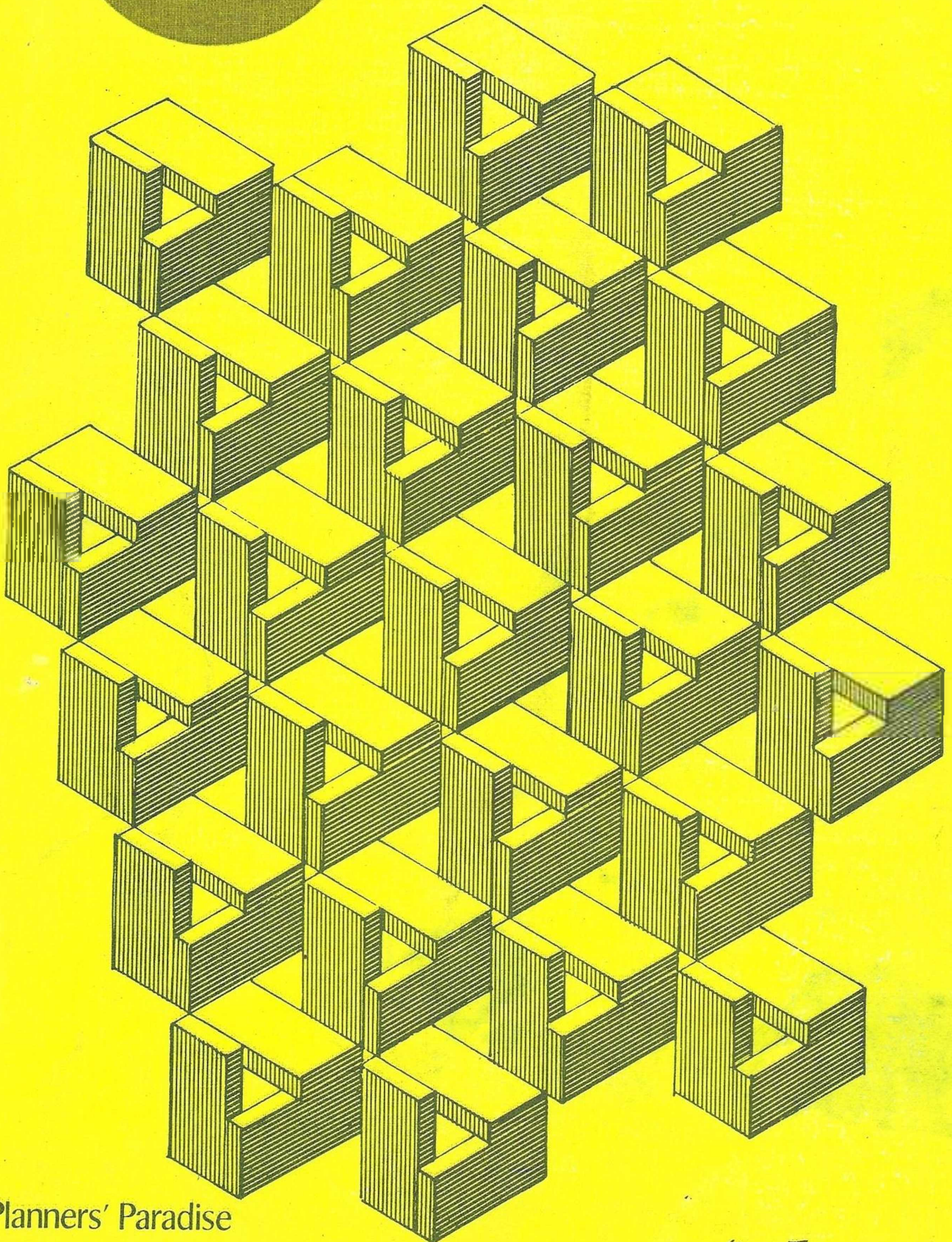
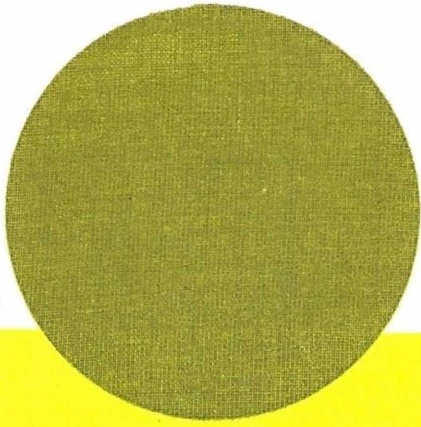


ZIMRI-7



Planners' Paradise

Harry Turner - 74



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ZIMRI-7

JANUARY 1975

IS EDITED & PRODUCED BY LISA I. CONESA

54 Manley Road • Whalley Range • Manchester M16 8HP • England

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All else by the editrix.



Bożena Wahl

The sketches on this page, and on page 7, are the work of Bożena Wahl, an artist noted for her illustrations of modern poetry in the Polish literary press.

AT THE RISK of stating the obvious, I'll start by pointing out some changes in this issue - just in case you've forgotten what ZIMRI used to offer. We proudly present our guest art editor Harry Turner, who is responsible for most of the layout in this issue. And I've branched out to experiment with offset litho - in many ways I'm pleased with the freedom this offers (though at the time of writing the finished result is still a mystery to me), but there are disadvantages: our art editor has been busy elsewhere and since I've had to rely on him for a lot of layouts it all took much longer than I expected. But worth waiting for, as I'm sure you'll agree.

One big advantage of duplicating is that I'm less dependent on outside help, so don't be surprised if in the future issues there will be less litho and more mimeo. However, it will mean that there will be shorter intervals between issues (which should please you all no end). Yes, I'm well aware that the gap between Z6 and Z7 is overlong; certainly much longer than I anticipated. There are many reasons for this which I don't propose to inflict upon you in detail. Production and editorial problems always bore me to tears and I don't want you lot to start weeping all over ZIMRI - the print might run and ruin the precious layout.

There are other ways I could reduce you to tears. I could, for instance, tell you about the cost, paper, postage, et cetera, et cetera, but you've heard it all before from other faneds and it is as exciting as an orgy in an old folks home.... though a tear or two may well be shed under the circumstances. No, I won't mention cost and I won't tell you my troubles, let us away to grimmer things like... conventions?

And here's where I'll need every tear you can spare. You may remember that in the previous issue, I was exulting over the prospect of organising another poetry soiree, for the SEACON 75. Forget it. The Seacon committee has decided that only established poets should read their work; poets such as Edward Lucie-Smith et al, not sf writers who write occasional poems, not fans who write poetry. It has to be done professionally, if it's to be done at all, they said. I was heartbroken, but the committee's decision is final, so we have to accept it. Naturally. And I do accept it, but it doesn't stop me from grumbling.

I don't expect the whole world to agree with me but the way I see it is this. There are hundreds of poetry readings all over the country but only one Eastercon a year, therefore I would have thought, in my infinite wisdom, that 'if there is to be a poetry reading at all' sf writers and fen (especially fen) should be given the opportunity to read their work first and foremost. After all, it is our con or is it? You may dry your eyes now, I've had my say. There's been a lot of discontent expressed about the Seacon and the changes made to the proposed outline on which they won the bidding at Tyncon already, and I must admit that I agree with most of the criticism. They are, however, to be congratulated that they've managed to persuade Mike Moorcock to be Guest of Honour - with Mike it's sure to be a lively and exciting con, something really to look forward to.

But when all is said and done it is not the official programme that makes a good con (though it does help at big ones); it is - to paraphrase Gray Boak - a bed, a bar, and a sprinkling of assorted fans. To this I would add a GoH with a strong personality. As Gray says: 'The convention begins when the programme ends' and he's come up with a splendid idea of producing a convention with no programme at all, not instead of, but as well as, the Easter and Nova cons. This is to be a truly faanish con, location: Blackpool. It has been unanimously agreed that cons are getting too big, which must mean that a lot of fannishness, and personal contact, is inevitably lost in the multitude. Gray's proposal and enthusiasm deserves support; naturally, I've already written offering my services should they be needed and I hope the rest of all you Trufen will follow my good example. After all, what can you lose, and there's a chance that you may like the idea and enjoy the reality.

'Reality is only a crutch'. Who said that?

You didn't think I could write an editorial (or whatever you wicked purists will call it) without saying something about future ZIMRIs, did you? Wrong. I mean to keep you in suspense as to the coming contents this time, but before I let you read John Brunner and other meaty delights herein, a word of thanks to all contributors, loccers, and guests: ta. NOW you can read and enjoy....

lisa

JOHN BRUNNER TALKS



Photograph courtesy of JAY K KLEIN

Peter Linnett interviews John Brunner & Lisa asks a few questions of her own...

PETER LINNETT: Could I begin by asking you how you got started as a writer, and why you chose to write science fiction in particular?

JOHN BRUNNER: It all goes back to the time when someone left a copy of the War of the Worlds in my nursery. I was about six. It was a Heinemann first edition that belonged to my grandfather, and I drew Martian fighting machines all over the endpapers. I suppose I really decided to be a writer when I was about nine and found I couldn't get enough sf to keep me occupied. I tried my hand at a story of my own. But it wasn't until I was thirteen that I collected my first rejection slip.

PETER: And when did you start selling to the magazines?

JOHN: That, funnily enough, was after I sold my first paperback. Just before I left school, shortly after my seventeenth birthday, I sold a paperback sf novel. It appeared under a pseudonym and sank without trace, but it paid enough for me to buy a typewriter of my own, so I could give up pestering people to borrow theirs. Then, before being drafted into the RAF, I made a couple of sales to American magazines; after coming out of the Force, I moved up to London under the mistaken impression that I was already a writer, and sold a great many stories to John Carnell's magazines, New Worlds, Science Fantasy, and SF Adventures, and also to Authentic SF. They paid incredibly low rates. If it hadn't been for the fact that a job opportunity appeared and I was able to work with the Industrial Diamond Information Bureau, under the guy who writes as John Christopher, C.S. Youd, I would almost certainly have had to go back home with my tail between my legs.

PETER: When did you become a full-time writer?

JOHN: Well, after I'd spent a while working with the IDIB as a technical abstractor and editorial dogsbody, I went to work as a publisher's editor with the Books for Pleasure group. I spent a couple of years there. Then, when I managed to sell a story which had been published as a serial in New Worlds to an American publishing company, I decided it was worth taking the risk of starting out as a freelance.

PETER: Did you find this tough?

JOHN: Yes, it was indeed; but for someone starting out today, I would say it would be even tougher.

PETER: Could you say something about your working methods?

JOHN: My prime working method is that when I start work on a project, everything else stops. I turn up late for meals, put down the bell-off button on the telephone, and keep going. I like to organise my day so that I deal with my morning correspondence, read the paper over breakfast, walk down the road to the post office, settle down to the typewriter at eleven or half past, and work through most of the rest of the day. If possible, what I like to do is break off at a juncture where I have fixed in my mind what I'm going to say next. Occasionally this will involve me in working into the small hours of the following morning. I don't go to sleep on what I'm doing until I'm absolutely certain that I've broken off at precisely the right point.

PETER: Do you plan a novel out in advance, on paper, before actually writing it?

JOHN: It depends on the complexity of the story I have in mind.

PETER: How about Stand on Zanzibar?

JOHN: Well, that was a book on which I worked uninterrupted for the longest time of all my books - five months from starting to make notes through to wrapping and mailing the final draft. But what counts is not the time spent at the typewriter, because any efficient copy typist can turn out more pages in a day than I can. What counts is how long has been spent on planning the book in advance. In the case of Stand on Zanzibar, it was certainly more than two years between the germination of the idea and the time I actually set to work on it.

LISA: Stand on Zanzibar starts with a quotation from Marshall McLuhan's Gutenberg Galaxy and his ideas must have contributed to the style of it. How far do you go along with McLuhan's ideas?

JOHN: McLuhan had some invaluable insights, most particularly his description of the printed book as the first indefinitely-reproducible object - i.e., the first example of mass production. His comments concerning the transition from oral wisdom to written wisdom, which remains effectively unaltered by the passage of time, similarly strike me as very accurate. Like virtually everyone else who has tried to make sense of our chaotic situation, though, he does tend to over-generalise his conclusions. I can't say I admire everything he has written for just that reason. One thing above all which strongly conditioned my thinking when I was drafting Stand on Zanzibar was his remark to the effect that between one Monday's paper and the next there may be nothing in common except the masthead.

LISA: In this book you carry out the idea of the McLuhan 'mosaic', so far as it is possible in an 'obsolete' medium - the book - but is this not a paradoxical situation?

JOHN: Stand on Zanzibar's opening is structured like a newspaper, not a novel. One routinely reads about ten or a dozen different subjects - if one takes a paper like the Times, Guardian or Telegraph - on the first page of the paper before turning to the back page or page 2, or wherever, and continuing the story. There is nothing paradoxical about this because...

LISA: But do you go along with McLuhan's dismissal of the book as an obsolete and confining medium of communication? Would you welcome the opportunity to be creative in the

ZIMRI INTERVIEW

electric media, such as the currently available audio-visual record-playback systems?

JOHN: I do not go along with McLuhan's dismissal of the book. I don't find it in the least confining, and it certainly isn't obsolete. Its status has changed, of course; it no longer exerts the predominant influence it used to. On the other hand, when addressing a conference on communications, Isaac Asimov defined the perfect characteristics of an information storage and retrieval system and showed that the book incorporates more of them than any alternative. I'd love to play around with audio-visual equipment; in fact, next time I have £750 to spare - not soon, I imagine - I think I'd like to acquire a Sony Video-Rover. Would anyone who has access to one care to let me borrow it for a month or two and find out if it's as much fun as one would imagine it to be?

PETER: Do you have a lot of trouble starting a book, breaking the ice?

JOHN: I don't, but I'm sometimes very much afraid that the reader may. What I like to do is to get an opening for a book that will grab the reader by the scruff of the neck, and drag him into what I want to say next. If one can achieve that, one can be pretty well certain the reader will follow through to the end.

PETER: Do you prefer writing short stories or novels?

JOHN: Novels, definitely. I used to write a great many short stories; in fact in one issue of Ted Carnell's *Nova* magazines I appeared three times, which was how I came to acquire two unwanted pseudonyms. But what seems to have happened to me over the years is that my understanding of how a story is put together has expanded to the point where I consciously have to discipline myself into writing in shorter lengths, purely as an exercise so that I don't lose touch with it. Additionally, there's a financial incentive - hour for hour investment invested, it seems more profitable for me to write a novel than to write the equivalent wordage in the short story form.

PETER: Are you writing any short stories now?

JOHN: Very few; if I do three or four in the course of a year, it's an exceptional year.

PETER: You've written a lot of thrillers, and your sf often has a thriller-like framework. Do you prefer writing this kind of thing?

JOHN: What I'd say to that is, I like to write the sort of books that I enjoy reading; and I enjoy reading well-written thrillers as much as I enjoy any kind of fiction. There's a certain overlap between my sf and my thrillers, as you say. I think this is largely due to the fact that I like, wherever possible, to have a strong narrative line with a lot of action to sustain the story, rather than relying purely on the internal reactions of the characters. I have written very few novels which depend primarily for their impetus on emotional changes going on within the characters, unless these have been brought about by the impact of external circumstance.

PETER: What's your attitude to experimental writing?

JOHN: I keep remembering the time when my American colleague Lester Del Rey took me to task at an sf convention in America for having used the term experimental during the course of a talk I was giving there. He came up afterwards and said, 'Look, John, a successful experiment is not called an experiment, it is termed an advance.' In this sense, I feel that what experimental writing I have undertaken has been experimental in terms of what I personally have done before, and not necessarily in terms of writing generally.

PETER: By your standards which of your books have been experimental?

JOHN: Well, books going back as far as 13 years now - such as *Squares of the City* - would have to be termed experimental in terms of my own work. When I wrote *Squares* I decided to see if I could actually plot a novel on the moves of a world championship chess game - and I managed it; it took me about 18 months on and off. But one could say that even some of my most conventional looking books, like *Quicksand*, were experimental for me because I was tackling a different aspect of the craft than anything I'd attempted before.

PETER: To what degree are you concerned with characterisation?

JOHN: There is nothing more important for anybody writing fiction.

PETER: How about sf, would you say that's a special case?

JOHN: It's a special case within a very limited definition. That's to say, if you were trying to create generally well-rounded characters in the context of a future society which has not yet come into being, it would be a tour-de-force if you managed to bring it off. The fact that it has been done is a beacon and a guiding light for anybody tackling any sf theme. It's very easy to have ideas; sf has by and large been a fiction of ideas. But simply to dramatise these ideas with cardboard cutouts is not good enough, because so many people have tackled ideas which fall under the sf heading with the full expertise of the contemporary novelist. I'm thinking of, in our own day, Kurt Vonnegut and Anthony Burgess; in the last generation, Aldous Huxley and R.C. Sherriff. They brought to bear on sf ideas the full range of novelistic technique which was available in their respective days. For an sf novel or short story to succeed today, I think it's incumbent upon the author to be prepared to be measured by the finest standards available. Because if a writer sets himself limited targets he is for ever going to command a limited audience and - with perhaps one or two exceptions - will never really feel satisfied with what he is doing. He'll never feel that he's realised his potential.

PETER: Would you say most characterisation in sf is adequate?

JOHN: No.

PETER: Who are you thinking of in particular.

JOHN: There is a celebrated dictum known as Sturgeon's Law, which you may possibly have heard of. It says that 90% of sf is rubbish because 90% of everything is rubbish. I wholeheartedly concur.

PETER: You've devoted several books to what might be called ecological themes, such as *Stand on Zanzibar*. Do you feel a need to communicate the fact that we may be in danger, from pollution, overpopulation, etc?

JOHN: While I'd hate to think that any of my books were being taken as preachy or didactic, I do feel very strongly that if somebody is going to write about the future, he must logically have a vested interest in there being a future for him to write about. And since it looks at the moment as if we are putting ourselves in danger from two opposite ends of the scale, both with a bang and with a whimper - as by blowing ourselves up in a nuclear war or by poisoning ourselves back to the subhuman condition - it seems to me that it is advisable, if not necessary, for an sf writer to tackle these as being the major pre-occupations of persons currently concerned with the future.

In the 1920s and 1930s the big questions were, basically, derived from the hard sciences - can we send a man to the moon, can we split the atom? Now we know we can do both those things. The one question that remains, and which is perhaps more significant than any question that has ever been asked in the whole of history, is: why, if we are so smart, aren't we clever? Why can we go to the moon and yet not live together in a sane society? Essentially, our ingenuity has outrun our simple competence, and I'm afraid it takes more of an effort of imagination than I can contrive these days, to escape awareness of that while I'm working on an sf story.

PETER: So your attitude is pessimistic?

JOHN: What I usually say is that I'm a pessimist in my head, but an optimist at heart.

PETER: You have to believe in a future?

JOHN: I'd hate to imagine that I belong to a non-viable species.

PETER: Do you pay a lot of attention to criticism of your work?

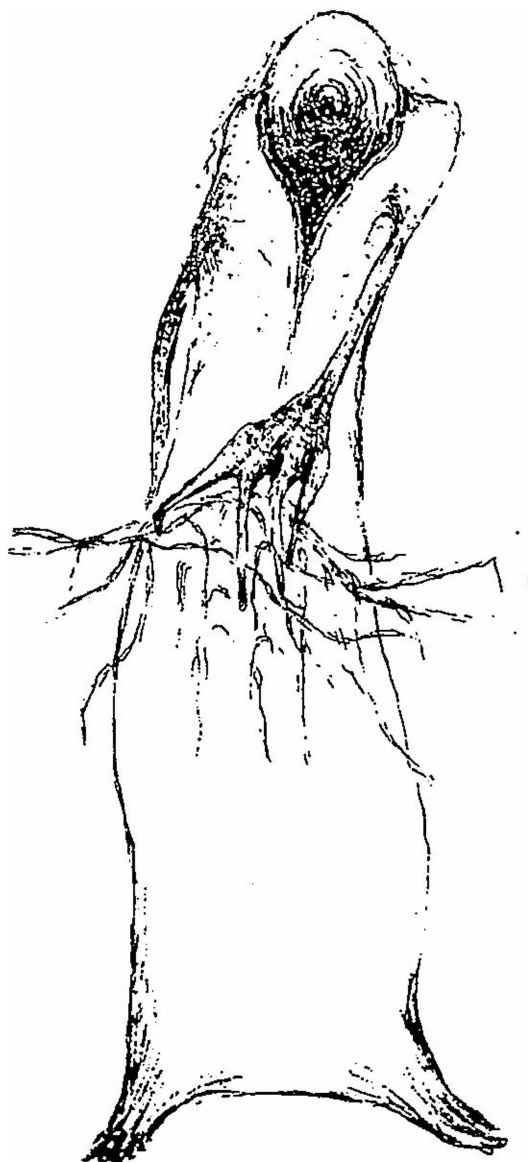
JOHN: A great deal, provided that the person who is criticising is somebody whose judgment I can respect and with whom I can carry on what the Americans would call (he puts on a stage American accent) a 'meaningful dialogue'. One of the nice things about going to sf conventions, which is a privilege more or less reserved, I think, to sf writers, because no other field has attracted this kind of enthusiasm, is that one can be walking around the lobby in a convention hotel and a total stranger will come up and say not only, 'Hey Mr Brunner, I liked that book', which is very good for the ego and gives one the charge necessary to carry one through the next year's effort, but also, 'Why, in such and-such a book, did you do so-and-so?' This forces a questioning of one's approach to the subject matter, and a reevaluation of one's technique. It's a warning sign when somebody asks me, 'Why did you do so-and-so?' Next time I have a similar problem I'll think out another way of tackling it, because somebody who is obviously intelligent and fairly widely read has failed to get the point I was trying to put across. It's very educational.

PETER: You've published so many books, (at the last count, over 70), you must presumably dislike a lot of them now?

JOHN: I wouldn't disown anything I've done except the book I sold while I was still at school. Over the course of the years, when the rights reverted to me in a book with which I was not satisfied when I first wrote it, if I've still enjoyed the story I've revised the book, expanded it, improved the dialogue and the descriptions, generally tried to bring it up to the sort of standard I would wish to be judged by.

PETER: Could I ask why you write, apart from financial considerations?

JOHN: That's not really a fair question! Put it this way: if I didn't enjoy writing, I wouldn't do it; if I didn't make a living by it, I'd do far less of it. I suppose there are two basic reasons for any kind of creative action, and in most people who do anything from writing to needlework the two poles co-exist. One reason is out of a sense of fullness and completeness that you want to share with other people, and the other is a sense of incompleteness in yourself that you want to compensate for by a creative act. There have been some people who exhibited one or other pole; I'm told, for instance, that Franz Schubert



Bozena Wahl



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led a very happy life indeed, and wrote his music simply out of the joy of his heart. On the other hand one looks at Shakespeare, and sees that in a sense he was writing to complete himself as a result of being forced into a marriage that effectively failed, and being uprooted from his home. These two poles, generally speaking, co-exist within one individual; you can't draw a hard and fast dividing line.

PETER: Have you any regrets looking over your career to date?

JOHN: Regrets... yes. No - regrets might not be the correct way of phrasing it.

PETER: Or do you wish you'd written certain books in another way?

JOHN: I've sold a lot of half-baked books which could have benefited from being left on the shelf for another couple of months, and then completely rewritten. What I mostly wonder about is - well, I suppose it's tempting for an sf writer to speculate about parallel worlds. I sometimes wonder what would have happened to my career if *The Squares of the City* had been published in the year I wrote it, rather than five years afterwards. I sometimes wonder what would have happened to my career if I had managed to find a publisher for a book called *Manalive*: I was the only working writer who went all the way through CND in its palmy days from local group level right up to the national executive, and I did a 150,000 word novel based on my experiences. It's not so much a question of regrets as being frustrated by outside circumstances. Basically, no, I should not regret anything because, after all, I have done what very few people are fortunate enough to do - that is fulfil an ambition conceived in childhood, at the age of nine, and actually turn it into a career.

LISA: Which of your contemporary writers do you particularly admire, and why? Which do you condemn and why?

JOHN: I admire those writers who combine versatility with exceptional craftsmanship. Anthony Burgess, from this standpoint, would have to be at the head of my list. I also admire those writers who seem to achieve with ease what I personally find very difficult - not because I believe they find it easy, but because they manage to make it look easy: James Tiptree Jr., George P. Eliot, Roald Dahl. I admire those writers who continue to offer extraordinary new comments on the world at an age when one might predict they'd be content to rest on their laurels: Fritz Leiber, for one. And I admire those who can persuade me, while I'm reading, to accept a world which I know perfectly well to be absurd, illogical, and incredible: Philip Dick is the star example.

I won't answer the second part of the question. I now and then have reason to condemn a particular book, and do so by giving it an unfavourable review. I decline, however, to condemn any writer who shows the least glimmer of talent on a once-for-all basis. Authors whose work does nothing whatever for me as a reader are often very nice people when you meet them.

LISA: You have a penchant for a stylish mode of dress - especially at conventions. Is this a conscious projection of your ego?

JOHN: At present I am wearing a three-year-old Marks & Spencer shirt, and a five-year-old M&S sweater, and a pair of M&S trousers whose age I forget but which are paint-smudged because I wore them when doing up the study and

which have a number of straggly threads sticking out partly because of the cat's claws and partly because of the thorns in the garden. Oh yes - and the summer-before-last's pair of crossover sandals. You want me to turn up to conventions dressed like this? Come off it. In the course of my ordinary life I have no call to be smart; going to a con is a chance to put on some rather more elegant gear than usual. Someone who has to go regularly to an office, or travel and meet people as a salesman does, wouldn't feel the same way, surely?

LISA: You have complained over the years of editorial censorship and interference with your books. Have these impositions lessened?

JOHN: Yes, but it took a lot of digging in of the heels before I managed to improve the situation.

LISA: What are you working on at the moment?

JOHN: I'm doing a *Book of Brunner* for DAW, to go with the ones they already have for Frank Herbert and Phil Dick and so forth.

PETER: In conclusion, what advice do you give to beginning writers today?

JOHN: Well, there's a classic story of how John Steinbeck was invited to an American university to address a writing class. He wove on to the stage, slightly late, having suffered some of their hospitality. He looked out over the audience and said, 'How many of you want to be writers?'. Dutifully every hand went up and he said, 'What the hell are you doing here?' and walked off. That sums up my own point of view: there is only one way to prove that you want to be a writer and that is to write. And by that I mean go through all the boring drudgery, the mechanical motions involved in getting out a story in publishable form. Even though it may involve countless rewrites, or sitting at home when you'd rather ring up that bird you met at last Saturday's party. Regardless of all that, if you've got it you will stick to it.

You also have to learn to pay attention to detail. In November 1972 I was invited to the University of Kansas as guest novelist in residence, and had to tell quite a large number of students what was wrong with the scripts they put in as story assignments in their writing class. The first thing I had to do was - so to speak - hold the scripts under their noses and point to all the things they should have spotted were wrong themselves, which they shouldn't leave for an editor to discover. Because if an editor looks down a page and instantly sees half a dozen things wrong - sloppy punctuation, bad spelling, sloppy layout, vague phrases when a precise phrase was called for - that is the way in which you get the script put straight back in the return envelope.

Attention to detail, persistence, and above all, a sense of craft - these are the three things I would recommend to any writer. It's no good expecting to perform a brain operation, to swim or ride a bicycle or cook a Cordon Bleu meal, without a lot of practice. I get thoroughly turned off by people who don't expect to go through a tough apprenticeship on their way to becoming writers.





"I can well imagine a perfectly healthy society
in which nobody reads poetry. I cannot imagine
a healthy society in which nobody writes poetry."

Stefan Thomerson

Max
Noiprox

Rewards of Celibacy

No clap
no itch
no syph
no crabs
no sap shared
no living rhythm
no disturbing love for another
no disquieting zest
no spiritual fruition.
fruition

Only the nauseous, compulsive
repulsive love
of power-seeking SELF,
usually called God.
Never admitted, never understood
never felt, never witted, withering
into the Never-never land of total sterility
and only fit, you acerbic old boffin,
for lime kiln or coffin.

Most of us

Most of us
want the impossible
We also want the possible.
Most of us
are incapable
of living with
the impossible
and certainly not the possible.
Who could you live with ?

Don't try to answer.

The Mirror

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
biggest liar of them all.
Look into my lying eyes;
look back at me without surprise.

Mirror, mirror, on the wall,
sly corrupter of them all.
What can there be of truth in you
with a mere two-dimensional view ?

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
why insist on looking tall ?
The mercury behind your glass
cannot tell what's coming to pass.



Mark
Burke

Not yet

You sent the children packing,
Let them play their heart-felt games.
Somewhere, two diamonds rest,

Not yet, not yet...

I watch the weathers of you,
Clear skies, tempests and fog -

Why are we so much like children?

Obeying rules secretly named
My fog in answer calls
Its hide-and-seek again.

Shocked Faces

Were they embarrassed by those poems?

The non-discoverers are very strange -

It is good for their survival
That they should be equipped
With the same powerful weapons
That we too possess

... All pointing in the wrong directions.

on both sides of the horizon

i live my working days
in a strange looking glass country -
i can't make social calls,
upon reflection
it is an elsewhere that i step from,
i'm just out on parole.

reminding myself,
reminding myself,
that things are the wrong way round
when i am here.

perhaps that's why i can unleash impossibles,
turning them from your hooks
to eat real grass -

both landscapes shift:
the trouble really starts when i get back.

just by chance

yes, i am in the landscape -
find where i'm hiding in the drawing,
it's like a comic game.

i learn from the ways you keep on looking,
like all these paths i chance to take
you come on me at random -

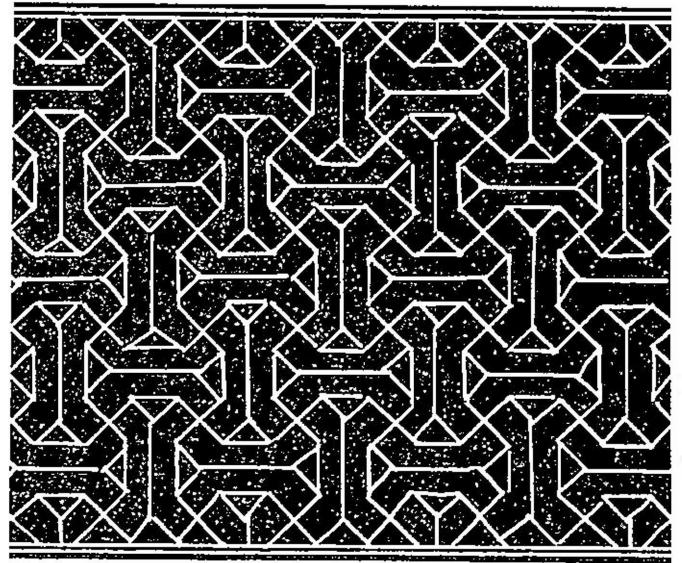
it's as you wish it.

i am the tinker of my ballads,
your irish travelling man.

JO WITHISONE

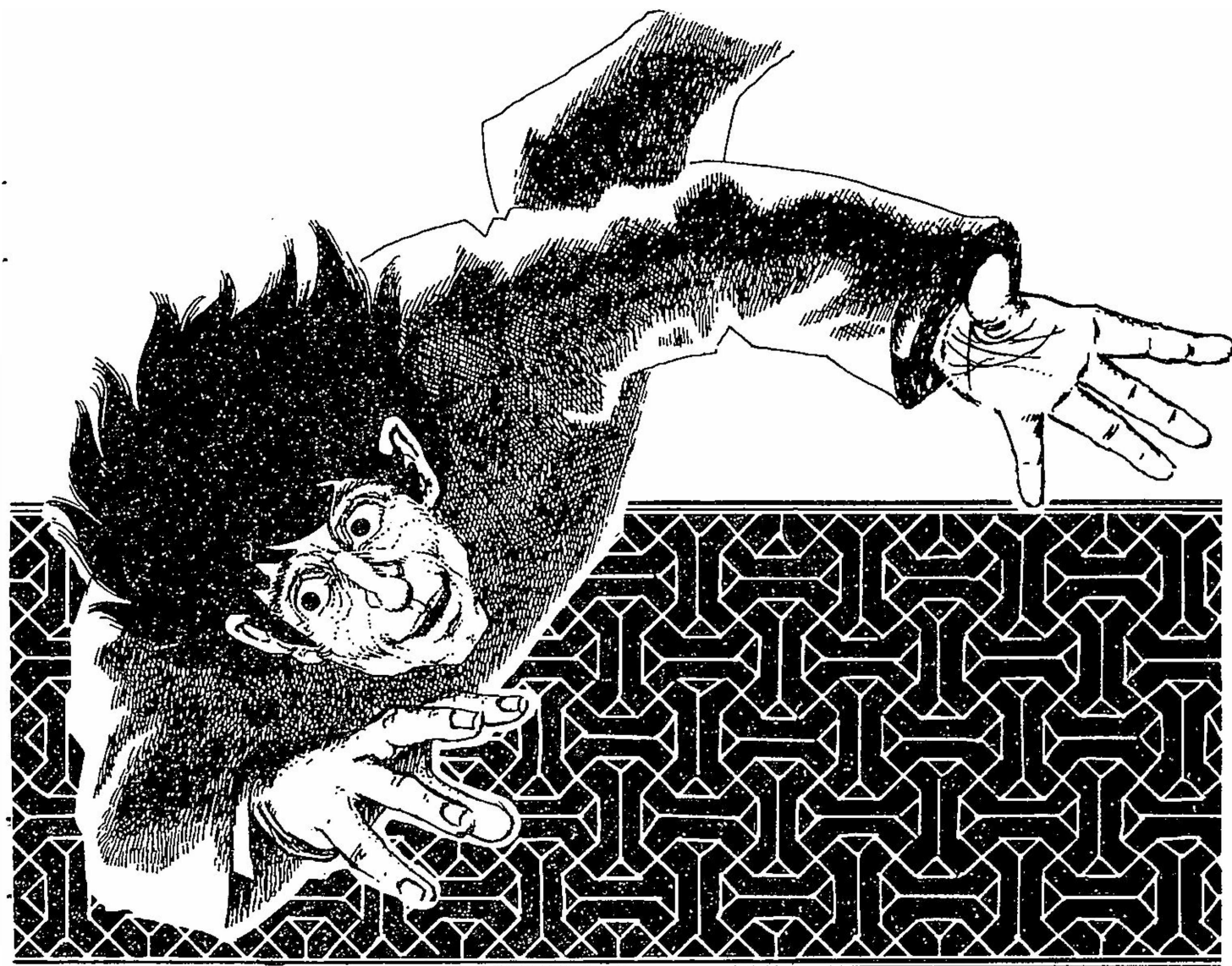
I was watching the television in the hotel lounge. People kept coming in and going out. Their sole purpose was to cause me a great deal of irritation - or so it seemed. Because I was seated near the door everyone came up to me. They asked about the film. The title of the film was 'Welcome, Birds!' Something about bird-houses, the spring, starlings...

The first one was a small boy. He asked politely "Pardon me, do you know the title of this film?" "Welcome, Birds!" I answered. He didn't hear. I repeated the title. He didn't ask again and went to find himself a seat somewhere. Meantime someone else was whispering in my ear, the same question. "Welcome, Birds!" I said. "The what?" insisted the voice quietly. "Birds", I said, "birds." "What do you mean, birds?" calmly. I in my turn asked the voice to go away, just as calmly. The owner of the voice looked at me as though I had offended him, but he did not go away. Then an old lady walked up to me. It isn't nice to be impertinent to old ladies. I collected myself. Filling my lungs with air I said: "Welcome, Birds!" "I'm not joking" the old lady told me. "Nor I", I answered. "Of course you are", insisted the woman indignantly. "No." "How silly", she said. "Please lady, leave me alone!" I shouted. "Moron" she threw at me and went away. No sooner had she gone when two youths attacked me demanding to be told the same thing. I didn't say "Welcome, Birds!", this scene could end only one way - badly for me. I got up and left the room. Outside the door an old man bumped into me and said: "Ah, you were in there, what's the film they're showing?"



THAT WAS





YESTERDAY

We were separated by wallpapered quilting. I heard when Rynner coughed and how he laughed when he was reading some amusing book. Sometimes he laughed for days; with short intervals during meal-times. Clearly the book was very funny. He would knock on the quilting and invite me to join him, saying that it was good to laugh together. We sat on his bed and laughed, tears streaming down our faces. We laughed so much that the water-jug shook and splashed water on the table. I couldn't laugh too long because it caused a spasm in my throat, so I left and returned to my own room, promising myself each time never to repeat the performance. And now, as I lay down, the spasm in my throat easing away, Rynner started laughing and calling me again. He called two or three times more. I pretended to be asleep.

Then suddenly... he burst in through the quilting and flew over me in the air, shaking with laughter. He went into the wall and out again, then soared into the ceiling; in and out laughing all the time. Then as calmly as you please he dived into the floor, came out again and jumped through the window, disappearing from view. His interminable laughter reached me from the street below.

I pulled a blanket over my head. It was all very strange.

I pulled the blanket over my head and sat under it completely motionless, except for my knees which began to shake. Rynner called me from behind the quilting.

I didn't answer.

He called again.

I didn't answer.

"Serious!" he called, "Are you asleep?"

"I'm not coming in" I answered.

"Idiot!"

"If you say so", I said deafly.

Rynner's funeral was held on the following day. He lay in the coffin with a smile on his face. His colleagues said farewell to him with a small tuneless band. There were speeches at the cemetery. They praised him. Said what a pity it was that he was dead. His wife cried. His sons stood around the grave shifting from foot to foot, and staring.

And in the morning Rynner called me again from his room. Again he was laughing at something. I was surprised because he died yesterday. I went in to see him; he was sitting on his bed reading a book - and laughing.

"But you died", I told him.

"That was yesterday", he said smiling calmly.



lisa i conesa

about friendship

The most difficult
thing
that ever happened to me
is to live
in your time and your friendship
Because
I know
and maybe because
I haven't a clue
what
you are thinking about
I can tell you so many truths
about yourself

I think you accurately
or so completely deafly
That's why I know you
to the very last tone
We must play at being ourselves
or
reversely
mortally seriously
celebrate life

There are days
when I can't contain myself
within myself
because I don't know how
to be a mathematical example

Don't demand commonsense
from imagination
nor ask logic from my dreams
Be human

save me from myself

about jealousy

You are a warden of time.
You smile at me, you stroke my hands,
but your eyes and brain are forever putting me on trial.
You adjust my shawl, so tenderly and forcefully,
as though you were already tying a knot around my neck.
Your memory steals my every word,
because in me you see a skilful acrobat,
bouncing on the line of your mental arena.
You cultivate jealousy in the flower-beds of suspicion
saying: "I can show you
a faithful picture of improbability."
But it's an illusion... There are many portraits,
we all change in the presence of the other
like colours which are dependent on their background.

I suffer from being myself. Close your eyes,
Perhaps I'll return to your good health.

My Magic Castle on the Enchanted Mountain

My magic castle is filled with absurdities
only victims are allowed here
good health and vigour shackle my conscience
my safety-belt is broken
& everything that happens here has the quintessence of fantasy
as created by the greatest of poets
living death exists only within the undead

(Deucalion son of Prometheus
husband of Pyrrha escaped the flood
then walked throwing stones behind him
which became men)

It was said that I am extravagant
paid for my bread with words
cut bread with words
Thus came fulfilment
soundlessly: the beginning of sacrifice

Love: is an unfinished human being
noticed Paul Eluard
(I think he was sick at the time)

And I who love when shall I reach the end of
freedom if from Pandora's box
I took out the best plague
a heart

"You, Pablo, and Igor!"

Flaubert was his Penelope

he searched for him in the white sheets of Provence
in the valleys of Umbria
on the tabletop terraces of the Metropolitan Opera in New York

in the distance the sea threw out wave after wave
Flaubert
tiredly bending over Madame Bovary

Impotency or an invocation
--- the pleasure of inactive observation
as
sweat and whining
swam down Gustave's arms
slowly and laboriously.

John
Nielsen
Hall

steve
sneyd

Mersey Sleep

A hard days night travelling,
To see your murky sky,
And waters,
You port of the silent ships.

I've come in pursuit of money,
That can't buy me love,
And requiring work,
Eight days a week still remembering,

Boys in collarless jackets,
Feeling fine with bass guitars
Blowing the plaster down,
Head in hand, face to the wall.

Pity me, lonely guitar boy,
So very scared that she loves you standing there,
wondering just when,
A golden oldie becomes a revived 45.

a triumph of artifice

to revive aeons-deepfrozen mammoth
out of far waste Yakutia

by gibberish-seeming abracadabra
of ions retrace life force

& drag kicking back into monster

yes clever

but what made the product richly
profitable was how the lumberer

(Lazarus, the showman called him,
natch)

was taught with kicks and prods to

pick up pencils with those mighty
tusks and trunk

human nature after all

even with women there is
no point in being magnificent unless

somewhere along the line they fuck
even if only coldly

A Toast to Craftsmanship

'Always', the prophet said,
stoned among the glasses dead around
the back room of the 'Venus Arms' -

'Always you must attempt to write as if
by accident of fire-proof safe, say,
harbourage through the firestorm,
your words alone will happen to survive
the coming cataclysm -
and so must stand alone in their own right
a beacon for confused, debased and groping
lost survivors, those Nairod Yargs who
grimace unaware
at the reflections of
their snarling matted faces in
the last and worshipped parking meter's gleam -

remember then, as cratered yet majestic and far-
seen as the High Moon,
each word you write must be in every sense a requiem
for the not yet but quickly dead, and all they did
and all you are -

now before it's too late!

his spittle spattering the jelly round his pork
pie's rim and scrawling nest of manuscripts,
so desperate to make his point he seemed

trying hard not to yawn, & wondering when
the juke would come back on,
his audience peered around in the dim light,
each furtively attempting to find out
if the one truly lovely girl in there that night
had really gone home yet - so soon -
before the last pint gave courage to chat her up -

and wondering if she'd gone alone
as she had come.

Outside, the walls re-echoed with
the landlord crying 'Time'

It has not pleased so many, but
from his fat smile come gathering the dead -
at least it seems that time still pleases him.

THE TOUCH OF A VANISHED HAND

ROBERT P. HOLDSTOCK

Thank God for Gable's hands.

A blind man once wrote that in the holding of hands there is an awareness of self existence. The blind man's name was Andre Goriot and he lived in exile on the seventh world of Sirius.

I set down on Sirius 7 in my youth and found the blind man in his self-contained installation, a small, almost featureless construct, set well in at the base of a cliff. He held my hands and talked of what he had learned about perception and isolation. I was bored and tried to keep my murmurings inaudible, but at the time my throat recorder was new to me and an irritating static sent tingling fingers of skin sensation down my chest. Concentration was difficult to maintain. The blind man was just so much boredom, suffered by my adolescent self only because what he told me would be of use in my level one dissertation.

He held my hands for all the time I was with him and I never recovered from the intimacy of the contact. The very touch of a man's hands thereafter made me shiver and recoil. I wore gloves perpetually and doggedly declined to shake hands in greeting or at an introduction.

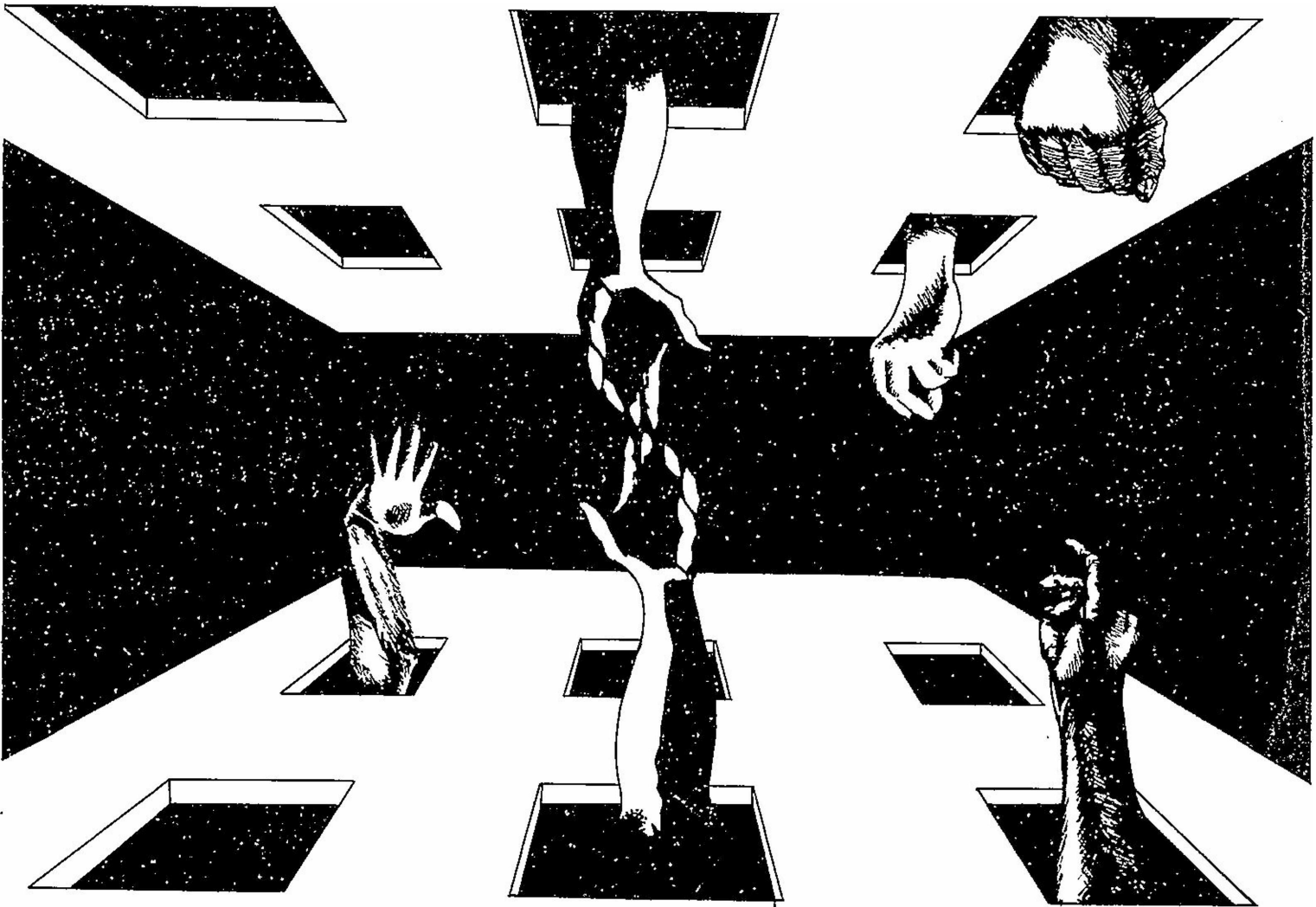
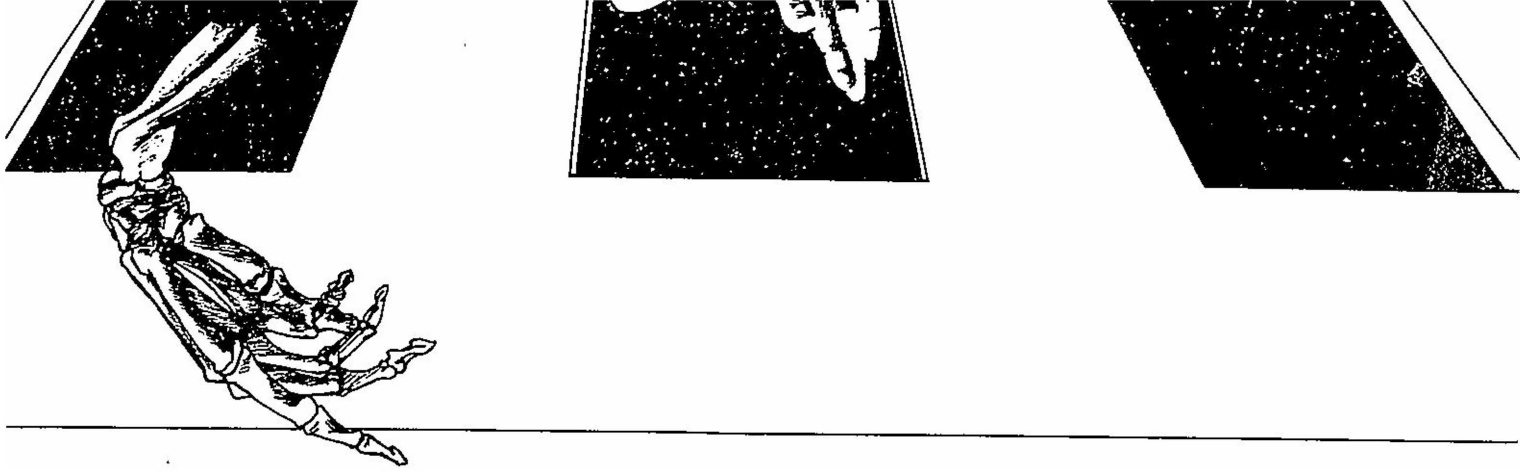
It became so unnerving, the physical revulsion to a hand's touch that I underwent corrective psychotherapy. It was not a recourse to which I referred myself willingly. The effect of deep space upon fairly ordinary psychoses has been the subject of thousands of level two and three dissertations. And still the surface has been no more than scratched. An unexpected linkage in my brain resulted in an essentially simple piece of corrective therapy having an effect on my sexuality. Essentially, my drives reversed.

I had no regrets. Why should I have had? With my new motivations and interests I was content; as content as I had been with my old.

Later there was a man called Christopher Gable who had never heard of Goriot. I met him over dinner at the status-B Eurasian club, of which I was a member on nineteen mapspace worlds. Gable had travelled much. In the lines on his face I read of great loss. In the way he talked I saw a certain lacking of identity. Perhaps the two things were related, but I never found out.

Gable was middle-aged and his blonde hair was cut above his ears in a very conservative style. He towered over me in height, and yet his clothes hung loose and creased upon his frame, and when he walked he seemed ill at ease with motion.

When I mentioned Northern Europe he was immediately interested and confirmed that he came from Sweden, although that had been more than a decade in his past. I heard, then, the Scandinavian lilt to his interling. He had already noticed the unshakeable American accent in my own voice, and I spent a while telling him of my brief and pointless participation in the Sino-American war of '78. I had been made prisoner near the beginning of the fracas and had been interned in a small camp that stretched below the ruins of the Bridge Monument in a part of the prison city that had been San Francisco. My Anglo-French status had been denied me, despite my shouting (they weren't prepared to believe that a European would have volunteered so quickly to come into the war: since we only have to do three months military service I thought to get mine over with as quickly as possible. Surely the first three months of a war is safe enough? I didn't understand war) and I had been



branded as a North American and interned with several locals who taught me much of American cynicism. We made gravity nets by the waters edge, and some of them chose to drown, but most of us dreamed of faraway worlds, and the freedom of space.

That had been a long time in the past, and the hurt and frustration of those sordid years in confinement had long since passed away.

We turned the conversation towards the arts, and towards the scientific arts, and found a common interest in holospan and mobiloforms. Returning to his apartment that same evening I was astonished at the array of original art forms he possessed. Many had been executed by his own hand. The walls were covered with mobiloforms, mostly reconstructions of his earlier life; I saw people and places that fired my imagination, all moving through their ten second cycles with never tiring repetitiveness.

Over the days our friendship developed and we began to shirk work to be together, to talk over common ground and enjoy the emotions and pleasures of each others company.

Over the weeks our relationship developed into something more than friendship, and the total absence of women in the city became an irrelevancy, and Gable wondered why he had ever brooded and pined for female companionship. There was nothing we wanted or desired that we could not both supply for each other.

All this was on Rigel-9, an oxygen-nitrogen world, so distant from its primary that the sky was never blue in any terran sense, and the surface was always cold. The underground city of Voronezh basked in homeostasis, but shuddered too often for our likings to the cracking and movement of the Niner's crust as it moved before forces within our comprehension but beyond our capacity to control.

The time comes to leave Rigel nine and we go out on to the surface. The landscape of the planet has been terraformed in as much as it has been flattened. We gaze at miles of flatness, the granite-like rocks ground to sand which has blown away. The deep blue sky is star speckled, as it always is; immensely tall conoids reach into the sky at regular intervals, black in colour, splitting the wind into confused patterns of flow. These are the power houses of Voronezh and they harness the powers of wind and sun.

The roadways wind between the towers and we walk across Nine to where they cross. A hundred yards away, small and opaquely white, is the landing and despatching block; we step upon it and reach out to hold hands.

This is the way of travel and there is nothing particularly intimate in the touch. Our suits coded for our destination, the block transmits us through space in extended seconds. As we move to our goal, the third world of Bianco's Star, we feel the passage of suns and worlds and spread thin to conserve our identity. It is a sensation of disembodiment, time slows, and I know little save the touch of Gable's hands upon my own, and the excitement of our next few months together. The cerebro-tactile linkage keeps us in contact and we travel through the void as a unit. Until...

I come out of space on the third world of Bianco's Star on the heat-seared equator of the world; I stand upon the cool

white landing block and the gaping maw of a subterranean tunnel opens wide so that I might move into the equable temperature of the terran installation below.

I feel Gable's hand clasping my own and turn to him - without thinking that I should be seeing him, without realising that the grasp should have ceased to be as we landed and separated ... as we appear to have done.

Gable holds my hand and he is nowhere to be seen, I have a feeling that I shall never see him again, and as I go below, shocked and weak, I know he has been lost and will remain lost forever.

We had come to Bianco's Star to offer our artistic talents to the major art industry of the world - crystal sculpture. I sat in my small apartment for many days, harnessed to the projection headpiece, shattering a seven pound crystal in carefully directed ways, and producing nothing. My thoughts were cloudy, my emotions unpredictable but predominantly blue. The crystal lost weight, the dust filled the air, the shape changed from linear to abstract, to various meaningless forms, to a perfect feather that found some small number of admirers and earned me the credit-status to move to Earth.

Gable's touch was on my hands all the time, and I never knew if he was with me in awareness or not.

On Earth I revisited England and found peace of mind, for a while, in the roaring city of London. I hid away in Highgate, in a shack built of red brick and ordinary steel, that stood below the great Northern Flyover. The whole region was a shanty town, a lake of ruins, fire blackened houses and cracked tarmac roadways. The City rose five hundred storeys above the ancient Thames and at night the lights from those roaring megaliths made the shanty town a jungle of harsh concreted walls, and intense shadows.

This was all a vision of San Francisco, a curious reflection and reconstruction of my fears and frustrations in the months following my release from internment. I relived in agonising dreams and extended periods of unshakeable reminiscence, the exhausting trek across the continent of America, following the straggling columns of Americans all searching for their homes and families. And I, with an ocean separating me from my own security, living in dread of death before I could touch the land at Cobh or Plymouth.

The feeling of wrongness with the city grew, and with each passing day I became more uncomfortable. I talked to virtually no-one and lived a hermitic existence, eking out my resources as much as was possible. I became more and more thankful for the continual pressure of Gable's hands upon my own, but attempts to communicate with him failed.

After three weeks in London I could take the isolation no longer, and travelled to Sweden where I found Gable's birthplace. I traced his life through school and three cities, through a broken marriage and a finished career: he had taught emotive art at the University of Upsala, but his drug commitments and adolescent behaviour (he had created obscene designs out of the vone booths on the university campus) finished him as a lecturer. That had been in the early days of powerthought design, and Upsala had been the home of many of the earlier models of the projection apparatus that would later become almost a household possession. He had abused his privileged status and he had been sacked.

From the mobiloforms of Gable that I saw there, from the expression on his face, the spring in his step, I decided that the disasters of his early life had not particularly bothered him.

His wife had left him shortly before he would have thrown her out. Their contract was nearly expired anyway, and would not have been renewed because of artistic and culinary incompatibility, the most mundane of reasons for divorce in those days. Gable had moved to Stockholm and opened a breeding contract with a Norwegian 3-birther. I found his seventeen year old son living in the lake district of Jutland. He rode an air horse across the marshy ground of his inherited farm and dropped from the seat even before the sleek machine had stopped. He stared at me across a patch of reeds before turning to skim flattened pebbles across the still waters of the lake. I saw Gable in his hair, in his eyes, in the arrogance of his bearing.

"I was not greatly endeared to my father."

His voice was Gable's voice. I wanted to listen to him talk for hours, but he fell silent.

"Why did your father leave? Why did he become so depressed?"

"Why?" He laughed. He kicked at some mechanism hidden in the reeds and his lake erupted into turbulence. He stripped off his clothes and walked to the water's edge. Gable in every way. I felt my stomach knot and suppressed the desire I felt. He stepped into the waves and shouted, "I was greater than him. In every way." He began to swim and turned on his back and there was a smile of horrifying coldness upon his face. "I took his soul. I drained him. I became him... and more."

The pressures on my hands increased. Was Gable listening? I squeezed the unseen hands and felt the despair of the trapped man. I wondered in what hell Gable was existing. Was his son interested in knowing his father's fate? Should I tell him?

Gable's son did not reappear. The turbulence of the lake died quite suddenly and I assumed that the youth had come ashore out of my sight. I sat by the water's edge and after a few hours the lake seemed to shrink and the freshness of the landscape became submerged in an aura of stagnation. I searched for the son and found only ruin... a ruined farmhouse, an overgrown road, a rusty air horse, unused for many years.

A sudden terrible fear came over me and I ran from the farm, screaming. But when I reached the mainway all was normal again.

In the darkness of the night train to Boulogne, confused and cold, I felt every finger's pressure on my own, imagined I could sense the ooze of sweat in Gable's palms, as he screamed in his emptiness, threshed and struggled to regain his material existence. I sobbed, felt sick.

Under the channel, with the red lights hypnotising me as the monorail glided silently through the submarine world. Then Dover, and the smell of the continent I had just left. In Dover, by the hovercraft docks, I knew the pleasures of flesh, immersed myself in the body of a dockside bawd, and slept the night dreaming of Gable. His hands clutched desperately at my own and I awoke several times during the night to find my arms outstretched and the fingers clenching and unclenching, the bisexual figure beside me watching in consternation.

There was a moment, some little while later, when I felt my

hands touch warm, smooth flesh, and yet I sat alone on the platform of a monorail station, waiting to journey north.

I sat in the lounge of the station and closed my eyes, and it seemed my hands ran across the belly of a small but shapely woman, explored navel and pubis, and stroked the outside of her thighs for an interminable time. I sat in that dimmed light and stared at my palms, and I felt the fullness of a breast, and my finger tips touched the hard button of a nipple and then wandered again in a drunkard's walk towards the feminine apex.

Opening my awareness to the station I found it in ruins, the rails warped and useless, the station tumbledown and filled with the litter of ages, cans and the bodies of air cars. The viscera of a nation, decaying through time.

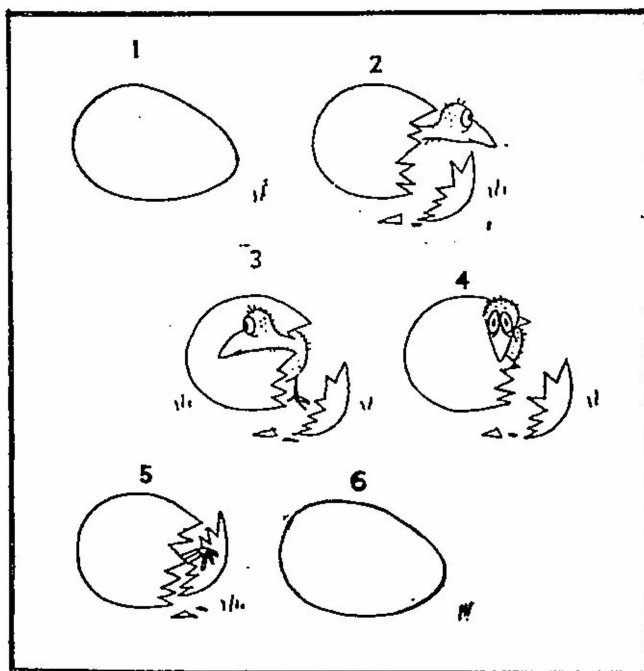
Leaving Earth, with its frightening transmutations, I jumped to Mars, but found I could not land. I moved on, dispersing through space in the direction of Centaurus. Gable's grip played a bolero on each hand and I squeezed back, reassuring him, always reassuring him. I could not make contact at Centaurus and journeyed on, dispersing even more, and I noticed that the stars were thinning, and as I came close to Sirius its glowing disc faded and became black, and Gable seemed to hesitate, as if aware of my shock.

The Universe about me was gone in a second and I recalled the events of a moment before, of standing at the platform on Rigel nine, of holding hands with Gable, of jumping...

And the dream in that drawn out moment of time between worlds, the events and shock of Gable's loss, in fact, just a sublimation of my own failure to transmit correctly.

And now Gable, on a world somewhere, alive and dreaming every night of his past and his future, and feeling me gripping his hands as I drift through a curious non-existence wondering whether a day or a million years has passed.

Thank God for Gable's touch.



Chris Priest on FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND



FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND by Brian W. Aldiss
Jonathan Cape/1973/pp184/£2.25

Some readers of *Zimri* may possibly recall that a few years ago I wrote a rapidly enthusiastic item about Ted White in *Speculation*. I hereby serve notice that any such admiration then implied is now at an end.

A few months ago Mr White published a serial version of *FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND* in his tired and emotional magazine, *Fantastic*. By this act, Mr White became a party to the book itself, lending his tacit approval to it. Indeed, Mr White went so far as to describe the book as an "important event", and as having a "compelling story". The fact that Mr White probably didn't choose the novel himself (Brian tells me that it was bought for *Fantastic* by Sol Cohen) is not really relevant; professional ethics constrain Mr White either to personal approval of the book, or to silence.

However, here is the unspeakable Mr White reviewing *FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND* in the *Chicago Literary Review* (the fact that someone like Mr White reviews in a journal with a name like that is a moral in itself): "... a dreadfully bad novel, badly plotted, badly written, badly conceived." (He says more, which I cannot bring myself to reproduce).

Now then. I come not to bury Ted White but to praise Brian Aldiss, but I decided that this was a fitting example of the kind of constraints one has to work within when reviewing in a field as closely-knit as science fiction.

I too, in a sense, am a party to *FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND*. Brian has been a good friend to me and however objective I try to be - or however objective about my review Brian tries to be - it cannot help but become something of a personal statement. Brian knows, for instance, that when I first read the book I wrote him a personal letter saying how much I'd enjoyed it, and as a review written for a magazine like *Zimri* is of necessity a friendly, less formal thing to do than, say, writing for

a newspaper, I feel constrained to support that first impression. I know Brian will read this, and my remarks are directed as much to him as to the reader; a pin pricking in a fanzine draws more blood than a dagger swung in the *Times Literary Supplement*. (Or the *New Review*, for that matter, to make an in-group joke of something to show the scar has vanished).

All of which preamble sounds as if I am preparing to reverse my original opinion, which I am not. I read the book a second time in order to write this review, and if anything I found it more enjoyable; certainly, I found the intellectual and literary aspects of the book (and one is dishonest if one denies that these are relevant to a book like this) more satisfying, more complete and totally persuasive. But more of this in a moment.

Traditionally, one must pay attention to the plot, in order to help convey the essence of the book to anyone who has so far not read it. With *FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND*, I doubt if a plot-synopsis would be of much use, for although the book has plenty of story (with a fair smattering of sex, fistcuffs, betrayals, chases, etc) it is almost without plot in the usually accepted sense.

Brian's narrative method (a more accurate description) is to place a modern man (an American ex-presidential aide called Joe Bodenland, of the year 2020) in what might be called an alternative universe of the past, where Shelley, Mary Shelley, Byron, Frankenstein and his monster all co-exist on the shores of Lake Geneva. The science fictional device Brian uses (and whatever anyone else has said, make no mistake but that this is a science fiction novel) is a thing called a timeslip, which has been caused by "impact raids" during a nuclear war. The timeslips are, in fact, rather more than just a method of getting Bodenland back to the past, for they feature regularly, and importantly, throughout the book. Once Joe has accepted his fate, and has further understood that reality and fiction have become confused, then he dons the role of avenging God that Frankenstein himself takes on in Mary Shelley's novel.

The point of this, as I see it, is Brian's understanding of the importance of Mary Shelley's *FRANKENSTEIN* not only to science fiction, but to the growth of awareness

and understanding of science in the 19th & 20th centuries. Joe Bodenland actually murders Victor Frankenstein, but then, because Mary Shelley's own plot has assumed figurative or mythic meaning, becomes impelled to pursue and eventually slay the two monsters.

If I am reading the book correctly, Brian's use of this mythic element is invoked brilliantly over and over again; the metaphors of Frankenstein's monster recur endlessly.

Furthermore, Brian's use of language is, in this book, amongst the finest to be found in modern fiction.

However, I am still in the preamble. I will certainly return to these aspects of the book, for I intend to conclude this review on a positive note. Before that, though, I feel I must mention the less positive qualities, for, specious as some of them might seem, I feel they cannot be overlooked.

FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND is a book that hints at author's haste, because although Brian has considered in great depth the literary aspects of his novel -- what I think of as the figurative or mythic content -- he has not paid equal attention to the surfaces. Or at least, he is enough of a craftsman to present his surfaces with a seeming consistency, but because his main purpose was elsewhere he has imagined less deeply those matters which are likely to be noticed by a reader like Ted White (or, I suppose, like me).

For example, I find the one central flaw -- which irritated and distracted me throughout -- was the character of Joe Bodenland himself.

Why, I kept asking myself, WHY did Brian make Joe an American? His nationality seems to have no function within the book (except perhaps in two ways, both minor: (1) it provides Joe with a social entrée to Lord Byron and (2) it could just be that as an American Joe is symbolic of a machine-oriented 21st century civilisation), and, what is more, nowhere within the book does Joe ever think, act or speak like an American.

For a start, the book itself is epistolary in form, a grand English novelistic tradition. (Joe's letters are addressed to his wife Mina; shades of Bram Stoker).

From the very beginning of the book, before Joe realises the mythic role he is to play, and is entertaining the U.S. Secretary of State, he is writing in classic, understated English prose. His vocabulary is English: he says "pokey" meaning "small" (Americans think a pokey is a gaol); he says "functioning" when an ex-presidential aide -- a traditional distorter of good English -- would say "functional".

When, from time to time, Joe's narrative does find an Americanism, in the context of the heightened, measured prose that is everywhere else, it jars horribly: when Joe describes Lord Byron as "a handsome young guy", my blood ran cold. (And the worst passage in the book -- thankfully very short -- is when Joe writes to Mary Shelley and tells her about Women's Lib and the clitoris.)

What is perhaps even more inconsistent is Joe's apparent cultural background. Far from seeming to come from the cultural desert of the White House, Joe is clearly of an English heritage.

His enthusiasms for the welfare state are tantamount to an Un-American Activity, as well he ought to know. When he lectures Percy Bysshe Shelley about automation, he talks knowledgeably about the cotton towns (wouldn't an American of Joe's stated background be much more exercised about Henry Ford?), and later, when writing a letter to Mary

Shelley to assure her that her novel will be important, Joe rattles off a list of writers, all English or European, who share with her the same concerns. I suspect someone like Joe would not have read Thomas Hardy, and almost certainly would never have even heard of George Meredith.

I won't make any more mileage out of this, but I place emphasis on it because it seemed such an unnecessary irritation. If only Joe had been stated to be an Englishman, none of this would have bothered me.

Unfortunately (and the agonies pile up), the surface cracks do not begin and end with Joe.

He finds himself in the French-speaking region of Switzerland. Fortunately, Joe can cope with the language, because he spent some time at the American Embassy in Bonn, and can speak German fluently. Quite apart from the fact that most Germans cannot understand Schweize-speaking Swiss, such an ability would be useless in towns with names like Genève, Sècheron, etc., situated beside a certain Lac Léman.

Then Brian necessarily inherits the insularities of Mary Shelley. Victor Frankenstein (a Germanic name if you please) would have French as his native tongue, as his father is a Syndic of Genève. As Mary Shelley presumably gave Frankenstein's monster a copy of Milton's *Paradise Lost* to read in English, its native tongue would be English. (It says to Joe things like: "If thou canst survive this night..."). I gave up trying to work out who would speak to whom in which language, and so, I suppose, did Brian.

Finally, I discovered several idiosyncracies of construction which were careless; I find such idiosyncracies so rarely in Brian's work, that my conclusion that the book shows signs of haste is only reinforced. One such is that much of the novel is in the form of a spoken and tape-recorded diary, and yet, when referring to his wife, Joe hopes that if she "reads" this...

Careless English, too (surprisingly enough). P.31: "Telling him to wait, I followed Frankenstein at a distance." (The "him" is a boatman, who has not been mentioned since the previous chapter). P.137: "My fear was leaving me, overtaken by curiosity." (What Brian presumably means is that curiosity was replacing fear, whereas the sentence actually implies that the curiosity was leaving faster than the fear!).

At this point, to everyone's relief, I shall cease forthwith to talk about the surface flaws; science fiction is well enough served by novels with only surface values to offer, and when in a case like this, we have a novel that is genuinely profound, one's main purpose should be with the texture.

So, in the spirit of exploring the greater qualities of the novel, let us go straight to see Brian's unique abilities at work. Here he describes the female monster that Frankenstein is building as a mate for the first:

... the uro-genital tract had been modified. The vaginal area served purely for purposes of procreation; a sort of vestigial mock-penis was provided on the thigh, from which urine could be expelled. I looked at this detail with some interest, thinking it would probably tell a psychologist a great deal about Victor Frankenstein's thought processes during this period of his engagement.

The last cool observation, coming in the middle of a horrified but factual description of the monster's construction, is a brilliant moment, of which few sf-writers

would have been capable. Here Brian touches on the essence of the soulless science of Frankenstein; with the benefit of modern hindsight, Joe Bodenland is realizing that Victor Frankenstein is mentally ill. Sensibly, though, Brian makes no meal of this; the next paragraph continues with the description. (Later, just before Joe gives Frankenstein the bullet, the latter is raving about making a third monster, to kill the other two, and then, and only then, is Victor's madness laid on the line).

If a writer of such wide talents could be said to have a central theme, I suspect the one Brian has returned to most often, and with the greatest power, has been his ability to make poetry out of science. The earliest examples of this peculiarly science fictional surrealism are to be found in his collection *THE CANOPY OF TIME*, and his current stories of the Zodiacal Planets are no less surreal for this reason. His novels too: I shall never forget the opening pages of *CRYPTOZOIC!*, with the motor-cycles revving up through the great Devonian silence. And, before I sidetrack too far, in *FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND*.

The milieu of the novel is the early 19th century, and it is one in which the three great conflicting social forces -- science, religion and technology -- were first clashing swords. Electricity had been discovered, the Biblical version of evolution was being questioned, those cotton towns Joe refers to were installing power-looms; the Miltonic religious outlook was being questioned; the poets of the day, romantic in retrospect, were forward-looking, scientific... the sf writers of the day, if you like. All this seems to me to have always been the kind of milieu at the heart of Brian's best work. Mary Shelley too, heavily influenced by Byron and, more particularly, by Shelley, also somehow absorbed these conflicts and rendered them into a scientific novel. The Victor Frankenstein Joe meets bears a slight resemblance to Shelley (although this is obviously Brian's own speculation); the monster adopts his Satanic role after reading Milton; Byron leaves lying around a first-draft poem (I cannot trace this: was this *Childe Harold*, or did Brian in his wonderful conceit actually draft a few lines for Byron?) which curiously presages the final, metaphysical pages of *FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND* itself; Victor Frankenstein "was -- in this development as elsewhere -- some decades ahead of his time" in activating his monsters with alternating current. The two books, Mary Shelley's and Brian's, become confused; why did it take Brian so long to get around to this book?

But other influences abound (and once one starts seeking, it is so tempting to find): in the final passage Joe goes in search of the two monsters, "hunting them in his own superpowered monster automobile, all-powerful swivel gun cocked and ready, and this quest in the ice of the frigid lands, and across the protean, timeslipped landscape, with the cold moving in... is this not already side-stepping Mary Shelley and venturing into Anna Kavan's universe?

I cannot recall another book of quite so many delights, if this is not a reviewer's cliché. During the sequence in the Villa Diodati (where Milton himself once stayed), the exchanges between Bodenland and the poets are examples of Brian's finest writing yet. Witty, convincing, and by the Gods so presumptuous, I suggest that this passage alone demands that the book should be read. (I also remember the willow-leaf on Mary's haunches; again, a piece of Brian Aldiss poesy that develops into a metaphor when Joe signs off his letter to Mary, p. 106).

But the symbolic structure of the novel, which I have been struggling to isolate, is for me the conclusive evidence

that this is one of the finest pieces of sf yet to have appeared.

My reading of it is this. Frankenstein's error, born of a fevered scientific ambition, was to go one better than nature. Hence he becomes a quasi-god. His monster, improved in every way except appearance and soul, is intended not to replace man, but to complement him in the way computers, engines, etc., complement modern man. What Frankenstein did not anticipate was the monster's gaining of a religious conscience, a soul if you prefer, through the reading of *Paradise Lost*. In other words, the central dilemma facing Frankenstein was the question of the moral responsibility of the scientist. This is stated explicitly in the confrontation between Frankenstein and Bodenland shortly before the end; Bodenland is playing conscience to Frankenstein:

(Bodenland): "Isn't that terrible shadow over your life enough to make you understand that you should desist from further experiments?"

(Frankenstein): "Shelley understood better than you the passionate quest for truth which overrides any other considerations in the heart of those who would open the secrets of nature, whether scientists or poets. My responsibility must be to that truth, not to society, which is corrupt."

(Frankenstein, later): "My -- my monster, if you will, learnt to talk and even learnt to read. He found a leathern portmanteau containing books. Was that my fault?"

But it is also stated implicitly throughout; the metaphors of Frankenstein's ambitions are everywhere evident.

A leader in *The Times*, commenting on the impact-raids, observes: "By seeking to control too much, we have lost control of ourselves." When Bodenland tries to sell his everlasting watch in 19th century Switzerland: "The aspirations of the society of my day were mirrored in miniature in that watch: the desire that it should never need maintenance, should never run down." Even Joe's car, nuclear-powered, is a symbol of aspired perfection.

But Brian being Brian, he cannot resist reminding us that nature will probably gain the ultimate ascendant. The nuclear-powered car becomes useless when its front wheels get stuck in a crevasse; the watch will never go wrong, but it is intended to be thrown away; even the concealed microphones that litter the gardens of Joe's home are not infallible: "I was not picking up what the children were saying very well because of the constant buzzing of bees in the jasmine -- how many secrets of state were saved by those same insects?!"

I'll close this with another piece of reviewers' tradition: the summing up. *FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND* is not Brian's best novel; that label I personally reserve for a *SOLDIER ERECT*, a book that succeeds marvellously on an altogether different level of ambition. It is, however, far and away his best science fiction novel so far. I think I cannot say more than that, except to hope that the pin-pricks of my cavils about the surface-qualities do not lump me with the frightful Mr White, with whose odious dismissal I chose to open this.

more
inconsequential
conversations
reported by
Harry
Turner



I am ALONE

IN THE studio

and the alto sax of Charlie Parker wails torrendously from the newly-installed bank of 50 drive-units in the wall-mounted loudspeaker enclosure. Lovely. Charlie's music has been one of my obsessions since first I heard him on record, way back in the days when the trad-bebop feud was raging amongst jazz fans. Before I heard Bird, jazz was simply happy-go-lucky music-making; the experience of Parker's music was an ear-opening experience and a mind-blowing revelation... Contentedly I flick the volume slide up a notch to drown the dismal thumping of protesting neighbours.

The last unison chorus fades and I realise that the desperate banging on the wall has been supplemented by a sharp rapping on the door. I investigate and find myself apologising to an indignant Jo Withisone, who has guided a wandering fan to the studio and been kept waiting on the doorstep. Introductions reveal that the wf is Joe Patrizio, with a few views to express on my non-article in the last Zimri.

- Harry, he starts the moment we sit down, you're right in saying that you don't need words to communicate - but you do need language. Maths, art, music, etc, are all languages.

- I recall that Edward Lucie-Smith once described modern art as an invented artificial language which is native to nobody, I comment, a sort of Esperanto which must be deliberately learned through hard study. I like that emotively off-putting "hard study" bit... Ted obviously intended the remark as a hard criticism of whatever he regards as "modern art", but surely it's a comment that applies to all periods and styles of art ?

- Yeah, nods Joe, as you said some critics try to impose irrelevant standards on an artist's work, and end up condemning it. However, this sometimes operates the other way. And what annoys me right up to here, is the clap-trap spewed out to "explain" a painting or a piece of music. If what you say is true - and I believe it is - the artist has used paint, music, or whatever, because what he has to say cannot be said in words. Why then, oh why, must some idiot translate the untranslatable ?

We drank to that.

- Of course, goes on Joe, as art is a language, I suppose we have got to learn it. But can we learn it ? And have the artists any right to be angry with us if we can't ?

- Not so long ago the American painter Jackson Pollack filled up large canvases with chaotic doodles that couldn't be regarded as paintings in the accepted sense. But in less

than a decade they were not only accepted, but part and parcel of the mainstream of painting.

- Well, resumes Joe, personally I feel we learn the language by this sort of absorption - looking and listening - with just a little guidance from one who knows it.

Jo decides it's time she joined in.

- That's fine if you're in an environment conducive to looking & listening, and a guide is handy when needed. Like the way we learn our own language, of course; it starts so early that later on we aren't aware of the effort that was involved, or even of the way our thinking is coloured by the in-built cultural conditioning that is part of the process. One learns the rules in a way that often leaves you unaware of rules - somehow it's all regarded as a 'natural' process. Until you start to learn another language and then the rules become obvious because they have to be consciously learned. Which is why it's best to live in a country while learning the language, rely on cultural immersion, absorption plus guidance, to achieve any sort of fluency.

- It's odd, I add to Jo's point, how people realise this so far as the spoken or written word is concerned. There's an awareness of the problem of illiteracy and an urge to tackle it. But there seems less awareness of the problem of 'visual illiteracy', and that is what I feel so concerned about.

- Let's get back to the critics explaining art to us, persists Joe. I can't accept that it can be explained because for me art bypasses the verbalising critical faculties, and goes straight into the soul - for want of a better word. I can't explain why a piece of music or a painting moves me - but there is an excuse for me; I don't know the language. But I'm pretty sure that even Harry couldn't say why a particular piece of artwork gets through to him. You may be able to explain the cleverness or originality of it, but not why it twangs your insides...

I grunt agreement.

- That's exactly why I talked around an article in the last issue but never actually got around to doing it. And probably why Terry says about the last cover design "I don't know what it is, but I like it". A comment I find at once gratifying and mystifying; was the image so obscure?

- What did start you off on it, asks Jo.

- Hard to say that in retrospect. I was intrigued by this anxious face peering backwards, with its Kafkaesque implications. It became a motif in an exercise prompted by comments made about colour printing at the Tynecon, and

an urge to try the results of overprinting three transparent dyes in screen printing. Initially it was a visual thing -- I mentally manipulated the Kafka image in terms of a basic grid of squares, with permutations of size and colour, and then it was a matter of translating it into practical terms of screen printing. It was all sorted out at a non-verbal level, and it's impossible after the event to sift out the intuitive links that related the strands of the problem - under pressure of an editorial deadline I might add. If it has to have a title by way of explanation for some folk, I guess I'd call it Portrait of K, because to me it conveys something of the unease of the fugitive that is the essence of Kafka's Trial and Castle...

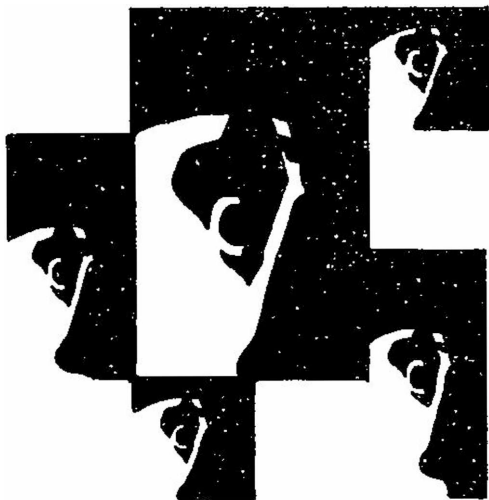
- But that's not the end of it, interrupts Jo. Lisa tells me that when mailing the last Zimri, she kept seeing the cover from different angles, and realised that the whole character changed with the viewpoint...



Turn it round so that the base of the image becomes the righthand side, and there's another eye staring at you.

- Wow, breathes Joe intrigued, The Accusers of K. Right?

- What's in a title, I grin.



(The remarks attributed to Joe Patrizio are lifted from his letter of comment; Jo Withisone's comments reported verbatim).



my

friends **ALL**

LAUGH

(hahaha!)

when I tell them that Bradford plays a vital role in the international art scene, but it's true. Though if you've not heard of the Bradford International Print Biennale and are curious to see what it's all about, you'll have to wait until July 1976 for the next one. With my current interest in screen printing, I found the exhibition both a visual delight and a stimulating demonstration of contemporary print-making.

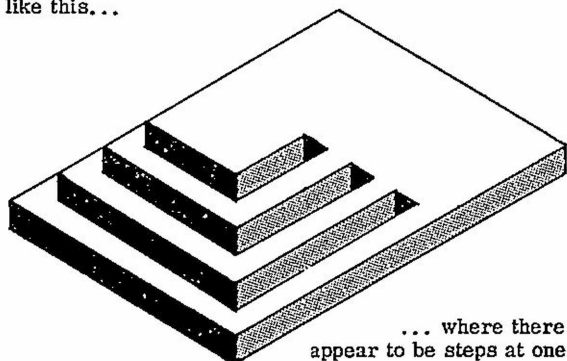
So I am full of enthusiasm when I call on Lisa. Most of her possessions seem to be piled up outside the door of the flat but on negotiating the barricade I find she is not being evicted but merely succumbed to a mad impulse to paint her flat white... all over.

With a deft dab that covers the last few square centimetres of ceiling with white satin-finish vinyl, Lisa gracefully descends the steps, puts brush and paint tin in my hands, and suggests I start in on the walls while she brews up some coffee.

- How's the screen printing project going? she asks.

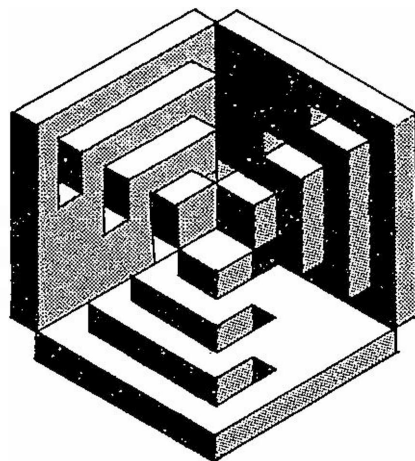
I mutter some excuse about plans being interrupted while I earn a living but admit that the visit to Bradford has sparked off a few ideas, which I proceed to daub on the unpainted part of the wall.

- Remember the flat ziggurat illusion I once drew? The one like this...

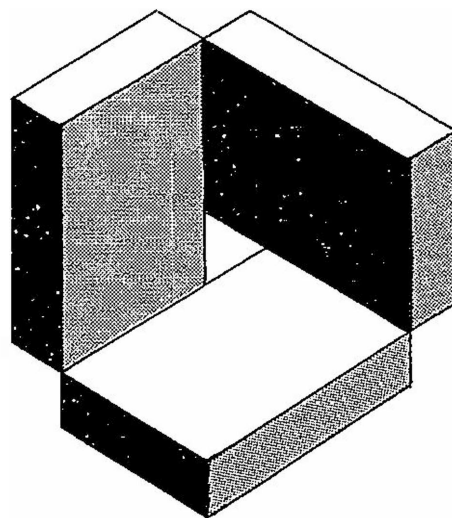


... where there appear to be steps at one

end although the whole thing is obviously only the thickness of one step. I started playing about with it, using three of the figures to form a cube shape...



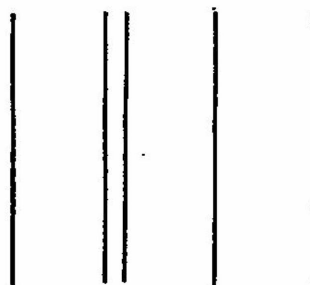
... and did a few variations, with the result that I decided to drop some of the detail to concentrate on the "pure" shape as a different illusion seemed to be emerging from these sketches. By making a "hole" in the centre of the slabs, I obtained a figure that looked 3-dimensional but obviously could not be realised as a solid object.



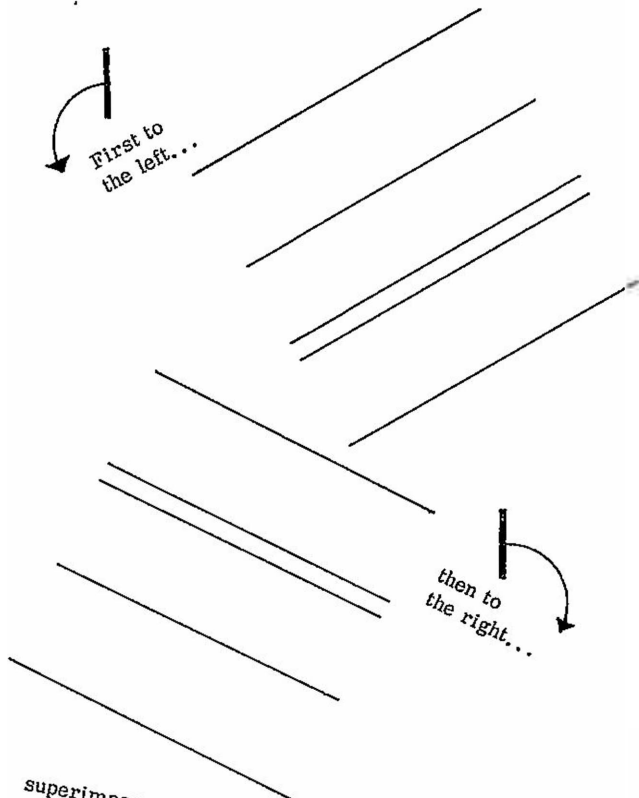
- Rubbish, says Lisa confidently; she picks up three paperbacks and tries to juggle them into appropriate positions, fails to do so, and retires baffled.

I warm to my theme.

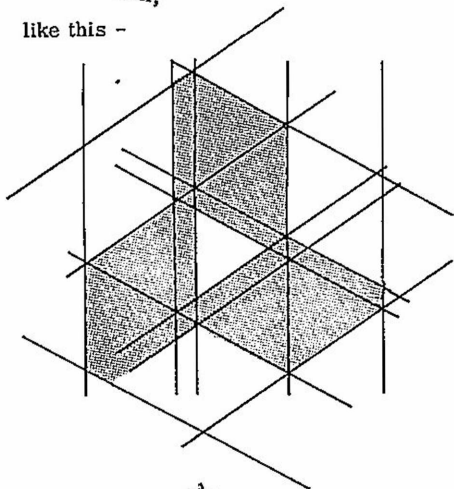
- Let's begin again on a simple basis. I draw five parallel lines, so...



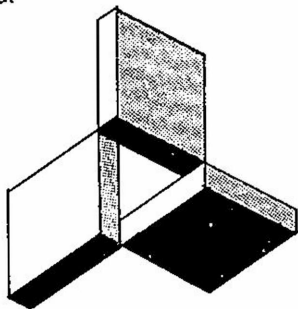
then I rotate them through 120 degrees,



superimpose them,
like this -



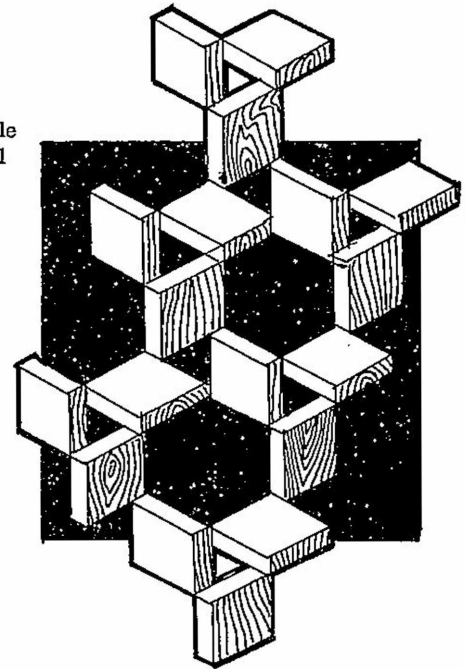
and end up with a grid,



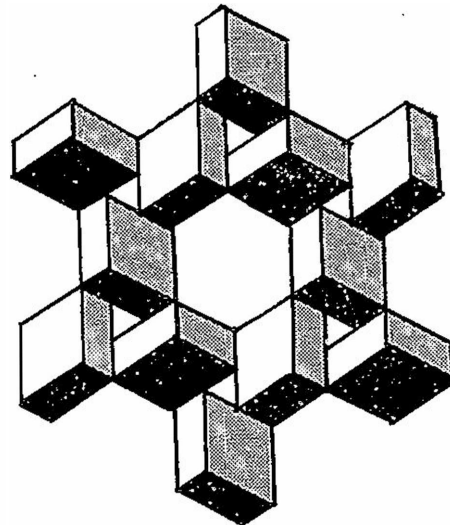
and hidden there is this shape - our "impossible" object again...

This provides us with a handy module that can be linked up in all sorts of ways, producing convincing 3-dimensional structures.

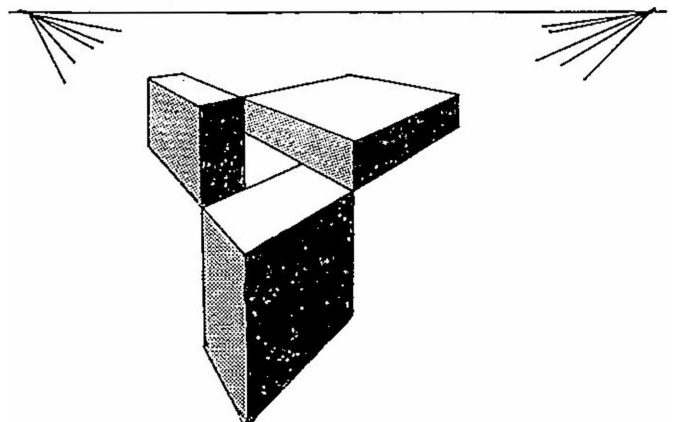
Like this
unrealisable
"Sculptural
project"



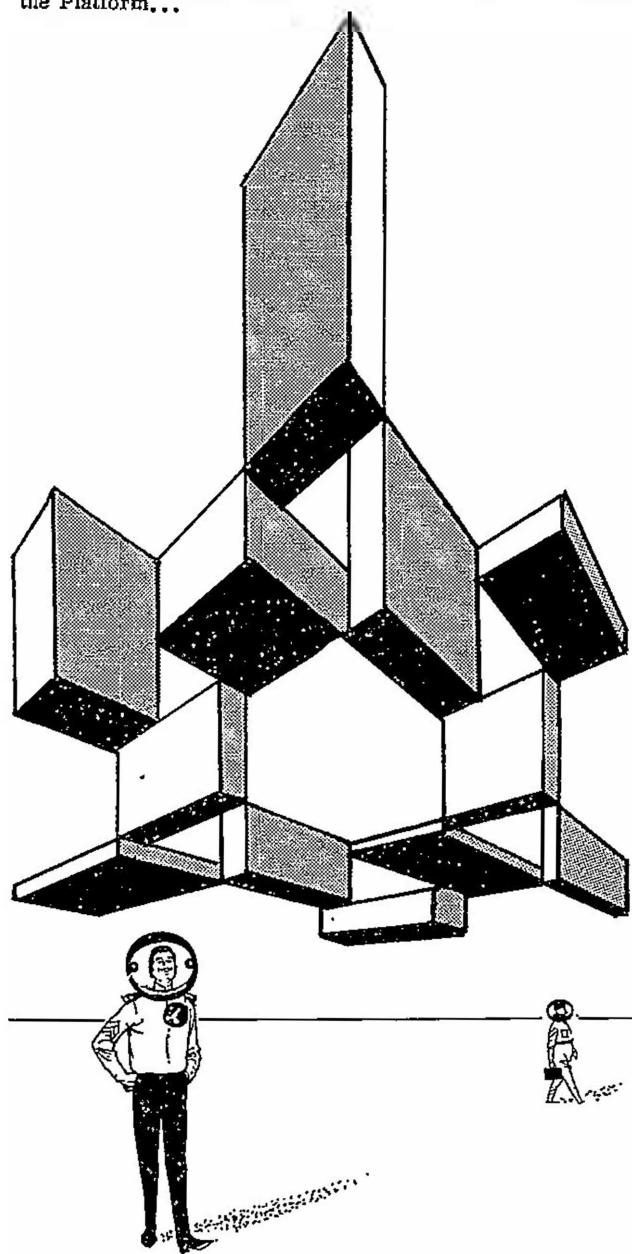
or this
"Space Platform"



Oddly enough, the rules of perspective can be applied to these drawings, and, if anything, make them even more impressively 3-dimensional...



Look what happens when we apply perspective distortion to the Platform...



I stand back proudly admiring my handiwork only to encounter a glare from Lisa. Belatedly, I realise that the length of the wall is filled with sketches.

- After all that doodling, it needs a second coat, she says sweetly.

Several hours later the job is finished and - wow! - the result is dazzling. Suffering from what I hope is temporary snow-blindness, I grope my way to the door, stumble over the obstacles on the landing, trip downstairs, and depart...



- That's really great, I have to admit, confronted by Jo's latest adjunct to gracious living. It's a large print, a visual poem by the Japanese concrete poet Seiiki Nikiuni.

- Well, nobody gets turned on by art so much as another artist, smiles Jo.

We'd been invited to eat at Jo Withisone's apartment. A privilege doled out to few, Lisa informs me. She filled me in about Jo's taste in furnishing her penthouse but omitted to mention that the lift would be out of order on the day we called. She's a writer and poet, pants Lisa as we toil up the stairs, and she's got a centrefold of Steve McQueen on the ceiling over her bed...

When we finally arrive, Jo's apartment proves warm and inviting. So does our hostess, looking exotic in something black and closefitting. I pause momentarily, to take it all in and get my breath back, but Lisa pushes me impatiently over the threshold.

Reed mats and colourful cushions are scattered over the floor; a long, low table stands against a wall dominated by the large print. Simple but impressive - all that Lisa had said, I admire it.

Jo laughs and explains the low-level living as just the result of bad planning. Like, she'd seen this table in a junk shop, decided it was ideal for her new abode, and then after it had been manhandled into the lift and unloaded on to the landing, she found there wasn't room to manoeuvre it through the apartment door. The man, jokingly, suggested that the only way to get it in the room would be to saw off the legs. Jo, in desperation, did just that. When the truncated table was installed she realised that there was no need to buy chairs. An economy that appealed to her.

And the large print really sets the seal on the Oriental-type decor.

- 触 means 'touch' and the repetitions of the phonetic symbol 触 show the delicacy of the art of touching, explains Jo, adding hastily, I got that out of the exhibition catalogue.

- I think it's fascinating the way he uses the ideograph to create a visual image that's appropriate to the meaning; a real visual poem, enthuses Lisa.

Jo serves a splendid meal: chicken breasts and mushrooms in sherry sauce, with Mandarin oranges, washed down with hock. She's puzzled to find the sherry sauce has an unexpected piquancy, but Lisa modestly claims credit for spiking it with gin. Over coffee and Cointreau we drift back to the subject of art.

- Too few people enjoy direct confrontation with art, I throw out, because they're content to take it secondhand as reproductions in books, films and slides, and on TV. So much depends on the physical presence of a work of art - its scale and relationship to its surroundings, its material, texture, colour... Reproductions are just filtered viewpoints, a partial and distorted experience.

- ¡Pero, hombre! explodes Jo, surely it doesn't matter what a work of art looks like; if it's a physical object it's just got to look like something. But no matter what form it takes, it always begins with an idea. That's the important thing to my mind. But an idea doesn't have to be given physical shape - an artist can express herself in any way. If she uses ideas that proceed from ideas about art then they are art and not literature... like Yoko Ono's advice: 'Use your blood to paint; keep painting until you faint; then keep painting until you die'. Then there's her idea of listening to the sound of a room breathing - at dawn, in the morning, in the evening, before dawn. And bottling the smell of the room at each time as well.

Lisa decides she must try that herself. I hope she refers to the second proposition; the first sounds messy.

- We seem to be round to the subject of conceptual art and back to the presentday confusion about the nature of art, I say. Several artists believe there are already enough art objects in existence and feel no urge to add to the number. So they've abandoned the art object and regard anything they do as being art. Personally, I don't think that's the answer. I welcome uncertainty because it leads to constant questioning, experiment, and discovery. And that's been the driving force of art in this century; a continuing visual debate about what art is. We discarded subject matter in the effort to escape the literary associations of the past and to disentangle the image from the words. Now the pendulum seems to be reversing and some artists are bringing back the words again, replacing the art object by the documentation of an idea...

- That's only logical, interrupts Jo.

- Pursue logic to extremes and the result can be nonsense. This preoccupation with documentation logically follows on from the basic idea of action painting - the end product is not so much an art object as a direct record of the artist's creative processes. Logically, the work may be partly invisible to carry out the artist's intentions - like Duchamp's With Hidden Noise, a ball of string with a small object added and concealed inside; or even totally invisible, like Oldenburg's project for a buried sculpture. Take logic one step further, and the object doesn't need to be made; the creative act is the proposal itself. I deplore this in a way, yet have to admit that I wish some contemporary manifestations would stop just there. Like the proposal for the Otterlo Mastaba by Christo...

- Who? chorus Jo and Lisa.

- Christo. The guy who goes around packaging public buildings, wrapping up cliffs, and hanging plastic curtains across valleys. His latest project is the building of a mastaba, measuring 60 by 50 meters at the base, and rising to a height of over 50 meters, using 242,945 empty oil drums. He's actually

had a feasibility study carried out on this monument to the oil sheiks by the Ken R. White Company of Denver, Colorado. Maybe the project is held up by the oil crisis. I hope so.

- Reactionary, mutters Jo.

- It may sound a horror to you, chips in Lisa, but don't forget that Duchamp, all his life, tried to find an unaesthetic object, yet all his 'found objects', his 'readymades' - the urinal, the bicycle wheel, the bottle rack - became regarded as aesthetic objects just because he forced people to look at them outside their functional role.

- Right. If I say it's art, it is art. And people are still finding out that very thing. There's the N.E. THING COMPANY, formed by a group of artists in Vancouver during the 60s, who executed a series of landscapes by the simple process of putting up signs along country roads. First came the warning: YOU WILL SOON BE PASSING BY A 1/3 MILE N.E. THING CO. LANDSCAPE: START VIEWING. A little further on the motorist was informed: YOU ARE NOW IN THE MIDDLE OF THE N.E. THING CO. LANDSCAPE. And finally: STOP VIEWING. I wonder how many people became aware of a landscape at which they really looked for the first time... Then there were Marjorie Strider's street pictures - she put up 30 empty picture frames along a street to create 'instant' art works, drawing the attention of people to different aspects of their environment. She did it twice in different streets but never discovered how successful she was, since most of the frames were stolen by passers-by. Seth Siegelaub is another believer in logic who started from this assumption that people rely largely on the secondary information of reproductions of works of art and finished up organising the first art exhibition to exist in catalogue form only. He asked artists to provide a written description of the work they would have put in the exhibition, published the information in catalogue form, and that was it. No need to bother with the actual exhibition. The catalogue was enough - certainly enough for those who would not have travelled in to see the show anyway! An artist with an idea will always find a way of expressing it, but I subscribe to the view of American critic Harold Rosenberg that the artist is the product of his art. Most artists develop ideas through unfocussed play in their chosen medium. Most of the art of our time has arisen out of ideas about art: cubism out of Cezanne's methods, action painting and much abstract expressionism out of the work done by Monet in his last years when his eyesight was failing. It is these accumulated insights, conflicts, and disciplines of painting, of poetry, of music, that provide the artist with the means of self-development. And surely art's value today is that it gives the individual breathing space to realise himself in the face of increasing communal pressures and the restricting mass-behaviour of our society.

- You don't convince me, comments Jo when we prepare to depart. As someone said: One word is worth one-thousandth of a picture.

Lisa grins appreciatively at that. I feel outnumbered...



The artistic projects mentioned are all genuine. And they're detailed, among others, in a book by Lucy Lippard: SIX YEARS: the dematerialisation of the art object 1966-1972. Recommended reading!

THE DREAMS OF AHASUERUS

by IAN WILLIAMS

V.

I am the greatest traveller of all time.
I believe I came from Egypt, or maybe Babylond.
For centuries I wandered round the Mediterranean
regions, where the first civilisations were founded.
My appearance has helped. I am of average height
being a metre and a half, my features are approximately
Caucasian and my colour tending to the swarthy. It
is fortunate I was not negro or oriental for obvious
reasons. I could, in fact, have come from any
European country, I am of no definite racial sub-group.
As power balances shifted I moved to France, England,
eventually to America and then to Europe Unie.
When men went to the stars I followed.

The Draconii are the longest lived of the sentient
races and have developed senses that work not quite
the way they should. I went on a pilgrimage to see
the oldest of them, a revered grey-furred philosopher
who looked like an elder lemur. He was over fifteen
hundred earth years old. I greeted him ritually in
their languid tongue. He opened an eye and said casually
that had he known of me it would have been himself who
would have made the pilgrimage.

From Draconis to Beta Lyrae to Procyon Centuri,
walking the starpaths as casually as I had
once walked the streets of Corinth.

VI.

I woke,
a light sheet covered me,
close to my body lay the nude form of a girl.
I pulled back the clothes and looked at her.
I looked at the white sheet and could not
remember where I was.
Such a familiar sight disorientated me.
Was I in Rome or a flat off Earls Court?
Who was the girl? A midtwentieth century student,
a slave, a star-liner hostess?
I did not know.
I didn't even remember the act I had performed with her,
it was lost, blurred with the memories of countless others.

the dreams of ahasuerus

VII.

I am not human.
Perhaps I once was but no longer.
I am Ahasuerus the immortal.
I have no purpose.
Unable to stay in one place for more than two decades
I drift changing friendships, losing and gaining,
but taking care not to love.
I am cursed.

I understand man so well
and myself not at all.

I am over three and a half thousand years old
and an empty vessel full of knowledge and experience
yet lacking totally any form of wisdom.

Because I have been unable to participate
fully in my humanity
I have lost it.

I am the detritus of time
washed up on an empty beach.
That is why I am here,
to act as a symbol to myself.

VIII.

It is the evening.
A flying creature dips down into the water,
it comes up with a struggling creature in its beak.
Is the flying creature a bird and the struggler a fish?

I do not know where I am.
Am I at Corinth? A fishing village
by the shores of the North Sea?
Symbarr on Draconis?

Time swirls around me
and I am lost.
I have no name.

bookreviews

DYING INSIDE by Robert Silverberg
Sidgwick and Jackson, £2.25 - 1974

Reviewed by: RITCHIE SMITH

It was Doctor Johnson, I believe, who once remarked something to the effect that a 'good' book is good in vain, if it is discarded (misunderstood) by its readers.

Which, in a typically elliptical way, brings us face to face with the central problem in what is science fiction literary criticism, as in SF itself: whether to lay the emphasis on the 'imaginative' or 'literary' elements. To go too far is to risk losing your audience, which I fear Robert Silverberg might have done, were it not for his decades-honed professionalism, and the snob appeal of bandying about his name.

As it is, when I charged into Chapter One, I was (already loaded down with prejudices of various kinds) not impressed: a muddy sort of prose, far too many quotations from Beckett and Eliot et al, and the interior life of Silverberg's protagonist Selig was less than fascinating. I at once compared Dying Inside unfavorably with its near analogue, Keith Roberts' The Death of Libby Maynard, wildly underrated, superbly well written novellette on the same subject, which is also in the first-person-singular narrative mode: then I compared Roberts' taut, imagistic, magnificently charged prose with the merely workmanlike wordage of middle-aged Robert Silverberg.

I was wrong, and I'll try to tell you why.

I was going to write about Roberts, I remember, of an art I think deeply rooted in autobiography, of his brilliant evocation of late-fifties provincial Art School life, and those dramatic, totally compelling interior monologues of 'Libby' Maynard. Compared to that, Silverberg at first seems positively flabby, a minor milestone on the long tired highway of Jewish confessional art, viz, "Toni. I should tell you about Toni now..", someone who takes an idea as revolutionary as telepathy and creates an acceptable, banal, middle-class world, like some intellectual and American version of John Wyndham.

But as you read on and on, the imaginative texture becomes more and more apparent (it is Life, naturalism as opposed to 'art', formless, bitty, random, a tendency to dullness--just the way it is) until finally you put it down and realise you have just read a tragedy. And the poignant thing is, David Selig is not a tragic figure: he is a loser, a man condemned to forever being a fragile character, a penniless and world-sick spare wheel. I love the way this assaults generations of American popular fiction's fantasy-idealization of the 'hero figure'. It shows up as immature trash what Freud stigmatizes as the 'omnipotence wish': no wonder so many hardcore SF people dislike this book, and its unsocial and nearly friendless David Selig.

This book is a serious, novel autobiography, so it is not as 'thrilling' as the latest epic potboiler from Zelazny. We admit that. But look within, and there is a triumph concealed inside the kernel of an apparent

artistic inadequacy: Silverberg has created a well-rounded, sad, perfectly believable quite normal character who is a full telepath: Silverberg has welded the outré and the everyday so well that even a critical eye can hardly discern the joint.

The book is the story of Selig's life: it moves in flashback from his childhood, where neuroticism culminates in a sharp, ironic scene with a child psychiatrist, some family background, then through his 'infinite series of odd jobs', and his women, including 'Toni...one of the two great loves of my life, the other being Kitty'. In fact, Selig is one of the few characters in science fiction to have a truly adult sex-life: Silverberg's ability to show the search for love, and all the bittersweet aftermaths of finding it is one of his great strengths. And Selig's life is of course finding, losing, getting and spending, travelling, moving through seasons of gathering stones together and living through the hells of those black, tortured days when love goes wrong on you, and you wonder 'where to go from here?', and times when money is desperately needed and it isn't there, when friendships part and leave bleeding wounds behind, and all the time you are growing older; and all of this is pointless, naturalistic surging takes place above the bed-rock fact that Selig's telepathic power, his uniqueness, is deserting him.

There are so many good things in this book. The carefully-drawn, changing relationship between Selig and his sister; the page-long description of how an old farmer, 'a grim and forbidding character, well past sixty, who says little and stalks dourly through his day-long round chores with his heavy-joweled face perpetually locked in a frosty scowl' is really an ecstatic Nature-mystic; the psychic unmasking of Selig's contemporary, Dean Cushing, as the scalpel of telepathy slices through the external glow of earnest eyes and sincere, sympathetic smile; and the final hallucinatory, tortured, moving paragraphs when Selig's power has finally died.

I'll sit here and think. This is an authentically great book. It must be one of the very finest short novels of 1972: it certainly escapes categorization into the usual slots. In fact, thinking about it, about Camp Concentration and Nova and the rest, I wonder, this book is so adult, the characters are so well-realized, that I think Dying Inside may be the finest book in modern science fiction. Why don't you all read it and find out?

THE MOMENT OF ECLIPSE by Brian W. Aldiss
Publishers Panther, 35p. - 1973

Reviewed by: RITCHIE SMITH

'But my subject matter is always similar, under the surface variety. Always the quest for truth. Though various groups of characters may seek it in different regions. Lately, art has been seen as a sort of refuge..'
(Brian Aldiss, CYPHER 6).

My difficulty with reviewing a collection of short stories is that I like to review towards a conclusion, either Yes or No. After all, nothing is more boring than the truly mediocre, than true 'middleness', although the multifarious nature of a collection inevitably makes your final comment on it some sort of compromise.

What? (asks an imaginary Reader) Is there any doubt about overwhelmingly recommending the book that Aldiss (who basically considers himself

to be a short-story writer) believes may be his best ever, that Moorcock too advocates as 'perhaps his best..'? In a word, no; but to begin I must express some residual doubts, about the absurd middle-classness of his work, all these seventeen year olds absolutely certain of 'going to Oxford', the way that I am sometimes bored by another variation being rung on the tired old props and themes of middle-aged middle-class middle-England, and banal slightness of a few of the stories herein.

I am also compelled to salute a capital-A Artist, possibly the most widely gifted SF has had since Wells.

It's probably my own inadequacy, that I must praise Aldiss in terms drawn from the vocabulary of classical criticism and writing, writing that I found in this collection by turns 'witty', 'urbane', 'ironic', 'restrained', although I myself prefer the brighter colours and more grandiloquent personality and imagery of Romanticism, which is after all (cf. Billion Year Spree) the ultimate well-spring of science fiction.

To begin the naming of names, though -- The title story, "The Moment of Eclipse", is a very, very fine moodpiece with a faint aura of autobiography, involving 'I', a minor but celebrated film director, and his relationships with neurotic 'beautiful women with corrupt natures' (presumably partly symbolic of art itself), and some delightful exotic locations, such as the Cote d'Azur. "Orgy of the Living and the Dying", set in India, is partly yet another variation on that trite old theme, the middle-aged adulterous Englishman abroad; it is something of a masterpiece too. Despite the deliberately realistic setting, a UN Famine Abatement Wing refugee camp, and the action-fiction nature of some of the events, this story defies analysis, it's too complex: read it and the first story several times though. They are first class, both of them.

"The Day We Embarked for Cythera" appears to be set in some sort of distant-future world: the dialogue is good, mainly excellently hollow-banter, but the (perhaps allegorical) point of the story eludes me. Watteau's painting? Something to do with the Greek myths? But the final crashing repetition of the question, the ultimate question in every way, 'Survive? Survive? Survive?' pricks you into wondering about what Life is, and what Death is. I think. It is very good, though, even if I wasn't capable of comprehending this mildly surreal-toned scenario.

It's nice about Aldiss, not only that he's 'made it', but that, affected Rabelaisian gusto and all, he entirely deserves his success, as this collection amply testifies. Very wide-ranging, his talent. Like "Confluence", a sort of alien to English mock-dictionary, reprinted from Punch. The entries are hilarious, perceptive, and sometimes epigram-like in terse accuracy. One must forgo comment, only quote at random: 'HOZ STAP SAN: A writer's attitude to fellow writers / JILY JIP TUP: A thinking machine that develops a stammer; the action of pulling on the trousers while running uphill / ORAN MUDA: A change of government; an old peasant saying, 'The dirt in the river is different every day' / PAN WOL LE MUDA: A certainty that tomorrow will much resemble today; a line of manufacturing machines'. As with most punchline-type verbal humour, the joke is in the juxtaposition. For my outré taste this is the most instantly entertaining fragment of the book.

To briefly sum up the other, perhaps lesser stories, I would say that some of the short, absolutely-not-SF pieces (not to mention the parody "Working

in the Spaceship Yards") aren't as funny as I presume they are intended to be. Like "Down the Up Escalator". "Swastika" goes after rather cheap effects. "Heresies of the Huge God" is most amusing, but has no core of artistic meaning, and I rather think that Gibbon ironised religion better. I have only glanced through "The Worm that Flies", but it looks both interesting and impressive. Two stories I didn't care for at all, but no doubt "The Circulation of the Blood.." "...And the Stagnation of the Heart" have numerous intelligent admirers.

So what is there to say? Aldiss walks tall and acts like a king: we are all, I suppose, a part of his principality: he knows it, and we know it too. A great man, who can write slight works (no doubt practically overnight) as well as superb, longer short stories, which I prefer. A great man.

The Moment of Eclipse is a five-star book.

Ritchie Smith--'74

DESTINY DOLL by Clifford Simak
Sidgwick & Jackson, 189pp - 40p

Reviewed by: KEVIN SMITH

"Against his better judgement, Mike Ross allows himself to be persuaded by a beautiful, wealthy, but eccentric woman to lead an interplanetary expedition. His team consists of one man, his obsequious blind guide, who is led by 'voices'.

"The 'voices' lead the little expedition to an anonymous planet which welcomes them with a homing beam and then snaps shut around them like a Venus fly-trap. Their ship is sealed against them, and they are cast through a quirk of space/time into a wholly inhospitable desert environment from which there seems no escape.

" This is Clifford Simak, winner of the Hugo Award, at his exotic, compelling best."

This rather lengthy quotation (I don't write like that) comes not from the text of the book, but is the entire blurb from the back cover. I wish Fowler of 'Fowler's Modern English Usage' could have seen these three paragraphs. They provide some beautiful examples of the cliché in action: 'beautiful, wealthy, but eccentric woman', 'snaps shut...like a Venus fly-trap', 'a quirk of space/time', 'seems no escape'. Aren't they lovely? Then we have a few subtle touches to convince the reader (or potential reader) to buy the book if the wonderful plot synopsis wasn't enough. There is the subtle trendy word 'environment'. An easy way of saying 'desert environment' is 'desert', but maybe the blurb writer is paid by the word. And finally there is the subtle hint that we have here a Hugo winner at his best. In which case, why didn't it win a Hugo?

There are, unfortunately, one or two errors in this blurb. I say unfortunately because I had to read the book to discover them, or a few pages of it, anyway. I discovered the first when I reached page seven. In fact, there are four in the party, not three as is stated in the blurb. This would come as a great disappointment to lovers of trios, or shock to quartet haters, who have paid their forty pence.

The second error is in the final sentence. "Simak...at his exotic,

compelling best." Wrong! This I suspect vaguely by page seven and more strongly by page nine where the hobbyhorses appear. That's right, hobbyhorses, who can talk in pidg in-English. "We be hobbies," said the horse. "My name is Dobbin." Dobbin for Christsake! I have read other Simak and Destiny Doll is not his best.

In fact, this is the reason why the review so far has been about the blurb. I read the book a while ago and I've forgotten most of the plot. What I did remember was my vow never to read it again, at risk of stomach turning. The blurb, however trite, is easier reading, and the cliché only reflects the contents of the book. We have a string of unlikely incidents with unlikely causes and nebulous connection to each other. This is not a novel and Simak knows it — he's been a writer long enough. Does he think we don't know? This is an atrocious book; Simak can do better, so why didn't he? Perhaps I should complete Dobbin's first speech.

"We be hobbies," said the horse. "My name is Dobbin and we have come to take you in."

Right on!

TODAY WE CHOOSE FACES by Roger Zelazny
Published by Signet, 95c

Reviewed by: RICHARD GEIS

I must admit that a new Zelazny novel always seduces me. I'm instantly on my back, reading compulsively, my mind busy with the pure enjoyment of well-wrought fiction. Granted Roger has weak spots. Granted he is self-indulgent now and then. Granted he would do well to try a novel sometimes that isn't about an immortal man/men/elite with super powers.

But the Zelazny narrative magic casts its spell upon me and while I'm reading him I rarely boggle. I am swept along until the last page, usually in one day.

So now I tend to mistrust my judgement as far as Zelazny goes. I often can't see, or pass over as unimportant, the flaws in his books other critics see.

Yet...I can't see a damned thing wrong with his latest, Today We Choose Faces. I may be blinded by my emotional in-tuneness with him and this book, but I'm wowed and dazzled and full of admiration.

Such a book presents all kinds of problems for me as a reviewer, though; I don't want to give away the twists and turns, the surprises, the wonders. It's a novel structured for revelation as it is read, and to give too precise an idea of its storyline would cheat the reader who had not yet enjoyed it.

Would it be enough to say that in my estimation Today We Choose Faces is the finest novel Roger Zelazny has written in years? That it will probably win a Nebula and/or Hugo Award, that it has the best elements of A.E. Van Vogt and Alfred Bester...a combination of The Demolished Man and The World of A.. with a pure Zelaznyan angle of plot and style, dazzling concept of the future of mankind, a clone of supermen/selves/self, a series of vendetta murder myst-series and suspenseful chases, incisive and thought-provoking examination of Freedom vs. Control of Mankind, of basic questions: does the end justify the means; can man's nature be changed; should man be changed?

There are levels of entertainment--the perfect combination of sense of wonder, action-suspense, and food-for-thought. Altogether a beautiful meld: a superior work of science fiction.

The above review was first published in The Alien Critic; I ordered the book on Dick's recommendation; having read it I agree with every word 'spoken' above, thus could do no better than reprint the review. TWCF should be available on British book-stands by the time Z is out and about.

MORE BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW

Brian Aldiss - EIGHTY-MINUTE HOUR (286pp, Jonathan Cape £ 2. 25)

"There are many brilliant and thought provoking things in this book; none more so than Bodenland's pursuit of the two monstrous beings across the Arctic waste that pre-figures the eventual dying of our planet. Mr Aldiss has seldom done anything better than these last visionary pages." (Francis King - Sunday Telegraph.) Well, I dunno, I don't usually disagree with FK of ST, but I found this book rather hard going. It is, I believe, Mr Aldiss' first Space Opera, and I'm not a space-opera-woman so this could be the answer; on the other hand I found Mike Moorcock's Alien Heat fascinating, delightful, superb...everything. Yeah, but is it 'space-opera'? If it is, it is also much more than this. Likewise, almost everything else Mr Aldiss' has written before has delighted me, but not this, not Eighty-Minute Hour.

Isaac Asimov - THE EARLY ASIMOV vols 1,2 & 3 (Panther @ 35p each)

As states the title, these are Asimov's early stories, very. The very early ones are weak and almost unreadable, but, and its a big BUT, the sections between the stories where Asimov writes his literary autobiography are fascinating. I've always enjoyed Asimov the raconteur much more than Asimov the writer...May Ghod forgive this blasphemy..!

James Blish - A CLASH OF CYMBALS - EARTHMAN, COME HOME - A LIFE FOR THE STARS - THEY SHALL HAVE STARS (All published by Arrow @ 35p each).

John Brunner - THE SHEEP LOOK UP (457pp, published by Dent @ £ 2. 95)

The cover is by Goya, this I thought a bit of a cop-out, for such an elegant book the publishers could have commissioned some poor living artist to design something more up to date and more fitting for the novel itself, however... The Sheep Look Up is "...a prophecy of ecological, moral, and political disaster. ...It is a horror story without the slightest relief and the message is unmistakable: we must stop fouling our own nest!" (Joanna Russ.) Against a dismal background Brunner follows, during one year, the interwoven stories of several characters who live in a world where the seas are fouled up, the rivers choked up etc., all thru industrial waste. Town and city dwellers have to wear oxygen masks in the streets because of the thick smog which never lifts. It has been said that Brunner is an intelligent writer, and rightly, but the trouble with this novel is gloom 'without the slightest relief'... It might well be as Brunner predicts, but to read 461 pages of doom, gloom and foreboding is heavy going... What hell it would be to live in such a world!!!!

more books received for review

John Canning ed - 50 STRANGE STORIES OF THE SUPERNATURAL (published by Souvenir Press @ £2. 95 - 478pp)

This is a collection of some 50 odd 'true' happenings, theories and dreams; from the mysterious Orient of the by gone ages to Uri Geller - a phenomenon of our day. Amongst the writers there are Charles Eric Maine, Clare Smythe, Roland Seth and an article about Charles Fort (Peter Roberts, this might be for you..?)

Philip Jose Farmer - LORD TYGER (Panther, 50p - 284pp)

The cover says: "A brilliant imaginative novel by the author of TARZAN ALIVE." Since I'm not a space-opera-woman you might think that I'm not into fantasy either, righton, I'm not, but I enjoyed this sexy brave new Tarzan very much indeed. Ras Tyger (alias or a modern-type Tarzan) is incredibly real and exciting. He is fluent in four languages... a wild prince this, the ultimate savage who rules his teeming, perilous domain with savagery and mighty sexual prowess from which no native woman is safe - or wants to be. If you're fed up with this tame, weak, piping time of mechanised civilisation, grab Lord Tyger and with delight pass away your time... What the cover said is true, it is brilliant, and it is imaginative, and I loved it.

M. John Harrison - THE COMMITTED MEN (Panther, 35p - 139pp)

Radiation brings about mutation; through a devastated Britain divided between bizarre tribal communities a small group of people set out on a journey to take a mutant baby to its own reptilian kind. 'M. John Harrison has an acute sense of both comedy and drama and for that quality so lacking in SF, realistic characterization. In fact, characterization is the backbone of the narrative...which is unusual and welcome' - Age.

Dan Morgan & John Kippax - A THUNDER OF STARS and SEED OF STARS (both published by Pan Books @ 40p each).

Michael Moorcock ed - BEST SF STORIES FROM NEW WORLDS-8 (Panther, 35p -204pp)

Nine stories and an article by J.G. Ballard on Salvador Dali. The first story - A Boy and His Dog by Harlan Ellison - is worth getting the book for.

Robert Sheckley - THE SAME TO YOU DOUBLED (Pan Books, 35p - 172pp)

Sixteen short stories by Sheckley originally published by Gollancz in '72 titled Can You Feel Anything When I Do This?

Damon Knight - A POCKETFUL OF STARS (Pan Books, 50p - 318pp)

A super collection of stories chosen from the archives of the Milford (USA) SF Writers Conferences. Each story is a gem in its own right, but what makes this collection extra special is that each story is prefaced by an introduction from its author. I can't resist the temptation to give you a taste of one, even if it won't tell you the whole story. Harlan Ellison's lead into his I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream: "This story has won me some awards and considerable praise. If for no other reason, I should love it, & of course for these, I do. But more, it was the instrument for the sweetest revenge I have ever tasted. I'll tell you about it. ... Jim Blish opined that my first published story, a dreary little item titled 'Glow-worm', was the single worst story ever written by anyone, anywhere...at least in the history of Western Man. Cyril Kornbluth, whose wit was ultra-violet years before anyone had heard of black humour, emasculated me, defenestrated me,

more books received for review

amputated me, disembowelled me and, simply put, made ghastly fun of me. Damon was hardly the kindest of the bunch; he ventured that I had no talent and ought to go back to college where I might learn the rudiments of the English language. Ted Sturgeon castigated me for being a smartass and having brought a typewriter along.

"What that barrage of insults and categorical rejections by master knife-wielders did to me can be gauged by my appearance in the workshop doorway the next morning, bag packed, tears leaking down my face.

"Dimmed by the years, I don't recall the exit speech with anything even approaching phonographic accuracy, but the substance of it was, 'Goodbye, you bunch of cruel bastards. I came up here looking for help, and you shat on me. So I'm gonna leave, but you'll see, I'll be back - and I'll be the best of all of you!' I do recall the laughter that trailed after me and my melodramatic outburst."

And a para or two from James Sallis' intro to A few Last Words: "The Conference. I remember the stories that year ... Harlan running out of the room when my story came under discussion, his arms over his head, shouting 'I'm down a rabbit hole!' And the talking. Harlan and myself in an ice cream parlour ... Mike (Moorcock) and myself still talking at six in the morning in Virginia Kidd's living room and the leaves outside looked like fish skeletons. Warmth and understanding that will always be a part of me: I'll never be able to go away from them. Though I've never returned, to the Conference. But most of all, because they so changed my life. I have to remember the night Mike asked me to come to London to edit New Worlds (it was five in the morning, five months later I was on my way)- ..."

Nineteen great stories by some of the best sf writers in the field with introductions from each and every one.

Dr Fredric Wertham - THE WORLD OF FANZINES - A Special Form of Communication.
(Published by Southern Illinois University Press @ \$10.00
144pp)

A beautiful glossy book to behold; great layout, nice big type, in short lovely to look at and easy to read. BUT, the illoes reproduced do not represent the best in fannish art and the quick look into fandom is very superficial. If you're looking for a book which can really tell you about fandom, fanzines and fen, I suggest you try to get hold of Harry Warner's ALL OUR YESTERDAYS; this is not as glossy and posh, but Harry does know his subject inside-out.

Brinsley Le Poer Trench - SECRET OF THE AGES: UFO'S FROM INSIDE THE EARTH.
(Published by Souvenir Press @ £2.60 - 192pp)

- MYSTERIOUS VISITORS (Published by Pan @ 50p
175pp - illustrated)

According to the introductions in these two books, it seems that Mr Brinsley Le Poer Trench (who is the hair presumptive to the Earl of Clancary...) makes a serious attempt to present a possible solution to the UFO enigma. He answers such questions as: "Why is the reality of flying saucers such a well-kept secret? What is the explanation of Angel Hair? Are the young men and women of today's permissive society an alien race?" And many other questions you never thought of asking... I'm afraid I didn't have the patience to finish either of these books - the subject just isn't my bag, so I'll say no more just in case..

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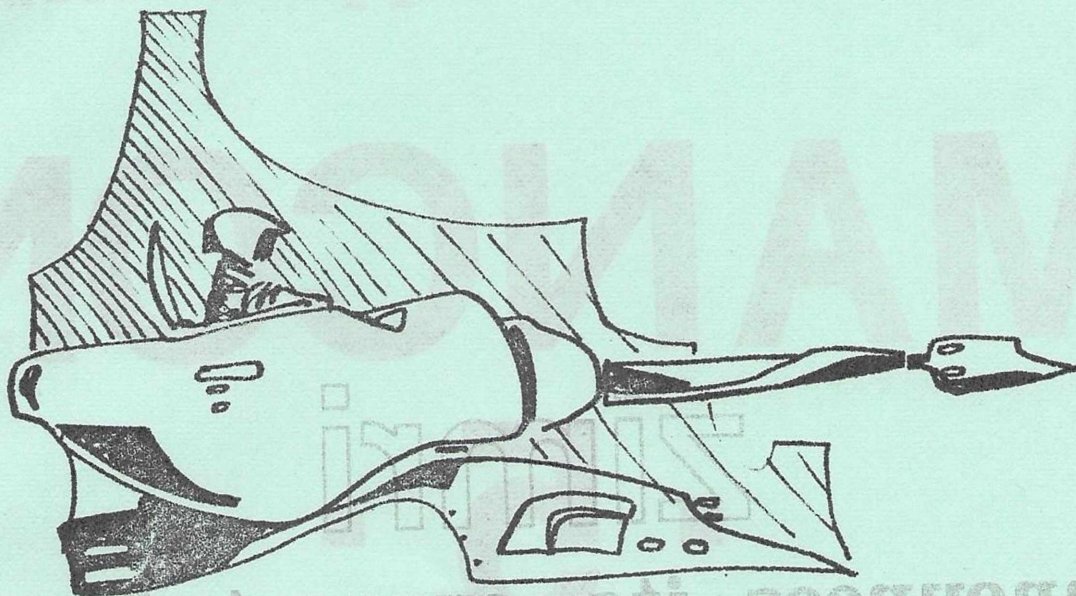
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fanzines

RECEIVED & READ

Many fearless and/or masochistic faneds will doubtless be disappointed to see that Gregory isn't guesting in this column this time; I must admit that I share your disappointment because I've had a terrific response to Greg's erudite reviews. But Greg never reviews anything outside British fanzines (or so he tells me) and there just weren't enough British fanzines lately to justify a column. I hope to be able to tempt Mr Pickersgill to write for Zimri again some time, but for this issue you'll have to put up with me.

What I'm going to do here is not review, rather, I'll list contents and express my own personal reaction to some of them if I'm so moved. I'll try to mention as many 'zines as possible because this issue will be going to a number of new fans (via the SF Monthly) who might like to sample some of them.

So for the information of the newcomers who write in for samples, might I suggest that you enclose a Stamped Addressed Envelope (A4 size, 8p stamp for something as large as Zimri). And I'd like to ask all unsolicited contributors to do likewise ($3\frac{1}{2}$ or is it $4\frac{1}{2}$ p stamp will do) if you want your manuscripts or illoes returned. This plea sounds terribly un-fannish and

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mercenary I know, but if YOU've had as many manuscripts (especially fiction) submitted as I've had in the last few months, you'd be screaming for help as well.

Most fanzines are available for trades, a substantial letter, contributions, or even a show of interest as well as hard cash.

THE ALIEN CRITIC-10 = Richard E. Geis, P.O. Box 1108, Portland, Oregon 97211
U.S.A. 55pp American Quarto, mimeo. Subscription is
\$4 for one year, \$7 for 4yrs. (£1.98 for 1 & £3.43 for
4yrs. British agent is: Wm. Dawson & Sons, Cannon
House, Folkstone, Kent CT19 5EE)

TAC is in my opinion THE best fanzine around, there ain't another one like it. What makes this 'zine unique is Dick's style and personality. He's there on every page, if not in person than in spirit. Even when I'm reading an article by someone else, Dick is leaning over my shoulder thinking Alien thoughts into my mind.

The fanzine itself is neatly reproduced but has no illoes within, somehow one doesn't really miss them tho, probably because of the colourful personality of the editor himself.

As to the actual content of TAC-11, we have An Interview with Stanislaw Lem and to be honest I'm a bit fed up with reading about Lem, there's been so much written about him lately, but in this interview - with Daniel Say - Lem emerges as a real person, not a very likable one, mind, but real nonetheless. The interview was done in the course of several letters and Lem writes (in 'English', this is not another translation) about his early years as a student, doctor and a full-time writer. About the books he read and authors he admired; about writing in general, science fiction, and about himself. Its quite fascinating to see SF thru the eyes of someone who is so much admired by the sf-world and yet isn't a part of it himself.

A Nest of Strange and Wonderful Birds by Sam Merwin is an article about Mr Merwin's years as 'science fiction editor for Standard Magazines, The Thrilling Group or whatever.'

Next, Dear Lisa, Have Just Cleaned My Typewriter Which is a Wild and Stupid Thing to Do.. by Ted Tubb. This is a reprint from my very own Zimri-5 and it is quite naturally brilliant, witty and well worth reprinting. Ted writes about writing, writer's block, critics, helpful and unhelpful fans and himself. I remember when I got this mss from Ted how excited I was and how much appreciated the article was by Zimri readers. In fact a number of fans (mostly from US) wrote asking for the issue of Z in which Ted appeared; as ever I didn't have any spares left, so for this reason as well as the other, I am glad to see it reprinted in The Alien Critic.

The Traditions of Science Fiction and Conventions is a transcript of the Guest of Honour speech given by Robert Bloch at the 31st World SF Convention in August, 1973. The first half is brilliant, typical Bloch humour, towards the end Mr B gets a bit sentimental and gooey. But, I suppose if I was there at the time, with the faanish atmosphere, a drop or two of the hard stuff, I'll bet you'd see a tear glistening in my eye. . Here is t h e conclusion: "From somewhere in this audience today--somewhere amidst all the young people here--will come the fresh talent, perhaps even genius, of the future

F a n z i n e s

--the artists, editors, writers. A new Orwell, a new Huxley, a new H. G. Wells. Tomorrow belongs to you." Immediately following this article we read: "If you can keep your head while all about you others are losing theirs... ..perhaps you're the executioner." by Rudyard Geis no doubt. I like it!

As well as all this there are lots of letters from pro-writers, fans and Dick's personal friends (I wonder if his friend Pearl exists in reality or just in Dick's imagination? Her letters are certainly different, funny too). Mr Geis is a fine book-reviewer too, in fact I pity the fan who doesn't get The Alien Critic of his/her very own. In case you haven't guessed, this fanzine is highly recommended!

ALGOL-22 = Andrew Porter, Box 4175, New York, NY 1007 USA. 52pp, Am.quarto, printed. \$1.15 or \$5.00 for five (Ethel Lindsay is British agent, for address see Haverings).

The printing is superb and the paper glossy, but oh those illustrations! Very poor indeed. This issue isn't as interesting as some in the past. Bloch (reprint) on history and development of the sf film; Poul Anderson (another reprint) looking into the future of same. Barry Malzberg on a Gene Wolfe story; an interview with Roger Elwood - of interest to would-be pro-writers, perhaps; and Ted White on publishing, again?! The best section in this issue is the lettercol, but then Andy's lettercol is always pretty lively.

FOUNDATION-6 = Peter Nicholls, The Science Fiction Foundation, North East London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Essex RM8 2AS - 125pp A5, printed. Single copies in UK 75p, US & Canada \$2.00

This is not a fanzine but a publication that no SF reader (or fan) should miss. F6 is the second issue edited by Peter Nicholls, and you can take my word for it, he's doing a splendid job. Despite some troubles with the printers the output seems to be pretty regular.

In this issue Brian Aldiss follows the editorial with The Profession of Science Fiction: Magic and Bare Boards, all about Aldiss' childhood, teen-hood into manhood; how he came to read and then write science fiction.

A quote from the editorial introduction:

"Mr Aldiss has a professional interest in the histories and states of mind of science fiction writers, and to this end he has put together a book, consisting of six autobiographical pieces, by himself, Harry Harrison, Alfred Bester, Damon Knight, Frederic Pohl and Robert Silverberg. The book is called Hell's Cartographers, and will appear from Weidensfield & Nicolson in 1975 ... We are grateful to Mr Aldiss in allowing our series to include a part of this."

And so they should be, because for those of us who are fascinated by the whys and wherefores of the lives of our favorite authors, this book can't come out too soon.

The other article in this series is by Samuel R. Delany: Shadows - Part one in this issue is a theoretical statement which, while it applies very directly to science fiction, goes well beyond that immediate application to open up some very large questions indeed about artistic creation and verbal communication. Part two will follow in F7.

The rest are reviews of: Aldiss' Billion Year Spree and Frankenstein Unbound;

Fanzines

Ballard's Crash; The Robert Shackley Omnibus edited by Robert Conquest; Fingalan Conspiracy by John Rankie; Memoirs Found in a Bathtub by Stanislaw Lem; The Invincible also by Lem; New Writings in SF-23 ed Ken Bulmer; The Man Who Folded Himself by David Gerrold; Harlan Ellison: A Bibliographical Checklist compiled by Leslie K Swigart; Mindfogger by Michael Rogers; Space 1 by Richard Davis; Heritage of the Star by Sylvia Engdahl; Red Shift by Alan Garner and The Astounding-Analog Reader volume 1 & 2, eds Harry Harrison and Brian Aldiss.

I particularly enjoyed and admired Ursula Le Guin's review of Red Shift - is there anything this lady isn't good at...! But David Pringle's review of Crash, although competent enough and quite perceptive, left me wanting something more... insight? I dunno, perhaps its me, or the book itself. Crash is such a strange and superbly surreal world... perhaps only JGB himself could do it justice... perhaps.

CHECKPOINT-56 = Darroll Pardoe, 24 Othello Close, Hartford, Huntington PE18 7US. 4pp, offset litho. Available for news, trades or 60p for 10 issues (£1 for 5) Free sample on request.

The one and only British newszine; it comes out very regularly--once a fortnight--since Darroll took it over. Fannish news, views and reviews. No.56 reports on the Novacon just a few days after the event which can't be bad. Deserves all the support it can get.

LOCUS-166 = Dena & Charlie Brown, Box 3938, San Francisco CA 94119, USA. Single issue 40c 18 for \$6.00 (according to my calculations that's 20p for 1, and £2.46 for 18 issues. Peter Weston is the British agent, 72 Beeches Dve, Erdington, Birmingham 24).

Locus is a newspaper which covers the entire science fiction field; fandom, fanzines, prozines... you name it, if its happening, you'll find it reported in Locus. No.166 reports on P. Schuyler Miller who died on October 13th - a longish article. There are the usual news about pros, conventions, marketing news, book stuff and all manner of miscellaneous sf matters, plus a list of recent fanzines. Recommended.

HAVERINGS-58 = Ethel Lindsay, 6 Langley Ave, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6QL. 12pp, A4, mimeo. Three issues for 40p, or 1 dollar for same.

A reviewzine. In this issue Ethel covers some 80 odd fanzines. Useful to faneds and newcomers.

BIG SCAB-2 = John Brosnan, Flat 1, 62 Elsham Rd, Kensington, London, W 14. 16pp, quarto, mimeo. No price so I guess its the usual.

I'm sharing my Nova Award with this zine so it must be good. John's a real fan-writer (pro as well from what I hear) if ever I read one. He's entertaining, witty, wry (dry?) and darn-right-nasty sometimes. But its all good-natured fun - I think. Scab is a very faanish, very in-groupish, in-jokeish personalzine. Terrific fun if you're part of the Rat Fandom but I imagine somewhat bewildering to anyone outside the group. Thus if you're a Rat, its recommended... On the other hand I'm not a Rat and I do enjoy it, so...

Fanzines

TILL THE COWS COME HOME-3 = Elke & Alan Stewart, 6 Frankfurt am Main 1,
Eschenheimer Anlage 2, Fed Rep of Germany. 42pp,
A4, printed. No price, the usual I suppose.

I found this issue somewhat wearisome. Its not fannish, its not sercon, its not nothing. It looks nice tho. The editorial is too silly for words - even four letter ones, and Paul Skelton's Points East is pointless and a bit sickening. Can't imagine what came over Paul to write such a load of rubbish; he's not normally as bad as this. John Piggott's column is a disappointment, John can usually do better than this as well.

The lettercol had one or two interesting letters but on the whole it was uninspired and uninspiring. Oh yes, there was a flash of inspiration from someone in Salisbury: "I could have danced with you till the cows come home. On second thought I'd rather dance with the cows till you come home."

Steve Sneyd's story wasn't bad, but aside from that this issue was rather insipid. Ho-ho! I've missed something: on the front cover they do give a price, 'tis £5.00.

MAYA-6 = Ian Maule, 13 Weardale Ave, Forest Hall, Newcastle NE12 OXH
44pp, quarto, mimeo. No price here but I think it used to be
20p or the usual.

Long overdue, much awaited Maya, here it is at last and its sad 'cos Ian's saying goodbye from the first page onwards. Yes folks, Maya is to have a new editor - its third - Goodbye Ian, hello Rob. I've said this before somewhere, but I still don't know why, if Ian's going to produce another fanzine, as he says he will, did he give up Maya to Rob Jackson? Why not Rob produce one of his own and Ian go on with Maya? Just a thought, but its nagging me.

Anyway, anyway, M6 is here and its but a shadow of its former self. Its still nicely duplicated and Harry Bell's illoes are as good as ever, but this is a skeleton with only bits of old-Maya-flesh clinging to the bare bones here and there. Alan Hunter's front and back covers don't help; the ~~titty~~ pretty young lady is so old fashioned she looks as tho she stepped out of the 50's. Alan is a competent artist but his style hasn't developed at all over the years, all his illustrations look the same to me.

Writing for this issue are John Piggott, John Hall, Rob Jackson, Terry Jeeves, Darrell Schwetzer and Maule himself. Its all solid fannish stuff but nothing in particular stands out. The lettercol is dated but that's to be expected under the circumstances.

It will be interesting to see if Rob's kiss of life will succeed in bringing Maya back to life. I have a special affection for Maya, cos it was one of the first fanzines which introduced me to fandom (or fandom to me), back in the days when Ian Williams used to be the editor. Despite Ian's often sombre style of writing, and the sometimes grotty reproduction, Maya had life, enthusiasm and that certain undefinable something. When Maule took it over he cleaned it up, gave it a good layout and we all cheered (yes we did!), then I think he lost interest or something.

Be all that as it may, I'm glad Maya isn't deaded, good luck and Best wishes Rob.

(Rob Jackson's address is: 21 Lyndhurst Rd, Benton, Newcastle NE12 9NT)

F a n z i n e s

EGG-8 = Peter Roberts, 6 Westbourne Park Villas, London W2. 15pp, quarto mimeo. Available for the usual, not money.

Another of the long-awaited zines and altho its not as fat as usual Egg does not disappoint, for the occasional flashes of blinding brilliances are still here. One flash in particular: John Brosnan's North Sea Nog is as bright as ever. Egg is a faanish zine but not too in-groupish to be bewildering; this type of faanishness attracts and pulls one into fandom rather than excludes and alienates.

Can't remember when Egg-7 was published but it was a long-long time ago, thus one might expect the lettercol to be very dated, not so, Peter's been clever at weeding out the fossils, what's left is timeless on the whole.

I've always been fond of Egg (isn't everyone?) and Peter promises that the next issue will follow shortly, hmm.. Methinks I've heard that somewhere before, but I hope he means it. Now, if only Gray Boak and Peter Weston would pull their fingers out we'd have ourselves a much livelier fan-scene. It would be nice to have some healthy competiton again. Yes, I know everyone is all busy with cons and things but cons come and go --- fanzines are for ever! Recommended.

CYPHER-11 = James Goddard, Plovers Barrow, School Road, Nomansland, Salisbury, Wilts. 46pp, A5, printed. 25p for 1, £1.00 for 4 issues.
(US agent is Cy Chauvin - 60c for 1, \$3.00 for 5 issues.)

This issue came out in May this year ('74) and I'll bet the day Zimri is out and about, Cypher will be sure to follow, it usually does. No.11 is the first issue to be printed in a new smaller format which I dislike and wish Jim would go back to A4 or something. But this is a personal preference and nothing to do with the contents of the zine.

Cypher is a serious, sf orientated fanzine, with little if any fannish content. The illustrations in this issue are not to my taste but most of the the articles are; J.G. Ballard's Personal View of Aldiss' Billion Year Spree for instance. I envy Jim like hell for getting something as good as this. Here's a sample para: "

..A slight sense of unease came over me as I read the last chapters of this book. (These sections, where Aldiss brings the history of science fiction to the present day, are a masterpiece of diplomacy - a sociable and gregarious man, Brian clearly wants to be able to go on attending sf conventions here and in the United States without being clubbed over the head by some outraged author's well aimed Hugo. On reflection, he should have commissioned me to write these last two chapters...) "Smashing isn't it?

Bob Shaw has nice things to say about BYS and Phil Harbottle concludes the discussion. The book reviews are competent and the lettercol is shorter than usual but interesting nonetheless.

Oh yes, there's another article on Solaris, by John Brady this time. I'll let you into a secret, this was originally submitted to Zimri, I rejected it and reading it again in Cypher, I can't say I'm sorry. What a horrid note to finish on, am I getting nasty?! Tut, and I used to be sweetness and light itself once...

F a n z i n e s

And now I'll have to limit myself to as few words as possible--time and space are c'losing in!! Most of the fanzines listed below deserve much more than a mere mention but perhaps I can do better next time.

MOEBIUS TRIP-20 = Ed Connor, 1805 N. Gale, Petoria, Ill. 61604, USA. 160pp
mimeo, 75c three for \$2.00 or the usual. General.

The only 'fantome' or pocket-book fanzine in fandom (the world?), full of reviews, articles and a super interview with Robert Bloch who talks about his friendship with Lovecraft & himself as a struggling young writer in the days when.. Good lettercol good fanzine.

OUTWORLDS-19 = Bill Bowers, Box 148, Wadsworth, OH 44281, USA. 40pp, offset litho. \$1 for one, \$4.00 for four. General.

One of the best fanzines this; good artwork, professional reproduction and the contributions excellent. Poul Anderson looking into the future of sf? Robert Lowndes tells why we should not try to look into an author; almost convinced me too - almost. Susan Glickson writes about the cult of the Teddy Bear (I've got five teddy bears, two monkeys, an Ingvi and two hairy monsters living with me not to mention my parents..). An excellent lettercol and much, much more besides. Highly Recommended.

IT COMES IN THE MAIL-11 = Ned Brooks, 713 Paul Street, Newport News, VA 23605. 20pp, mimeo, the usual.

A chatty daily log of incoming mail. Ned's an entertaining chatterer, useful fanzine reviews too.

WHISPERS-4 = Stuart David Schiff, 5508 Dodge Drive, Fayetteville NC.28303
64pp, printed, \$1.50 one issue.

Horror-fantasy semi-pro-zine, best I've seen in this field. The fiction isn't at all bad either.

HUNE-40 = Fred Haskell, 343 E. 19th Street, No.8B, Minneapolis MN55404 USA
Available for the usual.

Minnesota SFS clubzine, this one is fatter than usual and its less clubbish= more general.

WARK-1 = Rosemary Pardoe, 24 Othello Close, Hartford, Huntington, PE18 7SU
11pp, A5, offset. 20p or the usual.

A sort of newsletter-reviewzine. Rosemary says that she wants to concentrate on fantasy zines but more general reviews will also be featured. In this issue there are indeed both fantasy and general, some nice and long too.

SELDON'S PLAN-35 = Wayne Third Foundation, Box 102 SCB, Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan 48202. 56pp, Am. Quarto, offset litho.
60c for one, \$3 for 5 issues or the usual.

James Blish's speech reported; Joe Sanders on Brunner & Lovecraft: Comparison in Fantasy; lots of reviews, and an interesting letter column. Mutterings from associate editor and iskry..sparks from ed: Cy Chauvin.

MALFUNCTION-6 = No name or address of the editor(s) given, its a good job I'm a good detective and have been able to find out - it wasn't easy.
Peter Presford & Brian Robinson, 10, Dalkeith Rd, South Reddish
Stockport, Nr. Manchester. 24pp, quarto, mimeo. Usual I think.

Fanzines

Malfunction has got itself a new co-editor, Brian Robinson from Hell (r.i.p.) his address isn't given either, so in case Bi-Ro is travelling in cognito I won't tell you his whereabouts, even if I knew...

M6 contains fannish chatter about conventions and fans. There's a good letter-col and some odd fanzine reviews. The front and back covers (and I didn't like the back one much - hope it hurt him too!) are by Bi-Ro. Malfunction is a nice-messy-fannish-fanzine, if you're a nice-messy-fannish-fan, you'll like it.

DIEHARD-5 = Tony Cvetko, 29415 Parkwood Drive, Wickliffe Ohio 44092, USA
45pp., mimeo., One issue for 50c, or the usual.

The cover is printed this time, the 'zine itself is much thicker too. Articles by Don Brazier, Mac Strulckow, and others. Book reviews and letters. It is what's known as a general type zine.

RATPLAN-16 - Leigh Edmonds, P.O. Box 74, Balaclava, Victoria 3183 Australia.
17pp, quarto, mimeo. \$1.60 for 4 issues or the usual.

Another Campbell nude cover, nice but a bit old hat. Articles by John Foyster, Joan Dick and Ray Nelson. Book reviews, lettercol and an 'art-portfolio' -- well, that's what it says but there's only one page of it -- nice one tho. General; neatly produced; very regular fanzine.

CORRIDOR-5 = Michael Butterworth, 10 Charter Rd, Altrincham, Cheshire. 31pp
A4, offset-litho. Available for 20p, or £1.00 for five.

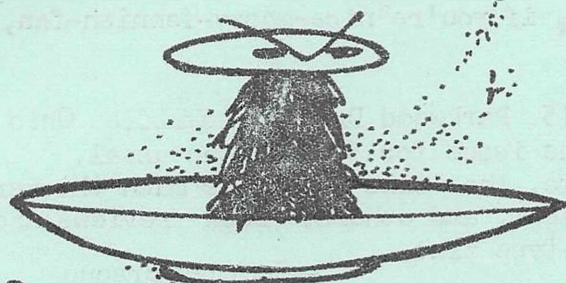
This is not a fanzine but a speculative type semi-pro-mag. The best in this issue is a long interview with J.G. Ballard and the reviews by Jeff Jones. Fiction is by Hilary Bailey, Brian Griffin, Bob Jenkins, Terry Gregory, Richard Kostenaletz, Ismael Casbah and Alan Cormac. Two poems, I rather liked (and hated) the one by Michael Ginley called The All Plastic Girl.

The next issue of CORRIDOR is to be re-christened WORDWORKS and should be out at the same time as this issue of Zimri. Look out for it it promises to be something really special.

lisa conesa

You should not ask the artist for more than he
can give, or the critic for more than he can see.
Let's be satisfied to make people reflect, let's
not try to convince them.

- Georges Braque



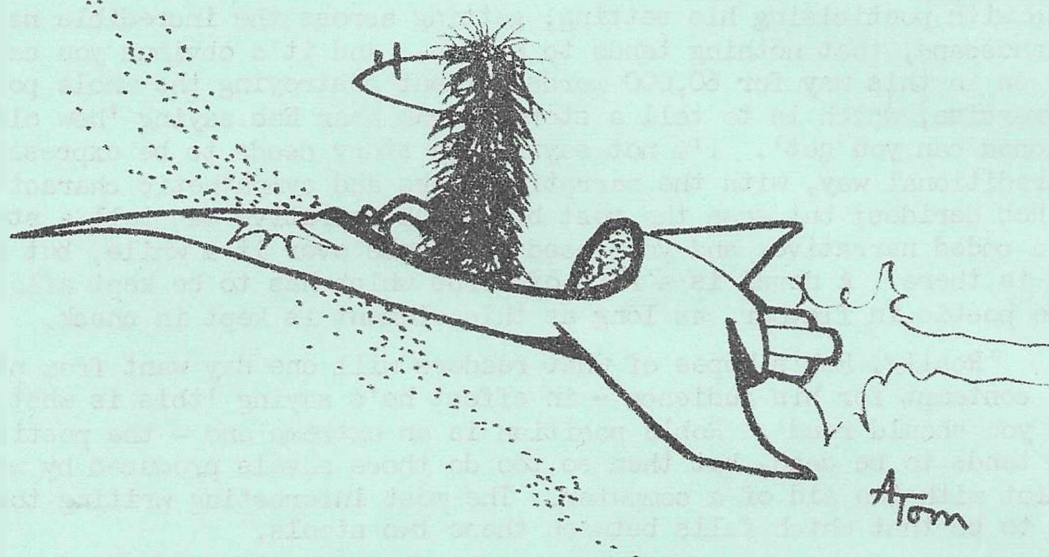
FAN MAIL

PETER LINNETT - 13, GROSVENOR ROAD, WEST WICKHAM, KENT BR4 9PU

"I liked most of ZIMRI-6, a good front cover, too. I'd like, though, to take issue with parts of what Rob Holdstock says in his letter, which I think perpetuates a few pathetic fallacies that have been around too long.

"First, the implication that there are only two kinds of fiction - precision-made 'crap that sells', and poetic, felt material that's hard to get into print. Rob implies that he writes the latter type, and so he sells once every two years. Yet there are serious writers who are very obviously doing what they want to do in sf without 'selling out', without really coming into either category, and making a living out of it. This idea that if you're 'serious' you won't reach an audience is ridiculous. I thought it had been discredited long ago.

"Second, to quote Rob, 'I feel that anything more than a basic notion for a story at the start of writing destroys the final product in terms of art'. Come off it. There are as many ways of producing a novel



as there are writers; I myself feel the need of roughing out a synopsis before I begin a story, otherwise I have a feeling of not knowing where I'm going. J.G. Ballard tells me that he always does a 25-page synopsis before starting a novel, a five-page one before doing a short story. Would Rob call him a hack? Obviously, you come to a point where you have to leave off with the summaries and start on the story, but not all writers can just start from scratch. I wish I could. I agree that there are too many writers who treat novel-writing as if it were a mathematical exercise, leaving nothing to chance; but Rob's position here seems to be extreme.

"It just seems wrong, somehow to write with geometrical precision. It'll sell, but is it art?' What Rob seems to be saying is that his way is the best. It's far more meaningful, anyway, to judge a novel in terms of itself, not on the way it was written or whatever. I'm suspicious of people who bandy the word 'art' around as if it were a 20th-century Holy Grail - in some circles, of course, it is. This sounds very snobbish.

"When Rob starts talking about the day demand will switch to poetic-type material, I had a feeling of deja-vu. This has been discussed

before, and it shows a misunderstanding of the nature of the medium. The novel is a vital, flowing form - the great insights in poetry are expressed briefly, concisely; they're crystallised, and marvellous in the poetic medium. But transferred to the novel in any abundance they render it static; the 'poetic' novel is usually static and boring. An example - Ballard's Crystal World is not good as a novel, because the author becomes so concerned with poeticising his setting, getting across the incredible nature of the landscape, that nothing tends to happen. And it's obvious you can't carry on in this way for 60,000 words without destroying the whole point of the exercise, which is to tell a story. I can hear Rob saying 'how old-fashioned can you get'. I'm not saying the story needs to be expressed in the traditional way, with the narrative hooks and sympathetic characters that Rob derides; but even the most broken-up narrative can tell a story - it's a coded narrative, and you need to puzzle over it a while, but the story is there. A novel is a raft of words which has to be kept afloat; it can be poetic in flavour, as long as this element is kept in check.

"Really, Rob's hopes of what readers will one day want from novels shows contempt for his audience - in effect he's saying 'this is what I think you should read'. Rob's position is an extreme one - the poetic novel tends to be dead, but then so too do those novels produced by writers who plot with the aid of a computer. The most interesting writing today tends to be that which falls between these two stools.

"After all that, I have to say that I liked Rob's story."

SAM LONG - BOX 4946, PATRICK AFB, FLA 32925 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

"I know Rob Holdstock, and I know he's a good writer, but he sure didn't show it in Sandcastles. The first few paragraphs turned me off. He starts by piling adjectives and adverbs on top of each other, plus using awkward syntax. 'Stang' is not the past tense of 'sting'. 'Maldoer' is not good: it should be either 'evildoer' or malefactor'. And so forth. Yrrch, it sets my teeth on edge to see such careless writing. Besides, the story didn't lead anywhere after we found the boy was a phantom. Of course, the shortcomings of his writing are not your fault, but you really ought to have been more selective than this: send it back for a rewrite. It's your duty as an editress."

/=My duty as an editrix is to use my own judgement, Sam, and I judged Sandcastles to be a super story which did not need any rewrites. Whatsmore, most of the readers agreed with mewith a few exceptions of course.=/

"Where'd you get that interview with Mrozek? Not bad a-tall, and you translate very well--it was almost as if the interview had been done in English in the first place. And did you write that little Elegy for Gillon Field? It's quite good, very touching. (Tho, he said nitpickingly, I'd put 'to' for 'with'.)"

/=The Mrozek interview was taken from a Polish magazine called PRZE KROJ - - and the poem for Gillon was by Leonard Cohen... but I thought I said that just before the poem itself.. yes, I did! You're not giving me your undivided attention again Samuel, tut..=/

'Marion Turner's tale was a delight, just as the woman herself is. It was

F a n M a i l

clear, unprepossessing, fluent, well-written--an admirable piece of work. By the way, you know, in a few hundred or thousand years, 'soon', relatively speaking, there will be no longer any total eclipses, because the moon is moving away from the earth, and thus will not cover the sun's disc. Only annular eclipses from then on.

"Ted Tubb's bit was good. Solid, serious but not oppressively so, and very competently written. I take issue with him, however, when he says (p 28) that societies growing on other planets would be feudal. Colonies are almost never feudal, as the historians of ancient Greece, Rome, and the Americas show. Once those colonies have had sufficient time to evolve a breakdown in the central colonization authority, then you can have feudalism on that planet. Feudalism occurs when a strong central power (e.g. the Roman Empire or the First Kingdom in Egypt, or Mycenaean Greece) collapses and men must fall back on their local resources. Weaker men commend themselves to stronger men, promising to serve him in exchange for his protection. The positions become hereditary, and localism becomes the order of the day. Of course the planet may be highly centralized, non-feudal, but be feudal relative to the central authority of a star system or galaxy, as is shown in the Foundation Trilogy. An earthly example of this was Normandy in the time of William I, which was one of the most centralised states in western Europe, held as a feudal fief by William from the French king.

"I always enjoy Harry Turner, either in print or in the flesh."
/Hein...hein../"Listen to him Lisa, and heed him: he is a wise man."

/= Yes Master.=/

MERVYN BARRETT - 179, WALM LANE, LONDON N. W. 2.

"In his article about the Dumarest books Ted Tubb says an awful lot of challengeable things. That bit for instance about "every man is on a personal quest the aim of which is to find happiness..." That's a rather sweeping sort of assumption. I know one man who isn't - me. I suspect there are a lot of others. I doubt whether Ted writes books in order to feel happy. He may feel happy when he completes one that has come out the way he wanted it but the important thing is the writing of the book that's what he set out to achieve. I think that the state of happiness is a sort of by product that comes often with - but not only with - the achievement of a worthwhile creative goal.

"His stuff about colonisation being undertaken by barbarians because they have the guts etc., seems to me to be a lot of rubbish with little in the way of historical precedent to support it. Sure barbarian is a pretty loose term and it seems that it originally was probably a culture/snob thing - anyone who wasn't a Greek or a Roman but the usual sort of picture of a barbarian is a sword swinging tribesman who sails out and burns a few villages, sacks the odd town, takes what he wants and then buggers off. But these weren't the people that established the cultures that I'm familiar with.

"The Vikings might be taken as good patterns for your typical barbarian but how many overseas colonies did Denmark establish? Certainly you could find traces of violence and feudalism in the new colonies at first but no significant measure of it. Feudalistic and barbaric because

those with the guts to make the effort could be nothing else.' The colonists who came to New Zealand with the idea of settling there, to use a rough sort of social classification, lower middle class. They had some education and some aspiration to own property and enough realism to realise that in the system in which they grew up with large areas of the agricultural land part of large estates and such as was marketed either expensive or undesirable, they were unlikely ever to have these things they wanted. They went out to farm because that was what they wanted to do and all that could be done in a new land. They took up as much land as they could manage. They were preceded by whaling fleets, soldiers and missionaries and followed by merchants, tradesmen, gold seekers. Guts in plenty but not a barbarian in a boatload.

"American history is more violent. If there were any barbarians in America they would be the - by definition - the Indians. The invaders brought civilisation and in wiping out the Indians they were just getting rid of some nuisances that stood in the way of it. All sorts of things happened and all sorts of groups set up communities to live a life the way they thought it should be lived and couldn't any more be lived in the countries they came from. There was even a sort of commercial feudalism - the company towns - but order and system was established as soon as it was practical to establish it and it was usually based to a great degree on the laws of the country the immigrants came from.

"They travelled for weeks-months in wooden sailing ships and some of them didn't make it alive. For most of them it was a one way trip too - they had to make good because they couldn't afford to go back and there was nothing left to go back to.

"If colonies are established on the planets of other stars by people from earth it will be because it seems like a good idea, an adventure, something worthwhile. But they'll go out prepared in a way other colonists and immigrants, in our past weren't and if there is a whole planet for the taking why should there be violence?

"Greg Pickersgill may not know what he likes but he sure knows what he doesn't like (which is mostly everything) - after he's seen it. He writes like someone who is constantly being let down by fans and fanzines. He resents that other fans aren't doing what he can't do either - edit a great fanzine. He resents that they don't care and put out their fanzines anyhow. Bad (by his lights) fanzines embarrass him in the way legendary serious old time sf fans were embarrassed by Bergey covers. In a perfect world there would be a right to publish but all fanzines, before they could be given away, sold or traded would have to be submitted to a board of review presided over by a suitably uniformed, suitably titled (Oberfanzinefuhrer, perhaps?) Greg Pickersgill who in precise measured phrases would pass down his objective judgements. (Like, maybe, "He's a bloody idiot... shit.. fucking terrible..")

"Rob Holdstock, in your letter column, says some pretty strange things. All that stuff about how he couldn't build a novel that way (from a skeleton, inventing situations, characters, philosophies etc). To me it seems like a pretty reasonable feat. 'I have more respect for literature.' Egad, how pretentious can you get? Robert sounds like that most tedious of literary bores (and the worst examples are usually poets) whose works express him, strip him naked and expose his soul to the world, who'll fiercely resist

any effort to change or **shackle him**, who won't sell out to the establishment etc... Only even if you could see his soul it probably wouldn't be more interesting than the exterior of him"/= Sorry, but I just cannot let that go; you obviously haven't met Rob in the flesh, Mervyn!="/and no one could care a stuff what he did really and the establishment hasn't even heard of him and probably never will. Art happens when an artist is doing his thing to the best of his ability."

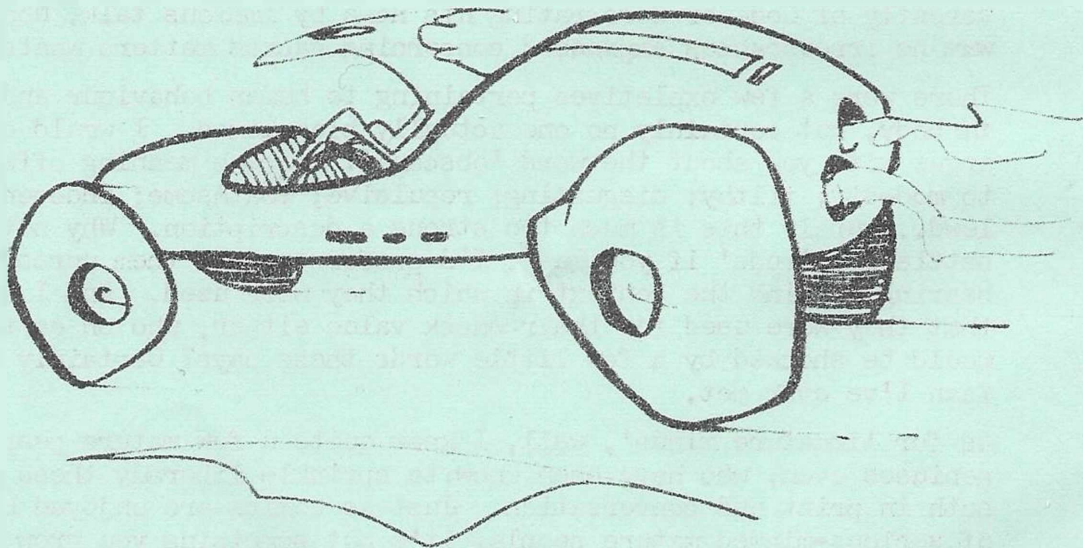
/= And isn't 'doing his thing to the best of his ability' the same as being oneself, discovering about oneself, reacting to the world around us? In other words 'exposing one's soul'? If a writer is truly honest he can't help but expose his attitudes, thought, feelings et cetera; his 'soul' if you like.=/

"I couldn't tell the difference between a sonata Beethoven wrote because he felt like it and one he ripped off in a hurry to get enough money to pay the milk man."

/= Aaa, there you have it, Merv, it's all up to the reader/listener whatever; it takes a 'soul' to see a 'soul', on the other hand...=/

"The idea of Holdstock writing with his balls though has a certain gruesome, bizarre fascination. Perhaps this talent could be worked up into an attraction for the next convention. 'At Coventry. For three days only. See the wonder of the Science Fiction Age. **HOLDSTOCK'S TYPING TESTICLES**'."

/= Hmmm...mm.. I think... I'd rather see Rob's soul. =/



ROBERT TOMLINSON - 13, SILKIN WAY, NEWTON AYCLIFFE , CO. DURHAM. DL5 4HE

"Having handled dozens of amateur efforts (not fanzines) in my position as Manuscript Bureau Manager for the British Amateur Press Association, I can safely say that Zimri surpasses them all."/= Prrrr...rrr.rrr..=/

"The opening sentences in Brian Aldiss' story --'12 Magnificent Ways to Die' -- were a delight, and the phrase '...from penis erectus straight through to rigor mortis without any boring intermediate stages..."

has, in my opinion, the mark of near genius." / = Near genius? why not go the whole hog, Brian IS a bloody genius; well, why else would he be in Zimri?! =/"This type of writing can be quite amusing without being in the least obscene.

"...My one complaint about Zimri is the use of such strong language which seems positively quite abusive in some of the review pages, and even in the fan-mail.

"It is the vulgar expletive which offends against good taste. Although at times the normal adjective isn't forceful enough. Words like 'genitals' and 'intercourse' can never replace 'balls' and 'f---' but must they be used in conjunction with blasphemy? Because it's the blasphemous obscenity which really offends.

"I'm no prude, in my younger days I too have used obscenities, but never within earshot of the ladies, bless 'em! Nevertheless, obscene words shouldn't be used indiscriminately just to show-off, or shock, or to be just downright dirty!

"A conversation which is made up of every other word being an obscenity shows an immature mind. When one reaches maturity -- which can be attained at any age -- one discovers they don't need childish vulgarity to express themselves. In time obscenity does tend to lose its appeal -- like comics, picture-stories and all the paraphernalia of childhood -- we grow out of it."

/ = Well, I would argue with you about your word 'blaspheme', I've gone thru Z-6 with a magnifying glass---just in case I missed something in the first instance---and I can't find anyone speaking irreverently of God, or desecrating His name by impious talk. Nope there were no irreverences expressed concerning sacred matters whatsoever.

There were a few expletives pertaining to human behaviour and parts of the body, but certainly no one actually blasphemed. I would also argue with you about the word 'obscene': obscene meaning offensive to modesty; filthy; disgusting; repulsive; loathsome; indecent; lewd...surely this is much too strong a description. Why not settle for 'rude' if you must, I'd prefer to call them unrestrained, bearing in mind the context in which they were used. And I doubt that they were used for their shock value either, who on earth would be shocked by a few little words these days? Certainly no faan I've ever met.

As for 'immature minds', well, I know quite a few mature people, geniuses even, who have been known to sprinkle liberally these words both in print and conversation. Just as comics are enjoyed by a lot of serious-minded mature people, it's not something you grow out of, on the contrary, it is something you grow into.

Like a lot of other things, its all a matter of conditioning. I, for instance, find your "...within earshot of the ladies, BLESS 'EM" just as offensive (not to mention chauvenistic) as you seem to find 'rude' words. "Bless 'em!", indeed, this conjures up a picture of someone patting a dog (or a dog-like lady) on the head: 'there,there that's a nice bitch .' I feel that if I'm to be treated as an equal---intellectually and so on---then I don't need to be protected from the so called naughty words as tho I were a child or some kind of

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moron who has to be sent out of the room in case my feeble mind gets corrupted.

On the other hand it is not natural to me to use these words (I wish I could think of a suitable definition for them) myself--especially in print--thus it would be dishonest of me to do so just to follow the latest trend as it were. But I'd hate to have people I respect and consider myself their equal to be put into a verbal straightjacket on my account. Mutual respect is mutual relaxation, trust, being oneself in the presence of the other. How can any relationship be expected to develop if one, or both, are forced to be for ever on their guard. No, if I accept someone as a friend/whatever, then I accept them as they are, not as I'd like them to be.

And yet I still would not devote a whole editorial trying to prove how emancipated I am by using every expletive I could think of...but then that's another story and another fanzine..=/

ALAN B. STEWART - 6, FRANKFURT AM MAIN 1, ESCHENHEIMER ANLAGE 2, GERMANY

"I had been beginning to think that ZIMRI didn't have much of interest for me - not being one of those poetic artistic types - but Z-6 did contain sufficient non-intellectual matter to make it slightly comprehensible to me.

"Now your Mr Pickersgill.." /=Mine? No Sir, Mista Pickersgill is very much his own man..=/ "...for instance, has done himself proud, but with a noticable lapse of standards in his review of ERG. Greg surely doesn't expect anyone to believe that he actually likes ERG "the nicest fanzine in Britain". Where, for example, Alan Burns is a "congenital idiot", Gerald Bishop "grotesque", Dave Rowe "irritatingly brash, noisy, bumptious", Howard Rosenblum "the fan most people like to disregard" (actually I thought that was Greg Pickersgill), he praises Terry Jeeves for his "easy bonhomme", whatever that may be.

/= So? What's your point, man? "Bonhomme" means: good-natured man..=/

"By the way is it true that Greg once tore up a copy of ZIMRI before your very eyes, and if so, how come you're now publishing fanzine-reviews by him?"

/= No, it is not true. It was in fact Leroy, and even if it was Greg, what has a show of strength and fearlessness got to do with being an excellent reviewer? Everything, perhaps!..=/

PAUL SKELTON - 25, BOWLAND CLOSE, OFFERTON, STOCKPORT, CHESHIRE SK2 5NW

"Brian Aldiss' Twelve Magnificent Ways To Die was exceedingly pointless and I'm disappointed in you, Lisa. I can't help feeling that if it hadn't been written by Brian Aldiss it wouldn't have stood an earthly of seeing print. You may restore my faith in your integrity by telling me, truthfully though, that you have too rejected stuff by big name pro-writers."

/=First let me tell you that from the 41 locs I have received--so far--only one other wierdo shares your opinion of Brian's 12MWT. You are right in thinking that if it hadn't been written by Brian Aldiss it would

not have stood an earthly, simply because it would not have been as good by anyone else. And I can't truthfully tell you that I have too rejected lots of stuff by big name pro-writers 'cos I haven't had that many submitted, the ones I do get from BNPs I usually accept with thanks for the simple reason that 9 out of 10 BNPs know their craft and it would be silly of me not to want to give my readers the best I can get. Perhaps on reflection you'll agree?=/

"Dave Rowe is right. Greg doesn't respond. I have been sending him fanzines, either direct or through Kettle, for nearly four years and in all that time I have had the stunning response of three fanzines and one postcard saying in effect, "Here's my new address, and where the fuck is HELL-8?" Not exactly an overwhelming volume of response. Greg seems to think that simply by being Greg Pickersgill he has a right to every fanzine published in this country. And because he has been so objectionable to everybody that they are reluctant to stop sending their 'zine to him because it might look like they can't take it. Well, I can't take it any more and the next time Greg gets a zine from me it will be reciprocating one he's sent me. Greg is a great guy, one who fandom would be much poorer without, but he's been getting pretty much of a free ride for far too long now. He also happens to be a very perceptive reviewer when he doesn't get stuck in behind his prejudices. Even then he usually has a reason for heaping the shit where he heaps it but sometimes the foetid miasma obscures from him the fact that even shit has its good points."

/=I agree with you about Greg not LoC-ing and I think all we fan-eds should organise a boycott: no more fanzines for Greg just cos he's a great guy! I'm sure that it will be worth it, for who knows perhaps his LoCs would be as good as his reviews. Having agreed with you thus far, Paul, I'm afraid I lost you after the words "...Greg is a great guy..." Are you in fact congratulating Greg for his cunning tactics, or what?=/

"Marion Turner's piece captivated with its obvious enthusiasm even though I had no interest whatsoever in the subject matter. Fear And Loathing In The Grand Hotel was even better because it was so bloody interestingly written as well as being about something I was looking forward to reading. Bristol was my first con and I like to see it through as many eyes as possible. ... Ted Tubb's piece was interesting for the light it threw on the Dumarest series, but it was one of the lesser pieces in the issue. Ken Bulmer was saying, at Newcastle, that Ted feels a bit left out of fandom, as if the whole thing is slipping away from him as he gets older, and I'm not surprised with letters like John Hall's."

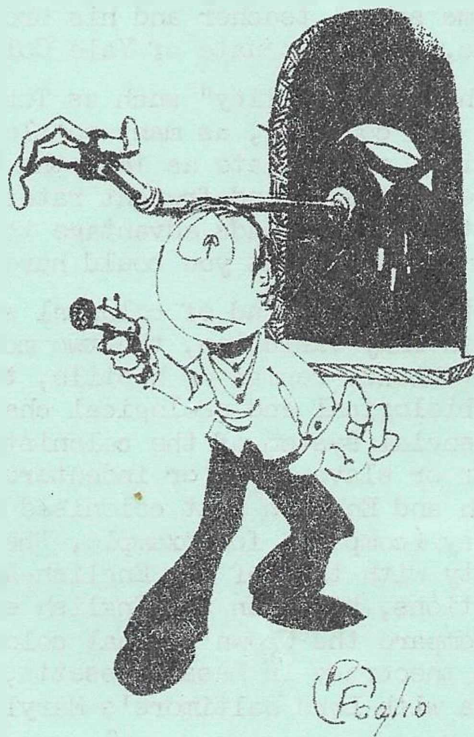
/=I wonder..An old Polish proverb says: 'Kto sie lubi, ten sie czubi.' Freely translated it means that one usually attacks the people one secretly admires, and I'm certain this is the case with Johnny Hall. I sincerely hope that Johnny and indirectly, I are to blame for Ted's 'left-out' feeling. I get lots of attacking letters and I only publish the ones which I think the guy being attacked can take, more than this, I usually hope he'll give as good as he gets. Seemingly my crafty manoeuvres don't always work out...=/

"Harry Turner seems to be as good at writing as he is on the art side of things. I envy him with all the power of someone who can do several things passably envying someone who can do the same things and others.....

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...bloody well. /Eh, don't be so modest Paul, y're not so bad yourself=/
The poetry did nothing for me, but then mine would probably do nothing for
you or them. Ian's piece was interesting, biut (biut? - I'm getting nearly
as bad as you. Well honestly, there were an uncommon lot of typos in this
issue..)"

/Yes, well, nearly everyone told me off about that, but I'm only
going to let Paul put it into words this once, cos it would get too
boring for you lot, and too embarrassing for me. I can only blame
Jo Withiswhatson, my proof reader again and promise to do better
this time and the next times..I hate those bloody typos as much as
anyone but...=/



CHUCK HOLST - 2301 ELLIOT AVE.S MINNEAPOLIS, NM 55404 - U. S. of A.

"Aldiss' piece might be called the ultimate fantasy. Most of us want
to die well, as most of us want to live well, but few of us have the
choosing of the place, time, or the manner of death. (Perhaps that is why
Evil Knievel is going ahead with his grand leap across space despite the
failures of his two pest vehicles.) But if Aldiss ever does achieve his
ambition of kicking off in the midst of orgasm, I hope he at least has the
decency to warn the lady first. Finding your lover has become a corpse
(I almost said "stiff") could be quite a shocker and I can easily see that
rigidity could lead to frigidity (there, I did it).

"Mr Tubb's ideas on cultural stages and colonisation are a bit simplistic, don't you think? ("...smashing them in the only way they can be smashed, changing them in the only way they could be changed?") Now, the last time Britain was colonised, I know, it was by barbarians, but America has had a different experience and one still close to many of us. The very city I am writing this in was founded less than a hundred fifty years ago. The first two buildings (a couple of mills, photographs of which are still in existence) being erected in 1823 and 1824, and I can assure you it was not founded or settled by barbarians but by civilised men seeking to bring a familiar kind of order to the wilderness. Many of the people who settled this part of the continent did it for adventure, idealism or, most often, the chance to better themselves economically, but they were far from being barbarians. My mother's great-grandfather moved here mainly because he wasn't making it in New York state, but also because many of his friends and relatives had already moved to Minnesota ("Friend after friend departs.." he wrote in his diary a hundred eight years ago). But he himself was a part-time farmer, part-time school teacher and his brother, Fletcher, who preceded him to this state, was a graduate of Yale College.

"Nor was there a "hands-off policy" such as Tubb so logically deducts from nothing. On the contrary, as many settlers were encouraged to immigrate as were willing, and as late as 1890 the Northern Pacific Rail Road was still offering reduced fare and freight rates to settlers west of here. Of course, it was to the railroad's advantage to boost the number of people needing goods from the East, but you could hardly call it feudalism.

"I strongly suspect that the kind of colonial society that develops on a world will depend upon many variables, the two most important being the nature of the planet (whether benign or hostile, the geography of the planet, its geology, its biological and ecological characteristics, etc.) and the already-existing social system of the colonists and their place within that system (master or slave, free or indentured, owner or renter, etc.) The Spanish, French and English that colonised the New World all did things in their own way (compare, for example, the Spanish-American slave's position in society with that of the English-American slave) based on their national institutions, but even the English experience in America was far from uniform. (Compare the Crown's penal colony in Georgia with the earlier, intellectual theocracy in Massachusetts, or the Quaker colony and ideals in Pennsylvania with Lord Baltimore's Maryland.)

"The barbarian is not the only one with guts; I think space will be colonized by civilized men and women.

"Skipping around a bit, I come to the fanzine reviews and Greg Pickersgill. This was my first acquaintance with Pickersgill, but I would assume from his style, if not from remarks elsewhere in the 'zine, that he has some kind of reputation in British fandom. Few of the fans I know in the American Midwest care to go in for that kind of insult and personal attack (it seems to be more the Lunarian thing) and I, personally, found Pickersgill more amusing than his words, eg., I think he is less witty than laughable. The only fan I know of around here that at all approaches Pickersgill's style is something of a social outcast for his general obnoxiousness in large groups (he is really all right by himself or with only one or two people) and his occasional undeserved attacks upon people despite that fact I think he has more intelligence and wit than Pickersgill.

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"As long as I am on the subject let me state here and now that I also disagree with Pickersgill on the subject of book reviews in fanzines. Granted, the worst of them can be trite, boring or positively illiterate, nevertheless they do serve the function in this age of overproduction of occasionally alerting someone like me to something worthwhile or at least interesting that I might otherwise have passed by. I really don't have time to read even half of the new sf coming out today so it's nice to have some guide for the selection of the stuff I buy. There are even rare occasions when a review might give me some insight into a novel I would not otherwise have garnered or cause me to go back to an old favorite and reread it. And of course, the reviews can also tell me where not to waste my time.

"The thing to do about book reviews is not to expect too much of them, to realize that they are, in the end, just opinion, and then pick a reviewer whose tastes and opinions pretty much coincide with yours and let him (or her) be your guide. It's not necessary to me for the reviewer to give a critique of the writer's style compared to that of Arthur Leo Zagat or to explain how this book fits into the writer's cultural adjustment to the twentieth century --no, all I really want to know is, what is it about and will I enjoy it? It may happen that I am a literary cretin who doesn't appreciate good writin', but, by the Great Spider, if that is so, then I want there to be another literary cretin with my tastes somewhere out there picking my books for me.

"Besides: the more reviews there are, the less chance one will have of undue amount of influence over the fate of any particular book."

DAVE LANGFORD - TRELAWNEY, OAKFIELD GDNS, NEWPORT, GWENT.

"..Zimri... I liked it. There's subjective-response reviewing for you. ... What a short editorial! but this is but dignified restraint. Should I have said editrixial?) Vague feeling of guilt: I didn't go to the poetry soiree at the Tynecon." / = You shouldn't have said anything, one can go off people. = / "Next year maybe." / = Hmm. = /

"Not his best work, but Brian Aldiss' mortuary piece is certainly entertaining. But what about the supermegalomaniac SF dream: YOU and YOU ALONE have the secret trigger to the Doomsday Bomb and at the slightest movement of your little finger POW! end of you, of humanity, of (small after-thought) the universe in one last gigantic orgasmic fusion... Great Scott, General, the very fabric of space has been ruptured by the U-Bomb - be calm lad be calm...

"About Sandcastles, I don't know... The hero's hangups are well sketched but don't seem quite to fit in. The careful, portentous build-up breaks down in too many loose ends: only half resolved. A nice story with flaws. Aphids on the black roses...

"And two stranger-than-fiction pieces follow. Both great fun to read - more than once - and the sort of thing that really justifies fanzines; who else would publish them? Marion Turner's piece is better because she obviously enjoys the whole thing and I'd mutter 'infectious enthusiasm' if it weren't such a hack phrase. The Con report - sure it's timeless, but as for honesty? I've not noticed that much Weltschmerz floating around at cons... and does John Hall do nothing but get pissed? I was sober for the

first two hours at Newcastle (but then I arrived late).

"POEMS. Subjectivity! Seems to me that BEHIND HIS EYES drags, ALONG THE BEACH is cliché, MORE THAN EVER has some power but blurs its images in the first section, producing a curiously confused effect. The England poem tries for restraint and achieves pretentiousness. ('tis fate!) AHASUERUS is prose and would save space by being printed as such, suffering slightly from the diffuseness and reiteration which characterise 'prose poems'. Still I'd like to read the rest. Aldiss - god, am I one of these people who only like superficiality? - he's superficial as all hell and GOOD. More, more!

"As a rule I enjoy reading reviews, and agree mere summerising is no good. Kev Smith hates the same story as myself in NWISF21 - cheers! The DEATHWORLD reviews were interesting: 5 paras of Why This Book Is no Good followed by 1 of Why I Like It All the Same. Odd that Pickersgill reverses this by spending ages praising BLUNT in fine and then condemning it as a whole. The 'zine reviews though stimulating in the way that garlic is, stink of prejudice. "Stick to the bloody material!" I screamed as the agile reviewer leapt lithely from side to side of the point, stabbing critical knives into zines, editors and irrelevant personality stuff. (That didn't come out exactly as I meant it but the meaning's clear.)

"The letters were good quality stuff. The first two, concerning poetry, talked a good deal of sense. I can't add much, but will offer one or two thoughts. The space-between-words, it seems, when wider than normal, is essentially a substitute for punctuation - indicating pauses and stresses of greater or lesser degree - perhaps capable of finer gradation than ordinary stops? Breaking up lines by vertical spacing provides more positive stressing, and this seems not to be an incommunicable thing. The key is moderation. When words are fragmented, when their scattering on the page degenerates to the point of visual confusion - then you lose the readers' attention and they won't jump your intellectual hurdles any more.

"Ah me, once I've started it's difficult to stop. I enjoyed Z, as I said before, though one or two bits fell into the love-to-hate category."

MRS PAMELA BOAL - 43, HAWTHORNE CRESCENT, GROVE, WANTAGE, OXON OX12 7JD

"I am able to believe that Brian Aldiss could turn a railway timetable into interesting reading, but were they 'twelve magnificent ways to die' or would a more accurate title have been 'Twelve Maganificent Ways of Living Just Before Dieing'" / = 'Dieing'?! Hey, what are you trying to do, Pam, beat me at my own game; that's Conesaspelling...I like it! I like it!! =/ "After all there is only one way to actually die.

"I read three out of the five fanzines that Greg Pickersgill reviewed, which was just as well, because apart from two or three sentences, where I thought if that is true I agree with him, no clear picture emerged of the zines under review. What did emerge was a picture of a viperous (emotionally) man with a boring line in expletives.

"John Hall's Fear and Loathing in the Grand Hotel, did convey in parts, that sense of alienation we all feel at times, even in the company of friends. Perhaps I would have sensed it more, if it hadn't arisen mostly from the fact that he was freeloading on the hotel. But then, I'm just a

law abiding old square.

"I really enjoy letter columns, perhaps because the same people write to so many zines that they are beginning to seem like old friends. "

/= I hope most people feel the same 'cos this letter column -as ever- looks like being longer than I anticipated. Methinks I've got my talking-cap on again too! =/

JOE PATRIZIO - 37, COWANBRAE DRIVE, DUNFERMLINE, FIFE

"Thanks for Z6. I don't really deserve to get it, do I? (No) Because I didn't write a letter on Z5, did I? (No) I'm very sorry and I promise not to do it again, don't I? (No -- I mean, yes).

"Brian Aldiss forgot to give the titles and authors of those science fantasies he reviewed, but I'm pretty sure that I've read at least four of them. Clever and funny.

"The book reviews were a waste of paper -- all book reviews are a waste of paper. (Gee, I've just agreed with Greg Pickersgill.)

"And talking of Greg Pickersgill, weren't his fmz reviews good? "
/ = Yes. Phiu, got there before you this time! =/ "I thoroughly enjoyed them, even though I'd read only one of the zines mentioned. However, I must take Greg to task in saying Howie Rosenblum is 'the next generations's Brian Burgess'. Nobody dislikes Brian. To digress; many years ago Brian hiked from London to Peterborough (or thereabouts) to get to an Easter Con and visited me on the way. I lived in Edinburgh at the time. When it was suggested to him that his route was somewhat devious he explained that it was easy to get lifts from London to Edinburgh.

"Letter col: Lot of sense expounded by Tom Roberts on poetry... I may go back and read Z's. Although I think I understand what T.S. Eliot is getting at in your quotation, and although there is always room for exploration with words (which is perhaps the point of poetry) once a writer starts to use words and sounds which are, to everyone but himself, unrelated to the normally accepted meanings, associations or symbolism, we have, not poetry, but mere self indulgence. "

/ = I might be tempted to agree with you there except how is the said poet to know when he's reaching someone and when he's merely being self indulgent? Surely the only way to find out is to experiment; which bring us back to square one. =/

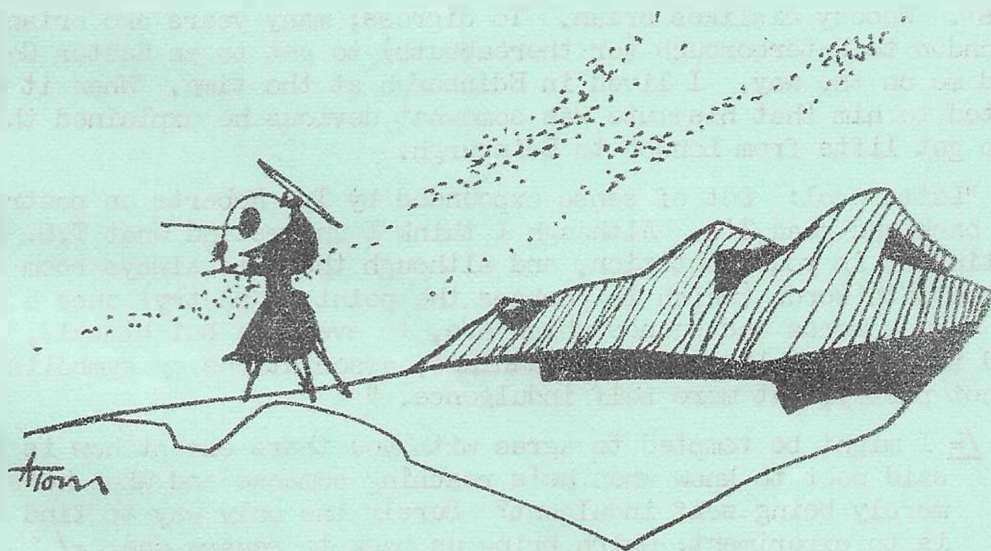
"John Hall is being a bit hard on Ted Tubb. John seems not to realize that things were better when Ted was younger -- just as, when John is older, they will have been better when he was younger. It takes an extremely well balanced and totally integrated personality (like mine, for instance) to recognise the better aspects of the past and present.

"So, having read the letter column, I suppress my open mind, grit my teeth and read the POETRY. Michael Butterworth's things struck me as being trite and clever-clever. For him, an intellectual exercise rather than an emotional one, as they should have been. Similarly, Gerald England. And you? Almost the same comment, except that in the middle, I felt a faint stirring. The trouble with this poem is that its concrete references are so

vague as to give no pointer to the direction you want us to go. It does give a vague wave in a number of different directions, all of them arriving at no conclusion and not worth the head room. 'Ah' you say, 'does it need to have specific concrete references? Is it not sufficient in itself to be an open ended referent?' Well, perhaps. But all I can reply is--who needs it? I don't need this sort of thing to trigger my fantasies. "

/=There you go, speaking for me again! I would not say the things you had me say there at all; what I am saying is that in my own poem I did arrive at a conclusion, and a very profound one to boot. OK, so you didn't get it and that could be my fault, but it could also be yours. I wasn't trying to trigger your fantasies, what I was trying to do was to share my thoughts^{on} moments of absolute self awareness, power, flashes of brilliance... compared to the dull half-asleep minds we normally go around with. But then it's pointless trying to explain, the only way I'm able to explain is in that poem I wrote and that did nothing for you, so we're back in that square again -- sigh. =/

"Ian Williams' piece was a bit of a cop out. It wasn't really a poem, more of an outline for a story that he couldn't be bothered to put meat on. Quite enjoyable, though, in a mild sort of way."



TERRY JEEVES - 230, BANNERDALE RD, SHEFFIELD S11 9FE

"I don't know what you're up to with Zim, but if you keep on at this rate, you'll be copping a fannish Oscar in short order."

/= Well, as it so happens...she said smiling smugly...I am at this very moment gazing at my lovely NOVA Award; you must be a sooth-sayer, Terry. Ta. =/

"First off, that cover. Very clever, very striking...one of the best things I've seen on any fanzine British or American, in many a long

year. I have no idea what it is, what it is meant to be or anything else except that I like it. To a slightly lesser degree, I also like the interior art. No complaints mark you, all of it nice evocative stuff with the exception of Harry's illo for the OPEN ENDED GAME. More and more, he is going for the symbolic stuff and in this case, as far as I'm concerned, it doesn't do anything. It is nicely balanced and that's the lot. Pity, cos Harry is no mean draughtsman at a 'straight' illo...

"On the other hand...interview with Slawomir Mrozek was without doubt the most utter conceptual illustration of the penultimate rationale which any evocative and discerning might conceivably intend. It is often thought to be effete and fin de siecle to construe such sentiments in an idle fashion. Was it not Chinovan who said: "When all else is illusions, this we must acknowledge...truth is the eternal verity of self awareness." Now you may not entirely agree with this, but since Mrozek was obviously a disciple of Chinovan, the similarity is undoubtedly there. Personally I prefer fish and chips."

/= Jeeez, that was heavy stuff there, Terry, too heavy for me I fear. Chinovan? Never met him; at first I thought you were talking about Armand Jean Duplessis, Duke and Cardinal Whatshisname but no, it was merely an echo in my mind. =/

"Which brings me to Fanzine Reviews. Hmpf..don't know whether to be flattered or outraged at Greg's review. I think I'll decide to be flattered.

It has been erroneously stated that I don't like the modern age, or modern fandom. This is the typical sweeping statement, which if I made it, would be pounced upon with glee by Greg and others of like persuasion. There are many good things in past ages (even if moderns do not agree) and many bad ones. The same applies to modern fandom. It emulates the curate's egg, being good (and bad) in parts. Modern sf is the same. The good stuff (what I like) is way and above, better than that of the thirties or 40's; the bad stuff is worse. As for poetry, well, that's an exception, it seems all rubbish to me.

"Final comment. How is it that Brian Aldiss seems so obsessed with s.x ??? I'm all in favour of the game, but it does get a bit tedious to find it in nearly everything he writes."

/=What could you have been reading by Brian lately? I've just finished Billion Year Spree: no sex, and in Frankensteing Unbound the relationship between Bodenland ^{& Harry S. Gally} is romantic, sensitive, tender, ephemeral certainly not sexy. Perhaps its in The Eighty-Minute Hour, I'm only half way thru that - so far I haven't come across any obsession with sex, unless its all in the later half of the book.

Come to think you may have been referring to 12 Magnificent Ways to Die, but no, you couldn't be because in it Brian also talks about patriotism, gluttony, spaceships and sunrises, fast cars, films, music and LSD - to mention but a few that spring to mind at random. So where is all this sex BA is so obsessed with?! Could it all be in the mind? Yes, but whose mind, eh? EH? =/

JOHN N. HALL - 35, FILEY AVENUE, L O N D O N N 16

" Zimri-6 maintained the standard.....if pressed I'd say the best things in the issue were the poem More Than Ever and Greg Pickersgill's Fanzine Reviews.

"Robert Holdstock's perceptive little LoC ("John Hall reads like a frustrated songwriter") was a body blow to all mental giants who had heretofore condemned Mr Holdstock as stupid, moronic and infantile. Here, in these few lines, Ole Buddy Rob, shows just what degrees of acerbity he can heat his rhetoric up to; given a good night the night before, and a new dinky toy when his wife went shopping. Holdstock accurately guesses, unaided by the many who could have told him for no extra mental effort, that I am in fact a frustrated songwriter, although not frustrated in quite the way he no doubt hopes.

"Speaking of what Mr Holdstock calls Pop reviews however, it does occur to me that ZIMRI does not review albums. I could contribute a few but it would be pretty one-sided: all Rock 'n Roll, Country n Western and West Coast Harmony. So those cretins who can muster praise for concert rock ought to be given a crack of the whip too I suppose, and maybe even erudite classicists like yourself, Lisa, could throw in a few comments on the musical world. Worth thinking about?"

/= Sure, but would they like it? Certainly your report on that Rock concert (Z4 $\frac{1}{2}$?) was very well received, so perhaps all you readers out there will let me know what you think of John's idea=/
66

J. T. PARKER - 18, KING WILLIAM STREET, OLD TOWN, SWINDON, WILTSHIRE

"Looking through ZIMRI, I was initially surprised to see that Sci-Fi was not the sole concern of the magazine, but after reading it and digesting it this minor detail no longer worried me.

"E. C. Tubb's piece was excellent, this is generally the kind of thing I look forward to in publications of your type. A really absorbing read.

"The fiction and poetry was profound/superficial/obscure/moving/gutless/pretentious/ interesting - the most neutral adjectives. Seriously though, most contemporary literature is striving to articulate the feelings of the sensitive trapped in a universe of heavy mental repetition (even the poets fail to discern the whispering all around) and endless cynical manoeuvres on the planes of feeling and instinct. The superficial CAN be profound, this is the obsessive quest of modern aesthetics. On a popular level, the novels of Moorcock, the music of Tangerine Dream and the paintings of Rossetti do contain elements of an apocalyptic nature. The very absurd fundamentals of these popular escapist dreams are their very strength. They mirror the absurd foundations of our own space-time continuum. So absurd that we dare not dwell upon these things for long lest we go gibberish with stark cosmic fear.

"I enjoyed the letter section: it is always interesting to read other peoples' views even if they are not in accord with one's own.

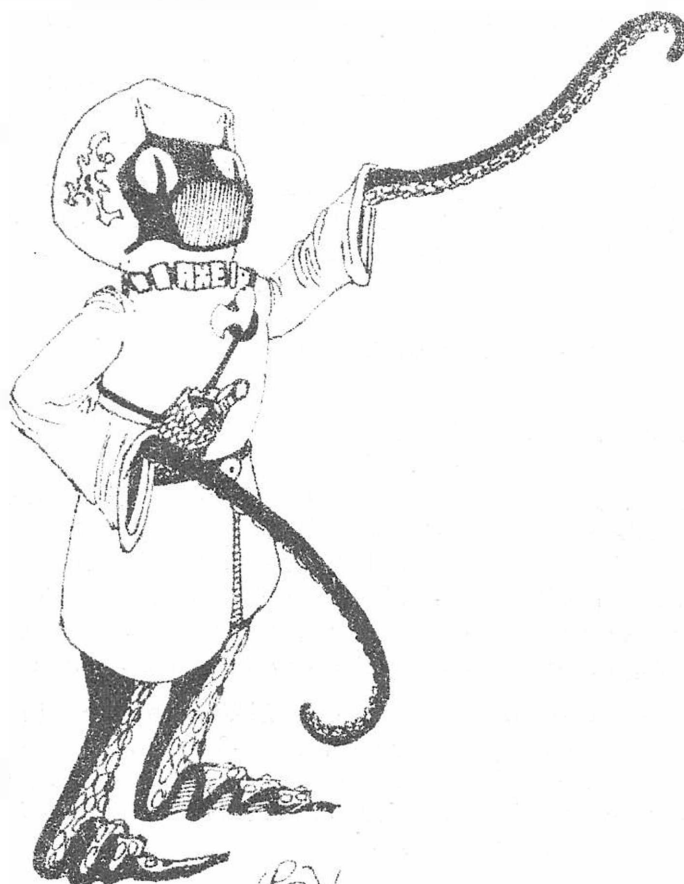
"A thing that I find vaguely irritating in the 'fanzine world', as an outsider, is this seeming insularity of concerns and ambitions.

This being the picture I get from the constant references to 'cons', the gossip about various 'personalities' etc. It all conveys the idea of a small 'in-group' patting each other on the back; a bunch of very nice (I'm sure!) but obsessive individuals somehow not exciting in the real world of events and ideas. ZIMRI is no worse than other fanzines as far as this is concerned, but that atmosphere of 'inwardness' still clogs."

/= Actually Zimri is one of the least fannish, or in-groupish fanzines around, tho I suppose even Zimri must appear somewhat insular to a newcomer. Its just like meeting strangers, getting to know and love them (or hate them). We don't always pat each other on the back y'know, fans have been known to administer a swift kick to fellow fans from time to time - metaphorically speaking, of course. =/

"Despite some reservations, which I mentioned above, I find your fanzine very interesting and promising. My goal for you - if I may be so arrogant as to suggest it - would be to try to tie up the whole field of speculative/fantasy literature with what's happening in the real day-to-day world. All art must be relevant. All creations stem from the brains of real people, not robots or martians. SF is concerned more and more with creating myths and alternative world structures, fanzines and SF criticism must reflect this."

/= Well, in my own way, I have been trying to do something on the lines you suggest, but its not easy... On the other hand I I wouldn't like Zimri to be totally sercon, there's something very special about fans and fandom; once its got you, it never lets you go, so beware! =/



ERIC B. LINDSAY - 6, HILLCREST AVENUE, FAULCONBRIDGE N.S.W. 2776

"As a long time fan of space opera, and one who has enjoyed reading the Dumarest series, I was fascinated by E C Tubb's piece on that series. It fills in pieces that were missing from my view on it, as well as being helpful as far as obtaining novels for my collection is concerned.

"Greg Pickersgill's review of Terry Jeeves' ERG makes me wonder just what Greg wants to see in a fanzine. I have always enjoyed ERG, whereas the usual run of UK fanzines seem so ingroupish (and generally stupid) that even the flashes of wit that are often present do not lead me to respond to them at all. And as for his comment that fanzines run for the editor rather than the readers haven't lasted more than 2 issues (page 48) I have never heard such a load of rubbish in my life - the audience might change, or even shrink a lot, but if an editor damn well feels like doing a fanzine that way it can last forever. Fanzines, dammitall, were originally intended to be about sf, not about dull individuals leading dull lives and writing about the great events (getting sloshed at a con) in tedious detail, which is what Greg seems to think are about. I don't mind ingroups in fandom, but the UK one is just too small. (Still, his reviews were interesting)."

JIM GODDARD - PLOVERS BARROW, SCHOOL ROAD, NOMANSLAND, SALISBURY, WILTS

"Ted Tubb's article is interesting background material, and, as intended, offers an insight into how the author regards his own work. It's a pity he disregards some of the more obvious questions about the series, and it's a pity he makes no attempt to answer other questions and remarks that his article poses. For instance: who decided that every man is on a personal quest in search of happiness? There are many other aims in life apart from the achievement of happiness, and some of them far more important. Despite this, the article supplies interesting background reading to the Dumarest series. It's a great pity that Ted has become typecast, as it were, known for just one particular type of SF. He strikes me as a highly intelligent man (intelligent, in this context, does not mean educated, which is something Ted lacks), who could write a far more diverse range of SF; but he's found himself a niche, and seems content to stay there."

I ALSO HEARD FROM: ANDREW STEPHENSON, CHRIS MORGAN, CHRIS FOWLER,
JOHN BRUNNER, BRIAN ALDISS, PETER NICHOLLS, RITCHIE
SMITH (wonder where THOTH is...?), DON CHUNG, CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON, ROGER
WADDINGTON, STEVE SNEYD, ROB HOLDSTOCK, DAVID LEE
ROGER WADDINGTON, LES ATKINSON, GERALD ENGLAND, STEPHEN
WALKER, ANDY DARLINGTON, LINCOLN HALL, MARC BOUDEN and ARCHIE MERCER--
Archie didn't actually write a LoC, he drew one instead: a sort of three
page map of Zimri which was unfortunately too intricate to reproduce.

My thanx to everyone who responded, likewise for all the interest shown in Z-6 by the guys (no, no ladies at all!) who'd read of Z in SF Monthly. Regrettably I wasn't able to send everyone a sample of Z6 cos I only had about 20 spare copies left. You'll all be getting Z7 instead, but remember, once you've got your free sample it is up to you: respond or coughup!!!!

