

WIZ

#9, February 12, 1984, is the Special Richard Bergeron Depreciation Issue. As usual, it mirrors the party going on inside its editor's head as he bemusedly reflects back fandom's image as it reaches him from the beguiling perspectives of Puerto Rico. All is distorted by the lens of the personal.

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The Missing Heart On The Matrix Cover Quote Mystery (or A New Kind Of Typo): When better typos are dreamed up expect to find them in Wiz first. I created a real beauty last issue -- the explanation of which might consume a good part of this issue. And three quarters of you will wonder why I bothered since I caught it after the initial copies were rushed off to all my favorite people (now you know how you rank in the nebulous Wiz hierachy) and the rest of you might have been mildly baffled but with slannish prescience figured it out anyway. A no-win situation. But I must forge on. Seems I was so eager to get those copies out I forgot the heart in my comments on Pete Lyon's latrine humor cover for the BSFA's Matrix. I'd written "and what about that 'I SF' patch on the back of his short-shorts? Maybe not witty, but hardly banal". Well, it verges on the banal (or, at least, nonsensical) as it appeared in a couple dozen copies. I'd intended "and what about that 'I ♥ SF' patch". A crucial difference. Of the British copies probably only Langford's contains the rare variant sentence and he doubtless paid it no attention anyway having long concluded there's more missing in Bergeron's mind than meets the eye. Perhaps I should rerun that old saw about "...come help me complete the last Wiz: get out your red fine line Pilot pen and insert a ♥ in its proper place" to give sense and rhythm to the entire episode. Dave would love that -- never having quite recovered his composure after I completely ruined his Taff report with an equally creative omission.

Anyway, here's your chance to become a co-publisher of Wiz. Oh, and don't feel terribly slighted if your copy did contain the elusive ♥. A few which were intended for my favorite people inadvertently got thrown out with the kitty litter and weren't mailed until after I'd corrected the oversight. (Of course, when you've altered your copy -- if you were among the lucky ones -- this whole passage will be even more meaningless than the original typo. Like I said: a no-win situation.)

This is intended to keep you from becoming too envious, Paul.

The Infamous Matrix Cover Contretemps: festers along with only slight encouragement in these pages. I'd considered running for your enlightenment a reduced version of what must be the most obnoxious cover ever to appear on a fanzine but have been saved (in the nick of time) by my own sense of propriety and reluctance to drag Wiz completely into the gutter. I draw the line at fishnet stockings. Too, I've no stomach for the reaction of the local puritanical printing establishment and its printeress. I can't be too cavalier about this last or I'll find myself printing Wiz in some obscure place like Argentina or New York and I have no interest in finding out if Lyon's cover could topple Wiz as well as an empire. I refer to the editorial empire of Simon Polley whose hand at the helm of Matrix is called into impeachment by Martyn Taylor in Epsilon 15. Martyn wonders "what makes Polley think he has the right to grossly insult the members to whom he is beholden" and thereby explains why club fanzines tend to be run by committee (actual or implied) and are so damn boring. No self-respecting editor can create a top-level fanzine with one eye peering over one shoulder (either his own in apprehension or the members' looking for something to disapprove of). A good fanzine editor answers only to himself: those of like mind will go along for the ride and those who don't are already in a different boat anyway and therefore of little immediate interest to the editor. This plank walking exercise isn't entirely novel as those of us from the dead past recall. No less a personage than Charles Burbee was kicked out of the editorship of LASFS' Shangri-L'Affaires in an imbroglio involving which male members were or weren't sniffing each other's underwear and when he decided to send the magazine to Amazing Stories for review after the club had voted to boycott that prozine's fanzine review column. Independence on the part of vassals is not looked on lightly even when the lackey, in this case Burbee, turns a turgid organization organ into the number one fanzine.

Elsewhere in Epsilon 15 Rob Hansen takes note of my remarks in Wiz 7 on the whole matter. After detailing Polley's winning of COFF (the Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund) which has "become fandom's most public form of censure" Rob turns to my comments and finds "an indication that at least one American sees the whole affair somewhat differently" which is a bit insular coming from British fandom's most famous internationalist. But it fits in with his chauvinistic pitch to the Welsh in his Taff platform -- this has as much to do with the merits of the candidates as my being an American does to the relevance of my opinions.

Rob goes on in an odd vein last seen in fandom when some of us were finding Sixth Fandom Fandomism between every line (not in the lines themselves, however). He writes "Bergeron...affects great hilarity...as near as I can make out...he seems to be saying ...he seems to feel." Why doesn't he just comment on what is on the page rather than what he seems to think I seem to be saying. This is all too unseemly for me and beyond that lies a maze of conjecture about motives and meanings. And isn't this the technique Rob criticizes in Epsilon 14 when he writes about people who "project their own views onto a piece and criticise on that basis rather than on the basis of what has actually been written?"

2 Anyway, Hansen makes a clear distinction between the Matrix cover and his own publishing of a drawing of a man taking a piss on other grounds than mob disapproval. One is offensive and one isn't. But, in the Epsilon at hand, isn't above tweeking the mob himself with a cover quite a bit less innocuous than Dan Steffan's urinal mood piece. Or do I smell a trap?

Cesar Ignacio Ramos, an artist of no mean accomplishment himself, came by the other day. I asked his opinion of Epsilon's latest cover -- which depicts militant feminism in kinky over-kill glory. Specifically, I pointed out a bit of graffiti which reads "JKHB IS A CI' " -- part of the 'U' and other letters are obscured by a paper bag (no, I'm not going to silk screen in the damn bag).

"What do you suppose this says?"

"Well, the hidden word must be 'cunt'." Cesar is perfectly bi-lingual.

"Good. I'll quote you to that effect in the next Wiz."

"I knew it. It was a trap," Cesar guessed.

I lamely ventured that it might be "cuff" or "cult", though as graffiti either leaves something to be desired. But let's think about what is on the page rather than what seems to be on the page. What is on the page is a rather coy oblique allusion to what is perhaps the crudest sexist put-down of women -- more frequently encountered in gutters than on the cover of one of the brightest fanzines around. It strikes me as an odd bit for a Taff candidate to flaunt -- not to mention one so insulted by a Matrix cover. This bids fair to be the strangest Taff race in many a year -- there being no contest with D. West's ability to run an even more bizarre campaign.

I handed Epsilon to Cesar and told him to check out Rob's comments. He immediately noted the bit about the "giant penis" -- which had completely passed me by -- on the cover of Chris Priest's (!) Deadloss which he (Hansen) had criticized "solely in terms of its anatomical inaccuracy" rather than on the grounds of bad taste. Apparently, 'taste' has little to do with any of this.

"After the cover on this issue, I wonder what he knows about 'anatomical inaccuracy'", Cesar wondered.

Yes, come to think of it. Epsilon 15's cover shows a pistol (and machine gun) armed woman attired in vaguely fetishistic garb tilted just slightly back on her heels to keep from falling on her face -- unbalanced by a pair of breasts only imperceptibly smaller than the cheeks of her posterior.

"To tell the truth, I find this cover extremely gross," Cesar said.

Cesar is a feminist, which in Puerto Rico is as rare as the sight of a penguin coming ashore on the Condado beach, but I thought this a bit excessive. After all, it's just another cover on just another fanzine and has about as much to do with anatomical accuracy or taste as most fanzine covers. In fact, Rob's creative handling of anatomy and perspective is one of the most interesting things about his artwork.

Finally, I wonder what women will think of this cover: not too many I can ask around here without getting my face slapped.

Dan Steffan rises to the, er, bait cast in Wiz 7: I'll address myself to your thoughts on bad taste in art, etc, especially since my priceless artistic works are woven into the fabric of your article. But where to start?

I vaguely remember seeing the Pete Lyon cover at the worldcon, but don't recall the actual artwork. Must not have been too rude, or I'd have certainly remembered it, as I have a talent for being rude -- or so my wife says. Rob Hansen's reaction struck me as an attempt to be politically correct. When you are politically correct you have to despise these sort of odd/rude/juvenile pictures. But usually you sit in your bedroom and laugh your ass off, like you did in high school. But when you talk about it -- especially in mixed company -- you deplore it.

If Rob had come out and said it was funny that might not be justifiable, whereas his comments to the negative can easily be justified by citing chapter and verse of the current chic political rhetoric. Rob is a very sharp guy and I think he took the easy way out on this one. That Rob didn't appear to notice that this was a comment on the restrictions of the Woman's Apa seems to indicate that he really didn't think about it too deeply. And after all, it's only a silly bit of pen scratching on paper -- certainly no worse than the bad nudes that have appeared in some of Keith Walker's crud-zines, and actually technically much better (the barbarian is pretty well executed). There is no denying that it is in bad taste, but I think bad taste has its place too. /rb: Let's not get Holier Than Thou, now./

Which brings us to "my" cover on Epsilon. First of all, you missed the real point of the cover which was mentioned on the back page of that issue. This was a tribute of sorts to the genius of Will Eisner, creator of the Spirit. When Rob sent me his sketch (which I inked) he said that he saw something of Eisner in my work -- which was perceptive, because a lot of my brush technique was learned from studying Eisner -- and I was inspired to do something that lent itself to that style.

I never thought of it as a political statement. The issue number floating away on the polluted water is an Eisner cliché and meant as nothing but a tribute to that cliché. Originally Rob's figure was just standing on the top of the pier doing nothing. It was my idea to turn him and have him pissing into the water. I did it so he'd have something to do. If it is also a statement on the environment or whatever, it was an accident as far as I'm concerned. But more than that, it doesn't strike me as being the least bit in bad taste. Frankly, I'm sure that if I was in the position of being on a pier in the middle of the night with nothing to do, I too might just piss into the wind.

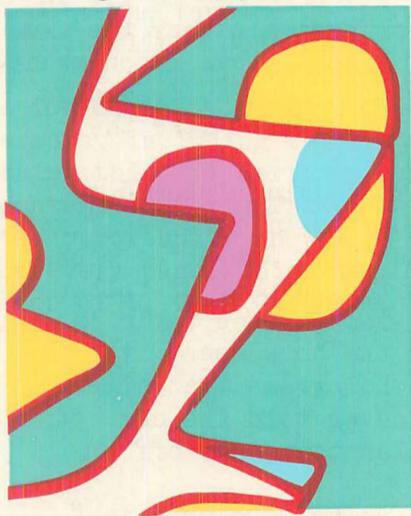
However, the puckered anuses which appeared in Pong were political statements. I put those pictures on articles that concerned themselves with assholes. They were rude

3 and intended as such. The butt-fucking duck cover on BNF 3 (Grant Canfield with my inking) was meant as a statement concerning the end of my love affair with ducks. I had, in the mid-70s, done a number of fanzine covers and full color paintings based on the theme of ducks. I have this one wonderful patron who commissioned me to do a bunch of duck paintings. The first was Duck Savage, and another was Mandrake the Magician. Ted White owns another that was my piece of resistance called The Duckess, which features a female nude with a duck's head reclining in what is otherwise a cliché Mucha art nouveau setting which turned out, after it was finished, to be an unintentional portrait of a woman we'd both dated. /rb: !/ After a couple years of this I began to notice that lots of people were drawing and painting ducks. I decided to stop. I didn't want to be compared to people who had wider recognition for their ducks, even if I was doing them first. So while visiting Grant in 1977 he drew this picture as a kind of farewell to the subject matter. I loved it and put it on my fanzine. Frankly, it never occurred to me that somebody might consider it in bad taste -- I just thought it was funny. My attitude is fuck 'em if they can't take a joke.

But then, I don't think you disagree with that notion. I think you put it very succinctly: "Good taste is often a snare and a delusion." I've always believed that humor is where you find it.

As for my pick of movies: I'd take both "Road Warrior" and "Triumph of the Will". I like "Road Warrior" because of that gritty, kinky, post-holocaust vision and because it was really well done. Leni Riefenstahl's film is inarguably well done, and in my opinion deserving of your line: "the ultimate example of the art of propaganda on film." But I don't think it is fair to put it down because it documented the rise of the Hitler worldview. It is no less art because of its subject matter -- nor would the world's best made snuff movie. The subject matter may -- and should, I guess -- repulse you, but if it were done right, who's to say what the final outcome would be? "Triumph of the Will" is an awesome film. The interesting way it is edited, in conjunction with some of the powerful moods created by Albert Speer's use of lighting and architecture, make it a textbook example of the documentary form. Never mind that it was commissioned by the Nazis, on a purely subjective level it is emotionally stunning. (1010 North Tuckahoe Street, Falls Church, Virginia, 22046)

Wild Prose: Ever on the lookout for new ways to confound the unwary Wiz reader (and realizing you've come to accept the above as just another week's work in the usual issue) my ears pricked when Bill Gibson mentioned this book he'd just sent off to his publisher. Now I'm a big fan of Bill's writing (though maybe not convinced he's "the leading literary light of the known universe" as Dave Langford says I am -- have to



think about that one) but I've become a bit notorious for my block against reading fairy tales. Then it occurred to me that Bill has so blurred the distinction in these pages that I read "Bell Rings In Athens" as part of a novel in progress and "Hippy-Hat Brain-Parasite" as autobiography -- which is exactly the reverse of the truth. Why not, then, publish an excerpt from this first novel by a leading light of, at least, Wiz? Bill was dubious. Something about not wanting to intrude the professional side of his life into the fannish. Silly boy. He doesn't realize his professional side is possibly twice as fannish as what he reveals in fandom. Getting down on my knees I told him he was wrong and looked ravishing today. While I was prostrating myself in the dust, Bill asked his Ace editor Terry Carr what he thought of the idea. Terry replied with enthusiasm. Bill was won over. Terry has impeccable taste.

Interestingly this gives unpretentious little-old-Wiz the chance to beat out ratty professional journals like Interzone -- as Langford notes in Ansible -- though if Asimov's wants to buy first serial rights, I won't stand in the way. Bill also mentions Ace has accepted an outline for "Count Zero" (a second novel) and a British company is making noises about a film based on "Burning Chrome", but I'm not sure if this is all DNQ. Oh, yah, Malcolm Edwards slips in here somewhere: Victor Gollancz Ltd. is going to publish the hardcover version of the following. Tell them you read it here first.

So brush out your veridian green mohawk, put on the silver lip gloss with the purple polka dots, paint a deep crimson slash mark across one naked ass cheek, polish the switch blade and (almost forgot the hit of Substance D) you're ready to live:

Neuromancer (by Wm. Gibson):

Friday night on Ninsei.

He passed yakitori stands and massage parlors, a franchised coffee shop called Beautiful Girl, the electronic thunder of an arcade. He stepped out of the way to let a dark-suited sarariman by, spotting the Mitsubishi-Genetech logo tattooed across the back of the man's right hand.

Was it authentic? If that's for real, he thought, he's in for trouble. If it wasn't, served him right. M-G employees above a certain level were implanted with advanced micro-processors that monitored mutagen levels in the bloodstream. Gear like that would get you rolled in Night City, rolled straight into a black clinic.

The sarariman had been Japanese, but the Ninsei crowd was a gaijin crowd. Groups of sailors up from the port, tense solitary tourists hunting pleasures no guidebook listed, Sprawl heavies showing off grafts and implants, and a dozen distinct species of hustler, all swarming the street in an intricate dance of desire and commerce.

4 There were countless theories explaining why Chiba City tolerated the Ninsei enclave, but Case tended toward the idea that the Yakuza might be preserving the place as a kind of historical park, a reminder of humble origins. But he also saw a certain sense in the notion that burgeoning technologies require outlaw zones, that Night City wasn't there for its inhabitants, but as a deliberately unsupervised playground for technology itself.

Was Linda right, he wondered, staring up at the lights? Would Wage have him killed to make an example? It didn't make much sense, but then Wage dealt primarily in proscribed biologicals, and they said you had to be crazy to do that.

But Linda said Wage wanted him dead. Case's primary insight into the dynamics of streetdealing was that neither the buyer nor the seller really needed him. A middleman's business is to make himself a necessary evil. The dubious niche Case had carved for himself in the criminal ecology of Night City had been cut out with lies, scooped out a night at a time with betrayal. Now, sensing that its walls were starting to crumble, he felt the edge of a strange euphoria.

The week before, he'd delayed transfer of a synthetic glandular extract, retailing it for a wider margin than usual. He knew Wage hadn't liked that. Wage was his primary supplier, nine years in Chiba and one of the few gaijin dealers who'd managed to forge links with the rigidly stratified criminal establishment beyond Night City's borders. Genetic materials and hormones trickled down to Ninsei along an intricate ladder of fronts and blinds. Somehow Wage had managed to trace something back, once, and now he enjoyed steady connections in a dozen cities.

Case found himself staring through a shopwindow. The place sold small bright objects to the sailors. Watches, flickknives, lighters, pocket VTRs, simstim decks, weighted manriki chains, and shuriken. The shuriken had always fascinated him, steel stars with knife-sharp points. Some were chromed, others black, others treated with a rainbow surface like oil on water. But the chrome stars held his gaze. They were mounted against scarlet ultraseude with nearly invisible loops of nylon fishline, their centers stamped with dragons or yinyang symbols. They caught the street's neon and twisted it, and it came to Case that these were the stars under which he voyaged, his destiny spelled out a constellation of cheap chrome.

"Julie," he said to his stars. "Time to see old Julie. He'll know."

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Julius Deane was one hundred and thirty-five years old, his metabolism assiduously warped by a weekly fortune in serums and hormones. His primary hedge against ageing was a yearly pilgrimage to Tokyo, where genetic surgeons re-set the code of his DNA, a procedure unavailable in Chiba. Then he'd fly to Hongkong and order the year's suits and shirts. Sexless and inhumanly patient, his primary gratification seemed to lie in his devotion to esoteric forms of tailor-worship. Case had never seen him wear the same suit twice, although his wardrobe seemed to consist entirely of meticulous reconstructions of garments of the previous century. He affected prescription lenses, framed in spidery gold, ground from thin slabs of pink synthetic quartz and beveled like the mirrors in a Victorian dollhouse.

His offices were located in a warehouse behind Ninsei, part of which seemed to have been sparsely decorated, years before, with a random collection of European furniture, as though Deane had once intended to use the place as his home. Neo-Aztec bookcases gathered dust against one wall of the room where Case waited. A pair of bulbous Disney-styled table lamps perched awkwardly on a low Kandinsky-look coffee table in scarlet-lacquered steel. A Dali clock hung on the wall between the bookcases, its distorted face sagging to the bare concrete floor. Its hands were holograms that altered to match the convolutions of the face as they rotated, but it never told the correct time. The room was stacked with white fiberglass shipping-modules that gave off the tang of preserved ginger.

"You seem to be clean, old son," said Deane's disembodied voice. "Do come in."

Magnetic bolts thudded out of position around the massive imitation-rosewood door to the left of the bookcases. JULIUS DEANE IMPORT EXPORT was lettered across the plastic in peeling self-adhesive capitals. If the furniture scattered in Deane's makeshift foyer suggested the end of the past century, the office itself seemed to belong to its start.

Deane's seamless pink face regarded Case from a pool of light cast by an ancient brass lamp with a rectangular shade of dark green glass. The importer was securely fenced behind a vast desk of painted steel, flanked on either side by tall, drawered cabinets made of some sort of pale wood. The sort of thing, Case supposed, that had once been used to store written records of some kind. The desktop was littered with cassettes, scrolls of yellowed printout, and various parts of some sort of clockwork typewriter, a machine Deane never seemed to get around to reassembling.

"What brings you around, boyo?" Deane asked, offering Case a narrow bonbon wrapped in blue-and-white checked paper. "Try one. Ting Ting Djahe, the very best." Case refused the ginger, took a seat in a yawning wooden swivel chair, and ran a thumb down the faded seam of one black jean-leg. "Julie, I hear Wage wants to kill me."

"Ah. Well then. And where did you hear this, if I may?"

"People."

"People," Deane said, around a ginger bonbon. "What sort of people? Friends?"

Case nodded.

"Not always that easy to know who your friends are, is it?"

"I do owe him a little money, Deane. He say anything to you?"

"Haven't been in touch, of late." Then he sighed. "If I did know, of course, I might not be in a position to tell you. Things being what they are, you understand."

5

"Things?"

"He's an important connection, Case."

"Yeah. He want to kill me, Julie?"

"Not that I know of." Deane shrugged. They might have been discussing the price of ginger. "If it proves to be an unfounded rumor, old son, you come back in a week or so and I'll let you in on a little something out of Singapore."

"Out of the Nan Hai Hotel, Bencoolen Street?"

"Loose lips, old son!" Deane grinned. The steel desk was jammed with a fortune in debugging gear.

"Be seeing you, Julie, I'll say hello to Wage."

Deane's fingers came up to brush the perfect knot in his pale silk tie.

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He was less than a block from Deane's office when it hit, the sudden cellular awareness that someone was on his ass, and very close.

The cultivation of a certain tame paranoia was something Case took for granted. The trick lay in not letting it get out of control. But that could be quite a trick, behind a stack of octagons. He fought the adrenalin-surge and composed his narrow features in a mask of bored vacancy, pretending to let the crowd carry him along. When he saw a darkened display window, he managed to pause by it. The place was a surgical boutique, closed for renovations. With his hands in the pockets of his jacket, he stared through the glass at a flat lozenge of vatgrown flesh that lay on a carved pedestal of imitation jade. The color of its skin reminded him of Zone's whores; it was tattooed with a luminous digital display wired to a subcutaneous chip. Why bother with the surgery, he found himself thinking, while sweat coursed down his ribs, when you could just carry the thing around in your pocket?

Without moving his head, he raised his eyes and studied the reflection of the passing crowd.

There.

Behind sailors in shortsleeved khaki. Dark hair, mirrored glasses, dark clothing, slender...

And gone.

Then Case was running, bent low, dodging between bodies.

Of Fake Fans And Other Illusory Identities: Bill Gibson, whose cliff we are still sitting on the edge of, wonders about Cesar Ignacio Ramos -- whose shadow has been seen flitting through these pages: "I hope this Puerto Rican fan isn't some figment of yours, Richard. He will have to work very hard indeed to convince the world he isn't merely a new Bergeronian mask..." A new Bergeronian mask? I let that pass with momentary unease at how many there have been. But when Patrick Nielsen Hayden (who seems to be so pre-occupied with such things he barely has time to write his column) wrote "Is Cesar Ignacio Ramos your E. Knowles Elkhardt?", I concluded this had gone far enough.

Frankly, Cesar Ignacio Ramos and I had played with the perverse thought of making him non-existent as a sort of refreshing reverse on the more common hoax we all know only too well. But for unknown reasons Cesar likes being in reality. Some people are hopelessly mundane.

But not Cesar. Can you imagine anything more unlikely than having dinner with a Puerto Rican comics/Atari closet Ursula LeGuin freak at a restaurant which serves very wet 2-for-1 margaritas but is otherwise devoted to hot northern Chinese cuisine? At the Szechuan in Old San Juan we toyed with the concept of creating a new form of paper personality even more unreal than usual but which, at it's inner core, is quite real. The sort of idea only a Philip K. Dick fan could dream up. I've got accustomed to the idea of being around a fan and don't pay it much mind anymore except after three 2-for-1's when Cesar starts speaking straight Wizese. Listen carefully and you'll hear him fighting for his very existence.

"Look, why not use my PO Box number? I don't get that much mail and it would save you renting your own," I deviously offered.

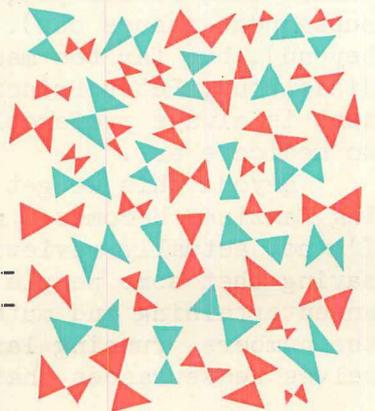
"But, good grief, no one would ever believe I existed then!"

He had a point. No point in pushing this so far he couldn't someday return and re-join the living.

"So what? That would make you virtually unique and it would no longer matter whether you or I wrote your material. Your bit in Wiz 6 was clearly the hit of the issue and I wrote that after several of these." I signaled for another 2-for-1. "You get all the egoboo and I do all the work. What a set-up! How many people have a certified fan of Sixth Fandom Fandom writing their material? Very few."

"But what would happen when I go to a convention? Would I be invisible or would everyone think I was you?" I paled at the thought of having a surrogate identity at any convention -- not that CIR wouldn't be a perfectly credible representation -- but commiserated with his concern that anyone would think he was me. There are worse fates, though. I began to speculate at what might appear in convention reports. A young, good looking, Puerto Rican artist/raconteur being taken for a wizened, decrepit, fannish hermit from northern Vermont seemed a winning combination to me. I wondered what would happen when he met D. West.

I could see Cesar Ignacio Ramos plotting. We were on dangerous ground -- it's hard enough controlling these endless combinations of reality without someone out there changing perceptions before I've had a chance to. Would he know what to do with such power? Would I? Perhaps I should write him out of existence with



6 a typo before it was too late.

"But I want to start contributing artwork to SFR and I don't want everyone thinking I'm just another of your styles." We agreed on that, at least.

I changed the subject. "Why don't you do a fake Wiz?" He considered the endless hours of silk screen drudgery.

"Perhaps launching the first Puerto Rican SF prozine would be more convincing."

"Cesar, you're no fun tonight." I fell into the Moo Goo Gai Pan.

Oh, well, judge for yourselves. His address is Box 4129, Old San Juan, 00905. Send him fanzines. He'll probably comment. Or contribute. I've unleashed him on the world. God help me.

"The truth is that you're really a convention fan without conventions."

"We shall see," said Cesar Ignacio Ramos ominously.

I Have This Occult Way Of Anticipating PNH's Every Move: It seems. Rising spectrally from the dim memories of avid Wiz fans who recall he once wrote a column for this magazine, Patrick assumes a position at the blackboard which I'd have done better to pay more attention to the last time it was called to my attention back in the 8th grade. But I've already topped him with the incredible opening section of this issue which is in the stick as I copy the following. I give you the mildly pedantic:

Cum Grano Salis (by Patrick Nielsen Hayden): Do I yet live? Can I still type? Memory a blank. Violence. A blur. Vagueness. Inventory essential parts -- broad mental horizons, check; sensitive fannish face, check; fascistic critical standards, AOK; ro-coco allusiveness, dubious -- what's this? Christ, what a mess; looks like a Langford hit job. Think. Remember. Ah yes. "Eisenstadt" indeed; that's the last time I use R. L. Fanthorpe's Handy Pocket Guide To Very Huge Words. Shit, I'll bet "pointless erudition" is out of whack too...right, completely wrecked. Funny how the wheels keep spinning in there anyway. Nothing to do but carry on, I suppose. Chin up! Latin declensions! It'll heal soon enough; try and think obscure thoughts. Paideuma -- ah, very good, couldn't forget that in a million years. Hanseatic League; well, good try, obscure enough for now. Turn up the gain; how far does the damage extend? Knob marked "structuralism" -- hit the switch -- Lacan's renegade trope of catachre%#&* -- ! Well, give it time, give it time. Meanwhile, there's always the old cheap trick of disguising a letter of comment as a column...

Laziness, Carelessness, and Contempt: Looking over the letters in Wiz #8, I wonder -- was I the only reader struck by the immortal sentence in the issue previous, "What is one to make of an editor who typos her own title in the colophon and just doesn't care enough to obliterate the correction?" The editor Our Editor is referring to is Abi Frost; the fanzine le nouveau revue bleu. I dunno; what do we make of it? Maybe her "obliterate" done dried up.

As a matter of fact that charming typo is hardly alone in Wiz #7; cursory examination of that issue yields a list of ~~104 significant~~ fully 22 typographical and usage errors, including the very wonderful "immanently" for "eminently" on page 1. Why do I bring this up? Certainly not to browbeat Dick Bergeron for "laziness, carelessness, and contempt", Chris Priest's judgement of an earlier Abi Frost fanzine which Dick takes the opportunity in Wiz #7 to agree with. Despite the typos, Wiz projects the opposite on every page. Which is, I suspect, just it. There are a lot of ways to give an impression of L, C, & C; there are as many ways to avoid doing so, no matter how shoddy your materials or persistent your inability to spell. Obviously I think Bergeron is successful at avoiding it: I think Abi Frost is as well.

It's an old issue, the matter of scrappy appearance in fanzines. What gets ignored is that it's an economic issue as well. Not all of us have the wherewithal to produce a delicately adjusted machine as glistening as Wiz, within which our lapses may be practically invisible against the blinding glare of overall visual marvellousness. Some of us have to cope with old equipment, obsolete supplies, and empty pockets. These days Teresa and I own a Selectric and enough money for fairly decent reproduction; I'd hate to think that the material we publish would be completely ignored were it to be published in more primitive form. Certainly there are limits, but in no way did Abi Frost's fanzine go below them; it was legible, it was clearly laid out (standard straight-down-the-page typewriter layout), and most importantly, it was well-written and amusing. For which latter consideration I'll put up with a far lower standard of reproduction and typing skills than served up by Ms. Frost.

I said there were a lot of ways to avoid L, C, & C. Obviously I think writing well is one of them -- probably the essential one. Beyond that I'd say it was a matter of calibrating the visual feel of the fanzine to one's own level of competence with such things (or, better yet, slightly below, so it doesn't become a grinding effort to get subsequent issues out). I'm all for pushing to the limits of one's writing talent (and beyond), but far too many fanzines apply the same principle to printing and design with disastrous, Peter Principle-like results. As Teresa says, solid straight-down-the-page text is always preferable to an unsuccessful fancy layout, and any text is preferable to mediocre art.

Beyond this we get into matters of gestalt and the slippery ground wherein assessing fanzines becomes a matter of assessing personalities: treacherous stuff indeed. As I'm not actually reviewing specific fanzines here I think I can safely get away with saying that some people seem to have the knack for genuinely engaging their readers in an entertaining and mutually illuminating process, and some people publish fanzines by the numbers, running largely on automatic while (one imagines) softly intoning to themselves reassurances that, indeed, yow, they are having fun. Perhaps they are. The point

7 is that a lot of elements come into play, and that criticism-by-the numbers tells us very little. So Abi Frost doesn't type like a pro; so her fanzines look scrappy; so what? Perhaps with mammoth effort she could produce something that looked like John Bangsund put it out; more likely, if she thought that was necessary, she'd forget the whole thing and we'd be denied a very lively (if sloppy) fanzine. In fact le nouveau revue bleu passes all my tests as outlined above: the writing is good, the ideas are interesting, the interplay between editors and correspondents is first-rate, and (thank God) she isn't trying to do anything slick with the visuals, a task she's obviously unsuited for. Now, if she were setting up her fanzine as a little imitation-magazine, with page-by-page layouts, design-y headings, the whole schtick -- aargh. She isn't. I like it.

Time to go; time for Abi Frost to reveal that she is in actuality a professional graphic designer with a string of awards to her name. Shock, humiliation, sound of critical theory recoiling from mortal wound. Better hold on to that obliterated line; it may come in handy yet.

Speaking Of Which: "Irony...in its more general sense may be defined as the use of words intended to convey one meaning to the uninitiated part of the audience & another to the initiated, the delight of it lying in the secret intimacy set up between the latter & the speaker; it should be added, however, that there are dealers in irony for whom the initiated circle is not of outside hearers, but is an alter ego dwelling in their own breasts." (--H.A. Fowler, "Modern English Usage" 1930.)

Joseph Nicholas protests that I miss the ironic content of what he writes. Perhaps. Doubtless I miss a lot of the nuances of his prose; for some strange reason they all seem to get drowned out in the blare of hostility which surrounds them. In reference to the outrage he expresses in Wiz #8, I might point out that a great deal of both his and Judith's critique of such fanzines as Pong relies for its coherence on a studied disregard of the ironic aspects of those very fanzines; thus Judith reads Dan, Ted, and Dick /rb: Who me?/ as having claimed, with high and terrible seriousness, that Pong (circulation 150) was "the focus of fandom in general". To me the references of this sort /rb: Who me?/ which they refer to read as tongue-in-cheek self-parody. A "failure to communicate"? I wonder.

What Joseph is demanding is the benefit of the doubt -- that his words, no matter how outrageous, be regarded in the best light possible, as meaning what they seem to intend to mean when he makes sense, and as "irony" when he does not. A reasonable request, save that I don't recall him ever doing the same for anyone else. Naturally, in civilized discourse all of us would grant each other this, and more; thought, reflection, and a sincere effort to examine each others' work for the real intent behind it before gleefully rushing to "clobber" anyone who looks clobberable ("just for the fun of it" -- more Nicholas irony, one assumes). No fun in that, though -- that would be "everything-in-the-garden-is-lovely"-ism; thoroughly unhip. But discourse with Joseph is not civilized discourse. Despite his protestations, one is forced to assume that he likes it that way.

"Most of us now take for granted a kind of casual brutality...berserk screams of rage and a few stiff-armed clouts with a length of bicycle chain are the forms of argument more likely to provoke us into a worthwhile response. (Give me some blood and mayhem, goddammit!)" (--Joseph Nicholas, Rothnium #6, 1978; in a letter of comment.)

We get what we ask for: whether we're happy with it afterwards is another question altogether. Are you happy, Joseph?

The Trouble Is I See The Victims Every Time I Think About It: "Frankly," writes RB of the infamous Matrix cover, in (yet again) Wiz #7, "I don't find the Lyon cover much funnier than the Incinerations stuff, but the image of the British science-fiction bourgeoisie opening their BSFA envelopes, encountering this scatological doodle and reacting in a perfect imitation of Rob Hansen causes me to fall down on the floor laughing like an idiot." Hmmm. Now try this image: someone recently introduced to fanzine fandom via A Woman's Periodical opening their BSFA envelope and feeling as if they've been gratuitously kicked in the stomach. Hey, did I miss something, or what? I don't recall AWP doing anything to collectively merit this. Is being shitty simply for the fun of it OK now provided it also happens to epater the right bourgeoisie?

Inevitably, it's the sort of matter into which all kinds of left-field arguments get dragged. Politics, sex, Rob Hansen's earnestness, and what exactly is that barbarian doing?, anyway? Well, don't bother answering that last. The salient fact is that the whole cover was clearly intended to insult a specific set of real people who obviously didn't deserve it, and as such was a dumb move. Why muddy the waters by replacing those real people with images of some "bourgeoisie"? (Yow! I am being earnest. No apologies. Thank you, and good night.)

RB: I'm reluctant to get into a squabble over the subject of spelling -- especially when I'll have to look up the word in the dictionary. I concede the economic argument. It's possible Abi couldn't afford correction fluid or a dictionary. But if no one in British fandom can spare a bottle couldn't she borrow a copy of the latter? According to Priest she lives (or lived) with a professional journalist (Roz Kaveney) but a paragraph of Kaveney prose Chris quotes convinces me she must be the first professional journalist never to have heard of a dictionary. Believe it or not, Webster's is the most referred to reference around here and typos are as assiduously stalked as sloppy presentation -- if a bit less successfully. (You'd be astounded at the number I do catch, Patrick. Or maybe not...since you're inflicted with my letters; which usually go out uncorrected and normally contain 22 errors to the page.) I insist on high marks for trying (in publications), though. I see no evidence that Abi does.

8 Glancing at la nouveau revu blue (and marking only the examples which jump off the page) I count 120 typos or misspellings in the first 8 pages -- without delving into the byways of Fowler's, word breaks, or whatever. In point of fact, I had originally counted only 103, but that seemed uncomfortably close to a bad joke so I spent a few more minutes scanning. This in a fanzine which argues (persuasively) "That's why we need that much misunderstood thing, a generally accepted standard of excellence. People may then argue that a given piece of work does or does not reach the standard, rather than, as at present, simply cheering or booing" and "of course people can improve. I just think some may be helped by reading more widely, so that they can set a higher standard for themselves." I've taken the liberty of eliminating the 6 errors which appear in these two quotes. This from a critic who, in Ansible, tut-tuts another fanzine editor for having the title misspelled on the cover of his fanzine! This from an editor who may not be a "professional graphic designer with a string of awards to her name" but who (get out the "obliterline", Patrick) tells us in le newview revuu blu she is or was a student at "the London College of Printing" and does the "odd bit of freelance writing and copy editing." (!) All without benefit of dictionary? I'm afraid when it comes to fandom, Priest's conclusion about her attitude stands.

Items like Leni "Raffenstal" (in Wiz #7) were my abject surrender after a fruitless two hour search for "The Last of the Nuba" and a bizarre conversation with the local telephone operator. The vendedor de churros fritos at the beach wasn't of much assistance, either. It's hell living in an intellectual wasteland. I'm sure Abi agrees. I could have written PNH to find out that it was "Reifenstahl" (as he tells me in a 22 item addendum listing the sins of Wiz #7 which was prepared for my eyes) but didn't think it worth the month wait between an exchange of letters. Better to publish than disappear in a sea of perfectionism: as Frost has concluded. However, even writing to P would not have helped me. The elusive Nuba has since surfaced and gives the author's name as "Riefenstahl". Should I send Parker & Row a copy of Patrick's addendum?

I'll end by saying I found la neouvea revu blew fascinating, witty, and entertaining. But remain nonplussed by having my copy stapled in the following pagination: 1, 2, 4, 3, 5, 6, etc. This gave me some confusion in unraveling who was saying what to who -- a confusion in no way helped by Abi's technique of footnote numbering her replies to the ends of locs (causing one to wonder whether the writer was itemizing points or we're being flagged by Frost) and all tossed together with irrepressible editorial interpolations indicated by only ((.....)). Not my idea of "clearly laid out". PNH and I must have widely different standards in that regard.

What I did love about the review knew blew was that the entire maze is replete with arcane allusion every bit as obscure as anything you'll find in Wiz and referring to a fan context largely hidden from our eyes. Reading it was something like doing a double acrostic en español when one can't spell and doesn't know español.

I dunno, P. As a one time fan of Max Keasler, I'm not asking for "a delicately adjusted machine" (who was?) nor for something which looks like it might be successfully submitted for exhibition to the American Institute of Graphic Arts (to nod to another false issue). However, a fanzine critic who has appeared in so august a journal as Ansible shouldn't confuse us by demonstrating standards lower than Brian Earl Brown's. (Oh, "obliterine" isn't in my dictionary, Cesar was little help -- however, I've asked him to proofread this issue, and the Fancyclopedia is in New York.)

Which reminds me that I forgot to find a convenient place to quote PNH's remarks from Izzard #3 on BEB's delicately adjusted machine: "to Brian the idea of a minimal functional fanzine seems to mean dispensing with such fripperies as correcting typographical errors...he seems at ease among his crooked headings and badly-color-mimeographed terrible art." (Spoken like the quintessential AIGA judge.) But where to stick this? Perhaps I'll let the reader insert it where s/he feels it will fit most smoothly.

I see, Patrick, you're a person of kindness and compassion. I incline to the view that "the victims" of political cartooning (even inept political cartooning) are self-appointed and have forgotten that revolutions were fought to protect everyone's right to express bad taste. It's called the price of freedom, I believe. And it's a price (especially) real people should cherish. The bourgeoisie usually don't.

Alexis Gilliland observes: Langford is probably as funny as they come. There must be a market for humorous essays somewhere, and it ought to come seeking him out. Strange to be keeping posted on Britfandom via Puerto Rico, however.

Gibson's piece is interesting and evocative, though it took me awhile to figure out that "camo", as in "camo kids" referred to camouflage, presumably what they were wearing. The survivalist phenomenon is a sane response to the threat of nuclear war that has hung over us like Joe Btsfplk's little cloud since my early teens. However, it is not attractive, and given the recent findings on the nuclear winter, it isn't realistic, either. Not Gibson's fault...he just reports what he sees.

Your remarks to Nicholas and Hanna at first struck me as harsh to the point of brutality, something better carried on in private correspondence. Then I remembered that it's as easy to hurt through carelessness as through intent...and that Nicholas



9 and Hanna have been appallingly careless, both in what they read, and in what they wrote...so they had it coming. Rereading, I am reminded of Ivan the Terrible as he is about to deal with the Boyars of Novgorod. His wife tells him: "You must be firm," and Ivan replies "I will be firm!" Cut to miles and miles of Novgorodians kneeling in the snow as Ivan approaches. So good for you. You were firm where firmness was called for.

Eisenstadt, according to my German dictionary breaks down into 'eisen=iron' and 'stadt=town or municipality'. Irontown, possibly, which sounds a bit like Pittsburgh, which couldn't be right. Perhaps PNH was thinking of eiGenstadt, which refers to a single valued state of an orbital electron, and would, in the context of his remarks make as much sense as was really called for. Of course, Langford would have known that, being a graduate of one of the better schools, and if he hadn't besotted his fine mind with homebrew he might have remembered. (4030 8th Street South, Arlington, Virginia, 22204)

RB: Not "hurt". Just (finally) exasperated. Joseph has been asking for this since at least 1978 -- see the quote above from Rothnium #6 which I disinterred for use in Telos #2 back in good old April, 1980. Obviously, fans are the most patient people in the world. I bare no animosity toward Joseph or Judith. My patience ran out. Art Thompson tells me "One thing you probably don't know about Judith Hanna is that she possesses one of the most gorgeous smiles it's possible to have. It lights up her whole face and is a delight to see." This implies nice things about Joseph, too. He must have saving graces to have deserved someone who sounds so nice. I wonder at the value of a pose which conceals one's best qualities.

Egoboo For D. West: I'm accused by a mildly annoyed BNF of "fawning" over D. West -- of whom I've written that "Performance" is his "Achilles heel" and a "catalog of kinky enthusiasms". An odd form of "fawning", methinks. Here's the real stuff by a current Taff candidate: "D. West...is quite possibly the finest observer and recorder of fandom's social mores and rituals currently writing" "dazzling" "one of the few attempts to establish a proper critical basis for fanzine reviewing" "amused and entertained me greatly" "had me falling off my chair with laughter more than once" "'Performance' is the best thing I've read in a fanzine in years" "enough with the egoboo for my rival in this year's Taff race, already."

Alright, Rob. Who are you going to vote for?

An Insignificant Reference To The Past: A long draft is consigned to the garbage at this point. It had to do with an (over) extended reply to Anders Bellis who is still seething over my comments on blackballs, apas, and him in Wiz #2, Nov. 1982. Anders came into the context because he felt inspired to hurl a blackball at the NHs for reasons AB seems to think cannot be accurately summarized in less than a page. Wiz usually runs to only 10 pages and I hardly think the minutia of Anders Bellis' problems with correspondence and trade agreements (circ, mid-1981) with P&T worth 10% of an issue. I'm sure even he will agree. The essence of my piece was that the loathsome blackball is a weapon which can be irresponsibly used for the silliest of reasons: I'm an expert on this having blackballed between 40 and 60 prospective Fapa members in my time. Unfortunately, Anders was only too ready to hurl the nearest brick at the NHs because they put their personal problems ahead of their fannish obligations to Anders Bellis. The beasts.

Anders' new fanzine Brick came crashing through my window recently. Over half the text in its four pages is devoted to an exhaustive rehash of his experience with the NHs and (now) me. My man, it's a wonder you can have any fun at all in a fandom containing such "old" scalawags as myself and irresponsible cads like P&T.

OK, Anders. I apologize if I missed a detail or two in summarizing your dossier on a situation which bids fair to rate a whole chapter in a final edition of "The Immortal Teacup". You should have been delighted that everyone had forgotten this 16 months ago.

I'm happy I'm not on the waiting list of any apas Anders Bellis belongs to. Especially apas with blackball provisions.

Down In The Gutter: If we can take a moment to slither up from the pit of mud, slime, and maggots into which my exchanges with Anders Bellis seem to have sunk (you must beg, borrow, or buy a copy of Brick if you don't happen to come across it in the last stall of the men's room of the 59th Street BMT), let's turn to a breath of (very) fresh air from one of my favorite UK correspondents. Seems he's reeling from the effects of having been cast in the role of an authority on bestiality back in Wiz #7 (that's the breaks when you end up as an oblique allusion involving D. West):

Chuch Harris quotes: "One isn't truly sophisticated until they've had carnal knowledge of a goat, as Chuch Harris once said."

GOAT! You dare suggest I'd cohabit with something like that! Me! Mr. Clean, distinguished and kindly old trufan and ex-co-editor of Hyphen (32nd year of publication -- has your sub expired?), indulging in sexual congress -- as poor Mr. Heinlein called it -- with the beast of Satan?

I wonder just what is the difference between libel and slander (apart from approx \$40,000, that is?) Never, NEVER did I think I'd live to see the day when an old esteemed and cherished friend like you -- you prick -- would descend to scurrility to blacken my fair name just because I'm going to vote for ROB HANSEN FOR TAFF.

I shall never understand the filthy perverted imagination from which you can dredge up such an evil slur. I am ruined in fandom (although the goat certainly isn't). Already I have been drummed out of the BSFA with obloquy (that's Joseph P. Obloquy -- the goatherd from Obloquy House) and every fnz I get has a big black cross in the little box by the address panel.

And, if I wasn't on the freebie list, I'd cancel my Wiz subscription, and the hell with you -- and your bloody technicolored airmail labels. So there.

I said "camel."

10

Never, not once, have I known a goat intimately or on more than a nodding, good-morning-and-be-damned-to-you acquaintanceship. Sometimes, R, slanderous faneditors can almost be a pain in the arse; which is more than any goat can say about...

Yours Truly,
Chuch Harris.

PS: At least, I think I said "camel" -- but not to worry, not to worry...if we get you extradited it will be for Brighton, not dollars.

Now I love Dave Langford & Co: he's the finest thing in Wiz and even prettier than the silkscreen printing, but can't you get him to turn down the volumn on the D. West adulation in every damned issue? ...Decadent aesthete ...stylist ...famous Dave, Taff candidate. Pause for boggle.

I can see it already. The podium in centre stage; D., enthroned thereon, languidly picking his nose whilst the frenzied faithful hymn him with Cole Porter.

"You're the breasts of Venus,
You're King Kong's penis
You're God's prepuce, you're self-abuse,
Y*O*U'R*E T*H*E T*O*P*S!!!

For the life of me, I just can't see why. I've read and re-read "Performance". I loved the scarcastic pieces -- a master of the art -- but much of it seemed tedious. During my 20 years in the Wilderness Outside, I missed all of Rat Fandom. I've barely seen any of True Rat or Fouler, etc, so I no longer share the same terms of reference as the rest of you, but to me the excitement seems false and contrived. If, however, the scales drop from my eyes, you'll be the first to know. But don't extend any deadlines.

Gibson's letter was interesting. I always like these little glimpses of the USA -- fascinating after the endless tv stereotypes like "Dallas." Similarly the background to Art Rapp's letters -- though I will never know what wild grapevines are. (Surely Pennsylvania would be too cold for grapes -- or perhaps it's a generic name like "Cow Parsley" or "Maidenhair fern"?) And somewhere in my memory bank is the idea that his wife "Nancy" was originally Nancy Share, one of the two stunning Share sisters who published Hodge Podge. The other one was called Marie-Louise, to whom I once wrote a poem called "I Want My Fair Share", but that was 25 years ago and I trust they have both worn a little better than I have (32 Lake Crescent, Drayton Green Daventry, Northants, NN11 5EB, England)

RB: Sorry I got your goat. Didn't realize it was a secret. Must have been something I picked up from a Hyphen backcover.

Langford has perfect taste, but is unaccountably on record as supporting Mr. Hansen. However, one can only guess what foul acts will be committed in the secrecy of the voting envelope.

You seem to support, at least, one of West's arguments: that without the proper frame of reference (read: context) his performance loses so many resonances that it's largely meaningless. D. (the fan you love to hate) West has a genius for working himself into these clever corners. Actually, I'm on your side of the generation gap: having discovered fandom only 24 hours after you. I've seen no copies of True Rat, or Fouler, and only one of Wrinkled Shrew. The NHs, JDBerry, and Jerry & Suzle took pity on my deprived state and xeroxed a copy of Rich Coad's set of Stop Breaking Down for me, though, so I may have a slight advantage. But I'd already inferred Pickersgill's importance from the fact that he wasn't represented in By British -- sort of like surmising the existence of Pluto from its effects on the orbit of Neptune. A strong ego has a similar disturbing effect on the fields of mental energy through which it passes: especially an ego which is also an immense creative force. I note that Walt (in Epsilon #15) laudes Rob Hansen for his "perceptiveness in recognising how peculiarly suitable /the Hunter S. Thompson/ style is for convention reports." What Walt calls Thompson's "blend of blinding perceptiveness and manic irrationality" has been a mark of West's essays since "Wish You Were Here", his report on the 28th EasterCon which appeared in SBD, August, 1977. Bill Gibson, with no mean ear for style, pointed out other Thompionesque aspects of the West stance in Wiz #7. I'm amused to see you supporting Hansen while he picks up West's (loose) marbles. Why not vote for the real thing?

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"I have nothing but admiration for D. West." -D. Steffan, #1 Fan, 1981 & '82, Pong Poll.
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TO:

WIZ

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P&TNH FOR TAFF