

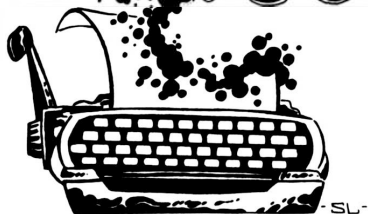
Crystal

NUMBER 3

SHIP



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In both size and content this issue of the Crystal Ship has reached a new high: so has the printers' bill! So, finally, I've come to the stage where one of two things must happen. Either I cut back to a very small circulation and keep paying for it all myself, or I accept subscriptions for the 'zine. Until now, I haven't particularly thought the 'zine worth it, (typically modest self-depreciation!), but circumstances (approaching bankruptcy) force me to accept the second alternative. So from now on readers who either don't contribute, exchange or send letters of comment (even if its only "I like/loathe it") will have to pay real money, at a rate of 25p a copy in Britain or 2 per dollar overseas (bills only please). All subs operate from issue no. 4.



GUMBO'S VARIATIONS



Hi there, and welcome to the third voyage of THE CRYSTAL SHIP. Take no notice of the symbolism on the cover; I gave Martin Helsdon carte-blanche on the illustration and ended up with a ship on the rocks! Not that I'm complaining, as it is a customary excellent job by Martin, and to a certain extent it symbolises the rocky passage that this issue had in reaching completion. Due to various assorted problems, mainly lack of time at an early stage in the proceedings, this issue is at least two months late, as well as eight pages larger than anticipated. The "enlargement" came about because all of the people who either volunteered articles, or were conned into writing for me, actually did turn in manuscripts long before I'd completed my pieces. I mean, I'd almost expected at least one to not turn up, but everything came, so it all went in. It got so that I was actually turfing out artwork in order to fit every thing else in! So this issue is not quite as different in appearance as I'd intended it to be. Still, thanks Andy, Peter and Patrick, and even thanks to Joseph!

Joseph's article is one which I am sure will raise more than a few eyebrows, (and probably a few arms with bricks attached, too). Let me make it quite clear here, that the views expressed in his article are not my views, in any way whatsoever. In fact I disagree quite strongly with both Joseph's views and his way of expressing them. Why print it then? Simply because I feel that the constant whispering under-current of dissatisfaction with THE SILMARILLION should be brought out into the open and discussed. In the next issue of the Crystal Ship I should like to print a variety of views, both on Joseph's statements and on THE SILMARILLION itself. For that I need your reaction! So put pen to paper as soon as possible.

The inclusion of an article which I do not agree with raises one question which, perhaps, needs answering. In the past I have always said I would print only what I wanted to print. That still holds true, for in the circumstances, what I do want at the moment is a good discussion of the points raised by Joseph Nicholas. In the future I shall also probably publish articles that I either disagree with or have no particular liking for, because they need answering, airing or just plain annihilating by you, the reader.

(Cont'd p.32.)

GILDED SPLINTERS

The Generation Gap in Rock

There has grown in the last two or three years a gaping split in the ranks of the Rock music business between the older-established forms of rock and the 'New Wave', high energy, low musical ability variety which masquerades under the silly pseudonym of 'Punk Rock'. The basis of the split probably originates in the frustration of young bands at having to compete with the 'big name bands', (who the punk rockers so quickly slag off as 'boring old farts'). The truth of the matter is that the older established groups had slowly developed a wide range of technical abilities and gadgetry which furthered their musical and dynamic presentation to a point where a young band starting out on an equal footing and trying to compete with the older bands, needed to go into hock to the record companies or management agencies in order to afford the equipment necessary to compete.

In reaction to this soul-destroying servitude, or the lack of opportunity to get the necessary contract in the first place, very inexperienced young bands rebelled and began a return to the basics of rock, a seventies version of the sixties 'Beat' boom. This 'new' music consisted of a simple fairly monotonous beat, heavily amplified, and raucous lyrics which the groups hoped the audiences would identify with. The British bands became hung-up on the 'macho' street gutter-snipe image, (for example the Sex Pistols), which in many ways automatically alienates the older listener. The music they are, or were, producing reflects the people they are writing for; the juvenile population under twenty, the delinquents, the school leavers who can't find work, the football supporter bent on mayhem.

The energy the punk bands pour into their music is raw and uncontrolled, but that is slowly changing. More intelligence is creeping into the songs, the musicians are learning how to play, becoming more ambitious and are moving slowly away from the constricting format that their earlier attempts had made for them. Bands like the Stranglers, Adverts, Boomtown Rats and others are producing exceptionally clever records without losing the basic energy which set them off in the first place.

The other side of the coin is that bands that were basically 'Punk' in image and did not have any musical talents or leanings at all, (or at least, none perceptible to me), like the Sex Pistols, the Damned and the Clash, are already beginning to sound very dated and boring. These bands are all sound and fury, but with no guts or core to them, and the result sounds too much like empty posturing. The tensions within such bands are already showing, with the much-publicised wreck of the Sex Pistols, (and recently the Damned also), probably indicating the way most of these bands will go. I suspect most of the 'punk' bands will have 'retired' on their earnings, (what they have left of them!) within a year or so, or be queuing at the Labour Exchange, for their posturing and their music is too temporary and 'fashionable' to last for much longer.

One of the problems of any type of music which claims to be modern is that the musicians must assume that the listener will follow them and mature as the musician does. Now this can only work to a certain extent. Rock music's basic appeal began in the early fifties, diminished to almost nothing by the early sixties, (mainly because the Rock idols, Presley et al became softened by their success and were finally seduced by the record companies and Hollywood into becoming stable 'mature' artistes, with a lifespan on the scene of decades). But the new young fan was unhappy because all he could see was an aging idol churning out rubbish, not an individual whose rise and gradual maturity had been followed every step of the way.

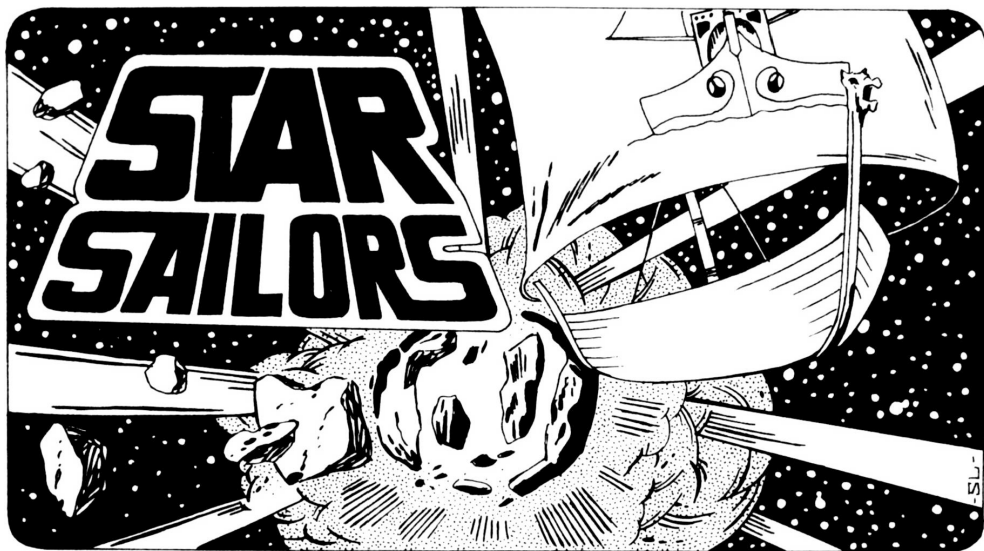
The young fans of the sixties went looking for their own music, and in Britain the Beat Boom developed, first locally in '61 and '62 (aided by the popularity of instrumental bands like the Shadows), and then took off like a rocket in '63. The basis of Rock had been resurrected in the North of England, and when the Beatles took off and showed that musical development was possible inside Rock, and that a good, inventive rock song could reach both young fans and the older rock'n'rollers, then the scene was set for an explosion of interest greater than the world had seen before in music.

The legacy of the Beatles extended far beyond their own time, for when they finally broke up the basis had been laid. They had led the record-buying public by the ear from a very basic rock song through to popular songs of unheard of complexities, and the fans lapped it up. As the young musicians who rode the Beat Boom upwards aged and matured so did their music, but this time it matured within the Rock framework, and developed in many different directions, pulling in all kinds of influences. The effect of the Beatles, and more especially the Animals' classic "House of the Rising Sun", dragged American folk singer Bob Dylan into Rock, and a new genre was born - Folk-rock. This precipitated an avalanche of "thin-skinned man's rock", replete with clever, image-filled lyrics which challenged the mind while it tapped the feet. Country Joe McDonald summed it up perfectly when he called an early album of his, "Electric Music for the Mind and Body".

Complexity grew to encompass the neo-classical tapestry of sound that epitomised groups like Yes at their best. But the younger fans, the new generation that reached their teens in the seventies, were left out again, not alienated this time by the dullness of the music, but by the very complexity and diversity which made that music so excellent. How can a fourteen year old of today understand the kind of music laid down by people like Van Morrison, Joni Mitchell, John Martyn or John McLaughlin, to name but four. 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. Most youngsters are not sufficiently motivated to do this; they become disenchanted and are thus ripe for the Punk revolution.

It is therefore truthful to call the current movement "New Wave", for it does genuinely represent a third generation of back-to-basics rock musicians. At the same time, it does have many influences from the previous generation. Bands like the Stranglers show obvious similarities to the Doors. Others show affinity to early Who material, both in sound, songs, and stage act. As well as these there are people like Elvis Costello wrapped up in the "New Wave", whose approach and style are outside the Punk image. Also a number of older musicians are finally getting some recognition in the tide of interest; people like Nick Lowe, Ian Dury, and the reconstituted Pirates. These are people who have been on the fringes for years with little or no recognition.

So there are a good few bands in the "New Wave" that owe allegiance to older forms of rock, and these are the bands that are gaining acceptance outside the Punk movement, especially in the States. The rest are having great difficulty in breaking into the American markets, primarily because of resistance to the savagery of a great many of their lyrics. It is this violent and desperately cynical side of their music which makes it difficult to see any future for many of the current bands. I can only feel that there is basically something wrong with music that encourages its followers to commit violence, or that induces such a cynical attitude as the Punk stance. Once Rock music was a vehicle for increasing the listeners awareness, and maybe it can be again someday. Until then I guess I'll just have to sift the offerings of the new bands to try and discover a little of the gold hidden amongst the chaff.



Philip K. Dick can build you! by Andy Muir

This article began its life as a proposed review of WE CAN BUILD YOU to coincide with the publication of the book by Fontana. However, in true Dicksian fashion it was to have a troubled passage before seeing the light of day. The 'zine it was intended for-RHUMILLI- did the accustomed thing and folded before the second issue was printed. Since there is a continued interest in the works of Philip K. Dick, I decided to resurrect my notes on WE CAN BUILD YOU in the hope that some people will find them of interest.

It has almost become expected now to see Dick referred to as the greatest SF writer in the world: and whilst this claim can be validly made for a fair number of writers (Silverberg, Lem, Delany, Aldiss etc.) there are certainly none with better claims than Dick. It is true he had to write some low-rate books out of financial necessity, but the main bulk of his work - such gems as PENULTIMATE TRUTH/FLOW MY TEARS THE POLICEMAN SAID/MAZE OF DEATH/DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP? and many more- represents an astonishing achievement.

Dick's investigation into the position of human life in the present day has led him into creating a "reality" all of his own. The grim implications of Dick's books are that the world is peopled by sick somnambulists whose hold on reality is shaky and ill-founded. The view of reality as a subjective entity (experience) is commonplace nowadays; but Dick utilises the genre of science fiction to present a harrowing series of subjective realities each as painful and confusing to live in as the last. WE CAN BUILD YOU is not one of Dick's greatest books (ie. not on a par with those mentioned above) but the themes are characteristically Dicksian and it is far from being a pot-boiler written with only the bank balance in mind.

WE CAN BUILD YOU is a sombre and highly depressing novel in which Dick manages both to attain and to sustain a frighteningly realistic tone, despite some over-exaggeration in stressing the misery and frailty of human existence. However, as often seems to happen when I read a Dick book, I feel that I have read an excellent novel that could have been even better with a little more care and work. Therefore, before I comment on the book's strengths, I should like to point out a few of its shortcomings.

Conspicuous by its absence is the touch of Dick's superb inventive-ness; there are no talking taxis to lighten the atmosphere. Incidentally, and unusually for Dick, the story is told entirely in the first person, lending even more weight to the didactic nature of the book.

Dick makes the book difficult to get into by his over-exaggeration and heavy handed symbolism in some of the opening chapters. For example, in chapter two he suddenly presents us with: "It was always disappointing to the Rosen family that Chester's eyes are set beneath his nose and his mouth is up where his eyes should be." This may raise a grim smile out of context, but the ludicrous image is startling in its incongruity when you are reading the book; and it shatters the dramatic illusion so laboriously being built up. Presumably Dick was using Chester to function as a contrast to the "normality" of the simulcra, but I feel he went too far.

A similar incident, presumably designed to symbolize the weakness of organic life in the face of mechanical creations, occurs in the second paragraph of chapter eight: "Two tiny yellow finches, playing and fighting in the air, swept up against the hood of my car; I heard and felt nothing but I knew by their disappearance and the sudden silence that they had gone into the radiator grille. Cooked and dead in a second."

Occurring as it does near the beginning of a chapter this symbolic little episode comes over as heavy handed and obtrusive - especially when compared with the harrowing, yet unobtrusive image of the yellow-jackets in the previous chapter.

These points may seem petty but they exemplify the underlying tendency to over-stress prevalent in the book. Consider the narrator's list of people he knows who have been mentally ill - this occurs in chapter three and prepares us for universal schizophrenia - the list is fourteen strong before Louis Rosen (the narrator) is interrupted. And he launches into list again in chapter seventeen to further emphasise the point. Then there is Pris, the schizophrenic who must rate as one of SF's greatest characters. Her treatment by Louis prepares us for the narrator's early visit to a psychiatrist and subsequent attacks of manic-depression, paranoia and schizophrenia. By the end of the first half dozen chapters we already feel that the sane characters, notably Maury and the simulcra, are an anomaly. And Dick, never one for restraint, goes further: Maury is so shocked by his daughter, Pris, going over to their opponents that he is driven temporarily unbalanced "into a state resembling senility." Indeed he later says, "I am going mad". In addition, since the Lincoln simulcra is modelled as closely as possible on the "original man" it shares its model's manic-depression and latent schizophrenia. All this seems to me to be going overboard to make a point which could have been made with greater effect by the employment of a higher degree of restraint.

What is so annoying about the sloppiness of some of the writing is that elsewhere Dick shows that he is capable of better quality. We are a juvenile discussion on the theme of "what makes a human different from an android"; but we are also given the superb contrast of the cold, calculating and pragmatic behaviour of Pris with the "human" kindness of the Lincoln simulcra.

As the book develops the greater its strengths become and the weaknesses dissipate. Although(or because) he concentrates fully on the characters - almost to the exclusion of background setting - Dick conveys an overwhelming sense of realism.

A good example of Dick's superb insight into the workings of the human mind can be seen in chapter thirteen. Louis' self analysis of his obsession for Pris, and his meditations on what hotels mean to him are examples of Dick at the height of his powers.

In his THE UMBRELLA OF LIGHT Angus Taylor says WE CAN BUILD YOU is

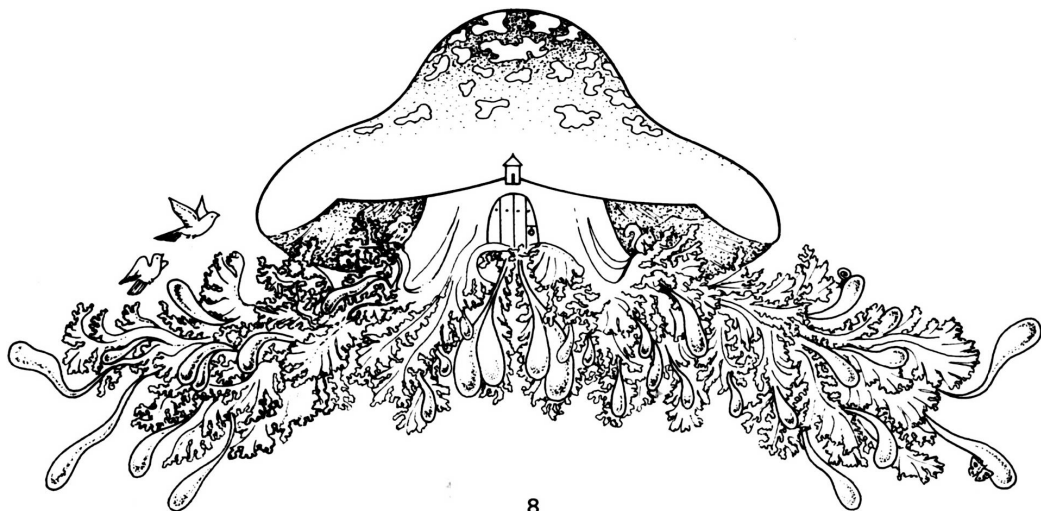
"concerned very consciously" with, amongst other things, "love as destructive as hatred". This is very true as far as it goes, but one of the great strengths of WE CAN BUILD YOU is that it presents love in a whole range of ways, (including an ultimate expression of love in the "courtly" tradition; that of idolising a cold and unreachable woman). We are presented with the destructive love of mad passion in the obsession of Louis for Pris, and Pris for a certain Sam K. Barrows. Yet that same destructive love is seen as a reason for living. When Pris has finished her work on the Lincoln simulcra she realises that she has no further purpose in life, "My life is empty, I might as well be dead. All I've thought and done has been the Lincoln." To keep on living Pris changes her obsession to the person of Sam Barrows. The most explicit expression of the paradox of the destructive yet life-giving love is, however, given by Louis in chapter twelve:

"It was as if Pris, to me, was both life itself - and anti-life... I could not stand having her around me, I could not stand being without her. Without Pris I dwindled away until I became nothing and eventually died like a bug in the backyard, unnoticed and unimportant; around her I was slashed, goaded, cut to pieces, stepped on - yet somehow I lived: in that I was real. Did I enjoy suffering? No. It was that it seemed as though suffering was part of life, part of being with Pris. Without Pris there was no suffering, nothing erratic, unfair, unbalanced. But also, there was nothing alive, only small-time schlock schemes, a dusty little office with two or three men scrabbling in the sand...."

It is this portrayal of the narrator's inner reactions to the tensions aroused by this paradoxical state of existence that makes this book yet another top class novel from Philip K. Dick. It is another Dicksian world of dream-reality with drug-induced fantasy fugues figuring prominently near the end of the book.

When the story gains impetus the writing improves and the characteristic Dick quality of throwing out questions which must be answered comes to the fore. I leave you with the most penetrating of these, from the excellent chapter thirteen:

"How could something on the order of Pris begin to represent life to us, as I was going to tell Sam Barrows? Are we that warped? Are we warped at all? Isn't that nothing but an indication of the nature of life, not of ourselves? Yes, it's not our fault life's like that; we didn't invent it. Or did we?"



Almost fear and loathing in Middle-Earth!

1977, the publishers kept telling us, was the year of THE SILMARILLION. Then September 1977 was the month of THE SILMARILLION. And then... and then the book arrived through the mail and I experienced something akin to colossal disappointment, quickly supplanted by an intense bitterness towards Tolkien and all his works. Now, some six months after its publication, my attitude seems to have mellowed somewhat; while still anti-pathetic to the thing, I'm able to rationalise my antipathy. Whether or not these rationalisations make any sense to anyone else is, as far as I'm concerned, neither here nor there; they're my bloody rationalisations, and right now is the time to parade the prejudices that underly them for your edification and entertainment.

But, just to backtrack slightly.... I suppose I should have known roughly what to expect, and been largely unsurprised by THE SILMARILLION's eventual style and presentation; I had, after all, read Humphrey Carpenter's biography of Tolkien only a month previously, wherein the genesis of the entire opus had been set forth. But Carpenter also revealed a couple of minor facts that, at the time, completely passed me by; only reading THE SILMARILLION itself returned them to the forefront of my memory, there to illuminate everything with blinding intensity.

Firstly, while talking about Tolkien's early literary influences, Carpenter remarks that he had read a great deal of William Morris' work while still an undergraduate - the same time that he began work on the material that was later to surface as THE SILMARILLION; and secondly, when discussing Tolkien's approach to the art of fiction later in the book, he states that Tolkien felt that a "high" prose style was the only prose style suitable for fantasy literature.

These two items are not unrelated. In point of fact, they're inseparable; they form the single basic key to understanding why Tolkien wrote in the style he did.... and why he fails in his use of that style.

The Late-Victorian visionary William Morris is correctly venerated as the man who, almost singlehandedly, rescued fantasy literature from the nursery into which the Victorians had thrust it; and I think it would be true to say that if it had not been for him, the genre would probably not exist today, certainly not in the form we know it. But, even so, venerating someone's memory should not be any more than that; it certainly shouldn't spread over into imitating them.... and you have only to brush up against Morris once to realise that almost every fantasy author to have appeared since has been little more than a slavish imitator. Mock-medieval societies and quasi-biblical prose styles have achieved a spurious pre-eminence as the only "suitable" societies and prose styles for fantasy; each succeeding generation of authors following doggedly in the footsteps of the previous, as though the mere existence of the tradition was enough to justify it.

And not one of those authors - Tolkien amongst them - appears to have paused to ask themselves just why Morris created the societies he did, or why he used the style he did.

The answers are simple, both to find and to understand. Morris was, in the grand tradition of the word, a Romantic. A founder-member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (which he later abandoned when his increasingly "radical" Utopianism eventually led him into the Marxist camp), he hated the very idea of the Industrial Revolution, and believed that the only way in which man could ameliorate its effects was to abandon it altogether and retreat through time to some earlier, pre-industrial "state of grace"

- a state that he felt had once existed in the static feudal culture of the Middle Ages.

And, being a Romantic, he chose to ignore all indications of the true nature of the Middle Ages, and invented his own milieu where the knights were always chaste and valiant, the damsels always fair and swooning, the kings were always just and wealthy, and the few peasants he actually allowed to exist were either happy and jolly and contented with their lot or else dead. Nowhere in his work is there any mention of life as it would have been lived by the majority of the populace - a life that would have been, in the main, "nasty, brutish and short"; a life whose main constituents would have been dirt, disease, poverty, illiteracy, prejudice, ignorance and overbearing tyranny.

But then, in making the Middle Ages look as desirable as possible, he could hardly inject those sort of elements into his work, could he? Which makes his concepts of Utopia or a "state of grace" look distinctly suspect; when we know the reality on which the model is based, and can see how much the model has been distorted, what justification is there for trusting it's creator's intentions or methods?

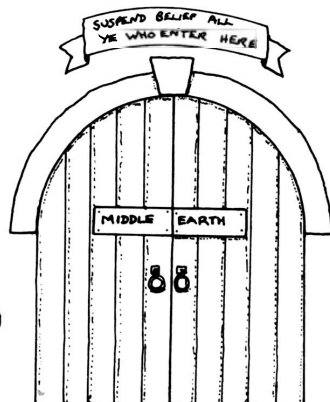
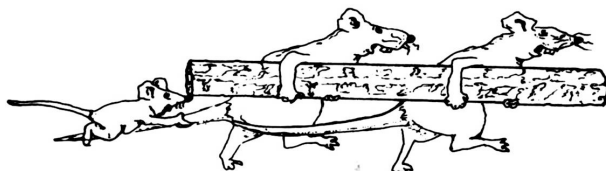
That, however, is a subject I have no intention of pursuing in this particular article. A subject of far greater relevance is Morris' prose style - a style that has been disfiguring fantasy literature ever since, and made a complete mockery of THE SILMARILLION.

Morris employed a quasi-biblical, or "high" prose style in order to point up the moral of his fiction; the presentation of an idealised Middle Ages as some sort of surrogate Paradise, one that could actually be brought into being here on Earth and enjoyed in life so that no-one need suffer through seventy-odd years of (industrial) hell in the hope that it would materialise after death.

Almost everyone who has written fantasy since his day have appropriated his prose style without regard to this simple salient fact, and have thus used it in the most inappropriate fashion imaginable. By their slavish imitation of it, they have rendered it meaningless, and all but destroyed its message. And, by ignoring the message, Tolkien systematically destroys the value of his own work.

He himself has said he had no message to push; that he was not interested in writing allegories. Furthermore, he had no need to dramatise his world of Middle-earth in the way that Morris dramatised his world of the Middle Ages; Middle-earth is complex enough, detailed enough, "real" enough, to exist as a viable entity in its own right; it needs no other form of support mechanism tacked on to it to keep it afloat. It lives in the reader's mind because of its contents, not because of the way in which those contents are described.

But the thing that strikes me most about THE SILMARILLION is the way in which its contents are described, not the contents themselves. On the very first page, I was con-



fronted with a prose style so biblical in tone that I could only begin to wonder whether what I was reading was actually a novel or a religious treatise:

"There was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Iluvatar; and he made first the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought, and they were with him before aught else was made. And he spoke to them, propounding to them themes of music; and they sang before him, and he was glad. But for a long while they sang only each alone, or but few together, while the rest hearkened; for each comprehended only that part of the mind of Iluvatar from which he came, and in the understanding of their brethren they grew but slowly. Yet ever as they listened they came to deeper understanding, and increased in unison and harmony..."(p.15)

Do you really want me to quote the corresponding passage from Genesis?

Perhaps there's a certain element of unfairness in choosing the above quote; it is, after all, the first paragraph of the Ainulindale, a myth of Middle-earth's creation, which concerns itself with a god, a bunch of angels and someone who sounds not unlike Milton's Lucifer under another name. It is, in other words, Middle-earth's equivalent of the first few chapters of the Old Testament, so perhaps the biblicosity of its style and tone is justified. So let's choose another quote, this time completely at random:

"Now when Turgon learned of the breaking of the leaguer of Angband he would not suffer any of his own people to issue forth to war; for he deemed that Gondolin was strong, and the time not yet ripe for its revealing. But he believed also that the ending of the Siege was the beginning of the downfall of the Noldor, unless aid should come; and he sent companies of the Gondolindrim in secret to the mouths of Sirion and the Isles of Balar. There they built ships, and set sail into the uttermost West upon Turgon's errand, seeking for Valinor, to ask for pardon and the aid of the Valar; and they besought the birds of the sea to guide them. But the seas were wild and wide, and shadow and enchantment lay upon them; and Valinor was hidden. Therefore none of the messengers of Turgon came into the West, and many were lost and few returned; but the doom of Gondolin drew nearer...."(p.159)

There's no immediate biblical parallel for this, which is perhaps just as well; but while the subject-matter of each quote is completely different, the style of them is not. The "high" prose style so beloved of Tolkien may be suited to the first quote, but it sure as hell isn't suited to the second. There's Morgoth, breaking the blockade on his fortress, boiling up out of the north to restart the war; and there's Turgon down in Gondolin, obviously so worried at the prospect that he's sending out companies of elves to plead for help from the people who disowned them many centuries previously; and yet there's no possible way in which the reader can feel the fear of Morgoth or involve himself with Turgon's plight. The whole thing is told in such a depersonalised, almost wholly lobotomised fashion, that the element of desperation you'd normally expect to be present in the situation is completely absent. The piece has about as much life as a dead toad; and yet it is, or it's supposed to be, an action sequence, not a fossilised bloody hymnal with righteous ritual standing in for the more normal aspects of storytelling.

"Yes, but", you're saying, "THE SILMARILLION is a semi-legendary record of Middle-earth's elder days, the 'bible' of the world's later inhabitants." True enough; this I do not dispute. But just because the world's later inhabitants come to look upon it as a bible is no reason

for it all to be told in biblical prose, is it? Moreover, the core of the book, the story of the Silmarils themselves, is a story of greed, corruption and the eventual destruction of "Paradise"; so why did Tolkien choose to tell it in a prose style strongly reminiscent - in fact closely based on - that used by William Morris? Particularly as Morris was concerned with the creation of a surrogate Paradise, not its destruction?

This is where Tolkien - among a great many other fantasy authors that I could lay the names on but won't right now - reveals a quite terrifying weakness; a belief that there is a standard style for each literary genre, as though it were some kind of bland and universalised vehicle that can be used over and over again without change. Such a belief is evidence of either imbecility or ignorance - style is instead a highly individualistic thing, its form peculiar to whatever message it is being used to push, or to whatever sequence of events it is being used to describe. While I don't necessarily agree with Marshall McLuhan that "the medium is the message", I do accept that they are at least reasonably close, that there is some connection between them.

Tolkien seems to have been completely unaware of this; it's as though he had long ago decided that whatever William Morris did was good enough for him; and that because Morris wrote in a particular style, then he must too, thus revealing his failure to understand - or even attempt to investigate - the reasons why Morris used the style he did.

THE SILMARILLION isn't the only one of Tolkien's books that suffers from an inapt choice of prose style; THE LORD OF THE RINGS falls into the same abyss from Chapter V of Book Two onwards. This is the point where, as he states in his introduction to the one-volume paperback edition, the Fellowship having reached Balin's tomb in Moria, he abandoned his work on the novel for almost a year. And it shows; the most memorable thing in the entire Moria sequence is not Gandalf's fight with the Balrog, but the sudden change in prose style at the beginning of the aforementioned chapter; the reader receives a jolt akin to that experienced when climbing steps in the dark and trying to step on a step that isn't there.

But then I suppose that this is merely by-the-by; after all, I'm here to talk about THE SILMARILLION, not THE LORD OF THE RINGS. But then even though THE SILMARILLION is the body of ancient history that underlies THE LORD OF THE RINGS, the latter must still be considered as something of a dry run for the former, in which the techniques of an exercise in extended storytelling in a particular prose style are first worked out, later to be applied to the former. (I know he was working on THE SILMARILLION, on and off, all through his life, but you don't imagine that he wrote the final drafts of the whole thing first time out, do you? His son Christopher says as much in his introduction to it.) And, as an aside, remember what Carpenter says in his biography concerning the publication of THE HOBBIT in the United States in the mid-sixties; Tolkien wanted to rewrite it from beginning to end before its publication, presumably in the same impenetrable style he used for this latest opus. Thank God he didn't; the book would have been lost to children - and a large number of adults - for ever afterwards.

I really do mean "impenetrable" in the above context. Time and time again, the meaning of the words in THE SILMARILLION vanishes beneath the surface murk of verbosity, repetition and obfuscation; I cannot see the story because it is obscured by the words on the page. Bloody hell, I sometimes doubted that there actually was a story; the whole thing kept repelling me after a passage or three; I had to keep putting it down and reading something else for a while in order to free my brain from the coffin into which Tolkien had forced it.

"Repellant". THE SILMARILLION is repellant in an active sense; it,
 throws

me out as though I were some sort of intruder, and I'm damn sure I'm not the only person who found the whole sorry concoction as tedious as I. It's as though Tolkien, hoping to remove his creation as far as possible from the scene of any potential critical analysis, deliberately made it repellant to the potential critic. Look at that introduction in the one-volume paperback of THE LORD OF THE RINGS again; he says:

"Some who have read the book, or at any rate have reviewed it, have found it boring, absurd or contemptible; and I have no cause to complain, since I have similar opinions of their works, or of the kinds of writing they evidently prefer...."

In other words, "Critics, get stuffed" - an attitude that is supported and underlined by the remarks he makes about the act of "secondary creation" in his famous essay ON FAIRY STORIES:

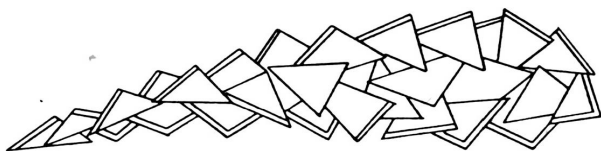
"....and while he(the reader) is there it is dangerous for him to ask too many questions, lest the gates should be shut, and the keys be lost...."

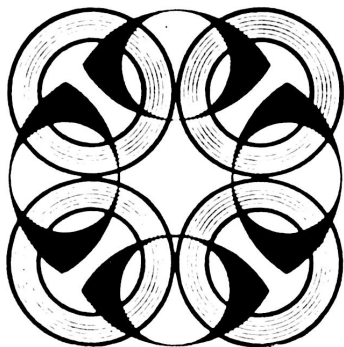
In other words: "Don't analyse, because I don't like it". But here again, as so many times before, Tolkien demonstrates only a failure of understanding - this time his failure to understand that critical analysis, far from losing the keys through the asking of questions, actually gives the reader possession of another set of keys, which open up other gates, allowing him to plunge deeper into the mythos and the symbols that underly an imaginary world. Unless, of course, Tolkien wanted to keep secret the sources from which his world of Middle-earth had been derived.. ..perhaps because he was afraid of having it shown up as derivative? But then any imaginary world is derived from elements available in the real world.... which, if my comment about "secrecy" is in any way true is indicative only of monstrous vanity on his part. But then THE SILMARILLION seems to me to be less of an exercise in derivation than THE LORD OF THE RINGS, although this may well be due to its excessive verbosity effectively concealing the detailing with which the background has been invested - a verbosity so all-pervasive that even proper names are forgotten in the aftermath of any attempted reading of the book.

No matter that there are lots of people reading it - at the time of writing, it has spent no less than twenty-three weeks on the SUNDAY TIMES bestsellers list, most of them in first place - but I can only wonder what they're all reading it for, or even why they're reading it. They're certainly not reading it for relaxation or entertainment - the whole thing has a hectoring, didactic tone that is at best irritating and at worst downright patronising - but I shouldn't think they care; after all it's Tolkien, isn't it? And Tolkien is Tolkien, a man who can get away with anything simply because he is Tolkien, a name that serves to excuse all ills. And THE SILMARILLION is certainly an ill; it does nothing for THE LORD OF THE RINGS except devalue it in the inevitable retrospect that follows the reading of the former. I used to like THE LORD OF THE RINGS, but now I seriously doubt that I'll ever reread it....

1977 may well have been the year of THE SILMARILLION, but it eventually turned out to be an event that was not worth waiting for. As an exercise in language, the book is pathetic; as a vision, it is empty; as a novel, it is a joke. And I'm willing to bet that Tolkien himself, if he were still alive, would be laughing at our gullibility; at the ridiculous adulation we are according to something whose only achievement is the blotting out of reality for months - possibly, in the long term, for years at a time.

by Joseph Nicholas

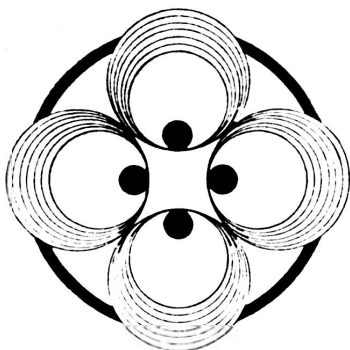




RY
COODER
AND

AND

THE
LITTLE
FEAT



In a Rock music world obsessed by the need to write new material, and to sing and record only new songs, Ry Cooder stands out like a sore thumb. He's a strange charismatic figure whose entire output to date has consisted of music from any era but the seventies. Yet for all that, his records are without exception superbly modern productions, crystal clear and full of interesting, arresting sounds.

Ry Cooder first came to the attention of the Rock public in the late sixties, when he recorded with the Rolling Stones, on their "Sticky Fingers" album. Before that he had been a regular on the Californian music scene, and was a member of the now legendary Rising Sons, along with another 'musical anthropologist', Taj Mahal. He appeared as a session man on records by Captain Beefheart, Arlo Guthrie and many others, including the excellent first Little Feat album.

It was not until he began to release his own records on Warner Bros. that Ry Cooder's real abilities came to the fore. Then it was as a superb blues guitarist and singer, with a penchant for picking up old tunes, dusting them off and presenting them in a brand new coat of paint.

His guitar-work is perhaps his trade-mark, especially the precise bottle-neck guitar which he features on many of his blues songs. He learned much of his technique listening to people like Robert Johnson, Huddie Ledbetter and Sleepy John Estes, (who he later persuaded into the recording studio with him on the "Boomer's Story" album), and his superb playing reinforces his own view that there is a world of difference between the Rock 'slide' guitar as practiced by the late Duane Allman, Beck, Clapton etc., and the true bottle-neck guitar played by the old-time blues-men and now played by Cooder himself.

While his roots are so obviously in the blues tradition, Cooder does not confine himself either to blues songs or blues-oriented music. In his albums he has covered fields as diverse as '20s Dustbowl ballads, Jazz, Calypso, Tex-Mex and Hawaiian music as well as old pop songs, making them all over into an extension of his own personality.

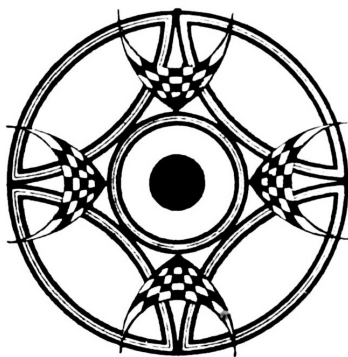
Cooder is a musician whose abilities to transform a song from its original form into something else entirely are quite stunning. Just as an example, he takes the old Jim Reeves song, "He'll have to go", (which qualified for the J.D. Owen Excrutiating Songs To Be Exterminated Award in its original version), he adds the unique Tex-Mex sound of Flaco Jiminez's accordion along with his own guitar work and light, distinctive vocals, and produces a superbly fresh and interesting song; a transformation I would not have believed possible with such a mundane song. And this is

the kind of metamorphosis he achieves with nearly all his songs.

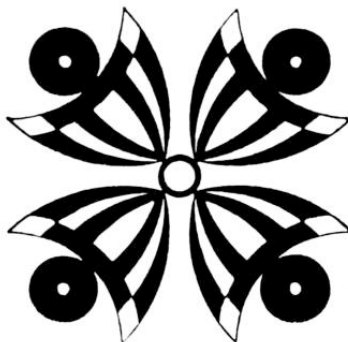
To date Ry Cooder has produced six albums, the last of which was a live recording made on his European tour in 1977, and featuring his current band of musicians, most of whom come from the borderlands of Texas and Mexico.

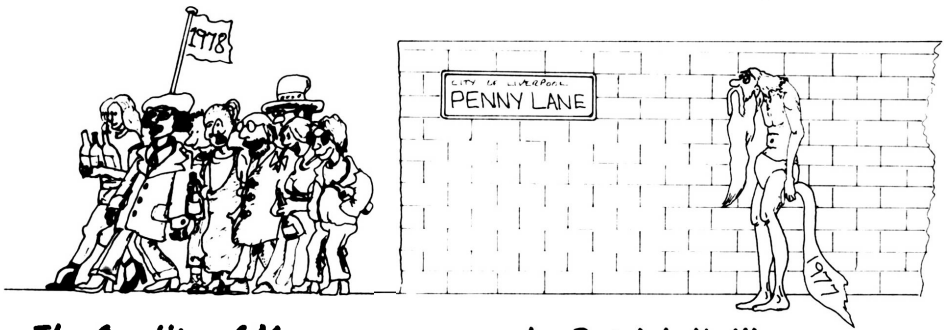
Cooder's involvement with the Tex-Mex sound is perhaps indicative of his whole approach to music. He heard a record by Flaco Jimenez played on the radio at some time, and liked it. He went looking for more music in the same vein, deciding that it had a wider appeal than the small area of Texas where it had originated. He painstakingly learned the button accordion in order to understand the possibilities of the instrument (which is the predominant part of the Tex-Mex sound), and only when he understood what the musicians were doing musically did he go down south to search out Flaco Jimenez and his fellow musicians. Once he began to work with them he was surprised by the versatility of the bolero beat allied to the basically German accordion, and he found it possible to translate a wide variety of songs into the Tex-Mex format. The results appeared first on his "Chicken Skin Music" album and, as well as the aforementioned "Hell have to go", the record included Leadbelly's classic "Goodnight Irene" (with a basic waltz beat which the musicians latched onto as if they had been playing it for years), and the soul standard "Stand By Me". In all there was a gap of two years between "Chicken Skin Music" and its immediate predecessor, during which time Cooder had pursued the Tex-Mex sound as well as finding time to meet and master Hawaiian 'slack-key' guitar playing, (as opposed to the dreadful tourist fare served up as 'Hawaiian' music).

There is little doubt in my mind that Ry Cooder is one of the very best musicians working in the Rock field today. His championing of obscure or regional musics is a constant source of new and fresh influences upon both his own work and the Rock scene in general. It is only through people like Cooder that Rock music really progresses, even though at first glance it may appear that he is backward looking. His eclectic approach and his superb musicianship and taste indicates an awareness of the infinite possibilities of music, and it is this rare awareness that produces fresh and consistently innovative music. I wish it could be said that this awareness is a growing trend in modern music, but unfortunately it is not. We should therefore be more than grateful for the continuing efforts of people like Ry Cooder to expand the frontiers of music in such an interesting fashion.



Ry Cooder





The Quality of Mersey

by Patrick Holligan

I enjoy travelling, and although Britain does not exactly offer endless rolling deserts and shimmering horizons of the kind that our forefathers sought a century or more ago, she does at least have her motorways. Mile upon mile of seemingly endless and certainly unchanging tarmac.

At least this was the picture last Christmas as I headed down the M6 toward Liverpool. Why Liverpool? Well, after a rather quiet festive season in Scotland I was taking the rather paradoxical step of spending New Year south of the border. There was, however, method in my madness. I was joining my girlfriend - the things one does for women! Mind you, after Scotland I imagined a New Year in Liverpool would be about the next most Celtic location, given the volatile mixture of Scots, Irish and Welsh that have deposited themselves on the banks of the Mersey - not to mention the floors of scouse public houses.

I had, however, reconciled myself to a rather quieter Hogmanay than usual. I'd had an uneventful journey up until now and was approaching the outskirts of Liverpool proper. Who was it said that it's always the last few miles of a journey that are always the most trying. (I can't remember, but they were correct.) Try as I might I just couldn't get into the right approach lane for the Wallasey tunnel. I'd get within eyeshot of the tunnel's yawning mouth only to be propelled up another flyover leading in the general direction of where I'd just been. I'd tried the left-hand lane and the centre lane, so this time I chanced my sanity on the outside lane. Eureka! The toll gates loomed ahead, thirty pence and I was in. After the motorway I thought I'd experienced everything - but no; no overtaking, no stopping, no headlights and no changing lanes. The miles seemed to tick slowly by in a subterranean gloom, fluorescent lights flickered and cat's eyes winked, and at any moment I expected to be confronted with the inhabitants of this twilight world - their phasers on stun! "Beam me up, Scottie", I thought to myself, "and now". Just as I was wondering what Mr. Spock would have done next I saw the light at the end of the tunnel.

To cut a long story short, I eventually arrived in Heswell and found myself being plied with some of Susan's father's home brew. Now I know what you're thinking, but you'd be wrong. Susan's father is a retired pharmacist and doesn't hold with anything as fashionable as valium - his answer to a crisis is a tankard of home brew. "What, you've cut off your finger? Have a pint of home brew." "What, your wife's just died? Have a pint of home brew." Okay, it could get a bit monotonous were it not for the fact that his home brew is a knock-out in every sense of the word.

One and a half pints later I was beginning to babble about Martian invaders and tunnel dwellers with cat's eyes. I remember being propelled towards the bedroom with the assurance that, although the tunnel maintenance crews did, on occasion, play unkind tricks on unwary visitors, they had all gone to Glasgow or Dublin for the forthcoming festivities.

My thoughts next morning were mainly concerned with how to avoid another infusion of fatal brew without giving offence.

The solution came miraculously, in the shape of a phonecall from one of Susan's old schoolfriends. This particular friend was giving a party on Hogmanay, "and would we like to come along?" Would we? Well, once being assured that he would put us up for the night, (thus avoiding the mindbending prospect of having to enter "the tunnell" during the hours of darkness) I accepted the invitation graciously by screaming down the phone, "We haven't met, but God bless you".

That evening we put on our party frocks - at least Susan did - I settled for an off-the-shoulder travel-weary sweater and an ever so slightly worn (in odd places) pair of denims. Our rendezvous was to be a pub near Penny Lane, and being Hogmanay the world and his wife were there when we arrived.

One of the worst things about travelling, in England at least, is that if one happened to be Scottish one can get into difficulties when ordering a pint. Scotland avoids this quandary by catering for her drunks in having only two basic types of beer, and as long as you can slur the magic words "speshul" or "heavy" one is reasonably certain of being catered for. (I always remember the way in which an entire bar sidled away from me on my first night in Bletchley when I asked for a pint of Starlite - wow, was that a wrong order!) This time I was not going to be caught out. "A pint of Guinness," I cried with a knowing glance at the regulars. Well, I misfired again. I imagine that being so proximate to Ireland has taught barmaids in Liverpool to treat the vital liquid as if it were holy water: it must have taken the girl fully ten minutes to draw the pint. On Hogmanay never order a pint of Guinness in a crowded pub. Even Jem O'Casey, "poet of the people", must have realised this fact.

When things go wrong and they won't come right,
Though you do the best you can,
Though life seems dark as the midnight sky,
A pint of plain's your only man.

Heed not the wise, I thought as I scurried away from the laser gaze of a thirsty bar, wishing desperately to be engulfed by the welcoming yawn of the Wallasey tunnel. Thankfully I was soon introduced to Susan's friends and their friends, and so on until all recollection of the incident was swamped in bonhomie and booze.

Luckily the party was nearby and soon all was peanuts, crisps and in truth some very toothsome party grub. But true to character, my attention focused unerringly on the bar. Now I know that "they" all say that one should never mix wine with beer but at parties where one doesn't know anybody one can start with a clean slate, and so to show that although I was Scottish I was nevertheless not without some of the social graces I decided to indulge in a few glasses of the "red biddy".

It must have been on my third, or was it my fourth, journey to the bar that I noticed somebody familiar - I say familiar because, although I had never met the person in question his face was definitely a face I felt I should recognise. I looked more closely, was it? I couldn't trust my judgement a moment longer and so I staggered off in search of Susan for a second opinion.

I found her deep in conversation with our host. "Susan, do you know

that I've just seen someone who is the spitting image of Paul McCartney - things drink does to you." Our host looked at Susan and grinned - Susan looked at me and grinned. I checked my flies. Finally it was explained. Susan's schoolfriend was in fact John McCartney, Paul McCartney's cousin. Every year at Hogmanay one of the McCartney family takes a turn at throwing the New Year party - and this year it was John's turn.

So there I was at the McCartney family party with Paul and Linda McCartney and children, plus Mike McGear, Twiggy and her American actor husband, and Cynthia Lennon (remember her?).

"Coo" I said, clutching for a peanut, and casually wandering from room to room stealing glances at the assembled celebrities.

At five to twelve we were all shepherded outside to await "the bells" and to listen for the sirens from the docks. There were about fifty of us by now, standing in a big circle in the middle of the road ready to sing "Auld Lang Syne" and to generally cavort about. Unfortunately the familiar faces in our midst had been recognised and immediately after the chimes of midnight we were forced to beat a hasty retreat back to the house as the word was out, and the party threatened to balloon in size from fifty to five hundred (okay, one hundred). Once inside, Paul McC. led off the community singing and as I said airily to someone a few weeks later, "Y'know he's pretty good live too".

By this time I felt almost part of the family. Auntie Jeannie had arrived in regal splendour and was enthroned in one corner, Twiggy and her husband in another. Paul and Linda were working their way round the room talking to relations. This is it, I thought, if we stay in this corner it's just a matter of time before we're introduced. But it wasn't to be - at a family party you spend your time with the family and that was exactly what the party was all about. We were in fact one of the few "outsiders", made welcome nonetheless, but all hope of "chatting to Paul" or asking for autographs was strictly "de trop" so we remained firmly in the background as observers. That is, until the sing-song started and then fired by enthusiasm and vino I joined in with gusto, and Susan suggested a few oldies - to be greeted by a nod and a lead off by Paul. Linda had left the baby of the family in the upstairs bedroom to sleep (if that was possible). There was no carrycot, so a sheepskin rug was placed in a small case and the baby slept soundly nonetheless. John said next day, "think of it, the heir to millions slept in my weekend case."

About five in the morning the party petered out and, as the guests took their leave, Susan and I helped clear up in lieu of bed and breakfast. After most parties all one finds is empty bottles behind chairs, fag-ends in the sink and the ubiquitous party drunk asleep in the bath. Not this time; apart from the debris we found 500 dollars in travellers cheques. I don't think I've ever seen never mind handled 500 dollars - so we all took it in turns and passed a half hour or so each person deciding what he or she would buy at Lewis's next day. We then took bets as to who had lost it, as Paul apparently never carries money. Needless to say the field narrowed quickly and we eventually decided that it must belong to Twiggy's American husband, and John made a rueful note to phone him later in the day. I could just imagine it. "I'm glad you enjoyed the party, it was nice to have you. By the way, you didn't lose anything last night did you? Oh, just a small matter of 500 dollars!"

Well, I'd had a pretty eventful New Year after all, and in fact looking back, I begin to wonder if it all wasn't simply a side-effect of Susan's dad's home brew....But it wasn't!

ISLANDS IN THE SKY

"Nothing makes sense unless its continuance for a long time can be projected without running into absurdities.... There cannot be unlimited, generalized growth.... Ever bigger machines, entailing ever bigger concentrations of economic power and exerting ever greater violence against the environment do not represent progress: they are a denial of wisdom."

E.F.SCHUMACHER

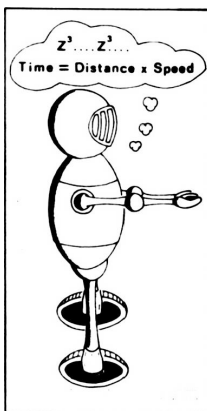
The above quote from Schumacher's AN ECONOMICS OF PERMANENCE, when applied to human life in the twentieth century, forces the most optimistic person to come to the conclusion that humanity, as a whole, has amassed very little "wisdom" in all its current history.

Consider in the light of the quote the current growth of the human population worldwide, (and especially in the Third World countries); the rapid depletion of "conventional" energy resources (everything from wood to oil) and the constant growth of energy demands; the depletion of a great many of the raw materials on which our civilisation depends, or their concentration into a few areas; the rapidly increasing strain on the environment of coping with our civilisations detritus; the already proven ecological disasters of many of our methods (ie. the American Mid-West Dust bowl, resulting from the farming of the early part of the century); and the constant power struggle between different factions of the same race. Now answer a single question. Would any observer of this muddled, crazy planetful of people give good odds on our survival intact for the next hundred years?

All of these problems are really the result of two apparently irreconcilable factors. One is that the human race is a constantly increasing species that has achieved a certain level of sophistication at the topmost level which all below strive to reach. While there are many things wrong with the means by which we achieve these levels of sophistication, and while many of them are patently absurd, (for example, the high food consumption in relation to needs of a large proportion of the industrialised West), these levels are a standard from which it may be considered undesirable to retreat from.

The second factor is the finite nature of the world in which we live. The earth has only so much surface area available for human habitation. While there are many areas available for expansion, they are frequently in places that are either undesirable or uncomfortable, (ie. Deserts or Polar Icecaps), or in areas which require great technical resources to develop, like the shallower sea-floors. Once we use up even this space, there is no way we can expand humanity's living area without reaching an intolerable level of overcrowding or destroying our environment. Survival in such conditions would mean that human beings would have to be very different animals from today, for the level of control of the majority of the population would be absolute, and the populace very little more than automatons. This basic denial of freedom to individuals is in direct opposition to the current trends in the West, where the rights of the individual to shape their lives as they wish is becoming a major part of the Western nations beliefs, (albeit accompanied by ever-increasing bureaucracy which enforces "laws" upon us "for our own good".)

The conclusion that many Sf writers in the past and present have reached is that mankind must leave the planet of its birth and spread out, first throughout the Solar System, and then in a gradual Diaspora



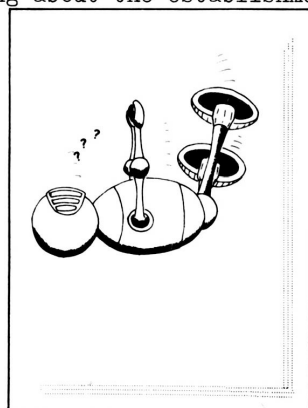
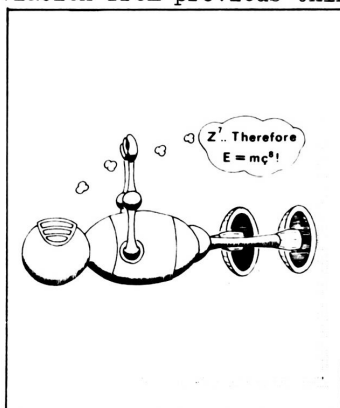
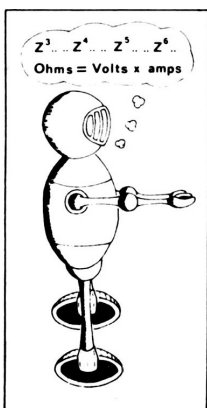
through the Galaxy. And finally the scientists are beginning to arrive at the same conclusions. In a book called THE HIGH FRONTIER: HUMAN COLONIES IN SPACE, Princeton University physicist Gerard O'Neill has proposed that, rather than search for ways to "terraform" planets and thus become tied to another planetary surface, that mankind instead colonises the free space between planets.

In his book, O'Neill proposes a systematic programme that would mean a series of colonies in space that could be built by the early part of the next century, with the first such colony being begun within the next decade. All of this, O'Neill claims, is possible using today's technologies, (which in itself means automatic bonuses as new technology presents better alternatives as the problems are investigated).

O'Neill's proposals, if proved viable in all senses of the word (and I do not believe either his book or publications since on the same subject do prove it to be totally viable), could solve many problems in a way compatible with the Schumacher quote. It would, by the very nature of the system, provide a geometrically progressing amount of living area for future population growth; it would use resources which are potentially good for many thousands of years without pollution to the living environment; it would provide energy to the Earth from the one, non-polluting, ever-available source, the Sun. And it could also have a very great effect on man's view of himself and his home planet, fostering more definitely the idea of one world and one people. This new frontier could spark off a renaissance of the human spirit almost as great as that which sprang from the discovery of the Americas in the fifteenth century.

O'Neill's scheme does not spring from any radical new discovery which revolutionises space travel, but rather from the careful assemblage of a series of known facts and technologies into a workable package. This package evolves into a self-sufficient, self-perpetuating series of space colonies fairly rapidly.

The basic start for the system requires only one major deviation from previous thinking about the establishment



of "space stations" or "colonies". But it is the major key suggestion that O'Neill has made. This is that the material required to build the colony does not have to be lifted up from the Earth, with its relatively deep gravity well, but can be obtained very easily from the Moon. The material can be put into orbit from the lunar surface very cheaply, using a "mass driver", which is in effect a giant catapult. O'Neill's team have worked out the mass driver's capabilities, and even built a small working model which exceeded all expected performance levels, and this would seem to be a feasible suggestion. To an Sf reader, the idea should not be too unfamiliar, as Heinlein used a similar scheme in THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS to bombard the Earth with rocks. And it is rocks that the mass driver would be throwing too, for the composition of the lunar soil is such that it contains a great many of the materials required to build the first colonies, including large amounts of oxygen.

The colonies themselves would be placed at the "Lagrange" points of the Earth-Moon system, which are two stable points where the sun is never eclipsed by either earth or moon, and as the main power source of the colonies would be solar energy, then this is essential. There are a variety of different designs being worked on for the first colonies, varying from the familiar toroidal shape Sf space stations, to "Bernal" spheres, to ten mile long cylinders, (not unlike RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA). All of them would be spun to induce artificial gravity, and all of them would be made as earth-like as possible.

The first colony would have a population of around ten thousand. Its main functions would be two fold. First would be responsibility for constructing second generation colonies on a larger scale for populations of one to two millions, while at the same time, the first colony would also begin construction of a series of energy satellites for earth orbit. These would be satellites which collected solar energy, converted it to micro-waves which was then transmitted down to collecting stations on the surface. A number of studies have been made of this possibility and the only real problem with it would seem to be whether such an abundance of micro-wave transmissions would have any effect on the atmosphere through which it passes. If worries in this respect prove to be unfounded then these solar energy satellites would provide a very excellent source of "clean" energy for the Twenty-first century, although I doubt that they will be sufficient in themselves to cater for all our future needs.

The planning and study that has already gone into the "Space Colonies" project is still relatively small by comparison with the awesome size of the project. But as a number of the proposed links in the system chain have already been, or are being, investigated independently, the ground

work is rapidly being covered. The solar energy satellites are being studied by at least two organisations, one being the Boeing Corporation, and NASA has done initial, independent studies of O'Neill's scheme, and has been able to verify the technical feasibility of the proposals. But there do exist some areas where the designed colonies are either over-optimistic or plain hazey.

The major problem area is in the design of a complete eco-system for the colony. O'Neill has, rightly, laid down the criterion that, initially at least, the colonies must be Earth-like in their environment. They must contain significantly wide-spread and varied vegetation as well as animal life. But it is hard to see just where it is possible to draw the line between what should go into the colony and what



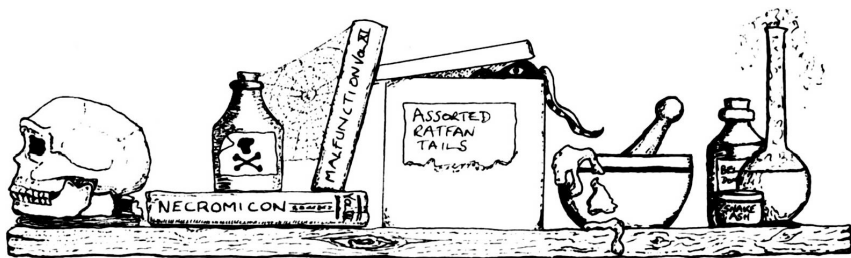
should be excluded. O'Neill makes the point that it should be entirely possible to ensure that no pests are imported into the colony, so as to ensure the healthy growth of foodstuffs, etc. But supposing the exclusions represent an essential link in the ecosystem? Is it possible to introduce birds into the colony, without ensuring that the insects that a particular bird may feed on comes with it? And what if those insects are a "nuisance" to the colonists?

The problems of ecosystems are barely understood here on Earth, and certainly to design an ecosystem the size of a small town, and maintain it in a balanced state, would be beyond the capability of current ecologists. It would require constant watching to ensure no "build up" of over population by particular insects or animals, or (more seriously) the poisoning of the colonies environment by organisms lacking certain essential check mechanisms that have previously ensured a balanced ecology. If, for example, the colony has areas of open water stocked with fish, what happens if all the fish suddenly die because of a lack of some particular chemical compound that was previously an unrecognised necessity for the health of the species. Would the colony's environment be able to cope with thousands of decomposing fish bodies? (Would the colonists be able to cope with the effluvium without oxygen masks?)

There is the possibility that O'Neill is right and that the colony would be a pretty pleasant place to live in. There is also the possibility, if the ecologists are not up to designing a fully self-sustaining system, that the environment could be somewhat unpleasant, rather smelly and maintained only by artificial means. Only further study and an initial colony will prove the biological viability of the idea.

Another area where there is a great deal of controversy is over the social organisation of the colonies. Obviously the first colonies would be established under the political control of one or more of today's major powers, or alternatively a United Nations organisation. But later colonies could evolve their own differing social structures. Indeed some people, O'Neill among them, have suggested that this could be the eventual spin-off which would have the greatest effect on Earth. The "closed" environment of a space colony could enable experiments in social structures to be tried, without undue influence from the outside. When you start a colony from scratch then obviously the groundlines you lay are amenable to a fair amount of deviation from the "norm". New systems (or perfections of old systems) could be installed from the word "go" and the whole colony designed around them. Extensive study in this area has already been done, especially by Magoroh Maruyama, Professor of Systems Science at Portland University Oregon, whose article "Designing a Space Community" in the October 1976 issue of THE FUTURIST should be required reading for anyone interested in Space Colonisation.

There are, of course, opponents of the space colony idea, whose dislike of the idea stems from a projection of current world problems into the future. They argue that a small closed colony would be extremely easy for a political group to take-over, and impose authoritarian rule. They are worried that the colonies would be extremely vulnerable to the type of terrorist activities so prevalent nowadays, and that the terrorists could hold whole colonies as hostage. These are, of course, possibilities, but should they be allowed to blind us to the far greater advantages to space colonisation? In a world where it can only be a matter of time before some terrorist organisation gains control of a nuclear device, and holds New York, London or any other major city to ransom, can we really expect terrorists to have a great deal of interest in an island in the sky? We need the shot in the arm that space colonisation can give us. We need the expansion room. We must therefore accept that dangers also go with them.



JUST A PINCH OF... BY PETER PRESFORD

Curse it!

Another article way behind schedule.

Even the worst people must have some sort of line to toe. Even disorganised clods like me. But someone must have it in for me somewhere, though I can't imagine who.

Perhaps it's something from back in the Presford family past. It may be that my Great, great, great, great Grandpa incurred the wrath of some comely Gypsy whench. For doing some dark and dirty deed. Mind! If he was a Presford, it would be more for not doing any kind of deed.

The Presford past is wreathed in mystery. If you meet a Presford anywhere in the world... he/she is a relation. I have the feeling that we are a branch of some great family shunted away with a new name. Dishonour of the name and all that.

But that first statement bears some thinking about, "Curse it!" What a strange thing to say to yourself; or anyone else for that matter. It could prove rather nasty you know.

Curses, rhymes, incantations and a whole concoction of phrases leap at you from the pages of novels and articles. But as far as I can see none of them seem to work. Mind! I don't count that "wee chappie" in the Gold Label advert.

I mean ...come on, admit it. How many times has the Hero muttered a few choice words and "Whoops". Sand gets blown in the baddies eyes; or a huge wave rises out of a placid lake and turns over the pursuing ship.

I like the one that controls the "Fire Elemental"; be very handy for lighting Super Slims, or giving the wood-stove a boost on a cold morning. And what super parties we could have in summer on the lawn.

"And how would you like your steak, Fred?" "Well done"

"Huff and Puff and do your stuff,
This fine steak needs to be...
Well done!"

"Oops!"

This opens up a whole new world. Though no doubt it could be somewhat trying if the words came out a little mixed up. I mean, you could be whisking along a nice balmy breeze to get the girl-friend in the right mood.... when you slip. And before you know it you have a shower of snow in July. And I can't see that going down well with her sexy sun-top.

Along with the curses, charms have always held a certain fascination

I get this vivid picture in my mind of someone like Steve Lines; with a Whacking big wart on the end of his nose. Hammering bloody hell out of the tarmac in the middle of a crossroads. Trying to bury a frog's leg with a hawthorn stuck through it. I mean! If he got clobbered by a car, that would most certainly solve his warty problems.

Er! I didn't mean it Steve, honest!

Nearly crashed through a hedge the other week. Just watching a magpie fly across the road. Well, you see, I had read a few days before that if you saw a magpie fly from left to right on your outward journey, that would bring you good luck. But if the bird dared to fly the other way you best Turn back. Or was it the other way round? It must be true. Well, I nearly went through that hedge, didn't I!

"The Hero is dying, me Lord" ... "Dying? Gadzooks, we must get the local Wizard to make a charm for his hurts."

So the local Wizard is approached. He soon throws a "Bit of this", and "a bit of that" into the pot. Then the evil smelling brew (it isn't good unless it's evil smelling) is smeared over the wounds of the Hero; in no time he is up slaying Dragons and raping Maidens. Well, the charm had a slight flaw in it.

Charms seem a pretty fair way of dealing with things. But I think a whole new range is required for today's Modern image. There's the old charm for Quinsy "Apply to the throat hair cut at midnight from the black shoulder stripe of the colt of an ass"; I should think that sorting that one out would be just as bad as waiting for an operation on the National Health.

SF and Fantasy fhans could benefit no-end from some of these concoctions. Snake-skin ash would be a boon at conventions; we should really have a table set aside for their ware. Do you know that a little ash from snake-skin placed between your shoulder blades will make everyone agree with you ? I think John Brunner has been using that one for years!

And how about dried leaves of Rosemary ? The leaves placed in bheer or wine will stop them from going flat. Now that is a must, going off some of these Hotel bheers.

I have heard that the rusty safety-pin of a pUnk-Rocker placed in your kettle will stop it from furring up.

Some of these things wouldn't go down well in the wife's kitchen. I can just see her loving me for hanging snake-skins from the flue-light; and being delighted by the toad's legs swinging from under the kitchen cupboards. But what the odd human skull or two would do over the electric stove I wouldn't care to think.

"Peter!"

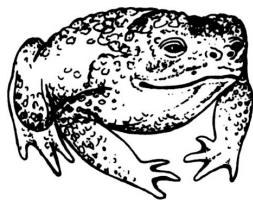
"Yes, love?"

"Have you put Bat's blood in the coffee jar again?"

I mean, the poor old toad doesn't stand a chance. Take for instance my coming home from the Horse and Jockey the other Friday night. The Jockey is only a hundred yards away round the corner, so I use me natural feet to take me there and back.

I was strolling back with Dave from across the road when he called to me to watch my feet. Leaping about and crashing into a wall, I peered back looking for the mound left by man's best friend. But all there





was, was this little, lonely, frightened toad. So I picked it up and took it home.

Anita opened the door for me; telling me to leave it ajar so that she could put the milk-bottles out for the morning. I followed her into the kitchen. "Here" I said, "I'll do it for you". Remembering the poor old Toad in my hand, I held it out to her and asked her to mind something whilst I stuck the bottles out.

Well, the kitchen light was off. And she held out her hand, and I placed this rather damp toad in it. It was a very good scream actually. I nearly dropped the bottles. The toad shot into the air and landed on the floor with a "splat".

"What was that?" she yelled.

"Er, only a poor defenceless little toad" said I.

"WHAT!!!"

Do you know, when she finished thumping me, she made me take my toad out into the garden? Glad to say it was quite well after its rather rude and crude flight through our kitchen. And as I placed it on the ground near the firewood pile, it looked up at me and mewed. Honest, it bloody well mewed. I often think about it since that night. I could have carried it around with me, nice and snug in my pocket. We would have got along famously. I could have taken him to parties and conventions and had a great time.

Toads are much more friendlier than frogs, don't you think???

Artists Credits



Martin Helsdon : Cover.
 Steve Lines : Cover title, p2(top),3,6,26,30.
 Graphics Ad-lib 2: p2(bottom),32.
 Pabla : p8,25(top),28.
 JO : p10,16,23,24,25(bottom).
 Dover Books : p14-15.
 Andy Firth : p20-21.

Thanks again to all of the contributing artists, and I only hope they all print as well as they deserve to. I am still looking for artists prepared to contribute on a regular basis, and will be delighted to hear from anybody who would be prepared to work for me on commission,(needless to say, this is not a paying concern.)



The mailbag on the second issue of the Crystal Ship has been very encouraging, with about a 25% response from all copies sent out. There has been quite a range of opinion on most aspects of the 'zine, ranging from "please don't ever change" to "please don't ever send again". Most people were pretty constructive in their comments though. For starters, the Katherine Kurtz article attracted comment from:-

Martin Helsdon, 32, Burns Crescent, Chelmsford, Essex. CM2 OTS

"I must disagree with your assessment of the Deryni series, although this is only a matter of taste.... the series shows a total lack of knowledge, either of the period or 'awareness' of the feeling of the 'medieval' age.... This is possibly true because the medieval period in northern Europe really started with, for want of a better marker, the conquest of England by William: it marked the change from comparatively small dukedoms and kingdoms, to a large centralised state, that led in turn to the emergence of the State, rather than areas owing allegiance to one man.

The Deryni novels show a country as politically aware as the England of Elizabeth I. This is also true of the technology and organisation of the author's world; the ethics, however, are based upon the ideals of the present age, they do not fit very well in the Dark Ages.... In my opinion the entire series is weak and stereo-type ridden. For a better representation of a 'realistic' Britain in such a period I suggest you try the Merlin/Arthur novels of Mary Stewart, or Alfred Duggan's THE CUNNING OF THE DOVE."

-----oOo-----

After being annihilated so convincingly it's a wonder I ever communicated with Martin again, but I did and the flow of letters to and from Chelmsford is. so far, uninterrupted. The fruits of it are on the cover.

Most people seemed to think I had hit on a good subject with "Dance in Fiction", but that I had thrown it away. The best analysis why it happened came from Andy Firth.

Andy Firth, 185 Osborne Road, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

"Reference your fanzine: I read it from cover to cover, and they tell me there's a fifty-fifty chance I'll see again when the bandages come off. The Layout is rather daunting with all that typeface. I think Joseph Nicholas was right, you need more artwork to provide refuge for the old sentinel eye. Perhaps you should experiment a little more with the format.

The 'Dance in Fiction' piece sadly lacked development. You more or less contented yourself with listing examples of stories with dances in them.... As you say, the dance conjures a whole chain of images. But you failed to provide the links. Your list lacked continuity.... There was no feeling of evolution or progression to the article, which I think it needed. Dances are essentially fluid as well as diverse. It is not merely movement with rhythmical steps etc., as the dictionary defines it. It can be free-form, or each gesture can have meaning. It can be with music or without. It can be an expression of feeling or a stylised way of

telling a story. The Dancer from Atlantis can be alone, have a partner or be a member of a group.... I fear you did not show how dances invented by authors compared to dances in real life, and where their similarities and differences must lie. Dances are difficult to lift out of context, without dragging the plot with them in most cases. For instance, in Braxa's dance in Roger Zelazny's A ROSE FOR ECCLESIASTES, there are many references to Indian Ritual dancing. Generally these dances are elaborate - each movement has significance, and they tend to be moderately slow. In the story it comes across like the Rite of Spring. How?

Dances are by nature allegorical because they allude to things we sometimes can express no other way. As such two pages only scratched the surface. I hope you'll explore its significance and possibilities in some issues to come. It's a good meaty fascinating and original topic.

...I liked your articles on William Starr, Tom Robbins and Kathryn Kurtz, secretly I think they were better book reviews than the book reviews. The 'Flies on...',oops. 'Files on...' idea was original. It gave an extra dimension to your critical appraisal, and allowed you to cock a few snooks. That's what you intended wasn't it?....I was impressed by the sheer scope of the 'zine itself. It doesn't lack ambition or sincerity.

-----oOo-----

One of the earliest comments on CS2 arrived from Pam Boal, who operates skilfully with a very sharp knife. The result was one very deflated ego. Pam's second letter is one reason why there is no fiction in this issue, as I'm too busy to give it the care and attention it needs to be worth printing at the moment.

Pam Boal, 4 Westfield Way, Charlton Heights, Wantage, Oxon. OX12 7EW

With CS1 you were feeling your way. I hoped in your second issue that we would see some original thoughts, ideas, opinions, something to get hold of. You just aren't there John; I almost caught sight of you in Recent Reeds, which is, in my opinion, the best part of this issue....

The File on Tom Robbins is just too clever, it is pointless satirising or sending-up a groups reaction to works if the person reading the satire hasn't read those works. I was left with the impression that I might object to some of the aspects of Tom Robbins' novels and therefore that you were getting at me. Talk about alienating your reader....

-----oOo-----

Fortunately there were still plenty of others who re-assembled a shattered dream into something recognisable. For example, there was the delightful Geraldine Charles.

Geraldine Charles, 103, St. Pauls Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middx. HA3 9PT

...I fully intended writing after issue 1, but due to an unfortunate accident during decorating, (it got thrown away!) I was unable to discover the address of its worthy editor. Tentative enquiries amongst the less inebriated members of an Innmoot met with cries of "eh?", "who?", "Whaat?" when I asked for information on "the Crystal Ship". But the noble Stuart Clark produced your address. Unfortunately it got left behind the following week....

I was surprised to see mention of Moore's NO WOMAN BORN. My father has an extremely ancient SF book printed in the '50s (BEST OF SCIENCE FICTION) containing this story and I have never seen any references to this particular story before...it's nice to know someone out there had heard of Deirdre too.

...I enjoyed the GOLDEN BEES OF DAEDALUS - although I found it hard to believe in a lepracaun called O'Crich, (I don't know why, it just sounded a funny sort of name, though I expect there are probably large numbers of quite respectable lepracauns called this). I also, at first, didn't read that Eland was a satyr; I had mental visions (briefly) of a talking eland. How unusual, I thought, whatever next? A talking gnu or even a wildebeest...

-----oOo-----

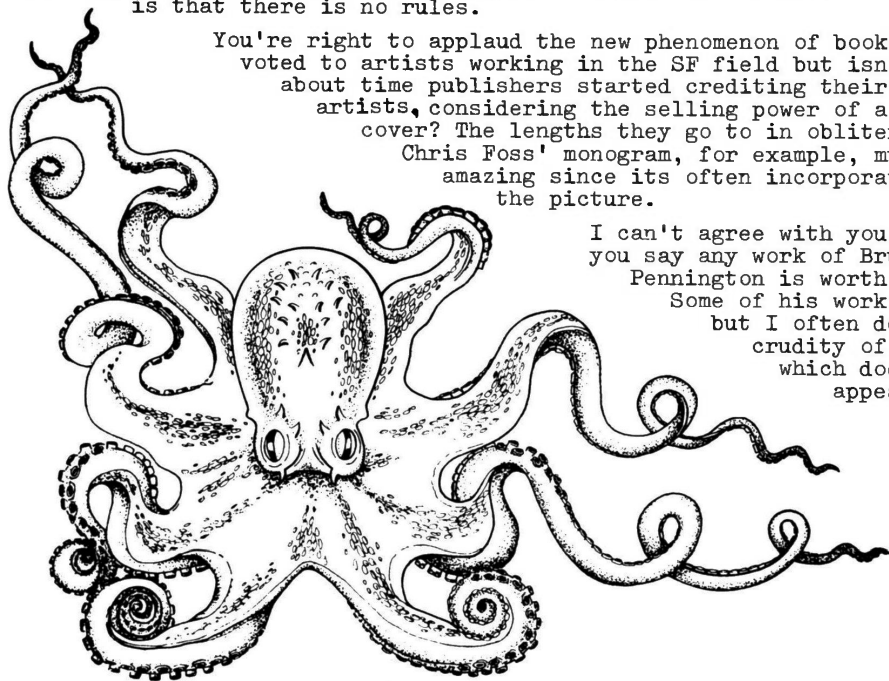
And of course there was always Kevin Easthope to prop me up before somebody else came along to knock me down again, (and this despite forgetting to give him even a name check in the last issue - really sorry about that Kevin.)

Kevin Easthope, 6, Ipsley Grove, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 7SY

...I would have liked to have seen a longer lettercolumn as I think it forms an effective link between editor and readers which can be very cohesive in any small circulation magazine.... The lettercolumn was big enough, however, to show just what a colossal ((expletive deleted, supply your own!)) Joseph Nicholas is becoming. Although the Camberley Guru has never published a fanzine of his own, he seems to spend a great deal of time telling other people what they're doing wrong. There is never a qualification such as: "This is my preference". Oh no, Nicholas always knows the correct method - and that method, of course, is the Nicholas Method. I find such conceit truly astounding. His views are so pathetically antiquated that its possible to trace a direct link back through the dim murky fannish past, right back as far even as the legendary Pickersgill. It's transparently obvious what Nicholas is trying to do of course - I expect he thinks that by such feeble impersonations of Uncle Greg he will reach equivalent fannish stature. Unfortunately the infantile babble of Nicholas in no way approaches the viciousness of Pickersgill at his worst. He will show himself to be an exceedingly stupid person indeed if he continues in these deranged attempts to impose uniformity on such a diverse field as fanzine publishing. The only rule is that there is no rules.

You're right to applaud the new phenomenon of books devoted to artists working in the SF field but isn't it about time publishers started crediting their cover artists, considering the selling power of a good cover? The lengths they go to in obliterating Chris Foss' monogram, for example, must be amazing since its often incorporated into the picture.

I can't agree with you when you say any work of Bruce Pennington is worth having. Some of his work is fine but I often detect a crudity of image which doesn't appeal to me.



...Finally, I did enclose a loc with my last letter didn't I? (Or rather, it was incorporated in the actual letter). I was most upset that I didn't even make the "We also heard from"s. Boo! Hiss!

-----oOo-----

Naturally, when you speak of the Devil, the ol' boy sometime appears. though nowadays it seems as if he leaves a lot of the contact with Fandom to be dealt with by Joseph Nicholas. His initial response this time was quite mild really. It wasn't until I replied to the following letter that he applied the accustomed (and expected) vitriol. He is such a touchy person!

Joseph Nicholas, 2, Wilmot Way, Camberley, Surrey GU15 1JA

....I don't know about there being any characters you can like in Fletcher Pratt's THE WELL OF THE UNICORN; I don't think that there are actually any characters at all. Part of the trouble with the novel is the quasi- biblical, or "high" prose that Pratt has adopted for the telling of his story..... The background to THE WELL OF THE UNICORN is straightforward medieval imitation, the sort of thing that's been plaguing fantasy fiction ever since William Morris rescued it from the Victorian nurseries, and will go on plaguing it as long as the publishers keep reprinting these so-called "classics"....but then, what the hell do they care? After all, they're only in it for the money...as are Ballantine....

Okay, so what sort of fiction do I like, I can hear you thinking. Well, I've become very pissed-off with SF and fantasy in general over the past year;... the good stuff gets lost under the welter of material unloaded onto the bookstalls by indiscriminating publishers. Silverberg goes out of print, Dick gets spaceships on his covers just for the sake of the brand image, Le Guin goes into mainstream because the critical rewards are better.... junk by Niven and Haldeman cop the major awards of the year, Asimov gets THE GODS THEMSELVES (easily the worst thing he's ever written) reprinted for the umpteenth time, New English Library make another fortune from something as atrocious as Heinlein's TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE.... Christ I'd rather read Thomas Hardy and Jane Austen than put up with another spaceships, aliens and ray-guns saga, they can at least write. There aren't many stylists in SF, and most of those are Kate Wilhelm and Christopher Priest. Moorcock too; his CONDITION OF MUZAK won the Guardian Fiction Prize.....

-----oOo-----

Do you get the impression that our Joseph is losing touch with SF, or is he just out of the mainstream and stuck in some stagnant back water somewhere?

Of course, there were all the others whose comments are too numerous to mention:- Ian Bryant, Stuart Clark, Garth Danielson, David Lewis, Stephen Lines, Andrew Muir, Simon Musk, Katherine Phillips, Peter Presford, Keith Richmond, David Rowe, Nigel's Myth, Kevin Young.

Fanzine reviews appeared in WARK and FANZINE FANATIQUE, for which I thank Rosemary Pardoe and Keith Walker.

Other fanzines received were: Stuart Clark's EGLADIL, Garth Danielson's BOOWATT, Andy Firth's FLEDGLING(2), Jean Frost's JABBERWOCKY, John & Eve Harvey's GHAS, Craig Hill's MONOCHROME (2), Simon Musk's STORMBRINGER, Peter Presford's MALFUNCTION, Keith Richmond's UGLY DUCKLING, Paul Skelton's THE ZINE THAT HAS NO NAME, Keith Walker's CYCLOPS.

TA, for general comments and encouragement from:- Robin Cooper, Phil Noskeau, Jean Holley, Patrick Holligan, Dick Sharp, Jacqueline Stewart, and Liz Whitelegg. (Phew, just got everybody in!)

recent reads



-SL-

CECELIA HOLLAND : FLOATING WORLDS. (Sphere)

Cecelia Holland has been one of my favourite historical novelists ever since I first discovered her books about eight or nine years ago. With such superb works as "RAKOSSY", "UNTIL THE SUN FALLS", "THE WONDER OF THE WORLD" and "THE DEATH OF ATTILA" to her credit, her standing in the historical field is exceptionally high. So it came as a surprise to me when she produced an Sf novel called "FLOATING WORLDS", which has now been issued in paperback by Sphere.

With her hard-earned position in another genre it must have taken a great deal of courage to enter the Sf arena, and to produce a whopping 500+ page book as her first novel in the field speaks volumes for the lady's confidence in herself.

Fortunately that confidence is in no way misplaced, for "FLOATING WORLDS" is a fascinating book, well up to her past high standards, and showing up quite a few established writers in SF for the relatively poor technicians that they are.

Entering "FLOATING WORLDS" is like plunging into a warm and exciting dream. The events of the book flow around you naturally, bearing you on relentlessly from one page to the next, until you have to forcibly extricate yourself or sit up all night, trapped in Ms. Holland's superb tale until the final chapter is reached. The vigor and polish of her writing is matched by the richness of her imagination, and although there may be a shortage of "hard" SF ideas, the atmospheric writing; the superb treatment of dialogue; the rich and forceful characters and settings more than make up for that lack.

The story hops and skips around the future Solar System; a future amazingly diverse in its political systems. Earth is an anarchical society, living penned up in domed cities as protection against the deadly pollution in the atmosphere. Elsewhere there are military dictators on the moon, Capitalism on Mars and a feudal barbarism exists amongst the mutant populations of the outer system.

Basically the story is outlined by the experiences of an Earthwoman, Paula Mendoza, who is a key figure in negotiations between the Inner Worlds and the Stythian Empire, a confederation of the outer planets. She is swept along by a course of events which takes her to the artificial "floating" cities of the Stythians, (situated on the "surface" of the gas giants of the Solar System), and then back to Earth as war erupts between the two factions, with the Earth as the main battleground. Much of the

plot could be said to be pretty improbable, but the impetus of the action and the excellent writing propels the reader along at such a rate that he has no time to quibble over such minor details.

The characters are, without exception, superb. From the central figure Paula, on outwards to even the most minor character, they are all consistently finely-drawn and human, and will be just one more thing which will constantly draw me back to this marvelous book. If she can do this fine a job on her first foray into SF, then just what will she be able to turn out in the future?

FRANK HERBERT : CHILDREN OF DUNE. (NEL)

NEL have finally released the last volume in the DUNE trilogy, CHILDREN OF DUNE. This has been out in the States in paperback for at least twelve months, so they have been pretty slow off the mark.

In many ways, this final volume is the most staggering in the whole trilogy. It is a crazy, twisted book, with an amazingly convoluted plot that weaves together the differing fates of all the Atreides family, as numerous antagonists that were present in the previous volumes all intrigue to take over the vacant throne left by the demise of Paul Atreides, as was described in DUNE MESSIAH. It is a very powerful consummation of the whole trilogy, and Herbert exercises all of his considerable writing talents in order to create a fitting finale to an exceptionally fine series.

That is not to say that the final volume is without faults, for it has several. The major one is perhaps the fate of Leto, Paul's son, who is perhaps too powerful, too omnipotent by the end of the book. A diminution of his powers by half would have left him still a necessarily fearsome figure, but also more believable. The slight overkill here is, perhaps, Herbert's only real mistake in the whole trilogy.

The whole of the DUNE trilogy is now in general circulation and it is so obviously one of the greatest works in SF, that it would be almost churlish to pick fault with NEL for delaying the final volume's issue for so long in Britain. But one other item does make me dissatisfied with their handling of CHILDREN OF DUNE. The final cover breaks the sequence began with DUNE, being still by Bruce Pennington, but instead of the blues and yellows of the first two volumes, there is a fairly nondescript (and incorrect) green effort. Could NEL not have specified a continuation of the former volumes far superior covers?

PIERS ANTHONY : A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON. (Ballantine/DelRey)

This book is a very strange departure for Piers Anthony, who has previously stayed pretty firmly in the SF field. So just why he has decided to suddenly branch out into a fantasy novel is a bit of a mystery. Perhaps it would be fair to say right here that there does seem to be a hint of SF creeping into the background of the story, almost as though the world on which A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON is based is actually an SF alternative society, rather than a pure fantasy world.

The book is quite good, full of interesting incidents, and has a nicely conceived cork-screw of a plot which actually does work out quite successfully. The characters are amusing inventions, even if they are a trifle thin and rather irritating in one or two places, but they are generally consistent.

The major fault that the book displays, is that Anthony has written it in a very flippant style, which is often at odds with the subject matter. If anyone has ever read Anthony's hilarious PROSTHO PLUS of a few years back, (and if you haven't, treat yourself to a good laugh), you

can probably remember the style from that book. And it just doesn't work terribly well when applied to a fantasy subject. It is almost as if Anthony had decided that Fantasy was a flippant subject, to be approached in a very light-hearted manner, because it is plainly such a silly genre. If ever there was a book that showed that the "high prose" style is not at all bad for fantasy, it is this one. A similar style was carried through with far greater success by Gordon Dickson, in *THE GEORGE AND THE DRAGON*, (reviewed in CS2), so it is actually possible. A *SPELL FOR CHAMELEON* is worth a read if you can borrow it from someone, (don't all stampede in this direction) but really isn't worth the exorbitant import prices demanded for it nowadays.

GUMBO'S VARIATIONS (Continued from page 3)

One thing missing from this issue is any sample of my own fiction, (stop cheering at the back there). This is because there has been a pretty consistent criticism of *THE GOLDEN BEES OF DAEDALUS* from sources that I can agree are likely to know what they are talking about. But I do not intend either my fiction, or anybody else's, to be excluded forever. I'm still working on my own ideas, (or at least I will be when this issue is consigned to the printer at last), and I will certainly publish other stories in future issues, once I am satisfied that I have reached a reasonable level of competence in story construction. I do feel that the ideas I have are worth writing (*GOLDEN BEES OF DAEDALUS* was not representative), but that they need a framework worthy of them before being published.

And so to the normal pleas of all 'zine editors. As you may have noticed (see foot of contents page) from issue 4, *THE CRYSTAL SHIP* will be available on subscription, for those who will neither contribute, write letters or send 'zines in exchange. So if you want to continue to receive this 'zine, and you have nothing to offer but filthy lucre, then launder it thoroughly and send it along to me. I will then achieve vast wealth and resources, and will be able to continue publishing further issues of *THE CRYSTAL SHIP*, for your edification, delight and, occasion ally, bewilderment too.

To aid in this grand scheme, I naturally need more contributors, more artists, more locs, more of everything. How else is the Empire to grow if not with the aid of the sweat of your brow? Things I should very much like to see would be articles on Herbert's entire *DUNE* trilogy; a good analysis of *THE SWORD OF SHANNARA*, and maybe even an over-view of the works of Anne McCaffrey. Plus, of course, any other article of an amusing, interesting or controversial nature that your fertile little minds will undoubtedly be able to dream up. Can I expect to hear from YOU! Good. Until the next issue then, goodbye.



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