

*Etchings 1*

Give a warm welcome to a new literary journal, especially one as committed to short fiction as *Etchings* appears to be, at least on the strength of the first issue. A new literary journal is a glorious form of madness. Unless somebody is prepared to take risks of this magnitude, our literary culture will wither. Good luck to them.

The fiction offerings are pretty good. Many have a ruminative quality. Among the most appealing is Peter Farrar's atmospheric tale of a man who defies common sense to pursue a career as a singer. The story is thoughtful and mellow. Frank Burton's *AABEHLPT* is also a fine piece, using wit to elaborate a simple, beguiling idea. That idea is a form of obsession in which every aspect of a character's life is arranged alphabetically.

*Melbourne-New York Line*, by Lee Kofman and *The Age of Reason* by James Friel both bring a searching compassion - and sense of disappointment - to the shaping of religious identity. Kofman deals with Jewish identity and Friel with that of Catholics.

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