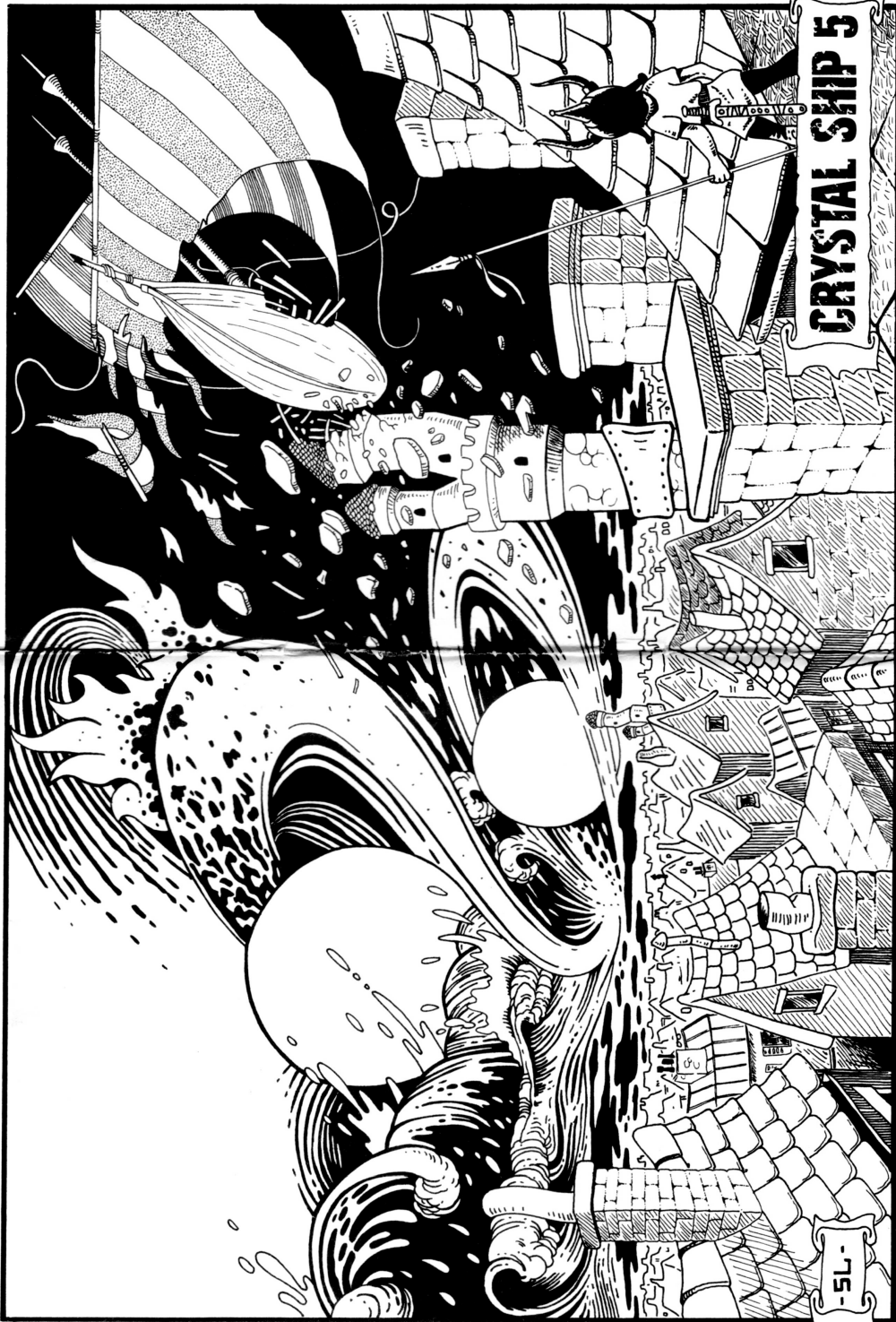


# CRYSTAL SHIP 5





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## Gumbo's Variations

January 3rd 1982: the last day of my Christmas and New Year holiday. It's back to work tomorrow, and access again to the electric typewriter in the office. Then I can begin the final push to get CS5 out. I have been juggling different articles and layouts around over the past week, and have now decided just what constitutes the issue - to my surprise, the zine has fallen into place quite nicely, with only a few minor bits and pieces to do to complete the whole issue.

As you will have noticed by now, this issue is bigger than the last, 32 pages against 28. Most of that increase is taken up by the Ripples column, which has expanded to accomodate many of the letters that I've received in response to CS4. What started out as 4-5 pages expanded irresistibly out to 8½ pages, and was only arrested there by drastic pruning and ruthless excision of a number of letters that I would really have liked to print. That's fanpublishing, I guess - the constant fight of aspirations against economics.

When I restarted CS, I had accepted that it would take me a couple of issues to get back to the response level of CS3. So you can imagine my surprise to find that, despite all kinds of problems (like out-dated address lists), CS4 has actually surpassed CS3 in the number of LoCs it drew. I must say that I am extremely grateful to everybody for writing, even if it has taken a large percentage of my available free time keeping up with the correspondence! Not that I'm grouching, you understand, as I have enjoyed writing dozens of letters, and I am looking forward to doing it all over again when this issue finally staggers out into the world.

The majority of correspondents were quite complementary about CS4, which has encouraged me a lot, although I know that there were many things in CS4 which I can improve on, both in my own writing, in layout, in general design, right the way through the zine. I believe that this issue is an improvement, and I hope that you all agree. Well, not all -

there are some people who could never be satisfied by anything anyone produced - but I don't take that much notice of professional grouchers, so I guess I can easily live with their discontent.

The major criticism of CS4 (apart from the strange chap who said it was full of 'the usual bunch of kooks and trendies', and who advised me to give up and send the money to the SDP instead - the SDP! - and he accuses me of consorting with trendies!), was that it was a bit out-of-date. Hardly surprising, as some of the material had been around for up to three years, and obviously the letter column was a hodge-podge of maybe-still-relevant bits dragged out from a stack of mouldering letters. Graham Ashley went as far as to say that I should concentrate hard and write 'now' articles. Well, I tried; this editorial is about the fourth attempt I've made to complete the task. The others fell by the wayside as events overtook them.

I first put pen to paper on an editorial in early November, hot with the fires of outrage over a number of fanzine articles coming from the 'Old Guard' in fandom. Before my first draft was even finished, WALLBANGER came along and knocked out part of my argument, which I patched up again from a slightly different angle. Then I received a copy of Malcolm Edwards' TAPPEN: bang went another supporting strut. Finally, the suddenly-prolific Rob Hansen tiptoed yet another EPSILON past the front door's defences and finished the job of making my editorial well and truly redundant. I tell you, there is no competing with these 'spirited' beggars for topicality! With a cumbersome old ship like CS, it takes me too long to get an issue into print to be really topical - I'll have to be content with my slightly passé approach, and Graham et al will have to lump it I'm afraid.

The other major criticism seems to be that I'm a bit too eclectic, flittering about all over the place in one issue. I guess my critics are going to have to live with that, too, as eclecticism is my 'thing'. I've got a wide range of interests, all of 'em dear to me, and I like to touch on at least a few of them in each issue. Whether it's books, records, films, tv, radio, science fact, fannish humour - whatever; if it catches my eye and I'm interested or amused by it, then it's likely to turn up in CS. I have great difficulty in restraining myself from including a regular motor racing column in the zine, motor racing being another of my 'passions'.

By now, CS has assumed a certain identity of its own, and that identity is closely linked to its very eclectic nature. CS wouldn't be CS without music articles, or decent artwork, or people like Peter Presford (he'll be back next issue, nonest!), or without oddball articles like Steve Sneyd's piece this issue. I quite admire the determinedly sercon approach that someone like Geoff Rippington maintains in ARENA, but I'm not about to emulate him, because it's not my way of approaching things. I may be a Jack of all trades, but that satisfies me, and CS is a fair reflection of my own thinking and attitudes, muddled though they may be.

Aside from receiving plenty of excellent letters, one of the good things about being back is that I'm receiving lots of fanzines again. I've had about three dozen or so in the last six months, which is quite a lot considering the fact that I've not actively gone out of my way to obtain fanzine exchanges. It's quite odd to see all this activity again, especially as many of these zines are coming from the 'Old Guard' that seemingly fell asleep, as far as fan publishing went, after Season, and have only just woken up. Looking back on zines I had before I fell out of the scene myself, I find that with zines like WALLBANGER and EPSILON, I've barely missed an issue after being out of circulation for two and a half years. On the other hand, there are at least some areas where the

old-timers have kept churning them out. It was nice to see zines like ERG and TWLL-DDU again, still trundling along in the comfortable vein that Terry and Dave established ages ago.

That's not to say that there are no good new fanzines around, too - there are, and there are signs that a resurrection of the fanzine as a force in British fandom is underway. There are good new faneds out there, like Chuck Connor, like Martyn Taylor, like Kevin Rattan, who will probably get it altogether and produce really good fanzines in the near future. Across the little water, in the Netherlands, Roelof Goudriaan is producing a fine English fanzine, A FOREIGN FANZINE, which British faneds should make efforts to acquire, as it is very good, one of the four best fanzines I've received in the last six months. Roelof manages to produce a pleasing mix of European news, fiction and fan articles in a very stylish way - he's good and probably getting better - certainly his enthusiasm is catching, as he even conned a fannish article out of me!

The other zines I strongly rate are all from relative old-timers. The indefatigable Geoff Rippington's ARENA continues to be the British sercon fanzine that I really do look forward to seeing (never having succumbed to the lure of the BSFA). He's got the mix about right now, combining British authors and fanwriters together into an excellent blend of articles, reviews and interviews.

Across the big water, another Rip Van Winkle stirred back into life when Pauline Palmer put out another WILD FENNEL recently. WF is an oddity, a really warm and friendly zine that has all the endearing qualities of a pet cat; it just loves to crawl into your lap and curl up there - it's a very relaxing zine to read, and I hope that Pauline doesn't fall back into the waiting arms of her APA again. Fandom needs more WILD FENNELS!

Finally, but not by any means least, a British fannish zine that really does show how it should be done. Harry Bell and Kevin Williams, staunch members of Gannetfandom, produced OUT OF THE BLUE in mid year, and it's one of the best single issues of any fanzine that I've ever seen, chock full of excellent articles, good humoured, with delightfully clear printing - it really can't be faulted at all. Andy Firth's piece, "Whistlin' in the dark", is one of the best fanzine articles I've ever seen, witty, interesting and superbly well-written.

But enough of other people's zines - what's in store in this issue of CS. Well, there's an idiosyncratic piece of writing from Steve Sneyd that's very appropriate for this time of year, when we are all desperately thinking of how to spend our precious holiday time. There's an equally appropriate piece of reminiscence from me, on the perils of Winter travelling; a short review of an interestingly different fantasy from Mary Gentle; a very odd reaction to Philip Dick's VALIS from Iain Ewing, and one or two other bits from me on things like rock music. Plus, of course, Martin Helsdon's folio of pictures scattered through the zine. I've deliberately cut down on illustration this time, 'cos Martin's stuff really needs to stand on its own, without the clutter of my normal artwork around it.

Next issue should be out (famous last words) in mid-'82, depending on whether promises of contributions are fulfilled - the more promises kept, the faster the production. The next CS is going to be a special 'Oriental' edition, in design at least (with a few articles in the same vein to keep the spirit of the thing a bit more alive.) I'm quite looking forward to getting to work on it, (nothing like being a glutton for punishment, is there?). After that I hope CS will be on a regular basis, say about three issues a year. So keep them responses coming, and feel free to consider CS as a hospitable resting place for your work!



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Notice something about those names?

They don't appear in your atlas, for a start.

In fact, none of these countries exist.

So are we off on a tour of utopias, dystopias, old ropeas, and general mythical locations from the wide and wonderful world of fantasy, SF and Literature with a capital L for long?

Not quite.

In ten years time, any or all of those countries might easily exist, assuming the human race makes the next decade. Seats in the UN, a national airline (dirigibles by then, maybe), an IMF loan with loads of pretty strings, colour tv showing Star Trek repeats with sub-titles, and all the other pleasures of independence that countries like Britain enjoy so well (except we don't get the sub-titles).

Because all of these names are examples from the vast cast list of countries that somebody, often a lot of somebodies, are trying to make happen. Some are ghosts out of history striving to be reborn, places that appear and disappear down the millenia like the pages of a book being turned in a candle-lit room. Some have never existed before. Many probably never will - but then, what odds would you have got twenty years ago for predicting that sleepy, subdued old East Pakistan would erupt through the map as Bangladesh?

Some of these prospective countries are the homelands of linguistic minorities, others of religious traditions different from those of the state that currently includes them (states, in some cases, since many such might-be 'captive nations' sprawl across current frontiers).

Once in a while, a back page paragraph or two in a national newspaper gives one of them a mention, usually when the Whatever Liberation Front hijacks a plane with a Bolton man on board, or in some other way impinges on the Great British Way of Life.

In the meantime, whether you are looking for some names and picturesque locations to use in your next near-future setting story, or like to be one step ahead of today's news, or maybe even think that minorities do have a fair old argument for an independent home of their own, here are a few selections to be going on with, starting with the place where this article started.

EELAM - The state sought by Sri Lanka's Tamil (Hindu minority) inhabitants. Roughly the north quarter of the island, the opposite end from Arthur Clarke's favourite beach.

HAYASTAN - The Armenian (ring a bell now?) name for Armenia, and independent intermittently from way back BC to the late Middle Ages. Independent again briefly after World War I. Today, the remnants of the Armenians (those who survived Turkish massacres in World War I) live in the north-east part of historic Armenia, now a union republic of the USSR, (the rest of Armenia is occupied by Turkey), or in exile. The Secret Armenian Army recently made the news by seizing Turkish offices in Paris.

BREZH - Brittany in the Breton language. Independent until the 16th century, when the last Duchess was married to the French king. Local rights were removed during the French Revolution for rebellion against the centralising activities of Paris, the language was heavily suppressed (an equivalent of the 'Welsh knot' meant beatings for kids caught speaking Breton at school). There was further suppression at the end of World War II for alleged collaboration by Breton nationalists with the Nazis. Mitterand has promised local autonomy.

SHABA - In the early days of Congolese independence Shaba seceded briefly under the name Katanga. Lunda population. So called 'gendarmes' have staged two invasions from bases in Angola to try and revive the idea of secession.

KALITDUNAT - Eskimo name for Greenland. Currently internally self governing part of Denmark. Voted recently on whether or not to leave the Common Market. (It decided that it would - ed.)

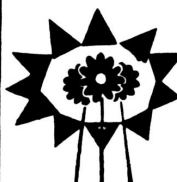
Appetite whetted? A few more to go on with then.

MINSUPALA - The southern Moslem majority islands of the Philippines, where the Moro Liberation Front has been fighting for ten years against the Christian central government. The name stands for MINdanao, SULu and PALawan, the three main islands the claim.

MAROUNISTAN - Projected name for the Maronite Christian sector of Lebanon if that divided country does break up completely.

AZANIA - African nationalist name for South Africa - an odd name to choose, as historical Azania was the east coast of medieval Kenya - and also a mythical island empire in the same East African area in Evelyn Waugh's BLACK MISCHIEF.

EUZKADI - The independent state demanded by some of the Basque inhabitants of North-east Spain and South-west France. Some say they descend from Cro-Magnon man, that the language of witchcraft is Basque and that it was Basques, not Saracens, who ambushed Roland at Roncesvalles.



ESSEQUIBO - A very long shot. An area of Guyana (British Guiana as was) about the size of Britain, claimed by Venezuela. Reverend James Jones country. It could end up that neither country keeps it.

PATTANI - Malay speaking area of southern Thailand. There seems to be rather too many ambushes of Thai army units there to be all the work of geriatric survivors of the Communist side in the '50s Malayan Emergency.

CABINDA - Oil rich part of Angola. An enclave surrounded on three sides by the Congo (Kinshasa variety). Secessionists are pretty quiet now and were possibly always mainly a Gulf Oil Company bargaining counter.

KHALISTAN - The independent state some Sikhs would like to carve out of north-west India. Next time your bus driver is turbanned, be polite - he might be their Minister of Transport some day!

LIBERTARIA - The state rich American anarchists in the Libertarian Movement (yes, there are Right-wing Anarchists, Dorothy) would like to set up as soon as they can get their hands on an island or two somewhere. ABACO in the Bahamas, ESPIRITU SANTOS in Vanaatu (New Hebrides as was), are amongst suggested targets: each has been the centre of abortive secession attempts in the past (remember Jimmy Stevens and those wallahs who purport to worship Phil the Greek).

SEALAND - The mini version of Libertaria - an old offshore fort well off the East Anglia coast, occupied, pirate radio style, by a shifting cast of mysterious punters. Being left alone until H.M. Constabulary find a good cure for sea-sickness.

OROMA and TIGRE - Just two of the states that will be carved out of the Ethiopian empire if various liberation movements have their way. Oroma is the home of the Galla minority in the far south, and Tigre in the north; both share the quality that at various points in history, each was top dog in various Ethiopian civil wars. Now they want out completely.

WALLONIA - If Belgium ever splits down the middle, as seems more likely with each government collapse there, this will be the French speaking southern bit (Flanders is the richer Dutch-speaking north). The dividing line has scarcely changed between the two since Roman times.

ARABISTAN and ALBA, KURDISTAN and OCCITANIE, MOSQUITIA and ZETLAND, and KABYLIA, PAKHOUNISTAN and BOUGANVILLE and..... and are we considering fantasy or future reality - mere might-have-beens, or the shape of things to come? "Those who live longest will see the most", as they say - in the meantime, if the subject begins to intrigue you, your library should have David Downing's AN ATLAS OF TERRITORIAL AND BORDER DISPUTES (New English Library 1980), the Minority Rights Group (36. Craven Street, London, WC2N 5NG) will send you a list of well-researched publications on the topic for a SAE, and if your local betting-shop won't give odds on which of these foetuses are ever likely to be born, they might know somebody in Special Branch who will!



# Travels with Chichger

Today it snowed for the first time this winter. Quite suddenly, and with little warning, the whole landscape has changed from the greens and browns of Autumn to the harsh white, grey and brown of Winter.

Driving into the University from Newport, along ungritted roads, with the car slipping slightly on every bend, I was reminded of a long forgotten incident when a former colleague of mine encountered heavy snow for the first time in his life.

It happened over fourteen years ago now, in the first year of my own travels to Milton Keynes. At the time, I worked for Punch Publications in Fleet Street, the parent company that owned Punch magazine, among others. In a sudden flush of enthusiasm, the somewhat staid old company had taken over an ailing, but modern, printers in Milton Keynes. They had then decided, for some equally strange reason, to move large portions of the parent company (including my section, the circulations department) out into the wilds of Buckinghamshire, to inhabit the top floor of the printers' offices. Naturally enough, a lot of people didn't want to go, which meant that a few of us were able to screw some good terms out of the firm in return for staying with the company and travelling up and down.

And so it came to pass that three of us travelled between Middlesex and Milton Keynes each day. A young chap called Noel (an accounts clerk) and I journeyed into Hounslow every morning, where we transferred into the car owned by the third member of the intrepid band. The third man was Chichger, who was the firm's salaries accountant. He was a stocky, middle-aged East African Indian, who's family had been expelled from Kenya only a year or so before in one of Kenyatta's 'Africanisation' periods. He was a nice bloke, a bit taciturn, and having nothing really in common with Noel and I, (who were both twenty years younger), apart from the shared need to travel the same route to Milton Keynes daily. So the conversation in the Chichmobile (as Noel and I dubbed it) was never exactly scintillating.

The Chichmobile was a two-year old Morris Traveller, (one of those Minors with an estate back and wooden struts). It was surprisingly comfortable considering the fact that the design was damned near twenty years old even then. It didn't do at all bad in performing the trip every day. If it had just been down to the car, we would not have had any kind of fraught feelings about the journey.

The trouble was with the driver; Chichger had learned to drive in East Africa, and had not really come to terms with British roads or traffic. It wasn't that he was a bad driver, as I don't think we ever considered for one moment that he would lose control of the car - Morris Minors are pretty safe old buses anyway - but he did have inherent foibles about certain things on the road, lorries being his major failing.

It seems that in East Africa, (and from other friends who have been to West Africa it seems as though it may apply to the whole continent), lorries are the kings of the highway. Unless you are on a multi-lane road, to overtake, or to try to overtake, a lorry is suicide, as the lorry-driver would consider it completely within his rights to block your attempt, or drive you off the road. Chichger had all of this firmly conditioned in him, and no amount of experience on British roads would shake him of the fear of lorries.

On a motorway he was ok - he'd cruise down the M<sup>1</sup> at eighty with no

problems, but once we were off the motorway onto even a wide major road like the A5, the survival instincts took over and, at the first sight of a lorry ahead, Chichger would be off the accelerator and onto the brakes to slow down.

That was frustrating enough by itself, (especially if it was on the homeward journey, and Noel and I had dates with our girl-friends) but Chichger compounded the offence even further. Once behind a lorry, he became hypnotised by it. Literally, he would be staring at the blank tailgate of the lorry oblivious to almost everything else - the road ahead could be four lanes wide and as empty as a Treasury purse; there could be a police car sitting on his tail with its blue lights flashing; there could have been a four minute warning of Armageddon on the radio - he would not have taken a blind bit of notice.

As a result, he would often gradually creep up behind a lorry until the nose of the Morris was virtually under the tailgate of the lorry. In the meantime, Noel and I would be either screaming blue murder, whimpering pitifully, or feverishly scanning through the 'Sits. Vac.' columns for a quick way out of the daily terror of Chichger's lorry phobias. I'm still amazed that the old Morris came through those encounters intact, without so much as a scratch on its nose - I'm sure that there must be a few lorry drivers who still remember a light-grey Traveller that scared the living daylights out of them by nearly disappearing under their rear end!

Chichger's experience of British weather was also naturally rather limited. Although he quickly got the hang of the normal vagaries of fog and rain, ice and frost, etc., snow managed to elude him. He was fortunate enough to have experienced a mild winter in his first year in Britain, with little snow in the South of England, and what little he did see didn't prepare him for the full awfulness of a real blizzard.

The snow came in early December that year, sweeping down from the North and catching us completely by surprise. It had been a fine, if frosty, morning when we drove up the M1 to work, but by mid-afternoon there was a full scale blizzard blasting away outside the office windows. Noel and I put our heads together and agreed it was now or never - we had to get on the road soon or be stranded in Milton Keynes over night (and it was a Friday, too - not a pleasant prospect). We marched Chichger to the car despite his protests that it was unnecessary to go so early, (it was about four o'clock and already dark), but he finally bowed to our wishes and we set off.

The M1 was already closed so we had to go down the A5 for London. We knew we were in trouble when it took three quarters of an hour to get to Hockliffe, a mere eight miles away, but we plugged on up the road to Dunstable, where we entered a deep cutting in the Downs, on the hill up into the town centre.

That was where we really hit problems. The force of the wind, channeled through the cutting, pushed the Chichmobile about all over the place; snow had accumulated on the road to a good six inches deep overall, and it was also drifting. The Morris side-slipped into one of these drifts, just managed to stagger through, but then only made another fifty yards or so before it died completely.

Chichger tried to re-start, but all he could get out of the engine was an apologetic cough. We piled out and opened the bonnet, to find that the engine was absolutely soaked, where snow had been pushed up under the car and over the electrics. The engine was cooling fast so that we figured there was no chance of it drying by itself, and more snow was blowing in and around it all the time.

Fortunately we had passed a garage at the bottom of the hill, a

a tiny place that was not much more than a filling station. It's lights had been on as we passed, so we hoped and prayed that it was still open - but we had to get the Chichmobile down the hill first.

Manhandling a Morris Traveller around in a blizzard on a slippery surface, with traffic still staggering up the hill past you, is not a pastime that I would recommend to anyone. We were all pretty cold and wet by the time we'd got it pointed the right way. We'd all taken tumbles on the hard-packed undersnow, and were feeling distinctly second-hand, so we were not amused to find that the snow prevented the Morris from simply rolling down the hill - snow just packed under the wheels and acted as wedges. We had to push the thing right down the hill.

Thankfully, the garage was open, so we persuaded the garage hand to bring the Morris inside the workshop, where he produced his purpose built tool for drying off wet ignition systems - a hair dryer! Within five minutes, the Chichmobile was ready to roll and Noel and I looked outside to find the blizzard had left off a bit too - things were looking better. "Come on, Chich," we said, "let's be off."

But answer came there none. Chichger was hunched over the coal stove in the corner of the workshop, shaking like a leaf on a tree. His normally olive skin had taken on a pronounced blue tinge, his teeth were chattering like demented castanets, and he was obviously in deep distress. The garage hand took one look at him and rushed off to put the kettle on. Chichger really needed a bit of help de-frosting!

I presume it was one of those physiological things about the human body, that Chichger had not adapted quickly to the extremes of temperature that he would encounter in Britain after the warmer climate of East Africa. Whatever the reason, while it took a mere five minutes to restore the car to working order, it took a full hour to restore its' driver!

He said afterwards, in the funny Indian lilt that comedians delight in imitating, that he had never been so cold before in his life - he really felt that his limbs had frozen up completely, which was odd because, by the time we'd got the Morris down off the hill and into the garage, Noel and I were actually sweating from the exertion - the exercise had kept us warm. Chichger, sitting inside steering with no heating, had damned near froze solid!

Eventually, tanked up with coffee and some 'medicinal' brandy, Chichger was back in working order and ready to resume the drive. By then it was about seven o'clock, and we had travelled the grand total of eleven miles in three hours, which would have been reasonable for a slow husky team, but was pretty lousy performance for a car! We all took turns using the garage phone to notify our near and dear ones that we were running a little late, then we set off again into the frozen white landscape, which was virtually deserted by now - everyone else was sensible enough to stay put.

The rest of the journey was merely nail-biting - the blizzard had abated and the snow was falling quite gently. There was still a lot of it underfoot, and it was badly rutted so that the Chichmobile behaved more like a tram than a car, which in a way was no bad thing - Noel and I had a vague suspicion that Chichger had a low alcohol tolerance and that the brandy had gone straight to his head. It was the casual way he kept breaking into song, and his overall loquaaciousness that fuelled our suspicions - we heard more of the thoughts of Accountant Chich that night than in all the other trips put together.

With a few more close calls, and a lot of luck, we finally got Hounslow about nine that evening, where Noel was relieved - indeed, amazed - to find that there were still a few buses running to Richmond

(where he lived), while I jumped into my old MG Midget, and was astounded to find that it was prepared to go, even with nine inches of snow on the bonnet!

My own personal adventures continued for the rest of the evening, as I had to travel across from Hounslow to Slough to see my girlfriend, to assure her that I was safe. At the time, I was just saving my pennies for a new pair of rear tyres to be fitted to the Midget, so the trip along the Bath Road, running as fast as I dared, (which was quite fast, as the road was completely empty), on near bald tyres was fun to say the least. I don't think I've ever had a car more out of shape deliberately than I had that old sports car on the roundabouts and curves of the Bath Road that night. If the Fuzz had seen me, I'd probably still be waiting for my licence back. I even managed a spin in the middle of the Colnbrook by-pass, the straightest section of road on the whole journey! Great fun though, and a valuable catharsis after the tension of sitting helplessly while Chichger tried to cope with the snow.

The daily trips didn't last much longer after that. I think Noel and Chichger came to the same conclusion after that crazy journey in the snow, as a couple of months later they both left Punch to go back to work in the sensible commuterland of London. I stayed on and travelled up in the MG for six months more, before realising that my girlfriend and I had a good opportunity to get married and move into a place of our own in Milton Keynes immediately. This we subsequently did ending the daily travels altogether. I still can't go out in sudden snow storms, or go up the hill into Dunstable, without being reminded of Chichger and his old Morris, and the day he learned the real meaning of Winter.



**Curses!**

Guess who made a major error on calculating the length of an article then? Now, what can I fill up the space with?

I know - does anyone out there know anything about a film that is apparently being made of Peter S. Beagle's fine fantasy, *THE LAST UNICORN*. A reprint is due out shortly, and I noticed in the *BOOKSELLER* that it was announced as a film tie-in. What film, who did it, and when? My admiration for Beagle's work gives me great feelings of trepidation piece of fantasy coming under the bale-

ful influence of Bakshi or Disney.

The Beagle book is amongst the first releases on George Allen and Unwins new fantasy imprint. It will be interesting to see what other fantasy works they print in future. Let us hope that the millions they made from publishing Tolkien will be put to good use in encouraging new fantasy writers with their own ideas, rather than copyists.





# Too Long a Sacrifice

# Mary Gentle

Politics and fantasy make strange bedfellows - unless you consider politicians de facto fantasists - but particularly so when they concern Ireland.

Mildred Broxon's TOO LONG A SACRIFICE ( Dell Books) begins in Ireland fourteen centuries ago. Christianity has only just arrived, Sidhe-magic is a taken-for-granted part of reality. Tadhg MacNiall is a harper, Maire ni Donnall is a healer: they are husband and wife in an equalitarian Celtic society. Cursed, Tadhg comes under the influence of the Sidhe-folk; and Maire follows him to their palace under Loch Neagh. There they forget their world and their love for each other, living with the immortal Sidhe as the centuries pass.

So far, standard myth and legend as used in contemporary fantastic literature. But when Maire and Tadhg find their way back to the world, they emerge in present day Ulster...

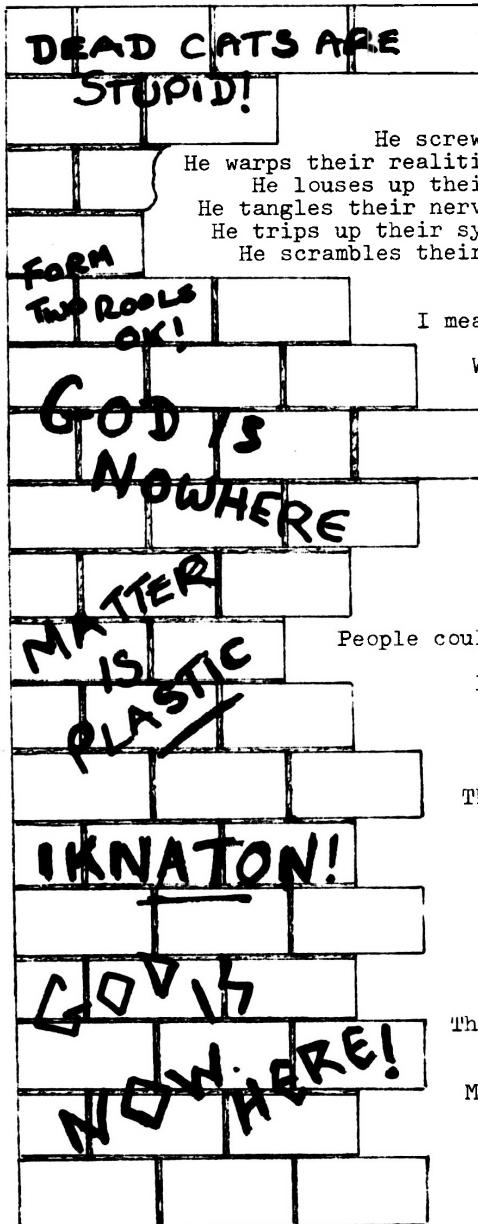
Broxon sends Tadhg south and Maire north, each ignorant of the other's survival; one under the malign influence of the Horned God, one with the healing powers of the Goddess. Tadhg runs USA-bought guns - in Boston bars the slogan runs: 'give a dollar and kill a British soldier; best bargain you'll ever buy.' Maire heals a Catholic girl and a British soldier, lovers in Belfast; and she joins the Women's March for Peace. But Broxon is most telling where she abandons old legends for her own kind of fantasy - a hate-beast stalks the Falls Road, re-eyed and loving murder. There's no explanation for its presence, and no solution; but how could there be?

Being Ireland, religion is an integral part of politics; from the tolerant sexually-unrestricted Celtic tribes to the Christians of modern-day Belfast. In TOO LONG A SACRIFICE the dead lie unquiet in the earth, to be woken by the pagan Tadhg - 'Did the priests lie?' one dead woman asks, finding no heaven or hereafter. Neither Catholic nor Protestant in sympathies, the book decries using any god as an excuse for murder.

It takes a brave writer to tackle such a theme, and Broxon makes a good attempt at it. Life in a war-zone is clearly portrayed. The violence is not ignored, but it is perhaps too much offstage to be effective; and we are too accustomed to television showing butchery, blood, and the aftermath of bombings to come easily to silkies and the Sidhe. Distance lends a mythic quality to the view of Ireland; sometimes leading to blindness, sometimes - as in this book - to a different but clear-sighted view across the Atlantic. Broxon has anger and compassion. her sympathies aren't biased; it's possible to see how each side thinks they are doing right - and that the results prove both wrong. TOO LONG A SACRIFICE is told in a modern style of English that echoes with Celtic rhythms. The characters become real, even when they stand for myths greater than human. The descriptions of Ireland are vivid. If, in the final analysis, it doesn't quite make it - what fantasy could encompass all of that? But it reaches, it touches, it moves; considering the power of the subject, it would be strange if it didn't.

It would require some apocalypse or unimaginable act of healing to end TOO LONG A SACRIFICE properly. Broxon, heading towards Tara and a confrontation between a Goddess-inspired healer and a harper who can raise the dead; Horned God and Goddess; Protestant and Catholic; in the end comes to neither. You can't solve a problem that has no solution. The fantasy fails - but isn't it better to fail using fantasy as a unique outlook on the world, and making a plea for sanity, than to fail writing mock-heroic sword-and-sorcery or post-Tolkienian fairy tales?

# Fiddlin' with Dick



Oh boy!  
Philip K. Dick !  
Oh boy, on boy!  
That guy is on mean mind-fucker !  
I really mean that !  
He screws up peoples' brains with his books  
He warps their realities by their proximity to his works.  
He louses up their world view by overlaying his own.  
He tangles their nerve endings with glimpses of madness.  
He trips up their synapses with hallucinogenic phrases.  
He scrambles their cerebellum with well chosen words.  
He's a real mind devourer !

I mean, take this thing I have before me  
VALIS!  
What do you call a thing like this ?  
Well, you could call it crap;  
But that's just a cop-out.  
You could call it brilliant;  
But that's a cop-out too!  
VALIS is...is...is...  
Is everything and nothing!

VALIS is theology exploded.  
It is madness personified.  
It's wise and didactic;  
It's also bloody dangerous!  
People could get hurt reading stuff like this!  
It could damage their egos.  
It could assault their very beings ;  
Their souls, even .  
VALIS should be banned!

Catholics must hate it.  
They should re-start the Inquisition,  
And dispatch them to California,  
To deal with P.K.Dick.  
The Inquisitors would disappear ,  
Lost amongst the freaks,  
The religio-materialist anarchy  
Of the West Coast of Amerika,  
Philip K. Dick Land,  
The home of the mind warp,  
The land of the free (?)  
The melting pot that produces ...what?  
More crackpot religions?  
More mindless tv shows?  
More multi-million dollar movie junk?  
More dumb Presidents?  
Oh wow - that's real Dick-land.  
Dick and California,  
Which came first?  
The Screwball State,  
Or the Screwball Saint of SF?

What do you make of a writer,  
Whose hero is himself?  
Not once, but twice,  
In schizoid psychodrama,  
With messianic overload,  
As the motive force  
That drives the madman on.  
On into shades of darkest gloom,  
Of aborted Second Comings;  
Of wise old satellites,  
Complete with zapping pink lasars;  
Of age old conspiracies,  
That fool man as to the nature of time.  
Of Yin and Yang turned on their heads,  
Transformed into psychedelic piracy,  
Where God is Mind,  
And Mind is quite, quite mad.

Dick thinks that God is Us,  
You and me and even him,  
The reality distorter,  
The mind-warper,  
The schizoid saint,  
The world-weary writer.  
Philip K. Dick is God,  
Just like you and me.  
Believe me, I know it's true.  
I got it direct from God,  
In the shape of P.K.Dick.

But can you believe this guy?  
Is it Dick you're hearing,  
Or is it Horselover Fat?  
Does it matter?  
Is it insane to think that is does?  
Dick raises questions,  
But he's very short on answers,  
To calm a reader's soul.

Oh boy - see what I mean?  
Let Dick into your life,  
Even through the smallest crack,  
And your mind comes up with crazy junk,  
Just like this!  
Philip K. Dick is a mind-fucker.  
And he's pretty cracked himself.  
I only wish that P.K.Dick  
Would keep his thoughts to himself,  
And not let them invade the world.  
But he won't - so you best beware,  
And please try to remember,  
That VALIS is pure HELL!

THE EMPIRE  
NEVER  
ENDED!

KING FELIX

IT'S GOD'S  
FAULT!

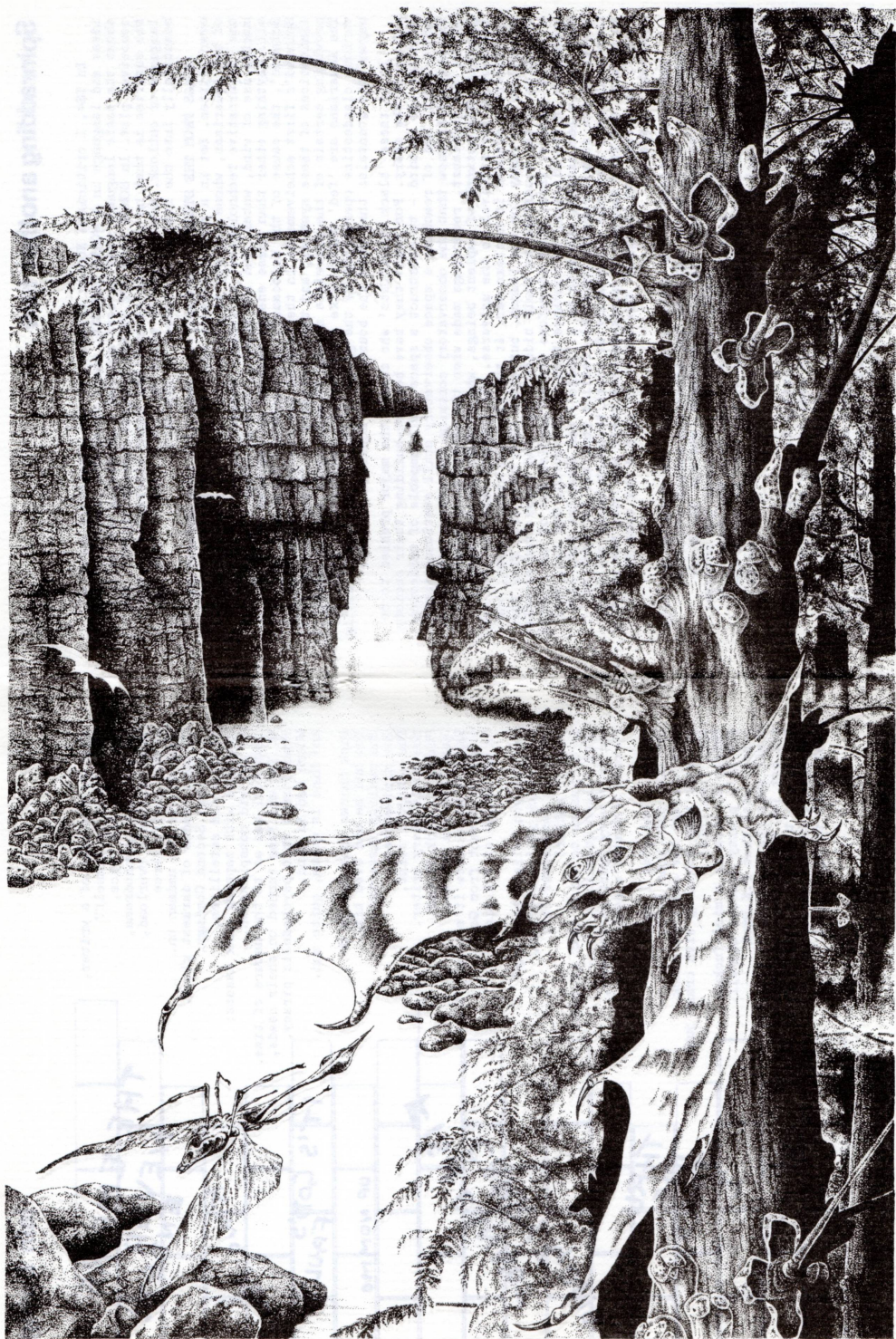
UP NOMMO

WISH CANNOT  
CARRY GUNS

THRU  
THE  
THIRD  
I

TRY SUICIDE





# Spinradding another tale

In CS4, I criticised Norman Spinrad for the unsuitable match of ideas and language in *A WORLD BETWEEN*, where Spinrad's preconceptions about the basic language that he uses spoiled a promising and well-conceived plot. In *SONGS FROM THE STARS*, Spinrad redeems himself, and the surprise is that he succeeds without any major alteration to his language or outlook, but because he comes up with a subject that fits beautifully into the framework erected by his style.

*SONGS FROM THE STARS* is probably the best book that Spinrad has ever written. Set in a post-Holocaust America, it details the adventures of two Aquarians, whose society is almost the ideal personification of the 'Alternative Technologies' of today. 'Scienc' is restricted to making use of wind, water, sun and muscle, with no other energy aids at all. Anything other than these energy systems is regarded as 'Black Science', the cause of the Holocaust, and therefore forbidden. One of Spinrad's first achievements in the book is successfully suggesting the limitations of these systems, and their reliance on 'black science' for providing certain of the materials needed to make their systems work. The Aquarians are 'fed' things like solar cells, transistors, etc., in various clandestine operations by the group of 'black scientists' living beyond the mountains that mark the boundary of Aquarian society.

It is these 'black scientists' who create the major problem to be solved in the story. For years they have been re-building their society with one aim in mind - to construct a space craft capable of achieving Earth-orbit, and of reaching a space observatory still stationed there. The scientists know that the observatory contains recordings made just before the Holocaust, recordings made when the observatory tuned into a galactic wide network of sapient beings, who provide the necessary information for survival in the universe. The contact came too late and civilisation crashed in nuclear war. At the time the story begins, the scientists are ready for the launch, but think that this will draw the attention of the Aquarians to their hidden city, and maybe even provoke a 'Jehad' against them. They therefore try to involve two of the leading Aquarians in the mission, to convince them of its worth. The two, Cool Blue Lou (a Zen master, who acts as a 'judge') and Sunshine Sue, (the leader of the communications network), realise that the information they could gain from the observatory is worth breaking their own codes to obtain, and they succeed in black-mailing their way onto the mission itself, in return for 'staging' the launch in such a way that the Aquarians accept it.

The final outcome of the mission hinges upon the decision to admit the Aquarians, as it turns out that the Aquarians social evolution prepares them to understand the alien messages, whereas the Black Scientist on the mission is totally unable to comprehend the material at all. The nature of the experience, the 'songs from the stars', is essentially transcendent and an extension of the 'Way' by which the Aquarians live, and is the crucial point which Spinrad seems to be making in the book.

Spinrad's handling of the overall plotting is pretty good throughout, with only one real flaw, in that the need for the scientists to contact the Aquarians in the first place is never quite convincing. Spinrad needs the Aquarians to understand the 'songs', so the scientists 'need' the Aquarians to forestall an unknowable eventuality - that the Aquarians as a whole would spot the launch, recognise it for what it is, and act against them. Apart from that, it's a fine piece of writing.

# Beautiful Dreamer

A man sits alone in the middle of the stage, in just a single spotlight. A stocky chap with short curly hair and a thin beard, he holds a battered acoustic guitar across his lap. An electrical pick-up is crudely stuck to the sound box of the guitar with silver-grey gaffer tape. Alongside him stands an amplifier stack, and at his feet there are a variety of pedal switches. His left foot pumps out a rhythm on the floor, his fingers fly over the strings and music pours forth, like liquid silver, like burning gold. The old acoustic guitar produces sounds like no-one has ever heard before.

The man in the spotlight was John Martyn, in about 1975, in one of the finest "In Concert" rock programmes ever recorded. Nowadays he's got himself a band, as well as a new record company, but he is still treading his own path, still producing distinctively beautiful, muscular music.

John Martyn is what can be best described as a scruffy Glaswegian. He first came into popular music in the late sixties as a folk singer. He produced two fairly mediocre solo albums in the late sixties, which were fairly typical folk-oriented records, and then he formed a duo with his wife Beverley.

After some success on the folk circuit in Britain, the duo went to the States in the summer of '69, and made a remarkably good album called STORMBRINGER. The record was produced by Joe Boyd (who also did a lot of work with Fairport Convention) and featured various American record stars, including Levon Helm, of the Band. It was a fine album, a transition point between the pure folk of Martyn's early days and his later works. Despite its American production, STORMBRINGER is a very 'British' album, on a par with the best of Richard Thompson, the most 'British' folk-rockers of the era.

A second duo album was made a year later, called THE ROAD TO RUIN, but it did not have the power of STORMBRINGER. With the birth of their first child, the duo of John and Beverley Martyn finally broke up and Martyn went back to solo work again.

The first fruits of that solo work came a year later in 1971, with the album BLESS THE WEATHER. On BLESS THE WEATHER Martyn began his explorations of the rock and jazz fields that have occupied him ever since. Still having large traces of folk in the vocals, his guitar work on BLESS THE WEATHER stretched out and, ably backed by the excellent acoustic bass-work of Danny Thompson, encompassed some of the most languidly beautiful and splendid sounds around at that time. He used images of water throughout the album, and the music matched the images, superbly liquid, rippling sheets of sound. With titles like BLESS THE WEATHER, WALK TO THE WATER, GLISTENING GLYNDEBOURNE, even as a final track a quick SINGING IN THE RAIN, Martyn had obviously produced a 'concept' album of sorts, but one without pretention and with such a clear and perfect sound that it was one of the stand-out albums of the year.

It took Martyn two years to come up with his next album, and again it had a 'thematic' feel to it. Titled SOLID AIR, it was the first of Martyn's 'peak' albums, where he wove his influences together into a single viewpoint that was entirely individual, owing much to other musicians, yet still distinctively the product of John Martyn alone.

SOLID AIR had an extraordinary 'airy' feel to it, as suggested by the title - but it was moving air, air as a dynamic force that Martyn



conceived and captured in the music. He had already acknowledged the influence of the jazz-rock band Weather Report on his music before this album, but SOLID AIR showed that Martyn could mix it with the Wayne Shorters and Joe Zawinuls of the world without shame.

SOLID AIR used British folk-rock musicians like Danny Thompson, Dave Mattacks, Dave Pegg, even Richard Thompson, yet came up with a totally un-folky sound. Martyn's voice slurred and skipped across the lyrics more like a horn solo than a vocal, and his guitar-work reached new heights of complexity, using electronic gadgetry to sustain long chords while he interwove sharp little musical statements full of invention. SOLID AIR was the album of 1973 for me, the best that Rock had produced for a number of years. It is still an album I play with expectations of being moved and delighted.

The next two albums, INSIDE OUT and SUNDAY'S CHILD, showed Martyn exploring the styles he had used on SOLID AIR, and were fine albums, though without the real spark of genius that had set that earlier album apart. INSIDE OUT had several outstanding tracks, including the remarkable EIBHLI GHAIL CHUIN NI CHEARBHAILL, a traditional Gaelic pipe tune which Martyn succeeded in transcribing to the electric guitar in very nearly its' original form, using his electronic 'devices'. Emulating the 'pipes on a guitar is a feat of musicianship, let me tell you!

SUNDAY'S CHILD showed Martyn back-tracking a little towards his folk days - he includes a superb version of SPENSER THE ROVER, one of the songs he used so well in his stage act. (The culture shock of a switch from the heavy music of SOLID AIR, to the light SPENSER THE ROVER on stage had to be seen to be believed - only a consummate artist like Martyn could accomplish it successfully). There were signs on SUNDAY'S CHILD of the directions in which Martyn's music was going. ROOT LOVE contained many elements of the blues-funk-reggae mix that was to later surface on the ONE WORLD album.

Martyn, at the end of 1974, entered a down period in his career, and for the next three years he did very little touring and only a couple of records were issued (one a retrospective compilation, the other a curiously marketed live album, which Martyn distributed himself). Yet the break seemed to renew him, for at the end of that time, he produced his second 'peak' album, the magnificent ONE WORLD.

Released late in 1977, ONE WORLD represents Martyn at his most relaxed, with sympathetic backing by people like Andy Newmark, Dave Pegg, Danny Thomson and Stevie Winwood, plus a superb production by Chris Blackwell (with some help from an unnamed reggae producer). ONE WORLD absorbed reggae into the Martyn mix and transmuted the music into a far subtler rhythmic mode to his earlier work. Where SOLID AIR succeeded in using 'slabs' of sound, virtually by muscular force, ONE WORLD moved lithely, with the grace of a gymnast.

From the first bars of the crooning love song COULDN'T LOVE YOU MORE to the last fadeout on the bopping BIG MUFF, ONE WORLD is a joy. It is full of excellently conceived, beautifully executed music that represents a musician who has thought deeply about his work and who reacts emotionally to it in a way that produces what can only be described as 'organic' music. It has a very natural sound, much as BLESS THE WEATHER and SOLID AIR had their creation based in the natural sound of water and air. The sound of ONE WORLD is a much more human sound, like soft laughter, satisfied sighs - it is music with more humour than the run of the mill Rock scene normally produces. Ultimately it was the music of a man with a satisfied mind.

That satisfaction didn't seem to last, for Martyn's last two album releases have been slightly nervous affairs, reflecting the changes in





Martyn's life (for example, his divorce from Beverley Martyn) and the general atmosphere in which he now works. Between the time of production of ONE WORLD in mid '77, and GRACE AND DANGER in late '79, the whole world of rock music was turned on its ear by Punk and New Wave bands, and this is reflected in the harder edged tone of Martyn's music.

GRACE AND DANGER featured Phil Collins strongly, and he went on to produce Martyn's latest album, GLORIOUS FOOL. It is a fine album with rolling, rhythmic music that comes from the heart of a man who, more unsure of himself now than for a number of years, is still a very 'alive' musician, still picking up influences, still searching for different ways to express the emotional content of his songs. Now he has a band behind him permanently, and in some ways he is learning how to use that group as an extension of his instrument, as a contributor to his sound. I get the feeling that John Martyn is going to produce another 'peak' album in the next few years. I, for one, look forward to that event with great expectations, expectations I'm certain will be justified.

## Ripples

It has been extremely difficult deciding which letters, (and which portions of letters), to put into RIPPLES this time. I have had a wealth of material to choose from, and I have had to expand this column from an expected four pages out to eight and a half - it could as easily been ten or twelve. Not that I'm complaining, as I have enjoyed receiving such a response, but it has been a hell of a job getting it together, and I've had to hack a good few chunks out of the letters I am printing, as well as leave out some very good material altogether. I do think that the final result is representative of the general views expressed about CS4.

HARRY WARNER JR.

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21740,  
USA

"The fourth Crystal Ship is a fanzine after my own heart. I'm two and three and four years behind time in writing locs on a lot of fanzines; you require nearly three years between issues, so what would be more typically fannish than a prompt response to it? Maybe such an out of order behaviour will break the dilatory habits of both of us.

...I've been skipping or scanning most fanzine material about rock music because it's so far outside the range of my knowledge and interest. But Dave Wood's article held my attention quite well. I found myself thinking at several places how his text could serve as a parable for fandom. Fans are just as prone as rock music enthusiasts to consider the field as it was when they were young and new in the field to have been higher in quality than ever before or since. And all the disputes over the theory of numbered fandoms have one common element. Everyone who participates in the disputes considers that a new numbered fandom came into being just about the time that he became active in fandom.

...It would take a full-sized book to go fully into the matters Paul Kincaid brings up. The advice to write about what you know about is obviously sound, but not sufficient in itself. A couple of decades ago, I sold about a dozen stories to the prozines, and I don't remember writing anything in them about anything with which I was familiar,

except for utilising my memories of an office party for a few paragraphs of one novelette. Then there's the famous case of Stephen Crane's THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE, a novel about the American Civil War which might be the best story based on that conflict, but was written by a man who had seen nothing of war or battles. Some other writers seem to rely on things they know well to achieve their first big successes, then turn to other subject matter and continue to be successful; Mark Twain, for instance, who used boyhood memories and later jobs for such books as TOM SAWYER and LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI, then created equally magnificent books by sheer imagination like THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER and A CONNECTICUT YANKEE. Dickens' DAVID COPPERFIELD is based to a considerable extent on the author's own early life, but I don't think it's any more convincing than GREAT EXPECTATIONS as an account of a boy growing up. Science Fiction presents special problems since, by definition, there must be things in it with which the author isn't familiar, and I wonder if a desire to write what they know about has helped to create the recent trend to writing SF stories which are thinly disguised stories about the present.

...Peter Presford is vastly amusing and wise in his article. I would never have guessed that anyone could fit together an abstract treatise on heroism in fantasy fiction and a concrete example of a personal adventure and make them mate so neatly without any tell-tale sign of a join or crevices where the edges meet. I wonder, is there somewhere in the United States or United Kingdom a pre-school toddler whom destiny has already chosen as the future fan who will become a fannish hero in about 2005 for the brilliant accomplishment of reprinting all the Peter Presford writings together in one huge volume which older fans will immediately compare in favourable terms with the Willis issue of WARHOON?"

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Well, I've broken my dilatory habits by getting CS5 out fairly quickly - I guess it's up to you now, Harry.

WALTER WILLIAMS.

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New Mexico,  
87102  
USA

"After reading Paul Kincaid's article, I began to understand why I hadn't been able to place that novel about the laundromat. (Will Howard's washer finish its Rinse Cycle in time for him to rush home and catch the rerun of 'Teenagers from Outer Space'? Will Charlotte-Sophia run out of New-Blue Bleaching Crystals before her third load?)

Informed and literate as Paul Kincaid's advice was, and granting it was much more sensible than the usual advice offered to would-be writers, I found it perilously close to Method Acting. ('If you wish to know how a murderer feels und you don't want to kill anyvun to find out, think of dat time when you svatted a fly und conzentrate.') Personally, I think it does not give quite enough credit to the imagination.

...In regard to the article A LITERARY SPECTRUM, I can advance my own pet theory that SF, fantasy, and historical fiction are near cousins. ...Each, to achieve success, requires the meticulous description of a world that does not belong to the author or the reader, such that the world is made believable. Manners, clothing, ideas and technology are perceived to be different in each of these fictional genres, or at least will be perceived to be different if the author is doing an honest job. In fantasy, the world can be plainly impossible - magic instead of technology, to give the most oft-quoted example - but still the laws that govern a given universe have to be explained and made

comprehensible. I personally do not appreciate those fantasies that just throw in one wonder after another without explaining the rationale behind them. While writing SF and historical fiction the author imposes upon himself an additional discipline; in SF he must stay within the bounds of known scientific possibility, while in historical fiction he must stay within the boundaries of known historical fact. In both cases, the author can be forgiven if he stretches the boundaries a bit, but he must do so plausibly and such that the boundary-markers do not show obvious signs of having been moved."

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Walter's letter was one of my most sorrowful tasks, as it was very long with excellent points throughout. Unfortunately it was a case of cut-down or drop altogether, as I could not afford to go into another four pages of print to fit it in.

CHUCK CONNOR.

Sildan House, "....I enjoyed Spinrad's MEN IN THE JUNGLE far better  
Chedistow Road, than IRON DREAM, but found his style in the (in)famous  
Wissett, BUG JACK BARRON to be totally off-putting. Therefore I  
nr. Halesworth, am not sure how to take your comment that A WORLD  
Suffolk. BETWEEN must be said to be a failure, yet, at the same

time, an interesting book. For me, a book either works or is okay but nothing special, or 'where the hell can I get rid of this rubbish'. Now, having read Dick, Ballard and their like, I can appreciate a bit of subtlety (okay, so CRASH was a gross-out, so was MARTIAN TIMESLIP), but anything with the jaggedness you describe seems destined for either the remaindered pile, or the 'only 'Op each' bins.

A LITERARY SPECTRUM? - I'm not sure if you haven't bitten off more than you can work with here. You could take the whole line of 'hard SF'(future history) and, by working yourself through the shades to Science Fantasy, neatly hop onto the straight Fantasy lines, shifting sidewise to true history, coming finally to Myth and Legend. If you really wanted to get 'crazy' you could include things like the NICK CARTER series as an Alternative Earth story, because the character just cannot get away with that kind of lifestyle here on this planet! (New form of SF? This is getting out of hand!)

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Re:A WORLD BETWEEN - An author who tries hard to do something worth while, yet fails, can still be more interesting than the mediocre writer who aims for the audience every time. Spinrad is prepared to tackle things in a different way; sometimes it just does not work out!

DAVE REDD.

'Kensington', "...I don't believe in Dave Wood's placing rock into ten  
9, Queensway, year phases, even as an over-simplification. The actual  
Haverfordwest, life of a teenage cultural cycle is about five years  
Dyfed. before the fashion decays and is replaced; each new  
phase is a reaction against the worst degeneracy of the  
old. E.g:  
1957 Elvis decaying to Frank Ifield etc.  
1963 Beatles Rock " " Tremeloes  
1967 Beatles Hippy " " Wizzard  
1973 Pink Floyd/Mike Oldfield " " Pink Floyd/Mike Oldfield  
1977 Sex Pistols " " Toyah

Mind you, these overall trends also include oddities and minority interests - this year (1981) has been particularly odd, with Shakin' Stevens, Talking Heads and Fred Wedlock all finding audiences. The real

point is that 1956-7 saw a major shift in the nature of mass-appeal popular music, away from Rosemary Clooney and Towards Chuck Berry.

About the Deryni novels - I don't agree with you or Pete Presford. I couldn't begin to read them. Although I'm not a Welsh-speaker I know (or know of) enough normal everyday people called Morgan or Rhiannon to make books using these names in the far future, or on ancient Mars, (or where ever), simply unbelievable. If your fantasy characters had average WASP names like Joe or Fred, then English-speakers would find them implausible too. For me, fantasy, myth, SF, history or whatever, always has to be plausible, ie. anything going against my world-view is as off-putting to me as, say, Spinrad's implausible motivations are to you."

-----oooooOooooo-----

Dave's point about mundane names in fantasy fiction is a very interesting one, though sometimes I would prefer an author to use a reasonable 'mundane' name rather than invent something wierd which I stumble over every time I encounter it. Outré names do not necessarily help the plausibility of a fantasy work. You have to have the kind of genius for philology that Tolkien had to really invent plausible names consistently - a string of vaguely connected syllables does not constitute a name automatically. Anyway, wasn't the Deryni world supposed to be a kind of 'Alternate Wales'?

MARY GENTLE.

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11, Alumhurst Road,  
Westbourne,  
Bournemouth,  
Dorset.

"...While I sympathise with Dave Wood, I would quarrel with his basic premise. You can't separate the most recent 'waves' from their associations: historical and emotional. In that sense, you're never going to get an unbiased judgement of any form of music until the first generation of its

adherents are dead and gone. But those who weren't there at the time miss out the essential atmosphere of the society that created that music. Therefore, music being an emotional experience, all value judgements will by nature be purely subjective. As for being 'not really part of it anymore', that again is subjective. You're part of what you think you're part of.

....Any examination of what we 'know' must of course be an individual thing; I'd personally draw the line well before some of the secondary experience that Paul Kincaid allows. The trouble with knowledge gleaned from the media - especially with regard to historical events - is that you tend to regurgitate the same tired old crap, the orthodox late twentieth century view. A writer's subconscious throws up enough parasitically-gained cliches without actually inviting it to do it. The closer you get to the consensus view, the further off from your own unique viewpoint you are.

And as there's no way of really knowing what took place at any point in history (other than that personally experienced) I guess there is no reason not to regard all historical novels as a sub-genre of Fantasy. I would agree with most of what you say in A LITERARY SPECTRUM. As to whether readers care what label a publisher sticks on a book, I don't know; but anyone who confines themselves to a single genre on that basis is pretty much of an idiot - and is missing out on a lot, too. (One of the best sword-and-sorcery novels I know is Clavell's SHOGUN. Come to think of it, there's no sorcery, but there's so much superstition and religion you don't notice it's missing.) One thing implied in this blurring of genres, is that reading fantasy - by which I mean good fantasy and not the sub-Howardian blood & guts school - makes it easier to empathise with history. If you can realise the complexities of Gormenghast and Middle Earth I suspect it's much easier to put yourself into the mind of a Roman or an Aztec, whose societies at least had the

advantage of existing.

Can't help wincing at Dave Wood's comment that criticism is pointless....He would appear to think that a critic is there for the writer's benefit (writers who take that view end up snooting themselves) whereas in fact critics are there for the edification of interested readers.... Sorry to labour the obvious. But it shows the state of the SF field when the mere act of daring to analyse a book brings forth a rabid anti-intellectual reaction..."

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I can't imagine why I forgot to mention SHOGUN in the article - as Mary says, it is one of the finest examples of cross-genre fiction currently available, (and I rather think I'm going to hate the film/tv version for 'mundanising' the whole epic!)

I can think of one area where critics do regard themselves as being there to 'benefit' the writers - that's in the field of fanzine reviewing in our very own SF fandom.

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61554  
USA

"...AT THE WATERSHED put forth a viewpoint that I basically agreed with....It is very easy to fuse a musical style or school together with the times or movement or people that you've associated them with, and do it to such a degree that it's hard to judge either with much detachment. You become too close to the music. I don't think I disparage any particular waves of rock music because of my late '60s/early '70s roots. But I do go the other way, and I know there are certain parts of rock - the Beatles, for example - that I can only listen to one way, and that's with pure nostalgic enthusiasm. I could never give any sensible appraisal of the Beatles' purely musical contributions.

This does not just happen in rock. I've only recently stuck a toe into jazz, and in reading scads of liner notes and a few books, I've found that movements in jazz produced as much emotional feuding as those in rock. The criticism of, say, bebop, has been just as vicious and angry as anything said about new wave.

I am uncomfortable about using 'legend' and 'myth' as categories of fiction. I look at my dictionary and see that these words are associated with being untrue or fictional, or at least not verifiable. But the thing that makes myth and legend what they are is that they are believed, and in the case of legend, believed very strongly, both in their literal and figurative senses. Fiction is not taken that way, not by the people who read it, or those who write it. And while legend and myth can be a good starting point for a writer, the end result often comes out rather thin-looking, because we all know no one really means it. Consider the novels written in this century about Christ, by the likes of Kazantzakis, or the stories by people like D.H.Lawrence...., which ring true because the writers and their readers come from a culture where Christ is accepted - people accept these legends and myths.(I'm talking about people's perceptions, not what Christ may or may not be in reality). If D.H.Lawrence had tried to write a story about the Buddha then it would have come out rather silly. If Kazantzakis had tried to write a novel about Mohammed, he would have probably written a much shorter book. But their works take on life because they write about Christ, somebody who is really important to them, not just some pretty story. And, if you don't take them to heart, myths and legends are little more than pretty stories.

I didn't get the chance to read Joseph Nicholas' piece on Tolkien, but I can guess at what he said. I find it ironic. In Marty Cantor's

HOLIER THAN THOU fanzine, there is this running argument amongst Nicholas, Cantor and Darrell Schweizer over the merits or lack of same of new wave SF, (remember new wave SF?). Along the way, Nicholas has been defending the work of J.G. Ballard, while Cantor has been castigating it as junk. Basically what it boils down to is that Cantor (and Schweitzer, I don't want to leave him out) dislike Ballard because he doesn't fit their standards for what good fiction should be. Nicholas argues that the inspired writer creates his own standards, and he should not have to fit anybody's preconceived notions of what art 'should' be. Looking at the comments on Nicholas' article I can only surmise that he has now fallen on the other side of the argument, and has attacked Tolkien because he doesn't fit his preconceived notions of what art 'should' be."

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Aha, methinks I detect the Ol'Nick Double Standard at work. Of course Joseph did attack THE SILMARILLION because it didn't fit his own preconceptions - to find him on another tack doing the self-same thing from the other side (and not even knowing that he's doing so) is typical of Joe. In his favour, it should be said that leaping to the defense of Ballard is a favourite pastime of many British fans (excluding myself), for the man occupies a very strong position in the pantheon of 'British Gods of SF', strongly supported by other authors like Aldiss and Moorcock. Personally, I've always found him over-rated, with the exception of three books (early ones), and I am violently opposed to calling any of his later works SF at all. To me, clarity of writing is an important perquisite of SF - Ballard's 'new wave' material were often models of obtuseness; he seemed to specialise in obfuscation.

On Myth and Legends, I disagree with Jim, as I am not sure there is a definite line that anyone can draw and say 'on this side is mere fiction, on that side lies the realm of myth and legend'. Myths and legends deal with cultural needs and examples, and in modern times fiction (whether on film, tv, books) does contribute to the culture of our times and often acts in the same way as myth and legend as a cultural model for behaviour, etc. Fiction provides role models, as does myth, as does legend. It makes no odds that there may have once been a grain of truth in a legend, or that the fiction came from the pen of an author only yesterday; the important thing is that the legend/fiction is perceived as being either applicable or truthful, and it is then used to provide a separate perception of human problems, giving the reader some guidance and experience in coping with his own problems. They all fill the same human need.

DAVID THIRY.

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"...You shouldn't get onto Spinrad's demonstration of low quality. Sure, the quality of his writing sucks, but you're overlooking the most important fact of his professional career - he writes for television! Writing for that dissipated medium will demolish anybody's internal Shit Detector. And it seems to have crushed the life out of Norm's.

Since I am admittedly unfamiliar with Spinrad's earlier work, I can't know if he's always suffered from this affliction. But it's apparent that the author of A WORLD BETWEEN has forgotten how to write for veteran SF readers, and is seeking an audience of unsophisticated newcomers - you know, the kids who've seen STAR WARS and now think that the sense of wonder of science fiction is embodied in scenes of space ships gliding through the sky, accompanied by a background of John

William's pseudo-classical music.

It's significant, also, that A WORLD BETWEEN contains these characteristics: simple plotting, wooden, uninteresting characters who speak as if they've been educated in the American Broadcasting System's School of Adoliscient Pulp Jockies, and that it is really just a superficial examination of an obsolete social phenomenon like the space cowboys forcing the space indians into their culture. Why, you might say, is that? I think it's because Spinrad sees M\*O\*V\*I\*E M\*O\*N\*E\*Y in his book. So he writes down to his audience.

With the exception of a very old short story of his (THE BIG FLASH) I've never been particularly impressed with Spinrad's work. So, A WORLD BETWEEN left me without my basic attitudes changed. Which is okay since I didn't pay for the book, but only borrowed it. Nothing ventured, and certainly nothing was gained from its reading.

For once, I have to completely agree with an article - that's Paul Kincaid's THAT REJECTION! I know that I'd never be able to write half so much as I do if I had never, for instance, been in a street fight, or had seen a deer get nuked out by a speeding Mack truck. These experiences have crept into my poetry and stories, I'm sure, as secondary stimuli.

But, I feel that article should have included a quote by O. Henry, concerning the concocting of stories: 'You've got to get out into the streets, into the crowds, talk with people, and feel the rush and throb of real life...' Anyway, that's fine for a mainstream writer. A writer of speculative fiction has to do this same thing, but imagine all those people on drugs, and, even as he is the only sane one, he is the sole person capable of translating what he sees into realistic verbiage."

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GRAHAM ASHLEY.

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"...How does a three year gap find the Crystal Ship? Well, in '78 its eclectic nature was appealing to me, while its lack of direct fannishness made it more relevant to someone who knew little about the people or places of fandom. Now, those virtues have changed into niggling faults. The eclectic nature becomes numbing chaos, there is no cohesion to your articles, you dance from Spinrad to fantasy novels to the Doors to Presford without even the benefit of some linking editorial. Equally, none of the articles are contemporary; it is true to say that any of those you published in number four would have looked as much at home in number three, despite the large gap in years.

However, on the positive side, the criticism and argument of both yourself and your contributors is pretty precise and one cannot fault your layout or presentation. It's just that, as a whole, Crystal Ship appears stunningly BLAND.

You badly need an injection of vitality and I feel this could be achieved by the relatively simple expedient of publishing articles which are relevant to, and directly concerned with, NOW, rather than concentrating on those which aimlessly wander a timeless limbo. Perhaps if you manage to maintain some kind of regular schedule for publishing CS this improvement will be forced upon you by necessity."

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Firstly, let me say that I'm not terribly worried about being 'NOW' in my approach to things - it's never worried me that I might be unfashionable (though CS3's GILDED SPLINTERS did reveal that I had some psychological barriers over being 'out' of the music scene, now largely a thing of the past). So printing 'now' articles is a

bit beyond me, (unless anyone out there cares to contribute them - remembering that, even with a greater frequency of publication, CS will take 4-6 months to produce, and that 'now' articles may be 'once upon a time' when they are finally published.) As Graham says ,vitality may come with more frequent publication.

ARNOLD AKIEN.

6, Dunblane Road, "..."My tastes in music are probably too relentlessly Seaburn, middle of the road for me to feel much in the way of Sunderland, smug superiority towards the latest 'new wave', or Tyne and Wear, the one before that...and so on backwards, until the SR6 8EU time when I, and everyone else in my generation, listened to early rock music - whether we liked it or not. Now...just as in way back then, we endure the latest 'new wave' because, whether we like the stuff, or have it forced upon us, it is part of the social atmosphere - and we can no more ignore it than we can ignore, say, traffic noise or the contents of brightly lit shop windows.

Last Tuesday night I travelled home on the last train from Newcastle to solidly pedestrian Sunderland. The train was mostly filled with young people who had, I suppose, been to see one of the 'new wave' bands at the City Hall - they sure as hell hadn't been to the ballet. At least, I assume they'd been to a new wave gig because of their clothing and 'gay lib' badges. None of this wierd display bothered me in the least - indeed, were they to go naked and file their teeth to sharp points, I would not turn a hair. As I sat down next to a girl with orange hair who had painstakingly greased it in some way so that it stuck out in points, I reflected on the fact that she obviously didn't believe in the virtues of soap and toothpaste, and the equally obvious fact that I was probably the only person on the whole bloody train that they - the strangely identical representatives of rebellious youth - would regard as being a 'straight'..., the only 'conformist' in their midst. I certainly stood out from the crowd; and little did that horde of like-minded young people know that I was and am a member of that most anarchical of social groups - fandom.

Here we hit upon one of the most interesting paradoxes of human behaviour: the twin, and seemingly opposite, desires to belong to, and be accepted as, a member of a group - and thus be acknowledged as being one who believes in its values, and follows its behaviour patterns - and the wish to stand out from the crowd, to be an individual, a personality. How strangely these twin drives clash and grind their gears as our societies move forward : nation clashes with nation over identity and superiority - and generations, pop cults, unions, political parties (and even that supra-national colossus of an organisation - fandom) circle each other warily whilst they look for a good spot to place the knife. It is from out of this clash of the need for acceptance and the need for assertion that the concept of the Hero (or the Heroine) emerges.

In a Hero, a social group - of whatever kind - embodies within an individual those qualities it considers are of paramount importance. The dilemma is resolved ; the Hero is the group, and members of the group can either strive to become a hero, or the Hero; or, if they lack either the ability or the qualities demanded by the group of its heroes, they can identify with the hero. (At the extreme end of this identification, there is the 'groupie' - the practice of identification with the Hero by means of sexual availability is an ancient one, which has its roots in the principle of the survival of the fittest.)

It is natural that each social group should choose Heroes whose qualities are derided by opposing social groups. But since some qualities and behaviour patterns exist or are created so as to ensure the survival of the human species, it is equally natural that these qualities (or



attributes) are universally admired - though the cause that inspires them may be universally derided - foremost among such qualities is that of self sacrifice.

How does it go?... 'greater love has no man, etc'. Anyone who is willing to sacrifice his life, his individual identity, to save others, will earn universal admiration for his action... since the survival of a group can often be dependent on the willingness of a group member to die that his fellows might live and reproduce. Presford may well believe, in retrospect, that he was a bloody fool in risking his neck in the way that he related in his article, but the drive that led him to do it makes perfect sense."

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I printed Arnold's letter at length because I felt he had made a number of very cogent points in relation to heroes and their place in society, something very topical at the moment after the lifeboat disaster in December. I wonder what Arnold thinks about the purely 'created' heroes - the media hype that elevates a relatively worthless individual to great heights, far beyond what that person can cope with. Is that still a facet of his 'hero as representative of a segment of society'? If so, what group - the Media itself?

JEAN SHEWARD.

15, Hereford Road, ".... Presford's piece was wonderful, even if he didn't  
Acton, exactly keep to the subject. I recall a similar  
London, W3. fannish walk along a towpath (Ghod knows which  
convention we were trying to get to/escape from)

when the worst to happen was or being dive-bombed by kamikazi bats - though come to think of it, some members of the party might have preferred a crawl along a slimey 30ft. tunnel...

I like reading definitions of the fantasy genre, though no-one has really come up with a comprehensive one - and nobody ever will. Fantasy being a fiction of new and different ideas, as soon as it's defined some writer will come up with something which falls just outside of that definition. Is inaccurately researched historical fiction actually 'fantasy'? Because that's what this article seems to say! Compare Mary Renault's Crete with that of Thomas Burnett Swann, Joan Grant or Richard Purtill. No further comment.

I have this thing about about expanding fannish horizons - if I can be considered by various groups to be (a), a fantasy fan, (b), an SF fannish fan, (c), a hard core SF fan, (d), a comix bugg, and (e), a media fan (but never a Trekkie!) then I don't see why other people should not share the same diversity."

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Tsk, tsk, Jean - my contention was that you could read Historicals as fantasy because the historical times are so far removed from our own as to be unfamiliar to us in the same way that fantasy is.

As for diversity, you only have to look at CS to know I am all for that!

Regrettably, that's all the room I've got for LoCs - the following people also wrote in, and I thank them for their efforts, and better luck next time:- Michael Ashley, Gerald Blank, Pam Boal, Simon Bostock, Dave Bridges, Alan Burns, Gary Deindorfer, John Dell, William Ewing, Alan Freeman, Ian Garbutt, Roelof Goudriaan, Steve Green, Martin Helsdon, Terry Jeeves, David Langford, David Lewis, Steve Lines, Mike Paine, Peter Presford, Kevin K. Rattan, John Shire, Peter Singleton, Steve Sneyd, Martyn Taylor. And to all the folks at the Open University for encouragement - ta!

