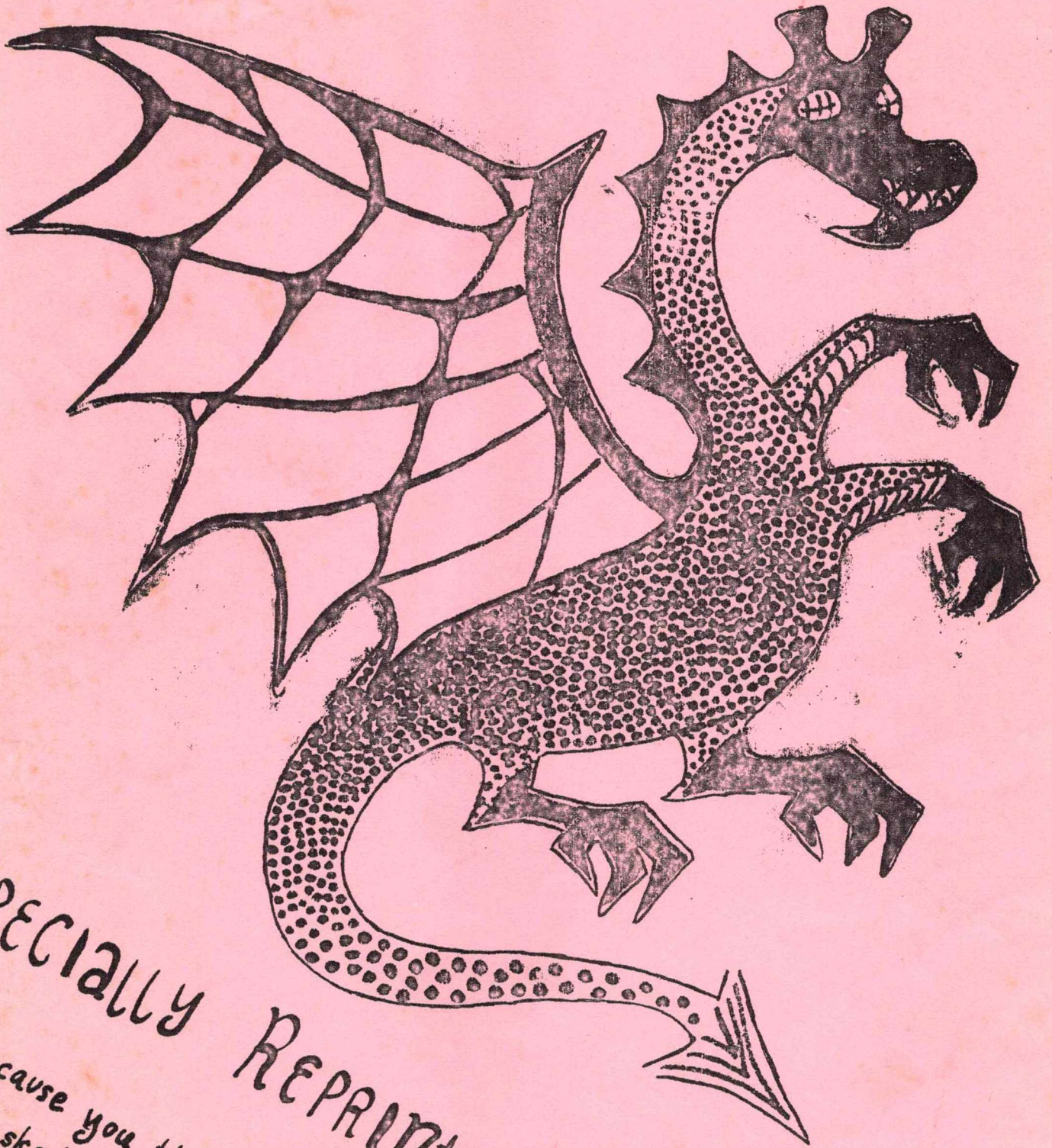


DRAGON BURST

(incorporating BLACKBIRD'S EGG)



Specially REPRINTED!

- because you, the readers,
asked for it!

20p

This fanzine comes to you from CHRISTINA LAKE, 69, Leamington Rd., Southend-on-sea, Essex, SS1 2SW and is available for any of the items customarily offered in exchange for such masterworks.

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Any thing not otherwise credited (including the typing errors) assume to be the responsibility of the editor.

EDITORIAL

This fanzine has changed immensely in writing. My original concept was something like FUSION, the Warwick University fanzine (only of course better!) i.e. a magazine type effort with stories, articles and artwork. The artwork went by the board first, mainly because I don't know any artists and can't afford to put in illustrations anyway. Then I began to wonder about the fiction. I've caught myself trying to skip fiction in fanzines (more than once). If you're reading a fanzine in the pub, fiction doesn't work at all. News and gossip can be read with one eye, fiction needs at least two and profits from a modicum of attention. I try to give this on principle. Mainly because my initial interest in fanzines was as an outlet through which I could inflict my stories on an unsuspecting public, and if I don't read other people's stories, how am I to convince myself that someone out there is reading mine? Another common criticism of fiction in fanzines is that half of it isn't worth reading anyway. I must admit I went through a stage of reading fanzine stories specifically to see how bad they were, just to convince myself that I could easily write something better. I think the main problem is that desperate editors of club zines and such like are often so anxious for material that they are glad to accept the offerings of any enthusiastic story writer regardless of the quality of said offering. I should know! This is how some of my efforts have found their way into print. Perhaps encouraging the artistic delusions of second rate Heinlein imitators might not rank very highly in most fanzine editors list of priorities, and rightly so, but I feel there is a place in fanzines for amateur fiction, provided it's included because the editor likes it and not just to fill up space.

The question of whether to print fiction or not was symptomatic of a whole shift in my ideas about what sort of a fanzine I wanted to put out. As I read more and more fanzines I became tempted to embark on a far more fannish enterprise. After all, wouldn't it be infinitely more fun to write about what Laura and Bob Shaw (the Fake, or the Depraved, as he'll be known as here) spent several hours after Bruce's room party at Yorcon doing? Yes and no. This sort of writing is amusing, but it's not quite what I want to include here*, mainly because it does rely so much for its meaning on knowing the people concerned. This said, I'm afraid a certain number of Glasgow 'in' jokes have infiltrated the pages without me quite knowing how they came to be there (honest!), so apologies to all non Trout reading.

* though it's exactly the sort of thing which might appear in the brilliant new zine THIS NEVER HAPPENS (see advertisement page 16)

The other thing I was finding annoying about specifically fannish zines was the attitudes of the likes of Joe Nicholas and Alan Dorey to fanzine production. Some people seem to be so dogmatic about what a fanzine should be, and are so rude to people who don't conform to these golden rules. You'd think to hear them talk that somewhere in the universe there exists the Ideal Fanzine that every faned should strive towards. To me the whole joy of fanzines is that you can put in them anything you damn well want. All this talk of standards is nonsense. The more professional fanzines have to be, the less fun they are. If criticism becomes centred on the quality of the printing method and people are slagged off for their lay-outs, it's obvious that something is wrong. The communication device has become more important than what is being communicated and the fanzine equivalent of the hi-fi buff moves in for the kill. It's sad, not because presentation isn't important, but because it's not the be all and end all of a fanzine. It strikes me there must be something fundamentally wrong with either the publication or it's readers, if the main sort of comments it generates centre around such matters as the aesthetic appeal (or lack of it) in the typeface or the best way to set out a letter column.

N.B. The cover picture is dedicated to all fans everywhere who are fed up with dragon artwork. (I think I'm starting to get over the dragon phase now - onions are the new thing. Any artists out there like to draw me an onion?)

THE NAMING OF FANZINES

My fanzine has always been called Dragonburst throughout it's unnaturally long period of gestation. In fact Dragonburst started out as the title of Anne Maccaffreys next novel, inspired by a set of balloons we had at home one Christmas. The yellow balloon was obviously a gold dragon, so Simon (my brother) and I called it Ramoth, the white became Ruth, and with a bit of imagination the orange one ended up as Mnementh. We played around with the balloons, trod on them etc. as children will, until the inevitable happened and one of them burst, Mnementh to be precise. By this time I had already invented the black dragon Jbaro (it has since been pointed out to me that the name should have ended in a 'th' but I don't care). He was a mutant evil dragon, ridden by a kitchen drudge who had accidentally impressed him while dusting the latest clutch of eggs. I chronicled their story in charcoal one night on the corridor walls of Tocil (the flat where I was living at the time) in a series of impressionistic drawings depicting key episodes from the story: the hatching of the black dragon, the bursting of Mnementh and Jbaro's victorious conquest of Pern (this at least was what the captions said, the drawings themselves were rather less clear!).

What you may be wondering, has all this to do with my fanzine? Not a lot except that the only picture I had for the cover was of this same Jbaro donated from Caroline's portfolio of dragons and coloured in black by me. And the only way to justify putting a dragon on the cover seemed to be to give the zine a dragonish title - which I already had: Dragonburst.

This was fine until I told the title to Lilian (my co-editor in the soon to be published fanzine THIS NEVER HAPPENS). She took a violent dislike to it largely on the grounds that it wasn't clever, original, evocative, obscure or anything else that makes for a memorable fanzine title. I finally placated her by saying I would add something like the Infinite Non-Sequitur. Dragonburst or the Infinite Non-Sequitur. She agreed that this was an improvement. I checked up on the initials: D.O.T.I.N.S. An almost pronounceable acronym, I thought, wondering at the same time about the possibilities of An Almost Pronounceable Acronym as a fanzine title or perhaps the Appallingly Unpronounceable Acronym, otherwise known as AUA, but

but discarding these as silly.

It was then that I began seriously worrying about the name for my fanzine. I sat on the train to Glasgow reading my marketing notes on branding that I had successfully ignored all holiday, pondering on what they had to say about choosing names. They informed me: "The name chosen should be one which will make the maximum contribution to selling efficiency." Examined in this light there certainly did seem something lacking in the name Dragonburst. I mean there may or may not be dynamic and mindblowing elements in the concept of stars bursting (c.f. professional magazine Starburst) but when transferred to dragons it just sounds slightly revolting. Aha, I think, a fanzine which will appeal to punks must commission article on the Clash from my brother!

I read on and see that indeed name and image are very important in buyers motivation. This starts me thinking. So now I see why Twll Ddu is so popular - it projects the image of being Welsh and perverted. And imagine, Dave Langford probably thought people were reading it for his witty writing all along. With the inspiration of a B.R. sandwich, I plunge overboard with my image analyses.

Second Hand Wave - plagiarism? No, surely not. I settle for strange yet reassuring.

Drilkjis - intellectual and alien.

In Defiance of Medical Opinion - dangerous, possibly indecent.

Siddhartha - mystical Indian hippy stuff.

Vector, Matrix - cold and mathematical. (Perhaps that's why so many of the members don't write?)

Napalm in the Morning - destructive (or am I thinking of the connotations of the name Joseph Nicholas?)

It must be emphasised that I have not necessarily read all of the publications mentioned above, and am discussing them purely in terms of the concepts their names evoke.

"One-upmanship can be achieved by adding Extra or De-Luxe to the name", my notes continue. Dragonburst De-Luxe I murmur, immediately upgrading the publication from a cheap crudzine to glossy magazine in my imagination. And if this should start a trend, would we see Extra Drygulch or The Special Edition of Gross Encounters?

"Or alternatively" I read on, "there may be class associations in the name e.g. Braemar, Gleneagles."

Sarfend Dragonburst, I wonder? Definitely punk.

Subconscious drives may produce "In", "Leisure" - the notes end by saying somewhat ambiguously.

By this stage I am beginning to understand that what I need is a name that reflects dynamism, quality, exclusivity and subconscious drives like Windsor Super Zip or Tenerife Streak De-Luxe. On the other hand, what's the good of an image I wouldn't particularly want to live up to anyway? I'd much rather my fanzine sounded pseudy and intellectual and had a name like Anneaux d'Enfer or Cognoscentience. But then again, what's wrong with Dragonburst apart from sounding sub-McCaffreyish, uninventive and nauseating? I mean, I could have called the fanzine British Leyland's Lethargy Inducing Leftovers. Now there's an idea...

* * * * *

The Naked Ape

Q: Odd numbers were once considered masculine and even numbers were considered feminine.. Can you think of the reason why?

A: Odd numbers were believed to be divine or heavenly, while even numbers were considered human and earthly.

(Taken from an American puzzle book)

* * * * *

MARVIN'S PROBLEM PAGE

Dear Marvin,

Most people think that being a cloud on Nimbus is a carefree existence; no problems, no responsibilities, just drifting wherever the fancy takes you. But I am very self-conscious about my size. I am sure my friends laugh at me when I can't get over a mountain range and have to go round. Sometimes I get so upset I just cry and cry for days. What can I do?

Cirrus, Nimbus.

Dear Cirrus,

Look on the bright side; the more you cry the less you have to cry over, and you may be helping some robot to rust away peacefully. I wish it was me.

Dear Marvin,

I am a 260 year old Dendron with a beautiful ash blonde wife and sixteen offshoots. A happier little spinney you've never seen. The only problem is that I've got this irrational fear of Autumn. It worries me so much that my leaves are falling off. What can I do?

D. Sid Yous, Dendra.

Dear Sid,

Why worry about leaves, you can always grow some more. I've got some diodes that could fall off anytime and I wouldn't mind a bit. If you really want to get to the root of the problem, see your local tree surgeon. But what's the point?

Dear Marvin,

I'm worried. I get strange urges; to make silk and wrap it round myself; to try hang-gliding; to leave the cabbage patch and spread my wings. My friends all seem happy just munching their way through leaves day after day. Will I always be different or is it just a phase I'm going through?

Fred Fiftylegs, Lepidoptera.

Dear Fred,

I hope this won't depress you too much but you have another life to endure after this one. Once you give in to your natural urges you'll find yourself dashing from flower to flower looking for nectar. The best you can hope for is to suffocate in a jam-jar. Wretched isn't it? But then life s like that, especially mine.

Dear Marvin,

I am an intelligent shade of the colour blue and I've fallen in love with a cute little patch of yellow. My wife has found out about us and is green with envy. What should I do?

Cerulean, Dulux.

Dear Cerulean,

Introduce your wife to a handsome bit of red and everything should come out all white. What a drepressingly bad pun!

Dear Marvin,

While visiting this dimension in the guise of a white mouse I fell in love with an Arcturan mega- elephant, whom I asumed was also a pan-dimensional being; due to our shared interest in Brochian Ultra-Cricket. Imagine my surprise when I discovered my love really was an Arcturan mega-elephant. My problem is this ; do you know anyone who would like to buy a 15 ft. diameter engagement ring?

Mickey Mouse, Disney.

(continued on page 9)

The day that I start taking all this seriously is the day that I'll hang up my cowl...

Recently I managed to go to a party and come back with the last 2½ years of Batman comics to read. Batman was probably my first hero - I took the television programme very seriously and resented going to Brownies as it meant missing the first part every week. My brother and I, when we weren't building our own version of Thunderbird 2 under the garden staircase, used to play Batman with the girl next door (she for some reason always took the part of Batman, while my brother and I had to make do with being Commissioner Gordon and Robin respectively). Later when I was much older the series returned to the television and I watched it as avidly as before, but this time for the hilarious way the actors played the stylised routine of each week's episode. Somehow I didn't expect Batman to be any different as a comic character, or to like him if the writers were trying to take him too seriously. But I was wrong on both counts. I had not more than nibbled at the pile of comics before I was ready to forget the slightly absurd crime-fighter in a silly costume and believe in D.C.'s dedicated avenging hero, now known as the Batman.

Batman's life has moved on quite considerably since the days of the television series. Robin has grown up sufficiently to go away to university, and Batman has left stately Wayne manor to live in a penthouse on top of his tower block office building in Gotham City. As I start reading, he, or rather Bruce Wayne is about to embark on an affair with Selina Kyle, a temporarily at least reformed Catwoman. There are also two other interesting women in his life: one Silver St. Cloud, who could not accept Bruce Wayne's double identity as Batman and the deadly Talia who belongs to the whole League of Assassins strand of adventures wherein Batman fights her father Ra's Al Ghul, the powerful villain who has lived for centuries.

The Darknight Detective

There are two aspects of Batman which are emphasised in the comic books of today: the legend and the man. Artists and readers alike seem to revel in a mysterious, somewhat sinister Batman floating round the city at night, striking fear into the hearts of criminals. That is the legend. Behind the legend is the man who in the true American tradition has made himself what he is by sheer force of determination and will power. True, he did just happen to inherit a fortune from his parents, but otherwise hard work, training and exhaustive study were sufficient to make him a brilliant athlete, a genius detective and a technological whizz-kid. Unlike many comic book heroes the Batman has no super powers. He is exceptional, but exceptional within the limits of human possibilities i.e. his powers are those of a normal person exaggerated and intensified. By implication the myth is saying that any naturally talented person can turn himself into a super hero (as borne out by Robin and Barbara Gordon/Batgirl).

Police and Thieves

The attributes of the hero, though, are not as important as what he stands for. Much has been said about violence in comic books, and there is certainly a sadistic/masochistic element to many of the stories. Batman beats up the villain or else they inflict unbearable pain on him in some form or another. Batman is fighting for justice (and no doubt the American way of life into the bargain). He is on the side of the underdog and is the mainstay of Gotham City police's effort against crime. But his morality is very simple.

Law-breakers are wrong and must be punished. Criminals are stupid and superstitious bullies hiding behind guns. He may feel sorry for them in a patronising sort of way, and tell them how much better off they will be in Arkham lunatic asylum but most of them are just bashed over the head and carted off to prison, or else conveniently fall to their death at some stage in the fight. Batman, of course, never deliberately kills people or even carries a gun (which is to his credit). He does believe in increased police powers though, and one of Bruce Wayne's favourite charities seems to be Gotham City police force. Batman's position is a bit like that of the Special Patrol Group here, a specialist who can deal with situations that the police are not equipped for, and in ways that public accountability might not allow. Not all the writers are unaware of the ambiguity of Batman's position. In BATMAN 311 anti-nuclear demonstrators discuss their attitude to Batman. One of them has an instinctive fear of him, especially as they know that the time is coming when they'll hold their demonstrations on the plant rig itself and be liable to get arrested for trespassing, but his friend argues, "I don't see the Batman shoving peaceful demonstrators into paddy wagons." Nor do I, but add a bit of criminal damage, and I'm sure he'd be happy to oblige.

The Acceptable Face of Capitalism?

In his public life as millionaire Bruce Wayne is not just a playboy (though when he ever has time to cultivate this image I'm not sure.) but also as a highly successful businessman. Since his father was a doctor I don't quite know how he came to inherit a business empire (a fact no doubt explained somewhere in Batman's long history), but he is certainly an exemplary businessman. The vast profits of his corporation as well as funding the Batman's career are at the disposal of all the city's most fashionable charities. Of course Bruce Wayne does not make his money through exploitation - at least not through exploiting Americans. Wayne is no leaser of slum properties, his line is more foreign speculation, like construction deals in Brazil, bank mergers, Asian oil properties. His empire is founded, in the time honoured and morally respectable fashion of American businessmen, on the skilful acquisition and disposal of foreign assets. It is a game played with the capital and properties of other nations, dictated by the rules of profit with little regard to the fact that it is often a whole area's livelihood that is being so played with. The depression does not seem to have hit Wayne enterprises yet. Even when Ra's Al Ghul was trying to bankrupt Bruce Wayne, there was no talk of redundancies or other such trimming measures. All the more surprising as according to that story Wayne's money is invested in such old wave industries as steel, rather than in growth areas like data processing, micro-electronics etc. where America still has a technological lead over most countries.

Damn the Batman, Alfred... and damn the world that needs him.

Like all the best heroes, Batman is flawed. He fights crime as an obsession. If crime-fighters anonymous were to set up in business, Batman would be their first caller - that is if he could be made to admit his problem. In the comics Batman keeps harking back to the murder of his parents, partly I suppose to fill new readers in on the story, but also because he has never grown up enough to accept their death. So he has this pathological desire to go out every night and beat up criminals. Unfortunately the strain of indulging this passion has resulted in a mild form of schizophrenia. Batman ostensibly needs a dual identity to protect himself when he's off-duty and to allow the Batman to operate effectively, but it also allows Bruce Wayne, the respectable, upstanding citizen to exist. Unfortunately

for Bruce Wayne the Batman side of his character is something of a tyrant. It is part of his obsession to believe that he is indispensable and that Gotham city, unlike the rest of America cannot get by without him. So in the name of duty and service to the community the Batman keeps butting in on Bruce's best romances and spoiling them (he even makes him wear his Batman costume under his clothes most of the time, thus severely limiting the scope of Bruce's activities with any of his attractive escorts). Bruce Wayne is obstinate though, if the Batman messes up one of his affairs, he starts on another. Silver St. Cloud leaves and in walks Selina Kyle a.k.a. the Catwoman. Batman does not think much of this, basically because he knows the woman's a criminal, however much she may protest to the contrary. Bruce Wayne is determined to have his revenge over Silver and deliberately takes up with this woman whom the Batman side of his character hates, or at best distrusts. The Batman allows this indulgence, but remains alert for any excuse to put a stop to the whole thing. Eventually Catwoman is suspected of stealing from an Egyptian exhibition and Batman does not hesitate to rush off to her apartment and try to arrest her, refusing to believe her protestations of innocence. But the Catwoman is innocent, and because his obsession is the pursuit of truth and justice, the Batman eventually has to admit this. So Bruce Wayne wins a temporary victory, and by way of atonement Batman is forced to accompany Selina Kyle in her search for an exotic cure for her exotic illness.

Of course the distinction between Batman and Bruce Wayne is not as clear cut as for the sake of simplicity I am making out. Even dressed as Batman he cares for Selina Kyle, just as dressed as Bruce Wayne, he was hurt when Silver St. Cloud left him. But there is a very telling line in this issue (Batman 324). Batman thinks: "You won't die Selina...I'll see to that! You can't die... You're the woman Bruce Wayne loves!", as if Bruce Wayne were not himself, but perhaps a little brother whose fantasies he has to indulge. Eventually, though, the Batman wins again as Selina cannot forget the moment when Bruce doubted her innocence and so walks out on him. Alfred, temporarily the mouthpiece for Batman says; "Perhaps losing Miss Selina and Miss Silver St. Cloud before her... is all for the best, sir - the Batman's life is not an easy one." To which Bruce Wayne can only reply, "Then damn the Batman Alfred... and damn the world that needs him." (Batman 326)

Unlike Silver, it is not clear that the Catwoman recognises Batman as Bruce Wayne. This seems strange, for she has been close enough to both for one to feel she must be either very blind or else Commissioner Gordon not to recognise that they are one and the same. However, perhaps this is not as illogical as it might seem. Given that presumably Selina did not spend as many hours on her dates staring infatuatedly at Bruce's jawline as Silver did, the resemblance might not be quite so striking. Also precisely because the Catwoman has known so well the two separate persons, she will have a separate history of mental images for each, and a separate set of responses to go with them. Most people only see what they want to see, so when Selina looks at Batman, she sees Batman and when she looks at Bruce Wayne, she sees Bruce Wayne. At the same time this indicates just how completely disassociated the two characters which are Bruce Wayne and Batman have become.

Well, that's it, I guess I'm hooked now - I'll just have to buy the comics as they arrive, if only to see if Ra's Al Ghul really is dead, whether the Catwoman will go back to a life of crime and, should Marv Wolfman take up writing the stories again, to get some more wonderful scenes of Batman and Robin shouting at each other.

Well known Warwick graduate, C.J. Lake B.A., D.E.M.L. here presents the very first popular version of her award winning thesis entitled:
The Role of the Woman In Twelfth Century Society

As is well known to historians and the general public alike, there was only one woman in twelfth century society - Eleanor of Aquitaine. This being the case, her role is self evident, that of marrying as many heads of christendom as possible. The first of these was Louis VII of France. Back in the twelfth century if you weren't the Pope or the Holy Roman Emperor, the next best measure was to constitute yourself king of some nebulous area and fight, murder or marry yourself into the land which went with the name. Louis VII, when he claimed to be king of France wasn't referring to the Hexagon we know and love today, but merely to a few castles in and around Paris, and the personal possessions of his wife, Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine. This was all very well while he remained married to Eleanor, but when his turn ended, and Eleanor, realising the export potential in the English market for Bordeaux wine chose the soon to be Henry II as her next husband, poor Louis began to feel somewhat threatened and decided to exchange worldly ambitions for the more durable and less tangible ones of sainthood.

To return to the subject of this study, Eleanor's achievements were not confined to the field of matrimony. It is well known that she invented courtly love and chivalry, which had previously been invented by her troubador grandfather William of Aquitaine, and subsequently forgotten for political reasons. Eleanor, despite being nominally Queen of England, popularised the French language so much (though only speaking Latin herself) that from the writings of her time may be extrapolated the whole course of French literature, including surrealism, existentialism and Asterix the Gaulle.

Perhaps it might be illuminating to consider the early history of this remarkable woman. What were her thoughts and feelings as she prepared herself to step into the glaring spotlight of History? We shall probably never know. Certain though is that the deciding factor in her unprecedented rise to position in the male dominated society of the day, was her good fortune in being born before rather than after her many brothers and sisters. Possessing a strong and precocious Gallic sense of 'egalite' Eleanor contrived unobtrusively to smother the offending potential heirs who arrived in the ducal cradle with such monotonous regularity (a feat only to be equalled by a little known descendant of hers, Mary Tudor). I do not feel it would be overstating the case to say that the current interest in cot deaths can be directly traced back to Eleanor.

As a young girl Eleanor groomed herself for society in the usual ways which have since become accepted. She appeared at all the gatherings of note, battles, sieges, treaty ratifications and film premiers. The machinations of European politicians were no mystery were no mystery to her. She was conversant with the answers to the great questions of the day, like whether the crusades really were only an early example of Western imperialism, or why any self respecting angel would even want to balance on the point of a needle. Her fame spread to all the best matches of Christendom and might have had her embroiled in the World Cup Finals, if the Pope had not forbidden everybody to take part on account of a sizeable Muslim presence in Spain at the time. Then it was that the personable saint, Louis hobbled into her life, and the rest as they say is history.

Some of Eleanor's achievements have been mentioned already, but not

least among them must be counted her success in placing two of her sons on the throne of England simultaneously. King Richard, inventor of Blondie, gay lib and wargaming, was an early adherent to the principles of job sharing. While he went off for exotic holidays in the Middle East, or explored dungeons in Germany, his brother was given the early opportunity to practise unpopular economic policies and further damage England's balance of payments, which was already seriously in deficit through the excessive quantities of Bordeaux wine being imported. King John (inventor of Robin Hood, India rubber balls and two dimensional stereotyped villains) was astute enough though to realise that France was not the sort of country his crew of barely anglicised Normans would really want to live in over the centuries to come, and so abandoning with almost unseemly alacrity the worse of his French possessions (though not Aquitaine!), he set about constructing the Hammer of the Scots (later to be known as Edward I or the Bionic Monarch).

And what of Eleanor? She grew tired of her sons antics and went back to Aquitaine to found Lycees and write her memoirs, which were so scurrilous that monks were working on twenty four hour shifts all over christendom to keep up with the demand. Fortunately for the reputation of the would be saint, Louis all copies had been burned in a premature fit of puritanism before the case for his canonisation was heard. No doubt if this work had survived the role of the woman in twelfth century society would be much better understood and I could have filled this space with something more worthwhile.

Next Issue: The Hammer of the Scots meets the Friends of Kilgore Trout. Don't miss his death dealing encounter with the Saviour of Fandom.

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MARVIN'S PROBLEM PAGE (cont.)

Dear Mickey,

I think I ought to tell you that is one of the oldest jokes in the whole universe, and if I had humour circuits (which I haven't) I wouldn't think it funny either. Old jokes are about the most depressing things in existence. In fact existence seems like an old joke to me. Perhaps that's why I find it so depressing. I don't know why I bother answering such rubbish! I'd rip this up but I might enjoy it too much. God, I'm so depressed.

Dear Marvin,

You think I don't know?

God.

(Marvin also heard from Mrs. Thatcher, Prince Charles, Joe Nicholas, Robert Heinlein, Bob Shaw (the depraved) and most especially IAN SORENSEN- can one wonder he's depressed.)

++ ++ ++ ++ ++

EXISTENTIALISM FOR BEGINNERS

Lesson 1 : Identity

How do you know who you are? What defines the parameters of one's being? Some would say one is no more than a composite of other's expectations. But this sidesteps the issue, for these expectations must have been formed through interaction between some outside reality and the idiosyncracies of an individual's perception. This implies that control over one's identity is possible. For how this is achieved see lesson 2, Suicide, an existential act?

PARLEZ - VOUS. FANSAY!

With John Brunner and Alan Dorey planning to entice European fandom across to the shores of everybody's favourite E.E.C. partner, I thought that now might be a good time to make known the formulae which will enable you to impress your European neighbours and destroy the totally unfounded myth that the English speak no language but their own (the Scots being excluded from this criticism on the grounds that nobody knows quite what language they speak!). Below, then, are a few absolutely essential phrases in French and German for the would be multilingual fan:

- Oui, j'aimerais bien boire un pot - Yes, I'd love a drink!
Ou se trouve le room-party? - Where's the room party?
Quel jour est-il? - What day is it?
J'ai plus de fric! - I've run out of money!
Le mec avec qui je buvais du vodka - what was his name again, that guy
hier soir, quel etait son nom deja? I was drinking vodka with last
night?
J'ai perdu mon parapluie - I'm out of my head on para- psychology
Qu'est-ce que c'est que la - I wish I was a member of the B.S.F.A.
B.S.F.A. ? and could attend their A.G.M. and
receive 6 wonderful mailings a year.
- Ich will Perry Rhodan schreiben - I was once a ghost writer on a
Perry Rhodan original.
Damit ich dich besser sehen kann! - Damn it, I didn't expect to see
you here!
Das kommt nicht in Frage - Don't let Das into the room.
Beame mich hinauf, Scotty! - Beam me up Scotty!
Jeepers!' - (international, don't bother to
translate except in the presence
of Henry 'Streetwalker' Balen.)

As everybody knows, fandom is just one big happy family, cutting across barriers of race, language and reading habits, so feel free to use the familiar form of the pronoun 'you', i.e.

Tu es un sacre encule = You're such a nice fellow
Du bist ein Sau

Of course if you're trying to discourage familiarity the following might come in useful :

Allez vous faire foutre!

as Lilian and I discovered to our cost when we tried our French on the Cretins at Trout one Thursday.

It is also well to bear in mind that the French and the Germans are very philosophically inclined, so prepare yourself to be confronted by such questions as these in the course of a normal conversation

Why are we here?

What is the meaning of life?

and Does it cosmically speaking matter if I don't pay my hotel bill?
The answers to which being in order

Because someone rigged the bidding session

State of functional activity peculiar to organised matter (Oxford

No, but have you ever visited a British prison? Eng. Dictionary)

n.b. When talking to a German fan, do REMEMBER NOT TO MENTION THE WAR -otherwise you might find yourself listening to a long treatise on the sociological and economic factors leading to the rise of Hitler!

Simon is a prolific writer, whose spare time and spare note-books are all used to the same end, penning yet another of his innumerable science-fiction 'epics'. His current work Fools Gold is a vast improvement on the earlier 4th Dimension Trilogy, which featured a hero who would make Buck Rodgers seem subtle and sensitive by comparison. The story printed here has always been something of a family favourite. I like it for the obsessive way the hero goes about his search for his 'mind'. I'm not convinced that mind is the best word for what Simon means (it's obviously not intended to refer to the mental faculties, maybe soul or identity would be closer), but then it's difficult to find the precise word which describes what it is that differentiates a human being from an intelligent machine. Anyway read the story and see what you think.

T H E S I L E N T W O R L D S by S I M O N L A K E

Slowly, cautiously, I entered the cave. The light gradually disappeared to be replaced by a murky darkness. The atmosphere around me seemed suddenly to come alive. I realised something was wrong, but it was now too late. I tried to run but found myself trapped by some invisible force.

Suddenly I found my mind being invaded by something alien and hostile. I tried desperately to resist, but I could feel the caverns of my mind being slowly torn apart. I screamed out in agony as the intense pain and terror hit me.

Then it was over. I found myself lying outside the cave. In horror I realised that my mind was gone...

It was the twenty seventh century. The population of Earth had decreased dramatically because of the planet rush during the past fifty years, precipitated, it seemed, by the recent discovery of many, new, habitable planets.

I sat quietly in the corners of the large hall, watching as people danced to the loud music which reverberated around the room. In the far corner, Don Richards, for whom this party was being held, stood surrounded by a large group of people. He was recounting one of his many tales, for he was one of the few pioneer spacemen to return to Earth.

"Clifford, don't try to hide away, you're supposed to enjoy parties you know!"

"You know I don't like parties! I don't know why I bothered to come in the first place!"

As he moved over to where his friend Stanton stood, I overheard what they were saying.

"I've been talking to Clifford, he's been acting real weird. I know he's never been much for social life, but...well, I don't know."

"He's been like that ever since his experience on Armada." The name Armada brought back a fear which I had so long suppressed. The memory of what had happened five years ago sent a shiver down my spine; for on Armada someone had stolen my mind.

By ten o'clock the party was in full swing, everyone apart from me seemed to be having a good time. I decided to leave, walking out into the cool night. Looking up into the sky I could clearly see the stars. Someone out there had my mind. I entered the house, going straight to bed. I was soon asleep.

I woke, sweat pouring down my face. The nightmare of what had happened to me on Armada had returned to haunt me. I sat up. I noticed my clock had stopped. I wound it up, still it would not go.

"Damn stupid clock!" I shouted. I heard nothing. What was happening I wondered? Once again I tried to speak but nothing came out. What was happening to me, I wondered in fear? I ran over to where

my brother lay, shaking him violently in an attempt to wake him. His eyes stayed firmly shut. It was then that I noticed the room had changed. The many posters which had covered the walls were gone; the floor, usually littered with clothes and other oddments was bare and the wooden door had been replaced by a smaller glass one. Perhaps it was all just another nightmare from which I would soon awake.

I approached the door, momentarily stopping as it slid open. I decided to enter the adjoining room, cautiously walking past the door. The room was similar to the one I had just left; two men lay asleep on the beds. Neither woke despite my efforts to rouse them.

I traversed the whole building passing through about thirty rooms, each with two people asleep in them. All, I noticed had been at the party. Eventually I came to a larger room with a huge screen on one wall. The screen the Earth slowly disappearing behind as we set out on a course for Andromeda. In Andromeda lay Armada, the planet where someone had stolen my mind. Someone had my mind; I wanted it back, yet how could I get off this ship?

During the next few days I searched the whole ship; I could find no way either of controlling it so that it would land on Armada or of activating the outside doors so that I could get out of the ship should I be successful in landing her. I soon gave up the pointless task of searching the ship. As days merged into weeks, I began to feel the effects of time spent in such depressing silence. I longed to hear a familiar sound; a bird singing, a baby's cry, or the sound of the wind in the trees. Twice I was certain I heard a voice, but after searching every room I would return having found nothing.

During this long period of silence I even considered suicide as a possible way of ending the eternal nightmare. Perhaps I would even have carried out this idea had the ship not landed on Armada.

I watched in surprise as the hatch door slid slowly open. Taking one last look at the ship I had been trapped on for so many weeks, I stepped onto the thin grey Armadan soil. A slight breeze blew across the barren surface. In the distance I could just make out the cave where my mind had been stolen. I still remembered its location clearly.

Inside the cave a shadow flickered against the far wall. I swung my torch round in time to get a fleeting glimpse of a small man.

"Hey you! Whoever you are, I've come to get my mind back!" I shouted. Suddenly I felt something hard hit me on the back of the head. A searing pain lanced through my body. Slowly I slipped into unconsciousness.

I AM GRAHAM YOUNG FROM THE PLANET EARTH. I HAVE COME TO GET A SHIP WHICH WILL TAKE ME TO THE OUTER GALAXIES. I AM GOING TO STEAL TREASURE IN THE OUTER GALAXIES.

When I awoke I felt strange. I tried to work out what was wrong but one thought pounded through my head blocking out all others. I had to reach the outer galaxies; there I would find treasure to make me rich. I noticed that a door leading from the room I was in was open. Through it I caught snatches of a conversation which was meaningless to me.

"Do you think Mitchel suspects anything, no-one has ever returned before."

"No. As long as he thinks the implant's worked he won't worry."

"Here he comes now."

"Well, how's our patient then?"

"The implant worked fine. He's just woken up. We may as well go and see him now."

The three men entered the room.

"How are you feeling?" asked one of the men, "You're lucky still to be alive, you know. That was quite a nasty crash. My name's Mitchell and these are Galt and Harwood who patched you back together again."

"I am Graham Young from Earth. Where is my spacecraft, I must leave at once."

"Galt, go and show Young his ship."

The ship was fairly small, having been designed for one. There were three rooms; one was a navigational room, one a weapon store and the other a rest room. I found the ship easy to control, somehow familiar, although I could not recall using that type before.

The journey took three weeks; the loneliness did not affect me, I could remember many trips I had made alone before, yet the silence annoyed me. I could not think why.

I had made it. I had reached the outer galaxies; yet would I ever return? Only one person had returned from the outer galaxies. He had died two days after returning having revealed nothing. It was also thought that Mars III, the mythical paradise planet was to be found there.

I reached a planet with two moons, rich in oxygen. I decided to land. I was just preparing to penetrate the atmosphere when I realised that a large ship was taking off from the planet. It came into range, overtaking my small craft without difficulty and immediately launched two missiles. I managed to avoid the first but the second hit the rear of the ship, damaging it badly. I was sent hurtling across the room, smashing into the wall. I was immediately knocked unconscious.

I woke up feeling stiff. My head ached and my legs were cramped. I managed to stagger to my feet and looked around me. The ship was a wreck left to drift endlessly in space. I was destined to spend my life drifting endlessly through silent, dark space.

It was on the fifth day that a ship came into view. I was surprised at the ship's appearance, puzzled because the ship seemed familiar. It stopped by the wreck of my ship, the door slowly opening to reveal an unmanned control room. I entered the ship, noticing a large screen showing the ship slowly approaching a far off planet. I explored every room in the ship and found each to contain two beds on which people slept. The scene was disturbing, but I could not tell why. Finding an empty bed I lay down and fell asleep.

I woke up alone in a strange room resembling a medical theatre. Where was I, I wondered, feeling confused. The events of the last few weeks were a blur. The last thing I could remember was being hit from behind by something hard.

"Are you awake?" A soft voice drifted through my hear'. I tried to reply, but no sound came from my mouth. How could I reply?

"You cannot speak for these are the silent worlds. You will find that telepathic communication is easy." The voice entered my head again.

"Where am I?" Tentatively I sent out my thoughts.

"This is Mars III."

"The paradise planet!"

"Yes. I am Stabella, queen of Mars III. We found you in a wrecked space craft; you had been implanted."

"Implanted?"

"Yes. Let me explain. On Armada there is a group known as the mind stealers. It was set up by a doctor, Seranian Vogt who saw the potential in mind stealing. Criminals who had been chased across the galaxy could have a complete new identity implanted in their skull so that even the highest computers could not break through the disguise. Any person who had these mind grafts though, would find much of their memory clouded. As Vogt grew old he designed

androids to carry on his work. The group went on doing their dirty business successfully until Mitchel became their leader. He too was an android but he wanted to become human. He had the graft of your mind implanted in himself. From then on he was no longer an android, and so much more likely to make mistakes. We sent two agents, Harwood and Galt, to help in his downfall. Mitchel was shocked when you returned to Armada and so he implanted the mind of Graham Young to get rid of you, but Harwood added a mind filter so that we would be able to remove the implant."

Not really taking all this in, I asked, "And why did you take my friends from Earth?"

"Your friends were brought here to receive the happiness which we send throughout the galaxy to unite all races in peace. We are trying to remove corrupt and criminal organisations such as that which you encountered on Armada."

"Can I see my friends?"

"Not at the moment. They are recovering from their long journey. I will send Crayford to show you round the building, then tomorrow you shall come and meet me."

"I will look forward to that."

A few minutes later the door opened and a tall dark-haired man wearing a green tinted visor entered.

"This way." He gestured to the corridor leading from the room. We walked up the corridor until we came to a room leading off from the main hall. Crayford showed me inside.

"Here is where our androids are made."

The room was filled with many complicated pieces of machinery. In one corner lay two partly assembled androids. Crayford showed me two more rooms before we came to one guarded by a couple of androids.

"What's in here?" I asked.

"Not even I know that. Queen Stabella has told no-one and her guards make sure that no-one can get in." There was something in the way his words sounded in my head that convinced me he was lying. I knew I would dearly like to find out what was inside.

There was nothing of any great interest in any of the other rooms; though a thief or a connoisseur of art might have thought otherwise. Crayford took me back to the room I had awoken in and left me to rest. After he had gone I cautiously opened the door and peered out into the corridor; it was now empty, even the androids guarding the secret room had gone. Making certain that no-one was about I ran up the corridor and slowly opened the door to this room. There was no-one inside; the room seemed small and bare in comparison to those I had been shown earlier that day. In the centre of the room there was a large cabinet filled with row upon row of yellow vials. They seemed to contain some kind of drug, one unknown to me, but obviously important to be so well guarded. I tried to open the cabinet but found four locks keeping it shut. Suddenly I heard the sound of footsteps in the distance. I got back to my room safely, listening as the footsteps went past. I decided it would not be safe to return. But the strange drugs had aroused my suspicions even more; something sinister was definitely taking place.

Crayford came early the next morning to take me to the throne room. He told me to wait outside while he went to speak with the Queen. He disappeared from view through a side door. He was gone for several minutes. Eventually he returned telling me to enter. The large doors swung slowly open, allowing me my first look at Queen Stabella. Her beauty was immediately apparent. She wore a long blue satin dress which seemed to set off perfectly her emerald green eyes and night black hair. I walked slowly towards her only vaguely noticing the many fine statues lining the aisle leading to the throne.

"You like this room?" she asked.

"It's ve... very interesting," I replied, waking from my trance.

"Come and sit down." She indicated the seat next to her throne.

"I've arranged for a ship to take you back to Armada. Once you have your mind back will you return to Mars III?"

Looking into her eyes I could only make one reply. "Yes!"

"Good we shall eat together. You can tell me something of your life back on Earth and I shall tell you all about Mars III to hurry your return."

"May I see my friends before I leave?"

Queen Stabella hesitated fractionally before replying, and at that moment I recalled my suspicions of the previous evening.

"Perhaps that would not be wise. They are not at their best and the pleasure will be all the greater when you return."

"No, I must see them now!" I insisted.

She must have sensed the firmness of my purpose, for she made no further attempt at dissuasion. Crayford was recalled and instructed to bring my friends.

As they walked towards me I was relieved to see that my brother was there, and Stanton and Richards as well. I began to hope I had been wrong about Queen Stabella. But as they came closer I noticed a slightly glazed expression on some of their faces.

"Marshall you have come to receive happiness on this planet."

Their voices entered my head in unison, then I heard my brother:

"Clifford, come to me" He stretched out his hands. I was suddenly filled with fear.

"NO! NO!" I cried. Then I realised what had happened. "They've been drugged. You've stolen their minds!"

Inanger I lunged at one of the guards who had charged into the room. He fell instantly, I grabbed his gun and opened fire on another guard. He fell too, along with Crayford and another. I ran out from the room, leaving Stabella staring at the body of Crayford.

It took me only a few minutes to get out onto the planet's surface. There I found myself in a huge space port. Spotting a ship of the sort I had flown before I ran towards it, jumping aboard as a large group of guards appeared in the distance behind me. As I took off other ships took off after me. I went off to check the weaponry, leaving the navigational computer to take suitable evasive action. To my amazement I found the ship had an implosion bomb. Could I risk releasing its cataclysmic force? It seemed my only chance, yet it would mean killing my brother and my friends. Somehow I just didn't care. Without their minds how could it matter to them whether they were alive or dead? I brought my finger down, activating the bomb. Within seconds the silence I had suffered in for so long was shattered by a heart rending explosion. Mars III erupted in a gout of flames, spewing out rock into space. I found my voice had returned.

A few minutes later I was on my way out of the outer galaxies and had set a course for Armada. I would reclaim my mind and then destroy Armada as I had destroyed Mars III.

I hurried towards the cave, determined to reclaim my mind. As I entered the cave I switched on my torch and looked around. The cave was empty.

"I want my mind back!" I shouted. "Come out, or I will have to come and find you."

Suddenly a large burly figure appeared.

"Hello, I'm Galt," he said. "Was it you who was shouting?"

"Yes."

"What were you shouting about?"

"Someone stole my mind. I've come to get it back."

"That's terrible. I'll try and help you find it. But why don't

you come and have a drink first?"

"Are you some kind of a nutcase..." My attention was caught by the sound of a space craft taking off. I realised what was happening. Mitchel was getting away with my mind! I rushed past Galt before he could try and stop me, and hurried to the space ship I had stolen from Mars III.

ON the main screen I could see Mitchel's ship racing towards the Armadan sun. I steadily increased speed until a warning light came on the panel next to me. Disregarding the fact that the ship might at any moment break up, I increased the speed still further in a desperate attempt to catch Mitchel. As we hurtled across space the large orange mass which was the Armadan sun grew bigger...

Mitchel must have been able to feel the extreme heat as his ship neared the sun. He was going too fast, he wouldn't be able to turn back. It was as if he couldn't face losing his mind and becoming an android again.

The light seered through my eyes, the heat paralysed my body. I could turn back but I could not face life without my mind, to live forever a robot human. I carried on, the heat slowly burning my body, and then the strain on the engines became too much. The ship exploded into thousands of pieces. My mind, my whole body was gone, gone forever...

Some Thoughts On Daleks

The daleks are probably the most insecure robots in the universe. Why do you think they always operate in groups? They can't bear the silence. Even if they happen to be by themselves they trundle around shouting out their identity and their mission. It's as if they need to constantly remind themselves that they exist and that they exist for a purpose. Who can wonder that their favourite action is extermination? How else are they to communicate with the world outside their metal shells? It is inherent in their designs that they should want to conquer the universe, they cannot express themselves in any other way.

COMING SOON - the six year old twins reveal what they did in the Easter holidays; the truth about onion fandom; why D&D is played with wee dolls in Glasgow; plus the unfashionable half of F.O.K.T. exposed and much, much more in the first issue of THIS NEVER HAPPENS; available soon from:

LILIAN EDWARDS, 1, Braehead Rd., Thorntonhall, Glasgow
for Back numbers of Roy of the Rovers

Autographed photos of Sting

A glass of Cinzano and lemonade

& CHRISTINA LAKE, 69, Leamington Rd., Southend-on-sea.

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or any of the usual rubbish people exchange for fanzines!

CREDITS: thanks to Tim for letting me use his office, Alison for feeding me, Simon and Bilbo their encouragement, Bruce for the Batman comics, Bob Shaw (the deapaved) for allowing me to read his fanzines all year and Caroline for the dragon.

COVENTRY, APRIL 1981

Outbursts - a letter column

Response to the limited print run of Dragonburst was so encouraging that I have decided to revise my policy of a select mailing list issue only and make the zine available to the fannish public at large. Below is a selection from the somewhat unusual (I think) letters that Dragonburst seems to have attracted.

ANNA CONDA, THORNTON HALL, GLASGOW.

What can I say concerning this incomparable opus, Dragonburst? Well for a start the title is mundane, derivative and outre. As Kierkegaard said, the future can only be considered by a mannered appraisal of the past, and here I shall not consider the oeuvre before my eyes at present, but remember once more that paragon of fanzine production, your previous epic, Blackbird's Egg.

BE (as it was known to its patrons) epitomised the eternal dilemma of amateur publications - whether to appeal to the most intimate and incestuous of lusts for gossip of fandom at large or to stand proud and distant from the backstabbing bickering and strive for the standards the editor can most fully derive from his/her inner resources. BE circumvented this Damoclean peril uniquely, by incorporating into the most fannish articles shreds of educational and stimulating polemic, as well as such interesting and little seen topics as the mating cries of the original Indians of Madagascar and why Erich von Daniken was right, (and a Good Thing).

Can Dragonburst emulate this remarkable achievement? Do we have a map? Does it matter? Does it matter if it matters? Has anyone got any more paper? Can fandom endure? Does Alan Dorey really F--- penguins? Am I eternally interrogative? Is this the end? (No, unfortunately it wasn't, but I'm having too much difficulty reading Anna's handwriting to print any more!)

A. HITLER, GIFFNOCK, GLASGOW.

Loved your last zine. In one move you have made Southend the S.F. centre of the world. It was almost as good as some of my own stuff. P.S. Liked the bit about invading Leeds.

P.P.S. I hope my opinion matters to you as people don't seem to pay as much attention to me as they need to. Does this matter? Does it matter if it matters? Does it matter if it matters if it matters?? Does it etc. etc.

(No.)

FRANCIS PATERSON, 24, TRAFALGER RD., HARLOW, ESSEX.

Many thanks for the copy of your fanzine - the first I've ever read! I'm stunned by the penetrating wit, the brilliance of your articles, your excellent taste in letters, the way you get to where it matters - although does it matter if it matters? Anyway thanks for enlightening a poor neo.

P.S. Who's Alan Dorey?

(Sorry I had to cut that a bit Francis. Normally I wouldn't publish the letter of a greasy neo anyway, but to talk of Francis and grease in the same connection is clearly preposterous. Anyway, perhaps our next writer can answer the question about Alan Dorey.)

MICHEL ULTRALIGHT, 2, MILLENIUM AVENUE, GLASGOW.

This publication ranks in my estimation with Hungarian Army Cooperation Aircraft of 1914-1932 - Complete Registration Numbers from A-Z for vividness of prose and illustrative writing, but does it matter that it does not answer the question whether the dragon of the title is acrobatic, is it a personification, a dream, a Freudian image of Alan Dorey for whom the writer has I would presume to think a

deep-seated ~~xxx~~ desire ~~xxx~~ craving she-is-daft-on-him- aw shit would like to get a bit more intimate with and sees him powered by natural gas and supported by some soaring through the air and at azimuth in the blue sky bursting blowing going ka-boom. Aw shit you know what I mean- a representation of her belief she could not get her hooks into him.

(Then again perhaps he can't. As usual Michel's remarks are rambling, incoherent and read as though they were hurriedly scribbled on the back of a postcard in some seedy Glasgow drinking establishment while listening to a particularly appalling singer perform to the laboured efforts of a suffering organ player.

Now here's a letter to prove that I don't just use the correspondence that has something nice to say about the fanzine...)

RUFUS FARTHING, 31, Alfriston Rd., Crediton, Devon.

You can do better than this, I know you can. Even a five year old would have difficulty finding intellectual stimulation in this mish-mash of pseudo-Hitch-Hiker humour and candy-floss substitute. As for your editorial.

a) it's all been said before
& b) you're missing the point entirely.

Let me explain. If you have nothing to say (as is the case here) the medium becomes by default the message. In a visually pleasing context your little flourishes of whimsy might just have worked. The whole would have transcended its constituent parts and become an agreeable memento. If you were an artist (and I don't just mean someone who draws pictures), you would know this already, so I wouldn't need to tell you, and if you were a polemicist, there'd be no need to tell you as it wouldn't be relevant. I think some sort of clarification of your aims might be a good idea. Look at what you've produced, and think hard before starting on any new project.

(Thanks Rufus. I know you're a member of the "a fanzine is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever" school of thought, but personally I'm not into coffee table art. The whole point I was trying to make in my editorial (which you seemed to have missed completely) is that I'm putting the fanzine together for my own enjoyment and am not interested in what other people think a fanzine ought to be, only in making the best job I can of publishing the material I want to include.)

I also heard from PETE THOMPSON 'I eagerly await your and Lilian's scandalzine. How much will you offer to sell them to Laura for?', ELIZABETH JENKINS 'I seem to have devoted the whole evening to plunging my toothbrush down my foul sink and swamping my carpet with water' and PASCAL J. THOMAS 'du 11 au 13 Septembre 1981, la convention nationale(et unique) francaise de S.F, se tiendra a Bordeaux.' (For further details write to Pascal J. Thomas, 45, rue d'Ulm, 75005 PARIS.)

That's about all there's left to say. Coventry has become remarkably tension stricken over the last few months. A person living in a house just across the road from the office where I am typing this stabbed an Asian doctor at the chip shop round the corner for a bet. The doctor is now dead. It does not make for a very good atmosphere in the City, to say the least, as don't the efforts of the national Front either. (I'm sorry about the convoluted structure of the sentence, but I'm typing it straight onto the stencil.) But then what can you expect in a city based on a dying industry (car production), in the present economic climate?

July 1981

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