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Warhoon, a remnant of Paleolithic times, is brought to you by that boring old Richard Bergeron who, after all these years, ought to know better but is still dragging home the dinosaurs and inquiring if the pterodactyl dropped off any mail today. The answer to that question hasn't changed much either and for shame, fandom, for shame. This is issue number 30 (an epocal event not survived by such superior publications as Void, Oops!a!, and Quandry), dated September, '82. The editorial address is still Box 5989, Old San Juan, Puerto Rico, 00905. Wrhn is available for accepted contributions, in trade for yours, letters of comment and reviews, or \$5.00 per copy. Subscriptions are not accepted. Warhoon 28 is in stock at \$25 but availability depends on when a supply is brought down from New York City. Letters of comment may be published unless otherwise specified. "The Improbable Irish" is copyright 1969 by Ace Books-Grosset & Dunlap, Inc, and is reprinted with their kind permission. Other material copyright 1982 by Richard Bergeron and all rights are assigned to the respective contributors.
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OUT OF MY PLACE AND MIND

It wasn't until porforeading* the final draft of the colophon that I realized this is not only the 30th number of this fanzine but also its 30th anniversary issue! Warhoon #1, as those of you who read the colophon in #29 no doubt recall, was published in January, 1952. And, of course, if you've read neither of them, as seems more likely, this is as much of a surprise to you as to me. But maybe not as much of a shock as Mike Glicksohn must have had after printing the editorial for Energumen 16, which proclaims it as the 10th anniversary of that magazine while the cover carries a banner announcing the "11th Anniversary Issue!!!"

Numerologist of the world arise from your sodden reveries and tell us what this means (if anything). Or perhaps it's all of a piece with Chris Atkinson's visitations by the archangel Leonard as recounted in her wonderful autobiographical essay "Life With The Loonies" in Tappen 2. Certainly a 30 year search (however desultory) for The Enchanted Duplicator qualifies as some sort of benign aberation. I confess, however, the closest I ever actually came to a mimeograph was to stare dumbfoundedly at the superlative crate assembled by Dean Grennell containing the one he sent me in 1954. I think that mimeograph is still waiting in its box in a farm house in northern Vermont. Since that traumatic moment I've always been able to scheme to have other people such as Redd Boggs, Walt Coslet, and the John S. Swift Planograph Company do the actual

*typo courtesy of Teresa Nielsen Hayden (her first literary contribution to Wrhn).

duplication of this fanzine. Maybe I'm not as crazy as I think and, in the meantime, Dean Grennell is still getting egoboo for that crate.

Traditionally a landmark date like this requires some obligatory looking backward and forward (such as before you cross the street) but a glance through 30 issues of this magazine reveals little autobiographical material as people have noted throughout its history. I enjoy material by fans about themselves and mundane biographies and autobiographies are my favorite reading material -- but I'm never up to the demands and assumptions such material imposes on me. The first assumption being that I'm a singularly interesting subject -- and then the necessity to prove it by writing interestingly. The fact that I may be self-centered is not, per se, interesting and such material "usually comes off as egocentric and boring" I was telling Ted White in response to an invitation to write my fan memoirs for *Gambit*. The space could be better used by Edwards, or Frost, or White. I've never been able to convincingly refute that argument to myself. While I feel a certain regret at turning down the opportunity to regale you at length with my memoirs in what will probably be the #1 US fanzine by this time next year, the other point I made to Ted is: "...the timing is off. This isn't what I want to do in fandom right now and secondarily I'm not sure this is what fandom needs (sercon as hell, as ever!). Autobiographical stuff is a bit retrograde -- I want to interact with the fandom of today (not tell it where I've been)." I'm not ready to pick up my cane and tell the young whippersnappers about the days of legend -- legends are being made right now and it's time we continued recording them. There has been enough contemplation of the past, by me at least, and I think I've made some necessary points in recent culminations which needed to be made. I'll always find fan historical writing by our best writers engrossing (but they can even be interesting when writing about emptying the garbage or science fiction -- not necessarily mutually exclusive topics come to think of it). As I wrote in a letter in *Boonfark* 4 (January, 1981) "the real challenge to a contemporary fanzine is to be contemporary: what the fandom of the 80s will need is a fanzine which both timebinds and illuminates the era." The purpose of remembering the past is to apply its lessons to the work of the present...not in imitation of tradition, but in creativity which will take new forms or must at least equal the best we've seen. That's what applying standards is about.

An interesting definition of a fan is one who is nostalgic for the future and at the 30th issue I find myself even more excited by the 31st and its possibilities than I am over the reality of the present one. If I didn't feel that way I suspect I would be ready to quit and it occurs to me it's the conviction that they have seen better days that has caused so many of our finest to depart this hobby. (Perhaps even more than disillusionment -- though it has been a long time, it seems to me, since anyone left our midst in a flash of light and a loud report as was once the style). Something of the sort passed through Eric Mayer's mind when he came to the conclusion (since reversed) that he had accomplished all he could with *Groggy* and rather than trail off with a few more diminishing and uninspired issues that it would be better to stop abruptly. I don't think an intelligent person stops growing and inventing but by definition growth involves change and those inspirations which were formerly lavished on us get sublimated into winning court cases, or art directors awards, or bowling tournaments. The focus of attention shifts but growth should be the guiding principle. In another sense fandom is more than just a hobby -- it also involves an emotional commitment to a social order of which one sees oneself as an operative part if only on a part-time basis. And therein, perhaps, lies the reason for Mayer's reversal. The decision to be made is just what the most worthwhile hobby (for one) is and then avoid making Francis Towner Laney's mistake. He gave up fandom to return to stamp collecting but no one ever said iconoclasm was an indication of intelligence -- a recent letter from Walt Willis reminds me that "the last Fandango Award (a genuine blank) was given to Laney himself by Chuck and me." If I recall correctly the citation was for giving up fandom for little bits of postal paper.

Yes, I suppose, I'm supposed to be reminiscing about the history of this publication but I'm too busy wondering what's going to appear on the next page of it. And that's why I've continued to have so much fun with it.

The next page, like the future, never gets here.

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It isn't every day I receive a fanzine of which a major sub-theme is that I'm a boring old fart. I don't know if I should be thankful for that fact (their very rarity could be taken as a contradiction of the premise -- like, how come you all never noticed, huh?) or jubilantly point out that I've now scaled the heights and been awarded the distinction of just such an accolade. If I do it will no doubt be seized on by Chris Priest as fresh evidence of my lack of modesty and preoccupation with my own self importance -- an accusation he manages to squeeze into his fanzine Deadloss when he isn't otherwise filling its pages with his preoccupation with how boring I am.

"Fanzines have started talking about each other again; a sure sign of a fannish spring" states Chris and surely as winter follows spring it must be true, as I have long maintained, that the proper study of fan is fan. And hardly a better subject of study could be found for observation than the peculiarly stimulating personality to be found raving from one end to the other of Deadloss #3 -- which consists entirely of fanzine reviews. Raving entertainingly, for the most part, I might add -- though perhaps I merely have a preference for the perverse. For instance, a major thesis of Priest's is that I am a "boring old fart" whose meandering observations "become writ as law". I guess I have a choice of being flattered or insulted by this tacit admission that I am such a power in fandom that even when I "don't know better" everyone takes what I have to say as law. You readers, of course, have no choice -- by his own statement he thinks you're such dolts that you'll be persuaded by whatever I say regardless of the merits (or otherwise). This puts Chris at a distinct disadvantage -- wouldn't you say? His other thesis, which he belabors endlessly to the point of distraction, is an opinion I don't begrudge and it's hardly worthwhile to debate: I can find less boring things to devote my time to than the question of whether or not I'm boring. He's entitled. And maybe he's right. After all, he is an expert. His fascination with bores verges on the monumental. I've just noticed that By British contains a slight but well written article by Priest in which he managed to detect at least (I got tired of counting) 22 categories of bores who infest British conventions. Judging from the amount of space devoted to me in Deadloss he has finally found the ultimate subject of stupifying, mind-numbing tedium to waste his time on. Most people lose interest in bores (isn't that part of the definition?) but not in his, er, inverted world...apparently. If I'm so boring why am I so fascinating?

Do you get the feeling he's deliberately playing into my hands?

The answer is probably yes, I laconically conclude. I hope Chris isn't doing a Nicholas pirouette here -- wherein the next chapter we find he was only 'pretending'. The thought from an old "Harp That Once Or Twice" keeps running through my mind (filled as it is with "Willis's Golden Oldies"): "If you have read this far, you are now caught in the most intricate trap ever designed for one individual." It's possible, you know, because later in Deadloss we see: "...I don't find the material of Warhoon boring. What I find boring is people like Bergeron, who commit fanatical, obsessive acts of history." I'll return to that last bit somewhere further on but it isn't easy to see how he separates my works from me. He seems to be saying he likes what I produce, but not the fact that I produce it. (!) I should point out (so he doesn't blunder into another trap of his own design) that the second largest body of work to appear in Wrhn was by, you guessed it, me. He wants his cake, in other words, but not

eat it. Elsewhere in Deadloss he chides Joseph Nicholas for "playing into the hands of a boring old fart like Bergeron". As Priest says, if you do that "then there's something wrong." Correct, but the absorbing question in this case is what?

To get to the crux of the matter quickly, Priest's main justification for his opinion, as pointed out with characteristic incisiveness by Malcolm Edwards in Gambit 55, occurs in his rambling nonsequitur marred review of Pong when he cites my "unassailable ignorance about Greg Pickersgill's fannish career" (a point J. Nicholas made in Pong with about as much impact since I was the one who first complained about it). While this career, which I, myself, "acknowledge was 'significant, influential and flamboyant', was taking place" I was spending those "ten years lovingly typing out fan articles from yesteryear". Chris goes on: "Mind you, he doesn't know why Greg is all those things, nor even if he is all those things, because his head is filled with the past. This is why he's a boring old fart." It's interesting that this particular conjecture is the one which settled cross-ways in Chris' throat. A fair proportion of Deadloss is spent hacking his friend Greg Pickersgill's legend down to size after he makes the statement that the question of Pickersgill's "greatness and influence" is "a discussion I don't want to get drawn into". Sure. It's fairly obvious that anyone who changed the face of British fandom (I did know the before and after, clearly) had to have been some kind of strange fannish genius on the face of it alone without even referring to such rumors and rumors of rumors as Nicholas's history of British fandom in the 70s in By British among other documents much more obscure than that. The 70s were a particularly busy decade for me and the little time I devoted to fandom was pretty much taken up with 'Another Project' -- but as Edwards points out, even if I hadn't been involved with Wrhn 28, it isn't likely I would have known much more about Pickersgill than I did -- not having been one of the three or four fans on his US mailing list. So where does that leave all the other US fans (say 99½%) whose awareness of Pickersgill may have been even less than mine and whose first exposure to his significance came from my speculations in Pong? Hmm? Edwards calls this "leaky rhetoric" and we've but touched the surface...


Elsewhere in Deadloss Chris responds to amazement expressed "that the committee of a recent worldcon appeared not to have heard of Walt Willis"--a collection of whose work appeared on the Hugo ballot. Priest finds nothing particularly wrong in "Willis being unknown to modern fans" because in 1970 he, Priest, hadn't heard of Harlan Ellison. From another point of view it's reprehensible not to be familiar with the work of an obscure fan of some significance who appeared in low circulation fanzines 4000 miles away in the early to middle 70s. Where do we go from here? Well, let's try the back cover of Gambit 55 where we find Ted White presenting "Quoted Without Comment" wherein Arthur Hlavaty quotes Dave Langford to the effect that "The Denver committee, I see, never heard of the obscure, yet somehow Hugo-nominated fannish fan Walt Willis." Hlavaty comments, "Shocking, eh, what? And yet I would say that the concoms have a point." Priest and Hlavaty make an interesting team but I'm afraid I can't go along with them. Not to have heard of Willis is to be ignorant of most of the significant trends that have shaped fandom for the past 30 years -- Serious Constructive Insurgentism among them; a development in the history of fandom which Priest probably doesn't even realize he is a child of. Such a blind spot is comparable to having lived in Paris for a decade and one Sunday afternoon in a stroll along the Champs de Mars coming quite unexpectedly on something you'd never known existed: the Eiffel Tower. Bob Leman has a good word for it in the letter column of this issue of Wrhn: illiterate. The Denvention Committee didn't only display ignorance of the fandom it supposedly served: it also displayed ignorance of the history of the awards themselves. The never before heard of Walt Willis was awarded a Hugo in 1958 as "Most Outstanding Actifan". I wonder if the Denvention Hugo Committee had to be told what or who a Hugo was?

Let's follow this twisted trail of Priestly thought just a little further: in his

review of New River Blues Chris quotes Roz Kaveney's surprise that "it is still considered quite respectable in such circles /of academia/ to have no idea or knowledge of what important areas of popular culture are actually like" and goes on, himself, to point out that "the Establishment of literature, in Britain at least, make it a point of honour and standing to be ignorant of sf" and John Lennon. "Lennon and sf are seen as examples of popular culture alone" though they have been influential and effective "by any standards, including those of the Establishment that chooses to ignore them". He then accuses Kaveney of poor writing because she didn't make the point herself. Hmm. What kind of writing is it that accuses an editor of poor writing because she hasn't followed a train of thought onto a particular track the reviewer has seen while overlooking an area of ignorance mutual to that of the British establishment? Priest is literally excusing ignorance on the part of fandom's selected representatives who don't have the least idea of the history from which they spring while pointing to the deliberate ignorance of the British establishment. How many ways do you want it, Chris?

Well, who knows who knows who knows who? I guess it all doesn't really matter very much -- unless, of course, one values knowledge over ignorance. Priest says "If Bergeron will spend 10 years typing up old fan articles, what does he expect?" Who told him I expected anything? What is a Hugo awarded by the unknowing worth anyway? Actually, what I should expect is a certain minimum standard of awareness and I think the proper attitude is away from tolerance and more like mild impatience. After all, toleration of ignorance is a form of intellectual sloth and Priest's "I must say my sympathies lie with the Denvention Committee" is the sort of thing we've seen "Quoted Without Comment" before. But of course he won't tolerate my not knowing much about Pickersgill (something I was complaining about, you should note, not tolerating). But where does all this leave Joseph Nicholas -- having such a compatriot also pointing out my ignorance...sort of "like going for a joyride in a plane with a chum who turns out to be a kamikaze pilot" wouldn't you say?

(Maybe it's time we took a break here -- like the character in the Hoffman illo below -- and dealt with something a bit less contentious for a change. I see from my notes that we've quite a ways to go... Perhaps I shouldn't allow the remark that I spent "10 years typing up old fan articles" to pass -- for the sake of the historical record, at least. Most of the typing was absorbed by the office of the clothing company I owned then. At the same time I absentmindedly had stencils typed for almost every installment of Harry Warner's column "All Our Yesterdays" and those are now in storage in New York awaiting my final thoughts on that project and the result of my efforts to find an interested fan publisher who would like to complete it with me. It's time I put some perspective on this 'publishing giant' reputation I seem to have acquired with that 600 page fanzine: estimating roughly 10 years from conception to the first UPS pickup for distribution averages about 60 pages per year. A mere nothing when you consider that #29 ran 64 pages and there may be more in the year Oct '81 - Oct '82. In 1960 Wrhn totaled 104pgs, in 1961: 208pgs, in 1962: 276pgs, and in 1968: 168pgs. Except for issues 5 and 6 which were published by the Gafia Press all the stenciling through #27 was done by myself-- if anyone cares. I daresay at least several dozen fans averaged a good many more than 60 pages per year during the decade -- many of them in apas alone. I stenciled about 200 pages of the WASH myself -- I was determinedly working my way into hospital as the President of the company mentioned above and had no time for fannish frivolity beyond the limited goals I'd set for myself. I certainly did none of the mimeographing or binding so it's best to save egoboo for publishing achievements by those who actually labor in the Augean Stables...supervising 60 pages per year amounts to virtual gafia when you stop to think of it.)



One of the most interesting aspects of Deadloss is how it has almost totally escaped any mention whatsoever in Pong -- save for an aside or two in my own pages in that fanzine. The odd thing about this is that reviews of Pong have, for some reason or other, been scarce and this Deadloss contains not only the longest one I've seen but also one of the silliest and most unjust fanzine reviews I've come across. Hardly the sort of thing Dan and Ted would or have let pass. I questioned Ted about this and he said he had written direct to Chris rather than air his objections in Pong. Maybe by this time you're all wishing I'd done the same thing. This is a quality I find admirable in Ted: a tendency to build bridges of friendship before he's forced to confront someone in print. Perhaps Steffan has done something similar -- I've neglected to ask -- but I can't imagine him keeping quiet very long if Buck Coulson, say, had made some of the remarks about Pong which appear in this Deadloss. Surely Deadloss is an irresistible collection of comment hooks for such gifted editorialists as Steffan and White. As the official representative of the World Pong Headquarters stationed in the Caribbean, I propose to give this review the overdue recognition it deserves -- after all, it contains some of the most monumentally fallacious thinking I've ever seen in a fanzine and, as such, has caused my formerly high regard for the forbearance of White and Steffan to know no bounds.

Deadloss is rampant with accusations by Chris of "poor writing", "scrappy or hasty or ill considered" opinions, and, among others, this interesting criticism, referred to above, of New River Blues: **"The point I'm making is that she skidded over it because she couldn't resist saying something else. Which is another kind of poor writing."** Most of these accusations apply to his review of Pong and, in addition, constitute another example of playing into other people's hands. Something is definitely wrong here and perhaps it's that **"Deadloss is composed direct onto stencil."** Which I take to be a boast since in the same paragraph he makes the point that **"The way fanzines are produced is not an excuse for laziness, carelessness and contempt."**

Oh lawdy. How to grapple with this? The review opens with this admission: Pong **"is precisely the sort of American fanzine I would have turned my nose up at a few years ago, simply because it is so determinedly fannish."** Chris is pleading guilty to the charge of snobbery -- pure and simple. Well, be that as it may, there are forms of snobbism which are not synonymous with contempt. We all practice forms of exclusion in choosing our friends, the matters we prefer to spend time on, etc. But there are forms of snobbery -- there is the elitist snob, for example, which is a combination of the best and worst traits of this person. Some brilliant people are constitutionally incapable of tolerating stupidity -- it's not necessarily their most ingratiating trait. Perhaps this is the direction Priest's turned up nose is pointing: he says he has changed over the years and now looks forward to Pong...which, I guess, is progress, of a sort, over total exclusion of the category. Total exclusion has nothing to do with elitism, but is merely another facet of the kind of aversion he scorns in the British literary establishment: a sort of willful prejudice or, perhaps?, contempt. I first encountered this form of snobbery in a crowded hallway outside an open room party in the Morrison Hotel at ChiCon II in 1952 when Ed Wood, in the course of small talk exchanged in a chance meeting, informed me that Skyhook was "too fannish". That remark made such an indelible impression that I recalled it nearly 30 years later when writing the editorial for Wrhn 28 -- in the course of which I transcribed the mental notes of my thoughts on meeting Hoffman, Willis, and Keasler which I had carried around with me all those years. Wood was still at it at SunCon in 1977 when he informed a fan panel that he had thrown his copies of Hyphen into the trash unopened. Terry Carr then made the point that Wood, in his anti-fannish zeal had been throwing out the critical essays of Damon Knight which, Tom Perry noted later, had been collected and "published by Advent, which Ed was associated with". Of course, Advent also published the writing of Wm. Atheling which first appeared in the "too fannish" Skyhook. It was this same Ed Wood who offered to help supply me with copies of Willis's fanzine review column from 40

issues of Nebula, the Scottish prozine, published in the 50s, which remain the largest source of little known writing by Walt Willis. An interesting collection of contradictions, this Ed Wood -- he noted in ending this digression. This is snobbery of approach, and has nothing to do with quality -- it's the sort of attitude that will turn a nose at a fanzine, admittedly, merely because it is **"determinedly fannish"** no matter how good it might be. Writing about the aims behind that supremely fannish publication Hyphen, Walt Willis said (pg584) "People like Ed Wood used to dismiss fmz like ours as ephemeral tittle-tattle: I wanted to show it was fmz full of reviews, and speculations about the differences between sf and fantasy, that would be in the incinerator, while ours was still on the shelves." I thought this battle had been won 30 years ago on the corpse of The Rhodomagnetic Digest -- but there I go again, timebinding, my head full of yesterday's news. Trouble is it's difficult to forget history once you've lived through it and the thought arises that those who refuse to learn from it are, as they say, condemned to repeat it. Well, welcome aboard, Chris, but please don't lecture us about contempt. (Some brief cross references -- of which Deadloss is a fertile mine field: note Priest's review of New River Blues complaining about establishment snobbery -- a **"point of honour and standing"** to be ignorant of aspects of popular culture. I guess it all depends on whose ox is being gored and that's another form of snobbery and, perhaps, poor writing. Contempt is, of course, integral to his opinion that you take what I have to say **"writ as law"**. Whatever did you all do to deserve such devastating derision?)

See what I mean? And we've only progressed to the second sentence of a page long review! Actually, the rest of the first paragraph has been covered, in part, above and by Edwards in Gambit. This is where he makes some points, though, about not being a slave to history, my **"obsession"** with the past, and my sense of **"self-importance"**. My interest in fan history is in learning from it and in preserving aspects of it which show the directions from which we've evolved so that we're not continually repeating, er, yesterday's news by reliving The Staple War -- as Priest himself, in effect, does in surrendering to the charms of Pong and retreading all that tedious story in his own life. Chris isn't all that disinterested in the past but, wouldn't you know, the past he is most interested in (**"obsessed"** with?) appears to be the past of Chris Priest. Since fanac on paper is by nature largely a self-centered activity it must follow that the most interesting aspect of it is one's self: a conclusion perfectly suited to Chris judging from just about everything I've seen by him lately: In Nabu there was that exhaustive tale of regression to the stage at which he played with model train sets (as an adult!), and in Deadloss #1, he tells us, there's that introduction about the long years between bits of fanac (**"We've all done this, none more lengthily than the first issue of Deadloss"**, says Chris, but I'd like him to point out where I did it), and his piece in Tappen 3 never gets past 1975 though it commences as recently as 1969, and what about the one in Tappen 2 about **"Dave Prowse's feet and my madness, coexisting unnoticed in an office in Wandsworth, so long ago."** Well, nobody accused Chris of living in the future but being nostalgic about somebody's feet is a bit kinky. But enough, you get the idea, and it is my sense of self importance that such a big issue is made of anyway, isn't it? ...if I'm not careful I'll have you all fascinated with Chris Priest! This is, you see, also the section of Deadloss which quotes my aside that during the last ten years I was involved in **"Another Project"** and thus missed out on the rise of Pickersgill. Chris comments **"Those spurious capital letters imply immense importance, don't they?"** Do they? Aside from the implicit self-mockery at the concept of giantism in fan projects I thought they were merely attempting to convey that I'd been preoccupied with something which had turned into quite a bit more than I bargained for. But I'll grant this is an assumption a person whose own recent output totals near preoccupation with himself might make. One thing I can assure Chris is that if I wanted to convey the impression of immense importance my years in advertising have left me with tools of expression a lot more sophisticated than the deductions to be made from a couple of **"spurious capital letters"**. With any luck at all I'll soon be

accused of false modesty and, you know, you really haven't made it until you've been accused of false modesty -- such an accusation (by its very nature) opening the accuser to the suspicion of over-weening envy (I mean who else would care about something so beside the point but the envious?).

It's in the second through fifth (brief) paragraphs that we encounter the strangest thinking in Deadloss: and here we have to proceed with a bit more caution because these paragraphs are split by an unexpected non sequitur which consists of the entire third paragraph (unless my thinking isn't as fine as Chris's -- a possibility I do not preclude...not being that immodest). You figure it out. The second paragraph informs us how the editors of a British fanzine (Second Hand Wave) solicited an article from Priest on "**Charles and Di**" -- a couple who were recently given a rather conspicuous wedding in England (I explain for American readers who weren't paying attention to world wide satellite communications devoted to the public life of British royalty last year). Priest declined but later found himself "**regretting it**" because "**Dan Steffan published a little cartoon in Pong 22 pointing out that the Brit fanzines have never mentioned the couple. Funny lot, these Americans, eh?**" Paragraph number three follows about the efforts of White and Steffan to ignite a revival of fannishness by example through Pong and concludes with Dan's comment that most of the effect had been on British fanzines. Well, fine. But it has nothing to do with the paragraph preceding it or the differences between US and British fandoms which Priest pounces on in paragraph four (here quoted in entirety): "**You see, the thing is, whatever Joseph Nicholas might say from his generously anti-American point of view, or Bergeron might say with his head full of Willis's Golden Oldies, the real difference between British and American fanzines is that they talk about Charles and Di, and we don't.**" There must be levels of irony I'm missing here. Are you missing them, too? Let's attempt to shred this step by step so we don't also fall, inadvertently, into a culture gap. (a): One thing I'm reasonably sure of is that Priest totally misses the point of Dan's sardonic little "Blondie and Dagwood" cartoon. US fandom has about as much interest in such 10 day wonders of the media as it does in the proceedings of the Daughters of the American Revolution. We threw all that out with the tea in Boston Harbor -- though I'll grant the non-fannish community here seems to have a lingering fascination for such archaic relics of the obsolete past. In fact, at the beginning of my comments on Pickersgill, I singled out that cartoon as one of the best things in that issue of Pong -- but Priest doesn't seem to have noticed the humor of it. (b): If the attempts of a British fanzine to get Priest to write about the wedding (revealing, I would assume, duh, a British fan interest in the wedding) and a zappy cartoon in Pong indicates US fandom talked about the Royal Wedding and British fandom (or fanzines) didn't, I fail to see it. Or perhaps he is saying something else...such as that his refusal (later regretted!) to write about the wedding means that all British fandom wasn't interested in it or talking about it. No, he can't be that arrogant. Or can he? He is actually saying Dan's cartoon indicates US fanzines or fans "**talk about Charles and Di and we don't**". (c): Can one slightly irreverent cartoon in Pong be said to be evidence of a particular national characteristic of US fandom? I thought it pretty good, but not that powerful. (Second Hand Wave did come along later and, you guessed it, had something in it on the Royal Wedding -- by Brian Aldiss -- which struck me as dreadfully serious. Aldiss took a very basic man-to-man (not to say macho!) view of the whole proceeding and wondered about Lady Diana, in an aside I can't help but think Prince Charles would have preferred Brian ask him in private correspondence, "What experience has she in bed?" Presumably, following Priest's line of reasoning, this indicates British fandom is fascinated by Lady Diana's prowess in the sack. What it tells me is that Second Hand Wave's editors -- blissfully unaware they weren't supposed to be interested -- solicited more than one British author on the subject and may even have had in mind a special British-Fandom-Looks-At-The-Royal-Wedding-Issue.) Chris has put himself in the position where previously unnoticed examples of British fandom's interest in the wedding will turn up regularly. Like, for instance, Abi Frost -- who apparently hadn't gotten the message,

either -- writing in the Ansible Literary Supplement that "Second Hand Wave...wears the stamp of 'editorial personality' like a Lady Di lookalike's cushion." But getting back to this silliness as an indicator of the differences between fandoms: it might even be fun to make up examples of this kind of thinking... What is the difference between Puerto Rican fandom and British fandom? Well, as far as we know, Puerto Rican fandom has no Puerto Ricans in it. One could take this kind of thinking all the way to the level of the old "Knock-knock, who's there?" jokes. And Priest practically does in the next (5th) paragraph of this treasure of a review of Pong: **"Oh yes, another difference. We" have Chris Atkinson (she's "fragrant") "who knows how to write a con report" while Pong "hires" people to write con reports who "spend the entire weekend fuddled by dope. Ephemera written by dopers, whatever next?"** Whatever, indeed. Presumably broad sociological differences are ascribed to entire fandoms on the narrowest of bases -- such as who might write for Pong and where Chris Atkinson lives. I guess if she moves over here the difference between US fandom and British fandom will be...but need I go on? Priest, however, does. His final paragraph in this review reads **"Actually, this aside, Pong is triff."** Yah. But this overlooks a **"doper"** orientation on rather more than Pong's reporters. I was going to say all this adds up to some kind of intellectual arrogance but I would only be half right.

In truth, the most glaring difference between British and American fandoms is that they are obsessed with flatulence and we arn't. Can we deduce from this that their garbage dumps are piled high with empty baked bean tins, Holmes, while on the way to pointing out the absurdity of sweeping generalizations which ascribe national characteristics to isolated and preposterous examples? After all, this is what passes for thinking in Deadloss.



The rest of this will be more or less in the nature of a mopping-up operation since most of the major points are made above. Sadly I must overlook such fertile areas of discussion as his largely gratuitous knocks at Greg Pickersgill -- on which I could only comment from a viewpoint of **"unassailable ignorance"**, obviously, though the inconsistencies of his criticisms are apparent on the page and don't require a degree in fan history to find your way through the maze of fallacies or the comments on fanzine titles he doesn't like (Greg Pickersgill's and Avedon Carol's) which seem irrelevant when you recall the name chosen for his own offering. Or this pronouncement on the 'permissible' areas of discussion in fandom: **"Fandom is not a political organization... so one can legitimately**

say 'Keep Politics Out'." This has already been rather brilliantly taken apart by Simon Ounsley in Still It Moves #2: "We can't legitimately say 'Keep politics out of fandom' because, as Chris himself says 'All fandom is, at heart, is a group of people drawn together by a mutual enjoyment of a form of literature.' Since the literature concerns itself with political issues so, it naturally follows, can fandom." I'm not amused by some pompous oaf telling me what are 'legitimate' areas of discussion for my fanzine -- this same person sneers at Asimov for being **"overweight"** (in Drilkjis 5) and George Scithers as **"the epitome of sartorial bad taste."** I think Mr. Priest could use a few lessons in 'taste' himself; not to mention a crash course in what constitutes bad manners (and this last is probably what Deadloss is really all about).

One of the most reiterated, not to say **"obsessive"**, denunciations in Deadloss is that things, ideas, and attitudes are **"old"**. Are we wandering into the world of fashion now where last year's thoughts are made *demonde* by the latest trends? Thus we have **"wordy old bores"**, **"boring old..."** and more permutations on that theme than can easily be counted. A grab-bag of those directed at myself would include **"his head is**

filled with the past", "...ten years typing up old fan articles", "fanatical, obsessive acts of history", "...his head full of Willis' Golden Oldies", etc, etc, which seem to add up to an indictment of me for having lived so long and, in passing, of Willis for not having written everything yesterday. Fascinating isn't it? I mean the spectacle of a seemingly intelligent person writing copy about the world of ideas which could have come out of the press reviews of the Paris *couture*. We're passing from "leaky" to meaningless rhetoric, now. (I wonder if this preoccupation with ageism might be a British cultural trait -- or at least of British fandom which seems crazed with a fervent thirst for disestablishmentarianism. Malcolm Edwards in Tappen attributes something of the sort to Greg Pickersgill who seemed to have the idea that Edwards should preface Pickersgill's contribution "with something about him -- ostensibly because he's now one of the dead old farts of fandom". This conjures the image of British BNFs peering intently for signs of wrinkles and bags under the eyes as the suspicion overtakes them that by being around for 10 years they have gone *passé*. D. West sets it all in perspective in Nabu 11: "Nobody's been supplanted or made redundant... Sure the emphasis changes -- the theme or fashion of the moment -- but in the end it comes back down to a question of who has the most talent, and the ones with the talent are going to stay on top for just as long as they choose to remain active." Elsewhere in this very issue of Wrhn the point is confronted by Ted White in reply to D. West -- who can be seen working both sides of this particular avenue. One might also turn to Linda Pickersgill in Start Breaking Up #1 who, in the course of a disquisition on (yes) Boring Old Farts, says "Age or number of years in fandom have nothing to do with it." Of course.) Does the validity of Willis' thinking have anything to do with the fact that some of his material was written, 10, 20, or 30 years ago? Presumably not when one recalls this quote from Chris Priest in Epsilon 8 on meeting Willis at the 1976 ManCon: Willis is "far too modest to realize that his own writing had more influence on my life and ideas and ambitions (and those of countless other people) than any SF novel is ever likely to have on his." In other words, the age of his writings have little more to do with their relevancy than the color of the paper they were printed on -- then why raise the irrelevant? Unless the irrelevant is just another arrow in this barrage of badly aimed and increasingly simple-minded putdowns of myself. I'll leave it to someone with more patience to explain What It All Might Mean.

When Chris writes of his astonishment at meeting "this modest and shy-mannered man" (one wonders what Priest was expecting) and speaks of the impact Walt's work had on him he points to the motive behind what he calls a "fanatical, obsessive act of history." Rob Hansen, a reasonably active contemporary fan, had never seen any of Walt's writing other than his ManCon report of 1976 -- which in light of D. West's dictum that "the best place to read old fanwriting is in old fanzines" seems odd when you remember that Hansen has had an extensive association with Pickersgill and more than passing acquaintance with Edwards. It became necessary to draw this material together and reveal (in Harry Warner's phrase) that "an individual can transform fandom, transmute stodgy surroundings, and transcend the dreary realities that snatch most fans away from their possible achievements". It was necessary to preserve Walt's writing from the random destruction and oblivion which would have inevitably overtaken so widely scattered a body of work...a body of work which, I had concluded, represents a culmination of our best instincts and, to quote Hansen, "the essence of the fanzine experience". Yes, I guess it's possible to sneer at this as an "obsessive act of history" -- if one is given to childish petulance. Certainly I had adopted an admittedly unfashionable and sercon attitude toward what is just a hobby but fandom is "largely a literary phenomenon" which, in Malcolm Edward's words, is "pointless unless you are doing your very best". This echoes in its own way the justification I gave in the WASH in quoting Willis: "fandom is a very worthwhile hobby, and the most worthwhile thing in it is doing as well as you can something that interests you and gives other people pleasure, no matter how much trouble it is." Fandom is fun; but fun is worth taking seriously...if one avoids getting pompous about it (something, it occurs to me, I'm

not succeeding too well at in this paragraph). However, I'm willing to risk boring Chris Priest to preserve and encourage excellence.

Is it relevant to ask what Priest himself spends a good deal more time on than I devoted to the WASH (though he admits the impact of Willis' writing and the relative significance of his own preoccupations)? What are we to make of considerably more time devoted to a paraphrase of reality which starts with a rejection of it...and a consideration of which leads inevitably to the degree of just how much more efficient one Iscariot is from another in raking in the drachmas? Is it obsessive to devote yourself to grinding out fables from an inner vision? Perhaps. Perhaps the entire necessity to communicate on so sophisticated a level is "obsessive". Of course, the artist is an obsessed person or wouldn't be one -- the 'artist' would be watching reruns of "I Love Lucy" with his/her undriven brethren instead of writing novels about fire lizards which turn into flying dragons.

An "obsessive act of history"? Maybe. But a good one or a bad one? History will give the reply to that question if fandom hasn't already and I fear not history's answer -- I know it will be more impartial than Chris Priest's whose opinions are so condescending that obviously my notion that only one royal figurehead sits on the throne of England is very much mistaken.

"The way fanzines are produced is not an excuse for laziness, carelessness and contempt." Right.

::

Last and first fen meet. The confrontation is oblique: the son is bemused by a sensory kaleidoscope of color, sound, and feeling and the father still proselythizes *passé* alternate universes. Neither recognizes the other.

The scene is a convention hotel and James Salads and friends are floating around the corridors in a haze of "smoked rope" looking for a party in room 366: "Door opens. It is oldtimer firstfans. It no party. There is SamIs4sf+. He is talking in 120 decibels about literary merit of Ray Cummings. Oldtimer talks about EESmith. Woman talks about lost ERBurroughs manuscript..." Later "back out in hallway, we wander down, come to a corner, find elevator. Inside one other fan. Holding onto floor. Cannot hold liquid. Too much Con Suite Free Bheer. 'Third Floor,' he says, and we leave elevator." One can only assume they pushed the button for him and the timebinding reader wonders if this, then, is the end result of forcing people to drink hair cream -- an event only slightly before its time just after the fall of sixth fandom.

Are these the children of Peter Vorzimer? Or do they belong to all of us -- these children whose fannish symbol is a spear through our walls? The barbarians are not knocking at the gates. The barbarians are ourselves...

But I am ahead of myself. First I have to concede/explain that James Salads is an artist and the mirror he holds up is well worth looking into. In fact, it's just one of a collection of statements of some power in Cheryl Cline and Bill Breiding's *The Wretch Takes To Writing c/w Roads*. Cheryl and Bill (with some help from the files of Rich Coad's *Space Junk*) have put together a fanzine completely devoted to the special interests of its editors with little or no terms of reference to any other context. To browse unsuspectingly through it is to glimpse what SFandom1982 may ultimately contribute to the history of our peculiar social/literary movement. This fanzine contains some of the most powerful writing I've seen since *Start Breaking Up #1* and much of it is on a level with Linda Pickersgill's Felliniesque "Best Popcorn In Town" in that fanzine. Once you start reading you're trapped like a rabbit frozen into immobility by a cobra...a context in which you're never sure the next corpse you encounter won't be you.

One reads with a sense of inference trying to figure out what is going on like a Martian perusing an old National Geographic except for the horrifying thought that we're reading an artifact from the future. An entire culture is implied by a paragraph like this: "The Rocker says he died on August 5, three days after the last performance of 8-Eyed Spy. Lydia Lunch had already announced plans to leave the Spy at the end of their American Tour. Now with two of the driving forces of the band gone, it isn't likely we'll be hearing any more espionage from the Spy." The culture is Punk Rock, of course, but the view is sardonic and witty: "Terry came back, having just interviewed the band for Pulse. You might even say she had taken Lunch to dinner". The band is on the verge of breaking up but Lydia "gave no reasons for her impending departure, and none of us knew that fifteen days later George Scott would shoot enough heroin into his bloodstream to stop his heart."

One asks if there is life after Punk and the very nature of the question leads to speculation that to make despair a way of life is a form of negation...but to play at it is either a perversion or a pose and a declaration of the ultimate kind of despair.

The May 14, 1981, Rolling Stone printed this by Woddy Hochswender: "From the moment it hit American culture, people said the Punk movement was dead" but a movement fueled by alienation spreads horizontally like a blight and then turns cannibalistic as its hatred discovers itself. What is one to make of a living artform which self-destructs? The latest kink in Punk at that time was something called "slam dancing" which Hochswender described thus: "There is this dance in Southern California, and it goes like this: You bounce up and down, nice and light. You move to the left and you move to the right, then smash the guy next to you with all your might... The Stardust is on Sunset. At the entrance was a throng of teenagers, stalled for the moment. A kid with a bloody nose and a vacant look in his eyes was being carried out. Inside, bodies scratched and collided in front of the stage. Periodically the crowd surged back away from the stage as the slam dancing grew more intense, and bouncers emerged from the shadows lugging another bloodied form."

It's not that farfetched to find slam dancing expressed in Rich Coad's brilliantly written ("The jangling tintinabulation, or the onomatopoetic ringing, of the telephone jarred me awake.") "Kids! Get Rich Quick!!" in The Wretch, etc. Good clean fan-nish fun is now expressed like this: "I noticed Mike Glicksohn staggering down the hall with the help of several friends. Glicksohn, of course, is the epitome of Boring Old Fart Hippie Fandom. Dressed in the usual uniform of jeans and t-shirt, Mike tops this off with an Australian Bush hat in a futile effort to hide the cascading hair and long, lice-ridden beard which put him at least 10 years behind the times. Also, the poor, misguided nearly senile old fool..." A description of Ted White bears more relationship to a shadow out of Innsmouth than to any other conceivable apparition. Rich's other friends play like this (or Rich plays at pretending they do -- take your pick): "'Come on Coad!' shouted Cvetko, the blond one, giving me a harsh kick on the inner thigh for friendly emphasis. I nodded affably past the great curtain of pain that had fallen down to cover the hallway. 'I shall be there,' I gasped out between grimaces... 'Not good enough, Coad,' yelled the dark one, Wesson, demonstrating his admiration for me with a just-between-us-buddies jab to the solar plexus." It looks like I stopped going to conventions just in time. My thoughts turn back to The Stardust on Sunset where Derf Scratch, the drummer of Fear, is coming off a set "when a six-foot three skinheaded goon bumped into him, then clocked him with a vicious left hook to the nose. 'And he didn't stop', says Scratch. 'But this time I kept thinking I wonder when somebody's going to help me?' Nobody helped, and Derf Scratch wound up in Conoga Park Hospital with seven broken bones in his face and a drainage cup taped to one side of his head. No fun at all." When the social aspects of an art movement reach the point where they are indistinguishable from a mugging it has passed the point where it can be considered a comment on society and is well on its way to the intensive care unit

of the local mental insitution. No fun.

But what prompts the slam into Ted and that "nearly senile old fool" Glicksohn? The answer may lie somewhere in the direction of Coad's own appearance: Coad plays/played in a Punk band called The Steamrollers and for all we know has his head shaved to the skin on both sides leaving a strip of hair down the middle dyed day-glo pink like cotton candy. I'm not knocking it you understand -- fashion is fine for those who like that sort of thing -- and I can visualize the collision of the anti-fashions: the costume of Punk is far more explicit than the drop-out uniform Glicksohn wears. Coad puts down Mike's look for "being 10 years behind the times" which is a fashion commentary if ever there was. The smell of blood and feathers is never far away. Erica shared a room with Darby Crash "who used to sing with the Germs." We're back in Rolling Stone now, gentle reader. "'The pressure to cut my hair was great. All the punks kept telling me to cut it. They're not the most popular kids in school. Oh, wow, we are antisociety, and it's such a fashion show.'" Crash died of a drug overdose this year."

All this metaphorical (and not so metaphorical) posing takes us back to Wilde's lifestyle as an artform. Punk is telling us how we look -- as Picasso did during the occupation of Paris in World War II when he showed his agonizingly distorted portraits of the lovely Dora Maar. Punk is our self-portrait in hypocrisy but the mind reels at the potentialities of artform as a way of life. Hector Rodriguez rots in Bayamon prison for his protest against the insanity of our times: Hector smuggled a bomb aboard an Eastern Airlines plane bound for New York and fortunately was removed from the plane along with his bomb. The court failed to understand his argument that his act was a 'conceptual artwork' -- a statement intended to illuminate the consciousness of humanity. Perhaps it will now be revealed that the attempted assassination of Pope Paul was merely a failed iconography. There's a fascinating short piece at the end of The Wretch Takes To Writing c/w Roads by D.S. Black about the failure of Art to speak and the failure of communication. Artists are increasingly professional manipulators who merely know which purse strings to pull and the result is that art's message is lost in a market place where artists who see are reduced to screaming..or go insane.

Humanity is glued to a television set and ready to turn the switch when a rare attempt is made to hold up a mirror. Don't interrupt. A Segal can show this in plaster but the television viewer lost in his own reverie can't see it. Can't hear it. The surface of life like the moving image is accepted as the essence: a circus of death with Marilyn Monroe at one end and the bomb at the other. Drugs, voluntarily consumed, handle those who are capable of seeing too much. Escape, from one extreme to the other, is accepted ritual.

The punk attitude is determinedly alienated as if a rejection of rationalism is a rational alternative. Of course, one can't argue that reality is rational -- not with the increasingly rising tempo of the sick and morbid which daily life and the entertainment media present, but there is the option to create beauty and live a peaceful life as best we can. (Not with too much visibility, though, because if your example breaks through the media you'll be destroyed -- perhaps in the courtyard of The Dakota, for example.) So you fry your hair orange and wear purple lipstick and boil your brains in an electrical outlet. It wouldn't be difficult to argue that Punk is searching for the point at which an aesthetic statement becomes emotional suicide: it's just too sardonic -- I mean those photographs in Rolling Stone of middle class American families with their staid middle America Mom and Pop and little Joey, freaked out and fried in full Punk drag saying something just standing there. Is he saying, "This is the end. This is the end, my friend. My only friend..." -- in the words of another lead singer who overdosed?

Punk holds up such a mirror.

--Richard Bergeron, 1 Sept 82



Non-Synopsis, 8 December 1981: This is ridiculous, you know. It's more than fifteen months since Sunday at Noreascon; most of the relevant brain cells have died or gone into hiding. Could this Boston trip have been real? Today I woke up to a white world, the first unexpected snowfall of the English winter, and a note from early-rising Hazel saying I DON'T BELIEVE IT EITHER. There seems no way to connect with a notebook page whose first entries are about the buzzing heat in Boston and the fact that flies kept landing on my toes. Still... do we not have cosmic minds?

Sunday 31 August 1980

"Flies keep landing on my toes," I said, and wiggled those bits of toe that stuck out of my sandals. Hazel looked away, preferring even a Boston drugstore's display of electric vibrators ('super satisfaction for all parts of the body') to the sight of the toes she had promised to love and cherish. She has this theory that they are oversized and malformed; but Boston's flies seemed happy enough with their steaming bulk. We moved down the street, by now so almost accustomed to the USA that a radio warning of imminent 96° temperatures provoked no more than mild screams. Not even pausing to worry about a slot-machine advertising US STAMPS IN SANITARY FOLDERS (perhaps the 13¢ worth of folder is needed to keep the flies from the gum), we penetrated the Noreascon hotel and allowed our British reserve and likewise our brains to be eroded by the Aussiecon bidding film "Antifan Strikes Back". The image of someone reeling from a

MacDonalds in the grip of "Alien"'s face-hugger is not one to be forgotten, even after fifteen months of trying.

THE TRANSATLANTIC HEARING AID

Bit 4:

"The Day of the Jackpot"

That Sunday morning at Noreascon was quiet. "Too quiet... I don't like it," I said to Hazel with characteristic originality.

"Ahh... the drums... the flies," she responded, causing me to flash a quick glance at my toes. All clear. The flies were resting in preparation for a later assault -- and so was fan-

dom, with the appalling pyrotechnics of the Hugo ceremony approaching at a remorseless rate of sixty seconds per minute. In the relative calm I met the celebrated fan Ed Meskys: he murmured something to me, and I nodded encouragingly to him. Nobody had told him I was deaf. Nobody had told me he was blind. He murmured something else as I waved goodbye, and another fannish meeting of minds was over.

More people drifted through the foyers. I admired -- at close range as I could manage -- a badge on the bosom of a moderately ravishing young lady who travelled under the name Starr Fyre: the badge read I AM NOT A MAN! I AM A FREE NUMBER! This view was blocked by the sudden appearance of Mike Glycer, who towered high over me and some considerable way to either side of me. I'd been reading his convention newsletter Lobster Tales, specifically an item about the two tons of ice imported to chill Coke and (occasionally) other things on Saturday night; it was the work of mere minutes to assemble a lightning quip contrasting this with approximately eleven tons of beer consumed at the far smaller 1979 British Worldcon, but before I'd adjusted the semicolons Mike was far away and working on the next newsletter but three. Instead we found Joyce Scrivner,

David
Langford

who does not tower high over me but has talents in other directions: "Linda Bushyager went to this party once," she told me, "a party where John Norman was, because she wanted to look at his wife's back. And do you know, all the other women were in low-cut evening dress but John Norman's wife was wearing this outfit with a high collar and long sleeves..."

From these flagellatory thoughts it was a natural step to the agonies of the Astral Leauge Initiation. Joyce had begun to enjoy watching people submit themselves to the ritual pole rather as spaghetti submits to a fork; she hurried me downstairs to put Carey Handfield to the question. Carey was manning the fannish tables which lay on the naked face of the Lower Exhibit hall like some lonely Foreign Legion outpost amid the encircling Sahara. Tears filled his eyes at the sight of human features after so long in isolation; he announced his readiness to pit himself against any mere pole provided he was told what to do... and perhaps, for the benefit of readers as yet unenlightened by missionaries of the all-potent Astral Leauge, I should pause to explain the task required of neophytes (the technical term is 'suckers').

Take a five-foot broompole. Take several drinks. Stand. Hold the pole horizontally before you, in both hands -- hands a couple of feet apart, palms up, fingers curled round pole, but the grip must not alter throughout the ceremony. Lower the still-horizontal pole and step first with one foot and then with the other over the section of pole between your hands. The pole is now behind you: maintaining the grip, bring it back over your head until you are again holding it horizontally before you (though with uncomfortably twisted wrists, as you will find). This was the easy part. Now raise your right leg -- 'left' and 'right' may be exchanged throughout the following if desired-- and manoeuvre the right foot around the right-hand side of your right arm and back over the pole towards you. You should now feel less than comfortable. It only remains to duck your head under the pole and -- still without releasing your deathlike grip on it -- continue the motion so that your torso follows your head, and your whole right leg follows your right foot, through the 'hoop' defined by arms and pole. In the penultimate position you find yourself standing shakily with the still-gripped pole passing between your legs. A backward step with the left leg over the pole returns you to square one in a glow of triumph, fulfillment and Astral Mastery. Have another drink and spend four days in traction.

The most elementary Visualization of the Cosmic All reveals that the sticking-place of all this comes in the antepenultimate motion, as pole and right knee jam firmly against one another and further progress seems unwise, not to say impossible. Carey showed the relentless driving force that had made him chairman of the Australia in 83 Worldcon Bid (Failed), and crashed through the preliminaries with contemptuous ease. Then, screwing his courage to the sticking-place, he stuck. Great veins bulged out all over him, and from his spine there came a noise as of distant Rice Krispies.

"Let me give you a push," said Joyce with solicitous giggles, approaching the puce and straining form while your narrator stealthily moved backwards. "It just needs a push here--"

The effect was rather as though she'd taken a flying kick at a trembler fuse. Carey's fingers gave way; the pent-up energy of his pose lashed out in a multigravity thrust which brought the pole close to escape velocity. It failed to escape, Joyce having accurately blocked the launch window with her stomach; before you could say "Action and reaction are equal and opposite, and act on different bodies," she had sat down with a thoughtful expression.

"You didn't actually pass the test, Carey," I managed to say above the mingled groans.

By this time Hazel had broken into groans of her own: "Heat," she said feebly, and "Smoke", and "People." Again we went separate ways, she searching for cool and quiet in our hotel and I for free booze in the SFWA suite. Some fans never realized that Hazel was at that worldcon; typically she'd be lying down in our room while I lay with equal aplomb on the floor of some convenient party.

During my pre-floor period in the SFWA room I struggled to collect huge names to lend verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing trip report; once again I had to make do with Barry Malzberg.

"Hello, Barry Malzberg," I said brightly to the moaning figure of my hero.

"Ohhhhhh," he told me, looking up with the air of a Spanish Inquisition client deciding that after all he had preferred the thumbscrews to the rack.

"I was reading your first novel last month, and--"

"Oh God! No! Not my first one! No! No!"

"Er... "Screen"?"

"Ohhh. No, that was my ninth. I can just about... live with that one." He slumped in his chair, apparently comparing the joys of chatting to me with those of the rack. I slipped away before he could reach an unflattering verdict.

Alexis Gilliland sat at a table looking distinguished and drawing a cartoon every 35 seconds. Next to him, Dolly Gilliland managed not to blench when reminded that Avedon Carol had invited the Langfords to stay in Washington for as long as they liked (in the Gilliland house). Nearly famous author Connie Willis explained how the notoriety of her exclusion from the John W. Campbell 'new writer' award was doing her career no end of good. "I published this one story ten years ago and I'm sure they disqualified me because it was so bad, I mean it was really awful, it makes me shudder just to think of it..." F&SF person Anne Jordan scattered free copies of the October issue, cover story by Britain's very own Ian Watson...

"I know Ian Watson," I said ingratiatingly. "I even touched him once."

Anne J. was unmoved; again I reminded myself that editors and publishers have often met several authors and become disenchanted.

"Editors are just people who cannot write," she told the unsurprised room.

Onward, to a talk by Taral on fan art: but foolishly I still carried the fatal pole, and everything was delayed while Moshe Feder failed, twice. Taral himself then mastered the pole by a series of incredible writhings, while all present shaded their eyes against flashes of fluorescent red underpants from beneath that apple-green kilt.

"I have rubber limbs," he said, proudly unknottting himself. Avedon had gone pale, and repeated that she was only limber and lissom at certain phases of the moon, and couldn't possibly attempt this contortion before five in the morning.

I even remember some of Taral's slides, for the usual self-centered reasons. Up went an Alicia Austin drawing (circa 1967), and I muttered "Bloody hell, it's a Beard-sley pastiche." Up went a drawing from "Salome" (circa 1894), and Taral dropped the name of Aubrey Beardsley on uncomprehending fannish heads, and I committed flagrant acts of autobackpatting for hours after.

To fortify myself for the horrors of the Hugo ceremony, I accompanied Taral (and Victoria Vayne, and Marc Schirmeister) to a nearby Chinese Spaghetti House renowned for such delights as Ravioli Won Ton. Not much fortification was achieved, since the other 5751 convention members -- Sunday afternoon's count -- were also trying to eat before Hugo time. Over the next hour the queue ahead of us dwindled to 5730 or so; the two cartoonists had covered all the available paper with doodles of great clinical interest (a drawing of a famine is very like a drawing of a muchness) and our hopes of sweet and sour lasagna had demolished the third law of thermodynamics as they plunged below absolute zero. Eyes averted from the delicious plates of tagliatelli Szechuan on other tables, ears stopped against the muffled click of spaghetti-swathed chopsticks, the fannish party shuffled out into the night.

On the street, the meeting was called to order. The British Delegate observed that the Hugo ceremony was starting in mere seconds, and that although he did not doubt it to be a load of cobblers he nevertheless felt it his duty to attend one item on the main programme. He had his credibility to think of, he added unconvincingly. The Chairman (Taral) expressed his opinion of the Hugos, adding that he would swap the whole lot for a decent meal. The British Delegate proposed a compromise solution making use of natural resources such as the high-speed pizza shop visible nearby. The Lady Member from Toronto then took the floor and described in some detail all the frightful things which would happen to her delicate metabolism should she even set foot inside the junk-food emporium alluded to. The motion was put that the meeting should disperse in an orderly fashion, and the British Delegate found himself standing alone outside the pizza place...

The impression left by the few confused minutes I spent inside was of Hogarth's 'Gin Lane' (not featured in the Taral slide Show) with monstrous pizzas substituting for the squalid gin-bottles. No plates. No cutlery. Bloated for a dollar, ulcerated for two dollars. Still chewing carbonized crusts and wiping greasy fingers on my handkerchief, I sprinted down the aisle of the Hynes auditorium to enjoy the wondrous ceremony for which I had sacrificed so much.

There I sat down -- and suddenly, almost before I knew what was happening, nothing happened. Things continued not to happen for some while; there was time to gaze around at the ranks on ranks of sweaty bodies filling the vast hall and threatening to bring the almost-as-vast balconies crashing down. Close by was the British contingent: Jim Barker representing Bob Shaw, Malcolm Edwards and Chris Atkinson representing Peter 'Encyclopaedia' Nicholls, and Chris Priest representing Chris Priest. We agreed to be unstinting in our applause for all the British items nominated, no matter what deafening silences filled the rest of the hall...

From the distance comes the sound of a two-note fanfare, and from close at hand the sound of a grotty pizza rumbling in the aching void of D. Langford. Huge cheers as toastmaster Robert Silverberg bounds into view. Further fanfares. I strain to hear Silverberg's brief introduction to the ceremony, which goes on for forty-eight minutes. (While I strain to hear, Gordon Dickson strains to see: he only has his reading glasses and is employing Jim Barker as seeing-eye fan.) Silverberg quips meriting a brief and appreciative smile, or groan, are met with colossal torrents of applause which shake the building. Harlan Ellison leaps for no apparent reason onto the stage. Even vaster cheers! Silverberg makes his Ellison circumcision joke: Boston trembles at the ovation, and far across America the San Andreas Fault slips a few more inches. Howls of feedback from the PA system. Each mention of a famous name provokes yet huger cheering. There is even a mighty burst of applause at the announcement that George Pal is dead.

At last, after what seems like forty-eight minutes, the presentations begin. Gleaming Hugos stand neatly lined up on a table...but their time is not yet. Convention

chairman Leslie Turek receives bound copies of all the Noreascon literature. George O. Smith receives the black spot in the form of the First Fandom Award, with loud cries of "It's about time!" An ill-looking Lou Tabakow collects the Big Heart Award... all this in far more time than it takes to tell, since the routine is for a celebrity to pace portentously onstage, and be applauded, and be introduced by Silverberg, and be applauded some more, and to make a little speech before pulling the winning name in slow motion from its envelope. Naturally all the nominees' names must be read out too when it comes to the Hugos, but these preliminary awards are apparently not the sort which have nominees.

"The Pat Terry Award for Humour in Science Fiction..." (What the devil is the Pat Terry Award for Humour in Science Fiction?) "...goes to 'The Hitch-Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy!'" Chris Priest, as Ranking British Name, is urged forward to accept the thing, and there is a chill silence while the billions of SFWA members he has alienated memorize his face. What next? "The Gandalf Award," Silverberg reads, not struggling too hard to conceal his distaste, "is under the, ah, aegis of Lin Carter..." There is no Gandalf Award. There is no Lin Carter. Silence swells to fill the hall, broken only by what sounds like giggling from the British contingent. On, hastily, to the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer... "Barry Longyear!" Chris's knuckles whiten; a low moan comes from Malcolm; your reporter emits a faint noise which he later claims to have been an after-effect of the pizza.

At last, the Hugos. Good old Alexis Gilliland picks up the fanartist award, and reads out the slips from Chinese fortune cookies which (he asserts) infallibly predicted his success. Good old Bob Shaw wins as fanwriter; failed nominee Langford murmurs "The weed of fanwriting bears bitter fruit," and stifles his cries of rage and envy as Jim grabs the trophy. Suddenly, as if by magic, the Gandalf Grand Master of Fantasy Award appears and its winner is named as Ray Bradbury. The British block fancies the uncharitable theory that when the reasonably Grand masters are exhausted, this award will by design go to Not-so-Grand masters such as its founder Lin Carter.

Locus wins as professional fanzine, Michael Whelan as professional artist, "Alien" as dramatic presentation. Tension mounts in a certain quarter of the audience. Best nonfiction is indeed the Peter Nicholls "Encyclopaedia of SF". Huge cheers from the British contingent; pause while Malcolm delivers the longest speech of acceptance so far, dwelling lovingly and interminably on the revised editions which this accolade may make possible. Best editor: George Scithers of "Asimov's Skiffy Mag". Hoots and groans from the British contingent. The short story Hugo is presented by Harlan Ellison, who is swift to observe that "The short story, as we all know, is the single most difficult category of writing." George R.R. Martin wins with "The Way of Cross and Dragon", and again a few minutes later with his novelette "Sandkings".

Chris smiles bravely as his own novelette "Palely Loitering" bites the dust, and mutters something which sounds remarkably like "Better than losing to bloody John Varley."

Really huge names are making the presentations now, guest of honour Kate Wilhelm handing over the novelette Hugo and other guest of honour Damon Knight following with the Hugo for novella (which goes to Barry Longyear's "Enemy Mine" amid indescribable noises from the Brits). Now the top award, for best novel. Who swings more weight than Wilhelm and Knight at the con where they're joint guests of honour? Ah, of course, they'll present the novel Hugo jointly. But no! Amid the hugest cheers of the evening, risking sunburn from a holocaust of popping flashbulbs, wittily pinching the bottoms of any (female) attendants who stray too close, on comes jolly Isaac Asimov to do the honours. Somewhere in the audience a TAFF delegate who considers Disch's "On Wings of Song" to be the only decent book nominated is saying to himself, "I won't scream."

Even if it goes to "Titan" I will--not--scream..."

"The Fountains of Paradise" by Arthur C. Clarke," cries Asimov, and I scream. Cities are laid to waste and aircraft hurled from their courses by the gale of cheering--which, however, subsides with remarkable speed as the vast audience becomes a mob hell-bent for the exits...

Back in the outside world, the surging crowd and the past tense, I restrained myself from taking part in Moshe's 'Claude Degler Memorial Scavenger Hunt'. Somehow my sense of wonder reeled at the thought of locating a badge advertising an old Worldcon bid (losing bids scored extra), a box of lime jello (made-up jello scored extra), a ten of clubs with a naked lady/man on the back, a "Necronomicon" (not in English)... The most interesting item had been removed from the list after consideration of US conspiracy and kidnapping laws: no longer could you score points by producing a mundane.

The night disintegrated into parties. Almost instantly Rochelle Reynolds (now Dorey) received a mark of favour in the form of an intimately applied Harry Bell original cartoon: "I'm never going to wash that elbow again," she declared. Harry was telling me this in the middle of a wide hotel corridor when Harlan Ellison himself approached us and bestowed a ritual blessing-- "Stop fouling up the goddam hallway, you fucking Limeys." He went by. "I shall never wash that eardrum again," I said with fervour.

Roz Kaveney fancied going to the Hugo Losers' Party many hotels distant, and that way we went: "Jerry Pournelle's future history broke my thirty feet of bookshelves," she confided unconvincingly on the way, and also asked to be urgently warned should she be in danger of meeting Sandra Miesel -- some little matter of her Foundation review of a Miesel book on Poul Anderson, I gathered.

The party was being thrown by Jim Baen of Ace, and I furtively slipped him a copy of my book on military technology and killing people, with the suggestion that it would fit just perfectly into the Ace list.

"Oh yes," he said, taking the hardback and throwing it into a drawer. "I've looked at it before. Felt it was a bit negative about warfare."

"Of course it's bloody negative about warfare!" I failed to say. Instead I expressed pious hopes that imminent Baen replacement Susan Allison would like the book, and madly went on to relate the description of her someone had given me earlier. "Tall and blonde and smells of money," I heard my mouth say as I stood aghast.

"Hey, Susan..."

Susan Allison appeared. She barely seemed to come up to my waist. "Tall and blonde and smells of money," said J.Baen's voice from an infinite distance.

"Reeeeeeally?" She sniffed herself cautiously.

"Mmmmf," I replied as I fell backwards into illimitable black space. Well... at least she was blonde.

Some inward urge, I know not what, led me to abandon that party relatively soon. I left Roz teaching young skiffy writers to play charades, little knowing that mere hours later she would contrive to lock herself out on a hotel fire escape--to be rescued only after long and piteous calls for help.

The British party, held in a wide corridor near that fifth-floor swimming pool, was

loud, boozy, depraved and just like home. Bottles of imported Heineken lager were regarded with indifference by Brits and with seeming awe by the natives; masterminds Greg Pickersgill and Linda Karrh (now Pickersgill) offered variety in the form of a ready-mixed 'brandy Alexander' which Greg had decided he would rather like to live on for the rest of his life. It tasted like coffee-and-chocolate milk shake pepped up with the hard stuff; Graham England was deeply suspicious of it, and issued warnings about its fearful potency whenever I accepted a sip. Certainly it was effective enough to make me demonstrate the Astral Test anew: millions of US fans attempted it, but mastery was vouchsafed to a pitiful few. Returning to my beer-bottle after a brisk round of failed initiations, I found that kindly hands had dropped a cigarette end into it. Some victim of the pole had been revenged at last.

By 3:15am the British party consisted mainly of Joyce Scrivner. I tottered away in search of further fun but instead found the SFWA suite, now guarded by a magical talisman bearing the cruel runes MEMBERS AND GUESTS ONLY. Brushing this contemptuously aside, I discovered the place to be full of fans: Malcolm Edwards, Chris Atkinson, Avedon Carol. We sat on the floor mumbling at one another for an unconscionable time about cosmic subjects like the Astral Leauge and Jacqueline Lichtenberg and the art of drawing with felt pens on the sleeping form of Joseph Nicholas. Bored by now with the pole, I hid it in a cupboard for the SFWA to find.

Avedon exerted her wiles to discover what my fanzine title Twll-Ddu meant. I explained that twll was Welsh for hole, and ddu was Welsh for black--

"Black hole? Do you mean to say the name of your fanzine just means black hole?"

"Ah," I said. "But a name as unpronounceable as that is surely worthwhile no matter how mundanes translate it; and moreover, don't you realize that this is a Welsh pun, echoing the phrase twll d'un, which literally means 'the hole of a person'; knowing what you do of the Welsh people, you will grasp that the reference is not to the navel or nostril. Hence Twll d'un bob saes, 'all the English are arseholes' (saes being the Welsh version of Scots sassenach), a specially popular Welsh platitude. Being totally inept at languages I'm fascinated by snippets like that; by the information that the French have exactly the same idiom as twll d'un (only, of course, in French); by the news that 'black hole' can't be translated literally into Russian because in that language the two words together have, again, a below-the-belt application (female this time); by the fact that owing to the exigencies of Welsh gender-matching Twll-Ddu is in fact ungrammatical--one of the d's shouldn't be there, I don't know which--putting me in that quintessentially fannish quandry of having a typo for a title..."

Anyone who believes that I actually managed to say all this (without the benefit of later rewriting and embellishment has probably not been around fandom very long.

The mumbling continued, and continued, until well after five in the morning: one of those pleasant times you can't write up because you never wrote it down. But then came the low point of all the convention. Susan Wood was at that party too, looking unwell and much the worse for wear; she went briefly berserk and flung a bottle at Terry Carr in the room next to where we were talking. That's all. The party ended instantly; Terry was removed and stitched up; I was swept from the room in the general tide of eviction--forgetting I was a SFWA member with a right to be there--and went back to my hotel. I mention all this because I dislike the hushed silence which (especially since Susan's tragic death later that year) has tended to add an undue weight of whispered speculation to an unfortunate incident which was over in seconds.

It was nearly half-past six that morning when I stumbled into our room, swapped grunts with Hazel and remembered to phone England with the Hugo results. Just for once,

Chris Morgan's Birmingham SF Group Newsletter was going to scoop my Ansible. For a long while I was troubled with an alien voice which intoned "Wrong number"; eventually it dawned on me (as indeed it dawned outside) that the voice wanted my room number. That settled, I contacted Chris and told him all; he cheered and groaned in the right places; and that should have been the end of the only transatlantic phone call I'd ever dialed. Its cost was missing from the hotel bill, though: long afterwards I learnt that the mysterious Voice had failed to take down my room number after all.

I know this because next day the Bell Telephone Company called Chris, and sternly told him that he'd received a call from the Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston. Breaking down under their ruthless lack of questioning, he admitted this misdemeanour.

Chris thought as rapidly as if trained in Null-A. The whole transatlantic truth was revealed to him. "Yes," he said earnestly. "The caller was a Mr. Gernsback. G-E-R-N-S-B-A-C-K. His first name is Hugo..."

I hope the Bell Telephone Company doesn't read fanzines.

Afterward, 9 December 1981: Now I've finished drafting this it seems even harder to travel mentally back from a warm, muggy dawn in Boston to midnight, freezing fog and a halo round the Moon in icebound Berkshire. The only hope is to intone the frightful formula of termination, as follows-- Other episodes of this peripatetic Taff report have been published in these fanzines: (1) Tull-Ddu 19, 50p-for-Taff from me, 22 Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berkshire, RG2 7PW, UK. (2) Boonfark 5, \$2.50 from Dan Steffan, 1010 N Tuckahoe St, Falls Church, Va. 22046. (3) Nabu 11, 50p-for-Taff from Ian Maule, 5 Beaconsfield Rd, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 3HY, UK. (4) Warhoon...this Warhoon, I hope, unless something's gone wrong. (5) Tappen 3, by whim from Malcolm Edwards, 28 Duckett Rd, London, N4 1BN, UK.

There will be more, somewhere, and a collected edition, someday. -drl

.....
Avedon Carol for Taff. Or else.
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THE OTHER SIDE OF MIDNIGHT

The real world contains Monday mornings and Post-Convention Blues. Silicon ended with both of these horrors coming together under weak Newcastle sunlight. Everyone seemed reluctant to leave and face mundane existence again.

Chris Atkinson in "Alternate Silicon Report" in Start Breaking Up, October 1981.

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"Three bites on the neck and you pub your ish forever."
.....

AT THE DRIVE-IN

Our car joins one of the two long lines waiting for entrance. The music from our car radio joins the symphony of noise coming from every other car in line, each tuned to a different radio station or playing a tape deck. I sit in the passenger seat with my feet on the dashboard, my eyes on a level with the side window ledge. I figure this gives me the appropriate cool look necessary to spy on the neighboring cars. The one right next to us contains a family. Mother is in the front holding a crying toddler

with chocolate smeared all over it's face, and she's screaming at the three other kids in the back seat to stop jumping up and down, this ain't no trampoline, and shut up 'cause Daddy's trying to listen to the football game on the radio. Daddy, with a can of Dixie beer in his hand, has his head inches from the front speaker and every now and then yells Shuddup towards the back seat and Go Go Go towards the speaker.

Linda Pickersgill in "Best Popcorn In Town" in Start Breaking Up #1, October 1981

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2. How To Tell An Irishman:

THE IMPROBABLE IRISH

Walt
Willis



If you meet a man in a bar and he offers you shares in a shamrock quarry in his peat bog in Londonderry, view him with the utmost suspicion. Peat is called turf in Ireland and Derry is called Derry, as it was before James I sold it to some London merchants in 1613. This character does not come from Ireland, whatever might be said about his old wire-haired mother.

Fortunately you could assess his credentials even without having obscure information like this, because the national characteristics of the Irish are very well known. Perhaps it would be a help if I were to just set them out to remind you, adding any additional information that might be of interest.

The Irish are drunks. It is said that the Eskimos have eleven different words for snow, and no doubt it is for similar reasons that the Irish have at least as many synonyms for intoxication. (Full, cut, stoven, sozzeled, maggoty, stoned, blithero, stotious, half tore, blind, and blutered in Belfast or flutered in Dublin.) So there is no doubt that a lot of Irishmen like a drink now and then and it is socially acceptable in most of Ireland. For instance blood donors, who are of course unpaid, get a glass of Guinness afterwards: in the North it's a cup of tea. It is also true that some of them drink too much, filling the alcoholic wards and fooling some statisticians. But other statisticians note that the per capita consumption of whiskey in Ireland is less than in Scotland, and of beer etc. less than in England.

I think I can hear someone jeering that no doubt they also drink less tequila than the Mexicans, with the insinuation that they are filling up on poteen while the statisticians' backs are turned. In fact many Irishmen have never even seen poteen (pronounced pot-yeen by the Irish and poison by the medical profession) and most know better than to drink it when they do. Poteen making is a dying craft, like its customers. The only man I ever heard of who made any money out of it did it by buying war surplus distillation equipment by mail at ten pounds a set and concealing it about the bogs; he then informed on these illicit stills to another department of the British Government, receiving twenty pounds reward for each.

Many Irishmen used to drink too much, at a time when it was the only alternative to suicide, and their present reputation is a sort of hangover from then. One wonders which of the other nations who are pointing those rather unsteady fingers of scorn have not had similar periods in their own history, with far less excuse for them. I seem to remember that it was not so long ago that the staid English were patronizing gin palaces offering to make them drunk for a penny and dead drunk for twopence, with straw for sleeping it off on a half-penny extra.

The Irish are priest-ridden. Those Irish who are Catholics are certainly very devoted to their Church, especially since the English tried to suppress it, and will defend it against all comers. Among themselves however they regretfully recognize it as composed of fallible human beings. As the Irish barrister Paddy Kelly is said to have put it, "The Irish Bishops are individually virtuous and sapient men, wise in precept and impeccable in practise. But it is a great misfortune that they should always fix their meetings for an occasion when the Holy Ghost happens to be engaged elsewhere."

It is also a strange thing in a priest-ridden country that every national leader in its long struggle for independence should have been a Protestant, with the single exception of De Valera, and he was excommunicated without apparent effect. And that the Irish have been known to disobey a clear and direct instruction from the Pope on a matter of morals when they didn't want to stop what they were doing. Their ingenious technique for dismantling unexploded Papal Encyclicals should be of considerable interest nowadays.

Incidentally, the song "Father O'Flynn" was written by a Protestant.

The Irish are pugnacious and violent. This is as true as it was of the French naturalist's famous description of a wild animal: "This creature is very vicious. When attacked it defends itself." No doubt it is only because the Irish have been so busy doing this that they have never attacked another country or persecuted a racial minority. (Ireland did not even take part in the Crusades, much to the annoyance of the Pope.) But it does seem strange that even during the most troublous times of her history the incidence of violent crimes was always so much less than in England; and that I should have survived several long hot summers in Ireland, not to mention some thirty short wet ones, without ever having seen one adult strike another in anger except on English television.

The Irish are sentimental and impractical. No. Here for once I'm afraid I'll have to disagree. The Irish are hard-headed, even cynical. The only sentimental things about them are fake Irish songs like "Mother Machree," which no Irishman would be heard dead singing. The real Irish song is more like that cheerful marching tune in which a girl greets her wounded lover home from the wars, with increasingly macabre verses ending:

*You haven't an arm and you haven't a leg.
You're an eyeless, noseless, chickenless egg.
You'll have to be put with a bowl to beg.
Johnny, I hardly knew you.*

The Irish have no illusions about war, and their proverbs indicate none about ordinary life. "Death is the poor man's doctor." "If you want praise, die; if you want blame marry." In the industrial North, where they are if possible even more down to earth and practical, they have a saying which tells more about human nature than I think I really want to know: "A borrowed saw cuts anything."

In early Irish versions of the Scriptures, David did not go to fight Goliath on a mere promise: he demanded and received sureties from Saul that his reward would be forthcoming when he won, a sensible precaution the Irish assumed he would have taken. The English novelist Anthony Trollope, who lived for some time in Ireland, wrote:

I found them to be good-humored, clever--the working classes much more intelligent than those of England--economical and hospitable. We hear much of their spendthrift nature; but extravagance is not the nature of an Irishman. He will count the shillings in a pound much more accurately than an Englishman and will with much more certainty get twelve pennyworth from each.

When Parnell, the famous patriotic leader, was arrested in 1881 at the Morrison Hotel in Dublin the proprietor offered him an escape route out the back; however the great man preferred to accept his imprisonment with dignity and accompanied the police without resistance. But on the way out the martyred hero paused to haggle over his hotel bill. I do not say that Parnell was a typical Irishman, but I do adduce in evidence a Dublin street ballad which was popular soon after and included among its tributes to their champion the following admiring verse:

*They took him and they bound him, them minions of the Law.
'Twas Pat the Boots was there that night and told me all he saw.
But sorra step the patriot bold would leave the place until
They granted him a ten percent reduction on his bill.*

Lady Fingall in her autobiography describes a more embarrassing scene at a French hotel, where a sum was added to their hotel bill for a broken bedroom utensil. Her husband stormed upstairs and came down carrying the chamber pot, swearing that if he had to pay for it he was going to take it with him.

Among the many stories which are supposed to illustrate the impracticality and foolishness of the Irish, like the one about the level crossing keeper who left his gates half open because he was half expecting a train, I know of only one that is authentic. This concerned the three young children of Richard Littledale, a 19th Century barrister. They had saved up their pocket money to buy their father a present and had accumulated the vast sum of three shillings, with which they proposed to buy him a red kerchief. They found just what they wanted in a shop, but it turned out to be two shillings and eleven pence, which is not divisible by three. Fortunately the eldest child almost immediately saw the solution to the problem. "Make it three shillings and we'll take it."

Stories making the Irish out to be overgrown infants became popular because for a long time it suited the English to think of them in this way. For the same reason stories are now told by white couples in bars in South Africa to illustrate to visitors how completely irresponsible and untrustworthy the colored people are, a flow of anecdote which can only momentarily be arrested by asking who is looking after the children.

The Irish are to blame for their reputation too, because some of them retell these stories themselves and others even act them out for the benefit of strangers. One of the great Irish faults is that they never can resist a joke, a failing which lands them in endless trouble. I have heard of a Dublin lawyer who, on visits to London for the rugby internationals, was in the habit of amusing himself and his friends by lurching up to policemen with his cap pulled over his eyes and asking, "I beg your pardon, Sor, are there any moving pictures in this town?" Whatever the answer he would stagger away exclaiming "Faith and begorrah!"--the only time he ever used the expressions in his life.

In the same way, if a visitor to Ireland happens to be the sort of person who throws his weight about, he will come home with enough stories of Irish incompetence to last him a lifetime. Jonah Barrington saw through this as early as 1803 when he wrote: "The sharpest wit and the shrewdest subtlety which abound in the character of the Irish peasant generally lie concealed under the appearance of simplicity."

On the other hand, if you are a decent sort of fellow, and the Irish will always give a stranger the benefit of the doubt, they will go to immense trouble so that you will not be disappointed. They feel personally responsible for everything in Ireland that might affect your holiday, even the weather: if you say it is a fine day they glow with pride, and if you complain about the rain they feel guilty about it and make lame excuses about it being good for the fishing. So it is not surprising that they try to

make such other improvements in the local situations as lie within their power.

For instance I used to think of Belfast as an ordinary modern industrial city until one day I escorted an American girl from the airport terminal to the main railroad station. I found her deep in conversation with a porter who had carried her baggage out to the street, had refused a tip and wished her a pleasant holiday, and was now halfway through planning an itinerary for her. The cab driver stopped his meter to detour through the more pleasant parts of the town pointing out places of interest, like the Titanic Memorial. Outside the railroad station a Character materialized from the sidewalk, the like of whom I had never seen in my life, asked her what part of the States she was from, invited her to look up his relatives there, and disappeared again with a most charmingly turned compliment. Inside the station the train from force of habit started dead on time, but saved the day by stopping again halfway out to let on an old lady who had arrived late. The city of Belfast then heaved a little sigh and went back to making money, but it never seemed quite the same to me again.

The fact is that everyone gets the Irish he deserves.

Their hospitality has given the Irish their reputation for extravagance, and more than once done them great harm. In 1541, in a time of war and poverty, an English visitor wrote, "Though they never did see you before they will make you the best cheer their country yieldeth for two or three days and take not anything therefor," and reported meals of milk, butter, herbs, spices, swans, partridge, plovers, quails, oysters, salmon, ale, mead, nectar and whiskey. What once aroused greed later justified apathy. In 1830 a Royal Commission reported that Irish farmers gave away a million pounds worth of food every year to the poor, a fact which convinced the English that there was plenty of food in the country. They refused to believe the Irish when they claimed to be starving until with characteristic perverseness they started dying like flies.

I suppose you will by now have quite given up hope of being reassured that all Irishmen have red hair and are called O'Something. I am afraid that all I can offer along these lines is the information that the majority of Irish people are of Blood Group O (indicative of Nordic ancestry). However, my barber tells me that quite a number of Irishmen are red-headed, about one in a hundred; and there are twenty-two pages of O'Somethings in the Dublin telephone directory. There are also twenty pages of McOthers, but both are outnumbered by English names. This is partly because through the centuries many Irish families changed their names to escape persecution or evade discrimination, often simply by translating them into English. The Sinnachs became Foxes, the Mac-anghobhanns Smiths, the Galbhains Whites, the Brannachs Walshes. The state of the Dublin telephone directory though may largely be accounted for by an edict of Edward IV in 1464 that "all residing within the counties of Meath, Dublin and Kildare should adopt an English surname--either from a town, or from some color, or some trade or office; and their posterity should retain that name in future time." So even if your name is Sutton or Chester or Black or Brown or Taylor or Carpenter or Cook or Butler, you may still be descended from the High Kings of Ireland.

However, being Irish is not a matter of parentage. It is an infectious condition endemic in the region, against which there is no protection but complete isolation, and for which there is no cure but death. As the wife of an English Prime Minister once said sadly, "Ireland is a country one comes to love like a person." So all the people who have come to Ireland and fallen in love with it, Norse and Norman and English, are now as much Irish as anyone if not more so. "It is not a question of race," said George Moore, "it is the land itself that makes the Celt."

"This has never been a rich or powerful country," said John Kennedy, "and yet, since earliest times, its influence on the world has been rich and powerful... No

larger nation did more to spark the cause of independence in America, indeed round the world. And no other nation has ever provided the world with more literary and artistic genius. This is an extraordinary country..."

-Walt Willis-

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GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

"Not so long ago I wrote this article for One Off which devoted several pages to a markedly unfavourable assessment of Joseph's achievements and abilities as a fanzine critic. ... Strangely enough, from the column in Nabu no one would ever guess that I'd said a word about him at all. I'm fairly used to a response that ignores the arguments and addresses itself only to the insults, but apparently even that is beyond the poor lad's waning powers."

-D. West, Nabu 10, no date, 1979?-

"It shouldn't take a genius to spot the tone of peevish dissatisfaction that underlies so much of what D. has to say about me. Several pages of One Off devoted to slagging me off, eh? Several pages devoted to slagging off /several others, as well/, all of whom have reacted in more or less the same manner as I -- with bored 'so what?' indifference. In which respect it's no wonder that he's complaining as much as he is: it must feel terrible to be so roundly ignored."

-Joseph Nicholas, Nabu 10, no date, 1979?-

..."it wasn't a coherent explanation, was it? ... Although why I should have to do that here when I should be doing it in the columns themselves I don't know. Dammit, if the columns /in Nabu/ aren't clear enough to begin with then they're no bloody good, and I'd better do something about shaping up my act. After all, Don (Astral Master) West took me to task for several of the things I said in my third column; and I could but nod my head in response to each of his statements, the while vowing solemnly never to so massacre logic and sense in the future."

-Joseph Nicholas, from a loc (c. 1979) in Raffles 6, May 1982.-

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GET IT

Patrick Nielsen Hayden's Fanthology 1981 is now out and a Must Have it definitely is. A beautiful production containing the tasteful Mr. Hayden's selection of the top fan writing of 1981. Here you'll find those splendid articles by Chris Atkinson (who in 1976 was leery about the whole idea of writing for fanzines "because once you are in print you are a possible target for scorn and ridicule") from Tappen, and other great stuff by Langford, White, Priest, Benford, Mayer, etc. If there is still any question whether last year marked the consolidation of a Fanaissance this time capsule should lay any doubts to rest. \$2.50 from Patrick: 4338 15th Ave NE #411, Seattle, WA 98105.

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ARTWORK CREDITS: The Hoffman/Bergeron Duel continues: Hoffman recklessly climbing atop the Wrhn logo with an absurd pre-historic drawing. Bergeron strikes back in the colophon and licks his wounds. Other Hoffmans: 7, 11. Doodles by the editor appear on pages 16, 25, 31, 39, 46, 51, 54, 72, and, of course, the covers.

“Being Best Fanzine Critic isn’t exactly the most earth-shaking of achievements at any time, and when there’s absolutely no real competition it gets a bit tedious. After all, who’s going to review me?”

—D. West, 1979?

FIVE YEARS AFTER

Don West might possibly throw up to hear about it, but in a roundabout way he's responsible for the degafiation of Richard Bergeron and the publication of Warhoon 28. Well, not that roundabout, actually. I guess it must have been the summer of 1977 -- back when Gary Farber and I were drifting around New York City and the Midwest and I had a CoA in several successive issues of Karass -- that Jerry Kaufman showed us a fanzine he'd just got from England called Wrinkled Shrew 7 which contained a closely reasoned 24-page essay on the state of British fanzines by this D. West character. It was an amazing piece; a Gargantua among fanzine review columns, a white-heat manifesto that nonetheless showed all the signs of having been rewritten several times, yet not without narrative drive sufficient to drag the reader from pillar to post all the way up to a ripping sensawonder-inspiring conclusion. It crogged us all. It also cheesed us off a bit, as good contentious writing is liable to do.

Specifically, where West seemed to have put his brains in backwards was towards the end of the piece, where in discussing the Weston/Platt/White controversy then current in Maya he segued into a discussion of Charles Platt and the gafiation of Walt Willis, writing as he went the most stinging critique of Willis and his influence on fandom I've ever read. Stinging enough, in fact, that it got Farber up-and-writing to the long-gafiated Richard Bergeron's last known address to ask if he'd given up on fandom entirely or if, perhaps, he still intended to publish that Willis anthology he'd been talking about back in 1971, hm? Guerilla tactics followed provocation by correspondence and no sooner had Gary dropped the letter into the mailbox

than he'd bundled a cardboard box bigger than he is full of current fanzines (including the pertinent Shrew) and enterprisingly deposited them in front of Bergeron's Upper East Side door. Apparently the amino acids and complex protein chains combined in the appropriate fashion since in a matter of days Gary received a letter from a strange new creature called "Dick Bergeron, Actifan" burbling effusively about all manner of projects imminent from publishing the WASH to founding love camps for trufen in the Ozarks. Fortunately that stage passed with the development of opposable thumbs and an upright stance and soon the Thing had evolved into the faned we see, or rather don't see, today. And for it we have none other than D. West to thank. Stand up and fall down, Mr. West.



ROUGH
MIX

Patrick
Nielsen
Hayden's
column

Well, lean down hard on the fast forward button, and suddenly it's no longer 1977 but 1982, and following the consumption of a good-sized stack of Rat fanzines loaned to Seattle fandom by Rich Coad this writer finds himself browsing through his own small cache of other, similar British publications with, as they say, a New Understanding of such critical matters as Rob Holdstock's chest hairs, Graham Charnock's glassy stare and Bigles And The Jiant Algy From Outer Spase. Which is irrelevant except insofar as it explains why I find myself rereading D. West's giant opus for the first time since the publication of the WASH. Holds up pretty well, too, except for the comments on Willis. Since Pat and Graham Charnock never seemed to publish another issue of Wrinkled Shrew, however, maybe a brief response, even one written and published five years after the fact, is in order. Besides, all good fannish material is Timeless, don't you know, even arrant fuggheaded nonsense like this trash from nonetheless suave intelligent and withit D. West. You fucking bet.

It's hard to get into, this quarrel of his with Willis, but it seems roughly to be born of temperamental differences, a little misplaced class antagonism, and a whole lot of misunderstood fanhistory. A crucial passage is when West quotes Tom Perry quoting Willis as saying, "I have never been able to think of anything so important that I had to shout it," an apparently inoffensive statement that nonetheless seems to drive West quite round the bend. "Is life to be nothing more than a politely muted mumble? An endless ennui of flaccid gentility? Not for me!" replies West, the reflection off the foam speckling his lips accidentally illuminating a whole corner of this particular intergenerational encounter.

One does wind up wondering how much Willis D. West had actually read when he wrote this. "Willis' brilliance is all sham: hollow as a gaudy glass bauble hanging on a Christmas tree," West says in dismissing Willis' prose stick. Now, this is not an impossible impression to get -- if your main experience of Willis' writing consists of ear-

ly Quandry columns and the editorial matter in Slant and Hyphen. But I find it hard to believe that West can have seen the Harp columns from the later Oopsla's, Quark, and Warhoon -- in many of which lurks, well subdued but always there like a firm bass line, a solid moral commitment, vision, and even anger at the persistent stupidity of the world. Indeed: well subdued. "Politely muted", even. There are very good reasons for

writing this way which have nothing to do with being mealy-mouthed or valuing "gentility" above all other considerations. Specifically -- and it is here where Willis' real strengths shine compared to even West and the best of his British contemporaries -- it gives you room to expand, to express real anger (or other strong feeling) in a startlingly effective way when you need to. Consider, for instance, a passage from the Harp in Warhoon 10, January 1961, debating disarmament with Gregg Calkins:

"The third argument, and here they're really scraping the barrel, is that it doesn't really matter if we're all obliterated because the rest of the Universe would carry on as usual. This was my first intimation that fandom now includes a number of extra-terrestrial entities, and I congratulate Dick on this unprecedented success with Warhoon. However to those of his readers who happen to be human beings, the question of survival does seem of some importance. If there are really any of us to whom it doesn't, would they mind getting the hell out of this argument, which can be of no possible interest to them, and committing suicide in some less spectacular way than blowing up our planet? Thank you and goodnight, Gregg Calkins. Oh by the way, are you shooting Jo and the baby too, or are you going to ask them if they think their survival is important?"

Now, could D. West, Joseph Nicholas, or even Greg Pickersgill achieve that particular sort of effect? I don't think so. Pickersgill, with his mastery of immediacy, might conceivably devise a paragraph from the same material that grabbed and startled the reader as much, but for it to actually stand out from the sort of thing he normally writes he'd have to beef the emotional intensity up to the point of strained credibility. Certainly he'd have no room to go from there. What Willis does has to do with the old saw about how you should beware the fury of a patient man -- since Willis is usually so easy-going and soft-spoken, people tend to reason that if he's actually raising his writerly voice there must be damned good reason. It's a matter of style, and of which strategies one prefers.

For a while I wondered if West didn't sort of subconsciously realize what options he'd passed up in adopting his own distinctly forceful style, and resent Willis his flexibilities, all the while concealing his resentment in attacks on Willis as a pos-eur. I don't think so, though. From this vantage the problem seems to be composed of a lot of interlocking little screwups. One is that there really appears to be a species of BNF in Britain who attends conventions like a grand signeur nodding politely to the hoi polloi. (In the US such snobbery is practiced more covertly, a testament to our populist roots.) This has resulted in an almost automatic tendency on the part of insurgent types in the UK to react to grace and politeness as if they were little time bombs due to fill the room with noxious smugness and condescension at any moment. Another is that the current generation of British fans' crucial myth -- the paideuma of their fannish culture -- is one of Young Turks Throwing The Corrupt Bastards Out, which tends to work against any sort of constructive fancestor worship (tongue-in-cheek phrase, O my British readers, with about as much seriousness attached to it as Big Name Fan).

West says of Willis, apropos of WaW's dealings with Platt, that "he was only equipped to deal with people who already stood in awe of his BNF status." Offhand, I would say that D. West is only equipped to deal with established and much-honored BNFs who are in actual fact shambling old frauds, and confronted with one who seems to have been -- to be -- the genuine article simply cannot cope. In fact, there is much less distance between Willis and West, as fannish ideology goes, than between West and the intolerant, fandom-hating Charles Platt. True, Platt would probably agree, and Willis disagree, with West's thesis that "where real differences of opinion exist they should not be sneaked round on tiptoe but kicked out into the open and set forth with as much

forcefulness of expression and downright acrimony as seems necessary." Sounds like exactly the sort of thing Platt likes to pay lip-service to as far as it suits him to do so, despite the fact that his malicious antics actually tend to degrade the language, terms, and issues of any given argument so far that the only thing the participants get out of it is a bad taste in their mouth. Whereas Willis would probably point out that it depends on which differences of opinion between which people you're talking about -- if Fan A is having a mutually illuminating discussion with Fan B about the current state of street music in Boston it would be silly for them to disrupt it by going hammer and tongs at each other over irreconcilably differing opinions about French national party politics. On the other hand, when you look at the ideology that has fueled Ratfandom and everything else creative in '70s British fannish fandom -- commitment to quality in written fanac and a disestablishmentarian spirit based on a deadly humor -- and then examine, first, Charles Platt's barely-coherent anti-fannish ravings over the last zillion years and, second, Willis' connection with Sixth Fandom, the standard-bearer of its day for pretty much the same ideology as I mentioned up there as being the essential tenets of Ratfandom et al., you can perhaps draw your own conclusions. Me, I think the idea of Charles Platt as an avatar of the sensible fannish iconoclastic attitude is one of the strangest ideas I've heard in years (still is, too, five years later).

But then, West has a funny view of the whole story of British fandom in the early 1960s, and while I wasn't around at the time any more than he was the contrast between his version and the version I get from contemporary sources makes me suspicious, as one should properly be as soon as what is being presented as History starts sounding like Myth. Everything I've heard and read about the Platt Wars, including Platt's own fanzines of the time, reinforces the general view that it was a sad and stupid time, full of thickheaded neofans, berift of any sort of decent examples, blundering about in a fog of their own miscalibrations. Yet to hear about it from D. West it's Instant Legend time, featuring Charles Platt as an only-slightly-flawed Junior Greg Pickersgill who smites down the evilly complacent old fart (Walt Willis in the unlikely role of Dave Kyle). Now, none of this would seem to me anything but typical fannish confusion except for the fact that this tale, as West tells it, just happens to work itself out as a nice teleological, justificatory myth for '70s UK fannish fandom as a whole, through particularly the Rat portions thereof, complete with a Moral and Many Points And Features Useful To The Young. Great stuff, with the only minor drawback that as history it's balderdash. But that didn't stop the Song of Roland, did it? Well, there is the fact that the principals of this one are still alive and everything. Perhaps we should wait. Or better yet, find different myths, myths that aren't vulnerable to the sort of vitiation this one gets via a brief WAHF-column quote in the loccol of the fourth issue of that supremely Rattish journal, Stop Breaking Down: "I enjoyed SBD 3," it runs, "but it made me feel like some Japanese soldier of WW2 who emerges from the jungle only to find the war still on." Now, whose name is attached to that? Hint: Not Charles Platt's. The implication is clear.

Well, anyway. As for the rest of West's criticisms, most of them are of the sort that can't really be intelligently argued about beyond a certain point, omnipotence and God-like knowledge of human motivation being beyond the ken of such folk as we who are not Malcolm Edwards. "Willis has about as much real modesty as a neon sign blushing red... Outside factors alone would not cause such an arch-fan as Willis to drop fandom so completely for so long. He quit because he didn't like it any more; he didn't like it any more because he saw his position as BNF of BNFs beginning to crumble." Oh, bullshit of bullshits, West. Willis' modesty -- and we are speaking of perceptible behaviors here, understand, not information about the Inner Man gleaned only through telepathy or other gnostic means -- is about as extensive as that of most reasonable people who happen to do something quite well, and know it. It's a minor miracle, in fact, when you consider the silliness and tendencies towards hero-worship of many younger fans, half of whom seemed determined at any given time to make Willis into a sort

of inhuman totemic demigod. Given that a few people like Platt are always going to be rubbed the wrong way, what the hell was Willis supposed to do? Write like Keith Walker? Attend conventions with a paper bag over his head? What he did do was probably the only acceptable option: he left. Though not on Charles Platt's behalf. What West says about the behavior of confirmed arch-fans is true enough, under normal circumstances; unfortunately, Willis lives in Belfast, a city of tragically abnormal circumstances; under which it became obvious in the late 1960s that some things were more important than fandom. Between 1968 and his recent retirement, most of Willis' spare energies have been diverted into the cause of peace in Ireland. So much for Platt's repeated assertions that fans are unable to deal with the real world. Though no doubt the Sage of Patchin Place could heal Ireland in an afternoon or two, given half a chance.

Well, anyway, anyway. What a tangled mess of myth, projection, and sad sordid truth. Poor West. Poor Willis. Poor Platt, for that matter, having to be Charles Platt for the rest of his life and all.

THE BEAST OF BINGLEY

Having said all that, I have to explain that I actually suspect fuggheaded but suave intelligent D. West of being a transcendental genius of sorts, really, and that this column was originally intended as an appreciation of his fannish commentary as reflected in these stacks of Rat fanzines I've been reading. Unfortunately, every time I mention West to someone over here the only thing they can tag his name to is that wasn't he that guy who wrote all that strange stuff about Willis and Platt a few years ago? or isn't he the guy with the peculiar cartoons in Twll Ddu? Poot. Certainly West doesn't deserve this sort of obscurity over here, even if the overwhelming bulk of his writing has appeared in scruffy little Rat fanzines whose editors are so anti-American that only Rich Coad gets copies and they tear the covers off his just to make sure he knows who's boss. West's writing is good and pertinent enough that North American fans ought to go out and scrounge copies of it from the Lucky Few, just like we in Seattle did and a mighty degrading thing it was too. See, that's the problem with you lot; no enterprise. I mean, this is a guy whose writng has had Impact, Influence, and Import, over There at least, with all manner of oblique and grotesque events proceeding from his advent; earthquakes, vast drunken orgies in the streets, births of two-headed calves, Greg Pickersgill giving up fanzine reviews, etc.

What West does very well indeed is notice what's actually going on. Whole chunks of what Ted White's article last issue was at best a prolegamena to dealing with are illuminated in a few succinct paragraphs by West from a con report published in Stop Breaking Down 5 (August 1977):

"Why is it that - initially at least - so many SF enthusiasts seem earnest, narrowminded, complacent, and even slightly stupid? Almost it seems as if these people are driven to seek SF out of a dim perception that it contains elements wholly lacking in their own characters: imagination, vision, invention, and a capacity for interest and excitement. (Not that I've ever had all of that from SF, but I do keep hoping and running the occasional spot-check.) No wonder, really, that fandom seems so alien and inaccessible. To the outsider, fandom's values are inverted: a fan no longer needs SF. He's started to grow his own.

"Outside, the mindless hordes mill endlessly, clutching their paperbacks and craning to catch sight of some famous pro. Inside are the boys who really know about time warps and such, and have made it to another dimension entirely. Yet it's curious to see how the hard core of fandom manages to impose its values even upon those who scarcely understand or sympathize. The caste system of fandom is a thing to marvel: a maze of ratings and fine distinctions complex beyond belief. Thing is,

by some mysterious and esoteric process the 'inner circle' hypnotises everyone else into taking it at its own valuation. The Elite is the Elite simply by taking their Greatness for granted. The rest just tag along like sheep.

"What Easthope and those others who complain of 'cliqueishness' fail to realize is that the 'Elitism' of fandom is not something imposed from above: it's entirely dependent on the voluntary servitude of those who consider themselves to be less worthy. The Establishment is really wide open; the barriers to admission exist only in the eye of the beholder. All that is necessary to be accepted as a fan is to be active in fannish pursuits."

Can anyone deny that these are the real facts of fannish "power" and "influence", such as they are? Yet people persist in dealing with them as if they were like military, civil, or financial power, obtainable by strategies metaphorically congruent with the methods one might use to get elected mayor, promoted to executive vice-president, or win a fight in a schoolyard. None of which work, and serve only to shunt the user of such strategies into one of the many shadowy sidings off the fannish main track, as shown by Ted White last issue. Fannish "power" is a voluntary game whose rules have more to do with magic than with anything else.

West goes on in the same con report, explaining the difference between "acceptance" and "immunity from criticism" and discussing the changes in British fandom over the last decade or so, to the effect that what West calls the old "star system" of BNFs, actifans and neos has passed away and in the resultant anarchistic chaos everyone is pretty much equally likely to "get the piss taken out of him pretty frequently." Good analysis but we're back into issues specifically pertinent to British fandom. But then he concludes, invoking in the process a feeling no convention-attending trufan can honestly deny ever having had:

"And so it goes. All these nonfans at conventions are just there to fill in the crowd scenes, to provide a background of animated noise, to create a party atmosphere, to feed the megalomania of fannish fans with the unconscious tribute they provide by their very existence. After all they do cooperate. The fans dominate the show, while the protofans -- creatures with no more than the potential of real life, like embryos which may miscarry or abort before coming to term -- go their ways only dimly conscious of the very existence of these Secret Masters.

"Weird carry on, when you think about it."

Weird bit of writing, when you think about it. Tongue-in-cheek yet serious: to me at least it's a masterful balancing act, playing off the obvious absurdity of non-fans as a lower form of life against the fact that in some way or another we exalted fannish types do mythologize non-fannish con attendees as "lesser breeds without the Law", not only on a subconscious level but also consciously, usually humorously but often with a touch too much seriousness for our own mental health. It's a minefield; one of our most-talked-about and least-thought-about subjects. D. West has thought about it.

Well, great, you say, but why bother? How does any of this fannish crap matter, matter enough to merit this sort of intellectual effort? I mean, it's damned difficult enough trying to sort out meaningfulness, reality, right and wrong, in the "real" world, without setting forth trying to pin down and analyze the experience of something as slippery as fandom, never mind fannish fandom whatever that is. Won't we just rehash the same old questions over and over again, ultimately arriving at the same nice pat please-as-many-people-as-possible answers, 60% reasonably close to right and 40% bluffing bullshit? Questions like these had me in a state of apathe-

tic paralysis not so long ago (I shit you not), so I'm grateful to West for inadvertently providing the answer in the third issue of Simone Walsh's *Seamonsters* (March '79):

"Like sex, it's all in the head. Recently I read a story (by Barrington Bayley) in which this bunch of aliens conquer the Earth easily enough, but have trouble running the place because they can't empathize with Earthly cares and motivations - themselves, they've come to the perfectly reasonable conclusion that nothing at all matters very much.

"Fandom consists of making meanings out of the meaningless - constructing a microcosmic universe which actually has some point. (It's not particularly unusual in this respect; innumerable other activities have the same purpose, including working for a living.) The fact that fandom is a minority interest imposes the extra strain of a sort of schizophrenia: the necessity to believe in the importance of what is going on while at the same time recognizing that in worldly terms the whole business is altogether trivial. Fanzines reflect this split-mindedness in the uneasiness of their compromises. The least authentic try to imitate something else - be it a college rag-magazine or a literary journal - while the most successful simply go for broke and frankly confess and indulge their eclecticism and eccentricity."

West goes for broke. He is that rare sort of fannish critic: capable of the difficult task of putting fandom's assumptions, myths and shibboleths into a larger context without resorting to the sort of sidestep that attempts to deal with fannish things by means of structurally tenuous comparisons with situations from the mundane intellectual world -- for example of which, see Our Editor's attempt, last issue, to give fandom a pedigree descended from Pepys, Samuel Johnson, Carroll and all those guys. Doesn't gold water, boss; fandom is fandom, and why should it have to be described in terms of all those other people's (admittedly worthy) ideas and accomplishments? It's akin to calling automobiles "horseless carriages with metal bodies" instead of "autos" or "cars", as if we were ashamed of the idea of autos being just autos.

But it's what we do all the time in our little byworld -- subconsciously assume that we're obligated to constantly justify and explain ourselves in the rest of the world's terms, which of course only leads to further ridicule from the Outside as we embarrassedly thrash about apologizing for precisely those things which make us most ourselves, as if we subconsciously really knew and believed that our interests and proclivities were cracked. The word on Mr. Press's notepad is always "Goshwowoboyoboy", and the term for our besetting sin is and always has been failure of nerve, as West himself very eloquently pointed out in *Wrinkled Shrew* 7, March 1977, the fanzine that brought you this column and this fanzine for that matter, in the ironically cyclic fashion at which fandom has always excelled:

"...Science Fiction, Mainstream, and fandom all in their different ways turn aside from too many challenges, make too many excuses and dodge too many difficult questions. (...) That good old term 'Sense Of Wonder' seems to have fallen into some disrepute lately, but the thing itself still exists and has meaning. In the last issue of Peter Roberts' *Egg* there was a short article on H.P. Lovecraft by James Parkhill-Rathbone. At first bafflingly opaque, the thought of the author finally revealed itself with a piercing clarity: 'a permanent feeling that it is strange to be alive at all, that life on earth is not an abstraction of the biologists, a phrase like "society" or "ecology" but an experience that is, personally, very surprising.

"That's it. Life is very strange, and is something to be investigated, celebrated, and enjoyed - not to be laid down in mothballs like best clothes that are to be worn only on special occasions and in the correct formal way. Put a little

kick into it, fans. Forget about scandalizing the zombie neighbors. You're all going to die -- why bind yourselves in the shroud before the time?"

If we're lucky, Don West's time is nowhere near. Good on him.

-Patrick Nielsen Hayden-

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ABOUT THAT "RIPPING SENSATION-INSPIRING CONCLUSION":

The final irony of West's column (in Wrinkled Shrew 7) is that it proceeds from the discussion of Willis to apply much the same sort of showbiz "what have you done for me lately" standards to Greg Pickersgill's recent work. In 1970, West says, Pick and Leroy Kettle revolutionized fandom with their fanzine Foulter... But now -- now Pickersgill is "in some danger of becoming less and less relevant to the fannish scene. He's stuck in a rut. ...his own success is catching up with him. ...Stasis means decline, sooner or later. Either fandom is a process of continual change and revolution or it is nothing more than what some would have it be: a retreat for aging hobbyists, a refuge for cheap status seekers and for inadequate personalities craving the comfort of approved mediocrity."

Several grandiloquent paragraphs roll on from there -- stuff about mountains to be climbed, houses to be built, enormous important problems to be solved through the magic of Stefal Type Thinking, and -- yes! -- sense of wonder.

Don says fans "dodge too many difficult questions." I think he's dodging some himself. Why does he retreat into these murky metaphors at just this point? Why malign alternative viewpoints with meaningless derogatory adjectives? (If you're not an aging hobbyist, you're an aging something else. Ain't nobody getting any younger.)

To me no better proof could exist that we're not climbing a mountain at all, but going around in a circle on the Vico Road. For this feeling that science fiction and fandom cannot be merely enjoyable but must also be important has evidenced itself before -- in the Gernsback Delusion, Michelism, New Fandom, N3F, FIAWOL, the Cosmic Circle, Fans Are Slans, the Crusade to Cleanup Fandom, WSFS, and the Heidelberg Opposition, to name a few. West doesn't specify just what the goal of the crusade is -- apparently it's up to Pickersgill to do that -- but ghod is it important, so we've all got to charge ahead, climb that mountain, upwards and onwards, excelsior!

So it's no wonder that elsewhere in this essay West urges the "throwing out of all the old rubbish that impedes advance." Timebinding means remembering that we've seen these landmarks somewhere before. And that means we're not likely to march along toward the Great Goal with the same iron discipline. We might sit down and relax and get to know each other, swap stories and fanzines, and generally just have a good time. We might even glance over some old obsolete fanzines -- produced before the great revolution -- and find them not so bad after all. Someone might even have a copy of "The Enchanted Duplicator" and leafing through it find (say in chapter 4 or 11 or 14) someone with a sharp resemblance to the current Maximum Leader, that guy who's screaming for everyone to get up off their asses and get a move on toward the New Tomorrow. Yes, and someone might laugh.

-Tom Perry in Quark 14, April, 1977-

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Today fandom. Tomorrow the world.

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“Jophan thought he was the most conceited and self-centered person he had ever met, but nevertheless the encounter refreshed him. It seemed to him that the dislike of such a person was a very good recommendation for Fandom.”

—Walt Willis, 1954

Dear RB:

Regarding your invitation to contribute to Warhoon -- I'm not sure that this would be entirely satisfactory to either party. As you will gather, I'm rather at odds with various aspects of the tradition Warhoon seems to represent, and while I don't feel it necessary to be always on the attack (being far too lazy in any case) this might cause problems. Most of my writing contains at least some critical content (and some of my writing contains nothing but critical content) and even if you were willing to publish this kind of thing it might be difficult to present it in a form that would be intelligible to your particular readership. (And they'd probably like it even less if they did know what I was talking about.) Anyway, I'm not a very productive writer and I'm already committed to various things for people over here.

My own attitude to reprints in general is that they're ok in small doses and with the right material, but that they're death in larger quantities. I didn't buy either of the British fanthologies, and only partly because I'd got most the material already. (Well, I think I have. Offhand I can't really remember what was in the bloody things.) Most fanwriting is produced for a specific time or place or both, and taken out of context it loses an awful lot of its fannish appeal. I view fanzines and fanwriting as organic and holistic, not as interchangeable receptacles for interchangeable assembly-line productions. Sometimes you can transplant an article, but it has to be done very

selectively. (And if you don't need to be selective, then this to my mind suggests that the work in question must be rather lacking in any real individuality. Stuff like that I can get anywhere. I certainly don't need it in fanzines.) The best place to read old fanwriting is in old fanzines.

Still, I suppose it's all a matter of taste and not too important so long as nobody starts getting dogmatic about it. If you want to reprint the entire works of Walt Willis that's your business. It isn't going to bother me any -- just so long, that is, as nobody insists I raise my right hand and swear how marvellous, wonderful and really important said works are. So here's where we get to Warhoon: The problem is, not only is your kind of thing not my kind of thing, but it appears that I'm going to have difficulty even saying this without running afoul of people like Ted White.

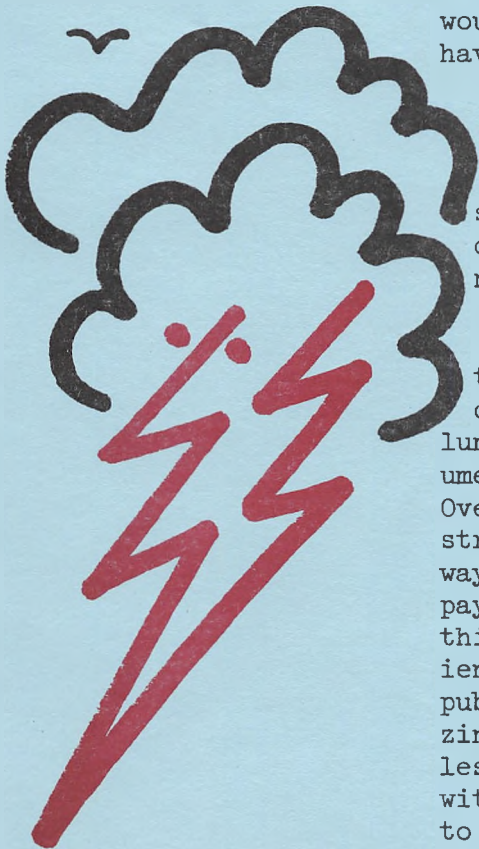
OUT OF THE BLUE

A letter
from
D. West

My attitude to Ted White is rather ambivalent. On the one hand, he does represent some small sign of life amidst the generally gutless mediocrity of American fan criticism. On the other hand, a closer look at his opinions and arguments tends to indicate that he is all full of shit. Well, win some, lose some. (Or winsome all the time, as in the case of Joseph Nicholas.) I guess the man's status as critic and commentator depends heavily on the fact of his having so little real competition. I once compared the average American fan feud to the spectacle of two tranquillized slugs trying to trample each other to death. White is definitely in a different class -- more like a woodlouse on speed. This gives him an unfair advantage over the others. (But see White v. Glyer and other riotous recent issues of Pong. Maybe I had it right first time.) Trouble is, over here he would have got trodden on long ago. Still, I suppose you have to work with what you've got.

Anyway, down to some details. The article "The Politics of Fandom" is a strange mixture of facts, fallacies and plain old nonsense. Some of what White has to say is probably true of all fandom, some is probably true only of American fandom, and some has little or no connection with any reality outside his own head.

Reading American fanzines I've sometimes been struck by the fondness American fans seem to have for committees, chairpersons, secretaries, treasurers, and all the other lumber of administration and bureaucracy. One can only assume they go in for this kind of thing because they like it. Over here, there's comparatively little in the way of formal structures at all. The chief organization, the BSFA, has always been pretty ramshackle and never exactly notable for paying attention to rules of procedure. (In fact, the whole thing has usually been treated as little more than a convenient source of funds, enabling the editors of its 'official' publications to bring out what are in effect subsidised fanzines.) The local groups, societies etc are generally even less tightly organized. Perhaps this has something to do with the habit of meeting in bars, and the general devotion to drink. Apart from its other effects, alcohol does have a tendency to increase resistance to any form of organiza-



tion whatsoever. (The fact that British fans seem to get drunk much more frequently than Americans probably also contributes to various other differences between the fan-nish cultures. But that's a whole subject on its own.) Then there's the factor of size. In Britain it's possible to know (or at least know of) virtually all the fanzine fans, and to meet most of them two or three times a year at conventions, or more frequently at local level (since the geographical separation isn't all that great.) A point to bear in mind is that there are hardly any British fanzine fans who are just 'Paper personalities' -- virtually all of them have a social face as well. (Your own and others' comments on Greg Pickersgill, for instance, fail to take this into account.) In these circumstances fandom tends to exist as a loose whole rather than a collection of isolated and insular groups, and the business of playing the local bigshot becomes fairly obviously ridiculous.

So far so good, and since I find the 'mundane' sort of politicking (with minutes and meetings and elected officials and so on) quite as tedious as Ted White, I'm happy with 'fannish anarchy'. On the other hand, White doesn't seem to recognize that there are two kinds of fan politics. One consists of the boring, formal, simpleminded nonsense he describes, in which individuals with delusions of grandeur pursue largely illusory positions of power, and the other is the more intricate (and interesting) game of status and influence which just about everyone else is playing. This second kind of politics is the one in which White is heavily involved himself, though he doesn't seem aware of it.

'Fandom is a meritocracy.' Yes indeed, but in what terms, exactly, is the merit to be defined? In terms of comparability with (or descent from) the particular fandom Ted White grew up in? Any such definition is a fan-political power-grab (and not particularly subtle at that) since White is simply pushing the line which will give himself and his friends the most status. Fair enough -- except that if he does it so crudely he really shouldn't be surprised if the audience responds by giving him the finger.

'Power' in fandom doesn't really have much connection with material objects. The material prizes are limited to convention funds and the like, and are fringe benefits rather than essentials. The material sanctions to control other fans simply do not exist. However, there is a considerable potential for getting people to do what you want (or to grant you a certain status) by working to influence their perceptions. Virtually everybody who publishes a fanzine is doing this, whether they consciously recognize it or not.

Fans compete, and this competition is rarely (if ever) solely a matter of writing better prose or drawing better pictures than the next fan. (This should be pretty obvious when you consider the productions of those people who don't even try to write or draw better work.) The competition in fandom is concerned with making an impression -- an end to which good writing may be only a means, or may even be seen as largely irrelevant. In practice, it matters less (from this point of view) how good a fan is as writer, artist or whatever, than to what extent he can make other fans grant him the equivalent status.

That's what fan politics is really all about, and Ted White is either a hypocrite or singularly lacking in self-awareness if he can't acknowledge that that's what he's playing at -- both in Warhoon and just about everywhere else I've seen his work. Performance is not just what you do -- it's what you can make people see you as doing. Fan politics is about fashion -- who or what is 'in' or 'out'. And while nobody can be compelled to follow fashion they can certainly be sold on the idea -- regardless of the quality of the goods concerned.

Myself, I enjoy this kind of thing, being one of the 'devious, manipulative' kind

of persons referred to. I omit 'unpleasant, hypocritical and insincere' -- I have to leave the other side some adjectives.) So I don't really object to White's fan-politicking as such. On the other hand, I do object to the pretense that he himself is not involved in such activity, and also to the terrible lack of style he shows.

The White approach is best described as Dumb Brute Force. He tries to bludgeon the audience into acceptance by sheer weight of verbiage. For a man who is supposedly devoted to the entertainment side of fandom he shows little real wit himself and not much perception of humour elsewhere. For instance, whenever I start thinking the human race is pretty dull, boring and predictable, I turn to the Cosmic Circle and feel more cheerful immediately. White, on the other hand, regards such aberrations with gloomy disapproval. (The mind boggles at the thought of what he would make of the Astral Leauge...) Gosh, Ted, what does it take to get one small snigger out of you? Drone, drone, drone -- all deadly serious, solemn and portentous. Jesus, maybe the poor guy actually believes all this shit about how earth-shattering Sixth Fandom was...

This is all making me regret missed opportunities. If I'd only known how far gone in rectitude the poor kid was I could have sneaked up on him at Seacon and given him a good shake and yelled a few facts in his ear.

Still, facts aren't the kind of thing that bothers Ted White too much -- even the kind of facts he knows very well, but apparently chooses to keep in some specially padded brain cell. Like, for instance, the fact that British fandom has been wholly separate from American fandom for the last ten or fifteen years. And the fact that Walt Willis has been largely absent from the British fan scene for just as long.

So why do we get all this garbage indicating criticism of Willis is the next best thing to blasphemy? Why all the shock/horror? This is ancient history, for God's sake. Who cares? Well, obviously White has to care. Because if all that stuff wasn't really so hot -- if somebody even thinks it wasn't so hot -- where does that leave him. Groupies don't have any more status than their idols, and if the idols lose their shine then things are really tough all round.

Which is all very sad, but no particular reason why I should stand still for such a load of crap as that purveyed by White in his paragraphs on myself and Charles Platt.

As it happens, I remember reading the Willis piece that moved Platt to make his original attack. I thought Platt had a case, but being a fairly new fan in those days (around 1964, I think) I didn't have anything to say myself. Later, in the 70s, when the matter came up again, I was more sure of my ground. In a way it was all very academic, since Willis was long gone from the active British scene, but I was feeling irritated by the dogmatic insistence that Willis and his particular approach were somehow above criticism, and that nobody could possibly presume to say a word against Good Old Walt except from the basest and most despicable motives.

Looks like nothing much has changed. Admiration for Willis is still the next best thing to a fannish Loyalty Oath. If you don't like Willis then by Ghod you're not a fan at all, as far as Ted White is concerned. (I keep wondering why I haven't been struck down by a bolt of lightening. I mean, people still talk to me, even.) I did worry a little bit, when I wrote that Willis-denouncing piece for Wrinkled Shrew (which also, incidentally, criticised a whole lot of other people as well) that I might alienate a few people I wished to be on good terms with. In the event, the only person who seemed to notice was Tom Perry, who wrote what I'm told was an attack on me in his Quark. (I never could figure that out -- the whole thing was so veiled as to be totally opaque, and it's possible it referred to someone else altogether. Hugo Gernsback, maybe.) The awful truth is that scarcely anybody in Britain has given

much of a fuck about Willis' reputation for the last decade or more. It's even conceivable that there are fans around today who never even heard of the guy. Yet things seem to go along quite merrily. What this suggests is that the White scale of values might be just a little bit out of touch with reality.

Ah, who needs reality anyway? Especially someone who can write a sentence like: "It's a safe bet that both individuals are more closely bound to their mundane culture than most fans are, whether in acceptance of that culture or in rejection of it."

Go on, you figure it out. Looks like he's got us coming, and he's got us going. Either Platt and I are frightful conformists or we're frightful non-conformists. Sounds reasonable. (Like: 'Either it is raining, or it is not raining.') Of course, captious person might complain that in terms of logic this is a statement which is so tautologous as to be fatuous. Also, it's a little hard to explain how such opposites can both be reconciled with the same argument (that we attacked Willis out of a mistaken transfer of mundane class-consciousness to fandom, or a desire to advance our own reputations). Still, that hardly matters. The number one implication is plain: being "individuals who have failed to understand either fandom or their perceived targets" we aren't really fans at all.

The syllogism goes like this: all fans adore the works of Willis; West and Platt do not adore the works of Willis; therefore West and Platt are not fans. The only trouble here is that the conclusion is true only if the premises are true. And, sad to say, there are quite a few people who will swear that I'm a fan, and an even larger number who are not Willis worshipers.

(A thought occurs to me -- why not cut out the middleman and just make the qualifying test of fannishness a matter of who adores Ted White? Save everybody a whole lot of trouble.)

All of this is rather too transparent. As ever, White is running for office as BNF on the Sixth Fandom/Willis ticket, and you'd better vote the right way or the boys will get together and tut-tut you flat. Really heavy stuff. Trouble is, it only works on shitheads who can't think for themselves and don't have the minimal level of literacy to take care of a Ted White attack. (Submit now, or Ted will bore you to an early grave.

Zzzzzzzzzzzzz as they say in the comic books.

How can you stand it, over there? I mean, what's up with you guys that you let him get away with all this lamebrained flimflam? Bloody hell, contact with American fandom is like fishing around in cold porridge -- after a while you even start getting excited when you find a lump which is a bit more solid than the rest of the gelid mess. Then it turns out to be only Ted White.

Just so we all know where we are, let's get it on the record one more time: I have no very great respect for the works of Walt Willis and I have even less respect for those Willis-worshipers who insist that Willis-adoration is somehow essential to being a fan at all. "The Enchanted Duplicator", about which so many American fans profess to be completely bananas, is a fairly tedious piece of laboured whimsy. The other writings are clever, hollow, and relentlessly bland. Willis is nothing but surfaces -- an endless succession of polished, carefully contrived masks. It's good like well-modelled wax is good -- and about as alive. Doubtless Willis could have contrived something elegantly turned to say about the weather forecast (and doubtless he did, somewhere or other) but so what? It can all be summed up as skill in the art of polite conversation -- and five minutes later no one gives a fuck about any of it. Moments of gravity, light touches, profound thoughts -- it's all on the same level of

artificiality. And to the unbesotted eye the artifice is creakingly obvious. It's like watching a surgeon reconstruct a corpse. This is some kind of Ideal?

Ghosts are what I can do without, particularly the ghosts of people I never much revered in the first place. So I have a pretty strong objection to getting this ancestor worship routine dumped on my head all the time. If I'm aiming to set up any sacred cows I think I'd prefer a model which is reasonably up to date and which I've chosen myself, not a moth-eaten skin and a memory bequeathed by some previous generation.

This is hardly tactful, is it, considering your own labours on behalf of the Willis legend? Still, I think you ought to be a little more aware that excessive devotion to the past can be counterproductive. Myself, I do have some interest in fannish history, but I view it as history, not as some kind of Holy Writ. I don't reverence the past at all, I'm just curious about it. Reminiscences are all very well, and can be entertaining, certainly, but it's decidedly unrealistic to expect people who didn't share the experiences in question to consider them as in any way important. What I, or anyone else, said or did ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago is of not the slightest consequence to the fans of today. Likewise, it doesn't much matter how good I or anyone else was ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago -- what matters is performance now.

And here's the point: as far as I'm concerned, fans lose status if they don't continue to do something to earn it. Fandom isn't some kind of timeless limbo in which nothing ever changes and there's one (and only one) path to glory, and once you've gone that route you're made forever. BNFs don't have tenure. Ted White's stuff about a "transfer of mundane class-consciousness" is nonsense (while his extraordinary suggestion that Platt and I attacked Willis simply because he was Irish is not just nonsense but evidence of brain damage). Fandom is a meritocracy, yes, but the merit lies in doing something now, not having (perhaps) done it in the dawn of prehistory.

Just how good Willis ever was remains an arguable question -- an arguable question, please note, not one settled beyond all dispute -- but there can hardly be much argument about the fact that it's a very long time since he made any contribution to British fandom. So why on earth should we be other than bored or irritated by the attempted insistence that the works of WAW represent the all-time Fannish Standard of Excellence? It's like an assertion that all novels should be modelled on the works of Jane Austen (since no one could possibly do any better any other way). Even people who liked Jane Austen might start getting a little restless under such limitations, while those who were less smitten might be excused for turning nasty.

Ted White's view of fandom and fan history is parochial, narrow-minded, absurdly limited and almost entirely self-centered. He seems to be fixated on some kind of fan-historical process in which each step is vital to the next step -- one brick piled on top of another. Take a brick out -- such as Willis -- and the whole edifice collapses in ruins. End of Civilization As We Know It.

Balls. This kind of nonsense assumes that the forms of fanwriting (and fandom in general) are so tremendously subtle and require such massive genius to discover that the poor halfwitted newcomer will never get anywhere at all unless he turns to the Wisdom of the Ancients (as purveyed by Ted White). Balls again. Shocking idea though it may seem, there is a world outside fandom where people do learn to read and write and even get their ideas from sources other than fanzines. Not all knowledge is found in fanzines, and not all good writing.

(It's rather ironic that while American fanzines have generally been regarded with derision for the last ten years or so, American writers -- such as Tom Wolfe, Hunter Thompson etc -- have often been much admired and had a strong influence. The derogatory comments you get in British fanzines aren't anti-Americanism -- they're

simply anti-American-fanzines.)

It ought to be notorious by now -- in fact it is notorious, though it's another of those little facts that keeps slipping White's mind when it's inconvenient -- that each generation of fans tends to re-invent the fanzine almost from scratch. This can be pretty tedious to watch, but it also has its illuminating aspects. It's obvious, for instance, that quite often people don't so much get converted to fandom as simply recognize it as something towards which they were already struggling. Not a few people produce fanzines before they've ever heard of the word. In other words, fandom and fanzines are the result of a peculiar set of conditions which exist independantly of the peculiar set of people who, as it happens, have been attracted to them in the past. The situation is more significant than the people. Nobody is indispensable and nobody ever was indispensable. Given a few reasonably intelligent people the whole caboodle could be reconstructed from scratch in a couple of years. Fan history will always consist of personalities, but it doesn't really matter which personalities. The thing goes on regardless.

Looks like I'm blaspheming again. After all, if this is true, where does it leave poor old Ted, who doesn't have much going for him except an awful lot of History? I suppose that's why he has to plug the Party Line so hard, raking over the ashes of the past and throwing up a heavy cloud in the hope that it will conceal the fact that times have changed while he's stuck in the same spot. Most of the dust seems to have gone to his own eyes, if he really can't see that he's playing the fan-politics game he professes to condemn. Exclusion by definition is the trick he principally relies on: if something can't be defined in the terms that fall within the White area of authority (Willis, Sixth Fandom, etc, etc) then it isn't fannish at all. Glory, glory. If Ted White doesn't know it, doesn't want to know it (and furthermore didn't think of it first) then it's not worth knowing and shouldn't be mentioned in polite conversation.

I sometimes wonder what's the matter with you people, that you all seem so terrified of getting out of the past and into the present. Even the British fandom of the 70s has to be seen not as itself but as some kind of reincarnation of figures from a (totally alien) American history. (Pickersgill is the new Laney, or Burbee, or whoever.) How on earth are you going to handle the British fandom of today? Not at all, by the look of things.

Good God. What a load of solemn nonsense it all is. (If it makes you happy I'll settle for being the New Claude Degler. Now there was a guy with vision...) I perceive that there's going to be lots of oh-so-serious American fans getting the piss taken out of them unmercifully, and never quite catching on. Nothing seems to have changed (or penetrated) since that extraordinary article by Susan Wood.

Certainly nothing seems to have penetrated Ted White's skull. Still, I suppose if a stray idea ever did manage to break in it would soon start feeling so lonely it would have to leave in a hurry. Anyhow, he doesn't really need ideas, with all that Ancient Wisdom for a truss.

I give up. Maybe it's like the man says: "It made no sense until one realized that for this person the 'history' he'd been pushing was his own validation: it gave him the status he could not otherwise earn."

Right. Except that White should be thinking less about the application of these words to Sam Moskowitz and more about the application to himself. Sure, he can establish very wonderful credentials as One Who Was There At The Time, but it would be more impressive to see evidence of what he can do now -- apart, that is, from pick

over the bones of dead dogmas and long-gone triumphs.

Must try harder. Must start trying.

--Don West

RE: REINVENTING THE WHEEL

The trouble with all this, though, is that everyone comes to fandom and fanzines as if they've just invented it for themselves, which is not only alarmingly solipsist but also as far as I'm concerned is totally fucking stupid. It would never occur to me to try and do something without checking on how it had been done before, and moreover, not doing it at all if I felt I couldn't at least equal the people who'd come before me. Which is why I was outraged when some character at the convention said, more or less, to hell with the past, we don't need to know, man, we do it all our way, etc. Okay, fair enough, if you can do it better, by all means abandon the past (as indeed British fandom did in the early Seventies), and while you're at it kick out any obsolescent ideas and attitudes too, but do it carefully. And remember, just because it's a fanzine doesn't mean it's good or even interesting.

-Greg Pickersgill in Stop Breaking Down 7, August, 1981-

“I enjoy this kind of thing, being one of the ‘devious, manipulative’ kind of persons referred to.”
—D. West, 1982

Dear D:

Thanks for sending me the carbon of your letter. I found it fascinating, in the same way I might find a rabid bat, flopping around on the ground, fascinating.

I seriously doubt that there exists between us enough common ground for any real communication to occur, but I'm willing to make one stab at it, in recognition of the energy which went into your seven pages of ravings about me, and the courtesy that led you to send me a copy (if it was courtesy; it occurs to me that it might instead have been the desire to raise a little mischief that much quicker).

From my point of view you are fundamentally wrong in nearly every premise from which you argue at such length in your letter, and certainly you are mistaken about my motives and how I think. But I will cheerfully admit that I was more than likely wrong about you in my characterization of you in Warhoon 29 -- as I was aware I might be when I wrote it. But I felt I might well get a rise out of you -- I didn't anticipate

seven pages worth, but I did hope that you might be stung by the injustice of the way I characterized you at least as much as I was by the injustice of your piece in Wrinkled Shrew.

Your point about the second type of fan politics is valid and well-made, but represents a point of view which I don't myself hold. After all, all politics, defined broadly, has to do with "status and influence"; you are simply extending the idea beyond overt politics to interactive behavior of all sorts. And while it is true that to some extent indulgence in this level of politicking is unavoidable, a good deal depends on the degree of emphasis one places on the conscious pursuit of it. I do not find it nearly as "interesting" or "enjoyable" as you do -- since it is to the extent that one realizes one is doing it both manipulative and coercive, and I care for neither. Nor is it why I am in fandom. I socialize in fandom (to the extent that I do) because I enjoy the company of my friends and the opportunity to make new friends. I write for and publish fanzines because I enjoy the act of writing for and publishing fanzines. Simple (or complex) enjoyment has always been my primary motive and I think it is the primary motive of many other fans. If your motives differ, I don't object to that, but I do object to your monochromatic vision of fandom as a place where all strive for status and to be "fashionable."

The "merit" in "fandom is a meritocracy" is constantly being defined by the expressed opinion of the body of fandom -- and in ways I don't always agree with, either (such as the popularity of subfandoms grown up around Star Trek or Ms. Lichtenberg)-- but as I was using the word "merit" has more to do with artistic criteria than relative comparisons with any given social group. That is, good writing is to be valued over poor writing; good drawing over inept drawing; etc. To the extent that a consensus of fans recognizes specific merit in something, that thing will be valued.

WEST
OF THE
MOON

Ted White
replies



Where we totally part company is in the motives you ascribe to those who see merit where you see none. Since I myself find little merit in the pudding-blandness and self-congratulations of all too many American fanzines, and I see myself engaged in a struggle to change this, both by criticism and by example, I find a certain irony in the position in which you place me.

I don't, for instance, think that fans compete. I think we collaborate. Why else have we befriended newcomers in whom we recognized kindred spirits? Why do we write for each others' fanzines instead of hoarding all our material for our own zines? To be sure, the element of competition is not entirely absent, but it is not a competition for status, but rather for excellence, rather like that in sport: a spur to improve oneself and one's work.

I find this attitude paralleled in music. When I play in a band there is on one

level the competition between band members to come up with the best music, the best ideas, the best execution. But there is also the cooperation and support that we give each other: the ideas we trade back and forth and each build upon collaboratively. The idea is to reach a common goal, not to beat each other out. In the groups in which I've played (admittedly not commercial successes, but not trying to be that, either) the concern has been to create music on which we could all get off, which rewarded us with pleasure and if there's an audience did the same for it.

Fandom is for me exactly the same. I write and publish stuff because I get off on it and I hope others will too, but not in order to primarily or specifically influence or impress people so that they will grant me Status. Whatever status I have in fandom is a reflection of what I have achieved, not something I deliberately set out to acquire. (By way of example: Harlan Ellison lobbied heavily for the earlier Hugo and Nebula awards he received and in the process devalued those awards for himself. If he'd sought those awards solely for financial gain and career advancement, his tactics would have been justified -- to him, anyway -- but he hadn't. Harlan wanted those awards as symbols of how much he was valued -- loved, even -- as a writer, but by pushing so hard for them he corrupted their meaning to him, and they became only symbols of how successfully Harlan could manipulate the people whose unsolicited admiration he truly desired. Recognizing this, Harlan found little meaning in them and -- being Harlan -- had to go on winning awards, which meant continuing to lobby for them, hoping eventually to achieve the meaning from them that he knew they didn't possess, a vicious circle which was broken -- if it was -- only by the fact that eventually he had enough momentum that further striving on his part was no longer necessary to go on winning awards... By the same token, if I scheme and manipulate in order to achieve Status, then that Status is worth little to me since I regard it as dishonestly come by and thus not representing anything of value.)

This is not to say that I wouldn't like to influence fandom in specific directions, and certainly much of the more didactic stuff I've written has been for that very purpose. But I see fandom as a (large) collection of individuals, and its overall nature at any given time as the sum collective nature of those individuals. That is, if American fandom is bland and dull, it is because too many American fans (the majority, or at least a large visible portion) are individually bland and dull. Most of them cannot be changed; fandom can be changed only by either driving them out or swamping them with new recruits who are more lively and interesting.

Since I've never found the human race "pretty dull, boring and predictable," I've never looked to the Cosmic Circle for a chuckle. No doubt if you ignore Claude's propensity for rudeness to his hosts and his mental illness, he might seem more amusing, but I can't help thinking that your reaction is amazingly shallow. Then again, I can't help wondering what, if anything, you actually know about the subject.

Yes, I am well aware that British fandom has been isolated from US fandom for the last ten or twelve years -- although recent attempts to sort my vast fanzine collection have yielded up a number of mid-70s British fanzines which I find myself appreciating now far more than I did on their arrival (when I was myself somewhat uninterested in fandom on either shore), including the Wrinkled Shrew with your long diatribe which I did read at the time -- and fail to see how this "fact" had any bearing on my piece in Warhoon.

And I see no point whatsoever to your continued reiteration of Walt Willis' relative inactivity in the seventies. Shakespeare has been dead for centuries; do you object equally to the fact that his plays are still being staged and his works still taught to students? "Fans lose status if they don't continue to do something to earn it." That's a novel point of view; if we applied it outside of fandom would that mean

that now Picasso is dead his paintings are worthless? Should we allow Shakespear's plays to vanish into history unperformed because "it's a very long time" since old Will "made any significant contribution to British" playwrighting?

The simple fact is that, although you appear to be too tin-eared to recognize it, Willis set a high standard in his writing, and the excellence of that writing has not been diminished or devalued by the fact that some of it is now more than 30 years old. I note that fans as completely contemporary as Avedon Carol, upon reading Warhoon 28, have been completely won over by Willis, surely ample evidence that he remains not only entertaining and enjoyable to read but as relevant as ever.

Who cares if Willis "has been largely absent from the British fan scene for...the the last ten or fifteen years"? The notion that you have to be doing something Right Now in order for it to be any good or worthy of admiration is a notion for which I have little but contempt. The entire history of the creative arts denies you. But I forgot; you believe in "fashion". This year's fashion obviates last year's. Here today, gone tomorrow. Willis? Who's he?

But then, you are also arguing that Willis was never that good. This is at least a more arguable point, and less foolish on the face of it -- if you've read rather little of his work. "I thought Platt had a case," you say of Charles' idiotic attack on Willis's Zenith column. I disagree -- not because I am a "Willis groupie" (my reputation in fandom, in any case, hardly stands or falls with Willis's), but because I thought that particular column -- an essay on humor and how it is written, using Beryl Mercer's fanzine as a bad example -- was a striking example of a) good writing, b) constructive criticism, and c) insightful thinking. You characterize Willis as "clever, hollow, and relentlessly bland." That was not true of the Zenith column, nor is it true of most of his other writing, which indicates to me that either you have read very little Willis, or that you are incapable of understanding what you have read. All of Warhoon 28 refutes you, totally and completely.

But then, I see little indication that you can read anything except that which filters through your prejudices. (If I was wrong about you, as an Englishman, entertaining a prejudice against the Irish, then I must conclude that you have other prejudices for I recently re-read Tom Perry's response, in Quark, to your Wrinkled Shrew piece. You found it "so veiled as to be totally opaque." I found it pointedly on-target. Are you really that rigid, or is it that you cannot admit publicly an error in your perceptions? The only "opaqueness" in Perry was his unwillingness to name Charles Platt, and in this I think he was much like those who refuse to name John Lennon's assassin in order to deny the man the notoriety he sought.)

As for the "fatuous"ness of my statement "that both individuals are more closely bound to their mundane culture than most fans are, whether in acceptance of that culture or in rejection of it," I see that I must explain to you what I thought too obvious to require detailed explanation: Most fans are -- or were, until recently with the onslaught of media-fen -- cultural outsiders. Reading sf taught them to look upon their culture as an alien observer might. I imagine you would not argue thus far. As for being more closely bound to their culture by either acceptance or rejection, let me give you an analogous parallel: Among those who are raised as Roman Catholics are those who have rejected their Catholicism by turning to Satanism and the Anti-Christ. Although they have rejected Catholicism, they remain bound to it and have not really escaped it: they still accept its tenents and its basic worldview, having only opted for the reverse side of the coin -- unlike, say, an agnostic who is indifferent to all of Catholicism. Or, as The Old Zen Master so quaintly puts it, hatred binds one to ~~mm~~ one's enemies. While you may well feel that my statement did not apply to you, it is logically sensible (in the abstract) and neither "tautologous" nor "fatuous".

Nor was I saying that if you "failed to understand either fandom or (your) perceived targets," you are not a fan. I do not go around making pronouncements of who is or is not a fan. If you regard yourself as a fan, then you are one. So what? Platt renounced fandom. I get the impression that you've simply dropped out of most fan activity. (No longer "fashionable"?) After all, fandom has always had its share of fugg-heads. Platt revealed a streak of maliciousness that was even greater than his undeniable brilliance as a writer, and I think it's crippled him as a person. In any case, I don't pass judgement on you in terms of whether or not you're a fan; I do respond -- with distaste -- to you as a fan as I've encountered you (which has been pretty much solely in that Wrinkled Shrew piece). Sorry if that bothers you, but that's your problem. I can assure you that my reaction was not mine alone.

Inasmuch as I have commented (in Pong) at length on the subject of each new generation of fans "reinventing the wheel," you missed the boat in your castigation of me on that point. What bothers me is the simple unnecessariness of this reinvention process. It is a terrible waste of time and energy for those involved, nearly pointless to those not involved but watching it, and is senseless in its redundancy since so rarely is anything genuinely new and useful created. Clearly it is the product of ignorance -- no one would willfully ignore previous generations' progress to, for example, reinvent oil pigments in order to paint -- and all ignorance is remediable. It is easier to overcome one's ignorance of What Came Before in fandom than in many areas of activity, and sheer arrogance to persist in ignorance.

But although fandom is a trivial artform, ranked up against, say, the history of Western art, writing, and music, it is not true that it doesn't matter who had existed at any point -- "it doesn't really matter which personalities" -- since the history of fandom, as in the history of all art, is not the history of generalities but of specific talents. Specific people, talented or particularly strong in personality, have dominated specific eras and places in fandom, and had they not existed the history of fandom would be quite different. Imagine the history of music had there not existed Bach, Beethoven, Debussy, or, particularly, Schonberg (who gave the 20th century a whole new vocabulary). There would still have been music, yes, but not the same music, and possibly not even the same kinds of music. Equally, Los Angeles fandom of the 30s and 40s would have been totally different without Forrest Ackerman, and the Sixth Fandom era would have been very different without Willis -- and possibly even current-day British fandom might have evolved differently with a different cast of characters. While it's true that as nascent fans we encounter in fandom something we intuitively recognise (a good point on your part), a lot has to do with whom we encounter and what aspects of fandom we brush up against first. If we meet first an aspect of fandom which bores or annoys us, we may simply decide that fandom is not for us and leave again without ever having found the part we'd have resonated favorably with.

To the extent that the history of fandom is a history of high points, of peak achievements, it is the history of talented individuals, BNFs, and not of social movements, just as the history of any branch of writing is the history of talented individuals and their specific works.

You may feel that I have nothing going for me but "an awful lot of History," but what is that "History"? Simply the record of my various achievements as a fan. I've put out a number of good fanzines and I've written enough and well enough that I once was awarded a Hugo for fanwriting. Unlike Willis, I have become embroiled in controversies more than most fans, and I am nowhere nearly so well liked, but I don't believe I've traded on my past to any extent. Today I am writing a wide variety of material for fanzines, little of which I think you've seen. You're entitled to your opinion of the quality of what I write, but I doubt you'd have formed the opinion you've expressed at such length in your letter had I not taken a passing swipe at you in the Warhoon

piece. (I note that while you've called me a number of names, you've responded on a substantial level solely to those paragraphs in the piece which concerned you.)

Well, there it is: more than I'd intended to write. The temptation was to answer insult with insult, a temptation which I've tried, with only partial success, to resist.

Over to you.

--Ted White

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RE: REINVENTING THE WHEEL

Hitherto eras in fandom were rather like the civilizations in Asimov's "Nightfall". A fandom would rise, flourish, and then suddenly collapse in ruins. There is a period of chaos, with the survivors eeking out a precarious existence in the ruins or retiring to the Shangri-La of FAPA, until a new fandom is built up slowly and painfully from nothing. Take the Spacewarp era. Rapp's fandom seemed solid, rooted in strength. Then came the Michigan Bomb Plot, Rapp's enlistment, the climax of the last Warp presided over by the ghoul-like Insurgents, and then the dark ages again, the columnists, contributors and readers of Warp dispersed to the four winds. Then the age of chaos, with watchers peering into the darkness at each little flash of light in case it is a new dawn. The awakening of interest as it is gradually realized that Quandry is the new hope. The gradual building up of Quandry's sphere of influence to restore all the Spacewarp heritage, culminating in the recall of Burbee and Laney from the wilderness of Los Angeles, and simultaneously the conquest of new territories -- The Outlanders, British fandom, etc. and the rediscovery of legendary ones like Tucker and Bloch. Until finally the new civilization contains not only everything that made the old one great but a lot more besides. But at what a cost of time and effort. No one can assess the talent lost and the opportunities missed in that long period of transition.

-Walt Willis, "Fandom At Sixes And Sevens", Vega 12, 1953-

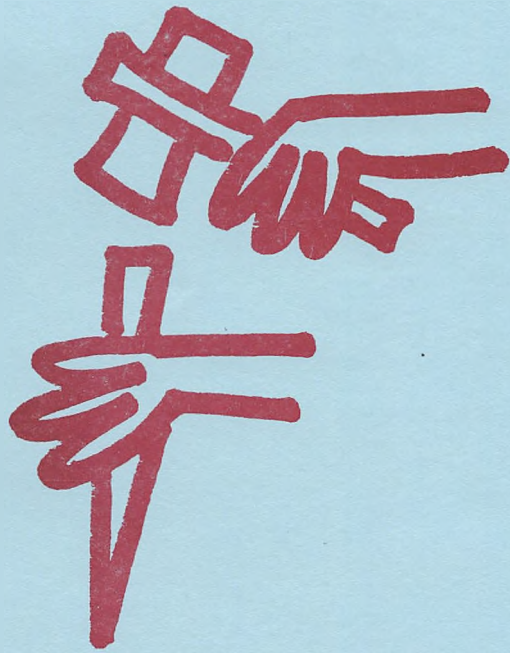
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“Like any other civilization, fandom depends on timebinding —the passing on from generation to generation of accumulated knowledge and experience.”—Walt Willis, 1956

We're in the crypt, now. In front of a casket. A pale, putrescent hand is pushing out from the narrow crack of the slightly open lid. The scent of awakening vampire fills our nostrils. The hand reaches unsteadily toward a pair of small bottles beside which is a note reading simply "2 pints".

Actually, we're in front of a fanzine and I've just described the cover of the latest publication to reach me from far off British fandom -- Graham James' Don't Think Once. I think twice about that but mainly I'm pleased with the cover and contemplate it a bit more. The drawing is absolutely minimal (if not antiseptic) and could do, I muse, with a water color treatment: say, a range of greys from black to off-white. But then I've just suggested a typical Charles Adams cartoon; haven't I? Not such a bad thought: he invented this delightfully ghoulish form of cartooning and I'm wondering just how much The New Yorker pays for these things these days. Years ago I recall hearing \$1500 was a going rate for a full page drawing and that they regularly buy cartoon ideas for their best artists -- like Adams -- and split the payment between artist and writer. This looks like a natural for an Adams page and I wonder if I should write the artist about his/her bloody drawing and suggest such a thing. The drawing is unsigned so I turn to the contents page and find the credit for D. West.

Things get complicated. Don't Think Once arrived a few days after typing the preceding twenty pages and my head is still reeling from too much D. West. Your's too?



West has entered rarified company in my mind. I mentioned to Walt Willis in the early 60s that I worked across the street from the building containing the offices of The New Yorker and thought some of Bob Shaw's cartoon ideas might be the sort of thing they were looking for. (Ted White made the same point in a letter to Wrhn 15 years later which I finally got around to publishing last issue -- so twenty years after my first thoughts about placing a fannish genius at The New Yorker the idea seems to be coming to a head; things move glacially here in the elephant's graveyard. I still haven't walked across the street yet, Bob, and the mails are no faster than I am, but it's still a good idea.

BELABORING
THE OBVIOUS

Bergeron's
specialty

When I finally sent Wrhn 28 to Walt Willis I suggested that parts could be culled and assembled into a portfolio of samples for submission to, say, The New Yorker. I didn't envision actual reprints in the pages of that magazine (though I don't have any trouble picturing whole sections of "Twice Upon A Time" appearing there and I'm rarely wrong about the commercial potential of talent) so much as showing them that a writer exists who might be able to work "The Talk Of The Town" at least as felicitously as Truman Capote who once worked there. From what I've heard about their payments for text Walt would be able to add a couple wings to Strathclyde (or at least winter in Puerto Rico) on the income from half a page alone. After all, Ireland isn't much further than Maine (in the head) from where E.B.White sends copy for the editorial columns of The New Yorker.

I tend to think of The New Yorker as some sort of heaven where all good fans should go when they've really

made it. Various aspects of this fanzine are patterned after Ross' magazine -- even the latest touch of those Hoffman drawings could be said to derive from Thurber so I suppose I can give no higher compliment and as I look at Don't Think Once's contents page I realize I've just given it to D. West.

I cringe at the thought of the 7 page article West is probably writing this very minute (he talks about bludgeoning "the audience into acceptance by sheer weight of verbiage" but when did he ever write one paragraph when ten would do the same job?) about the nerve of fans who view him as a reincarnation of Charles Adams (or whoever) and not as a totally original creation from Minerva's brow having no referent to past or future. Unfortunately we are products of our time and place and that includes all that has gone before as can be perceived in odd reflections and permutations in our own attempts at originality. When some of these attempts bear an uncanny resemblance to other thoughts in other times it ill befits one to denigrate the past while recreating it.

I feel most ambivalent. I'm supposed to be spluttering with rage and making with the rhetorical garbage, I guess. After all, D. West has just trampled with grandiloquent abandon all over a good friend of mine and corollary to his opinion of Walt's writing has to be that anyone who would produce a 600 page book of it must be soft in the head. But that's all right...rhetoric is another form of theatre and the more outrageous the opinions the closer we find ourselves to the theatre of the absurd which is why fuggheads are often as cherished for their entertainment value as derided for their obtuseness. But I assume West is too bright to be that stupid (!). This looks more like gamesmanship on a vast scale. I think he gives it all away and, in a sense, confesses his form of recreation: pushing buttons and waiting for the howls of rage. It's all rather transparent and to take certain aspects of his writing seriously is to play into his hands. No, Don, the apt comparison isn't Claude Degler -- as I'm sure you're fully aware though it amuses you to pretend otherwise. Degler was sincere. The person who played this role a lot straighter than you was GMCarr.

As Patrick Nielsen Hayden points out: West is an acute critic and observer of the sociology of fandom. I wonder if Don is even dimly aware though that some of his most telling insights were first suggested 30 years ago by Walt Willis? It's quite wonderful that only 60 days or so before Don's letter arrived I was typing Bob Leman's letter in this issue along with my reply containing Walt's observations on the manifestation of the fannish mentality apart from the context of fandom. And then there's that bit about the reinvention of the wheel -- as rediscovered by each new fandom -- which "ought to be notorious by now -- in fact it is notorious" but which is so notorious and embedded in the bedrock of certain heads that even someone as literate as D. West should know that it was first articulated by someone whose writings are "clever, hollow, and relentlessly bland" and "nothing but surfaces -- an endless succession of polished, carefully contrived masks." It says a lot for the power of such empty writing that it is still being repeated these many years later. (Will Hunter Thompson still be quoted in 30 years? Come to think of it, is he quoted today?) What could Walt do if he really tried? And West says, what Willis "said or did ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago is of not the slightest consequence to the fans of today". Oh? Then why does he keep regurgitating what Walt said ten, fifteen, twenty, or thirty, years ago? It won't wash, West. Chris Priest was saying something recently about playing into the hands of the boring old farts...the text might be worth reviewing, in passing, before you both fall into the same trap. (Incidentally, Simon Ounsley's Still It Moves 2 contains an article by none other than D. West on sex and science fiction which I found utterly charming if not downright quaint. It's been years since I read an article on that subject. Actually, it's about "eroticism" and science fiction -- after all, this is 1982. You know: those throbbing, pulsating, thrusting spacewhips* hurtling into the void. Careful, D. We're only supposed to reinvent wheels...not the sex drive, as well.)

*A typo -- but let it stand.

West says "The awful truth is that scarcely anybody in Britain has given much of a fuck about Willis' reputation for the last decade or more." Perhaps not. I doubt most British fans are overly concerned with image but what about Walt's writing or his quality as a human being? I would venture to guess (and I'm getting pretty good at this conjecture racket) that British fandom's affection for Walt Willis is at least as great as its surprise will be when it finds itself represented by D. West. I'm reminded of a passage in Epsilon 9 where Rob Hansen states that because of Joseph Nicholas' high visibility and strident acrimony "it seems entirely possible that in his pronouncements he was seen very much as speaking for" British fans and as such had "done us all a great disservice." West presumes, flatly, to speak for British fandom above and when he says Walt's writings are "of not the slightest consequence to the fans of today". I wonder what British fandom thinks of that? I could point out that literally hundreds of the fans of today care enough to spend \$25 (not an inconsiderable sum in these days of depressing economies) for a 600 page collection of those inconsequential writings -- many of them in the United Kingdom (yes, the very fans who haven't given a, er, farthing for Willis' reputation for "the last decade or more"). Don's typewriter does tend to run away with him. What do you imagine led him to write so presumptuously arrogant a statement to the one person who would be in the best position possible to refute it?

Don's standing as a sociologist of fandom gives an odd perspective to his notion that "The Enchanted Duplicator" is not "important". "The Enchanted Duplicator" is important as the only coherent attempt to depict the sociology of fandom. All other documents relating to fandom are sociological studies second and histories, autobiographies, encyclopedae, etc, first. Willis' and Shaw's work has also stood the test of time -- as each new generation of fans recognize themselves in it. It is also important for the multiplicity and extent of its editions. It is the only fan work which has appeared in a prozine, been presented under the auspices of a world con, produced as a play, recreated as a comic strip, and will -- before long -- be either filmed or video taped. Literary merit is an arguable subject but facts are not. Surely Don was aware of them?

But this will never do. Here I am muddling about in facts when I should be dealing with broad sociological pictures like the appearance, image, and status of things, ideas, and people. Yah, the big stuff, like Tom Wolfe and Hunter Thompson rummage around in. The only trouble is while Wolfe is amusing enough Thompson is the only writer who ever made me feel sympathetic toward Richard Nixon and I'm not sure so excessive a disgorgement of bile and venom could be called an achievement -- except, possibly, stylistically. It is interesting, though, that these are the only two writers West names who should have had more influence on American fan writing and by inference elevates Walt to the level of influence of these seminal writers (personally, I think comparisons between Willis and Saul Bellow are more to the point -- the sense of humanity of Wolfe and Thompson having suffered something of a blight of poverty). If I can amuse myself for a moment with a Western flight of fancy into intuitive speculation (sometimes things really are what they seem to be and it never stops D. West to charge full tilt over the brink of speculation): What is West really trying to tell us? That mockery about "modesty" in Wrinkled Shrew looks mighty like envy if you run it backwards. West repeats some of Walt's most cogent observations on the microcosm, suggests only Wolfe and Thompson as more modern models (though I'm sure he'll now find dozens of others), and grieves about his perception of Willis' perception of Willis. All this seems to indicate a high level of suppressed fancestor worship (certainly West shows more evidence of this than Walt does of false modesty -- a charge I note Walt himself has effectively defused in Boonfark 6 with his remarks on the gestation of "The Enchanted Duplicator" wherein he shows total awareness of the impact of that work. No doubt, West will now accuse him of lack of modesty!). Perhaps West is as bound by that which he rejects as he would be if he accepted it...the continual denial of our forebearers as having no effect whatsoever on our ideas seems a bit out of kilter with reality. (West says, "What I, or anyone else, said or did ten ... years ago is of not

the slightest consequence to the fans of today". This is being dramatically contradicted by the effects of Greg Pickersgill's thought in the form of a set of Stop Breaking Down being circulated through Seattle fandom "making small nuclear explosions in the heads of John D. Berry and other local lights" (PNH, Pong 31) and by Rob Hansen in Pong 35 who hadn't "read about 75% of the fanzines under review ... in D. West's mammoth 27 page piece in Wrinkled Shrew ... yet that lack of knowledge in no way impaired my enjoyment ...nor has it on any of the occasions I've reread the column in the year's since." West's zeal to consign Walt to the garbage heap of history goes so far that he even tosses himself on the pile. Does all this strike you as preposterous as it does me? D. also overlooks fans whose thinking is 5 years behind his thinking of 5 years ago. Exposure to old Western thought could bring them up to 1978, at least.)

I agree "The best place to read old fanwriting is in old fanzines" but that statement overlooks certain facts: few fanzines survive the decades and those which do are almost totally inaccessible to the vast majority of fans. Thus each fandom virtually reinvents the medium. Ho hum. Volumes such as "All Our Yesterdays" and Wrhn 28 are only modest attempts to stave off the darkness of ignorance. The valient torch carrying of such people as Pickersgill in the dark ages of the 70s would be a lot less necessary and a lot more pointed if fans had available a facsimile volume containing benchmark examples such as Skyhook, Wrinkled Shrew, Egg, Xero, or Habbakuk as illustrations of the tradition they are working within and what they have to build on and surpass. The doorway to the future is through the past. Picasso knew this. D. West doesn't.

But these observations must be as obvious to him as they are to me..as he sits ghoulishly asking for another "2 pints". In a sense his performance is fascinating as theatre and remains fascinating if we remember that the aim of part of it is to elicit our performance in response. To take all West seriously would be to conclude that perhaps we should drive a stake through his heart and send him to The New Yorker.

-Dick Bergeron-

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THE SECRET

The Martian: Secret? There is no secret. Anyone with eyes can see the way to live.

The Earthman: How?

The Martian: By watching life. Observing nature and cooperating with it. Making common cause with the process of existence.

The Earthman: How?

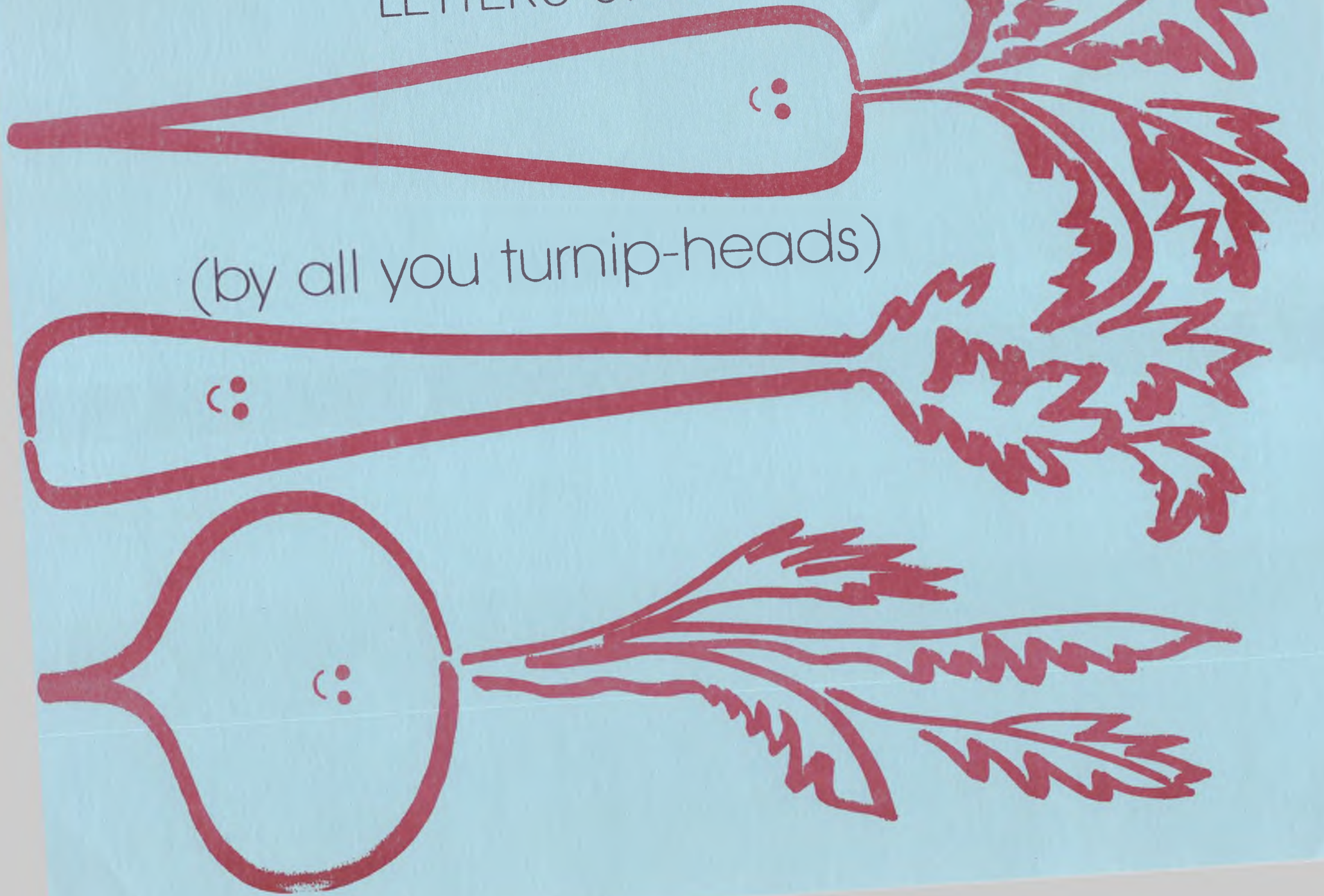
The Martian: By living life for itself; don't you see...deriving pleasure from the gift of pure being.

The Earthman: The gift of pure being.

The Martian: Life is its own answer. Accept it and enjoy it day by day. Live as well as possible. Expect no more. Destroy nothing. Humble nothing. Look for fault in nothing. Leave unsullied and untouched all that is beautiful. Hold that which lives in all reverence for life is given by the Sovereign of our Universe: Given to be savored, to be luxuriated in, to be...respected. But that's no secret. You're intelligent. You know as well as I what has to be done.

-Ray Bradbury, "The Martian Chronicles", NBCTv (written years ago)-

LETTERS & LETTUCE



(by all you turnip-heads)

"We've come to a pretty pass", as Walt said to Madeleine when they reached Snoqualmie and found themselves on the way down to Seattle, when I have to insult my readers to make an illustration left over from last issue's abortive first installment of Patrick Nielsen Hayden's column fit as the heading to this letter section (now, that's a sentence even Joseph Nicholas could be proud of!). Patrick couldn't think of a way to connect D. West to giant sentient vegetables but I don't think he really tried and here I am reduced to casting edible aspersions on you all. As for what relevance it may have had to Patrick's first installment: that's information lost in the mists of the Nielsen Hayden DNQs and the windy drafts prevailing easterly from Seattle. :: I don't want to ramble inordinately here (there's a mountain of letters begging to be quoted). I don't even have room for the editorial piece on the results of the first and last Warhoon poll. Yes, I decided not to do it again even before the tally was started. All these deadlines and tabulations are something of a drag aside from the fact that it seemed to put many of you through an agonizing decision process and I can see why: all the contributors last issue would be numbered among my favorite writers in fandom and apparently yours too I concluded when people like rich brown were so reluctant to vote anyone at less than third place that he split his first, second, and third place votes into half points each. Avedon Carol said, "I hate this!" and Malcolm Edwards put the negative side into these words: "I don't mind open-ended polls like the Ansible Poll, or the Pong Poll, because there are winners, but no losers. If you're featured that's very nice; if you're not, well, there may be all manner of reasons why not, and nobody's likely to be too disappointed. But if I were included I would be less than encouraged to be confronted with irrefutable statistical evidence that the majority of readers thought my contribution the worst of the issue. In fact I would be seriously inhibited from contributing further. Maybe your contributors have thicker skins...but I wouldn't count on it." Probably that's the real reason I couldn't bring myself to vote...and I can see now why factors having nothing to do with the writing tend to distort the results: such as my presence in the issue or Walt Willis'. How can I win a poll when an issue has something in it by him? Unfair competition, obviously. The only way I could have got an unbiased result this time was to have omitted the next chapter of "The Improbable Irish". And Dave's report. And Patrick's column. I really expected to come in last but see now that the editor has all the advantage: I tend to be more topical than anyone in the issue and as the unifying point you're all going to think I've pulled off something or other and vote accordingly based on reasons having nothing to do with the quality of the work (I suspect). And I could point out that Bangsund's piece -- with the ink hardly dry on it yet! -- has already been selected for some honor or other. Anyway, the envelopes if you please now that the results have been thoroughly discredited:

As to the now moot question of whether I should conduct the poll every issue the answer was: Yes(11), No(9). Whether the poll would cause nervous collapse among the contributors: Yes(9), No(12). And if it mattered: Yes(7), No(15). Heartless, arn't you? :: I translated votes into the following values: a first place vote was worth 6 points, second was worth 5, etc. Among the writers you ranked us like this: Willis(113.5), Bergeron(110.5), White(95), Warner(89), Bangsund(60) and Perry(44.5). Votes in the art department were valued from one to 4, of course: Bergeron(81), Hoffman(53), Arfstrom(60), and Guinta(33). :: Best letter writers were: Willis(33), White(17), and Harris(12). 25 of you voted: Cathy Doyle, Lynn Hickman, Ethel Lindsay, Loren MacGregor, Marty Cantor, Dan Steffan, John Henri Holmberg, Bob Leman, Ted White, Dave Haden, Mike Glicksohn, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Darroll Pardoe, Andy Porter, rich brown, Sam Wager, Paul Skelton, Dave Langford, Norm Hollyn, John Berry, Avedon Carol, Jerry Kaufman, Buck Coulson, and Eric Mayer. Thank you. :: The third place among the letter writers was an interesting development and indicated I may have made a mistake in presenting so little of a fan whose reappearance may be one of the best effects of Wrhn 28. As a concrete result of this poll I've decided to publish a letter which could be called "Inside If" from one:

CHUCH HARRIS: ...so, when I've woken early in the mornings, I've crept downstairs and sat in the kitchen, dipping into the Wash at random, and finding it full of de-light...leaving it reluctantly to go to work, in a sort of warm glow as if I'd been talking to Walter Himself again after all these years. :: One thing that strikes me immediately is how odd phrases here and there act like old long forgotten photographs found in a drawer. Memories flood back, and run through the mind as if a video cassette had suddenly been switched on again. My memory seems to work in pictures rather than words. Instead of a formal review this will be just a lot of incoherent notes jotted down as I go along.

Harry's evaluation was a Gem; perceptive, affectionate but not cloying. I wonder if I would have stressed the points that I personally felt to be some of the reasons for Walt's, well, SUCCESS!! :: First would be his enormous tolerance. He is a Good Man. In all truth I have never known him to do a mean or shabby thing. Even when he is in there bitching it's in an affectionate teasing manner that disarms instead of offends...a sort of brotherly railery. :: Mind you, I don't always like the old lovingkindness act, myself. Even now, after all this time, I still feel the same rage I did the first time I read the conversation piece with Fingal O'Flahertie. Bloody pliant thinking g reeds indeed! I was so cross that I did my own chat-show piece with young Fingal but, thank ghod, decided against ever stencilling it. I was sore...but not sore enough to go sobbing my grief across fandom. :: I was quite right of course. Baying in the wilderness or not, every damn word I said was true. It was hard enough to try to rouse fandom from its usual lethargy without my best friend and co-editor deciding that this was the opportune moment to roll on his back and wave his clay feet in the air. :: There were only a couple times I was cross with Walt and this was probably the worst...but in the end, none of it mattered. Fandom, as always, flows on like a somnolent amoeba, absorbing all the differing viewpoints, and gradually the right people (ie, fanzine fandom) took over TAFF again.

The next point I would have stressed was Walt's ability to pick 'em and -- to use his own phrase -- nudge 'em. Remember, James and BoSh were illustrators to start with until Walter nudged them from the drawing board to the typer. :: Madeleine, Peggy, Sadie GATWC, me, -- all nudged into participation as full active members of the gestalt. Only John Berry's wife remained apart and perhaps aloof (we'll get back to that later). :: And, best example of all, Atom. :: Another neofan, called (I think) Peter Chater, appeared simultaneously with Arfer. His first letter of comment to "-" was fantastic. Trenchant witty comments, risque jokes, original thoughts even! Arfer was anything but dazzling and very very neo, whilst Chater was talent. I told Walter so, but he wasn't a bit interested. He took an exactly opposite view and busily coaxed Arthur along, whilst I got after Chater the Comet...who flashed right past us and was never seen or heard of again. {rb: Er, did you publish that letter in Hyphen?} :: As I said, Walt could pick them and nudge them. And even now I still sometimes wonder whatever made him pick a deaf sailor, with nothing but a small talent for invective, to share the editorship of what some people think is the best fanzine ever.

The other thing I wanted to mention was that Walter was a Focal Point. Newtownards Road was easily reached by George, BoSh and Jas. And, this is the crux, Madeleine was there to weld the group together to form (I hate this word) the gestalt. 170 was by no means a friend's house where you dropped in for a cup of tea and a coffee kiss. To me, and the others, it was home...a place where I had exactly the same feeling as I did at "Carolin" Lake Ave Rainham. I knew where the correspondence was, I knew where the pornography was, and...for Jesus' sake hooley, if I wanted a coffee kiss (and usually I did want one -- at least) I got one out of the tin and I ate it. We went to 170 to participate, not to visit. And, of course, that wasn't all Walt. That was Madeleine: not a puppet master or foreman but someone who provided the environment in which we could all thrive. :: It seems that the prime requirement of most suc-

cessful fan groups is a good meeting place. Liverpool, even though they had little creative talent for publishing were marvellously successful at everything else they tried. Ena Shorrocks provided the clubhouse and they all worked together to produce fantastic films, tapes, and quite high class booze. And Ella Parker's place housed a thriving group in London for a long time. :: And, as I said, we had Madeleine. She was always very special to me too because after I'd fathomed the soft accent, I was able to lip read her a bit. I'm not a very good lip reader, and most everyone else had to write everything down. You can imagine just how important this was to me. On most days (lip reading is like golf, somedays it's good, most days it's bloody awful) Madeleine could even interpretate for the others: a sort of oral Rosetta Stone by which incomprehensible mouthings became understandable words. :: I honestly can't remember flooring her at any convention, or saving her from Mackenzie. I'm desolate about the first and delighted about the second. I guess I used to spend all the cons with her -- partly because of the lip reading but mostly because we got on so well together, laughing at the same things, and sharing a host of likes and dislikes. The three of us were very close. I can't think of the word I need...it was more than affection, but "love" immediately takes on sexual connotations and it was never that -- I've never seen a couple so besotten with each other. I suppose a sort of family love would be the most descriptive...siblings, perhaps? Or perhaps they looked on me as a sort of idiot brother. Walter always wanted me to write, and Madeleine always wanted me to find a halfway decent partner and happiness. I had some very odd women -- and everyone of them were absolute perfection to me at the time. I was romantic, naive, and blind to the most obvious fault. Walt and Madeleine would never interfere or criticize, but approval was never forthcoming for any of them. :: Rita Khrono for instance: you can see in Walt's con report what sort of impression she made...especially after I told Walt we were going to get engaged. And she was one of the more presentable ones. The only girl they did ever approve of was the one I married...Sue...and I sometimes wonder what made me shun redheads and decide on a pretty, stacked, blue-eyed blonde who was not only sexy but washed every day. {rb:!!}

About John Berry. I've always thought that Diane, not John, wanted out. She never seemed at ease with the rest of us and was always a bystander rather than a participant... John, more than anyone else, played ghodminton for blood -- which is the only way it can be played -- but I can't recollect seeing Diane in the mixed doubles or taking part in any activity. She was a typical young housewife far more interested in her young family than she was in her husband's new friends. She was Respectable, and far more a pillar of the Establishment than John ever was. With the other girls I could romp and joke like a brother, but I felt with Diane that I was just another friend of John's: no more no less. Mind, this is not a cheap snide judgement. She was always pleasant and friendly, but never close. I wondered if, with John in such a highly dangerous job, if she felt more secure and happy with the friends he would have made in the police and their wives who shared their fears and problems. :: As for John's writing: he was a genius at situation fantasy, and could have been a full time writer if he had studied the basics of the craft like BoSh and James, but he was never interested enough. He needed a hell of a lot of editing. He'd come up with a lovely eccentric idea and then spoil it with sloppy construction and bad writing. Whenever I stencilled anything of John's I virtually re-wrote it. He dearly loved to hiss, mutter, expostulate and drawl; they were all dropped for "said" as we went along. When he got bogged down in hopeless verbiage, it got chopped out. "This Goon For Hire" is a gem, but it wasn't until the proof was corrected and then stencilled. :: John, of course, knew this and wasn't the least concerned -- which makes it all the more puzzling when you read why he left us.

When you talk of the influence Walt had on the young Bergeron, you'll have some idea of the effect he had (and possibly still has) on me. Almost the whole of my personal philosophy as well as my outlook on sex, religion, politics and code of morality

stem directly from Walt and Madeleine. Both of them were crucial -- perhaps "vital" is no exaggeration even -- when I was trying to adapt to a deaf world. I was searching for things in which I could compete equally with mundane people. As a letterhack I was on equal terms with most everybody and I got a joy from correspondence... Anyway, here is the happy letterhack bombarding Belfast with two or three letters a week and unwittingly building a hermitage. The more letters I wrote the less time I had for ordinary contact with people. This was fine with me because I felt at a disadvantage with them. The women available were second and third rate, and mostly I was happier with my typer. Walt and Madeleine kept nudging but I fought for a long time against any contact with flesh and blood fandom. When, eventually I was manoeuvred into visiting the Epicentre, I lay awake worrying for the whole of the previous night. :: Once in, of course, I revelled in fandom. I began to visit the White Horse but never considered myself a member of the London O. I was an Honorary Wheel of IF with no other loyalties. :: One of these days I must sit down and write what I can remember about the Epicentre, about The Game, and about Daniel Dare.

Daniel Dare was a lone wolf fan
of the ordinary pattern.
He'd Nova zines and BRES
And a heap of Vargo Statten.
He'd ninety-seven pocket books
And knew the plot of each.
And all the astronautics lore
That Picture Post could teach.

And all the other twenty verses. :: And about Vinç. Even now I feel guilty and sad about the deal he got from fandom, and hope that eventually he found some sort of happiness somewhere. (But even there I doubt it; if anybody was born to get the shitty send of the stick it was gentle, unassuming, idealistic Vincent. I hope too that when I finally get into the loft I still have the cards he sent me from Ireland. He was on a touring holiday with Walter and Madeleine whilst I was pondering religion because I wanted to marry Rita Khroné. As the leading atheist in the Wheels of IF here was Daniel come to judgement -- and they made the most of it. Every day I got at least one pootsarcd showing a church of some sort and bearing an uplifting message, eg, "We burnt this church yesterday. We heard the clergy were asking for a raze so we gave them an illuminated address. Lead Kindling Light. PS: And Lo! He chastisith us with torrents; Support The Fanwets! :: In the end of course, the problem solved itself. Rita got engaged to somebody else and I got back to stenciling.

I still find the trip reports fascinating even at the umpteenth re-reading. I always felt that both trip reports were written solely for me -- which, of course, is what every reader should think of them, -- and even now this still seems true. I used to comment endlessly on them, endlessly questioning Walt about people, towns, transport, hamburgers, everything about the country I'd never see. Walter kept at me to stand for Taff but, in truth I never wanted to go by myself. I preferred Walter's version. I had no problems in coping with it. (32 Lake Crescent, Daventry, Northants, UK)

A. VINCENT CLARKE: You've probably noticed in Pong that yet another remnant of sixth fandom has surfaced, in the shape of yours truly. After 20 years of absence I'm looking around with a bleary eye, feeling like Karloff being attended to by that Good Doctor Frankenstein. Various kind people have lent or given me fanzines... whether to enlighten me or to drive me away for another two decades I'm not quite sure. :: Actually, I had a letter from Harris a couple of weeks ago in which he said nice things about Wrhn and promised to send me #29 to keep (it appears that he hasn't the space to collect fanzines, what with his massive private collection of golf clubs -- many of them still intact) but with the unseasonable weather -- snow, of all things --

which has thrown transport, letters and every damned thing into a state like a Convention hotel meeting its first fans -- #29 is probably still on the way, from him. :: I haven't seen many 80s zines yet, but apart from the size of 'fandom' -- in carefully inverted commas -- and the lack of knowledge of the history of fandom in British fan-zines, I am still much impressed by the quality of 80% of the writing. In the older generation, this can be explained by their practise of it over the years, but the younger generation have a smoothness which I rather envy. (16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent, DA16 2BN, England)

WALT WILLIS: To start off in a completely unexpected way, which is always a good idea, I had not half an hour ago a letter from Bob Shaw addressed to Vince Clarke. As you may have heard already from some other source, Vince is back into fandom, at his primaeval address of 16 Wendover Way. His first feelers were met by simultaneous letters from Bob and myself, and this letter from Bob was a reply to Vince's reply, filling him in on the last 20 years or so of Bob's life. Most you will already know, but it was news to me that he is now working in stained glass as a hobby and, typically, doing it well enough to sell anything he can produce including sf/astronomical scenes for offer at conventions. He concludes a disquisition on this phenomenon, which he sums up as weird, with the remark, "Life, to quote a joke Walt told me sometime around 1952, is a big fish." :: Now knowing Bob I know it was part mischief that made him throw out this hook, but also partly the gift Bob always had as a fan of being able to start waves. I had completely forgotten the Big Fish joke but I think it's coming back to me and I'd like to ask you as the sort of person who would know such things whether there is anything I've missed out. As I recall it the Big Fish joke can be spun out to almost any length, but in its essentials consisted of the story of the Great Philosopher who retired into a cave for 30 years of meditation on the meaning of life. During this period his reputation steadily grew, there were learned articles, newspaper supplements, books, endless speculation on tv chatshows, pilgrimages to the cave mouth. Finally the 30 years were up. TV crews, press, politicians, public massed around the cave mouth. The Philosopher emerged, held up his hand for silence and enunciated the words, "Life is a big fish". In utter silence the Great Philosopher returned to his cave. Immediately several schools of thought arose about the Philosopher's revelation, leading to much dissension, even violence. In desperation the leading philosophers of the world decided to form a deputation to ask him for further elucidation, and there was another even greater concourse at the mouth of the cave. The Great Philosopher emerged and listened courteously as the deputation explained the various interpretations which had been put on his words, and the objections which had been offered to each of them. "Oh well," said the Great Philosopher, "Maybe Life isn't a big fish then."

I was not only delighted but awed by the letter from Bob Leman. The fact that Bob whom I have always humbly admired as a writer should regard himself as a sprout of me...this I find quite staggering. I consider Leman a better writer than I'll ever be, and in evidence adduce the last sentence of his letter as quoted by you. Wry, poignant and funny, and I couldn't have written it in a month of Sundays.

I don't think there's all that much difference between my methods of writing and John Bangsund's. John obviously does all the writing and rewriting in his head, exactly as Bob Shaw does, and the actual production of ms is a matter of transcribing. Other people, like me, need the act of writing to stimulate inspiration. The prime example of his school is probably L. Ron Hubbard who explained once that when he got stuck in a story he would backtract 5000 words and, building up speed on his electric typewriter, let sheer momentum carry him through the bloc. (rb: I like the typo on "backtrack" so much I've decided to leave it -- just think what could have been done with "bloc".) :: Harry Warner's piece was honest and fascinating, but I liked best his account of Harry Turner's 1977 reply to Warner's 1941 letter. The more so because

it had always seemed to me that those two were spiritual doppelgangers. Similar names, similar backgrounds and jobs, both fannish hermits and both with a very likeable Puckish solemnity.

Between them George Charters and Ted White gave me pause to reflect on the nature of the Natural Pun. If you look at how that one of Ted's arose it seems obvious that it was created by Nature herself from the infinite variety of circumstance, that it was a Wild Pun flowering in the hedgerows like a wild strawberry (to coin a fraise) for anyone to pick. But it's always been my experience that the Wild Pun has something untidy about it. The example which comes to mind is the time when someone at a meeting of Irish Fandom referred to an acquaintance who was practising at being a bullfighter by having a friend charge at him with a lawnmower to which a pair of horns had been attached. One of us immediately said, "Ah yes, the coup de grace". It might have been any of us because the pun was already there created by Nature herself assembling such an improbable collection of circumstances. But note the untidiness of it. The grace=grass bit was perfect, but what about the coup? It was no help really for one of us to point out that if one were to speak in a Scots accent (thereby elevating it to the rare status of a tri-lingual pun) coup= coo, thereby completing the second layer of meaning. But, be it noted, only completing it was a piece of wordplay such as Dean Grennell used to excel in. To be a perfect pun a piece of wordplay has got to be not only unexpected but instantly comprehensible, and by the time you would have disentangled the implications of someone saying "coup de grace" in a Scottish accent the pun has vanished as a form of humour and you are left with merely an intellectual exercise. :: But contrast this with Ted's "tit for tat". Here is a pun which is perfect in every way. It is subtle but instantly recognisable, unexpected but inevitable, comprehensive but economical: not only does it do everything a pun could do in three monosyllables, it also conveys an affectionate but caustic comment on how the Willises spent their respective days. I am forced to the conclusion that it may very well be the best pun ever made in the entire history of the world, and I cannot accept that it was a Wild Pun in the sense of one created entirely by nature and offered freely from her bounty. The circumstances which led up to it were not so bizarre as to compel the attention towards one phrase, like coup de grace: it needed someone with a creative subconscious to search for and isolate the essential elements and words from all those in the day which had passed, and Ted deserves all credit for doing just that. It was no more unintentional than Columbus's discovery of America was unintentional because he didn't know it was there. Of course once the three words had been uttered anyone could appreciate them, just like anyone could go to America but in both cases it was the creative impulse of the explorer which produced the opportunity for others.

As far as I'm concerned Ted should be asked to take another bow for his "The Politics of Fandom". This was full of interest and says things to me about fandom which I hadn't fully realised for myself. I think this is one of the best things Ted has ever written. It ties in very closely with my own feelings on finding that after all those years Taff was still going strong on exactly the same lines on which it had started, sustained by nothing more than the continuity of each Taff delegate arranging for the election of his successor. No Standing Committee, no International Governing Board, no Rules Council, wonderful. :: Carried out some excavations in a cupboard of old fanzines, and almost wish I hadn't because of the decisions it confronts me with. For instance, what use is a Nolacon Programme booklet on which LeeH had got for me the signatures of every actifan in attendance; and yet how could one destroy such a thing. (32 Warren Rd. Donaghadee, Northern Ireland. BT21 OPD)

BRIAN EARL BROWN: One thing that disturbs me about Wrhn is the sense of ancestor worship going on. And not just in Wrhn, but also Telos, Boonfark, and Pong. There's a feeling that one can't be fannish without kowtowing to the memory of Willis, of Burbee,

of the Void boys, who may all be great writers and fine people, but who also existed 10-20 years ago. It's nice to know these people were around, nice to see retrospectives of their works, but fandom is an on-going process. It exists today -- not yesterday. While I find Wrhn, Telos, etc, interesting fanzines and enjoyable reading, I also prize zines like Genre Plat, Kratophany, Space Junk and even Holier Than Thou and the new Rune because they are current, modern and (with exceptions) well written. (Michigan)

BOB LEMAN: I enclose the poll, which I think is a bad idea; wait for the locs. Rating people 1-2-3 is an invidious business, and one would rather not do it... Hard choices, and I'm not sure I'd do it the same way tomorrow.

I do appreciate the well-considered and informative answer to the question I put in my letter. The situation has been considerably clarified for me, and I am (you will not be surprised to learn) exceedingly pleased by these developments. Whether or not I return to active fandom, it's good to know that this attitude exists, and that there might just possibly come out of it a golden age of fanzines even goldener than any of the previous ones -- if indeed there were such. I think there were; or at least there was an age of the very best quality ormolu, with the odd chunk of purest gold turning up from time to time. You, the Nielsen Haydens, Ted White, Dan Steffan, and (these are new names to me) Eric Mayer, Kathy Malone, and Alan Bostick have my thanks and admiration for acting as the saving remnant. Perhaps especially Patrick Nielsen Hayden, whom you finally zero in on, and who so greatly impressed me with his part of the Telos that gave me my first look at a fanzine since the early years of the Great Gafia.

I am grateful for your kind remarks about my fan-writing, and you are most certainly right about the Perelman influence. There were no doubt some blurred echoes of Benchley and feeble gropings after Mencken in there as well. I suppose that if one is to develop a truly distinctive voice of his own, he must be careful about what he reads. If you read too much in the work of the giants, you're either intimidated to the point of being silenced, or, if you do go ahead and write, the big fellows will -- however you fight it, however you prune the copycat lines -- have some control of the pencil. Benchley was the funniest man of them all, but Perelman's style -- the incredible precision in the choice of words, the surprise of the rare word and the unexpected juxtaposition, the brand-new and just-right metaphor, the tightrope act between parody and lampoon -- Perelman's style, I say, laid its hand upon me, and I can't deny it. But I resisted stoutly, and mostly I don't think it was blatantly evident. The only way to learn to write is to do a lot of reading, and if you read the good stuff, you learn willy-nilly; but you've got to watch out lest you unconsciously play the sedulous ape. When I turn my hand to fiction I have constantly to be on guard against two of these giants, each about a mile and a half tall, whose writings I reread constantly. I am speaking of Faulkner and Nabokov. Pastiche Faulkner looks pretty silly in a little F&SF story about spooks.

You're totally right about the preposterous categorizing for the Hugo awards. I saw the report about the Denvention committee member who said, "Who's Walt Willis?" The literate grow fewer, and indeed until the last election (which may have come too late) the regnant ideology in Washington, as in most of the press and the academy, held that excellence is eliteism, and that a consistent egalitarian must reject the notion that one piece of writing can be intrinsically better than another. Levelling (vide Gresham's Law) is always to the lowest level. I saw at the convention a flyer that read, "Call it Sci-Fi -- wipe out eliteism in fandom." Surely it's more egalitarian to vote for lists, which are within almost anyone's capabilities, than for the writings of Walt Willis, which are beyond the capabilities of almost everybody. And with "Cosmos", you didn't even have to read it; you could watch it on TV. You can't get equalled than that. :: If in fact fandom has the distinguished ancestry you cite on page 10, then damn few of these people at Denver were fans. Twenty or so

years ago, Earl Kemp published a large symposium called "Why Is A Fan?" He requested a bunch of fans -- at least fifty -- to answer the question. I recollect that I incurred a certain amount of odium in some quarters at the time by assuming in my response that fanzine fandom was all of fandom. That wasn't true, even then, but the non-fanzine component were at least readers of sf. :: The mob in Denver was composed of fans, all right, but for the most part they were Sci-Fi fans. Many, I am quite certain, move their lips when they read, if in fact they read at all. It is in no way surprising that your WASH was handled as it was. You're a rotten elitist if you expected other treatment. Like, it's the electronic age, man. Don't give me this elegant prose crap. (2615 Broad Street, Bethel Park, Pa. 15102)

{rb: Since Patrick, elsewhere in this issue, makes a similar reading, I should comment on the matter before six months pass and everyone forgets I've been defamed: if no one remembers one's ignominy what fun is it? :: I didn't mean to imply that Pepys, Pope, Johnson, and Wilde were members of the original Cosmic Circle (like you, me, and Patrick) but that their passion for The Word was antecedent to the aspect of fandom I find most interesting and enduring. In no sense, of course, were they fans and I specifically said "in other quarters". Of course they don't "justify" fandom (does any hobby need justification? -- I thought that by definition a hobby was self-justifying) but it may be helpful to recall we are writing in a form which can be taken to extraordinary levels. And, as John D. Berry points out in Wing Window 1, "deserves to be judged by the highest standards one would apply to Montaigne and Thoreau" (who, I understand, were excluded from Oasis). :: Lovecraft and Carroll are a slightly different case -- an argument could be made that their fannish impulses took a form very similar to those which inspire even, say, this fanzine. In fact, Ray Nelson in Pong 12 & 13 has presented insights into this topic pointing out that our mindset (yes, yours and mine, Bob) derives from such BNFs as William Blake, Mary Shelly, William Morris, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. And Carroll is certainly not far from the energy which was devoted to Hill and Rigby and a bottle of vinegar in a tavern in Northern Ireland from 1935 to 1939 long before Willis knew what he was. When I looked up the data for that last sentence I was amused to read the following on pg440: "...Rachel Ferguson and her sisters had invented an elaborate private mythology concerning the Brontes, and lived in it themselves a sort of pseudolife in parallel with their mundane existence. I think the Brontes themselves had one which they shared with Branwell, and I know that lots of other people, like Shelley, also had these private worlds of their own. I was going to argue that this was a manifestation of the sensitive fannish mind... To me at any rate the main attraction of fandom is this property it has of being a combined mythology and microcosm -- an artificial private world which does actually have a real existence (but not too real), and in which one can enjoy a sort of contemporary reincarnation... At the very least, two lives for the price of one. It could be argued that fandom is not an escapist hobby at all, but almost the reverse -- an overflow outlet for the creative imagination." (This appeared in Skyhook 30 years ago: and would give rise to thoughts about "going around in a circle on the Vico Road" if such theories of cyclical fannish thought hadn't already been denounced by Patrick in Pong 31.) The question rises whether we are considering fandom as a collection of devotees of sf and fantasy or a peculiar literary diversion marked by a gift for creating fantasy worlds -- a preoccupation that focuses on sf but which can exist independently of its subject? (Certainly I have little interest in sf, fantasy, or fiction at this time in my life and am quite content to let fandom function as a sort of fantasy world in many ways connected to the "real" world -- a hobby horse on which I can play the role of the lone ranger.) :: If fandom is a literary phenomenon in its own right -- as Boggs and Priest point out -- then we're talking about a part of fandom: fanzine fandom; whose interests occasionally overlap those of convention fandom (which it gave birth to), etc, etc. D. West in Nabu 11 (no date) argues that all the other fandoms are irrelevant: "they all

co-exist with fanzine fandom...This Great Movement Of Ours... If somebody comes up with something which is alien to the (primarily literary) format of fanzine fandom they do not thereby sweep the old order away and render it irrelevant... In hard fact, they are the ones who are irrelevant, since 'fanzine' is a self-defining concept, and anything which doesn't fit the concept is therefore by definition not a fanzine and therefore of no particular interest." We are groping toward a redefinition of fandom -- making it more specific and, with words, excluding the ravening hordes as you, Bob, did in Kemp's symposium. All of which takes us right back to the point we started at here on the Vico Road.)

PAUL WILLIAMS: I am not a fanzine collector, but I remember Wrhn with great warmth, and in particular I realized maybe a year ago that I would be very interested to read your essay on Picasso again. I was never much aware of Picasso (although the card game with the triangular cheese was a print on the wall of my childhood home) until I had the good fortune to almost accidentally end up in the Modern's retrospective in the summer of 1970. I made my way through it in far too brief a time and was deeply moved; but the clincher was I decided to buy a copy of the paperback book of the retrospective for Miriam Knight, and then the price was so low with the museum membership card I'd borrowed I bought two, and found myself engrossed in the book and its reproductions and engaging chronology for the next many months. A very powerful shock of recognition at several of the works, that day in the Modern, made me realize how much impact that Wrhn -- your article and your renderings of several paintings and images -- had on me in some inchoate fashion. :: Later that fall my wife Sachiko and I had the opportunity to meet Bob Dylan, thanks to a short book I'd written about him at the end of '79 to which he responded favorably -- we had the impulse to bring the Picasso book and let him look through it. I won't explain exactly what I had in mind, since the link I see between Dylan and Picasso is the subject of an essay I feel likely to write sometime in the next ten years, and I doubt I'll be able to refine it to a sentence till after I've written that essay, if at all -- but the evolution/repetition-with-constant-freshness of themes... ah, no, not themes at all but actually the same painting, same song, done again... in both their work, has much to do with it. Picasso's many different "Guitar"s and "Guitar Player"s, according to this notion of mine, are not unrelated to the many very-different-from-each-other and independently excellent recordings (mostly from concerts, taped by "fans") of "It Ain't Me Babe" or "Like A Rolling Stone" that make up Dylan's least-known or understood and most remarkable oeuvre. One could say that Picasso is painting (or constructing, sculpting) the same painting each thoroughly different time, or that Dylan is creating a new song each time, and at best the comparison helps point in the direction of an understanding of what it is that actually is going on. So anyway, I had marked many different "Guitar"s in the book to show Dylan, thinking at least the subject matter might appeal to him, and then in embarrassment removed the place-marks from the book. And then Sachiko took the initiative to show it to him anyway, and I suddenly had the inspiration to accomplish something similar in a capsule by showing him the double spread of bulls, drawn in sequence, seemingly devolving or evolving at the same time. He first protested he was not interested in that kind of art at all, then began to be pulled in but claimed the second earliest, one of the most representative, was best, and "he should have stopped at that one." Then looking closer, "Oh, but I see why he had to keep going..." There was an electricity. He asked if we intended to give him the book; I said no. Other distractions in the room rushed in.

Perry's waterbed story was funny and quite entertaining... And I could add that he's right in what he starts to say about gafiation. It's only certain people, who feel not only lack of total disgust but more importantly a sense of obligation or compulsion, who do this dance of feeling that they have or have not gafiated. Gafiation is a phenomenon experienced by those who have heavily immersed themselves in fandom; talking about gafia or thinking about it is related to a feeling of with-

drawal pains or to obligations unfulfilled or perhaps explanations ungiven. Also it clearly has to do with the struggle within when one isn't fully ready or willing to give up active or overactive fannish involvement. I think I felt some such circa 1964 or '65, as correspondences died out and my half-mimeographed 100+ page next issue of my fanzine slowly lost its certainty of imminent publication. But once the crisis passed, my relationship with fandom sort of stabilized into something distant in some ways, close in others, but in any event quite unrelated to the term "gafia" as we tend to use it.

I was rather set up by the editorial to admire Bangsund's writing style, and admire and enjoy it I did. The elliptical paragraphs, asides, and steady-as-she-goes clarity of content are most appealing. The magazine as a whole does not live up to the somewhat weighty analysis in your editorial of what a good fanzine should offer and what marvelous specialness is to be found in the best fannish writing. And just as well, because I s'pect if it tried it would be unreadable. But reading Bangsund, and his commentary on the WASH and fan writing in general, pleases me and leaves me free to applaud the editor's ambitions and forgive him his pretensions. By all means do encourage such writings, even if it means waxing a little silly or self-conscious yourself at times. :: And having said that (how self-important all interesting periods in fandom sound as they discover themselves, though this one is a little more self-referential than most -- and if self-importance is what it takes for fandom to be entertaining and literate, then bring it on), I repeat that I probably found the editorial more personally involving than anything else in the issue, and surely would not have felt connected to the fanzine (& thus able to write a loc) without it. I guess for me a good "editorial" (in the fanzine sense) is what makes everything else hang together. I suffered with you about the WASH. I pleased in your enthusiasms and your delight in discovering the Nielsen Haydens or hearing from Bob Leman. If this were too elegantly expressed, by the by, it would go right past me. An important aspect of any good fanzine is its essential subjectivity, a willingness to open up and be friends. Yours succeeds. And playing your open subjectivity against your successful and sustained role as the Thomas Pynchon (ie, unseen and in the biographical sense not quite known) of fandom works real well. Y'know, most BNFs have built or grown myths around themselves, of one sort or another. Interesting how that fulfills a very human need in the audience, in all of us.

I wanted to pick up a thread that continues from what I sort of said about "gafia" and also is generally inspired by the tone of your commentary on contemporary fandom or the part that interests you throughout this issue. Let's see... it has to do with my anomalous relationship with fandom, which I suspect may turn out to be not so anomalous at all... To start with, the person I see most of with the possible exception of my wife and two children, this fellow who works out of the same underheated garage as me every working day simultaneously on our publishing company on the one hand and our non profit human rights organization on the other hand, sharing aspirations and work and dividing what funds come in for sustenance, is Robert Lichtman, with whom I had a slight correspondence via fandom perhaps as early as '63, and whom I met and became friends with in '68 at the Baycon. Our friendship in '68-'69, which had nothing to do with fandom per se but definitely grew out of it, was I suppose the basis, along with circumstances and Robert's book publishing experience (and mine) in the intervening years, that caused us to get together again in 1980. But the fact remains we met through fandom, and this is not an isolated example. I see Miriam Knight quite often, and she and I worked together in recent years on the publication of two excellent books, and on Entwhistle (the publishing company) in general. Miriam's circle of current friends includes, for example, Ardis Waters. Walter Breen drops by her place. Walter wrote an article for my rock and roll magazine, back in '68. Ted White mimeographed the first issue in '66, and wrote an article on Murray the K in '67. Andrew Main continues to be a dear friend, and re-

cently made an excellent recording of my wife's first American concert. Dick Ellington typeset both the books I had a hand in publishing last year, and did an excellent job. Bill Donaho glides ghost-like through Ellington's sometimes when I'm there, picking up his mail. Lesleigh Luttrell is another dear friend, who was responsible for a national radio news service calling and interviewing me on Human Rights Day last month. I have a Dan Steffan painting on the wall of this very room. When the author of a novel we published last year needed a place to stay in mid-America on his speaking tour, fannish connections helped out. Dick and Pat Lupoff gave me a place to stay and drove me to Glen Ellen six years ago, the week I bought this house. The presence of fandom and fannish connections in my life is endless, constant, very powerful, and I'm hardly alone in this.... What I'm getting at, I guess, is the family aspect of fandom, for many of us, that has little to do with whether or not we're active or the reasons one has for being or not being active. And anytime fandom starts being interesting to one like me, or you, or Leman or whoever, which is often largely a function of it being interested in us or the people we know or knew and the time we feel connected to, we're out here to be drawn in somewhat, to write some locs and read or write for or even pub a fanzine. :: This reservoir of talent, or interesting people, or former BNFs or what have you, is always there; the tide ebbs and flows as far as their visibility to fandom or fandom's interest in any or all of them. When I put out a zine in '63, I got letters from Robert Bloch, Art Rapp, Lee Hoffman, Bob Silverberg, Bob Tucker and others seldom heard from at the time. Over the fannish years I think a great many young genzine eds have heard from these same and others quite often, always breaking their ongoing gafia to offer a word of encouragement or respond to something that touches on their interests, their sense of fandom. Telos and F&L provoked such a response; the time was right, and along with the WASH and rb's renewed presence and then Pong something started happening. Or maybe it didn't. Maybe it's all over already and we haven't noticed. (Did I fail to mention Boonfark? Or faithful Mota?) And hey, how come a thorough fringe fan like me has seen this stuff?

The point, if there is any, is that these spurts of activity draw on the existence of a continuing fandom which includes quite a broad number of people who have considerable talent and a great sense of timebinding with one or several fannish periods. A very interesting sort of superstructure exists out here. This is probably more true of what we call "fannish fandom" than of any other kind, although of course convention fandom which is interrelated also draws on an incredible reservoir of once and future fans. :: You, who have few fans in your life except through your correspondence and fanzine reading and publishing, feel very connected to the great fanzines and fan-writings and their perpetrators. I, who sometimes seem to have nothing but fans in my life, have virtually no old fanzines in my files of any kind. So perhaps what you interpret in terms of the importance of certain standards and passions on the part of fan-editors, comes out looking different to me -- but not very different. That's the funny thing. What is fandom? I got into it for the writing and the publishing, the chance to play and express myself. And then got out of it again, even as I stayed with writing and publishing. But didn't really get out of it. There is an aspect of fandom that has nothing to do with activity. It's there in my life whether I wish it to be or not, whether I give it any attention or not. Fanzines become interesting to me as fandom, in your words, remembers "its literary roots" and stuff like Wrhn and F&L appear. They don't quite draw me in, but then I'm a publisher already; I'm sure they would if I didn't have access to such satisfactions. So of course I applaud this latest wave. But fandom exists in my life, and I in it, apart from the literary, even apart from my interest. It is a web of friendships, common experiences, and connections which clearly will be with me as long as I live. (Box 611, Glen Ellen, Ca. 95442)

JOHN-HENRI HOLMBERG: I am again stricken by the veneer of nostalgia both explicitly and implicitly covering Wrhn's pages. Explicitly, of course, in items such as your editorial and Harry Warner's memoirs, and implicitly in the general themes of most of

your written contributions as well as in items such as the letter from Jim Blish, a true gentleman and perhaps the only science fiction person whose death brought me to tears. I met him last at the British Eastercon in 1975, some few months before his death; he was skeletal and gave the impression of grave illness, but his gentleness, his wit and keen intelligence were untouched by cancer and I was as impressed as always by his ability to be always generous, always polite, always interested even when the arguments and the fans he came up against must have seemed to him to be wearisome to the point of being beneath noticing.

Like John Bangsund I am an unfortunate victim of early stencil training: I learned during the typing of my first fanzines at age 13 and 14 back in 1962-63 to compose readable first-draft copy on stencils or on spirit duplication masters. In one respect this has of course had a beneficent effect on my whole later life: I have been extraordinarily productive, with thus far in 12 years of professional writing more than 2,000 articles, referates, reviews, columns, essays and pieces of journalism in print. On the other hand I can bear to reread little of this disgusting mass of verbiage; out of perhaps close to 4 million paid for words (including translations, which have been even more tedious to write than the rest) I have come to consider not only the Sturgeonian 90% but most probably another 90% of those last 10% to be pure garbage in that it could easily, and certainly should, have been rephrased, rewritten and restructured to be better prose and to make whatever point intended with greater force. :: Which naturally heightens the mixture of pleasure and awe generally associated with reading a new Wrhn, where so many of the contributors so obviously take enormous care in composing their material. Although to some extent it seems to me also to be less than fair to compare the writers in Wrhn to the average fanzine contributor: if nothing else, and if my off-hand calculations are reasonably accurate, the average Wrhn writer is around 50 years old and has been a fan for 35 years -- staggering credentials which make even my own 20 years as an active fan feel as kindergarten at best. I don't claim that people automatically write better or more carefully as they grow older, but my personal experience has been that the more you have published, the more care you like to take so that you will at least succeed in expressing intelligibly and clearly your exact meaning: this, if no more, you learn from painful experiences and from even more painful rebuttals to statements you are unconscious of ever having wanted to make.

I find myself in agreement with Ted White, not only as regards his analysis of the essence of fandom, but also when he states in one of his letters that he at the same time feels resigned to an eternity of fanac and to an increasing disillusionment with present-day fandom (ca. 1975). Possibly some of this Janus syndrome is simply nostalgia -- of course friends were closer, fandom cosier and fannish writings less jaundiced ten or fifteen years ago when the arguments felt new, the fellow fen were more of an age and it was still possible to be enthusiastic when you joined battle over the new Heinlein novel or Star Trek segment. But I also give a large amount of credence to the theory that at least fandom is suffering from the surfeit of film fans, comix fans and pop culture sf fans now entering it in droves and clusters. Even chilly Sweden is beginning to grow blisters of Star Wars fanclubs, Star Wars fanzines and similar extraneous groups which all behave as though -- and seem to believe that -- fandom is something they if not made up themselves at least was made for them and their special interests. Thus the mainstream of fandom as I know it is even now dissipating in front of my disbelieving eyes, and what remains of it are scattered and dispersing fragments consisting of the individuals who used to publish what I regarded as true fanzines, and to arrange what I used to believe were genuine conventions. But of course both their fanzines and conventions lacked Darth Vader, Captain Spock and the rest of the parapernalia nowadays obviously central to that almost unrecognizable sf enjoyed by the current consensus of teenage neos dominating Swedish fandom. :: Presumably nostalgia is not the gleaming weapon with which to attack this frontal assault on the bastions of fannishness. But it comes automatically, and perhaps the most fascinating

part of it is that the nostalgia myself or Mats Linder, who have after all been active twenty years, is echoed in a surprisingly convincing way by fans like Anders Bellis, a trufan indeed but one who entered fandom less than five years ago and who consequently is mourning the passing of a fannish epoch he never experienced first-hand. Perhaps this is not completely different from the sudden renaissance of Victorian novels in England a few years ago, when authors in their 30s and 40s started writing of London fogs, gaslights, Empire and the Sepoy uprising; the yearning for a simpler and perhaps more pleasant age may very well be a general phenomenon, not just another bit of fannish silliness. (Torsgatan 76, S-113 37 Stockholm, Sweden)

CHRIS ATKINSON: Ted's article reminded me of one of the first occasions when I met a group of US fans. The meeting was held in a flat belonging to the parent of one of the group. When we arrived, we were hurried past the owner of the flat by her daughter, who said to us, "Oh, you don't have to talk to mother, she's just a 'mundane'". I had never come across this term before, and was shocked by the fan's rudeness to someone who was, after all, letting us use her flat. Because of this I went out of my way to speak to the woman in question who turned out to be a social worker like myself, and to have a lot more in common with me than her daughter, who seemed obsessed with the finer points of duplicator design, a topic which has never fired me with a great deal of enthusiasm. :: Ted uses the term 'mundane' (or variants of it) around 30 times in his article. It appears to be a dismissive term for non-fans, for activities outside fandom, for ideas which it is not thought appropriate for fans to hold or to discuss openly with other fans, at any rate. I am confused, I must admit. Ted has recently expressed a liking for an article I wrote, about social work and mental breakdowns. Presumably Ted would see these as 'mundane' activities as I did not do them with fans. Maybe they become fannish if a fan writes about them? But what if I write about them in our social work newsletter, a duplicated magazine run entirely by volunteers, whenever they feel like it, which does not pay its contributors? Have I magically been changed from fannish to mundane overnight? Or does it depend on who reads the article? What if the other fan who works in my office reads the article? Does it suddenly become fannish again? The point I am labouring somewhat is that it is not possible to draw a dividing line between mundane and fannish activities in the way that Ted seems to want to do. They interlink. Fandom is a part of society, just like work, just like marriage. Some bits are distinct, some bits overlap, but it just doesn't work to think of them as completely separate worlds. Fandom only exists in the form it does because of conditions in wider society. Fandom needs a postal system...duplicating technology... mass literacy, for example.

Certainly I agree that the 'organisation' (or lack of it) in fandom is pretty unique. The only grouping that I can think of which is in any way similar is the womens movement. (This is so, at least, in Britain.) This is certainly a very positive aspect of fandom as it does allow greater freedom for people of all types to express themselves and become involved. However, the snag to this is that we are all products of a wider society which does not work in this way. (Personally I think it would be extremely difficult for it to do so.) Just as Ted talks of women in the 50s being 'enculturated' away from science/science fiction/fandom, we are all affected by our society in ways that are bound to be evident in all our activities. For instance, research has shown that women qualify statements much more than men do, are more hesitant and self-denigrating when asking questions in public meetings and tend to apologize more. This evident lack of confidence is surely a handicap in any situation, fandom included. Presumably other subordinate groups may have similar handicaps. This would perhaps go some way to explain why, in Britain at least, the vast majority of fans are white, middle class, and male. :: It seems to me that it is the artificial boundary between the 'mundane' and the fannish that has led Ted to another difficult area, that of keeping politics out of fandom. Ted is referring to two sorts of politics, internal power games, and politics with a wider focus such as Marxism or femin-

ism. The former seems unavoidable in that in a variety of people there will always be someone who wants to take over, but the way fandom has developed seems to gently dissuade such people-- thus far, at any rate. The second sort of politics however by its very nature affects us all, whatever our way of life or hobbies. Ted himself seems to be arguing for an apolitical fandom, but in his article implicitly criticises Marxism (referred to --or its adherents are referred to-- as idealistic, utopian and naive, whilst the expression "communist termites" speaks for itself), thus taking up a political stance himself. Indeed, to determinedly not hold a political view obviously gives support to the status quo... and to be giving such support is a political act!

I find it difficult to unravel the different ways Ted uses the word 'political'. Sometimes, as I have mentioned previously, he means internal politics, sometimes a personal involvement with wider politics expressed within fandom. A further meaning to the word seems to be the use of the whole of fandom as a pressure group for a particular cause. This seems a fairly impossible venture knowing the diversity of political opinion amongst fans, although I cannot see the problem with a small group of fans, getting together to say, express disquiet at the nuclear arms race. Surely that is their choice, and if they wish to call themselves the "Harringay Fans against the Bomb" then that is their choice also, although it seems a bit of a crazy choice as the majority of people would probably think they were football supporters or exotic dancers. Presumably being fans remains their central focus or they would forget fandom altogether and join the Harringay campaign for nuclear disarmament. Maybe they are equally interested in both activities. To discourage discussion on areas seen as non-fannish seems to me to encourage people to be insular and boring. :: The relationship between England and Ireland is complex and is not always paralleled by the relationship between English people and Irish people. I find it hard to believe that D. West, at any rate, should have been motivated in his criticism of elitism by a dislike of the Irish. Maybe some of the appearance of elitism in fandom may stem from a desire to be as different as possible from mortals not blessed with the knowledge of things fannish. Things such as the silly spelling which Ted (I hope) makes fun of in his last line. Maybe it's also because a group of friends often seems exclusive to an outsider coming along -- until he is accepted. But maybe some of us are also just a little bit exclusive in our groups of friends/fans, because we are slightly worried that strangers might change things, with their newfangled ideas about politics or feminism... (28 Duckett Road, Harringay, London N4 1BN, England)

DARRELL SCHWEITZER: One inherent paradox of fan politics which Ted White seems to ignore is that the organizers and power-hungry types are often the only ones willing to do the work in running a club or convention or publishing a clubzine. I've seen this happen many times. All the people you want to run things aren't interested and they spend a lot of effort avoiding getting elected to office. Some power-hungry incompetent can sometimes take over simply because there is no competition. The Philadelphia SF Society, which is a very old group (an original Science Fiction League chapter) and remarkably feud-free, seems to experience a perpetual power vacuum. Whenever some likeable and competent person can be found who is willing to hold a position of responsibility, all the other potentially capable people who are trying to avoid doing any work block vote him into office with an overwhelming majority and thus stave off disaster a little longer. When this person begins to tire of the position, a frantic search is made for another sacrificial victim. :: As a general rule, though, putting on a convention is a lot of hard work, unpaid, and in these days of mundane fandom, increasingly taken for granted. It can involve personal financial risk (ie, individuals being sued in financial disasters), and in order for someone to be willing to go through all that trouble, they have to be getting some gratification. Those who are not impressed by dizzy heights of secret masterdom probably don't think it worth the bother. So the fan politician is probably a necessary evil and will always be with us. The only alternative I see is the professional, paid convention worker, who is

not going to help make things more fannish. :: I'm sorry to burst Tom Perry's, ah... whatever ... but the waterbed clearly dates from the earliest issues of Weird Tales, not from Heinlein or even Gernsback. Like the immortality and invisibility motifs, it is something which came into science fiction from fantasy, and perhaps from general folklore. One wonders if the tales of the Sargasso Sea and ships being entrapped therein aren't ancestral memories of gigantic, prehistorical waterbeds which do not appear in the fossil records because they deflated before being fossilized. But, more to the point, the cover story on the very first issue of Weird Tales was "Ooze" by Anthony M. Rud, and the cover painting shows a young lady writhing in the clutches of a particularly nasty waterbed which the artist, with typical Weird Tales ineptitude, has equipped with tentacles. But then, this is the same magazine which a few years later depicted Conan the Barbarian in Bermuda shorts and Solomon Kane in a pith helmet. It only figures. Nevertheless, for many years the typical Weird Tales story could best be described as: "Three explorers discover a lost city of dubious repute. One goes mad. One is absorbed by a waterbed. The other survives to tell the tale." (113 Deepdale Road, Strafford, Pa. 19087)

DAN STEFFAN: I love the cover though I realize its origin in a late 60s Wrhn. I like the colors and the timebinding quality of the illustration, but it has more to do with what it has to say about your concept of what good fanart is. This illustration shows the way you have distilled the essence of classic fanart. It has the simplicity and character of the three great fanartists: Leeh, Rotsler and Atom. (Of course I acknowledge the place of Ray Nelson and others, but don't see their influence in your work.) All three of these people achieve a simplicity that you also have. They communicate a great deal of personality with simple lines and well thought out characters. I see this in your stuff as well. Of course there is the other influence of fine art (Picasso) and your art direction career (the layouts and especially the spreads which started appearing in the late 60s). This color cover illo has all those things. It is fair cartooning, but excellent design and great fanart. It works. Bearing this in mind, I have to say I was disappointed with the general appearance of this issue. :: While your art has often been simple and sleek, it has rarely been crude...as are some of the obviously new drawings in this issue. You mentioned when we were discussing your cover for BNF 5 (which was a photo-collage) that you didn't feel able to draw any more, and didn't know what to do to get back in practice. In view of the things I said in the above paragraph, I find it hard to believe. I am someone who expresses himself artistically, and while I draw less than I should, I can't imagine being able to lay off long enough to lose touch. At this stage of the game, when I do not draw for a month or so, I find that I have continued to improve in spite of myself. (rb: Yes, but art has never been my primary 'voice' in the sense that Van Gogh or Matisse communicated automatically on paper in line and image: I'd stopped 'speaking' in that medium for 6 or 7 years. Essentially my 'art' is a form of talking to myself -- a recreation in a playground of design (if you will) where my most successful work -- from my standpoint -- is totally self-indulgent and an escape into shapes and patterns that are an automatic and always unexpected discovery. See Kandinsky. It has nothing to do with you the viewer or your expectations.) I see you as having a large artistic vocabulary, and I don't see how you could have lost command of it, even if you've become rusty at the techniques involved. Why have your skills which seemed so refined in the late 60s diminished? What happened to cause you to stop being prolific and practiced? I can't imagine that you, an artistic person, have given up doodling.

I suppose specifics are best: the illustrations for both the Bangsund and Perry items were weak. The figures were dismally executed -- especially the little guy on the Bangsund illo. I mean, jeez, you've long ago perfected those simple fan-guy drawings like the one on the cover -- it is hard to believe they were done by the same person. Especially when compared with the other drawings in the issue by you. :: I'm sticking my neck out here but I think those two above mentioned illustrations are

probably the only ones in the issue by you which were drawn recently. If what you say about your loss of technique is correct then the difference between the recent illos and the old ones is obvious. The snake at the beginning of the lettercol was great -- vintage streamlined Bergeron art. And the art for Walt's piece was also great stuff, it has everything I expect from you. Do you see the difference? Of course the above is all very hypothetical. I just want to say something to jar you back into the right groove. :: I liked your use of the Spaceways cover for Harry Warner's article. It was appropriate and relevant and I encourage more of the same -- providing it is not too hideous a piece of art. The Arfstrom drawing was out of place however. It was not relevant to the subject of the article it accompanied. And while this isn't necessarily a bad thing, it just seemed out of place. It wasn't a sleek Bergeron design; it wasn't holistically a part of the fanzine. It made Wrhn 29 seem more like a scrapbook than any other issue. And besides that, I don't think it is all that good a drawing. Arfstrom was a good Finlay imitator, but that all seems very dull and dry now -- and besides, I have an old Odd cover of his that is better than this piece. I just couldn't help feeling that you used it instead of something of your own -- perhaps another example of your lack of confidence with a pen. :: Leeh's art was fine and welcome. I think she is a good addition to the visual identity of Wrhn. She is all I attributed to her earlier -- and is relevant to the surrounding text. I guess that's what I didn't like about the Arfstrom art -- it struck me as an illustration that was out of character for the fanzine and something that I'd have never seen in Wrhn ten or twelve years ago. (1010 N. Tuckahoe Street, Falls Church, Virginia, 22046)

{rb: I think the problem is really your expectation of what an issue of Wrhn should look like. The format has changed radically over the years -- from the two all art issues in the early 50s to the series containing absolutely no artwork. The device of full page graphics and solid text combines features of both approaches -- opportunity for splashy visuals in a non-frivolous format...a combination of the 'hot' and 'cool', to refer to Ted White's article on packaging in the Pong Annish, and this admission confirms Ted's observation that I have "carefully considered each and every aspect of the Wrhn package, right down to its relative austerity." (I might add that that consideration has resulted in a much easier to put together fanzine than if I jumped into each issue without the least idea what I was going to do this time. The result creates the gestalt and, sometimes, runs into problems of expectation when the formula is varied. One might note that this simplification via formula is a definite part of the success of fanzines as diverse as Hyphen, Quandry, Pong, and Tappen among many others.) I see another possible direction in the spread for Patrick's column in this issue: I've yet to indulge my fascination for typography in Wrhn (though the 'Quandry' and the '6s&7s' pages in the WASH were the sort of thing I did extensively as an advertising and editorial art director. :: If any of you would like to leave the room to get a beer or something this may be a good time because I intend to take this opportunity for some fanart shop talk with Dan: All the art last issue with the exception of the covers was current and done in a three day period (along with another dozen or so full page pieces) here in San Juan. The problem of apparent loss of facility is that I no longer have the resources of a major advertising agency at my disposal. I'd perfected certain techniques (some of which were noted and used to splendid editorial effect by Frank Lunney) of working in extremely small sizes, blowing a drawing up photostatically, and then refining out any crudities. The original of the cover on #29 was something I doodled in a few seconds and is actually only about 2½" tall -- as was my cover on The Monthly Monthly last year. I carelessly explained this technique to Patrick Nielsen Hayden and the result was a cover on Telos 4 which I had to hurriedly research through my memory files to make sure I hadn't done it. Wish I had. :: Here in Puerto Rico the cost of photostatic enlargements is prohibitively high and the quality astonishingly low. Now I'm forced to primitive forms of execution such as working to size which I haven't had to do since the late 50s when I was absentmindedly drawing my way back into fandom on the covers of Gemzine. The

difficulty for me now is something like attempting to do a careless doodle 4' tall. The facilities at Doyle Dane Bernbach allowed me incredible spontaneous freedom and the ability to translate a drawing to any size mechanically. Now when I draw an 11" sentient vegetable the felt tip pen has to flow with instant uninterrupted spontaneity -- the least hesitation or uncertainty appears on the paper immediately...it takes a bit of practice for the inks and freedom to flow effortlessly -- something like the necessity to write perfect first drafts. :: The cover of this issue was done in the late 60s (I did about 15 variations -- all 1"-1½" in size) and am now thinking of producing it as a giant silk screen graphic 40" tall. Sometimes these things take awhile to jell. :: I don't know if you're all asleep yet but I'm afraid you'll have to bear with me.



We fanartists rarely get a chance to prattle on about our work so I'll take this opportunity to inflict my thinking on my drawings in #29 while I'm at it: The illo for "The Improbable Irish" may be the most 'accomplished' and I like it the least. Too slick. Too practiced. Too anecdotal. It did what it was supposed to do but not much more -- I prefer fan-art which goes beyond that into pure design. The snake was pure Bergeron 1962. It's all right but I want to do more than that. I get bored when I know exactly what I'm going to achieve -- it verges on parody. The Bangsund page was my favorite (and my favorite piece usually dictates which will be the 'lead' item after the editorial in an issue). The little figure being threatened by spears was the first of several versions -- some of them as 'slick' as the one on the cover but I made a deliberate decision to stay with the first 'crude' one. For me it said something about the 'angst' of those people in that room in which the tips of spears were coming through the walls at them. In its crudeness it reminded me a bit of Edward Munch's "The Scream". All of which is a

much of a muchness to burden fanart with but...it just happened to come out on the paper the way I thought it the first time. There are instances when all the technique we have at our command gets in the way of a simple direct communication. The 'crude' version had in it what I wanted to say -- the rest of them didn't. :: I've had the Arfstrom illo for years (well before #27) and have always wanted to run it as a full page as a sort of homage to Arfstrom and a recognition that some of his work was a tour de force rendering of Finlay -- whose oeuvre I still have a great affection for. There are Finlay drawings which haunt me to this day 30 years (and more) after first having seen them. You see how eclectic my taste is: Miro and Hoffman (Lee, not Hans!) are giants of whom I stand in awe but there's another kind of genius in what Finlay did with images that imprint themselves in one's mind forever. I know what you mean about the Arfstrom being out of context but surely the context is mine and it's really only your expectations that it is out of. :: Dan's letter was cut from an 8 page document which went into a fascinating analysis of his reactions to Wrhn (as a 'living' fanzine) and his relationship to the magazine and its influence on his own fanac which sounds in many ways like the attitude the young Bergeron had toward the fanac of Redd Boggs (a point Steffan himself makes). It's difficult for me to decide if it's fascinating because I'm the editor involved or as a study of a fan and his ideals as confounded/expressed by Wrhn 29. Well, it's far from all crass egoboo (as you can see from the above) but I wonder if many of you would care very much about such matters. I thought not.)

JOHN D. BERRY: The issue as a whole is too much dependent on Wrhn 28 to be wholly itself. The Pong Annish, which came not long before it, provided an instructive contrast, being wholly engaged and more of a culmination than a postlude. That issue of Pong would have to fight it out with three issues of Tappen and Boonfark 4 for the position of best single fanzine of 1981, and, good as it is, Wrhn would have to come

in somewhere behind them. :: I cherish my copy of "The Improbable Irish" and wish it had been published by some publisher other than Ace, someone who knew how to market it. It just fell through the cracks. No other Ace book was the slightest bit like it, and it wasn't marketed to fit into the categories -- and onto the shelves -- that similar books on countries and peoples get sold in and on. (rb: But it was also published by Taplinger and Burns & MacEachern, Ltd. See the WASH bibliography.) :: Harry Warner avoided the pedantries that occasionally creep into his letters and produced a virtually flawless piece -- intensely interesting, unencumbered, thoughtful, anecdotal...

I was touched by the dream that Ted White evoked: the small community of intelligent, lonely fans, many of them socially inept or crippled or simply undistinguished in their lives except for the paper world of fanzines, all of them gaining meaning from this community and what they create within it. I'm not immune to that dream. Indeed, it's part of what makes fandom special to me. :: But Ted seems to be claiming that our warts are our crowns. He seems to have confused the fact that these outcasts created something worthwhile in fandom with the conclusion that it's better to be socially inept or dying of a leprous disease. Ted is making a virtue of our alienation. Is it a virtue? I don't think so. When you live in a crazy society, as we all do, it would be crazy to be too well-adjusted, but that's not an excuse for not trying to be sane. :: I don't believe in any division between fandom and the rest of the world. Fandom is part of the real world, as Malcolm Edwards put it succinctly in Tappen. It's quite legitimate for Ted to complain when people begin to participate in fandom and bring preconceptions to it that get in their way, but it's foolish to insist that fans don't partake of the faults of the world and should therefore ignore them. Feminists didn't "import" sexism into fandom; it's been here all along, an assumption that's been too seldom questioned. It's hard to imagine how an intelligent woman, especially an intelligent young woman, could not be a feminist today, or at least have underlying feminist assumptions that are bound to clash with those of many older male fans. It is, in fact, precisely that idealism that Ted eulogizes that motivates so many active feminists, in fandom and elsewhere. :: It's the attacks on feminists that annoy me in Ted's article. He seems to assume that there's a "real world" somewhere and that fandom is somewhere else, when of course fandom is a community that exists in and of the rest of the world. It's worth looking at our assumptions (newer feminist ones as well as older sexist ones) in fandom as it is in the rest of our lives.

But is fandom a meritocracy? Partly. I've never known the ideal fandom that Ted describes, and I distrust ideals that rise into the clouds, leaving the earth's dirt behind. "All the heaven there is," as a poet I know wrote, "is here." "No ideas but in things," wrote a rather better-known poet. Fandom is not just the starry ideals cherished by its members, but the actual ways in which fans act among themselves. We all know people who have achieved a certain amount of fame and even prestige in fandom without deserving it (just look at the Hugos!). Probably the merit-based hierarchy is strongest in purely-on-paper fanac, for all the reasons Ted cites, but fandom has never been purely a paper phenomenon. :: And yet...Ted is right. The heart and essence of fandom is in fanzines, and the many newcomers who take fandom as a purely social scene are missing the point. There is no reason that the most socially inept should be the best writers, artists, publishers -- fans -- but it's certainly true that in a club or at a convention the person who is more socially ept and attractive will make out better. The smart loner may be drawn more to paper fanac than the more sociable fan out of compensation -- but fanzines don't have to be created just as a form of compensation. They're an artform, not a therapy.

I don't regard it as a bad thing that fans should be socially ept or competent people. I started out as a nerd, and I'm glad of the ways I've escaped my nerddom, and regret the ways I haven't; I don't glorify those nerdy qualities. But I do regard it as bad when people get involved with fandom and fail to recognize its special

nature, particularly its verbal nature, or to respect the peculiar kind of community that fandom is. In that I'm in agreement with Ted. And, while I don't think fandom is or should be immune to the kinds of considerations you bring to any other aspect of your life, I do value the way it cuts across all sorts of lines -- the way you may find something in common, through fandom, with people you would otherwise never know for reasons of age, sex, politics, social class, or geographic distance. And I value it as a sort of community based on literacy, on the printed word, on love of language and the creation of your own writing, publishing, and drawing... When Ted describes the typical fan's "superiority and inferiority complexes" for being smart but inept, he claims that they "were outnumbered and subject to scorn and derision for the very foresighted views they espoused." Nonsense. They were subject to scorn for being nerds, not for their ideas. Fans are not slans, and mundanes are not lower on the evolutionary ladder. (525 19th Avenue East, Seattle, Washington, 98112)

←rb: And yet. And yet I recall the advent of my own nerddom in the eighth grade when a controversy arose when I maintained that an eclipse of the moon was caused by the Earth coming between the moon and the sun. Someone else was asked the same question and held that it was the moon coming between the Earth and the sun (or perhaps the sun coming between the Earth and the moon -- I no longer recall) that created the effect. I patiently explained my side of the argument to the dumbfounded stares of the whole class. At this point the teacher took a poll of the entire room and everyone of my fellow students agreed with my opponent. The teacher turned to me and asked if I was sure that I was right. I said yes. The class never forgave me. And taught me the meaning of contempt.→

ALEXEI PANSKIN: In his article in Wrhn 29, my old friend Ted White concludes by kicking Sam Moskowitz around -- without naming him -- for his first book the self-serving fan history, "The Immortal Storm", published nearly thirty years ago. :: Hey, now. I think Sam Moskowitz deserves a lot more credit than he has been given. He is not just a pathetic mediocrity attempting to take on an undeserved status...as Ted intimates. :: The fact is that for twenty-five years or more Sam Moskowitz has been dedicated to digging up and printing the facts of the history of science fiction. He did it when it wasn't popular to do it. He did it even though there was no particular money in it. He did it even though there were no particular guidelines to follow. :: Just look at Moskowitz's bibliography. He did two books of profiles of the major sf writers since Cyrano. He did research into the dime novel, into 19th century newspaper sf, into the sf produced by a coterie in San Francisco in the late 19th century, into the magazines of the turn of the century and into the pulp magazines of the Teens. And much much more. :: Sam Moskowitz is not a trained scholar. He makes mistakes. And he is a clumsy writer. But when the trained brains, the mistake-catchers and the slick stylists want to talk about the past of science fiction, sooner or later they will find themselves relying on the help of Sam Moskowitz, for all his imperfections. He was there first. I think everybody who has sneered at SaM and laughed at him, and then gone off in private to use one or another of his books owes him an apology. Sam Moskowitz isn't a classy item -- but he is the real thing, and he should be loved and respected for that. He has served science fiction the best way he knew how. :: I think it is carrying fan politics too far to keep kicking Sam Moskowitz around for things he wrote in 1954 or did in 1939. If Ted can admit that Sam Moskowitz deserves respect as an expert in his day job in frozen foods -- well, let him look once without blinking at what SaM has achieved as an amateur scholar and a true fan of science fiction, and give SaM the credit he is due. (RR 2, Box 261, Perkassie, Pa. 18944)

TERESA NIELSEN HAYDEN: Do I really have to decide whether I like Bangsund or Willis better? :: (I'm biased here, due to an unfortunate accident that befell me some time back. I was unfamiliar with Bangsund's fanzines, picked one up at a convention, and reached the punchline(s) of a Keats-and-Chapman story before I realized that,

far from being a chatty and improbable historical vignette, it was a multiple literary pun of Lovecraftian dimension. The discharge of the punchline (it was the one about "The curfew tolls the knell of passing Dai/and leaves 'The Vault' to Doc Ness and Twomey") Smote Me Down, and I have since been unable to regard Bangsund with anything but a rather wary awe.) :: Y'know, Dick, sometimes I contemplate all your letters and locs and fanzines, and the idea comes to me that what you're actually doing is inventing the fandom that you want to deal with. I suspect the principle goes something like "you pretend that the fandom you want to deal with actually exists out there, and if you pretend well enough other people who are equipped to appreciate what's going on will pretend along with you, and it will appear." :: That's one metaphor for it. Patrick and I sometimes talk in terms of pheromones; you keep following the scent of things you like and eventually you'll come to a proper source of them. We figure that we found fandom in about that fashion, moving from one contact to another. Emit the right ones and the people you want will find you. :: ...A good fanzine, at heart, is not the artifact itself, not the sum of its articles and illustrations and printing; much of what makes it good is the particular continuum it creates. To read Hyphen is to enter the Hyphen universe. To read your editorial was to enter the Warhoon universe... In the end, the silly thing I liked best about Wrhn 29 was the way it made Wrhn 30 hang in the air, visible, in front of me. (rb: Ah. And can you see the TNH article in number 31?) (4714 36th Ave NE, Seattle, WAsh. 98105)

ANDERS BELLIS: As far as I am concerned, the by far most brilliant piece in the issue is not the excerpt from "The Improbable Irish" by Walt Willis, but Harry Warner's "All My Yesterdays". Once again, I wonder why Harry Warner, Jr is not more frequently mentioned in discussions about the all-time greatest fan-writers; not only are his fanhistory books incredibly well written, informative and amusing, but the articles and essays one comes across by him in various fanzines now and then, are always, and I've found no exception, written with great skill, humour and care. (Vanadivagen 13, 113 46, Stockholm, Sweden)

PAUL SKELTON is quoted here for Anders Bellis' benefit. I think I told Skel that I'd somehow lost interest in being actively involved in large reprint projects: But I wish someone would reprint some more of the old stuff. I've never seen a Hyphen or a Quandry or a Skyhook or a Void or just about anything. I've read nothing by Burbee or Laney, next to nothing by Carr or Boggs! Where is a guy like me going to come across material like this? There's no way I could afford the sort of prices such material would bring at auction these days, not that such stuff ever does come up in the auctions anymore. The folks who'd part with such material have long since parted with it and those who've hung onto it ain't likely to let go now. (25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire, England. SK2 5NW.)

DAVE RIKE checks in with some thoughts relevant to the above: Did Dan Steffan tell you about the copy of Innuendo Terry Carr sent him? Terry had one of the copy shops in Berkeley do copies of an issue of Inn and Dan wrote him that while he knew it wasn't mimeo, it looked so very much like mimeo that he could only assure himself that it was Xeroxed by noticing the staple marks on the sheet edges. If one had a good file of fanzines and leased a good plain paper copier that would do the job, you could do copies of fanzines at a not-too-outrageous price and generally on paper stock that will hold up longer than the original. With a good copier one could reprint fanzines on a custom basis. (rb: From my experience with the WAsh I would say that easily between 100-200 subscriptions could be lined up immediately for the first couple dozen productions of such a reprint press -- provided it was done at close to cost. Lynn Hickman recently wrote that he "Just got another offset press to add to my collection. Its an ABDick model 330 that has been stored for a number of years in Jonesville, Mich. I'm in the process now of seeing if I can get it printing again." So I don't know what you guys are waiting for: I'm faunching to see

those facsimile editions of the complete runs of Stop Breaking Down and Wrinkled Shrew. Not to mention..> (Box 11, Crockett, Calif. 94525)

BRUCE D. ARTHURS: Wrhn is a very dense fanzine. Meaning that very little in the way of extraneous or trivial material has been left in; each paragraph, each sentence, says something, has a reason for being there. I made this observation when I realized I'd drafted over two pages of comments and hadn't gotten past the colophon yet. (3421 W. Poinsettia, Phoenix, Ariz. 85029)

JERRY KAUFMAN: We don't, as it happens, exist in a pure fandom restricted to fanzines. Personal contact has been important to fandom since the first convention in 1937 (or whenever). Certainly Lee Hoffman was a major fan despite, or because, or totally beside the fact of her sex, but in the story of her first meeting with Tucker (in which it is hinted he dropped the bath towel he was holding), the humor of a man inadvertantly displaying himself to a woman would sorta disappear if Lee had been the chubby thirteen year old boy everyone thought she was. (Lee was my first hero in fandom, though I had no idea who she was when I first met her at Tricon: if I had a family tree, Lee would be my father.) :: Much of Ted's analysis I find accurate, except that I think the change started a long time ago. I came into fandom at Tricon in 1966. "2001: A Space Odyssey" had just come out, and "Star Trek" was just about to begin its tv run (several episodes were premiered at the convention, to general approval). That was when it started. Do you remember the mass onslaught of Pittsburgh fans, Ted, at the 1968 Disclave? There were 25 of them. (4326 Winslow Place N., Seattle, Wash. 98103)

AVEDON CAROL: Nowadays fandom is full of people who not only aren't interested in fanzines or even written sf, but they consider folks like you and me to be very strange indeed, with our perverted little fan magazines and nonsense like that. I have come to the conclusion that they are so far away from understanding what a fanzine is for that they see us as pathetic failures at putting out real magazines -- that is, they think we're aiming to put out something like Algol, but we just aren't up to it. :: The last paragraph of your editorial I show to everyone who walks into the room, and every single one of them says something about what a nicely put together paragraph it is. And some of them thank me warmly for showing it to them, and I think maybe they look like they are crying. I know how they feel. It made me cry a little, too. And laugh a little. It's just right. And I thank you for showing it to me. (4409 Woodfield Road, Kensington, Maryland. 20895)

rich brown: It has been a few months since I last read "The Improbable Irish" -- but even recently read Willis seems remarkably fresh and deserving of top honors. However, Ted's "The Politics of Fandom," while a little out of focus in the middle -- it seems in part memoir, in part an Article With A Point -- homes back in again at the end: even with the fault noted, it too deserves top honors. :: It seems to me you seriously undervalue your own contributions to Wrhn's total gestalt, not only in your editorial but in your editorial presence. If I were capable of objective judgment, I would perhaps place your editorial a quarter rung above Tom Perry's column; Tom sparkles here, however, and both his topics touch very responsive chords, nay, feelings of deja vu, in me. :: Bangsund's contribution might seem a toss-off, but it is such a brilliantly written too-off one can't help think it could not have been improved. Warner's "All My Yesterdays" is in the same category of brilliance although certainly no toss-off; if it suffers in this comparison, it does so from being but part of the intended whole, and even then it occurs to me that in most any other major fanzine it undoubtedly would have been the Major Article which all good fanzines need. :: I agree with much of what you say about the term "fugghead", while maintaining some of those uses are legitimate. Certainly the term has been applied to people who did not deserve it -- but a handful have deserved it, too. I can't

find any sympathy for people like GMCarr or George Wetzel -- vicious, hateful individuals with no regard for truth -- I'm frankly unmoved that they've been "ostracized" from fandom. I once heard "fugghead" defined (satirically) as "anyone who disagrees with me," and what makes it more satire than joke is many people, and probably most of us who voted in the "Fugghead of the Year" poll, may have used it just that way. I've also heard it defined as someone who consistently speaks without thinking, which would probably qualify me as the fugghead of all time if it were consistently applied -- I still have that regrettable tendency, and you'd think after the time I've been in the microcosm I would have Learned Better. You use "fugghead" and "dork" interchangeably, but I believe Dan Steffan's intent in bringing "dork" to fandom was to have a nicer, if still negative, word for "fugghead". Dorkishness, if I understand the intent, was to be applied to the kind of bumbling fuggheadedness more the result of ignorance than genuine viciousness. Thus, many who have been considered fuggheads -- Sam Moscovitz, Orville Mosher, John Thiel, Martin Morse Wooster, to name a few possibilities -- were and/or are dorks. I don't have enough first-hand information to know which category Degler would best fit; he seems to have been generally harmless... I've heard that the incident which caused many people to declare Peter Vorzimer a fugghead -- his bullying of a drunken young fan to drink a bottle of hair cream -- never happened. And there have been a few really pathetic cases -- Raleigh Evans Multog and Norman Wansborough, who so far as I know never harmed anyone but were retarded adults. So, while I think the term has legitimate uses, I also think you're right and that it has been misused more often than not.

Did you bother to tell John Bangsund "Kehli" was the name of LeeH's horse, the care and feeding of which threw her into the awaiting arms of gafia? :: Some people, Bangsund apparently one, write brilliant first drafts. I'm not among them -- and the pity is that it took me so long to find out, despite its being as plain as it could be. I am reminded of the time Ted Johnstone agreed to do mailing comments for my Sapszine. When I handed him a stencil and said, "In Saps, we comment directly on stencils," he held it out in a variation of the Deadly Indirect Glance Ploy and replied, "It appears to be a waxy, porous material attached to a paste-board-like backing." :: What is fandom? Ted provides the best definition of our fandom I've yet seen -- "anarchistic meritocracy". But I'd go a little further, and be a little more exclusive (perhaps, dare I say it?, elitist). :: We have always had club and convention fans, of course, and most of them have been nice people in their own way -- even though we have not always seen eye-to-eye on the "purpose" of fandom (ie, whether to buckle down and get organized so as to promote sf in the eyes of the mundane world or to emulate the creativity we admired). Convention and club fans have always made up the larger part of fandom, in the same way that New York State is the largest thing you can mean when you mention New York -- even though "New York" can also refer to a smaller portion of the state, as in New York City. Now, with conventions being innundated with media freaks, we are beyond such easy analogies... :: I personally think it would be a lot easier to define the media freaks out of fandom. We can't keep them from believing they are fandom in the largest possible sense, of course, but that doesn't mean we have to tacitly agree with them by referring to them that way. Why should we, since so many of us -- fanzine, club and convention fans alike -- do not believe they are? :: When the size of conventions first began to get out of hand, I thought it didn't really matter. Indeed, I once thought the all-day programming and all-night movies performed a useful function -- it kept the walk-ins occupied while fans enjoyed themselves with other fans elsewhere. If they enjoyed that fare, fine -- if not, let them make an effort to find out what fandom was all about. Besides, if they paid their own freight, who was I to gainsay their (by my tastes) more mundane pastimes? Especially since it kept them from underfoot? :: But there are errors in that logic which only became apparent when the club and convention fans attained their purpose -- as lagniappe when sf became "sci-fi" with media acceptance of "Star Trek" and "Star Wars". Now it's obvious that when you buy

a convention membership at today's inflated prices, you're actually paying for all the things they want a convention to be and few, if any, of the things we've come to enjoy. You're paying for their movies, the parties where they can fawn over "the pros" and the "stars" and the extra convention space they require for their games, comic- and Trek-related activities, etc. All they provide are their numbers -- which effectively deprive the rest of us of what hotels once offered free, since even the largest cities seldom have more than one hotel capable of accommodating so many people. We've gained nothing and lost much that was once to our advantage. So who needs them? (rb: Ah, yes. The Frankenstein effect...) :: It may have once been that, if sf conventions and fandom were not precisely synonymous, fandom at least made up a significant part of the people who attended conventions. Fandom, in this sense, is where the communication goes on -- and fans are those who do the communicating. This can be done at clubs and conventions -- but it is almost always done in fanzines. Fans are also those who time-bind. The others -- who certainly far outnumber us -- may call themselves fans, but if that makes them participants in the microcosm we are part of, then it stands to reason that the world must have once been flat because so many people once believed it was. :: The media fans also publish "fanzines" if you care to define fanzine that way. Or not, if you don't care to define it that way. I don't care to define it that way. They can define it their way if they want -- but just because they frequently mistake form for content, why should we? (1632 19th St. NW, Apt. 2, Washington, DC. 20009)

ERIC MAYER: I'm impressed with the overall look, the color work, the design. I hope you have time to produce plenty of artwork. Perhaps a few fanartists could be convinced to pay attention to all the elements of their work rather than just the representational element. Generally speaking, when it comes to sheer representation, actual depictions of muscles or spaceships (or whatever it is fanartists tend to enjoy reproducing), the human hand can't compete with the camera, even, it seems, when the camera is focussed on models as in "Star Wars" and the like. (Although there are exceptions. I was rather overwhelmed when I went to see Monet's huge water lily paintings in New York. Actually they are absolutely realistic, as a few magazines have shown by comparing them to photos of the reconstructed gardens at Giverny, but the paintings have more depth, movement and life than the photos. But I doubt you'll find those qualities in a depiction of a spaceship in a fanzine and I maintain the fanartist would be better off worrying about the composition and so forth than about the shadows around the screws.) This, of course, is just my excuse for not being able to draw... :: Ted White's mention of the similarity of fannish writing of the Willis type to New Yorker material amused me since, years later, I thought the same. Indeed, Willis' early columns seem exact replicas of "The Talk Of The Town". Reading Willis reminded me most strongly of reading E.B.White's collected letters. Although Willis' pieces were more carefully put together than White's letters they were, in a sense, informal, being for amateur publication, and the atmosphere was the same. In both cases I felt I had spent, and spent well, a great deal of time, covered a lot of ground with, an almost painfully sane and thoughtful person. Probably White has influenced my essays more than anyone. (1771 Ridge Road East, Rochester, N.Y. 14622)

TED WHITE: Despite the fact that his book is superlatively good and a pleasure to reread, I am disappointed not to find something by the current Willis in Wrhn 29. I think what I miss was underscored by rereading his 1950's work in #28: The last few Wrhn "Harps" were excellent essays but communicated little of the thoughts and feelings of Willis as of that moment. I enjoy Walt's reactions to the world (both fan and mundane) around him. I don't require of him ever better worldbeater pieces. I enjoy his gossip, his comments on fanzines, and all the other pleasant ephemera which made up much of his earlier fanwriting. The man has a sharp eye and a keen ear and his observances are usually illuminating. (I realize that the current situation in Northern Ireland doesn't encourage fannish froth, but the latter might make for a pleasant

momentary refuge from the former... :: I said in my review of Wrhn 29 in Pong that I had additional bones to pick with Perry beyond those cited in the review. Mainly, I wonder why he did such a poor job of thinking out his problem and possible solutions. I am aware of two solutions superior to the one he picked: 1. All electric drills have a button on the side of the handle with which one can lock the trigger down, fixing the drill in the "on" stage. If the tedium of three gallons a minute (not a bad rate for a small pump) was too much for Tom, he could have thumbbed the trigger lock, set the still-operating drill/pump down on something, and walked away from it, perhaps to catch a few hours of sleep in another room. (It would have been easy, using Tom's superior mathematical powers, to calculate roughly when the waterbed would be pumped out, set the alarm for then, and return at that point to shut the drill off.) 2. But, far more easily, why didn't Tom, once he had the hose hanging out his window, use it as a siphon? That way he could have left it to drain without the slightest problem and no need for attention. :: My awareness, as I read the piece, of these simple, obvious solutions, made me impatient with Tom's hassles and worries concerning his decision to move the still-half-full waterbed into his bathroom. And I'm sure the fact that I can't help thinking Tom was a bumbler in dealing with his problem has reflected itself in my opinion of his piece as well. I can't help thinking the cleverness was all in the writing and not at all in the doing. :: Redd Boggs says "People who go to cons that often must be looking for something, and not finding it." I think that's most likely the opposite of the truth. Most people, I think, do find what they're looking for at cons, and it is this which encourages them to go to more. Different people look for different things, of course -- ranging from obscure books in the huckster room, to the opportunity to strut about in outlandish costumes, to the chance to be with friends otherwise rarely encountered, to sex -- but in my experience the people who stay home are those who haven't found what they were looking for at conventions, and not the other way around. Is it just me, or is that point almost painfully obvious? :: I'm concerned by the fact that too much of Wrhn 29 doesn't meet your own standard of "greatness", in that it lacks aliveness and immediateness. (I think of all the pieces in 29, only your editorial meets that criterion; naturally with no current letters for the letter column and the restart of a fanzine effectively dormant for 11 years, this is not unexpected. (1014 N. Tuckahoe St, Falls Church 22046)

CATHY DOYLE: I hesitate to take pen in hand for several reasons. All those exhortations about the need for good writing lead me to look this over 50 times wondering if this letter will measure up to all this greatness. I also wonder if I know enough about the subject to offer an informed opinion. I don't have a large collection of fanzines from any period to draw on, much less from the 50s and 60s. The last year and a half in the wilds of South Georgia have even made me wonder if the term 'fan' is one that I can continue to apply to myself. :: I think the thing that irks me the most is the "small is beautiful" attitude towards fandom that I read in many of these works extolling the virtues of the old days. In a country of over 200 million people, combined with the push to semi-literacy it seems likely that fandom would expand a bit. Many of these people got into fandom through various media sources, which seems to tick off print fans even more. I started out in Star Trek fandom when I was 15 and gradually found out that sf was more than rotten grade B movies. {rb: How many Trekkies did? You, obviously, have a Cosmic Mind.} Star Trek fandom was where I did my first publishing, attended my first con. And I'm sick of everyone treating me like some lower form of life because of it, claiming that they weren't really cons because the subject was Star Trek and that everything I published was trash, sight unseen. {rb: Come, come. There's salvation even for Trekkies!} Lines like "One such individual puts on conventions for profit -- an idea borrowed from those barbarians, the Trekkies" in Ted White's article drive me up the wall. I know that Ted has many accomplishments in fandom and other places, but that still doesn't give him the right to call me names without even meeting me. From what I've heard, many Star Trek fans were just as upset as regular fans to see cons being put on for profit, and called the District Attorney in some cases to check them out. {rb: But why? Conventions are

just another form of business -- like tractor expositions or antique shows. Why can't someone just pay a few big name pros \$5000 each and mount their own convention?) But it's not only the anti-Star Trek attitude I sense here, it's the anti-anyone-who-doesn't-think-like-us-syndrome. Fanzine publishing is an expensive hobby these days. We just put out an 8pg fanzine called The National Noid which probably cost over \$50 for just 100 copies. The mind boggles at how much you must spend, along with the Telos gang, to produce your little offerings. We can't afford that kind of expense, even if we could shanghai all our friends into writing for us. It seems like an apa is a reasonable substitute for people like us. It does cut down on the number of people you can communicate with regularly but this doesn't stop many people from also publishing for general distribution. I don't think they are mutually exclusive. (213 East Main Street, Statesboro, Georgia, 30458)

{rb: \$50 for 100 copies of an 8 page fanzine is much more than I paid for the reproduction of Wrhn 29. 235 copies cost me \$292 and included some pages in three colors, of course. That may seem like a lot but isn't when you consider it's my primary hobby and the only issue published in the two year period. I've seen reports people have spent \$1200 for the privilege of being mobbed at Denvention and presumably the average convention will cost easily \$300 in transportation, lodging, meals, etc. I suspect a convention fan spends more on his hobby than the Telos gang did on that magazine and the Telos gang ended up with something which will be enjoyed and contemplated for years -- and not just as a memory, either. What do the fans who put on Iguana-Con have to show for that effort? And SeaCon "H-Bombed its fandom flat" for a number of years leaving virtually nothing but the BSFA in the wasteland. What do you people see in conventions? Can't you just go out and have a nice time with a few friends -- do you really need a 10 ring circus which you prefer to ignore anyway?) :: I believe I am the most vocal champion of Groggy -- not because it is small but because it is good. Telos was large and widely circulated (about twice the circulation of Wrhn, I should imagine) but the critical factor, too, was that it was good. That's all that matters and if a Trekkie can publish a fanzine as good as Groggy (or the National Noid), I want to read it. How many do? :: Wrhn was a Sapszine from issue #1 through #17, I think. I have nothing against apazines which try to be something more than badly drafted letter substitutes. And don't fret about defining yourself as a fan -- just be one and stop worrying about it. What the devil would being in the "wilds of South Georgia" have to do with it? Locale has no bearing on the matter. You can be a fan in the wilds of Puerto Rico, or Ireland, or Argentina, or northern Vermont, or... But that's self-evident; isn't it? :: Unless the provocation is directly personal it's usually best, for sanity's sake, to laugh it off.)

MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER: Your editorial was fine, but I suspect both you and Ted White are using the term "fandom" for two different classes of objects. On the one hand, there is "fanzine fandom", which has numbered about 200 fen since I discovered fanzines in 1975. Then there is, for lack of a better term, "fandom", the swarming hordes that cluster around Worldcons. The problem in fanzine fandom is that the part wishes to become the whole (or at least be considered the whole), and, since 1978 or so, has had its illusions shattered. :: What I've read in fannish fanzines over the last five years corresponds in form and tone to what I've read in amateur journalism publications in the early forties -- nostalgia for the dead past, and rages against the uncertain present. Fannish fandom has attempted to reorganize as a closed elite, denouncing the vast world outside as being hopelessly mundane, while celebrating itself as being the only true keepers of the flame. :: The chosen survivors of fannish fandom do try to perpetuate themselves as an elite, trying to shelter themselves from the masses. What White claims is "supposed" snobbery is not supposed, but very real. The problem with this snobbery is that by maintaining fannish fandom as a closed circle, open only to veterans from the past or the rare newcomer who has steeped himself or herself in enough fannish lore to laugh at the jokes, no new talent can develop. As a result, the few new fanzines to have earned the res-

respect of the killer elite are derivative, pastiches of the past. Dan Steffan may be perfectly sincere when he says that his chief goal in fandom is to create the perfect Sixth Fandom zine, but this is 1982! We don't ask that the science-fiction we read be variations on what was popular 25 years ago; why is it the noblest and highest goal for fanzines to be static, pale copies of truer originals? :: We are all heirs of Walt Willis, but we've been chasing the wrong Willis. The more "fannish" Willis was, the less important was his writing. The reason Willis' writings still live, and the reason I expect to enjoy Wrhn 28 when I'm 74 as much as when I'm 24 is that Willis was an accurate social critic; in his travels and his letters, he told the truth about his time, preserving fandom and his age with grace, wit, and style. If only our current generation of fanwriters (if there is a current generation of fanwriters) could write about the world with even a tenth as much truth as Willis did! Then this "fabulous fannish revival" we are all allegedly in the middle of might be something more than terminal nostalgia. (8906 Talbot Avenue, Silver Spring, Md. 20910)

{rb: I'd expected to let Martin Morse Wooster have the last word but then the following letter arrived. Vinç Clarke's copy of Wrhn 28 finally arrived and if I don't take this opportunity to quote from his reaction I'll probably let it pass completely. Anyway, when you're already at page 80 why not try for 84? -- it seems I was saying something of the sort around page 510 and we know what that led to!)

A. VINÇ CLARKE: I got IT. When I arrived home on Thursday evening (this is Saturday morning) there was this elephantine envelope with the return address of SAN JUAN leaning against the porch and pulsating with suppressed energy. Clutching it with one hand and two shopping bags and a brief case with the other -- no, I must have opened the door with a key (telekinesis?) -- I shot inside, dumped the junk on the floor and tearing open the envelope drew IT out, shoved Lady-the-Toy Poodle out of the way, and sank down on the couch. :: A small yelp (what else?) drew my attention to Lady. She was bouncing up and down with her hind legs crossed and making urgent I Want To Go Out noises. Little bits of envelope stuffing littered the carpet, a packet of Chicken Croquettes I'd brought home from the supermarket had defrosted in the shopping bag, and it was two hours later. ...

I kept finding myself laughing out loud, then groaning as I came across some revelation of (comparatively) youthful folly of my own. After a time I became conscious of a strange multi-warbling, faint and far away. I looked up. Some idiot was shining his car's lights through the chinks between the window curtains...no, he wasn't. It was daylight. I looked at my watch. It was 5:15AM. I'd read the damned thing all night. The odd noise had been the dawn chorus of birds, unable to penetrate the double-glazed windows but echoing down a chimney. I finished off the letter to Walt in a single sentence and went to bed for nearly two luxurious hours. ...

To me, Walt's general philosophy of fandom, the 'rules' and the guide-lines, express in a near perfect form the sort of subculture in which we lived in the 50s, and I can perfectly understand your own feelings. We had, after the work of the mundane world was finished each day, access to a toy Utopia which displayed in miniature many of the virtues one would wish to see in a future mundane world...affectionate comradeship, creativity, mutual help, etc. Admittedly, it had its vices too, but the ideals were there, and given their best expression by Walt.

I can't remember ever reviewing Walt's writing in the fifties. Then and now sheer envy chokes me when I attempt analysis, but loosening the collar... Except in the case of "The Enchanted Duplicator" -- and what an exception! -- Walt seems happiest when he's commentating, expressing opinions and in other free forms of expression. He rarely attempted fiction, where form is imposed by a plot structure, and I can't remember him composing a line of poetry, though his knowledge of it is obviously wide-ranging. He reviews occasionally, but only when the subject arouses feelings -- usually of anti-

pathy -- that he can expand into an essay in which he can express his own philosophy.

A little alteration of style can be seen as the years pass, but this is mostly because considerations of the mundane world darken the writing, excise the humour, bring out the quotations. The easy grace, the flow of his writing, hardly changes...and needn't.

I consider it -- now -- very fortunate that Walt turned to Stateside zines for publication, for as he states in relation to Hyphen and Slant, it wasn't so much what you could say that was an over-riding factor in the UK of the early 50s, but at what length you could afford to say it. I well remember cutting and cutting and cutting the text of my own stuff -- and other peoples -- so that I would use less stencils, paper, ink, postage. The early discipline instilled by economics probably helped Walt's style when he had the wider fields, the endless pages, of US fanzines in which to show his talent. He could expand, but if needed, as Tom Perry relates can tighten into a few words a thought which would take half-a-page of patter from someone else.

In the early days, I used to quarrel with him by private letter because I thought he was not showing enough concern for British fandom. I was jealous that his talents, so much greater than his contemporaries, should be directed primarily towards the US, which already had a flourishing fandom, rather than towards this country. Well, I was jealous of him generally, but in particular his westward orientation was a sore point. But I could dimly see then, and can more clearly see now, that I was arguing against a fundamental part of his nature.

In the 50s most of us were introverted, but Walt found a way of using this affliction. He managed to bring to the task of writing his commentaries a facet of his personality I have just named the Martian Ambassador. This was the neutral observer supreme, naturally more involved in the more densely populated areas of fandom (the US) than the backwoods (the UK), who reported on the inhabitants of our small world. He wrote of the feuds and follies, friends and foes, warts and halos with an other-worldly detachment, which included a report on the Earthling Walter Alexander Willis.

The marrow-freezing honesty is more interesting to a survivor of those days than the inhumanly sharp observances detailing the mats outside a convention hotel, a cockroach walking across a floor, the composition of a hamburger 'with', satisfying though it is to read the latter.

When reporting on humans --well, fans-- the Ambassador reports with a directness which shows up almost all other writing I've ever encountered, in or out of the fan field, as timid and convention-bound. The only obvious concession to the muted opinions, gagged by Good Taste, of the rest of us, is a care not to leave any value judgements lying about in a lopsided condition. "X is an obnoxious slob" writes the Martian. He regards this. It's true, but it might give people a bad impression. "X is very kind to children and animals" he adds.

Both statements are then printed, leading to an almost Marxian dichotomy and a symbolic minefield. These stresses occur all the time, for Walt doesn't write grey -- he writes black and white together.

I suppose that this ability to let one side of a personality take over when writing is not uncommon, but 50s fandom was fantastically lucky in that it had an on-the-spot Martian observer to survey it who had immense writing ability, a wonderful sense of humour, and an appealing philosophy.

This is about WAW the fanzine writer. As a living breathing person, in the flesh or by personal letter, he inspires wonder and affection too, but that's another story. He notes at one point that I was once influential in his life. It's blindingly obvious

that he's influenced a large number of people and made our subculture that much more enjoyable.

This is beginning to sound like an obituary. I hope to heavens we haven't seen the demise of WAW as a fan, and provided he hasn't found some fresh way to use his talents in the cause of peace for Northern Ireland -- which would naturally have complete priority -- I'm going to do my damndest to try to get some material from him for the third volume of the trilogy. (rb: In an unquoted part of his letter, Vin~~d~~ suggests that Wrhn 28 is only the first volume of a trilogy!) (16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent, DA16 2BN,UK)

GARY DEINDORFER: You say, "Enjoying your hobby can be a serious matter if you want to get the most out of it." I must agree, but not entirely. Ideally, that is true. Yet, speaking for myself, some days I write better when I don't care than when I do. That is, when I am not taking the special pains which the doctrine has it should be taken. This doesn't mean that I don't think the pains should be taken, in one's writing, drawing or publishing. But habit can set in, and I find myself taking what I think of as my particular, personal, idiosyncratic routine of pains in what I write. Then I feel the writing getting stiff, hidebound. This is when, if I have the guts and sense to do it, I think to myself, "To hell with this scrupulousness. Let me slop it out on the paper any old way and see what happens." Sometimes -- serendipitously -- a new, rare, fragile flower is found to be growing in the desert. Perhaps just as often, nothing good comes of the temporary letting go and the not caring. We can fall into stereotyped habits of caring, and this is especially true when we are working on our creative thing with craft imposing itself as a screen between ideas and execution, whether words, art, editing, publishing. It's akin to the ideas Patrick Nielsen Hayden expressed in part of his editorial in Telos 3 -- letting a certain unpremeditated clumsiness come between yourself and your writing instead of falling into safe, tried, trite and true habits of grace of expression. Then you can take this stuff and rework it in subsequent drafts. For me, at least, I can find it good not to make it a serious matter to enjoy the hobby of fanzine writing; not even the seriousness that opens the door to frivolity. Sometimes frivolity opens the door to frivolity. It can even happen that frivolity opens the door to seriousness. There are all sorts of tricky byways to be found in this labyrinth. I am suggesting that seriousness of intent can sometimes become a prison of habits, something that must be burst out of into "the new realm of delight." (477 Bellevue Avenue, #9-B, Trenton, New Jersey, 08618)

RICK SNEARY: I find it hard to find the words to express my surprise and pleasure at opening the long brown and finding a new issue of Wrhn. I had thought that I had died last summer -- at least fannishly speaking -- and this makes me feel that I have either gone to heaven or been transported back to 1961. Since then I have recieved Gambit 55, which is even more of a surprise. Surprise in part that I would be listed in his gathering of 200 Trufans. This indicated to me that, 1) Once a Trufan, always a Trufan; 2) There were fewer Trufans left than I thought; 3) Ted has been so out of touch that he was unaware hcw out of things I have been. :: While I have not been quite as out of touch as Bob Leman, his questions about what had been happening, and your reply helped me a lot. I'd been seeing and wondering the same thing. I had been lucky enough to see some of the fanzines coming out of Seattle, and remarked that they seemed to have reproduced a NYC fanzine of the early 60s, with the original cast -- without actually having been there. Something I find slightly more remarkable than you or Ted White or Eric Bentcliffe reviving your old zines...because all these were products of the total culture of that time, and while we can remember what it was like, the Nielsen Haydens have to create it. (Though I suggested that maybe it was a hoax. That they really didn't have all this new material from you old timers, but that they had put a few piles of old fanzines through a computer, and then programmed it to write stuff in each of your styles. After all, I argued, that I didn't think anyone could write such a perfect rich brown letter, not even the rich brown of 1981. It is hard to imagine rich being a man in his 40s.) :: I would suggest that it is not just the influx of media fans that are

the cause of fanzine Dark Ages, but the rise in the 60s of the multi-apas. Take as example the Los Angeles area. Up until the 60s, our area had produced a number of good fanzines, but with the birth of APA-L, all this seemed to end. The older fans found it was much easier to express their views in a couple sheets, once a week, than go to all the work of a full size fanzine. As new fans came along, they saw only APA-L, and wanted to get into it too. Coming out once a week, it keeps draining off all the energy, time, money... And, as more of the newer fans are not writer types, and are not in touch with general fandom, the model hardens. -- And, there have been little apas all over the country..fast writing without much thought for a very limited circle. So you have poor writing standards and a narrower outlook. But, I think there are new fans who are potentially good fanzine fans...and the Revival may bring them to the True Faith. :: There is one thing though, I hope after an early self awareness of the reasons for doing a fine job, that the Revival Fanzines will not spend too much time writing about it being a wonderful thing, and explaining how to write great fannish articles. My feeling is that it is better to write well than to write about writing well. Many fans tried to write in the Burbee style, but Burb never wrote about how he did it. {rb: I suspect it would have been quite helpful if Burbee had written more about fan writing than that quote I ran in Wrhn 11. The doorway to a Dark Age is labeled 'Ignorance' and a fandom without criticism is a fandom that forgets -- until a Pickersgill reminds us.}

{rb: And still the letters arrive! Shall we try for 86pgs? The latest is, I think, a testimony to the power of the walking dead to evoke the past -- or at least to the attraction a fanzine whose first issue was dated January, 1952, must exert on an incredible range of people. The last person I expected to hear from was onetime fanartist Ray Capella. His letter not only timebinds but binds space, as well. Ray writes as...}

RAUL GARCIA CAPELLA: {Ay dios Mio! -rb} Say you've taken a long look at the old cathedral in San Juan. You walk uphill on Calle del Cristo until you've reached the little plaza at the top, where the Ponce de Leon statue stands, pointing across the bay. :: Okay, you turn around the way Ponce is facing and will probably be looking at "La Botella", if it's still there. ("La Botella" was a bistro where you'd find artists, good jazz, visiting celebs, drunks, and all kinds of interesting continentals and locals, in the 60s.) It became a posh restaurant in the 70s. But we're going back before that time... :: A long building starts on the corner opposite "La Botella"; you turn right, at right angles to where Ponce is pointing, following the cobbles. The street is Calle San Sebastian and the cobbles have taken us into the 40s... Before you get to the rear gate of the Governor's Mansion, you'll see several condemned doorways along the building on the left. :: At least one of those doorways wasn't condemned in the late 40s. It led to a tiny room, a sanctum sanctorum belonging to the Panther Boy Scout Patrol. In the rear of that place, behind the worn benches, was a shelf cabinet. One shelf contained at least one garish and curious item: A pulp magazine. On the cover a young man shot rings out of an interesting-looking pistol at two tentacled green men, one of whom held a frightened, good-looking woman. Needless to say, the magazine was already old. :: It was my first encounter with the pulps. It was, in fact, the first time I'd read "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea", "The Adventures of Telemachus", "From the Earth to the Moon", and "Tarzan of the Apes" (not to mention Holmes and Raffles) in Spanish, but nothing in English except what was given me at school, and naturally, comic books.

Oddly enough, I didn't become a fan then and there, although I enjoyed the story tremendously.

I had seen all the Buster Crabbe serials, and later "The Phantom" and "El Capitan Maravilla". In those days you could go into the Royal and Luna theatres without being stuck forever to the seats, or feeling roaches and hands crawling about you. (The Luna, on the street by that name, later became a discotheque as raunchy as the theatre had been.) :: (The Capellas were an old family with roots in Spain and society connect-

ections: doctors, teachers, music tutors, ad nauseam. But Dad was a maverick; he dug Bogart as well as the legit theatre, loved serials as he did weightlifting or writing poetry.) :: St Thomas Aquinas Catholic College then had its upper grades in what is now the El Convento Hotel (certainly it had been a convent; but it had been a parking garage and part of it St. Thomas Aquinas subsequently). While attending there I became addicted to little digest-sized magazines which provided no short stories, but a novel a month at 10¢ a throw: "Doc Savage", "Bill Barnes", "La Sombra", "Jim Wallace". :: The latter, my favorite, had worked with Chic Carter. Of mixed American and Spanish parentage, James Fonseca Wallace had a Harvard law degree and post-grad kudos in Criminology. He fought the underworld with fist and .45 through about 40-50 issues I collected. I had also at least a dozen or more of each of the other titles. And discussed them thoroughly with Johnny Herrero (the Doc Savage-Bill Barnes fan) and Rafael "the Kid" Rodriguez (the La Sombra-El Vegador fan). :: Guess Nick Carter took conversion to Spanish easier than his contemporaries. Or was there a Nick Carter and a Jim Wallace?

And still, I wasn't a fan.

To do that, you must first arrive at the crowded mainland city, equipped with innocence, perfect English useage and an accent that could blunt a broadsword. You side-swipe the ghetto, go to your last grammar school year in a nice Flatbush residential area and try to convince everybody that you know Bogart as well as dunking for apples. That you believe the same things as Coop and the Duke did, that you, too, are Robin to "El Murcielaga". And you fight. :: You never know how fiercely American you can be, buddy, until somebody puts you to the test. And if by then you've arrived at thinking that a citizen of the world is better, then you're on the way to becoming a fan. :: While in High School during the early 50s I wrote a letter to Thrilling Wonder Stories. I couldn't remember that old pulp magazine I'd read, but described the plot and cover, knowing it was a "Captain Future" issue. TWS published the letter; they didn't know the novel title. But a reader -- Jan Romanoff, I believe -- sent me the issue ("Calling Capt. Future"), no charge.

And, looking at the stacks of SS, TWS, FFM, aSF, FNs, I discovered I'd been a fan for a few years.

By then, and before being drafted, I was illoing for correspondent Gregg Calkins and for Williamsburg fan Bob Silverberg. Naturally, a fanartist actually notices other people's work, with mixed admiration, trepidation and (yes) a feeling of camaraderie, however disseminated it may be. And there were things in the mail which held stuff by ATom, DEA, Harness and Richard Bergeron, who later wowed me with a fanzine of his own!

Truly, what with "Star Wars" and "Blade Runner" on the screen (not to mention "Alien"), onetime correspondent "Astra" Zimmer selling novels handoverfist, and now receiving Wrhn out of my home town, 'tis a strange and wondrous age we're in... Have we reached the Future, or has it assailed us? :: Anyhow, many thanks. Give my regards to El Condado, but remember me only to whatever wild stretch of beach you can find, where no tourist has ever trod. (217 W. Grand Ave. Alhambra, CA 91801)

DARROLL PARDOE: Harry Warner is right about hectography -- it is, surely, not only the cheapest reproduction process ever invented, but also the nastiest. The very first fanzine I actually mailed out was mimeo'd in the traditional way, but prior to that I had attempted to do one in hecto. I had this hecto kit in the attic, you see, so I got it out and tried my hand. All went well for the first twenty copies, and then the ancient gelatine (it had been up in the attic for a long time) started developing ulcers on its surface. I'd read somewhere that what you had to do to regenerate the surface was to melt the gelatine in the pan and let it set back into a nice smooth block, so I carried it through to the kitchen and applied the heat. Either the cooking was too vigorous, or some strange chemical reaction hadset in during the years in the roof,

because what happened was that the gelatine went black and started to exude an appalling stench. Between the lack of success in hectography and my mother's complaints about the smell and the purple fingermarks on her stove (I was still living at home then) I gave up and went off to see Ken Cheslin about his old Gestetner, which I knew he wanted to sell. I've never been foolish enough to try hectography again. (11B Cote Lea Sq. Southgate, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2SA, England)

JIM MEADOWS: I do find myself bristling a little as I read on and on about your hopes and efforts (and Ted White's and Dan Steffan's hopes and efforts, and so on) for a return of the Golden Age Of Fanzines When No Zines Were Crud. (rb: That is not only a snide exaggeration; it is also a lie.) I'm not bristling at the goal of elegantly written, light, humorous fanzines. It's the reactionary smugness that goes along with it; I won't believe the lost Golden Age of Fanzines is in sight until the incessant harping over Fandom's Sorry State ceases to be the most memorable feature of fanzines like Boonfark, Pong, and your own. (rb: I thought I'd said "Can the best of all possible fandoms be far behind?" I suppose if you're given to rampant defensiveness that could be interpreted as "reactionary smugness". But a recent day's mail brought Dot, Epsilon, Tappen, and two issues of that superb journal of laid back humor: Pong. The crudzines are beginning to seem the exception. Thanks be!) (Box 1227, Peking, Ill. 61554)

.....
 Jerry Kaufman for Duff. But, of course. -db

AFTER ALL

I'm wondering if this is the issue Teresa thought she could see shimmering before her eyes in the haze...it's certainly not the one I envisioned. Missing are Bangsund, Perry, and Warner. Harry was crowded out by the overwhelming clamour above. John, due to the tenuousness of postal communications between San Juan and Australia (they never heard of each other), probably has not yet seen the second of the two copies air mailed to him at \$4.50 each. Tom's other obligations and a jaundiced view of my deadlines have worked to keep him out of the issue. Hopefully they'll all be back next time.

The response to 29 was most encouraging and I only regret I haven't been able to quote more of it above...for instance, Steffan's and brown's comments are excerpted from 8 page letters. Also heard from were: Malcolm Edwards, who talks about fannish obligations which have been put aside by intervention of the "real world" -- whatever that might be, Lee Hoffman, Arthur Thomson, David Langford, Ethel Lindsay, Sam Wager, Mike Glicksohn, Marty Cantor, Loren MacGregor, Ole Kvern, Bob Bloch, John Brosnan, Noem Hollyn, Roy Tackett, Luke McGuff, Robert Coulson, Art Widner, Gary Hubbard, Marc Ortlieb, FMBusby, John Endem, Terry Jeeves, Jean Gomoll, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Cy Chauvin, Rob Hansen, Bruce Townley, Stu Shiffman, Tim Marion, Harry Andruschak, and Leigh Edmonds.

Special thanks to Steffan and White who conducted an excavation to supply me with a copy of Quark 14, to Tom Perry for his Xerox of the same material, and to fabulous Seattle fandom for a facsimile edition of Stop Breaking Down (splendid fanzine!) thereby confirming all my arguments for the need of such undertakings. Thanks, gang! -db

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