

# SOUTHERN GOTHIC

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## HONKYTONK CAPPUCCINO

I was going to write about how I don't hate Nashville anymore but then I had to drive over to Tower to pick up some video tape and I remembered how much I loathe Nashville drivers. I go from calm to psychotic in less than a minute when I'm behind the wheel of my car. No one ever uses a turn signal unless they accidentally bump it with their arm and then it stays on for miles while you're wondering if the clownbutt ahead of you really means to turn anytime soon. Then there's this obsession with Vanderbilt University. You would think God Almighty Himself matriculated at Vandy. The campus is littered with the offspring of Southern society who think nothing of spending \$20,000 a year for a basic undergraduate education. And another thing: Nashville just looooooves the Atlanta Braves. With no team of our own we have to choose between the Cardinals, the Reds or the Braves during baseball season and Atlanta's a lot closer than St. Louis or Cincinnati. Myself, I do not like the Atlanta Braves (except for David Justice who's pretty cute). The tomahawk chop has got to go.

So okay, I guess I still hate it sometimes. I thought maybe after four years I'd have adjusted a little. I suppose that's the operative word: little. It's not hellish all the time. I don't feel so off-balance anymore, for sure. I have my routine in place. Every year Nashville adds a store or an environment which makes up for the ones I left behind. And once in a while something utterly goofy kind of reconciles me to my fate. At the moment I'm amused by the contest to name the new stadium. My favorite is the Y'all Hall though Bubbadome is a close runner-up.

One of the things that bugs me about living here is that I've acquired a facsimile of the local accent, a dopey ungrammatical twang. Boy, it's embarrassing. Half the time I don't even notice I'm doing it. I jes tawk lak I fell offa the turnip truck. This really slays my husband John Bartelt, Mr. Wisconsin Nasality himself. I can't help it if I pick up accents. I try to enunciate but when I get on the phone with Tina Marie we're just a hootin' and a hollerin' our way through our sentences. And *she's* from Illinois. Ye gods.

I do enjoy some of the nuances of Southern speech. I'm especially fond of the thoroughly exasperated utterance, "This gets on my *last* nerve," as though Southern hospitality had a finite limit. If Bubba gets mad at Beauregard he says he's "fixin' to get ill" with Beau. And I laugh when someone invokes the powers that be by muttering, "Surely to God, stop tailgatin' me!" because some cretin zooms up and mindlessly drives two inches behind their rear bumper instead of passing them. Believe me, I'm not alone in my disapproval of local driving habits. Even native Nashvillians think everyone here drives like a manic baboon.

I'm not entirely convinced that Southern hospitality is all it's cracked up to be but I will definitely say people are more polite here. It's kind of unbelievable, really. Store clerks always, and I mean always, say hello when you enter their store. They ask if they can help. They *exude* personal interest in assisting you. Actually, I found this extremely creepy when I first arrived. I was used to the lethargic and hostile attitude of big city clerks who act like they'd rather die than assist anyone. "But I want to buy this," I'd plead, waving money around hopefully. They'd look at me with withering scorn and go on break immediately. So finding a city filled with helpful, friendly store personnel unnerved me. But I'm used to it now.

I have even recovered a large portion of the politeness I was taught as a child and repressed for safety reasons as an adult. I say hello to strangers if I pass them on the street. I open and close conversations using Ma'am or Sir when speaking to adults. They do the same with me. Small children to whom I have been introduced call me Miss Lucy. They wouldn't dream of calling an adult by their first name alone and unless I insisted on being formal they would never call me Mrs. Bartelt. I must admit being called Miss Lucy makes me feel rather ancient. But I really like the politeness. It's very pleasant even if it's only superficial.

The smartest thing I've done since moving to Nashville was to become a travel agent. I had to pay a lot of money to go to school for four months and then take a really grotesque travesty of a job for two years but I got the experience necessary to find a great job and now I'm thrilled with my work. I'm not actually a sales agent which is why I haven't inundated fandom with my business cards. I do book friends' vacations once in a while but I have to squeeze it in at night or on weekends. I'm in a management position, a specialist in the technical end of things. They call me Quality Control. I call myself a Ticket Goddess.

I have my own office. I'm salaried. I don't have to deal with the public. You can't imagine how happy this makes me. I didn't know this kind of position existed when I started. I transferred into Quality Control at my first job after being a sales agent and a customer service agent and I haven't looked back. It's a hideously detail-oriented job. But I like detail-oriented jobs if the information is interesting. Geography and travel fascinate me, always have. I'm not precisely sorry I didn't do this earlier, though. I think I needed all the other experiences to prepare me for this one. If that's not too New Age for you, dude.



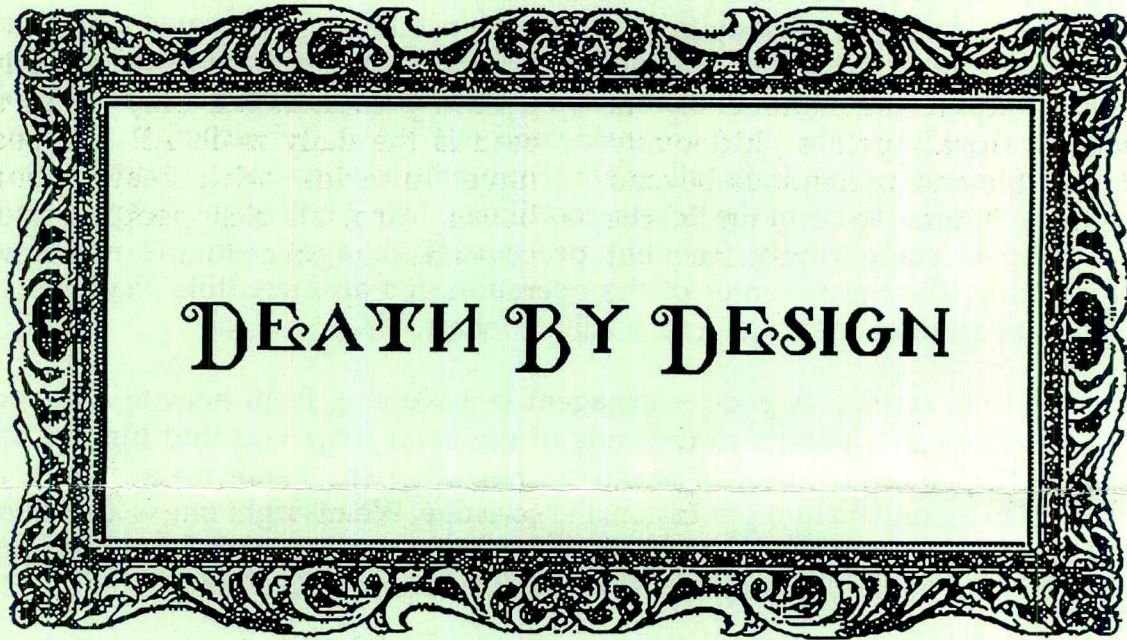
True, it's an administrative type job. I like that. If my machines break down I fix them. I don't have to educate, coddle, or convince them. They never call me at home. They never ask me stupid questions. They do exactly what I instruct them to do. This suits my notion of comfort on the job. Besides, in order to do my job well I have to know the database inside and out, act as technician, accountant, and den mother, maintain all the accountable documents, review every passenger record, issue all the tickets, coordinate their delivery and keep up with the airlines' staggeringly frequent procedural changes. I'm the nexus of information, the nerve center of the operation. It's an incredible challenge. I wouldn't be a sales agent again for a zillion dollars.

Don't get me wrong. A good sales agent is a blessing from heaven and you should follow that person to the ends of the earth once you find him or her because god knows it's easy to be a bad agent. There's an enormous amount of raw data to assimilate into professional knowledge. What's right one week can be wrong the next. I still have to keep up with all of it, I'm just glad I don't have to act as the interpreter between the travel industry and John Q. Public.

Of course, the best part of the job is taking advantage of the inexpensive travel. I travel to all the exotic places I'd ever dreamed of and quite a few I never thought about, like the Mall of America. I annoy my friends endlessly by reciting all the wonderful places I'm going or have gone this year like Kenya and Iceland and Ecuador and Bermuda. I know I'm boasting a little; please forgive me. The subtext you're missing when I drone on about travel plans is the silent offering I am making to the younger me. Every trip to a new place is a reward for being resilient enough to tough out my childhood and adolescence. I kept promising myself one day it would all be better, I'd do what I wanted and no one would ever make fun of me again for being weird and creative. It is, I do and no one does. They *pay* me to be weird and creative. I have to live in Nashville to do it? Piece of cake.

As it turns out it's just as well I can afford to get out of town fairly often. Now that the government has killed the SSC project there are an awful lot of physicists looking for jobs. Since John already has a perfectly good job and a shot at tenure at Vanderbilt it makes a lot more sense for us to stay than to look for that elusive perfect city. After all, there's always retirement.

So here I'll stay in the land of cotton where old times are not forgotten, they still refer to the Civil War as the War of Northern Aggression, and the age of consent is 14. I console myself with endless cups of cappuccino and sing along to my Weird Al Yankovic CDs while deciding between attending the ballet, going to the rubber stamp store, or just staying home and watching favorite episodes of Mystery Science Theater. Life's pretty good. Send more fanzines.



So you've suddenly got a lot of money. You've traded in your VW Rabbit for a sleek 450 SL and you finally bought the house of your dreams. But alas, your taste is firmly middlebrow and the Fortune 500 boys plan on dropping by later this year to interview you. How can you acquire an instant cache and look like your money has been in the family since Guillaume invaded England? Buy *Architectural Digest*.

It's my favorite magazine. I pore over every detail of every page. The ads are as fascinating as the articles. I read about furniture and design styles with the avidity of a movie fan thumbing through the latest tabloid. But what makes it such a sadistic pleasure is the glossy spectacle of the food chain of client, interior decorator, and antiques dealer. It's offered as the one true path to the accolade of good taste; day trippers discouraged.

For one thing, as defined by *AD*, good taste is generally synonymous with wealth. There is something inbred and homogenized about most of the featured homes. I admire mahogany and silver as much as the next person but I loathe the sheer quantity of antiques crammed into each room. God forbid someone should have a non-important piece of art. And although some people mention picking up their favorite bauble at the Paris flea markets it's clear that many more people simply hand a boatload of money to a decorator and say, "Here's the key to my new house. Make me look good." The decorators rule. It's more than homogeny, it's hegemony: the imposition of a particular style.

I'm convinced of this by the invariable presence of dark red dining room walls and vast swathes of yellow, red and green checked fabric covering windows, sofas and chairs. They'd probably cover



the dog if they could get it to stand still. It's serious fabric overkill. Personally, I find small apartments done up in oversized floral prints hideously claustrophobic and pretentious beyond permission. It may look good in the ancestral chateaux of the aristocracy but it looks affected here in the land of the free. Perhaps this is an argument for also being the home of the brave. Page after page offers overstuffed chintz sofas, red and blue Persian rugs, and intricately draped floor-to-ceiling silk curtains embellished with giant tassels over windows through which Big Ed's Auto Parts store can clearly be seen. All this Old World ambiance is annoying.

No need to point out that I'm obviously from another rung of society. I am a product of my environment as much as anyone and I came out of the solid middle class values that produce things like ad campaigns for warning labels on music. We all have our crosses to bear. But I enjoy beautiful things and I'm crazy about the 18th century and no one I know owns anything in a style other than Late American Dorm Room. I've had to turn to magazines for my education, magazines that cater to the landed gentry and the outright millionaires. I've learned a lot.

For instance, I've learned about rich people from *AD*. They didn't all grow up in houses filled with antiques although clearly a fair number did grow up with lots of money. One can only imagine that as they attained their majority or their first million (whichever came first) they acquired a taste for good taste. Lord knows they dare not simply toss their leather-

bound books just any old place in the library. Lord knows they've got to have a library even if the only thing they read is the daily mail. All rich people have libraries with leather-bound books. Also, all rich people have an important art collection. Hardly anyone just buys paintings they like. They buy what their investment analysts tell them would be good for the portfolio and never mind it looks like the cat threw up on the canvas. They carefully display it with a nice little spot lamp and hope that when the Kluges come over they notice what good taste the owners exhibit by owning a genuine Regurgitated Mouse Parts.

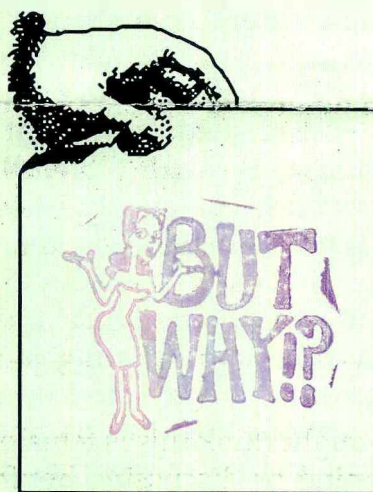
Obviously no one actually lives in these places or you'd see some sign of life: a television, for instance. You can't tell me rich folks don't sit around watching football and eating Doritos. But *AD* tastefully screens out all hints of plebeian activity. These homeowners ride with the hounds and use more than one tuxedo a year. They have photogenic children and live-in staff. It's a lovely Ralph Lauren fantasy of yachts and good schools and charity balls. I find it irresistibly seductive. But it's also baffling. I can't understand the strange multiplicity of pillows deposited everywhere in these homes. You'd have to heave a dozen or so onto the floor anytime you wanted to sit down. And why do so many people feel compelled to own giant Chinese vases? They're too big to put flowers in. I'm sure they're an investment. It's just that if I wanted to show off all my money I'd sooner arrange stacks of bills on silver platters than have a vase bigger than Delaware taking up living space.

I don't want to mislead you; *AD* is not all crimson curtains and faux marble. It does live up to its claim of being an international magazine of fine interior design. Though European baronial splendor is predominant there are gorgeous examples of everything from clean, spare Finnish modern to traditional Thai architecture and New York Art Deco. Each issue of the magazine throws in one or two contemporary houses for contrast since all that expensive modern art has to live somewhere and most people don't feel a David Hockney looks quite right over a divan covered in Brunschwig & Fils damask. Invariably the modern homes strike me as chilly and inhospitable, not unlike most of the art in them. I can't figure out why but comfort is not generally compatible with contemporary art.

What really slays me is the text in *AD*. The language is on the order of literary criticism or wine talk: specialized terms, unfamiliar references and a cozy ambiance of clubbiness. It's not unappealing in its snobbish little way but it's far too precious for my taste. Decorators say things like "Italy is very relevant right now," and "I have a passion for objects with a certain mystery and playfulness." Most people don't consider anything that costs more than a small Central American country to have any sort of playfulness so practice appearing unmoved when this sort of thing comes up in conversation.

Ultimately, I find *AD* invaluable. It's an inexpensive way to learn about interior design, furniture, and of course architecture. It's also a great fantasy

object and I'm a lot surer of my own taste after critiquing so many others'. But I swear, if you ever hear me say something as gormless as "*trés amusant*" when talking about a table just shoot me. The world doesn't need another design victim.



## WHY YOU GOT THIS ISSUE

- I thought you'd enjoy it
- You asked for it, honest
- Heck if I know
- An embarrassment of riches
- You voted for NAFTA
- We trade or something
- You think Joel is cute, too
- God moves in mysterious ways



## REAL NAILS

Tina Marie Meisenheimer and I are sitting around talking nails.

"Fiberglass?" she says, grabbing my left hand and bringing it close to her eyes to scrutinize the perfection of the fill.

"Acrylic. I can't deal with having the same material my skis are made of on my hands. Besides, the chemicals they use to bind it really stink," I reply, not at all discomposed by having Tina Marie breathe all over my hand while she twists and turns it to get the best light. She nods seriously and holds her own hand out, palm down and fingers spread wide, to show me her newly acquired nails.

"Fabulous," I say admiringly. "Is that Magenta Sunrise or Blood Rose?"

She smirks, preening a little. "Caribbean Calypso. Isn't it nice, though? James picked it out. I was going to have a French buff but he talked me into this." We both stare at the deep ruby sheen glowing on her fingernails and sigh in mutual agreement that James definitely knows his colors.

You might think this is female bonding, standard girl stuff on the order of clothes shopping or discussing boyfriends. You would be wrong. This, my friends, is nothing short of Female Empowerment. For every girl who was a tomboy or an irredeemable nail biter, having false fingernails is a major piece of personal mojo. Suddenly we're walking tall, exuding confidence, feeling sorry for anyone who isn't us. Our hands, for the first time in our lives, look utterly feminine. They appear longer, slimmer, more elegant. Rings look better on our fingers. But best of all, we get to buy lots of little bottles of nail polish.

After all, the real reason women like makeup is because it comes in so many delightful little pots and tubes with French names. No woman will deny this if confronted by the truth though they might act slightly guilty and try to justify it by claiming they can actually tell the difference in their skin when they use L'eau du Watteau Superhydrative Biolage Crème de Nuit instead of good old soap and water. What it really boils down to is a deep emotional need to possess exquisite glass containers and tiny crystalline bottles of mysterious liquids and powders which are to somehow transform us into the breathtaking perfection of female beauty. (I guess it's the old Sorcerer's Apprentice mentality. Either that or some people *still* think there's a way to transmute base metals into gold.) But the business of false nails is distinctively different even if there is a crossover in the irresistibility of the beautifully packaged containers.

For what every girl discovers when she gets her first set of false nails is that an amazing transformation has taken place on her own grubby, stubby hands. She

becomes Woman, the epitome of sleek and sophisticated femininity. When she reaches for a pen now the act is imbued with glamour. Whose elegant hand is that holding that pen? What might not that hand write with such well-manicured nails? Clearly, the owner of such highly polished and cuticle-free nails is someone who has time for luxuries and is willing to pay for them. Gone is the visual reinforcement of childishness. In its place are hands that can compete with any privileged, soignée Ladies Who Lunch. When it comes to separating the girls from the women, nails count.

I'm not suggesting that false nails can cure cancer or make you a better person. I'm certainly not suggesting that one must have false nails in order to be truly feminine. All I'm saying is, watch what happens when a woman gets her nails done. Suddenly she's holding her fingers in attractive positions, unconsciously or consciously showing them off. She hands you something with a little flourish. She cocks her wrist slightly and learns to rest her nails against a complementary color such as her blouse or her lipstick. She's flirting with her hands. Interpreting the message is akin to understanding the language of flowers (now an esoteric exercise but once a high art) or the answers signaled by the position of a lady's fan in the 18th century. A certain type of woman wear a certain range of nail colors. I am absolutely not kidding. And Madame Lucy is going to Reveal All.

Let's face it, a sweet young thing wouldn't be caught dead wearing nasty red nail polish. She'll go for the pastels or best of all the "natural" nail, so contrived as to appear to be her own with just the right amount of pink and an extension of white on the end. A light mauve, a pearly pink, or at most a deep rose proclaims the wearer to be girlish, young (or young-at-heart) and very, very nice.

The more adventurous sort will try a rainbow of glistening reds and pinks. This is the magpie woman, unable to resist a glossy shade of anything. She will always do her nails in silver glitter for Halloween. And she loves to match the color of her outfits, spending hours every week taking color off and putting new color on. She also dyes her hair but that's another issue and article entirely.

The woman in wine or jewel tones is self-confident and rather sophisticated. She probably owns a Very Good watch and several Very Good pieces of clothing that seem quite plain to the untutored eye. Sherry, burgundy, champagne, ivory, amber, anything discreet but rich will grace her hands. She is never a blonde.

The rebellious types go for bold and unusual shades: corals, crimson, black, blue, anything that says to an observer "I'm not hiding myself. Love me, love my bad taste." Rebels wear orangy red, so different from a high gloss, blue-tinged Chanel red. College students and heavy metal girls fall into this category. Most women go through this phase before settling into their own niche. Even so, sometimes only a really trashy red will do, especially if you're wearing all black.



Finding someone who will do your nails the way you like them is fraught with tension and high drama. Women trade names of manicurists like family recipes or military secrets, withholding information if they fear their favorite will become too busy or too self-important. Which is pretty silly because any really decent manicurist is already busy and self-important. Scheduling nail appointments can be hellish. And believe me, false nails are a major investment of time and money.

There's the initial session which takes about two hours and costs about \$60, longer and more if extensions have to be added (and they almost always do or you'd be wearing your own nails, wouldn't you?). Then there's the fill, ideally done every two weeks at a cost of \$25 to \$35. A fill takes a mere half-hour on the average. Occasionally I miss an appointment for one reason or another. Should this occur the dreaded gap appears, where my own nail can clearly be seen peeping between the cuticle and the edge of the false nail. No amount of nail polish can hide the gap and it is a familiar sight to false nail wearers. It's really the only way anyone can tell if a woman is wearing her own nails or not. If you can afford it and your manicurist is good, the gap never appears. If you let it go on for too long you run the risk of snapping off the false nail because it isn't properly anchored at the base. This hurts far worse than breaking your own because the false ones are actually bonded to your nails with industrial-strength quick seal glue. This is not an operation for the squeamish. But it's worth the bother to the nail-wearer.

Do men detect this state of grace? Fat chance. It's a subtle thing. It might be the equivalent of owning real pearls, another symbol of privilege. It's definitely a class thing. For a woman who has to do her own housework cannot maintain her nails in pristine condition. Which is why the technology of false nails is such a boon to modern women. No one has to know they work for a living. No one can tell just by looking at them that they have to do their own dishes.

It's something that women do purely for themselves. Other women admire a beautiful manicure. Men won't notice unless they themselves get manicures (or give them, I suppose). Men sense only in a dim, far-off sort of way that a woman is dressed for success with nails to match. They indicate faint approval or distaste according to their nature and then they go back to grunting over the Packers. But most women recognize the time and artistry that go into another woman's exquisitely done nails and they are quick to compliment and compare notes.

Getting our nails done. It's not as intense as shoe shopping nor as competitive as finding the perfect hairstylist but it's a common thread that binds the gender together in a mutual admiration society. And as we stride through our modern, hectic, fast-paced life it's a chance to sit back, relax, and allow a bit of luxurious pampering to carry us beyond the demands of the outside world.

Time to go. I have an appointment with James. I'm going to ask him to try that truly fetching shade of Caribbean Calypso on me. It will match my new outfit.

## RODEO ROMANCE

God bless Texas. Today I went to the rodeo.

Watching the mustangs plunging and snorting in their pens, ready for their eight seconds of fame, I remembered how much I love horses. They're magnificent when they're in their prime, muscles bunching under silky skin, ready to take offense at the slightest flutter of cloth or sudden noise, bursting with energy. I like cattle, too, but I don't love them. Horses are poetry; cattle are prose.

I also love riding. Having competed in barrel racing I understand how difficult it is to put your horse through the tight, precise turns. I've loped across a western valley on a sturdy pony, lost in the exhilaration of sky and wind and snow-capped mountains. I've been scraped off by horses who were tired of carrying me. The old low-hanging tree branch works every time. I've gone flying off the back of more than one cranky animal. So I enjoy watching riders pit themselves against the wiles and ingenuity of a bucking horse or work in graceful unison to catch and rope calves, a testimony to ranching skills. The spirit of the Wild West hovers over the arenas and corrals, still alive in the hearts of anyone who's ever been enchanted by stories about cowboys and cattle drives and a home on the range.

A rodeo's an opportunity to show off skills acquired and still used in the



cattle country of the American west. Breaking wild horses, roping calves preparatory to branding them, training horses to cut and herd are still useful activities to ranchers but to most Americans they're as exotic as a circus trick. The crowds are always in a festive mood.

I dressed carefully for the outing: a new black shirt with red embroidered roses, black jeans, black and red cowboy boots, and my treasured black Stetson. By rodeo standards I was dressed up mighty fancy.

But I was nothing compared to the cowboys. They wore turquoise, purple, pink, grey, denim blue or a soft buckskin yellow. Loops and swirls of thread garnished their cuffs, collars, pockets. No Levi's, only Wrangler jeans. Their leather chaps were pretty ordinary except for the bright tinsel-colored fringes which looked spectacular whipping through the air during an event. For men engaged in a rough sport they sure looked like they'd just dropped in from Las Vegas.



A lot of them are young. Sixteen, seventeen, twenty years old. The older ones looked gnarled and beat up. A series of broken limbs, strained muscles, pulled tendons all take their toll. It's not an easy way to make a living.

Rodeos are a weird institution, a peculiarly American combination of death-defying athleticism and vaudevillian humor. Some of the events are astoundingly dangerous. I've watched a fellow get tossed in the air up to mezzanine level by a Longhorn steer. A lot of the cowboys wear neck braces and it's no wonder when you watch them get snapped this way and that on the back of a corkscrewing bronco. To qualify for prize money they have to stay on the animal's back for eight seconds using one hand only on the rein and without their free hand touching the animal at any time. Eight seconds is a long time when your mount is determined to rid itself of your unwanted weight.



I always sit over the pens. It's like being backstage at a theater. The wranglers herd the animals from the holding pens to the starting chutes through an intricate series of pens and gates. The Brahma bulls wedge their massive bodies into a corner of a pen

as though they could get out if they just looked through the fence long enough. I like watching the cowgirls get their mounts ready to hit the ground running when the gates swing open for the barrel racing, leather saddles polished to a warm glow and silver buckles gleaming. I especially enjoy the milling excitement of the horse pens, every animal keyed up for performance. Nearly 4,000 horses each year are saved from the glue factory and rehabilitated as rodeo performers. It appears the horses like their jobs. The ones who buck off cowboys for a living certainly seem to enjoy the cheering and attention.

It's a surprisingly short performance for everyone no matter what the event. Take, for instance, steer wrestling. A successful steer wrestler has to allow a seven second lead for the steer, chase after it with his horse, hurl himself off the horse onto the steer (which weighs upwards of 600 pounds), and twist its head around by the horns so that the steer falls to the ground with all four legs in the air. A good time is 13 seconds. Of course this is a lunatic pastime but I always cheer like mad anyway. It's an *impressive* lunacy.

I really don't know how anyone makes up their mind to sit on the back of a bull. I'd sooner ask a cobra to shake hands. Bulls are just plain mean. They're also absolutely huge, a thousand or more pounds of meat on the hoof. Cowboy macho is a strange, strange thing.

Cowboy clowns are a staple of the rodeo circuit. I don't care much for them but they serve a serious purpose

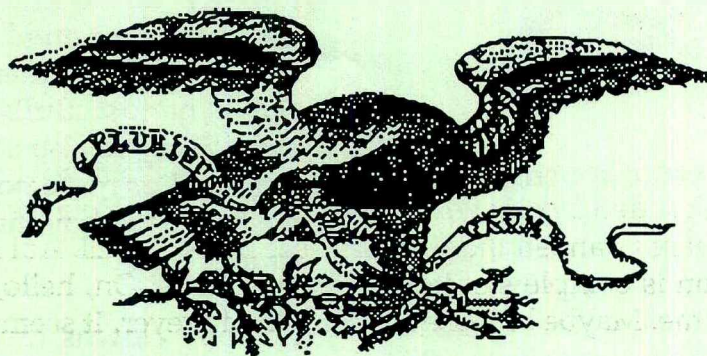
beyond hokey entertainment. They're bull fighters, intended to distract an unruly animal from goring a rider. There are usually two of them, dressed in huge overalls with lots of red scarves stuffed loosely in every pocket, faces painted and jokes ready. A rodeo clown needs a barrel and a broom. The scarves are to wave at the animals to distract them and herd them into the exit gate once they've shucked their riders. The broom is useful for that too but more often acts to prop up a man-sized dummy. If a bull really wants to go after someone, he'll take out his frustration on the dummy if the clowns can steer him that way. If they can't get out of the bull's way by jumping up on the fence, they head for the barrel and hide in it. The dummy frequently features a plastic mask of the current President. Clinton took one in the hiney twice tonight and seemed none the worse for a little goring.

Rodeos are also a bastion of flag-waving patriotism. It's the only place I still stand and place my right hand (clutching my hat) over my heart during the playing of the national anthem. I'd be scared not to. The half-time entertainment is nearly always a

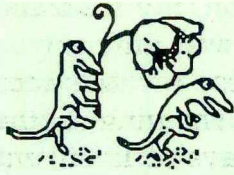
recreation or tribute to the Cowboy Way of Life, whether it be chuckwagon races or Mexican-American vaqueros showing off their lariat skills. You haven't lived until you've seen Jerry Diaz or one of his brethren doing the Wedding Band: an enormous loop of rope kept spinning around himself and his horse while they lope around and around the ring.

I hear there are more female riders on the circuit out west where there are rodeos practically year-round and more chances to win prize money. I've seen a few black cowboys but overall the rodeo is a white male tradition, a ode to manifest destiny and the displacement of native peoples. We carved our frontier out of someone else's sacred and traditional ground. I have never seen a Native American at a rodeo.

Despite this unsavory past, I think it will survive as a romantic memory of our pioneer history. Because in the end it's simply a celebration of the ancient urge to master nature and proclaim our independence. As long as Americans want to believe in spacious skies and amber waves of grain, there will always be a rodeo.







## THE LIFE CYCLE OF A FANZINE FAN

Thanks to everyone who has kindly continued to send me their fanzine despite my utterly dilatory habits. I haven't been in the mood to write letters of comment for the last couple of years but I hope that's changing. I was shocked to realize it's been eight years since I published anything on my own. I love writing with others and I have a strong editorial and stylistic presence in everything I collaborate on so it was both great fun and enormously fulfilling to produce fanzines with Bryan Barrett, Avedon Carol and Allyn Cadogan among others. Sadly, I haven't found a supportive fan community in Nashville so I've been unable to find a writing partner here. I've kept my hand in by regularly contributing articles to other fanzines, happy to see my work appear under someone else's aegis, but it's not the same as doing your own. Besides, I hear the skeletal whisper of Fafiation more often these days. For the first time in my life my job is consuming some of my creative energy. It's satisfying and engrossing and although I don't precisely take it home with me I'm usually very tired at the end of the day. When I sit down to fan my ac I feel uninspired. To tell you the truth, I'm not sure who my audience is anymore. My comet has blazed through the fannish firmament (*pace* Ted White) and it's starting to seem as though it's heading out into unexplored regions. Which is okay but it makes me sad.

So I went to the Worldcon this year. I knew I'd enjoy exploring the city if the convention didn't work out so I gave it a shot. I'd been wondering if fandom was just a phase I'd gone through as a sort of delayed happy adolescence. The relative isolation of Nashville had acted as a refining measure. Quite a few friends didn't bother calling or writing after I moved away from San Francisco and I was crushed by their defection. Eventually I got used to not hearing from anyone unless I made the phonecall. I intended the Worldcon to act as a litmus test.

It was more like a family reunion than a convention. I couldn't stop commenting on how fat or grey or bald everyone was. Don Fitch was the unofficial host of the Fan Lounge. (Why haven't we beatified him yet?) I caught up on Bay Area gossip and passed on some of my own. Just for laughs I wore my wig of waist-length hair and my best rodeo outfit one night. Jerry Kaufman did a tremendous double take. Lilian Edwards yanked the wig off to see if it was real. Abi Frost exclaimed, "This convention is complete shite and no one cares! Oh, hello, Lucy." No one else recognised me. Maybe because I'm fatter and greyer. It seems likely.

John and I shared our room with Bill Bodden and Joe Wesson, my insurance against the possibility that the con itself would be a drag. John was only staying until Monday as he had to get back to teaching. I was in town for a whole week. Joe was on one of his famous flying runs, in and out of town in 36 hours, grabbing his fun by the handful before jetting back to upstate New York. Bill was winding down from a West Coast tour. I quizzed him about his visit to Seattle. He was gratifyingly impressed by its beauty and its fans as was only right.

By previous arrangement I was to meet Patrick Nielsen Hayden for lunch during the convention. It had been a long time since we'd had a chance to sit and really talk and I was looking forward to it tremendously. Guess I should have known. I said hello to James "Jim" Young as we passed by on our way to our table. Alas, Jim felt it incumbent upon him to return the favor when his group broke up and he sat down to have lunch with us. So much for my cherished plan. It was fun anyway even if the conversation did veer into international politics which both Patrick and Jim had opinions on, unlike yours truly.

I also prearranged a dinner with my dear friend Denise Rehse and this did, in fact, come off as planned. We dressed up for the occasion and enjoyed ourselves tremendously. I had requested she make reservations at an Italian restaurant of her choice. She found Etrusca, a handsome marriage of exciting food and elegant decor. We spent hours over asparagus soup, endive salad, braised lamb shanks, polenta, angel hair pasta, chianti and coffee. It was superb. I knew it wouldn't last. (Five weeks later it closed and reopened under new management. That's San Francisco for you.) Our evening was tinged with a bittersweet melancholy as we knew I might not be back before she leaves for a year in the South Pacific.

Contrary to my expectations, the stores of San Francisco didn't seem to be filled with wonderful clothes. I was truly appalled to find Nordstrom's infected by the platform shoe craze. A store long venerated as being the supplier of exquisite good taste was trying to be youthful and kinky. Bleah. Planning to spend several hundred dollars updating my wardrobe, I ended up buying a sturdy wool duffel coat to wear to the Giants' game on Tuesday after the con, and not much else.

The game was great, definitely a highlight of my trip. God, I hate living in a town without major league baseball! Bill and I met Moshe Feder and Lise Eisenberg for dinner at the Hunan on Broadway and then walked down Sutter Street through the Financial District to catch a bus to Candlestick Stadium. I pointed out sights of interest ("I used to work there! And there! And there! I saw David Byrne right over there but I thought it was someone who just looked like David Byrne!") in a rush of sudden nostalgia for what was once my personal turf. We were a bit late to the game as the buses decided to convoy in packs of three instead of running every 20 minutes as advertised. Moshe's friend Ellen sat with us for a while but went off to sit with other friends who were closer to home plate. We had a good view of all the action, the weather was beautiful, and the Giants beat the Phillies.



I spent a day wandering the city with Herr Peter Larsen and Bill after the convention closed. Breakfast at Spike's Cafe fortified us for Dr. Lucy's Patented Highlights Tour which purports to take in sights not normally seen by the average tourist such as the panoramic view of the city from the balcony of the UCSF Medical Center. It also takes in the classic Musée Mécanique where we stuffed ourselves into a coin-operated photo booth and made faces for the camera. We fed quarters to view the Earthquake of 1906, The Opium Den (Peter's fortuitous discovery), The Magic Spirit Typewriter, The Hand Of Mystery which reads one's palm, and many more fine automated curiosities. We had coffee upstairs in the Cliff House bar but it wasn't our style so we repaired to Japantown to look for weird gifts. Our day ended at the classic Tonga Room for Happy Hour and Bill was suitably moved by the mounds of hors d'oeuvres and authentic fake tropical setting.

So did I come away from Worldcon convinced I was a fan or confirmed in my belief that I'm slipping away from the heart of trufandom? I'm not sure. I know I'm still a fan as far as enjoying fanzines and for sure my greater social group is composed almost entirely of friends I met through fandom but I can tell I've lost a certain edge. I want to keep up with the people I already know but I doubt I'll be going to many more conventions, therefore I'll probably meet far fewer new fans. I think my articles appear in as many British as American fanzines but I feel like I've kept up my fannish connections there primarily through correspondence and visits. Unable to do the same with Australian fandom, I've recently joined ANZAPA to keep in more regular contact. I'm enjoying it so far but traditionally I haven't stayed in a place very long because my mother taught me to not say anything if I can't say something nice and quite frankly the strain wears on me.

Oh hell, I'm a fan. I care deeply about fan gossip and what could be more fannish than that? I was simply fascinated to hear the newest DUFF administrators, Dick and Leah Smith, ousted previous DUFF administrator Nick Stathopolous from their room parties not once but twice at the Worldcon. The reasoning for this was unclear but apparently stemmed from their erroneous assumption that Nick was some kind of drunken ocker loonie. Shocking bad manners, Smith persons. Tsk.

And what's all this about mild-mannered Mike Glycer demanding to be taken off the YHOS mailing list on account of personal print vendettas by a contributor? I read the same issue he did but I couldn't locate any venal jabs leveled at File 770. Aren't feuds baffling when you're not in them?

I've had fun putting together material for a fanzine. I don't expect to get many letters of comment (though if Harry Warner, Jr. doesn't come through with one a certain light will have gone out of my life) but I do hope this encourages faneds to keep me on their mailing lists. Just don't give George Laskowski my address, will you? It took me for effing ever to get off the *Lan's Lantern* list.

May you have peace and pleasure in the new year. See you at Corflu Eleven.

JAN 22 1977

SOUTHERN GOTHIC: BACK COVER AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

HONKYTONK CAPPUCCINO

DEATH BY DESIGN

REAL NAILS

RODEO ROMANCE

THE LIFECYCLE OF A FANZINE FAN



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