

WIZ

#5, March 23, 1983, is the special D. West Self-Destructs Issue. Brought to you by Richard Bergeron whose "radiant features" Dave Langford (our British forwarder) was last seen keening over not having seen. Which radiant features, Dave? Bloch wants to know. Interlineation by M. Glicksohn.

.....
Western Thought (being D. West's snappy rejoinder to a "few sentences" I remarked on earlier): Your comments on "Performance" in Wiz 3 suggest that you read half the article very quickly and the other half not at all. If you want to argue with yourself, go ahead, but far too many of your criticisms are either self-contradictory or based on misinterpretations which can be countered simply by referring back to what the text does contain. Lifting single sentences out of a 36 page article and declaring that they provide the key to the whole is either unscrupulous or very careless when it means that you are totally ignoring whole pages devoted to explaining the points in question.

Thus it's really rather silly of you to attack my statement that "Anyone who reads fanzines for their prose style is a halfwit" on the grounds that I must be arguing for (non-existent) "substance" when I follow up with a couple of pages devoted to making a distinction between "Good writing" and "Good fan-writing" which emphasizes the primacy of that very "personal element" to which you yourself make reference a few lines later. Since you acknowledge ("a point made by both West and Eric Mayer") that I recognise that "the local library is full of books which in their own fields may be better written than what we'll find in fandom but none of them comes to us in the mail in the personal idiom" and that "The personal element is what West himself exemplifies to a high degree" then what on earth do you suppose is your argument with my position? "Prose style" in the quotation quite clearly refers in that context to prose style alone (ie, the technical skill of the delivery rather than what is being delivered) and while it is certainly impossible to make any absolute separation of form from content I do go on to argue that content in the form of "personal element" (or "personal idiom") is what is most important in fan writing. In effect, I am saying that anyone who looks to fanzines for prose style is an idiot because they have a completely wrong idea of what fanzines are for -- not to mention a highly unrealistic view of the literary abilities of fans (or very low critical standards). I am not saying that prose style is valueless -- only that it is secondary. As I remark on the very next page: "It would certainly be agreeable to see an improvement in the standard of writing in fanzines, but it would be a great -- not to say fatal -- mistake to gain this rise in standards at the expense of precisely those qualities which justify the existence of fanzines in the first place." That seems clear enough. (And, incidentally, it's not a particularly new argument. You can find something very similar in the 1977 Wrinkled Shrew piece, where I make a distinction between well-written fanzines which fail because in imitating non-fannish models they ignore the personal element, and fanzines which are successful despite being badly written because they maintain the authentic personal approach.)

Likewise, grabbing one sentence of reported speech ("What is the use of all this crap... if you can't get to screw the people you like anyhow") and announcing it as "the key" to my "attitude concerning print fanac and personal contact" is either extraordinarily presumptuous or extraordinarily daft -- rather like assessing a stranger's character on the basis of one glimpse from the top of a passing bus. Look, I know that American fans tend to have two page attention spans but don't you think that if I write a 36 page article I expect people to read it all the way through, and to relate all the various parts both one to another and to the whole? Your critical approach suggests that you take every page (and maybe every paragraph and every sentence) in complete isolation, as though you can't quite believe I'm doing anything more complicated than compiling a list of events. Doesn't it occur to you -- if only by virtue of the way the scene changes and the structure leaps about -- that I am presenting more than one viewpoint on my subject matter? That frustrated moan of mine, you should remember, occurs in the one and a half pages devoted to describing a mood of depression and a party I was seeing with an (unusually) jaundiced eye. I describe myself explicitly enough as "evidently more than a little loose at the hinges" and since for the other 34 pages I am pretty cheerful (despite -- on the same page as your quotation -- observing that "my affairs are in just as much a mess as ever, my prospects are no better, and plainly I don't have any right at all to be feeling good") it should be obvious enough that the state I'm in is the exception rather than the rule. Still, on the strength of my account of one untypical incident you are ready to pronounce that "it may come as high revelation" to me that "there must be fans quite content with their sexual lives who view the opportunity to inter-react with their friends as something other than prelude to jumping into bed with them." This is about on the same intellectual level as deducing from the report of a three-legged dog that all dogs are three-legged.

Sometimes I wonder if people are labouring under the delusion that I write all these articles in my sleep, and that everything I say is a random outpouring straight from the Unconscious and can therefore be treated as damning self-revelation which owes nothing to my intelligence or intentions...

Look, there isn't anything in "Performance" which isn't meant to be there -- but I have to assume that my readers are smart enough to see that single pieces are not necessarily the whole, and that what is said on one page has to be related to what is

2 said on other pages. Your comment that the article "ultimately defeats itself" because "there's so much in it that can be twisted back against West" makes another great triumph out of totally ignoring the fact that the piece contains contradictions and ambiguities because it is about contradictions and ambiguities. "Performance" is a combination of arguments and illustrations -- all of which were chosen to make certain points. The arguments are as logical and consistent as I could make them, but the illustrations (such as the party scene mentioned above) reflect both my view that fannish motivations and behaviours are more varied and ambivalent than is generally admitted and my determination to write the truth rather than the usual self-serving apologia.

Like everyone else, I often have mixed motives, and what I say or think or do is not necessarily directed by the same principles at every time and in all circumstances. I can promise to reason consistently, but I can't promise to behave consistently. There are even times when I don't know what I'm doing at all. /Now, that's a sentence I should seize on as one which supplies the missing Key Which Gives Sense And Rhythm To The Entire Epic, but I will restrain myself. Just this once. -rb/ The actual writing of "Performance" was not at all an accidental process -- since my (rather slow) brain had ample time to get itself sorted out -- but the behavior and the passing stages of mind the article describes were very far from planned.

This rather messy, blundering, and sometimes discreditable side of life is what usually gets left out of fanzine articles. Standard practice is to tidy things up, to keep it clean, neat, light and humorous. Sort of Family Entertainment: the kind of stuff that passes the time smoothly enough without ever ruffling any prejudices, upsetting any ideas, rousing any speculations, or indeed calling for any thought at all. Fine -- if all you want is another dose of old Doc Pangloss's Soothing Syrup. Only a continuous diet of this pap is not so much a dose as an overdose -- a wipeout throwing the victim into a terminal coma of boredom. Like I said: in the end only the truth is interesting. Lies are just boring.

The sexual material in "Performance" was included as the most convenient (and drastic) way of indicating my impatience with the sheer phoniness of much fanzine writing -- all the lying-by-exclusion and cowardly evasions that try to preserve a narrow little fantasy world which is never anything but nice. (I think I'm quite nice myself -- but I'm also other things, and if you want the niceness you have to take the other things too, because I really can't be bothered faking anymore.) Of course, everybody knows that no one is perfect -- but there's ways of making even that sad truth suitably painless. The most commonplace is the Wry Humour treatment, in which one tells a joke against oneself as a sort of loss-leader designed to sucker the customers into casting admiring eyes over the greater store of Virtue remaining... And if the defect is something more heavy, of which people might actually disapprove, the method is to present it as a 'problem' or an 'issue', thus neatly shifting it into an area demanding conscientious liberal sympathy and tolerance rather than possibly hostile judgement and condemnation.

I hope and trust that in "Performance" I have avoided this kind of cop-out. At different moments I moan that fandom is no good unless you can get to screw the people you like: I think about seducing a fifteen year old boy; and I am all set up by alcohol and dope to fuck absolutely anything that's available. None of these things was (or is) either an issue or a problem to me. They're just what seemed like good ideas at the time and might well seem like good ideas at some other time. The point is: none of this (or similar) behaviour was ever exactly secret, but it all fell into the category of what everybody knows but nobody ever writes. This is too large a category for my taste, and I thought I'd give it a few kicks. As it happens, my usual ideas of 'fun' extends to nothing more debauched than drinking two or three pints of beer while watching the late night films on TV. But while the character described in "Performance" is only part of the whole person that I am, I don't see why that (or any other) part should be suppressed. (It's the sheer hypocrisy that annoys me -- as I say, none of this stuff is at all secret, so why on earth pretend?) In abandoning the usual self-preserving, self-serving self-censorship I have perhaps exposed myself to a good many cheap cracks (and it will be interesting to see just how far tolerance stretches for someone who is unrepentant, unconcerned, and doesn't give a shit about either liberal causes or liberal excuses) but this will be worthwhile if only a few people get the message.

As the title suggests, "Performance" is mainly about fandom as a sort of self-fictionalising (or self-mythologising) process, but since this process is (in my own case, at least) not an unconscious one the article also reflects the ambivalences which inevitably accompany any degree of self-awareness. This is stated explicitly enough: "On the other hand, I like playing games, and fandom, life and Art are all games which can be played on more than one level. I may not take fame very seriously -- but sometimes I enjoy it. I may satirise fannish role-playing -- but sometimes I do it." In other words: at different times I do things for different reasons -- and sometimes I may do one thing for several reasons, each reason valid on its own level but each level very different from the others. The things that keep me involved with fandom include interest in writing, friendship, sex, drinking, gambling, sheer curiosity, meeting new people, conversation, fascination with ideas, art, a taste for conspiracy-games and a revolving-door relationship with the desire for fame. "Performance" is a piece of showmanship, an autobiographical self-examination, a serious attempt at a literary tour de force, an elaborate series of moves in a game of fannish oneupmanship, a vehicle for a series of jokes and inventions, a sociological study, a tribute to various friendships, a philosophical statement, a return contribution to fandom, an aesthetic argu-

3 ment, a general pisstake and attempt to stir things up, and an all-round celebration of the fact that I am still alive, kicking, and irresponsibly cheerful despite everything that has (or has not) happened. One thing it turned out not to be was an attempt to impress somebody into bed with me. Being fundamentally realistic I have come to the conclusion that somehow the people I want to screw and the people who are impressed by what I write never turn out to be the same individuals. Things is tough all over. (And my friends, of course, are not impressed by anything I do, anyhow. The bastards. Even when I demand aid and support against these hordes of savage Americans they just giggle.

Anyway, it's all fun... But you were going to comment on "West's ideas of what constitutes fun" weren't you? So what was the problem? Was it the thought that since "fandom is fun" is "a point most of us had thought settled at least since Tucker was born" and since I'm supposed to be just re-inventing these Ancient Truths it must surely follow that my "fun" and the "fun" of the Olden Days are one and the same?

Well, fuck me gently, as we say in these parts. (Purely an expression denoting great surprise, you understand.) I never realised that Tucker, Willis and all the rest of the Good Old Boys "might like to be walked on by men wearing black high hell shoes, fishnet stockings and nothing else." It's all been kept very quiet, hasn't it? In fact, I find the idea of all these respected Elders sharing my "catalog of kinky enthusiasms" rather shocking. Say it isn't so. I mean, if you tell poor old Vince Clarke that his idea of fun and my idea of fun are identical he'll probably have a fit.

Indeed, this is one little problem you're going to have to get sorted out, since you can't have it both ways. Either I'm just restating Ancient Truths or I'm saying something new. If I'm just restating Ancient Truths (such as the famous 1952 dictum: 'Ted White is full of shit') I'd rather like to know why I'm being jumped on, and if I'm saying something new I'd rather like the fact of its newness to be acknowledged (whether or not you agree with the statement).

Perhaps you should give some attention to the notion that the same form of words can have entirely different meanings at moments in time which are twenty years apart. This "reinvention of the wheel" business is reinvention only the most trivial level, just as the wheel on a ten ton truck is a recapitulation of the wheel on a wooden hand-cart only in the most basic generic sense. And that's the physical material world -- in terms of social behaviour it's even harder to argue that two terms used at different times refer to exactly the same thing in any significant way. (Try telling it to any Social Sciences student and he'll laugh in your face.) I know very well that all my so-called reinventions are effectively new creations -- not due to any tremendous genius on my part, but simply by virtue of changes in the world -- but it looks like you are going to have to learn it the hard way. All the same, you ought to be able to pick up on the idea that the principles are different (regardless of any superficial verbal similarity) from the very evident fact that the practice is different. Or are you going to tell me that I write just like Willis? Vince Clarke will have a fit.

Anyway, I do wish that if you're going to refute me you'd refute what I said, and not Tom Perry's garbled paraphrases. Apparently people go all peculiar when they read an attack on Willis -- a red mist (or something) rises before their eyes, and they can never see the actual words. I've never said that "SF and fandom cannot be merely enjoyable but must also be important". What my 1977 article (and just about every other one of my articles) was arguing was that fandom (and SF) was the prisoner of entirely unnecessary self-imposed limitations. And who wants to play in a very small backyard when there's a larger world outside? Being a prisoner gets pretty tedious -- and I don't want to get institutionalised, either. Perry's "we might sit down and relax and get to know each other, swap stories and fanzines and generally just have a good time" is not something I object to (since it describes some of the things I do myself) but it's not enough. I want more -- not for any great solemn and serious reason but simply because I need more for real enjoyment. Maybe it's a character defect or something, but it's certainly a fact that at Perry's level I just get plain old bored. So although the "several grandiloquent paragraphs" he refers to were certainly a bit on the purple side they represent nothing more sinister than an attempt to egg on Greg Pickersgill (in particular) and fandom (in general) towards showing a bit more liveliness.

Still, Tom and I always did have this communication problem. (We met at the 1976 Novacon.) Every time I made a joke he took me seriously, and every time I said something serious he thought it was a joke. Doubtless it was much the same in reverse, though I always assumed that everything he said was serious. It certainly wasn't funny.

You ask "Is it possible that 'Performance' actually marks the beginning of West's descent into Nicholasism?" and wonder "how it feels to be so transparent while deluding oneself that one is being devious?" Well, as to whether I'm deluding myself will be for others to judge at some later date, but as far as my methods are concerned I must refer you to another passage you appear to have overlooked: "Misdirection is the key, not concealment. Do everything in the open, but make sure that the audience is watching only the parts that don't really matter. That way you can slip anything past, and by the time they catch on --" In other words, this is like a game of chess: all the moves are clearly visible but it's up to the opponent to work out where they're leading. As you should recall, Joseph announced his "trap" only after everyone had (supposedly) fallen into it. I, on the other hand, issue a clear formal warning ('Hey kid, wanna be manipulated? No? Fuck off, then!') and leave people to take what action they consider appropriate. If they can forestall my moves, good luck to them.

(I must also point out that you are not the only person in the audience. Anyway,

4 it's rather nice to know that I've failed in your case, since this means that my twenty pages in Wrhn and my half issue of Wiz owe nothing to deviousness on my part and everything to your sincere esteem of my honest worth. Maybe I'll go back to open manly virtue after all.) -D.West.

A Three-Legged Dog Viewed From The Top Of A Passing Bus (and other fanciful tales): (One aspect of the following reply to the above letter bothers me slightly but I suppose it's a result of separating it into its own section and moving it center stage under our proscenium arch. Thus, a reply to D. West becomes as much a performance as his own wordy disquisitions and I find myself addressing the audience rather than the writer. No slight intended. West and I still speak across the ocean (on paper!) and I do think of him as a (terribly complex) person rather than a thing. Dim the house lights:)

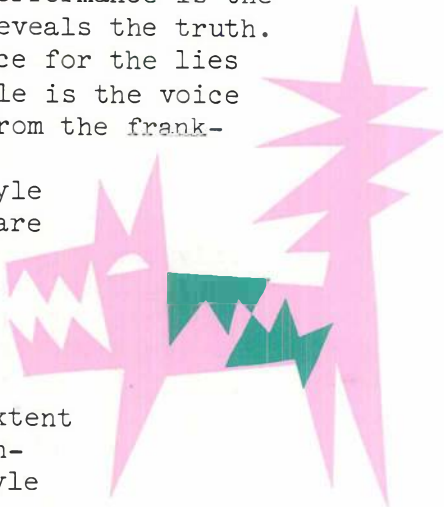
The writhing medusa head of USfandom1964 yawns (and the readers with it?) not-so-tantalizingly before us and I hastily reach the conclusion that it might be best to pass on to other subjects before the serpents hypnotize us. Briefly, then:

(1) On the question of "contradictions": I'm not alone in this particular perception -- it seems to have been noted in this connection most recently by Bill Patterson, D. Langford, rich brown, and Rob Hansen in just the first wave of responses to "Performance". I suppose the logical conclusion is that none of these people can read either or could it be that one unconfessed pastime West has failed to mention is a none-too-discreet nibbling on his toes? Coincidentally with the appearance of Wrhn 30 and Wiz 3 I notice that British fandom seems to have finally caught on (in Ansible) to the "sense-defying" essence of the Sacred Texts not to mention Ounsley and Lyon's amusing comment that "such fan history was of no interest" to them. The evidence is on paper for those who want to read it. (Doubtless D. was comforted by the hosanna of approval from J. Nicholas in Wiz 4. It's nice to know that I wasn't the only one who was "manipulated".) I should mention, though, that I'm rather surprised by the number of people who bothered to write to me to mention that they'd skipped most of West's pages in Tappen 5. I wonder if a show of hands might not reveal that my idea for a West collection was a bit before its time. D. must be writing for generations yet unborn. If so, that constitutes another interesting contradiction: he obviously has no future (save through repetition) since he thinks time is rendering everything he says irrelevant. Lucy Huntzinger drops me a postcard to express disappointment that West thinks his past writing has no current audience and likewise seems to be missing the Master's Message. In the meantime, Lucy, I've heard about a cache of old West articles in Chili (you know, the land of baked beans) which just might be for sale in the next five years (by which time all the words in them will mean something else or they'll have become totally obsolete.). I'll keep you informed.

(2) Of course we're fighting the old war of form vs. content here: the news that it's the expression of personality that makes fanwriting fascinating was discovered a bit before 1977, though -- possibly as far back as LeZombie when it was realized that the number one fanzine rarely contained anything about science fiction studies. As far as I'm concerned, this is accepted as a 'given'. But it's not what makes fanwriting readable: the laundry list is personal but I doubt such writing is very gripping despite the occasional curiosity about fans' dirty underwear. I don't go along with the argument that "content in the form of 'personal element' is what is most important" and that "prose style is secondary". I think I'll borrow some support for my side of it from D. West as reported by Malcolm Edwards in Drunkard's Walk #2: "D. was worried that fanzines like Felicity were going to set an unfortunate trend for British fanzines full of soul-baring personal revelation ... that British fanzines were going to become like American fanzines, in other words." But surely personal revelation is interesting when written by Chris Atkinson (chocolate fetishism) or, say, D. West (all other fetishes not listed above)? In other words it's the style that one brings to one's personal message that makes us want to keep reading and not necessarily the content -- which we may have heard before. More contradictions? Here's something touching on both points in an loc on Wiz #4 by Mike Glicksohn: "despite 'Performance's stylistic pyrotechnics and undeniable entertainment value many of D.'s assertions were more than slightly asinine. As, for example, his contention that no one should read fanzine material for its style. Coming in a piece primarily worth reading for its style this was either delightfully satirical or dumb, dumb, dumb."

"Personal element" is part of content. "Style" is the lie of performance. Personal content is (or should be since "lies are boring") the truth. Performance is the artifice of presentation: in fiction the parable or lie that reveals the truth. (Personally I think parables are pablum and have little patience for the lies of fiction but that's a whole other story.) In non-fiction style is the voice or personality we give what we have to say...quite different from the frankly spurious edifice of fiction: but a confection, nonetheless.

To boil it down: if fanwriting doesn't have a sense of style I can't read it. I want to be entertained because the chances are pretty good I've seen the content a number of times before in other forms. And even if the writer is saying something new (not a total impossibility) the writing has to avoid boring us or it won't hold our attention. Style in fanwriting is not often a conscious artifice and is often a by-product of the writer's personality. We all have personality -- it's to the extent that we express it that our writing becomes interesting. In fanwriting, then, personal element often confers inadvertent style



5 on content. It's the best fanwriters who reverse the process and through a conscious "performance" imbue their work with the lie of "personality". So it comes back to the argument that the best fanwriting is read for style.

(3) The suspicion that that sentence I quoted provided the key to West's attitude concerning print fanac and personal contact seems only further confirmed by the continued reference to it, the "realistic" realization that you can't write people into bed with you ("Things is tough all over." -- a conclusion which must have been arrived at over a period of time rather than in the seering burst of insight revealed in "Performance"), and its presence as an underlying theme from one end of the epic to the other. We are all slightly more complex than that but pardon me for not wanting to write a 36 page review. A reductionist attempt, to be sure, but presumably a key part of the truth. Or perhaps not. D. says "Lies are just boring" so we must accept him at face value. Or must we? In a part of his letter not quoted in Wrhn 30, he makes this remark: "Also, don't be misled by the violence of language etc into thinking that British fanzines print the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. They don't. A lot gets left out, and in its place comes a few lies to make it more interesting." Yah, not like American fanzines "full of soul-baring personal revelation" and, presumably, the truth. That would be boring. I guess this is part of the game too, isn't it? Picking and choosing in a search for truth among the lies. Is West being truthful in saying that this is the British way of "personal revelation"? Who can guess.

(4) "We were just entertaining and amusing ourselves and each other, and having a lot of fun." says Lee Hoffman in Blatant 12 and similar sentiment was put like this in "Performance": "I am aligning myself in the general direction indicated by the Party Finding Instinct -- and the rather crude FUN sign in my brain is just flickering into life". This is not to say that Lee and West (and Vince, and Avedon, and Annie Laurie) all enjoy the same thing but the principle is the same: enjoyment of an act for itself. The hedonistic pursuit of things fannish for themselves. I consider this exchange between West and myself 'fun' but I can easily imagine many of the readers might be appalled, bored, or indifferent -- among them, I might guess, Lee Hoffman. Others may enjoy reading the profit and loss statements of science fiction in Locus. I don't.

West's game is definitely misdirection here: I'm sure he knows quite well that there's nothing in the work of any other fanwriter which would lead to sardonic hyperbole about men in high heel shoes and fishnet stockings (a vision inspired by his own Rocky Horror Show imagery in "Performance"). If he'd wanted to seize on the correct sentence from my comments on "fun" in Wiz 4 he should have noted that I'm a "devout believer in different strokes for different folks" (the obvious corollary to this is that I'm usually quite content to let most people go to hell in their own handbaskets, however). I did comment on various of his ideas of what constitutes fun: for instance, his passion for making mince meat out of dead horses, but I have the uneasy fear that we may be hearing more about other kinky enthusiasms from D. himself. In which case he should review a little fanhistory before we find ourselves reinventing (for the fun of games) one of its more ugly interludes alluded to in the opening of this snappy rejoinder. One can look at words through the distorting glass of time but the underlying principles change much more slowly and in terms of the time span we are discussing the social attitude (both in and out of fandom) toward certain practices has probably not changed at all. I'd very much regret to see West "have to learn it the hard way." I do find his creative courage admirable: perhaps it's his sense of imaginative performance that needs a little restraint.

Mike Glicksahn: "I think the most frightening thing about Wiz 4 is the (apparently) casual way in which you toss off half a dozen PNH quotations to play on a comment Patrick made about your own writing. I find it awesome to contemplate the existence of a fan who not only has so much source material to call upon but also is fiendishly organized enough to be able to call upon it! How the hell can anyone enjoy playing around in fanzine fandom when all the time the spectre of Bergeron looms over his shoulder, a machiavellian bloated spider-like figure in a massive web of fanzine verbiage ready to spring upon the slightest inconsistency or contradiction at less than a moment's notice? I don't even keep copies of my own locs, let alone know where the printed portions of them may be found, yet Bergeron is there ready to hoist me on my own long-forgotten petard, with only the slightest provocation. The mere thought of it is enough to drive one to gaffiation..." (137 High Park Ave. Toronto, Ont M6P 2S3)

Alexis Gilliland: "Wm. Gibson's excerpt is absolutely fascinating. I imagine it must lose considerable force by being read in context. If it doesn't, it has no business in a fanzine, it should be sold somewhere. The New Yorker, perhaps." (4030 8th St. South, Arlington, VA 22204)

Judith's Oversight: In Izzard #5 Judith Hanna attempts to substantiate an accusation that Pong was focused on the past. Claiming to have researched J. Nicholas' copies of that fanzine she notes that from issue #15 to #40 she "counted 104 significant references to the past". Judith doesn't explain her criteria for "significant" or the basis of computation (for instance, is the whole subject of the archaeological investigation of Ratfandom counted as one example or are each of 20-40 contributions from a wide range of people counted individually?). Never mind. It doesn't matter because her figure of 104 references is actually White baiting ("Step right up, folks, and see the snarling BNF goaded to a frenzy by sweet unassuming Judith's red herring.") and, in fact, she rather gives the ploy away by the flat statement that the entire run of 21 issues contained "only one article about the real world of the present, Richard Bergeron's 'Reefer Madness.'" My copies of Pong contain numerous fanzine reviews of issues

6 which appeared mere days or weeks prior to their mention in Pong -- immediacy was a notable aspect of a review in Pong (Wrhm 29, for example, having been reviewed some two months before the rest of fandom was able to see it). Pong contained film reviews, convention reports, and countless articles on such topics as teaching Steve Brown to fly, Dan's moving day, etc, etc, etc, and all concerned with events contemporaneous to Pong's existence. Don't they appear in Joseph's copies? Or isn't contemporary fandom part of the real world?

Perhaps I should be flattered that all Judith could see was my "outstanding" column "about something close enough to /me/ and to all of us to raise real passionate involvement". Well. Now I would like to see those copies of Pong Joseph recieved: for all its relevance to the "real world" (of marijuana induced escapism?) that particular installment was conspicuous by its total inability to inspire any "real passionate involvement" on the part of its readers. As I recall, only Rob Hansen mentioned the piece in a later issue, Ted and Dan had to be prompted to let me know what they thought of it, and the only spontaneous reaction aside from Hansen's was Bill Gibson's -- nine month's later. And now Judith's comment after one year! Such passionate involvement with the present is almost enough to make me want to do a facsimile edition of Pong before my literary accomplishments are completely overlooked. Contrast this with the response -- from all segments of British fandom and many in the US -- to my speculations on Pickersgill's seminal importance and the ensuing discussion with none-other-than Joseph Nicholas. I have seen the light (and the unpublished Pong letter file) and assure one and all that the real passionate involvement was not with events grabbed right out of the day's headlines involving my own brother and his fight against the USArmy and the deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe but rather with this on-going preoccupation fandom has with its own past.

Possibilities: (1) Either Steffan/White have neatly sandbagged Nicholas with fake Pongs (too elaborate a concept to be any more than unlikely -- but One Never Knows), (2) Judith didn't actually check out those issues, (3) she did check them out but didn't percieve what was in them, or (4) is playing a game. If (4), then I suspect she's caught a virus from her roommate and urge a quick convalescence before her credibility is seriously affected. This kind of game will have lesseffect on Ted White than it will on yourself, Judith.

Notwithstanding, I do think it clear that Pong was much more of the moment than given credit for -- the discovery of Ratfandom was a current event for us even if yesterday's news for British fandom. Clearly fandom on both sides of the ocean found the subject of more interest than the ICBMs in Britain's backyard. Speculation about the latter seems to lead inevitably to smoke filled dreams or that nightmare which ends "Reefer Madness" and "a world gone mad."

Much more cosy to take a toke and contemplate fandom's navel.

That Ansible Fan: is back with us again. In case you're wondering about the title of his column, it's one I inflicted in last minute desperation. Dave suggested "Let's Hear It For The Deaf Man", which I found oddly painful: like black people who joke about 'niggers' because if they don't laugh they know the blood will come gushing out of their eyes. This isn't Holier Than Thou, yet, Langford. Another title has since occurred to me: "The Wind In The Typewriter", which has a certain endearing literary quality and alludes to a staple of the British diet (as well as Dave's style, come to think of it). Which does the Deft Fan prefer?:

The Langford File (for the time being): Dear Dick: So you've been restoring a wonderful building in San Juan? We've been titivating a grotty old building at 94 London Rd, Reading -- to which end I've already installed 28 power sockets, 10 junction boxes, 9 light switches, 8 lights to be switched, 2 doorbells, a shaver socket and a partridge in a pear tree. Probably it says much about the nature of the fannish mind that while the electrical installations in this place would now seem over-elaborate at Battersea Power Station, my cosmic perceptions can quite happily pass over the cracks in the plaster, the holes in the wall, the rotting wood, the slithering slates...Oh well.

In the intervals of fighting hundreds of metres of cable I have -- with the usual excuse of "Well, I've got to review the thing" -- been indulging the old intellectual masochism by an assault on the slopes of Stephen Donaldson's newest megalith. (How is it that after reading nearly 3000 pages of Thomas Covenant I still have a brain at all?) "White Gold Wielder" contains more gems for the connoisseur of literary anthracite: I soon worked out what "beneficent mansuetude" was, and am practising jaw exercises in hope of making my face "argute with concentration", perhaps even to the extent of giving myself a "gaunt, compulsory visage", whatever sort of visage that may be. It's tempting to offer a small prize for the best explanation of what Covenant was actually doing when "he made his preterite way" somewhere, or, again, "shone like a cynosure." Though some people seem to think Donaldson is so triffic that (in the good old phrase) the sun shines out of his arse, I am moderately confident that this isn't what is meant by the phrase "analystic refulgence."

Speaking of fantasy authors, Hazel recently made and carried out our joint decision to have a decent carpet fitted in the front room downstairs. Now one of the stories which most terrified me when I was little was "The Whistling Room" by William Hope Hodgson (from "Carnacki the Ghost-Finder"), in which the floor and walls of the vilely haunted chamber pucker up into a huge pair of obscene, whistling lips. Shudder, shudder. It happened that we'd had air-vents cut in our lower walls to help dry out the musty underfloor and cellar. So when during recent high winds I wandered into that cursed front room and saw what the carpet was doing, I quite naturally fled screaming, trying hard to remember the Unknown Last Line of the Saaamaaa Ritual or whatever Carnacki's

7 favourite *deus ex machina* was...

Our next party, if the wind is right, will feature the sensation of riding a flexible captive hovercraft -- another British First.

Our last party was described by stupendously famous Malcolm Edwards as singularly lacking in orgies, but perhaps he stood in the wrong spot. New euphemisms were created that night -- a newspaper had got left in the toilet, and whenever he was taken with a bodily need John Sladek rushed to mystify some other fan with the information, "I must go and read the Times Literary Supplement." Abi Frost brought a small male harem, half of which she kept introducing as "my awful friend Graham". ("What did he do that was awful" I blearily asked Arnold Akien over breakfast the following evening. Arnold frowned in concentration: "He just stood there radiating awfulness, really." "And looking like a B-movie version of Edgar Allan Poe," I recalled.) On being told that the six-foot pile of damp twigs and branches in the garden was apparently fireproof, Abi and friends -- exiled to outer darkness by Hazel's no-smoking regulation -- spent hours using up all our matches and firelighters, not to mention most of a formerly blazing indoor fire, until at last they succeeded against titanic odds in burning our garden rubbish for us. "Next time," said Hazel, "we'll leave a lot of decorating materials around and tell them it's utterly impossible to paint the top rooms."

But the cosmic highlight was the great Katie Hoare/Joseph Nicholas confrontation. Katie (Wife of Martin Hoare) considers Margaret Thatcher as a feeble and wishy-washy person of left-wing views. Katie believes loudly in basic liberties like the right to hunt foxes and burn trade unionists. So there was Joe, deviating some way from the iron line of sobriety, gesticulating furiously in all directions, saying things like "The lickspittle running dogs of Toryism, the capitalist lackeys of the repressive Thatcherite junta---" and being increasingly maddened since each time he came to the refrain "The Thatcherite junta" Katie would interrupt at 120 decibels, saying "Hoonta, hoonta," or some such pedant's version of the pronunciation. Joseph's spleen knew no bounds. His denunciations rose in volume and pitch, his gestures traced the impossible outlines of hyperspheres and tesseracts. As the crescendo loomed, Katie (who is tall and, er, Junoesque) leant forward with a tender smile and tickled the side of Joseph's jaw as a fond mother might tickle her baby. "Ahhh... coochy-coochy-coochy," she said. The effect was dramatic. Arrested in mid-rant, Joseph stood dumbfounded, his arms waving with manic energy, his lips unable to produce more than an intermittent splutter in the face of this outrage. It took him five minutes to regain speech.

Yet another party happened at the Harvey's a week or two ago: John and Eve showed customary sadism and demanded that everyone do the Astral Leauge initiation. Next day, as the bruises faded, I remembered my attempt to describe the process in Wrhn 30 -- perhaps a fannish first, since Graham Charnock fudged the crucial move in his Stop Breaking Down description. Reminiscently I looked up the relevant passage. The eyebrows rose. Bergeron had struck again, threatening actual physical injury to anyone who followed his version of the rite! So come. Help me complete Wrhn 30 by cutting out the next Langford quote and glueing it on page 18, para 3, immediately before the words "but the grip must not alter throughout the ceremony"...

"The hands may optionally slide along the pole."

Read Wiz, without which no Warhoon is complete!

Good Grief!: Would someone over there wrench that copy of Wrhn 30 out of Langford's palsied grasp before he developes terminal brain damage (one of the harzards of reading the thing)? Too late. He's uncovered my plot to simultaneously sabotage the one magnificent D. West contribution to fannish thought and involve that unworthy in litigation with the families of fans who follow his recipe for sado-masochistic delight. With friends like D. Langford being Devious and Manipulative aint easy.

Still In The Business: of trading back numbers of Wrhn for PKDpbs as advertised last issue. Terry Hughes came through with 9 titles (in exchange for Warhoons sent 5 or so years ago!), MMWooster sent others so I now have 19 different Dick books. I want the rest. Please write (even if you're a dealer -- old Wrhns are worth more than old PKDpbs because the former are much, much rarer. But, then, aren't we all?). :: Am also interested in acquiring all pre-1980 PNH apazines. I believe there are about 200 of these obscure publications not in my files. We can make a deal. I need the evidence. :: Send fanzines to: Mike Dickinson, Via Garibaldi, 18, 21020 Taino (VA.), Italy and Art Rapp (you remember him), 282 Grovania Dr., Bloomsburg, PA, 17815.

Patrick Nielsen Hayden: writes "Ted's dislike of Wing Window /in Wiz 3/ is interesting. I like Ted's writing; I like John D. Berry's. Having typed out good quantities of both I'd say that the biggest difference between them is that Ted tells you things, very clearly and precisely, whereas John takes you backstage and shows you the stages his thinking goes through on its way to a conclusion. Both approaches have their strengths. Ted's allows him to get a lot of observations and conclusions down in a small amount of space -- has anyone noticed how skillfully Ted signposts in the essay form? -- but often winds up seeming rather didactic and lecturish. John's provokes considerable sympathy from the reader, drawing him in and allowing him to draw some of his own conclusions (which may account for the great popularity of WW among seemingly disparate fans), but sometimes, as Ted points out, falls prey to a tendency to seem too amiable, too agreeable. It's worth noting that whereas Ted is definitely cheerier and more expansive in person than in print, John is more ascerbic and critical than you might think from reading Wing Window. Such are fannish affects. Anyway, I don't think the contents of



8

WW can fairly be described as 'gossipy' or 'I-went-for-a-walk' stuff, contra Ted. John's idiom for conveying substance is very different from Ted's, but the substance is there." (4337 15th NE #411, Seattle, WASH, 98105)

Church Harris discovers The Box: "What, you may well ask, has happened to Harris revenant? Here we have Wiz 1, Wiz 2, Wiz 3, and Wrhn 30 and nary a word of thanks. Is this the fannish equivalent of Halley's comet, whizzing briefly across the scene every quarter century or so and then departing once again for the Outer Void leaving nothing behind but a trail of sparks from his hawse hole? Where is Cholly Goldenboy, the epitome of Trufandom, dedicated anew with a refurbished sense of wonder, the pauper saving his pennies and dreaming vaguely of another Gestetner? :: Alas, our hero stumbled and fell. The piggy bank was raided and the Gestetner hoard wantoned away. I bought a Teletext. A what? A Teletext. This is a sort of TV set with a decoder attachment used, amongst other things -- to pick up sub-title transmissions. On certain programmes you can choose to have subtitles beneath the picture so that deaf viewers can follow the plot and the conversations. :: I find it fascinating and addictive. I saw a sub-titled 'Towering Inferno' the other night and found it incredibly exciting. I never imagined I'd ever react like that to anything on the box. Ghod only knows what I shall be like when we get around to soft porn with sub-titles. (Altho', when you come to think of it, what sub-titles could they use: 'O Sir Jasper! Ooh. Ooh!' just about covers the whole gamut of conversational skills required, whilst the plot conflict is just mere speculation as to which leg he is trying to get across.) :: Sub-title service is free, but (via a link wired to the phone) you can call up Stock Exchange prices, rail and air timetables, encyclopedias and computer service, etc, simply by punching a page number into a keyboard supplied with every decoder along with a zillion other information pages. A small charge for each page (about 2 pence a page usually) is added automatically to your quarterly phone bill, and whatever will they think of next! :: Fortunately, there is only about one hour a day of sub-titled programmes available at present, and most of that is serialised soap opera that I wouldn't care to watch, so all is not lost and the Gestetner pot is slowly refilling." (32 Lake Crescent, Daventry, Northants, England) /Quarterly phone bill? Whatever will they think of next?/

Eric Mayer: Your comments on my writing are endlessly encouraging. It amuses me to think I can pull strings just like a real writer. However, do you think what makes fanwriting so interesting to study in this regard is that the strings are so readily visible? And not only that, but because we know more about fanwriters than about pros, in the typical case, we can see just what part of the writer's psyche those strings lead back too? As I've mentioned I was glad to hear some good words on "Pepper Gets His Lumps" since it was a worrying article for me. So far as style goes, I always get the feeling that my things are barely cohesive, a bunch of sentences getting in each other's way, not smooth, as say Gibson's writing is smooth. I could not write anything like "Bell Rings In Athens" in 100 years. (1771 Ridge Rd. E., Rochester, N.Y. 14622)

/I'm not sure all the strings are obvious: I was referring to those visible in the piece itself -- the structure, etc...not the strings that lead back to the author, particularly. I find your writing smoother reading than, say, Gibson's which sometimes astonishes me with what I see as marvelously complicated literary games. For instance, the second sentence of the 'Bell' piece I regard as a tour de force with the entire impact of a short story compressed into one line. That's the kind of writing I find very impressive. Classy stuff. Your own work I find touchingly affective in a sincere way. Its smoothness is in the manner you raise the level of intensity as you go along culminating in a statement of some power -- as in the Lennon piece in the fanthology. All this is worth thinking about (and worth writing about): it's through self awareness that we gain control of our literary tools. :: Do you find the legal work fulfilling? I see such joy (and understanding of effective design) in the Groggy covers that I can't imagine you not making more money and having more fun as a designer, art director, or commercial artist. What gives? -rb/

World's End: I like the concept. Of Rincon, I mean. Ann Whitney asked if I'd ever been there. I'd stopped at her house to check on the dust avalanche which some minor demolition I'd undertaken next door had precipitated on her roof, patio, and (possibly) head.

"No," I confess feeling bone if not world weary. It seems I've become entirely a hermit of the Old City here in Puerto Rico. The most I've seen of the rest of the island was glimpsed in the early 70s while directing a television commercial for Lee's Carpets. At that time, I discovered Puerto Rico is, indeed, the fabled landscape rumored to be an undefiled fragment of the original Eden...plunked down in the sea 80 miles from the deepest trench in the Atlantic Ocean. But, somehow, all I ever get to see of it is this reprint of a 17th century city whose streets are still paved in the unearthly blue bricks brought over as ballast on the boats of the original Spanish settlers.

"Oh, come on. On the spur of the moment. Nielo is here and Rosie will drive us out and you need to get away from all this for at least a day," she said as she combed the fine white powder from her hair.

Ann is a treasure. Anyone who can laugh off a few tons of plaster dust outside the courts on this wildly litigious island gets my vote of confidence. How can you refuse a woman like that? And I did feel like getting away from it all: my Spanish sounds vaguely like ancient Greek and none of my workmen speak any English so you can imagine the Kafkaesque nightmare even the simplest details of plumbing or concrete mixing turn into when I am deciphering such arcane arts in another language.

So it was off to Rincon. Rincon. One of the best kept secrets of Puerto Rico: known

9 only to the local inhabitants (who neglect to mention it very often to resident Off Islanders) and the international surfing community...but this last was something I wasn't to infer until I actually arrived on the scene myself.

We were supposed to get an early start but as usual nothing happens in Puerto Rico before 10:00AM. At which time Rosie pulled up outside my house (not the unrestored one -- the one I live in) in her Toyota and honked the horn. I'd been ready since eight (still running on New York time, you see -- which puts me easily about 2 months ahead of everybody on this somnolent island). I jumped into the car with an offering of Chinese Hibiscus cut from my roof garden. Rosie started the car and headed for the hills. About 400 yards outside the entrance of the Old City I asked impatiently "Well, where's Rincon?" It was that kind of day. I'd assumed Rincon might be just a bit beyond Dorado -- about 3/4 of an hour up the coast from San Juan -- but it turned out to be situated on the western coast between Mayaguez and Aguadilla facing the Dominican Republic and Haiti beyond the curve of the planet. Still, I had no idea that what we'd been talking about was a 3 hour trip (one way) -- it not having occurred to me that one could drive in any one direction for three hours on the island: actually you can do better than that: starting from the eastern tip at Fajardo one can arrive at Mayaguez 4 1/2 hours later. Driving fast.

I find myself captive to a bunch of car fiends. Nielo lived in Puerto Rico a few years ago and was back after settling an estate in Pennsylvania. It seemed in his previous tenure he'd lived in Rincon and worked in San Juan -- driving both ways five days a week. He's funny that way. Ann rents a house at the edge of the water in Port Royal to which she and husband Bill escape every Friday evening and return from late Sunday or early Monday morning. Port Royal is only about 2 1/2 hours away on the south coast and approximately 30 miles from Mayaguez. Rosie is an indefatigable driver and has been a fixture on the local scene for 20 years though she manages to summer in Indiana and Paris -- news that surprised me since whenever I turn around I find Rosie in the immediate vicinity. Rosie is a caution to us all. Literally. After 20 seasons in the often baleful Caribbean sun -- all of them apparently without benefit of sun screen or other protection -- she has come to have more than passing resemblance to a discarded mistress of Captain Kidd. Evidence of numerous minor operations to remove erratic and capricious growths from the surface of her (once fair and now terra-cotta) skin gives pause to reckless impulses the rest of us Nordic types have to soak up the sun on a clear day (of which there are usually about 360 every year).

I resign myself to snatches of vistas whizzing past. There was no time to lose if we were to arrive before mad dogs and Englishmen had finished with the noonday sun. Oh well, one cascade of magenta bougainvillea dripping down the side of a mountain looks much like any other as you might imagine and I'd cleverly asked Rosie to stop at the



post office for a moment so I could check if certain important documents had arrived from my worldwide network of correspondents. Holier Than Thou #15 had so I spent a good part of the trip befuddled by the notion that I'd been apologized to in its pages for having been accused of being nostalgic for Sixth Fandom. Apparently Cantor doesn't realize that I had only the most tangential connection to that era (yes, I was alive, I suppose) and while I flashed pass was guilty of having perpetrated one of the more forgettable crudzines of the time (Wrhn 1-4) and some execrable artwork. And now I am upbraided for my longing to relive that past? Ha. Actually, and this I doubt I've ever confessed anywhere, the period of fandom which I might feel a bit of nostalgia for would be the early sixties -- which Redd Boggs described as "this best of all possible fandoms" and an era which saw the most fascinating interaction among such publications as Lighthouse, Void, Xero, Habbakuk, Discord, Hyphen, and my own before mentioned crudzine. Now that time was well worth being nostalgic about if one were given to such retrograde sentiment. (I should also point out that Wrhn 28 was not a tribute to Sixth Fandom -- surveying, as it did, a particular viewpoint on things fannish from the late 40s to the late 70s.) At least he spelled my name right. I look back at the whizzing bougainvillea.

Ann wonders what I am reading and, frankly, I'm not sure myself. "But it looks so interesting!" She's dying of curiosity but I let her suffer. There are certain things mundanes should not be subjected to and the humor in HHT is several of them.

I wing silent best wishes to the new Mrs. Robbie Cantor whose first editorial is crisply and intelligently written and augers well for the future of the magazine. And congratulations to Marty himself. From my experience I'd say that Robbie has met an amiable and likable guy and there's no readily apparent reason why they shouldn't have many years of happiness.

Puerto Rico is vaguely shoebox shaped with one end pointed toward Africa and the other toward Florida. The north coast receives the brunt of waves from the open Atlantic and the southern edge faces a serene Caribbean. San Juan is on the northern coast. We are traveling along the Atlantic vista toward the western boundary of the island. The beaches on the north coast tend to be scrubby and the incline of the ocean bottom as it races off to the Great Trench brings in an undertow famous for drowning several unwary tourists every winter. But in 13 years of visiting the island (three of them as a resident) I've never seen the western extremity.

10

Rincon is only a small section of a 30 mile coast but as one descends through the hills to it one glimpses a spectacle I'd imagined existed only in the south Pacific. Bleached white beaches are lapped by incredible blues and further out rolling waves ponderously and deliberately advance like the ships of some great armada. The jets of Eastern thunder in a few hours away back in San Juan. This is a part of Puerto Rico (a) too far away and (b) too unheard of for visitors to these shores who prefer to drive fifteen minutes from the airport to the strip of hotels along the Condado, take a quick shower or dip in the hotel pool, and head for the in-house Casino. The worn beaches of Condado are adequate -- if congested with fellow travelers -- and the non-stop farrago of new San Juan is immediately at hand. One scarcely feels that one has left Vegas and for those who appreciate that sort of ambiance the attractions of Rincon and the western coast would be a disappointment. No hotels...except in the major cities such as Mayaguez (the Hilton, for instance) but it's a coast that closes at sundown and one has no choice except to close with it.

We settle in at "Gloria's Home" (dial 809-823-3715 and tell her Bubaloo sent you) which is a small guest house on an awesome beach. The guest house is positioned in the middle of private homes which sit, oh, six feet back from an expanse of sand miles long which would make it the supreme mecca of the jet set were it plunked down on the south coast of any northern Mediterranean country. Here it's the front yard of the Puerto Ricans who've decided they'd like to live in this kind of surroundings. The front yard... which leads down to that incredible transition in the sea dividing the Atlantic and the Caribbean and nothing else. Imagine, if you can, that one wall of the room you're sitting in isn't there...all you can see through the opening is a few palm trees at the left hand edge of this space, a strip of beach down near the floor, a band of sea reaching to the horizon line, and the rest filled with a skyscape the likes of which you'll find only in the masterpieces of mad Italian painters of the quattrocento. Drop into this a setting sun inexorably sinking toward the horizon and all the while working unheard of alchemy of color on cloud and void.

"It's a ther-a-py. It's a ther-a-py! Yesss!" The voice is Gloria's. Gloria (not long ago) was a domestic servant in New York City and while cleaning apartments on Park Avenue was cleaning up for a down payment on this little property she has developed on the edge of paradise. Rotund Gloria...ebullient and bursting with life, is, herself, somewhat of a testimonial to the cleverness and industry of a sometimes maligned people. "I built this house myself!" She surveys it with obvious pride. "I worked with the plumbers, and the electricians and I planted this garden!" Gloria's daughter brings us a black bean soup laced with garlic and onions. I sip on this and watch over Gloria's shoulder Sol sink into the sea in the vast Cinerama on the other side of vast Gloria.

Gloria pays it no mind. The ther-a-py, apparently, is for the paying customers... which we arn't. Another thing about the people of the Puerto Rican outback is their unending kindness, hospitality, and generosity.

Nielo limps up from the water. Nielo was in an automobile accident as a child and the prognosis was that he would never walk again. This diagnosis overlooked Nielo himself who determined inspite of one mangled leg that he would not only walk but engage in all the other activities his heart desired. Extensive therapy and murderous determination insured that he did. Nielo was the only one of us in the water that day. It's winter, you know. The Puerto Ricans (and us smart continentals) know that the damn water is cold this time of year. Of course, it's not that cold -- not as cold as the water around New York in August, say. We've been spoiled. July in Puerto Rico is the time to go to the beach...when the anvil of the sun is blazing down on sand and water and driving the humanoids into the slightly cooler sea for respite. Not now though. I shiver and wonder at Nielo's apparent insanity. The Puerto Ricans won't be here (in droves) until the summer months. This is, of course, a summer resort -- deserted in winter except by the hardy locals who live here. Lucky bastards.

The concept I like is that there's nothing out there. Visually, I mean. One sits looking at what Columbus saw when he sailed beyond. Out there the world drops off at a perpendicular angle leaving no evidence that this intimidating grandeur is prelude to anything less than the end of the world. One soaks up an astonishing seascape which (peopled with cherubs and the seraphim) must herald the entrance to those pearly gates which lies just on the other side of this rhetoric.

"What is in this drink, Gloria?" I ask.
.....
"Are you really a Cubist? I thought you lived in Puerto Rico, not Cuba."
.....

WIZ
RICHARD BERGERON: BOX 5989
SAN JUAN PUERTO RICO 00905

TO:
.....
.....