

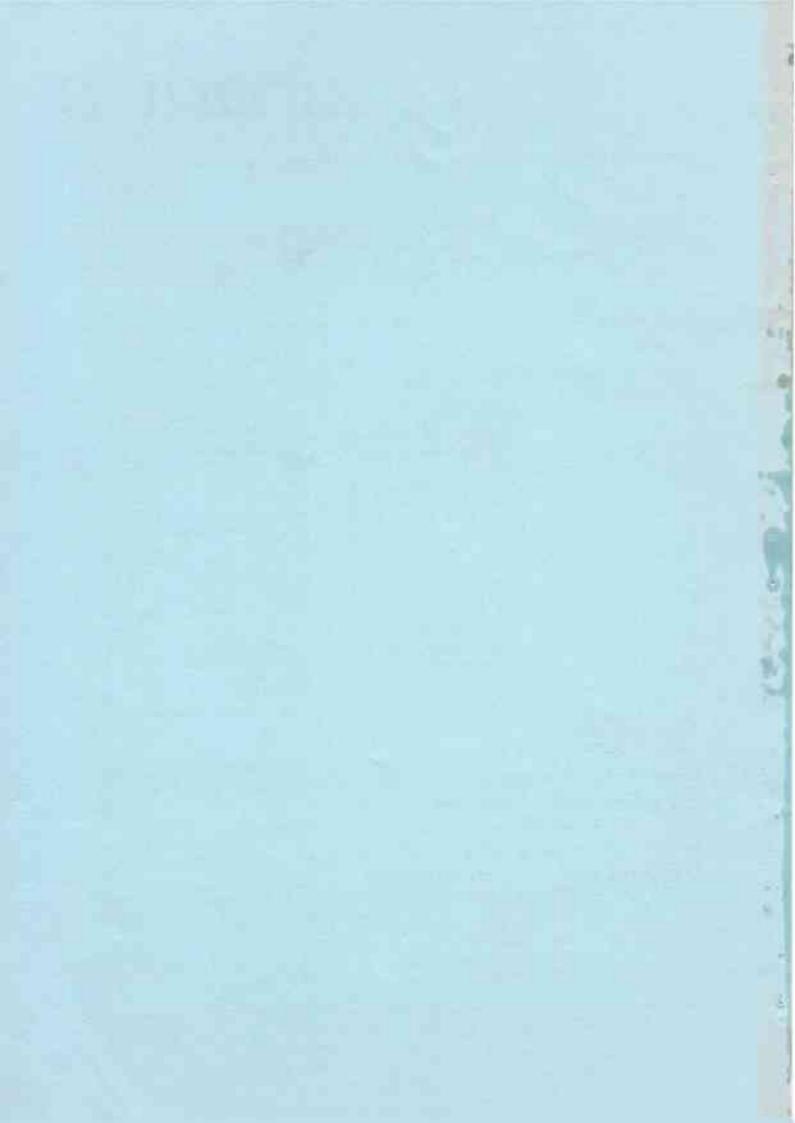


# Zímrí · 8

MARCH/AFRIL \_ 1976

\*Edited and produced by Lisa I. Conesa - 54, Manley Road, Whalley Range, Manchester M16 &HP, England. Zimri is available for a substantial Letter of Comment, contribution, trade or 50p for individual copies. Subscriptions £2 for four issues (£1 for 2 issues). US/Canada - 8 dollars for four issues.

CONTENTS:	LETTERS OF COMMENT:
TO BOLDLY GO' by Jack Marsh with Graham Charnock. 3 Charles Partington. 3 Malcolm Edwards. 3 Chris Priest. 4 Rob Holdstock. 4 Julia Stone. 5 John Hall. 5 Pat Charnock. 5 Terry Jeeves. 5 David Britton. 5 Lisa Conesa. 6 Bryn Fortey. 6 Peter Linnett. 6 Wike Collins. 6 John Jarrold. 6 Brian Robinson. 7 Roy Kettle. 7 David Rowe. 7  BOOK REVIEWS. 8	Ted White
TWO LETTERS AND A CRY OF DESPAIR by Rob Holdstock 14	Cover entitled Girl in the
INTERLUDE by Ted Tubb 18	Gallery, designed by Harry Turner.
Greg Pickersgill REVIEWS FANZINES 24	
PYRAMIDS IN MY WARDHOBE by Harry Turner .25	Back cover by Edward Lutczyn, cut by me and titled:
THE TRUE CAT by Leroy Kettle 27	erThe Handgeared Boy?
PS or Poetry Section: Ritchie Smith 41  Michael Butterworth 42  Max Noiprox 43  N. Robinson 43  Mark Burke 44	Within: page, 1 - Edward Lutczyn; page 8 - Arthur Tomphson; pages 18, 20, 31 - Harry Turner.
lisa conesa 44 Steve Sneyd 46	The editrix is responsible for all else.





Poor Zimri-8, its been in the incubator for much longer than nature intended. It should, by rights, be an elephantine sized ish, but from what I can see from here it looks quite normal.

Z-8 started off as a <u>fannish</u> issue - never having produced anything really fannish, and always yearning to - I managed to persuade Bryn Fortey, who is afterall an adopted Rat Fan, to collaborate with me. He produced a fine conrep (SEAcon) and worked very hard trying to collect some material for <u>Zimri</u>. But that was all a very long time ago; many things intervened and took up my time, the early enthusiasm, unfortunately, became a bit thin round the edges, work on Z became erratic, and finally ground to a halt.

When I tried to pick up the threads again this year some material was dated and had to be omitted: like the conrep for instance - with the MANCON almost upon us it seemed rather pointless to include a yearold report. Apologies to Bryn.

My ideas had changed too - the last few months of my life have been grey ones; which might explain why the frivolous mood in which Z-8 was conceived has gone. And why, despite reports in many zines, BF's name is not down as co-editor. I thank him for all the help he gave and feel sure he'll understand why this issue is not what it started out to be.

One of the happenings that chilled the fannish mood, was the death, sudden and unexpected, of my stepfather. Up until then I never experienced anything so final, so irrevocable... With the entrance of death into my universe a feeling of being 'in charge' had suddenly vanished. I was no longer in

control and immune. Its curious, we live our lives with the knowledge, a certainty, of death - our own and others - and yet when something like this happens, out of the blue, we are totally unprepared for it. So one (this one at least) escapes into the world of fantasy and/or fandom. Or perhaps a deserted asteroid...

One of the worlds I have been escaping into lately has been PROFESSOR NMAA'S LECTURE by Stefan Themerson - an advance review copy arrived just a few days before Z-8's publication, which means it cannot be reviewed in the regular review column this time, I would, however, like to say something about it now just to wet your appetites and convey some of my enthusisam for the book and its author.

This is a strange and fascinating novel (as is BAYAMUS about which later).. The world of social comment expressed through fantasy is broad and varied; its celebrated writers range from Aristophanes through Swift, Carroll, Orwell, Kafka and Jarry. Although the works of Stefan Themerson are still not very well known in the United States, his novels are known and acclaimed in England, France, Germany, Holland and Poland. PROFESSOR NMAA'S LECTURE, his most famous novel, will be on the American book-stands sometime in February this year ('76). It is published by The Overlook Press (c/o Viking Press, 625 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y.10022) at \$8.96 (251pp).

Professor Mmaa is, in his own words, "a scientist who is concerned with what has been gathered empirically from nature." He is also a termite who devoted his life to the study of man. Themerson has created a unique termite world that mirrors human follies - political, sexual, religious and scientific - with conviction and humour.

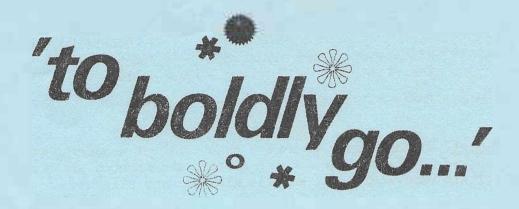
From his first struggle to save his old nurse from political repression through his poignant encounter with the Queen to the final chaos of complete destruction, Professor Mmaa often valiantly - more often absurdly - follows his conscience,

And to quote from the <u>Manchester Guardian</u>: "Stefan Themerson is an immaculate stylist and a thinker of originality and breadth...a veritable Buckminister Fullor of letters."

BAYAMUS is not a new book, it was first published in 1945 and again in '65 by Gaberbocchus Press, 42a, Formosa Street, London W,9; it reads as though it had been writton 'today' or even 'to-morrow'. Neither of these two books are science fiction and yet both are more sf than sf itself and much more than fantasy. I tried to get BYAMUS reviewed first by Jack Marsh, who felt 'so bemused by the whole thing he ended up feeling unqualified to comment'. Then I sent it to F.G. Smallmount who wrote: "One thing I will say straight out: once read this book cannot be ignored. The original paperback version of <a href="Catch-22">Catch-22</a> carried the legend 'read this book and you will never be the same again' or something to that effect. Overstatement? Well yes, of course, no book can be that mind shattering, but BAYAMUS is the nearest I've yet read to living up to such a warning." Thus I hope your appetites have been wetted sufficiently to get these books yourself and see what you think.

In BAYAMUS we are asked the question 'why should a one-legged uncle be a less interesting phenomenon than three-legged Bayamus? And how to explain the triggering powers of dead worlds? These and other questions drive Bayamus and the Author to the Bottle Party of enlightening sanity. Once on their way from the Theatre of Anatomy to the Theatre of Semantic Poetry, they travel fast into situations which, after a dazzling series of shocks and surprises, reveal the truth you half expected.

My own question is, if this is sf why isn't Themerson one of us, and if it isn't what is it? Does it in fact bear classification, is anything classifiable these days? Do Ballard or Aldiss or Ellison write sf...?



by JACA MARSH & Others

The question was; 'If you were cast away on an uncharted asteroid for the rest of your life, which six books and one record album would you choose to have with you, and why?

Unfortunately, the whys became just too unwieldy for total inclusion, though Graham Charnock no doubt aware of this, kept his reasons to the bare minimum ("a fun book--a sentimental book--an sf book" etc), which, besides being exactly what was required, scores him a team point. But here's his list:

### Graham Charnock:

Door Into Summer - Robert Heinlein Cat's Cradle - Kurt Vonnegut Scott's Last Expedition (Diaries of Captain Scott) Metamorphosis & Other Stories - Franz Kafka The Breaking of Bumbo - Andrew Sinclair The Songof the Flea - Gerald Kersh

Record: Goodbye and Hullo - Tim Buckley

Charles Partington appears to have made heavy weather of it all: "though no restrictions were placed on the choice of books, mainstream, sf, or whathaveyou, I have deliberately limited the six to be taken to the sf genre. I found it extremely difficult to compose a list of six sf books; were I to have considered mainstream novels as well the task would have been impossible."

A Voyage to Arcturus - David Linsay
House on the Borderland - William Hope Hodgesn
Doctor Faustus - Christopher Marlowe
The Titus Groan Trilogy - Mervyn Peake
Star Maker - Olaf Stapledon
Billion Year Spree - Brian Aldiss

Record: Safe as Milk - Captain Beefheart

Malcolm Edwards included one of the few remaining obscure Dick novels "so there's a chance that whatever lousy crudzine this is supposed to be appearing in has amongst its readership a few Dick fans who haven't tracked down a copy and will be consumed with gnawing envy on hearing about this really great book they haven't been able to read. " Malcolm Edwards is a fully paid-up member of Ratfandom.

Chamber's Twentieth Centry Dictionary
Catch-22 - Joseph Heller
Martian Time Slip - Philip K. Dick
The Universal Baseball Association - J. Henry Waugh PropRobert Coover
History of Western Philosophy - Bertrand Russell
The Fifth Head of Cerberus - Gene Wolfe

Record: Happy Trails - Quicksilver Messenger Service

Chris Priest Couldn't bear to make a choice without wondering what he may be missing, so he devised a randoming system, and grabbed six books at chance off his book shelves... but let him tell you all:

"The first was HIGH VA CUUM by Charles Eric Maine, an appropriate title, all things considered. should be good for a survival tip or two in low-atmosphere environment Actually, Maine is one of my irrational of likes; I think because he is writer, even if his science is dodgey. Then such a good narrative came, much to my surprise for I didn't know I had such a book on my shelf, The MUBBERT PHILLIPS CHOSSWORD BUZZLE BOOK. (Must be one of the ones Christine left behind.) I don't like, nor am I uch good at, crossword puzzles. However, the answers are rinted in the back. (My favorite crossword clue 35 all time: "Listen! A Sexual Ferversion (5,2,4,4)".) Next a short story collection: The FURLOUS FUTURES by Algis Budrys. Good, competent writer, is Budrys. Next, Alan Bennett's play GETTING ON. I saw this in London when Kenneth Moore was in it, and then it seemed like a typical middle-class, middle-aged comedy. Bennett says in his introduction that the play isn't meant to be a comedy, and that the director of the play changed his intent. In the lonely months ahead, I shall read it out aloud, first in a silly, middle-aged high-pitched voice, and second in a deep, serious voice. (The alphabetical-by-author way I shelve my books meant that when I found the Bennett book I narrowly missed Elisabeth Beresford's THE WOMBLES. \*Phew\*) Next, BEST SF 2, edited by Edmund Crispin (narrowly missed DHALGREN here, \*phew\*phew\*); the Crispin anthologies are OK, I supp pose. Could have found worse. Lastly, a novel by Francis Clifford, OVERDUE. I don't know anything about Clifford's work, but the blurb says: "A brilliant, suspense-packed story of struggle for survival in the Arizona desert." Sounds exciting, but I might never get round to it.

As for a record, that's more difficult. My randomizing system produced PENDULHM by Creedence Clearwater Revival, but I wouldn't want to take a rock record. It'd wear thin too quickly. Nor would classical music, which is something I only like in small doses at certain times. I think the best record to take would be something that under other circumstances you wouldn't dream of listening to, something which would remind you that life on Earth in the late 20th Century was actually pretty ghastly. So with this in mind I'd lock for some cultural gcm like John Hanson doing a selection from the DESERT SONG, the soundtrack SOUTH PACIFIC, a BACHELORS double album, or, best of all, the London Symphony Orchestra's new album THE BIG HITS OF BACH, MOZART, AND HAYDN, as arranged by Bert Kacompfert. Failing all this, there must be an album called EUROVISION SONG CONTEST WINNERS 1955-1975. Thet'd keep me on the asteroid for ever."

Rob Holdstock sent only a scrap of paper containing his scrawled selection:

The Holy Bible Son of Man - Robert Silverberg Again Dangerous Vision - ed. by Harlan Ellison War of the Worlds - H.G. Wells An Age - Brian Aldiss Dahlgren - Samuel R. Delany

Record: Tales from Topographic Oceans - Yes

A total of six giant-sized pages of comment came from Julia Stone and John Nielsen Hall. No room! No room!

Julia Stone:

Mrs Dalloway - Virginia Woolf Le Grand Meaulnes - Alain Fournier The Seven Pillars of Wisdom - T.E. Lawrence Puckoon - Spike Milligan Sword at Sunset - Rosemary Sutcliffe The Gas - Charles Platt

John Nielsen Hall:

The Complete novels of Kurt Vonnegut Jr
Trullion:Alabastor 2262 - Jack Vance
The Planet Buyer/The Underpeople - Cordwainer Smith
The Friends of Eddie Coyle - George V. Higgins
Bound for Glory - Woody Guthrie
Left Hand of Darkness - Ursula K. LeGuin

Pat Charnock didn't want to be stranded at all, but faced with the seemingly inevitable, decided to lie back and enjoy it - and asked if she could take her cats and a good supply offlea collars (huh?) Why not!

Pat Charnock: The Winter of Our Discontent - John Steinbeck
The Once and Future King - T. H. Whit
The Plague - Albert Camus
Door Into Summer - Robert Heinlein
Song of the Flea - Gerald Kersh

Tales of Horror and the Supernatural - Arthur Machen

Record: Harvest - Neil Young

Terry Jeeves assumed that the ides was to "sellect material (like a wife) up with which one can cheerfully put up for umpteen years of isolation."

Terry Jeeves:

The Astounding Science Fiction Anthology Chambers' Twentieth Century Dictionary The Ambidextrous Universe - Martin Gardner Mathematical Recreations and Essays - W.W. Rouse Ball The Guardian Crossword Puzzle Book The Gollancz - Treasury of SF

Record: Lieutenant Kije Suite - Frokofiev

David Britton rushed his list to me because he understood that Zimri was nearly ready. When was that, Dave, six months ago?

David Britton: A Voyage to Arcturus - David Lindsay
Crash - J. G. Ballard
Valley Back Radio Broke Dava - Ishmac

Yellow Back Radio Broke Down - Ishmael Reed

The Supermale - Alfred Jarry
The Killer - Colin Wilson

House on the Borderland - William Hope Hodgson

Record: Trout Mask Replica - Captain Beefheart

A number who participated cheated a little with the inclusion of an occasional 'trilogy' or 'collected works' but it was Zimri editrix, lisa conesa herself, who took this trend to its perultimate situation by only managing to squeeze one actual title in amongst a multitude of volumes.

<u>Lisa Conesa:</u> "While I'd obviously be taking favourites that would bear rereading, there are lots of books I want to read but never seem to find the time for, like Percy Wymdham Lewis' HUNAN AGE trilogy, so that's choice number one.

Secondly I'd like to take the largest collection of MODERN POETRY available. Number three would be Mervyn Peake's GORMENCHAST trilogy simply because I d never tire of it.

The collected works of Alfred Jarry is my choice number four, because I seem to find something new each time I read it; likewise David Lindsay's VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS which is my fifth choice.

Finally I'll take a collection of poems by <u>Charles Baudelaire</u> to remind me that I'm a woman and that there used to be men about, men who said lovely things to women...

Record: Chopin Recital by Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli.

Bryn Fortey who's obviously a student of human behaviour /=?!=/ "Ok y, Jack, here's a list for you to include when you finally get round to realising that Greg, Simone and Johnny Abo simply ain't gonna send any".

Bryn Fortey: Bug Jack Barron - Norman Spinard Camp Concentration - Tom Disch

The Sirens Of Titan - Kurt Vonnegut

Catch-22 - Joseph Heller Ubik - Philip K. Dick

The Drowned World - J. G. Ballard

Record: Jam Session - Produced by Norman Granz for Columbia Clef

Peter Linnett: The Drowned World - J. G. Ballard

Collected Essays Vol. 3. - George Orwell

Dying Inside - Robert Silverberg

We - Zamyatin

Cat's Cradle- Kurt Vonnegut

A Farewell to Arms - Ernest Hemingway

Record: Dylan Thomas reading his own Foetry.

Mike Collins: Catch-22 - Joseph Heller

Childhood's End - Arthur C. Clarke

Farenheit 451 - Ray Bradbury

The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch - Philip M. Dick

The Ballad of Beta-2 - Samuel R. Delany

The Green Rain - Paul Tabori

Record: Tubular Bells

John Jarrold disappointed me by not listing 'John Jarrold Sings the Perry Como Songbook' as his record selection...

John Jarrold: Brave New World - Aldons Huxley

The Goblin Reservation - Clifford Simak

'A Book of Norse sagas'

The Golden Bough - Sir George Frazer

The Oxford Book of English Verse - ed. Dame Helen Gardner The long Goodbye - Raymond Chandler

Record: The Benny Goodman 1938 Concert

#### Brian Robinson:

Image Of The Beast - Philip Jose Farmer Image Of The Beast - Philip Jose Farmer

Record: Frank Sinatra Sings Songs for Bestial Imaginings

Inevitably almost, it was Roy Kettle who first put the whole thing in its right perspective; unlike Brian Robinson who got a very clear image of what turns him on...

Roy Kettle: Prayers that have worked

A million & one things to make with san
The Solitary Man's Guide to Repartee
Desert Island Etiquette

Egon Koney's No Food Guide

Record: Sir Laure ce Olivier shouts'Help! in Three Hundred Different Languages

and the list of books he would least like to have....

The Complete Works of Miriam Alan de Ford

The Complete Works of Ron Goulart

The Robert P. Holdsotck Reader

Stories Jack Marsh Couldn't Sell

Fivehundred Boring Peorle Make Lists Of Books

Record: Julie Ancrews meets Max Bygraves

wave Rowe, added intellectual stature to the whole venture with the astute comment "nyah, bee & sucks

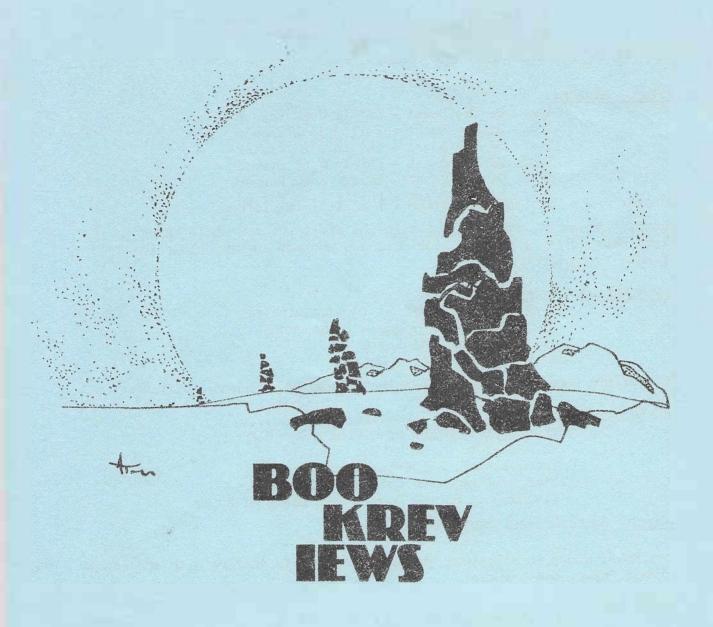
#### Radid have:

Do it yourself distress signals
Be your own Asteroid Gardener
Teach yourself mineral cooking
Timetable for Asterod Belt Snace-Buses
Minimum Life support Survival: What It Is & How to Do it
1001 silly replies to pseudo-ideas from the Zimri-Mob.

...So there we are. Marry more were asked but sighteen figally entered into the spirit of the thing and submitted lists. My thanks to each and every one of them. Not a very representative survey, I admit, but from it 'A Voyage to Arcturus' and 'Catch-22' emerge as the joint favourite titles and Kurt Vonnegut as the most popular author. And no Asimov; no Verne; no Moorcock. The absentees were as interesting as those included.

They say you can tell a person's nature from a study of his/hers bookshelves. Hmm, I think I'll take another look at these lists.......





THE EICHTY-MINUTE HOUR by BRIAN ALDISS Jonathan Cape £2. 25 - 1974

Reviewed by: HARRY TURNER

"Even we mad scientists enjoy a song now and then", confesses the villainous Dr. Auden Chaplain, just before he is arrested for crimes against humanity. After ploughing through some of the lyrics that Brian Aldiss has written for this space opera, I am tempted to suggest that they took the wrong man...

Make no mistake. This is a real space opera, complete with tortuous tangled plot, and peopled with improbable characters liable to burst into song at a dramatic moment. It's a curiously self-indulgent romp of a book, written in part, no doubt, as relaxation from <u>Frankenstein Unbound</u>. It exploits the <u>concept</u> of time-turbulences used in the earlier book; here Aldiss uses the disturbances as a convenient means of frenetically hurling his characters across vast shifts of space-time, and enjoys himself resolving the apparent paradoxes of time travel to reveal the deterministic trap governing the fate of humanity – with a world-ruling Computer Complex in the role of the "infernal machine".

I confess that at first reading, I found it difficult to follow the wide-

ranging action, and to keep pa æ with the breathless unfolding of the intricate plot. I know that many opera-lovers enjoy the crutch of a potted plot, but it would be near impossible (as well as pointless) to attempt to summarise this one! (Only anti-intellectuals use a term like "over-complex", quips Auden Chaplain... okay, I've just joined the ranks).

To complicate matters right from the start, there appear to be two parallel tales being told. One proves to be a strange interior fantasy of Julian Surinat, seeking escape through drugs from the calamity of losing both legs in the third world war. It gives Aldiss the chance to indulge in tongue—in—cheek purple prose that o casionally lapses into long Thesaurian word lists. Though even in the "straight" tale he is capable of writing a sentence such as: "The floor felt warm, worn, hydroptic, apical, pennate, like the flesh of a vulpine and voluptuous courtesan erotogenically dying".

There is a superabundance of ideas crammed into this lively book. I admired the faintly hilarious explanation of the creation of the asteroid belt: his description of the proto-asteroid planet, girdled with a "tropical forest" of giant trees, sucking out hydrogen from the world's interior through deep tap-roots, and releasing it into the oxygen-rich upper atmosphere to form a highly explosive mixture, just awaiting a spark from intruding time travellers to cause the inevitable catastrophe. And I endorsed the belief expressed by one sane character that "work is mankind's worst vice and affliction, killing more people year after year than all your drugs or automobiles combined".

But the Aldiss sense of humour grated at times; he can be very ponderous. The excruciatingly punny names he bestows on characters like Monty Zoomer, Dinah Sorbutt, Devlin Carnate, pall rapidly with repetition.

This is a craftsmanlike book. When the required happy ending has "come screaming and giggling back" (after Auden Chaplain has enjoyed a mere five minutes of complete world domination), all the mysteries have been unravelled, all questions answered, the fates of the actors in the drama resolved, and everything set for the final curtain. Though it was done a little perfunctorily in the case of Sue Fox and Dwight Ploughrite Castle, who are returned from a time-turbulance by disinterested beings in a distant future, conveniently introduced on page 283, a mere two pages before the end!

An opera, even a space opera, demands music and performance. In many ways this is a concept uneasily suited to the conventions of the printed page; is this book a hint that Brian Aldiss seeks to break through the limitations of the Gutenberg Galaxy into "auditory space"? Dare we imagine that even now, someone out there is busy setting the lyrics to music, and some intrigued producer is planning a full-scale TV extravaganza?

MYSTERY OF THE ANCIENTS: Early Spacemen and the Mayas by ERIC & CRAIG UMLAND Souvenir Press/illustrated/ £3.25

When the word "Maya" crops up in conversation, the fannish reaction is "Rob Jackson's fanzine". Then maybe thoughts shift to the Amerind civilisation that has inspired so many sf epics, that had its beginnings in Central America about 1000 BC, flowered briefly between 300 to 900 AD, to decline and disappear before the arrival of the Spanish invaders.

Mention "Maya" to the brothers Umland and their reactions would fill a book. Have filled a book, and this is it.

They tell a story of the Maya, visitors from a distant galaxy, aliens who arrived in our solar system 200 million years ago and settled on planet X, a world between Mars and Jupiter. They voyaged to the inner planets in search of metals such as iron and titanium; landed in volcanic areas where the power of the planet's core could be tapped and harnessed; and erected pyramid storehouses.

And then, some 700,000 years ago, disaster struck - planet X blew up to form the asteroids, stranding the Maya on Earth, with limited resources and supplies. The disruption of planet X and the resulting showers of debris affected Earth's climate; the Maya had to abandon their Antarctica base (remember At the Mountains of Madness?) as a new ice age took over. After that, the Maya seem to have moved around, retreating and avoiding contacts with maturing mankind, leaving their store-pyramids to be taken over by rising civilisations in Mesopotamia and Egypt. And the relics still being rescued from the jungles of Central America are one of the last known outposts of these aliens...

Still with me? There's more to come.

Consider the interest shown by both American and Soviet governments in the archeological remains in America, and in deciphering the Mayan hieroglyphs. Consider the cooperation of both governments in Antarctic exploration, their abandonment of the space "race" and sudden conversion to active cooperation in space exploration.

To the Umland brothers it all adds up to the fact that more has been discovered than the two governments want to make public at the present time. Not only have the American and the Soviet authorities found the secret of the Mayan invasion from outer space, but they have reached conclusions about scientific discoveries such as Kardashev's stellar radio sources or "beacons"; they can only be signals from the Mayan home star base. Not signals to us a but a message to the Mayan survivors that help is on the way!

Before you run for the hills, I should point out that if the great disaster happened 700,000 years ago, it's taking help a long time to get here.

Again, despite their pleas for enlightened scepticisim in the face of scientific dogma, the brothers Umland make some pretty dogmatic and shakily based claims. And they are fond of quoting authorities without appearing to check on their sources. Their blithe acceptance of the popular theory that the asteroids are the remains of a shattered planet ignores the increasing data that metcorites are from fragmented parent bodies nearer to the size of the present asteroids than a body of planetary dimensions. There seems to be good reason to believe that the bodies revolving in the asteroid belt were so affected by the nearby mass of proto-Jupiter that they failed to coalesce into a planet.

The Umland brothers tell of mysterious force fields set up by the Maya to protect their hide-outs - like the notorious "Bermuda triangle". They refer to a 1968 experiment when (I quote) "a team of American and Egyptian scientists attempted to X-ray the pyramid of Chephren. Their results? 'Scientifically impossible!' admitted the leader of the project. 'There is some sort of force that defies the laws of science at work in the pyramid!'".

I can't find any hint of the source of this quote, but in Kurt Mendelssohn's book The Riddle of the Pyramids, there is mention of an experiment (p.54) carried out in 1970, when cosmic radiation was measured in the central chamber in the hope that variations in intensity would indicate the existence of hidden chambers and passages, which otherwise could only be found by extensive and destructive tunnelling. The fact that the results were negative suggested that there were no other chambers. And also

indicates an absence of any "secret force" masking radiation!

They also get entangled with that colourful character Charles Piazzi Smyth and his measurements of the Great Pyramid. Smyth's work on the "pyramid inch" becomes faintly ludicrous when it is realised that it was based on the need to fight against the introduction of the metric system to Britain in the 1850s (and we are suffering for this now!) He believed the inch to be a Godgiven measure and obviously superior to the centimetre, which was inspired by atheistic revolutionaries. Smyth's theological arguments and fanatical logic were later disposed of by the work of Flinders Petrie on the Giza site. Yet the Umland brothers quote him as the victim of closed minds; ah well, they have a theory to prove too!

I have only nibbled at a few strands - in such a tangle as this book it is difficult to know where to start or finish. And yet some doubts remain: there are many things mentioned by the Umland brothers that have not been satisfactor ily explained, and in that situation the imagination has free reign.

A book in the Fortean tradition though lacking the meticulously documented persuasion of the Master. You'll find frequent references to wellknown speculative works by such authors as van Daniken, Charroux, Churchward... Indeed, I am surprised that the name of Frank Bellamy does not appear, since his book Built Before the Flood: the problem of the Tiahuanaco Ruins, published in 1943, is very relevant to the story told in this book. All in all, it's an intriguing and infuriating mixture; ingenious argument and ingenuous confusion between fact and fictions. It may lack authority, but it's rich in entertainment.

One final thing. The suggestion is made that a pyramid acts as an "energy lens", aiding in the preservation or mummification of bodies. And the authors tell of small "styrofoam pyramids... on sale in Europe and the U.S. to be used for resharpening dulled blades."

I wonder if they re already on the British market?

harry turner

DHALGREN by SAFUEL R. DELANY Bantam Books 75p - 1975

Reviewed by RITCHIE SMITH

On that melodramatic beach at the end of 'The Einstein Intersection' Samuel R. Delany accepts this: that, although fruitful dissatisfaction can lead away, moons and planets and stars away, everything will be waiting on the eventual return down to earth.

'After the moon, what else is there?' (p.504).

Thore is the 340,000 or so words of 'Dhalgren'. Everything? Some sickeningly urban, fiercely American happenings, in a 'now'somewhere between the very late sixties and the future, a now set in another of Delany's variations on a theme of New York City - Bellona. In this wrecked place the miraculous rubs shoulders with impeccable nitty-gritty realism. Abandoned by most, there are still poets and politicians, the WASP middle class, niggers and Hell's Angels (playing overly familiar roles), monks, sexual inverts, muggers, and so on. With, I believe, one fabulous American quality in common; playing out roles - and not those that Society hands out. At the heart of identity is choice: either one's own, or someone else's, and anyone self-named 'Lady of Spain' is living out some level of interior fantasy. (For the significance of naming in American literature, I would recomend Dr. Tony Tanner's 'City of Words').

That is a key theme of this immense, worthy, but two-dimensional work. Delany is gifted herein, with all his brilliant showmanship, with an incorrigibly digital mind; and after all, great literature is the most complete art of the analogous. So, after 1969 sometime, we are witnesses of a disaster-struck city connected to but not congruous with the mainland of the USA, which carries all the load of symbolism one could wish. In a 'dream' comes 'the Kid', poetic, sinistral, chronically uncertain (but often flamboyant and on occasion violent). Not knowing his own 'name', he cannot know his own identity. This novel chronicles his picaresque adventures and the people - heightened from the wonderful ciphers of 'Nova' - that he meets. Many of these hide their true names under the glamorous noms-de-guerre of the scorpion pack.

These people include the two that he loves and makes love to most, DEnny and LANYa (respectively, teenage scorpion, and musician/intellectual). If we have uncovered Delany's 'name' here this is cabbalism indeed: but the myth-encrusted work of this writer, 4 times winner of the Nebula award, always has been, and around the philosophical centre of his vision is, as usual, so much distracting brightness that the heart of it all is unknown and unnamed (by me too)..this annoys some. I know language may shimmer; but it must congeal into the factual, at least in prose. Especially when its subject-matter is metaphysics.

The amnesiac Kid (William Dhalgren - perhaps) drifts rather than progresses into the receiver of poet and street punk, and the troilism of 'Babel -17' - it is less outspoken in other stories - reaches some brilliant and affirmative climaxes. But there is always a lot of spilt blood; and that this hinted-at violence happens relatively rarely onstage seems symptomatic of the book as a whole, with all its impressive barrage of sensuous detail. Admittedly, the aggressively sensational characterisation and vocabulary aids that peruliar, over-polished stylistic glow of much of Delany's work. But this novel is, really, the nameless poet's work: 'I am thrown back on a present where only the intensity of the senses can justify this warmth. What I have fallen from, perfected by memory into something only possible, I do not want to falsify any more than that.'

I have a tip of the tongue impression that, could the unnamed poet identify himself, he would no longer 'be a poet'.

One of the things, of course, that the book is about is the art of writing itself. Again, Delany's old obsession: brass orchids serves as the 'name' both for weapons and a collection of poems. On the other hand, I cannot be alone in admiring the charmingly uningenuous New Zealand poet, Newboy, or the table-talk in the Richards' household, whose cliche-blinkered lack of sanity is no doubt meant to echo Middle America's. Newboy and Roger Calkins, a rich man who is also a politician, come over realistically as being cultured and intelligent; the obsessions of June Richards, perhaps more symbolic, are correspondingly less convincing.

But I still, regretfully, suspect a hollowness at the heart of this work.

Let me say this, though: there's no writer I enjoy actually <u>reading</u> more, and only a handful who entertain so well on so many levels. No writers inside SF possess a more unusual intellect. This huge book is infinitely far above the usual stupefying pulp fiction, and greater in scope than the aridity of a certain type of dully respectable 'Englishness'. I have worked for weeks, not days, on this review — with a casualness inappropriate to a work of this stature, let me quickly admit. Yet one must regret the absence of a great humanistic theme (like that of 'The Dispossessed', or even 'Camp Concentration') to respond to. There is incident enough here, but I cannot believe that the function of anyone's art is to merely <u>record</u> the glittering or sordid human reality. No matter with how frail a cobweb, the novelistic art

must link chaos to chaos and reveal Order. Delany never gains full control of his materil; unfortunately, his naturalistic and metaphysical impulses rarely work other than at cross-purposes..consider the character of 'George', for instance.

And so it goes. Life. 200, 300 pages..400, 500 pages..And stray thoughts bubbled up. 'The italics in the dialogue seem exceptionally well-placed—maybe I hear the same stresses in speech as he does..' Or 'Everyone is living out their own fantasies'. (This thought I toyed with further.) 'In the great moralist novels of the 19th century, one's own fantasies were the very last yardsticks by which we live. Duty did that. In Delany's world—our world, he must insist—duty to those higher abstractions is dead. Except perhaps for a vague duty to perform the gratuitous action, to be servil to purely momentary impulses and curiosities..and maybe that's why I sense a certain sort of moral hollowness in this work'.

It is the profound moral hollowness of today. As in this book, every achievement is hollow. To criticise Disigren for being meaningless is to criticize that: it has grown out of underground culture into the main stream of good American fiction, and it is a rich book, full of life, full of spunk and vinegar, rage and wonderment. But to me, it is ultimately a disappointment. It only has the texture of greatness, not the substance.

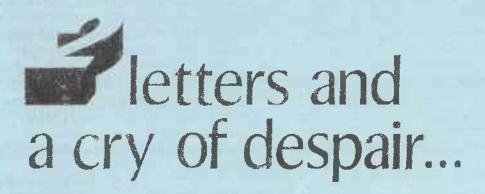
-Ritchie Smith

THE INVERTED WORLD by CHRISTOPHER PRIEST
Harper & Row \$7.95 (Also published by Faber) Reviewed by: CHRIS MORGAN

Imagine spending your life running up a downwards-moving escalator from which there is no escape and with certain death waiting at the bottom. This situation faces a community of about 500 men and women in Christopher Priest's ver; unusual novel, in which the "escalator" is a whole planet. The community inhabits Earth City--an ugly office-block on wheels--which has to be moved northwards on four pairs of railway lines at the rate of about one mile every ten days. Difficulties are caused by a shortage of labour, by a shortage of rails -- these must be laid in front of the city and taken up behind it -and by natural obstacles en route. The city needs to move because it is constantly pursuing an optimum position. Though this is stationary the ground shifts southwards and, with both times and distance changing their values as one moves from the optimum, the city could never catch up were it to fall as much as twelve miles behind, and it would be destroyed in an extremely weird manner. The world on which this occurs is fairly Earth-like, with human inhabitants, but it also seems something of a mathematician's nightmare, possessing a host of apparently impossible features.

The gradual unfolding of the situation and the revelation of when and where this all takes place are the major points of the novel; to reveal them would be to ruin the reader's enjoyment. Thus, even at the risk of eliciting more snide remarks about my capabilities as a reviewer from the oldest hack writer in British SF--Mr E.C.Tubb--I shall say little more about the plot or background and then with reference to earlier parts of the book.

Most of the story is narrated by Helward Mann, a youth who, as the novel opens, has reached the age of 650 miles (almost 18 years) and is about to become an apprentice in the guild of Future Surveyors. Due to his restrictive upbringing in the creche Helward is almost totally ignorant of Earth City and of the world outside. Apprentices must learn these things by experience, since they would otherwise be likely to believe the truth. So the reader follows Helward's progress as he slowly assembles the anomalous pieces of evidence concerning his environment.



LETTER TO BRYN FORTEY, November 1973

Dear Bryn,

Thankyou for your letter with its four letter implations to me to write with some news. News in London? You've got be out of your tiny welsh mind. Nothing happens here but drunkenness, street assault and fornication, and I'm sure you Don't want to know about anything like that!

We did have one bit of excitement recently, though. Greg - you know, Greg - moved into the basement flat of a house in Notting Hill Gate. The landlord was little short of a shark, and a right unpleasant character to boot and a certain embarrassing incident involving the loss, in transit, of a quantity of rent money led the two gentlemen to the verge of war. The blow up, the final straw, occurred during one dark night in Autumn when Notting Hill Gate, normally a serene and quiet place, was woken to the cry of 'COME OUT AND FIGHT YOU "- KING DAGO BASTARD'.

tanding in the dawn, fists clenched, body swaying in alcoholic aggression, red scarf wrapped tightly about the neck, face and head hidden beneath medusa like hair, the challenging figure was a frightening sight. Pickersgill was drunk, and the Hungarian landlord was about to get his come-uppance. The cry was repeated, but no landlord appeared. Eventually Pickersgill lurched heavily down towards the basement and found his bed.

I arrived for a visit later and became the unwitting witness of what would lead to a great tragedy. Things might not have come to a head if not for the window rapping incident. Sobered, only vaguely aware of the nights aggression, Greg was chatting amiably away when the landlord came down to the basement and tapped at the window. Pickersgill, until that moment calm and happy, erupted into a reasonable semblance of Charles Manson.

He raced to the door and flung it open. "LOOK" he roared at the landlord, indicating the door knocker. "DOOR KNOCKER... KNOCK DOOR KNOCKEF...
MAKES BANG BANG ME HEAR BANG BANG... ME COME TO F-KING DOOR...DON'T KNOCK ON THE F-CKING WINDOW..."

My first meeting with the landlord. He came into the room, a huge man (I remained seated) with big sad eyes and a fat nose. Muscles rippled beneath his shirt. Fear rippled in my mind.

Thinking myself reasonably anonymous amid a five foot high pile of comics, I was taken aback when Greg introduced me.

"This is Mister Holdstock... he knows ALL about YOU."

"How d'you do mister Hadstock. So you know all about me, do you? Tell me mister Hadstock, what do you know about me? What has Greg told you?"

Supreme muscular control saved an unpleasant incident. I laughed casually. "Why, hah, hah... I think ho, ho... that I'll be, er... diplomatic and, heh, hah, say nothing."

"Mister Hadstack declines to say what he knows about me Greg. It must be pretty bad, huh?"

"His mames HOLDstock."

"So what's in a name, Greg?" Jesus, I thought, what a great line for a play. I grasped a piece of my gut and spoke up. "No, mister Ross... I've heard nothing bad and nothing good." Tremble, tremble as the Hungarian eyes and muscles flick towards me. He turned back to Greg. "May I talk to you, Greg? May I talk to you in front of mister Hadstock so that he can hear and be a witness?"

"Talk all you f-king want, " Said Pickersgill with considerable indifference.

"Oh that's right," began the landlord, "swear, use foul language. A young boy like you... You've not lived, Gregory. You're NAIVE... You're NARROW. I'm twice your age, and you tell me to f-k off. Come out you Dago bastard, you cry. And my wife. Hungarian bitch you call her. Look, Greg if I weren't your landlord I'd have gone for you. You know that don't you. But my hands are tied, Greg. My hands are tied. But I thank good Christ that my SON didn't hear. He'd have gone for you. He's a strong boy, is my son. He'd have gone for you. He's a strong boy, is my son. He'd have gone for you. He'd have smashed your face for your language. F-k off Ross, you say, go f-k yourself, go chew crap, you say. You're young, Greg. You're impetuous. You're PUERILE. Mister Hadstock laughs. Why do you laugh mister Hadstock?"

"Me?" I squeak, then catching my voice and dragging it down. "Me?" I intone in my belly. "I'm not laughing. Just stretching my lips. It's sad. It's sad to see two grown men arguing like school boys."

Thinks: Our father who art in heaven...

He gives me a withering look then shrugs. "Grown men? You're not a man, Greg. You're a boy. When I was your age I fought the F-king Fascists in Spain. I fought like a man. I killed people. I fought those fascist bastards with hand and knife, I got blood on my hands, the blood of men, Greg, men who were dying at the point of my knife, screaming as they gave up their lives for what they believed in."

It's all too much. It's like some silly play. I tune out, embarrassed by the melodrama that this stupid man has dragged in. I've heard the full story from Greg, and the man is a thief, an unashamed thief. It isn't funny any more.

Why not drop Greg a line? He might fill in the details. Mean-while, God bless, and regards to everyone that side of England.

INTERVIEW WITH A NOT VERY FAMOUS AUTHOR, BY G. PICKERSGILL.

G.P. Firstly I'd like to say you're one of the best unknown writers around, far better than that turd Charnock, or that creep Kettle; one line of your work is worth a book of pretentious Ritchie Smith, and you have more talent in your little finger than John Brosnan has in his little... finger.

Author (smiling) Oh come now, surely not ...

G.P. (laughing) Well, I thought I'd try. Okay, you've seen through me. You're mediocre, mundane, starved of ideas, cliched in style. What is the secret of your failure?

Author Good friends, and their acceptance of my superior brain.

G.P. The boy's a fool. To get down to business (slowly) what-is-your-first-nov-el-about? Shall I repeat the question a little slower?

Author No, I think I understand what you're getting at. There's this man, see , and he comes down on this strange world, see? And there's, like, all these strange creatures - called aliens. See? And a woman who he screwed a few years ago but who is now also an alien. Only she's still human to look at, I mean she's got breasts and a bum and things, only inside she's an alien, and she has this thing going with URAK, who's the big boss alien, and they spend a lot of time feeling each other up, only they don't get excited because their love is something deeper than sex and emotion, it goes beyond the realms of human understanding which is why I don't bother to explain it. ANYway, after a lot of action and sex and action there's this japanese character, who isn't important except that I wanted to insult the japanese so I have a character from Tokyo and my hero calls him a yellow twat and things like that, all good character stuff. ANYway, this japanese punk has found evidence of a great civilisation living on the world trillions of years before, and they'd sent two prisoners to a prison planet - he translates this from an alien notebook he finds in the ground - and it turns out the prison planet was Earth, and the prisoners turn out to be..."

G.P. Adam and Eve!

Author (startled) No ... Brian Robinson and Peter Weston, actually.

G.P. The boy's a fool. What about short stories?

Author My latest masterpiece — it's alright to use that word isn't it? — is a half-assed story derived from a line of Sylvia Plath's poem, Lady Lazaras. I wish I'd left it at that. The editorial says my story is about existentialist uncase. I meant it to be about this man who goes around killing people. I didn't even know what 'existentialist' means. I've also sold a collaboration with Roy Kettle to Science Fiction Monthly. The story is called The Cold Earth and is about existentalist unease, or a man who kills people, I can't remember. Anyway, the important thing is, it stinks. And I did all the work. Roy made the coffee. G.P.Your first story sale was a Nebula, wasn't it?

Author My first story appeared in New Worlds, in the same issue as Graham Charnock, and M. John Harrision, and Brian Vickers. It was written during a stay in the south of France when I was sixteen. I was just about to have an affair with a young french negross (well, we'd shared a bar of Cadbury's) when I asked why she spoke English with an American accent. Her reply was that she'd leared English from some American sailors the year before. So I ran home, thanking God for sparing me, and wrote the story. I got paid three pounds, which was worth a lot those days. When the story appeared it had this big foot on every page. Don't ask me why, the story was about a future factory where the Europeans have been made into slaves by the invading chinese and negroes. It was allegorical, not to mention existentialist, and had nothing to do with feet at

all. I blame Charles Platt. It was his foot. I spent two years dreaming of revenge. I've calmed down now. The first pages of that issue had a photo of me with no hair. Well, there is hair if you look closely, but not much. Graham Hall had written to me and, in his own words, asked for: something moody and mysterious if possible, to strike awe into General Readership and perpetuate the myth of Writers. I took him seriously, of course, but that's what I was like in those days. I went into the garden and spent an hour dragging my face into the most miserable expression it has ever worn, and I squinted sourly into a camera lens and bingo - mystery and awe.

G.P. And the story received a Nebula nomination.

Author No.

G.P. My mistake.

LETTLA TO BAYN, Harch 1975

Dear Bryn,

Sad to relate my dreams of being a smooth, brilliant, instantly recognised and greatly-demanded writer have failed to materialise. If I am to make a living I must sell that part of me that I regard as most important, I must hustle my imagination to those grey mackintoshed publishers with their leery grins, glass eyes, with the stains on their trousers and the anticipatory curvings of their right hands, ready to grip whatever I offer them - manuscripts, my soul, my left arm...

I am weighed under with advice on good hack writing. The important thing is to start with a bang, of either sort; then you have to make sure there is a cliff hanger wherever the average reader is likely to have to pause to re-adjust his brain - this means about every two pages, and that means a novel has to have a lot of excitement, a great deal of sex, or preferably both happening together.

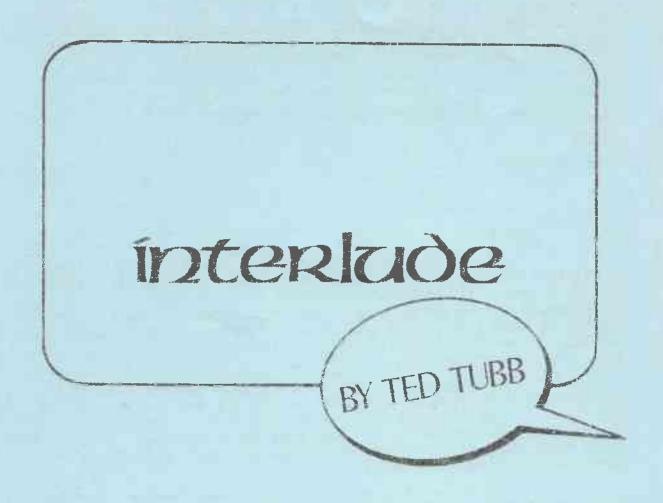
My first series is called The Saddlebums. The hero is called Wayne Breed; he's a great pistol man, and not a bad shot to boot. The book starts: Jake Mitchum turned, six gun in hand, and just had time to snap a single shot at the group of braves who stood there before the first arrow thudded deep into his groin and poked through the seat of his buckskin pants.

Hakes you want to read on, doesn't it pardner? It's easy enough starting something like that, but maintaining the same level of violence for fifty thousand words can become a real pain in the arse!

How about some army days recollections? If I remember, no hack novel could touch them for sex and violence content!

Love,

A. Buddy



He woke shivering, clutching vainly at the broken fragments of shattered dreams, the shards lying like splintered rainbows, glittering fantasies which dissolved as harsh reality thrust itself forward to dominate his being.

It was going to be a hard day. The Tired Old Author knew it as he struggled upright on his lonely couch. The cover had fallen and he trembled at the early chill. Pale light illuminated the window beyond which came the discordant cackling of massed birds yelling a greeting to the dawn. Sourly he listened to them as he punished his lungs with the first cigarette of the day.

It had been a hell of a night. Twice he had woken, convinced that he was dying, feeling the tearing regret of lost opportunities, of leaving things too late. A time of trouble and tribulation with half of his mind spinning like a top, one lung on strike, his heart pounding like an engine with missing cylinders. Unless cigarettes killed him first then surely booze would carry him off. A holiday, he thought bleakley I need a holiday. Long days spent on some sun-kissed beach, nights without tormenting dreams, the pressure gone, the need.

But now there was work to be done. A novel - sf, to finish. A seastory to be delivered at the end of next week. A western to be completed by the end of the month. And his fingers were sore, his eyes ached, his back had grown callouses and his rump was tender.

Rising he washed, brushed his tooth, scraped the stubble from his chin, arranged the thinning strands of grey hair and hastily turned from the visage in the mirror. Dressed, he gulped down hot and strong tea, took another couple of cigarettes and then, not because he wanted it but knew that he would need the strength the food would give, forced himself to swallow a couple of raw eggs, some toast and jam and then, stealed himself for the effort of the day.

He reached the Monster as collectors were readying themselves to punch the commuter tickets, as a blue haze thickened over the traffic and the merry sound of wire baskets in the supermarts vied with musek and the pad of feet as shoppers searched for bargains with hungry eyes. The lucky ones, those who didn't have to think, who would be paid no matter what, who had unions to look after them or pensions to spend or nice little jobs with convivial company with whom to chat over the tea-break or to make dates with for later on.

But all he had was a room redolent of the smell of mouldering tomes and, dominating it, the Monster.

It grinned at him with its waiting teeth, 91 characters with assorted extras, paper rolled into its maw. Sitting he stared at what it contained.

With subtle cunning he had ended in the middle of a line and not at the end of a chapter as had once been his custom. To do that, while satisfying, meant that he would have had to flog his brains to find a new beginning but now all he had to do was pick up the train of thought and carry on. The yarn was science fiction and he read:

"Dear God, Harry! The instruments! Look!"

Sandra threw out a pointing hand. Her face was pale, her hair a golden mass of dishevelled strands, her eyes bleak and the tremble of the pointing hand betrayed her fear.

"Harry "

Toa sucked in his lips and then carefully added; -

"what shall we do?"

A good question and one which had bothered him during the might. What indeed? She and Harry were locked in a ship which the dreaded aliens had sent on a collision course to the sun. The food was out, the water, the air. They had no suits, no weapons, no hope of rescue. But Harry was not fazed.

"Steady, girl!" His arm dropped comfortingly around her shoulder. "You're not alone. I'm with you."

"I know. But, Harry-?"

The aliens have made a mistake," he said with quiet triumph. "They have underestimated us."

And, thought Toa bitterly, I've underestimated the damned wordage. The trouble with switching from one length to another. Carry on like this and the book will be short a few thousand words. Well -

"Undrestimated us?" Sandra was puzzled. "But they are super mathematicians, Harry. They couldn't make a mistake."

"I didn't say they had."

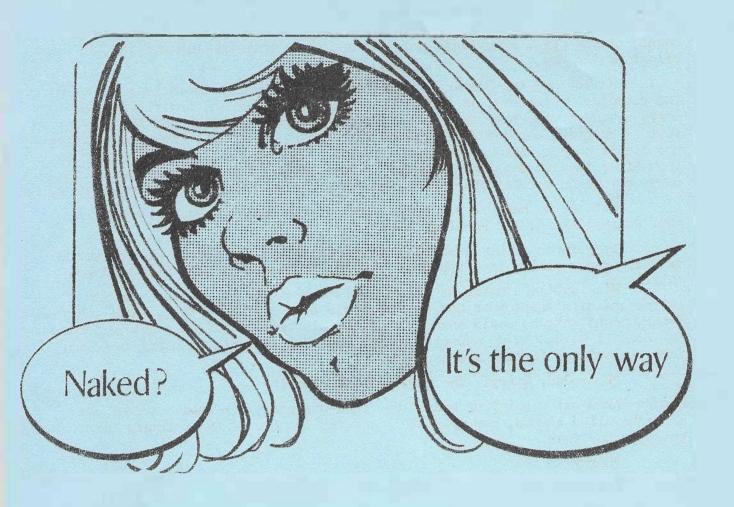
"But - "

" I said they'd underestimated us."

"But - "

"You said they'd made a misake. They did, but not exactly in the sense you mean."

"But - "



"Trust me, Sandra," he said gently. "You know you can do that."
"I know, Harry, but explain. Please explain."

"It's like this," he said. And as he spoke some of the tension left the smooth contours of her face and a gleam of hope replaced the defeat in her golden eyes. And yet she was of the ruling class and old traditions died hard.

"Naked?" A faint flush appeared on her cheeks. "The both of us, naked?"

"The only way," he insisted. "We can sweat and the heat won't be so bad. That's the mistake the aliens made - they are cold-blooded creatures and have no automatic temperature regulating mechanism like we have. If we spin the Hardy-Bulth regulator and evict all we can spare from the port lock the reaction will just be enough to veer us from a direct impact-path. It won't be easy, girl, but we can do it!"

Wearily Toa hit the shift-lever creating a blank line, a 12pt lead which had the effect of splitting the action and, in a sense, creating a mini-chapter. A neat convenience which saved the necessity of forming 'bridges'.

Now to fill up the missing wordage with a diversion to the girl's distraught father. He would be on the bridge of a combat vessel of the

Imperial Terran Space Fleet, the grim-faced Commander gruff in his condolences, the lower-ranks duly respectful. Movement and action which had nothing really to do with the story added so as to fill up the length. And then, after a junior officer had been badly hurt by some accident or other, a machine maybe breaking down, a sacrifice made by the girl's significance - a good touch that - back to the intrepid couple.

Another blank line - it all helped. A touch of terror, the hero burned - the girl protected by this sweating flesh, his eyes respectfully turned from her succulent beauty and then the grand finale when the hated aliens are destroyed, the ship rescued the young couple given the blessing of the father.

End with trumpets off.

Dazed Toa looked up from the typewriter and eased his aching back. Subconsiously he had heard the ring of the doorbell and now, descending, saw the small heap of mail. A large brown envelope which had an ugly appearance as all rejects had. An offer to enrol him in a book club, another promising loans at a crippling rate of interest, a course of mind training — fantastic promises but nothing concrete until the money was down. A plain sealed wrapper containing the catalogue of a sex—shop — somehow he'd got himself on a sucker—list. Sourly he cast it aside remembering the acid comment of an old sage. "If you can do it you don't need aids and if you can't what the hell good are they?"

A letter.

Dear Sir,

I am a young man who has decided to become a successful writer and I am writing to you for any help that you might feel free to give. I have read and admired your work for years and I think that your 'Stranger in a Strange Land' is the finest book ever to be produced. If I could write half as well I would be more than satisfied. So, please, if you could tell me how to begin I would be very grateful. I'll even dedicate my first book to you.

Sincerely,

Ernest Young-Adam.

A good letter even though the writer had made an elementary mistake. Toa hadn't written the book mentioned and he wondered if that very moment Heinlein was staring at a similar letter praising a work produced by someone else. Eya had probably written to maybe a dozen writers in the same vein - well, if he only got a couple of answers it was a good return for his postage.

And the simplicity of the missive appealed to Toa. I'll answer it, he decided. And I won't mention his error because that would be both embarrassing and cruel. And I am a kindly man at heart - never do I indulge in personal villification of an individual I do not know. Criticise his writing or comments he has made public, yes, about that there can be no harm. But to become personal and insulting to a man I wouldn't even recognise if we met face to face? That is unthinkable.

A relic of the past which still lingered from the good old days when the rule was if you couldn't say something nice about a person you kept silent.

And yet, could be answer? The request obviously meant more than it at first seemed. To tell the lad to buy paper and pen was no answer. To warn him that he had to type his stuff double-spaced with margins, and

indentations at the paragraphs if he hoped that it would be read was still not the answer. How to begin? To begin a story?

How indeed!

Once, when he had been very young and still wore the bloom of innocence, Toa had stumbled on SF and had the wild notion that, in order to get more, he would have to kidnap writers and force them to produce more of the same. His age then can be judged by the fact that he had had no idea as to the pursuasive powers of money. Probably because he hadn't had any; now he km w different.

But he still didn't know how a story should be started.

With a bang?

With a subtle leading into action?

With heart-stopping descriptions?

The sea-story, for example. The thing he had to do next. How to start the damned thing?

"On all sides the sea thrashed like a tormented beast with waves scudding mast-high beneath the leaden sky and the wind a shreking demon in the taut rigging. Feet braced on the quarter-deck Captain Harvey stared upwards with a worried frown, then turned as a hand touched his sleeve.

"A bad blow, sir." First Officer Quadrain was a man who had spont his life at sea. "The old girl's complaining and...."

Or?

They came like wolves from the mist, sleek shapes heavy with cannon, sails trimmed, the flag fluttering from the mast of the hated foe.

"Frenchies!"

"All hands on deck!" Quadrain's voice was a roar. "Man the guns! Action stations! Fire at will!"

Or?

My Lord Branch chose to be gracious. He had won at hazard and the Lady Penelope had more than hinted that tonight he would be welcome in her bed, so it was with a benign smile that he looked at Captain Harvey standing stiff and straight in his dress uniform.

"Well, Captain, eager for action, eh?" He nodded at the answer. "Those damned Frenchies are getting too insolent. It's up to you to teach them a lesson. You will leave on the tide and give it to them, eh?"

Dear Eya.

You begin at the beginning and always remember that if the beginning doesn't make the reader want to continue then all the rest is wasted. No one pays to be bored. No one really wants to start a book which does little more than give a lecture. Books are to entertain or teach. If you can manage to combine both then you are doing a good job. But, as a

writer, you must first entertain. How you do it is up to you, How you begin ditto. But remember that a novel, and you want to write novels, is not a collection of snippets or well-polished scraps. Ideally everything which takes place in a book has a bearing on everything else so that to cut the work is to ruin the whole. No one has yet managed to write such a book, but there is no harm in trying....

It was no good. To a leaned back and knew that he was wasting time in attempting the impossible. If he knew then he would do and if he did then he would be rich and famous. And even the advice he had given would remain incomplete. What of flashbacks? Diverse viewpoints? Multilateral development? How to describe characters? What to say about tempo? First tempo or third? How to tell a story - how to begin?

... so write, finish and submit. It it is good it will be taken. If it n't taken then try again. Keep on trying. Deciding to become a writer isn't enough. It requires work and dedication.

Too much of both, he thought as he sealed the letter, and other things which you may be lucky enough to avoid. Some do - others do not. What they are only time will tell.

Time!

It was dusk now and time for normal men to cease for the day, to mingle in social intercourse with others of their kind, to put aside the cares of toil and to relax in the company of friends. But a deadline was waiting and work still had to be done.

Rolling a sandwich of paper and carbon into the machine Toa frowned at the virgin surface. The sea-story should be done first, but there would be no harm in rattling off a few pages of the western. Just to find the heginning, maybe, just to break the ice.

On all sides the desert stretched, the dunes like the hide of a tormented beast, the harsh wind breath of hell itself as it strummed against the taut canopys of the waggons. Feet braced in the stirrups Captain Harvey stared at the sky with a worried frown, then lowered his head as a rider drew alongside.

"A bad blow, sir." Second Lieutenant Quadrain was a man who had spent his life in the west. "The waggoneers are complaining and....

Try again.

They came like wolves from the shadowed darkness, slim shapes hideous with paint, thair markings that of the hated foe.

"Indians!" Quadrain's voice was a roar. "Sound the alarm! Action stations! Fire at will!"

Well..?

Colonel Branch chose to be gracious. He had won at poker and the widow Penelope had more than hinted that tonight he would be welcome in her

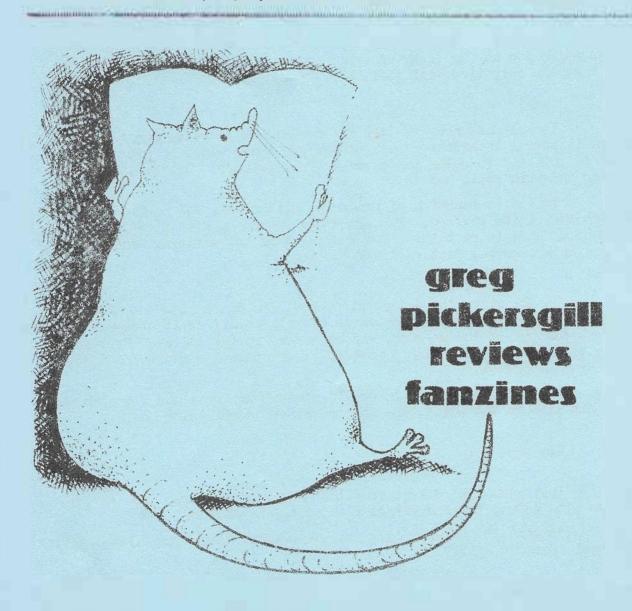
bed, so it was with a benign smile that he looked at Captain Harvey standing stiff and straight in his dress uniform.

"Well, Captain, eager for action, eh? He nodded at the answer.
"Those damned Sioux are getting too insolent. It's up to you to teach them a lesson. You will leave at dawn and give it to them, eh?"

Satisfied Toa turned from the typewriter, wincing a little at the pain from cramped muscles. Stooping he hefted the thick, brown envelope. His initial fear had been groundless, this was not a rejection but a fanmag and one he held dear. Joy waited within the envelope and his fingers twitched on the sealed edge.

Tonight he would settle himself with the mag and a bottle. A small drink first as a libation, another as a toast, a third to keep the other company. More for medicinal purposes - and to hell with the side-effects.

And tomorrow, maybe, he would write his letter of commont.



# PYRAMIDS IN MY MARDROBE

### - harry turner

naut, do you, asks Lisa incredulously.

My reputation as a serious thinker sways in the balance. I've just got hold of a copy of von Däniken's book In Search of Ancient Gods ... his "pictorial evidence for the impossible". And I have to admit that among the wealth of illustrations provided there are many that impress me, ranging from the grandiloquence of the Tiahuanaco ruins and Nazca "lines"

- You don't seriously believe all that crap about god being an astro-

the wealth of illustrations provided there are many that impress me, ranging from the grandiloquence of the Tiahuanaco ruins and Nazca "lines' to the elaborately carved stone bas-relief over the sarcophagus and remains that the ancient Maya left in a burial chamber inside the Temple of Inscriptions at Palenque — a find that shook up archeological preconceptions in the 1950s. This exquisite example of classic Mayan sculpture, on a stone some 14 feet long by 7 feet wide, and weighing all of 5 tons, depicts, according to orthodox opinion, an Indian on a sacrificial altar. Däniken chooses to interpret it as showing an astronaut cradled in a space capsule. And his book includes the work of American aviator engineer John Sanderson, who has decided to re-interpret the carving in terms of a technical diagram and produced a picture of an efficient-looking space craft with an astronaut at the controls.

But another item catches my attention... about pyramids.

- Guess who's involved in these miniature pyramids I mentioned in the

review of the Umland's book, I invite Lisa.

- Who, she enquires vaguely, preoccupied as she breaks off typing to slosh another blob of corflu on the blood-splattered stencil in her

typewriter.

- Son of Marshall McLuhan, no less, I announce. Seems that it was McLuhan junior who first built an 18-inch high model pyramid in red Plexiglass, and as well as resharpening a blunt razor blade, also preserved a juicy beefsteak for all of 20 days. And Däniken also mentions this experiment with a cosmic ray detector in the Pyramid of Chephren, but his reference doesn't make any more sense to me than the Umland brothers did...

- That figures, murmured Lisa, happily typing away once more.

- Incidentally, your readers don't need to let me know where to get a commercial plastic pyramid: the address is right there in Däniken's book. Though what inflation's done to the price quoted of three dollars I shudder to think...

\* \* \* \*

I can never resist the lure of a book sale. There's this copy of "Teach Yourself Polish" going cheap. Hearing the language spoken on visits to Lisa has created a certain aura of familiarity, and the back-page blurb is full of promises: "laborious learning of tables .. replaced by a gradual process of familiarisation.. grammar similarly simplified.. a thorough grounding." I feel supremely optimistic about my capabilities. I pick it up. Why not, I think.

Getting down to it, I find there's more hard work than the publishers suggest. Polish grammar's more involved than English. Then there's the complication of inflection, the way words keep changing form by function

and relationship to other words in a sentence. But I persist. Eventually, when I fancy I have achieved a certain mastery, I pluck up courage to compose a letter to Lisa. Nothing involved, and yet, as I lick the envelope flap, I feel this is going to surprise her.

Apparently it does.

On my next visit while complimenting me on my letter she mentions, in a polite way, a few mistakes in the matter of gender. Then she looks faintly puzzled. What, she asks with eyebrows raised, is this bit about the painting that's fallen behind the wardrobe?

Back at the studio, I ransack the waste-paper basket, unscrumple the many drafts discarded during composition. I consult my notes. Not a hint of paintings falling behind wardrobes. I am seized by an immense sense of failure to communicate and, next day, when the local Boy Scouts call collecting for their summer jumble sale, am tempted to present them with "Teach Yourself Polish".

The thought that stops me is that I might yet have a future as a Dadaist poet in Polish...



BOOKS/MAGAZINES continued from page 13
(Due to the vast increase in the amount of publications received it has been impossible to write about everything. Be sure that all items received are at least given a descriptive mention.)

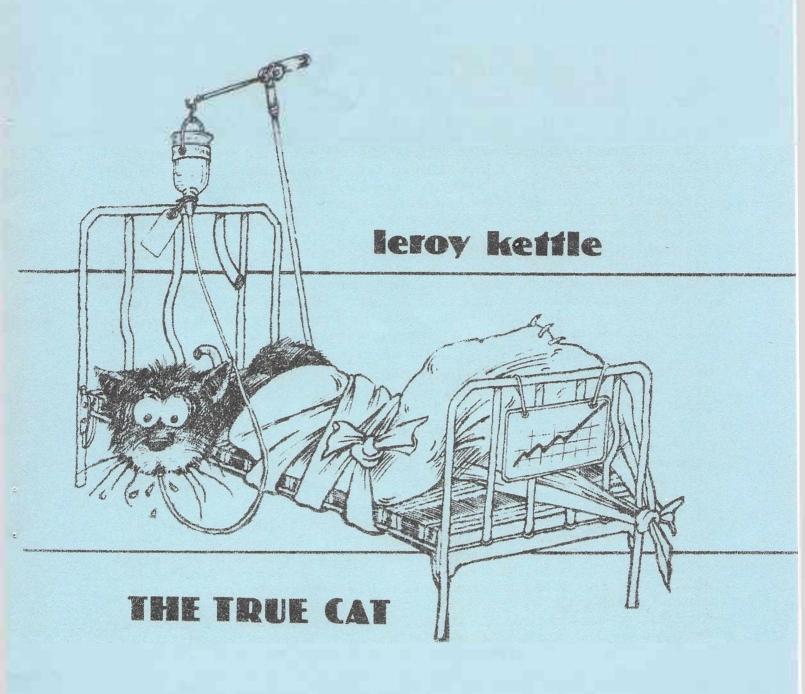
pre-eminent, and Christopher Priest puts across well the desperate need to keep the city moving at all costs. It is the system of guilds (besides the Future Surveyors there are Track-Laying, Bridge-Building, Traction, Militia and Barter) which ensures the city's movement, and these are excellently thought out. It is easy for the reader to identify with Helward Mann, though the other characters are, deliberately I feel, little more than sketches, albeit interesting ones. Only Victoria, Helward's wife, fails to come alive as a person.

I have reservations about the book's ending. This is too slick and unexpected, failing to explain all the phenomena ascribed to it. Also the author is sometimes careless and misleading in his phrasing ("I passed out. I came round about a minute later." - How did Helward know it was only a minute later?), and deficient in his descriptions (what does Victoria look like?). Such faults are relatively minor and do not spoil a fine novel.

-Chris Morgan

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For more Books & Magazines Received please see Extended Book Supplement enclosed within this issue.



In the daze of my youth we seemed to get through a lot of cats. We got through them like some people get through Kleenex, and almost as messily, although they were slightly more difficult to dispose of.

For a long time I thought we only had one cat. It was called Fluff, like all good cats were then, but ours was not a good, nor a normal, cat. Often it was ginger or black and white, and at other times tabby. Once, for a whole week it was tortoise-shell (which is alright for tortoises, but looks sort of untidy on cats). Funny old Fluff, I thought.

I knew the changes in its colour (and size, which I ignored) coincided with the times that my grandmother used to totter out onto the main road and scrape up a shapeless, red-streaked lump but I didn't know why. She used to bury these lumps in the back garden with monotonous regularity and my toy shovel. My grandfather couldn't understand why his marrows won no prizes that year but, as usual, blamed it on "too much bloody weather".

Whenever my grandmother got hold of another stray and told me that

Fluff was back (my childhood stupidity is a family legend) she also suggested that I begin to learn to close the gate. But it wasn't me who let the cats out. It was my crazy uncle, who drank meths from the Corona bottle in which it was kept because he thought it was flat pop, who used to chase the cats onto the main road and laugh and laugh. I wouldn't go near Fluff despite accepting the general opinion that he/she was a nice cat. Probably because I looked like a smaller version of my uncle the cats used to sharpen their claws on me frequently. I soon learned to keep my distance, which could well explain my inability to detect any relationship between dead cats and live ones, and also why I was prepared to accept any Fluff without argument. In fact, I found I couldn't even recognise any similarities between cats killed by the frenzied Bilston traffic and those killed by other methods. The pathetic Fluff that went (I hope) to the Great Fishmonger In The Sky after coughing up blood and fur for several days bore no resemblance to the unfortunate version which my unrepentant uncle tried to flush down the toilet. Quite understandably it had failed to survive his repeated (and bewildering) attempts to shove it around the U bend, and when the resultant dripping black mass was buried it meant nothing to me.

Eventually I grow large enough to emulate my uncle. The combination of being able to copy a pseudo-adult and wreaking revenge on Fluff (who, after all, seemed indestructable, and whose scars I bear to this very day) proved too much for me.

To my shame I threw the current Fluff onto the living-room fire. Once more my grandmother had to find space in the back garden, and then I began to understand how the burned, twistad object had once been a living creature. Since then I have been reasonably pleasant to most small animals. I was very young.

Anyway, not long afterwards my father married again (and I stopped living with my grandmother and her bizarre son). The subsequent delicate additions to the Kettle household no longer allowed cats to be present, as my step-mother regarded them as biters of babies, foulers of furniture and clawers of carpets, besides their anti-respiratory habits of moulting in mouths (specifically babies mouths, and with remarkable accuracy for a condition so uncontrollable). Anyway, she didn't like them. I don't think she had ever been within swinging distance of a cat, and, certainly, had not had the traumatic experiences of my earlier days to mould her character. It appeared to be a completely irrational hatred of mobile furry objects, which makes one wonder where the babies came from.

I well remember one day how she cheered when the evil moggy from next floor came scuttling across the lawn with its one good eye staring at the crowded bird-table, and my father, springing from nowhere, booted the already tattered and scarred cat high into the air. Before it touched the ground, my uncle (no relation) overcoming the bad leg injury which kept him out of work (not too amazingly, it was an old cat injury), swung his boot beneath the sorry animal which, with a dopleresque wail, flew back next door where it landed in a twitching heap.

It took me some time to overcome this persistent anti-animal propaganda. I still can't sit in a car without feeling a touch of panic if a dog runs into the road in case the driver, like my father, decides to chase it irregardless of highway codes, moral codes or pedestrians. But cats I eventually got to like. Very much.

Oh, yes, except for Oscar. He belonged to Paul The Fostman who lives next door to me. Paul The Postman's a bit of a sod, who, with his unspeakable friends, likes nothing more than a quick revival of any long, loud musical right outside my room any time after two in the morning. That's not really relevant. Aryway, he decided he would like a kitten, got one, 28

and called it Oscar. It was the most singularly vicious animal which ever existed. Blofeld's piranha had nothing on it. Possibly its temperament was due to the inches of dust and filth through which it had to plough all the time. Or it may perhaps have been Paul's insistence that Oscar cost him nothing in apkeep which finally drove it berserk. Like Paul, the cat used old newspaper cut into strips for certain purposes of personal hygene. It often used to slink downstairs (coughing and choking) in order to leave horrifyingly white faces in somewhat more cattish places than a basin full of tits and bums ripped from the Daily Mirror. It also used to eat stuff which could never come out of a tin. That food was extaordinarily hideous, both in looks and smell, besides having a strange propensity for attracting maggots. In such an atmosphere of cleanliness and affection did Oscar grow up to be a revolting little cat. It bit, claw, or merely hissed at, anything which moved. It would not be picked up, stroked or ignored. I've had less ravaged skin picking gooseberries for a fortnight without gloves. Eventually it ran away. I've always suspected that someone deliberately left the door open for it (not my uncle this time though). Faul still deludes himself that it was a nice animal and that someone may have stelen it, but I suspect it was ripped into as many pieces as his Daily Mirror by the 1stfull-grown street-cat it met.

You may wonder whether this rubbish about cats ever gets fannish. Well, it does. So there.

John Hall's cat was the next I saw a lot of and, luckily, it was quite a nice one, so I got back to liking them again. He called it Chissum (spelt Chisholm, as in "Trial" and "get along li'l dogies") probably because he thought this was ethnic (a word he thinks means Country and Western which is a type of music he likes more than he lets on.) Chissum had a permanently dazed expression and was friendly to everyone except John, but in a bowildered sort of way. This was probably because John had a habit, whenever Chissum did anything wrong, of picking it up and shouting in its ear, "You know that's wrong. You naughty cat. I've told you before not to do that and you still do it. DON'T DO IT ANY MORE." Then he'd drop Chissum which would stand rigidly where it landed for some minutes before beginning to shake its head furiously. This treatement must have damaged its little feline brain, as must its enforced proximity to John's speakers, but fortunately in a different way to Oscar's. And it never could understand spoken English quite as well as John thought, because it did do things again. But it was a nice cat.

So we come to the Charnocks. When Tigga Charnock gave birth (after having been impregnated, I understand, before the delighted eyes and slobbering mouth of Graham in the Charnock's front room) a happy home was wanted for Treackle, the black one, Tabit, the tabby, Blob, the other tabby, Ginger, the ginger (yes, indeed) and a ginger and white one whose name I forget. I decided I wanted a man's cat, which, contrary to Graham's belief doesn't mean a bitch. I didn't want a silly woman cat that would go around making herself pregnant (or however they do it). Luckily, the one I liked the look of most, and which ran away from me least, the ginger tom, was a tom. I had him, and Chris, being mislead by their apparent cuddliness, chose one too. Tabit. A female.

I had been determined to call mine Fang, which I'm now very grateful I didn't do as it would have sounded pretty bloody silly at the vet's for one thing. Instead, long-tired of calling fandoms after animals, I decided to call my animal after a fan. I chose a prominent fannish cat-lover and named my cat Robert. (Chris called hers Tabitha, which is a typical effeminate name for a female cat.)

Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that, while Chris had a sharp

little cat that could chew mice and walk at the same time, I had a mentally defective creature. Sadly, there was no guarantee. I had apparently got it shop-soiled, so to speak. I underst od exactly what this meant when I discovered that Robert took great delight in treading in his turds. Little brown paw-prints appeared all over the house. At first, I took this to be a further sign of Robert's amazing dumbness. For instance, when under a chair he would rear up for no apparent reason and smash his head against the underside, staggering away semi-conscious in search of another chair. He would take flying leaps from bookcase to table, or chair to settee, and completely miss his target shrieking pathetically as he shot past. He would hang from the top of the wall, caught by his claws in the heavily embossed paper, and only manage to get free as someone was walking underneath. This, I thought, is one dumb cat.

What I didn't realise was that all this was only camouflage.

What happened was that as a result of his turd-treading activities I felt obliged to train him into cleaner habits for his own sake (as stinking cats are unloved cats) and my sake (as I had to live with his offensive feetprints). This I did by attempting to get him to turn more carefully after he had done his number twos (Zimri euphemism number one). During these attempts I had reason to be in closer proximity than usual to his turds. After the first day I noticed that these brown, vaguely cylindrical, objects had fallen in the shape of an F. This was reasonably amusing and momentarily took my mind eway from such pressing matters as vowing never to feed him fishy substances again. However, the next day the letter U appeared, quite clearly defined. Following days produced a K and a C. (I put down the peculiar order to bad education at the hands of Graham short period of rather ineffectual turds he came up with a Q, closely followed by an arrow pointing towards me. This compleated the message as far as both of us were concerned because he never trod in his turds from then on and I never underestimated his intelligence.

It could well be that my uncle, seeing things through a methylated haze, had discovered this catty intelligence, well-hidden though it is (especially in Robert's case) and was waging a private war against them. It could well be that Oscar, being a well-versed, or better, in his alphabet as Robert, had been driven mad by reading the strips of Daily Mirror which graced his litter-basin. It might even be that Chissum was struck dopey by the astonishing illiteracy all around him in the Hall household. I can't say definitely, of course, but that message FUKC Q really did appear from Robert and I find it just a little bit disturbing. I may not even have him done in case he retaliates. I'm certainly not going to leave a carbon of this lying around. Be warned. ——Leroy

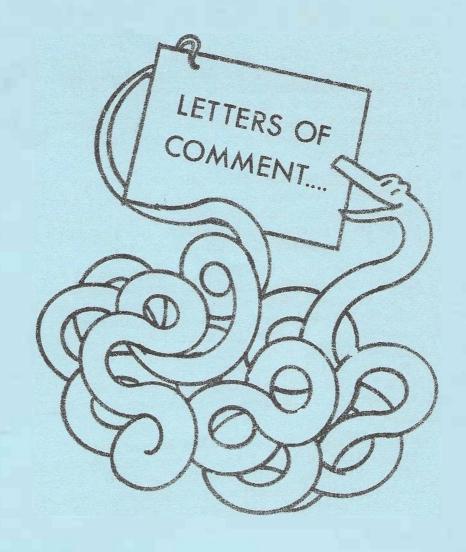


P.S. Since writing the above (as the saying goes) there have been two cases reported in the Hackney Gazette (slogan: 'Ave A Look In The 'Ackney) of people being killed by their cats. One was smothered to death like Huple, the other was tripped and fell out of a third storey window. Has anyone heard from the Charnocks lately?

—Leroy.

P.P.S. Has anyone heard from <u>Kettle</u> lately? --Robert.

You have just read: FAECES FACTS II



TED WHITE - U. S. A. Thanks very much for the copy of ZIMRI 7. It goes without saying that I find Priest's \*Unspeakable Mr White" line a bit annoying (although I personally have no trouble in saying "Mr White," and the name has been spoken by quite a few others), but what I object to is Priest's blatant intellectual dishonesty in using me as he has.

To put it simply, what he has done is to rip what I said from its context (while gratuitously sneering at the context), treat what I said as in some way totally false, wrong and objectionable—and then to justify my criticisms in his ostensibly praise-filled piece. That takes some doing, and it certainly lowers my opinion of, ah, Mr Priest.

I wonder at his motivation. I've never met him, but I wonder if he belongs to Mr Aldiss' little group of back-patters and mutual admirers. I've noticed for some years now that criticism of Aldiss, no matter how oblique, rates not only supercilious rejoinders from Aldiss (check his responses to the Panshins in F&SF) but from his coterie of admirers, to whom, apparently, the man is at least one of the lesser Gods. Since Aldiss is after all only a human being, it seems to me that this Aldiss-Can-Do-No-Wrong syndrome hurts him more than it helps him.

In any case, I should like to set the context straight and let your readers draw their own conclusions.

The story begins with a letter from Creath Thorne, a fan whom I've known and respected for most of the last ten years, requesting a piece for a special supplement of the University of Chicago <u>Literary Review</u> devoted to sf. I was knocking around in the house with a mild case of flu, nothing to do, and I decided to write Creath a letter from which I hoped he would extract an article (he'd asked for my "thoughts", or somesuch).

My letter explained its context quite clearly, but the portions concerning my state of the moment were edited out of the article Creath extracted—no doubt quite properly. Less happily, what might be considered my professional indiscretion in discussing a work I'd published in less than glowing tones was not.

Still, let's get facts straight—facts to which Priest had access. First, his slam at the publication ("the fact that someone like Mr White reviews in a journal with a name like that is a moral in itself") is totally unjustified —as much as I would be in saying "the fact that Mr. Priest writes for something called Zimri is a moral in itself". Worse, I do not "review" for the publication; it was quite clearly stated that my piece (titled, none too seriously, "Fear and Loathing in Science Fiction") was "his account of where he sees himself and his fellow writers today." It is my sole contribution to The Chicago Literary Review.

Upon such small deceptions, Priest builds larger ones.

He quotes a single line of what I had to say about <u>Frankenstein Unbound</u>, implying that I was reviewing the book in a formal review.

He knows this is a false implication, yet he says, "here is the unspeakable Mr White reviewing <u>Frankenstein Unbound</u>..." He "cannot bring himself to reproduce" the rest of what I have to say. I'm not surprised. Here it is:

(beginning with the fifth paragraph; the first four had nothing to do with Aldiss or his book) "Still, nothing strips bare an author's abilities faster than copyediting his manuscript. Recently I published Brian Aldiss' Frankenstein Unbound. It is an 'important' novel -- and already a nominee for a prestigious British prize -- and Aldiss is a much proclaimed 'man of letters' for whom this novel was, I believe, a labor of love in which he invested much of himself. "I published the novel because I would have been a fool not to--its publication is a Major Event in the field and already letters are coming in from my magazine's readers raving over the fact that the novel was published in Fantastic (a sampling of those letters were in fact subsequently published in the magazine) -- but the plain and simple fact of it is that it's a dreadfully bad novel, badly plotted, badly written, badly conceived. The characterizations are absurd throughout--not one living, breathing, human being populates the entire story, despite cameo appearances by Mary Shelly, Lord Byron, Victor Frankenstein, et al; all are doom-ridden pieces of cardboard. The dialogue is British European, despite the fact that Aldiss has gratuitously made his viewpoint-protagonist/narrator ('Joe Bodenland'!) a Texan. And the actual sloppiness of the prose (imprecise usages, actually wrong usages -- and I don't mean 'Britishisms' either, although those also abounded, and were left untouched) astounded me. I can think of half a dozen young, beginning writers whose prose is better crafted than was Aldiss'.

"Well, this is very disillusioning to me, and I repect any other editor in the field could tell stories equally so."

It was certainly an indiscretion to write that. I should not have. Not because I don't believe every word of it (well, nearly every word—I tended to exaggerate into absolutes where qualifiers would have helped), since I do, but because it is not the business of an editor to criticise what he accepts for publication. Oh, editors do it all the time—but in face—to—face conversations, and not in cold print where it can stand as an embarrassment for years to come. Hypocrisy is sometimes a social necessity and I have often regretted my failure to be hypocritical in the socially accepted modes—which would certainly endear me to a great many more people and spare me articles of the sort Mr. Priest has written.

Still, I think from the context it is clear that I am not exhibiting hostility toward either Mr Aldiss or his novel--just disappointment.

I was responsible for the purchase of the novel, although the actual dealings were between my publisher, Mr Cohen, and Aldiss' New York agent. I was asked if I thought we should buy it and I said, before reading it, yes we should. I still feel that was the right decision, badly flawed though the novel was. Its appeal transcended its flaws. (On the other hand, its flaws were obvious to many readers, some of whose criticisms I also published in subsequent letter colums of Fantastic. And its appeal was hardly a commercial one—the two issues in which we published it sold the least of any issues in Fantastic's history, either before or since. I maintain this had nothing to do with the novel—our poorest sales always seem to come at that time of the year, if not usually in such an extreme form—but my publisher is less certain...)

Now it is a well-known fact that Aldiss and I have skirmished in the pages of various fanzines for years. He regards me with contempt and I consider him amazingly wrongheaded in this (and other) regard(s). I can live with this. It is not essential to me that I either like or be liked by everyone else. I try not to let such feelings interfere with my professional duties, and I had rather thought that Aldiss (whatever his other failings) was equally professional in this regard. Else, why approve the sale to my magazine (which he did) in the first place? I responded to what I considered his willingness to transcend past differences with a presentation I hoped would please him. The covers had his name in type as big as the magazine's title (the graphics were mine). The blurbs and editorial comment within the magazine were I think flatteringly respectful. I remain hopeful that Mr Aldiss found the presentation to his satisfaction.

Perhaps the strain of such backwards-bending is what led to my thoughtless criticising the piece elsewhere. I won't say it justifies it, but it may explain it. I labored over that manuscript for several days. It was a weak xerox copy on which several lines on each page were either streaked with dirt or so faint as to be barely readable. On at least three pages the lines in question were almost invisible. I carefully deciphered every word and made it legible for the typesetter (who certainly wouldn't have bothered, had it been left to him). Reading every word of the novel, word by worm, not once but several times, truly disappointed me. It was not a well-written book. It was not the quality of prose I expected of Aldiss. (I copyedited several of his stories for F&SF years ago. I didn't particularly like them -- one I recall, was about a baby which refused to be born, which I thought monumentally silly, but maybe we simply don't function on the same wave-lengths in what we like in stories--but I thought their prose more than adequate. Later I ran a short story of Aldiss' in one of my magazines -- a story purchased by a previous editor -- and I considered its prose excellent. Whatever my opinion of the kind of stories Aldiss wrote, I expected better craftsmanship of him than I found in Frankenstein Unbound.) The plot moved by fits and starts and seemed entirely author-motivated.

The philosophy expressed I considered naive and simplistically romantic. And to make "Bodenland" (what a name!) a <u>Texan</u>, not simply as Priest has him, an American, but a very specific type of American with a very specific style of speech, was totally unjustified by anything in the story. (I might as foolishly write a story in which the first-person narration, in idiomatic American, is credited to a Cockney...)

Now Priest puts his finger on this last flaw, and correctly identifies it as "the one central flaw"--which it certainly is, since it renders the narrator--the character whose viewpoint we are expected to follow--unbelivable, at least to an American audience, and apparently to Priest as well. This flaw was pointed out by many of my readers also.

And, although Priest characterises the language as (in hyperbolic overkill) "amongst the finest to be found in modern fiction," he also more correctly notes examples of carelessness in both detail and language. There are many more than those token examples he offered; I found an average of one per manuscript page.

Thus, to a large extent, Priest has himself noted the very flaws I commented upon in my article. He would have been far more honest to content himself with writing the body of his review and to avoid using me as a bad example.

As long as I'm commenting upon his article, however, I must chuckle at his notion of the "genuinely profound." The quote he offers (in which Frankenstein builds a monster with a penis for urination on the side of its thigh) is one of the most laughable in the book, as I hope I am not alone in recognising. It may be true that the observation that this said a lot about Frankenstein has some profundity—although not enough, I think, to have excited Freud—but it hardly justified to me the sheer absurdity of the image Aldiss has created of his monster (a female monster, at that).

The philosophy which Priest raves over, I find quaintly naive. It is 19th Century moralism; it presumes, as does most of Aldiss' writings by his own account, a Christian notion of Man and God which is so limited and narrow a view as to be depressing in an erstwhile science fiction writer. One wishes Mr Aldiss had been raised a Buddhist; it might have done wonders for his fiction and it would have spared us this dreary Fall of Man nonsense.

The question of morality in man's endeavours—in science as in other things—is a deeply perplexing one, and one which does not resolve so neatly into blacks and whites. Aldiss' use of his novel as a metaphor for this moral dilemmais his central failure. First, because throughout he is pleading his point, not concerning himself with the story values of the novel, a failure he shares with most previous authors of tracts (such as Huxley's Island), no matter how valid their points. Second, because he presents this dilemma through straw men in grossly simplified terms. Victor Frankenstein is more than insane—he is a monumental fool. It is hard to believe that he was intelligent enough to find a way to create life; he is not a scientist, his mind is closed and he is blind to the obvious. Obviously Aldiss sees him that way, but Aldiss fails to make his vision believable: he has built Frankenstein of cardboard and painted him black.

So okay, Priest and I differ. I accept that fact willingly. I've long since learned that intelligent people can have differing tastes. He sees some of the book's flaws and they do not matter to him; I see them and they do matter to me. Is this any reason for him to attack and to vilify me? Was his attack necessary to his defense of the book?

Mr Aldiss has traditionally made it hard to separate comment upon his work from comment upon himself—perhaps because he puts much of himself into his books and thus feels criticisms of them to be criticisms of himself.

I regard this as unfortunate, because my concern here has been with the work and not with the man. I regret having had published the original criticism I wrote, as I previously stated—and just possibly the tone of that criticism merits Priest's characterization of it as "odious"—but I do not think those criticisms were unjustified.

# Martin I. Ricketts - 10 Greville Road, Southville, Bristol BS3 1LL

The high spots for me in this issue were the two reviews of the Brian Aldiss books. Both Chris Priest's and Ritchie Smith's reviews were well-balanced in that they stressed Aldiss' literary greatness while not being afraid to express disaproval of his bad points, sometimes that, so far as Aldiss' works are concerned, most fanzine reviews seem ouriously reluctant to do. Perhaps its something to do with the fact that these bad points are few and trivial when compared with the whole scope of his work, with the fact that he writes with great verve and wit and complete lack of self-consciousness and that he is one of the best writers we have. The muddy writing to which Chris Priest refers has always long irritated me about Aldiss' work, but if that is the price for all the things I mentioned, then so be it: rather that than the somewhat stilted prose that a self-conscious search for perfection sometimes produces.

Philip Stephensen-Payne - 28 Woodfield Drive, Charlbury, Oxford OX7 3SE

The Frankenstein Unbound was the third I had read by Chris Priest (third review that is, not third FU review) in as many days, and is thankfully a great step above the other two. Here at least he is reviewing the book in question, and almost manages to convey his reasons for liking it. Almost, but not quite — I found his criticisms of the book more cogent and lasting. He still suffers, as well, with his tendency for using his non-fiction to parenthetically slate other authors, but fortunately he now moderates his outbursts somewhat. All the same his diatribe against Ted White on the basis of one review is rather child ish. Still he does appear to have the makings of a good reviewer in there somewhere.

I was surprised you disliked The Sheep Look Up, Lisa, I found it one of the most enjoyable books of the year - but then, I'm fond of depressing books; they make everyday life more cheerful by comparison.

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Ted Tubb - 67, Hudson Road, London S. E. 23 2 RL

Zimri-7 received and read with mixed feelings - a result of early and ancient conditioning which tends to have a love for the softness of duplicating paper and the familiar face of naked typescript. This is logically ridiculous, I know, and I'm not denigrating your attempt to uplift the mag with the use of offset - its just that somehow it isn't the same. Just like the old pulp mags with their format - take the stories from them, tart them up and, somehow, they lose something. But, that out of the way, heartiest congratulations on the mag and all it contains! /=My feelings about litho are much the same as yours, Ted, as you see I'm back to the old friendly way of reproducing - one aims to please at all times - I've even been thinking of producing a separate poetry zine; it's been getting thru to me that not all zimrireadors are altogether captivated by poetry..=/

Glad you agree about litho and I'm hoping that the next issue of Zimri

will be soon. For that reason your mention of a proposed new poetry mag fills me with dire trepidation. It will be good - and that's the trouble. Demands will be made on you and the production will wean you away from Zimri I know it! Poz (Poor old Zimri) will suffer and be neglected and wither away like a rejected suitor. Soon it will become a nuisance and a chore and you, being merciful, will take pity on the thing and kill it.

Of course, if you were to combine the two mags into one by using litho for the poems and so getting more on a page, have a separate cover even, you'd save on postage and collation and envelopes and all the rest of it. A suggestion born from utter selfishness — there are too few good mags and publishers not to speak of editors in fandom for one to be lost to us.

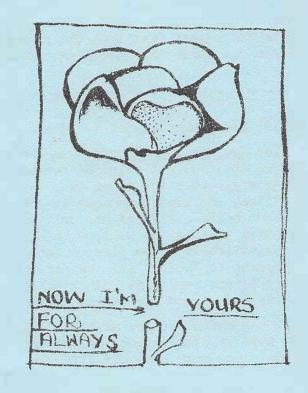
Be not beguiled by the sweet voice whispering - "Arise my love, and come with me..."

Not unless that voice belongs to ...

Mike Glicksohn - 141, High Park Ave... Toronto, Ontario M6P 2S3

Splendid cover, and damn well printed too. The graphics, mostly in the offset section, range from superb ("That Was Yesterday" double page spread) and brilliant (the Harry Turner sections) through damn good (most of the rest of the section) down to now-why-in-hell-did-they-dothat. The rather cluttered and coming on too strong poetry section.) In the mimeo pages, I really liked the title for the letter-col /=Arthur Thomson=/ But definitely this is visually a stimulating and superior issue.

I don't think you were at SEACON, because I'm sure we'd have met if you had been. In fact, I heard you were pretty well gafia by that time. It doesn't show in this issue of



Zimri, though, so I hope that was either a rumour or a phase or a rumoured phase or at worst a phasered room. It would be a shame to stop publishing Zimri after two excellent issues like these last two you sent me. (I'll miss you at the Blackpool Fan Convention too, I expect, and the New Orlean Fan Con, and you weren't at Confusion, Chicon or Disclave, nor do I expect to see you at Midwestcon, Kwestcon, Launchcon, BYOBcon, Fan Fair III or the worldcon in Australia. That'll make twelve cons I won't have seen you at before the end of this summer. We've got to stop not meeting like this, nobody's getting suspicious.)

/=And I'll bet we won't meet at MANCON-76 because you won't be there, but should we ever manage to meet, it is sure to be in parenthesis - cos thats where you love to spend most of your time. (I wonder if this has some deep psychological ((or physiological, even)) significance? Or just one of your little habits...? Shall I ever know!? =/

Rob Holdstock - 99, Roseberry Gardens London N4

What can I say? It was superb, the best Zimri ever and one of the best fanzines for many years. I am greatly relieved to hear that you will continue Zimri, and not fold it, and if you were thinking of making the whole magazine litho, let me urge you not to - the balance between the 2 production techniques was perfect- a combination of serious and fannish that appealed to both sides of my confused nature. Peter Linnet's interview with John Brunner was excellent, with some fascinating facts emerging! I would also like to congratulate you on John Mottershead - a very talented artist, and a great discovery.



Rafi Mohamed - 7, Clarence Road Bickley, Bromley, Kent. BR1 2DL

A point - Why? Oh why do you poets all insist on titling yourwork? I have something I wish to say - I discover the medium of poetry as being most suited to my intention - I proceed - the statement is the poem, the poem is the statement, a total entity, structured and complete. To place a title before it is to make an awkward extension, a blemish, an incompression of the implied emotion/thought. It distracts, it preconditions in a way readers response to the work before he/she begins to read. A bad habit this titling! Please excuse my sounding off like this. It is simply because I am rapidly discovering a great liking for the poetic statement and titles irritate me.

/=What is a title? A title is: a label, an name, a decoration, a trade mark, a means of identification, a criterion, a mark, a symbolisation, a pointer, any direction, a dress, a lead in, mood, scrithing to do by, nudge, wink & I'll say no more..=/

Ken J. Sell - 8, Westrow Drive, Barking, Essex IG11 9BH

Guess I'm just old fashioned but I don't seem to drop neatly into any Fan (what the hell is FEN?) group - I'm not a fat pussy for even a slim rat?=/who's made it and wants a little ego building, nor am I inclined to pussy stroking /= You can go out tonight, Mother, I won't need chaperoning..=/so I'm in limbo as far as fanzines go. I'm not knocking the SF elite or elite lovers but it smacks of self -indulgence to me - of the 'professional amateur' and those people who say "It's nice to see your name in print". -YUK! You can call me Adolf Hitler Jr /=or even Marquis de Sade! =/if you like as long as the cheque arrives on the first of the month.

Lisa, guess I'm not a fan at heart. I honestly don't care what Brunner does or does not wear... And I would not go to a 'con' - sorry that's the way I am but I like Z and I like you.

/= Ah well, that's all I care about, but you don't really know what you're missing.=//= Oh yeah, FEN=Faanish plural of FAN.=/

Merf Adamson - 14, St James Close, H E N D O N, Hull HU12 8BH

May I first say that when I saw it, the first thing that impressed was the size /=\*sigh\*=/ -- then the amazing interior; the printing must have cost you a packet, as the saying goes. Very professional. However, I'm glad the printed section is only half of the magazine; if it were lithoed right through, it would look formidable -- or daunting, to say the least. I like the way the departments at the back are still duplicated, it gives the whole thing a much friendlier atmosphere than I think would be possible with the printing press.

The interview was interesting, and very informative. I saw John Brunner at SEACON, and know that he's a very eloquent speaker; he tells, and tells it straight. He doesn't mince words, which is why I wonder, nit-pickingly, about the reference to Sturgeon's Law -- p6 -- "90% of everything is crud." Surely John would have said 'crud, as in the original, rather than 'rubbish' which is, I suppose acceptable to any one, but is it necessary? Especially in fandom, where the general impression I get is of everyone being blunt and to the point, with no pussy footing round words which might upset Granny. If I'm wrong, than I'm wrong, and fine by me, but I just wondered.

Several times in Z-7 Greg Pickresgill is mentio ed, and I must say that he sounds to be quite a contrary chap; and everyone's getting at Rob Holdstock (not only in Z, either) though I'm afraid indon't have any information on these two gentlemen, so again I can't comment on the validity or otherwise of these claims that they are 'great guys' or 'cretins'.

Andrew Stephenson -- 19 Du Pre Walk, Wooburn Freen, High Wycombe, Buck HP10 OQJ

The latest issue of Z has reached me, and I am greatly impressed by its appearance and what I have read of its contents. Nevertheless — and alas! — I cannot write more than this cursory — of acknowledgement at this time; so much has happened sf-professionally that I am bizzy bizzy, bizzy, you know? /= What do you think of it so far Sebastian? ( ...

Dave Wixon - 343, E. 19th St., No.5B, Mubbeapolis, Minn. 554404xW.S.A.

Rather suddenly, I recently ended up reviewing the fanzines received in trade by RUNE that led to my first encounter with Zimri, and I liked it so I'm here to comment, and maybe arrange not to have to read RUNE's.

First, a negative note, is on the artwork by Wahl: you mentioned she illustrates modern poetry, and I gu s my reactions to the two are similar. I am continually in awe of artists whose work reflects a great technical expertise -- draftsmanship, if you will -- but these illoes looked to be only a little more than sketches.

At one time artists could not live unless they had patronage, and so their output had to please -- or at least interest -- the audience the affluent society has made a great change there, too: now the artist is most concerned with expressing himself, not communicating. And self-expression is but a step from self-gratification. I will not condemn a man or woman for exposing his/herperche in public /=1?=/ but such exposure is not art unless artistically done, /= Is there any other way...?=/

JOHN Eggling - Phantasmagoria Rooks, 8, Colwell Road, London, SE22.

Prompted by Mervin Barrett's letter I finally found the strength to read a Holdstock story and was pleasantly surprised. The beginning seemed rather superfluous and the narrative flow was, at first, marred by his constant referal to inessential past events, presumably to give more of an SF backdrop. However when he finally came to the point it read well and came close to being prose poetry. If that is his usual type of structure you should try and exercise your editorial prerogative next time round, though.

Darroll Pardoe - 24 Othello Close, Hartford, Huntingdon PE18 7SU

Perhaps all us trufans should just hole up in a snall room somewhere in the con hotel and leave the official programme to the SF Monthly-ites.

Your put-down of Robert Tomlinson's objections to certain words being put in fanzines raised a sympathetic echo in this household. I think Ro's ears started expelling high-pressure steam around the bit about 'not within earshot of the ladies, bless 'em'. One of the things she (and I) get most worked up about is the patronising attitude some people have toward women. It even happens in fandom. A lot of fans just treat Ro as a kind of secondary adjunct to me, assuming that all the fanac that comes out of our address is my work, with Ro just helping a bit here and there. Perhaps part of this is because her interests lie more with fantasy fandom (eg, the BFS) but she is after all a fan in her own right (and was so before she even met me) and it's rather silly that some people can't understand that such a situation can exist.

Byron T. Jeeves - 230 Bannerdale Road, Sheffield S11 9FE.

Well I might as well start off by saying that just about every other Zimri 7 receiver must be saying... "I'm overwhelmed!" There can be NO doubt that production-wise, Z-7 must be one of, if not the fannish publications of the year, at least in the UK.

Once again, although Harry's cover was really not much more than an exercise in draughtsmanship, I liked it immensely. The creation was no doubt tedious and painstaking, but the real skill lies in conceiving that the result will be worth it all. / Eh? = / Harry's explanation of the thing inside was really great. Admittedly you can't make it, but you can set up three blocks (not of equal sizes and shapes) to give that view from one particular angle. In that sense, it isn't really an impossible shape but just an improperly viewed or interpreted one. In the view, the vertical and the crossplates appear to touch. In the actual object, they would pass one behind the other. But... what a stimulating illo and piece. MORE. /= ... =/

I could go into raptures over the experimental and lovely repro and layout techniques involved. I won't, you know how good they are.. still it must be nice to know that others (I hope I'm not alone) will feel the same way.

Harry Turner - 10 Carlton Avenue, Romiley, Cheshire.

I enjoyed Jo Withisone's piece - short but mind-grabbing. How can anything written with such artful inconsequentiality be so pointed and operate on a logical level of its own? /=Rhetorical, I presume.?=/ I hope you can persuade Jo to write more for future issues.

Hey, what's this about Sam enjoying me "either in print or in the flesh"? I deny everything. /= Coward!= /

Steve Sneyd - 4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield HD5 8PB.

In this Zimri, the best things to me are <u>That was Yestorday</u> (a beautiful example of making a moving story out of a joke, summat whosis who reviews fanzines in <u>Title</u> ses can't be done)... and the lovely paranoia on the cover... oh & the graphic of Gable's Hands story which seems to tell the story a lot quicker than the story itself...

.../=Two weeks later=/ ... think I've been a bit unfair on the Holdstock story.. first reading all the vibes are the layer of highblown poeticism as if he'd deliberately set out to annoy all the people who write locs complaining about his highblown poeticism etc..but on second reading it has a lot of depth..like a fugue developed from one of Philip Dick's asides..

Peter Roberts - 6 Westbourne Park Villas, London W2.

I enjoyed Harry Turner's 'conversations' and his dimensional illusions. Being an admirer of Lovecraft (believe it, if you will), I immediately linked these with the "impossible geometries" that are part of every self-respecting building in the Cthulhu mythos. This, to be truthful, has o courred to me before when looking at prints by Escher and others; I'm surprised, therefore, that no one has attempted to illustrate Lovecraft by using such eye-deluding artwork in combination with some splendidly monstrous Old Ones (for which I'd recommend Karel Thole as the appropriate artist).

And I think you gave a reasonable reply to J.T. Parker (inasmuch as you can hold a conversation with anyone who prefers initials to a name); but I think you should have squashed the nonsense about "the real day-to-day world", and its presumed importance — especially in terms of sf and fantasy. Firstly, the real world doesn't exist unless you've got a sort of mind that can expect 'facts' and can flow with the general current of 'reality'. Secondly, the 'real world' has no business in fiction, which is, by definition, the antithesis of reality (plenty of authors, and even more critics, would have you believe otherwise — ignore them). This second point of mine is one that I feel is important and which I strongly believe in. The first point is mainly nonsense, but should confuse some of your readers anyway.

Michael Moorcock - postmark "London".

Did you receive my reply in thanks of Zimri 7 ? I think it was amongst a batch of letters I mislaid before I could post them.../=I love creative people don't you..? =/

John Brunner - - The Square House, Palmer Street, South Petherton

Thank you for your fanzine dated... 75.. It was most interesting and welcome.

Johnny Hall - 101 Lakeside Road, London W14.

"Mummy, what's that music?"
"Well dear, they're trying to imitate the noise of the fish."

About Friendship was tremendous. Some new names you've dug up this issue. I wasn't bowled over by either Max Noiprox or Mark Burke's stuff, but I think that its a good idea to present poetry by people out of fandom.

ZIMRI also heard from: Archie Mercer, who said "Don't look now - I may be wrong - but I think that Harry's cover-design could be constructed in 3D by using a sort of counter-perspective or negative perspective on it."; Ian Williams, who was a bit tarty about his poem, but quite nice about other things... Chuck Holst who started off all passionately and then went off into pastures new. /Ah well, you win some you lose some..=/ My thank to HARRY WARNER Jr, RITCHIE SMITH, JOHN DELVILLE, ROB JACKSON, ROY PEACOCK, SAM IONG, JAMES PARKER, DAVID GRIFFIN, PAMELA BOAL, GRAY BOAK, DAVE LONGFORD, GRA POOLE, HOGER WADDINGTON, RAYLOND HARRISON, KEVIN EASTHOPE, CHAIG HILL, RUNE FORSGREN, DAVE SUTTON, WILLIAM SCOVILLE, JOSEFH NICHOLAS and ATHENA STYLIANOUS.

I should also like to that everyone who sent me manuscripts for Zimri, if you haven't heard from me already please be patient you will very soon now I promise. If you haven't enclosed a stamped self addressed envelope you'll probably be getting a postcard or something - I don't want to keep harping on it BUT the postage is getting a bit much lately - thankyou one 40 and all



A POEM FOR CATH

Ritchie Smith

Silence, her favorite language

Her brow plucks irony out of mid-air;

Poised, cheeky, beautiful, restrained

She sits

Offers jasmine tea, Kurdish cheese,

And Pre-Raphaelite art.

I gesticulate, vigorous

In studied denims

Blue, and failing wholly

To turn sincerity into finesse.

My dear, if I learn the lesson

Of your pure example

Quench my greeds

Erase my spite, do vegetarian things—

What sort of a 'Ritchie' would be left?

Once upon a time, ugly duckling, a long time ago, did you see that place for you waiting in the world? You knew who you'd be, knew what you'd do when you grew up, now grown-up and sat over there in the shadows crying.

Somehow it all went wrong, didn't it, duck?
Your high-deas were scoffed at, you weren't even allowed to try them out.
You were all wrong, the other ducks were right: wasn't that how they made you feel?
Ugly?
Duck?

Well, I know you tried to join in the games, but after a while it was all pretence, wasn't it? You tried to earn their love but no one did, did they? And after a lot of heartache you left the ducks who stole your place peoping at you from behind curtains in the cozy cottage by the bubbling brook in the countryside at Ringway with the three kids and happiness, and realised you had to hate them and that's just what you do don't you, ugly duck?

There comes a point
in the fairy tale though
when the ugly duck
finds friends
and flies off with the swans.
From then on,
you are a swan all along,
beautiful to look at,
knowing who you are
and what you want,
all over again.

#### SLIGHTLY

Max Noiprox

I don't know what
the dream
was all about.
It must have been funny
for I laughed
myself
awake.
The rest of the day
I went around
smiling
and people in
the street
stared at me
as if I were
slightly mad.

### ANTICIPATION

When you leave me, as leave you will I shall not cry. I shall be still. 'Turn out the lights and drop the keys' is all I'll say. As one who sees the departing dying. To leave is to die a little. So heave your pack upon your back. Take a plane to your Jamaican home. In vain I'll hope. No, I will not hope. I shall not cry. I shall not even die. Not to worry not to worry. I breathe the ghost of a sigh. Fatal even to feel sorry.

Time sears and scars all things. Bound, bound you are to me. Never found. Goodbye.

FOR L N. Robinson

A daughter, you became a sun and flamed amazement in your golden house islands away from common time.

You played Miranda (Caliban held court)around us, unshaped forces
wove a nest
of dreams.

You, firebird, have flown whole galaxies

lighting the clay of legends.

Astounded winge, your eyelids lifted then new myths began.

## PORNO PRINCESS

Mark Burke

Flat on your back, Like easy restfulness You lie ....

On your back Having planted those briars,
Land-mines, barbed wires,
You lie on your back,
And wait ....

Some prince is bound to come.

Your castle is surrounded By dead masochists Who fell in love With your defences -

It's just too good a con.

And, in the boredom
Of your sticky-fingered dreams,
The toads you kiss
Don't turn to princes The balls just can't bounce true.

Better to lie, though, Chancing it that the thorns Won't be smashed down

By a cool Beast breaking through Who, not having read the script, Won't even kiss you.

### SHE NEVER MADE IT

lisa conesa

No, she didn't make it flying in the lift to some floor of an hotel running away from -- ran quickly over the red carnet to the window down

last seconds of suffering when the hands still shake then huge and heavy otherness a bloody human meat On the way down
she bumped
into a balcony
her face flattened and split
they run up to look
couldn't
and asked
where from which floor

So she lay there on the pavement dead crowd around her with her Evil Angel or Devil only memory beastly testament echoes under some senseless address

NOT HERE

There you lie
In a house of brick like a snail

in a shell

Your body soft for knives and teeth Shrinking in waves

of breathing

There you lie in a shell of stone

I walk into its open mouth red hole washed with saliva There you lie far away from me and all the passers-by are your

messengers

The inside of their mouths

your unwritten letters

It is they who carry swollen gums theirs are the roofs

triumphant

Tongues like springs swollen

with suppuration

I walk staring into their open mouthes not romebering your face

you are only only a snail

Something soft and long a defenceless factor Only a tongue

### CONVERSATION

The leaves my love heavy like stones fall to the pavement mid a shower of sparks

My love my love my eyes are salting
My fingers hungry their stretched tight

Always love chasing the unattainable talking of leaves that can strike up a fire

My fingers are bungry stretched tight Salt covers me in a burning wave

On a large arrow of mutual reassurances swims my love the dead fish of power

My fingers are hungry my skin is hungry Salt flows over me with a thin stream of fire

Always my love chasing the unattainable talking of love which lasts for ever

My love where are you my love

FOR U

O the measureless lies and self-deception O for the dissipation of eternal dusk

not to be oneself
endlessly peering around corners
striking out melancholic hours
if only the dead two-faced leaves dropped off
beyond the hand's reach
the jarring of daily excuses backed away
beyond the horizon of thought

O for the freedom of not choosing I write with despair on the door-step of heaven.

DEADLINE MINUS ONE

Steve Sneyd

having agreed to make the World the Devil gave backword

so as a gentleman and mainly loyal employee God the apprentice

in his master's hungover absence had to improvise the best he could

claims under the guarantee are still going to arbitration at

this very minute MIND YOUR STEP the foundations are rotten

. . . . . . . . . . . . .





THE SCIENCE FICTION BOOK: An illustrated History by Franz Rottensteiner published by Thames & Hudson @ £2. 50 160pp.

This book claims to provide "a survey of the pictorial aspect of schence fiction as well as a comprehensive history of its literature." Sadly it does not live up to that claim. What it does provide is a heap of sf illustrations some good some awful; stills from the cinema, TV etc. Some of the Soviet art is better than most, and I believe, quite rare, but the text is very brief and as disorganised as the presentation of the artwork. No indeed, comprehensive it is not, not when one considers Brian Aldiss' excellent Billion Year Spree — which is now available in paper—back, by the way. There are some niggling mistakes like the one on page 151 for instance: Virgil Finlay's illustration for Cordwainer Smith's "A Planet Named Shagol"! Even Zimri wouldn't be allowed that kind of whopper. Nope, even at £2. 50 this is not a bargain.

2000 A.D.: Illustrations From the Golden Age of Science Fiction Pulps by Jacques Sadoul, published by Souvenir Press @ £4. 50 176pp.

If the previous book was sprinkled with occasional errors this one goes the whole hog (I mean, it's weird!) But let's start at the beginning. 2000 A.D. is a translation of the Hier L'An 2000 published in France in 1973. The translator's name is not given and it is ( ) quite obvious that neither he nor the publishers are in the least bit familiar with sf. I was astonished and embarrassed to read A. E. van Vogt's introduction overprasing this effort with phrases like "colossal intellectual effort.." and "the illustrators make use of their profound knowledge of the resonances of human nature." Sadoul's own text is just as inaccurate and more than a little messy. A.E. van Vogt's The World of Null-A is repeatedly titled The World of the A; Planet Stories is credited with "a number of Ray Bradbury's novels /= ! =/which were later to form The Martian Chronicles"; Simak's City is titled Tomorrow the Dogs and Frank Frazetta is referred to as Frank Franzetta... I could go on because these are but few examples; there are many more. At first it was quite fun spotting them but suon the fun turned to disgust, a little more care could've been taken. And to add insult to injury, we are given three pages of "Some Facts About the Universe" at the end of the book, these read like a pumpous Patrick Moore or worse! Save your money - this one is a second-rater to say the least.

I wish someone would have sent me <u>Science Fiction Art</u> compiled and introduced by Brian Aldiss to review (I'll bet its not as rotten as the two I got) but they didn't so I won't.

THE GODWHALE by T. J. Bass, published by Eyre Methuen @ £3. 70 306 pp. Reviewed Wike Collins.

Straight away let me say that this book disappointed me. It has all the necessary ingredients - The Hive, an underground civilisation; surface dwellers; conflict between the two; Rorqual Maru, a cyberg: part whale, part ship, and a marvellously complex combination of biology and mechanics. Yes, I liked the concept of the Godwhale itself and the story-line had possibilities.

So what went wrong? In simple terms I suppose I must conclude that, for all his ideas, T.J.Bass has failed at the most basic stage of his craft; namely, his writing. I found his style rather dry and lacking in what I can only term as sincerity. Large chunks of the book were boring, unimaginative, and with an almost 'fairy tale' air.

my sense of disbelief never suspended, The Godwhale stands no chance whatsoever of making my list for Jack Marsh's asteroid article.

10,000 THOUSAND LIGHT-YERS FROM HOWE by James Tiptree, Jr. Published by Eyre Methuen @ £3.60, 312pp.

A collection of short stories first published by Ace Books in 1973. Beautifully presented and a joy to read. There is not a single bad story in the collection and quite few outstandingly superb ones; worth every penny of the price. Highly Recomended.

THE BEST OF CORDWAINER SMITH edited, with Introduction and Notes, by J.J. Pierce. Published by Ballantine Books @ \$1.95, 377pp (Now available in England).

Here in one volume are 12 most important stories of the unique writer with whom I've been enamoured from the first word I read by him. In his introduction J.J.Pierce tells us that the stories are collected in their proper order for the first time, from part of a vast historical cycle taking place over some fifteen thousand years. This superb collection is no less than a classic book and a must for a n y o n e who appreciates a writer who is able to fuse wonder and poetry into imaginative tales that transend both science and fantasy.

NEW WORLDS--9, edited by Hilary Bailey. Published by Corgi Books @ 50p, 219pp.

Ten stories, by: Michael Moorcock, John Sladek, Brian Aldiss,
Charles Partington, M. John Harrison and others.

NEW WRITINGS IN S. F.--25, edited by Kenneth Bulmer. Published by Corgi @ 50p, 189pp.

Nine stories and an introduction from Ken; authors include Keith Stall, Charles Partington, John Rackham, Martin I. Ricketts and others.

THE WHONG END OF TIME by John Brunner. Published by Eyre Nethuen @ £3.25 185pp.

A novel about America of the future dominated by fear and cut off from the rest of the world by massive defence system. Plutonians - a newly discovered superior race - aim to destroy human civilisation. The only one able to provide a solution is a young American clairvoyant outcast who cannot be found.

THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH by Walter Tevis. Published by Pan Books @ 60p 170pp.

This book has had , justifiably, no reputation in the science fiction field since its original publication in 1963, and its only appeal could be to ill-informed film producers who's knowledge of the genre has not advanced since they left public school in 1952. And what of the plot? Well, you've read it all before a million times; an alien race send a saviour to earth to show us the error ow our ways...etc, etc. The lightweight nature of the book makes it an ideal chice for such pretentious 'pop' stars as David Bowie (in the tradition of Adam Faith's 'Mix Me A Person'). With the promotion that the film will bring to the book, another chance has been lost to writers of real merit to capture a wider audience. Stand up and be shot the man who recommended this rubbish to Bowie!

ALSO RECEIVED FROM PAN BOOKS:

NATURAL STATE AND OTHER STORIES by Damon Knight - 60p TOMORROW LIES IN AMBUSH by Bob Shaw - 50p FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND by Brian Aldiss - 60p THE EIGHTY MINUTE HOUR by Brian Aldiss - 60p FARTHEST STAR by Frederick Pohl & Jack Williamson - 60p RHAPSODY IN BLACK by Brian Stableford - 50p HALCYON DRIFT by Brian Stableford - 50p

FROM SPHERE BOOKS:

INCONSTANT MOON by Larry Niven -CONAN OF CLAMERIA by Robert E. Howard - 30p CONAN THE FREEBOOTER by Robert E. Howard - 30p SPEHER BOOKS continued:

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE by Philip Wyler - 50p

THE JOHN W. CAMPBELL METORIAL ANTHOLOGY Edited by Harry Harrison - 65p

THE BEST OF ARTHUR C. CLARKE - 65p

THE ICE SCHOONER by Mike Moorcock - 35p (Superb novelthis'n)

UP THE LINE by Robert Silverberg - 50p

CONAN THE BUCCANEER by Robert E. Howard - 40p

TACTICS OF MISTAKE by Gordon R. Dickson

SOLDIER ASK NOT by as above - 60p

DORSAI ditto. - 50p

FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID by Philip K. Dick. Published by DAW @ \$1.50, 208pp.

Jason Taverner, a top-rated television star wakes up one fine morning to find himself in some near future world, completely unknown and without the required I.D. papers. It soon becomes obvious that Taverenr had become 'the pea in some sort of cosmic shell..' This is a pretty gloomy, even horryfying future, but Dick is as ever absorbing, he also seems to care more for his characters this time.

Also by Philip K. Dick OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8. Published by Panther @ 60p, 211pp.

A novel set in the 22nd Century. Earth is dominated by genetic freaks—telepaths, precogs, 'New Men' with IQs which went off scale—and ordinary men don't stand a chance. Thors Provoni goes to the stars to seek help and comes back with friends from Frolix 8. But there is a price to pay for the help.

NO DIRECTION HOME by Norman Spinrad. Published by Pocket Books @\$1.25,238pp.

A collection of short stories from one of the better sf writers today. There are eleven stories in all and I've only read four of them before, even those four were a pleasure to re-read.

THE LIVES AND TIMES OF JERRY COHNELIUS by Michael Moorcock. Published by Allison and Busby @ £3. 50 - 176pp.

Alternative biographies of Michael Moorcock's most famous character where history shifts, the past transforms the future - rules don't in fact exist in Cornelius' world. Here too Jerry encounters Bishop Beesley, Miss Brunner, brother Frank, sister Catherine, mother Mrs Cornelius and many other familliar characters from the Cornelius novels The Final Programme, A Cure for Cancer and The Enclish Assassin. The book has illustrations by Mal Dean, Richard Glyn Jones and Harry Douthwaite.

OUT OF THE STORM by William Hope Hodgson. Published by Donald M. Grant @ \$10.00 (Available in England @ £5.00) 304pp.

Seven stories by Hodgson, collected for the first time in hardcover; with a long critical mography of WHH by Sam Moskowitz. Interior illustrations are by Stephen Fabian. Dust jacket by Hannes Bok.

GODS OF AIR AND DARKNESS by Richard Mooney. Published by Souvenir Press @ £3. 50

Richard Mooney challenges the theory of evolution: man, he argues is a descendant of extra-terrestral visitors, who came and stayed. As supporting evidence he draws on the world myths and mysteries of archeology which have been largely aired by so many writers in this popular genre.

However, he is not content merely to requote quotations that have almost become cliches; in the last chapter he has some critical remarks to make on fellow writers such as. Daniken and Charroux, especially for the ideas they have derived from the writings of Madame Blavatsky. He has some interesting ideas to put forward, but with so many of his contemporaries appearing in paperback the price of this book seems rather high.

ON SEMANTIC POETRY by Stefan Themerson. Gaberbocchus Press, 42a Formosa St., London, W.9. £2.40 (paper) £3.60 (cloth) 128pp. Illustrated by Franciszka Themerson.

The book opens with a delightfull introductory essay On Semantic Poetry and is followed by some relevant extracts from Bayamus and eight other books by Themerson. To start with Mr T discusses Poetry in general; would that I had room enough to quote the whole introduction, but I will quote a little something out of context anyway:

"...the poetry of a poem is not in the poem.
Nor is it in what the poem is about.

It is in us."

Its a fascinating book and for anyone who is in the least bit interested in words and or poetry, its more than a must.

SCUTH LONDON MIX by David Miller. Gaberbocchus Press (address above) 80p. 16pp This is a collection of short poetic prose, statements, observations thoughts concerning the nature of reality. As in life, there are no easy solutions; nothing is really resolved. The writing is open, almost simplistic on the surface, yet the subjects are complex and compelling. Recomended.

HONE & DRY? by Gordon Ellis with drawings by David Russell. Published by David Russell, 10 Hall Bank, Buxton, Derbyshire. £1. 50, 42pp.

Beautifully produced hardback book of poems and illustrations. The title conveys the genral atmosphere of the poems; quiet contemplative, unpretentious. There's a sort of stillness about the poems and the illustrations. A retrospective glance back on life; somehow the argency of life itself (and death) seems to be missing, there's an air of rocking-char resignation about the poems — in a pleasant, warm-summer-afternoon kind of way.

STRANGER SIT AT MY TABLE by Thomas Lands. Published by Alpha-Bellers Press 107, Highgate Road, London NW5, @ 95p. 79pp.

This is the first volume of verse or 'private notes of a foreign corresponded' about crime: political, sexual - and legal. Thomas Orszag-Lang, Poetry Editor of Resurgence is possibly better known for his articles in The Observer, The Daily Telegraph etc. The blurb also tells me that this copy may well gain in value - well, I'd better hang on to it then.

TYPES by Jim Burns. Second Aeon Publications, Peter Finch, 3 Maplewood Court, Maplewood Court, Llandaff North, Cardiff CF4 2NB. No price given. 12pp.

Small booklet

of stories and poems by Jim Burns who never fails to delight me. Sharp, witty poems, one of which I just must quote in full here and now:

The Bohemian Girl

She was once fucked by a famous poet, and forever after was accepted as an authority on the arts. "One has to feel it", she'd say, and we'd sit silent, knowing that she spoke from experience.

SUCCESS edited by Kate Dean, 17 Andrews Crescent, Peterborough PE4 6XL Annual sub £1. 80 - 6 months 95p. Quarterly mag "For all Creative Writers". Poetry, stories, articles and competitions. Friendly and regular little mag.

-Thatsit folks. I'm afraid that I haven't been able to include everything received, more goodies next time. All uncredited comments/revs by the editrix.=

Mr Brian Robinson, of no fixed abode, wishes it to be known that the following more accurately describes his reading preferences than the list published in the current number of the famous Manchester fanzine  $\frac{Z}{1}$   $\frac{1}{m}$   $\frac{r}{1}$ .

The young lady (sic) responsible for perpetrating such a gross misrepresentation of the facts is warned to keep her room locked at night for the duration of the Convention.

signed The Beast



Note from ed: Since this here idle threat arrived dated april ist, one supposes that it is not to be taken to heart by the (sic) young lady in question or even Jack Marsh who is just as responsible for this dramatic turn of events.... But don't miss the next issue of Zimri where ALL shall be revealed!!

