

# WIZ

#4, February 4, 1983, is the special Abducted By Britfandom Issue. Lord knows when they'll return it but the US readers don't seem to be putting up much of a fight. Still supervised by Richard Bergeron during time left over from restoring a wonderful building on Calle Sol in San Juan.

.....  
**The Accomplice Of Wiz:** (Dave Langford -- a fan dear to my heart and billfold) has found another irresistible way into those cockles -- as did someone who can be read on page 283 of Wrhn 28 saying "It is Christmas morning and Ireland is covered with a soft mantle of mud as I sit here in the Oblique House attic, shivering over an inadequate electric fire" thereby scandalizing the half of fandom who had been expecting him to pass the holy morning in fasting and meditation rather than grinding out copy for his column in Oopsla. When Dave isn't forwarding the Brit copies of this thing -- a service he still hasn't collected a farthing for, ho, ho -- he writes this sort of thing for me at a time when you'd expect him to be skulking by the fireplace waiting to sandbag that senile gent in the red underwear and white beard. Dave writes

**The Langford File:** Dear Dick: The hapless author trembled in the growing cold, his soul hungry for rest; but rest was not for him. Weary from stamping and posting the endless paperwork of his cruel taskmaster Bergeron, he stared vacantly across the appalling white wastes of the sheet in his typewriter. Outside, a few flakes of snow were beginning to fall. It was Christmas Eve.

You've talked me into it with your convoluted logic: all of this may be printed, though every statement in it is false. (Take that, Epimenides.) I love that caressing Bergeron flattery in your request for verbiage: "nothing too serious; just the usual Langford babble." What can I do but humour this mad desire to make Wiz an oversized sleeping-pill whose bergeroid sugar coating conceals a bitter core of Langford logor-rhea?

As usual, I see, a throwaway line in Ansible has contrived to get itself misinterpreted. "Highlights from Joe Nicholas's 50,000 word draft Novacon report," I wrote at the head of his conrep, alluding partly to the customary heavy editing needed to wedge it into Ansible, partly to his now legendary GUFF report. "You see," said Joseph, though at much greater length, "your scrappy and episodic TAFF instalments are full of tedious day-by-day reportage and will be absolutely unreadable when finally gathered into one volume. Also the instalment plan takes far too long. I'm going to publish this timely GUFF report which will be an Integrated Whole, framed with fearful symmetry; the draft's about a quarter of a million words, and..." At this point I had to be restored with strong elixirs. Joseph continued reassuringly: "But that's just a personal nostalgic memoir which no one will see; what I publish will be edited highlights, about 50,000 words probably." "Real soon now," I intoned. Score, eighteen months after Joseph's return from Australia: Slow Dragging Instalment Publication 25,000 words approx, High-Speed Integrated Monolithic Publication 0. Meanwhile I claim to be the world's greatest authority on editing Joseph, able to collapse his lengthy drafts at the touch of a typewriter into snappy Ansible copy -- without visible loss of content, bar occasional boring bits heralded by such phrases as "The Thatcherite junta..."

Speaking of fan funds (oh, this connective stuff is subtle), it's good to see the excellent Avedon Carol as 1983 TAFF delegate. This news was shouted down the telephone by impartial administrator Kevin Smith, in accents of unbiased glee; I rushed to my duty of writing suitably libellous words about the TAFFperson for the coming Eastercon progress report. It was the work of seconds to pillage my Avedon letter-file for embarrassing quotations from The Woman Herself, like the nine-word review of "The Empire Strikes Back" ("This was fun. I particularly liked the sex scenes.") or the wild line "I have a picture of myself that's getting younger and healthier up in the attic." The whole piece was titled "Eight Or Nine Wise Words About Avedon Carol", a sop to those who like to feel clever upon spotting what they think are subtleties -- which would lead straight to the next paragraph, only here is a microfanzine from John D. Berry which demands comment. John has some sensible worries about TAFF, and again raises one of the Pickersgill Objections -- that worldcons are so huge, soulless and unfannish that European TAFFpeople would be better advised to visit several regional cons, or merely the major US fannish centres and no cons at all. I dunno. Despite all the horror stories, I suspect TAFF delegates from these parts do genuinely want to experience for themselves, if only this once, the filth and the fury of a US Worldcon. You lot over there may be blasé about the things; we generally don't get the opportunity to become so. I escaped Noreascon with only minor scars and more enjoyment than I'd been led to hope; Kev Smith is still droning on about how great Chicon was and how he met all these wonderful fans. (Famous Martin Morse Wooster complains that Kev was "constantly surrounded by Totally Correct Trufen of the magnitude of Stu Shiffman and Jean Gomoll" who rudely denied Kev the conversational joys of, for example, Martin Morse Wooster.) Another small awkwardness is that many Brits find it difficult to take enough time off work for, say, the Berry Proposal of a week each in Seattle, Minneapolis and New York. I wanted unpaid leave from the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment to extend my TAFF trip, and the sods refused it. Thus it was that TAFF lost me my job! Or, less excitingly, thus it was that the decision to become a starving freelance was made several months sooner. So then I had all the time in the world, and it only remained for Hazel to get extra leave from her bit of the Civil Service, and... Many Brits find it difficult to make long TAFF trips. And, a point which hasn't apparently occurred to John, why should

2 Brits even bother when after all the long effort of crossing the ocean to the brave new world of US fandom, they are not after all their expectations permitted to gaze upon the radiant features of R. Bergeron? Humph. This paragraph will now adjourn for a drink.

Speaking of Lewis Carroll, it's interesting to see that Carroll's favourite number 42 (offhand I remember it crops up once in "Alice In Wonderland", twice in "The Hunting Of The Snark") has been wholly assimilated by Douglas 'Hitch-Hiker' Adams, who's been going on lecture tours explaining the long hours of intellectual strain which went into his unprecedented selection of 42 as funniest possible number. H'm. One side-effect hit local fan Chris Hughes: being about six-foot-eight, he'd called his fanzine Rule 42 for reasons of Alice. Along came Adams, and in his wake a billion betowelled Hitcher fans, all of whom wrote to Chris begging copies of this obvious Hitcherzine. Exit Chris, pursued by a bear. Having disposed of Adams, I moved on to deduce that Carroll also inspired William Burroughs. Carroll illustrator Harry Furniss observed: "He was determined no one should read his MS but he and I; so in the dead of night he cut his MS into horizontal strips of four or five lines, then placed the whole of it in a sack and shook it up; taking out piece by piece, he pasted the strips down as they happened to come... These incongruous strips were elaborately and mysteriously marked with numbers and letters and various hieroglyphs..." Omitting the final labelling, here is the prefiguring not only of Burroughs's 'cut-up' method but also of FAPA mailing comments.

While I'm quoting, I appreciated Eric Mayer's comment that over-dense writing may need to be read too slowly for human patience. Stephen Donaldson is an appallingly dense write, especially in terms of diction, and I can mildly enjoy his stuff only by reading at high speed -- fast enough not to appreciate the subtleties of that frightful prose. ("A snarl spring across his teeth.") Instead let's quote some Good Stuff spotted in A.P. Herbert's splendid "Uncommon Law" during a recent and uncommonly slow re-reading. "The point at issue is whether the appellants are entitled under the Land Tax Clauses of the Finance Act, 1931, to enter upon the window-box of the respondent, Mr. Albert Haddock, and there remain for the purposes of measurement and assessment on the neglect or default of the respondent to supply particulars of his window-box on the Land (Expropriation) Tax Form Q1/73198." Er, quite. And, a sadly apt line in the eyes of this wretched scrivener to whom Dick Bergeron now owes £4.62½ (or would accept title deeds of Brooklyn Bridge): "'Clothes do not make the gentleman,' said Lord Mildew in Cook v. The Mersey Docks and Harbour Board (1896), meaning that a true gentleman might be clad in the foul rags of an author."

In typing this I see I've accidentally omitted the key paragraph which gives sense and rhythm to the entire epic. Anything to save you trouble.

All best, Dave.

Joseph Nicholas: fills in details on that tantalizing GUFF report he has been tantalizing us with: "The delay in its appearance is due to a fairly substantial chunk having gone missing earlier this year, probably mixed in with the stuff I threw out to make room for Judith at my previous address /Is she that huge?\*-rb/, and I will now have to rewrite it from memory, but as a taster you could perhaps turn to 'Fear Of Flying' in Leigh Edmond's Ornithopter 10 and give thanks that I'm still alive at all. /Oh?-rb/ :: The references to D. West's 'Nicholasisms' in Wiz 3 did rather irritate me. Far from snickering in the background, I'm rather amazed that you think all that stuff I wrote for Nabu important enough to warrant such continuous references back to it; references which, if they're still being made in two or three years' time, will be absolutely meaningless, since those articles are hardly likely to stand the test of time as well as D.'s lengthy theoretical analyses (the verbosity of which, incidentally, is a consequence of their detail; without that detail, his arguments would seem shallow and insupportable). They will be read and re-read and remembered for years to come; mine will not be." (22 Denbigh St., Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER, England)

The Nabu pieces are important as examples of something or other though not necessarily in the same sense as West's work. Obviously I agree his works will be read and reread -- if fans can find them in their original obscure appearances -- but apparently you're closer to my thinking on the value of collecting and making available his material than you are to West's fascinating arguments against same. Which presents an interesting paradox: either West is right and should be consigned to the garbage heap of history or is wrong and such fallacious thinking really not worth reprinting. Where does that leave me? Actually, I can argue -- and probably have been -- that he's worth preserving (pickling?) for the art alone even if bonkers on a few subjects.

Rob Hansen: (finally) is quoted: "Of most interest in Wiz 2, not unnaturally, was the bit about my 'chauvinism'. The slight problem with your statement that 'Rob's approach is chauvinistic' is that Rob never stated his approach. If you reread the relevant section of Epsilon 12 you will see that when I say '...the idea of an annual anthology of the best writing to appear in British fanzines in the preceeding year is a good one...' I am responding to Eve Harvey, who suggested the idea as something put out by the BSFA. Since the BSFA is the British Science Fiction Association it would probably be more inclined to support such a project than one that was more international in scope and, given the generally insular nature of the British anyway, such a selection of 'local product' would probably be more effective in tempting a few BSFA members to take the plunge themselves. The thing that sparked off Eve's letter, you will recall,

---

\*This snide remark is directed at J's GUFFery -- not Judith Hanna; who I find rather provocative.

3 was my 'Notions' column in the previous issue and the idea of a fannish foundation '...whose initial, and primary, purpose would be the publishing of a regular organ devoted in part to reprints and fans...', an idea that was (as stated in issue 12) 'impractical' but which was floated as '...a way of eliciting a response, of provoking discussion on the issues presented...' You will, however, note that I said this hypothetical foundation '...should be international rather than national in outlook...', so given that said foundation was to publish an organ featuring reprints etc., I would have thought that my position on fanthologies was fairly clear. Since, for you at least, it obviously wasn't I'd better spell it out here as plainly as I can. While supporting Eve's idea of an annual British fanthology put out by the BSFA, as far as it goes, my own approach in putting out a collection of the previous year's best fanwriting (if I was moved to do such a thing, which I'm not) would be almost exactly the same as Patrick Nielsen Hayden's! Amazing, eh? This charge of chauvinism is particularly galling since I was, as you point out, taken to task for the Epsilon letter column being 'too American', recently wrote to BSFA Matrix (which accused me of trying to be 'mid-Atlantic') telling them that '...those of your readers interested in fandom beyond the confines of the BSFA could do a lot worse than to write off for some of the fanzines coming out of the US at the moment....' and, in a recent letter to Brian Earl Brown, said that '...I get fanzines from both countries that I enjoy immensely and I'll leave arguments about whether the best fanwriting is currently coming from the US or the UK to others. Me, I'll just carry on enjoying good fanwriting wherever it comes from.' I've come to expect such apparently wilful misinterpretation from Nicholas but I hadn't expected it from you. Surprising." (9A Greenleaf Rd. East Ham, London, E6 1DX, England)

I'll plead guilty to fast reading and fast writing. When I read your approval of a British fanthology in Epsilon 12 I confess I dashed into the bedroom where I keep the typewriter (knocking over several structural columns which keep the roof of this temple over my head) to do battle with the forces of chauvinism wherever they might appear. (I'm well aware you're denounced as an internationalist in certain Brit circles -- as, from time to time, were/are Rob Jackson and Ian Maule -- since I referred to those accusations in Epsilon's letter column.) Sloppy research. A search through the previous issue of Epsilon, if I could have found it, would have put your approval in context, as would a perusal of your correspondence to Matrix and BEB (I don't get the former and the latter doesn't show me your letters). Incidentally, I do value you as an international fan (and a particularly brilliant one), but I (mildly) protest the imputation of "wilful misinterpretation" -- a line of thought which could only result in finding yourself smashed and mangled some night in that dark ally in which I lurk. Hm, perhaps my next essay in literary criticism should be an attempt to figure out how Joseph manages to write anything wearing these brass knuckles.

**Barter Mart:** I've finally figured out what to do with old and useless back copies of Warhoon (no, not send them to Marty Cantor for placing on his fanzine table at the world con at \$200 each). I recently brought back a stack from New York and will offer them for trade for PKDick pbs. I don't particularly mind if they're eyetracked so if you're no longer interested in keeping them and would like to see what pre-infantile regression Wrhns were like I'd like to exchange on a one-for-one basis. The Wrhns I can offer are #26 (Feb 69, 60pgs), #24 (Aug 68, 64pgs), #22 (Aug 65, 34pgs), #21 (Nov 64, 20pgs), & #27 (Sept 70, 56pgs). The PKDs I do not need are: High Castle, Electric Sheep, Palmer Eldritch, Valis, Flow My Tears -- The Policeman Said, Divine Invasion, Crap Artist, and Dr. Bloodmoney. All other titles desired madly.

As an aside, I might mention that "Stranger In A Strange Land" was the reason why I stopped reading science fiction. Dan Steffan's eulogy to Dick, in Pong is the reason why I've started to read it again.

**There Are Worlds I Have Seen: Stranger Even Than My Own:** "Dick Bergeron's fanzine Wiz is just plain strange...to read Wiz is to enter an intense and disorienting universe, as you plunge headlong into the strange fandom Dick inhabits..."

--Patrick Nielsen Hayden in Izzard #3.

"We now return you to your regularly scheduled fanzine, not intended for internal use." "And along comes the Denvention committee, organizing agency for the 39th World Science Fiction Convention, Hugos rubber chicken site selection business meeting Wsfs Uninc. and all, and they no doubt by now think of themselves as the Focal Point of Fandom, or at least an Important Part of same -- and briefly, as between two alternate dimensions, the gap parts, the world-gate opens, the air is blue with ozone and we stare uncomprehendingly at one another, inhabitants of wildly dissimilar reality tunnels." "At first I was confused at this until I figured out that Brian has obviously been reading subversive and fraudulent pamphlets (widely distributed on street corners in Detroit by undercover agents of the Illuminati) informing him that old-time fan-writers like Terry Carr, Dick Bergeron, Charles Burbee, Walt Willis, and Robert Bloch actually died years ago and have been lying peacefully interred ever since." "My personal universe deflated, creased and collapsed, gnawed at all the while by a farrago of fold-outs, fold-ins, pop-ups, put-downs and over it all the soft quiet voice of William 'Father' Bowers intoning the virtues of Outworlds, The Unpredictable Fanzine." "Furious religious wars revolved around the crucial question of whether the legendary /Wash/would ever really appear or whether it should be considered, like 200th fandom and other religious promises of future eucatastrophe, to be a deep psychomythic allegory on fankind's eternal drive to purify itself and bring about the City of Ghod on Earth." "Reality seemed long ago and far away."

--Patrick Nielsen Hayden in the last few years.

# 4

Little Known Social Customs: "It's great fun, even, or perhaps especially, when I don't have any idea what it and you are talking about; like reading an anthropological study of some Brazilian tribe that I've never heard of." Thus Lizzy Lynn in Izzard #3 explaining some of the fascination fandom has for her and perhaps illuminating an aspect of what makes reprints work for many people. PNH touched on this in his letter in Wiz 3 and mentioned for the elucidation of D. West "It's called 'curiosity', I think" -- a point West himself acknowledged (in Wrhn 30) "I don't reverence the past at all, I'm just curious about it" in a sentence compounded of the usual West rhetorical hyperbole and a fairly common phenomenon. Yes. Ms. Lynn says it quite well and explains, I think, how one can read raptly through an "Ah! Sweet Idiocy!" -- about a time in fandom when one wasn't even born or why Pickersgill could "religiously read a section of 'All Our Yesterdays' every day". But I think the fascination goes beyond anthropological considerations: included in the dig is a discovery of information about one's self. Stumbling across a cache of ApaX mailings the unwary reader ventures into the cavern and finds an endless stream of discussions going full blast among people like White, Carr, Breen, Lichtman-- on such subjects as love, power, social adjustment, etc; practically all of it having contemporary resonances to the reader's present conclusions: either testing or confirming...and all of it imbued with the particular personal theatre each writer imparts with his own (sometimes) inadvertent style. You can't tell me it makes the slightest difference whether the reader discovers this material in the original ("The best place to read old fanwriting is in old fanzines.") or in a facsimile reproduction of it, or (much more difficult to find) a skillful capturing of its essence in a historical retrospective.

The sensible aim of reprints is to bring some of this material back out into the sunlight where those who have an interest in it can find it; where it can inform the reader's perceptions about both himself and fandom. The automatic assumption that "it doesn't matter" is reminiscent of the ostrich with head buried in sand who forgets which way is up and digs further and further down looking for illumination.

Bob Tucker: "I'm pleased that you had the courage to throw away or destroy those old copies of Novae Terrae. I would have been very disappointed if you had followed the greedy inclination of some others and sold those fanzines for dirty cash. Terry may be so far gone as to offer you five dollars for a copy, but you surely are not so depraved as to accept it. :: At an auction in Melbourne in 1975 (at the worldcon) I watched a copy of Bradbury's Futuria Fantasia sell for \$100. I wasn't alone in feeling stunned. The buyer was a librarian and she was spending institutional money to amass a collection for her library, or college or whatever it was she represented." /But who was bidding against her? -rb/ (34 Greenbriar Drive, Jacksonville, Ill. 62650)

Fanning In The Future: It doesn't work. It's lonely in the it hasn't happened yet. Nobody knows what you're talking about. You see, you, the reader are still here in the present. I've come back to tell you. Or have I waited until you came to me?

I'd had it. These accusations, I mean. That I live in the past with my head lost in the clouds of Sixth Fandom listening to Lee Hoffman plucking away at a harp as she rides past on the back of Kehli. So I went into the future. But I found it's pretty much like today. Which may have something to do with the fact I went only two months into it and prepared it to be this way. I should have known all this from having re-discovered sf through Philip K. Dick. Wouldn't you say?

It all began after I noticed there are actually two fandoms here. You think there are more but that's all an illusion having to do with alternate realities and the thinning of interfaces at the existential passage known as world con. You see there's a fandom that exists in Bulk Rate and another traveling around in First Class postage. In the latter, for instance, Dan Steffan is/was the Number One Fan Face but in the former, he's hardly heard of. In the other there are strange things that come in the mail such as (very) heavy fanzines from something called (Taral?) Wayne Third Foundation. In this fandom (for all I know) Taral himself may be the #1 Fan Face. Their publications look like fanzines, smell like fanzines, and even think like fanzines but when you start reading a random sentence such as "my own feeling about Zionism was that it was an attempt to manipulate for political purposes people's faith in"... they fall from numbed fingers crushing your foot into the terrazzo and I conclude my fandom may be as strange as PNH claims. It was into that fandom that Wrhn #30 was bulked on the brink of the Christmas crunch. And disappeared for months. When letters started coming in from some of the people in First Class accusing me of not having sent them a copy of a fanzine they'd heard they'd been defamed in I began to fear the Puerto Rican Postal Authorities ("Hey, man, got any good weed?") had tinkered with the interface again. Maybe they dumped the whole mailing into San Juan harbor instead of bothering with all those Mixed States. Dickian, indeed. Of course, I did my own tinkering by sending out a few copies via First Class and creating a ripple effect in the rumor corridor connecting the two fandoms. For its term of transit Wrhn 30 would effectively exist as a foreshadowed ghost in the consciousness of the Bulkheads. It worked.

In the meantime (as an afterthought -- or was it a forethought?) having nothing to do but await the flood of irate mail I began to take seriously Ted White's exhortations about Frequency and Continuity. I jumped into the pit with Wiz #1 and followed up with #2 just fast enough to change your mind that the first had been a hoax. With #3 I realized the arcane power within my grasp when Tappen 5 arrived via airmail. After blundering my lonely way through the labyrinths of fan history here was my chance to really leave everybody behind by escaping into the future. Both Tappen and Wrhn wouldn't be arriving at most destinations until 4-8 weeks after Wiz #3. I could set up every-

5 body with oblique references to #30 and scale the range of West's "Performance" before most of you were even aware it existed. Out went Wiz #3.

Unfortunately the future hadn't yet been borne. If everyone is puzzled by my normal discourse, which springs from what I've remembered from 30 years in fandom, imagine the reaction to my asides and arguments directed at events which hadn't even objectively happened yet (and all written from my usual timebinding perspective). Right. You had even less notion than ordinarily of what the hell I'm writing about. Wasn't it wonderful? I ask because this (delayed) Wiz should be arriving just after Tappen and Wrhn and I still haven't heard from many of you about the future I prejudiced. Does it exist?

I could pull another twist: I have on hand D. West's postscript to "Performance". I think I'll save that adventure in vertigo for Wiz #5.

Inhale your reality enhancers. You'll need them.

**The Fan Who Fell To Earth:** seems to be Steve Green (just the latest example in this indidious plot to people the planet with interesting Britfans?). Literarily he appears a cross between Langford and Ounsley with a dash of Willis. SG sends a letter I might mine for quotes next Wiz and something called The Twilight Zine bearing the motto "Since we have to speak well of the dead, let's knock them while they're alive", it features a keening (and unworldly) piece of fiction by Eunice Pearson, and the indescribable LeRoy Kettle's thots on Why Is A Fan. Green can be reached at 11 Fox Green Crescent, Birmingham B27 7 SD, England, and I hope he doesn't mind this sudden exposure.

**"Anyone Who Reads Fanzines For Their Prose Style Is A Halfwit":** D. West tells us in Tappen 5. At risk of being found out I have to admit I find D. West one of the most interesting stylists around either in or out of fandom. But I wonder if West's statement isn't really telling us something about himself; ie, that his reading hasn't been all that extensive and largely in the journeyman prose which constitutes 98% of fan writing at any given time. For me the most interesting thing about fan writing is not its startlingly incisive and original thinking but the attempts of our best writers (admittedly only a handful in the time I've been reading fanzines) to write in interestingly distinctive ways. The best fanwriting is about good writing more than about good thinking. "Performance", itself, is a tour de force of style -- a tour de force, I might add, which will keep it readable long after aspects of its thinking are shown as contradictory. (To put a finer point to it I could claim that "Performance" is one of the most important fanzine articles of the last 15 years -- right up there with "Life With The Loonies", "The APA And The Survival Of Civilisation", Hello Goodby", and "Apocalypse Now And Then".)

There are many reasons for reading fanzines but for me one of the most absorbing is the critical reading of the technical aspects of how an article like "Pepper Gets His Lumps" by Eric Mayer is put together. How it achieves its effects, how it plays with us (the reader) in getting the responses Mayer wants to evoke, and how this interrelationship of style and content brings us closer to knowing and understanding our friend Mayer. Potent stuff. We get it in fanzines...in a continuity that extents backward and forward in time...and without commercial interruption. Surely this is the most special delight to be found in fanzines -- more important than the fact that someone's shoes get pissed on is how we are told about it. There are two ways to impart such weighty information: interestingly and uninterestingly...memorably and forgettably. Both formers require the conscious application of style and skill in the use of words. West says "Fanzines are about communication -- not exercises in style" but writing which doesn't entertain (as I've been whinning since about 1962) has to surmount the obstacle of boredom before it can communicate. Fanzines are about communication but those fanzines and fanwriters who neglect to take this diversion a bit more seriously than the care with which they write out the laundry list are doomed to join the vast numbers of fanzines and writers forgotten almost as soon as their fanzines are filed (if that's inevitable; why bother?). I read PNH for his prose style (though, admittedly, his work is high in significant content); for the askew perspective he gives us on that world he lives in inside his head -- it's that aspect of fanwriting (that askew perspective) which makes it interesting (not the points which have already been worn to the nub a thousand times in fanzines since the 1940s) and which makes me inclined to go to a lot of trouble to seek out old writing by people such as D. West, Bob Leman, Redd Boggs, John Bangsund, Chris Priest, James White, and very few others. Where in vast mundane can we find anybody with a style quite as special as Dave Langford's? Well, where? I want to know. The minutia of Eric Mayer's personal life is only as interesting as he makes it and is probably just as banal as anybody else's. In fandom, it's not so much what is said but how it is said.

After you've read a few hundred fanzines anyone who doesn't read them for prose style would have to be conspicuously catholic in taste (and a far more patient man than I) -- to put as kind a face on it as possible.

Which sort of sets the stage for the kind of personal writing which delivers the always unexpected pleasures one discovers in something like the following:

**Bell Rings In Athens (Wm. Gibson):**

"Bit of a holy Joe, was he then?" Andy, the smuggler, still Birmingham-pale under his fresh Greek sunburn, passed the conical Euro-joint to the Chilean model and winced as he peeled off his t-shirt. Our host, who we all called Yorgo, was crumbling greenish Leb for another joint, mixing it with the tobacco from a torn Hellas Special oval. Andy was on a quiet summer swing through the islands, a working vacation, his rucksack full of foil-wrapped bars of hash. He bought the stuff in London and brought it down on a student flight, charging four times what the locals were asking for black hash from Is-

6

tanbul. Andy did well for himself; his customers knew who he was and where he came from, and trusted him not to shop them to the police. His customers were mainly hip Greeks with money, and resident foreigners. Tourists, being the major national industry, were allowed to pursue their vices in peace.

"The man was an absolute prick," Yorgo continued. "This procession has been taking place for centuries, but this bastard of a Bishop says no, it's pagan, heathen." He shrugged. "So when they reach the top of the hill, he has every churchbell on the island rung. All the children cry, the little girls in their ribbons ..." He glanced at me. "The bells, you see? They are a language and the voice of God. Birth and marriage, death, the Holy Days. To hear them rung that way, in anger, condemnation... The people were shattered. The procession ended." He shook his large head.

He was, I suppose, in his mid-fifties. He was a wealthy man, perfectly idle, educated in the Fifties in London and Vienna. Now he lived alone on Hydra, washed over by each new summer's wave of tanned boat-flesh. John Fowles had done his sex life an immeasurable favor with "The Magus". He had the looks, the house, the languages, the time. I wondered if he'd always worn those dark bulky Italian pullovers with suede shoulders and elbows, expensive and ragged.

His house was delightful and mysterious, a warren of rooms and hallways, whole Gormenghastian reaches of Hammer Film cobwebs waiting to be explored, stoned, with guttering white candles. He got, as the saying goes, a lot, and as far as I'd been able to gather, that was literally all that he did.

Once he showed us a small ballroom, abandoned for nearly a century, its dry parquet floor like a scattered truckload of wooden Lego.

English Andy went to the ugly Telefunken console and flipped the record, the Pink Floyd soundtrack from "More". The girl leaned on the balcony's marble balustrade and scratched at a scab on her leg. They used marble like plywood. I once saw a doghouse made of marble slabs. "Just after the government fell," Yorgo said, "after the Colonels, there was a story. For weeks the city had been tight, tight, humming with the tension. Because we all knew, knew it would happen. In the cafes, in every shop, the people waited. Everyone, you understand?" I nodded, looking out over the harbor. The town spilled down the hill in a whitewashed organic jumble of walls and windows, the streets mostly stairs. A donkey screamed. The "Kamelia" was coming in, or maybe the "Portokaliios Ilios", the white decks dotted with tourists.

"And in the Parthenon, there is a bell, a very old bell, run only at times of the gravest national emergency or the greatest joy. That bell rang the day the Nazis came. It rang the day the Occupation ended. And a young American, you see, a hippy, was stoned on acid that day, in the Parthenon. Tripping heavily. And all day the tension of the city had been reaching him there, like a fever, a vibe, a tangible thing." He made a gesture. "Understand, in the streets, you could feel it. And this boy, it began to hurt him, to hurt his head. Finally he had no choice."

"No choice?"

"But to ring the bell. He rang it, and instantly every street and square was filled. The Colonels had no choice then, but to send the tanks." He shrugged. "The bell. It brought the Colonels."

I looked at him. Why did he seem so old, suddenly, brittle and transparent? Frightened in a way that I'd never been frightened.

Another hour of talk and retsina and we left him there with the week's girl, the beautiful Chilean. I bought Andy a cold can of Fix beer in the taverna halfway to the port.

"He's a character, old Yorgo, isn't he?"

I said he was.

"Harmless old bastard, though. Good man to know. Pity he's looking so much older. Since last summer, I mean." He cocked an eyebrow at me.

"Is he? I've only known him a month or so."

"Oh. Well, Little bother with the local military, it was. Heard he was a dooper. Strung him up by his thumbs."

"Gave him a hard time, you mean?"

"Literally. By his thumbs. Be a dead man now, if he didn't have money and family in Athens."

I looked down the hill and saw my wife climbing the stairs, smiling, with a string bag of fresh bread.

--Vancouver, Nov. 1982.

"Bergeron, of course, is a Cabist"



TO:

**WIZ**

RICHARD BERGERON: BOX 5989  
SAN JUAN PUERTO RICO 00905

