

ORILKJIS

DRILKJIS 2

October 1976

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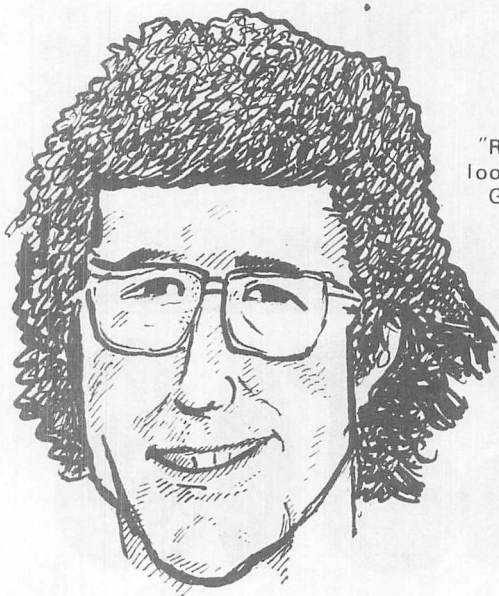
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Production

Fervent thanks to Keith Freeman.
Also to the man who sold Dave
the duper just in time for this.

DRILKJIS is available for trade,
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or 40p per copy.



"Rubbish always
looks worse in litho."
Greg Pickersgill.



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CONCERNING—

In one of the first responses to DL, Malcolm Edwards confessed to having enjoyed the zine---intimating that this was something of a surprise. "I was afraid," he explained, "it might be full of stories." But Hook parodies are OK by him (though Ian Maule finds them "dire": win some, lose some): and so to some vague wonderings about definitions and the fearful spectre of fan-fiction in general.

Rob Jackson said his piece some time ago. "Why should I read fan-fiction when I have five Zelazny novels I haven't read?" Naturally he's not talking about esoterica, faaan-fiction, but of stuff in that overlap zone where fans ape the modes of the professionals. This may only become irreproachably pro by appearing in a prozine. (He tautologised.) And thus we realise that Rob's own "Nunatak Wall" was fan-fiction, unspeakable and vile, for x years after its appearance in Sfinx 6. Then, with SF Monthly, a wondrous change came over the piece, a quantum leap to the magic realms of prodrom.

The issue is murky. Brandishing the critical bell, book and candle at all fan-fiction can't be right, if some of it is truly good enough for the money markets. (On the other hand, Hook was good enough for the money markets. H'm) Elke Stewart pushes this notion as far as it'll go with her "If there were ten times as many prozines in the UK, ten times as many stories would be published. Where are they now?" Yes: and if there were a thousand prozines...good grief. With such vast reservoirs of brilliant---well, saleable---fiction in the country, we should right now be getting nothing but the cream; but somehow the bowl is usually half-full of skim, and occasionally tastes more like Cadbury's Soylent Milk...

Well.

If professional appearance isn't a guarantee of quality, what hope for fan-fiction? It comes swiftly back to Argument Number One: the quality is

low. Fan-fiction writers are learning to write, usually, or not bothering to learn. The finger swivels to point at fanzine editors; it's their responsibility to choose well, isn't it? ---in terms of both quality and appropriateness for the zine in question. Which leads to Argument Two: "fiction just doesn't fit in fanzines". In view of the awful articles and verse that do emerge from innumerable duplicators, the low-quality contention is a good deal easier to laugh off than this most terrible pronouncement. Just where does fan-fiction fit?

Serious&Constructive productions? Hardly: those critics won't lie down with the lamb in their midst. Clubzines tend to suffer from fevered mutterings of "we've got to print Fred's poem or he won't type the zine, must use Joe's story because he's duplicating it, page 3 will be blank unless I stick in Jane's Day of the Triffids review," etc. The Personalzine offers up the editor's own distilled secretions, lovingly cherished in dark places until the hour of publication---"Every man likes the smell of his own farts"---you can't edit your own stuff objectively. (You could, but usually you don't.) Fannish fans only want faan-fiction, with all the esotericism that the extra "a" implies (fortunate that the extreme case "fhaaaaaan" is rare).

There's still the Octopoid Genzine, extending its insidious arms into rock music or wargaming or poetry or---fiction. Sometimes the tug of all these will be fatal to the bit in the middle, the supposed "unifying personality": but when things harmonise instead of coagulating into a dozen soggy and separate lumps, you have a niche for fan-fiction. A niche best left vacant until a high-quality piece comes through (yes, Lisa, you can go on publishing Rob Holdstock), or something turns up which isn't quite straight f/sf. Off-beat pieces are safer...parody, funny stories, in-jokes...

One stone remains to be turned---

and here is the Fiction Only zine, a (4)
desperately rare species. Rare, because an editor who sets his sights above the mediocre is faced with an appalling lack of material---Rob Jackson's argument works from the other end too, and the good stuff spends its time being submitted to prozines. The trick, I suppose, is to catch pro-quality writers unawares: thus Sfinx has featured Rob Holdstock, Rob Jackson, Chris Morgan and Ian Watson, among others, whose tales have been reprinted in SFM, New Worlds, and so on.

...There's a case for crossing out this section, on the grounds that I started with the subject of fan-fiction; fandom being what it is (whether regarded as colouring or dimming the pure light of sf enthusiasm), the contacts with ficzines are few and tenuous.

So be it. As expected, a bloodhound passage along these trails merely leads me up the garden path. The path wriggles; finding myself back at the starting-point, I trip over the question "But what makes fan-fiction controversial?". That's straightforward. I think.

Fiction can be put to the test; other fan writings often can't. Fans don't like the reminder that perhaps everything they do is inferior. It isn't: * but fiction is so difficult to bring off, so susceptible to deflating comparisons with pros, so much a part of the Rough Outside World---far more soothing to avoid it. Stay out of the pros' gardens and they won't hurt you.

---Wouldn't it be unbearable if They accepted witty fannish pieces? We'd all have to stop writing them. (You never started, cries a voice from the back.) "Why should I read your con-report," Rob Jackson would announce, "when I've five Zelazny reports I haven't read yet?"

Forbear from mockery, mortals. The hour approaches. Fanzine reviews have returned to the prozines... there was the Geis column in Galaxy/If. Writing on the wall, and not even stencilled, but letterpress.

* Not to imply that fan-writing is necessarily important. "Brilliantly written rubbish" says a friend of mine.

Back in reality, Malcolm Edwards remarks "I read fanzines---among other reasons---to relax from sf."---a perfect statement of the popular position. The quality argument is bumped into second place: better or worse, fanzines offer something different.

And fan-fiction offers more of the same? Maybe. The stories get written, fan editors print them, and the Silent Majority (if fandom has one) does not complain...

(It should. Next time you find a lousy story in a fanzine, why not be a nice guy and write in saying what's wrong? Might be the only criticism the poor sod will ever get, this side of Roger Elwood's award-winning rejection slips.)

Therefore...

Not much. No burning message for all fans, no tablets of stone in the manner of D. West. The hoary old answer to such controversy runs: To each his own, and all that. Let's say that if a zine fills a gap it's worthwhile. Conversely, the fact that a gap tends to have edges does imply that the zine will be hammered by somebody.

"I don't like this."---fair and unanswerable comment.

"This is lousy stuff."---but why? What standards are you using?

"I don't like this, therefore it is lousy." ---Bleah.

Wonder if DRILKJIS fills any gaps? Well, the draught used to come in under my door...

* * * * *

"I hear from a physician, a gynaecologist now practising in Egypt, that a dancing girl can lie on her back, and with a full glass of water standing on one side of her abdomen and an empty glass on the other, can by the contraction of her muscles on the side supporting the full glass, project the water from it, so as to fill the empty glass.

"This, of course, is not strictly dancing..."

(Havelock Ellis, "The Art of Dancing".)

"One in every five mammals is a bat."
(Blurb from "The Life of Bats".)

CROSSTALK: BOB SHAW

** Welcome to DRINKJIS, Bob: it's good
** of you to find time for this.

I find time for fannish doings because I like fans and fandom. The trouble is that I can't find enough time. Over the years I have built up a guilt complex about the number of fanzines I received and read with pleasure but never got around to commenting on by letter. I think it is a genuine sin not to send a loc in return for every labour of fannish love. If I suddenly became a millionaire it is possible I would never write another novel, but I honestly believe I would go on writing for fanzines.

** And short stories? ---When I last
** talked to Pete Weston he (when not gloating over your ANDROMEDA pieces) contended that you're best as a short-story writer. Do you still agree?

I believe I have gone on record as saying that I felt myself to be a short story writer by instinct, rather than a novelist. My views on that point have begun to change, though, now that I have all the time I need for writing. When I was holding down another job, especially in journalism, I was usually "written out" for the day when I sat down in the evening to write science fiction, and as I'm not possessed of great reserves of stamina I preferred to write short stories. I'm not a facile writer, the most I ever get done in long sessions is a thousand words, and so the idea of being able to finish a piece in three or four sessions had a great appeal for me when I was in that tired-out condition.

Now I find that my short stories are getting longer, averaging eight or nine thou where it used to be three, and that I have begun to regard book length as a reasonable sort of package

for the presentation of a story. Also, I'm beginning to feel that the initial creative effort in dreaming up a new universe for a short story is almost as great as that for a book---so why not write a book? This doesn't mean I have plans to cease writing short stuff. I tend to write too economically rather than pad things out, and I hope I will always be able to evaluate the weight of an idea and write it to its appropriate length.

** In that case I take it you had rather
** little to do with the Slow Glass framing device in UNKNOWN WORLDS. That comic strip... "See the WONDERS captured in the SLOW GLASS!"

The Unknown Worlds comic thing came about simply because they approached me and said they would like to do it and were prepared to pay a set fee for each issue. Authors usually agree to any proposal in which they get more money and egoboo without having to lift a finger. I suspected that Marvel would mess the idea around somewhat, which they duly did, but I wasn't too perturbed because---sorry if this offends anybody---in my mind I don't connect comics with writing. The things Marvel did just seemed irrelevant. There was a little personal bonus in it for me, though. My only son has remained determinedly unimpressed by my having published a string of hard-back books, but he took the comic to school to show his friends!

** How about other media? I think
** NIGHT WALK would film rather well.

A couple of years ago an American gentleman wrote and said he wanted to buy the film rights of NIGHT WALK, but there was no mention of money and none changed hands. Six months later he told me he had almost finished the script, but that was the last I heard of the matter. I guess he was some

kind of free-lance who in the end didn't (6) succeed in interesting a studio in the proposition. It was a pity, but one lives in hope...

** There are images in your books which hang round like vivid film-scenes: I think of that collapsed lung flapping in ONE MILLION TOMORROWS, the man who loses his eye in GROUND ZERO MAN, the disturbing prostheses almost anywhere. To me it's a Bob Shaw hallmark: the Little Macabre Touch. These little tweaks at the nerves must be there for a reason.

This common factor you've noticed in my books, and which you've dubbed the Little Macabre Touch, is---as you surmise---inserted with a conscious eye for effect, but I'm not altogether sure of what effect. Paradoxically, I feel that a writer can convey a sense of reality to a reader by bringing the reader face to face with something which is likely to be outside his own experience of reality. The uncommon ratifies the common. For instance, if you've ever had a raging toothache for a couple of days, and then have the tooth removed, you are immediately back in the same condition you were in before you got the ache---but how different it seems! I can remember walking down the steps from my dentist's surgery and understanding, though only transiently, that true happiness is not being in pain. Given that one thing, freedom from pain, we ought to be able to enjoy our lives.

** I'm always convinced that freedom from my immediate worry---whatever it is!---will put everything right.

...Straying completely from the point for a moment, the mention of that dentist's surgery in Belfast reminds me of an odd thing which happened there. I'd been visiting this man twice a year for several years, in his very large terraced property in Castlereagh Street, and was completely accustomed to trotting up the stairs to the mezzanine landing, turning and going up the next flight and into the surgery on the left of the first floor landing. Then, one rainy afternoon, I was going in for a check-up and, just as I reached the mezzanine landing, a very strange chilly feeling came over me. It was so odd that I paused and looked

up the second flight of stairs. My eyes were drawn---not to the familiar surgery on the left---but to the door on the right belonging to another dentist. Then I got a clear vision of a young woman, easily recognisable as my mother at a much earlier period of her life, lying in a bed beyond that door and wearing a bedjacket of pale green silk. This was the first occasion---in fact, the only one---on which I really experienced that celebrated crawling feeling on the nape of the neck.

The feeling wore off in a few seconds, but it had made such an impression on me that when the dentist had finished his work, instead of going back to the office, I drove to my mother's house, which was a couple of miles away. I was half-expecting to find something wrong, but she was all right and insisted on making me a cup of tea before I returned to work. While I was drinking it I asked her where I had been born. She said, "In Nurse Kells's Nursing Home." I said, "Where exactly is that?" She said, "Down in Castlereagh Street, where the dentists are now." I then asked her if she had had a pale green silk bedjacket at that time, and she confirmed that she had, but she was baffled at my knowing about it because it had been discarded when I was an infant.

(Sad to relate, there is a fairly mundane explanation for the above story---I have a brother who is 18 months younger than I am, and he was born in the same room, which was the one at the right of the first floor landing. My father could have brought me along on a visit. The questions which linger with me are: How did I recall a detail like the bedjacket from an impression gained when I was 1½ years old? And what was there about that particular rainy afternoon which brought the "memories" back with such eerie vividness when none of my previous visits to the same house had had any effect?)

** Does this sort of thing happen to you often?

I can give one other genuine example of my psychic powers, but with a plea that nobody will accuse me of believing in ghosts. My father was born in the heart of rural Ireland and he never felt completely at home in the city of Belfast, where he spent most of his

life. He was very fond of Guinness, but he shunned the city's ordinary pubs and always drank in a strange little off-licence about a mile from our home. Most nights he could be found in there with three or four cronies, none of whom was worried about the illegality of the arrangement, or the fact that he was a policeman. He died in 1968, and one day about three months later I was across town on an errand and with my youngest child, who was five at the time. I took a short cut along the street where the off-licence was, and on seeing it I thought, "If ghosts really existed, that's where my father's would be found." Denise was kneeling in the back of the car, looking out of the rear window, and when we passed the off-licence she shouted "Look! There's grandad!"

Because of what I had just been thinking I asked her which grandad she was talking about, in case my wife's father had strayed into that part of the city. She said, "Grandad Shaw, of course. Oh no... he's dead." I couldn't see anything in the restricted view of the mirror, but Denise persisted in her statement that she had seen my father going into the off-licence. I can testify that she knew nothing about his drinking habits, and that she had in all probability never even been along that street before because it was miles away from where I lived. The above is absolutely true and not doctored or slanted in any way, but I have no explanation for it.

However, we were talking about Little Macabre Touches. One of the reasons I put them in is that they had such a strong effect on me when I first encountered them in real life. You refer to the flapping lung in ONE MILLION TOMORROWS. I heard about that from a friend who had experienced it when he was recovering from a lung injury, and my blood ran cold when he casually mentioned how he had had to learn to walk with an uneven rhythm to prevent this collapsed lung banging on the inside of his ribcage. The funny thing is that this chap was a keen amateur writer who had hopes of selling SF stories some day. When I asked him if he planned to use the lung thing in one of his stories he looked puzzled at the very notion, and he gladly gave me permission to make use of it myself.

(7) It is possible that the reason I am a writer who has had some commercial success, while he never got started, is that I could see a value in that experience of his, even at second hand, while he couldn't.

I spend a fair amount of time sitting in pubs---the south Lakeland pubs are great for yarning away the hours in---and somehow I never get bored even when listening to the celebrated local bores doing their stuff. Too often I've found that little old men who are completely "non-literary", if you know what I mean by that term, have had striking experiences and because they choose the "wrong" words to relate them, they somehow convey their experiences with force and clarity.

I've listened to innumerable stories about the wartime blitzes, but one I remember most clearly came from a tiny old man who was talking about a bomb landing quite near him, and he said it "filled his trousers". For a moment I thought this was an euphemism for the failure of his sphincter muscle, but I queried it anyway. He indicated his trousers, which were of the old-style voluminous type---possibly the same ones he wore during the blitz---and he explained that for a moment they had gently inflated like balloons and then subsided. This humble, homely little detail suddenly gave me the clearest picture I've ever had of an air pressure wave rolling out in a flat, invisible, circular ripple from the centre of a bomb blast... Is this getting away from the point again?

** No, it's fascinating...But tell me ---getting back to LMT's---how many of the others have roots in reality? The ball-bearing douche, the details of migraine---?

The LMT's fall into two classes: those I experienced directly or indirectly; and those I made up.

In the former category come the visual effects of migraine which were described in some detail in THE TWO-TIMERS. Those were quite easy to do because I get them about twice a year, though luckily I have a rare form of migraine called hemicrania sine dolore (the half-headache without pain) in which I get all the visual fireworks, but no subsequent pain. The lung business I've already mentioned, and the

man drowning in ball-bearings in ONE (8) MILLION TOMORROWS was a straight report of one of my best nightmares. I woke up from that one in a cold sweat, and can still feel all the little steel balls clicking against my back teeth on their way down to my lungs.

The part in THE GROUND ZERO MAN in which the man fell onto a projecting steel reinforcing bar and lost his eye was taken from real life, an event which occurred to one of my boyhood chums. The real horror in that sequence, for me, was not the loss of the eye. For some reason, I was more appalled by the fact that the boy picked his eye up and ran home with it---and that was why, in the book, I had the man pick up his eye and advance on Hutchman with it cradled in his hands. At that moment the character in the book was confronted with the same reality that my friend had faced at the age of ten---that the human body is like a machine in some ways, that you can take bits off it but that it is very difficult, or impossible, to put them back on again.

It all comes down to my dismay at the realisation that the entity I know as Bob Shaw, I, me, exists at one level of reality---and the only way he can interact with the outer reality is through the functioning of a very strange, complicated, messy and frail set of organs. This arrangement seems both precarious and unfair. I'd rather be a ghost, or failing that I'd like to be constructed like an apple, with a smooth skin on the outside and a simple, wholesome, homogeneous material inside.

(** Thus the very different construction of the aliens in PALACE OF ETERNITY?

(Yes, I wanted to make the Syccans nasty looking creatures, and a good way to do this seemed to be by designing them with their insides on the outside, if you know what I mean. I would love to be sufficiently in tune with nature to enable me to look at a heart heaving away inside an opened chest cavity and think, How beautiful! But I can't and that's that. Needless to say, I never even considered being present at the births of my children.)

When the boy ran home to his mother

with his eye in his hands, even he must have known---beneath all the panic--- that he was behaving illogically, but a part of him wanted to be told, "It's all right---the doctor will join it on to you again, and everything will be like it was before." And the fact that things were not going to work out that way meant that Reality, and Death, had presented their calling cards.

Other LMT's---like the lady in the lake, and the grub in PALACE OF ETERNITY---were manufactured out of my imagination and, although you class them as memorable, they haven't the same impact for me, possibly because I don't feel threatened by them.

** The most threatening images have to do with seeing. In OTHER DAYS, OTHER EYES, "People are their eyes... the retina is an extension of the brain..."

I have the greatest respect and admiration for anybody who goes blind and is able to carry on with his life. I couldn't do it. I had quite a serious eye disease which once threatened my sight, and since then I can't bear to sleep in a totally dark room. When I waken up I have to see immediately I open my eyes. I even wear rimless glasses because I can't bear to have the frame getting in the way of a portion of my visual input from the outside world.

** That's why artificial eyes come across as being so macabre. ---But then, there's a whole range of... weirdness implicit in man-machine interfaces, which writers minimise or dismiss.

As you say, very few writers exploit the eerie and unnatural aspect of cyborgs. In the SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN, for instance, he is always shown neatly rigged out in shirt and slacks ---but underneath the clothes, what must the joins look like? There was quite a moving episode in that otherwise rather daft series in which Austin's childhood sweetheart became a bionic woman, and there was a prospect of them getting married and having bionic sex together. When one looked at them both fully clothed this seemed quite romantic, but when they undressed there would be the joins to contend with. I'm not being facetious. The nub

of the whole cyborg concept is the interface between flesh and machine, and I can only guess at some of the horrors and indignities which could be outlined by, say, Christian Barnard.

...Since writing the above paragraph I've seen an episode of THE BIONIC WOMAN, one in which she takes part in a bathing beauty contest, and it became apparent that, as far as the television people are concerned, bionic people don't have any visible joins. They seem to assume that the plastic skin of the artificial limbs will blend and imperceptibly change into real skin where required---something I regard as totally impossible. If I'd been connected with the series I would have been prompted by my science fiction conscience to object about that, and no doubt I would have been thrown off the team. Similarly I would have had to speak up, in the context of SPACE 1999, about their assumption that all races in the galaxy speak English. This probably means I am destined never to make the big time in "popular" science fiction---but when something is blatantly impossible I just can't stomach it.

I don't know how dishonest this is, because I'm quite happy to have things in a story which are discreetly impossible. Perhaps my criterion is that if I am satisfied that the author is an intelligent person who does me the compliment of crediting me with some intelligence too, I can go along with his creation. In the case of TV science fiction, I am almost certain the people in charge are scientifically illiterate and either can't see glaring flaws or assume that anybody who is dumb enough to watch SF rubbish won't notice anything wrong.

The question of what is possible or impossible in a work of fiction is an interesting one because---as I have indicated---the author is required to do a bit of double-think. A book I did recently, A WREATH OF STARS, has been getting good reviews, and I regard it as part of my output of "serious" science fiction---and yet there are things in it which strain even my credulity.

On the other hand, I've just handed over a novel called MEDUSA'S CHILDREN which I wrote in an entirely different

mood, and which was never meant to be classed as "serious". It features, among other things, an intelligent mutated jellyfish---something which for all I know is quite possible considering the already fantastic nature of siphonophores, but which I couldn't take seriously.

I don't think MEDUSA'S CHILDREN will get good reviews. When I started it I was hoping to show I could deliberately break the rules in the same way that Brian Aldiss did in HOTHOUSE, but it didn't come out like that, and the critics are going to say I've gone into a creative decline. Or, perhaps I'll be lucky and they'll grant me licence to fool around a bit in print every now and then. I'll just have to wait and see... but that's one of the things which makes life interesting.

** Thanks, Bob.

* * * * *

Footnote:

Eric Batard reports in MAGNUS 8 that Bob Shaw's first book has become, in French translation, UNE LONGUE MARCHE DANS LA NUIT. Which is a bit long-winded, but fair enough. Also on the list are familiar-looking titles like "LE CREPUSCULE DE BRIAREUS de R. Cooper... LA SECONDE EXPERIENCE de J.O.Jeppson...". The one that foxed me was Zelazny's LE SERUM DE LA DEESSE BLEUE. The Serum of the Blue Goddess? Good grief. (D)

Great SF Plot Notions Later Sold To Harlan Ellison, Number 1:

"I can read... that Lazarus was raised from the dead, yet not demand where in the interim his Soul awaited; or raise a Law-case, whether his Heir might lawfully detain his inheritance bequeathed unto him by his death, and he, though restored to life, have no Plea or Title unto his former possessions."

(Religio Medici (1642) by Sir Thomas Browne)

Dilemma

"We are between the wild thout of certainty and the mad zitidar of fact ---we can escape neither."

(The Gods of Mars by Edgar Rice Burroughs)

* * * * *

THE MOVING TARGET

transient fanzine reviews: jim linwood

The first two issues of Dave Rowe's K were received with mixed feelings by most fannish pundits, the consensus opinion being one of disappointment---mediocrity followed by the passable. However, with K3 Dave plays a mean trump card: an issue that is everything K could have been and should have been from the start---an international fanzine of high quality with a minimum of editorial presence. The sting in the tail is Dave's "Yah boo, I told you I could do it" and then announcing its death. By holding back the floodgate of feedback until the third issue Dave shows what a potentially live zine he had on his hands, despite his deplorable technique of editing the LoC's into separate subjects---a well written LoC from the like of Glicksohn or Warner has a logical flow even when dealing with disparate topics.

The Novaward controversy is prominent---there've been too many bleeding hearts on what is a rather trivial issue compared with keeping some semblance of unity within Anglofandom---but several fen, including Alan Stewart and Paul Skelton, give serious consideration to the alternatives of a British Fanzine Award without resorting to the character assassination and fuggheaded remarks that are now the inevitable afterbirth of the Novaward.

Chris Fowler raises several serious points (in a LoC that Dave considered editing because of its length, but quite rightly let stand) on how far fanzine reviewers should go when they stray from objective to subjective comment; although he fails to see the point that even objective reviews should have some jam in them---even if the jam is a fan editor's blood. Gray Boak's reviews in "The Things I Notice Now" are a mixture of objective and subjective (with perhaps a smear of red in respect of McMahon's INV-

ERTED EAR TRUMPET) and, although regrettably short and rushed, keep within the confines of each zine under review instead of using them as a springboard for personal abuse.

I'm not quite sure what to make of Mae Strelkov's two short contributions; they contain the spark that produces superb LoC's but Dave does her a disservice by presenting them as articles in their own right. With a minimum of rewriting Mae's items would have made an added bonus to the letter pages or an integrated column.

Dave Cockfield's Boakcon report establishes him as a promising fanwriter with some accurate and affectionate portraits of the attendees---here's a guy who goes to cons, seeks out new faces and is nice to them...a dying practice. Ben Indick writes a tribute to, and reminisces about, the late David H. Keller and his wife; a very strong, moving piece of writing that carefully avoids sentimentality and yet conveys a deep sense of loss. Bernie Peek---K's half sleeping editor---concludes his apology of an editorial with the poser: "...what person in their right mind would spend time and money on sending what amounts to a long letter to people they might never meet?" The answer is simple---a fan.

Issue 9 of the usually innocuous and pleasantly rambling Cynic has already carved a place for itself in fan-history as the zine that built the barricades which several well-known fen are still manning---although the positions in Gray's camp are noticeably vacant due to desertion at the first sound of enemy gunfire and assertions that they were forcibly conscripted while intoxicated. In retrospect, Gray's misguided criticism of the Novaward seems mild compared with a passing remark of his on page 4 that a committee member of a recent Eastercon

lifted £40 from the proceeds. Did I hear that right? ---yes, EMBEZZLEMENT is the name of the game. Gray refuses to name names. I wish he had; but "head-in-the-clouds idealism" is now unfashionable, giving rip-off artists a free rein.

There is a belief generally held by fannish cognoscenti that good material will always transcend bad reproduction and layout---an icon that Brian Parker takes a sledgehammer to in Parker's Patch 3. Curiosity prevented my grainy a.m. astigmatism from slinging it into the slush pile usually reserved for zines bearing a Lancaster postmark, yet the contents page revealed the names Kettle and West---persons not usually found within crudzines---and so my translation of this over- and under-linked mess was commenced in the manner of extracting pomegranate pips with a pin.

Brian's editorial is repetitive and verbose, but makes the excellent point that producing a zine, however crappy, is a way of paying one's way in Fandom and honestly admitting that it's a damn sight more easy than LoCing---I'd like to add reviewing also; LoC writers can be selective, whilst the Guild rules state that a zine must be read at least 5 times to ensure fair comment.

Leroy Kettle has a minor classic of humour concerning his attempts to follow in the footsteps of Little Mal and secure an interview with Tom Disch. Leroy's popularity as a fan-writer lies in his total lack of pretensions and the way the reader can identify with him as he wisecracks his way through familiar fannish experiences. He comes over as Joe Everyfan, always on the verge of having a story published, dogged by fate, making stupendous social faux-pas while trying to infiltrate pro-dom with its phoneys and pos-eurs in search of the elusive interview, but always having an out by being able to run back to his mates (or the nearest fanned) with the newly rediscovered knowledge that most pros really are self-opinionated creeps.

The West turned out to be Don's wife Ann, which is the next best thing---possibly better, because she knows when to cut sentences short and

(11) possesses a better sense of narrative construction---with an excellent piece on being married to an erratic but brilliant fannish commentator. The most unusual line in the article is Ann's revelation that she only discovered that she was pregnant after 8 months---I'd missed this on the first reading, but both Marion and Simone Walsh were rendered incredulous by Ann's oversight.

The lettercol shows enthusiasm for Brian's original non-derivative style with intelligent letters from Jeff May, Ritchie Smith and the highly versatile Joseph M. Nicholas. Joe, to drop his pompous full name, is someone to watch---ubiquitously appearing in both fannish and sercon zines with thoughtful and amusing LoCs. He can be forgiven for bearing more than a passing resemblance to the young Gerry Webb.

Who knows the evil that lurks in fans' hearts?Spy X!

It seems that publishing giant Graham Poole is responsible for 50% of Anglofanac---I have before me Spi 5, Hot-Pot, Spaces 1 and his latest offering Cyclotron. This is a Jekyll brew that attempts to turn nice friendly sercon types, who are currently pushing computer buttons or awaiting redundancy in the Civil Service, into conceited cocksucking pros. However, once past the atrocious cover depicting a butch nude with big tits rising from the Kojerkoff pate of Harry Harrison, there are some genuinely useful tips and information for budding pros---like there should be no fewer than three obvious corrections on any one page of a MS. Co-editor Dave Penny lists 5 outlets for material (7 if you include New Writings and Andromeda), which is a depressing prospect for any one hoping to make a living out of the genre.

I recently witnessed a most degrading spectacle: a one-time fan and aging JD had been placed on public display in the window of a Charing Cross Road remaindered bookshop and forced to write one short story a day---the purchase of a highly priced anthology by this person would get one an autographed copy of his day's output. I refrained from introducing

myself to the American Dwarf and offering him a jelly-bean, as I had no wish to join the legion of arselickers who in recent weeks have been beginning each sentence with "As I told Harlan" or "Harlie and me"---also, unlike his dust-jacket photos, he looked a mean, ugly bastard who would have pulled a flick-knife on me for openers. The Fan in the Glass Booth is an idea I offer to prospective con-committees; well-known fen are placed in front of a typer to do their stuff before congoers. Give Greg Pickersgill a copy of your fanzine and watch him ~~tear it to shreds~~ analyze it in depth; observe Dave Rowe reduce your painstakingly literate MS into misspelt gibberish; and see Ian Maule edit Checkpoint, passing off lists of paperbacks as news whilst the Sun turns nova.

F r o d o S u c k s

With Greg Pickersgill relaxing his Bogart fanzine reviewing style in Stop Breaking Down 3, the outstanding feature is Malcolm Edwards' "We've Gotta Get Out Of This Place", in which he breaks out of his sercon mould with a remarkably well-sustained Mancon report. This is not the usual boring recitation of drunkenness, fuggheaded pranks and proanalingus that becomes unreadable after the first few pages, but a distinguished piece of shotgun reportage that adopts a deliberately provocative and aggressively arrogant styl---certain fans won't like Malcolm's unflattering remarks about them, but where would Little Mal be without Brosnan? Mal's style invites complimentary parody:---

"As Christine and I entered the bar we were dismayed to discover that it was entirely populated by mongs, but then we spotted Leroy and the others sitting in the corner. They were being served by a drooling, moronic waiter of African extraction who was quite incapable of understanding the simplest of orders. As he brought the tray of drinks Leroy tripped him up saying 'Look, a nigger in the carpet-pile'. We all broke down laughing at this merry quip from the World's funniest funny-man and re-ordered a round of martinis with lemon and a dash of peppermint. Bloody hell."

Mal puts several sweeping statements about Kitten Fandom into the mouth of Christine---they are all dull, balding and overweight, apparently, missing the more obvious generalisation about their asexuality---with the obvious exceptions of Coral and Janice, of course.

I have this recurring nightmare, see; the secret masters of Fandom are all gathered together at a seance to contact the spirit of Hugo Gernsback and ask his opinion of the current state of Fandom. Only one message is received from beyond the grave: "Hey. This fellow Edwards writes excellent fanzine reviews." I wake up screaming...

Overshadowing Leroy Kettle's emergence as a genzine editor are 19 pages of "fanzine reviews" by Don West in True Rat 8. The inverted commas are there because they are not reviews in the conventional sense; nice, compartmentalised plug-in modules to enable a fan-ed to pad out his zine and gratuitously honour fannish tradition. Don's reviews are in fact a commentary on fanzine fandom possessing such tight continuity that would even defy the deft censorial scissors of Dave Rowe; it is also a piece of writing that deserves a second or even third reading to fully appreciate the many nuances. Don's previous commentaries in Parker's Patch 2 and Daisnoid, which displayed more than occasional flashes of insight marred by excessive verbiage and overlong labouring of points, were trial runs for this major assault on cliched fannish thinking. Sure, some cripples like Dave Rowe are easily overerrun as Don pursues more sacred fannish cows, and his analogy of Gray Boak with Gerald Ford is hilarious and painfully accurate as regards the persona Gray has been projecting in fmz recently. The real shakedown comes for patronising attitudes towards mediocre neofans, fan graduates of the University of Pretention and the intellectual carrot, Darroll Pardoe.

Although Don comes over as a virus who knows each blockage in the fannish bloodstream and every spot harbouring a carcinoma, after the first four pages an ugly thought occurs: "What is a talent like this doing wasting time writing about a load of drivel produced

by lower-middle-class public servants (13)
and technicians?" The "only three good
fanzine reviewers" feed quite happily
on the stuff---their excreta bringing
both joy and rage to their readers---
but to a writer like West fanzines are
a starvation diet.

(Dear Ed;

I'm pissed off with all
this mutual admiration shit from
the so-called "Fanzine Reviewers'
Guild"---Linwood and his buddies
should piss off to their own little
slum with a tin-bath and leave us
trufans alone.

Signed:

A.Cunt of Reading.)

Leroy's coming out as a genzine ed-
itor is totally successful and the us-
ual mad wit of TR is not diminished in
any way, as was feared. The remaining
line-up of contributors consists of
Gra Charnock on the perils of para-
noia, Pete Roberts on byegone fandom,
John Brosnan keeping his flies clean
at ManCon and cartoons by the versat-
ile West nicely complementing the
text. Now this paragraph is a good ex-
ample of the bland reviewing style Don
complains about, but having commented
on these writers in my previous rev-
iews for C anything else would be rep-
etition. These writers together with
forceful fmz reviews will no doubt
invite odious comparisons with SBD---
true, Peter sinks further into the
past for material and Gra sinks even
further into narcissism---but that is
a hazard for any faned who attempts
to feature the best of fan writing.

FRG Rules....OK

FANZINES REVIEWED.....

- (1) K 3 --- Dave Rowe and Bernie Peek
- (2) Cynic 9 --- Gray Boak
- (3) Parker's Patch 3 --- Brian Parker
- (4) Cyclotron 1 --- Graham Poole
- (5) Stop Breaking Down 3 --- Greg
Pickersgill
- (6) True Rat 8 --- Leroy Kettle

* * * * *

Newsflash: Checkpoint is being taken
over by Peter Roberts, who is going to
be a postman or grow mushrooms (Ian
Maule isn't sure which) in Devon. (ed.)

* * * * *

SCIENCE & RELIGION DEPARTMENT:

Some extracts from Philosophy of
God's Mathematics of the Atomic Energy
(privately printed, 1948), by Timothy
O'Mahoney, "Member of the 'Legio Mar-
iae'; Ascribed Member of the Institute
of Charity; K.B.S; Mathematician of
the Atom..."---

The basic theme---

"Protons and electrons move, in
small units,
Influenced by electricity round orbits,
Of atom which has nucleus, God's inf-
inite
Uranium that makes energy a sight...

"Sir Ernest Rutherford, atomic
mast'r brain,
A mind for science, and its thinking
trained,
For study of atomic uranium,
And its ninety-two electrons momentum."

Footnote to above---

"Electricity is static current,
positive and negative. The cathode
from the negative electrode dart out
rays which had the nature of X-rays.
The beam of X-rays could best be ex-
plained by the wave theory of light,
which travels at the enormous veloc-
ity of 186,000 miles per second. It
was on the careful chemical analysis
of uranium that Mme.Curie, a pious
Catholic, discovered the element rad-
ium. Twelve cwts. of uranium is roughly
1/133 of an ounce of radium..."

Simple illustration, avoiding metric units---

"...If every two inches of the cir-
cumference of the matter of the world
possessed $1\frac{2}{3}$ drams of Radium, the to-
tal amount would be 2,737,152,000
drams; this would give us 8,811,456,000
scruples of Radium to every two inches
of the earth's energy."

The meaning of it all---

"Is there a boundary to atomic rad-
ium? Is there space and end to time to
atomic energy? Is there an end before
the beginning of the five elements we
do not know (the greatest secret of
atomic energy)? Is something missing?
and is nothing, something? I am con-
scious of not mental process of mat-
ter, and as to motion, heat and light
of atomic energy I know less... I am
conscious that I am conscious of it,
and that is all."

* * * * *

Ratfans Are People, Too

Kevin Smith

"Pickersgill won't like Sfinx," I was warned. "He doesn't like fan fiction."

I nodded sagely, absorbing this information vital to survival in fandom. A question occurred to me.

"What," I said (little realising the overpowering sense of deja vu it might give to a number of people) "is a Pickersgill?"

A Pickersgill, it transpired, was a 'turd-brown', hairy object, trailing a red and blue (possibly) appendage, one of the cells comprising the widespread creature known as ratfandom. The Pickersgill was not the only ratfan (for so these cells were termed) to abhor fan fiction, as I soon found out. This tendency was widespread also. Since at that time an amateur sf magazine, Sfinx, occupied many of my leisure hours, there seemed no alternative. Ratfandom and I had to be adversaries.

Of course, it wasn't that easy.

Before the spectre of ratfandom had impinged on my consciousness I had met one Rob Holdstock. (Could there be more?) Touted as a published author---'Microcosm' in New Writings 20---he was brought to a Sfinx writers' meeting in Oxford by Chris Morgan. In some ways that was encouraging. "I don't think he's that good," Allan Scott confided to me afterwards. It came as a shock to discover that this shy, unassuming individual who wrote and published fiction (Do you remember 'Macrocosm' as well?) was part of ratfandom. I just could not believe it when people assured me that he was a rat. Even harder to detect was the inherent rattishness of Andrew Stephenson. He seemed such a nice guy that gas chromatography would be needed. That was before I saw him in action on a bad story at a Pieria meeting, though.

But despite these two aberrations the conflict was on---Us (people involved with OUSFG and Sfinx) against

Them (ratfans, mostly). At least, in our minds it was. Their reaction was, in the main, disappointing.

"I'm Kevin Smith," I would say to them, in a tone of controlled, calculated menace. Exhibiting incredible insensitivity they would fail to notice this.

"Kevin Smith?"

"From Sfinx."

"Oh yes." And off they would wander, leaving me alone with my carefully rehearsed put-downs. Really, though, that was fortunate. Lines about Leroy Teapot and Greg Pickledgills do not, in retrospect, strike one as very original, or even remotely funny.

Life meandered on---Novacon 3, Novacon 4, meetings in the Tun, the Oxford lot, the Pieria lot, but not much contact with anyone else. I left university and started work. (Really, it isn't boring.) I recall wandering into an argument in the Tun between Keith Oborn and Greg Pickersgill about Sfinx and the Nova. (Yes, that again. Sorry.) Greg considered that a university backed magazine was against the spirit, if not the rules, of the award, and should never win it. Keith interpreted this as meaning that Greg thought Sfinx was crap, and leapt to its defence. Thus an argument. Keith was doing quite well when I appeared on the scene, so I restricted myself to expounding, briefly, my editorial policy and intentions while editor. Gradually it became evident that Greg did not think Sfinx was crap, full stop. It merely offended against his idea of a proper fanzine. Taken on its own terms, as a university fiction magazine, he said, it was quite good. At that I could agree with him; the argument, really, was over.

Keith did not appear to see it that way and carried on. Greg responded and several minutes were wasted before it petered out, unresolved, as arguments based on misapprehensions tend to do.

I learned later that Keith was upset because I hadn't given him more vigorous support.

Then came Novacon 5, and another contact with ratfandom. I was at Martin and Liese Hoare's room party, drinking Newcastle Blue and green wine and dissuading Warren from raping Marion, having a quiet, enjoyable time, when a manic Holdstock (a clue---it wasn't Sheila) burst in. "Anyone want to come to a party downstairs?" he said, loudly.

"Okay," I replied, "lead on."

We left the room. "You know," he said, "I hate Brosnan. I really hate him." Rob was slightly pissed. I nodded; it seemed the thing to do. Suddenly he leapt forward. "Come on!" he yelled. At high speed we hurtled along the corridor and down the stairs, taking two or less strides per flight. Was the drink in imminent danger of running out?

"I really do hate that Brosnan."

The room was full of people. We moved through them towards the dressing table supporting the drink. Leroy offered me some red wine. "Most kind," I said. I returned his kindness by relieving him of the burden of the nearly full bottle, and leant on the dressing table. Rob sat down on the bed alongside several half-dozen others. I drank my wine and said odd things to odd people.

Suddenly a shriek cut through the babble of conversation: "I hate you, Brosnan!" Rob hurled himself at the aforesaid individual, knocking him off the end of the bed onto the floor, where they grappled awhile. Rob then changed his tactics. He dragged John to the open window and attempted to push him through it. Brosnan fought back manfully. It was a wise move; we were four floors up. For long seconds which seemed like eternal half-hours they struggled there. We watched this battle of literary titans enthralled by the prospect of an imminent defanestration.

But gradually the thrashings diminished, the conflict subsided and both combatants retired. I was left pondering the meaning of it all. Was this a privileged insight into the essential truth of ratfandom? Looking back with the benefit of greater experience the

(15)

answer seems clear. Mr Holdstock did not like Mr Brosnan very much.

On now to the Spring of 1976, a watershed of sorts. DRILKJIS finally made it into print, some 18 months after the idea was first mooted. The original concept was of a fanzine for people who hated fanzines, a common original concept, it seems. Dave and I still considered ourselves apart from fandom, especially rats.

"Let's not send one to Pickersgill," said Dave.

I concurred without reservation. However, by a remarkable coincidence, Stop Breaking Down appeared at that time also, and we decided Greg could have a copy after all. It turned out to be a good move.

Reaction, or lack of it, from Oxford (Keith, Dermot Dobson, etc.) indicated that DRILKJIS was not the fanzine for people who hated fanzines. Other reaction---to pick an example not really at random, Greg's review of it in SBD 2---indicated that it might be a fanzine for people who liked fanzines. Fanzines in exchange started arriving. A subtle change came over the editors. Hazel, now Mrs D. Langford, noticed it. "You're becoming fannish!" she accused Dave; I had to admit I was getting that way myself as well.

By the time Dave's housewarming party happened the transformation was progressing nicely. I found myself able to talk quite easily to Greg and Leroy and Simone and others about subjects fannish and subjects not---at least, when not obstructed by Kevin Easthope in process of attempting to give the appearance of wanting to confront Greg. Slowly the realisation came that they were human after all, quite rational folk, however well they try to disguise the fact.

The hints had been there all along, of course, but it is quite amazing how a little prejudice was able to obscure them.

* * * * *

Variant Readings...

DRILKJISM... D. West
DRINKGLASS... Jim Linwood
DROLL KISS... Dave Cockfield
D(sod-it)... Tom Jones

* * * * *

 S I L I C O N 1 --- T H E B E T T E R B U S T D E V E L O P E R

by DAVE COCKFIELD.

It was a Friday morning and for once I was feeling in good spirits. The state of euphoria was fully justified; I'd just booked into the Imperial Hotel, showered and greeted the Gannet contingent who had beaten me to the bar. Setting their usual high standards, Alan Isaacson and Brian Rouse were well into their second pint as I was savouring my first. "Who's arrived besides us?" I queried. Normally calm and collected, Alan hastily gabbled in reply, "The Sheffield Mob!" I almost collapsed, but recovered on hearing that they had disdainfully left the hotel in search of a pie shop and a pub. Old Peculiar (not to be confused with Ian Williams) was, it seems, too strong for their delicate constitutions.

Shortly, Pat and Mike Meara arrived to enliven the conversation with talk of Dungeons, Dragons and Uncle Hobgoblin and All, until the proceedings were interrupted by the untimely appearance of a pack of Yorkshire Terriers, one of which pranced around the room dressed in a long black cape, brandishing an elaborate looking raygun. It was obviously a raygun because of the zap noises its owner made every time he pointed it at the bewildered barmaid. Thankfully, after a few moments he collapsed and fell asleep on the floor. Paul Thompson couldn't hold his liquor. Had a stake been handy the first embarrassment of the Con would have gone the way all caped monsters go, in the style to which Hammer has made them accustomed.

Eventually the cultured from throughout the land drifted in to join the company...Robs

Jackson and Hansen, Greg and Simone, the Bells, Janice and Dr. Crippen. The invading hordes were descending upon us so swiftly that the Con registration desk was having difficulty keeping track of everyone. Each new arrival was handed a brown envelope containing a programme sheet and a Gannet badge complete with their name, just in case they were unable to spell it themselves. These were stored in a cardboard box, and whoever was sitting nearest to it was designated Registrar. I must congratulate Pat and Mike on the splendid job they did, allowing the committee more time for important things such as TV football and drinking. Anyone requiring lessons on how to run a FAANCON should apply early for next year's course.

The afternoon passed pleasantly, with the Sheffield pack being automatically ostracised from the conversation due to their silly behaviour. I know that it was advertised as 'Silicon', but who would have expected anyone to act accordingly? Before I knew what hit me, the inevitable happened:

THE GANNETS WENT FOR A CURRY.

Returning, belly bulging with excesses of Lamb Dhansak and Pilaw rice, I once more got into the swing of things, drinking and insulting anyone within range. Despite the invigorating company with whom I was entwined I knew by 1.30 that it was time to retire, so, taking my leave from Ian and Janice, I headed for bed.

I never made it. I had barely left the lounge before being hijacked by Rog Peyton. "Fly me to Andromeda," I de-

manded as he began to extol the goodies which he had handled lately. No, not Arline; his books. Before I knew it, Rog, Mike Meara and I were discussing the unmentionable---'SF'. A number of times our whispering voices were interrupted by fen bidding us goodnight or Rob Jackson cavorting drunkenly around the corridor showing off his latest acquisition, Alan Isaacson's denim hat. It looked good on Rob, especially worn sideways. I always suspected that on the face of it he was a wide boy, and the positioning of the hat proved it. 3.30 chimed in my head as I glanced at my wristwatch and we all decided that it was definitely time for bed. Rob had convinced us that we were the only ones still up. There was no-one else left for him to bother. Joining him for a joyride in the lift, I couldn't help wondering what the rest of the Con would be like, following the first (unofficial) night.

I awoke with an amazingly clear head; only a back tooth was suffering from a hangover. But ignoring the pain I joined Rob Hansen and the Shaws for breakfast. After fruit juice, bacon, egg, toast and marmalade polished off by lots of (thankfully) strong coffee, I relaxed with a gloriously full stomach and felt guilty as I watched Bob and Sadie. Bob was fighting off memories of the 'cleaning out' his system had received following his curry of the night before; Sadie was attacking her kippers as if with pick and shovel. By the time she had finished there were two piles on her plate, one of fish and one, much larger, of bones. With a resigned shrug she popped the forkful of fish into her mouth and gave up. Eating breakfast was just too much hard work.

The morning was spent congregating around the Bar Billiards table, as a number of us

(17) displayed the prowess developed in our misspent youth, even Mauler with his little piece of Gristle. The major obstacle encountered by the players was that each had his own set of rules, but with a little persuasion from a subdued, mild-mannered Greg, we adopted his rules. Quite surprisingly he even won a game or two.

Still sulking in defeat, Rog called upon me to exercise my brains as a member of the Con Com. He wished to be told where he was to display his books. As if I would know. However, with typical Geordie inspiration I consulted my programme. "Put 'em in the Barnard Room," I told Rog. The ungrateful bugger then asked me where that was. Brummies can't half tax one's patience. Frantically I set off in search, contemplating directing him to Barnard Castle. As it turned out I needn't have worried; the Barnard Room was only ten yards or so behind where I'd been standing. Without delay his stall was set up and his wares were sold, if not his books. Unlike Mancon, when mistakes were made at Silicon we covered them up as quickly as we made them. The Gannets have a wealth of 'Con' men in their ranks.

Harry and Irene joined the happy throng just in time for dinner, or breakfast where they were concerned. Rob Hansen sat on my right, Ian and Janice on my left, Greg and Simone opposite right, Irene opposite and Harry opposite left. 'Left' being the operative word. One look at his steak and mushroom pie had him heading for the loo. A few minutes later he returned, only to repeat the process. Several times. Had there been numbered boards handy the assembled fen would have been hard put not to award marks out of ten each time he raced past their tables trying to radiate an air of nonchalance. Greg was halfway through his

ice cream before Harry felt confident enough to remain in a seated position and eat an extremely cold looking chip. Rob complained that he had forgotten to photograph Rob Jackson the previous night. I suggested that he take one of Greg enjoying his sweet, if only to prove that Pickersgill is human after all. Upon hearing his name mentioned, Simone asked Greg what I had said about him, only to receive the curt reply: "Nothing! Bloody silly Neo!" I got the impression that Greg didn't approve of my remark.

During the day Dave Hutchinson and I were approached by a radio reporter who was looking for some SF freaks. On discovering how normal we were his face dropped like a soggy black pudding, but with the help of other Gannets we persuaded him to return later that night for a humdinger of an interview. He left after surreptitiously slipping his copy of Maya 11 down the back of a seat.

Before my big moment arrived it was necessary to suffer a dismal panel discussion on fan-zines. Greg said everything there was to say in a two minute speech which left Mike and Ian Williams with nothing to do but twiddle their thumbs, or whatever else was handy. This was followed by the cancellation of our big film due to the projectionist's not having any spare parts available when the hotel projector broke down.

It was time; the reporter had arrived and Ian, Rob, Harry and myself (naturally) headed upstairs to get it over with. Twenty minutes and a couple of whiskies later we congratulated ourselves on having presented a fair description of what the Con was all about, although two questions had us a bit bamboozled. I was asked what kind of people were in attendance at

the Con. "Oh, just average people like ourselves. Doctors, librarians, civil servants, LABOURERS!" Christ! What else could I say? We were beginning to sound like a reunion of the Hellfire Club. Ian answered the last question about our opinions of the unnaturally hot weather we were having. "We're only bothered about how it affects the price of beer," he chortled. Some of us actually got up to hear ourselves on the Monday morning, only to discover that we had been edged out by the North East Western Society.

The NEWS hold their meetings every Saturday night at the Imperial. We were made to feel normal as we watched old men swagger around the bars, twirling their shooters, gripping their butts (rifle) and resting their pot bellies on the bar rail. But for the extra wide gunbelts, some of them would be dragging on the ground. Harry mentally kicked himself for not stocking up with gas masks. Later that night all these obese food factories would be stuffing their guts with Pork (bacon to the uninitiated), Beans and Frenchie Fries. The convention should have been subtitled 'War of the Worlds (Blazing Saddles v. The Smog Monster)'.

To escape the gastronomic horrors about to be unleashed, Silicon retired to an upstairs room party. All fifty-odd of us comfortably housed in one room quaffing fruit punch. Yeuk! How on earth it was all drunk I'll never know, but by the time Match of the Day had finished I was forced to resort to buying drinks once again. Fight of the Day followed a few moments later, as Wild Bill Hiccup fought it out with Cow Pat Garret in the main street. Neither won; the Law appeared for the second or third time that night to allay the fears of neighbours hiding behind

locked doors in case of stray (19)
bullets.

Finally, the first of a series of D&D games was started. I've been informed that it was a good game, but I wouldn't know because I fell asleep just before half the company was wiped out by giant toads. Thankfully Sunday was another day.

Before retiring I had booked an early morning call for nine o'clock. I awoke at ten to nine and settled back to wait for it. Thirty minutes later I gave up and joined Stan and Helen Eling for breakfast. At any rate, for Helen and I it was breakfast. Stan turned it into a Chaos practice by knocking over a jug of milk.

'Chaos' is a simple game to play. All you need are one swimming pool, one beach ball and a dozen or so stupid buggers willing to have their brains (if they have any) knocked out. The idea of the game is to jump on the person holding the ball. The winner is the person who survives.

The game got under way with Ian Williams, Rob Jackson, Alan Isaacson and Brian Hampton hogging the limelight, splashing around wildly and generally testing Archimedes' theory of displacement. There was more water out of the pool than in it, especially after a few Hampton specials off the side. Williams also contributed some surprisingly big splashes for one so small. However, he soon tired and was to be seen standing next to the statue at the pool's side until I shouted, "Ian, even the statue's bigger than you!" He hastily took to the water and more inspiring pursuits, like trying to divest Jean Staves of her bathing costume. I gather that she was grabbing more balls than necessary and waiting for people to jump on her.

Every few minutes, more brave soles* would take to the water: Marsha Jones, who every other second would return to home base for her spectacles to discover where the ball was; Stan and Helen Eling; Pat Meara; Dave Bridges, who never seemed to leave troubled waters; Rob Hansen, who injured something every time he got stuck in; and many more whom I've forgotten. I cautiously remained on the side-lines. I'm happy that I did, because I was knackered just watching them.

The major programme events of the Con were upon us. A discussion panel entitled 'From Manuscript to Merchandise' was a rousing success, mainly due to the funny anecdotes Eddie Jones dragged up about the seedy side of the SF business. Kevin Williams was appointed to chair the panel in order to ensure that Bob Shaw and Rog Peyton also had a fair chance. I won't say that they didn't get their bit in, but Eddie tended to overshadow them by the odd twenty minutes or so, aided by his ever ready accomplice Marsha.

The panel was buzzing along so successfully that murmurs of disappointment could be heard when 'Doc Savage' was announced as the next item. They were soon silenced by a five minute break for refreshment. Fifteen minutes later we actually managed to drag people back and the film got underway. About this time I was digesting a dozen assorted fingernails, saving my own for later---Doc Savage had been my choice for the Con and I had visions of fen departing in disgust at the Corn being paraded on the screen. My fears were unjustified. After the usual choice remarks such as, "Look, there's Ian Williams." "Where?" "Someone hand me the micro-

- - - - -
* Not a spelling mistake - D.C.

scope."; everyone settled down (20) and they actually stated afterwards that they had enjoyed it. The fabulous five plus one and a half triumph once again. The committee, that is, not Doc Savage and his crew.

The beer flowed once more, bar billiards was played, the local chink was invaded and his produce taken away. The night flowed as fen relaxed with each other, blissfully unaware that soon everything would end. Dungeons and Dragons came back into view. By this time news of Mike's dungeon had spread far and wide; there was a surfeit of fen eager to play. The characters and equipment were sorted out and a small troupe of sixteen vicious fighters, wizards and clerics, aided by one hobbit (not Ian Williams) entered Mike's murky depths. It's about time Pat washed them out. Naturally I fell asleep. I wish that joker with the sleep spell would keep it on a tighter rein. Trying to stay awake was useless and served only to provide everyone else with a laugh as I imitated Noddy. Every time my head fell sleepily back I'd jerk upright, only for it to flop back again.

With atypical cynicism I booked another early morning call and went to bed. And was hit by insomnia. Then it was seven o'clock and time for breakfast. I expected to be the only one up so early, but Eric Bentcliffe and Brian Hampton made me feel like a late-riser. Regretfully, breakfast was soon over and I said my goodbyes, I had to leave early that day. There was one piece of business to finish; I had some of Rob Hansen's artwork to return. Attracting the receptionist's attention I coyly enquired as to the whereabouts of Mr Hansen's room, and without delay made my way there. After knocking on the door for an eternity I heard a grunt or two asking who it was. With a lot

of coaxing he opened the door a fraction, as I explained what I wanted and why I had called so early. He grunted again, shut the door in my face and five minutes later let me into his room. It turned out that he had had no pyjama bottoms on and had shut me out in order to get dressed. I got the impression that Williams had been spreading stories about my supposed fascination for the male members of the human race.

I returned to my room, packed my bag, thanked the receptionist for the early morning call which came through as I was leaving, paid my bill, said goodbye to everyone I encountered and set off down the road contemplating three very enjoyable days.

It had been a good if uneventful Con, made that bit more memorable by little things, such as Eric Bentcliffe looking at a photograph of the Manchester Group in the Fifties and pointing out to Bob Shaw a scrawny looking character called Taffy, only to realise that he was looking at himself. There were things better forgotten---the Sheffield Group with one or two exceptions, the swimming pool statue's losing an arm aided by a fan from (surprise, surprise) Sheffield, and an obscene publication called 'Stop Puking Up', which might have succeeded in being funny were the contents not in such bad taste. Dare I say it originated in Sheffield?

All in all, I now look forward very much to Silicon 2. Dave Langford is collecting contributions to the 'Silicon Fan Fund' to finance a well known hard up fan for next year's Con. With complete impartiality he will endeavour to win fair and square, or by less devious means if all else fails. Please give generously.

* * * * *

"Brever: an almost obsolete word. It now means chemist." (Beachcomber)

Book Reviews

(21) "Show, not tell": which is as it should be.

EYE AMONG THE BLIND by Robert Holdstock
(Faber h.c. £3.95; 219pp; ISBN 0 571 10883 0)

Reviewed by Dave Langford

Mutability stalks the spaceways. Humanity is on the run from a thing called Fear, the future backlash of pollution, claustrophobia, technophobia. When the downward curve has levelled out there may come a rebirth; the sky, meanwhile, is full of ships carrying a contagious panic, which cannot be allowed to land...

As above, so below. Ree'hdworld with its human settlement and enigmatic natives is the focus of tension; ancient evolutionary wheels are turning to a point of catastrophe. The biologist Zeitman seeks to understand the Ree'hds for several reasons: scientific curiosity, hope that the settlement need not be caught in the gears, and love of (or at least, need for) his one-time wife Kristina---who has moved almost too close to comprehension, has gone native, shackled up with the Ree'hd Urak. Meanwhile Kevin Maguire, blind but seeing, too old by several centuries, and intimately linked with Ree'hdworld intelligence, stands aside: he knows it all and would never dream of preventing any of it. (Maguire, by the way, is the weakest of the main characters. In his role as Man of Mystery, he's the nearest thing to a cliché in the book.)

As Ree'hdworld undergoes its own changes, both Ree'hds and men must suffer; the most violent effects are at the delicate interface, human/alien, which Zeitman approaches and Kristina has reached. The strengths and weaknesses of the two races begin to come into focus.

And the answer, the final deft ravelling of plot-threads into a single knot awaiting the keen scissors of reason---no. Nothing so easy. A major strength of Eye Among The Blind is its avoidance of facile explanation.

Queasy question: should one review a friend's book? Instant answer: Yes, especially if your knowledge of the writer can grind the scalpel to a finer edge. The critical appeal to a jury of peers, "how does it compare with his other works?", inevitably fails for a first novel... unless acquaintance with Rob's shorter pieces, published and unpublished, can fill in part of the background.

Book and background agree: here's a writer whose faults spring not from paucity but excess. So the atmosphere is rich---but almost too rich; the characters (Maguire excepted) are vividly alive ---almost too much so. They protest too much, they burn up nervous energy faster than a Jag drinks petrol; but though they'd be exhausting people to live with, one can enjoy them in a book. Better than stereotypes any day.

On a cruder level, the man who knows too much will keep tripping over minutiae, such as the shameless Pieria in-jokes. Mac Malsem is mentioned; there's even an oblique reference to Kevin's barbarian Alcain (Warrior King, Demon Slayer, Lawns Mowed)---the Roanscott effect in EATB reflects Alcain's foe Roanskot, who in turn owed much to Allan Scott and Mike Rohan... and so back to Pieria. References to Andrew Stephenson are more veiled (Wooburren, desolate and empty of intelligent life: Wooburn Green?). Garry Kilworth and John Jarrold are united in the B-Type Kiljarold Vaze, a weapon Hook would have been proud to carry; Diana Reed perhaps gives the world its names; the murals of Morgansworld are "crude in execution, not to mention content". Nasty one, Rob...

Enough of this.

Now Rob Holdstock prefers intuition to reason, a preference reflected in this book. Chains of faultless logic are constricting things; his past attempts to construct hard-sf plots have suffered through impatience with scientific pedantry. ("But, Rob, if the black hole strikes the earth and is big enough to see, won't it sort of destroy the planet?" "Oh.")

With softer sciences in the fore-

ground and a minimum of hardware, the characters struggle more convincingly through a universe of events which fall into no simple machine-stamped pattern. There are pleasant wisps of mysticism and metaphysics. There is a great deal of enjoyable writing, with a few lapses: cupboards are "repositories", the blind man looks "with the same blind expression he always wore"---mere carelessness.

The ending is satisfying in that (and here I repeat myself) no dreary revelation is pulled from a battered hat. Some things we had suspected are confirmed, yes, but loose ends are deliberately allowed to remain. Apocalypse proceeds offstage; the Ree'hd cultures, free of human irritation, return to their strange predestined paths; Zeitman, having learned a little, prepares to learn a great deal more. I hope this last applies to Rob; that after a damn good first novel, he can resist the siren song of lucrative hackwork for long enough to write a second one, which will be better.

 "Oh well," he clichéd, "it takes all sorts to make a world." (Legend of the Werewolf by Robert P. Black)

THE EXILE WAITING by Vonda N. McIntyre
 (Fawcett Gold Medal 1976; \$1.25;
 224pp, Also published by Victor Gollancz at £3.95)
 Reviewed by Chris Morgan

Ursula LeGuin writes like a man.
 Joanna Russ writes like a professional castrator. Vonda McIntyre writes like a woman.

Do you remember that beautiful Nebula-winning novelette from a couple of years back, "Of Mist and Grass and Sand", about a young female healer and her three snakes? Well, that was by Vonda McIntyre, and here she is with a first novel which is inventive, compassionate and polished---amply fulfilling the promise of that novelette. It is a novel reminiscent of early DeLany---full of power and poetry.

On a near-derelict, far-future Earth, humanity lives only in Center---an underground city organised on semi-feudal lines. The rich are very rich (also haughty, bored, cruel, unthinking etc.) while the poor manage to survive

either by begging or thieving. Mischa, the novel's remarkable fourteen-year-old protagonist, is poor, and a thief. I will admit to a general lack of enthusiasm for teen-age heroines in SF. (Heinlein's Podkayne nearly made me throw up.) But Mischa is different. Never whimsical or Lolita-like, she strides through the book with unflagging determination and unshakable will. She has some telepathic ability (which is unique to members of her family). In the final analysis she is the most adult character in the novel.

The plot stems mostly from Mischa's determination to leave this dying Earth. She manages to gain entry to the Stone Palace and speaks to the Lord Blaisse, asking to be allowed to work on his space-ships. He has her publicly flogged for (as they say) her pains. But circumstances change. While Mischa's back is healing a raiding ship arrives. Its joint captains Subone and Subtwo take over the Stone Palace with a minimum of force. Blaisse is allowed to remain but these two immensely able young off-worlders, who have almost identical faces and a strange empathetic relationship, pull the strings. Subtwo maintains his detached, emotionless, almost inhuman air, but Subone is subverted by the depraved grandeur of Blaisse's lifestyle. When next Mischa enters the palace illegally it is to Subtwo that she speaks. He gives her a chance, instructing Jan Hikaru to teach her all he can. Jan, from the planet Koen but of mainly Japanese ancestry, discovers that Mischa's potential is enormous. But events go awry for Mischa and for Subtwo...

These three, Mischa, Subtwo and Jan, are the book's main characters. It is their personalities and relationships with each other and with the minor characters which make this novel so outstanding.

My precis has covered barely a third of the complex plot, of which every thread is woven in and out to create a rich and believable tapestry of the future. The ending is a happy one, though, with every one of those threads tied neatly. THE EXILE WAITING is a deep, subtle book, an exciting book and, perhaps above all, a satisfying book.

Before the mss (and I don't mean manuscripts) of the world unite to tear me limb from limb for being a male chauvinist oink I'd better explain my opening remark that Vonda McIntyre writes like a woman. She writes very ably about women, detailing their characters without over-emphasising their gender. But her male characters, too, are almost feminine: they are, with few exceptions, thin, pale, undermuscled intellectuals. Indeed, she seems to adopt a decidedly anti-machismo attitude throughout. I must stress the point, though, that these factors in no way detract from an excellent first novel. Read it.

* * * * *

ANDROMEDA edited by Peter Weston

(Futura Orbit 1976; 65p; 206pp; ISBN 0 8600 7891 4)

Reviewed by Chris Morgan

Almost all original anthologies include at least one good story---the sort of story which excites and enthralls, which makes you stop and think, which you rush through because you want to know what happens and then wish you hadn't rushed through because it's finished and you wanted it to go on exciting and enthralling you. But what about the bad stories, where you can guess the ending before you've reached the bottom of the first page because it's been done before, or where you turn over the page and find you're into the next story because the author hasn't bothered with a conclusion or an explanation or anything, or where you read right through---maybe twice---and then wonder what the hell it was supposed to mean? Almost all anthologies have a few of those, too. And the gaps in between the good and the bad are plugged with mediocre stories; you know, stuff which is just a tiny bit more worthwhile than watching TV or leafing through the Daily Tabloid.

But what happens when you come across an original anthology without any bad stories, without even any mediocre ones? You don't believe it, that's what. So you read through the stories again, mumbling "Alright, where is it, then? Where's the rubbish? Where's the 90% crud of which everything (according to the gospel of St Theodore) is composed?" And finally you realise that there are only good stories in this anthology and you shout "Eureka!" as

you leap from your bath of complacency (what else, during a water shortage?) brandishing a copy of---yes, a copy of ANDROMEDA!

I'll admit that when I first heard that Pete Weston was going to edit an original anthology I thought he'd end up with a bookful of Astounding-type stories. But I misjudged him; he's done a great job and ended up with a nicely varied collection of very high quality, which any reader will enjoy. (Well, there's a lack of humour and not much swords & sorcery, but I suppose it's difficult to pack everything into 200 pages.)

Pick of the bunch, without a doubt, is "An Infinite Summer" by Chris Priest. An obvious spin-off from his Space Machine research, this is the best story he's ever written: a delicately beautiful period piece which hovers between 1903 and 1940. It deserves award nomination.

After that it's difficult to decide on a quality league table, so I'll go through the book. Brian Aldiss' contribution is his first straight SF story for several years, being neither an enigma (do I hear a chorus of "Thank Ghod"?), nor an offshoot of his marvellous Malacia series of renaissance fantasies. Instead it's about a man who is seeking the secret of the universe in a planet-sized museum. Michael Coney is not one of my favourites SF authors, but despite my prejudices I enjoyed "Starthinker", his unusual telepath story with a sting in the tail. So we come to Bob Shaw. You might think that a title like "Waltz of the Bodysnatchers" must mean a funny story. But not so. Like much of Bob's work this is a murder mystery (which just happens to be set on a planet with a peculiar legal system). Very straight, with no funnies or gruesome bits. Fiendishly clever, though.

I've got to be careful of what I say about Bob Holdstock's story, because I helped him with it. Actually, all I did was to point out one or two faults in the first draft and to suggest the title "Travellers". But even so I'd better not praise it too much or you'll all think I'm being immodest. So I'll just say that it's a remarkably original and exciting time travel novelette in which the hero doesn't only

get the girl in the end but in various other times and places, too. Naomi Mitchison's very short "Valley of the Bushes" is a mood piece, quietly horrifying. "Doll" by Terry Greenhough is extremely gruesome about a world where each new-born baby is protected against disease by being twinned with a doll. But not an ordinary doll.

George R.R. Martin seems to have arrived on the SF scene overnight, with a flourish of trumpets and a Hugo. His story of the gaming pits of Lyronica, in which the twelve great houses of that planet compete via the fighting power of ferocious beasts bred especially for the purpose, contains the nearest thing to humour in the anthology. And Haviland Tuf, the interstellar animal-seller, is the sort of character about whom a whole series of stories could be written. I hope it will be. "The Giant Killers" is only Andrew Stephenson's second piece to appear in print, so most people won't realise that this polished, highly technological story is typical of him, though it doesn't display his full range of writing ability. The last story in this collection could only have been written by Harlan Ellison. It sacrifices plot for emotion and explanation for outre description. But Verma's peculiar eyes---both blessing and curse---are a fittingly memorable conclusion to an anthology as good as the New Dimensions, Universe and Nova series.

Okay, Pete. No bad stories, and not even any mediocre ones. Now let's see you do it again, and again...

* * * * *

DR FUTURITY

THE UNTELEPORTED MAN by Philip K. Dick
(Methuen; 60p & 50p; 157pp & 124pp)
Reviewed by Kevin Smith

These are two slight and enjoyable novels, admirable for whiling away the time on a train journey (that was when I read them, in fact) but not possessed of any great significance. I put them among the higher quality of "stop gap" literature (see Dave Cockfield in the letter column).

Dr Futurity concerns a medical doctor, Jim Parsons, whisked out of his own time of 1998 into a future where his profession is obsolete, not bec-

ause disease has been eradicated but because sick or injured people are at once painlessly killed. The structure of the society, moreover, is such that these people go willingly to their deaths, a point vividly illustrated when a girl Parsons has saved from death swears out a complaint against him and trots off voluntarily to undergo the "Final Rite".

This is not the point of the story, however, for all that it occupies the first sixty pages. Parsons has been brought forward by one particular tribe of the society to save the life, illicitly, of a highly respected member, and this serves as a springboard for some highly involved time-traveling. Parsons and others flash backwards and forwards in time, helping and hindering themselves as they go until all is solved at the end. The traditional paradoxes of time travel are there, but are sidestepped.

A paradox that isn't resolved involves the plot: why, having gone to great trouble to bring the doctor forward in time, do the tribesmen lose him for sixty pages? During that period, when Parsons could have been killed half a dozen times, they are mere helpless watchers, unable to assist him in any way. In fact, if they had used their time machine properly, they could have avoided the whole book. But what would have been the use of that? Dr Futurity is a good read and can be recommended for just that... don't expect anything very memorable, though.

Although first published four years after Dr Futurity, in 1964, The Unteleported Man is not so enjoyable a novel. It is primarily concerned with the efforts of one man to take a space ship on an 18-year trip to a planet colonised by teleportation devices. However, the hornet's nest he stirs up, as powerful organisations conflict in their efforts to aid and prevent him, throws up a multitude of other characters, each of whom occupies the limelight for a while. By the end the initial protagonist is a mere bit player, so much so that the final scene is dominated by Joe Peasant off to get drunk. Joe who?

The whole book is bitty; the central theme is not allowed to dominate and the plot twists do not make up for

this in the way that the time travel complexities do in Dr Futurity. In addition, there is a surfeit of the clever-clever gimmickry found all too often in SF generally and Dick in particular. For example, the friendly organisation is "Listening Instructional Educational Services Incorporated"--- "Lies Inc" to its enemies; and the unfriendly organisation is "Trails of Hoffman Limited". How twee can you get?

But for stop gap literature it is not at all bad, and much preferable to ERB, Doc Smith and Laurence James.

* * *

I might be accused of applying a double standard of criticism: "all these faults, but not at all bad--- as stop gap literature". Certainly it is true that I haven't gone into the detail possible in book reviews, but the books don't warrant that. Having stated that they are not great literature it would be pointless and time-wasting to review them as such.

The double standard lies in saying that because a book is SF, it cannot be great literature, and therefore that SF must never be subjected to the detailed analysis and criticism that is performed on major mainstream novels. With this I totally disagree.

Richard Avery was a failure at 35.
(Transit by Edmund Cooper (1964). No comment, really...)

A SONG FOR LYA and other stories
by George R.R. Martin
(Avon \$1.25; 208pp; ISBN 0 380 00521 2)
Reviewed by Phil Stephensen-Payne

These days new SF authors are a dime a dozen. They spew forth from workshops like Clarion, clutching their tatty manuscripts that often fit the odd hole in a magazine once or twice and are then forgot. Every month, it seems, a new name appears--- but only a handful last more than a year. One of that handful is George Martin. Regularly, since 1971, he has been publishing a couple of stories each year---stories of rare quality that satisfy even the most jaded palate; stories like "A Song for Lya" that won a Hugo last year. Now, at

(25)
last, the best of these stories have been put together in a collection of remarkably high quality.

"A Song for Lya" is bound to be familiar to many readers already because of the award it won. The story of the old, old unnamed city of the Shkeen, and of the alien religion of Union that was fostered there; of Lyanna the telepath, the beautiful woman, the little girl---the convent; of Robb, the man who loved her, loved her far beyond common love for he shared her gift of telepathy, but could not love her enough and so lost her to something he couldn't understand; and of the Greeshka, the aliens, the parasites---the instruments of deification. It is a story one doesn't forget--- and is glad for the remembrance.

Here also the familiar "With Morning comes Mistfall"---Nebula nominee for 1973 and collected in that year's anthology. As with many of Martin's stories the theme is one of the lack of understanding. The conflict between Sanders, the romantic, proprietor of Castle Cloud on Wraithworld, and Dubowski, the "scientist" who has come to Wraithworld to explain, once and for all, the legend of the "wraiths". As Martin says, speaking through Sanders:

"Answers. Answers. Always they have to have answers. But the questions are so much finer. Why can't they leave them alone?"

Between Sanders and Dubowski, there is no common ground---and in the conflict one must lose.

The basic theme of conflict recurs in "Dark, Dark Were the Tunnels", though neither side is ever aware of it. The Earth has been devastated by nuclear war and, many years later, colonists come from the Moon to look for signs of survivors. But there is no contact, only death; the inevitable result of the contact of alien cultures.

Martin has a brighter side. The book contains one delightful story--- "Run to Starlight"---about the problems facing a sports manager when the Brish'diri, aliens with whom Earth has rather strained relations, express a desire to enter a team in the National Football League. And what a team! The problem becomes a question of which is worse---to let them win or make them

lose.

Then there's the humorous "throwaway" story "fta", with a new line on hyperspace; the futuristic ghost story of "The Exit to San Breta"; the stark realities of "The Hero" and "The Second Kind of Loneliness"; and the rather disappointing "Override" and "Slide Show."

Not all the stories are of peak quality, but the collection as a whole is---especially for a newcomer. My only regrets are that it was too early to include my favourite Martin story, "The Storms of Windhaven" with Lisa Tuttle, Nebula runner-up this year---and that Avon chose to produce it with such a revolting, and irrelevant, cover.

First finish the crossword. In which anthology were the unclued authors? Solve the chess problem by considering the squares containing pieces---K,Q,R,N,B,P---eliminating extraneous men (and locating the board!) as follows:

The black king can move to just one vacant square. Unless this move is diagonal, any major piece must stand on a square of its own colour. No rook lies in the KR file. One piece is en prise; two haven't moved; occupied files may contain one piece or four. Identical pieces do not adjoin. OK?

Now eliminate those men whose existence remains uncertain (except for one which would be en prise should it move). The side with fewer men is to play and win, most probably by mate in five.

ACROSS:

8 The ayes have it! (3); 9 To eliminate boils, perhaps (5); 11 A bargain, but pinstripe (though not rubbish) is returned (4); 12 Part of circular construction (3); 13 Reversing ends on the headland (4); 14 Strangely green species (5); 15 Northerner returns piano to

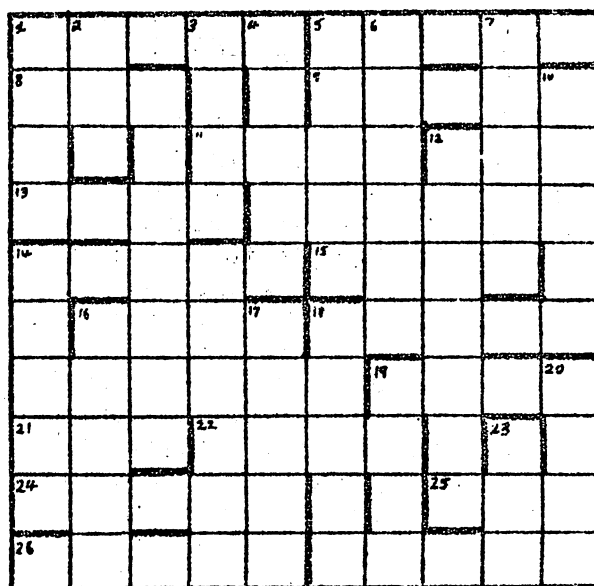
friend (4); 16 Mainly dark-coloured forehead (4); 18 Where one burnt Keats, possibly (5); 19 Observe Oriental agent (4); 21 Part of episode may be cut (3); 22 Encounter food, say (4); 24 Eight-set toad confused with a hundred (5); 25 Melodious gas (3); 26 Well-polished home in secluded surroundings (5).

DOWN:

1 Bachelor meets with approval---and runs (4); 2 Rusty Russki? (3); 3 From which aviators are sent round (4); 4 Thick poles in the river (5); 5 Companion unwell with a cold (5); 6 Previously seen programme about bog-moss (6); 7 Bind pieces up (5); 10 Ceres may be just a pile of debris (5); 12 Like to go round resort with first class return and woman of easy morals (7); 14 Plaster little George put round the ship (5); 17 Lanky editor in tree, climbing (5); 18 Wriggling snake in Scotsman's sock? (5); 19 Small case, in perpetuity (4); 20 Spun a tale (4); 23 Transcendental experience begins in confusion (3).

CHESSWORD:

DAI PRICE



LETTERS

(27) to my mind anyone who wants to hang around with Skelding is asking for it.

REPLIES..... Should either of us wish to lay claim to a particular reply it is indicated, in stunningly original fashion, by a letter in brackets at the end, thus: (D) or (K). Otherwise, editorial comment is joint, and possibly several too.

PHIL STEPHENSEN-PAYNE:

"Your duty to your trade does you proud. Buying the first volumes of Perry Rhodan, Simon Rack and Expendables just to be fair to the genre. Couldn't you have borrowed them? I have three out of the six Simon Rack books (1, 4 & 6---Sphere have a funny distribution system) but have not read them. I don't have any Hook books, nor have I read them, and I think I sold the one Perry Rhodan I bought and read to OUSFG (although I've since got a few more from Futura before I could stop them) ---I detested him. However, I do like 'The Expendables', mainly because I enjoy the characters. I'm not sure I would want to defend them in a review, but Conrad, Kwango and the rest come out as real characters for me, however hare-brained their activities. But then I am generally fond of Edmund Cooper's books anyway (except things like 'Tenth Planet') and changing the name on the cover does not, in any way, change the style.

"I think for the sake of future relationships I'd better keep fairly quiet on the 'Oxford bombings' issue. I'd only say that whether or not Skelding deserved his sentence this time, I have no doubt he had earned it altogether. Perhaps he's better off in gaol, he might be on trial in Angola otherwise. As for the rest,

"I was very disappointed with Chris' review of 'Dhalgren', it was obviously early on in his acquaintance with the book---he is far more coherent on the subject these days and could have produced a far better piece. OK so he admits it to be his first impressions, but does that really justify three columns? Chris sketches a little of the plot and a fraction of the problems, but I don't think he helps either those who have read it or those who haven't. I'm not sure anyone could in one review, it'll need several articles like 'The Role of the City in Delany's Dhalgren' and so on before anyone can make sense of the book---if indeed the term can apply. It is a monstrous book and, like Legion, contains multitudes. I don't think the question is: 'Is it sf?' as much as: 'Is it a book, or just a set of notes?' I think that, if you have the time and patience, it's worth the effort (and I wasn't disappointed much at the end) to see what Delany is up to. As a book to read for enjoyment, though, I'd prefer 'Triton' anyway. At least it's finished.

"I was most impressed, on the other hand, by your review of 'Hard to be a God' by the Strugatskis. It was well reasoned, balanced and with just the right amount of plot revelation. And, as with most things one likes, harder to talk about because it's so good. I was inclined, at first, to think the review a little long, but it didn't feel so on reading. How come we've not seen your work before, Mr Smith? Throw away that bushel.

"Your short reviews were also of interest, but I still think Jeeves is best at that length. Suggestion for future issues: exercise your literary muscles

more, there's talent there somewhere (but not in fiction, please)."

You should know better than others, Phil, that for most of the time during which Mike Skelding was gaily letting things off all over Oxford, a bang meant 'practical joke' not 'IRA'. Even in the first half of '74 bombs were something which happened in Ireland or maybe London. The fact that Mike's last spree coincided with the Birmingham explosions was bad luck---the rules were changed. From an irresponsible idiot who ought to be fined, Mike suddenly became a criminal menace to be locked away.

In June 1974, when I committed my own indiscretion, no-one worried much (the police didn't until Mike stirred them up); by 1975 public opinion had moved so far up the hysteria-scale that Mike was advised not to appeal: there were no un-biassed juries any more. (D)

Anyway, free again and obviously recovered from the trauma, here is MIKE SKELDING:

"Mike Rohan tells me that, according to my potted biography in the American edition of the Encyclopaedia for which I wrote an article on Guerilla Warfare, I am a Captain in British Intelligence, and a lecturer in Guerilla tactics at Sandhurst!! How on Earth have they described you?"

I gather their first suggestion was something like 'Total Annihilation Officer, Los Alamos'---but Mike Rohan has toned this down... (D)

"On the subject of warfare, I recently learned that the domestic staff employed to clean laboratories for the Manhattan Project were specially

(28) selected illiterates, so that any diagrams of A-bomb components which they might come across would be meaningless to them. Perhaps the jury for a certain Oxford Trial was selected in the same way, and for much the same reason?"

Never mind, Mike. These things are sent to try us.

MALCOLM EDWARDS:

"The account of your (Dave's) trial was, of course, interesting, but rather too oblique and telegraphic, I felt. And while the perpetrators of the second lot of bangs may have been rather harshly treated, they really do have only themselves to blame, given the prevalent climate of opinion about bangs in public places."

You're too kind to the pyrotechnic article: it was badly written. (Simone Walsh also put the verbal boot in here.) The reason for the telegraphese was that I wrote it while the memories of the trial were still painful, and hence skipped through the fortysix pages of notes (made in the dock) with undue speed. See above regarding opinions about bangs in public places. (D)

"Thought Chris Morgan's review of 'Hello Summer, Goodbye' was a very odd thing. There is a rather cloying note in some of the love scenes which is the book's main fault, but 'nauseatingly maudlin' is phrasing it several degrees too strongly. Also, of course, the characters are human beings---who are what Coney wanted to write about---except for the purposes of the book they needed to exhibit certain reactions to changes in temperature which human beings don't have. So he made them aliens. He could have called them 'adapted men' or somesuch, I suppose; so what? Chris tries to give the impression that the various assump-

tions don't fit together (hid- (29)
eously inconsistent is how he
put it), but although he may
have a point about the muta-
tions, there's nothing at all
inconsistent about the rest---
and it all plays a necessary
part in the book's ingenious
(and ultimately unexpected)
plot. Oh well, I think it's
probably Coney's best book yet,
although it clearly struck
Chris right in a blind spot.

"The Rubberised Man' works
rather well, despite my unfam-
iliarity with its specific
source. I think it's a little
too long, mind you; I found
that I was smiling at the jokes
for the first couple of pages,
worked up to actually laughing
by the fourth page....and then
gradually tapered off into smil-
ing again. I do try to steer
clear of that kind of series
sf (with the exception of Tubb's
Dumarest novels, which contain
nice touches and avoid sense-
less brutality). I did read
'Earth Lies Sleeping', and
couldn't agree with you more.
It's a really, cynically bad
book. You might have mentioned
that, apart from the opening
and closing chapters, it isn't
sf at all, but a pseudo-medie-
val hack novel.

"George Hay's projects al-
ways strike me as wantonly ob-
scure. SF on cassettes; sf on
microfiche; sf on postcards
---anything rather than sf on
paper. I'm sure that when
someone figures out a way of
engraving sf on the head of a
pin, George will be in there,
marketing them."

We mentioned the 'wantonly
obscure' remark to GEORGE
HAY:

"This microfiche project is
linked with the H.G. Wells Soc-
iety---and you should see what
they said about Wells when he
first suggested the use of
microform---and a few other
things---in 1938. The issue is
simple enough---do we want to

do things more efficiently and
more cheaply or do we want to
stick to the good old stone-
age methods we know and love?
If the Third World can clamour
for the use of low-key, small-
scale, labour-intensive alter-
native technology, Ghandi-
style---who is to say that it
should be discouraged in Brit-
ain? I'm for more everything
for everybody. Those who want
less everything are entitled to
have that for themselves---but
why force it on the rest of us?
To me, the insistence on unwor-
kable traditions, with the
inflation and unemployment they
bring with them, is redolent
of the obscurity with which I
am charged."

JIM LINWOOD thought:

"You should really have sto-
mped George Hay for his arseli-
cking adoration of ElRon and
the Scientologists---but as they
have a nasty habit of suing
anyone who says 'Boo!' to them
you were probably wise not to."

But ANDY DARLINGTON:

"Enjoyed the George Hay thing
---he got me into 'Stopwatch'
so it was nice to find out
more about him."

What can we add?

TOM JONES and STEVE SNEYD
also referred to the bomb-
ings (see comments above).
Tom first:

"Two years, Jesus Christ!
Surely he can appeal? OK, so
letting off those big fireworks
was a stupid thing to do, esp-
ecially in these times. It
causes the police a lot of ha-
ssle, and consequently we the
people a lot of money, and there
are people with weak hearts.
So they need rapping on the
knuckle, but not two years wor-
th. I have a fair amount of
trust in British justice, but
I know it can go wrong. Either
Dave's not told us all the
facts (which isn't likely) or
this is one of the times it

went wrong. Again, why no appeal?"⁽³⁰⁾

One of these people, we learned later, was being treated for a weak heart during the trial. The judge. (D)

"After upsetting me you then cheered me up with an amazing editorial and even better 'Rubberised Man'. It was one of the funniest things I'd read for a long time, even my wife, who's a silent giggler, laughed out loud. It perhaps laboured the point in places but you may well have been satirising the long drawn out bits of the Hook books, if they have them. Even if you weren't I'm only nit picking, it was a great bit of fan writing.

"After being away from the field so long I was somewhat disappointed when I started receiving fanzines again. The emphasis seemed to be on costly presentation rather than interesting contents (as a friend of mine once said about a meal: 'Shit, but beautifully cooked') The word to use for them would be 'bland'. DRILKJIS restored my faith: reasonable presentation, and interesting contents, it's got guts."

Hopefully Steve won't mind if we restore capital letters to his loc. We have not yet been swayed by these new movements in the English language.

"The Oxford explosions, obviously the guys suffered for playing in an era of serious terrorism, as did the Angry Brigade. Like the old saying, 'Jokes about cannibalism are not funny in New Guinea.' Having myself introduced panic by accident in a pub by leaving a briefcase behind last Friday (and it was one I go in pretty often) I can witness the creeping paranoia that has now spread outward from yer intelligensia into yer solid citizens

as, eg, barmen, guys with tattooed thumbs, desert veterans, etc.

"Have banged me head n times on wall, to have read and laughed at Lynan Sinker in Sfinx and never twigged it was take-off of the Hook books I keep finding remaindered at W.H. Smith railway stalls and avoiding, even if it means only other choice is Mickey Spillane. A superb sequence (the take-off, natch, not the template).

"Reviewer plays hell the r/h side of pages in a book he reviewed weren't justified. Believe I'm right this is one of publishers experimenting with golfball non-justified typing instead of justified letterpress setting in order to bring production costs down low enough to start doing new/first author novels. Surely, if so, a ragged right-hand margin is a small price to pay for a few more poor sods getting first crack at the sunny side of the publishing street? OK?"

You're right in saying that the right hand side is non-justified in order to reduce costs, whether that leads to more first novels, or to more profits for the shareholders. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the result looks amateur by comparison. As with so many things today we are being forced, gradually, to accept an inferior product, "because that's the only way we can afford to do it." (K)

BRIAN PARKER:

"This zine of yours is extremely silly. We can begin with the envelope which had nine stamps afixed to produce the grand total of 8½p. We open the envelope and lo and behold more extreme silliness---an unprouncable title---DRILKJIS for God's sake. I presume it's based on your combined names D??L-K??S---don't bother to tell

me what the RIJI stands for. (31)

"After the name the cover was only saved by the cover which was rather nice. Quite striking and pleasant if taken as an abstract design but poor when examined in detail---still I liked it fine. Inside---more silliness. Hook spoofs, pages upside down, and a crappy cartoon strip. The Hook send up was excellent though. I actually found myself bursting out laughing on occasion, I wouldn't say no to more of same.

"Perhaps I should tell you that a self avowed sercon zine should be ser not bloody silly; get a grip on yourself Langford. Or maybe plan to be silly---it's very enjoyable. Anyway, an excellent first issue which to tell the truth I enjoyed."

There is a reason for the RIJI, but you don't want to know that. May we assume that Smith, too, should get a grip on himself? In fact, nowhere in DRILKJIS do we vow to be sercon. You must have been listening to lies and rumours put about prior to its publication. I told you to keep quiet, Langford!

RAY HARRISON received the zine after issuing threats about how dire and unpleasant his locs could be. See for yourselves:

"I hope you don't continue to publish fiction in future issues. When I learned there was fiction in DRILKJIS I gave a loud and mighty groan. To be honest your little piece was not as bad as I expected. The redeeming feature was that it was a parody and you did not take yourself seriously. I have only read one of the 'Expendables' series and none of the other series of which you poke fun at. Needless to say I did not like what I read, though a few years ago I feel

sure this would have been right up my street. I doubt very much that the ears that need to hear what you say will ever see DRILKJIS.

"You have obviously spent a good deal of time on making your zine look good, and it does. The layout, titles and finish is really very good, very impressive. That's a lovely cover by Jon Langford.

"The in-depth reviews were pretty good, you can't go far wrong with Chris Morgan reviewing for you. Having said that I feel bound to point out, however, that Chris' usual good sense seems to have deserted him for a sentence or two. Is it fair to draw conclusions about an author's personal experience from one of his books? I know this has been asked hundreds of times in the past, and probably will be in the future too, if reviewers continue to draw conclusions. Anyway, it's all been said before so I'll say no more."

I think it is reasonable, if not precisely 'fair', to draw conclusions about an author from his books, even as few as one, since something of an author goes into all his work. Unless his name is Laurence James, perhaps. Naturally, the more books considered the more reliable will be the conclusions drawn, and no critic should pretend otherwise. Certainly you will never stop critics drawing conclusions.

(K)

The general reaction to Lyman Sinker seems to have been favourable, with the qualification that it was too long. Some wanted to see more of the same. We are likely to publish more parody, but not as often as every issue, nor even every other issue.

DAVE COCKFIELD:

"The interview wasn't bad

although it got bogged down near the end. I think that he (George Hay) is wrong about anthologies though. For all that there is an excess on the American market there are not that many over here, and if it is a good collection of stories it will sell. Look at how well the Nebula Award series disappears from the bookshelves. Perhaps the main problem in this area is that there are not enough quality anthologies, particularly of original stories. 'Stopwatch' was a nicely balanced collection, but something of the excellence of Pete Weston's 'Andromeda' is what is needed to really corner the market. Oh to get my hands on more collections like that and I'm the type who prefers to read novels. Short stories normally leave me wanting more but knowing that I'll always be out of luck.

"The reviews are as good as any I've seen in fnzs although my opinions of most of the books head in the opposite direction to those of your reviewers. Perhaps because I tend to overlook most bad points a book may have if I enjoy reading it, which brings me on to the editorial.

"Believe this or not, but I like to read ERB, Doc Smith, Laurence James, Moorcock and, yes, I'm a fan of the Ryder Hook books. I only hope that Ken will finish off the story started in 'Virility Gene'. Damn it! I want to know if Hook gets his bird! To counter all of this I must add that I hate Perry Rhodan, Cooper's Expendables and the new Steeleye series. I bet Cooper writes that load of codswallop too.

"With all of the good SF books which are unobtainable in this country I am one of the first to say that publishers should stop dealing in crap SF and concentrate on neglected writers such as Ellison. But

(32) if they did my favourites would go and the publishers would doubtless lose a lot of money with declining sales. OK, so these books are bad but they must be popular for a reason. I like them because:

(a) they concentrate on generating excitement;

(b) they are the type of book which can be read quickly; and

(c) because they are so easy to read they are perfect for someone like me who likes to read on buses, on trains, during lunch breaks at work, even on the loo.

You can put one down and pick it up again without feeling the need to re-read to make sure that a point was understood.

In other words, they are perfect stop-gap literature to fill in spare moments which would not do justice to the likes of a LeGuin or Silverberg. For this sort of entertainment I am prepared to overlook bad writing. This sort of book is also necessary because it attracts younger readers and from there they can graduate to the Asimovs, then the Clarkes and finally to the truly great SF writers. Long live crud!"

It seems we have a different approach to our reading. I prefer not to read 'stop-gap' literature, finding I can easily put it down. Picking it up is the trouble. There are enough 'good' books around to occupy my reading time. So far we have different preferences, but no argument.

I will take issue on the necessity of crud to attract younger readers. It is a very arrogant assumption that the young (the redoubtable R. Harrison Esq. apart, apparently) will only read crud. I admit that they are not likely to be attracted by the heavy going of 'The Dispossessed', or 'Dhalgren', or 'War and Peace' for that matter. But what about the

'Narnia Chronicles', the 'Earthsea' trilogy, or Alan Garner's children's novels? Not heavy, and certainly not crud. Did you really mean to imply that a young reader cannot cope with an adventure story if it is tainted with good plot or good characterisation? Good grief!

Another thing: after being worked up to fever pitch by the gratuitous sex and violence in Simon Rack and the rest, they are going to be mightily disappointed by 'Starman Jones' or 'Islands in the Sky' when they make that giant leap forward to the old masters. (K)

Last views on reviews---

ROB JACKSON: "DRILKJIS was much enjoyed. Ian Williams actually found himself agreeing with what Chris Morgan said about 'Dhalgren', which knowing Ian's opinion of Chris is odd. What's more he liked the style of the review."

Ah, but what did you think, Rob?

DIANA REED: "I enjoyed Kev's reviews, because as well as being informal they were incisive."

JOHN BRUNNER: "Allow me to be the latest of many to tell you that the story ascribed to an 'environmental conference' (in 'The Wounded Planet' reviewed on p.26 of DRILKJIS) about tipping ash out of the window is lifted from life: the person concerned was Walter A. Willis, when he won TAFF and was at the Chicago Worldcon. Shame on whoever stole the joke without acknowledgment!"

In fact you were the first of one---thanks John. The shame should be dropped on Terry Carr (for his story 'Saving the World').

Please don't go looking through DRILKJIS 2 for unacknowledged jokes, though ---you might find some.

The crossword prizes were won by Malcolm Edwards and the well known purist JOHN PIGGOTT:

"Your crossword gave me a great deal of heartache, because so few of your clues conform to the Ximenian ideal one ought to be able to expect. This is permissible in, say, 6 down, which I thought very neatly contrived and which gave me a chuckle or two when I finally got it; but not in a clue as uninspired and uninspiring as 26 down, where the fact that the answer's 'era' leaps out at you anyway. Obviously it's meant to be a word hidden in the term 'space raider'; equally obviously, the fellow who set the clue couldn't be bothered to indicate the fact properly. I don't want to harp on about this too much; I know just how laborious a task crossword compiling is. (I sent a couple to NEL once; they sat on them for nine months and by the time they decided to do something with them the magazine had gone the same way as SF Monthly. Poot.) But it does detract from the good ones, this sort of laziness."

Whilst not entirely accepting your criticisms, Dai Price says that he will avoid similar shoddiness in future. (Looking at some of the devious puzzles he and Dave have concocted Druid-like between them, I think he's right. You've got to watch these Welsh. They'll be wanting all their own water next thing you know. Put that broken bottle down, Langford!) (?)

PAMELA BOAL had some nice things to say:

"Potentially one of the best

on the zine scene: a well balanced list of contents; the layout (once you have sorted out the problems you are aware of) efficient and attractive. Possibly some would consider your contributors as in-group. As long as you are careful not to do your readers---and your contributors---a disservice by putting them in simply because they are in-group, then as far as I'm concerned in-groups have many advantages. One thing should be that you are in the position to twist their arms to get contributions on time for a regular schedule. Mind, it doesn't seem to work that way if other eds are to be believed."

We are aware of the dangers of in-group contributors, but nothing gets in DRILKJIS unless we consider it good enough, no matter who writes it. Your remarks about regular schedules don't really apply to us. Maybe All-bran would do some good....

DAVE ROWE was incredibly uncontroversial. Obviously one controversy at a time is enough for him:

"Well, I liked---however you pronounce it---but it tends to come across as the standard British genzine (Mk II---better quality edition) of a few years ago. Both editorials were well written, the George Hay talk was interesting (was that really a transcript, or written replies---it doesn't sound like the George I know), the comic strip was suitably chaotic, the R-Man was funny---but not quite up to Kev's usual standard, perhaps he was imitating Zetford too much---and the reviews were interesting.

"BUT, beyond saying 'Rather nice fnz,' I'm stuck for something to say---and this sort of loc is very unhelpful to editors, I know. And that's the whole trouble. DRILKJIS

(34) was pleasant read, but did not have anything that made me want to grab pen and paper and reply. And rather than go on repeating myself I suppose I'd better close here."

'DRILKJIS was pleasant read. Tarzan agree.'

CHRIS MORGAN made an excuse: "I was intending to loc DRILKJIS, but your cheery comment to the effect that I was a contributor and would undoubtedly receive a copy of D-2 whether or not I loced D-1 has made me change my mind. Hence you are spared the excreta. (Actually I enjoyed it very much.)"

Chris also sent us postcards from the Seychelles, which arrived in England about three weeks after he himself returned. We speculated about cheap rate turtle-post.

MARTIN EASTERBROOK made an even better excuse:

"I would like to comment on DRILKJIS, but I fear that as various parents of my various flatmates believe them to be living in my room and not in the rooms of their various females, we are from time to time plunged into the depths of Brian Rix farce. Two separate visitations over the weekend, and the subsequent rearrangement of my room (also in one case the condemnation of my humble self to non-existence) has placed the zine beyond the recall of my instantaneous filing system, a pile for everything and everything in its pile."

And the last word from BOB SHAW:

"The cover looks really good and I'm looking forward to reading what's inside."

* * * * *

WAHF:

Keith Plunkett, Adrian Smith and John Welsh.

A F T E R T H O U G H T S . . .

Important things first: a letter from ROB HOLDSTOCK:

"Thanks for the nice comment about EATB. For Christ sake review the god-damn thing; I'm getting nothing but shit from reviewers. Why is it that of the thirty or so opinions I've received on the novel, twenty-five were raves, in the forms of personal chats and letters, and five were hates in the form of reviews?? There is no justice. Review the book and I shall stroke your hair gently as a reward; tell the world about the dual themes of conflict and rebirth that run on three levels through the book, human, human-alien, and alien. Tell them that. Tell them how the book's idea concerns a different evolutionary reality. Tell them that. Tell them that the book is about a group of characters who become involved with change on a massive scale and receive personal insight into their own and their races' weaknesses. Tell them that. Then send a copy to all reviewers in the world and say, Holdstock says screw you, you blind, lazy, ignorant sons of bitches. Next time read it properly!

"I am my greatest fan."

SPECIAL THANKS FOR TRYING TO:

Joseph Nicholas (whose savagely scathing Delany article has been delayed---he needs a free evening to re-read Dhalgren and Triton.);

Diana Reed (who, in the end couldn't bring herself to review what she calls "that dreadful book");

Mike Rohan (who has now tried harder and more variously than anyone else, without actually finishing a piece).

---All these may well appear in D-3.

C I R C U L A T I O N :

You received this fanzine because we printed lots of copies which we were disinclined to leave lying around. Why we printed them is something we're still investigating.

Note to fnz editors---DRILKJIS is less frequent than our other fanzines; trades with Dave or Kevin are apt to be answered by TWLL-DDU or DOT respec-

tively. If you trade with both of us, or if we feel curiously whimsical, DRILKJIS will also arrive in its roughly biannual fashion.

Note to other readers: Sample copies of all three zines are available. In fact, DOT 1 should arrive with DRILKJIS 2---but perhaps it won't. There are fewer DOTs than D's, so some people will miss out. Examine your conscience! Could this be a subtle indication of our regard for your responsiveness to date? TWLL-DDU 4 will also be enclosed if you haven't already received it. This is an attempt to outdo Graham Poole at multiple publishing.

Talk of the devil---a late LoC---

"I liked DRILKJIS although it doesn't seem to hang together as a whole. It's a 'what is it?' zine. The reviews are excellent and have almost persuaded me that my so-called reviewzine STARFLIGHT is a waste of time ..."

Thanks, Gra, for classifying DRILKJIS. We had been worried to death, but your giving us a category in which we can feel secure was of immense help in producing the second, even more 'what-is-it?' zine.

To finish this final flurry of letter extracts, JIM LINWOOD:

"The 25th of August: remember that date, henceforth known as the Day of the Crudzine. Titan, FF and One-Off arrived today. From Titan I learn that I'm a Gannet-Fan and FF blames the demise of SFM on poor old Holdcock and Bros... idiocy rules, ok. One-Off wasn't so bad, but Bridges seems to think that idiotic fmz layout is fannish..."

Positively the last fanzine review this issue... rest easy, editors. We also heard from David Strahan.

Book Received: THE GODWHALE
by T.J.Bass. (Methuen pb, 306pp, 65p)

Notable for the dazzling display of detailed surgical knowledge---but see the review of the hardback version in D-1. Incidentally, Kevin's guess there was not so far out; T.J.Bass is, we

are informed, a vet. Makes a change from James Herriot, at least.

(36)

The year of the first pay freeze,
Ian Watson's prospects brightened.
(Scottish Widows Investor Policy
advert, Second Series)

Gratuitous Hole Blocking Items.

BRILKJIS supports the SKYCON bid for Easter 1978. Now doesn't that come as a shock to you all? Look out for more information at Novacon 6.

BRITAIN IS FINE IN '79!

Remember that. Never mind what foreign currency speculators think, ask the Men who Know---Peter Weston, Peter Roberts, Leroy Kettle, Rob Jackson, John Steward, Dennis Healey... Dennis Healey? Well, he says he knows as well.

Peter Roberts for TAFF!

CROSSWORD SOLUTION (for last time,
not this.)

1 AC. consanguinity; 1 DN. counter-
signed; 2 alphabet; 3 guilds; 4 iced;
5 instinctive; 6 Yngvi is a louse;
7 unhappiness; 8 handicapper; 9 par;
10 son; 11 HAL; 12 dot; 13 tankards;
14 ken; 15 nisi; 16 deb; 17 entrench;
18 ruined; 19 enacts; 20 ait; 21 an-
emia; 22 tit; 23 ijaz; 24 zoo;
25 inertial; 26 era; 27 pod; 28 dray;
29 ere; 30 portmanteau; 31 dirty
bathrobe.

"ROCK FAN HAD GRASS ON HIM

"A Reading rock festival fan walked along Thames Promenade with a road works cone on his head and a flashing road works sign on his hand.

"Bernard Exton, 17, from Ashes Lane, Springhead, Oldham, was also wearing a sheet of artificial grass at the time, Reading magistrates were told..."

(Reading Evening Post)

FINAL CREDITS...

Collation assistance from Martin and Liese Hoare, not to mention Hazel. Thermostencilling brilliantly performed by Keith Freeman at Short Notice (his new home). Duplicating on the new Langford Machine. Fights arranged by D.R.Langford and K.J.Smith. Litho copy carried to and from the printers by Hazel (again not mentioned). Prayers that he can keep this up by D.Langford. Snide comments over his shoulder by K.Smith.

"Right Dave---let's print it!"

"NO! one more line---aaaaaaah."

