met, it was like watching a documentary - but a rather boring one which had got stuck on Niagara Falls and forgotten to move on to other things. I hasten to add that this is my view and not that of my companion. Tommy was fixated. We had a good window seat in the restaurant for lunch, and then Tommy went back to the falls whilst I went down the tunnels. Then, when I finally dragged him off to do something else, we went up the nearest viewing tower which gave us a lovely view of the Falls (which were very big... and wet... and white...)

The next day I breakfast and waited for Tommy to rise from the dead, as we had agreed to go to the science museum together today to see, amongst other things, the Special Effects film in the I-Max cinema. Around 12:30 I faced the return of the living dead. However, the living dead did not want to go to the museum. Instead the living dead wished to go to the bar where he worked and organise replacing his holiday with work as he had now decided not to go to the UK for Nyree's wedding. We set off together which meant Tommy could show me how to get the extra ticket that enabled me to transfer from tube train to bus, and parted company on the underground (suitable for the living dead, I guess).

Guide books are funny things. They tell you how to get to places but they don't mention how long it will take. The book said you would need at least four hours to get round the museum, which closes at 17:00. It never bothered to mention that it would be 14:30 when I arrived. The film was showing at 15:30 and 16:30, so I opted for the latter to give me a little time to look around the museum, and ended up in my favourite place; human biology.

The great thing about this museum is that it is really aimed at children. There were so many buttons to press and reflex action tests and the putting of square pegs into round holes - I loved it. There were real bits of bodies, all injected and expanded with coloured plastic both to preserve them and to show how they worked. Brilliant! My favourite has to be the full sized photo of a girl whose face was openable. When you opened her face, she sneezed on you - utterly gross - to have done this at 8 years old with a parent in tow! In comparison, the film at the I-Max was a bit of an anticlimax, but quite enjoyable - I guess. I really felt it needed more of the films and/or more in-depth how they did the special effects and less of boring people talking - but this could just be the re-awakened 8 year old talking.

The next day was my last full day in Toronto. I went to see the rest of the science museum, which was fun. On the way I stopped off to buy a present for Tommy and Mike to say thank you for having me. I had been going to buy Tommy a bottle of whisky or something alcoholic, but had been unable to find a liquor store. Instead, I made do with a metal candle holder that looked like a waiter for Tommy, and a couple of glass candles holders for Mike and appropriate candles to go with each. I find it very hard to buy presents for people I do not know well, so I bought them things that I liked instead. Sorry, guys.

We had a great last evening and got home late again. Tommy set his watch alarm for me as I had forgotten to bring an alarm clock, and went to bed saying "Wake me before you go". I got up real early and stuffed everything into my rucksack with great difficulty (- great difficulty kicked and screamed and struggled, but I got him in eventually). I opened Tommy's bedroom door and crept over to the bed. Stroking his cheek gently caused a deeper snuggling into the duvet, so I whispered goodbye and left his present by the bed. I put Mike's outside his door and staggered out of the house to make my epic journey to the airport. 📧

FANZINE REVIEW

by Tommy Ferguson



The *Apak* fraternity did a good thing for a while in the production of a frequent, dependable zine. It covered a multitude of roles: focal fan point, zine reviews, contemporary lettercol for issues of the day and an opportunity to feature short, concise articles by fan writers of little and major renown. Its demise was not noted as well as, say, the demise of *Attitude*; but its loss is mourned.

A good wake is always about two things: remembrance of times past and a renewal for times to come. In this respect I think both *The Jezail* and *Squib* are as good a wake as you can get. They both carry on the tradition of the ensmalled zine. They both come out more frequently than any other paper based zine than I can think off. They both feature articles by fannish heavyweights, excellent letter cols and a strong editorial presence. However much one remarks on the similarities though, the differences from the parent issue of *Apak* are glaring obvious as well.

Victor's personality thoughts and ideas run through his zine like a dose of Epsom salts. His attitude and thoughts on fandom are resounding, especially in his latest issue which details his coming of age in the on-line world of RASFF and other newsgroups. His thoughts are striking in their forcefulness, and as I mention below sometimes very misplaced and out of order. But he gets away with this because of the strength of his writing and his style. In *Squib 3* for example, we see a classic example of this:

"Who is this retarded truck driver (Jim Trash) to say anything about my work? To call 'okay' a piece the quality of which he will never replicate?"

But in the same article we also get this:

"The horizon was in my mind, a distinct range of mountains that superimposed itself on my retina, tracing a false arc for what I knew must exist somewhere. I would blink, and the illusory horizon would disappear and I would remind myself that I didn't really know where it was."

I've had arguments where Victor's writing is described as turgid and full of self-importance, and that as a reflection on his character it was all too revealing, and not nice for it. That is getting away from the point of reading fanzines though. I vehemently disagree with a lot of Victor's views on fandom, its

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inhabitant and the things they get up to. We've discussed in person and I've come to look on Victor in many ways. His social interaction with me is something that I look forward to but in a completely different way than when I get one of his zines. The zine is a very different thing from the person and to say that Victor's writing is full of self-knowing importance is to confuse the two.

How many times have you met a person with whom you had been corresponding with for ages only to find out that they are a complete prat, obnoxious and full of crap in real life? (Or the reverse, indeed...) Andy Hooper was like that for me. I had heard so much about him, read his *Apak* contributions and his high minded views on fandom, which I had agreed with but not in the way he said it.

I had been told by English fans that had met him that he was a colossus on the fannish firmament and to disagree with him would be instant retaliation. I was even warned of things nebulous going on in the dark depths of con rooms. This turned out to be dope smoking and illustrates one of the things I have begun to really detest in fandom scurrilous gossip. Needless to say when Victor introduced himself to me, he's that kind of guy, I was extremely nervous.

A quick conversation, chinese lunch, some music and comic shopping later I had fallen under his spell. Andy is a really nice guy. I like him a lot. In some ways it is therefore unfortunate that a lot of these qualities and the good things that he represents in fandom don't come across in *The Jezail*. It is a good zine, again full of the presence of Andy.

It is just that unlike anything since, it is an obvious continuation of *Apak*: new times, fanzine reviews, short idiosyncratic Andy articles and a quick lettercol. There just isn't much more to it. when Andy reviews *File 770*, he states:

"I've always admired his ability to relate fannish connections and involvement within the great machinery of big time international fandom. Given that he's still willing to pay for a 34 page fanzine, he has room for lengthy memorials and tributes to Ross Pavlac, and shorter obituaries for Ted Pauls, Lester Simons and Ed Cox, fan fiction - pretty entertaining fan fiction, too - by Ed Green, and numerous fannish news stories that I've shamelessly ripped off for my own column."

It almost as if Andy was doing an *Apak* wannabe but in the wrong order. Again there is nothing wrong with this, if you're going to aspire to anything, it might as well be the best. But it is almost as if Andy is: "Keeping his feet on the ground but reaching for cigars..." As I always thought that mad American was saying when watching The American Top Ten Show at 3.30am on Ulster TV.



Good, but we all know it can be a lot better. 🐾

The Last Cuban Story in this Fanzine - Ever

by Mark McCann

Casa de ceilidh

“You are the whitest fucking person I have ever seen in my life.”

I was standing in the back bedroom of our guests’ home. Their eldest son, a twenty-year-old bass player was examining my, admittedly very pale, hand with total amazement. He was taking such an interest in it I thought I was never going to get it back again.

“And you are the blackest fucking person I have ever seen in my life,” I replied.

When my friend Hugh translated this into Spanish everybody fell about laughing and it became yet another excuse for all of us to have another shot of home-made rum. The stuff burned my throat and made my eyes water as I tried to force it down. At \$1 a bottle it wasn’t exactly a quality product but it seemed a good way to cement international race relations.

The room we were in was tiny. A double bed and a huge wardrobe took up most of the space. I managed to retrieve my white hand and find a space on the bed next to the grandmother of the family. She sat there, a smile on her face, wearing a platinum blonde wig and gold cocktail dress. Every so often she would grab the closest man for a rib-crushing hug. Still sleepy from jet lag I found myself nodding off against her shoulder. The heat and humidity in the room was indescribable. Sweat rolled down my face, my tee-shirt stuck to my back. I felt I was suffocating.

It was my first evening in Havana and we’d been invited to *Casa de Ya-Ya*, a weekly get-together of Cubans which takes place in the tiny first floor flat of a huge 19th century tenement building in *Havana Vieja* (or Old Havana). Despite the strange surroundings the event reminded me of the ceilidhs my family and their relatives used to have when I was young. Friends and neighbours would come around to sing songs, recite poetry and get smashed on whiskey and bottles of Guinness. The difference here was the Afro-Caribbean *son* music that was being played was of far higher quality than the drunken Irish traditional squawk once produced by my relatives.

The whole flat was crowded with people who jostled for space with strange *santería* voodoo dolls which stood all around. There was even one constructed from a shop window dummy that I kept mistaking for a real person. The dolls are representations of Nigerian gods and goddesses and seemed to be based on Catholic saints. These too reminded me of home – equivalents of the statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Sacred Heart of Jesus that litter every living room in Ireland. Centre stage here in the flat though was a beautiful, almost religiously iconic, painting of Che Guevara. A smaller photograph of Fidel sat on a shelf nearby. Looking at them I realised for the first time that, shit, I really was in Havana.

“We have a lot in common with the Irish.” A young Cuban woman, so white I had at first assumed she must be another tourist, sat down beside Hugh and I. Cuban TV had recently shown a short season of Irish films,

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including *Michael Collins*, *Hear My Song* and *The Commitments* and it seemed that most Cubans based their ideas of Ireland with reference to these films. Quite often over the next couple of weeks when we explained to people that we were Irish they would go: “Ah!! The Blacks of Europe!” and then clap our backs in solidarity. I’ve got to be the whitest black man in history.

“You Irish are a proud nation. You fight for your freedom. Ireland is just like Cuba. I respect you very much.”

For a few seconds I debated with myself whether I should try to explain the intricacies of the Irish Troubles to her but then I thought, why shatter the respect of a beautiful exotic woman who I’ve only just met? Keeping silent I got a hug and kiss for my brave efforts to throw off the yoke of British imperialism.

Bad haircut

We were climbing over a memorial to American sailors blown up on the USS Maine during the Spanish American War. It was about 3am and I had suddenly fallen in love with Havana. All along the seawall of the *Malecón* Cuban couples and groups of friends sat drinking rum, listening to salsa and watching the world go by. We were stopped constantly by people trying to sell us cigars, marijuana or just wanting to talk with tourists – still quite a rare breed in this city. A group of gay men started hissing at me and I wondered yet again if my new cropped haircut was just a wee bit too much the wrong side of camp. “Come and talk!” they called.

Five years ago and a gay man would have been sent to a ‘rehabilitation’ centre somewhere in central Cuba. Now, after a lot of public debate about homosexuality, it’s suddenly acceptable – almost chic - to be queer in Havana.

During my whole time there I’m constantly amazed at how amicable Cubans are about almost everything. To take one obvious example, I’m sure there is racism in Cuba but as an example of relative racial harmony I can’t imagine there are many other places like it in the world. Coming from Ireland where black people are very, very rare it’s overwhelming to see such a rich mixture of black, mulatto, Chinese and white people living life cheek by jowl. Belfast will seem so boring after this.

When I was telling this to a friend later she said, “Well, surely they don’t like *Americans*.” But that’s not even true either. Despite the US’s attempts (now to be lifted) to stop its citizens from travelling there American tourists do make their way to Cuba and are welcomed with open arms. Just don’t try telling Cubans how to run their own country or you’ll be looking down the wrong end of an AK-47.

Tired of walking we get a lift home from a drunken Lada driver who swerves backwards and forwards along Avenida 5 until we reach the Miramar district where Hugh lives. Miramar is all Spanish villas, banyan trees and foreign embassies. We get out in front of the new Republic of Congo’s embassy (which looks deserted despite all the lights being on and the all the windows opened wide) and try to find Hugh’s apartment block. Mosquitoes are darting about my knees. There has been a power cut and the streets are in darkness. A policeman playing with his Russian 9mm pistol gives us a wary look. Hugh says “Buenos” and the cop smiles.

We eventually find the right address on the corner of Calle 21b but not before I almost break my neck. At every street corner in Miramar there is a three metre deep storm drain. Almost all are missing their concrete covers and are instant death traps. Walking in the dark it’s easy to do oneself a serious injury.

Loo with a view

We get ‘dressed up’ for a meal in the new restaurant on the top floor of *Edificio Focsa*. The *Focsa* is a thirty storey apartment block built in the 1930s and it’s safe to say that it has probably seen better days. It immediately reminded me of Divis Flats in west Belfast. It’s a dark, sweaty place and most of the apartments are now vacant. Lengths of steel cable hang from crumbling concrete. Every apartment is missing its air-conditioning unit. The empty slots look like gaps in a rotting smile. About seventy hardy souls continue to live there (including at one stage my friend Hugh and his girlfriend Selma who did battle there with infestations of cockroaches and mosquitoes for a whole year (see *Gotter #10*)).

Anywhere else and the *Focsa* would be a haven for crime and drugs - but not in Havana. Here every neighbourhood has a branch of the CDR, the Committee for the Defence of the Revolution. The CDR is part DIY secret police, part neighbourhood watch, part community group but mostly just local busy-bodies. You usually see committee meeting taking place on the steps of an apartment block around 7pm during the week. The CDR keep an eye on absolutely everything. But like a lot of things in Cuba it’s a much less disturbing concept in practice than it is in theory. Needless to say if you were to get up to any monkey business in the *Focsa* you would get a visit from the ladies of the CDR.

Despite the *Focsa*’s obvious state of distress the Cuban government decided to put a fancy French restaurant on the top floor which you can ascend to using an elevator at the rear of the building (you enter through a plush foyer thus avoid all the nastiness at the front). When you emerge into the restaurant you suddenly understand why it’s here. The *Focsa* is the tallest building in *Havana Vedado* and the view of city at night is spectacular.

We can see all the way to the *Plaza de la Revolución* in the south with its impressive José Martí memorial. To our right is the *Riveria* and *Capri* hotels – former hang-outs for Al Capone and his cohorts. To the left and far below is the beautiful *Hotel Nacional* – German tourists can be seen bopping at its poolside disco. Right below us is Avenida 23 known to the locals as *La Rampa* – centre of Havana’s nightlife. From this perspective it’s easy to miss the ruined ramshackled buildings that make up most of the city.

For the first time in Cuba I feel underdressed. I’m in a dirty tee-shirt, sneakers and jeans which normally is de rigeur for most places in Havana but I’m surprised to find people in dinner jackets and shirts and ties. The waiters don’t seem to mind though and show us to a table. We fight over bread rolls and devour them with

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gusto. For the past week we've survived on rolls bought with pesos from the local *bodega*. I only realised after a few days that the crunchy, interestingly textured black things in the *bodega* rolls were cockroach legs. I'm relieved to find that the *Focsa's* rolls do not have this source of added roughage.

The rolls remind me of a trip Hugh and I made to the *bodega* the previous evening. We met two women on the way there and talked to them for half an hour before eventually making our way into the city in search of our rolls. They wanted us to take them to the disco in the *Riveria* that night but we said no. We needed food. An hour later on our way back to the flat I heard someone screaming 'Marco!, Marco!' and I turned around to find these two beautiful women chasing us down the street. I could feel my ego exploring new heights. I had turned down a night out with a Naomi Campbell lookalike for the sake of some cockroach-infested breadrolls – and here she was chasing me - she wouldn't take no for an answer!

When they caught up with us they explained that they were desperate to go to the toilet and wanted to use the one in our flat. As they said this they both groaned and crouched on the ground grabbing their groins to demonstrate their predicament. Their acting was first class. It seemed like their bladders were about to explode.

"We'd better let them come with us," I said to Hugh but he wouldn't hear of it.

"This is just a trick, Mark. They'll come back to the flat, drink all our rum, spend the next six hours dancing and then demand to sleep with us."

I thought this over for about half a second. "And there's a *problem* with this?"

Hugh shrugged. "Well, you have to question their motives, don't you?"

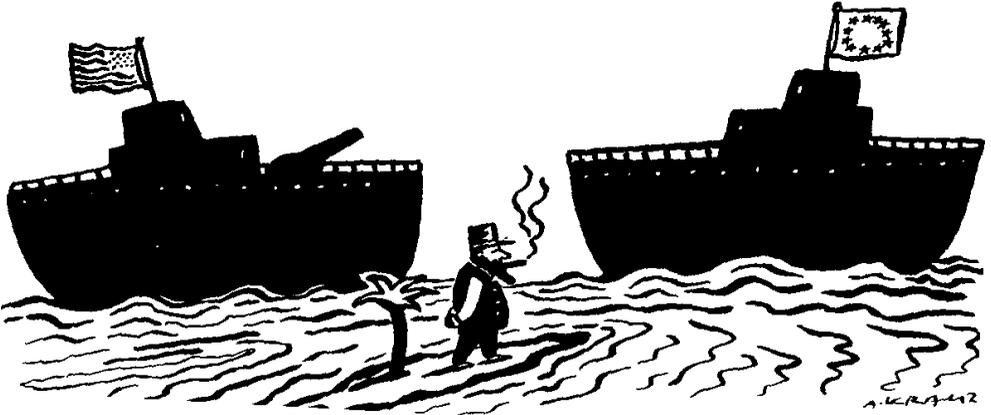
"We do?" I said, trying not to sound *too* exasperated.

After prolonged debate we half-heartedly told the women that they would have to pee behind the hedge and we would keep watch. At first they weren't very pleased but laughed as we averted our gaze. "You Irish are strange!" Damn right, I thought, as they danced off into the night.

"We're doing this for Fidel," Hugh explained to me. Our mood on the way home was subdued. "What would he think if he knew we had exploited those poor women?" Later as I chewed on my cockroach leg I wondered what Fidel Castro had ever done for me. I seemed to have replaced my Catholic Guilt Complex about sex for some kind of Fidelista version.

The meal at the *Focsa*, cooked by a real French chef was exquisite. I had onion soup for starters followed by fresh lobster– the first time I've ever had (or could afford) *langusta*. With ice cream to follow and an almond liqueur to finish the whole thing came to a laughable \$20. (The liqueur was '*por la casa*' or on the house.) As I paid up I reflected that an ordinary Cuban, if he or she is lucky, might get a salary of \$20 a month and would be horrified that someone could spend such an amount on one meal.

I couldn't help feeling guilty about the whole thing but then I told myself that what I was doing was simply transferring money which I had earned back in the UK (while working for the British government) straight into the coffers of the Cuban government – and, what's more, I was getting some good food at the same time. Eating lobster for the revolution! What a working class hero! Raul Castro would be proud of me.



Before leaving the *Focsa* I visited the bathroom and was rather impressed to find the toilet bowl was right next to a huge window overlooking the *Malecón*. The window ran from floor to ceiling and as I sat having a crap I could see people out on the streets, sitting in their apartments, swinging at the disco in the Hotel Nacional. It's the most public bowel-movement I've ever had in my life and quite a satisfying piece of exhibitionism it was too.

On the Ramp

We come down to earth very quickly. Emerging from the air-conditioned pleasantry of the *Focsa* restaurant we stumble out onto *La Rampa* – Havana's hippest street. It's the early hours of the morning but the tropical heat is unrelenting. The place is crowded with people. Broken (and live!) electricity cables are everywhere; huge potholes threaten your every step and street lighting is non-existent. The air is filled with cigar smoke, the smell of rum and sea spray coming up the 'Ramp' from the Caribbean. We dodge between Pontiacs, Buicks, and 1970s Ladas. A huge 'Metro Camel' roars past us crowded with people on their way home. The 'Camels' are an ultimate symbol of Cuban adaptability – Russian tank carriers, obsolete since the end of the cold war, now fashioned into frighteningly huge buses to help deal with Havana's demand for public transport.

I get grabbed by beautiful *jiniteras* every few yards along the street. Their conversations are good-natured and they are amazed at the whiteness of our skins. Cuban women have a disconcerting habit of not looking at you when they speak. They stand, hand on hip, with a couldn't-give-a-fuck expression on their face gazing intently into the distance. But when you try to leave you then get full in-the-face eye contact. "So why are you going away? You don't like me? *Por que?*"

Reluctantly I drag myself away, otherwise I suppose, Fidel would be pissed off.

As it is Hugh and the others are themselves getting a bit pissed off. "Why is it they always want to talk to *you*, Mark? What's the secret?"

"Maybe you're gay?" suggests the woman who's *still* pulling at me. "*Si?* You prefer men?"

Jesus, not the haircut again! I think. "*¡No habla Español!*" I tell her. "*Lo siento. ¡No entiendo!*"

She makes some sign language which quickly assures me that conversation was not going to be much of an issue in our relationship. She then says something which Hugh translates.

“She wants me to tell you that the best way to learn Spanish is in bed.”

But we walk on.

Coming from the icy desexualised wastes of Northern Ireland, Cuba is a bit of an eye-opener. Sex seems to be the national pastime – which I suppose is not surprising because it’s the one thing that’s not rationed (along with condoms). You have to be careful not to look too closely behind any hedge or in a doorway at night in Havana because there’s always people at it no matter where you go.

A lot of Cuban women see tourists as a potential way of escaping the poverty of their country and as a tourist you’re always getting the attention of *jiniteras* who may or may not be prostitutes – the terms are not completely synonymous in Cuba (*jinitera* means ‘jockey’). One person said to me when talking about this: “Diana Spencer was a *jinitera* but she wasn’t a prostitute. You understand? She wanted to be queen so she slept with Charles to get it. What’s wrong with that?”

Later in the week we’re drinking ice cold Cristal beer on the *Malecón* when a stream of wedding cars zoom past. Beautiful young brides sitting on the backs of open top 1940s Chevriolets hugging and kissing their middle-aged German and Canadian husbands. As they pass ordinary Cubans around us laugh uproariously and applaud. Two policemen standing beside us are shaking with laughter and waving at the brides. There is some kind of respect for these women’s determination to change their lives. I don’t now whether to laugh or be upset.

On the steps of the famous *Havana Libre* hotel we meet a friend of Hugh’s – a girl who has recently been diagnosed as being in the first stages of full-blown AIDS. She greets us all cheerfully and proceeds to tell us how she caught the virus from her Cuban boyfriend. She is careful to explain she didn’t catch the virus from a tourist.

“Those Chinese condoms are rubbish. Always use two,” she advises us.



Cuba has some of the most advanced AIDS research hospitals in the world but has no money to pay for the kind of drug regime that might help this girl. “Anyway,” she says, “the Americans won’t allow the proper medicines through.” She’s wearing a tee-shirt of Fidel embracing Pope John Paul II and is laughing loudly as we walk off home.

At the beach

Playa del Este is about ten miles from central Havana. Seven miles of unbroken beaches that run from the eastern tip of the city which are as popular amongst Cubans as they are for foreign tourists. Four of us set off early in the day equipped with factor 20 sun lotion and sensible hats. We flag down a Lada in the street and the driver tells us he’ll take us to the beach for \$10. We drive into the tunnel which runs under Havana’s harbour and emerge in the eastern suburbs. Here the Spanish villas are replaced by ugly, dilapidated eastern European tower blocks. Hugh tells us that his boss, one of the top translators on the island, lives here. I’m constantly surprised that there is no middle class in Cuba. No matter what their occupation everyone has the same basic standard of living. No Ikea for thousands of miles...

The Lada takes a back road to avoid police checkpoints. Theoretically it’s illegal for ordinary drivers to take fare-paying passengers and our driver is being cautious, although from what I’ve seen of the Cuban police they seem relatively casual. Fidel decided long ago that it was better to police Havana with *guajiras* or peasants recruited from Granma and Guantanamo provinces in the distant east. Hard-working men who would be impressed with a cool uniform, night stick and gun and who would be less open to corruption. The policy seems to have worked quite well.

Our driver, despite his illicit taxi driving activities, is a strong Fidel supporter and fought to repel the Bay of Pigs invasion. He’s upset at the move to capitalism which Fidel has begrudgingly instigated and which, although is slowly unfreezing the Cuban economy, is already creating a nation of Haves and Have-nots. There’s a feeling that Fidel has let loose something that not even he will be able to control.

Most Cubans we met seemed in two minds about the benefits of democracy. They look to Miami in the north and see the affluence (although black Cubans look to the north and see nothing but the racism). But they can also look west to central America and east to Haiti and south to Colombia and wonder which country Cuba is going to resemble in twenty years time. They know it is unlikely to become a small version of the USA.

Earlier that day we spoke to a friend who had just returned from Guatemala City where he stayed for a weekend to renew his Cuban visa.

“I was never so glad to get back to Havana,” he tells us. “Leave your hotel after dark and you will be killed. It’s almost a certainty.”

He tells us, and his horrified Cuban friends, of children living in the streets addicted to glue. Of policemen who drive around in unmarked cars killing the kids to keep the streets ‘clean’.

“These kids live in waste ground with the dogs and rats. They’d kill you for your watch. They’d kill you for your hat, for fuck sake! Jesus, it’d make you love Fidel Castro.”

The beach is a Caribbean paradise. A *son* band plays under the palms. Beautiful women sit reading Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The water is such a perfect blue colour that any Irishman who has ever tried to swim in the north Atlantic would weep over the injustice of it all. We grab a spot, pop open our cans of beer and I feel as if I’ve just been injected with valium. I never want to go home ever again.

We're soon pestered by *jiniteras* but it's more relaxed here on the beach – more like the women are just there to take the piss out of us. People just want to laze about and watch the sea. The girls come and go. James buys everyone bottles of Coke. Lying in the sea I think to myself that this must be heaven.

At sundown we drag ourselves away from the water. We are amongst the last stragglers on the beach and are joined by the *son* band who start playing 'Guantanamera'. We all dance around in the sand - the women showing us how to salsa. Our group has expanded to ten people, all of whom want to go partying. I'm embarrassed to find I've been grabbed by a girl and her mother who want me to go to *Havana Centra* to make me dinner.

A huge row erupts with various taxi drivers who sense that there's a lot of money to be made from these ten people. We are tugged from Lada to Lada before eventually someone in a huge Buick offers to take everyone home in his car. We pile in with room to spare and set off towards the sunset listening to Mexican salsa. I have never been more happy in my life.

On the final evening at José Martí airport I'm trying to think of the one occasion which summed up my trip to Cuba. Perhaps it was the moment when I was walking with James along Avenida Neptuno in Havana Vieja and we were surrounded by people on bicycles, on foot and in cars and suddenly somebody started shouting my name from a third storey window. I looked up and saw a young man who I don't think I'd ever met before in my life waving at me. I waved back and he grinned. A moment later he was gone. Who was he? God only knows but somehow, in a city which has two and a half million inhabitants, it didn't seem strange to bump into a friend in Havana. Despite being the most alien environment I've ever been in I've felt more relaxed there than I have been in most parts of my home city.

It may be just the ramblings of a naïve drunken tourist but I really did feel that visiting Cuba helped remind me that, despite all its inadequacies and its sheer unworkableness, there are some things of value in a socialist system - some kind of feeling of community and social cohesion - that I certainly don't find in south Belfast (or, for that matter, south London). I suspect western capitalist democracies have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. Whether it's worth losing it for the sake of a chance to purchase your own BMW Z3 is open to question.

One Saturday night we went to the disco at the Teatro Karl Marx. The place was jammed with Cubans, there was no air-conditioning, the sound system was so loud it was physically painful and there was almost no lighting. We went there with an ex-Liverpool shipyard worker called Billy. An unrepentant Stalinist he'd retired to Havana and now coaches Havana FC. It cost us the equivalent of 5 pence to get into the disco and within seconds we were po-going about to Chumbawamba.

So there we were: four Irish people, an English Stalinist and two hundred Cubans jumping up and down and singing as if our lives depended on it: "I get knocked down. But I get up again. You're never gonna keep me down. I get knocked down. But I get up again. You're never gonna keep me down."

I'm sure Fidel and Raul would have been proud of us that night.

Back to Reality(?)

Thirty-six hours later and I was in Leeds for Corflu UK. I was disorientated, I had stomach cramps (and possibly stomach parasites) and I couldn't answer any of the questions in the quiz. I spent the evening drinking my duty-free Havana Club rum and wondering just how quickly I could save enough money to get back to Cuba. After all I never did get around to visiting any museums. 🍷

TITANIC STORIES

by Joe Nolan

Shylock was allowed his pound of flesh – but not one drop of blood! I have been to see the blockbuster movie *Titanic* tonight. You have your pound of flesh – but I yield not one drop of (perhaps unconventional?) convictions regarding that ill-fated ship. I am of the subsequent generation – at 74 – to that of the years of the disaster, and I hold my previously stated convictions.

In the 1950s I drove for a time all the cranes which were used to build the ship, and on both No.1 and No.2 shipways, where *Olympic* and *Titanic* were built. I never saw the ship but my father worked on it, as did his mates. At ages 14 to 17 I heard them discuss the disaster – and the ship before the disaster – when it was being built. In the past few years I have seen both films. RTE 1 {Irish National Television Station} showed '*A Night to Remember*' on Saturday 31st January, so I had to watch it again.

The newsreel shots of the launch were good and the close-ups were not necessarily of the *Titanic* launch but were 'period,' valid up until about 1950! On this, my second viewing of the film, I was able to see that a great use was made of a sizeable ship model in those gigantic indoor tanks that Hollywood used in those days for sea shots. This did allow for some good shots of the model 'at sea'. This film is not just 'a good documentary', but is 'a well told tale', and one I believe which got pretty close to the truth in the year of its making, which was 1958.

The 1997 film *Titanic* is an excellent film. I am glad that you lot challenged me to go and see it. My previous inclination was to avoid doing so. It's basically a love story set on a ship due to sink and adds nothing new to the disaster story but the special effects are terrific! The created 'stage' and 'full sized reproduction' (at vast expense – five or six times what it cost to build the original ship in today's money) gave a 'Tonight You Are There' feeling to the production, and even the love story does not slow the pace down. What it also does is give the audience a feeling of what the size and interiors of a major are really like. As an old shipyard man I was quite at home.

Those of you who have not yet seen the film go and do so soonest. You have quite an experience in front of you. See and enjoy. It is quite likely you won't see another pic on this disaster until about 2040 AD as there seems to be between forty and forty-five years in each part of the cycle from the disaster (1912) to *Night to Remember* (1968) and now *Titanic* 1998.

Looking now at both films taken together I have to say that my personal convictions (prejudices perhaps?) are basically intact, but I have some reservations still. The engine room shown in both films appeared to have more headroom and less restricted space than those that I remember in Harland and Wolff in the 1950s. Were these shot in film sets? I think so, at present what I feel safe of is that the

Boiler Room (Oil fired) of those smaller ships of the 1950s were more compact, with less head room than the storeholds (Coal fired) of the 'Four Stackers' of the period 1900-30: the *Olympic*, *Britannic*, *Aquatainia*, *Mauritania*, etc.

I still have to believe that (in each case) the filmmakers went over the top in showing the ship sinking. What I know to be true is that every artist's illustration of the last period of the ship's life showed an impossible situation. Despite what is shown in the current film, I still contend that the after half of the vessel is depicted far too high out of the water prior to the breaking of her back. I accept that the last sequence in the new film showing the stern position standing vertically above the surface, after the second keel fracture. I have other quibbles but those are minor.

To close now, both films touch upon the social strata of the period, and the Dream Factory tears these to hell! It was never possible for steerage passengers to do what the hero does in dashing about the Titanic. No passenger on a steamship has ever been allowed forward of the breakwater in the forecabin, and in 1912, would have been brutally repulsed from even Second Class, never mind reaching First Class: 'Gods Country'. Similarly the heroine would not have been able to reach the stern and ensign flagstaff to attempt suicide. The 'dream factory' ignores facts.

What both films show, but leave the viewer to realise, is that as we nowadays know, the glitterati – and some of the vessels crew – did little to be proud of that night. To be blunt about it – murder was done on the Titanic. There were 708 steerage class passengers, for most of the last one and half-hours the Titanic was afloat they were in a cage in behind locked gates. In the end one steward disobeyed his orders and opened one gate. Just over 200 third class passengers survived. There were 332 first class passengers, and 276 second class passengers a total of 1316. Only one lifeboat of those afloat came back to search for survivors.

We had to wait until Nuremberg in 1945 to see such action classed as a crime; I hope that now the Titanic will be left to Rest in Peace. 📌



The Letter(s) page

Something of a full mailbag this time out so please excuse us for having to edit your responses. Writing letters to Götter has never really caught on, has it? So I suppose there's not much point in us being gurny bastards about it.

Cuyler Brooks <nedbrooks@sprynet.com>

Much thanks for the zine, though I must admit I could understand little of it... Perhaps it's because I am almost 60... I have put you on the list to receive *It Goes On The Shelf* so you can be equally puzzled.

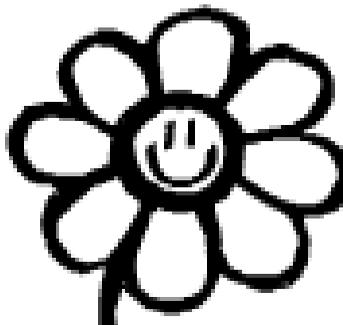
From: Darroll/Ro Pardoe <pardos@globalnet.co.uk>

Cockroaches. I suppose we all have at least one cockroach story. Years ago, I used to work in a lab in an old building on the Ohio State University campus. I had a little lab all to myself, and it had water pipes around three walls at about 3ft above the ground. The building was infested with cockroaches of the largest size, so when I arrived in the morning I would open the door quietly, and look around the room to spot the tell-tale feelers of a cockroach sticking out above the pipes (behind which it would be hiding). I then seized my trusty squeegee bottle of chloroform which I always left handy to the door, and squirted a stream of chloroform in the appropriate direction. After a few seconds a dead cockroach would drop down from behind the pipe. For some reason I always found that most satisfying.

Chloroform was good for wasps, too: a direct hit, or even a near miss, just dropped them straight out of the air.

Visiting the toilets in the lab building late at night was an interesting experience, too. It was dark, and quiet, and so when you turned on the light to go in the men's, the floor would for a brief few moments be a heaving mass as the hundreds of roaches gathered there made for the nearest shadow. I always tried to hold on until I got home (only five minutes' walk away, fortunately...)

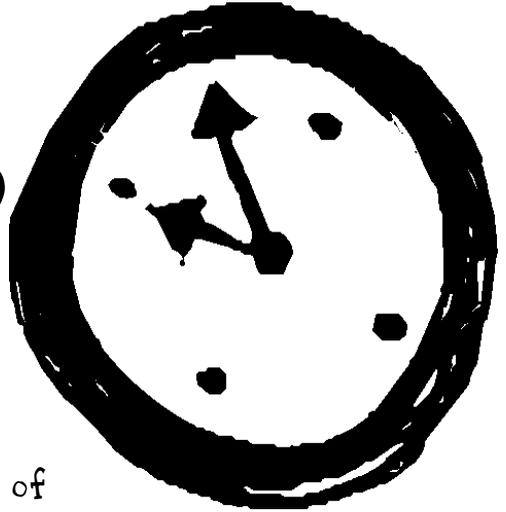
(Once again we suspect there were also responses from Pamela Boal and Steve Brewster but they disappeared after yet another attempt to install Windows 95. Sorry Pamela and Steve.) ☞



Götterdämmerung

Issue Eleven

Spring 1998



This fanzine was the work of
Mark McCann & Tommy Ferguson
with really excellent help from Eugene Doherty.
Oh, and I'm sure James McKee did stuff too.

Letters, articles, dried banana skins
and artwork
are most welcome:



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