

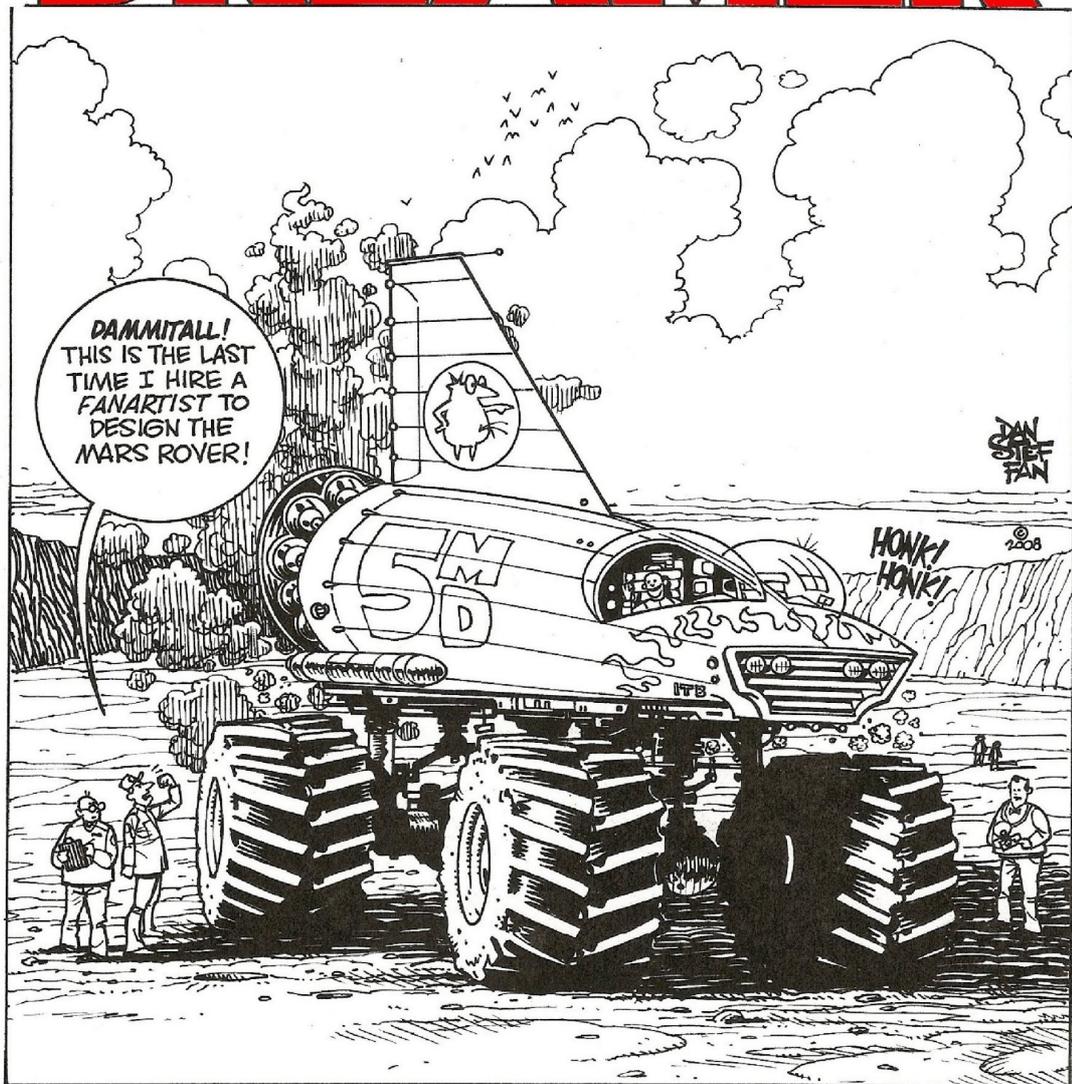
O Captain! My Captain! Our fearful trip is done,

The ship has weathered every wrack,
the prize we sought is won



But O Heart! Its.....

MOTORWAY DREAMER



Motorway Dreamer is is " edited" and published by
John Nielsen Hall

Please direct all contributions, letter of comment and bondage small ads, to:

Coachman's Cottage, Marrison Hill

Ramsbury, Wilts SN8 2HG U.K.

E-mail: rrr5646@yahoo.co.uk

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Cover	Dan Steffan
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	You have Locced
	You have contributed to this or past issues

	You are a fellow faned. Salutations from the great beyond of ish future!
	You have asked for a copy (Its up to you now)
	I have decided it should be inflicted upon you out of a dark vengeance. (Only you know whether you will get another issue)

B.Z. Toons

by Brian Zaikowski
www.bztoons.com



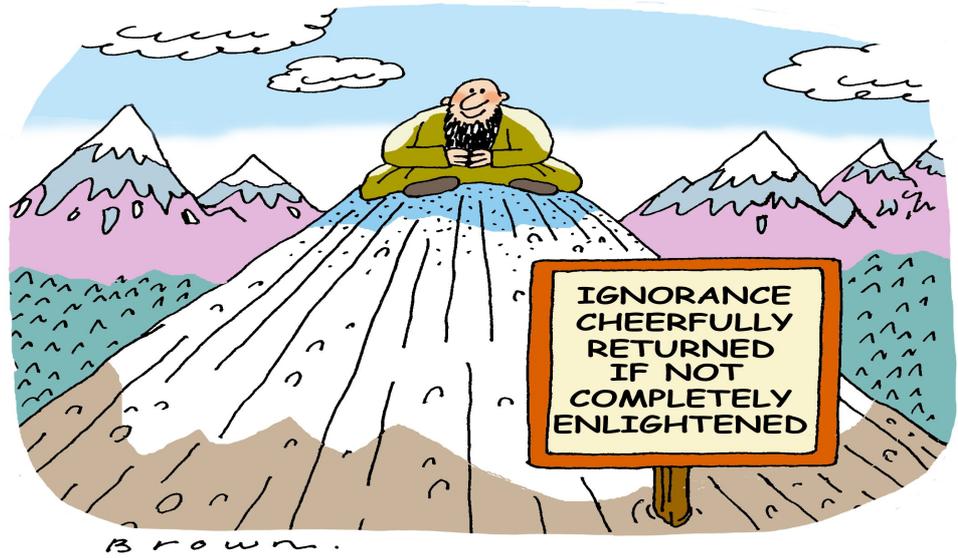
I am going to eat you. Eat you. Eat you. Yes I am.

EDITORIAL

The theme of this issue is creativity. A lot of fans think fandom is about different things. I hope some at least will agree that it is about creativity. Those of us who have tried to be writers may not have what it takes, but if fanzines exist for any purpose, they must exist to give a platform for those who like to write, even for those who write without hope of being widely read but still write anyway. I number myself in that company, and this issue I am going to inflict upon you some fiction of my own, not because I think its marvellous and want you all to be blinded by my genius, (though, you know, feel free....) but because it was in me and it had to come out,deformed and defective though I know it to be.

Then there is the poetry, which suddenly issued forth from various unexpected quarters. Poetry in fanzines has often been an embarrassment, and it seems almost to have disappeared. I have said before that I want it back, not merely because I still write it, but also because I know its still a secret vice practised by many, and I don't think it should be secret any more. I hope that if you read this issue, you too will send your furtive scribblings to me, and if you do, I may even print them.

WAITING FOR DARDO



John Nielsen Hall

(Authors Note: There really was once a Tibetan teacher called Dardo Rinpoche. Although it might be that a true Tantric adept can be in two places at once, the Dardo Rinpoche in this story is not him. Indeed, nobody is anybody.)

".....I'm unfaithful, lying, full of deceit. I'm completely out of control, I sometimes think. I cant have any kind of normal relationship with a woman. Sex is all that's on my mind."

" But you are in control, aren't you? I mean, its not like you've ever raped anyone."

"No. Though I expect I am guilty of coercion, on occasion."

"So its just being unfaithful?"

"Yeah. I made a promise and I cant keep it."

" Its the same with me. I'm a disappointment to my mother. I want to be the daughter she wants me to be - well, some of that person at least. But I cant stay with anyone. I cant even share a house with other girls for very long. I feel trapped and I feel like there's something missing."

" Do you think the answers will be forthcoming, when we get where we are going?"

"Oh, John, I so hope so. Really I do."

The sun was setting, and the clouds outside the window looked red and purple and so many other odd colours. The plane adjusted its course, and the wing visible through the window lifted slightly as if saluting the coming dark. It was a beautiful sight, but there was something unsettling about it too. We were flying into darkness.

The bus journey up from Calcutta had not been an unalloyed pleasure. The bus stopped a lot and was sun-bright, hot and crowded with only hard seats. Vimalakirti, being an ordained member of a Buddhist order, wore his robes- something he would never do back home. Seeing him, sitting upright and apparently serene the locals were very respectful. Olivia, Liz and I sat with him and maybe basked in his reflected

glory, though we were more aware than they how much the outward appearance masked the suppressed irritation which slowly grew to a fury. Mostly Vim was irritated by us, I think. Liz nodded her head to the Who cassette permanently rotating in her Walkman, occasionally emitting a ghastly drone of "hooareyou hoo hoo hoo hoo" as she "sang" along, earning a basilisk glance from Vim at the back of her frazzled dirty red hair, held down by the spring steel of the headphones. I was a greasy sweaty disgrace in my frayed Hot Rod Magazine T-Shirt and dusty jeans, reading *The Lord Of the Rings*, which he regarded as insufficiently spiritually uplifting, though I begged to differ. Olivia, who sat right next to him, spent all her time looking out of the window. India was still new to her, and she still pointed and exclaimed at elephants, ornately painted trucks and roadside temples, her round face illuminated by her wide smile, her long black hair untouched as yet by the surrounding dust and heat. She was a warm patchouli scented cloud of innocent wonder - when probably she should have been discussing the far reaches of the paramita's with Vim so that he could impress her with his undoubtedly amazing erudition and wisdom.

But the very worst thing for Vim was the entertainment provided on this luxury long distance bus- hours of Bollywood videos playing from cheap Jap TV's screwed into brackets that hung over the aisle, the screens an endless mass of distorted eye-popping colour as love struck gorgeously saree'd heroines, choruses of turbaned and moustachioed males and under dressed heroes and villains sang and danced at volume. About twelve hours into the journey, he had risen from his seat and marched to the front of the bus, where he politely but firmly requested a cessation or at least, a respite. The driver assured him that it would shortly come to an end, but as the sun began to set, and the road started to ascend into the hills, the Bollywood songs still endlessly succeeded one another. Women on the bus sometimes sweetly sang along, just loud enough for the relatives and friends around them to hear. Sometimes the men also sang at the appropriate moment in duets, of which there very many. It seemed as if the only people not enjoying the videos were the miserable westerners - and even one of them - Olivia - was watching, even if she did not sing.

Vim waited about an hour after his first request, and then rose from his seat once more. Arriving at the front of the bus, he bellowed " Just turn the fucking thing off!!" The tentative singing stopped and there was a hushed silence, save for the beat of the screens and the drone of the bus engine. I surmised that not everybody understood English, or even Anglo Saxon, but a Bhikku should not behave as Vim was behaving. Lips were compressed, eyes were averted. " Come and sit down, Vim" I said quietly, and such was the hush, my voice carried all the way up the aisle to where Vim was standing. Red faced, he came and sat, looking neither to right nor left. The TV screens went dark and lapsed into silence at last.

Liz, who had long ago dispensed with her Walkman, now raised her voice, and in the sonorous tones of her native Sydney, recited from memory "Like a fire, his mind constantly blazes up into good works for others; at the same time he remains merged in the calm of the trances and formless attainments." She rolled her eyes and added an overblown hand gesture to this text, dripping with heavy sarcasm.

As she sat in front of him, Vim half stood and leant over, his lower lip quivering a bit and his cheeks red with anger. "Texts are not bullets for you to shoot me with!" he said "There are always consequences, and they may be terrible if scripture is misused." I laid a restraining hand on Vim's arm and applied a slight pressure to urge him to sit down again. He did so, but the rest of the journey, through the night with only two more stops, passed in a most un-Indian silence. People pretended to sleep, but did not.

It was still dark when we got to where we were going. We were now way up in the hills, indeed the town which we were heading for had been a Hill Station in the days of the Raj. We stood by the side of the road where the bus had dropped us hoping someone would turn up who might sell us a hot drink. The air was cold and now we were shiveringly under dressed for the conditions. It was too early for the tea-vendors apparently, so in the dark Vim, who knew the way from his last visit, led us off up a road that wound far above us. The sun's light came in advance of the disc itself, pinkly creeping through clefts and passes high up in mountains far off across the valley to our right. Clouds were below us, fir and pine

trees were above us as we trudged on behind Vim, who walked erect and outwardly impassive his pack hanging by one strap over the shoulder his robe covered. Liz, Olivia and I had larger packs which we laboured under, puffing in the thinner air, much less elegant in our movement than Vim- but he led us toward our destination, surely around the hairpin bends, as we began to meet people in donkey drawn carts and mounted on bicycles coming down. Every one of them nodded, smiled or essayed a " Good Morning!"

It was a good morning, and as the sun rose further, I found new energy, enough to carry Olivia's pack front-wise on my chest, she being smaller and a little rounder than the rest of us and was puffing as we continued to climb. Giant poinsettias drooped vast red flowers over the road , and houses started to appear, set back from the road or visible at the summit of rises reached by paths or steps from it. These were rough and thatched at first, but as we progressed gave way to very English looking bungalows, looking as if they had been transported here from a South London suburb. Then came shops and shrines.

At last, we found a tea house and sat down at an outdoor table, watching the road and the view across the valley, the hills beyond, and the mighty mountains beyond them. The street was filling up with people of all sorts, Nepali's - more properly Newar's - in various garbs, some of them carrying fearsome Kukri knives at their belts, Sikhs in imposing beards and turbans, studious looking Bengali's in suits and ties, poor Indian women from the plains in clean sarees with enormous baskets on their backs, small brown Sikkimese people, a couple of immense hairy Australian's who wished us G'day and swapped tales of their travels with Liz, and - who we most wanted to see - Tibetans, tall and bad-ass looking in traditional fur lined three quarter length coats with one arm longer than the other and big hats, accompanied by their immaculately dressed women in aprons and heavy silver jewellery. Over our tea and breakfast paratha's, I asked Vim how much further it was.

"Not far" he said "Just over that bridge and up that hill." He gestured at a wooded hill that rose up behind a tall white bridge over a fast flowing river. It didn't look as far as we had already come, and I was feeling ready and able to walk on, but Olivia and Liz looked a bit dispirited.



A Vajra

"Do you think if you and I went on ahead, we could borrow some transport and come back for Olivia and Liz?"

Vim looked surprised "Actually, I suppose we could ask if there's a telephone here. I thought it was a bit early, when we got off the bus. We could ask Jaskaran Singh to come and get us." In my role as

peacemaker, which I had somehow adopted on this trip since we got off the plane back in Delhi, I now sought to mollify Liz who I could see was ready to explode on hearing this.

"Well, it was early - its only half past eight now. We wouldn't want to interrupt morning devotions, would we?"

" It sounds like the blokes a Sikh! Forgive me, but I cannot visualise a Sikh 'sitting' first thing in the morning."

"All things are possible" I pleaded weakly. Vim was talking to the tea shop owner in a mixture of Hindi and English, and soon that gentleman had a large old Bakelite contraption to his ear, barking in the same patois to someone unseen. Presently, after another round of teas, a Mahindra jeep roared up to the tea house, executed a three point turn with much crashing of gears and then, with the engine running, the

driver, definitely Sikh in a black turban and with a fine imitation Jermyn Street shirt and tie not entirely con sanguine with the combat trousers he also wore, jumped out and strode over. He introduced himself: " Jaskaran Singh, how do you do, pleased to meet you", to each of us in turn, shaking hands as he went round the group, but embracing Vim, whom he knew already from previous visits. He sat down and more tea was taken- I was busting for a pee, but reluctant to ask for a toilet - and Vim asked if the Rinpoche was in residence up at the Centre.

"Dardo is away , he has gone to see the children at his school, but I expect he will be back any day now." All of us knew that that meant many days, but we had been prepared for that. If you want to consult a Tibetan Rinpoche of some repute, you would have to wait. Nothing could occur quickly, or soon, and instantly was a dream, a concept of high fantasy. When the Rinpoche returned from his excursion, he would doubtless be tired, and would need a few more days , and then we might if we were lucky be granted an audience, but that would only be so he could welcome us, and then some days after that, we might be able to speak to him about what each of us separately wanted to talk to him about. And that might only be the beginning. It was no use thinking in Western time scales- we none of us could know how long we would be here.

I asked Vim about a toilet. He made rapid enquiries of the tea shop owner, and that gentleman gestured expansively to the back of the establishment. I followed the general direction of his waving and came out of the shop itself onto a narrow path which I followed a few feet up the hill to a small concrete shed. I peered round the door and found a urinal and a WC, and reasonably clean and sweet smelling, too. I stood at the urinal, unzipped and waited for the gallons of tea to empty. As I did so, I looked out through a gap in a small window. Up the hill, a few hundred yards off , a monk in a red robe sat on a round flat rock, his back to me. At length, I was ready to go back to the others, and as I turned from the window, out of the corner of my eye, I saw the monk turned also, and I thought he looked straight at me, as if he knew I was there. He was too far away for me to be sure.

When I got back to the others, Jaskaran Singh was loading up the jeep with our packs and Olivia and Liz were taking their seats in the back. I thought one of us would have to walk anyway, but Jaskaran Singh would have none of it, and enjoined me to clamber over the packs and the girls and sit on the very back of the jeep, my feet and legs protruding between Liz and Olivia and resting on the packs. I gripped something like a roll bar that supported the back seats , so that I should not fall off. Vim clambered into the front seat still giving that impression of serene calm, his brown robe neat and tidy. Jaskaran Singh gunned the engine, crashed the gears and with a jerk that almost broke my neck, we shot off over the bridge and up the hill.

The Centre, as we referred to it, consisted of a very large bungalow in extensive grounds. Turning off the road uphill, we drove down a long drive, past extensive rhododendron bushes and up again to park in front of a long veranda. Clambering out of the jeep, Jaskaran Singh led us inside. The floor boards were dark, and highly polished, and framed black and white photographs of long departed servants of the Raj hung randomly on the walls which were covered in dark and faded wallpaper. Following our leader, we went on into the house at a brisk pace, down a long hall, and out again onto another veranda on the back and thence by a covered walkway to a series of little cabins in the grounds.

Jaskaran Singh opened the doors for two of these , right opposite each other. Olivia took one, I took the other. Inside was a bit like a garden shed, there was no plaster or form of insulation, but there was a reasonable looking bed, a dodgy paraffin heater, and a Japanese looking shrine-in-a-cupboard, where you opened the doors to reveal candles, incense and a brass Bodhisattva, (Avalokiteshvara with just a few of his thousand arms) a window looking into some trees, a couple of shelves, and that was all. Olivia's was the same, except she had a Maitreya Buddha and a view over open land to the distant snowy peak of Kanchenjunga. Liz and Vim admired our accommodations and then we all walked on to theirs.

Liz was billeted in what looked like a folly on the estate of an English stately home, a sort of truncated stone tower with mediaeval crenelations, with a sign on the door entitling it " The Dzong". Inside was

tiny and, weirdly, the walls were covered in white tiles, like a bathroom. There was sort of watery light in the place.

"Geez, what's this?" asked Liz.

"We think it was once an observatory" Jaskaran Singh was walking up a narrow spiral staircase, to an upper floor, which had a domed ceiling and just enough room for a bed. The heater, shrine and shelves were downstairs. "Wow." was all Liz could say, wandering up and down the stairs dumbstruck. There was no window downstairs, and the odd light came from a window in the upstairs level adjacent to the stairs. It was probably the local variety of fir trees outside this window, and the tiles everywhere, that was responsible for the greenish wavering light.

"You will get used to it, I am sure." Jaskaran Singh's tone was, I thought, meant to reassure. He wasn't offering an alternative, however.

"I'll swap with you if you like, Liz" I said

"Nah. This is gonna be an adventure" she said, smiling.

"I know where I am going to be" said Vim, and he and Jaskaran Singh walked off, leaving the three of us inside.

"Liz, are you sure you will be alright?" asked Olivia

"No worries. I'm going to love it here!"

"Oh, I've just realised, he hasn't shown us where the showers are!" I looked out of the door, but Vim and Jaskaran Singh were nowhere to be seen.

"Showers! That's optimism." laughed Liz "But maybe there's somewhere to wash."

"Maybe if we walk the way they went, we'll find Vim and Mr Singh" said Olivia.

"You and John go. Come back and tell me what you find out. Right now I'm more in need of sleep than washing."

"We will be wanting loos, as well, I expect." I said.

"Let's go." said Olivia.

So the two of us walked on down the path in the direction that Vim and Jaskaran Singh had gone. It shelved downhill into rougher ground with a view across the valley, over part of the town, and beyond it to the hills and mountains. The massive bulk of Kanchenjunga that we had seen out of Olivia's cabin was slightly obscured here by a tall escarpment of rock to our left. It was while we were admiring this view that I saw a small hut on that same escarpment.

"I bet that's Vim's" I said, pointing. Retracing our steps slightly we walked in that direction and soon found a flight of steps, and these led to the door of the hut. We knocked, and sure enough Vim opened it.

"How you doing?" I asked

"Terrific!" Vim looked happy for once "I really love it here." He showed us in- it was much as Olivia's and my own cabins, perhaps a tad larger, and with a big window looking down the valley over the town and

beyond to a distant hazy vista of the plains below. Vim had already fired up his shrine with candles and incense. He had a very large bronze and ivory statue of a Vajradhara figure in yum-yum union position with his consort, above a line of smaller tantric figures, mostly female. Olivia looked a bit askance at it all. I wondered if she had ever seen a Vajrayana shrine like Vim's before.



" We were wondering where we wash and where the toilets are." I said.

" Follow me" said Vim and he led us out of his hut back down the steps and along a little path that continued round the rock. Screened by some rhododendrons was an earth closet. " But I go back to the house to wash. There are showers and everything there, although the water pressure is a bit unreliable. You need to get up early before the pressure drops from all the water being drawn in the town. And for you two, there are loos, real ones, closer than coming down here. The refectory is there too."

We walked back towards the steps to his hut, and he left us to walk back to our own cabins. "You know we've just spent a not insignificant amount of time looking for toilets and finding about essentials like showers and meals, because

he was too wrapped up in getting to his beloved little Hut, at last." I said

Olivia grinned. "You are not suggesting that Dharmachari Vimalakirti is attached to his hut, are you?"

" I think this trip has rather exposed the weaknesses in his practice, even to us poor Chela's"

" That rupa on his shrine was a bit much for someone who is supposed to be celibate, I thought."

" Ah, well, you see Tantric figures like that are not really about sex, you know."

" Indeed, sex is the form, not the content- the medium, not the message."

" Where have I heard that before, I wonder?" We both laughed. But the trouble was, sex might very well become my medium, if I let myself get close to Olivia. I thought she was very beautiful, and her smile and figure were the sort that might lead me into more of the trouble I had got myself into before I left the U.K. No self control was my problem. I had been talking to Liz about it on the plane out. She had said that she thought the best way to deal with situations like that was to remove yourself as far away from them as possible. She had done the same thing.

I looked away from Olivia and we walked on. Arriving at Liz's spectacular accommodations, we knocked and Olivia poked her head round the door, calling out what we had learned. Liz answered enthusiastically, and then we walked on in silence back to our cabins.

I did what I always do at the end of a journey when I got back inside my cabin. I sat and looked out of the window, dreamily recalling the planes, overnight hotel rooms, meals, and miles of road. The view into the trees reasserted itself over the daydream and at length, I hiked up my shirt and took off the body belt with my passport, cheques and money in it, hid them under the mattress of the bed, undid my pack

and hauled out my canvas shoes and a change of clothes. I swapped my big boots for the canvas shoes, took up the clothes and walked off to the house to find the showers. Vim had been right, there was only a trickle of water coming out, but it was at least hot, and I made the best of it.

By now it was about one or two o'clock in the afternoon, and I went looking for food. Finding the refectory, I saw that someone had laid out some sandwiches on a plate, but otherwise there was no one around. I scoffed a couple of the sandwiches and went back to my cabin. I opened my shrine, and lit the incense, but I knew that I was too tired to meditate. I lay down and slept.

When I awoke again, the moon was shining through the trees, and I had a headache. I searched fruitlessly through my stuff for pills - I did have them, I just couldn't find them. Fumbling around in the many compartments of my backpack, I became aware that there was someone outside in the trees. I was looking at someone as my hands groped around for the missing pills. He was so still, I hadn't noticed him at first - it was the monk I had seen through the toilet window at the tea house. He was seated in full lotus position, sideways on to me with his back not quite against a tree. I stopped the fumbling around to stare harder at his still form. I considered going out there and asking him questions, but as he was obviously meditating and this was, after all, a retreat centre, perhaps that wouldn't be quite the thing to do. But who was he? I watched him through the window, still half crouching over my pack. I don't remember how I went back to sleep, but I must have done - I was dreaming of being on the train in south east London.

The train was stuck at the station - I and all the passengers were impatient and cross, we had been sitting on that train for ages, and we were late - I don't know what we were late for. I hadn't been a commuter on the Southern Region since some time in the nineteen sixties. I decided it might be quicker to walk. I opened the compartment door and got out. The station had been Albany Park, but this wasn't Albany Park actually - it was somewhere that still had wooden platforms. Well, in the sixties there were still stations like that. There was no one else around and I walked down the platform to the Way Out sign. There was a ticket collector, who wanted to see my season ticket, so I got out the little leather wallet with a plastic window in it, that I kept it in. I noticed that the ticket collector was an old oriental looking man. He looked at my ticket "That's alright" he said "there's plenty of time left on that"

I walked on past him and down a long wooden corridor, covered in ads for stuff like Omo washing powder and Pepsodent. I was cross with myself for not remembering to have asked the ticket collector why the train was held up in the first place. Then I saw someone I knew walking towards me - a girl I hadn't seen for years, a girl I had known when I was at school. She was wearing a gaberdine navy raincoat, and her long brown hair, was blowing around her shoulders and across her face - actually I couldn't see her face - and wait a minute, why was it windy in here? It was a strong wind too - I looked round for something to hold on to. The girl walked towards me, but I had forgotten her name, I was going to greet her "Hey, Paula, how are you? It's good to see you again." But I wasn't sure she was Paula - she could be Linda, or maybe Lorraine, and so she spoke first from behind the curtain of hair "Why have you come here?"

She didn't sound friendly. I opened my mouth to protest, but I couldn't speak. The hair moved enough for me to see she had a necklace on - it was ivory, no it wasn't, it was bone, it was, in fact, skulls - lots of little skulls. Then my eyes travelled downwards, to where her raincoat was coming unbuttoned - I remembered the breasts that were about to be exposed, though we had been too young, it was very naughty, but we had touched each other, me her breasts, she had put her hand in my trousers, her hand was cool and I was - "Go back!" she said.

"Go back where?" I asked, puzzled

"You cannot stay here. Go back!"

Who was this talking? It wasn't Paula/Linda/Lorraine. The wind blew a piece of rubbish in my face, I couldn't breathe, I couldn't....

I woke with my face buried in the rough blanket on the bed while still kneeling on the floor. It was darker, and the moon was gone. I got up, remembered the monk, and strained my eyes, trying to see him in the dark. I thought he was gone.

I got back into bed. Ever since I was a child, I had been prone to bad dreams. It didn't matter if I changed my diet, whether I had a drink before I went to bed, or whatever, my subconscious insisted on warping reality into something out-of-joint, fearful and full of apprehension. Even when I had good dreams of happy experiences real or wished for, there was always an undercurrent of something mysteriously threatening. I tried to ignore the goings on in my head as much as possible, but, realistically, learning to meditate, and coming on retreats had made the dreaming stronger and more vivid. They would even take place during meditation itself, while I was, supposedly, awake. And that familiar figure - she wasn't familiar because I had a fumble with her at age whatever- she was familiar because I had seen her much more recently - if I could only remember where.

No use to rack my brains- I drifted off to sleep yet again. Some little part of my consciousness noted I no longer had a headache.

Next morning I went to the refectory for breakfast and found Liz, eating bread and cottage cheese, which was more or less all there was, though a big tea urn steamed away in the corner. I poured myself a big mug of it and took some bread.

"Sleep well?" I asked.

" At first - had some weird dreams later on, though"

" Me too. The journey I suppose."

" I dunno. There was someone telling me to go back home. It upset me."

" Wow! Guess what? I dreamt the same thing! "

" Are you having me on? Tell me yours."

I did. I asked her about the no-face female with the skulls round her neck " Have you seen anything like that before? "

" Yes. Wrathful Tantric deity type thing - Vajra-something."

" Did she appear in your dream?"

" Probably, but dressed as a cop- she was wearing the necklace of little skulls, at the open collar of her uniform shirt. I was on a road somewhere in the bush. I know I've been there, maybe years ago with Dad? But it was the same and not the same. I was driving very fast, but a police car came up behind, flashed me to pull over. She got out and walked to my window. I did the 'was I speeding officer?' routine. In fact, there are no speed limits on those roads that I know of. She told me to turn around and go back. She had fangs for teeth. I was frightened shitless mate. "

" Can you believe we are having this conversation? Are we under psychic attack?" I asked after her words had hung in the air, me picturing the barren Aussie bush, a place I had never been, the heat shimmering off the road ahead.

" Yeah, I can believe it. You may not *want* to believe it, but I'm prepared to believe its happening."

" We ought to ask Olivia how she spent the night - have you seen her? I don't know if its advisable to ask Vim."

" He could be having a similar experience. Knowing him , it would be worse."

" Maybe . But he's been here before. The Vajrathingy would be flogging a dead horse, wouldn't it?"

" You are assuming that it haunts this place , like a ghost. We don't know that."

" Have you seen that monk about the place?" I asked

" What monk?"

" I saw him first at the Tea House yesterday morning. Last night he was meditating outside my window."

Liz looked at me very dubiously. "Could be you are worse off than me, mate."

" Shall we go and find Olivia?" and like kids having an adventure we , got up from the table and half ran to knock on Olivia's cabin door. But there was no response.

" She could be sitting, or asleep." said Liz " Maybe we shouldn't disturb her."

" Okay. I think I will go and sit myself. What about you?"

" Ill walk around a bit, I think. If I see Vim, should I mention anything to him?"

"If you do, see if you can get an eyeful inside his hut. I think that's where I might have seen the deity. See if you can see it too."

I went back to my cabin and fired up my shrine again. I pulled out my folding stool and sat for a long time, trying to clear my mind, trying to breathe evenly. The phrase " Psychic Attack" was disturbing. Who could be attacking us, and why? Why? Why? Why? With each exhalation of my lungs, "why" seemed like a mantric syllable. Gradually, after a long time had passed and my knees were beginning to ache, it faded, the rhythm of my breathing became more silent, there was no discomfort, my eyes were shut but I was awake, and calm, and breathing and calm, and breathing, and calm and breath in, and calm and breathe in and...

BANG!- a shutter crashed open in my head - a big fleshy face with eyes like a lion looked in at me.

" You wont succeed." the face said. I breathed in and remained calm , breath in and calm. " Face it - you tried in London, you tried in Sri Lanka, you tried in Kashmir, it did no good, and its not going to work."

Breathe in and Go Away!, breathe in and Go Away!, breathe in and Go Away! " You are wasting your time, sitting on that stool, full of shit - hey, shall I show you Olivia in the shower, would you



like that?"

This was no more than the usual distraction my mind came up with in meditation - naked women, and the like, I knew it was my own mind even though I characterised the fat face in the window as Mara, a sort of Buddhist Devil, whose role within the scheme of things is to maintain delusion and desire and who holds the endlessly turning Wheel of Life in Tibetan paintings and who, with all his demonic hordes, had attacked the Buddha as he sat under the Bodhi tree, the night he achieved enlightenment. Even the idea that Mara might make the effort to disrupt my pathetic attempts at meditation was a grandiose delusion, but as a way of making sense of the goings on in my subconscious, it was useful. Not effective, though. I was sitting in my cabin, in front of my shrine, but at the same time, I was watching Olivia in the shower back in the house, turning round under the thin stream of the under powered shower, watching the water as it travelled in shifting streams over her generous breasts, her wide pale thighs, her..... wait!

I formulated a question in my mind : " Who came to me last night?"

Mara switched the porn show off. He looked soberly through his window at me."You know the answer to that." he said.

" I probably do - just like I know who you are, but you don't go a lot on names, do you?"

" No. If you know my name, you can shut this window. If you know her name..... lets just say, things will change. "

" Why does she want us all gone? Are we really a threat to the maintenance of illusion?"

" Ha! Don't give yourself airs, you little mummies boy."

" Why then?"

" Ask the Rinpoche. He's a friend of hers."

" Why shouldn't I ask you, Mara?"

BANG! The window was shut - he went. I was still breathing in.... and out.... and in... and..a voice -a different voice - said something " 'She' is the Vajrayogini Vajravarahi. Not the cats mother. And if you don't leave here I will cut the top of your head off and drain you out, to drink from my cup, like a fine wine."

I opened my eyes. A naked, brown, female back was between me and the shrine. Long greasy looking hair ran all the way down it until it obscured the parts she sat upon " You will go on living, but you will never get what I have drained from you back again"

I closed my eyes, and opened them again. She was gone.

I was calm though. I wasn't frightened, or panicking, like in my dream. Shakily, I gathered myself up, and rose from my stool. I forced myself to salute the shrine, extinguish the candles, and walk to my door and open it. Olivia was outside- her hair looked as if she had not long come from the shower. " Sorry I didn't see you earlier- I overslept"

" That's okay. This isn't the sort of retreat where you have to be in the shrine room reciting mantras before the cock crows." I expect I had an unconvincing smile on my face.

" I had a bad night." Olivia looked a little fearful. I didn't want to say ' Yes, I know.' At the same time, I

didn't quite know how to tell her that she wasn't on her own.

"Never mind. Have you seen Liz?" I asked her, being very British about it. Olivia hadn't " I saw her at breakfast. She didn't sleep too well either. Matter of fact, neither did I."

"It must have been the journey."

"Mmm. Liz and I think..." But just then, along the walkway from the house came Vim, resplendent in his robes, looking thoughtfully at the two of us.

" Good morning, you two. Sleep well? Isn't the air glorious here?" Addressing the latter question and ignoring the former, we were enthusiastic in our agreement. We all three walked on to Liz's Dzhong, where Olivia, knocked on the door and went in. Vim and I walked further.

" You're not, are you?" he asked, after we had walked in a companionable silence for some time. I knew what the question meant.

" No, I'm not"

" It wouldn't be skilful."

"I'm NOT!" I said quietly, but emphatically.

"Good."

Finally, we arrived at Vim's hut. We stood admiring the view, the haze shifting over the distant plains, and then he invited me in, and opened a small cupboard and brought out tea things. I sat and looked at his huge overpowering shrine with its great shagging Vajradhara presiding over smaller figures that stood or sat in a line in front. On the left, I saw her - a small brass figure stood in an odd legs-apart posture, with a cup held in her hand, as if proposing a toast. She had a protruding sagging belly, large sagging breasts, over which fell a long necklace of skulls. She had three eyes, big sharp teeth and the Tibetan crown-like head dress did nothing for her.

When Vim had made the tea and sat down, I pointed at the brass figure. " Whose this?"

" Vajrayogini Vajravarahi, the consort of Chakrasamvara, Lord of the Round of Existence. The Tibetans call her Nara Khachoema. She is dancing on the cremation ground, on the bones of the dead. She is also a guardian figure, usually of tradition and ritual."

"Ah" I thought I saw a correspondence with Mara. "A maintainer of the status quo, would you say?"

" No, not precisely. As Chakrasamvara is to life, Vajravarahi is to death. She is the other half of the circle, the dark that frames the light. Mara turns the wheel of the round- or we invite him to, by being attached- and he is the one with the vested interest in the status quo." Vim was slipping into full on Teacher mode now.

I brought him up short. " I've seen her."

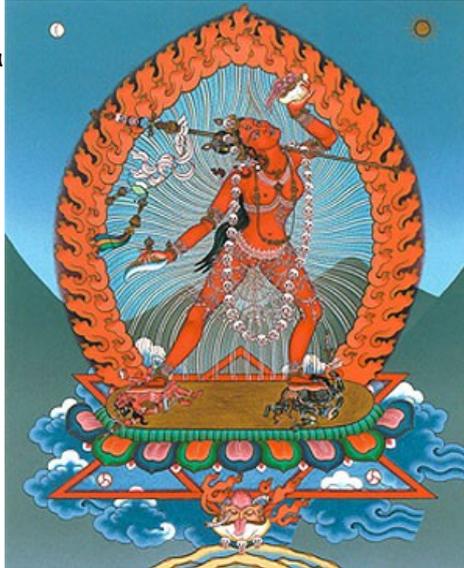
" Sorry?"

" I've seen her - Vajrayogini Vajravarahi, Nara Khachoema, call her what you like, but she has appeared in my dreams, and in my meditation. In fact Vim, both Liz and I have seen her in the brief time we have been here. Haven't you?"

Vim looked pale. " No - and you must be mistaken."

" I don't think so. When I first saw her, I knew I had seen her before. It was on this shrine."

"Maybe- but you don't understand. Nara Khachoema is a harbinger. She brings death!" he paused "Okay , strictly its the death of Self she brings, but Tibetan tradition associates her with 'Death' death. The traditional kind."



" If your setting out to frighten me, Vim, you are definitely getting there."

" You should be frightened! I'm frightened! And you say that the girls have seen her too?"

" Yes, I believe so. Not sure about Olivia, but I saw her on a station in South East London, and Liz saw her on an Outback road."

" These are dreams."

" Why would that make a difference?"

" It makes no difference."

" That's what I thought" I took a gulp of tea " I've seen a monk , too"

" A monk?"

" Yeah. Red robe. Tibetan."

" Where?"

" Here, in the grounds. And at the back of the tea house on the way up too."

"Not in your dreams, then."

" I don't think so."

Vim got up, lit incense, and started softly chanting "Om Mane Padme Hum". He was looking out of the window, not at the shrine. After a couple of minutes chanting, he looked at me again and asked: " Did she speak?"

" She told me to go back. She told Liz the same. She has also threatened to decant me into her cup, like a fine wine."

" Ha!" said Vim , his eyes wide. "If only the Rinpoche was here."

" He's not" I said, superfluously. Vim now began chanting a different mantra, the one for the great

Tibetan teacher, Padmasambhava:

"Om Ah Hum,
Jetsun Guru,
Padma Siddhi,
Hum"

After a while, I asked "What can we do? Can we defend ourselves? Should we go back?"

" We are certainly not doing that. Look... I'm sure the Rinpoche can help us, all we need to do is hang on. Nara Khachoema threatened you , but I think- I hope - its an empty threat. She has to wait to perform her dance, do you understand?"

" She said I would go on living, but you think she cant decant me unless I'm already dead?"

" Yeah, maybe, - yeah, that's it. She's telling you that the you that is you *now* will be dead. But she's not talking about enlightenment." Vim was not inspiring me with confidence. He went back to chanting, calling up the Guru. I understood why. Padmasambhava might come floating over the mountains on his sacred mat and brandishing a Tantric Vajra- it was always possible- but more likely Dardo Rinpoche would come up the hill in Jaskaran Singh's jeep. On him, Vim had pinned our salvation.

I had done a foolish thing, I realised. I had frightened myself and I had frightened Vim.

The next few days nothing happened. All four of us wandered around apprehensively, and Jaskaran Singh was asked repeatedly if there was any news of Dardo, but he merely shrugged his shoulders. " Either he will simply walk in, or someone will telephone me from the bus stop. I shan't know until then."He didn't seem bothered.

Then Olivia and I heard things in the night. Both of us came out of our cabins thinking we had heard a soft wailing on the air. Perhaps we did - but it was a faint sound as much a sigh as a wail. The moon shone through the trees, and we listened as hard as we could to hear more, but there was nothing but the deep mountain stillness. We went back to sleep, but two or three hours later, the noise returned. This time I just sat up in bed and listened It was both distress and ecstasy faint as if coming from the mountains, but somehow nearby at the same time. I felt cold as death. It was a while before I got back to sleep.

I was sitting at breakfast the next morning, when Vim appeared at the table.

"I thought you said you weren't."he said, accusative.

"Weren't what?"

" Having sex with Olivia."

" I'm not."

" Someone is."

" They are? How do you know?"

" Never mind."

" My cabin is directly opposite hers..."

" I know"

" If someone was in there with Olivia, I think I'd have heard them."

" I have heard them."

" Vim- look, you're tense. We all are. Olivia and I....."

" Wo! Are you admitting it now?" He stood with arms outstretched, palms outward, in a gesture of preventing me from going any further.

"No! We were dressed, outside, in the night, listening to a strange noise. That's probably what you heard, too."

" Nothing that strange." Vim was red faced, and shouted " I do recognise the sound of female orgasm, when I hear it, you know!"

I gasped in disbelief , then tried to suppress a laugh." Bollocks! It wasn't a female orgasm."

" We shall agree to differ!" Vim turned away from my table, strode angrily to where the food was, his sandals squeaking on the floor, served himself and sat ostentatiously at a corner table, with his back to me. Then Olivia came in, looked at Vim's rigid and angry back, whispered to me: "What's up with him?"

" Lets just say, he thinks I am taking advantage of you." I said in a normal voice. I wanted him to hear.

"Eh?" Olivia looked mystified.

" Ill tell you later." As I rose from the table, Liz came in. She looked very tired, her eyes were red.

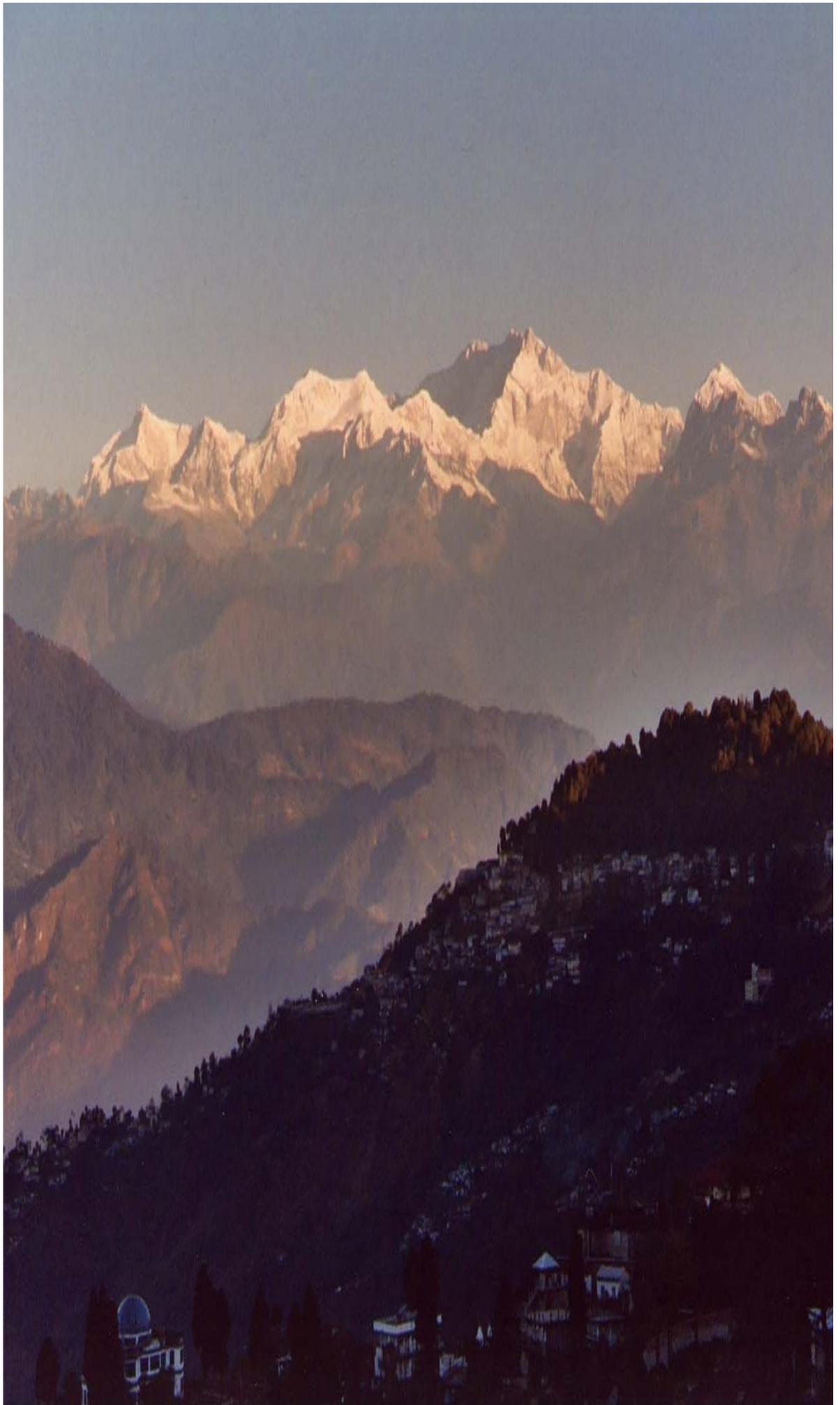
" You don't look as if you've slept very well." I said.

" I didn't" she said.

" Did you hear anything in the night?"

" No- did you?"

She sat with Olivia, who apprised her of what we had heard. I walked on, out to the garden. As retreats went this one was not the most relaxed I had ever been on. I walked out into the grounds trying to breathe and relax, breathe and relax , trying to clear my head, walking on. Before I knew it, I had reached Vim's hut, and now I turned onto a path new to me, going down hill. The view over the roofs of the town and beyond to the great white mountains, the deep blue of the sky punctured by their icy white crests, small banners of cloud flying from the peaks of the tallest was so breathtaking I stopped and stared. The view from Vim's hut was straight to my right, away and down the valleys to the plains beyond- he would need another window to see this great wall of rank upon rank of peaks stretching into the far distance. If Padmasambhava came on his magic mat, it would be from this direction, through the killingly cold and thin air above them that he would set his flight path. But another way of thinking about it might be, that he wouldn't have to fly over those impossibly high peaks at all. He was right here now,



just as the Vajrayogini was, maybe we even carried them both with us. My mind ran round these loops of logic and considered the abstruse philosophical questions of what did and did not exist. The reality of what I and the others were experiencing, was brought about the intentionality of what we all believed. It did not and could not make any difference whether someone else, rooted in objective reality thought we were hysterical and imagining things. The Vajrayogini existed for me because she was now embedded in how I thought about this awesome and beautiful place. Padmasambhava might fly across those mountains because I saw those same mountains as shielding the place, some deep hidden valley in Tibet perhaps, where he dwelt still, awaiting the day when the world would hear the truth of the Buddha's once more.

I turned my footsteps further down the path. The red monk existed for me in the same way and he was coming towards me. The path was too narrow for us to avoid each other and to my left was a steep slope which I expected might turn into a sheer drop. I stopped and pressed my uplifted palms together as respectfully as I could manage.

" Good morning!" he said " Lovely day, isn't it?"

I felt a wave of warm feeling. " Every day is a lovely day in this place."

" Is it?" He looked at me directly and I saw that this was the same person who had checked my season ticket at the Albany Park station of my dreams. His eyes in his brown wrinkled face held mine- I could see far galaxies in them. The top of my scalp tingled and the words by which I might make a reply to him were stopped, jammed up in the machine in my mind that issued them. I could only continue looking at him with my mouth open. He laughed " Why are you Westerners continually surprised? I should think they even know about what's going on up here down in the market in town. They are probably talking about it along with the price of rice!"

I could only stutter out " Who are you? How does everyone know?" while my mind added a great many more supplemental questions right down to " Where did you learn your English?"

" You know who I am. And I know in just the same way you know things from watching the TV- hey?" he laughed. " Have a nice walk. When you see her Ladyship again, tell her I said you could stay. And tell Vimalakirti that there's nothing to be afraid of. I must get on."

I didn't walk any further. I just stood and watched the mountains, my mind revolving, until, exhausted, I walked back to my cabin and slept.

I did a lot of sleeping that day and in the night, I found myself on a dream mountain, sitting watching over a small camping stove I had put some sheltering stones around, trying to boil water for tea. A strong wind blew relentlessly, and it was very, very cold. The sun was setting, just a red glow from surrounding peaks, and the shadows lengthened everywhere. I knew I was on quite a large rock shelf, but I also knew that in this light, I was no more than ten or a dozen steps from a fall of thousands of feet. I wanted to drink my tea and pitch my tent, which might be why I felt irritated by a figure coming towards me from further up the mountain, swathed in warm looking baggy clothing, and a woolly hat and goggles. Somehow, I knew who it was, though it was not easy to tell under all the gear. She sat down beside my stove, and we said nothing while the water boiled. Then I made the tea- wondering where the second cup I had had come from- surely I didn't lug it all the way up here?

" Good tea" she said.

" Thanks " I said " Sorry there's nothing stronger."

" The Rinpoche told me about you. I shall drink your tea- no fine wine for me today."

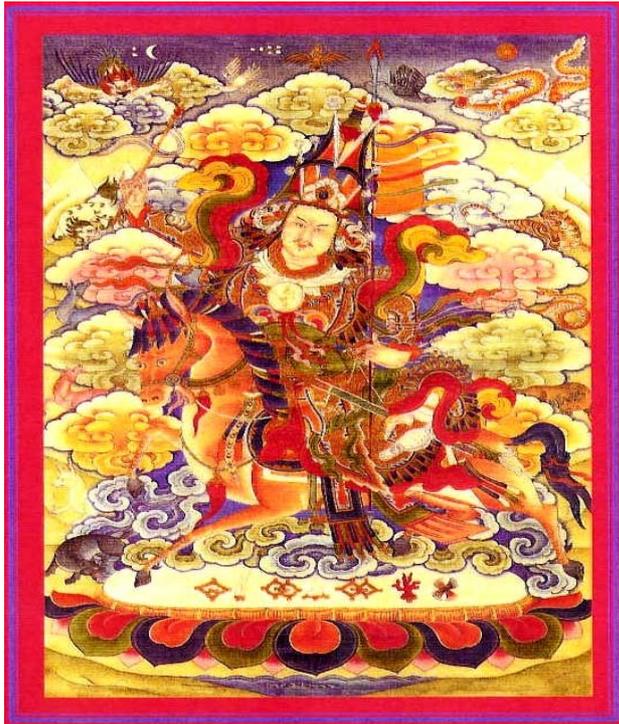
"I thank you for that." I said with a sigh of relief.

" All the same, you need not stay. You already know what you have to do."

" I am very loath to disagree with you. I have a great deal of work to do here, I think."

" Oh yes? Work on what? All that passion you are running away from? Its still with you. Why worry? As long as you have willing partners and you take care to hurt no one, what is so wrong you have to run thousands of miles away? Passion is the larger part of compassion, isn't it? "

"That's playing with words."



" Playing?" the Vajrayogini threw the dregs of her tea away. I couldn't see her face, but I could tell there was anger in her voice. " I'll show you playing!"

Suddenly, I became aware of a huge big cat, a tiger, stalking us both. The cat came up slope, crouched down, huge and stealthy, softly growling. I was transfixed with fear, rooted to the spot. I couldn't run and if I had I would be running into thin air above a nauseating drop. The tiger came closer , step by deliberate step, but soundlessly on its huge paws. The Vajrayogini was gone, but another figure came down the same path she had. He was clad in full Tibetan clerical fig, with a big old fashioned Admirals hat in bright gold, and he carried an enormous Vajra wand, that looked too big to lift. "There you are , Puss!" he said, laughing.

"Who are you?" I cried out, uselessly.

" Who indeed? More to the point, who the fuck are you?" he replied as he climbed calmly on the now passive and still tiger's back. "I like that song. 'Who Are You?' by the Who" then he laughed. The tiger roared, a massive ear splitting sound, and I shrank back in fear. But he just went on laughing, and even though I had shut my eyes in my fear, I found that laugh infectious- I could hear a very old record, 'The Laughing Policeman', with infectious and rhythmic laughter, and I was laughing at the same time as I was afraid of the advancing tiger, and afraid of the height we were at. I opened my eyes - the tiger and the lama were gone. But the music carried on, drifting through the dark sky. I was singing ' The Laughing Policeman' as I came awake:

*He laughs upon his duty, he laughs upon his beat
He laughs at everybody when he's walking in the street
He never can stop laughing, he says he'd never tried
But once he did arrest a man and laughed until he died*

*Aha aha hahahaha
ooahahahaha
ahahahahahah
oo aha ha ha ha ha*

At breakfast, Jaskaran Singh, resplendent in a three piece suit of immaculate cut and jet black turban, made an appearance. " Good news!" he announced " I have heard from the Rinpoche this morning. He is on his way back to the centre. I know you will all be pleased."

We all clapped. Another time I might have been cynical- I thought I must have met the Rinpoche yesterday, and seen him from afar the very day we arrived. But I was still laughing- not out loud, perhaps, but I was smiling at the very least. Pausing at the table where Liz was drinking coffee, still looking very tired and drawn, Jaskaran Singh handed her a small packet. " Those are the right batteries you wanted, I think"

"Geez, thanks!" Liz looked over at me, not amused by my sunny expression." What are you laughing at?"

" Nothing really" I assured her. But she got up and came over to me. She spoke in a low half whisper:

" I don't care what you think! I couldn't help it. And that tower, the Dzong, it echoes and its like a loud speaker, you know? I know I have brought it on myself. It was wrong- what I said to Vim on the bus. I shouldn't have done it. I'm being punished. Its not funny...." she sighed, and looked away - "The Vajrayogini was..... in my bed, she was my lover. I couldn't stop, I couldn't help it!"

I smiled - gradually all this was beginning to sound very funny.

" Except, she wasn't of course." Liz continued, her voice dropping to a whisper "I was on my own - with a vibrator. All night." She sighed. "I'm so ashamed! Its not like I'm a teenager. "

This was really funny. I could just imagine the lama on his tiger laughing too." That drive in the bush?" I asked. I now felt inspired and that I saw things with a blinding sharp clarity. "What was it the Vajrayogini wanted you to go back to?"

" You've guessed." Liz looked down at the table. "Oh well... .I'm lesbian".

" I'm sorry" I said. But my face creased and I was cracking up, laughter rising in my chest like boiling water. I began to sing:

"He said I must arrest you, I didn't know what for!
And then he starting laughing, until he cracked his jaw!
Aha aha hahahahooahahahaahahahaahoo
aha ha ha ha ha!!"

We were both holding our sides and laughing, our eyes and noses running. We just sat there and giggled for what seemed like hours. Vim walked out of the refectory with a disapproving expression on his face. Olivia wanted to know what was so funny. But we really couldn't say.

Dardo Rinpoche was sort of " presented" to us by Jaskaran Singh as he helped him out of the jeep. We bowed and pressed our hands together respectfully. Dardo looked me in the eye as he went up the steps to the veranda, but I saw no galaxies this time. But I was smiling, and so was he, and if I had held his gaze a moment longer, I would have been laughing again.

He turned in the doorway and addressed us all. " Friends- please excuse. But the journey, very hard." He rubbed his backside briefly- I noticed his English was less fluent that when I had spoken to him last. " We shall all meet, make offering to Buddha - day after tomorrow -hey?" he nodded vigorously. We

followed suit. He went indoors and disappeared from our view, leaving Jaskaran Singh to carry a very small, old and battered suitcase after him.

We walked slowly down the corridor and into the grounds once more. Vim was now ready to take Liz and I to task. "That was a very juvenile display at breakfast, wasn't it?" I would have said something like 'Sorry' but if I had, I would have been sniggering again. But Liz said it and then she went on:

"I'm sorry too about the way I behaved on the trip up, Vim, - in the bus?"

"Ohh..." Vim shook his head "No need. I wasn't thinking straight on that journey either. I'm sorry for the things I said."

Liz stared at the ground as we all walked. "I think I have to apologise too for being, shall we say, 'unquiet' on a couple of nights recently."

I knew what she meant but Olivia looked puzzled, and Vim missed the point entirely. "No need to apologise. I know all three of you have had experiences- John told me- and I have been very worried by what I have heard."

"I think we will have a more peaceful time now- at least I hope so." I said "Your Jetsun Guru mantra did the trick, Vim"

"Well Dardo is here, certainly....."

"No, I think the lady Nara Khachoema has left us."

"How do you know?"

"Last night, I found myself on a mountain top, having a cup of tea with her. She was very civilised, and she brought a friend. A little lama in an oversized Admirals hat and comedy Vajra. He jumped on a tigers back and they all left, laughing."

Olivia found this funny, and put her hand over her mouth to stifle her laugh. Vim stopped and looked at me. "Do you know who that was?"

"Well, lets say I have an idea."

Vim accessed teacher mode "Padmasambhava appears sometimes as the Crazy Wisdom Guru, Supposedly a wrathful figure riding on the back of a pregnant tigress. Crazy Wisdom is totally fearless- its power is that it can improvise according to the situation. It doesn't hold to any particular doctrine or discipline, instead it is spontaneous and acts on whatever situation is presented, without judgement."

"He wasn't wrathful, and I cannot speak for how far gone the tigress was, being no expert in such matters." I explained.

"Did you hear music?" asked Vim

"Oh yes." I turned to Liz "The Who never did a version of 'The Laughing Policeman' did they?" She dissolved in smirking giggles. Vim shook his head briefly and walked on, ramrod straight, his robe perfectly arranged.

"So she wont be back, you reckon?" Liz asked me "The Vajrayogini?"

"You don't want her back do you?"

" Ermm, no, I guess not."

Olivia said " I don't think my dreams have been as explicit as yours. I seem just to troubled by dark moods and unease."

" 'Livia,"said Liz " don't worry about it. You haven't missed anything. John and I are old hands at stupidity. Thank heaven you haven't had the chance to get as stupid as both of us" Then she started laughing, and I joined in and soon Olivia was laughing too. I don't know how long we went on....

*So if you chance to meet him while walking round the town
Just shake him by his fat old hand and give him half-a-crown
His eyes will beam and sparkle, he'll gurgle with delight
And then he'll start to laughing, and laugh with all his might*

*Aha aha hahahaha
ooahahahaha
ahahahahahah
oo aha ha ha ha ha*





You know what they say about buses. You wait ages for one and then along comes the

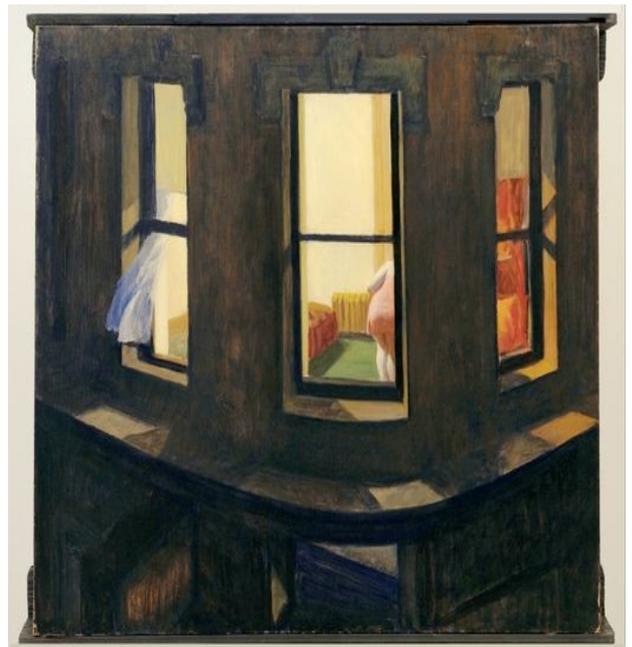
OBLIGATORY POETRY SECTION

I don't know what it was I said in the last issue., but somehow I finally got some poetry to publish. First up is something proper from Pat Mailer:

NIGHT WINDOWS
EDWARD HOPPER 1928

A window gaping wide
Exhales the heavy city heat.
Curtains move seductively
To embrace the cool, crisp night air.
Darkness of stone without,
Makes a frame for an enticing glimpse
Of life within a lighted window.

Illuminated,
A woman, unknowing,
Offers her proud, red robed rear
As she bends tending what? why?
Offers a brief flash of her life.
Bids me welcome, draws me in,
But answers nothing, shuts me out.
Within the room
Shapes, shades, shadows, inconclusive, tease,
They are hers to know. Intimate, familiar.
Mine only to conjecture, ungraspable.
A mystery.



Pat Mailer 2004

Next up, no less a figure than *Graham Charnock*. I was amazed to receive this, because *Graham* is not the sort of person you might think would be writing poetry- and you would be right. But he is after all a lyricist- pity there's no tune for this one:

This Septic Isle

Cheddar Cheese, Wensleydale
Portobello Market, Harrod's sale
Beagles, Collies, Whippets, Lurchers
Old lych gates in English churches
Tommy, Keith, and Uncle Ernie
Morecambe and Wise, Mike & Bernie
Winter's coming, chestnuts roasting
Cream teas and muffins toasting
Leather and willow, village cricket
Overpriced football season ticket
Battle of Britain, stiff upper lips
Rosie Lee, and betting slips
England Expects, Nelson, Churchill
Tony Parsons and Julie Burchill
Chelsea Flower Show, War of the Roses
Tatting, Sewing, knitted tea cosies
Gracie Fields, Frankie Vaughan
Health and Efficiency, top shelf porn
Soho Prostitute, Womens Institute
Homeless, destitute, Burton's first suit
English bobbies, shoot to kill
Fairgrounds, Dodgems, what a thrill
Freedom of the Press, all the news that fits
Readers Wives and Page Three tits
Cobblestones in northern towns
Debutantes and ballroom gowns
Kingsley Amis, Philip Larkin
Mary Quant and Molly Parkin
Dr Watson and Sherlock Holmes
Horses, stables and curry combs
Triumph Herald, Humber Snipe
Jellied eels, brawn and tripe
Captain Scarlet, Doctor Who
Dennis Wheatley, Wrinkled Shrew
Fairground Organs, Ferris Wheels
Sleazy Inside Trader deals
Billy Butlin, knobbly knees
Ian Dury, Al Stewart, Squeeze
Andy Pandy, Muffin the Mule
Larry the Lamb, Greyfriars School
Arthur Negus, William Blake
Fred Dibnah, Kendal Mint Cake
Happy Eater, Wimpy Bars
Galaxy, Milky Way and Mars
Roy of the Rovers, Biffo the Bear
Jeff Hawke and Dan Dare

Wheezer, Hotspur, Beano, Dandy
 Babycham, Guinness, Lager, Shandy
 Goon Show, ITMA, Navy Lark
 Alfie Bass, Graham Stark
 Sizewell, Dungeness, Derek Jarman
 Lords a leaping, Stevens, Scarman
 Childkillers, Saddleworth Moors
 Hindley, Brady, two world wars
 Swallows & Amazons, Biggles, Potter
 The Owl of the Remove, what a rotter
 Max Miller, Max Wall, Frankie Howerd
 Hancock, Harry Worth, Noel Coward
 Leonard Rossiter, Yootha Joyce
 Jasper Carrot, Rolls Royce
 ITMA, Python, Till Death Us Do Part
 London Weekly Advertiser, Exchange & Mart
 Windsor, Cheltenham Spa and Bath
 Aberfan aftermath

So many things to make you smile
 Abound throughout This Septic Isle



Next is an authentic piece of fannish prose, as written and published by Robert "Bob" Lichtman in 1963 in an *Westward Hoog!*, done for the 102nd FAPA mailing back in February 1963. Where else would you find someone ripping off Allen Ginsberg? I reproduce this as it appeared at the time, dupered on Twill Tone paper. I hope its legible.



GROWL FOR THE F.A.P.A.

-- Bob Lichtman

I saw the best minds of my generation on the bottom of the waitlist,
screaming hysterical shadowfaps,
rummaging through the surplus stock at midnight searching for an
angry Poor Richard's Almanac,
who published neo crudzines thus getting FAPA credentials and are
now #67 on the waitlist, fee unpaid,
who were dropped howling for nonpayment, reapplied and languished
drunkenly at #73,
who wrote angry letters to FAPA officialdom protesting the retention
of members ten years deadwood while sliding backwards wait-
listwise from FAPA divorces and split memberships,
who published asskissing shadowzines in editions of 110, getting six
postcards and a "noted" in response, and shouting "never again",
who received quarterly issues of fantasy amateur, pored through the
membership list and searched for "\$@!M"s into the wee
hours, sitting in front of their typewriters and television
sets and eating jelly beans,
who moved over the equator into the top twenty clapping their hands
and sending letters of comment to Lighthouse,
who finally reached top, paid dues and assumed membership position,
to be dropped nine months later for utter inactivity.

Matt Demble, I'm with you in Rockland,
where you're bitchier than I am,
I'm with you in Rockland
where you compose mailing comments on all 101 FAPA mailings
20 hours a day,
I'm with you in Rockland
where you argue politics with Norm Stanley and fight over
civil rights with Hank Spelman
I'm with you in Rockland
where they serve white store-bought bread at the dinner
table
I'm with you in Rockland
where corfiu runs in the water fountains, the water fountains
that drip at night and won't let us sleep,
I'm with you in Rockland
where your case is becoming serious and is reported in
Starspinkle (and eight months later in Fance)
I'm with you in Rockland
where your fellow patients take turns slipsheeting on your
figmentary Speedoprint and the counter is permanently set at
68,
I'm with you in Rockland
where your egoboo poll blackballs 75 waitlisters at one
fell swoop
I'm with you in Rockland
where you fan for ever and ever in a universe of quarterly
deadlines, electric mimeographs, eight pages a year composed

on stencil, and Rotsler cartoons in every mailing.

Fannish! fannish! fannish! fannish! fannish! fannish! fannish! fannish! fannish!
Fannish! fannish! fannish! fannish!
The typer and the stencil and the ditto fannish! The Rex-Rotary and
the drawing plate and the stylus fannish! The one-shot
fannish!
The monthly subzine fannish! The letter of comment fannish! The
turtle, the hedgehog and the elephant fannish!
Fannish the official editor! fannish the secretary-treasurer! fannish
the membership saving petition! fannish the late dues!
fannish the fugg **and** the grunch!
Fannish, fannish the feud and the fugghead! fannish the second-
generation fan! fannish the femme-fan! ahahahahaha!
Fannish Berkeley, fannish London! Fannish Chicago! fannish Birm-
ingham! Fannish Lansdale Turlock Seattle Portland!
Fannish New Orleans! fannish Santa Barbara! fannish Lubeç!
fannish Phoenix! Fannish Bakersfield! who digs LASTS is
LASTS!
Fannish Mycon! Fannish Chicon! Fannish San Francisco in '64! *
Fannish Hyatt House! Fannish Caravan Hall! Fannish Pick-
Congress, with its fannish elevators! Even with its fannish
elevators!
Fannish the cosmic mind! fannish the broad mental horizons! Fan-
nish the love camp in the Ozarks!
Fannish the superspecial egobooful extraspecial psyche of the
fan!

B.L. 1 21 63

* Somehow, most of the other participants in this one-shot dis-
agree with or take exception to this line! I can't understand
that, but plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose, as they say.



Please let this not be a one-off. Lets have some poetry for the next ish.



BACK SEAT DRIVERS

An amazing and varied selection correspondents comment on MD4:
Robert Lichtman

rlwh001@yahoo.com

As it happens, "fannish" fanzines are my favorite kind so it's understandable that *Motorway Dreamer* is among my favorite of the currently appearing ones. I believe the die was cast for me regarding this particular kind from my very first exposure to the things. The first handful of fanzines I ever saw included issues of Gregg Calkins's *Opsla!*, Dean Grennell's *Grue* and Boyd Raeburn's *À Bas*. But when you write that MD "might conjure the ghosts of *Scottishe* and *Wadezine*," I undergo some sort of cortico-thalamic pause. I've never heard of the latter (although Greg P's Memory Hole list informs me it was done in the late '60s by one Audrey Walton, of whom I've also never heard) but the editorial personality of Ethel Lindsay's fanzine—and of course Ethel herself—is so different than your fanzine's that...well, it just goes to show (along with your mention of Dr. Rob's *Maya* and Greg's various titles) that the "fannish" fanzine is a widely varied phenomenon. Long may they wave!

Lord Kettle's piece made for a long and entertaining read, and I was most pleased and appreciative that he included the lengthy cast of characters—for although I am to some modest degree "attuned to the British political theatre," knowledge of the more minor and bit players as his narrative unfolded was most helpful.

Regarding "Me and Buddhism—An Explanation," I found it a level-headed and sane exposition on what you believe and why. It's true that religion is seldom discussed in fanzines, although there have been exceptions (but I can't think of what they are at the moment); but if everyone did it in the same fashion you did here it wouldn't be a potential problem.

As you note, at this time "religion might be giving us a fresh excuse to be at each other's throats." Certainly the entire Middle East, and especially Iraq, would be a far better place if all the various religious strains there could, in the words of Rodney King, "just get along." But religious intolerance is hardly limited to that part of the world. In today's news, for example, is a report that the Pope continues to hold that Catholicism "provides the only true path to salvation." Although technically speaking I'm Jewish, for the most part I don't give much thought to religion so far as my own life is concerned. When I lived on The Farm commune in Tennessee, our leader Stephen Gaskin used to say that our religion was like the old computer punch cards. If you piled up the precepts of all the major religions, one per punch card, where the holes were the same all the way through was our religion. I always related to that, and try to abide by the so-called Golden Rule as much as possible.

The limiting factors with all religions are the bits where "you can't have one without the other". Buddhism is itself very eclectic, and has few areas where this dictum applies, but that doesn't mean they aren't any. I would criticise the RC church for claiming that it seeks an understanding with all faiths, while condemning mine as "childish", but you can go to, say, Sri Lanka and see the mirror image. So maybe the solution is to remember we are all human beings before we define ourselves by faith or

any other thing.

In Graham James' article he writes of visiting "the amazing multi-floored Story's Bookshop" while in Seattle. Perhaps someone in Seattle has already written in to correct this, but just in case...the actual name of the store he's referring to is Shore's, and I agree that it's a wonderful book emporium. (I haven't been there since 1978 myself.) I enjoyed his tale of Papa Primo's Pizza, and his final note wondering what became of it. Google offers that there's a Papa Primo's Pizza in Greensboro, North Carolina, and a Papa's Primo Pizza in Honesdale, Pennsylvania. But it also comes up with an article from a 1992 edition of the Pueblo (Colorado) *Chieftain* reporting that "Nona Zeffirelli's II Inc. announced Monday that it has begun to produce Papa Primo's pizza product for RAMM Foods Inc. of Orlando, Fla." Apparently this is some sort of frozen pizza, but the article trails off into corporate talk and is fairly uninformative. Graham will just have to continue to wonder, I'm afraid.

"Chuckling Out Time" was amusing and enigmatic and I enjoyed it. "Since no other bugger will write this stuff, I find myself under some pressure to produce." I've written some poetry in the past, but except for a couple of fannish pastiches all has long ago been binned. It took some digging, but I found something both lame and esoteric for your delectation. [This is the piece reproduced in the OPS beginning on Page 27] I no longer remember the deep cosmic/fannish significance of some of the allusions, to tell the truth. Regarding the poem, gag early and often. It's supposed to be a rant by someone who's spent too many years on the FAPA waiting list, which at that time was legendary for being larger in numbers than the membership list. At that point, however, I'd just gotten into FAPA after a three and a half year wait and published my first FAPazine, which appeared in the same mailing as this oneshot.

Contrary to the beliefs of that nice Mr. Weston, I for one do not "wish [*I was*] resident in fabulous, Old Worlde Wiltshire under the benevolent reign of our Beloved Leader, Tony," or even his successor, that creepy Mr. Brown.

Well, Peter did have second thoughts on that , Robert.

Chris Garcia writes that he "started life listening to 1970s rock (and punk), as well as country from folks like Marty Robbins and Johnny Cash." Being significantly older than Chris—in fact, I suspect that some if not all of my four sons are older than he is—my own early acquaintance with both Cash and Robbins was not in a country music vein. I first became aware of him in 1956 when "I Walk The Line" was a huge hit, but my favorite of his early stuff has long been "Ballad of a Teenage Queen," which came out in 1957. That's the same year I first heard Marty Robbins with his "White Sport Coat" ballad. These were all "cross-over" songs, but Robbins got much higher on the pop music charts with "White Sport Coat" than Cash did with either of the above tunes (although they made No. 1 on the country charts at the same time). As for Chris writing that Les Paul leaves him cold, I wonder if he's tried lately. I'd agree with Chris that Roger Ebert is probably the famous fan ever. His reach far exceeded Willis Conover's.

Next!

Chris Evans

c51evans@talktalk.net

The mix of articles oddly complemented one another, seeming to have as an underlying theme the notion of people beginning to see the light--or woefully failing to do so, in the case of Roy Kettle's take on Tony Blair.

Yes, Chris, thanks for noticing, I did try and theme the issue.

I was particularly interested in your experience of Buddhism. I come from the opposite tradition, being subjected to years of Welsh nonconformist chapel stuff during my childhood before I retreated into the peace and quiet of what I consider to be benign scepticism. In the end I couldn't take the dogmatism, the narrow denominational view of the truth, the idea that a supreme being would want to be worshipped constantly by his creations--this last one being something that I still find distinctly creepy. These are, of course, features conspicuously lacking in Buddhism, which has always struck me as the sanest of the major religions (if it even really qualifies as one).

I've no doubt that people do have profound spiritual experiences, but reading about them is a bit like reading about someone's favourite books or albums or movies: you can appreciate their choice, maybe even share a certain enthusiasm for aspects of it, but ultimately it's such a personal thing with a non-transferable emotional cargo since it arises from the quirks of individual psychology and from being in a certain place at a receptive time. I thought you described aspects of this particularly well.

It's not a new observation but SF readers, mostly an intelligent, very rationalist lot, are no less immune to the lure of transcendence than anyone else. Except that it usually has an intellectual rather than spiritual dimension. Most of us will have originally found it through the stimulus of stories that challenged our view of the world. We then went on to find fellowship through conventions, fanzines and all other means by which different groups in the SF world congregate. Some of us like to dress up, or perform rituals of obeisance to favoured texts. Those of us who've lost our original enthusiasm for the genre still retain a fondness for certain writers and films that we encountered at a particularly impressionable age. If this isn't a form of religious conversion in its broadest sense, then it's pretty close.

See Eric Mayer's letter below- its uncanny!

Enough of these sententious generalisations. I thought yours was a brave piece and a very clear-headed account of something that its actually one of the most intimate experiences a person can have.

You are too kind, Chris. Now here is Eric who descants upon the same theme:

Eric Mayer:

maywrite2@epix.net

Aside from saying I enjoyed Bruce Townley's cover, which took me back to the days he did covers for Title and even further back to when my friends and I put together Big Daddy models and even had Big Daddy "crash cars" I want to comment on your article on religion.

From your statement that faneds never talk about their faith in fanzines, I take it that you don't see Fandom as the One True Way. It really has struck me that Fandom is treated like a religion by some of its adherents, which is to say there are certain tenets one needs to accept as true, else one is not really a fan. Not only that, a true fan believes in the rightness of fandom, and the enlightenment to be found in fanac -- has at some point, in effect, been born again -- no longer a mundane but a fan. And any of us who might cavil over some fan's opinion on this or that aspect of fandom, or maybe not accept fandom as being perfect, who think, in short, they're blowing smoke out of their Gestetners...well, we are not truefen because truefen, of course...Believe.

I'm a bit confused by the last sentence of that para, Eric, but I will state that while I believe that Fandom Is A Way Of Life, I don't think anyone has yet decided that Fandom Is The One True Faith, and if they had, I wouldn't be a believer.

However, I think you are right that not many fans talk about their faith in fanzines and not many have any faith to talk about. I confess I have no religious beliefs. I wish I did. When I look out on the horror of the world -- or more correctly the horror of human society -- I wish I could be certain, or have even a vague hope, that there was something more, something better.

I was exposed to religion as a child. I was taken to services at our local United Methodist church and sent to Sunday School. The latter horrified me. Why were these adults telling me ludicrous stories that a preschooler wouldn't believe? Why were they lying to me? I found it upsetting.

It's the "belief" thing that's the stumbling block for me. I can't honestly say I feel convinced that there's a God or convinced of anything else that might translate to religious faith. I could perhaps make an intellectual argument that it would be a good idea to believe this or that but that would hardly amount to the internal conviction that it is so. I would welcome a religious experience. Alas, none have fallen out of the sky on me and I am, frankly, not likely to try meditation or seek out other means of attaining such an experience. I'm sure I would just feel silly. Like when we all tried reading the I Ching years ago.

I've made a couple passes through William James' Varieties of the Religious Experience. I recall that his attitude is that to the people who have religious experiences they are real -- whatever their actual cause -- and in many cases have a real effect on people's lives. They cannot be dismissed simply as inconsequential figments of feverish imaginations. James himself came to believe there was something else -- who knows what -- out there which we could connect with through the deeper regions of our mind, but he stressed that this was a belief unsupported by facts.

Having said all that I think it is supremely irrational to imagine that we can say that of course we know there's nothing else, nothing that we can't see from this tiny grain of sand we sit on in a limitless universe, nothing we haven't glimpsed since we opened our eyes a split second ago by cosmic standards. To imagine we have the knowledge to rule out religion, that there isn't a lot we don't yet know, is unjustified intellectual arrogance.

Yet, I can't believe simply because I don't think all beliefs can be disproved.

My feeling is that if you don't "feel" it, in some way- that is actually have an experience- you cannot really believe. Which is also why so many people who call themselves Christians are only nominally so, in many cases because they want to belong and/or conform, but have no real faith.

Anyway, I found your article fascinating. The concepts are hard for me to grasp. I wonder about that. How do such subtle beliefs work with millions of Buddhists? I take it, as mentioned at the end of the article, that there is a simpler version? I try to imagine our fundamentalist Christians, with their simplistic "the Bible says don't do this" mindset (although most of what they claim the Bible says, it doesn't) even attempting to get their head around the sorts of ideas you sketch out.

There are simplistic versions of Buddhism- " Pure Land" believers of whom there are a great many in China and Japan and of whom the Nichi Ren Sosho movement in the West is a part, believe that you need only endlessly chant the appropriate mantra to resolve all your problems and be reborn in the Buddha's Pure Land, a kind of Heaven. Theravadin Buddhism meanwhile emphasises a great many rules (known as "The Vinaya") and believes that following these unquestioningly will of itself lead to peace.

Also, with Christianity there is that carrot-on-the stick of eternal salvation. It doesn't seem that a Buddhist gets an "reward" for believing, which I am sure is irrelevant but not a very good selling point from a western point of view.

Well you know , even the notion of reward or punishment is itself an illusion.

Fascinating article and I would be happy to read more such.

Thanks, mate. I don't know if I will be moved to write any further on the matter, though.

Next!

John Purcell

j_purcell54@yahoo.com

Once again, you have produced a wonderful issue. I really enjoyed reading it, especially Roy Kettle's contribution. Very funny stuff, even for an American readership. There isn't much I can say in depth about Roy's article, except that it definitely offers insights into how some British citizens view Tony Blair's place in the grand scheme of things. Plus, I liked the brief encapsulations about the cast of characters; very funny on its own. Thank you for snatching it from the jaws of Graham Charnock's slush pile.

Your explanation of how Buddhism fits into your life was very enlightening. Yes, I know, that's a terrible pun, but it is very true. To bring back that phrase from my first paragraph, in the *Grand Scheme of Things*, we are merely participants in life. It is hard to avoid using clichés when writing about such a topic, but I find that the older I get, the more I come to accept who and what I am, and the people around me, too. All of the rat-racing to achieve wealth, prestige, fame, and all that rot has become less important to me. As you say, material gain cannot pass into the Great Beyond with you; leave it for your survivors as bequeathed in a will.

Did I say that?

It does make me wonder about my place in the *Grand Scheme of Things*, but when it's my time to shuck this mortal coil, I would like to know that I have lived right. By that, I mean to have been a decent, caring, loving husband, father, and done good things in life. Do I want to be remembered for grand accomplishments? Nah. I don't think so. It would be nice to go knowing that I have loved and been loved. True, that's another cliché, but I warned you.

And I just realized that all three of your main articles this issue hang together quite nicely: political legacy, religious/philosophical musings, and financial prosperity (Graham James' article). Even your poem "Chuckling Out Time" has a metaphysical message. I am impressed.

I'm always pleased when people notice the subtler bits, John. You and Chris Evans go to the Top of The Class.

Finally, I have to admit that I sometimes get Diana Dors and Jayne Mansfield confused. So long as the photos are labelled correctly, I am fine. Either way, two lovely ladies, eh wot?

No, sorry that's not good enough, chief. You'll be saying that one pair of large tits is just as lovely as the next, next. Like so many things in this world big tits come in many varieties. Diana Dors and Jayne Mansfield were very different ladies.

And now, from that land of sanity and quiet good sense that also occupies the North American landmass, here's Lloyd Penney

penneys@allstream.net

I so much remember those Big Daddy Roth illustrations...they were on t-shirts, car decals, packaging, etc. In the 70s, if I recall correctly, they were everywhere, and very popular.

Well, I view them really as a sixties thing- I had two Big Daddy Roth T-Shirts I bought from some place in Pasadena in about 67 or 8. I even wore them to conventions, where, at that time in Britain, they excited only sneers, if they were noticed at all.

Ah, what a wonderful caricature of Tony Blair, or Bliar, or whatever else you care to call him. Now that he's retired from the PMship and taken on Middle East diplomacy, I dare say he'll be Lord Blair before long. Gordon Brown has already been nicknamed Goddamned Boring, and I think he's already a target for some of the more militant in Britain. Clement Freud is still around? I remember him from one of the local FM stations rebroadcasting BBC radio game shows. Ah, another reminder! With the state of politics today, where's Spitting Image when you really need them? Today, many would not see their efforts of satire, but as treason.

Clement Freud is still alive, and still writes a column in the RACING POST- often with some very good jokes included among the tips. As for Spitting Image, I heartily agree.

I can't figure it out here, so I'll ask...what does a Minister Without Portfolio do? Sit in his office with a full staff, doing not much of anything?

That's a really tough question, and if we are lucky we might excite the true expert on all matters Whitehall, Lord Kettle of Hitchin, High Bailiff of the Wardrobe, to respond next ish.

Faith is so personal...I judge none and no one when it comes to religion. I find that people embrace it when they need some assistance in their every-day lives. Those I know who have embraced a religion perhaps not the one they grew up with, such as Islam and Mormon, did so not as a way to spend their time, but to help them make sense of their lives, and to see some kind of future for themselves. (By the way, a joke Canadians will get immediately...Jesus saves! Keon gets the rebound, he shoots, he scores!) If Buddhism has put sense and security back into your life, you're very lucky.

Thanks, Lloyd. Now I think that's about it- no, wait! I hear a plaintive cry from afar off, the words are indistinct and almost unintelligible.... could it be? No! Oh, Yes! Its none other than..... Ritchie Smith

ritchieritchie101@hotmail.com

Ah, what names from the past! John Hall. Graham Charnock. Harry Bell. My old house mate Leroy Kettle. etc. - Though I do wish somebody had invited me to John Brosnan's wake! I mean, we even shared the same literary agent..

I'm still more interested in politics than religion, but good luck with the Buddhism! And as I've always considered Uncle Leroy to be touched with genius, so I turned to his piece(s) first. I laughed. Yes indeed. But it probably has to be said that much of the New Labour project, and indeed Mr Blair's own character and politics, is beyond satire:"Change the world! Do the right thing! Make LOTS of money!" I gnash my teeth. I wail. I swear. (Though, Jesus, what a great actor/speaker Tony is! ...Pity he had to extend so much of the rhetoric into the real world, of course.)

Hey, this is probably my first LoC for - I dunno, 27 years? I see I'm a bit out of practise...



The evanescence fades, and as mists in a graveyard, disappears on a breath of wind. Who was that Masked Man?

MOTORWAY DREAMER is a Big Woman Press production, and is © 2008 in respect of the editorial content (whatever that is) and the contributors work. I cant remember and cant be bothered with all that British Library bollocks. Thanks for reading, and don't forget to write.... Goodnight!