

All summer long, John Berry and I played travelling games, passing the miles from Here to There by thinking up appropriate names for small towns (Merde, Quebec; Tollbooth, New Jersey; Freeway, California; Peach Pit Crossing, Georgia) and for fanzines. Australia beat us on the first; how can any made-up name beat "Wombat, NSW"? (Well, there's always Horsefly, British Columbia.) As for the second, we were better at thinking up titles than publishing them. This summer was not a good time for writing! But now it's fall, Up Here, time to drag out a title, sit down, and give you: WARM CHAMPAGNE!!

An accompaniment to your magic pudding, from Susan Wood, Dept. of English, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC V6T 1W5, Canada.

On October 20, I got a letter from the OBE, asking if I would be North American mailer for Anzapa, because Canada's postal rates were so much cheaper than Australia's. I chuckled. On October 21, I received the October mailing. And that, folks, was The Last Delivery of mail to date (Nov. 4) because Canada's semi-annual immanent postal strike had become Immediate. Negotiations continue, and I may actually be able to mail this to you direct, instead of having John Berry smuggle it over the border when he comes up in 10 days for the Maria Muldaur concert. And sure, I'll cheerfully be NA mailer. The irony was rather grim, though. We pay for our "cheap" rates, in other ways. (Just to add to the problems, negotiations broke down, causing the strike in the first place, basically because the postmaster general and the chief union negotiator loathe each other, and spend conference time trading insults.)

I was conspicuously absent from the October mailing because I was conspicuously hassled. Got back from the marathon journey of 2½ months and several thousand miles, kilometres or what-have-you to move into a new house, in a new city. The house turned out to be suitable for the resident colony of spiders, but not me; I'm fussier than your average spider. I spent a month cleaning, scrubbing, painting, making curtains, Fixing Up and the like, feeling too tired and hassled (classes had started, too, and the university had messed up all three of them-- for example, no-one had ordered the books for my honours class, though I'd put the list in in February) to feel depressed. (Yes, I always write in long parentheses.) October brought steady rain, The Dread Lurgee, and that post-con letdown which Bangsund describes so eloquently. I mean, here I am, just turned 27 and the various major achievements and High Points of my life are over, right? Gloom, gloom. (If you had my classes, you'd feel gloomy too. And the English Department has solved the feuds which decimated it, a few years ago, in a simple manner: no-one talks to anyone else. I feel rather lonely at times.)

I had been looking forward to this fall: to having the time and energy to write, after spending too long, much too long, writing my PhD thesis. And suddenly I couldn't write. And it was raining.... Figuring that if I went on in that vein, I'd be completely suicidal by Christmas, I finally started work on a convention non-report (which Leigh and John have my full permission to use, if they wish), swiped some stencils from the office to do an Anzapazine-- and left them in the office. Since I have access to a mimeo tonight, and since I have guests and 120 term papers both coming in from the end of this week onward, it's either 2 stencils' worth of minac or nothing. Hello. That's what I've been doing. The Melbourne mood of "Wagnerian gloom" seemed to spread north; I wonder if the bad vibes from my poor dirty house spread south to the Gloomy Pudding?

KEN, DERRICK, DON and CAREY: My sympathies with your housing problems, and with the flow of guests. (Especially Neal.) The student co-op I lived in always had extra bodies floating about (often US deserters/draft dodgers, plus attendant females) and it did disrupt life. I, of course, dealt with any guest problems, and with post-worldcon depression too, in a simple, direct way after TORCON. I left the con Monday afternoon, flew 1600 miles, and started teaching in a strange city the next day. So why did I do that again? (I have this little nagging fear that every 2 years, I'm going to move cross-country, except if I go further west, I'll fall in the ocean, which is about 10 minutes' walk away.)

KEN: "Kiddylit" as a genre has always been more respected in Britain than in North America-- people seem less afraid of taking fantasy and the imagination in general seriously. It may be a sort of frontier holdover, in North America: literature has to justify itself by being about "real life," or something. (My Scots Presbyterian grandparents quite literally thought that reading books was sinful, a waste of time when you could be planting potatoes.) However, suddenly "children's literature" is the big new Academic Subgenre-- courses all over the place. Along with this is a tremendous interest in turn-of-the-century fantasy illustrators: Rackham, Dulac, Nielsen. Maybe Tolkein's popularity made it all "respectable"? Anyway, closet kiddylit freaks like me are having that strange experience of seeing something we privately cherished become a fad.

JOHN BANGSUND: Gawd, what an utterly brilliant writer you are. Gawd. What impresses me about the postcon report is that you succeed in doing what I wanted to do with mine, which was to convey the feeling, texture, whatever-the-litcrit-termness, of the event: give the details, but also make your reader understand what it felt like to be experiencing them. Most conreports end up all facts and no sense of the experience: "And then I went for dinner with X, Y, Z and %, and we had pancakes at the Pancake House, and then I went wandering down the corridor to Room 392, and..." and of which proves the writer has a good memory or a fast hand with a memo-pad, but doesn't tell you much more about the writer.

I agree with you completely about the Hugoes; that was the reason I joined Eric, John and the rest in the conspiracy: well, that and Ursula's speech, when she reminded us we were all gathered to "celebrate." Not just have a good time, but enjoy a ritual-in-honour-of. There's too much pomposity and too little joy attending most Important Matters; if the Hugoes matter, then they matter enough to be enjoyed... I thought of your comments again the other day, when one of my honours students started yelling at me for "not taking Canadian literature seriously enough," because I had been joking around, and putting down some terribly Pompous and Pretentious writing. Why is Serious (read, Deadly Dull) always equated with reverence? Why does honouring something get confused with embalming it? Why don't you let those 44 visiting fen in; they must be hungry by now.

MICHAEL O'BRIEN: You were one of those people I wanted-to-talk-to-but... Next trip. I am Perfectly Safe around Tucker: he's my adopted grandad.

JAN FINDER: There is no Vancouver worldcon bid, and I am not chairing it. We are, however, having a Westercon here in 1977. You're all invited.

LEIGH and VAL: Hi! I miss you. : Leigh, I reserve the right to say not-nice things about fandom if fandom deserves it. I agree, though, the ABC woman had a distorted idea of fandom. "But don't you have any real friends" she kept asking.... Of course, I do, but not more stencils. 'Bye.