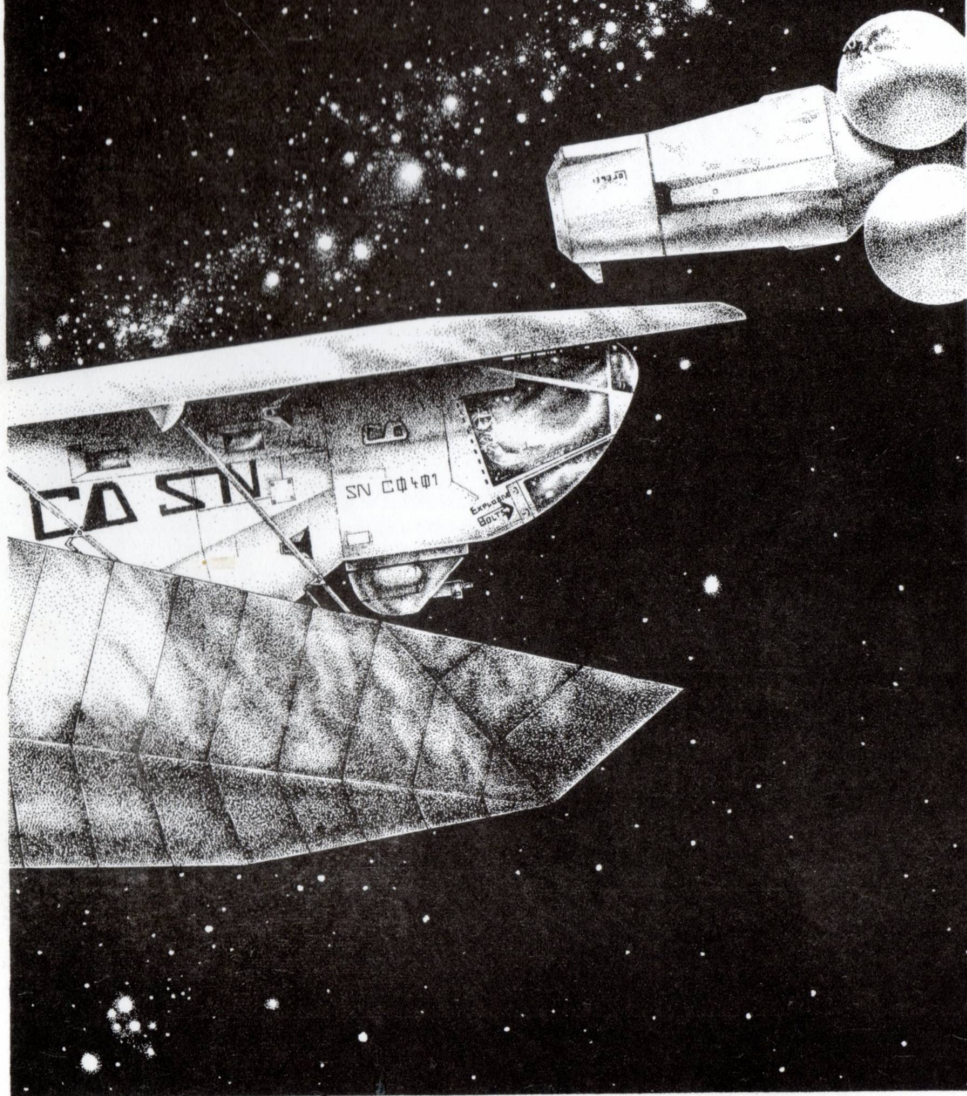


Crystal Ship

Number 4

Martin
Hensdon





Surprise, surprise - the Crystal Ship sails again ! After being beached for such an unconscionably long time, I must admit that even I am astonished that the vessel still floats. It's been nearly three years since the last issue and the 'zine really had gone aground on reefs of iniquitous indolence. Well, that's not entirely true as I did get to the point of having the mag about ready to go several times during that period, but was re-directed each time by the mundanities of life, like buying houses, overwork, and not having enough ready cash to pay the inflated print bill - little things in themselves you might think, but en masse they represented formidable obstacles.

It was the print costs which almost led me to a decision to stop publishing altogether, as I could not really justify the amount I would have had to spend to maintain CS3 standards, let alone trying to improve on them. But a short time ago a decision was made deep within the bowels of the vast institution known as the Open University (where I occupy my time between issues as a minion of over-whelming unimportance) that the OU's reprographics department could actually accept private work from staff (provided they had a fistful of money to pay for it) and at cost price too - a vast saving over outside printers.

So the immediate future of the zine looks reasonably secure, (provided the quality of the printing is ok - you hold the proof of that in your hand) unless the infamous Government Axe happens to fall heavily on our beloved institution and the OU emerges either Owen-less or Repro. dept. less - a fate too awful to contemplate without recourse to a bar. God, the thought of having to return to 'normality', (or what laughingly passes for 'normality' in the grey and depressing industrial slagheap out there), gives me the horrors.

This issue is not quite what it should have been as a result of the long delay since number three. It would be pretty pointless following up a number of the subjects raised in CS3 because half of the readers would have forgotten them, and the other half probably wouldn't give a damn anyway. So, for example, there is no follow-up to Joseph Nicholas' savage attack on the Silmarillion, apart from a few remarks in the letter column (which I decided to retain despite obvious difficulties after all this time). There are two outside contributors in this issue, both of whom have waited patiently for several years for their articles to be published - I trust they will not hold my inability to get into print as promised against me in future.

And so I leave you to get on with the fourth edition of the Crystal Ship, and I hope you enjoy the contents. I am going to start work on number five almost immediately, and would be very glad to hear from any potential contributors, both for articles and for artwork - Martin Helsdon has already promised a folio of illustrations for CS5, so it is off to a damned good start. Oh, and don't forget my new address!

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DEEP SPACE



SPINRADDING A TALE!

Like most other literary genre, SF reflects the interests and pre-occupations of society as a whole, and as such SF changes as society's interests alter or develop. Somethings remain staples of the genre; the role of technology in society and the way in which a community is influenced by science and the application of scientific ideas is an example of a staple SF subject, one that even Verne or Wells would recognise.

At certain times particular advances in technology or contemporary thinking in science leads to a vogue for a more specific form of speculation - a favourite currently is the role that the media plays in society and the possible effects of the 'electronic media' (computer datanetworks, video storage systems, communications satellites etc.) that are steadily growing in use nowadays. This particular idea couples with the growing realisation of the effect that the current types of media have on the population as a whole, and how the media forms public opinion and attitudes by its manipulation of output - accentuating certain features, down-grading others etc. - a tendency viewed with alarm in many quarters of society. SF reflects these worries and the future possibilities of the media field in general, (a good example being Brunner's 'The Shock-wave Rider', as well as some of Joan Vinge's 'Heaven Belt' stories).

SF also reflects specifically social changes, and the growth of feminism over the last twenty has led to an increasing amount of SF that examines sex roles in society; how sex effects both society and individuals, and how it governs events by its presence, absence or whatever. There has already been an extensive number of SF books on the subject, like Le Guin's 'The Left Hand of Darkness' or Joanna Russ' 'The Female Man', and it has become an area much favoured by the many excellent woman writers who have come into SF in the past decade.

With these three veins of thought running through SF, it is interesting to examine a book by an author who attempts to use all three areas at once. The author under examination is Norman Spinrad and his book 'A World Between'.

'A World Between' is set on the planet Pacifica which, when the story opens, is a peaceful civilisation of humans, living in a benign environment with a very sophisticated society, which is both democratic, (in a very true sense of the word - the extensive use of advanced communications establishes the possibility of 'electronic democracy') sexually equal, (with no clear 'role' for each sex - no stereo-typing into 'mothers' or 'wage-earners' etc.) and peaceful.

Into this paradise intrudes two other human societies from off-planet. From the remnants of Earth come the Femocrats, a civilisation dominated totally by women, with the males in the population reduced to servitude as 'breeders'. And opposing the Femocrats, there is the

arrival of the Transcendental Scientists, a male-dominated group of people with advanced technology which Pacifica needs to ensure its own survival in the future.

It should be mentioned here that Pacifica is the 'media centre of the human universe', producing vast amounts of material for the inter-planetary tachyon communications network. Pacifica's whole economy relies on the continuance of this network, which is endangered by both Femocrats (on the basis of the reduction of the network's use to a propaganda instrument) and by the Transcendental Scientists (who threaten the very existence of the network itself by their superior technology).

Now the whole concept of Pacifica's problem is set up extremely well - the planet becomes the piece of metal 'twixt hammer and anvil, being forced by propaganda from the two antagonists to change its society first this way, then that, as the propagandists struggle with each other for the support of the Pacificans. The two forces begin to pull apart the carefully balanced social structure of Pacifica, dividing the Pacificans into opposing camps of men and women, and the government cannot deny the off-worlders access to the media channels without causing grievous damage to the very roots of their society, based as it is in free media access.

The three corners of this gigantic 'eternal triangle' are represented in the book by three couples, two Pacificans (the head of the government and her consort, who is the minister for the media), two scientists (the leader of the expedition and his wife) and two Femocrats (the nominal head of the group, with her controlling force, the political officer). The whole story is reflected in the inter-relations between these people and the effect that the struggle has on each one of the six is closely documented.

Spinrad handles the basic plotting and changes of direction in the story very well, while his general conception of the forces at work are sound if a little over-emphasised; he brings in some very pertinent secondary issues such as the rights of any culture to interfere with another in the name of its own concepts of 'a higher good', and works in a great deal of pithy comment and worthy thought. On this level the book is very good and well worth reading.

On other levels, all is not well with 'A World Between'. One of the main flaws is the poor characterisation - with few major personnel and a large area to work in (the book is 350+ pages long) it should have been possible to bring out a good deal of the character of each of the main protagonists. Instead Spinrad resorts to simple structures, stereotyped men and women who, despite their supposed intelligence and acumen, do the most extra-ordinary things. One of the best examples of this is the early meeting between the Pacificans and the Transcendental Scientists - the Pacifican Head of Government is seemingly devoid of statesmanship of any kind during the interview, yet she is said to be an ace politician, superb at handling people, and she had figured out what the likely course of events would be before the meeting - so why the ineptitude in the face of expected reactions? A main character falls apart in order that Spinrad might carry on his plot without recourse to a little subtlety of thought.

Generally throughout the book Spinrad uses the characters in wooden mindless ways to carry out the plot changes required by his 'master plan'. All too often the reaction is that the reader feels that Spinrad is changing gear without using the clutch; and the grinding teeth in the gearbox are matched by the readers own!

Spinrad resorts far too often to a kind of lowest-common denominator gut-reaction in his detailing of the story, rather than going for a

degree of subtlety and wit which would smooth over the more obvious cracks in the characters. Spinrad resorts to 'soft porn' to give an impression of human warmth and love, and 'hard porn' to push the message of both Femocrat and Transcendental Scientist, with often ridiculous results. If the Pacificans were anywhere near to being as sophisticated as Spinrad would have us believe then they would have had the maturity to laugh the two factors off the planet after their first few broadcasts, (bearing in mind the fact that a staple part of the Pacificans own media output seems to be Japanese-style 'monster' movies, it could be that they're not so bright after all!)

Often Spinrad's use of language grates too; his constant use of jargon and invented slang words like 'bucko' infuriate after a few applications and are generally indicative of a fairly low estimate of the reader's capabilities, which would seem to say more about Spinrad's inability to communicate than anything else.

Many of the faults enshrined within 'A World Between' are equally true of some of Spinrad's earlier works, 'The Men in the Jungle' and 'The Iron Dream' for example. But, whereas 'The Iron Dream' was obviously drawn from a set of conditions governed by the supposition that Adolf Hitler was the actual author of the story, 'A World Between' uses much the same style of presentation to an altogether different end - and as a result loses much of its ability to communicate its intentions. The emotive, gut-reaction writing style gets in the way of the reader who is trying to see just how a society like Pacifica works, and ultimately it leaves the whole validity of the book in serious doubt.

'A World Between' is a good example of the way that an apparently well-intentioned SF author can be let down badly by his own pre-conceived ideas about how SF should be written. Spinrad seems to assume that he is writing for relatively unsuited people who need the facts put across in a loud brassy way to be able to pick them up - and that does a great disservice to the ideas he is propounding and to SF as a whole. With a good deal more subtlety, with good characterisation and wittier dialogue 'A World Between' could have been an excellent book; as it stands now it is too steeped in Spinrad's own prejudices (he presents the Scientists' case far better than the Femocrats and his male characters generally are more workable than the females) and the story is too hampered by a simple-minded writing style to get across the real messages that the book could have carried. 'A World Between' must be said to be a failure, although it is an interesting book nonetheless.

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At The Watershed

Your article on the rise of Rock music's "New Wave" in CS3, took me instantly back to those heady, golden days of the mid-sixties, when I too was experiencing for the first time the not altogether pleasant realisation that a generation had mysteriously appeared from nowhere to whom the beloved music of my formative years meant little and counted for less. True, I had the added frustration (for a while at least) of knowing that the "new wave" music of those days was, in fact, just my old wave music disinterred, until that sad and world-weary phrase, "Ah yes, but the original is a damned sight better", hovered around my lips like a lizard's tongue, ready to zap out at a moment's notice. Inevitably, of course, I was missing the point.

The appearance of a new wave every ten years or so is as natural as the sunrise, and it's useless to look for sophisticated answers to the bewildering conundrum of how anyone can possibly exist who is blind to the dazzling brilliance of your own generation, and prefers instead the absurdeblings of the new one.

There is a difference, of course. My own mob (class of the fifties) were nurtured on a music which was as basic and raw as an unripe banana, and which was treated as such. This is not a criticism. Simplicity was always the essential strength of rock and roll - was, in fact, precisely that which made it great music. It was also unsociable music, (as opposed to anti-social), in the sense that society wanted no part of it. Rock and roll was never respectable. Certainly Presley became one of the show business establishment's colossi, but he was virtually unique, and long before he died he had severed his connections with the music. The other "stars" of the time who went on to become established "all-round entertainers" were never more than marginally rock and roll artists in the first place. I'm thinking of the likes of Paul Anka and Neil Sedaka.

From the mid-sixties onwards, the establishment began to take what was now termed "rock" music seriously. Portentous and stupid articles began to appear, written by silly people who, perhaps from a sense of shame at enjoying something so markedly unworthy of their intellect, were apparently driven by a need to invest it with a kind of intellectual sophistication which it never really possessed. This, if you like, represented the reaction of the sixties' own "new wave" against the simplicity of the fifties. (I'm using the terms "sixties" and "fifties" in a stylistic, rather than a temporal sense). Eventually the music, and the terms in which it was criticised became so pretentious



that it rivalled in its absurdity the long established antics of the classics brigade, so that it became inevitable that the next new wave when it appeared would offer a return to the basic simplicity of the pre-sixties. Obviously, 1978 was not 1958, so that in form and content the music is very different, but in essence it has a very great deal in common.

Back in the sixties we old-timers, weaned as we were on such simple fare, greeted the appearance of the new wave in a correspondingly simple manner. We contented ourselves with the inner satisfaction of knowing that, for all its posturing, this uppity new generation was really only ourselves in disguise. They might be stunned by the Beatles singing 'Money' or 'Twist and Shout', or the Rolling Stones belting out 'It's All Over Now', or any of a thousand others, but we knew that the originals by Barrett Strong, the Isley Brothers, the Valentinos etc., were infinitely superior. We knew that the Rolling Stones had named themselves after a Muddy Waters blues, even if their fans didn't know who Muddy Waters was. It was all, in a way, very reassuring. The rise of pretension which coincided with a move towards original material, of course, left us rather stranded.

Your own generation's approach to the same situation is, predictably, different. You have grown up with pretension as an integral part of your music, and it is hardly surprising that you look at things in a far more cerebral way. You look for sociological explanations, and try to cloak your insecurity in a flow of clever sounding words which are, in fact, demonstratable absurdities. "The infant who was only a toddler in the Beatle era has to make up ten years of musical development before he can hope to fully appreciate the best of present day rock", you say, the implication being that popular musical development began in 1962, (or by your reckoning 1968), and that all future generations must take that as a starting point. That is as sensible as saying that we all have to make up eighty years of musical development to attain the same end (if we restrict ourselves to the era of recorded sound), or thousands of years if we do not. I do not know anything about you, but I suspect that your own awareness of popular musical culture was awakened around that time (1962?). We all tend to imagine that nothing particularly important happened before we became aware of it. To your generation the Animals' 'House of the Rising Sun' is a classic. To mine it is a diabolical hatchet job on a great blues standard. The point is that we are both right. (What it certainly did not do was drag Bob Dylan into rock - the undercurrents of popular culture are far more subtle than that, and the setting up of such rigid marker flags is, to put it plainly, silly.)

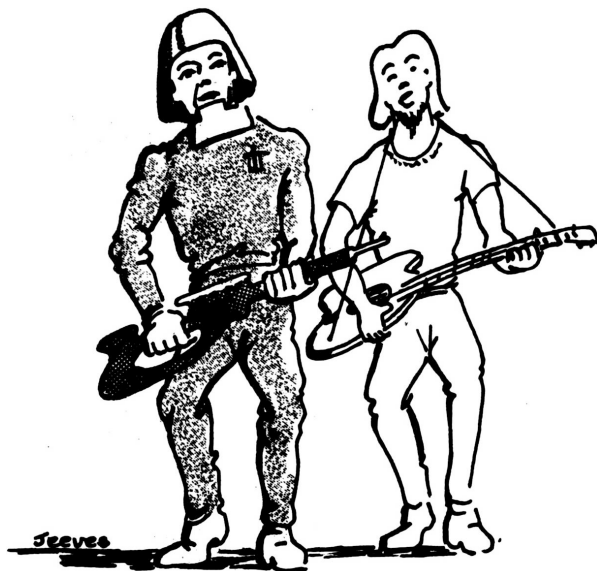
Of course the new wave has many influences from the previous generation - nothing emerges fully formed out of the air, but in order to really understand what is happening, it is necessary to break out of the restriction of dating everything from the emergence of your own generation, or even the last two. To that extent, we do have to make up all those years of musical development, if only to the point of accepting that there was good music around before we were born, and that good music is continuing to be made. Louis Armstrong was an infinitely greater musician than Johnny Rotten, but what of Rudy Vallee? Ten years (or thereabouts) from now, there will be people in their mid-twenties contrasting the new new wave unfavourably with the present one, and referring with total sincerity to 'Anarchy in the UK' as a "classic", and they would be right too. Regardless of the ultimate breadth of our musical taste, we never shake off the absolute conviction that music reached its finest flowering in the days of our

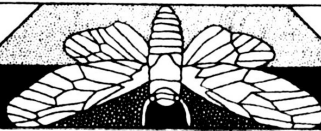
formative youth, and we're all absolutely correct. We cannot allow that conviction to blind us to the very best of what other generations have produced. To select as worthy of attention only those bands which 'owe allegiance' to older forms of rock' or, in other words, that are not much different from what has gone before, is a deadly mistake. That way lies the Syd Lawrence Appreciation Society.

A statement like 'once rock was a vehicle for increasing the listener's awareness' begs the question, "awareness of what?" With the exception of the short-lived 'protest' movement, the answer, (confining ourselves to the last ten years, at least), must be no more or less than awareness of its own pretensions. Rock music has certainly had no relevance to anything else in a long time. If you imply by 'awareness' an awareness of social injustice, of the world in which those of us who are not ludicrously over-paid Rock stars have to live, or indeed anything which might conceivably invest the word with any sensible meaning at all, then the new wave wins hands down. The 'someday' to which you refer is now.

The appearance of your first new wave is a water-shed in life. It signals the end of your own personal immortality. Some people never recover from it, and slide gradually downhill ever after, bemoaning the mindless destruction of their own standards. If you can avoid that, however, you come to the blissfull awareness that it's only music after all and that even if you don't like him, Johnny Rotten does have the right to be mentioned in the same breath as Chuck Berry, or Robert Johnson, or (write in a selected name of your choice). It's just a matter of accepting that you're not really part of it any more.

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THAT REJECTION!

(This article is an expansion of certain ideas expressed in a letter that appeared in MAYA 15. I have no recollection of actually writing that letter, but from internal evidence I would say that it is at least two years old as I write this (January 1979). During that time it is inevitable that my views have changed to some degree, though they remain substantially similar to those expressed in that letter. This note is addressed to anyone with a long enough memory to recall that MAYA, and sufficient stamina to plough through that letter; in case they start screaming, "Foul, that's not what he said!" upon reading this article.)

It comes to all of us who try to write. Sometime or other you tear open the envelope that brings your story bouncing back to you, and hurriedly read the form letter that falls out with the manuscript in the vain hope that they want a re-write. And a well-meaning editor has taken the trouble to scribble across the bottom: "Write about what you know about". I remember when it came to me - my fourth story, I think it was. I do know I was in Ireland at the time, and reacted to the letter by dashing every which way in a blind panic as I tried to concoct some story about the laundrette at the corner. Finally we would-be writers either give up writing, or ignore the advice.

A couple of decades ago there was a rash of downbeat domestic drama called "kitchen sink". I often wonder if the playwrights received this age-old editorial advice and actually came up with a story about their local laundrette. Most of us don't, though.

So you persevere, hoping imagination will carry you through. And lo and behold, you make the breakthrough. A short-sighted moron of an editor in the throes of a drunken binge actually pays you money for a story. Ya boo sucks to all that guff about experience.

Then you re-read the masterpiece and begin to get vague niggings of familiarity. You see, that editorial advice is wise, sage, true and misleading. No writer can write well about something he knows nothing about. He may not be aware he's doing it, but his experience forms the basis for all his best writing. The more he relies merely upon imagination, in general, the poorer the result. Yet, as I shall argue later, imagination depends also upon experience. The difference lies in the degree of control the author exercises. Pure imagination tends to seem at a remove from experience; even to the author himself the characters are made up, he knows they're not real, so he is afraid to, or doesn't feel the need to, encumber them with elements of reality. He has read too much hack work, he's seen too many old action adventure films. If they can get away with it, why need he bother messing about

by Paul Kincaid



with emotions and stuff like that? Anyway, the hero is a hero, so he's not going to be bothered by little things like a bullet in the gut. So it goes - hardly a guarantor of verisimilitude.

The problem with that editorial advice, the reason why it is misleading, is that it is wrongly interpreted. What do I know? It's the obvious question. A philosopher might well answer "nothing", since that deceptively simple question is precisely what the mainstream of Anglo-Saxon philosophers have been arguing about in Britain, Germany and America since the time of Descartes. But we're not philosophers, so we can side step that problem. Let us say that knowledge implies certainty, and the truth of what is known. (Would you say you "knew" something if you doubted the fact? Would you say you "knew" something if you saw for yourself that it wasn't so?) Truth is a problem, no-one has yet arrived at an acceptable definition of the term. But we might as well be pragmatic and accept Popperian standards - something is "true", we shall say, if we can test it and it has not been disproved. "There is a God" is a statement that cannot be tested, so it cannot be disproved, so we must remain agnostic about that. "The earth is round", on the other hand is a statement that has been tested many times in many ways and has not been disproved. Hence we can accept "The earth is round" as true, at least in our provisional terms. No absolute truth allows no absolute certainty, so for that part of the definition we might as well accept a similar pragmatic value and say we are "certain" of something if we believe it, and it is "true" in our limited sense. Knowledge, therefore, virtually equates with belief; except there is a little more surety underpinning it.

Anyone who has been bored to death during the last paragraph may now breathe a sigh of relief. My philosophical ramblings, at least in that technical sense, are over. But the exegesis is not pointless. By bringing the conclusion - that knowledge equals belief plus a measure of surety - to bear upon the earlier question - what do I know? - I hope to indicate that the answer can be very broad indeed.

That's the problem, you see. When the would-be writer gets that rejection, and begins to ask himself what he knows, he tends to use the word "know" in a very restricted sense. He asks: "What do I have direct experience of?" And even then, when he comes to answer the question, he is even more restrictive. He thinks, maybe, of Hemingway living in Paris and visiting the bull running at Pamplona; then going away and writing THE SUN ALSO RISES about living in Paris and visiting the bull running at Pamplona. Hemingway is a bad example for any writer to follow. Here was a man who, apparently, felt the compulsion to live out his novels and stories before he wrote them. And how many fictional writers do the same? A better example might be Borges, writing so much about his home town Buenos Aires, yet filling his stories with so much more than his own life. But Hemingway's life is so much better known.

So, our bewildered would-be Hemingway gazes around his dingy bed-sit and thinks that the editor wants him to write about this dingy bed-sit. No, that is journalism; and despite Hemingway and others, good fiction is not journalism. Or perhaps the editor means the people he knows? Better, if you know nothing about how people talk and behave you



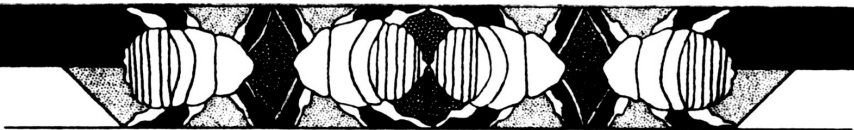
cannot write. Even so, this is only a small part of the writer's arsenal. Observing people is far more an actor's skill than a writer's. Actors tend to worm their way into a part, externals giving them the clue to the inner make-up. For writers the process is the other way round. Superficial appearances play their part, a vital part, in any work of fiction. The writer must have some conception of how old his character is, what he looks like, what his background is, and so on. Without that simple catalogue he cannot make his character act in a believable, consistent manner; because all these factors make up the man, define the way he acts. But more than that, the writer has got to see from inside his character. He has to know how the character perceives the world, feels emotions and pain, how he thinks and believes. In other words, the writer has to know his character from the inside out.

But wait a minute, says the would-be writer who, by now, must be thoroughly confused. Isn't this a retrograde step? Aren't you now going to say that the writer must turn to himself, rely on his own resources? Yes, I am. But be careful how you use the word "experience". We are hampered here by the language that is normally the greatest boon to a writer. Because the very flexibility of the language, the ability to use words in so many different senses, really does trip up anyone trying to make a precise statement.

Let us backtrack a little in this argument. The young writer says: "But I am young, I haven't had the time, the opportunity, to build up the necessary experiences." Possibly, I concede, just about; if we assume that the writer in question is an infant still, or has led a totally sheltered life. But for the normal run of humanity - and infants and those totally sheltered from the outside world are not, in the normal way of things, people who want to be writers - anyone who has reached the age of, say, his early twenties, has a wealth of experience to draw on.

I am going to divide experience into two sorts, experience of the inner world and experience of the outside world. By experience of the inner world I am talking about feelings and emotions. Most people have pretty well run the gamut of these, at least to the extent that they have some sort of referent to draw upon. I, for instance, have never experienced any really terrible pain. But I can cheerfully subject my creations to horrible suffering because I know what pain is, I have undergone a fair range of pains, I know enough to extrapolate. With a little outside help that I shall come to shortly.

Experience of the outside world speaks for itself. This, of course, does vary from person to person; and it is usually what the writer thinks of when he asks himself what he has experienced. In some respects I have been quite fortunate, I've visited most parts of Britain, Ireland, and a fair portion of Western Europe. This has provided a fair stock of backgrounds against which I can stage my little dramas, and some idea of the different ways in which the same sort of problem can be approached. Of course this sort of thing is important to a writer, and without advocating a Hemingwayesque approach, I do think that a writer should lay himself open to as many different experiences as he can. But that does not mean that it is all-important. If you know how to look for them you





can find as many backcloths and plot ideas on your own home ground. And there are many good writers who have not felt the need to go off in search of exotic locations and the like. But, more than all that, experience does not begin and end with what you see and touch and smell and taste and hear. What is important is not the sensation, but the comprehension of that sensation. And there are ways of comprehending someone else's sensation.

This allows in a whole new order of experience that tends to be unjustly ignored. Secondary experience is that which is filtered through someone else, the sort you glean from books, letters, articles, films, television, photographs, conversation, and so on. Admittedly it is not the same as the real thing; a camera can lie, there are all sorts of objections. But I am not proposing secondary experience as some sort of surrogate for the real thing, but as an adjunct. You see, this is how a writer, or anybody, come to that, assimilates information - from any and every source that comes to hand.

Everything, to use a metaphor I have used before, is grist to the mill. It is taken up, the mill grinds. New information is added, that too is ground up. Everything is broken down into fine sand. The grains shift perpetually into new and unguessable combinations, until finally a handful of sand is taken out to be formed into a brick that will go to build a story. That is imagination - the re-assembly of fragments of experience in new, or at least unexperienced, conjunctions. Depending upon how small the fragments of experience have been ground, we judge how original the end product is. But imagination cannot build if it has no bricks to build with.

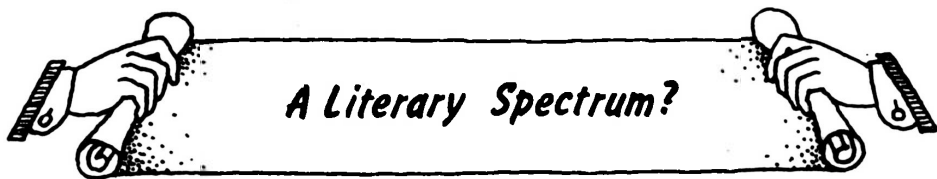
To give an example of the experiential importance of secondary experience, I have written stories set in periods of history I have never had experience of. And I intend to write more. If I were to rely on the direct experience I have never had, I could do nothing. But by research, by reading factual books, and by seeing how other creators of fiction have dealt with the period, I have been able to construct a skeletal framework which I clothe with my story and flesh out with what I can glean from my inner experiences.

Books and the rest provide information, facts and theories. If I am writing, as I have done, about the overthrow of Edward II in 1327, then the history books can give me the sequence of events, it can tell me something of the character of Edward though not of most of the other main actors, they can give a clue to motivations in some of the speeches that have survived, and the historians can provide theories to fill in some of the gaps. But there are an awful lot of gaps. I can fill some in by looking further afield for details about social conditions, political make-up, fashions in dress and warfare, and other such background information that helps to build up a picture of what made the people tick, of how they acted and what sort of straitjacket blinkered their thoughts. Then I can build up on this basic information with what I can gather from what is still there to see. Castles, museums, the landscape; there is a lot still available for direct experience to work upon. Finally I bring my inner experience to play upon the characters; how would I act there, what would I think in this situation, all bearing



in mind the background information I have already gathered via secondary experience. There are still gaps, inevitably. But depending entirely upon the depth of research, an adequate picture of that particular period of the middle ages should have emerged to create a believable story about that sequence of events.

The whole process is a synthesis of elements drawn from every source. I cannot, will not, claim that books can provide everything needed. To build imagination upon imagination with no grounding in reality is a recipe for disaster. But they can provide the information needed to build a model. It is the writer's job then to temper it with his own experiences - both inner and outer - to imbue the model with sufficiently lifelike actions and reactions to give the illusion of life. And that is the most that any writer can hope.



In my own experience I have found that fantasy readers very often do not draw a very great line of distinction between the pure 'fantasy' world, as imagined by Tolkien and others, and the more factual world of the historical novels. There seems to me to be a kind of 'relativity' between the various literatures which base themselves in either the 'seeming' past of fantasy, (and most fantasy worlds are set in an imagined past epoch of either this world or another), or the real past of our world - with gradations in between these two poles - and I find myself making very little distinction between the categories, provided the historical epoch in question is far enough back in time to be 'distanced' into near-fantasy itself. (The probable cut-off point seems to be around the fifteen hundreds, though why I'm not sure; history has a certain modernity after that period that begins to bring it too close to home.)

There seems to be four main gradations in the spectrum from historical to fantasy. First of all comes the historical novel, which by definition are set in particular places in history and basically feature main characters who have actually existed. Their lives may be fictionalised to a greater or lesser extent, and their acquaintances within the story may be pure imagination, but the central figures often really did live. I am thinking here of books like Graves' *I, CLAUDIUS*, the works of Treece, Sutcliffe, Duggan, etc. plus many others.

Slightly askew of this 'real character' story is the romantic novelists' delight, the stories written in a given period and geographical area, but with totally fictional casts and vastly romanticised stories - the many tales of lust and savagery on the slave plantations in the South of the USA, or the romances of Versailles and other 'great' courts during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are the kind of thing that falls into this sub-category, an area I find virtually unreadable.



Still within the boundaries of history a third area emerges - that of legend. Legend can be said to be the accretion of stories around an actual historical person, event or place. The historical figure becomes elevated out of his original context and placed in a much more 'heroic' mold, after shedding his old persona almost completely. A good example of this from English history is Robin Hood. Hood is held up to be a true patriot, fighting a vain battle against the evil barons of England in King Richard's time, when Prince John usurps Richard's throne while he is away at the Crusades. Hood's guerilla warfare against the infamous Sherriff of Nottingham is well-known, as is his habit of robbing the rich to feed the poor. The

truth is probably much more prosaic - for a start, early ballads would seem to indicate that the original of Robin Hood operated much farther north, in the Yorkshire area. He was probably nothing more than a bandit, from peasant stock, whose adventures were seized on by the common folk as a symbol of reaction against the oppression of feudal rule. From there the legend grew, expanding over the centuries into the full-blown story we have today.

Beyond legend, the historicity of a person or an event fades out almost completely and myth takes over. Myth-figures are not simply legends which have lost their historical basis completely - they are much more complex than that, springing forth from the very depths of the human psyche - and it is often impossible to disentangle a myth to see if there is any kind of historical basis to it. We can unearth Troy, but whether we can indisputably say that it was burnt to the ground by an invading force of Greeks coming to recover Helen is another matter entirely!

Myth is one of the most powerful forces in literature, resurfacing in disguised form in modern literature, in Sf, in fantasy, in art, in religion - every where. Myth often deals with the archetypes of the human imagination, and exerts a powerful effect on the modern mind, setting up ideals of behaviour, fears of retribution for ill-deeds, and imparting often rather contradictory moral patterns.

Perhaps the most powerful native myth-force in English literature is the Arthurian cycle, with it's foundations lost in the Celtic past and Arthur's subsequent adoption by almost all of the conquerors and neighbours of Britain. Historically there does not seem to be a shred of hard evidence for Arthur's actual existence and the whole myth has been propagated over the years by an accretion of Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, Roman, Norman and French legends carrying over many aspects from different heroes at various times. (The influence of Charlemagne in the development of the Arthurian cycle since the Middle Ages is quite considerable - most of Malory is Charlemagne-inspired, rather than Celtic) But the Arthurian myth is tremendously enduring, with ramifications throughout English history and literature.

Myth forms the basis for a tremendous amount of the religions of the world, and many of the earliest religions seem to combine myths of ancient heroes or mighty warriors into a pantheon of gods, or at the

very least, use the detailed accounts of the gods' influence upon the heroes as teaching material for the later generations, passing on the beliefs and aspirations of the religion's followers in an easily remembered and assimilable way. It may be that many 'myths' were, in the past, parts of actual history, in other cases the whole story may be an invention passed on orally from generation to generation, subtly changing with the passing years and fashions but kept alive by its applicability or its appeal.

So, is it really necessary to distinguish myth from fantasy in modern literature - the use of both areas being very similar nowadays, both tending to illustrate times when choices were easier, when the problem of life and how to live it was much more cut and dried - you could be good but tempted to become evil, or you could be evil from the first. The fight between good and evil is the mainstay of all myth and most fantasy, so that it can be said that both have the same aims, the real difference being that one matures and grows over generations, while the other springs forth from the mind of one man, though undoubtedly owing much to his forebears.

In my own reading I often find very little substantive difference between the four categories mentioned above. The novels of Edith Pargeter that are set in Medieval Wales exist side by side in my mind with the Deryni novels of Katherine Kurtz set in a pseudo-Welsh country of similar background. In the area of legend and myth, the borderline between these categories and fantasy are crossed frequently - the best modern example being the Mary Stewart 'Merlin' trilogy, (and of course her precursor, T.H.White's 'Once and Future King'), which has a very wide spectrum of historical placement, mythical figures and magical happenings.

So I wonder just how many readers of novels using these categories really do care whether a book is historically based or fantasy; and I wonder how many fantasy readers pick up the better historical novels of Mary Renault, Cecilia Holland, Henry Treece, Robert Graves, etc., and enjoy them as fantasy. The times written about are so far removed from the modern era that it is very hard to distinguish between the two - the dividing line is normally that, in the one you will encounter magic, while in the other you will not - normally! Hardly an earth-shattering difference to the committed fantasy reader!



Midnight For A Weird Soul

The Lizard King awoke into West Coast sunlight. On the sands he met Manzarek, master of noise, and they colluded together to assault the world of distractions. They enlisted Densmore, who became their heartbeat, and then the Blitz-Krieger joined, silent, strong and steel-fingered. Collectively they stormed the city of lights and then the whole land of midnight, tearing open the doors of perception for the young to enter the world of dreams and shadows. Then the Lizard King brought down upon the company's heads the wrath of the fogey-men, who broke the King upon the wrack of nomology, and drove him away to die in foreign lands. The Lizard King is gone - may his reign be remembered!

I came late to the music of the Doors. Their period of ascendancy coincided with a state of dormancy of interest in rock music on my part, and so I didn't pick up on their records until Jim Morrison was already gone, and the Doors were effectively defunct as a band. The album 'LA Woman' got a lot of exposure in Britain in 1971, especially 'Riders on the storm' and that effectively opened my ears to the group. But it wasn't until Elektra released the excellent compilation album 'Weird scenes inside the gold mine' in 1972 that I actually plunged in and bought a Doors record; then it was on the strength of the dj's plugging of 'Texas radio and the Big Beat' on the airwaves.

Buying that set is a move I have never regretted as it is still one of my favourite sets of all time - four sides of solid splendour, with superb lyrics, exciting music and that totally involving voice of Jim Morrison, twisting every nuance out of his words. I've since gone on to buy most of the Doors' albums to fill up all the gaps, and they still rate as one of my favourite bands, even after nearly ten years.

The reason for their lasting hold over me is largely due to the incredible Jim Morrison, so that I was quick to rush out and buy the biography of the singer that Jerry Hopkins and Dan Sugerman wrote, and which is now available in England.

The biography is entitled 'No-one here gets out alive' and traces Morrison's life in detail from his early years to his death in 1971, a span of twenty-seven years which burnt out Morrison completely, killing him from supposed heart failure in Paris, after a life that walked the tightrope of disaster from a very early age,

Hopkins and Sugerman's biography casts a lot of light onto the strange character of Morrison, light that legend, hype and hearsay had darkened even further than this weird man deserved. He was a person totally polarised into light and dark; one moment he could be a charming man, courteous with a disarming smile, quick wit and vast intelligence, then the next moment he would be completely freaked out, violent, full of demonic energy that revealed itself in sudden bursts of irrational behaviour, wild drinking bouts and, in his early career, in a total absorption in the drugs scene, (it was said that he was a very heavy user of high-dosage LSD in the hey-day of that drug).

After reading the biography I revised my own opinions of Morrison's death; until the book came along I had thought that it was a great shame

that he should die so young, but now I am amazed that he actually lasted long enough to write and record so much material in a mere five years of activity. With his constant drinking and his obsessional thoughts about death, as well as a constant fear of accepting limits upon his activities, by all rights the man should have been killed off one way or another after the first couple of albums.

The fact that it was to take him five years of hectic living to bring about his downfall speaks volumes for the strength of his constitution, and does mean that he left behind him a legacy of recorded material which is full of stunning imagery and surprising power, even though some of it is now over fifteen years old.

Morrison, it would seem from the biography, had been an iconoclast right from the start. His college and early university career outside California had proved him to be both an exceptionally intelligent and gifted young man, as well as a born rebel. He followed his own academic interests constantly, whatever the required subject might be, and plunged deeply into Nietzschean philosophy that was later to form much of the central subject matter for his finest works - the very name 'The Doors' came from Nietzsche, (the same passage that gave Aldous Huxley his title for 'The Doors Of Perception'). His academic work was often of a very high standard, with his teachers having to admit that Morrison sometimes knew more about a subject than they did, and it was this solid background of knowledge that later filled Morrison's lyrics with a strength of imagery that was virtually unknown in rock music before that time. In that respect, Morrison's songs are unique - and that is as it should be for the Lizard King himself was unique, and it was not until much later that a more knowing manipulator of audiences and fans came along in the shape of David Bowie.

Morrison was undoubtedly the moving force behind the Doors, with keyboard player Ray Manzarek a distant second, and it was basically Morrison's stage persona that first caught the attention of the rock public in the mid-sixties in Los Angeles. The fans flocked to see the 'really weird but beautiful' Morrison, who - when he got over his initial trepidation at appearing on stage (for the first few gigs he sang with his back to the audience or with his eyes closed) - became a charismatic figure, pouring himself out on the audience, drawing every emotive element out of his songs; the result was often both exciting and chilling.

But even before the Doors really made it big in the States, Morrison had already begun to reject the band's success, his tormented brain fighting against the artificiality of the rock business, and he began to want 'out' almost as soon as he was firmly 'in' - and he was 'in' well and truly; the band's first managers tried to get him to go solo, he appeared in magazines like Vogue and Sixteen and was very much in demand. Pictures from that time show him to be extraordinarily photogenic - a fact not lost on either the record company or the press - Jim Morrison was hot !

The event that finally drove Morrison over the edge altogether was the infamous Miami show, where it was alleged that Morrison exposed himself to the audience - an allegation never proved and denied by all those involved in the concert itself. The incident became a cause celebre for Miami law enforcement officials coming up for re-election and the Lizard King was their victim - he never did go to jail (his money brought lawyers who stopped that happening) but it finally drove him out of the country to temporary exile in Europe and there Morrison died, a victim of his own urge for destruction and, indirectly, his own intelligence. Morrison couldn't accept limits at any time, and when a court imposed some on him, he went away and died. Ah, but the music, that lives on in all it's splendour!

PRESFORD on HEROES



Heroes and Villains.

It's like that old argument as to what is the line between Fantasy and Science Fiction. Who do we say is the Hero, and who must take the role of villain? Is there a dividing line between the two - or, do we really want a line there at all?

Wow, I think we shall just deal with 'what is a Hero'? And that's going to be tough enough by itself. In my mind there is no logical line between a fool/brave man (ie. Hero). Only the 'instant action', the 'now'. To me a Hero is someone that acts without apparent thought. I say apparent, because I'm sure that there are times when a person does have time to really accept the fact that he (or she) is about to do something that may affect their own life in a very drastic way. It may certainly mean that their life has a chance of being forfeited if things go wrong.

Looking back into my past, I shudder at some of the things I attempted. The year before I married Anita, I placed myself in the 'bloody fool' category (in my own mind). I should have let a certain twit struggle. But at the time I thought his life was in danger, and I just didn't think of the outcome. And there is the whole crux of the matter. I just didn't think at the time.

But let's take a look at a few heroes from the world of literature, and see if they deserve that title.

Our bookshelves are bulging with books proclaiming some hero or other. Mike Moorcock has made himself a few bob through the use of the Hero/Villain touch with good old Jerry, but for the sake of my own piece of mind, I'll deal with books where the point I wish to make is a little more discernable. In this way we can scratch a few off the list as we go along.

We can start with a novel that gives a hint at our title theme straight from the kick-off.

HIERO'S JOURNEY...By Sterling E. Lanier.

Per Hiero Desteen is a man born in an Earth devastated by war, a holocaust world. Yes folks, the world is in danger once again, and Hiero's journey across a shattered America and Canada is to save the globe from further 'bigger and better' dents. He performs his mission with great

courage. But being a priest, telepath and trained killer does help him. He even has a travelling companion, a semi-trained, telepathic moose, (although a telepathic Mousse might have made the story more interesting). I mean, if he was really a hero-type he wouldn't need a companion to start with, Especially not a moose that trots around breaking wind all the time. Does kind of take the romance out of things.

He even picks up a sexy young lady along the way, by the name of Luchare. I mean, how can you be a hero with that lot around you?

Hiero falls by the wayside; nothing less than an adventurer.

In a series of novels that fairly crackle with pace, and that throws up heroes with gay abandon, we can manage to select two main ones in:

DERYNI RISING/HIGH DERYNI, etc. ...by Katherine Kurtz.

Here we have a different setting. We can take it as the lost past, or the distant future. Mainly a Celtic world, with many of the place-names Cymraeg rip-offs, (must be a good series).

The Deryni are a race of quasi-humans, and sorcerers to boot, but, because they have tried to take bigger sized shoes than they should, they managed to get themselves almost wiped out.

Three or four hundred years after the great purge, the Deryni are still hated by many of the higher born because of the power they wielded. So it is no surprise to find the two main characters in the series are of Deryni blood.

We have the Lord Alari Morgan, who pulls himself through the maelstrom of court life to gain the Duchy of Corwyn. He is ably assisted by his kinsman, Duncan MacLain; another man of the church, no less.

I will not even think of setting out the plot of this series; the pace is too fast and the plot too complex for that. And besides, I'm not here to do book-reviews, just to kick a few facts around.

The two heroes ascent, in terms of what is good and right, is without blemish. Then their mate, the old king, dies, and they have to make sure that his son stays on the throne, with the right people to guide him, because there are still a few naughty Deryni about and more than a few folk a mite jealous of them.

Can we say, then, that they are heroes? I think not. It is obvious that they are men with a mission. They have an end result in mind from start to finish, and beyond. Men with a mission....Scratch two.

I pondered deeply, (I didn't really, but it sounds good), over my third choice. Who should we have? Someone immeasurably popular like Bilbo Baggins? No, he was only a centre-piece for others, a wrapping for a longer story. After all, it must be remembered that he just wanted to smoke his pipe and go to Birthday Parties.

The names paraded before my eyes with a regular monotony, and without a true Hero in sight. So we settled for someone that sends a shudder through many a true Fantasy fan.

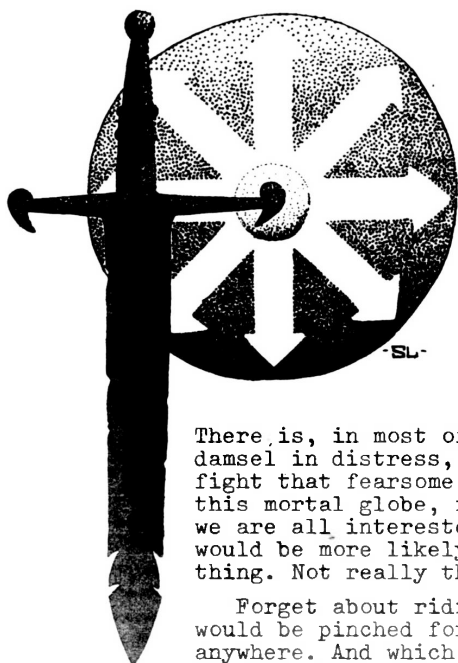
CONAN (the many tales of)...by Robert E. Howard.

and Lin Carter.

Björn Nyberg.

L. Sprague De Camp.

OK, so Conan has been hammered to death, when he never really had a good basis to start with anyway. But Robert E. Howard was no fool when it came to writing, and why should he be followed by such as L. Sprague De Camp? And why should they want to continue the lumbering farce of this over-muscled male chauvinistic pig? Did they see in him a free-lance



Hero? A man to be adapted to any situation or style?

Monsters, baddies and goodies, all fall, never to rise again, under the thrust of Conan's sword. The good deeds are only performed as an indirect action of keeping himself alive.

In one story we find him riding off into the sunset, leaving his enemy nailed to a cross as the vultures circle slowly overhead. Hardly the actions of a hero. Even his parting words are sarcastic, (besides being a terrible line to end a story with).

Quote" Your lives are not nailed to your spines are not ours."

Wow! Conan is a non-starter.

There is, in most of us, a wish to be a hero. Rescue a damsel in distress, or run up the colours and trot out to fight that fearsome dragon. But even if dragons existed on this mortal globe, it would never do to kill one. I mean, we are all interested in conserving wildlife so that we would be more likely to end up fighting to save the damned thing. Not really the same at all.

Forget about riding away to foreign lands. Your horse would be pinched for somebody's table long before you got anywhere. And which side would you fight on? Everybody seems to be in the right nowadays; either everyone is a goodie, or everyone is a (hissss) baddie, ...according to your point of view.

So we must move on to the next hero type - or not - as the case may be. And it is pretty obvious what the next kind happens to be.

In the years of 1962/3/4, I worked in an electrical wholesalers. Nothing too fancy, but it was a decent job with scope (as they say). And I was earning all of eleven pounds and fifty pence per week!

About a fortnight before Christmas, the 'Works Doo', (I always feel this should be spelt with a double 'oo'), took place. And it was always at the 'Marple Country Club', and a very posh place it was, too.

Drinks before dinner were free - vodka used to flow over my tongue like a newly discovered Victoria Falls. The dinner settings always had a certain ritual about them. A place with a one pound box of chocolates, then the next had twenty cigarettes, and so on. This, of course, meant girl, boy, girl, boy, etc. Yes, it was a decent firm!

The booze flowed - and the girls giggled. Being in charge of the Trade Counter and about to get married I had to keep aloof from such tawdry happenings. I didn't, of course.

12.30 came, and chucking out time; all lifts had been promised, but none for the lads. So, with the three 'D's, I started to walk. Dave Jones, Dave Sphinks, Dave Gresty, with yours truly tagging along in the rear. A bloody cold night, and the start of a five mile walk, soon brought the colour back to our cheeks.

Down the country lane we lurched, the shimmering haze of Stockport street lights many miles away. But they were something to aim for at least. Sobering up rather quickly, we decided to cut on to the main street of Marple village, to try to hail a taxi. Dave Jones was walking

some twenty yards in front. As we approached the bridge over Marple canal, we heard the groan of.."My ghod I must....", then the sound of a zip.

Being a gentleman, Dave had moved down from the main road, and was leaning against the two and a half foot high protective canal wall. I had stopped with the other two for a matter on the prospects of catching a taxi, and as there was a phone box across the road we had voted to ring for one to save any more wandering about.

Suddenly, there was a cry, and then a short silence. Then the huge splash of David Jones hitting water. We turned and stared at the now-empty wall and listened to the echoes of the splash dying away. Without thinking, I was away from the other two, and moving fast. In less time than it takes to blink, I was at the wall. One hand on the top, a vault over, and down I went.

I should pause here to give my shocked readers time to collect their stunned imaginations, and to picture my hurtling form turning into a perfect swallow-dive, then cleaving the water with the slightest whisper of a splash.

This, of course, was not the case. My spindly shanks whirled madly as I crashed onto very hard sandstone from a height of some twelve feet or so.

The towpath was on the other side of the canal, but there was a small spigot of land on this side, triangular in shape, and about fifteen feet long. I, of course, hit this, though I did get one foot wet in the process.

By this time Jones was doing his bit to earn an Oscar. Arms waving and mouth working overtime in an effort to get across the message that he was "Bloody freezing".

I now realised that I didn't wish to get wet, so I stretched out and managed to reach his outflung arm. I then hauled him to safety.

The penny then dropped to the fact that we were trapped! We could not climb twelve feet of slippery sandstone, and neither did I fancy going into those black and freezing waters to reach the far towpath.

I then noticed a kerbstone-cum-ledge leading from our spit of land off into the dark of the tunnel. Although it was only some twelve inches wide I reckoned this was enough for the two of us to crawl along, and so emerge on the other side of the road-bridge. We could then reach the high way again through the garden of the 'Ring-O-Bells' pub.

The biggest part of the job was persuading Dave he could make the crawl. Leading the way into the darkness, I soon found the roughness of the stone and the slime on the walls made progress hellishly slow. But we covered the first half of the thirty foot tunnel without mishap.

"I can't make it," Dave started to moan.

"Shut up and crawl," I snarled at him.

"I'm going to be sick," he answered, followed by genuine sound effects. At this, I redoubled my crawl rate. There was no way I was going to fall into 'that'.

Twelve feet.



Ten feet.

"Oh! I feel dizzy, I'm going to slip", came the wail from behind.

I almost turned round and kicked him in.

Another three feet, and I didn't have to. There was an 'aaarggggh'; an almighty splosh and looking back I could just make out the vague shape of Dave threshing away, making for the far bank.

Rubbing sore knees, I emerged from the far side of the tunnel and clambered through the pub garden. I was just in time to see the other two Daves dragging Jonesy from the water.

How we managed to get Dave into Stockport and then stick him in a taxi and so home, is something I'd like to forget.

But the crunch came the next day, back at work. I felt bloody terrible. I ached all over, and had the Granddaddy of all colds. Jonesy just slinked about the place, trying to avoid the jibes of the rest of the staff, who by now had heard all the lurid details from Dave and Dave.

By mid-morning I was staggering around in a daze. My misery ended with a request to go and see 'Him'. Upstairs I trolled, and knocked on 'His' door.

"Come in".

There then followed a conversation where I didn't need to say more than half-a-dozen words.

"AH, Presford."

"Heard about last night."

"Brave thing to do."

"You look wicked."

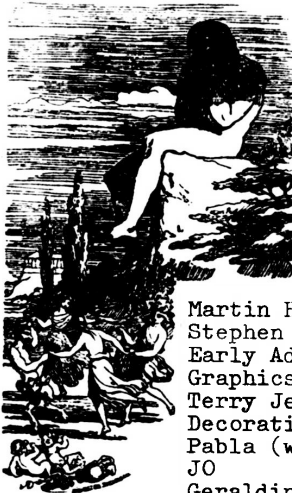
"Take the rest of the day off."

"Swimming is a great pastime."

Lengthy pause; "I can't swim.. thank you..goodbye."

Yes! Something's suddenly hit you in the gut. The last type of Hero is Just, a bloody fool.

Peter Presford



ART CREDITS

Martin Helsdon	Cover
Stephen Lines	Cover title, 20, 21, 26, 27.
Early Advertising Art (Dover Books)	2.
Graphics Ad Lib	3, 6, 18.
Terry Jeeves	8
Decorative Alphabets (Dover Books)	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 28.
Pabla (with apologies to W. Morris)	14, 15.
JO	23
Geraldine Charles	24, 25.



It is very difficult, nay heartbreaking, to re-view the large quantity of mail received in response to the third issue of Crystal Ship, all that time ago. Precisely because it is some time ago, a great deal of the topical and interesting comments that came in are not really usable, which is a great pity - if I had been able to rush straight onto this issue back then, the back half of the zine would have written itself and I'd have been guaranteed a good input of correspondence for the following issues - but now it's like a form of exhumation, raking over long dead coals in the hope of coming up with a spark or two. Still, with so much to choose from there had to be something in the pile worth using so here goes...

On the general appearance of the zine opinions were pretty well unanimous, as the following comments show.

"...A very attractive zine, fine illos and column heads throughout and especially beautiful lettering by Steve Lines on the cover. And of course it's obvious that the ship depicted by Martin Helsdon is not made of crystal (fine as the drawing otherwise is) and therefore can't be taken to symbolise your zine..."

(Pauline Palmer)

((After the last three years I've come to the conclusion that Martin knew more about the future than he told - I get the feeling sometimes that this issue is a raft lashed together from the wreckage of CS3.J))

"...A very friendly and smooth fanzine - but I didn't unequivocally like it. It was a little too smooth. NO TYPOS. Now how can it be called a fanzine without typos?..."

(Steev Higgins)

((I've always considered that typos just indicated an unwillingness to read over what has just been typed, as well as an inability to change - and in producing camera-copy for litho reproduction it is easy to drop in the odd word, as opposed to yer actual stencil cut fanzines where you need to be some kind of genius to line it all up again.J))

"...It's getting good, very good, and you even managed to make my own contribution look professional..."

(Andy Firth)

"...The Crystal Ship has proved itself a very seaworthy vessel... There may be less words from you but your presence is more evident and the image altogether sharper..."

(Pamela Boal)

"...I've never received a zine before with such superb layout; no searching for the continuation of an article or wondering what a word is"

(M. Caulton)

"...Lovely cover and some grand interior illos, nice handy (and thick) size, all makes this a very presentable issue indeed. No doubt about it, this sort of fanzine really puts one in a good mood even before you begin to read it. I shudder to think of the cost..."

(Terry Jeeves)



"...It looks very good indeed, nicely laid out, clear and legible, not swamped with second-rate illos, but with just the right number of good quality pictures in just the right places to make it visually attractive and easy to read - and the cover, in my humble opinion, must rank as one of the finest fanzine covers I've ever seen, it is a quite marvelous and atmospheric picture..."

(Paul Kincaid)

"...A definite improvement over its two predecessors... the layout is better, the artwork is rather more varied, the contents are somewhat more provocative... and I prefer provocative fanzines, even if such is only controversy for the sake of controversy..."

(Joseph Nicholas)

((And now, seeing as Joseph has brought up the subject, I'll pass on to the 'provocative' articles. Surprisingly the really provocative article seemed to be my Gilded Splinters, which inspired much more comment than Joseph Nicholas' own Fear and Loathing article. The response of the older generation can be found in Dave Wood's piece earlier in the zine - the young 'uns have their say now.))

"...You've missed the overall effect of Punk's musical impact. The Punk rockers have given a much needed jab in the arm to rock music in general and has made many other more established groups look to their laurels..."

(Graham Ashley)

"...I don't think that the 'generation gap'...can be considered wholly accountable for the punk revolution. It is a reaction to the times in which we are now living - rising unemployment, spiralling inflation, increased urban overcrowding, declining standards of material prosperity. If you were a school-leaver who's spent six months on the dole..you wouldn't be interested in Yes singing about the wonder of sunrise or emigration to a distant planet, you'd want a group like the Sex Pistols, singing about frustration and anarchy. If rock music is supposed to have relevance then any objective commentator would be forced into the admission that a group like Yes are utterly irrelevant..."

(Joseph Nicholas)

"...Gilded Splinters is the best piece in the zine, certainly the best article on rock I've seen in a fanzine..."

(Paul Kincaid)

"...Gilded Splinters I found offensively paternalistic..."

(Andy Muir)

"...I found myself agreeing with much of Gilded Splinters, though I'd not made an effort to think it out in quite those terms. One thing you didn't mention though, is the amount of (otherwise suppressed) emotion/tension...especially among the quite young.. that is sublimated into music (not to mention into the adoration of musicians) and it is this that's best expressed (and identified with) through a more primitive beat/style/energy, simply because it does take a degree of musical (perhaps also emotional) sophistication and sufficient motivation to appreciate 'evolved rock' which has become quite complex and diversified..."

(Pauline Palmer)

"...Gilded Splinters, now there's something I can get my teeth into. Musically rock has certainly advanced in the last fifteen years or so, but I do think there's a great deal of difference between engaging the mind and writing stuff which takes such geniuses to play and connoisseurs to listen to that those of us who thought that popular music

meant peoples' music can only resort to the oldest solution - REVOLUTION"
(Steev Higgins)

((Some of the things I said in that article long ago have acquired a certain respectability with the passage of time - others just look like sour grapes to me nowadays. I'm pleased to say I've not lost interest in rock music over the last few years, though I am tending to look back more than looking forward - a tendency that Dave Wood will say merely reflects my age - oh well, it comes to us all.

On Fear and Loathing the distancing effect of time have removed all immediacy from the responses to Joseph's article, and it all looks rather strange now. Nevertheless, here are some of the major comments contributed by the relatively few people who took the time and energy to reply - the Tolkien fans who didn't bother will have to swallow their tempers if the comments don't measure up to their expectations.))

"...Whether or not there was ever a good reason for writing fantasy in a 'high' prose style, it does have the effect of creating an atmosphere more suitable to the subject matter, ie it adds to the effect, which is surely what any writer is interested in achieving...The results of writing fantasy in a modern style can be fatal even in the best hands...I enjoyed the appendices to LOTR far more than the story, and always felt Tolkien himself did too, and that the Silmarillion was a collection of mock-myths rather than a story - a sort of scholarly game - write-your-own-history-of-the-world..."

(Steev Higgins)

"...Mr. Nicholas reacts to the pastiche-Jacobean English of Tolkien and Morris much as Arthur Machen did to the similar archaistic style in which Richard F. Burton translated the Arabian Nights; Machen found the style 'detestable'. Eddison, of course, used a similarly archaized style, which much influenced Fletcher Pratt. If, however, one can enjoy a wider variety of styles from Jacobean down to current journalese one can get more out of life and literature. So the loss is that of messrs Nicholas and Machen."

(L. Sprague de Camp)

"...Joseph does in fact have a valid point, as many fantasy authors do use a 'high' prose style to the detriment of the genre as a whole. One can, however, belabour a point into obscurity in any style; this Joseph has done..."

(Pamela Boal)

"...When Joseph Nicholas says... 'I could only begin to wonder whether I was reading a novel or a religious treatise', he misses the point entirely. The Silmarillion is not a novel, it is a fictitious history, whether secular or religious is to some extent a matter of definition.

Nicholas was expecting a novel, so he condemned the Silmarillion for not having an easy to follow plot line, strong characterisation, dramatic development, narrative style characteristic of twentieth century fiction and so on...Any attempt to evaluate the Silmarillion as a novel...is likely to be misleading, inappropriate or ambiguous.

Nicholas over-simplifies when he asserts that Tolkien copied a pseudo-medieval style from William Morris. This overlooks the influences of Nordic, Finnish and Welsh traditions on Tolkien's writing...Nicholas also ignores Tolkien's work in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English languages and literature ...in any case the chivalric conception of medieval times was not invented by Morris. It can be traced at least as far back as Malory..."

(Allan Beatty)



"...Morris' prose style and Tolkien's, principally in the Silmarillion, just are not the same, despite their classifiability under one heading... Doubtless Morris was a literary influence on Tolkien at one time. But then so were Dunsany, Eddison and, far more important, his own reading of the old Northern literature in the original... Tolkien was quite capable of thinking for himself about prose style. In his 'Prefatory Remarks' to Clark Hall's translation of 'Beowulf' he discusses the reasons for adopting an 'elevated' style, but goes on specifically to criticize Morris for exhuming 'dead words' in his own writing.

Now we come to Mr. Nicholas' main criticism of Tolkien, that since he doesn't use the 'high' style for the same reason Morris did, then he must be using it wrongly. Might I suggest this is fatuous nonsense? The idea that, because someone at one time uses a particular thing for a certain purpose, anyone else who uses that thing must also have the same reason for doing so is so obviously ludicrous that I trust the point need not be laboured.

...He criticises the 'biblical' writing for removing narrative urgency from the Silmarillion; but the book just isn't meant to have the kind of superficial breathlessness that Mr. Nicholas seems to prefer. These 'tales of the first age' are meant to be just that - stories from the remotest antiquity that explain how the 'present' world came to be, and in which the presence of breakneck action would be wholly spurious, (this isn't to say that the book isn't moving on other levels...)"

(Charles E. Noad)

"...Nicholas' article was well reasoned, and based on a level look at Tolkien's book. In particular, I agree with his remark about critical analysis: that, far from losing you the keys to the text in question, it gives you another set of keys which opens other gates and allows the reader to enter more deeply. Notice that Nicholas also ventures into the difficult territory of style and returns not without a few trophies; whereas most fanzine writers burble on about content, scarcely realising that - in a worthwhile novel - the happenings are plants growing in the soil of style, and that the landscape they survey is mainly style, the alembic, the amniotic fluid, of the writer's mind....(Nicholas') comments are not only moderate but much to the point. He will probably become one more sane person with average critical faculties driven from the Sf field by rabid illiterates because of a few mild comments about the egregious poverty of the prose of the likes of Tolkien, Niven and Heinlein..."

(Brian W. Aldiss)



"...All criticism beyond the 'I like it /I don't like it' variety is pointless...There is no such thing as 'constructive criticism'. All criticism is the statement of prejudice. What we term 'constructive' criticism is simply the attempted justification of prejudice. Mr. Nicholas seems to take exception to the concept of 'Critics get stuffed', whereas that is precisely the stance which any writer or artist ought to adopt. Indeed, anyone worthy of either title adopts it automatically. A genuine artist creates what he has to create, regardless of the critics, and when he's finished, his creations exist. That is all. Am I the only one

to whom the tortuous meanderings of the intenser forms of criticism bring only a smile? Let he and his ilk search for their phantom keys, but let them do it in silence. Oh yes, as for the Silmarillion - I did not like it..."

(Dave Wood)

((And that's about all that was worth printing on Fear and Loathing - I'd have liked to have written more myself, but time has eroded my own comments away and there seems little point in working myself up again; it's too far back in the past!))

"...I liked Peter Presford's toads'n'stuff article. Humour in Sf seems to be lacking too often - there are people who write highbrow articles who give the impression that it is a crime to read science fiction because you enjoy it..."

(M. Caulton)

"...Peter Presford's bit was amusing. I never understand what he's on about but I never get bored reading what he writes - there must be something wrong somewhere! "

(Stephen Lines)

"...Peter Presford's article was very funny. I have an editorial coming up (in RUNE)((long gone by now.J)) in which I ask the question, 'where has all the fannish humour writing gone?' I think it may be in England..."

(Lee Pelton)

"...Amused by Pete's bit; the ambiance of his present environ is really seeping into his bones.

How refreshing. The Quality of Mersey, a simply told personal anecdote, totally without pretensions (a rare find in fannish writing). Patrick, finding himself amongst celebrities, reacted as the majority of people would; he was tickled pink. He's different from the majority in that he is quite happy to admit and share his pleasure..."

(Pamela Boal)

"...Being at a party with Paul McCartney may be nice for Patrick Holligan, but I much preferred having breakfast with A. Bertram Chandler, Brian Aldiss, Roger Zelazny and J.K.Klein, (oneupmanship is not dead!)"

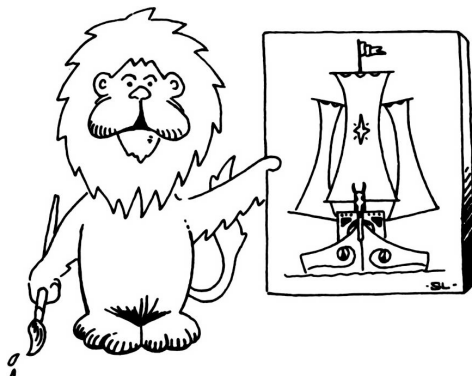
(Neville J. Angove)

"... On 'the Quality of Mersey': oh, to be in his shoes. I'm a great admirer of the Beatles -- I was raised on their music, and the changes in the Beatles coincided with the changes in my friends and me. To be in the same room with - not even talking with - one of the Beatles would give me such a high..."

(Shelby Bush III)

And that's about it. There was lots more - but after three years even the best of comments is bound to be a bit stale. To all those who wrote, a great big 'Thank You', and to those who sent fanzines an equally large 'Thank You'.

I'm not even going to attempt a WAHF list - it would be certain to be totally inaccurate. I did try very hard to reply to all communications received and I'll be happy to get the same level of response to this issue - so get them pens out!





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