“Come with me; we’ll get you a nice tumbler of gin, eh?”

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But once a year, like clockwork, the Fan Hugo short list comes out and somehow I can never quite avoid seeing it. When I do see it, I increasingly find a bunch of total strangers who’ve not visibly participated in fandom, and I see red all over again. I will inevitably be told that the failing is in me, that were I to educate myself, I would discover their merit. As often as not, whatever merit is involved, what I actually discover are more neo-pros doing nothing remotely to do with fandom as we know it, or if they do, only in pursuit of making money off us. So thanks, Scalzi. Fuck you.

Wait, what now? Why am I still on about John Scalzi’s Fan Writer Hugo, eleven years after the parade? Because it was John Scalzi who finally broke the Fan Hugos, that’s why. And he didn’t do the rest of the Hugos any favors, either, as it turns out. So while I don’t care a great deal about the Hugos in themselves, I do care about fandom. This creeping metamorphosis of the Fan Hugos into the lower bar minor leagues for baby-pro also-rans has gone viral in the years since Scalzi decided to huxter himself a fan Hugo, and that denigrates and undermines fandom – fandom the culture, fandom the gift economy, fandom the self-aware social structure – the one that traces its history back to the letter columns of the old pulp SF prozines. The fandom whose name is busily disappearing, drowned out by those who say “my fandom” to mean their favorite TV show – not even the fans thereof, or love of same, but the show itself – and those who think that being a skiffy fan it isn’t materially different from collecting stamps or watching the game on telly with a few mates. And fandom, my fandom – our fandom – does matter. Fandom is a gift – one that is peculiarly precious to me – and I will be sad when it passes from the Earth. So here I am raging at the dying of the light.

Let’s review a little history. It all began, as far as I can tell, in early February of 2007, in a blog post entitled, “A Series of Casual Thoughts I Had While I Was Filling Out My Hugo Nomination Ballot and Looking at the Best Fan Writer Category” over at Whatever. Writing as an exercise in thinking out loud, Scalzi ponders whether he’s eligible for the fan writer Hugo, in order to put forward someone besides Dave Langford to win it. Yep. Scalzi’s first bid for the Best Fan Writer Hugo began, quite explicitly, as a hunt for someone besides Dave Langford to win. Not a campaign for more diversity in the winners, mind you – because hey, okay, a desire for diversifying the Best Fan Writer Hugo short list could be understandable after Dave collected his twentieth. But no, it was a specific call for someone besides Langford to win. It was from the outset a campaign against a former winner: a move not only in poor taste, but patently unfannish. *Nj kulturni. Something We Don’t Do.* Which Scalzi might have known, if he had actually been a fan at the time.

It also wasn’t an attempt to self-educate about any existing actifans slaving away unsung out there in the fanac mines. This was not Scalzi trying to figure out who was being neglected or under-recognized in the field. This was a consideration of the letter of the Hugo rules to suss out who—John Scalzi for instance—might technically qualify under them as a “fan writer”, in order to, effectively, re-design the category in his own image.

The problem with someone who doesn’t know squat about fandom relying on the black letter Hugo rules for Best Fan Writer to figure out whether they themselves are a fan writer, is that the Hugo rules aren’t for that. They weren’t written to explicate the categories, or locate them in the context of fandom. They don’t set out to teach non-fans what a fan writer is or isn’t, or indeed what a fan anything is or isn’t. They presume that the fan electorate already know that. The Hugo rules exist to demarcate the boundaries between one award category and another. They rely on the collective cultural knowledge of fandom (or at least, Hugo-voting fandom) to interpret what is, or isn’t required to qualify, such as for example the expectation that in order to be the best fan writer in any given year, someone must first be a fan. Unfortunately,
collective cultural knowledge is, if not dead, certainly ready for hospice. It’s just not collective any more, drowned out as it is by the mainstreaming of geekdom and nerdedom, and the influx into Hugo votership of hordes who have no grasp of the culture they’re coming into, or merely brushing up against as they rush to stuff the ballot box and pass merrily on their way. And again, had Scalzi actually been a fan at the time that he wrote himself into the fan writer category, he would have quickly recognized that the letter of the law was far from the whole of the law. But alas.

As an aside, it turns out, there are lots of precedents in actual law for rules that don’t spell out all the limitations and expectations that they imply. If you’ve been listening to the very interesting and informative Radiotopia podcast, *What Trump Can Teach Us About Con Law*, you already know that, among other practices we derive from the US Constitution, the subpoena powers of Congress, and Presidential Privilege to keep some secrets, are literally nowhere written in the Constitution. They’ve been inferred from what is explicitly there, and implicitly endorsed by the Supremes.

But back to the main plot. In the end, though he magnanimously concludes that any SF pro who blogs is eligible for the Fan Writer Hugo, Scalzi declines to nominate himself. Too humble, I’m sure. But the door is left wide for others to do so. Comments on the post only underscore the idea of John Scalzi, Fan Writer. Patrick Nielsen Hayden wades in to declare, “Of course the guy who writes *The Whatever* is eligible for Best Fan Writer; it’s retarded to think otherwise.” With such endorsements, and the ardor of his following, it’s a foregone conclusion that Scalzi’s groupies will take the hint and nominate him. And indeed, though he didn’t win that year, John Scalzi made a strong enough showing in 2007 to be on the short list. And of course he won Best Fan Writer in 2008. Whatever else we may say of him, there’s no doubt that Scalzi is a master at attention whoring. Excuse me, marketing. Indeed, observing the drumbeat of his blogging of the fan Hugos from there on could serve as a textbook for effective self-promotion technique. Going from not knowing what a Best Fan Writer is to having a Hugo for it in 18 months is no mean feat. Going from not being a part of fandom in any way (Scalzi marks his entry into fandom to a Detroit convention in 2005), to having a Hugo for fanac in three years, is incredible. Literally.

So as I say, in 2008 Scalzi got his Best Fan Writer Hugo, but at least that year the rest of the short listers all had fannish credentials, going back decades in most cases. The field he won against comprised Dave Langford, Cheryl Morgan, Steven H Silver, and Chris Garcia. Best fanzine that year went to *File 770*, winning against *PLOKTA*, *Challenger*, *Argentus*, and *Drink Tank*. Best Fan Artist that year was Brad Foster, winning against Sue Mason, Steve Stiles, Teddy Harvia, and Taral Wayne. The fan Hugos still looked recognizably fannish. That was all about to change, though.

In 2009, “Best Fanzine” was awarded to *Electric Velocipede*, a small press speculative fiction zine that debuted at the SFWA banquet, and was published for sale by single issue or subscription. It was being published in concert with an independent publishing house, Night Shade Books. I don’t see any way that isn’t a pro- or semiprozine. In the same year, one of the fan artist nominees was Alan F. Beck, a professional artist whose contribution to fandom appears to be that he sometimes sells at conventions (and is kind of a terrible artist, but
that obviously is not an eligibility exclusion. The categories are not meant to legislate taste).
In 2010, “Best Fanzine” went to StarShipSofa, a podcast. Not a fanzine. Possibly a swell podcast, but still not a fanzine. (And before the arguments start, I'll suggest that the 2014 creation of a separate “fancast” special committee-awarded Hugo strongly implies a general agreement that a podcast is a different beast from a fanzine and as such merits a separate category if it’s going to win awards.) Also, the podcast is paid for by subscription, commercial sponsors, and Patreon and the sponsorships blurbs can be found in podcasts dating back to before its Hugo win. Even if you accept that a podcast is a magazine, if it regularly solicits money to support itself, it still isn’t a fanzine.

In 2011 Randall Munroe, the professional web cartoonist behind xkcd was on the short list for fan artist. Despite the fact that he makes his full-time living from his comic and does not participate in fandom in any way, the Hugo administrators that year did not disqualify him. It's pretty clear from that, and subsequent years, that the Hugo administrators won’t even enforce the letter of the law for fan category eligibility, let alone the spirit.

In 2012 Jim C. Fucking Hines, Scalzi’s little pal, and another fucking pro who happens to blog but does fuck all for fandom as a fan, won the Best Fan Writer Hugo. Thanks Scalzi. Hines recused himself from future nominations in the category, because that was the thing to do now, once you’ve used your personal fan base to arrogate yourself a Hugo nomination, but of course not before winning. Best Fanzine was won by SF Signal, which was a blog. Supported by paid advertising. In what sense would this be a fucking fanzine?

2013 Best Fanzine was won by SF Signal again. The editors, John DeNardo, JP Frantz, and Patrick Hester, recused themselves from future wins in the category, but not, of course, before winning a second time. Mighty white of them. Some woman called Galen Dara won Best Fan Artist, a fact she cares so little about that she doesn’t even mention her Hugo in the awards list that she does have on her website. Given she also lists literally all the publishers of her work as “clients,” I am not seeing evidence that she does any fan art at all.

And so it goes. You get the idea. I’ll resist the urge to rehearse absolutely all of the outrages in chronological order, but I’ll mention the 2015 Hugos because they were notable in several ways. I was actually at the award ceremony, for one, happily flanked by a pair of Fishlifters, because I attended the Spokane Worldcon as Randy Byers’ second in running the fanzine lounge. I think it was Claire who, while we sat waiting for the ceremony to begin, called our attention to the fact that the write-up of the history of the Hugos printed in the Hugo Awards Ceremony event program included a paragraph for every single Hugo award type – literary, dramatic, retro, committee awarded special – except the fan categories. It was as if the fan awards either didn’t exist at all, or were subsumed by the literary categories. How pointedly on-the-nose is that?

Also that year, the Best Fan Artist award went to Elizabeth Leggett, whose body of related art was entirely paid work for publication, albeit in semiprozines. But still, work sold for money. This seems one of the few cases where a small change to the language of the award could easily close one avenue of injustice, since the description currently includes appearances in semiprozines. We could dispense with that criterion without eliminating appropriate eligibility. But perhaps most memorably for many, 2015 was the first Year of the Puppies. The combined efforts of the Sad- and Rabid Puppies managed to get their slates solidly wedged onto the short list of many categories, including literary and media ones, leading to much public outrage in the months leading up to the convention, and to a rhythmic tattoo of Hugos going to “No Award,” during the awards presentation. And the audience applauded. Our highest honors were so badly broken that category after category went unawarded, and the fans applauded. Thanks Scalzi. Fuck you.

Yeah, Scalzi. Because beyond distorting the fan categories beyond all recognition, John Scalzi
opened the door for anyone who was paying attention and willing to do the leg work to rewrite any Hugo to their own preference. Looking at an award category, deciding that the people currently winning it don’t deserve to, examining the rules to see if they explicitly forbid what you want to do, and then mounting a blog-based campaign to circumvent the spirit of the award by recruiting a bunch of fan-cultural outsiders who never previously nominated or voted in that category to do so – does that sound at all like a familiar pattern? And make no mistake, Scalzi’s blog had plenty of Puppy-leaning types paying attention to it. The incomprehensible, but much repeated favorable comparison of John Scalzi’s debut novel, *Old Man’s War*, to the work of Robert Heinlein pretty well assured that the Randroids and the pseudo-libertarian ammosexuals would be there in droves.

So as far as I can see, John Scalzi created the blueprint: providing both proof of concept and implicit permission for the Sad and Rabid Puppy ballot stuffing campaigns. The fact that they didn’t also win the rockets suggests to me that they weren’t as good at marketing (and were aiming at some rather tougher nuts to crack, in voting number terms – Scalzi was sharp enough to notice that the fan categories had long been low hanging fruit for wrangling a short list nomination), but what they did wasn’t materially or morally different from what John Scalzi did. Neither one violated the letter of the law, and both dismissed or ignored the spirit. If the actions of the Puppies were blameworthy, so were those of John Scalzi. If what he did was okay within the rules and therefore okay, then so were the Puppy campaigns. The fact that John Scalzi is a funny, likable guy who tapes bacon to cats doesn’t change the moral quality of his actions, it just distracted a bunch of people from noticing it. Think of him as the Daenerys Targaryen of burning the Hugos to the ground, if you like – the Mother of Dingbats.

At this point, I should probably admit that the massive influx of *ni kuultarni* Hugo voters isn’t wholly Scalzi’s doing. His machinations coincided with various Worldcon committees and smofs ramping up efforts to market the Hugos more broadly, as a means to raising the profile and attendance of Worldcons. And many of the same people are intractably opposed to expanding the number of Hugos awarded for important reasons like the length of the ceremony and concerns of “diluting” the value of the award, and yet see no injustice in shoehorning whole classes of work into existing categories without regard for appropriate fit. So there’s little doubt that Scalzi’s arrogation of a fanwriting Hugo for himself just to prove a point fell at a very opportune time. He had help, wittingly or not. But that doesn’t mean his hands are clean, and it doesn’t make the damage he’s done to fandom any less real. The Hugos are broken, probably permanently and irretrievably. The chances of incredibly deserving fans like Dan Steffan and Kate Yule ever winning the Hugo recognition their work merited are nil, and John Scalzi doesn’t regret a thing. So, yeah, yar boo sucks to you, John Scalzi, and fuck you very much.

*Ulrika O’Brien
Member fwa and Unusual Suspect
Kent, WA*
UNUSUALLY IN THIS ISSUE...

An unusual photographic view of Seville railway station by the well-travelled LORD KETTLE of BROSAN graces the front end.

COVER

We are less than unusually shameless in appropriating cast-off pieces from elsewhere, hence SIMON OUNSLEY is able to relate here an historic tale of Leeds, a Xmas conjunction of Curry and Crab.

PAGE 9

After the previous year’s outing, detailed by Luke McGuff in BEAM #13, JULIE McGUFF finds her subsequent solo visit to the King County Clinic 2018 perhaps a little less unusual.

PAGE 17

Being named a GoH ought to still be an unusual plaudit. In the first of our pieces from recipients of that title, CHRISTINA LAKE offers Foolish Banter (and the riddle of 21st Century Fannish Etiquette).

PAGE 18

An unusual nom de plume to be sure, and yet DAVID O. FUCKING SELZNICK (aka Pete Young) deconstructs Moby’s contention that We Are All Made of Stars.

PAGE 25

From the department of “Friends with Unusual Occupations”, operatic soprano STACEY TAPPAN, experienced as she is, nevertheless finds a new sensawunda with a storied company, as The Diva Diaries will reveal.

PAGE 27

Unusually desperate for a target? JOHN WESLEY HARDIN and JACQUELINE MONAHAN consider one of fandom’s worst ideas, asking Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad W.O.O.F.?

PAGE 32

ALAN ROSENTHAL guides us gently yet unusually through The Five Stages of Being a Corflu GoH. And he should know.

PAGE 38
UNUSUALLY IN THIS ISSUE...

ULRIKA O’BRIEN and NIC FAREY engage in some unusually friendly banter about BEAM itself: what it was then, and what it is Eleven Years Later.

PAGE 41

THE READERSHIP: Suscipe Verbum.

LOGS: PAGE 46

ON OTHER PAGES...

Uncredited text by Nic Farey and/or Ulrika O’Brien. ‘The Shop on Peculiar Hill’ ad copy by J L Farey.

BRENDA DUPONT, suddenly and unusually peripatetic, kept us advised of her Road Tripping. (PAGES 15, 24, 40, 51)

Remembering fellow poet and fan Steve Sneyd, saluting his life and work, we’re grateful to Peterborough’s sometime Poet Laureate, Nic’s old friend CARDINAL COX. (PAGE 65)

Guest lyricist this issue: Andy Hooper (PAGE 16)

Art: Brad W Foster: (pp 47, 53, 64); Jay Kinney: BEAM label logo (p2); Pete Lyon: The Shop on Peculiar Hill cover (bcover); Denny E Marshall: (pp 49, 57, 60); Rotsler: (pp 4, 42-44); Reg Smythe: Flo and Andy Capp (p8); Charlie Williams: WOOF cover (p35);

Photography: Mike Abbott: Follycon disco (p22); Dan Ackerley-Homes: Cardinal Cox (p8); Al Johnston: (pp 21, 24); Guy Lillian III: Shelby Vick (p33); Gary Mattingly: Chiflu (p39); Linda Strickler: Simon Ounsley (p7); Stacey Tappan: herself (pp 27-31); Hazel Ashworth West: Curry and Crab (pp 11-14)

Other photographs/illos, predictably nicked off the internet, selfies or unknown credit. Or bloody Facebook profile pics.

THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS...

...is the name devised to describe the late-night fangatherings, surprisingly often in the environs of N Farey, which are mostly laid-back affairs, tending to involve the consumption of Jim Beam and other fine liquors, and a whole lot of bullshit amenable conversation on whatever topic might arise.

If you think you might be or might have been an Unusual Suspect at any point in time, then you probably are.

Wherever two or more may be gathered in the spirit of Tucker, we encourage you to raise a glass to the Suspects’ Toast: “Absent Friends”.

“I distrust camels and anyone else who can go a week without a drink”
I originally intended this report to appear in the ninth edition of the Leeds Group fanzine, *Rubber Crab*, unaware that its editor Graham James had the alternative plan of putting RC on hold for the foreseeable future. As the last such break in its regular schedule lasted 36 years, it seemed like a good idea to make alternative arrangements.

So here we are. Leeds and Las Vegas fandoms being twinned, at least in terms of musical appreciation and alcohol consumption\(^1\), an email of enquiry to Nic brought the welcome response that he and Ulrika might be able to squeeze my article into the next *BEAM*. I would, though, have to make a few amendments to place the Leeds group and this curry trip thing in context.

Well then...

Our group is based in Leeds in the north of England and made its name with a substantial flurry of creativity in the late 1970s through the 80s, running three national UK conventions (Yorcons 1 to 3), taking over the British Science Fiction Association, publishing and/or contributing to innumerable fanzines, launching the long-running *Interzone* semi-pro magazine (admittedly with the help of one or two people from London), running several relaxacons including the infamous Mafcon, and meeting every Friday night in the smoke-filled West Riding pub (and several subsequent venues) where these various bids for world domination were hatched.

The group wound down during the 90s and appeared to have fizzled out for good in the early years of the new millennium, but the recent sad demise of one of our principal members, D West, and subsequent correspondence on Facebook got us meeting again. Sadly, Mike Dickinson and Alan Dorey have also subsequently left us and actual Leeds fans are getting rather scarce. However, we’ve taken action by augmenting our numbers whenever other fans are visiting Leeds or else passing close enough to be kidnapped, bundled into the back room of the West Riding and forced to drink beer and exchange pleasantries for an hour or so.

I’ve been chronicling most of our recent meetings either on the Leeds SF Group Facebook page, or - when I consider the material to exceed the Facebook attention span – in the pages of *Rubber Crab*. Previous episodes can be found in RC issues 6, 7, and 8, all on efanzines.com If you would like to join our Leeds SF Facebook group, just go along and ask and it shall be given (unless we’re feeling really crabby that day).

Which brings us up to Christmas 2017 and our first ever curry meeting\(^2\). As mentioned above, the group normally meets at the West Riding pub, but this was adjudged too noisy and crowded for elderly fans at Christmas time so we met in pastures new: the West Yorkshire Playhouse café/bar and (first of all) an Indian restaurant with far too many vowels in its name.

You may be relieved to learn that we have now reached:

**The Start of the Article**

“Well done, Simon,” said Graham James, as we took our seats at the long table in the Aagrah restaurant. “You pulled it off. You got us all together.”

\(^1\) Leeds is admittedly a little bit short on mountains, glitz and casinos. A quick Google informs me that Vegas has 104 casinos whereas Leeds has 4, but we’re working on it, ok?

\(^2\) Strictly speaking, I mean that this is our first curry meeting with more than two people attending, Steve Glover and I having kicked things off with our meal at the Bengal Brasserie a few months previously (as documented in *Rubber Crab* 8, essential reading if you’re a fan of Glen Campbell. (Or Greg Benford.) Incidentally Steve was also at this Christmas curry meeting but was inexplicably omitted from the article. Sorry, Steve.
It was nice to have my achievement acknowledged, but even so, I might have been more encouraged if he had kept the surprise out of his voice. I had indeed managed to gather ten people together for an evening meal in the run-up to Christmas, but this shouldn’t really have been such a ground-breaking achievement. Perhaps it would have presented less of a challenge if I had been able to get across the basic concepts of the £5 deposit per head required by the restaurant in advance of the meal.

“You seem to have been rather eager about getting these £5 deposits,” Graham observes, referring to my repeated requests on Facebook. “Are times a little hard in the Ounsley household?” I hear around me not exactly murmurs of agreement but something which might be described as subtle quantum fidgetings of concurrence from some of the others.

In response, I try to explain that although only £5 was required from each individual diner, of which there were originally to be twelve in all, this amounted to a total of £60 which had to be paid some weeks in advance by me on behalf of the group. So although the complex process of setting up a bank transfer or remembering how you went about writing a cheque and putting it in the post might seem like a ridiculous amount of hassle for the sake of £5, when you had paid out all of £60 in advance, the perspective was rather different.

I am reminded of that scene in Father Ted where Ted is attempting to explain the principle of perspective to Father Dougal using a plastic model of a sheep. “Larger… farther away, larger… farther away,” he says, as he moves the sheep back and forth. But he manages to make little impression on Dougal.

My efforts to explain how twelve lots of £5 for everyone else amount to £60 for me are every bit as ineffective on the assembled fans. Later in the evening they will be discussing socio-political concepts which make my head hurt. They will be referring to the effect of algorithms on contemporary attitudes, even after Lilian Edwards herself has had to leave early with a head cold. They will leave my head swimming with the intricate threads of their eloquence. But try to explain a few basic concepts of arithmetic and you have them squirming about, gasping for air like a shoal of beached fish.

Never mind, at least most of them humoured me enough to eventually pay this usurious deposit of mine, though it was interesting to have my preconceptions about people who work in computers disabused. I had expected such people to come up with sure-fire scam-free suggestions for safely transferring the money, but Mike Ford simply enthused about the PayPal personal payments scheme, which had been suggested by Linda Strickler and which Mike had never used before. “Wow! It works like magic…” was his professional opinion.

Kate Jeary meanwhile, who single-handedly defends Cambridge University against spies, scammers, and people who post too many pictures of cats, sent me a despairing email about how she had tried to catch a train up to Leeds to pay me her £5 but had been forced to abandon her journey due to snow. It seemed reasonable to put this message in the same category as a genuine letter from somebody’s mother, so I wrote back to tell her not to worry, she could give me the £5

I am assuming international familiarity with Father Ted. If not, it’s time you got the boxed set.
when I saw her. I could almost see Graham nodding in approval at such largesse.

“So, Kate,” I said, when finally we met at the restaurant, “am I to assume from your desperate train journey that the only safe way to convey money in the 21st century is by hand?” If she says yes, I have a follow up question about how she pays her gas bills, but all she will say is that it is safer to send bank details by post than by email. This answer leaves a bit of a puzzle about the reason for the train journey but I guess she has to be careful not to give too much information away to the Russians.

At least I have now recouped the whole deposit and, as an added bonus, we almost have a full contingent of diners: there are eight of us with only two to come. There is no sign of Mike Ford yet, but a pitifully ailing Lilian has phoned to report that she is resting in a café round the corner imbibing emergency supplies of cough lozenges. She appears a short while later and tells me: “I’m beating you this time, Simon, I’ve been ill for twelve days, coughing and sneezing the whole time.” As I myself have been ill for thirty years or more, this seems to be further evidence of arithmetical shortcomings, but I am naturally sympathetic, and I have to accept that on this occasion, she is clearly oozing more gloop.

I am just about to announce that our party is almost complete but then I see Ian Sorensen walking past the window. As so often seems to be the case when you are trying to gather a group of people together, just as one of them comes home to roost, another one makes a bolt for the far horizon. Ian is wheeling a case behind him, looking for all the world like he has just been fired from The Apprentice, but then it is explained to me that he is taking Lilian’s suitcase to stash away in the car. Even when a third party happens along and he and Ian start to negotiate what appears to be a selling price for Lilian’s worldly goods, there is no need to worry. It turns out it isn’t some huckster from the black economy after all but Mike Ford, trying to find the restaurant. I wonder when the complaints about my directions are going to start…

(The more astute of my readers may have noticed that Mike Ford was in conversation in a previous paragraph in spite of having only just now arrived at the restaurant. I refer you to Einstein’s paper ‘The Unreliability of Time in Con Reports and Associated Fannish Writing’ for an explanation of this phenomenon.)

The magic number ten has now been reached, a mere two short of the twelve diners I previously reported to the restaurant, and I’m relieved to discover that this appears to be close enough for them to be willing to feed us curry. Exactly how this is to be done, however, has yet to be negotiated. In addition to the a la carte option, there is also a buffet alternative and this turns out to be a critical complication. Few people can remember which option they selected when they were originally asked, nobody is entirely sure whether such selection is binding anyway, and

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4 I must here reveal that I received a request to append all references to Lilian imbibing anything with the legend “(gin)”. I shall not of course reveal the source of this request but you’ll just have to do it yourself, Farey. You’re safe on the other side of that ocean, whereas Lilian and I live in (approximately) the same country. So she’s in range to swipe me with one of those parasol things that come with her gin.
even if it isn’t, no one seems to be sure about what they want to do right now. One or two people seem to bounce back and forth between buffet and table on the end of a piece of elastic for a while, assessing the range of available dishes, the relative costs of the two alternatives and (for all I know) the likely wear upon shoe leather of travel to the buffet and back. Our deliberations are overseen by a formidable head waiter who is managing not only a table full of hungry yet indecisive fans but a squad of trainee assistants who bob around avidly yet ineffectually in their eagerness to please. He has the air about him of a controller at a busy railway station and, though I zone out for a while as I discuss the state of the world with Kate, I am aware of progress gradually being made, with orders conveyed in background murmurs, like garbled announcements of trains leaving from platforms far away.

The air of confusion returns, however, when our selections start to arrive and it becomes obvious that the starters are being brought at the same time as the main meals. While this is unexpected, you can understand their eagerness, in view of our form so far, to get our particular party over and done with as swiftly as possible. I regret to say that I myself only add to the chaos, having entirely forgotten what I ordered. All I can remember is that it was a name I didn’t recognise at a spice level of two chillies. (I was being adventurous, OK?) It certainly wasn’t the creamy yellow coconuty Korma-like thing I’ve been brought. The word ‘farce’ would not be entirely inappropriate to describe the way things are going and, setting my usual hyperbole to one side for a moment, I swear that one of the eager assistants actually stands at the side of my table declaiming “Oh dear, what is to be done?” like a bit part actor in “Carry on Up the Khyber”.

I have to confess that my cognitive deficit is starting to become a bit of a problem these days. It can be inconvenient when we’re watching one of our cosy bedtime thrillers and I can’t remember who met a horrible death the previous week, but if it’s starting to keep me away from my curry then it is a matter of even greater concern. Fortunately someone else eventually claims the yellowy thing that I didn’t order and something more appropriately fiery is placed before me, along with a dish of rice instead of the naan I ordered. Never mind – this is close enough. I never discover what became of the naan but I polish off about a third of the rice, the rest being eagerly dispatched by Graham and Lilian, one of whom (for all I know) may have ordered it in the first place.

All in all, believe it or not, the meal is a great success, the high standard of the restaurant’s food being more than enough to offset the general confusion. In the end, I think only Kate and Lilian take the buffet option. I go over to take a quick squint at it and realise at once that I had a very lucky escape. Quite apart from the generous selection of salvers full of curry, I see row after row of free puddings. If I’d gone for that, I don’t think I would have made it as far as the Playhouse. Speaking of which, once the meal is over, we need to get to the West Yorkshire Playhouse for the second half of this rather complex evening. The journey between the two is not a long one, but is
not particularly easy to describe, as I found when I attempted to give directions on Facebook a few days previously. I talk the various landmarks through with Pete Lyon as we stroll along. Half way through, he has a sudden realisation: “Oh, when you gave the directions, you described the journey from the Playhouse to the restaurant! But we’re going in the opposite direction…” “Yes,” I explain, “but you have to get there before you can come back.” Pete does not look convinced.

Neither does Graham. As we reach the long flight of steps leading up to the Playhouse, he studies them suspiciously. “So these are your steps, Mr Ounsley…” he begins disapprovingly. I wait to see what comes next. I suspect he is going to point out that I described walking down the steps whereas in fact we are already at the bottom so we have to walk up them. In the end, however, he doesn’t say any more. Perhaps he feels he would need a plastic sheep to explain it to me.

When we finally reach the bar at the Playhouse, we find that Phil Knight, who has only come for the ‘drinks’ part of the evening, has been sitting there waiting for rather longer than advertised. I realise I should have added an ‘indecision adjustment’ to the timings.

Never mind – Phil doesn’t seem too bothered and at least now Graham is free to delve into his bag and bring out not Xmas cards but a pile of freshly minted fanzines. He has already explained to Pete why his artwork is not on the front cover and I have yet to discover that he’s missed the by-line off my article, so there is a short window of opportunity in which Graham can actually enjoy giving out his new Rubber Crab to readers instead of having to placate unruly contributors.

In an ideal world, the distribution of a fanzine would be followed immediately by the recipients reading it and conveying their response, the latter ideally involving the use of the phrase ‘five stars’ at some stage or other. In the old days, you would hope for D West to draw on his roll up and utter the magic words “bits of this aren’t too bad I suppose” or some such fulsome praise. In reality, the process is more longwinded than that so I shall have to refer you to the letter column to see what those who didn’t leave the fanzine behind at the Playhouse, actually got round to reading it, and even remembered to write a letter had to say. The role of a fanzine editor is a bit like that of Lou Reed in his song ‘Waiting For My Man’. ‘The first thing you learn is that you always have to wait.’

In the meantime, there is just the little business of the second half of the evening to write about. This soon turns into one of the complex, topical, sociopolitical, biotechnofannish discussions I’ve attempted rather ineptly to describe on previous occasions.

This time, the ailing Lilian is rushed off early to imbibe medicinal gruel in Chesterfield but Graham struggles through without her, joined first of all by Kate and latterly by Pete, the evening ending with a fascinating discussion on parenting: our own
and that of our children. Of course, in the spirit of *Arrival* (or should that be Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young?) parenting works both ways. “We got it wrong with our parents,” says Pete, as the discussion draws to an end. “We told them off for talking about the war. But they needed to talk about the war. They were traumatised.” There’s also a discussion of returning to fandom after time spent away, though I’m damned if I can remember exactly what was said about this – nor can I be sure what it reminds me of most. Is it *Heart of Darkness* or *The Enchanted Duplicator*? But when I try to expand on these and some of the other issues covered, I find this article morphing into one of those opinionated Facebook posts with which we’re all too familiar. Such efforts are not necessarily always a bad thing but I doubt we need more of them here.

Yet the conversations themselves were of greater interest than that suggests and I find myself wishing we could record them and issue them as a podcast or a YouTube discussion or something – maybe as part of *Rubber Crab*. Any thoughts? It would be interesting to try, though also a bit of a long shot. I can’t avoid the suspicion that if required to talk, people would refuse to say a word and start throwing paper aeroplanes.

Or maybe it comes back to the obstinate truth that we need to do a relaxacon after all. Then we can run that conversation again as a panel discussion. Though god help us if we need to organise everyone to pay a £5 deposit first…

PS: In closing, I should give a name check to people who were there at the meeting but haven’t been mentioned yet.

Hazel Ashworth West did an excellent job of taking photos in lieu of Linda, who wasn’t able to come. She also provided free advertising for her local builder.

Lee Montgomerie put in her usual late appearance and gave me the startling information that the smart meters provided ‘free of charge’ (though not really) by energy suppliers, ostensibly to help save energy by providing us with usage information, no longer work if you change supplier. Yet changing supplier is the single best way to save energy. So the whole smart meter initiative is a total waste of time and money and another example of how those in charge (worldwide but with particular reference to the UK) are totally clueless. I’ve cut the rest of this paragraph because it’s a very good example of what I was saying about this article all too easily turning into an opinionated Facebook post. Even so, would you believe it, etc. etc.

Yvonne Rowse (who had to go to work the following day) was on hand to assist Ian in nursing Lilian through her flu. On the way back, this apparently consisted of playing The Human

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6 This was an attempt to kick-start that elusive letter column, but I do feel there is scope to develop further formats in which to bring fannish discussion into the electronic age. Facebook is good but the attention span offered by most of those browsing (including me) is annoyingly short. What do I do with an article like this? (No rude comments, please.) It’s going in a fanzine (obviously – assuming you’re reading this in one) but isn’t that extraordinarily archaic for 2018? I could put it in a blog but how would I get anyone to read it? It seems to be the nature of the internet that Facebook and Twitter, the social media equivalent of McDonalds and KFC, are standing room only and everyone is shouting the same thing at once, while potentially more interesting bits are deserted because nobody knows they’re there or people don’t come upon them at the same time. Meanwhile, we’ll all go on blaming Facebook of course…

7 We tried to do a relaxacon. It sort of exploded. I think it was Facebook’s fault.

8 In fairness to Leeds fans, I should make it clear that my problems in obtaining deposits have been slightly exaggerated for (allegedly) comic effect. I love you all really.
League up at eleven to drown out her coughs and sneezes. I apologise if I was inadvertently dismissive of Lilian’s infection. I hope she’s better now. It was clearly beyond the level of mere Moody Blues relief. I only hope they didn’t have to go as far as cranking up the Bee Gees.⁹

⁹ One aspect of the transatlantic transplantation of this article that particularly worried me was that the ‘joke’ (I use the term loosely) on which it ends requires a peremptory knowledge of something so arcane and unlikely as Ian Sorensen’s taste in music. So thank goodness for these footnotes. We don’t have to end on a reference to the Bee Gees after all.
(Yes we do - Eds.)

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ROAD TRIPPING

BRENDA DUPONT

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Photo stolen from www.grammy.com
NOT RUSH

Lurking at the fringes of the culture
An alien contagion, lurid by persuasion
Daring tales of space flight and discoveries unknown
In mundane lit, all turns may be predicted
the characters are normal, their interactions formal
Nothing to surprise us as they marry and leave home

Give us something Stfnal where the tentacles may roam

Genre Fiction
Sport a brass brassiere, shake the hand of Fear
Take wing and be reborn!

Genre Fiction
On some starlit shore, hear the rockets roar
Warp out and be reborn!
Let us forget the waking life and all the foo we face
Make contact with another time and get high by sailing space!

Drawn by BEMs, we gather at the newsstand
Astounding Science Fiction has become a shared addiction
Wondering what Campbell said in a Dianetic code.

Reading on we dream of tendril towers
And if the end is tragic we fix it all by magic
And live the life we meant to in pursuit of grander goals

Something out of a wicked dream
Of daring schemes and timeless flights…

Genre Fiction
So sport a brass brassiere and shake the hand of Fear
Take wing and be reborn!

Genre Fiction
On some starlit shore hear the rockets roar
Warp out and be reborn!
Let us forget the waking life
And all the foo we face
Make contact with another time
and get wild in unknown space!

Original song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYYdQB0mkEU

Lyrical manipulation by Andy Hooper
In 2017, Luke and I went to the King County Clinic. It was an amazing and overwhelming experience.

This year, I went again, alone. We have some medical coverage now, but no dental insurance. At 10:30 pm last Wednesday night, I got in line outside Key Arena. At 12:30 am, the huge tent was opened up, with rows of chairs where we would wait overnight ‘til they assigned numbers at 5:00 am.

A volunteer at the door had a counter/clicker thingy; I was the 108th person to enter. The lady who was first in the door said she got there at 5:30 on Wednesday afternoon.

I had stuff to read, chargers for my phone, snacks and a small fleece blanket. I settled in. Some people managed to sleep in their chairs, and I think I nodded off for a few minutes, but the ladies sitting next to me Never Stopped Talking. All through the night, people streamed in steadily. Individuals, couples, whole families. The tent was full at 5am. At least 800 people.

You could come and go if you needed, as long as you marked your chair and were back in your spot when they gave out the numbers at 5:00am. They went in order and you were given a number depending on what services you wanted: medical/dental, medical/vision or just medical. Last year, I went for medical/dental, but ran out of time for the dental. I got my flu shots, saw a doc for script renewal, and had a mammogram. This time, dental was first priority. My number was #73.

They started taking people to the clinic in Key Arena at 6am. They have an incredibly well-organized system for intake and processing. After intake, one of literally thousands of volunteers takes you where you need to go.

Everyone gets walked to their next station by someone who knows where to go (or has a map). No patient wanders around alone, looking for anything. There were interpreters everywhere, with a bright vest stating the language they spoke.

There were also robot interpreters! Actually, a screen on a cart that could be hooked up by Skype to a speaker of a language they didn’t have an interpreter for in person. So freaking cool!

Last year, I noticed dogs in vests walking around, I assumed they were assistance dogs, assisting their person. But actually, they were therapy dogs that anyone could pet!

I went to the dental area, got assessed, and waited for x-rays. That was also cool. Instant, digital x-rays from a portable, hand-held machine. The x-ray area was put in what I assume would be the changing rooms and green rooms for the events they have at Key Arena. Portraits of bands and the dates they played lined the walls.

As expected, I needed a filling. I was surprised it was only one, though. On the floor of the basketball arena were all the dental chairs. Getting a filling is never fun, and is challenging when you don’t know the dentist. But she was really great, and said I was brave, after getting through a brief panicky moment when I got overwhelmed.

When I was done, I sat for a bit then was taken to see a chiropractor. My back is a mess, and I haven’t been able to see one for years, so why not take advantage, since they were available? A few spine crunches from a nice man later, I was done.

As I was getting ready to check out, I found a therapy dog, and I sure needed some doggie kisses and a wagging tail! When I got out, it was noonish Thursday – almost fourteen hours after I first got in line. About 4000 people get seen over the course of the four days the clinic is held. Going early on the first day has many advantages, Everyone is fresh and eager, and the mood is pretty jovial. There are always first-day bugs to iron out, but everything seemed to be working pretty well.

It’s difficult sitting next to strangers on a hard chair in a chilly tent all night, but for me and thousands of others, it’s really worth it.
It didn't worry me too much that fandom was changing from the irreverent fanzine-centred world I'd known since the 1980s. It felt like a bigger and more inclusive space, and it didn't matter too much if my place was no longer anywhere near the centre.

But then Follycon made me one of their GoHs. Sure, I was excited when Caroline Mullan rang to offer me the gig. For a few weeks, months maybe, I forgot that this wasn't the 1990s, or even the early 2000s. I floated around feeling like a minor celebrity in my own head. I wanted to tell friends and family. I imagined the reaction of people at work. (Unaccountably, indifference and incomprehension weren't the first words that sprang to mind).

The Follycon committee weren't calling me a fan GoH, but I felt we were on the same page. I'd done fanzines. I'd worked on a few recent conventions (Eastercon in 2012, Novacon in 2014 and Corflu in 2015). I fit their profile for a fan-related guest, with the added bonus of having recently completed a PhD on utopian fiction. My only concern was that I wasn't Lilian Edwards. I still remember from back in Mexicon days when fans were divided into performers and workers. Lilian was so obviously a performer. And back then I so obviously wasn’t. At Mancunicon, the 2016 Eastercon when I was announced as one of the guests for Follycon, I still felt haunted by that initial categorisation, and suddenly weighed down by expectations. I was sitting at the feet of Alison Scott. Not out of respect for her position as the future chair of Follycon, I hasten to add, but because this was the convention where most of the panels you wanted to attend were in rooms too tiny to hold a decent arm-wrestling contest, let alone a programme, and naturally all the seats were taken. Anyway, Lilian was sitting next to me, and talking eloquently from the audience about comics, or maybe the latest Marvel TV series, and I could tell that Alison was secretly wishing I was Lilian. Or maybe she was just willing me to say something witty and exciting, so she could tweet it to promote Follycon.

Anyway, after vowing to keep out of Alison’s way for a couple of years till Follycon was over, I settled down to worrying about the changing mores of fandom. I couldn’t escape the notion that during my time as Guest of Honour I would say, or do, something massively inappropriate. I wasn’t sure what was allowed any more. Could I swear? Could I drink? Could I make jokes about Ian Sorensen? What if I was found naked mud wrestling in a room party with one of the Tobes? Would there be a zero tolerance policy on trouser press defenestrations? What counts as good harmless fun anymore, and would I somehow inadvertently bring the convention into disrepute?

However, by Novacon I discovered that I had a different etiquette question to worry about. Was I supposed to be hosting a party for the former fan Guests of Honour? Everyone told me that I didn’t have to, apart from Fran Dowd. But the more often they told me that, the more it sounded like I did. After a while I had to add Fran Dowd, Alice Lawson and Caroline Mullan to my list of people to avoid.

But avoiding Caroline, played straight into the hands of Michael Abbott. You might think that Michael is a lovely amiable guy, and he is, but he also lives in Cambridge and does a lot of game-playing. So, never underestimate his strategy. Now, I’m not implying that he and Caroline had competing programming agendas but by showing no interest whatsoever in my position vis a vis former GoH parties, Michael lulled me into the state of security that led to me agreeing to do a DJ set with Kieron Gillen. After that, I couldn’t
CHRISTINA LAKE

say no when Caroline signed me up for the Mad Hatters tea party and BSFA Awards ceremony. It’s just as well GoH minder Catherine Pickersgill intervened at this point or who knows what else I would have agreed to. Though I have no-one to blame for the beer tasting, other than Doug, Claire and Mark, and Jim de Liscard. And beer. At least I said no to a Kaffeeklatsch.

By the start of 2018 I would probably have been unable to leave my home for the number of fans I was trying to avoid if I didn’t live in Cornwall which is beyond the reach of all but the most dedicated of SMOFs and conrunners. Instead I couldn’t leave the house because I was too busy preparing for all the activities I’d overcommitted myself on. And when I did get out, it was to go on ever increasingly long runs in the snow, rain and wind. Did I mention that I’d decided to run the Paris marathon the weekend after Eastercon? If this were an article about top tips on what to avoid if you are ever a GoH, then top tip number one would be don’t try to run a marathon the weekend after you’re due to be a guest at a national science fiction convention. In fact don’t try to run a marathon full stop. It’s as obvious as not fighting a land war in Asia. Or editing a collection of your own works, come to that.

I don’t know how I came to be editing my own collection. The committee were keen for me to do a publication, and I was keen to take the opportunity to inflict a master work on the masses. Ambitious ideas about writing about fanzines past, present and future fell by the wayside as the inevitable deadlines began to loom. But I’d been dead impressed by William Breiding’s Rose Motel and fondly imagined I could do something similar with my own back catalogue. Ha, ha! If only my life had been a bit less home counties and more rock n’roll. If only Lilian and I had really had that secret lesbian relationship. If only I’d written more articles for other fanzines so I didn’t come across as the queen of self-publishing. Thank goodness for Andy Hooper and Apparatchik.

Creating the collection segued closely into writing my GoH speech which was largely based on my early fannish career, so I also had to worry about how much I was repeating myself. At the same time as writing the talk, I was also trying to
condense down my 120,000 word PhD thesis into a talk to fit into a one-hour slot. Then there was all the prep I had to do for the beer tasting (which disappointingly involved a lot of online searching of beer sites, rather than offline beer drinking), not to mention persuading Doug that he’d like to help with setting up playlists for the increasingly scary prospect of DJ-ing with Kieron Gillen, writer of *Phonogram*, a graphic novel dedicated, I belatedly realised, to the art of sneering at other people’s music tastes.

All this frantic activity meant I didn’t have time to worry about messing up as GoH. Suddenly it was time to stop building up my running distances, stop writing my GoH speeches and get on the train to Harrogate. Getting to Harrogate from Cornwall is about a day of travel in itself, so Doug and I decided to leave two days before the convention just to be on the safe side. You never know with the British transport system and I didn’t want to risk missing the posh meal in a Nordic bistro that the committee were laying on for the Guests of Honour, did I?

The hotel in Harrogate had looked amazing in the presentations. A cross between Gormenghast and the venue for an Agatha Christie whodunnit. There was going to be croquet on the lawn and afternoon tea in the sunshine. But as we arrived, with forecasts of rain and snow for the weekend, it seemed an increasingly unlikely prospect. Even so the hotel looked good. On the outside at least.

Now I have to admit that I might have been a teensy bit disappointed when my room turned out not to be some fabulous suite on the top floor with an amazing view, but a fairly standard double with an oddly designed mezzanine bathroom, a couple of steps up from the rest of the room. Whose bright idea was that, I wondered? Didn’t they realise that drink and bathroom steps do not mix? On the other hand, if I wanted a last-ditch excuse not to run a marathon, then tripping up or down the stairs might just do the trick. It was only later in the weekend that I realised why the ground floor room had been chosen. Not just to keep me handy for the programme, but because most of the other rooms had certain design flaws, particularly on a rainy weekend, that meant that the rooms where they put the guests were the only rooms the committee could trust not to leak.

My first day was relatively light on programming, though oddly stressful. Firstly I couldn’t find the hat making workshop where someone was going to make my hat for the Mad Hatters tea party. Then when I did find it, I was told quite firmly that no hats would be made for anyone, however eminent they might think themselves. Catherine Pickersgill produced one of her own hats, and offered to fit in decorating it for me on top of her considerable workload as Guest Liaison. I gratefully accepted. She’s such a hero! Then there was the TAFF Extravaganza. Some programme items are more tricky to prepare for than others. Jim Mowatt was running it to launch his trip report, and Lilian and I were there as former TAFF winners. But what did TAFF Extravaganza even mean? Jim seemed unsure. All I could ascertain was that he wanted us to do something TAFF-related, maybe a “then and now” retrospective on what had changed since our trip. But Lilian mostly wanted us to do a reading of “The Fan in the High Castle”, the alternate history article she and Simon Ounsley (with a small amount of input from me) had written for *This Never Happens*. I tried to persuade her to save it for our fanzine reading slot later in the convention, but Lilian was determined, as she knew Simon was going to be at the convention that day. So, there we were in the billiard room, with no lead piping in sight. Jim had just re-enacted some of his trip report, with the help of Kylie Ding, Julia and DougS, then handed the mike over to us. This was my chance to show that I could do this GoH thing. The audience, not huge in the first place, looked like it was seeking
any excuse to leave. I started babbling about TAFF. Or rather, how we weren’t going to talk about TAFF, even though we could, but were going to read an article full of in-jokes from 30 years ago. I really know how to sell it to them! Luckily, none of this fazed Lilian, who effortlessly connected our effort to the Netflix series *The Man in the High Castle*, and then we embarked on what I can only call an annotated reading. That is, I read and Lilian giggled a lot, and then explained the jokes. Miraculously there was still some audience left at the end, though no Simon Ounsley who hadn’t made it past the circle of Leeds fans in the bar.

One of my more unusual duties as Fan GoH was to lead a small group of fans out to the Harrogate Parkrun on Saturday morning. Not only was it unfannishly early, but it was pouring with rain and the Parkrun circuit was as muddy as a rugby pitch. Aha, thought I, another opportunity to injure myself and get out of running the Paris Marathon. The marshalls seemed more than happy to aid and abet in this ambition, being more concerned about protecting the crocuses than looking after the safety of the runners. But at least this meant I made it outside the hotel before my programme duties for the day began in earnest. First there was a 90 minute panel on how and why otherwise sane people decide to do PhDs, followed by another 90 minutes on TWP to #MeToo. Luckily neither panel ran out of steam, and my only challenge was getting a chance to talk, not finding something to say. The TWP and #MeToo panel probably could have gone on for another hour, there were so many strong feelings in the room. I was disappointed that so many of the women present had experienced harassment and unwanted attention from men in fandom, and wondered if I was naïve to feel that most of the women I had known in TWP and fandom at large in the 1980s had been assertive enough to make their feelings very clear if men overstepped the line. But no doubt there was much more going on than I was aware of, and began to worry that maybe my sense of empowerment and positivity from TWP could be interpreted as wilful blindness or condoning misbehaviours, certainly in relation to transgender members. But, anyway, I must have said something right as several people ended up joining TWP. I left the panel feeling a bit drained, trying to keep my energy going for giving a talk on eugenics, the subject of my PhD. If I was worried about my PC quotient for the #MeToo panel, I had to be doubly careful on a subject like eugenics to make it clear that I was not endorsing eugenics, or anything done in its name. I didn’t think fans were slans, and definitely didn’t want to see a fannish breeding experiment. That out of the way, I thought the talk went quite well. There were a lot of people in the audience, and some interesting questions, and I managed not to overrun.

This meant that I could cross the corridor in time to collect a glass of bubbly for my next engagement, presenting one of the BSFA Awards. This was excellent fun as I got to sit with the other GoHs – Kim Stanley Robinson, Nnedi Okorafor and Kieron Gillen. Kieron and I had already made friends at the opening ceremony so some of my nervousness over DJ-ing with him...
CHRISTINA LAKE

had dissipated though not completely vanished. My task was to present the non-fiction award, which went to Paul Kincaid for his book on Iain Banks. While disappointed not to be able to go give it to Paul in person, I was more than happy with his substitute Chris Priest, who came up on stage and gave me a hug. It was also lovely to see Chris’s current partner Nina Allan get an award for best novel, to her obvious delight.

After thoroughly enjoying my role in the Award ceremony, there was only one engagement left for the day, the disco with Kieron. Doug and I still hadn’t sussed out how we were going to get our music onto Kieron’s iPad, so in the end we all decided it would be easiest just to use Kieron’s Spotify access. Kieron gave us a quick lesson on his DJ app, and we were ready to go. Kieron put on some music, then let us have a try. People began to come into the room, and soon they were starting to dance. They even stayed on the dancefloor when Doug and I took over for a stint. Clearly they would dance, whatever we played!

But I think we made a good team, as Kieron set complemented ours with music we wouldn’t have known to play, while Doug and I slipped in some tried and tested fan crowd-pleasers like Teenage Kicks and Road to Nowhere. Suddenly I realised I was having a brilliant time. I could play my favourite music and people would dance! But the true power of the music was demonstrated when Kieron got everyone out on the dance floor for his finale of Total Eclipse of the Heart. It was massive, and amazing.

Sunday was the toughest day. For a start it involved my GoH speech. I was doing a speech because I thought it’d be more interesting than an interview, and easier to prepare in advance. But perhaps it was simply another example of the kind of hubris that had prompted me to edit my own collection of writing. At least in an interview you can appoint someone to make you seem more interesting, and more importantly bond with the audience to keep the event moving along, and help them understand why they might want to know more about you. But no, I thought that I could say something interesting and entertaining about the fandom I had entered back in the 1980s from my current perspective as a fan in the 21st century. So I was mortified to discover that what I thought I was helping the audience engage with my story was coming across as exclusionary banter with my mates (oh the joys of instant feedback from social media!). But I kept going regardless, reassured by Lilian’s reminder that banter with mates was really actually the fucking point of fandom. I could even laugh about it the next morning at breakfast with Alison Scott who was wondering whether “Fanter” would be a good name for a fanzine until Mike Scott pointed out that Fanta was originally invented by the Nazis as a substitute for coke.

After my talk, I thought I was going for lunch with Doug and some of our Swedish friends, until I looked at my watch and realised I was due to be hosting a TWP get-together in 10 minutes time! This is where I might as well mention that I was glad that I hadn’t stepped up to host the former fan GoH party as I just don’t know how I would have had the time, or mental energy. Luckily for me, Spike had been shopping for wine and nibbles, as Lilian who’d suggested the time...
for the meet-up was nowhere to be seen; probably out eating that lunch I’d missed! The turnout was low as the event had been organised at the last minute following the enthusiasm of the #TWP panel, and most of the current TWP members were otherwise engaged. Still, several of the women from the panel were there, and Spike, who’d even been a member of TWP for a short while in the day, did a good job helping me explain what an apa was. After everyone had left, Lilian turned up, just in time to help drink the wine and drag me down to Kieron Gillen’s talk, which had in fact, I remembered, been the rationale for starting the TWP meet-up at the time we did. Kieron was scarcely articulate, intelligent and interesting. He, of course, opted for the interview approach, with Roz Kaveney, and totally nailed it!

After that I planned to go back to my room and lie down, only to realise that it was time to get changed and put on my Easter bonnet, as superbly produced by Catherine Pickersgill, for the Mad Hatter’s tea party. Tea on the lawn was out, but when I arrived, slightly late, there seemed to be a children’s party going on with magicians, balloons and of course children. Well, what else would you expect from a Mad Hatter event? I had splendid company from Laura Wheatly and Sally Rowse, but even so there were times when I thought it might be nice to turn into a dormouse and have a little snooze on the table. But I had a duty to the hat to stay upright, and parade it at the appropriate time.

I can’t remember if I was still wearing the hat for the beer tasting. I know I was writing my beer stories right up to the last minute and didn’t change out of my tea party dress, which somehow made my credentials as a beer drinker seem all the more unlikely. Here I was, a woman standing up talking about beer, and wearing a dress, not a CAMRA t-shirt, or whatever. Anyway, the female members of the audience seemed to relate to my battles not to get served beer in special “ladies” glasses back in the 1980s (although ironically those same glasses are now highly prized for drinking specific types of craft ale). The beer itself went down well, supplemented by actual useful information from Jim De Liscard and Doug. Okay, Tony Berry thought there wasn’t enough beer per tasting, but given how many beers we had to get through in an hour, and the strength of some of them, I’d say it was pretty good value.

One last day to go. All I had to do was say something coherent about utopias and work out what to include in the fanzine readings Doug, Lilian and I were scheduled to do. I even got up in time to see fellow GoH Nnedi Okorafator on a panel. I’m not sure I did say much of coherence about utopias, but I did try to promote the idea that we needed more utopian thinking. I probably talked about Aldous Huxley as well. But while I’d been exploring utopia, the Harrogate weather had been making its own plans for dystopia, or, at least, travel chaos. Snow had started to fall, and Lilian didn’t want to get snowed up in Harrogate as she had things to do and people to see in Edinburgh the next day. Not to worry, she told us, she’d talked Ian Sorensen into joining us for the fanzine readings. We weren’t sure that Ian would work as a token Lilian, but never mind! So we waved Lilian off to find her taxi, while I continued dithering over what to read. Caroline Mullan helped out, in the way Caroline knows best, by presenting us with a piece by James White and demanding that we read it. In the end, I became stunt Lilian and read out something by Lilian, something by Simon Ounsley and even something by myself. Ian was delegated to read James White and some pastiches by Colin Greenland from This Never Happens. Then Doug read from his Ballard-esque Eastercon report “You: Cider: Ian Sorensen” which contained the account of how he and Alun Harries had plotted to drop a photocopier on Ian’s head. This was all the
funnier for being read out whilst sitting next to Ian.

Then it was all over, and so was the convention, apart from the closing ceremony, where I had my last chance to talk to Kieron, Stan and Nnedi, and to swap bags with Nnedi when we found we had each other’s souvenir Follycon glassware. The rest of the day involved a very raucous Chinese meal with Graham James and co., and the dead dog party where I could slough off my identity as fan GoH and just talk nonsense to Spike, Greg and many others!

Being a GoH was amazing, fabulous, memorable and a lot of hard work. It did lead to some soul searching. What had I ever really done for fandom? What was the value of my fannish life in the 80s? What is it that keeps me being a fan now? Are fanzines dead? What do I want to do next? But I’m so glad that the Follycon committee gave me the chance to be a hero, well GoH, just for one day (okay four days, but got to get the David Bowie reference in somehow). In the end, it didn’t matter that I might not have achieved my goal of being “best GoH evs”, I’d had a chance that I would never have had outside of fandom to feel that a part of my life meant something, and that I’d grown through fandom into someone who could carry off being a guest, and mostly enjoy the experience. I didn’t do anything massively uncool, apart from misjudging how to present my GoH speech. And maybe I finally came to understand the purpose of the GoH party. Not a duty, or an arcane ritual, but a chance to relax with others who’ve been through it all before, and be as inappropriate and bitchy as you need!
Three minutes forty-one seconds. So you want to talk alienation in Angeles? Mr. Moby, you have the standard three minutes forty-one seconds. Good fucking luck.

If Angeles is the city of the stars, what the hell do Angels breathe?

Dreams, scripts, ideas, plagiarism, porn. It’s not pollution. Everyone drives electric now.

The first thing is, be cool, the second first thing is, be prepared. Henry Winkler has a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. There never was a more deserving guy, apart from myself. If anyone knows how to get around Angeles in a spacesuit because the pressure is too much, he does. Or because the air is too thin – more like a vacuum.

Look, you can’t just call yourself a crack addict Former Child Actor, turn up in Angeles and expect to pick up your fame ready-made.

People come to Angeles because they have to assume they have what it takes. Those who have an even chance and even those who have none. Never had. Ain’t that a bitch.

If you’re gonna make it where Angels live, it will take more than checking into the Roosevelt once or twice or swimming in a few famous producers’ palm-fringed pools. It takes parties, connections, craft. It takes pulp history, Famous Monsters of Filmland, The Toxic Avenger. But first, understand that that flashing neon VACANCY sign in every motel is actually a reminder, another mandate: gotta empty your head, your heart, your soul; find someone else’s art to validate your existence.

Appear shirtless on the videos of musicians more famous than you. Everyone has their art, including that Ron Jeremy. Amphetamize everyone. Make them all stars, put them on Star Maps and they just might do the same for you. Everyone in goddamn Angeles needs to be on a goddamn Star Map, get visited by people who need spacesuits to get around this fucking place.

Angeles just gets bigger so it can spit you out faster.

can’t fight the future

can’t fight what I see

Sean Bean is like everyone else in Angeles, on a road to nowhere and likely to emerge more dead than alive. He knows this better than anyone, he knows it’s only a matter of time.

One does not simply watch the scene without thinking of the meme, one does not simply chew down to the end of whatever it is you’re chewing, Sean, to get your answer.

So the great Bean stares into the middle distance and asks, I may have a car with gullwing doors but am I more Vacant than the rest of you? I can’t be, but I’m an overdressed Brit on Sunset Boulevard, so surely I am.

Bean says, hey Angeles, your heart is empty. Some people have it different to us and they use it different too, but not here. Spacesuits in supermarket aisles, who’d’a thought it? Angeles, I
get how you work, but I don’t like you, I only
love/hate you.
people they come together
people they fall apart
Verne has been gone more than half a year.
Suicide by alcohol poisoning, they said. Verne was
anything but suicidal once, bouncing off the walls
of first class in a 747 rocketing out of Angeles,
him and his buddy Phil Fondacaro. Good times.
Angeles helped lift him up there, smooth, all 2’8”
of him, but it was a long, rough descent over the
next dozen years.
People they fall apart. Verne brought joy into
peoples’ lives and got shit in return where and
when he didn’t need it.
People they fall apart, people like Robin, people
like Verne, people who now and then require a
spacesuit just to walk around town.
no one can stop us now
’cause we are all made of stars
I’ll get you on a billboard and your rise to fame
will be unstoppable. Be honest, there’s the
thickness of a cigarette paper between you and
the next airhead, but your jones is so great it will
get you to Beverly Hills. There will be scandals,
the Examiner and the Enquirer, but there’s
Johnnie Cochrane, there’s always Johnnie
Cochrane. You belong here. Everyone here
is made of stars. There are stars in all of
you, and some can’t help but burn twice as
bright. Let me down and I’ll bury you.
efforts of lovers
left in my mind
The Sunset Car Wash also does a wax,
Hollywood style. Everyone has their way of
seeing the world, including that Ron
Jeremy.
They put you here with their love and lust,
the people you paid, used, stepped on,
screwed, crushed; they were human once,
now they’re just fans, or better, enemies.
Sometimes they even used you. You can’t be
expected to remember all their names. “Didn’t we
once…? Nah, can’t have been.”
Sturgeon’s Law applies to people too.
I’d like to thank everyone who helped me along
the way to receiving this award: my parents, my
lawyers on speed-dial, my dog, my exes.
I sing in the reaches
we’ll see what we find
Space may be the final frontier but it’s made in a
Hollywood basement. Boldly going anywhere is
never overrated here. Okay, sing your fucking song
then, if you have to.
So you may ask yourself, well, how did I get here?
I have these weird moments. I guess we worship
the sun because that’s, uh, where we come from?
Is that what you’re saying? Stars or, uh,
something? Huh? No Jack, you’re probably right,
I guess I can’t handle the truth, the cosmic truth.
Look, another VACANCY sign. Okay, I get it
now. Think I’ll check in here, haul the spacesuit
out of the trunk, live in a motel while I shoot my
first script. I’ll be fine, won’t let them Angels get to
me. Didn’t take me long, huh?
I've finished my first week at the Met! Amazing to be working in a place with so much history. The Met as a concept and an institution was a little daunting to me at first, but there were several things that made everything so much better.

First of all: backstage is a maze. Twisty, windowless corridors, many with all kinds of stuff in them: instrument cases, timpani, rehearsal costume racks, extra chairs. It’s very easy to take the wrong elevator and get off to find a storage space for sets or stage equipment that does not allow you to pass through. You may think this would make things more daunting, but I deliberately programmed extra time into every day to purposefully get lost, so I could wander the corridors and figure out how everything worked. And I gotta say, even though it’s a big theater and a big building, it’s not so big that I couldn’t get a handle on the layout. And as it is a building from the 1960s that has seen a lot of use, it has a certain familiar, well-worn, institutional charm. I found myself growing fonder of the Met because of the well-established clutter and wear in its backstage. Plus, there are all these thrilling little Easter eggs. Finding the door to the Rehearsal Department felt like winning a video game. And there is a super cute hidden ticket window just for company members tucked away in a corner of the lobby!

Second, the staff there are all tremendously friendly and helpful. Everyone knows it can be tough getting acclimated to a place that is so confusing to navigate with so much going on at once, and everyone I ever asked for directions was happy to help me get where I was going. The Rehearsal Department in particular was amazing with their friendliness and helpfulness, but everyone I worked with or interacted with, be it costumes or wigs or artistic staff, was at the top of their game and very welcoming.

Third, the incredible David Salsbery Fry, who’s worked there before, was there to show me around and introduce me to some of the cool secrets and shortcuts, and to help me decompress and process all my feelings after rehearsals. Working at a new company is always a little draining as you try to meet everyone, find your feet, and bring your best to the rehearsals (not to mention also getting oriented in a new city and settled in your home,
and doing all the chores and errands that arise as a result of that). Having someone who understood the extra weight that the Met’s reputation and history brings to all that, and who helped me come back to myself and re-center at the end of the day, was such a tremendous gift.

Long story short, rehearsals are going great, I’m so excited to be a part of this show and this company, and I am slowly falling in love with New York again.

Oh! I forgot to add that not only do I know several people in the cast already, but I am constantly running into people I know from young artist programs or school or previous professional productions elsewhere, and it’s always delightful. There are always several operas under production at once here, and there are tons of people working on each one, so there is a lot of opportunity for serendipitous reunions! This is a factor of New York in general, but it’s especially concentrated at the Met. One of the most amazing discoveries was that a former student of mine is working in the Rehearsal Department, and we had a great time catching up. Super proud of her.

**Monday, September 24, 2018**

This blows. My. Mind.

I have worked at most of the major opera houses in the US, and at every one I am always given a call time to get into makeup for rehearsals and performances. This is so they can schedule the wig and makeup people and the dressers most efficiently so that everyone is ready on time.

If what I am reading here is correct, and I am right in interpreting what the rehearsal schedule today tells me in regards to the Samson opening night, there are no call times here. They let you know during rehearsals how long they think it will take you to get ready, and you just... show up, sometime between two hours and a half hour before curtain. And there will be a wig and makeup artist available for you any time during that window. That’s what this seems to be saying. That just blows my damn mind. That they have so many wig and makeup people that they can just take care of you whenever you decide to arrive. This is some old-school diva stuff right here.

**Sunday, October 7, 2018**

Today’s anxiety, for your edification:

*Marnie’s* first costume/stage/orchestra rehearsal is Tuesday, and sure enough we’ve been told on the schedule that we must be in dressing rooms at least half an hour before our call time, and preferably more than that (up to two hours before) to get into costume, wig, and makeup. As I am a perfectionist, and playing a small role, this makes me tremendously anxious.

What if I guess wrong the amount of time they and I need, and I’m not ready in time for rehearsal because they’re rushing to do the important people? What if I arrive way too early, and sit around waiting to go on, tired from getting up before I’m used to, and not warmed up enough physically or mentally? (Rehearsals have been starting at 10:30 am, and so does this one, but I have only barely been able to rise by 8:30, let alone get to the opera dressed, awake, and warmed up by then. Most of the performances will be in the evening, and we need to be starting...
to alter our schedules to be at our prime at that
time of day.)

Don't get me wrong; I'm thrilled to be singing at
the Met, and everything has been totally
professional and together, and I'm sure they know
what they're doing, and I'll manage fine and all
that. I just feel very keenly the responsibility of
this decision being left entirely up to me, especially
when there are a lot of other people in play. I
don't want to get it wrong and inconvenience
anyone. I wish they'd just give us definite makeup
call times.

Tuesday, October 16, 2018

“The new phone book’s here! The new phone
book’s here! [. . .] I’m somebody now! Millions of
people look at this book every day! This is the kind
of spontaneous publicity, your name in print, that
makes people! I’m in print! Things are going to
start happening to me now!”

Friday, October 19, 2018

Today’s the day I make my debut at the Met.
I spent two years at Juilliard gazing across the
street at the country’s biggest and most prestigious
opera house, wondering if I’d ever sing there. It
seemed ridiculously unattainable and yet there it
was, so close.

In the 20 years since then, I have had the
tremendous privilege of singing at Houston
Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los
Angeles Opera, San Francisco Opera, and so
many other wonderful companies. And rehearsing
Marnie at the Met, after all that, is not so different
in terms of the skills and expectations. I’m ready
to be here, it feels familiar.

But in a way, it’s so different. I’m coming back to
Lincoln Center, where I was a starry-eyed student,
as a professional. I’m working in a place that
rehearse more operas in a week than many
companies do in a year. I’m singing with some of the best
singers in the world, in a
place with so much history
and tradition. I love it so
much and I am so incredibly
grateful to be able to do this
for a living, to bring joy and
music to myself and others at
the highest possible level.

I bought this pin to wear to
opening night, made in the
1960s of Austrian crystal, just
like the chandeliers in the
lobby at the Met. It
symbolizes my entering this
house, this time not as a star
struck audience member, but
to make music.

Happy opening night,
everyone.
Friday, October 19, 2018

Aaaannnd 38 minutes into the opera I’m done with my Met debut! It went about as perfectly as I could have hoped for, except...

I was walking to stage for my first entrance when I realized my shoes felt more comfortable than usual. So I looked down and checked. I was wearing my own black leather almond toe low heels instead of my costume ones. They are almost identical.

So I reported this to the head of ladies’ wardrobe who was in the wings waiting for Marnie’s first quick change. One of the dressers ran to my room, got the right shoes, and came back just in time for me to put them on and make my first entrance.

But if she hadn’t gotten back in time, I swear, no one would have ever known.

Now to sit on my butt for two hours and take my first bow at the Met.

Tuesday, October 30, 2018

As Marnie is open now, we’ve started rehearsals for Suor Angelica. It’s a one-act opera that takes place in a convent and there is only one character in the entire thing who is not a nun.

I’m playing a pretty small part in this one and, as it is a remount, the director is giving us the same blocking as they used last time, rather than coming up with it fresh. But there are a lot of nuns onstage, so much of the staging process involves waiting in my spot while he spends time with someone else, often the bigger roles.

Different people handle this waiting around in different ways; most talk quietly amongst themselves. But last week I had a cold; I didn’t want to get too close to anyone and get them sick, I didn’t really have the voice or the energy to chat, and I was feeling kind of drowsy and cruddy, so I just stood there and kind of zoned out.

And it felt... meditative and peaceful. Instead of getting pissed off or impatient at the waiting, I
stayed in the moment and let myself just be there. And whereas sometimes I feel frustrated at whoever’s running things if I have to wait around during rehearsals, I felt a sense of empathy and goodwill instead.

Y’ALL I CHANNELED A NUN.

I can’t think of a better way to kickstart playing this role than to have done it when I was feeling sick and drowsy. It gave me the patience to slow down my normally mile-a-minute brain and get into the slower, more humble mindset my character needed.

I just hope I didn’t give anyone my cold.

**Thursday, November 29, 2018**

No, stupid nightmare, I have not sung four Ring cycles in my career and somehow never noticed there was a section of my role that I had always neglected to sing and also that no conductor had ever mentioned or corrected me on because I’m beyond help and worthy only of contempt and pity, and now it’s like ten minutes before I go on and somehow I have to cram this totally unfamiliar section into my head to prove that I’m a responsible professional. That did not happen.

**Saturday, December 15, 2018**

As a performer, I like finding meaning in things that happen, and I thought it was particularly clever of the universe to remind me of the value and importance of covers on the last day before I start being a cover full-time for the next several months.

Today the dominoes fell; due to illness, Stephanie Blythe cancelled the last performance of *Trittico*, in which she is singing two roles, so two separate people went on for her. Of those two, one was already playing a part in *Suor*, so someone (my awesome friend Sandra Eddy) went on for her. But Sandy is also in *Suor* so someone else went on (and made her Met debut!) in her place as well.

Covering doesn’t make me feel lesser, which surprises some non-singers when I tell them. They tend to picture the “All About Eve” scenario: me looking hungrily at the person while they’re rehearsing, seeking to weasel my way in however I can, and sabotage the person who’s singing the role I should be singing. But that’s not how it feels to me at all. It feels more like service.

My responsibility, as I see it, when covering a role, is to ensure that I am quietly and patiently as prepared as possible so I can step in and save the show if I’m needed. It’s crucial, and it happens a lot, as today clearly demonstrates. For me, it feels like a serious responsibility - part of that whole “the show must go on” thing. It could not feel less about me or my ego, except for my pride in doing a good job at what I was hired to do. It makes me feel even more like I’m part of a supportive family of colleagues.

Today was my last scheduled performance at the Met. From now on I shift to having my colleagues’ backs.
John: I must admit I've never encountered W.O.O.F before. Probably because, the occasional Corflu excepted, I don't go to conventions, much less WorldCons, as con-attending is a hobby reserved to those classes what can afford it.

Oh, I've been to the occasional Westercon, and I've helped run more regional conventions than I ever paid to attend (and then there's Corflu again). Maybe that's part of the problem. Conventions are associated with work in my mind, and everybody knows how much I like work (Hello, Nic, I'll have this wrapped up Real Soon Now).

And don't get me started on big con programming. Having to choose between ~25 different programming tracks at any given time sounds like a miserable hell of choice overload to me; any panel I attended would be tainted by the feeling that I was missing a better one, somewhere else.

But “Worldcon Order Of Fan-editors”? That's cool. I would sneak into legally and ethically pay my way into a Worldcon, just to contribute something for the chance to say I was a member of that lofty-sounding organization. It’s a suitably ostentatious name for a fanzine-sized APA that comes in at around ~80 pages.

W.O.O.F bears the hallmarks of any APA; each contribution comes on different paper, with varying levels of technical sophistication and participation. Minac seems to have been one side of an 8.5x11 page, as a few contributors submit zines with bare backsides, but contributions range from single pages to full-size perzines, a clubzine and more.

Like any APA worthy of the name, it's a bit of a circle jerk at times. Ample space is given throughout to commentary on prior mailings and other fanzines, which is akin to reading those “begetting” chapters in the bible if you’re not in on the conversation. You and I know it comes with the territory, but we risk alienating potential fanzine fans by... hah, just kidding, potential fans are too busy looking at their phones on the way to the next panel about costuming.

Jacq: Who’s Afraid of this Big Bad W.O.O.F? Not me. I live in a state that just elected a dead pimp. Bring it on.

W.O.O.F #43 was born in San Jose during Worldcon 76. Collected and compiled by Guy H. Lillian III (GHLIII) it was the usual labor of love; ask any OE. Guy includes a short history of W.O.O.F in his Intro, noting its debut in 1976 with Bruce Pelz at the helm.

There are 13 contributors. Cover artist Charlie Williams fashions an upright Schnauzer - or possibly Scottish Terrier - dandy with cane, smoking jacket and trousers. The tail seems to be that of a fox, as neither of those breeds is so luxuriously endowed. Other dogs peer out of the two “O’s” in W.O.O.F.

As OE, GHLIII is all through this disty, from the 1st page Intro, to lvy Pot, a short perzine of elegant prose and bio-tales, to his Zine Dump #44, an ambitious, cordial, humorous, and wry undertaking covering the four food groups of fanwriting. Guy
dishes no snark or flesh-tearing critique. In even-handed and matter-of-fact narrative, offerings are described without withering commentary.

From *INX Pot* we discover that the former criminal defense attorney lives on an island near Cape Canaveral and has a front row seat to the launches. The stars are not so distant when the pathway is in your backyard. Those in his presence are only one degree of separation away from such stars as Harlan Ellison, Ursula Le Guin, Anne McCaffrey, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, and even Ed Wood.

**JoHn:** Speaking of Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, I think the highlight of the ish is Guy’s tribute to Yarbro. It was written for the San Jose Worldcon Program Book but was inexplicably left out of the final publication and Guy places it as an addendum here. It is a warm, loving and nostalgic glimpse back at their friendship, and a capsule glimpse into late 60s fandom, as well. There’s a lot of namedropping by necessity, as their first meeting took place in a room full of Name Brand authors and future BNFs.

**Jacq:** *Zine Dump #44* is dedicated to, and its cover features, a photo of my darling ShelVy whose hand I once got to hold and who has since slipped “the surly bonds of earth” along with Steve Sneyd, *Data Dump* writer and publisher.

GHLIII lists the 2018 FAAN awards (for work published the previous year), and zines in alpha order. *Brylcream and Butter* (I’ll take ‘things you put in your hair in the 60’s,’ Alex) by Oz’s Andrew Ivamy, and *Swill*, by Neil Jamieson-Williams, are two of the most intriguing, with *Piss On It*, by John Purcell, taking an Honorable Mention, IMHO. LoCs from Curt Phillips, John Purcell, Lloyd Penney are included along with a note that the next issue of GHLIII’s *Challenger* (#42) is in utero.

Johann Anglemark’s *Diversion by Zero* finds the current TAFF delegate’s fan fund mourning the metamorphosis of TAFF duties from zine-based to ambassadorial. But he promises to play along, with his ever-so-tall, serene countenance and knowledge of idiomatic English. **JA**: TAFF delegate, W.O.O.F. meister, zine fiend - triple threat.

**JoHn:** I’d like to point out here that our issue of the disty featured two copies of Johann’s fanzine; clearly the OE was not cracking the whip hard enough on his army of collating monkeys. Also, no evidence is given herein that Johann Anglemark is tall. You’re clearly straying beyond the bounds of our editorial
mandate by relying on personal experience.... I have been passed a note reminding me we have no editorial mandate.

**Jacq:** Alan Stewart’s *Ytterbium Heptoxide* (a chemical compound with the formula Yb₂O₃, with an added oxygen molecule, because hey, who doesn’t like oxygen?) is a title which sounds like a substance used in an acid attack. AS did not write Year of the Cat (different Al) but the Oz native does write, and here presents comments from W.O.O.F. 2017, the most notable being Roger Hill’s “I do not have any of the W.O.O.F. mailings you are missing. Do they exist?” Roger Hill’s *Report From Hoople # 134.304* is the last article in W.O.O.F. 43 and mentions this again. From Mixu Lauronen: “Interesting Speculations. As they say, ‘History is written by the winners/survivors which in this case is Gandalf.’”

AS, like some of the contributors, provided W.O.O.F. with either the latest issue of his fanzine or LoCs of previous issues. Out-of-context LoCs are provocative because they, if truly intriguing, merit research, elicit outrage, provide a challenge, or pique curiosity. One wants them to go forth and multiply. To elicit a torrent of LoCs, it seems to me that the way to go about it is to give the reader a piece of nostalgia, an unpopular opinion, or piss them off some other way. You’ll hear about it soon enough.

**John:** Anaerobic bacteria don’t like oxygen. I assume that at least one of our readers is an obligate extremophile who finds oxygen to be poisonous and, on behalf of the editorial team, I’d like to apologize for the insensitivity.

**Jacq:** I shivered along with Dean Gahlon’s *Tales From The Frozen North*. Pay no attention to the way his surname is spelled on the bacover, that’s just the ceremonial typo present in all W.O.O.F.s since time immemorial. He’s attended 300 conventions and has a database of cons. That’s one way to stay warm. DG expounds on creating his W.O.O.F. page and celebrates the acquisition of fiber-based internet back on the tundra. Cool! Juan Sanmiguel’s *OASFIS Event Horizon* is a clubzine. GHLIII tells us this in his intro, and I’m going to believe any Guy that has posed for a hobbit picture (Sasquan). The zine is organized, comprehensive, has a review in it (“The Orville”) lists upcoming events and cons, business meeting minutes, The World Fantasy Awards, a detailed and exhaustive Worldcon 75 report (does the author possess the power to be in two places at once?) and the crowning glory of all fannish publications, a Lloyd Penney LoC. Florida fandom is well above sea level.

**John:** Clubzines make me happy, unfortunately in part because seeing one is like spotting a coelacanth or a tuatara in the wild, too-rare survivors from another age.

**Jacq:** Andy Hooper (with help from Carrie Root) gives us *Weisinger’s Worldcon*, a well-researched and scholarly piece about the 1939 Nycon attendee. We learn all about what Mort Weisinger was doing at the con, what he did in his early life, and what he went on to do because of AH’s exhaustive biographical capture of sometimes hard to find information and little-known facts.
Weisinger may not have been anywhere near 1939’s other top events, the release of *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*, but the editor of Thrilling Wonder Stories, Startling Stories, and later, DC comics, keeper of the Superman and Batman legacies and their “offsprings” (my words) WWII sergeant, and “idea thief” (AH’s words) was a force of nature in the world of ink and pulp. Described as “demanding, demeaning, profane, scornful, impatient, and quite simply exhausting to work for” Weisinger was no angel, and more of a character than his many characters combined. One of the anagrams of his name is “mewing rioters”; another is “wormiest reign.” Definitely worthy of eyes.

**JoHn:** Andy Hooper knows stuff, and he wants you to know it too. His study of Weisinger is more likely to be plagiarized for a term paper than read for pleasure by anyone under the age of 30, but it’s an impressively detailed, scrupulously researched piece that makes me feel like I’m working in finger paints.

**Jacq:** Chris Garcia’s *Little Passport* finds the affable two-timer (Hugos, that is - the man’s a happily married father of two!) diving into Photoshop (his zine cover has the only color page in the mailing and includes a skateboarder, a pentagram, and a microwave oven), podcasts, and poetry. There’s a *Drink Tank* resurrection on the horizon, he’s pounding out a *NaNoWriMo* on wrestling, and he takes some time to remember (and miss) Randy Byers and Milt Stevens.

**JoHn:** Chris Garcia, bringing color wherever he goes. Chris writes that doing stuff in Photoshop takes less time than writing. I could see how a man with twin toddlers might value his time differently than lesser mortals.

**Jacq:** Petréa Mitchell’s *Four Views of the Red Lion* takes us through a hotel that began life as Red Lion - Columbia River, before morphing into DoubleTree Red Lion, then emerging as the Thunderbird Hotel before becoming a storage area that burned to the ground. Yes, it came back, as Rodeway Inn, even sporting some of the original bathroom tiles. A more appropriate name might be Red Lion - Phoenix, but that would confuse all but those versed in mythology (*JoHn*: And then people would think it was in Arizona). PM weaves instances of fannish gatherings throughout the life of the hotel, flavoring
the piece with the nostalgia of distant memories. All things must pass, indeed. Hotels come and go. Fandom is forever.

David Schlosser explains the title of his contribution, "Aruf W.O.O.F." and it comes down to (loosely) fans/fen as riff-raff. I have always loved that term, ever since hearing it as a child in an Underdog cartoon. DS’s concise one-pager details a bit of the consuite’s shortcomings, concedes that he is a proponent of wise-assery, and tells us he has a son named Random. Squee! He can legitimately say he’s a father to some Random kid/dude/organism. He’s also got fan cred by the mega-ton, appearing in a W.O.O.F. edited by Bruce Pelz himself and referencing the year 1975 for some fannish undertakings.

Kat Templeton’s *Notes on a Saturday Morning* is a one-page tale of how she managed to visit Worldcon 76 and get into W.O.O.F. #43 all in one day. The future TAFF winner (just watch) last wrote for W.O.O.F. in Reno (2011) and has lived in Redding, Berkeley, and Sacramento, California, in that order. KT confesses to having focus issues with her writing but makes keen observations about her own role in fandom. Along with PM, she provides a rare and welcome splash of estrogen to the disty.

Christopher Carson’s *Deep Cuts of Deep Meat* - Deep is right; I jumped in, right over my head. The text so dense that I lost my train of thought before I got to the periods of the lengthy sentences about atoms and nuclear energy and Earth. Had there been a Jurassic thunder lizard known as a Thesaurus, I’d say CC has successfully harnessed and imbued his subject matter with its monstrous intelligence. My own experience with atoms has been limited to:

- Atom Ant - Hanna-Barbera’s first Saturday Morning superhero
- Arthur ThOMPson - named Art, created art
- atomic veterans - could see the bones of their fingers through shut eyelids during bomb blast experiments
- Ant Man - menaced by tardigrades while in the sub-atomic realm, from which Michelle Pfeiffer was rescued after 30 years, in full makeup!
- The National Atomic Testing Museum - simulated blasts in a concrete room; Miss Atomic Energy decked out in a mushroom cloud

**JoHN:** Chris Carson’s goals are lofty, loftier even than his high-flung phrasing. Unfortunately, the author’s passionate relationship with his own vocabulary precludes much attention being given to the needs of we hapless readers.

**Jacq:** Roger Hill’s *Report from Hoople #134.304* details how the Physics professor emeritus from Southern Illinois University is working on a quantum mechanics textbook; meanwhile, I covet my ability to make a flower out of a dinner napkin. The world needs all types. There are comments on W.O.O.F. # 42 and mention of a perpetual hunt for two missing W.O.O.F.s. RH is responsible for the list of W.O.O.F. by years, cities, and OEs that inhabits the other side of GHLIII’s Intro.

**JoHN:** And thus ends W.O.O.F #43. Your chance to get in the next mailing is Dublin 2019 (on the East Coast, roughly). If you happen to be in Ireland for some reason next August, swing by Convention Centre Dublin and drop off fifty copies of your ish.
OLD-TIME FIAWOL

NOT BOB SEGER

Just take those old fanzines off the shelf,
I’ll sit and read ‘em all by myself.
Today’s faneds ain’t got the same soul
I like that old-time FIAWOL

Don’t try to do Corflu in ‘Frisco,
You’ll never even get me out of my door,
And Curt Phillips will be really sore,
He likes that old-time FIAWOL

[chorus]
Still like that old-time FIAWOL
That kind of fanac just soothes the soul
I’ll reminisce about the zines of old
With that old-time FIAWOL

Won’t go to see ‘em pub a Chunga,
Or even get a Ted White funky old bowl
There’s only one sure way to get me to go
Get baked on old-time FIAWOL

Call me an oldphart, call me what you will,
Say I’m old-fashioned, say I took all them pills
Today’s fanac ain’t got the same soul
Not like that old-time FIAWOL

[repeat chorus until the audience awakes and flees]

Original song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SoaAb5MnKiY

Lyrical manipulation by Teresa Cochran and Nic Farey
THE FIVE* STAGES OF BEING A CORFLU GOH
AN INTROVERT'S VIEW

ALAN ROSENTHAL

*Some stages may be omitted for purposes of brevity.

Scene: A hotel meeting room, set up with auditorium seating. About fifty fans are seated, talking to each other, reading the program book, staring off into space, or sleeping. Rod Serling stands invisibly at the back of the room, smoking an invisible cigarette, and begins to speak:

“You all know what’s about to happen. Somebody is about to be selected randomly** as Corflu’s guest of honor. But after thirty prior choices and diminishing attendance, the pool of eligible winners is sadly shrunken. One of these people will win the Corflu lottery. But is this a Powerball jackpot, or a Shirley Jackson story?”

That was when I heard my name called out…

**Only if you believe in the tooth fairy. As it happens, I do. She comes in the night, pliers in hand, to demand the compounded interest that is her due.

Denial? Anger? You Decide…

“Oh, fuck” I yelled, quickly apologizing to Shel for waking him up. Several people congratulated me, possibly out of relief that their names hadn’t been chosen. “You’ll be fine,” they said. “Fuck off” I silently replied.

Bargaining

So how does an introvert manage to be chosen as Corflu GoH? I’d been chosen before, but had had the good sense (or perhaps a premonition) to decide not to attend that year’s convention in Las Vegas. Why me? Why now? Well, I was too cheap to pay twenty bucks to have my name removed from the drawing. And besides, I thought, it’s a matter of principle. Why should I have to pay to avoid an uncomfortable and anxiety-inducing situation? Secondly, I was too honest to write somebody else’s name on the slip of paper. Or, as Jeanne said, “You’re Canadian and a Jew. You’re doomed…”

Besides, she said, you’ve delivered presentations at conferences before, to rooms full of strangers. Everybody here knows you. “That makes it worse,” I replied. Visions of retrieving a PowerPoint presentation about topic-based information architecture in technical communications danced briefly through my head and were summarily dismissed. “How did you get through your thesis defense?” Slivovitz with breakfast, at my advisor’s suggestion. Hmmm, there’s an idea… “Why don’t you sleep on it, you’ll think of something.” But I slept very little, awake most of the night worrying about what I was going to say and fretting about how to say it in public without making a total idiot of myself.

Me: The Font of Knowledge

With Apologies to Myers and Briggs:

You are cool, analytical, intelligent, and have an extremely dry wit. Sometimes you slice through conversation with a cutting observation that causes silence and uneasy glances. You may feel persecuted, as you can become a target for fun. Still, you are usually secure enough in your abilities not to worry overly. You are productive and invaluable to those you work with. You are loyal, steadfast, and conscientious. You get things done. You are probably a week away from snapping.

Corflu GoH: Rock Star

You think fast and have a smart mouth. You are a hoot to your friends and razorwire to your enemies. You hold a grudge like a brass ring. You crackle. Although you have a leader’s personality, you often choose not to lead, as leaders stray too far from their audience. You probably weren’t very popular in high school – the joke’s on them!
See the cat? See the cradle?

**First Draft**

Poor Grendel’s had an accident. So may you all…

Rejected due to plagiarism.

**Depression**

I’d been asked if I might want to participate on a panel on Saturday afternoon. As I really didn’t, this gave me an even better than usual excuse to skip the program in order to work on the damned thing. After all, I didn’t want to miss a dinner expedition, which, contrary to Corflu tradition, had been planned a day in advance! Although, there is much to be said for hanging out in the hotel lobby to look for dinner companions after almost everybody else had already left.

On one memorable occasion, I ended up at a KFC with Dave Rike and Art Widner, the expedition fueled by Dave’s senior coupon and Art’s Sheep Dip. Which purports to be scotch, but I have my doubts… The conversation would have lasted into the wee hours if we hadn’t been asked to leave, in no uncertain terms, by the manager. I’m not sure if it was Dave talking loudly about the nutritional value of Kentucky Fried Rat, or my response when we told that we were disturbing other diners. “Diners? You’ve got to be kidding. Nobody comes to KFC to dine…”.

**Second Draft**

Thank you everyone. I am honored to be here, although I’m not entirely sure why. Is it truly an honor if you are required to subject yourself to extortion should you not want to accept? Everybody in this room is worthy of being honored. Not everybody feels comfortable being in the spotlight. Why not give the honor to somebody who actually wants it, and may have been waiting for thirty years to be chosen?

#haventpubbedmyishinghuknowswhen
#respectneurodiversity

Rejected as Un-Canadian content.

**Acceptance**

The three rules of APAhacking, as related by Apocryphal:

- Anything can be fannish.
ALAN ROSENTHAL

- Anything you say can and will be used against you, often out of context and by someone who never read it in the first place.
- Never explain, never apologize.

Pretend that you’re just writing something for an APA. Any event in your life can be made to seem fannish. Pick a few, string them together in a semblance of logical order, add an introduction and conclusion, and there you are. Done. You’ve earned a living as a professional technical writer for decades; you’ve totally got this. Have another drink before you begin, put your pen to paper (yes, I still draft in longhand), and stop writing when you run out of ideas.

Lastly, read your speech out loud to yourself. If it’s longer than five minutes, take heed of Terentia’s advice to Cicero and Make Your Speech Shorter!

Envoi

As some of you may recall, this bears absolutely no resemblance to the speech I actually delivered at Corflu 35 in Toronto. You can consider this to be the speech I would have liked to deliver if I had had more time to write it, or had prepared it in advance (as some fans have been known to do). Both speeches do have two things in common, though: I am happy that I managed to write and deliver it, and happier still that I will never have to worry about being a Corflu Guest of Honor again!

ROAD TRIPPING

BRENDA DUPONT

DON'Tpoke THEM.
DON'Tpet THEM.
DON'Tstep IN THEIR hole.
DON'Tcuss AT THEM.

Hi from Saratoga, WY. 8200
Badger advice on front.

Don't poke them.
Don't pet them.
Don't step in their hole.
Don't cuss at them.

Hi from Saratoga, WY. 8200
Badger advice on front.

Don't poke them.
Don't pet them.
Don't step in their hole.
Don't cuss at them.

Hi from Saratoga, WY. 8200
Badger advice on front.

Don't poke them.
Don't pet them.
Don't step in their hole.
Don't cuss at them.
ELEVEN YEARS LATER

ULRIKA O’BRIEN & NIC FAREY

NIC: I’d had thoughts about the milestone of the “annish”, largely due to John Purcell, who seems to have one every 20 minutes or so. In 35 years (give or take) of fanzine production I’d never previously considered the concept, and I’ve concluded that it’s much more an American than a British thing. BEAM #1 appeared in June 2008, so we’ve exceeded ten years. Logically if there was an “annish” it would have been #13. Just as well it’s all bollocks, then.

That did get me pondering, though, how this title might have changed, developed and/or improved during that time, and whether the “philosophy” of it all, if one even exists, was a coherent thread. How better to analyze this than via a thorough questioning by my co-editor?

Nobody expects the Swedish Inquisition…

ULRIKA: You blamed Ted White for prodding you into starting BEAM. How much of an influence has he been since then?

NIC: In terms of direct influence, pretty much zero, after all Ted isn’t everyone’s invisible co-editor. His indirect “influence”, if we want to call it that, has been as a long-term friend and mentor, someone who was very encouraging of my efforts after we’d met. I think it helped a lot back then that we met fairly frequently at his monthly bashes in Falls Church, and he was always kind enough to provide a spare bed since I wouldn’t want to be driving home, of course. In retrospect, I possibly spent more time in actual conversation there with rich brown (also Steffans) than I did with Ted, all of which I treasured greatly, but Ted would always be there if I needed a question answered.

It’s a matter of record that I’ve publicly disagreed with him on several things, but that’s never affected our mutual respect and friendship (so far, anyway). These days our contact is extremely infrequent. Also, blaming Ted was a convenient “catch-all” for the genesis of BEAM; there were general noises of approval for me doing another zine at the time.

ULRIKA: In a related vein, in terms of influences (sort of): from my perspective, BEAM seems even more in-jokey than the average bear, er, fanzine. Is that aimed at a particular audience, or are you just crafting in-jokes to amuse yourself? Or am I imagining things?

NIC: More in-jokey than Plokta? Maybe that is the case, for a couple of reasons. One is stylistic. Anyone who’s ever read an issue of Private Eye would easily note that some of my style is sometimes highly derivative of that august organ, although it’s also fair to make the point that many of its own “in-jokes” or catchphrases have entered the popular vocabulary. I do have a wicked willingness to be willfully obscure at times, and leave it to the reader to either also know to what I’m referring or look it up if they can be bothered. I think many, if not most, if not all zines are pitched at a “particular audience”, as you put it, or perhaps more accurately find that audience. Plokta was certainly such, but also the likes of Alexiad, various N3F publications, and G. Charnock’s Vibrator. Even Banana Wings could be considered so.

Another point to make is that, perhaps not so unusually, BEAM was conceived at a gathering of friends, and thus would be geared to the interests, the gestalt if you want to call it that, of those friends, which initially was drink-related. (Early on, one reviewer described it as a “whiskey-soaked genzine”.) I recall a conversation with Joyce Katz in which we were discussing how people who at face value were very different could come together in the Faniverse, and we concluded that it was very much about commonality of experiences with the literature, primarily. With BEAM, that was also a shared interest in drink, rather than certain herbal
substances which have provided a social core for others. I do like to think, however, that BEAM has gotten more “general interest” as it’s gone on.

ULRIKA: Hmm. Do you really think that drug of choice is a unifying factor for particular fanzine audiences?

NIC: I think it's a unifying factor in creating groups of friends, certainly. Perhaps I should clarify my attitude towards the evil weed?

ULRIKA: Go on then. Explicate your attitude towards that Evil Weed, oh smoker of an entirely different and equally evil weed.

NIC: OK: I have no moral or other objection to the use of cannabis; pretty simply put, I don’t like the smell, at least of the stuff they seem to get in the USA. In my student days, now over 40 years ago, I tried almost everything. Back then, the typical cannabis resin we crumbled into shaky roll-ups was enjoyable, and social, but after I left the London School of Economics and basically lost access to supply, I found that it didn’t hold any allure or interest for me. I’ve occasionally described the alcoholic tendencies of BEAM as an “antidote” to the dedicated pot-smoking fans I know, though that implies an attitude of superiority which I don’t subscribe to. I don’t much care at all what other people indulge in; as a person of dubious habits, I’m in no position to judge.

ULRIKA: Well, I suspect that the difference in cannabis smell is maybe also a function of time, perhaps even more than geography. When I was a teen, also roughly 40 years ago, I don’t remember marijuana smelling so pestilentially skunky as it usually does now. Knowledgeable friends suggest that part of that is the development of carefully bred strains with higher concentrations of cannabinoids, and part may be due to the overall improvement in quality of product — fewer stems and leaves in what you see these days.

NIC: You may well be right.

ULRIKA: I often am.

NIC: I’ve noticed that.

ULRIKA: Not that it influences you, sadly.

NIC: Oh, how little you realize how it truly does! (Though, granted, sometimes it takes a minute.)

ULRIKA: But getting back to the BEAM audience, Is the change in degree of generality because of a change in how you envision the audience of the zine? Do you have any particular ideal reader in mind when you write or edit? I know you’ve mentioned that you think of Claire Brialey as your core, or perhaps only, audience for some of your more tediously self-indulgent maunderings about the FAAwards. Is there a particular person you’re writing to most of the time?

NIC: Yes, me! I don’t really envisage any kind of audience or any kind of typical or generic reader. Your point is well taken about mentioning specific individuals on topics I know are of interest to them, but as I’ve remarked elsewhere in the ish, we get to ride our own hobby-horses. Some people will be interested in the exact same topics, others will flee in terror. It’s a fact that I
ULRIKA O’BRIEN & NIC FAREY

will tend to namecheck those who I believe may want to ride along.

ULRIKA: Anyway, I noticed that the first issue of BEAM was entirely laddish in terms of contributors. I know you’ve brought in more women since then (more than zero is not hard of course), but did you notice the testosterone overload at the time? Is adding more women’s voices a conscious choice?

NIC: Yes, very much so, at least to the extent that there’s no deliberate exclusionary policy. I may have commented on that at the time with some of the early female contributors. I’d like to think that there’s more gender balance as we’ve gone along. I’m particularly pleased that this is also reflected in artwork, since rather than yet more Steve Stiles (although he’s been on two covers), we’ve featured cover artwork from Pat Virzi, Lesley Ward, Alison Scott and a bacover from Sue Mason. The “laddish” criticism has a certain validity to it, and I think that’s always an element. After all, it’s the lad me co-editing. I think it’s more the case, though, given that we tend to commission pieces rather than take submissions, that I’ve leaned on friends to provide content, and many of those are not lads.

On reflection it perhaps wasn’t so much a question of specifically noticing the preponderance of lads, as a gradual development; #2, for example, had two drink-related articles, one from Claire Braley on malt whisky, a topic on which she is expert. You & I may have a language-barrier thing over the term “laddish”, in fact. You seem to simply equate it with maleness in general, whereas to a Brit it denotes a more specific behavior pattern. Claire has “laddish” qualities in certain respects.

ULRIKA: Speaking of co-editing, BEAM started out as a solo editorship. What made you decide to take on a co-editor for the project?

NIC: There’s a few reasons. One is that I’ve a history of running out of steam on a given title, and getting in some other eyes, ears and hands is a great way to rekindle a bit of oomph. Secondly, I don’t think I’m especially prolific as a writer, or perhaps it’s that I have ups and downs in terms of production. Having a co-editor not only provides much-needed material, but also provides variation, inspiration and critique. ‘World's Finest Fanzine’ we may be, but there’s always improvement to be had. At the time I conned Jim into getting on board, I found myself more interested in the production end of things (layouts etc) than actual writing, going through a bit of a dry spell at the time, I suppose, and I may well have been running out of people to lean on for contributions. At that point, having a second commissioning editor made a great deal of sense (as it still does, and as recent issues have definitely shown). I also found that I enjoy the collaborative aspects, and being challenged out of what can easily become laziness and formula, although note remarks on “style” earlier. While my own style, topics, favorite hobby-horses and such aren’t likely to experience any massive change, the added dimension of a co-editor with their own different qualities in those areas can
very much keep \textit{BEAM} as a project worth continuing.

Whilst, I would add, keeping its essential flavor and philosophy.

I’d suggest that any co-editor has to “get” what \textit{BEAM} is about. As you do.

ULRIKA: Philosophy, eh? What is \textit{BEAM}’s philosophy, anyway? Do we have a mission? I feel I’m entitled to know at this point. What, in short, is this thing for?

NIC: That’s what we’re looking to analyze here, isn’t it?

ULRIKA: Oh, I thought we were just trying to fill an editorial.

NIC: That, too. LOL. First and foremost, I’d say we are fannish.

ULRIKA: Right. I would agree with that one. Also, assholes on parade. Well, attitude, anyway, but that title’s been done.

NIC: You’ve brought extra attitude in, and of course I approve. Secondly, as a corollary (I guess) to the drunken origins of it all, we are both social and sociable.

ULRIKA: Yes, I think fanzines in general, and this one in particular, are an excuse for conversation as well as a means to one.

NIC: Claire (there she is again) has aptly and perfectly described \textit{Banana Wings} as “a conversation between us and a couple of hundred friends”, and I see that as a model of sorts. Although we have “frenemies”.

But then we don’t have a schedule which admits to “conversation” as such within the pages, although we can quite well engender it in other fora.

ULRIKA: Fair point. Proper conversations require a more frequent rate of publication, especially now that electronic media have made response times instantaneous. We expect an answer faster.

NIC: And I am not parading my arsehole for anyone.

ULRIKA: You’d like to think that.

NIC: There’s still a place for more extended analysis and discussion, which shouldn’t be able to be contained in a tweet or even a Facebook post, as much as some people rant on; more thoughtful and detailed analysis of fannish topics doesn’t have to turn into ephemera.

ULRIKA: Oh, but it’s so much more \textit{work}! (Moan, moan, moan.) By the way, I know you hate the word ‘filk’ even when it’s what you’re doing. What’s up with that? Do you object to filk culture, or are you just being a snob about relative coolness of different fandoms, or what?

NIC: Ah, yes, filk. Well, having had a nasty experience as a child... I do in fact have longtime friends who are filkers and filk fans (Chris O’Shea and Steve Glover come to mind), but my initial exposure to the form was firstly from media fandom, only a little later what I like to call “real” sf fandom, and I formed the sad and no doubt quite mistaken impression that it was a lot of hey-nonny-no tosh, I’m afraid.
ULRIKA: Speaking of coolness, while I was TAFF traveling all those years ago, I came up with a metaphor for the national character differences between Brits and Americans, as I saw them. To me, Brits are cats and Americans are dogs. There are of course individual variations, and most teenagers go through a phase of being too cool for school, but still, it seems to me that Americans mostly have the same Gosh-Wow-O-Boy unembarrassed enthusiasm you find in an adolescent retriever. They’re far easier about wearing their enthusiasms on their sleeves, as it were. Britons, by contrast, give the impression that they would die of humiliation if someone spotted them chasing a ball of string, er, hobby with too much un-ironic fervor. The aloof superciliousness of cats seems very Brit to me. And yet, you don’t seem to have much of that at all. Is that why you’ve gotten along so well in America, or is it just that you can still watch football on the telly?

NIC: Ha! It’s a class thing.

ULRIKA: Yeah, you are unrepentantly working class, aren’t you? Perhaps even studiedly so?

NIC: Yes to both (for certain values of “studied”); my paternal grandfather, whom I admired to the extent that I named my younger son after him, was unabashedly working class, although he had by the standards of the day a good job as a train driver. My father, after WW2, went on a much more middle-class aspirational path (as did his younger brother, who worked for a bank). Having gone to college and got a degree, I was expected to follow a similar upwardly-mobile route, but after I moved to the States events conspired to get me out of a suit and tie and end up having to get my hands dirty. You could call it making a virtue out of necessity, but I began to identify increasingly with my grandfather’s life of toil and became proud, rather than ashamed (as my mother was) of that.

Even though I went into white-collar work after college, I had been both philosophically and politically radicalized by my time at the LSE, also interesting times in the UK generally (1976-79).

ULRIKA: ...In fact, now you’ve got me wondering if it’s somehow perceived as cooler to be working class? I know there seem to be some folks who work hard to hide an upper class background, not mentioning any former editors, of course...

NIC: I don’t think a working-class life has any intrinsic “coolness” about it, unless you are John Constantine. Some people might think it is, but whatever, I do consider myself proudly working-class, but I’ve never pretended that I was brought up that way.
LoCs edited with tender diffidence by Nic, and/or brutalist fervor by Ulrika. Andy Hooper’s thoughts on #12 actually arrived after #13 had been issued and included the Rush-based “filk-of-comment”, as he described it, which you’ll find on p16. We expect his comments on #13, or even thish, to appear - er - later...

ANDY HOOPER

March 13

BEAM #12 carries both the bulk and the aesthetic impact of an immense antique desk equipped with many cubbies, drawers and crannies in which treasures might be hidden. Or old chewing gum; one cannot know without opening them. I find myself wishing for a time machine, so I could go back fifty years and show a copy to, say, Andy Porter, and tell him that in fifty years, this is what all fanzines will be like. And if I were a Doctor, I would certainly put a copy out in my waiting room.

Leafing through my rare and precious paper copy, and reading choice passages without my glasses on, is a decidedly guilty pleasure. I appreciate the First Fandom-friendly scale of the thing, but can’t help but feel a little guilty as well. Good Ghu, there is almost more margin than text; and the full-color format gives the art and photography their beautiful due. The photograph of the Bradbury Building interior in Randy Byers’ Corflu report would have pleased him immensely; and it gives visual proof of his gentle implication that the ancillary attractions of the 2017 gathering were somewhat richer than the convention itself. Even for the Guest of Honor.

It was nice to join such an opulent circus, but I don’t think I would have published our exchange on the FAAn awards. Given my complete inability to present any of my arguments in a sufficiently cogent manner to have any effect on your ideas about the awards, I’m not sure it was worth inflicting them on a wider audience. To digress further, I still have some mixed feelings about the way you’ve approached the job. It’s a great service to compile a list of “eligible” works and creators as you did this year; however, asking voters to cite the provenance of works that don’t appear on your list is not so worthy a decision. I know you don’t mean to imply that yours is somehow an “official” eligibility list - it says “Incompleat” in the title - but we both know that it will function as if it were. And then, I’m explicitly discouraged from voting for myself, but voting for the administrator’s genzine is not mentioned. Once you begin playing these eligibility games, everything starts to seem incredibly crooked. So all that being said, do you want to win, or would you rather not? And how do you think the rest of us feel?

Nic: In the interests of timeliness, I replied privately on this loc; Andy’s implied conclusion that he doesn’t really want to talk about this any more is my takeaway from the fact that I didn’t get a reply, and that’s quite all right.

I disagree about whether publishing our original exchange was worthwhile. Fanzines, after all, give us the opportunity to ride our hobby-horses in public view, the FAAns being one of my favorite steeds. We’ve moved on from the time of Andy’s comments, in that I’ve stepped down as awards admin, but there’s still nothing wrong with a critique of my incumbency, especially from someone who’s been a long-serving stalwart in that task. Those uninterested in a lengthy rebuttal can skip ahead now, if they haven’t already, which pretty much leaves me with Claire Brialey,
who will be reading this out of genuine interest, and Ulrika, who will be reading this because she kinda has to.

Rather than the ineffectiveness and lack of coherency, Andy’s part in the discussion shows development of thought, and thus might appear inconsistent rather than incoherent. I’d say that Andy’s arguments did influence my approach, moving it much closer to his “all votes will count, however obviously silly” and away from my original more rule-bound proposal, published in Inca. Andy, you’ve also moved away from your original position, now suggesting that I should have also urged voters to disregard my own fanac in addition to opining that they shouldn’t consider their own. It’s disingenuous of you to suggest that these are “eligibility games”, when it was me stating my opinion that self-voting is contrary to the spirit of the awards, and yet—and yet—there were a number of such votes received, and they were all counted, being within the only “eligibility” restrictions of being first-published work in 2017, and being within category. Yes, you were discouraged from voting for yourself, but not actually prevented from doing so.

The “request for citation” complaint wound up a non-starter. Of all the votes on all the ballots received, I only had to ask for two citations to be provided, which were not given, and therefore those votes were the only ones rejected on that basis out of 405 votes received. No FAAn awards were harmed in this procedure. (All detailed in the TIR results issue.)

This brings us to your final question: “...do you want to win, or would you rather not? And how do you think the rest of us feel?”

Of course, I don’t know how anyone feels unless they tell me, and your Facebook diatribes written shortly after the awards, clearly in anger, displayed a contempt which I found quite astonishing. You said, explicitly, that you felt that half or more of the FAAn awards you’ve received over the years to be “a joke”, driven in significant part by the fact that, since you were the incumbent administrator, Norfwest fandom was not only perhaps more motivated to vote, but could also be cajoled into doing so, thus stacking the deck in your favor. There’s some grains of truth in that analysis, perhaps. However, while I also engaged in advocacy for the awards in general, I did not make any specific pitches, not even (publicly) mentioning particular zines and writers whose work I particularly admired from 2017, although friends will know I privately advocated strongly for Simon Ounsley’s fanwriting (and Rubber Crab) in this way, and we can see how well that turned out.

I did, however, engage in extensive outreach to many toiling in the trenches who have not previously been represented in FAAn award
 voting, with a notable inclusion of various N3F titles and contributors, and the disappointing but perhaps expected non-participation of the majority of the readership of *Alexiad*, still and all a zine which has solidity and longevity measured by that old yardstick of ‘boo, the loccol. Again, here, your post-award comments referring to “feeling sick” about the appearance of N3F zines, John Thiel et al in the various top fives displays an arrogance and elitism that I reflexively despise. It implies that a dictatorial determination of what is “worthy” would be so much more preferable, and cozy, and man the ramparts against these shoddy pretenders, eh?

But let’s circle back to your pointed question: “... do you want to win, or would you rather not?”, which is more complex than that Aristotelian construction might suggest. My knee-jerk answer, at least the last few years, would be “I’d rather not”, but that of itself is as disingenuous as some of your own arguments. Our currency, after all, is ‘boo, and frankly one of the reasons we do a lot of what we do, whether in specific fanac or other endeavors is that we want to be told that we’re brilliant. One of the means of getting this ‘boo is awards, sure, but like Graham Charnock I find myself award-averse; the true satisfaction comes from those who are moved to respond, react, and often later contribute to the fanac at which we toil.

That having been said, I also consider that there’s no doubt that Ulrika deserves mega-fuck-tons (or some other ludicrously large measure) of credit for her significant contribution to a further increase in quality of this self-described (well, Jay Kinney-described) “World’s Finest Fanzine”. Just as the addition of Jim Mowatt as co-editor on earlier issues added a dimension and different tone (albeit a light-hearted and collegial one, rather than Ulrika’s more bracingly adversarial approach) kicked us up a stair or two, there should always be room for us to get shook out of our lazy complacency and re-evaluate things.

**Ulrika:** I have given up discussing the FAAnts with Nic. He is pig-headed and utterly inflexible about key points, and not very honest about that inflexibility. I’m not sure he understands even now how close he came to killing this co-editorship, but for the sake of my sanity and his wife’s future happiness, it’s best this way.

**Nic:** Reader reaction to Ulrika’s remarks may vary on a scale between wtf and dilligaf, but there will be a (very) few concerned citizens of the Faniverse who will be surprised if I don’t respond.

My typical method in any discussion is to withhold my own viewpoint in order not to game the result; some people are aware that I do this, but I now realize that others are not. I had (not untypically) lazily assumed this familiarity in Ulrika’s case, but was informed in no uncertain terms that this wasn’t the case, since she interprets my method as a violation of informed consent.

Stunned as I was by her vehemence (which is not even close to being conveyed here), it took me well more than a minute to realize that, for her, I was well out of order, and as a result of that it’s not a mistake I’ll make again.

I *still* don’t like to see that labelled as outright “dishonesty”, but it’s clear to me now that for Ulrika, it totally is. And that matters.

The Fan Activity Achievement awards are somehow congruent with the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, in being institutions that still hold a certain measure of amusement while seeming objectively superfluous to contemporary fandom. Do I want more continental Europeans involved in TAFF?
No more than I want more conrunners, costumers, disabled activists or any other subgroup which has been courted by one or more candidates in the past thirty years. Fandom is fandom; any group of friends that support one of their number to win the fund is as good as any other group. Having some existing connection to fandom and its international rituals is still a good idea if we want candidates able to boost and administer the fund. Nina Horvath was just a delight at Sasquan, and her experience was good value for everyone’s money. But she has basically disappeared now, which has been the pattern with a majority of continental TAFF delegates across the decades. It’s a good thing that TAFF has a wealth of helpful Shadow Administrators these days.

It’s certainly interesting to see Lucy Huntzinger declaring herself back in fanzine fandom. We’re richer for her presence. I feel like I know a great deal more about her than she does about me—I’ve devoured her work pretty avidly at times, while I get the feeling she’s never read anything I’ve written—not all the way through, anyway. I’m pretty sure she is the only person to have demanded to be removed from my mailing list on three different occasions. Part of that was certainly a function of her long gafia, but still….

Anway, Lucy’s early life reads like something from a John LeCarrè novel—I recommend her essay on her relationship with her brother, published in SOUTHERN GOTHIC #3—and fandom has always been one of the world’s premiere places in which to reinvent yourself. She’ll be winning a Best Fanwriter FAAn award by 2020.

Fun little story by Jeff Schalles. I enjoyed the brief glimpse of Pittsburgh nearly fifty years ago. I guess the kids who were falling prey to the Reverend Moon forty years ago are texting about fake news and voting for Trump today. Per Mencken, “No one in this world, so far as I know—and I have searched the records for years, and employed agents to help me—has ever lost money by underestimating the intelligence of the great masses of the plain people. Nor has anyone ever lost public office thereby.”

The Flann O’Brien glossary by Pádraig Ó Meáloíd was an intriguing read, although I admit that I’ve never actually read any of the author’s work. My immediate circle has such a command of his books, however, that I feel as though they have seeped contextually into my memory. I found many entries tantalizing—I was curious what else might be said about the road known as “Bowling Green” in 1911, beyond the question of which house the subject had lived in. Census records
now online have made many writer’s childhood neighborhoods open to view, which one must imagine to be possible models for characters appearing in their works. I obviously have a real personal weakness for this kind of research. But, Borges, Jorge Luis: To Be Written, Indeed.

Your excursions into filk were good entertainment as well. You kept quite a bit of the original meaning of “Spirit of Radio,” but that fit the tone you wanted to set. We do indeed echo with the sounds of Lichtman. Of Lichtman!

Nic: I may as well give up on complaining that I don’t like the song parodies being called “filk” at this point, though I’m still never going to call them that myself.

Ulrika: I am slowly working on Nic’s profligate approach to white space, and layout in general, but I’m fighting inertia with a rudder that’s too small, so change will have to be incremental.

Nic: But you did, dear boy, you did.

LEIGH EDMONDS

May 22

Your BFF has stirred several thoughts in what passes for my brain these days. The first is about the American health care system inspired by Luke’s all too vivid description of the factory hen method as he experiences it in the great USofA. While reading this I was sitting in the waiting area of a medical practice in Ballarat waiting to see my blood doctor for a review of my clotting problem. There were a few other people waiting there too, but it was comfortable and occasionally somebody wandered past wanting to know if I wanted tea or coffee. As usual the blood doctor was running about an hour and a half late so I got a lot of Beam read in a stress free and comfortable environment. Of course, at the end of it there was a $140 hole in my credit card but the government’s medicare system will refund me more than half of that.

Today I’m off to see my GP about related matters - the accommodation is less commodious and there will be no offers of tea or coffee, but there will also be no hole in my credit card at the end of the visit. I consider myself lucky that when I did a reconnaissance of the US in ‘94 to see if I wanted to live there I decided it was better to be poor in Australia than rich in America. I also suspected that getting to be rich in America was a lot more hard work than I was willing to put into the project.

The highlights of the issue were, to me, Chuck, David and Graham’s contributions which took me for a long wander down memory lane. It seems that Chuck was coming into fandom just as I was in the process of a slow gafiation and David and Graham’s reminiscences are of a different place but perhaps the same sensibility. To me, however,
memories of fandom and memories of the music scene run together. I had just discovered the Melbourne SF Club a week or two before I went to the Palais in St. Kilda to see the Rolling Stones (and a bunch of Australian mod bands) and my contacts with American fandom through APA-45 meant I knew more about what was going to be big in Australia before most other people here found out about them. Not that Cream, Hendrix or Big Brother and the Holding Company toured here, so I never saw them.

The venue that sticks out most in my mind is Festival Hall, a huge barn of a place in North Melbourne. […] I didn’t see the Beatles play there in ‘65 but most of the big British bands who toured in the mid to late 1960s played there, though only the Who sticks out in my memory. More memorable were the Australian bands because Melbourne became the center of Australian music making. The big event for several years was the Hoadles Battle of the Bands for which the prize was enough money to get the winning band to London. Consequently all the best local bands turned up and it was an outstanding night.

I saw the Purple Hearts there two or three times, […] When I met Valma a few years later it turned out that the Purple Hearts had been virtually the house band at the place she went to in Brisbane and we both thought they were outstanding - not quite the basis of our long relationship, but a good starting point. […] Valma and I together saw quite a few acts at Festival Hall over the years, the most memorable was the AC/DC concert that turned out to be the last one they gave before heading to England and fame and fortune. I see they are still playing many of the numbers that they played that night, but Bon Scott and Angus Young were in fine form and, dare I say it, unforgettable.
Being young and energetic Valma and I went to just about everything that went on in Melbourne in those days with subscriptions to the Symphony, Chamber Music, Theater, Ballet, Opera and other stuff. We seemed to be out most nights of the week during the early 1970s and rarely ate at home either. We slowed down a bit in the second half of the decade after Susan Wood encouraged Valma to go back to school and then to university and we moved to Carlton and Brunswick which were closer to the university.

Our concert going and general social life came to an abrupt end in 1980 when my job was transferred to Canberra. We were either too busy working, studying, fanning or going to the ANU (Australian National University) Film Group. We did go and see Norman Gunston at the ANU bar (and it took a week to get all the smoke out of our hair) and Phillip Glass at the School of Music, and boy was he LOUD!!!

Then we moved to Perth in ‘88 where I did my PhD. We did get to a few events at the Perth Concert Hall … One memorable concert was PDQ Bach at which, it seemed, people had noted the Bach part of the title but not the PDQ … When we moved to Ballarat we planned to go to events in Melbourne but that rarely happened…. While all that was going on there was also fandom. By sheer luck I discovered the Melbourne SF Club not long after arriving in Melbourne and went to the Easter convention in 1966, not knowing that this was the first convention in Australia since 1958. Unlike some of Chuck’s memories, there was nothing for us to rebel against because there was really no established Australian fandom, just a few old hands like John Foyster and Lee Harding leading us into the ways of fandom through links with American and British fandom. From there a bunch of us began publishing furiously, started holding conventions, bidding for and running Worldcons, winning DUFF, inventing GUFF and all the other stuff involved with a fully active fandom in a big city. Most of that stopped when Valma and I moved to Canberra though I was still publishing furiously, having a more than full time job and studying for an honours degree in history at ANU. Looking back on it, it’s no wonder that I collapsed from nervous exhaustion not long after Aussiecon II and was off work for the best part of a year. The wonder is that I lasted that long.

So there’s my potted autobiography. You invited it, so you’ve got it. There were a few other things I was going to mention but, frankly, I’ve exhausted myself just remembering all the stuff we got up to when we had the energy and enthusiasm to do it. (Did I mention there was also a lot of drinking in all that. I swore off the grog once after a late night drinking session with Gordy Dickson in Minneapolis on our DUFF trip and another time Merv Binns held the night before ANZAPACon, and on another couple of occasions too painful to mention, but those oaths never lasted.)

Nic: We “invited” this? All this? ‘Kinell! No, seriously mate, it’s always good when readers find articles, especially longer ones, not only interesting but relatable (though see Jerry Kaufman’s loc below). In respect to Chuck’s memoir, this is a large part of what he was getting at, urging other contributions to the history of what we might call our contemporaries.

LLOYD PENNEY

June 7

Corflu was fun, and yes, was a little disorganized. Diane Lacey, Kevin Grücock and Lance Sibley provided much needed support, and all of them are local Toronto fans. I was not able to stay long
enough in the daytime to attend the Memorial Bheer Tasting, but I have never been a beer drinker. It was great to chat with Mark Olson, Cas Skelton, the Fishlifters, Rob Jackson, Michael Dobson and more. Still, I felt out of my league, and at times, I was alone in a room full of people. It was local, so I had to go, but I wonder if it will come here again, and I doubt I will be able to go to another out-of-town Corflu.

I support TAFF where I can, and I have been pleased to participate by nominating candidates. We’ve also been pleased that people remember us and ask us for nominations, and I hope this continues. At this point, it may be all we can do.

I am very interested in the history of fandom, and I have many of the early history books on the topic, but once you get to the 80s, it really can’t be discussed with individual names. [...] Concerts and me? Never happened. However, the Beatles performed only once in Toronto, and Yvonne got to go to it, and got to meet them all.

[...]

Yvonne and I can announce that we intend to return to London in 2019, so there might be opportunities to meet up with local fans and steampunks.

Yes, it is a shame about Graham Charnock shutting off his Vibrator. Think he might eventually come up with a third incarnation? I am sure he’d be welcomed if he did.

[...]

My loc… My apologies, Ulrika, Reno was a bit of a blur for me, and still is. That was our last Worldcon, and I doubt we will return. By the looks of the way my letter was edited, I might not have been too lucid. I hope this letter’s a little better.

Nic: It’s certainly a dimension of my personal bolshee that I’ve disliked and avoided the term “fanhistory” just as much as I dislike people calling the song parodies which appear in these pages “filk”. I’ve used the terms “memoir” and “reminiscence” for several pieces we’ve published which really are “fanhistory” by any sane definition of the word.

Ulrika: Yes, Lloyd, you were indeed edited. My feeling is that an editor should work to make her contributors appear in their best light: as pithy, amusing, and interesting to readers as possible. Sometimes that entails a bit of trimming. Don’t take it personally, however, as I even edit Nic. Hell, this ish I made him kill an entire segment as deadwood. Others will note I’m not as effective at editing myself, but that’s Nic’s job and he’s crap at it. [insert emoji of humor here...]
Jerry Kaufman

July 18

I had no idea that Brian Parker was an artist, much less how interesting his work is. I've checked his Facebook page to see more paintings, and I'm very impressed. Your cover may be based on a real life model, but Brian has emphasized the rhythms not only of the switchback stairs, but also the tree branches surrounding them, adding to the interest.

I enjoyed Chuck Connor's memories of fandom, even though he has been active in corners of Britfandom that I'm not well versed in. I've received Chuck's own zines for decades, but somehow the names and materials did not stick with me much. But I've been sorting our collection and now have Chuck's Thingumybob and other titles all in one place and can reread them in the middle future. (I want to get the sorting done before I start serious rereading.)

Are we sure that the sleeping couple in the foreground of the photo on Page 21 are not Luke and Julie McGuff? I knew about the free medical and dental clinics from reports on local television news programs and in the Seattle Times, but I found Luke's first person report very informative. I'm lucky enough not to need free clinics, as I had a steady job that included company-funded insurance, and am now on Medicare...

I'm afraid that I wasn't too taken with "There Are Places", but ... I was quite taken, however, with several of the objects reproduced - I would have loved to have attended that NME All-Star Concert, knowing at least a little of the music of half the performers, and the Crawdaddy Club graphics are exciting even to me...

Thanks to Alison Scott for her tour of the British Museum and its special Scythian exhibit. Her mention of "Maddy Carty Music" made me think it was some combination of Maddy Prior and Martin Carty. But that couldn't be right, because it's Martin Carthy, not Carty. So I looked it up, and now I know I'll have to listen to her work on Soundcloud. (Aaaand now "Effortless" is playing.)

John Purcell's report on his TAFF trip is turning out to be one of the more entertaining reports of the recent past. It's good to get the inside scoop on the mad Skeltons. It certainly warns me off going on walks with them, as my knees are no longer cooperative enough.

I haven't watched most of the DC television shows you're excited by, Nic; I've stuck with The Flash because Suzle and I like the characters, despite the multiplying speedsters and the overly prissy turn that Barry Allen took in the most recent series....

Ulrika, I ought to watch Pacific Rim again to see if it strikes me as illogical and poorly thought out as you say. I may have had some criticism of it after my first viewing, now five years ago. All I distinctly remember is that I was mildly entertained. I think the initial reviews were pretty good, and even if they hadn't been, I would have seen it because of Guillermo Del Toro, because I've enjoyed many of his other films.

Nic: It's an interesting exercise to contrast your reaction to "There Are Places" with Leigh's above. Whilst you, perhaps parochially, found it not so relatable, it took our antipodean friend off on a slew of reminiscences similar to those of Dave and Jamesy (and meself). Very much YMMV, innit?

Ulrika: Oh, I absolutely had fun watching Pacific Rim – it's a perfectly jolly mindless Sci-Fi Action flick (and I use "sci-fi" advisedly, here). I have nothing against it, taken for what it is. The world it exists in isn't supposed to hold up to close scrutiny, it's just supposed to be fun, exciting, and cool to look at. And it is. It's this nutty claim that the movie is "visually intelligent," that sent me right up a tree.
BRAD FOSTER

July 27

Got in the nice and shiny print edition of BEAM #13 (super-lucky issue!) this past week, and thanks so much for that. Always amazed at the super-slick presentation and gorgeous design of each issue. This is a “fan” zine? I see pro-zines these days that could take lessons from you!

Many items of large or small interest packed within, all read, much enjoyed. But the one that made me grin the widest was Ulrika's look at Pacific Rim. All those involved in that flick have, at one time or another, shown they are capable of doing quite deep and meaningful and brilliant work. For this particular movie, they all just went “Fuck it - we want big monsters and big robots on a big budget!” and that’s what they gave us. Those who work hard to make this cartoon mashup into more than it is are wasting their time, and was fun to watch Ulrika point that out. It’s loud and bright and goofy, just like all the monster movies before it, just with slicker production values. I didn’t expect any more than that, and so was not disappointed.

Haven’t seen the second one, but from the previews, looks like it will be just as goofy and loud and fun and “don’t ask us too many ‘why’ questions, just watch the neat effects!” kind of thing, and I will probably enjoy it quite well on that level when we convince our friends with the Netflix account and big-screen TV to let us watch it there one evening.

Nic : At the moment of writing, I have not yet generated the word cloud for this loccol, but I do expect that “Ulrika” will be front, center and dominant. I’ll just leave that there, I think.

Unnamed Co-editor: Hrrrmph.
CLAIRE BRIALEY
September 29

What the actual fuck? What John Hardin and Jacq Monahan took from my riposte to Graham Charnock’s origin (well, renaissance) story in the final Vibrator was that I was drinking, and subsequently defending, generic American lager? I don’t think so. As I pointed out in that piece for Graham, whatever American beer I was drinking would have been one of the good ones – of which there are now many, and were some even eleven years ago. I can just about cope with Ulrika failing to like (lovely, tart, puckering, and only vinegary in a good way) sour beers since she’s unaccountably not alone in that; but I draw the line at having my general taste in beer confused with, say, Nic’s...

Oh yes, also: I’m still not responsible for the resurgence of Graham Charnock. You can blame me for quite a few things, but I claim no credit or blame for that.

I wrote that paragraph five months ago, when I first saw an electronic copy of BEAM #13 and realised that I was, as usual, too late to comment in a timely way on the previous issue. And that’s probably the case now with #13 in turn, but I’m writing anyway since this and #12 are a couple of fine issues (even if the later one didn’t quite demonstrate the high standards of proof-reading I’ve come to expect from BEAM). I might not be able to contribute to your next letter column, but I can at least send some positive feedback; like Ulrika, in her comment on a letter in #12, I rarely have something to say about an entire fanzine – but what takes me so long, as well as natural laziness and procrastination, is that the fanzines to which I most want to respond are those which have internal coherence, or which at least make multiple connections spark in my brain. I know I’ve said that before, quite possibly to you, but I still find it particularly hard to do justice to. I’ve actually been trying to knuckle down to getting this response together for another three weeks, since the slightly kippered paper copies of #13 arrived for UK distribution and I was struck all over again by Brian Parker’s glorious front cover. I’d pegged it for Brian’s work when I first saw it – I’m a fan of his and we’ve got one of his prints on the wall, not many metres from the study where I’m writing this, which does a similarly splendid thing with light – but seeing it in print confirms it as my favourite fanzine cover so far this year.

But I’ll (re)start where I originally meant to, back in #12 and another excellent pair of covers there, from Steve Stiles and Al Sirois (the latter with all credit to Andy Hooper’s quoted review).

It’s doubtless stating the obvious to deduce that your ability to print colour covers at this size garners you some high quality pieces; in an elegant symbiosis, such covers also serve as an introduction to the discerning editorial approach you take to both design and content – and, in the case of the back covers for both these issues, to the humour and community connections that imbue your fanzine too. So it works no matter which end you start, on which note I should commend you for the finest no-shagging disclaimer of recent times.

Looking back again at the rest of the content of #12 offers a salutary lesson in making LOCs prompt. What can I say now about the Corflu 34 (whether or not AKA Corflu LASFS, or Corflu Apricot Stout) write-up from Randy Byers, except that I miss his writing almost as much as I miss Randy himself? The various comments in the letter column about the ways in which we hold our friends and legends in memory – in the stories we tell about them as much as in continuing to appreciate their own contributions to fan activity – echoed and prefigured many of the thoughts that many of us will doubtless have had in reading Randy’s piece at different times since last year’s Corflu.
If you wait long enough to respond to a fanzine it turns out that a friend will leave a bottle of one of the beers reviewed in your house, and so add a layer of meaning. I therefore offer thanks to Anders Holmström, for Neapolitan Dynamite from Stone and the Abnormal Beer Company, alongside thanks to Roy Hessinger for his personal reflections on beer; we may end up taking the bottle along to Novacon so that we can still share it with Anders there, and thus get the benefit of his comments on it while we’re tasting. I enjoy getting information and reactions to beer from people with whom I share other interests and connections, just as I enjoy reading their reactions to books or fanzines; as well as the memories and reflections that flow from comparing other people’s views and experiences to my own, it’s a helpful way to get some specific recommendations (or anti-recommendations, depending) when there’s not enough time to keep up even with all the good stuff available.

That’s a clunky segue to Worldcons, but I’ll take that path anyway. The personal reflections on Helsinki and the Worldcon there with which your various correspondents may or may not have engaged also had many points of connection with my own experiences; I’ve begun to think that a lot of programming at Worldcons is aimed at and appreciated more by people who are newer to conventions and to the SF community. [...] However much I think I yearn for genuinely engaging convention programming, I agree with several of your contributors that catching up with friends from around the world is another major attraction of attending a Worldcon these days; I really appreciate having three Worldcons in Europe in six years so that I can do that without having to travel so much myself.

Maybe that’s also helped with some progress towards the opportunities Ulrika set out in her article about the fan funds. Observant fans will have spotted that, for the first time, the current European administrators of both TAFF and GUFF (Johan Anglemark and Marcin ‘Alqua’ Klak, respectively) are not based in the UK. Anyone thinking there’s been a continuing British dominance of fan fund races in the past few years may have missed the previous GUFF winners from Ireland, Croatia, and Finland; TAFF has been less diverse but, as Ulrika noted, we did have a recent delegate from Austria. In subsequent letters a few people mentioned the Anglophone origins of TAFF, DUFF, and GUFF, although we have been running races to and from ‘Europe’ for longer than I’ve been aware of them; Thomas Schlück won TAFF in 1966 – beating two Brits and a Swede – and it seems GUFF had become European, rather than simply British, at our end by 1985.

I do wish, though, that more people would remember that for fan fund purposes, and indeed geography, the UK is itself in Europe rather than being a separate destination or point of origin – and I can’t see that as changing, regardless of any more insular political upheavals which might loom on our horizon…

I’d hope that many future fan fund delegates from North America and the Antipodes will still want to visit fans in the UK, as well as in other European countries, helping to maintain the sort of incentive that Ulrika mentioned for UK fans to continue to support the funds too – but we might
still get our best chance to meet the 2019
delegates at the Worldcon in Dublin or the
Eurocon in Belfast, rather than because they’re
able to accept all the invitations they might
receive to visit London, Edinburgh,
Haverfordwest, Falmouth, or Sheffield.

As a mere fan fund bureaucrat – and with
profound thanks to Ulrika for the credit – I’d
very much echo the encouragement for more
fans to get involved with the fan funds, including
the work to raise money and support each fund
in practical ways as well as supporting candidates
in races and raising awareness of fan funds as a
continuing fannish tradition in the modern SF
community and our increasingly SFnal world.
I’m looking after the UK bank accounts for both
TAF and GUFF at the moment, but I gather
that the European administrators for each are
thinking more about how to manage money
raised in their own countries as well as in euros.
It has been interesting to see in recent years that
fundraising often needs to work differently in
different countries, too, which provides an up-
front example to incoming delegates of different
fannish traditions across the continent.

Which brings me back, at long last, to #13 and
John Purcell’s entertaining account of Life
Among The Skeltons. Skel’s own reflections on
their encounters in a recent LOC to Banana
Wings – including the Purcells’ return visit to
Stockport at the end of the trip, prolonged by
the kind offices of their airline who must have
realised they’d enjoy an extra day together –
confirm how fan funds can evidently foster good
friendships, sometimes after decades of written
communications, as well as prompting
considerable acts of hospitality. I also commend
to you, as a brief companion piece to John’s,
Murray Moore’s account of ‘the Stockport
version of tai chi … Exercising the Pigeons’.

I found it interesting to contrast Chuck Connor’s
early fannish experiences with Lucy
Huntzinger’s in #12 – not just their initial
encounters with and motivations in joining
fanzine fandom, but their reflections now on
what they got from it and how it shaped their
subsequent fan activity and interactions. (I also
learned that I really want to track down a copy
of Lucy’s fanzine Love and Friendship.) How many
points of connection have they had in the
intervening decades, I wonder, leading up to
appearances in successive issues of BEAMP? Is
there a Third Fan interwoven through their
fannish pathways, whose trajectory could lead to
a Grand Unified Theory of Fanzine Activity?
Chuck didn’t mention that in his response on
Lucy’s piece in #13, but maybe he’s keeping it
secret to entice everyone else to provide their
own contributions to his burgeoning fan history.

The part of Chuck’s article which most caught
my attention on re-reading was about the 1980s
British APAs – since this weekend we have been
prematurely celebrating the fiftieth anniversary
of Anzapa (the Australia and New Zealand
Amateur Press Association), of which we have
been members since we, and Spike, were
encouraged to join by Bruce Gillespie – and by
our desire to try to make him sigh a little less – in
2005. The official anniversary celebration is next
weekend in Melbourne; since we sadly can’t
make that, we’ve gone off early in order to
include photos in the contribution which is the
other thing, along with an equally late LOC to
Inca, that I’m trying to write at the moment.

‘Of Times Remembered’ was also particularly
interesting to me since it covers the period just
before I got into fandom myself – and, perhaps
for the first time, manages to make it seem
credible and recognisable as, to use Chuck’s
description, ‘somewhere I can go into and have
fun’ rather than an impossible golden era of
creative and social glory which inevitably I just
missed.

That might be because Chuck’s own experiences
and encounters in fandom mean that the most
familiar names from the 1980s fanzines I have
seen, and the fan history they have become, are on the sidelines here rather than squarely in the limelight – almost like a fannish version of Patrick Ness’s *The Rest of Us Just Live Here*. I hope other people who can add their own perspectives will be moved to do so, although it’s clearly a matter for individual fannish conscience whether they choose to restore for posterity the correct spelling of Lilian’s name.

This is a very cultural issue of *BEAM*, I realised. The Hodson/James musical piece was far more removed from my own experiences than the fannish reminiscences, for all that my own first gig was at Wembley Arena; it might be the age gap more than musical taste, gender, geography or any other differences which made the London music scene generally seem like another – very alien and quite hostile – planet in my teenage years. Meanwhile, Alison Scott is evidently managing to avoid the trap into which we usually fall; since exhibitions we want to see are on for ages, we needn’t go yet – and yes, we do indeed then miss a lot. In common with many Londoners – and perhaps Alison was also spurred by this opportunity – we usually only get around to seeing the permanent exhibits and institutions strewn across the city when we have Exotic Foreign Visitors determined to commit tourism. I did briefly see Michael Rakowitz’s sculpture ‘The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist’, the latest work to temporarily adorn the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square, while taking a short cut on a brisk walk through central London the other day.

The fourth plinth pieces have been wonderfully varied and generally worth a look (my favourite was Rachel Whiteread’s cast of the plinth itself, perhaps a little for its Fox’s Glacier Mint quality); this one is a replica of Lamassu, originally from Nineveh, latterly at the Mosul Museum, and destroyed there in 2005. It looked to definitely repay a proper visit and I shall have to remember to allow enough time when I’m next planning to be within a mile or two; it’s meant to be there until 2020 so I’m sure I’ll get around to that. Probably.

We have seen *Designated Survivor*, though; like many such political-based dramas, for me it always suffers a bit by not being *The West Wing* (or *Veep*), although it is considerably less daft than *Scandal*. My drama recommendation – which is only tangentially political, although definitely a thriller, and we came to it late enough that everyone else has probably seen it or decided not to long ago – would be *Person of Interest*. Much of the first season seems a bit monster-of-the-week, but there’s definitely a story arc waiting and the plot then moves fast across the seasons; there’s some excellent characterisation and character development, and distinct skilfulness which, when you think about it, also covers a lot of those topical concerns Nic mentions even if not (mercifully) quite the same ones. The first season was broadcast in 2011, mind you, so in a few respects real developments have already overtaken some of the cutting-edge science (or horror) considered in the show.

Our TV viewing is definitely of binging proportions; I’m far too impatient to watch or read serials on a one-episode-per-week basis. I’m therefore all in favour of the catch-up and streaming services which offer a whole season of a show as soon as the first episode is broadcast; we still watch (and rewatch) DVDs as well. We’ve definitely reached the point, though, where there’s far more quality television than we can possibly keep up with – and, without the background in comics which many fans have, we’ve been slow to attempt many of those based on the Marvel or DC canons. *Agents of SHIELD* and *Gotham* are firmly on my list, nonetheless.

Have you seen *Legion*? We’ve only had the first season so far, but that managed to twist my head inside out in a most satisfying way. We’ve also enjoyed both seasons we’ve seen of *Preacher*; I liked the comics and I think the TV adaptation captures the spirit of them very well while dispensing (so far) with some of the darker
grimness of Jesse’s family – although that may come.
I must stop, but I can’t without first commending Luke McGuff for providing an insight into an element of the twenty-first century USian dystopia of which I had been completely unaware. I am glad the free clinics exist although I am sorry they need to; inevitably, that makes me wonder whether I will be longing for something similar in just a few years’ time in the UK.
And so I submit to you, as to Chunga and Raucous Caucus before you and perhaps Inca soon enough, my latest entry in the ‘longest WAHF in the history of your fanzine’ contest. Thank you for BEAM. May your mutual no-shagging long continue.

Nic: Honkin’ WAHF indeed, and as good to hear from you re: BEAM as ever. I’ll take mild umbrage over your lassitude, as you invoke “timely” response, or more accurately the inability to deliver such, as a reason for being an unreliable loccer. I’m reminded of remarks by the coquetish Lilian E of many years ago, when I had chided her for a similar lack of response, wherein she contended that her precious words were given first call in her own zine(s) (which she was then publishing with semi-regularity, before engaging wholeheartedly with the ephemeral mess that is social media, and losing the ability to articulate actual Queen’s English) and thus were not to be wasted on mere locs. Frankly, that’s a philosophy that I concurred with at the time, given that I varied wildly between spates of being prolific with my own ishes (This Here... in particular) in which case there was barely time to loc others (although I like to think I made up for that with my capsule zine reviews in that title), and times of minimal output, wherein all words were jealously hoarded.
Another point here relates to something you wrote in a Banana Wings editorial a long time ago about the desirability of “fanzines talking to each other”, which was in response to something I myself had written. Whilst I’m certainly philosophically in favor of that concept, it’s something that isn’t happening at all right now, and that’s in a large part due to the vagaries of schedule. In a typically naive burst of enthusiasm after Ulrika agreed to co-edit, I had envisaged that BEAM might be able to punt two issues a year, but reality insisted that this ambition would be slapped back to “it’ll be out when it’s fuckin’ ready”.
It’s fundamentally highly admirable to commit to a frequent publishing schedule, but outside of APAs, that’s only something that Banana Wings has managed, and most
obviously *Vibrator* over its recent run. That gives meaning to “timely” response in that the loccol will resemble an actual conversation, if not exactly in real time, in some facsimile thereof (perhaps we’d call it “fanzine time”) which might be illusory but is nevertheless fit for purpose.

“It’s all about the ‘boo’, as an excessively drunk Corflu GoH once slurried, and ‘boo, as in reader response, is our currency. It’s foolish to think that any kind of immediacy in communication can be achieved by a zine like *BEAM* with an erratic schedule. Thus, timeliness of itself is not a requirement, but any response at all (especially a typically thoughtful one from such as yourself) is welcomed, whenever it manages to arrive.

**Ulrika:** I’m so glad you liked the disclaimer. We Made It For You, and were quite proud of it. … In case you hadn’t already thought of it, you might put a flea in Andy Hooper’s ear about finding Lucy’s *Love and Friendship*, as he gets all sorts of zines channeled to him for resale, and was kindly able to give me an entire run of *Widening Gyre* when I discovered I have misplaced or buried my own….Finally, Oh Yes! On *Person of Interest*. Hal and I are definitely fans – it’s one of the better all around skiffy-inflected shows on television in recent years, as far as I’m concerned.

**MARK PLUMMER**

*October 6*

Claire has just reminded me indirectly that I started writing to you back in May. *BEAM #13* is the usual stuffed bundle of goodies about which it’s possible to say an awful lot and thus leaving me predisposed to probably say nothing at all as it’s easier, but I should resist that temptation and maybe focus on a couple of things.

As in, say ‘Skyline Pigeon’ where Chuck Connor says: “But then, as Pete Young states in *The White Notebooks* #2 (page 12 I think) according to the reigning powers that be, apart from TWP there’s no other Brits involved in APAs.”

Now I trust you’re impressed with my commitment because I went and checked back on Chuck’s reference—I’m impressed by the way he remembers page numbers, by the way—and now I deduce that “the reigning powers that be” is me. Or I’m one of them anyway. Crikey. I’d better get Alison Scott to make me a T-shirt, or perhaps a hat.

Actually, and with all due respect to Pete, I think his version in *TWN* #2 must be a slight misrepresentation of what was said. It was two-and-a-half years ago, and honestly I’ve no recollection of the conversation, but I don’t think we could have concluded that “apart from TWP there’s no other Brits involved in APAs”, if nothing else because I know that Claire and I were and are in Anzapa. And I don’t know for sure but I’d hazard a guess that there are also one or two Brits in FAPA. Thus I think that the point was more that we didn’t know of any extant British fannish APAs other than TWP. In fact I’ve recently learned that the Pieces of Eight APA is still functioning which was a complete surprise. I’ve no idea who’s in it apart from Brian Jordan.

But, yeah, I admit I forgot about eAPA. Chuck wonders “what the fuck Peter Sullivan and I were doing for almost a decade keeping eAPA alive and well”. I guess the answer is having fun and I assume that was the point. If however there was some higher purpose, well, sorry, but eAPA never really seemed to be that important in wider fandom. I just looked through some of the publicly accessible mailings and they’re hardly well-populated, half a dozen contributions or fewer.
I don’t know whether it’s the detailed look that Chuck had in mind but there are articles about The Organisation in Prolapse #3.

I can’t offer much of a contribution to any attempt to document British fandom in the early eighties, for all that I’m in favour of the idea. Before my time, I’m afraid.

And I also have a certain distance from Dave Hodson’s description of the London gig scene in the late seventies and early eighties. The distance is relatively small, only sixty miles or so, and I realise that from a North American perspective that’s just down the road to the shops, but what can I say? Perhaps miles were just longer back then. But when Dave was hanging out in noisy smoke-filled pubs I was in north Essex, reading in Sounds about places like the Hammersmith Odeon and The Marquee, places that then seemed as remote as the Fillmore, Winterland, and the Hollywood Bowl.

My neighbourhood growing up was a bit of a concert wasteland. The nearest mid-range venue was Ipswich Gaumont, but that was arguably less accessible than London because public transport in the evening could get you there but without the prospect of a usefully-timed return journey meaning I was reliant on parental lifts. There were a few gigs at the Essex University just outside Colchester and that’s where I saw a few of those New Wave of British Heavy Metal Bands that Dave mentions including an early (pre-first album) show by Def Leppard. I started wondering what happened to all those musicians, given that logically they’d have been a few years older than me and so presumably are coming up on retirement age now. What did they do after their brief moment vaguely adjacent to if not actually in the limelight? A bit of googling suggests that in most cases they carried on playing in bands. Who knew?

I moved to London in 1983 and so all those previously quasi-mythical venues suddenly came within easy range. I think the Marquee was probably my favourite and my recollection of the place was probably more in line with Dave’s than yours, Nic. The word “sticky” would certainly loom large in any description. In 1983 there were busily celebrating their twenty-fifth anniversary, with a number of high profile shows including a Yardbirds reunion and a “secret” performance by ZZ Top which of course everybody knew about and so it sold out if not quite as quickly as a twenty-first century Glastonbury then long before any mere mortal might have hoped to get a ticket. I even had a membership there for a few years. I think you paid about two quid for six months and it got you 50p off a ticket at a time when tickets cost about three quid so not to be sniffed at.

The band I most remember from the Marquee was Here and Now, and they were I suppose ‘my’ group for much of the mid-eighties. They had been a more than usually chaotic jam band, denizens of the UK free festival circuit in the mid and late seventies where they toured on a bus with Alternative TV fronted by Sniffing Glue co-founder Mark Perry. An early claim to fame was that they contrived somehow to have the groove cut the wrong way on one of their albums such that needle ran from the centre of the records outwards and the music came out backwards. Wags claimed this had no discernible impact on the sound.

By the early eighties they’d evolved into something more structured and dare I say commercial. Although I think of them in connection with The Marquee -- I remember hearing keyboard player Gavin on the phone in The Marquee box-office, explaining to an aggrieved punter why they no longer espoused their old give-what-you-can-afford ticket price: “Basically, you bastards never gave us anything” - I’d trog around various parts of London to see them, in the process discovering just how far away from a tube station it’s possible to be while still being in zone two. Armed only with the knowledge of the street on which the venue was
to be found, I quickly learned that some London streets are surprisingly long.

Dave mentions Doll by Doll, a band who I only know as the billed support for Hawkwind’s 1979 tour. I recall this detail because when I was fifteen I had a tour poster stuck up on my bedroom wall.

Thing is, I saw a show on that tour but Doll by Doll didn’t play. Rather we got an entirely inconsequential act I remember as Billy Karloff and the Supremes. Now I can’t claim that I’ve been wondering about it for thirty-nine years, but I was certainly curious about the mismatch in a very low-level kind of way at the time and I suppose it has bubbled up in my memory once or twice since.

And as you’ve now brought it to mind again I’ve just looked it up online, and have learned first that it was Billy Karloff and the *Extremes* and second that, according to the 2015 Guardian obit of DbD leading light Jackie Leven, Doll by Doll were chucked off the tour for “intimidating” Hawkwind with the implication that this was through Leven’s monumental chemical abuse. Well, well.

Really good issue, as always, chaps. Great content and great look.

Nic: One of the most interesting things to me about ‘There Are Places’ was the substantial differences in which bands we’d seen and become attached to, which you’ve now added to. (“Doll By Doll”? Who they?) That’s churlish of me, because I was aware of the name, but I couldn’t name one tune of theirs without a Google. “Here and Now” likewise.

Speaking of “bands we’ve never heard of”, I ought to mention the rather good Screeens (yes, 3 ‘e’s) who I roadied for a few times, and in fact met one of my more interesting girlfriends, the American avant-garde filmmaker Stephanie Bereos at one of their gigs.

Mildly gobsmacked to note that you moved to the Smoke in 1983 (I’d been living there for 6 or 7 years prior, and had recently moved back to Herts). Given our satirically TARDISed friendship duration of 102 years and counting, I judge that we must have started hanging out together at Tuns & BSFAs quite shortly thereafter, although I believe you’ve mentioned that we first actually met in Birmingham, my fannish second home. Must have been at least ten years later that I found out we share a birthday (with the grate Aitch, Harry Bell, no less), and I labored on for another (ahem, number) of years under the delusion that the three of us were ten years apart, each. Although untrue, I still managed to acquire the derangement of the middle child, which probably suits me.

WILLIAM BREIDING

April 16

I received an unexpected package of fanzines from Andy Hooper a couple of weeks ago, one of which was BEAM 13: The Hard Copy. Andy’s comment was, there is a lot in there to respond to, so write them a loc. So, dutifully . . . I write.

Indeed, there is a lot of stuff in there. But I’m finding my head rolling with the Chuck Connor interchange. Generally I avoid Fannish Politics. And generally I find awards in the fannish context to be unseemly, including the FAAns. I’ve never quite gotten why the award system is so important to fans. And why fans like Taral whine and gripe about them if they don’t receive the recognition they feel they are due. And then there is a factor of fanzine fans that feel completely excluded from the FAAns. My question to them is why do you even give a fuck?
It’s a mere 50 to 100 people voting. Enjoy your own mailing list, or the fanzines you loc, and get on with it.

The whole thing of feeling excluded hits me the wrong way. I think fans that feel Corflu or certain fanzines, and fans are elitist are maybe too sensitive. I know whereof I speak because I have frequently felt this way about my entire life of activity in fandom. But I put this down to my own personal foibles and antisocial nature and have never blamed another fan or set of fans for my own feelings of alienation, or exclusion.

I’m not so sure that the whole merit thing is viable either. I think it has to do with personality types and fitting in, or finding your spot, and the ones that you mesh best with. Some may never do this and go away hurt, others, say like, the pseudonymous E.B. Frohvet, created an entire habitat in his fanzine based pretty much on his own feelings of alienation from the quote-unquote Corflu crowd, or the Ted White mind meld or whatever the fuck they were calling it, and he did a damned good job of it.

A fanzine is a personal expression and creation, not a McDonald’s. Not everyone is welcome. If a fan editor doesn’t want to send their zine to someone that’s their prerogative. I feel very strongly about this. There are fans whom are popular, active letterhacks, and revered fan writers that will never personally be sent my hard copy fanzine because I just don’t find them interesting, or politely put, have even stronger negative feelings about them. If this hurts their sensitive fannish souls, I’m sorry, but that’s life, and this kind of thing is going to happen.

Fandom is large and there is a spot for everyone if you want to be here, and this is what you want to be doing.

Back-patting and saying “good job!”, which is what the FAAns are, is all well and good, but when it’s taken too seriously it curdles my stomach. Even though Nic says maybe a quarter of the votes for the FAAns come from Corflu attendees I think it’s inevitable that they will be linked to the convention by those who feel slighted because the perception of their slighting is holistic, takes in the whole biosphere of a certain type of fannish milieu. As I said, this is more the problem of those who feel slighted, than of any particular group of fans.

And by the way, fanzine fandom is exclusive. It’s a small subset within a larger context. But it’s an exclusive club with an open door policy. And that, my friends, is very fannish.

A few other words: I very much enjoyed the joint piece by Hodson and James. It made me want to write something about my own days of club going and band-seeing in the sixties, seventies, eighties and nineties…much enjoyed!

And Brian Parker’s cover. That may be the single most beautiful cover I have seen on a fanzine for many a year. I have spent hours looking at it.

A loc one year late. That’s not too many.

WAHF

Alison Scott (“I just wanted to say how well I thought Brian Parker’s cover came out on the printed copies.”); Graham Charnock (“Usual excellent production apart from the shit cover by Brian (painting by numbers) Parker and a rather unnecessarily overlong review of the last issue of Vibrator.”)
I remember him wildly haired and producing hard-boiled eggs from somewhere unseen like some contemporary Gandalf of poetry. I first met him in Leeds where he organised a poetry reading at the Iconoclasm convention of 1989. There were problems with the tape-recorder, so I filled for a few minutes until it was working. He produced a fanzine of some of the poetry read at the event, *Icons of Starcasm* and so I was a Hilltop Press poet. Next we met at a poetry and small-press festival that Kevin Troop (of K.T. Publications) organised in Stamford in the late ’80s or early ’90s. Steve knew everyone and yet made time for oiks like me. Slowly I learned a little of his past.

Born in Maidenhead, English father, American mother, grew up in both countries, experiencing the alien-ness of each in turn. Moved to Huddersfield in 1966. Poetry in such magazines as Oz, short stories from mid 1970s (he is credited with over 500, some used in such anthologies as Years Best Horror). BSc in Chemistry, advertising copywriter then creative writing tutor 1996. MA in Poetry (1999). 2015 Grand Master by the SF Poetry Association which he earned not only for his poetry but also his biographical and bibliographical work on such then neglected poets as Lilith Lorraine.

From the introduction to his collection *Gestaltmacher, Gestaltmacher, Make Me a Gestalt* (Four Quarters Press 2000) comes a line from Steve, “there is no longer any agreed purpose for poetry to serve”. Be that the case Steve’s poetry embraced the startling image and the twisted metaphor. From ‘Adroganter et Sine Ulla Humilitate’ comes this which could be advice for a poet:

* someday we must try something  
  really truly difficult  
  something to make swans weep and cuckoos  
  in amazement cease to shit in borrowed nests  


From the same collection, in ‘A Magnificent Performance’ comes this “dangerous as a poem in so hostile/a ruined environment…”. From ‘Integrating the Stranded Alien into Society’ (*2001: A Science Fiction Poetry Anthology* Anamnesis Press 2001) in which the unfortunate being learns to well what it is to be human:

*I have taught the being to draw  
so far it scratches shapes of pure pain  
on every surface I value even my child-woman.*

Steve was much more than just a genre poet, in the acknowledgments to *Gestaltmacher…* over 80 titles are listed, some I recognised, ranging from Stonehenge Campaign Newsletter to New Statesman and Society. For examples of how the Yorkshire countryside worked its way under his skin I’d pick from the poem ‘Worlow Outlook’ (*The Pennine Triangle* Othername Press 2002) and this stanza:

*quarry  
here used to be  
Roman weather station  
road below girl in fast car bright  
lighter.*

And from “Churn Milk Joan” (*Neolithon* K.T. Publications 2001):

*The stone is shapeless  
tall yet withered  
older than sin  
younger than dawn.*

Taking this opportunity to go through some of his old collections I realised that on page 2 of *A Mile beyond the Bus* (New Hope International 1992) that there was a glued-in illustration obscuring an errant stanza. So Steve (I suspect he did this himself in every single copy, probably with different illustrations in each) who would write postcards on re-purposed fragments of cereal boxes.

From 1991 he produced the crabbed handwritten news-sheet *Data Dump*, initially on the sf poetry field but quickly expanding to cover all forms of verse
within the genre orbit. I supplied occasional reviews (mostly on genre music). Steve frequently reviewed my own pamphlets which I would pore over, savouring each erudite phrase which revealed aspects of my poems I hadn’t realised.

In 2010 he published a collection of my verse inspired by the tales of the Mabinogion, Sack of Midnight. These had been initially printed in various pagan magazines around 2002/2003. Steve had agreed to publish the collection but wanted to wait for the illustrator (Ian Brown) to come free, to which I happily agreed. There were re-writes at his request and I touted it at my gigs until it fell out of print.

Other works he edited that he was good enough to include work of mine in included Dreamers on the Sea of Fate (Sol Publications 1999), a survey of British SF poetry that included work from Brian Stableford and Mike Moorcock. Then there was Dreaming Scryers, True Deceivers. This collection originated from work read at a poetry festival in Oxford in 2003. Steve had persuaded Brian Aldiss to come and read there and I remember him asking us if we would mind only reading three poems each so that Brian Aldiss could read more of his. My thought was I would be happy just to read one if I was reading alongside Aldiss, we compromised at me reading two. Others who read (and so were in the booklet) were Rip Bulkeley, Andrew Darlington, John F. Haines and Steve Sneyd himself.

Others will have known Steve far better than I. He was a man who was generous with both his time and his talent. His poetry still exists in countless publications (he was incredibly prolific) waiting to be re-discovered.

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**CARDINAL COX**

Not all day just seemed it
Easily train strolling south
Under grey sky through Damen and then
Bit by bit getting underway again from Grimma mealbreak
Rolling on and on flatland and
At long last is here
Now and rush now from train to find
Dark gate gaping past gypsy van-back jeans stall then
Encircling wall followed on at last to find
Notable even among notable tower gates
Bright high angel-like figure mountain
Up up towards sky just as in childhood book Stargarder Tor
Rises on and on round wall
Guarded by round towers each black-and-yellow

Goldilocks-like identical halftimber
Roosting houses sat
Upon its top and and on round

---

**INSIDE AN OLDER WALL**

**STEVE SNEYD**

By wall that circles inside outer circle of
Noisebrimmed ring road just far enough to feel
Enticed into safe other or at least lost world;
wall-circuit done
Diving then up spoke of road inwards toward centre-hub
Now between more pale-painted
Arrayed-as-toy-rows medieval topheavy tiny houses
Reaching in well past museum where staff
Bewildered muttered how the hell Englishman got here alone
Up on to core of town to find sudden opening
Endless empty square as big as where army could march as bombers did
Not expected nor huge new block corner rising ten times Stargarder as new ruler-orator

Reprinted from *Arrows of Desire* #7, November 1995
THE FAAn Award Blues
NOT BEN HARPER

Let us see fanac from N3F
Then pass along, pretend to be deaf
The FAAns have hit an all-time low
Perhaps it's time for them to go?

They gave an award to some lousy clown
So I'm gonna burn them down
Yes I'm gonna burn them down

My vote is how I give the 'boo
And if we agree then I won't spit at you
Your vote's your own, if we both agree
But brother, if not there'll be some injury

Don't mess with my toys, don't you tarnish the crown
Or I'm gonna burn them down
Yes I'm gonna burn them down

There's a thing called the Rule of LAWS
And the Rule of LAWS should not give you pause
It's there so you know who to vote for first
So you'll get my blessing and not my curse

Put them all in a sack, in the river to drown
Now I'm gonna burn them down
Yes I'm gonna burn them... ugh!

Original song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKfGKLui5HM
Lyrical manipulation by Ulrika O’Brien and Nic Farey, and not Andy Hooper or Michael Dobson
Now's the Perfect Time to Take a Trip

We suggest a visit to the Vale of Strange, where nothing is quite as it seems and bizarre is the norm, but the tourists have a great time... as far as they can recall.

What Visitors Have to Say

“My 7 year old granddaughter and her 70 year old grandfather both loved it. It's a brilliant book suitable for 7 year olds upwards. I will be looking out for the next in this series by Grimly Darkwood.”

“The story is by turns mysterious, laugh-out-loud funny and genuinely tense and gripping... This world feels absolutely real and lived in – a hallmark of the very best fantasy.”

“Magically and intriguingly weird, a wonderful mix of reality and fiction. escapism for all ages.”

The Shop on Peculiar Hill is unputdownable – an enchanting story that’s so entertaining!

Eric Brown, author of An Alien Ate Me For Breakfast

A fabulous children’s fantasy, exciting and wildly imaginative!

John Gay Collick, author of The Book of the Colossus series

The Shop on Peculiar Hill
by Grimly Darkwood

(who bears such a striking resemblance to fan Simon Ounsley, they may well be twins separated at birth)

Book one in The Vale of Strange series

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