



VIBRATOR 2.0.9



THIS ISSUE CONTAINS: BIG HUGS, POLICE PROCEDURE, DEATH AND DYING, A SHORT STORY, CHINESE FOOD & PARABENS.

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The nights are drawing in, and here I sit waiting for notification of my own knighthood or at least OBE to arrive in a monogrammed envelope, an old man wearing carpet slippers and with a travel rug gathered about him, with nothing for comfort so much as a half empty bottle of vodka to sip from occasionally. Occasionally when I feel especially morose I dip into the leather bound copy of the complete works of T.S. Eliot which is never far away. If I get really depressed I take up Ted Hughes' Crow; the story of a dark and desolate creature with which I feel I have a lot in common. Come on, my mealy-mouthed lovelies, peck over these bones I present for your delectation, make my sad life worth living, pummel my nearly lifeless unresponsive body with locs and articles, beat me into submission with your.. er.. submissions. You know you can do it.

I'm Graham Charnock. My address is graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk. Please send review copies or cheques to 45 Kimberley Gardens, London N4 1LD. This issue is dated October 2014. Deadline for locs for next issue 30th November 2014. Thanks as always to Pat Charnock for proofreading and correcting my errant memories. Thanks to Steve Stiles for supplying the masthead illo, which I may well continue to use until he sends me another one.

WHAT DID YOU DO DURING BARCON 2, DADDY?

(What is Barcon? New readers start here. Inthebar is a Yahoo group founded by Harry Bell after the collapse of one of many of Greg Pickersgill's attempts to do the same. It is a very sociable site and occasionally its members feel the need to get together and socialize in a less virtual environment, so we go away for a long weekend to an event that is so far from being a Con it more resembles a Garage Sale. No, wife-swapping is not involved. Last year it was in Lincoln. This year it was in Royal Leamington Spa. That is all you need to know.)

Well, for a start I very nearly didn't go, especially since there was to be no wife-swapping. When I woke up on Friday morning a bout of rheumatic arthritis, or arthritic rheumatism, had set in overnight, as it has recently been known to do, and I could hardly walk. Pat suggested we postpone our arrival and go on Saturday instead, but I swallowed a couple of Ibuprofen and bit the bullet. My feet at least could still operate the pedals of my car, and there was after all no certainty I would be any better the next day.

And so we hit the road to Leamington Spa. Why do trips of this kind always seems to take longer going than coming back? I don't know, but this trip was no exception. It seemed to take hours to get there, and in fact it did, two and a half hours to be exact. On arrival though we were heartened to find Ian Maule in the car park sucking on a fake cigarette, you know, one of those electronic things that glows and dispenses a comforting puff of vapour as a substitute for contracting cancer. The receptionist was also out there as well but smoking a real fag. I gather she had already questioned Ian on his manliness and his inability to smoke a real fag like her. 'Ah, but can you do this?' Ian asked her, stubbing out his fake cigarette on his forearm.

Ian offered to help me with my bag but I wasn't trusting him with two bottles of vodka and cheerfully kicked him in the shin whilst declining his offer. There was a big yellow bus called Jones The Bus, parked in the car park, which I gathered had earlier disgorged a load of Welsh trippers, I mean mostly old-aged pensioners, not hippies, although these days, who knows? Fortunately by the time we arrived they had mostly dispersed. We did meet Keith Freeman in the lobby though who accused me of being responsible for the hotel allocating him and Wendy a room that was already occupied by another couple. We didn't see a lot of Wendy during the weekend. Maybe she was having a good time with the other couple.

Most people turned up in the bar during the course of the afternoon, including briefly Mark Plummer and Claire Brialey although Claire was obviously very sniffly from the attack of Ebola which would unfortunately curtail her attendance much beyond that night and breakfast the next morning.

Things soon settled down to discussing where various parties would disperse to for that evening's meal. Communal meals are a big part of basic Barcon non-programming. I was keen, in my anal way, to pin down a party for the Thai Elephant restaurant. Mark and Claire launched a counter proposal for a Cuban Tapas, and Pat who had lined up for the Thai immediately said she fancied that as well. Well, I fancied it too, but I was trying not to commit to too many top-heavy parties, which might leave others dining on their own. None of us would have minded so much if it was Brian Parker, but we do tend to look out for our own. The Mowatt/Haddock axis had already expressed a preference for non-fussy pub grub (in fact Jim had already staked out his preferences by earlier ordering sausage in batter and chips from a chippy a short way away) so we left them, and Keith Freeman, to it. Those that went, enjoyed the Thai Elephant, so much so we agreed to downplay it and not to confess as much to anybody else. The Cuban tapas crowd had much the same reaction to their chosen venue as well I gather. Eating out at Barcon can become somewhat competitive. The owner of the Thai Elephant was so impressed with us she even photographed us and put it on Facebook.

I think photos exist of the Haddock/Mowatt party enjoying their meal also, but I suspect they have been heavily photoshopped.

Saturday dawned. It was raining, not heavily but insidiously. After digesting a splendid breakfast and sitting around scratching ourselves for several hours we loaded ourselves into two cars and went to investigate downtown Leamington, hitting the Pump Room with its cafeteria, art gallery and museum, where several of us pretended to be children and tried on ancient Viking helmets and took photos of each other. Thence to the Jephson gardens over the road to marvel at the Palm house and take cute pictures of squirrels. People (ie Rob) then decided they wanted to find a pub for a snack and a few beers, despite it being nearly that witching hour when pubs stopped serving food.

We walked into the main shopping centre where we were even less likely to find what we wanted and I started getting a sinking feeling about the futility of the exercise which eventually resulted in my legs stopping working. I became distinctly grumpy and snarly and kneed anyone who came within striking distance in the groin. Despite me, people persevered and found directions to a pub some way out from the centre which not only still served food but had room to eat it in. This was the Fat Pug, a renowned swinging student venue which fortunately seemed fairly free from swinging students on a Saturday afternoon. We ate big hearty sandwiches (with chips). Pat had fish and chips with mushy peas, and I had humus with tortilla shovels (don't ask). People also drank pints of Fat Pug Beer.

Back at the hotel we drew lots for that evening's meal. Everybody seemed interested in Italian, but all the restaurants people tried were booked up (well, it was Saturday evening). We eventually found one called Nicolini's on the main Parade which could take a table of six. Then Mike and Pat Meara's party managed to book the same restaurant, and even later the Mowatt/Haddock axis also managed to book the same place. We had a sinking feeling that it was slightly suspicious that a restaurant had that much availability on a Saturday evening, but as it happened the food and everything else was perfectly acceptable.

Back at the hotel we gathered in the function room the hotel had somewhat grudgingly set aside for us, and indulged in a whisky tasting. There were five whiskies on offer but don't expect me to remember which was which. That sort of discernment went out the window fairly early on.

The next morning I managed to get up for breakfast, but I felt like a whisky zombie and immediately afterwards went back to bed to sleep for several hours (I awoke fitfully occasionally to find the Japan Grand Prix was happening on my television and it was always lap 33). In the meantime most other folks went to Kenilworth Castle and existing photos prove they had a good time. I was sorry I missed it. I was not the only one though. Mike and Pat Meara went off to investigate a Record Fair/Fabric Event instead.

Several people were leaving that afternoon. Sandra Bond, although she had only just arrived. And Brian Parker and Roy were off too. The Haddock/Mowatt axis were also due to depart because I gather like most young folks they had jobs to go to on Monday morning. The quorum that was left decided to round the day off at the Kayal Kerulan restaurant, another choice I can recommend if you are ever in Leamington (but why would you be?).

The meal was excellent (the first time I had tried dosa) and the staff attentive, if a bit slow. Afterward we convened back at the hotel and I managed to get people to play Cards Against Fandom, a specially doctored version of the game to include fannish slanted questions whilst maintaining the original's often racy and frankly often sexist answers. Somehow the mix worked.

Next morning by the time I had got up, everybody had gone, and soon so had we.

STEVE STILES NAROWLY MISSED THE DEADLINE ON 2.0.8 SO HE HAS PRIDE OF PLACE IN KICKING OFF THIS ISSUE

Your aside on Bruce Townley's refusal to hug you inspires sociological reflections on that subject. As we all should know, there are a wide variety, a continuum, of embraces ranging from the impersonal to the offensive: the glad to see you hug, the madly in love hug, the let's fuck hug, the we'll always be friends--so long sappy hug, the thank God we're still alive hug, the let's kiss our asses goodbye hug, and so forth and so on. (The anti-hug is, of course, the shove.)

I don't know either you or Bruce well enough to make any judgments on either one of you, but I feel a bit of consideration for Bruce inasmuch as I myself am far from being a hug slut, limiting my hugs to my wife and my dearest friends. Part of this stems from the sad fact that my parents were far from being physically demonstrative types (my approval rating was below 40%, they were always afraid of catching a disease), and that I grew up in a tough part of Manhattan: in my neighborhood the desired adolescent state of mind was to be a "rock," untouched by the vulnerability of emotion --probably the inspiration for Paul Simon's "I am a rock, I am an island" (and, boy, did I relate!).

Now, there's the fact that a hug is pretty physical so there's always the possibility of some sex in there somewhere. We Americans are famously conflicted about sex; so many of us are on so many different pages that it gets fairly bewildering. The sexual revolution opened up new perspectives for many of us, bias and taboos have shrunk, experimentation outside the norm is no longer suspect, sex for many is a celebration and very good for advertising. On the other hand, the puritans are still active among us and many of them are in Congress, damn them! While on the left, we have the Politically Correct Police busily lowering the bar on definitions of sexual harassment: for example, a seven- year-old male chauvinist pig in Brooklyn was recently suspended for kissing a female classmate on the cheek.

Summing up: some are born huggers. Some achieve natural hugging, and some have huggings thrust upon them.

By the way, the only fan to ever complain about the lobby of my apartment building (which *did* smell of cat piss) back in the 1970s was Charles Platt. He didn't so much complain as just mention it, and it wasn't the odor that bothered him but stepping on the copulating couple on the floor (fortunately, Charles was bare foot at the time.)

(EDITOR: I'm sometimes confused by the Greeting Hug which seems also to demand a kiss on the cheek, or indeed both cheeks. Does one actually kiss or simple moue with a corresponding sound effect? Then there's the embarrassment when one does kiss and it lands on the other party's ear. I would point out that on the occasions

*when Bruce and I *have* managed to hug, it has never involved kissing or any other declaration of sexual interest. I only hug my wife when someone we know dies, so please don't any of you be in a hurry to give us that opportunity.)*

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HERE'S MILT STEVENS, STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE. THE PITCHER SHOOTS A SHORT BALL. MILT HITS IT INTO THE STANDS. WAIT, WHAT...?

In Vibrator #2.0.8, you talk about network television and cop shows. At the moment, I don't watch any network television, and I certainly don't watch any cop shows. I am somewhat curious as to representations of police use of computers and math. I can remember when I had to avoid the term 'standard deviation' because it embarrassed the executives. We had a lot of work to do.

It is often convenient for tech types to allow the executives to believe that tech stuff is magic. Know ye oh king that we are devotees of the machine god and can use his mighty sorceries on your behalf. It's a little unnerving when the damned fools actually start believing it. At one point, LAPD got a new chief of police from New York. In New York, the new chief had a system called Fast Track. Fast Track was a mindless bean counting system, but crime had declined after it had been instituted. So the new chief wanted Fast Track and nothing else.

We already had much better software in Los Angeles. So I redesigned screens to make one aspect of our software look and act like Fast Track. The chief also wanted every report in the same fonts as New York and character for character. It was silly, but it satisfied the chief.

I agree with your comments on Facebook. Fandom would be better off if it had no contact with Facebook. This would be particularly true of conventions. It's long been believed that a mob takes on the intelligence of its least intelligent member. That seems to be demonstrated on Facebook.

I generally agree with Curt Phillips' comments on the Hugos. I submitted a motion to get rid of the fan Hugos, but it didn't work. I'm not going to bother with any further worldcon business meetings. If I were to attend another meeting and recommend anything, it might be to remove the voting rights from supporting memberships. That wouldn't go anywhere either. The business meetings want the money far more than they want philosophical purity.

Like Robert Lichtman, I very much remember the 1984 worldcon. I always knew that being worldcon chairman was sort of like being year king for a tribe of cannibals. However, it also has aspects of being hit by a train.

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MARK PLUMMER NORMALLY WINS AWARDS FOR HIS FAN-WRITING, BUT HE'S DECIDED TO MAKE AN EXCEPTION FOR VIBRATOR.

I should start off by explaining that normally I would rush to follow your instructions, and my failure to comply on this occasion is entirely down to Reasons.

You handed me a copy of Vibrator 2.0.8 at breakfast on Barcon 2 Saturday and so naturally I was reading it mere minutes later back in our room in the Falstaff Hotel. I did this despite our copy having the word 'Claire' inscribed in pencil on the front cover because that's the kind of devil-may-care rebel I am. Of course I saw your demand that I should immediately listen to John Wesley Harding. 'Stop what you're doing and listen to it. Now.' you said.

(A pause to wonder, why did you write names on the copies before handing them out? So if anybody abandoned their copy in the bar you'd know who it was? I have just written '... and Mark' on our copy by the way, in a slightly smaller script. Because that's the kind of devil-may-care rebel I am)

As I read this I was stuck out on the eastern spiral arm of the Falstaff where the wifi doesn't reach -- or perhaps it just hasn't noticed the door to the right at the top of the stairs and the corridor to which it leads -- and so while I don't doubt that the aural delights of Mr Dylan can be found on the internet somewhere that particular door was closed to me. Much like the door to the eastern spiral arm of the Falstaff. And, believe it or not, despite my youthful appearance I am sufficiently old school that my music collection still resides on numerous 4.7 inch silver disks in our house, then some 120 miles away. And so it was that -- rather than my devil-may-care rebelliousness -- that meant I couldn't comply.

Plus I wasn't sure we even had a copy of John Wesley Harding. I am not quite of the generation that thinks of Bob Dylan as the bloke who can't sing at the end of the 'We Are The World' single, but it seems to me that throughout my formative years Bob Dylan was a prominent name, yes, but mostly as a writer rather than a performer. On checking I see that in the sixties and early seventies he troubled the UK singles chart, which then represented the bounds of my musical experience, slightly more often than I'd assumed but my limited exposure to the man himself led me to the cliché view that he should stick to song *writing* and leave the performance to other voices.

And later, none of my friends seemed to have any Bob Dylan records. Well, I think somebody had a copy of Infidels -- so this would be 1983 or so -- but I really think that was it. And then, somewhere around that time, I experienced three moments of Dylanesque clarity. I stumbled upon what may have been the only UK television screening (Channel 4, 9.30 PM on Boxing Day 1983) of Renaldo and Clara, a film which as I recall serves to clarify very little at all about anything although it did introduce me to 'Hurricane'. I also saw The Last Waltz and thus 'Baby, Let Me Follow You Down'. And, most pertinently, I acquired a home-made tape containing Bringing It All Back Home and Highway 61 Revisited.

Those albums hugely resonated for me, getting on for twenty years after their original release. Granted, there were a few moments of bogglement. 'Einstein disguised as Robin Hood/With his memories in a trunk/Passed this way an hour ago/With his friend, a jealous monk'. Really? *Really*? But I quickly ditched my cliché denunciation of Dylan-as-performer. And then, some years later, when the perpetual HMV sale was virtually giving away the CDs, I bought loads of Bob Dylan, everything up to Nashville Skyline certainly.

Ah, but was JWH before or after NS? I get a bit hazy on the chronology after Highway 61, plus no internet -- eastern spiral arm etc -- and CDs 120 miles away. Would you believe me if I said almost the first thing I did when we got back to Croydon was check whether we have a copy of John Wesley Harding? I say 'we' here as technically the CDs reside in joint ownership but Claire, who I suspect *is* of the generation that thinks of Bob Dylan as the bloke who can't sing at the end of the 'We Are The World' single, would happily cede any claim to them. But yes, that's what I did, barely pausing to dump the luggage in the hall I raced -- yes, raced -- in a devil-may-care rebellious way to the CD rack and crikey, yes, we do have a copy of John Wesley Harding although not, oddly Blonde on Blonde. I wonder how that happened? So I can comply with your demand, although having missed -- for entirely justifiable reasons -- the opportunity to do so exactly as instructed I began to wonder, has the moment passed?

(Looking at the track listing for JWH, I have no memory of the album at all. I remember 'All Along the Watchtower', obviously, although there I cling to the assessment that Hendrix did a better job of it. But I can't call up any of the other tunes. Plus, on a quick glance I read 'Dear Landlord' as 'Dave Langford' which was oddly unsettling for a split second.)

So as I haven't yet listened to John Wesley Harding I will say that I share Curt Phillips's interest in hearing about your New Worlds tenure. So there are at least two of us. But I accept that maybe that's not the point. Maybe you had your heart set on China Mieville and Curt and I, even together, are just no substitute. I fear, though, that we may have a problem there as Mr Mieville has sworn off all public appearances for Reasons and so while he might indeed have a burning curiosity about those New Worlds days I suspect he will never be able to confront you with his battery of questions.

You may well be stuck with me and Curt then, and I'm sure Curt would willingly shave his head if that would help to, as it were, get you in the mood. He's committed to old sf magazines, is our Curt. Or we could find a suitable substitute, and maybe even more than one. I thought initially we could get Anatole France and Cecelia Holland, if that's not too eurocentric. But I don't think either of them go to conventions, and Mr France has been dead for

ninety years so I guess he has Reasons similar to Mr Mieville even if Mr Mieville is not dead and so his Reasons are probably less compelling. So we must look elsewhere.

Now as luck would have it, there is a fan in Ohio called Theformeryugoslavrepublicofmacedonia Melville but I've just checked with him and he thinks New Worlds all went to shit when Ted Carnell quit so he was less promising than I thought. But then, flash of inspiration, España Sheriff! This time I'm not risking checking on whether she's interested in New Worlds magazine -- although I'm sure she must, like all right thinking people -- so the next time the four of us (you, me, España, Curt) are all in the same place I think we should go for it. Let's see, why that'd be Loncon 3! No, wait...

While I've been not listening to John Wesley Harding I have been reading a volume of letters by Rachel Henning. Born in England in 1826, Henning emigrated to Australia in 1854. She didn't like it and so she came home again, but in 1861 decided to give it another go and settled permanently. I'm only a few pages in so far as she hasn't yet left England for the first time, but this is cracking good stuff: 'Rachel's [not her; different Rachel] love affair is the most fierce and throws all others into the shade. I suppose it is their youth; they have neither eyes nor ears for anyone else. They sometimes walk twice a day...' The fiends! Henning writes lots of letters so perhaps you should send her Vibrator. She's been dead for a hundred years, even longer than Mr France, but I bet she'd be more responsive than some of your other correspondents.

I have also been reading My Year of Meat by Ruth Ozeki. Our copy is a trade paperback with one of those bindings that's designed to look a bit like it's got a dustjacket. I assume it's not actually designed to make the book harder to read although nevertheless that's the effect it achieves. The title page has been rubber stamped to the effect that it's a damaged copy and thus is being sold at a reduced price. Oddly, the only damage I can detect is that the title page has been rubber-stamped. There's probably something very deep about that. Perhaps it's art. Or not.

Claire meanwhile is reading War and Peace. After that she's lined up a book about a squirrel with superpowers.

But back to Curt Phillips, I'm now going to disagree with him.

Well, obviously it's his choice how he labels himself, and in general I think a humanist is a pretty fine thing to be. And I guess that 'see[ing] no boundaries of fairness and access between men and women' is a subset of a system or mode of thought or action in which human interests, values, and dignity predominate.

However, I'm not clear on exactly what the problem is with advocating social, political, legal, and economic rights for women equal to those of men, that being what feminism is. I don't know, but I can't immediately see why any reasonable person wouldn't embrace that. And yet somehow Curt seems to insist that feminists are 'shameful and disgraceful' unless they 'also say what they are not. I know he's only asking that they confirm one thing that they're not but really, why stop there? Shouldn't anybody claiming to be a feminist also be required to complete a tick box like those green I-94W forms they used to give you when you went to the US, the ones where you had to confirm that you'd never been convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude and that you weren't, between 23 March 1933 and 8 May 1945, a member of the Nazi government of Germany? Hell, let's make 'em confirm that they've never been cruel to puppies too. Personally I'm not about to say there's anything 'shameful or disgraceful' in Curt claim to humanism even though he doesn't then go on to say that being a humanist does not mean that he considers it morally reprehensible to eat green beans on a Tuesday.

I also don't understand what the problem is with 'gender parity' -- or more specifically simply 'parity' as Curt seems to see something sinister in the use of 'gender parity' rather than 'gender equality'. Parity means 'the state or condition of being equal, especially as regards status or pay' so really, what's the problem with that?

Anyway, what I'm listening to at the moment is GoGo Penguin and Polar Bear, thus demonstrating the truly global reach of my musical tastes. I first encountered Polar Bear when Held On The Tips Of Fingers was shortlisted for the Mercury in 2005. I'm less taken with their new one, In Each and Every One (also Mercury shortlisted), which seems to me a bit samey and flat when it's not being harsh. GoGo Penguin's v2.0 is smoother, certainly, and thus more accessible, just piano/bass/drums but pretty impressive playing from all three. Somebody who understands about jazz will probably tell me this is all modern rubbish but that's the kind of devil-may-care rebel I am.

Talking of which, John Wesley Harding up next. Probably.

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HERE IS A LOC FROM THE UNLIKELY NAMED FRED SMITH

Thank you for sending various issues of your good zine. Must apologise for tardiness in replying. Actually, meant to acknowledge 2.0.5 but it got buried under stuff and then forgotten until 2.0.6 arrived when I was reminded to write. Then, suddenly, before I had a chance, here came 2.0.7. Dated, I note, August, (although I think it was September I received it). Is it a monthly schedule you're aiming for?

I'm probably far too late now to make any reasonable (or, at least, timely) comment on any of these but note that each ish is bigger than the last! More power to your elbow...or fingers! Also noted are the youthful faces exhibited in the photo on page 5 (of 2.0.7) especially when compared with the elderly gang on page 12. More evidence of aging Fandom! Looked like a good party, though, and it's nice to see that Taff winner Curt Phillips was well looked after. And got to Duxford and also to the Clacton Air Display to see the Lancasters flying

I enjoyed, particularly, your views on San Francisco since I've been there myself, although it was before I had rediscovered Fandom and therefore before I knew Robert Lichtman. We did do some of the touristy things but not Alcatraz (passed it on the ferry from Sausalito,) or the Columbarium. Did visit the Embarcadero, tho!

How did the shrew on page 13 become coloured? Surely you didn't hand colour every print issue?

Your lettercol is very good - pity I'm too late to get into it! Maybe next time..if you keep me on your mailing list.

One small criticism: I'm not enamoured of your zine's title or the symbol. Not that I'm a prude; it just doesn't mean anything - to me, anyway! All same the rest I enjoyed and hope to see again.

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*(EDITOR, I explained to Young Fred that the name Vibrator is historical, based on a fanzine I originally published in the 1970s. Those of you who remember it may recall it was meant to be a bit rude and get up people's noses, but of course I've matured a bit since then, but not enough some people may suggest. Back then people ***were*** a lot more prudish so the title had more impact than it does now in these blase days. Maybe I should retitile it **FUCK YOUR MOTHER, NIGGER!** or something. I have however at least replaced the rude thingey in the header with a perfectly respectable Steve Stiles illo. If he cares to do me another one, I will of course run it. Taral Wayne I fear is still shunning me because I didn't run any of his dildoes, but if you'd care to do me a furry animal one, Taral, I will give it serious consideration.)*

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

Pat Charnock posed the question:

I was reading the Guardian obits this morning, and came across this description of a TV director's death -

"As Gay described it, Ronnie's death could have been choreographed by himself. He was in the sea on a glorious summer's day with light dancing on the waves and the Needles in the distance when he had a fatal heart attack. It was as if he'd called cut at the perfect moment." [end quote]

I'm not sure there is a perfect way to go, but that doesn't sound bad, if you enjoy being in the sea.

My Dad was 84 when he went. I've told the story before, of how he cycled to the Post Office, and collapsed in there with a heart attack. He would have been pleased he could still cycle, as he'd loved cycling all his life. And he would have appreciated that the police carefully retrieved his bike and took it home for him. (He wouldn't have approved that they left it in the kitchen, but they probably wouldn't have known where to find the key to the garden shed.)

Or is it better to know you're going and say your goodbyes first?

GRAHAM: It's nice to think if you knew you were going you would have time to put your affairs in order, but I suspect I wouldn't put my affairs in order and would thus die as I generally lived in life thwarted by what I couldn't achieve. If I had sufficient advance warning I like to think it would at least enable me to hire a virtually endless stream of skips in which to dump my life, before flying off to San Francisco.

On the subject of the ideal moment at which to die, as someone who has brooded upon the subject of suicide for some time, I have now come to the conclusion that the ideal moment to top yourself would not be when you were extremely depressed and thought nothing could possibly get any worse (The Tom Disch Solution), but when you were extremely happy and thought that nothing in life could possibly get any better. The trouble is I suspect very few of us ever reach that state.

SPEAKING OF ONE'S DEATH BEING PRE-ORDAINED

*I don't normally go for fiction in fanzines but I thought I'd make an exception for this, since it is at least *real* fiction and not that most horrible bastard subsidiary *fan-fiction*. O. Henry was the pen-name of the prolific short story writer William Sydney Porter (1862-1910). This was the last work of O. Henry. The Cosmopolitan Magazine had ordered it from him and, after his death, the unfinished manuscript was found in his room, on his dusty desk. The uncompleted story (plus notes) was published in the Cosmopolitan for September, 1910. I have now attempted to finish it – Graham Charnock.*

THE DREAM by O. Henry

Finished by Graham Charnock

Murray dreamed a dream.

Both psychology and science grope when they would explain to us the strange adventures of our immaterial selves when wandering in the realm of "Death's twin brother, Sleep." This story will not attempt to be illuminative; it is no more than a record of Murray's dream. One of the most puzzling phases of that strange waking sleep is that dreams which seem to cover months or even years may take place within a few seconds or minutes.

Murray was waiting in his cell in the ward of the condemned. An electric arc light in the ceiling of the corridor shone brightly upon his table. On a sheet of white paper an ant crawled wildly here and there as Murray blocked its way with an envelope. The electrocution was set for eight o'clock in the evening. Murray smiled at the antics of the wisest of insects.

There were seven other condemned men in the chamber. Since he had been there Murray had seen three taken out to their fate; one gone mad and fighting like a wolf caught in a trap; one, no less mad, offering up a sanctimonious lip-service to Heaven; the third, a weakling, collapsed and strapped to a board. He wondered with what credit to himself his own heart, foot, and face would meet his punishment; for this was his evening. He thought it must be nearly eight o'clock.

Opposite his own in the two rows of cells was the cage of Bonifacio, the Sicilian slayer of his betrothed and of two officers who came to arrest him. With him Murray had played checkers many a long hour, each calling his move to his unseen opponent across the corridor.

Bonifacio's great booming voice with its indestructible singing quality called out:

"Eh, Meestro Murray; how you feel—all-a right—yes?"

"All right, Bonifacio," said Murray steadily, as he allowed the ant to crawl upon the envelope and then dumped it gently on the stone floor.

"Dat's good-a, Meestro Murray. Men like us, we must-a die like-a men. My time come nex'-a week. All-a right. Remember, Meestro Murray, I beat-a you dat las' game of de check. Maybe we play again some-a time. I don'-a know. Maybe we have to call-a de move damn-a loud to play de check where dey goin' send us."

Bonifacio's hardened philosophy, followed closely by his deafening, musical peal of laughter, warmed rather than chilled Murray's numbed heart. Yet, Bonifacio had until next week to live.

The cell-dwellers heard the familiar, loud click of the steel bolts as the door at the end of the corridor was opened. Three men came to Murray's cell and unlocked it. Two were prison guards; the other was "Len"—no; that was in the old days; now the Reverend Leonard Winston, a friend and neighbor from their barefoot days.

"I got them to let me take the prison chaplain's place," he said, as he gave Murray's hand one short, strong grip. In his left hand he held a small Bible, with his forefinger marking a page.

Murray smiled slightly and arranged two or three books and some penholders orderly on his small table. He would have spoken, but no appropriate words seemed to present themselves to his mind.

The prisoners had christened this cellhouse, eighty feet long, twenty-eight feet wide, Limbo Lane. The regular guard of Limbo Lane, an immense, rough, kindly man, drew a pint bottle of whiskey from his pocket and offered it to Murray, saying:

"It's the regular thing, you know. All has it who feel like they need a bracer. No danger of it becoming a habit with 'em, you see."

Murray drank deep into the bottle.

"That's the boy!" said the guard. "Just a little nerve tonic, and everything goes smooth as silk."

They stepped into the corridor, and each one of the doomed seven knew. Limbo Lane is a world on the outside of the world; but it had learned, when deprived of one or more of the five senses, to make another sense supply the deficiency. Each one knew that it was nearly eight, and that Murray was to go to the chair at eight. There is also in the many Limbo Lanes an aristocracy of crime. The man who kills in the open, who beats his enemy or pursuer down, flushed by the primitive emotions and the ardor of combat, holds in contempt the human rat, the spider, and the snake.

So, of the seven condemned only three called their farewells to Murray as he marched down the corridor between the two guards—Bonifacio, Marvin, who had killed a guard while trying to escape from the prison, and Bassett, the train-robber, who was driven to it because the express-messenger wouldn't raise his hands when ordered to do so. The remaining four smoldered, silent, in their cells, no doubt feeling their social ostracism in Limbo Lane society more keenly than they did the memory of their less picturesque offences against the law.

Murray wondered at his own calmness and nearly indifference. In the execution room were about twenty men, a congregation made up of prison officers, newspaper reporters, and lookers-on who had succeeded ...(*Ed. At this point O. Henry's original manuscript ended. What follows is my own reconstruction.*)... in the lottery of obtaining tickets for this public spectacle. He had been told that even more people had gathered outside, some supporting his execution, some objecting to it.

For perhaps the first time Murray actually fell to considering his crime. He felt no sense of guilt but was willing to have one imposed upon him, if only he could consider the circumstances. Had his wife not deserved her death? It seemed to him she had. She had cheated on him, and then taunted him with her infidelity. Maybe a man should not have responded as he had, by stabbing and slicing at her throat, but had she not provoked him in the first place it may all have been so different.

The corridor seemed to last forever. He thought that if perhaps it did last forever he might eventually escape death, treading into infinity. But inevitably more guards were waiting to lead him into the execution chamber. He was roughly handled and surprised at the way he was bundled into the chair. Why was he being treated so crudely, he wondered? Straps were fastened about him. He tried to speak to object but one of the guards stuffed a rag into his mouth.

Starved of oxygen he slipped into a reverie. He was walking again down the Limbo Lane, but now at the end of the corridor he saw a country cottage, with a white picket-fence. His wife was waiting for him, wearing a linen smock. She had been baking bread and there was flour on her hands which transferred to him as he embraced her. She smelt of bread and fragrant herbs. His daughter was sitting at the country table where his wife had been working. She greeted him enthusiastically offered up her cheek to be kissed.

He revelled in the dream. Everything was suddenly okay. Everything that had once been threatening was but an illusion in his brain. This was reality, not the sordid trial and conviction. Everything in his life except for this had been a horrible mistake, but now he was redeemed and felt at peace. He kissed his wife and child.

The execution had proceeded as planned. Murray's body was removed on a gurney and in due course buried in the prison's grounds.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In truth I had a lot of help from O. Henry who left a detailed synopsis of how he intended the story to develop, so I wasn't working in vacuum. Also O. Henry was renowned for often having a twist in the tail of his stories, so I tried at least to remain faithful to that without including a frankly clunky pay-off line that O. Henry had included in his notes. I often feel that I should myself write more background to my own stories so that should I die before finishing them someone might care to finish them off, but then I have about five stories on the go at once and never know myself from day to day how any of them will develop.

POP SONNET No. 2 FROM SANDRA BOND

Another in our ongoing series of famous pop lyrics rewritten in Shakespearean sonnet form. Please feel free to send us your own attempts.

There is a place where sons' lives are cut short,
By fathers claiming 'twas the Lord's command;
There is a place where cruel wars are plann'd,
By such as think that combat is mere sport.

There dwells a maiden, deathly pale of face;
Beggars and clothesless paupers there abound.
Bells that ring there must ring without a sound,
And men with muskets dwell about that place.

There may ye also find a gambler's den;
Laces may be bought there, red, white, and blue,
Such as will fasten any boot or shoe,
But sold at price by cryptic, devious men.

This place that's home to mystery and crime

NOW IAN WILLIAMS GOES IN TO BAT FOR THE DALAI LAMA

Your brain clearly wasn't in gear when writing about Facebook or, more specifically, the Dalai Lama.

For a start he'd be the first person to tell you not to mindlessly accept his word on anything. He'd tell you to think it through for yourself. One of the things about Buddhism which appeals to an atheist like me is that it tells you to question. I've been to meditation classes run by Buddhist teachers, read books about Buddhism and own a couple of books by the DL, and I shared a quote on Facebook about compassion not because it was by him but because it was something I've thought on and agree with because it makes complete sense.

It is true that there are lots of people who come up with glib, trite, new agey feelgood stuff much of which, frankly, makes me cringe, but you've picked a very bad example of it in The Dalai Lama who I once heard saying to an audience, "Come, take what you need." (from Buddhism). Can you imagine any other religious leader saying that?

And, no, I don't consider myself a Buddhist, there's just a lot about it that appeals to me.

*(EDITOR: I'm sure the old Lama is a splendid fellow. I saw him recently being interviewed by Rick Stein about food, and he seemed charming. It's when people cut and paste his *wisdom* to propagandize their own agenda that I object. And like it or not his writings and pronouncements do lend themselves to a lot of that sort of thing. Perhaps he should tell people to take what they want *for their own use only and not seek to inflict it on other people*. I'd go for that.)*

NOW ROBERT LICHTMAN CLIMBS INTO THE PILOT SEAT OF THE OLD X FIGHTER I RECENTLY FOUD IN A JUNK YARD, AND BLASTS OFF

I really like Steve Stiles's illo leading off *Vibrator* 2.0.8. I confess that I didn't pay a lot of attention to it when I first downloaded and printed the issue. But when I began reading the issue, I took a closer look and thought it was a very cool drawing with the multiple lines representing movement. Maybe, I next thought, it was 3D, but when I put on a pair of glasses I had on hand from when someone published a fanzine that included them for viewing the 3D artwork in it I was...well, disappointed isn't the right word since I had no real expectations. Next I had a brief fantasy that maybe his artwork was actually animated on the PDF and I hadn't noticed. I was wrong there, too, no surprise. I then wandered onward into your introductory section where I concluded that if Pat Charnock can be represented by Janis Joplin (leaving out the bit about Janis being dead), then (still leaving it out) Buddy Holly could represent me. Fortunately, unlike our representations, we are not yet dead.

I've never watched *NCIS: Los Angeles* or, for that matter, any of the "major US TV cop/crime dramas set in attractive West Coast locations with lots of cars and guns." That it's set in L.A. *could* make it passingly of interest to me specifically because of the location, since one of my minor favorite things to do is notice *where* in a setting I know the various street scenes are actually taking place and enjoying (if my guesses are correct) the improbable-in-reality jumps from one part of town to another as a chase scene or just cruising unfolds. One of my favorites in this regard is not, as you might expect from where I live, any movie set in the S.F. Bay Area (there are so many!), but rather the 1975 film, *Nashville*, produced and directed by one of my favorites, Robert Altman. I didn't see it until the early '80s, but I was fresh enough from having lived in Tennessee and having spent a lot of time in and around Nashville to recognize many of the places where the action was filmed. I probably wouldn't know them today, so many years down the line, but an exception to that would be Centennial Park—where the political rally with music was set on the steps of the replica of the Parthenon of ancient Athens, Greece.

Curt Phillips writes that following his horrific accident he was “placed aboard a helicopter for a flight to the nearest trauma center. It was my first time aboard a helicopter and I remember wanting to sit up and look out the window as we flew along.” In my own 1999 auto accident, I wasn’t stuck in my car as long as he was before being cut out by the “jaws of life,” but I also was put on a helicopter for my ride to the emergency room. That was my first (and so far only) helicopter ride, too, but unlike Curt I wasn’t aware of it—I thought I was in an ambulance. I didn’t learn the truth until much later. My own contribution to your ear syringing section is pedestrian compared to Curt’s, but I think I’m happy for that.

Uncle Johnny writes, “I think post-AIDS people became more interested in non-penetrative sex, which was probably a good thing in many ways; lots more variety.” Sex is definitely an area where variety is, as the old saw has it, the spice of life. But speaking of life, non-penetrative sex has another major advantage: it leads to fewer unintended consequences in other areas, too, such as children. Although I certainly knew of those (ahem!) alternatives well before then, they were extremely useful/helpful when I was married and living on the Farm where birth control was, not to put too fine a point on it, a very catholic proposition. No condoms, no pills, no nothing except for a wing and a prayer and an awareness of my wife’s ovulation cycle during which good ol’ fashioned fucking was definitely out of the question. But even though we thought we were being cautious, the fact that we ended up with four kids in six years doesn’t speak well for our efforts. After that, though, we did finally get it together—we stayed married another four years after that, with thankfully no more kids.

It took a lot of effort to “stop what you are doing and listen to” Dylan’s “I’ll Be Your Baby Tonight” at the end of his *John Wesley Harding* album, because I don’t own that record these days. But although it wasn’t on YouTube I did finally locate it on an obscure-to-me site, enjoyed hearing it again a lot, and for the sake of others who may not have the album either, here’s the link:

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xwcg9c_bob-dylan-i-ll-be-your-baby-tonight-1967_music

I do remember what a surprise it was, in the wake of *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*, to have such a starkly simple new set from that nice Mr. Dylan. The contrast to the Beatles’ *Sergeant Pepper* (released June 1, 1967) and the Stones’ *Her Satanic Majesty’s Request* (released December 8, 1967, less than three weeks before Dylan’s album’s appearance on December 27th) was surprising and even a little shocking. But unlike that “finger-in-the-ear crowd” who didn’t care for him going electric, I wasn’t that shocked. I loved the album to death and played it repeatedly. I had a similar reaction in April 1969 when, after a long gap, he came out with *Nashville Skyline*, which continues his foray into “country music.” At that time I was working for Columbia Records, his record company, in their San Francisco office, in charge of (among other things) mailing out the promotional copies to the rather large list of radio stations they serviced—and so, because they had been sent many more copies than they needed, it was the first Bob Dylan album I didn’t have to buy. And who knew that about two years later I would see that Nashville skyline in person!

David Redd’s comment that one of the things he enjoys most in old SF magazines is “the old fan columns and reader’s letters which were generally more fun than the stories.” That was what intrigued me most when I was fourteen and would hang out in a huge used bookstore in Hollywood after my weekly judo lessons. (I’ve written this before many times so those familiar with the story should skip ahead to the next paragraph.) There was a large wall full of old mostly ‘40s prozines that caught my attention because up to then my main exposure to SF had been in books from the library and back issues of *Galaxy* and *F&SF* that I found at stores closer to home. Who could resist those moldering issues of *Amazing*, *Startling Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories*!? I never had enough time before I had to go catch a bus to go home to read many stories, but plenty of time for an installment or two or three of Rog Phillips’s “Club House” column and/or some of the more chatty and mysterious letters in Sarge Saturn’s column. What I didn’t realize at that age was that this “fandom” thing still existed—what with there no longer being SF magazines in the pulp-size format, I thought of all this as an artifact of a past time, and enjoyed it on that level alone.

Your adventures in gambling made for interesting reading. As a youth I was unaware of such things with the exception of “penny-pitching” against a wall with a friend or friends. The one rule was that your penny had to hit the wall—and then, having next hit the ground, whoever’s penny stayed closest to the wall won the other players’ penny. When I was in high school I discovered a nearby bowling alley that had some pinball and other coin-operated machines in the lobby area. One of them was bowling using a weighted disc maybe three inches across that one slid with some force towards a virtual set of pins (represented by electronic sensors on the floor of the machine). The idea was to have the disc cross them in a way that led ideally to “strikes” and “spares” rather than “gutter balls” or just a few pins falling. Before long I had gotten so good at sliding the disc that I was racking up one high-scoring game after another. For this the machine rewarded me with extra games, so that for a single quarter (or however much it cost) I could play for a very long time. Sometimes it was so long that I eventually ceded my unused winning games to whoever wanted to use the machine next and had been patiently (or perhaps not so patiently) waiting his turn. Eventually I began to get bored with the ease of winning, and about that time I was asked by The Manager not to play anymore. Naturally this led to instant resentment, but giving it up meant I could then go home and read the day’s arrivals of new fanzines.

D. West brings up a notion, regarding monies from fan funds, that I’d never considered: “It could be argued that the handouts are tax-exempt gifts, but it could also be argued that they are taxable income or benefits. In the latter case the last half dozen winners might owe several hundred pounds or dollars to their respective tax authorities.” Since the fan funds originated in the distant past when, as D. characterizes Vince Clarke’s view of “Fandom As One Big Happy Family,” so far as I know there never has been a serious move to register TAFF or any of the funds that followed in a formal way as a charity or anything else. The funds’ “underground” nature so far as the Real World is concerned is its safety net from taxation. They operate outside the usual legal constraints on organizations that collect and disburse money, and in my view it’s preferable to a more formal arrangement. Even though the danger of embezzlement exists, to my knowledge there’s never been an instance of it other than the one to which D. refers.

After writing of his surprise that he would have had to pony up forty bucks to vote in the Worldcon site selection, Curt Phillips writes: “So why don’t we do the voting for the Hugo Awards like that? Charge a hefty fee up front (which can be discounted off your next purchase of... something, I suppose...) so that the less serious voters will avoid cluttering up the process with their under-funded opinions. This will make things a lot more straight-forward for everybody. Then when some special interest group wants to see their particular favorite ‘win’ a Hugo Award they can simply raise money, recruit qualified voters, and buy that award in an open and transparent manner.” Actually, the Hugo voting *is* done that way—in order to nominate, one has to be a member of either the current Worldcon or the previous one. And to be able to vote, one has to be a member of the current one. This is most cheaply accomplished by taking out a “supporting” membership, but cheap is relative—the going rate for one in next year’s affair in Kansas City is fifty dollars.

I agree with Curt’s advice to you: “As a Diabetic you should certainly be concerned about any kind of issue with your feet, particularly with any unexplained pain or numbness in your toes. Pat is correct to urge you to consult your doctor about this, and I urge you to do so too.” I know I wrote about this in my last letter, but it’s worth repeating and reinforcing.

I see that I touched a nerve in Curt by writing what I did about being selective in what I would read in Peter Weston’s *Relapse*—that I didn’t take the time to read *everything* in each issue when, upon starting some articles, I found that I could live without knowing what he refers to as “the intricacies of vanished fan groups and the smallest details of what a fan thought recording about their lives.” I agree with him that fanzines are (still) the repository of this sort of information—fanhistory in the raw, one might say—but in my personal reality there’s only so much time every day to do *everything* and boundaries (which are, truth be told, pretty flexible) have to be established in order to focus on the big picture. (Am I making any sense here?) That said, Pete’s fanzine was one of my favorites when he was producing it, and not the least for the depth of response he got from such a wide array of old-time fans and pros not seen in the pages of other fanzines.

Curt makes an amazing revelation: "I read with interest Robert's confession that as FAPA Sec/Treas he's long been in violation of the FAPA Constitution as regards keeping the treasury buried in a mayonnaise jar in his garden, or whatever it was he said. It's interesting because as FAPA OE I've never read the FAPA Constitution. I publish a copy of it every year but I've never actually read it (too many big words). I wonder if "anybody's*actually read the thing?" Well, I have, of course, because as SecTreas I need to know what's in it, especially as how it relates to my job—which is, beyond keeping track of members' dues and activity requirements, having a working knowledge of how the organization works.

Since Curt obviously won't read it as published in the *Fantasy Amateur*, perhaps he'll be unable to resist it if I reproduce the part about his duties as Official Editor here: "He shall assemble and send out the mailings. He has custody of the surplus stock. He shall publish election ballots and the official organ, *Fantasy Amateur*. The *Fantasy Amateur* shall appear in each quarterly mailing and shall contain information about postmailings, a list of the current mailing's contents, the reports of the various officials, the text of any proposals to be voted upon, and other appropriate materials at the Official Editor's discretion. The constitution shall be included in the *Fantasy Amateur* not less often than once every six months." On the last point, I made an executive decision some years ago that publishing the constitution once a year was really quite enough. So far no one has complained, but in the past I would have heard from Harry Warner Jr. about dereliction of duties. In his universe, FAPA was always to be run as though it was 1943: by the book, the whole book, and nothing but the book. He often complained about my failure to do so. Somehow the organization survived. (But to be safe, I never confessed to my mishandling of FAPA funds.)

I'm looking forward to your Barcon 2 report next issue.

Robert Lichtman can be found at robertlichtman@yahoo.com

GOOD OLD BOY JERRY KAUFMAN THWACKS HIS THEWS, ADJUSTS HIS CHAPS AND WRITES TO US FROM HIS DESERT RETREAT IN ARIZONA (SOME MISTAKE SURELY).

Thanks for another trenchant issue of Vibrator. I'm glad Ian Williams worries about you - he makes up for the rest of us.

We watch many of the same programs you do, only we usually watch them merely a week or two after they're first shown here instead of a season or two later. (We DVR a lot.) Many of the shows we watch, not just *NCIS: Los Angeles* rely on high tech to track suspects, reconstruct crimes, focus on microscopic evidence, and so forth. It seems remarkably easy, on these shows, to hack into all sorts of government databases, closed circuit tv systems, top secret agency files - no matter if they are encrypted, firewalled, or otherwise protected. *NCIS: LA* is my least favorite of the (now) three shows because it depends the most on Islamic terrorists for its weekly threats and crimes. Thank goodness the cast includes Linda Hunt and Miguel Ferrer.

Curt's glass in the ear story made my hair stand on end - and my ears, too.

So is Sandra Bond's Shakespearean version of a song based on "Voices Carry"? (I can't remember who did that song.) Or "Don't Speak," which is by No Doubt?

(EDITOR: No.)

Robert Lichtman remembers his first convention after returning to fandom in 1980 to be the 1984 Corflu, but I remember him being at the 1983 Westercon in San Jose. I flew into San Francisco after my DUFF trip to the Australian National Convention and the rest of that lonesome continent. and then attending the con before returning to Seattle. I'm sure I have photos of Robert sitting at a table in the lobby (or bar or coffee shop) with other people - he had long hair and beard at the time. Does this sound familiar, Robert?

In Curt's letter starting on page 16, I was confused about where he stopped being serious and turned satirical in his paragraph about charging a hefty fee to vote in the Hugos. But I'm sure the cost of a supporting membership is why more "traditional" fanzine fans don't nominate enough "traditional" fanzines, fan writers and fan artists for the Hugos, let alone vote for the ones that get nominated. I think the fee charged to vote in site selection is \$40 US (or equivalent), but I don't think it's enough to get a supporting membership anymore. (I am being too lazy to look up the 2016 Worldcon's rates to see how much I need to pay to convert my vote.)

My takeaway on Kameron Hurley's essay is somewhat different than Curt's - okay, maybe completely different. I don't think she or other feminists are saying men are complete bastards, but that the general situation of women writers in SF and Fantasy is not much different than it was in the 1970s when the previous wave of feminist readers and writers came into the SF Village. But I'm not good at marshalling arguments and making points in debates. And I don't want Curt to think that I am vilifying him. We all think we're good guys even when our faults are pointed out - I, for instance, only interrupt everyone because I think I'm somehow going to save time and breath by pointing out where the speaker is going wrong. (An I may well do this to women more often than men.)

Jarry Kaufman can be found at JAKaufman@aol.com

CHINESE FOOD

Very big in some areas, I believe. Even Warren Zevon wrote a song extolling Lee Ho Fooks, the famous Chinese restaurant in London's Chinatown and I think I even went there once. Lots of people of my generation have memories of the first time they ate Chinese food. Ian Maule can even remember who he ate it with. The best thing about Chinese food was that you could order it by numbers, sometimes randomly without any idea of what you could eventually get. The worst thing was the chopsticks.

The idea of using sticks to eat food has never appealed to me on any level. "Let's re-invent the knife, fork and spoon and use two sticks instead" - I can't imagine that idea getting any funding from Dragons Den or anyone else. "But it's traditional." Yeah, so is wiping your arse with leaves or a sea-shell. The Chinese and the Japanese have made many important contributions to culture down through the ages, but chopsticks is not one of them. I do like those little porcelain spoons they give you to eat soup though. See, even the Chinese can learn.

PARABENS

This previously unknown (to me) word cropped up in a recent TV ad for shampoo (No Parabens). Apparently Parabens are esters of para-hydroxybenzoic acids, and are widely used as preservatives and found across the board in many cosmetic products, including toothpaste. They are generally considered to be demonstrably non-toxic. I presume the reason they are now turning up as negatives in shampoo ads is because there is some concern linking them with breast cancer because they may mimic the effects of estrogen, although no study has ever related them positively to the disease. Still. It's another non-claim the shampoo industry can use to sell its product which in itself is probably toxic enough anyway. We live in fear and the advertising industry does little to persuade us not to do so.

JIM LINWOOD, OUR RESIDENT DYLANOLOGIST, CORRECTS ME

You are slightly wrong in your item on Dylan's *John Wesley Harding* album when you claim that the album cover contains "a monochrome shot of Dylan and his team in a faux-Indian (Native American) picture." The photo was taken in the back garden of Dylan's manager, Albert Grossman, in Woodstock. Dylan is flanked by Purna Das and Lakhsman Das of the Bauls of Bengal who were wandering Bengali minstrels whom Grossman had brought from India. They are in traditional Bengali dress. Behind Dylan is Charlie Joy, a local stonemason and carpenter, who happened to be working in the garden that day.



A Rolling Stone article claimed that little pictures of the Beatles and the hand of Jesus could be seen on the tree trunk if you turned the album cover upside down. This is absolute nonsense, of course; the images are clearly those of the Burlingtons.

(EDITOR: Slightly wrong? 100% wrong I would say.)

DAVID REDD HAS WOKEN UP FROM HIS LAIR IN DEEPEST DARKEST SOUTH WALES AND SENDS THIS MISSIVE

Well hello again and thanks for the paper vibrator, British Edition. Although did your evil twisted mind *have* to begin the issue by reminding me of Alan Freeman?

TV? Facebook? Have about as much contact with these as I have with Jonathan MacAlmont, whom you still haven't explained. (My TV viewing is largely obscure Celtic channels which somehow remain less unwatchable.)

Lot of good letters in here, enlightening and well written. I must resist the urge to shout out NEW YORK MINING DISASTER 1941!!! Which may be familiar to some from Richard Goldstein's *The Poetry of Rock* if not from the actual record. Otherwise, "don't even get me started on Bergerac" but I'm very glad D. West gave a rounded summing-up of Vince Clarke. I liked Adolf Hitler's comments but if he attempts fan fiction don't encourage him.

I dreamt somebody had written a brilliant five-page letter to you, then woke up and found I had actually read such a letter instead of the issue ending after the D West tailpiece. How nice. Can agree with appreciation of *Relapse* and good wishes to Peter, and second the interest in those far-off *New Worlds* days as you'd imagine.

And yes, was interested in the little world of those "carbon-based correspondence groups" as another quirky micro-society.

John Wesley Harding? Hmm, I liked Linda Ronstadt's I'll Be Your Baby Tonight. You almost persuade me not to end my Bob Dylan Chronological Re-listen Project with the motorcycle crash – thus avoiding The Basement Tapes – and have this one on the stack for 2016. Almost.

I showed your guitars page to a friend. He commented on the slightly squeezed-in appearance but was intrigued enough to be disappointed at the lack of further details – in fact he was inspired to photograph and write up his own collection during a mad couple of weeks. Next time I visit and inspect his guitars I'll have the print-out in hand as a catalogue. All due to you. You never know how you're going to affect someone's life (as Henrik Ibsen found when he commented that a friend's novel manuscript was terrible; she burnt it, had a nervous breakdown and was sent to a lunatic asylum. You writer people must learn to be diplomatic and polite.)

As for a FAPA treasurer keeping the accounts/funds his own way, amen. 'Twould put *me* in an asylum if I faithfully followed *all* the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers rules and recommendations, not to mention the Diocesan standard forms for computers. The downside is that the organisation, be it church or FAPA, has to hope that its treasurer is one of the Good Guys.

But must leave discussion of ethics and expediency to the likes of Curt Phillips.

David Redd can be found at: dave_redd@hotmail.com

(EDITOR: I'd certainly be interested in seeing your friend's collection of guitars, David, if you could find a way of sharing it.)

JACK CALVERT TAKES TIME OUT FROM CELEBRATING THE SF GIANTS WORLD SERIES WIN TO WRITE TO ME:

Now, ear syringing is something that I can identify with, having had it done once. One of the miracles of modern medicine, I say: you get a lot of improvement with only the expense of a little well-directed water. My experience was much duller than Curt's: I was expecting the water and it was reasonably warm, and so my head didn't explode. I had thought that I was going deaf, having done some scientific tests involving covering one ear then the other, while trying to judge the level of sound from the TV. The doctor's assistant tried the first squirt without much success, then called the doctor in. He took a fire hose... no, explained that you have to do this forcefully, and demonstrated how to blast an ear out. It worked well, and I haven't needed it again for years.

I won't be heaving the brickbats that Curt expects, because I agree with too much of what he says to do that. (And some day, I'm going to find out just what a brickbat is. Different from a baseball bat or even a cricket bat, I

suppose.) I'm not a scholar of fan history, but I do like reading about it, and I like the idea that this thing has been going on for as long as Art Widner can remember, and longer. I feel a sympathetic cringe at what Curt wrote in Vibrator and elsewhere about that academic panel, and his attempts to ask a question or two. The panellists may have some sort of insight into fandom, but they don't seem to realize that at least "our" part of the broader fan world is a community with awareness of its own history and nature.

Feminism is a harder call. I certainly think that women should have a fair deal. I read Kameron Hurley's essay: she does have a point. However, the point was made decades ago by Joanna Russ, Alice Sheldon, and Ursula LeGuin; not that the story shouldn't be told again, but they did it better. I found Hurley's "let me raise your consciousness about something you don't understand by telling you a parable" to be grating, distracting, and, uh, patronizing.

Robert Lichtman mentions that he was at Baycon in 1968. This seems to have been the crossroads of Fandom As We Currently Know It. Not that everyone was there, but almost everyone was, even me -- it was my one and only worldcon, and will likely remain so. My enthusiasm for congoing, aside from the occasional Corflu, or perhaps the odd Potlatch, has pretty much faded. I will be sending Robert a cheque for Tynecon III, but most probably will be there in spirit only.

Jack Calvert can be found at yngvizzy@yahoo.com

IT'S THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING FANZINE

At last I've managed to cut this twenty page behemoth of a regular (that's regular, Andy Hooper, in the sense of being every month) fanzine back to a mere 18 pages. Some people may breathe a sigh of relief, but I suspect many (especially those who never read it, or have yet to prove they do by sending me some comments, Andy) will not even notice. For the twelfth issue of this run I will be launching the Vibrator Annual Awards. I won't tell you what the categories will be but you can always ensure your place in them by telling me what you would like them to be. I suspect one of them will be the most Cringeworthy Medical Experience, so if you have anything you think can beat Curt's tale of extreme ear syringing, or Ian Williams' account of having his bollocks ripped off by a cat, let me know.

This issue of Vibrator has been simultaneously created whilst putting together the first Progress Report of Tynecon III: the Corflu which may well be available on www.corflu.org by now. Come and visit us, and join now before membership rates go up with inflation. How do I do it? Well the bottles of vodka on intravenous drip help a lot, let me tell you.

Mushrooms, What Are They All About? Next issue will have an authoritative article specially commissioned from Peter Roberts which will answer this question. Well, no it won't. I suspect I will have to write it myself as usual, but if any of you have mushroom experiences to share, especially as to how they destroyed your kidneys or even your mind, be sure to let us know. John D. Berry (another person who never writes in) has just bought a new Fiat 500. While I'm sure we all commiserate with him, have any of you out there got a Brand New Car story they care to share?

Next issue 2.0.10 will be out end of November. But don't take my word for it.

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