CRYSTAL SHIPSIX

Contents

And another 'Crystal Ship' slides down the slipway and out into the world. As always, it has taken me longer than I expected to get the thing together. Considering the fact that my job at the Open University consists (in part, at least) of running round and thumping academics and editors who fail to meet their deadlines, it is rather poetic justice that I can never get CS together quite when I plan it. Oh well, no doubt the experience is a salutary one for me - I may even mellow into tolerance and understanding of those poor, hard-done-by academics who fail in their attempts to give birth to a new masterpiece of education every year or so. But I hope not - otherwise I'll be the one falling down on the job!

As promised last issue, this CS is a thematic one, being 'Oriental flavoured'. In some cases, the 'oriental flavour' will be quite strong, as in Martyn Taylor's article on Kurosawa; in other places it will be more like the addition of a soupçon of sweet'n'sour to spice up a traditional Western dish. It's been a lot of fun doing this one, even if it did mean even more work in getting it together (and work that was nearly doubled when the first layout I tried didn't work out, and I had to junk it and re-start all over again - one lives and learns!) Just by way of relief (for me!), the next issue is going to be much more conventional.

One of the most frequently-asked questions that all faneds are faced with at some time or another, is "Why do you do it? Why spend so much money, time, and effort on producing fanzines?" It's a good question, one every faned must ask himself at some time or other, especially when things aren't going too well, and the oft-promised issue sits there looking like a pile of garbage on your worktable. When the question is asked by a non-fan, unaware of the long tradition in fannish circles of 'zine publishing, then it is doubly difficult to answer. And, of course, there are as many reasons for publishing a fanzine

as there are faneds. My own reasons for publishing the 'Crystal Ship' have become much clearer to me over the last year or so; indeed, I restarted CS after a long layoff precisely because I had worked out why I wanted to publish a fanzine, rather than simply doing it because it was a 'fun' thing, (it is that too, naturally).

I produce the 'Crystal Ship' for one main purpose, above all others - to stimulate me and keep my own aspirations alive and kicking. I am, not to put too fine a point on it, too damned lazy for my own good. It is far too easy for me to slip back into my armchair, escape into a good book (and there are more good books around in the world than I will ever have a chance to read!), or vegetate in front of the TV screen, or to while away the hours listening to my record collection. That is a very nice, comfortable existence that makes the years flow by with frightening rapidity. But, locked into the back of what passes for a brain in the Owen clan, is a set of aspirations. Not big, world-shaking ones (they're stored further down, amongst the garbage instilled by various schools, churches, media indoctrination, etc.), just little personal ones, which I've harboured for as many years as I've had the ability to read. I'd like to transfer onto the blank page words that convey some of the things that go on in my imagination, rather than existing on the words that come out of other people's brains.

So, following the oldest adage in the book about writing ('to write , you must first write'), the 'Crystal Ship' emerges as the first stage in a process of educating and disciplining me, that I hope will continue for a few years at least. The zine may wither away and die once I reach a certain level of competence as a writer; such is the way of things. One should never become entrenched in any one position for too long, otherwise the ability to move on to fresher pastures atrophies, and inspiration dies.

On the other hand, I do find that CS is an outlet for other interests too, which may mean it will hang around long after I've (perhaps) achieved my primary purpose. I enjoy the contact CS brings with other people (receiving mail every day becomes addictive - the disappointment of coming home to an empty doormat is tremendous!) I enjoy tussling with the design problems that a zine of CS's complexity brings (though I feel in dire need of more help from the more artistic members of the readership - come on folks, I've got to keep the standards up somehow!) I enjoy publishing other people's work, thus enabling other readers to get to know other writers' work. In short, producing CS is also becoming addictive! Increasing amounts of my own spending money go into the 'zine at the expense of the record collection, or the library (who can find time to read any way?), and I can honestly say that it's money well spent as far as I'm concerned.

Having said all of that, the obvious thing to be said is that I need a certain 'return' on my investment of time, energy and money. That, as far as I'm concerned, means that while the print figure of CS will remain about the 250 mark, it will not be being sent to the same people all the time, unless those people respond in some positive fashion, be it loc, zine trade, contribution, whatever (any thing but money - that's a waste of a copy for me). If there's no response, I may just assume you've died and strike you off the mailing list. So if you want to continue to receive the 'Crystal Ship', you know what you have to do - if you don't like the 'zine, maybe you could just sit on your hands for a while and it will go away (I'd prefer it if you told me why though).

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The Crystal Ship 6, August 1982.

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Available only by editorial whim (though I do trade, too!)

JAPANESE CINEMA'S FINEST HOUR?

AKIRA KUROSAWA'S 'THE SEVEN SAMURAI': AN APPRAISAL BY MARTYN TAYLOR.

The appreciation of any work of art is an essentially personal endeavour, it being a truism that 'there is no accounting for taste'. Nevertheless, there are certain works that, by common consent, are are deemed to be masterpieces; for instance, Michaelangelo's 'David', Shakespeare's 'Shall I compare thee ...', Mozart's 'Moonlight Sonata'. In the cinema there are few such, but among that number is Akira Kurosawa's THE SEVEN SAMURAI. What I hope to do in this discussion is point out a few of the factors that have led to this film becoming both a touchstone and a landmark in popular and critical acclaim.

THE SEVEN SAMURAI was, for Kurosawa, a labour of love and a long painful birth, at that. He had long wished to make a serious 'jidai geki' (historical epic), one that would strive for realism, even naturalism, in contrast to the heavily stylised manner adopted by most Japanese directors. During the year it took to shoot the film (following on a protracted period of preparation) Kurosawa was bedevilled by problems akin to those Coppolla met in the making of APOCALYPSE NOW. In the end, even the weather seemed to have joined forces in conspiring against him, and all the while the Japanese press hounded him for his ambition and daring in so openly flaunting the traditional forms.

That rejection of tradition is significant, given the dominant role of tradition and precedent in Japanese society, and an example of cinematic tradition may serve to illustrate the extent of that significance. The 'jidai geki' is to Japanese filmgoers what the Western is to American filmgoers and, to paraphrase Randolph Hearst, both print the legend rather than the truth. Both genres have as one of their principal concerns violent death, and the manner in which the act of death is depicted is central to their style. Before THE SEVEN SAMURAI, death in a 'jidai geki' was clean, honourable and relatively painless - for the hero, at least - much as in old time Westerns a man was shot once in the chest, staggered, groaned and died.

Since THE SEVEN SAMURAI Japanese films have become something of a byword for the sickening, pornographic, nature of their screen violence. Deaths have become a bloody spectacle, with limbs flying and stage blood spouting like an unattended gusher. At the same time however, there seems to have been a parallel development towards still greater stylisation (perhaps best exemplified by the stately unreality of, say, SHOGUN ASSASSIN). It is interesting that there have been similar developments in Hollywood (and other) Westerns, until there now seems to be a dichotomy between the gore-soaked likes of THE LAWMAN and SOLDIER BLUE, and the almost balletic strip cartoon action of the spaghetti Westerns. The reality, in contrast to both, is that the human animal with an intact will to live does not die at all easily. Bits of our bodies may strew the soil, and most of our blood may soak into it, but still we can survive. By modern standards, the weaponry of the Wild West was ludicrously inaccurate and low powered (even if samurai blades are still unsurpassed for murderous sharpness). The expression 'I'll fill you full of lead' doubtless grew out of the necessity to do precisely that to be reasonably certain of killing a man. Of course, the trauma of being struck by the heavy slug from a Sharp's rifle might disable a man, and subsequent bloodloss kill him - the weapon was, after all, designed to down buffalo - but only a lucky shot to the head would certainly kill him instantly. History gives us numerous examples of men continuing to function in battle with the most atrocious of injuries, and the reality of Western shootouts is probably better and more accurately shown in, say, Walter Hill's THE LONG RIDERS - in which the James/Clanton gang are literally shot to pieces in an ambush and still ride away - than in other, more cinematically effective, films. I shall return to Kurosawa's nature as a filmmaker, but for the moment it will suffice to remark that the conflict between Kurosawa the cinematographer and Kurosawa the seeker after naturalistic realism is not fully resolved in THE SEVEN SAMURAI, with the film entertainer's instinct winning out.

Another departure from Japanese attitudes was Kurosawa's maintenance of the proposition that a 'jidai geki' ought to hold up a mirror to contemporary circumstance, a point of view he took from his hero, Mizoguchi. "...of...importance is Mizoguchi's almost continual insistence that history be regarded as contemporary in that its problems were no less unique, no less personal, than ours, and further - given the perspective of history - we are more likely to appreciate something of ourselves when it is given to us out of our own historical context." (Donald Richie) What Kurosawa does is to show that historical characters can be, were, and are motivated by other concerns than the sterile, deadening, and anyway historically inaccurate, rigid honour code depicted in conventional films. In doing this, he populates his films with recognizable human beings, people not too much unlike us. Given the spellbinding influence of the Kabuki and Noh traditions in Japanese films (no less significant than the influence of stage-bound, word oriented character drama on Western cinema) this was a radical departure that opened up his film more easily to Western comprehension - most of us know less than nothing about Kabuki and Noh, and not much more about Japan in general.

The storyline of THE SEVEN SAMURAI is unashamedly a romance, but a muscular romance nevertheless. It is reasonably well known in the West because of John Sturges' barefaced rip-off, THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN. A peasant village has been terrorised for years by a gang of bandits who take crops and women, and kill a few men. At the beginning of the film, the villagers' patience is exhausted and they determine to search out samurai (essentially clans of mercenary warriors) who will protect them. Given the abject poverty of the village, and the fact that all they can offer the samurai in return for risking their lives is

the rice from their own mouths and the uncertain adventure of it all, they need to find some rather exceptional men. At first they fail, until stumbling upon Kambei, an older samurai who seems to be the embodiment of their dreams. A bowl of rice, an adventure, and the conviction that he will be doing good are all he needs to decide to accompany the villagers. Four other samurai accrete about the pole of his example - the novice Katsushiro, Kambei's old friend Gorobei, the crafty Heihachi, the stalwart Shichiroji.

The gathering of the sixth of the seven involves one of the most influential sequences in the entire film, echoes of which can be seen in countless martial arts films and spaghetti westerns. That this sequence should be so influential is heavily ironic, because it is the least typical of the film's overall style. We meet Kyusho, a master swordsman whose only aim in life is the perfection of his bloody art. Another samurai refuses to accept defeat in a practice bout. While Kyusho does not wish to fight he is unwilling to deny his opponent his suicidal impulse, and accepts. The two spar and pose in traditional style. Then his opponent charges at the motionless Kyusho. It seems as though he must die, until his sword moves faster than the eye can follow and the man comes to a very abrupt halt. The tableau is held for what seems like hours, then the man slowly topples over cold dead. I shall return later to the reasons why Kurosawa adopted this, for him, anachronistic style, but it is marvellously effective.

Kyusho joins Kambei and the others, leaving them one short. Desperate as he is, Kambei will not accept the drunken braggart Kikuchiyo. By the time they reach the village, though, Kikuchiyo has ingratiated himself, and the seven set about training and equipping the villagers for the battle. Once that battle is done, only three of the samurai survive, but all the bandits are dead and the village freed. In other hands the film could have ended in melodramatic triumph, but any triumph is muted as the villagers go about the everlasting business of planting the fields. Kurosawa portrays the victory of the villagers side by side with the tragedy of the samurai, who have fought and seen their friends die for something from which they are excluded.

That final sequence alone stamps THE SEVEN SAMURAI as the work of a great artist who can combine the general with the particular, the mundane with the sublime, tragedy with comedy, success with failure, in a seamless whole that so closely mirrors life.

If there is any single element that characterises THE SEVEN SAMURAI, it is the fact that it is a motion picture. The screen is constantly filled with movement, and when the characters are still then the camera moves. Given that the bulk of the film was shot on location during 1953, when the Japanese film industry was equipped with cameras best described as

archaic, this is a considerable technical achievement, but the significance lies in the mood engendered, which is one of precariousness, of fragility, of a sea change looming. Even the most placid, still characters, Gizaku the village elder,and Rikichi's kidnapped wife, are seen against a background of constant motion that at once enhances and subverts their stillness. Kurosawa is at once praising their serenity and pointing out that it is out of keeping with their social circumstances.

As well as physical motion on the screen Kurosawa shows himself to be a master of that most abused trick in the director's repertoire - the pace of cutting between camera angles to heighten the desired impression. Few have combined the change of image, musical soundtrack and plot action to generate a required emotional impact to quite the extent that Kurosawa achieves. Take the final two sequences, those of the climactic battle and the leave-taking of the samurai. Both occupy roughly the same amount of screen time, although the battle scene has ninety different camera shots to the thirty of the departure. Of course there are more events to be depicted in the battle but the departure conveys as much, if not more, information necessary to a full understanding of the whole story. It is a rare film maker who can combine really good action sequences with genuine emotional evocation in the same film, which is what Kurosawa does.

Even within the context of a muddy, bloody, confused battle Kurosawa contrives to use the techniques of differing pace to a specific, coherent purpose and not simple, generalised effect; in this case to create and direct emotional reaction to a revelation of central motivation. During the film the two novices, Katsushiro and Kikuchiyo, have closely observed the actions of Kyusho, each in their own way. Katsushiro holds him as an ideal, and treats him with reverence, whereas Kikuchiyo hides his real feelings. When Kyusho is killed, it is Kikuchiyo who thrusts aside Katsushiro in his eagerness to avenge the man. There follows a frantic crescendo as he dashes, maddened, through the pouring rain, and then a diminuendo - literally a dying fall - as he is shot and, dying, inexorably pursues and kills the bandit chief even as he himself is dying. Stillness follows his collapse to the ground, a long held image of the rain beating down remorselessly on the pathetically

exposed corpse. Kurosawa almost orders the audience to savour their horror at the death of the most recognizably human of the samurai in a typically quixotic act, his message summed up in a single image - that of a farmer's boy who dared lying dead in the rain.

Just as THE SEVEN SAMURAI is a picture of movement it tells its story through images, not words. The film is 160 minutes long, during which time there are 1250 camera shots and all of 685 lines

of dialogue, not one of which rises above the banal. No character says anything clever, or witty or even profound. What price the conventional image of Japanese wisdom? In this film, Confucius he not say... All the most telling points are portrayed in visual, not verbal, terms. What words there are add an extra layer of cerebral comprehension but the viewer who sees only the images and hears only the music would have a full emotional awareness of the story. This is a universal film. It transcends national, linguistic and cultural boundaries. It is an illustration of human capacity. It is also a demonstration of the huge potential of film for the telling of stories conceived and portrayed in images rather than chimerical words. Kurosawa has regularly bemoaned the fact that he is forced to translate his visual conceptions into words in order to sell them to his financial backers. His younger friend and disciple, Francis Ford Coppolla, has also been known to remark - at some length - upon the practical problems faced by artists who conceive pictorial dramatic works in a culture that remains essentially stage, and therefore word, oriented in dramatic terms. It is in this respect that THE SEVEN SAMURAI is a landmark, an example of what can be achieved.

As remarked upon earlier, Kurosawa followed Mizoguchi in believing that the 'jidai geki' ought to hold up a mirror to contemporary life. The institution of the samurai holds a unique place in Japanese history. A search for Western parallels is interesting but ultimately futile. The institution, like all institutions, arose in response to certain social pressures, and once those pressures died it too died. Many in Japan would like a restoration of what they imagine is the samurai ethic. Kurosawa, while plainly fascinated, is by no means uncritical. Katsushiro is a traditional samurai, born to it. He accepts without question the privileges of his calling, and, to be fair, its duties. He falls in love with a village girl, Shino, and they consummate that love before the final battle. Both survive, yet, when it is time for him to leave, Shino does not even acknowledge his unspoken invitation to accompany him, merely bowing her head to go on planting rice. Doubtless a Japanese traditionalist would applaud, viewing their sacrifice as the noble and virtuous triumph of duty over love. Kurosawa portrays it as simple, ignorant waste.

That even the institution of the samurai has become an anachronism is shown pointedly in Kyusho. A small, mild looking man, he walks without fear through a violent land because of his confidence in his skill. He is aware he will probably be killed, but believes that the man with the skill to kill him must, by definition, be a better human being - q.e.d.. Kyusho is killed by a bullet from a rifle, fired from hiding by the bandit chief. Just as a single shot sounded Kyusho's personal death knell, so the report of firearms was the death knell for all samurai. Their code of honourable combat could not survive the advent of a weapon that dealt silent, unseen extinction from safe distances. Professionals in an esoteric art, they were overtaken by a technological revolution that made the meanest criminal the death dealing equal of the most skilled samurai. Kurosawa looked back with a 20th Century perspective, of course, but that does not invalidate his judgement.

The gun, of course, was the chosen weapon of the protagonists in THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN and it is illuminating from the aspect of judging the two films to compare the characterisations of the respective outsiders. Kurosawa has Toshiro Mifune (a leading member of Kurosawa's repertory and , along with Ramaz Chkhivadze of the Rustavelli Company of Georgia, a member of the company of truly great actors) play Kikuchiyo as a bragging, bumptious cockatoo of a man who is,

nevertheless, the bravest of all the samurai. He is prepared to characterise the peasants as cunning, treacherous and worthless (by samurai standards at least) and yet he takes insane risks, and eventually dies on their behalf because he is one of them and cannot avoid his love for them. The largest by far of the characters on screen, with his heart never too far from his sleeve, Kikuchiyo is determined to be twice as large as life, and five times as loud. He adopts the role of hero and eventually it fits him. In THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, by contrast, Horst Bucholz is little more than darkly romantic decoration, a moral and human cipher, by far the smallest character,who has the burden of the Kikuchiyo role divided between himself and Charles Bronson. In this difference is encapsulated the difference between the films. Sturges'film is by no means bad. It is well made, looks good, and as an 'oater' is a leading example - and good entertainment to boot! Nevertheless, it lacks the passionate conviction that burns through Kurosawa's film, and it is that conviction which is a necessary ingredient of any work that aspires to being art, never mind great art.

During the course of this discussion, I have referred to problems Kurosawa encountered in making what many consider to be a genuinely great film. Those problems did not cease with the final printing of his film. The fact of the matter is that THE SEVEN SAMURAI as made by Akira Kurosawa has never been seen outside Japan. That film was 200 minutes long, and while there have been various shorter versions cut from it - one Japanese, two American, one German at the least - the appalling fact is that we shall never have the opportunity to see this film as Kurosawa made it. No prints of his 200 minute film exist, and not even the negatives of the excised portions survive. The principal architects of this emasculation were RKO Radio Pictures, and while one can hope that the executives responsible are aware of their crime there cannot be much foundation to that hope. That, even in its shortened, mangled form, THE SEVEN SAMURAI is accepted as one of the greatest motion pictures yet made is testimony to Kurosawa's achievement.

Art Credits

Art Credits this issue are few , since they have been all done by either Steve Lines or myself. Steve's contributions are unmistakable (well, they're the good ones!), but for completeness sake, I'll list them anyway.

Steve Lines - pp4,6,7,10,30,31,34.

All the rest are the work of your 'umble servant, with apologies to messrs Hokusai and Utamaro - you can stop spinning in your graves, now,lads! (Plagiarism Rools, OK?)

I'm hoping to get a bit more artwork of differing sorts into the next issue, so if the fanartists would please step forward and be counted, I'd be delighted to give you space in the zine!

THE FIRST FANZINE

by John D. Owen

It has always been assumed that the first fanzines were established in America in response to the 'pulp' magazines - and all the history books tell us this is so. (The Encyclopedia Of SF, for example, gives the first identifiable fanzine as being THE COMET, produced in 1930.) But recent research in the Chinese rooms of the British Museum and Library has revealed that the first real fanzine was published way back in the little-known F'aan Dynasty of Ancient China, in about 2000 BC.

The F'aan Dynasty is an unbelievably obscure area of history, which lasted a mere five generations, a totally insignificant era in the huge span of Chinese history. The F'aans were a homely breed, and their main pleasure in life was listening to stories. Each nobleman's house in China at the time had a resident storyteller, who's job obviously depended entirely on his ability to spin a good yarn, and who's imagination was forced to work overtime to keep pace with the voracious appetite that the F'aans had for new tales. Naturally enough, many of the storytellers were regularly dismissed when they dried up, and had to find new posts, which made the profession rather a precarious one.

The storytellers tried many different ways to improve their lot in life. They formed unions (which failed because the F'aan nobles simply beheaded anyone who went on strike - that caused a temporary shortage of tale-spinners in a few places, but persuaded the others that unions were not a healthy idea). They tried hiring travellers to bring back tales from far distant lands (which fell out of favour when the travellers returned and decided that storytelling was a nice, sedentary occupation to retire to after a life of travel, and replaced their employers). They organised conventions to swap stories (which failed because, in the nature of all conventions, the attendees spent so much time swilling back the rice wine, that the only thing they could remember about the cons afterwards was the colour of the kimono the hostess was (maybe) wearing when they finally slid under the table). All to no avail. The problem really had them foxed, and the turn-over in storytellers was becoming very rapid as the F'aan Dynasty's appetite for stories grew. Many storytellers were thinking of banding together in groups and acting as travelling libraries, just to be sure of making enough for a crust or two.

Then along came a storyteller's apprentice who solved the problem for them. B'din was a typical apprentice, sold to a storyteller by his parents at an early age. Since the storyteller's one aim in life was to find a way to live that didn't involve work, naturally, B'din was rushed off his feet doing all the things that the master storyteller couldn't be bothered with, like telling bedtime stories to the F'aan children. One day, however, B'din managed to get a day off (it was a special feast day, when apprentices were allowed to run wild), and he got together with other apprentices in the little town where he lived, and generally chewed the fat about how bad their

bosses all were, and how wonderful they'd be when they became masters.

The apprentices gathered in the Chinese equivalent of the local tavern. After many applications of rice wine (it was like a mini-convention, in some ways), the tanner's apprentice began to bemoan the fact that his master specialised in dragonskin leather. The other apprentices laughed, as this speciality had made the tanner a wealthy man, such was the beauty and soft suppleness of the finished product.

"You don't know the half of it," the tanner complained. "Dragonskin is murder to work with. You have to be so careful. One scratch on the skin and the thing is ruined. It lets water seep through the scratch, you see. Then the cobblers have shoes that leak from new."

B'din laughed. "You've got few problems, my friend. At least you are in a stable profession. My master's drying up at the moment, getting a block on new storylines, so we will be seeking new employment before very long. A storyteller's lot is not a happy one."

A scribe's apprentice chipped in. "Why doesn't your master keep up a correspondence with other storytellers? That way, you'd be able to exchange plots and storylines and keep the same job."

B'din snorted. "It's been tried. Trouble is, you scribes monopolise the letter-writing market, as our skills are strictly verbal; few of us can write coherently, though most can read." (This is true, as one of the awkwardnesses of the Chinese language has always been its need for very precise calligraphics for the writing to be readable exactly as intended. That took skill to achieve and only the scribes and the very wealthy ever had the time to perfect their craft to that extent.) B'din went on, "Your prices are too high for us, scribe - and keeping a correspondence going with a number of different contacts (which is what you would need) would bankrupt the most successful storyteller."

"What about this new-fangled idea that the southerners have come up with - using wooden blocks to put characters on paper. You could turn out lots of copies then, and distribute them cheaply." The scribe grimaced at the tanner's remarks; it was obviously a painful topic, since it threatened to remove a section of his more lucrative work, the hand copying of books.

"If there is a tradesman more costly than a scribe, it's a wood carver, especially a specialist one." B'din looked down into his empty cup and wondered whose round it was. "Mind you," he mused. "If you had a really cheap way of printing, that would solve the problem - you could circulate round the whole profession sheets of stories and tips and how to brighten old themes up."

"Wishful thinking, I'm glad to say." Said the scribe, and B'din grunted his agreement, realising that it was his round, and that his money was nearly all gone.

By now, the rice wine was turning the apprentices into sleepy, morose individuals who were only too ready to bemoan their fate all night. Conversation swung back to the tanner's dragonskins.

"How do you get that burnished look to dragonskin, tanner?"said the scribe.

"Well, it takes a long while because of the scratch problem. You mount the dragonskin on a special wide drum of perforated bronze covered in felt. Then you bring it into contact with another drum, which is mirror bright. You increase the pressure and revolve the first drum against the second, spraying them with oil. Do it long enough and the skin polishes completely. You then test it for scratches by putting more oil into the drum itself and seeing whether it seeps out - if it does, it's bad news. It means the skin is worthless for anything other than cleaning rickshaws!"

B'din's head was fogged with rice wine - but there was something there in the tanner's story that he couldn t quite grasp. He

shook his head and did the most natural thing that came to mind - "Who's round is it now?" Groans came from the scribe. "Mine again, I suppose." The evening ended with the apprentices rolling drunk and noisy, as is the way of things.

A few days later, however, B'din's work took him past the work-shop of the tanner. He wandered in to see his friend, and found him preparing to test a piece of dragonskin. He watched as the apprentice cleaned the skin and rollers of the aromatic oil they used for polishing, and then the youth filled the drum with more oil. The apprentice then took a piece of paper, inserted it between the roller and the skin, and revolved the drum. The paper popped out the other side, the youth grabbed it, took one look at the markings on the surface, and groaned. "Another one ruined!" B'din took the paper from the tanner and looked at it closely - the marks almost resembled writing. An idea suddenly burst into fruition in his mind. "Would that work if you deliberately scratched the skin?" He asked.

"Of course, though why anyone would want to is beyond me!"

"What if the oil were ink? Would it still seep through?"

"Yes, naturally - it'd make a right mess of the skins, though."

B'din grinned. "You've solved our problem for us. If I can get hold of an old burnishing machine and some dragonskins, I can get the scribe to scratch the writing on the skins, put ink into the machine and run paper copies off, which we can send to the other storytellers. End of problem."

And so it came about that B'din and his friend saved the storytellers of F'aan a lot of heartache and worry by circulating the first "F'aanzine", full of useful tips about storytelling. Rival sheets sprang up like wildfire, and soon there were hundreds in circulation, and the F'aan dynasty nobility were treated to a new renaissance in the storytelling art. Unfortunately, it came in the fifth generation of the dynasty - which was overthrown by a disgruntled lesser clan from the South. These were stolid, practical folk who saw no particular benefit in storytelling. They were known as the R'aat-F'aans, whose rule saw the end of both storytellers and fanzines, since they ruthlessly leapt on any slight deviation from their own views with such abandon that the whole trade was regarded as being too risky - 'when reality is a bad dream, who needs stories?' A pity really - think where we could be if the most populous race in the world were still a nation of fans!

The Forgotten Planet, or an Ecologist's Dream

The place was dead,
so they said;
A dried-up turd,
was the word;
We came to gloat,
clear the throat,
And sneer at bones that lay
unstirred.

Crippled and maimed.
so they claimed;
Lump in the sky,
was the cry;
We wished to see
how it would be
And curse the fools who let it
die.

But we found it green
in the sheen
Of Sol's old glow -
Complete re-birth
for old Earth
But who knew how?

Judith Buffery

A TOUCH OF STRANGE

by

MARY GENTLE

'East is East and West is West' (said Kipling, who after all did not live in the global village), 'and never the twain shall meet.' In science fiction, of course, they have met: often. There was Cordwainer Smith. There is, to take a similar current example, Somtow Sucharitkul.

Cordwainer Smith, aka Dr Paul Myron Linebarger, was a political scientist and a soldier; he was also (as J.J.Pierce notes in his introduction to the Ballantine collection THE BEST OF CORDWAINER SMITH) multilingual, and intimate with several cultures, both Oriental and Occidental. Somtow Sucharitkal is an avant-garde Thai musician as well as SF writer; IAsfm quotes him as 'commuting between Washington DC and Bangkok'. It does not do, however, to deal too much with personalities - for one thing, because Smith is dead and can't answer back, and Sucharitkul is alive and very well might. Consider them then from the reader's point of view: as names attached to a handful of books and short stories.

Short stories are as good a place as any to begin, if only because it answers the question: why these particular writers? Cordwainer Smith because he was the first to transfer Oriental styles and influences into science fiction (I exclude fantasy), and Sucharitkul because he is travelling in the opposite direction, uniting with the West; and because he shows in his early work strong evidence of being directly influenced by Cordwainer Smith.

One of the many things that makes Smith a brilliant writer is his capacity to surprise. Style, images, nomenclature: all are uncommon. Take the opening of "The Dead Lady of Clown Town":

> 'You already know the end - the immense drama of the Lord Jestocost, seventh of his line, and how the cat-girl C'mell initiated the vast conspiracy. But you do not know the beginning, how the first Lord Jestocost got his name, because of the terror and inspiration which his mother, Lady Goroke, obtained from the famous real-life drama of the dog-girl D'joan. It is even less likely that you know the other story - the one behind D'joan.'

Here is the auctorial voice addressing the reader directly, talking of fictitious events as if they were history too well known to need explanation; the use of unfamiliar terms, the references to unknown events which, together with the hint of a 'real' story behind the story, create an effect of great suspense.

One of his strengths is that he rarely explained the terms on which his universe operated. In "Under Old Earth", for example, we have: the Gebiet, the Bezirk, the Douglas-Ouyang planets and the gentleman-suicides; manikins, triple-think, and congohelium. To balance, he has also the gift of taking himself seriously but not solemnly: witness in the same story, a conversation between one of the Lords of the Instrumentality and a robot Centurion guard:

> '"They are having babies!" said Flavius excitedly.
>
> "I know that."
>
> "They have hooked in two illegal instant-message machines, "

shouted Flavius.

Sto Odin was calm. "So that's why the Earth's credit structure has appeared to be leaking in its balance of trade."

"They have a piece of the congohelium!" shouted Flavius.

"The congohelium!" shouted the Lord Sto Odin. "impossible! It's unstable. They could kill themselves. They could hurt Earth! What are they doing with it?"

"Making music...."'

A touch of strange, and a certain dry humour. But there is more to his work than this. All his stories are fragments of a greater whole - he may well also have been the writer who initiated the concept of a future history. Unlike many that followed, his is a true unity: a progression from the Instrumentality's rule of a happy mindless utopia on and through the Rediscovery of Man, and the apotheosis of the animal-derived Underpeople.

Smith's is the overview of history - his narrator speaks to us from a time as far beyond the Rediscovery of Man as we are before it; sorting through legends, music, art, and videotapes in an attempt to uncover the 'historical truth'. The emotional power comes from his creation of the characters who make history, and their own personal lives.

The contrast between the individual and history is all the more touching because, through all the best of his stories, there runs a feeling of immense sadness. His victories are born out of tragedy: the Lord Sto Odin dying so as to preserve the Earth, the martyrdom of D'joan, the hidden love of the cat-girl C'mell for the Lord Jestocost. The influences here are Christian, references to the 'Old Strong Religion' are often linked with the Underpeople; their theme is of redemption, and hatred for racist oppression.

What could be more Western? The Oriental influences are more subtly present - in style, in the use of casual violence to body and mind, in transposed quotes ('...the wise man Laodz declared, "Water does nothing but it penetrates everything. Inaction finds the road"'). His Lords and Ladies of the Instrumentality have all much of the Mandarin about them: Chinese warlords, autocrats, at once tyrannical and benevolent, exercising unrestrained power over many worlds:

> 'Watch but do not govern; stop war but do not wage it; protect, but do not control; and first, survive!' ('Drunkboat')

> 'The Lords of the Instrumentality were the corrupt rulers of a corrupt world, but they learned to make corruption serve their civil and military ends... With the launching of

the attack, Earth itself changed. Corrupt rascals became what they were in title: the leaders and the defenders of mankind'

(Golden The Ship Was - Oh! Oh! Oh!)

In short, they govern as though they meant it. I suspect this has little to do with culture, more to do with Paul Linebarger's experience of the genuine exercise of political power. In the end it is impossible to say what in these stories is 'Eastern' or 'Western', only what is unique to Cordwainer Smith.

Somtow Sucharitkul's career begins in 1979 with two stories, 'The Thirteenth Utopia' (ANALOG) and 'The Web Dancer'(IAsfm). They are set in the universe of 'the Dispersal of Man' and feature a galactic theocracy of 'Inquestors', borrowing also the religious overtones of the Instrumentality. These early stories feature one Lord Davaryush, an Inquestor who 'loses faith' after a spiritual experience in 'The Thirteenth Utopia' and goes on to plot rebellion in 'The Web Dancer'. The heroine of this latter story is a girl cloned for her biological abilities of balance, created as the Instrumentality created the Underpeople.

The Inquestor stories include such hardware as optical lasers, shimmercloaks, tachyon bubbles, and delphinoid ship minds. (The difference being, I think, that these are instantly familiar to the Sf reader, whereas Smith's vocabulary is not.) Two further stories in IAsfm - 'Darktouch',Jan 80;'Light on the Sound',Aug 80 - develop this further: the apostate Lord Davaryush and the woman Darktouch set out to free the delphinoid ship-minds from the agony of being used as starships. There are echoes here of another source, Robert F. Young's 'Starfinder' stories (appearing in F&SF 1977-80) feature 'space whales' as living starships to very similar effect.

The differences, then, between Smith and Sucharitkul? Moral ambiguity, for one. The Instrumentality never quite manages to be anything as simplistic as good or evil; the Inquest is evil from the beginning, and the Lord Davaryush far too willing to be drawn from his hierarchical power-games into subversion with ordinary people. Sucharitkul's characters are ill-defined, prone to shallow emotional responses and hearts-and-flowers sentimentality, tending to be 'redeemed by love' in saccharine endings. Smith's Lords and Underpeople reach out to each other, misunderstand each other, without ever ceasing to be themselves: servant and lord. The Instrumentality is nine-tenths under the surface; the Inquest is all surface, and a slick surface at that.

Compare, for example, pivotal points. Cordwainer Smith has a gift for turning-points, for

what Tolkien called the 'eucatastrophe', for the feeling that history is made here, this world, this moment:

'"I do say this happiness is not real..."
"How can you," she shouted at him,"in the face of the evidence. Our evidence, which we of the Instrumentality decided on a long time ago. We collect it ourselves. Can we, the Instrumentality, be wrong?"
"Yes," said the Lord Sto Odin.'
('Under Old Earth')

'The revolution lasted six minutes and covered one hundred and twelve meters.'
('The Dead Lady of Clown Town')

'"...they're animals - underpeople. Destroy! Destroy!" Then came the answer which has created our own time. It came from the Lady Arabella Underwood, and all Kalma heard it:

"Perhaps they are people. They must have a trial."

...The Lady Panc Ashash said quietly to Elaine, "I thought I would be dead by now. Really dead, at last. But I am not. I have seen the worlds turn, Elaine, and you have seen them turn with me."'
('The Dead Lady of Clown Town')

In their context, they move to tears. The pivotal point in 'Light on the Sound', in contrast, passes almost unnoticed, embedded in the text:

'"The Galaxy is large, Daavye, and the Inquest only imagines it controls everything..."
Davaryush waited.
"Now there's only one thing I want," she said, "I want the end of the Inquest."
Power of Powers! Davaryush thought. At last, I've finally heard the unutterable thing... uttered. I've had so many doubts, but I've never conceived of the destruction of the web that binds the Dispersal...'

In Smith's stories we are made aware of the historical importance of events. It should therefore be impersonal - but when the Lady Panc Ashash speaks it is a voice personal and immediate. Sucharitkul has no similar historical perspective, and, to be fair I don't think he was aiming for it here: his comes later, in 'Darktouch', with a visitor from the future telling Davaryush in the 'past' of his coming victory. But the reader is less involved with personalities than with the mechanics of temporal paradox; the emotional impact is gone.

It is less than fair to blame Sucharitkul for not being Cordwainer Smith, though it is an accusation he lays himself open to by being so slavishly imitative. But is it the fault of influence, or even imitation, as such? Smith himself, in the prologue to SPACE LORDS, is quite happy to confess the origins of 'Mother Hitton's Little Kittons' (in 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves'); 'The Dead Lady of Clown Town' (Joan of Arc), 'Drunkboat' (Rimbaud), 'The Ballad of Lost C'mell'(a 14th century work by Lo Kuan-chung), and 'A Planet Named Shayol'(Dante Alighieri). One is left asking if his power comes from his own writing or the templates he borrowed. True, he could produce bad work (many of the early stories, particularly 'From Gustible's Planet'). Also true: some very good stories are without apparent antecedents - 'The Game of Rat and Dragon',

'Under Old Earth', 'Alpha Ralpha Boulevard'. It's not what you steal, it's what you do with it; plagiarism has an ancient and honourable history - but only when it works.

So who is Somtow Sucharitkul when he's not being Cordwainer Smith or Robert F. Young? It's a difficult, interesting question. Regarding early work, there is the 'Mallworld' series (beginning in IAsfm with 'A Day In Mallworld', Oct79; 'Rabid In Mallworld', June 80; and 'Sing a Song of Mallworld', July 80).

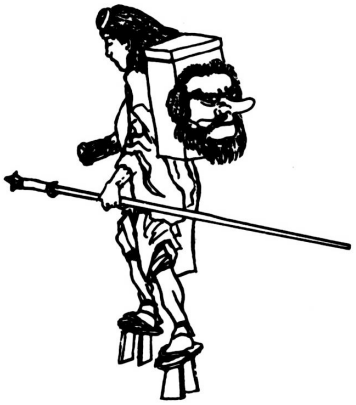
> '"Mallworld! The biggest shopping centre of all time, where you can buy ANYTHING you could possibly imagine."'
> ('A Day In Mallworld')

It is a spacestation shopping precinct, the ultimate consumer-society's wet dream. This first story introduces slapstick race & chase on the space station, the sexy alien Selspridar, and a teenage heroine:

> 'Now: why would a lonely, unsatisfied, Bible-belt virgin teenage girl like me ever want to steal the family car, sneak off the colony, and teleport to Mallworld on the sabbath, anyways?...
>
> ...Apart from my plain saffron robe, you couldn't tell me from a Babylonian. I've got normal black hair, freckles, budding little breasts, regular periods, and a perfectly normal, un-outlandish name: Zoe McOmar.'

The view across the Atlantic sees the Mallworld stories as something other than pure slapstick. A sombre note underlies them: the alien Selspridar have cut Man off physically and visually from the stars ('"until we're civilised"'), and the desire to break free fuels the Mallworld action. 'Rabid in Mallworld' is equally slapstick about aliens who eat their (non-sentient) young; 'Sing a Song of Mallworld' has a young rich boy musician as hero, who cannot play anything emotionally mature until he's seen Mallworld's seamy underside. After that (and without attempting to use his wealth to actually help anyone) he makes beautiful music - presumably for those who can afford to listen to it. It's almost impossible to read Mallworld as anything but a vicious satire on American society, if only because its manic enthusiasm can't be for real:

> 'I'm a good Catholic. Why, I was remote-confirmed by the Pope herself at my Bar-Mitzvah.'
> ('Rabid In Mallworld')
>
> '...teleporting in on the transmat, floating down the nothing tubes into a world of wonders. Tier upon tier, level upon level, serpentine crowd-streams pouring into demat-booths, holosigns blaring and



> flashing, little pink men buzzing around yelling slogans in your ears, corridors crazy-graving and twisting into doughnuts and crullers, slide-walks snailing and snaking alongside you, autopushers handing out free Levitol pills, robots dispensing candy, kinky sex, encyclopaedias and fluffy toys...'
> ('Rabid In Mallworld')

Yet what does Sucharitkul reply to the accusation in IAsfm of having created a 'chilling dystopia'?

'All I did was describe a place I wanted to live in! Mallworld is often a monument to plastic tacki-

ness, quaint and charming. I suppose it has to do with not having grown up in America.'

Wanted to live in! What you read into that depends very much on where you're looking. Slick Mallworld in slick magazine, or social comment disguised for the eyes of the great American public?

To bring things up to date, the Inquestor series is still going strong('Remembrances', March 82; 'Scarlet Snow', May 82), and in general more competently written. In 'Remembrances' Sucharitkul uses the paradox of time-dilation to provide a story of twin brother and sister, parted in the Inquest's destruction of their homeworld, who meet again when a year has passed for the girl, but sixty years for the boy - who is now, himself, an Inquestor. Planets are destroyed here, as in 'Scarlet Snow', by whim of the game 'makrugh' that the Inquestors play.

There is also in IAsfm 'Aquila the God'(April 82); comic adventure set in an alternate-timeline's Roman province in America circa 100AD. The humour is that of anachronism and incongruity, strongly reminiscent of Avram Davidson's PEREGRINE PRIMUS and SECUNDUS. LOCUS, April 82, promises us the AQUILIAD as well as a trilogy of Inquestor novels, and a short story collection.

It may be that the Inquestors will do better as a novel. The chief distinction between Sucharitkul and Smith is that one is a born short story writer, and the other, I think, a novelist.

Cordwainer Smith's one novel, NORSTRILIA - published previously with additional material as two novels, THE PLANET BUYER and THE UNDERPEOPLE - is not his most successful work. For one thing, it is set far too much on Norstrilia itself. The planet, Old North Australia, home of the immortality serum stroon, is better as a brief conceit (as in 'Mother Hittons Littul Kittons') than as the setting for a novel. What is intriguing in the short story becomes merely irritating at length. Parts of NORSTRILIA are powerful, but the pieces somehow refuse to cohere. Smith was a short story writer par excellence; his words are discrete entities. They share a common universe, a common history, and a common theme; but only rarely do they have characters in common. Rod McBan's oddyssey in NORSTRILIA follows that form of legend, of fable rather than novel. The short length is ideal for the fantastic kind of fiction, for the presentation of the truly strange. Allow it to become familiar at novel-length and it changes.

What it changes into, generally, is 'realistic' fiction. Realistic, that is, in the sense of human psychology and character. Smith doesn't specifically set out to create 'real' people. Sucharikul's stories show continuity of character rather than setting, they attempt to end with the human rather than the historical. The novel depends on realistic character, no matter how odd the setting. It indicates he might do better in that form - fortunately his first novel is available: STARSHIP AND HAIKU.

STARSHIP AND HAIKU is certainly not'realistic' in any other sense than character. To come back to Eastern and Western cultures, it is the Eastern setting and cultural differences that hold this novel together. They are a cold wind of strangeness that dwarfs the peculiarities of the plot - and it certainly has its peculiarities.

After the Millenial war most of the Earth is radioactive: Japan plans to 'add the last line to the haiku' by making the end of mankind beautiful. The book follows the conflict between Minister Ishida and Takahashi (self styled Deathlord), one planning a starship project, the other creating and encouraging mass suicide. It also follows Josh, Japanese-born and Western-raised; his mutant brother Didi, who is in telepathic contact with the whales; and Ishida's daughter Ryoko, who discovers the ancient link between the whales and the Japanese people.

The novel blends seppuku, intelligent whales, the death of the Earth, and seedling starships: it is the samuri values of beauty, fantasy, honor and death that succeed in giving it some degree of originality. To hold the mood just this side of the ridiculous is no mean feat, considering the absurdities. But the absurd is also a theme here. Sucharitkul sets up an ambiguous tension: are the basic values by which we're expected to judge this novel Western or Oriental? Compare the implicit approval in the description of Ishida's death:-

'It was a beautiful death; despite his lack of experience, he had killed himself most artistically, so that he and the rocks and the snow were a tableau of the utmost elegance and restraint.'

- with the Buddhist Abbot of the prologue, contemplating suicide by leaping from a tower into an empty swimming pool:

'"And what," said the Abbot, "if I were to jump?"
"It's absurd!" Ishida exclaimed.
"It's beautiful," said Takahashi. "To embrace death, still flushed with the joy of living".
Ignoring Ishida, the Abbot said to Takahashi, "And why is it so beautiful?"
"It is full of truth. It is a poem, a sumie painting, full of sadness and regret."
"You were always the glib, skin-deep one!" cried the Abbot in a sudden passion. "Have you learned nothing from me?"'

STARSHIP AND HAIKU shows Sucharitkul balancing the influences of samuri and pulp science fiction. The danger is of being neither one thing or the other, falling between two stools. The possible advantage is of being beyond one or the other, of creating, like Cordwainer Smith, something unique. Sucharitkul is, after all, only at the beginning of his career.

An American writer re-tells Oriental tales in the ancient Chinese style. A Thai writer finds himself at home in the pulp magazines. So it goes. 'East' and 'West' are a fraud and always were. Consider the differences between such broadly 'Western' writers as the English and the Americans (never mind the Europeans). Japanese and Chinese writers of sf also exist - see, for example, LOCUS March 82 - but, sf being notoriously chauvinistic about the English language, we are sadly in need of good translations. Doubtless they have their differences. (I can't claim to be an expert on the Orient - or, come to that, the Occident - my viewpoint is that of the average Western reader. If there is an average Eastern reader out there who sees it different, I hope she'll let us know.)

The word 'alien' came to me first through science fiction, so that it had the primary meaning of those unhuman (beautiful or dangerous) creatures from the stars. Later, found in its political context, 'aliens' simply as those not of one's own country, the usage seemed wrong. The perspective was too small: what then could you call the truly strange? Nothing human could be an alien.

It since appears that nothing is so alien to mankind as man. Both parts of the paradox are true: we are all human, we are all causes of - in the science fictional phrase - a sense of wonder. A touch of strange is that feeling that comes with simultaneous recognition and surprise. It is as likely to come from the human aliens as from the starborn variety; as likely to come from ourselves.

Still, something remains to be said - to the racists, to the chauvinists, to the merely bigoted and patriotic (of whom, even in science fiction, we are not short); in that if East and West had never met we should not have the Instrumentality, nor the last line of the haiku; we should all be poorer by that amount.

FLASHBACK

ASIMOV'S FOUNDATION

ONCE & FUTURE EMPIRE?

by John D. Owen

Isaac Asimov's FOUNDATION series is rightly judged to be a seminal event in SF, the work which took the genre out of the pure pulp adventure style that was dominant in the '30s, and through to the much more scientifically-based SF of the '50s. The series extends right through the period of John Campbell's "Golden Age" at ASTOUNDING magazine, starting in 1942 and being completed in 1950, when competition for ASTOUNDING from the MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SF and GALAXY initiated the SF boom of the '50s.

Campbell insisted upon his authors applying a good deal of thought to their stories, often supplying subject matter out of his own fertile imagination, and the young Asimov, at Campbell's suggestion that he do a 'future history' series, tied together the fall of the Roman Empire as a model for a Galaxy-wide fall, with the additional twist of an attempt to forestall the inevitable 'Dark Ages' by the establishment of a Foundation to carry over into the new era and shorten the time spent in chaos.

Modern readers, who come to the Foundation books in their completed form, often fail to take into account certain factors when judging Asimov's series; the major factor being that the series was produced and published in ASTOUNDING over an eight year period, between May 1942 and January 1950, and Asimov's own view of what should happen in his imagined universe changed considerably during that time, as did the society in which he lived. There are therefore considerable differences between the first published story, FOUNDATION (in the collected books, THE ENCYCLOPEDISTS) and the last.

There has been considerable criticism of the Foundation series in later years, almost all of it because of a failure to appreciate the simple fact that it is a series produced over a number of years and not a novel with all the parts tied together into a whole. Brian Aldiss, in BILLION YEAR SPREE, was particularly critical in this fashion, bemoaning the lack of organic unity caused by the 'serialisation', and objecting to too much faith being placed in technology in the books. Aldiss misses the nature of the series and the differences between the two 'ends' of the series. To observe the changes in attitude on the part of Asimov in the course of writing the series, the stories must first be read in the order of publication.

To establish this order, you must first drop entirely the opening part of the book, FOUNDATION, the story called THE PSYCHOHISTORIANS, which was not written until 1951, when the stories were first collected into book form. THE PYSCHOHISTORIANS represents after-thoughts on Asimov's part, and changes the emphasis of the first four real stories. All four stories, from THE ENCYCLOPEDISTS to THE MERCHANT PRINCES,

have as their main theme, not the unfolding of the Seldon Plan, but the problem of developing technology with a scarcity of materials (a very topical theme thrown into the limelight by the Second World War, with its own scarcity and economic problems). The Seldon Plan was secondary, giving a background to the events rather than being an event in itself.

The psycho-historical approach gains strength throughout the first four stories, until it has about equal billing with the main theme by the time of THE MERCHANT PRINCES, (which was the third story to be published; the fourth was THE TRADERS, which has been moved forward in the book, and which represented a small 'filler' story, rather than a major part of the opus). Much of this expansion of the Seldon Plan was due to pressure from John Campbell, whose philosophy it reflected, with its ruthless ideal of scientific determinism charting the course of civilisation for a thousand years ahead.

Asimov was never that fixed upon the concept of the 'inevitability' of the Seldon Plan, and it really only gained such an ascendancy in the overall series as a result of Campbell's insistance upon it being expanded. The closest Asimov came to really accepting the Seldon Plan gracefully was in the fifth story, THE GENERAL, which he penned after reading Toynbee's STUDY OF HISTORY, (and which is the only Foundation story really strongly influenced by Toynbee, contrary to later critics' opinions.)

The sixth story, THE MULE, represents a vast U-turn in the whole series and it came about because Campbell, ever the opportunist even when it meant overturning his own creations, insisted that Asimov needed to deal a hard blow to the Seldon Plan to retain reader interest - more 'inevitability of history' stories would have been self-defeating. Campbell's hunch was correct - the series did need the change of direction. Asimov did not like it, however, and he got his own back on Campbell by coming up with the longest story yet in the series - he contended that if he was going to do something that he disliked, then he was going to collect his biggest cheque ever from Campbell for it. THE MULE introduces a 'lost' element into the series: the Second Foundation. Asimov originally put the reference to a 'Second Foundation' in the early stories as a throw-away line. "It might come in useful", he thought. In THE MULE, it becomes the hope of the foundation, the last remaining counter-force to the Mule's domination, which is a pretty powerful oak to grow from such a little acorn, and it provided the impetus for the last two stories in the series.

By now, Asimov had grown rather tired of the Foundation series. He comments, in his auto-

biography IN MEMORY YET GREEN, that the problem of continuing a magazine series that had been running sporadically for nearly seven years meant that each story was more constrained than the last by the necessity of encapsulating the history of what has gone before. Unlike today, when the Foundation stories are available collected together in book form, at the time of writing the final stories, the earlier parts of the series were still only available in the back issues of ASTOUNDING. Asimov felt that the constraints of having to explain the previous history over and over again were beginning to be insurmountable, so he wrote the last two stories

under protest, and then refused absolutely to have anything more to do with the Foundation series. It is only thirty years later that his resolution has been broken down.

Asimov changed the whole outlook of the stories when he introduced the Second Foundation as a living entity into the series. Seldon's Plan changes from being a thing of the past projecting into the future, to an organisation of the present manipulating the human universe to its own ends, in the cause of a 'higher good'. Can anyone really read FOUNDATION today and not believe that the Second Foundation are ruthless dictators plotting to take over the First Foundation's Empire?

The final stories have often been called 'fascist' in their implications - the Second Foundation are today seen as cruel dictators, with their responsiblity for the destruction of a whole planet (Tarzenda in SEARCH BY THE MULE) and of the sacrifice of its own members in SEARCH BY THE FOUNDATION. Certainly the implications are chilling, but in condemning the whole series because of the last stories, the critics are wrong. The reason they are wrong is quite simply that the series is, as yet, unfinished, and following the motif (identified by James Gunn) of the previous stories, the next tales in the series would have to deal with the Second Foundation as the major problem remaining to the First Foundation - as the enemy of the human race's continuing social evolution.

Gunn has postulated that in each story of the series, the main problem requires a solution which then causes a major problem in the next episode - this is a perceptive argument, which can be seen to be valid. The solution to Terminus' early problems with its neighbours is the establishment of the 'Religion of Science'; by the third story, this religion is stifling the further expansion of the Foundation, causing resistance from other planets unwilling to allow the 'bridle' of Foundation science into their lives.

Later, after the 'dead hand' of Seldon's Plan defeats Bel Riose simply by historical forces, the belief in the inevitability of the plan stifles any chance the Foundation has of defeating the Mule - the Foundation forces expect the Mule to be defeated, and want to be around to share the fruits of victory, so no-one commits himself strongly enough, even when the enemy are at a disadvantage. The solution to THE GENERAL is the problem in THE MULE.

Taking this argument a stage further, beyond the end of the series as it stands, means that

the Foundation, believing that they are free of the influence of the Second Foundation, would have to re-discover and combat the real Second Foundation to achieve a society that had genuinely evolved from the different outlook of the technological-based Foundation, and not from the imposed solution of the Second Foundation, with its 'ruling class' of psychologists. The probable outcome would be a compromise - the physical sciences of the first Foundation could probably bring the Second Foundation to a state of stalemate, where the Second Foundation would be forced to abandon its plans of ruling the Empire and instead would work openly within the framework established by the first Foundation.

The alternative, as I see it, is the establishment of an artificially maintained equilibrium in which the Second Foundation rules an Empire that rapidly stagnates due to the need of the ruling classes (the Second Foundation are few in numbers) to maintain a tight grip on growth and technology to ensure no developments which would lead to the overthrow of their government. This alternative is presaged by the Mule's 'empire' which crumbles to nothing at his death, and is very much against Asimov's own 'liberal' (by American standards) outlook.

I believe that it was quite wrong of Asimov not to have completed the Foundation series before now, as it has left the whole meaning of the series open to misinterpretation. The major problem that he faced in the early '50s, of having to recap previous events before starting a new story, are taken care of by the ready availability of all the Foundation stories in book form, and by their continuing immense popularity - the subject matter of FOUNDATION is well known to all SF readers. He can produce the final (?) part of the series secure in the knowledge that this one, at least, he will not start at a disadvantage.

Asimov is now working on that final volume, tentatively entitled LIGHTNING ROD, and which Doubleday will be publishing sometime next year (assuming the Good Doctor's famed rapidity of composition still holds good). It's undoubtedly a book that is going to sell millions, simply because it is the long-awaited continuation of the best-known SF series of all time. It will be interesting to see how the author himself sees his previous work, reflected in the new book. It will probably alter perceptions of the overall series yet again, and it will be interesting to see just how those changes in Asimov's attitudes (and after thirty years, those attitudes must be quite considerably changed) colour his work, and quite how he disposes of the more distasteful connotations that have been attributed to the series. The completion of the Foundation cycle could quite easily be the SF event of 1983 - I hope optimism is justified.

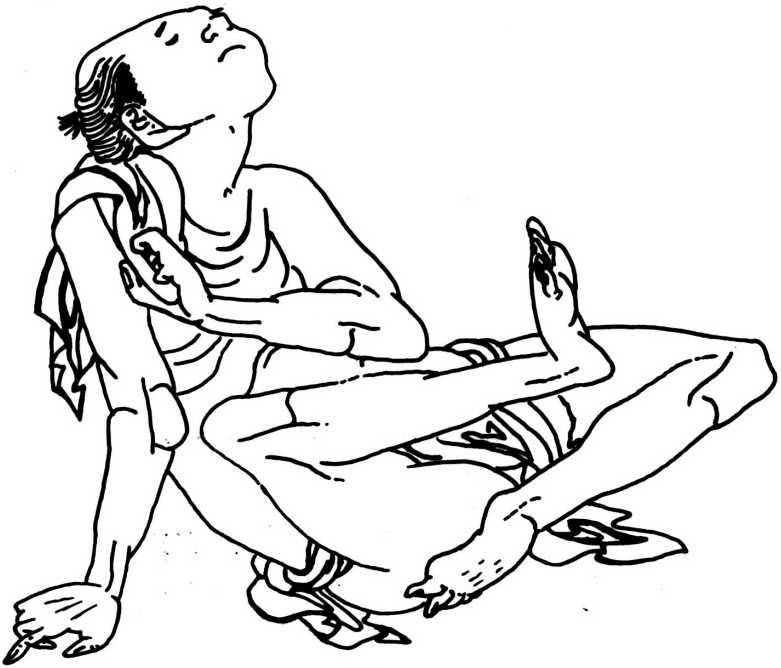
That article represents the first 'Flashback' piece, and I would like to be able to continue to run a regular column looking at the 'classic' SF (or Fantasy) books of the past, and seeing how they stand up to modern works. While there are a good few subjects I'd like to tackle myself, I'd also like to see contributions from you out there. Anybody want the floor for CS7?


Martin
Aclsdon

DAVID THIRY

Flexibility extends to all actions.
Adaptability is the capability
to learn to change;
And in this changing
to continue to do the same things
But in a different guise.
A farmer works his lowland fields in summer
But after a swelling river floods his crops,
He becomes an autumn fisherman.
The wind blows fallen leaves where it may.
Every activity is appropriate to its time;
It is absolute only for an instant.

Most face a great task
As if it were a mountain of ice.
They expect that it is unconquerable,
That even their very first step will slip.
In evaluating the problem,
The climber needs only to set one foot
on the mountainside.
This will give them the "feel" of the ice,
the steepness of the mountainside.
How few bother with this first step!
How many fewer will have the patience to
let their foot linger on that beginning
And give it a chance to warm the ice:
So making easy that first, critical step.



DAVID THIRY

There are a thousand principles designed for
bettering ones' self,
And each is based on my own ideals:
That you can never know enough,
That you can never be too strong.
This infers that the most profound understanding
is but of the surface,
And that even the greatest compassion is lacking.
These are the impossible limits which the world
holds true.
But I have experienced all this
And I tell you that
The best way to improve yourself
Is to become yourself.

Zen is both of the world and outside it.
It is part of a man's life and yet beyond it.
Zen motivates a life from outside
yet, it is life itself.
Living it is part of the total secret:
being, and not being seen;
moving, and remaining still;
holding, and yet letting go;
Calling in a silent way
for those who see to follow.
Zen is like walking a quiet street:
There is life in the houses all around,
But the most important being
passes quietly between.

DAVID THIRY

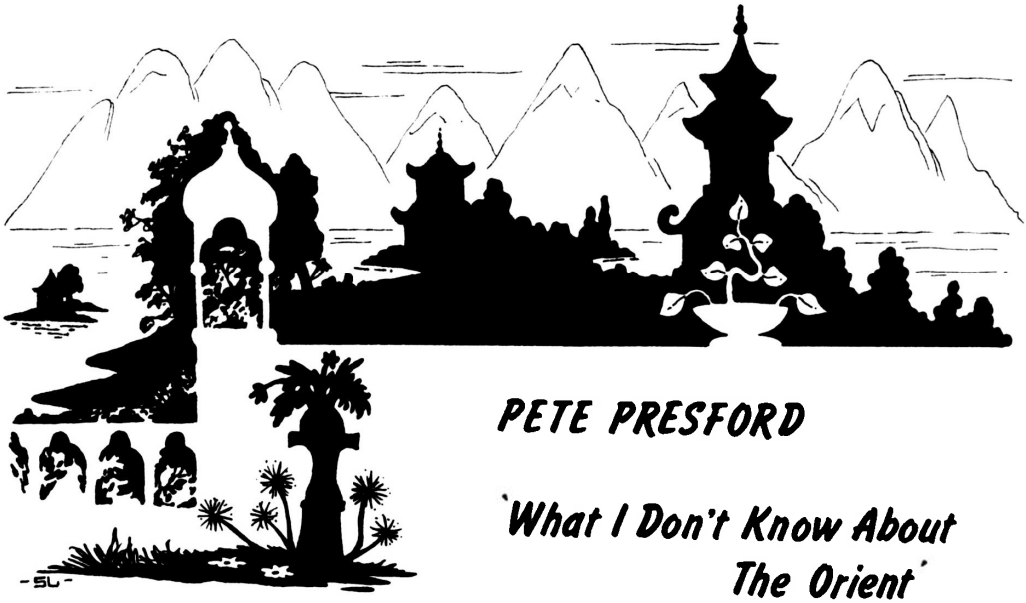
The way of correct living is not a narrow path.
Rather, it is a giant highway of many lanes.
When people speak of the "straight and narrow,"
They are actually discussing their own lanes.
When I talk of the wide highway
I am referring to as many narrow paths as there are
walkers on those pathways.
All lanes lead to the same destination,
All are forced to follow the same curves and hilltops.
What makes them different is whether
I am walking in front of you,
I am walking in back of you,
Or whether I am walking beside you.

There are a million worthy causes in the world,
Each promising a glorious battle;
Throughout your life will come enemies,
Some with raised fists, others in disguise:
It seems worthy to fight all.
Ah, a universe of beggars and sick,
villains and threatened maidens,
All guests promising a grand chase
topped with honour.
What special opportunities to do good,
To better the world!
But this seems to be more real:
That you clutch your weapons firmly
And leap into your heart
For your most worthy challenger is yourself.

Men of great rage are actually possessed of great calm.
A glaring sun contains darkness in its light.
There is youth in old age,
Silence in music,
Strength in gentleness.
A man advancing actually steps backwards.
Only what you see is what is,
But because another may see it differently
What you see as truth is also often falsehood:
Still air becomes wind when you run through it.

DAVID THIRY

Starlight has no value
Unless it first passes through a cycle of darkness;
Water cannot run pure
Until it has first passed through a filter of sand;
None can appreciate the grand sound of the wind
Except when it roars between trees.
Pleasure does not come unless it has been tempered
with pain;
Love is not felt without an equal measure of hate;
Life cannot be a full process
unless death be just behind.



PETE PRESFORD

'What I Don't Know About The Orient'

For me to write anything is bad enough. But to write something for a fantasy fanzine with an Oriental flavour makes me reach for a double portion of home-brew. Even stretching that word 'Oriental' to its fullest gives me no help at all. What was the last Oriental fantasy you read?

Normally I can fall back on personal experiences to fill'in any deficit caused by lack of knowledge; not this time folks. No matter how hard I try to drag the old grey matter around my skull, I just can't seem to relate in any way. Oh! There was a little bit of aggro down the Chinese takeaway a few years ago. Someone tried to nip out (sic) without paying for their flied lice... The owner, being an excitable guy, chased him, sinking his best chicken-chopper in the guy's back to help him along.

I must admit that I often think about the strange tales one hears of these far away places. And about the even stranger creatures that live (or lived) there. Or are they so strange?

In a recent visit to 'Ty Gwyn' (the humble Presford residence) by Frank and Anna Jo Denton, the subject of Dragons came to the surface. Frank went on to say how the poor old Dragon was being flogged to death in the States, by anyone that could make a fast buck out of him. Assorted badges bearing slogans like "Keep home warm with a Dragon" (we can do that in Cymru, hee-hee!), or "Support the Coal Industry - buy a Dragon". Also there are soft cuddly Dragons to sit on your shoulder, (are they messy, like parrots?). In fact - Dragons of all shapes and sizes.

George, my dragon, sits by the side of our fireplace and doesn't say a word. No doubt the whole matter is too much to bear(?)

It would seem that we even owe our much beloved Dragon to the Orientals. They had them years before us. No doubt the Yanks have always been a bit peeved that the dragons never settled in the States. But then I ask you - would you prefer to devour a beefburger, or a nice, plump maiden?

Perhaps the Dragon has been taken to heart because of his mainly bad reputation in days past. This is where the Oriental Dragon differed. They counted the dragon

as a most benevolent creature, along with three others, these being the Unicorn, the Phoenix and the lowly Tortoise. We British (unlike the Chinese) have never really been fair to the animal.

Take, for instance, the Yorkshire legend of the Dragon of Whantley.

"More of More Hall donned armour covered in spikes. Then, without horse, he went out to do battle with the beast, and kicked it to death."

How rotten can you get?

I'm sure that old Oriental favourite Confucius would have had something to say about the matter. Oh. He does.

"Tsekung asked,'Is there one single word that can serve as a principle in the conduct of life?'
Confucius replied,'Perhaps the word reciprocity will do. Do not unto others what you do not want others to do unto you.'"

That fooled you -didn't it?

It can be said that in the Orient, and particularly in China and Japan, the Dragon has a certain splendour and panache. Describing a Chinese dragon to an artist like Steve Lines, or any artist, can even bring a pang of remorse to my stoney heart.

"...It has a triple-jointed body, the head of a camel, the horns of a stag, the eyes of a demon, the ears of a cow, the neck of a snake, the belly of a clam, the scales of a carp, the claws of an eagle and the soles of a tiger."

There is no doubt that the Far East in particular holds a depth of folklore that hasn't been even touched yet. But, such is the culture and way of life in these places, I wonder if someone from the West could do full justice to a novel based on Oriental mythology anyway. Then again, it would be honest of me to say, I would love to be proved wrong

There is no doubt that the West has dipped it's fingers into the pie now and then. Yul Brynner and the oft-repeated MAGNIFICENT SEVEN is one example that springs to mind straight away. OK, I admit it. I watch it every time. But it was not a patch on the original Japanese film, THE SEVEN SAMURAI, which was a refreshing change from start to finish. I would have loved to see the film KAGEMISHU (The Shadow Warrior), which was shown at last year's Chester Film Festival. But it was a one-nighter - so I missed it.

The television has seen David Carradine with his bald pate, and his mentor muttering "...now you see, little Grasshopper..." every few minutes. Strangely enough, this has recently finished another re-run on a Saturday tea-time slot.

We had, of course, the highly

amusing Oriental product regarding the bandit city of 'Yang Shan Pho'. Now that I really enjoyed. Well - in small doses anyway. It somehow reminded me of those early Hollywood epics where swords swung and thudded in their thousands - but not one drop of blood did we see. Unless it was the Hero who copped it through the heart. We were then rewarded with a thimble-full to stain his shirt front!

Yes! There remains a field of literature just waiting to be ripped off!

Not like Cymru, of course. I would think that at least half of the writing fraternity have made a few bob out of Welsh history.

Pity none of them ever tried to tell the right story.

The little reading I've done on the Samurai makes some (nearly all) of the early Knightish heroes look like tatty bully boys, which most of them were anyway. No doubt the line between heavy and hero will never really be defined in an historical sense.

But, we must never forget that the Japanese code of honour did exist well into the Twentieth Century (still does?). Like any culture, they too had their scroungers on society, that masqueraded in the Samurai guise, yet robbed and killed just as so many Barons and Knights did in our own country.

Yet we are given to understand that the Samurai was a single warrior, unlike our knights, who rarely moved about without their full entourage behind. The Samurai roamed the countryside with little else other than a sword and back pack. Maybe a Samisen (it's a guitar/banjo instrument) strung across his back, to while away the lonely hours spent by roadside campfires.

It seems a great pity that places like China and Japan became so involved with their own cultural and caste systems, and so stagnated on the very crest of knowledge. Herbs, rockets, acupuncture, art: all came to nought, like other early civilisations - what was the push that they lacked?

We can only hope that the Earth itself doesn't become an Oriental mystery, visited in the far future by younger civilisations asking the same question. "They had the means...why didn't they reach the stars and conquer?"

Have we reached that dividing line yet?

No, Auntie Doris, It's Not The Swinging Blue Jeans Revival, It's The Children Of The Crucial Three...

Everyone says that Merseyside's the place if you want to hear good music. Why, wasn't the first evening I spent in Liverpool passed at a rock concert at the Empire? Admittedly, I had nothing else to do (I was between interviews at the time and had never set foot in the place before) and, admittedly, the attractions were Sailor and Mike d'Abo - hardly at the spearhead of thrusting, compassionate music even five years ago! Still, it was a favourable start, and since then various rock critics have suddenly discovered a Liverpool Renaissance, and Echo and the Bunnymen, Teardrop Explodes, and that curious combo whose only stability seems to be the presence of Pete Wylie and the expression 'Wah!' in their name, have all had their fair share of fame and fortune. But I have to admit that I'm still almost as detached from the scene as that particular evening when I went to see Sailor and Mike d'Abo on the strength of the fact that someone I knew had recently arranged music for him.

Because at that time I had Tenuous Connections - nay, Ambitions! An integral, if minor, part of the London/Essex University scene of the early '70s, I've paid money to see Bob Marley and the Wailers, ELO, Marc Bolan, Fairport Convention (in more incarnations than I care to remember), Steeleye Span, Ginger Baker's Airforce, Faces, and many others whose success would not have been assured without my sweaty figure bopping somewhere in the audience. Look, friends, I saw Billy Connolly when he was a humblebum, and once even conversed with someone who had the sleeve notes on his album written by John Peel. I was a loyal

follower of Childe Roland and the George Stukey Blues Band (neither of which you've heard of, so don't pose!) and I listened regularly, nay, religiously, to 'Top Gear' (which in those days was not a motoring programme!) and the number of times I've wondered whether Pete or Eric or Jimi should be the lead guitar in my band are incalculable. And I did know someone who arranged for various minor league bands and singers. (Well, he was the son of a colleague of my wife-to-be's flatmate.) But the fact reamains that nowadays I wouldn't know a Bunnyman from a Teardrop, a Dalek from a Wild Swan, and my idea of a Liverpool club is something with which an Everton supporter gets wellied!

Why's that? Well, partly it's geography. I actually live in Birkenhead, which tends to be isolated from Liverpool anyway, (there's an old joke which goes something like this: "Why did they build the Mersey Tunnel?" - "So that people could go home to Birkenhead without being seen.") and that's part of the reason. Still, Orchestral Manoevres in the Dark are from Wirral, despite their bracketing as a 'Liverpool' group, and you can't move in Oxton (the one part of Birkenhead which makes Hampstead look distinctly down-market) without tripping over people with spikey haircuts carrying guitars. More to the point, it's age - when you're married with two children, you do tend to drift away from bopping in sleazy clubs. Nearer to the truth, perhaps, is a sheer downright lack of enthuisiasm...

John Peel was in Liverpool recently, guesting each night for a week on Radio Merseyside, showcasing local bands and musicians. I caught, perhaps, half an hour to an hour of the sessions. The music was, in most cases, good - but listening to it, I felt nothing of the wild epiphany which struck me when I first heard, say, Love, Jefferson Airplane, Bob Dylan, the Velvet Underground, Bowie or Fairport. The most distinctive tracks were an extremely Byrd-ish song from the Wild Swans, and some reggae-style music from Cross Section. There wasn't anything of the iconoclasm of the Sex Pistols ('God Save the Queen' was the last single I bought unheard - an honour once only given to the Beatles and Dusty Springfield); suddenly every one wants to be popstars again. However, after listening to that, and especially a broadcast of the regular Sunday night programme 'Street Life', which featured a local band called Blue Poland, what struck me was the commitment of the bands and their audience to their music. Certainly, it's a sight better than much of the chart rubbish; when wet-eyed female singers can chirrup about how much nicer it is back in the home, and Freddie Mercury can ponce about in a tuxedo singing garbage in Spanish, then it really is time to switch off. I can just see my mum thinking "Now there's a clean and tidy singer , not like those hairy Rolling Stones." (Although at £10 a ticket, I'm not saying anything about credibility at all!)

Perhaps all I'm saying is that I'm not 14 anymore: my personal connection with the music is slight and that's always important. I know no local musicians, although Viv (the Wirral Library Service's resident Bohemienne) is acquainted with Chrysalis recording stars Afraid of Mice, and I did once see Pete Burns of Dead or Alive walking down Hardiman Street, and thought to myself "There's Pete Burns of Dead or Alive walking down Hardiman Street." Still, one day I shall breeze into the Armadillo tearooms at the right time and suddenly discover a whole new scene, man.

But I never did use that stupid expression...even then!

Andy Sawyer

(Thanks to Pete Atkins, whose article in the Merseyside ARTS ALIVE contained the words which I have stolen for my title.)

RIPPLES

A hefty postbag to sort out this time, but one I've immensely enjoyed dealing with, even if it did threaten to collapse on top of me at times. Trouble is, having so much material makes it very difficult to come up with a loccol that does justice to your letters. But I am going to give it a try!

MARY GENTLE,
Flat 1,
11, Alumhurst Rd.
Westbourne,
Bournemouth,
Dorset

靜女

'...Artwork: Wow! If you'll pardon the expression. Particularly the cover - particularly the centre spread. I'm a sucker for full-scale artwork - where did you get this man Helsdon? Triple Alpha! There are far too few zines with full page drawings...

Which brings me back to my opinion of CS4, if I can remember that far back; which is that the articles have to be supergood so as not to be outshone by the artwork. Two things stand out in CS5; Steve Sneyd's Future Holidays, and Iain Ewing's Fiddlin' with Dick. The first is just this side of lunacy (but only just), and may be a genuine New Idea. Fantasy Atlases I've heard of, Lit'rary Countries I've seen mapped; but hypothetical real nations...? Unfortunately I shan't be booking a tour, as none of them sound any more enticing than the countries that presently exist...

Ewing's article (?), apart from being funny, finally got me round to reading VALIS (And THE DIVINE INVASION, and A SCANNER DARKLY and MARTIAN TIMESLIP....but you won't need any more to tell you that I'm currently on a PKD kick!); this shortly before I heard the tragic news of Dick's death. Ewing's right. He doesn't say that Dick is a wise and sophisticated writer, but I suppose that goes without saying...

...Not too much controversy in the letter column, eh? Either you are getting it all right, or else you're not getting far enough up people's noses! But that's just me, I like to see the fur fly... I do have a feeling CS comes dangerously close to being bland, on occasion. More Anarchy! More Subversion! More Loonies! More Issues!...'

****

Well, I figure with this issue and (I hope) another by the end of the year, I've satisfied Mary on one of her four demands - the rest is probably up to you out there? Though speaking of loonie anarchists, here's Bernard Earp.

BERNARD M. EARP,
21, Moorfield Grove,
Tonge Moor,
Bolton,
BL2 2LQ

登山

'...That cover..it's tremendous and yet, and yet..what's happening? Two spheres (small moons?) have fallen into the sea/are being swept along by tidal waves. The waves and accompanying winds have thrown ...a ship high over the town. But that sentry is still standing his

watch with his spear tassels gently waving! Now, either this guy is showing devotion to duty far above and beyond the dreams of the most fanatical sergeant-major or as his whole world is so obviously doomed (there's no way he's going to outrun THAT) he's just enjoying the spectacle to the very end or he's just too daft to be scared or the American forces in 'Nam were not the only force to have had men take drugs on duty (..."Hey, this is a really farout trip...").

...Faced with a whole new style of reviewing, what else can a hack do but respond in style? But does this tell us anymore than an ordinarily laid-out article would have done? Is there more to the message than the medium? Yes, there is; this manages to grab the attention and hold it far better than any other review of VALIS I've seen.

...So what's wrong with the Method? I'm a follower of Stanislavski myself, and have been ever since I first set foot on stage. Sure, it's easy to send up, but if an actor can't feel and know an emotion (but not be controlled by it), how can he put that emotion across to the audience? Can a writer write an emotion he hasn't felt in some way? Would 'Beautiful Dreamer' have had the same emotional content if you'd been writing about someone you didn't care for?

...The reason I've been delayed in writing this very loc is because I've been in rehearsal, and then on stage in the MARAT/SADE. Playing a lunatic (type-casting, I know) which took all my creative energies, not to say every waking moment. I didn't just say "Ok, this scene I walk over there and slip the knife out of my sleeve." I worked out a reason for every damned move. If a move feels wrong then you work with the director and find one that does work. In "real life" you, yes you, have a reason, conscious or not, for every move, every action, and so must a player on stage else he's just a wooden puppet mouthing words. I'm not a great actor, I'm a bit part player, but by ghod I'm not a 'church hall player'... Your comment to Chuck ((re the Spinrad review in CS4)) bears on this. The MARAT/SADE was, looking back, too adventurous for our audience. It was a critical success, and a box office failure, BUT we stretched ourselves with it. Are we to limit ourselves to "drawing room comedies" because that's what could appeal to the old audience, or are we to push ourselves and them as far as we can, perhaps finding new audiences but risking failure, or limiting ourselves and certainly failing in the end as our old audiences die off. The parallel with writers sticking to a "winning" formula are too obvious to belabour...'

*****

> Bernard's well on target with his last remarks. I'm sure we can all name writers so far down in their own deep little groove that it's doubtful they could change for the better if they wanted to.
>
> The Dick layout seems to have caught on - could this be the next 'fannish' thing - SF Graffitti? Tell you what - I'll supply the wall for the next issue if you all supply the graffitti for it!

PETE LYON,
2, New Road,
Old Micklefield,
Leeds.
LS25 4AJ

如夢令

'...Steve Sneyd's article was interesting. I hadn't heard of so many aspiring states before and only a few were recognised as I scanned the list. It's a curious thing, nationalism, most illogical captain. Doubtless it goes very deep into human nature to want to identify with one area/family and oppose strangers. We are all prone to xenophobia... Even the most enlightened political thinkers can still get hung up on geographical/cultural chauvinism. One is aware that the political 'right' is nationalistic, nay patriotic..

but ironically the 'left' is more so. Justifiably condemning the nationalistic stance of organisations such as the NF, I've heard many an apparent 'free-thinker' turn around and defend the mayhem perpetrated by the blatantly nationalistic Irish Liberation Army. That so much strife, contradiction and confusion can be traced to this tendency in 'human nature' (whatever that is) indicates its ineradicable existence. The implications of this are very pessimistic. A glimmer of hope would seem to be that 'US' can be seen by the individual to be any number of people from a village pub darts team, to humankind, to all life forms. It's just a matter of education and a willingness to be open-minded.

...If I might just comment upon the Martin Helsdon folio. I always regard the 'stipple' style of rendering as a bit of a cop-out. A line is a dynamic thing, fluent, expressive in its thickness and tautness. To draw by dotting is to average out the image. It means that the correct placement of the outline can be focussed in during the act of drawing without any immediacy or spontaneity. The image can look flat and too even over the surface. Still, it can give an effective pseudo-photographic effect, and by and large these pictures are well done... I was pleased to see some thought going into the peripheral details of Martin's work. Usually, Sf artists go for the immediate and superficial impact, and the logic of the ecology or motive power is ignored... I've only gone on about the illos so much because it's nice to have decent artwork in fanzines, into which I can sink my teeth. In other words, the pictures are so superior to the majority of interior illustrations as to make it worth my while - he should do more! '

*****

Is this the start of a 'line-vs-dot' feud, I ask myself? In defense of Martin's technique, I would say that it is very effective when done well, though Martin does emphasise that it is a very laborious and time-consuming way to produce illos. I daresay someone with a really good mastery of line (and I think Pete qualifies in that respect) would naturally prefer to use that rather than the more-laborious dot-stipple technique.

My friend Iain Ewing set all kinds of things on the loose with his 'stream of consciousness rap' (as he called it) 'Fiddlin' with Dick'. My lousy timing being what it is, the majority of you will probably have got CS5 about the same time as you heard the sad news of Dick's demise, which inevitably coloured the response. Here's just two letters on the subject, to give the flavour of the majority of responses.

NIC HOWARD,
11, Downs Park,
Downley,
High Wycombe,
Bucks.
HP13 5LX

西江月

"...What really got me...was Iain Ewing's 'Fiddlin' with Dick', which has even more of an ironic tone to it due the the news of Dick's recent death.

If the 'poem' is to be taken seriously, then it seems to me that it is saying that we should close our minds, especially to the works of Philip K. Dick!

Crap!

I read VALIS a few weeks ago. It certainly was an experience. However flawed it is as a novel - and it is badly flawed - it is not a book to remain indifferent to. It is superb and terrible. It is mind-bending and boring. It is outre and mundane. It will be loved and hated. But whatever the reaction is, it will not be indifference. And a good thing too.

I always thought that most Sf fans read what they read - whether subconesiously or not - because they like to be 'mind-fucked'. That experience can be wonderful,

terrible, dull, uplifting, ecstatic: again, never indifferent. Like any other sort of fuck really.

Philip K. Dick writes - or wrote - books and stories that 'mind-fucked' people, got inside them, made them think, whether they were turned on or revolted. That's a good thing.

To Iain Ewing then: if you do not want to be stimulated - whether you loved or hated VALIS and Dick in general, it's still stimulation - close your mind off as you imply, and see what happens. Dissolution!

I loved VALIS. I didn't understand it all, my mind was fucked and stimulated, but I loved it and am none the worse for that! Not withstanding what I've just said, the second 'verse' of the poem sums up my feelings very well indeed. I think that literature will be a duller place without Philip K. Dick. At least he died in full possession of his talent, and had been recognised and praised for that talent during his lifetime.

R.I.P. Horselover!"

*****

SHAREE CARTON,
7116 - 81St.,
Edmonton,
Alberta,
T6C 2TY
Canada

虞美人

"...Iain Ewing looks to VALIS in exactly the same way I did. Currently I'm two-thirds of the way through it, and my mind is getting fucked by it. On the first page, Dick proved to me that he was one of the writers I've been looking for for years. I'd never read any Dick until now, and my mind is tripping on him the way only the best acid can get you tripping. Who needs drugs with Horselover Fats around to get you right fucked up? I felt sad, though, when I got to the bit about Dick keeping his thoughts to himself - that happened much sooner than any one expected. At Norwescon V, in Seattle in March, Tom Disch, the GoH, had to stop and regain his composure during his speech when he talked about Dick's death. People at the con were constantly murmuring about the loss of 'the Screwball Saint', as Iain puts it, and once I started VALIS, I realised that I have been missing one of the great writers of the last fifteen years. Dick certainly ranks with my faves at the top, on a par with Delany and Disch (my two idols/heroes)."

*****

I'm fully intending to drag Iain Ewing screaming back into the pages of CS, just as soon as I can convince him that fandom is worth entering, even in a minor way.

Steve Sneyd's 'Future Holidays' article provoked a lot of response, too. This 'nationalism' thing seems to be all the rage.

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK,
Post Office Box 606,
La Canada-Flintridge,
California,
91011
USA.

望嶽

"...Concerning CS being 'too eclectic'. Since this is derived from the Greek word to be selective over a wide range, I see nothing that can be considered a put down.

As a matter of fact, it is precisely articles like 'Future Holidays' that I regard as the real fun part of fanzines. They give me a chance to learn something new.

Here in the United States, we also have separatist movements. However, whereas most such movements are by poor minorities trying to seperate themselves from the majority, in the USA it is the other way round. The richer cities and counties are trying to free themselves of the poorer sections, on the grounds that they pay out more tax money than they receive in benefits and government spending back.

Thus, New York City has long had a movement to seperate it from New York State. Argument...more

tax money leaves the city to the state treasury than is returned in grants and benefits. This movement hasn't made much headway, but it's there.

Another separatist movement is in Los Angeles County, which sprawls over hundreds of square miles. Some of this is affluent people, some slums. As you may guess, more money goes from the rich to the poor in taxes than the other way round. There is a school bussing problem. So some parts of LA County want to seperate from the main body, saving taxes that way. Of course the rest of LA wants them to stay to support the tax base.

Meanwhile, Northern California is unhappy at the way Southern California takes water from their area and pipes it south. An election battle is shaping up over the so-called 'peripheral canal'. If the two were seperated, it would be easier to stop the water."

*****

Self-interest rools, OK?

Some people took Steve to task over his definitions of political groups. David Palter was one.

DAVID PALTER,
1811 Tamarind Ave.,Apt.22,
Hollywood,
California,
90022
USA

"...I was somewhat taken aback to read an assertion by Steve Sneyd that Libertaria is 'the state rich American anarchists in the Libertarian movement...would like to set up...' It is true that some rich American Libertarians have attempted to create their own states, but it is quite inaccurate to describe such people as anarchists. An anarchist is interested in abolishing government, not in creating new governments. Anarchists do not set up states of any kind, they only destroy (or try to destroy) existing states. Libertarianism and Anarchism do have a number of significant points of similarity, but also have some crucial differences which should not be overlooked.

I was sorry to discover David Thiry's condemnation of A WORLD BETWEEN... David asserts that Spinrad has, in effect, been ruined as a writer by having written for television. I must ask then, what is going to happen to us, who write for fanzines? Fanzines are the only medium in existence which, on occassion, are more awful even than the dread television. No, I don't buy that. An artist can write for any damned medium he/she chooses, and escape unscathed. It is true that one can write for television without being a good writer, but a good writer can write for television without being ruined (although in translating the script to tv, the producer may ruin the writer's work, which is another thing entirely.) And I don't know why David finds that the domination of one culture by another is 'an obsolete social phenomenon' and hence presumably not worth writing about. It is an important and real phenomenon, still taking place even now. And the suggestion that Spinrad deliberately wrote an inferior work in order to improve its chances of being made into a film, similarly does not follow; movies can and have been made from good books as well as bad. Furthermore, I not only think that this is a good book, but I also think that it could be made into a good movie but probably won't."

*****

People can't seem to agree over the merits or otherwise of Mr. Spinrad. After David, the Spinrad enthuisiast, we have the crazy Dutch fanzine master, Roelof Goudriaan.

ROELOF GOUDRIAAN,
Postbus 589
8200 An Lelystad,
The Netherlands.

"...I didn't like SONGS FROM THE STARS. Basically it's a novel without characters. The 'black scientists' clearly are nothing but impersonations of their 'black

science', but are either Clear Blue Lou or Sunshine Sue more? Could you tell the two apart easily? While Spinrad's heart is right, clear blue white, the whole book is built on over-simplifications of a larger than human scale - an old, old mistake of Sf - which I found to be annoyingly lecturing instead of convincing. As you noticed, the plot is weak. Spinrad does score his points, true, enough to make a damn good short story, a novella maybe - but from a novel I expect more than just points scored.

...Steve Lines gets my vote for 'most excellent fan tsunami artist', quite an honour, you'll agree - I loved the cover. Still, why do all your artists take such pleasure in showing CS in its last moments before total annihilation? What have you done to them?"

*****

I dunno, Roelof - maybe I don't put their names in big enough lettering, or something. Anyone would think they did not want to be displayed to the world at large - ungrateful wretches. (Sorry fellers, didn't mean it. Keep on drawing!)

WALTER WILLIAMS.
807 13th SW,
Albuquerque,
New Mexico,
87102
USA

悲愁歌

"...I think Steve Sneyd's future may lie in directions other than travel director...Once upon a time I considered becoming a travel agent, but was unable to interest any of the established firms in my Famous Prisons Tour. 'Clatter your tin cup against the bars at Alcatraz, and learn the famous "yah yah yah" song! Bask in the sun at Cayenne, and follow in the footsteps of the famous Papillon! Your friends will delight in strapping you into the electric chair at Sing Sing! Be given a sample sulphur treatment at the KGB fortress of Lubyanka! Try to dig your way out of the Chateau d'If with a battered spoon! '..Can't understand why it didn't catch on.

Your 'Travels with Chichger' struck a familiar note...Albuquerque itself, though about a mile in altitude and surrounded by much higher mountains, tends to have fairly mild winter weather. Usually the surrounding mountains catch all the precipitation, and any snow actually falling into the Albuquerque vicinity usually melts within ten minutes of striking the earth. But on the rare occassion when a blizzard actually does fall, chaos strikes the city. One would have thought it was a totally unprecedented condition, when in fact it happens two or three times each year. NO ONE IN THIS CITY KNOWS HOW TO DRIVE IN ICEY CONDITIONS! (One is tempted to remark that very few people know how to drive even in good weather, but I'm not inclined to cheap shots.) I'm originally from the frozen lands of Duluth, Minnesota, where the inhabitants can count on several feet of the frozen stuff each year, so I'm fairly competent to drive on ice - but in this city, not only do the drivers not understand basic defensive measures to use when driving in a blizzard, but also don't understand why they shouldn't go out, play in the snow, and have a good time! Every time there's a blizzard, every one of these morons looks outside and says to himself; 'Snow! Wonderful! Let's go out and drive in it!' And of course I inevitably have an important meeting, appointment, social engagement or whatever, and find myself out in the snow, putting my life at hazard in a city full of people who think it's fun to skid through an intersection sideways..."

*****

Walter was one of the few who commented on my 'Chichger' piece - another was David Thiry.

DAVID THIRY,
8, Princeton Drive,
Jacksonville,
North Carolina,
28450
USA

論詩

"...I wouldn't know where to

begin describing the peculiar driving habits of the various immigrant groups I've run across. ((Jm - slightly unfortunate choice of wording there, Dave. JO)) The worst, I suppose, are the Japanese, particularly the smaller members of that society, who rent cars which have been built for the larger Western drivers. I have often seen them putting around Seattle, peeking over the tops of their dashes like little owls glancing over the rim of the nest. These unfortunates were one of the principal causes of the pile-ups which plague drivers on Interstate Five, which runs through the centre of the city. More than a few times, I recall watching the local newscast, with the newsman deadpanning (the natural expression of a native Seattlite is a dull, beaten-down look) this news piece:..'Today,a thousand cars were involved in a fifty-mile chain-reaction collision on iced-up I-5. The cause seemed to have been a Mr. Baka Kurosawa, a tourist fom Yokohama.'

I liked Dick
He's dead now, no good riddance.
What he's written of late has
been crap.
However, this was an exception.
Airflite mourns his passing, a
bit.
It's drugs that did him.
A warning for all of us.
Drugs and Sf taken together blow
minds
Right out of this world.
A perfect place for a science
fictioneer.

You made a comment about Dave Redd's loc, ie. the one about names in fantasy, which I'd like to add to. I, for one, consider names to be the second most important consideration in a story, next to neat titling. The names of characters often make the difference between a story being shallow, or having some deeper meaning...

There's no reason to assume that today's common names will be obsolete in the future. My own first name has been in use for three thousand years or so, and even the most arcane of foreign names are being utilised for the naming of children, to the continuing pain of those poor kids.

Nonsense names in fantasy are the same as invented slang, in effect. They are most obviously created for the story, and break up the reader's willingness to suspend their disbelief...Give me a good fantasy about Fred the Spacefarer, rather than pulp about Zzip the Arcanian.

(By the way, my vote for the best ever Sf name is that of 'Gulliver Foyle' of Bester's THE STARS MY DESTINATION. Second best is those young sexless spacers in Delany's 'Aye and Gommorrah...'. That is, Bo and Lou and Muse and Kelly. Great poetry, this naming business.)"

*****

I agree with DT; names are one of the most important points at which an author can either hook his reader entirely, or start to lose them at once.

The other 'controversial' thing in CS5 seemed to be Dave Redd's letter on Rock history. Quite a few people leapt into the arena on that one.

CHUCK CONNOR,
c/o Sildan House,
Chediston Road,
Wissett,
nr. Halesworth,
Suffolk.
IP19 ONF

前出塞

"...I fail to see how (Dave Redd) can compare the pre- and post-'56 - or to give it its proper name, the Rock'n'Roll Revolution - movement to today, or even several years ago. The founding ideals are literally poles apart. (If you want to take it to the base then I'll back up that statement by adding that the original R'n'R came from the Blues, and R'n'R is also sexual in meaning, whereas the punk style was, and still is with the Oi! movement (which isn't neo-Nazi, as the more sensationalist side of the press seem to think), based on 'teenage angst' and frustration at the conditions they live in.)

...The table Dave presents is also misleading; one very large error is the failure to include Tangerine Dream and Kraftwerk (the original two-man lineup) who decayed into Numan/Futurist/synth bands. Certainly not what you might call a minority interest. Also it fails to mention 'Progressive' (Floyd were never central in this as they never really attained mass success until DARK SIDE OF THE MOON) to NWOBHM. And no mention of Hendrix?

I could go on with the Beatles thing, which decayed into the TV group (viz the Monkees), but I'll stop there, except to add that the Sex Pistols were definitely 1976 (late '75 if you want to be exact).

...'Gumbo's Variations' got my blood flowing. Who are these one-track-minded turkeys who say "you keep jumping around too much for my liking", eh? These buggers really should be shot at birth (and I mean that). I wound up with the same thing when I started the mag ((IDOMO)). You should have heard them scream when I printed an interview with Alan Grant (then sub-editor for the comic 2000AD, now a full-time writer for the thing). He pointed out how bad it was to write for comics these days (you only get a single payment, no foreign rights or naff all) with no control over syndication etc. The comments I got back from comics fans was 'great, loved it', but Sf fans....I've never known a collection of more-narrow-minded, middle-class-trying-to-be-working-class bunch of hypocrites. In the words of Pete Presford, tell'em to go stuff shit!"

*****

Consider it said!

JACK R. HERMAN,
Box 272,
Wentworth Building,
University of Sydney,
Australia.
2006

古風

"...Personally, I find the attempts to classify music (or Sf) by developments in 3,5 or 10 year cycles as rather pointless. While seminal influences like the Beatles or Pink Floyd really extend an effect for many years, the popular music (literature) area is too diverse for such trends to be regarded as anything other than minor movements within the field. Dave Redd's analysis is no sillier than many others but no more helpful. In Sf we have the same thing: '30's-Space Opera: '40's- Engineering: '50's-Social Sf: '60's-New Wave; '70's-Inner Space (or whatever). It misrepresents the field more than it helps in analysis.

...Mary Gentle took SHOGUN to be sword-and-sorcery. I can understand that view but I think it misses the point: primarily, SHOGUN is an 'Alien Contact" novel. As good as any in an area where Sf is supposed to lead the way."

*****

Jack also mentioned a number of areas that Steve Sneyd missed, the main one of interest being the HUTT RIVER PROVINCE in West Australia, that has already 'declared independence', and exists on the sale of stamps to philatelists.

PETER CAMPBELL,
80,Royal Terrace,
Thurso,
Caithness,
Scotland.
KW14 8NP

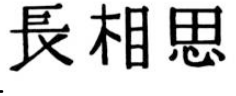
驃國樂

"...I can't agree with Dave Redd about the fact that '1956-7 saw a major shift in the nature of mass-appeal music..' '56-7 saw a shift in the market place, and - a stroke of advertising genius - the initiation of the American Teenage Dream. It was obvious that there was a brand new marketplace to anyone with a bit of suss. Independence was fast becoming an everyday teenage goal (probably due to economic and social factors) and all it needed was a totem to lead this new crusade - it was found in rock and roll, and in particular, Elvis Presley (the greatest media hype ever created). This brought about Youth Culture, and more importantly, Youth Expenditure. The nature of mass appeal music did not change - the older generation went

on buying Rosemary Clooney, or whoever, but the sales figures were swamped by those produced by the rock and rollers. In time, the two would appear to merge, when Elvis descended into slush, and the likes of Pat Boone and Tommy Steele arrived on the scene. Not so. In fact, it was just rock and roll impersonating Rosemary Clooney. The hard-core stuff remained, resolutely ignored, as ever, then grew up to be the next generation's standard level of acceptance."

*****

MARC ORTLIEB,
PO Box 46,
Marden,
South Australia,
5070



"...Dave Redd's list is interesting, but, I feel, flawed. For a start, it has a very Pro-British bias. There are movements that fit into his timescale which he hasn't mentioned - the entire West Coast musical scene, for instance - and I don't think one can justify making the Sex Pistols the starting point in Punk. The CBGB bands in the States, and the Detroit bands like the MC5 before them, had a strong influence there too. He also misses one decay which fits in at about 1970, ie. David Bowie decaying to Gary Glitter. However, putting cornerstones like that is a very random thing to do anyway, other than in the case of the Beatles, and perhaps Elvis. No two rock historians are likely to agree on any of them.

Arnold Akien's comments on the 'new wavers' was basically a repetition of what middle-aged folk have been saying about 'rock' n'rollers/long-hairs/hippies/romantics (pick one). It basically tells me more about him than it does about the fans. Sure, any musical trend picks up people who follow it,much to the disgust of those who don't. It was rather sad to see George Harrison recently lamenting that modern music was nothing more than noise. (From Paul McCartney I might have expected it.) I by far preferred Keith Richards' comments, at the height of the Sex Pistols' notoriety, in which he pointed out that one could remove the name 'Sex Pistols' and replace it with 'Rolling Stones', and the articles would read exactly as they had in '64/5. The more it changes...

As for Arnold's claim that fans are anarchical - bullshit! The fact that we are disorganised does not mean that we are anarchists. As a matter of fact, fans in general are among the most middle class of people, as Arnold's reaction to the new wavers shows."

*****

Just goes to show that there are as many opinions about rock history as there are people to express them!

And now, Marty Cantor (he of the excellent HOLIER THAN THOU fanzine) is going to change the subject completely.

MARTY CANTOR,
5263 Riverton Ave.#1,
North Hollywood,
California,
91001
USA

"...That which has drawn from me a loc is a representation of my position on Ballard in the loc from Jim Meadows. The 'Old Wave vs. New Wave' argument in my fanzine started in issue 8 (putting out three issues a year...without fail does lead to a wonderful continuation of controversy in issue after issue, and the 'War of the Waves' is still going on in issue 13); several times during this controversy I have taken great pains to state my position on things, said things including Ballard. For your benefit I will restate my position on this writer. I consider the early Ballard to be a most wondrous word-smith, a fine fabricator of word-pictures; forsooth, a fine poet. (He has missed his calling - Ballard should have forsaken fiction for the poetic craft). His early work was sometimes interesting, but it was never major science fiction. As he progressed as a writer, he first

dropped the rationality of science and reality, then (and rather early on) the very craft of story-telling. Much of what he has written (other than some early stuff) is not only NOT science fiction, it is not even any sort of story-telling fiction. It is, in fact, gibberish. Those who profess to consider Ballard an author of science fiction (other than the early Ballard, remember) are probably more daft than he is. I think that old P.T.Barnum was conservative in his estimate of the birthrate of suckers."

*****

That's tellin' 'em, Marty! It's a brave man that confronts the the Followers of JGB on his home turf!

Gary Deindorfer had a lot to say for himself, but such is the way of things that I've viciously truncated it to the following interesting digression.

GARY DEINDORFER,
447,Bellevue Ave,#9B,
Trenton,
New Jersey,
08618,
USA

"...Harry Warner is a good writer. The reason I know this is that he is able to write perceptively even about something he doesn't know much about: rock. It takes talent to write well about something you know poorly.

It is one thing to know something firsthand and write well about it. Not to know something and write well about it requires a large dollop of sheer intuition. For the writer who has such intuition can carve out new continents of reality from his own imagination, aided little, if at all, by firsthand experience. But if a writer is skimpy on intuition, he had better stick with what he really knows from having lived it. So much for advice from this amateur, non-pro author...

It's in how you 'know' something. If you are writing fantasy about a world that exists only in your mind, you must really know that world, even if you discover the world in the process of writing from one page to the next. Thus it seems you can write about something you have never experienced if you 'know' (Heinlein's 'grok') it in its inwardly imaginary fullness. Maybe I'll have to try that some time.

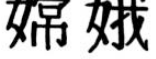
But, lazy me, when it comes to attempting fiction I am a real procrastinator. Maybe I should try to write a story about a procrastinator. But, no, I'd never get around to it.

One man's myth is another man's nonsense quite often, but each person seems to have a constellation of personal myths and lore, even if they happen to be highly idiosyncratic. A talented writer could, perhaps, communicate his personal slant on his mind's storehouse of myths to his readers if he knows how to build the bridge from his mind to other people's minds.."

*****

Joy Hibbert digressed too, into strange thoughts on the nature of myths and legends.

JOY HIBBERT,
11, Rutland Street,
Hanley,
Stoke-on-Trent,
Staffordshire,
ST1 5JG



"...One of the problems of using legend and myth as sources for fiction is that you can never see things the way the people who first wrote down the myth did, but at the same time the myth may not have recorded the important bits, perhaps because they thought they were obvious. An example of the first way of looking at things is the story of Penelope, Odysseus' wife, who waited patiently for her husband to come home, for twenty years. Those of a romantic disposition say, 'Ah, isn't that nice,' and those of a less romantic disposition say 'Stupid woman, sitting there faithfully while her husband was getting laid all over the Mediterranean.' Both miss the point. They assume that society wanted her to stay faithful, and the only reason the

suitors were bothering her was because she didn't have a man to protect her (the myths show a lack of time sense in making Telemachus an adolescent - something is wrong somewhere). But in reality, after it was fairly sure that he wasn't going to come home, (say after 12 years) she should have gone back to her father and been married off to someone else. So when people see the myth, they are judging things by their own moral standards. A similar problem applies to the story of Antigone and her boyfriend, who was also her 2nd and 3rd cousin (Antigone was the daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta). Everyone assumes that the disaster is that the young couple die rather than be seperated (Antigone is walled up after taking her brothers' bodies for burial, rather than letting them just lie as the king, her great-uncle/great-great-uncle, has ordered, and her boyfriend kills himself). In reality, the disaster is (according to the mores of the time) that King Laius had such disobedient descendants!

At the other side of the argument we have the Mabinogion, which doesn't bother to say, since it must have been obvious at the time, that most of the trouble was caused by the discovery of fatherhood. In Evangeline Walton's 4-ology based on these legends, it is quite obvious where the fault lies. In fact, if it had not been for the one man who believed in fatherhood before the idea had a chance to destroy the rest of society, Evnissian (who caused the war that killed practically everyone in Ireland and Wales) would not have been born! Myths and legends can be read as pretty stories, but looked at more closely they can show the changes in society, and in Greek and Celtic mythology, they show the way that men took over society and enslaved women, which only recently became admitted, so much had society been taken in by patriarchal religions."

*****

Arnold Akien's thoughts in the last issue on Heroes provoked response from a number of folk, including himself - but he's to come after Richard Faulder has had his say.

RICHARD FAULDER,
c/o Yanco Agricultural
Research Centre,
Yanco,
New South Wales,
Australia.
2703

寄人

"...I found Arnold Akien's speculations on the Hero interesting. Leaving aside the digression that fandom is a group of people with a common interest , rather than any sort of coherent unit, I think I would more tend to see the Hero as an expression of the human desire to transcend the limitations of the environment, be they social and/or physical. The Hero is not necessarily an expression of the group's desire for perfection, but rather of an individual's idea of perfection. Certainly if enough members of the group hold certain priorities in common, then the common hero will reflect those priorities. However, this certainly doesn't raise the hero to an archetypal figure, in the Jungian sense.

...The two book reviews were competent, if not particularly inspired or entertaining. Depends on what you want a book review to do, I suppose. However, it seems to me...that most book reviewers seem to consider some degree of foreknowledge on the part of the person reading the review. Almost, that they have read the books themselves and the reviewer wants to compare their response with the reviewer's. Looked at in this light, a review...is a pretty pointless exercise. (Academic criticism, of course, is another matter.) Probably the most sensible standpoint for a reviewer to take is to operate on the assumption that the reader has not read the book, and may well never do so. The function of the reviewer, then, is primarily to entertain. Most reviewers, I suspect, lack the wit to be entertainers."

*****

Point taken, Richard - I find I

enjoy reviews of books that I have read better than those I haven't, so I'm altering the way I review things slightly in future - though to be fair, I have attempted to review and entertain in CS in the past.

And now - here's Arnold!

ARNOLD AKIEN,
6, Dunblane Road,
Seaburn,
Sunderland,
Tyne & Wear.
SR6 8EV

"...Poor old Joe (Nicholas) is much maligned, and though he did start his image - of the ultimate fannish iconoclast - rolling rapidly downhill, that icey snowball has now grown large enough to bury the real Joseph Nicholas, who is hard to find under the slick assumptions that have frozen over his reputation. Joe's fate should be a warning to us all: it is all too easy to acquire a reputation - it is considerably less than easy to throw off the worst aspects of that reputation once it has slipped out of your control and passed into the embellishing fists of the horde of wolves that sit at the threshold of any critic's door.

...When I wrote in my last loc about the anarchical nature of fandom, I was referring not just to fanzine fandom, but to every aspect of modern fannish behaviour. Certainly there is a strong vein of conformity running through fandom - that could, in it's essence, be said to be a shared interest in Sf - but the outward front, of unity, rather reminds me of Cromwell's New Model Army after the end of the English Civil War: outwardly it was unified and invincible, but, even on cursory examination, it was riddled with schismatic flaws.

You have but to consider the ever-widening gulf between the media fans - who have their own zines, cons, and social groups - and the literature fans - who stand aghast at the prospect of the imminent victory of illiterate, media-oriented tat over more worthy contributions to the common pool of literary endeavour, (thus do I reveal my own inclinations - bloody television!). I could make a list of fannish sub-groups, but those two are the most notable at the moment. Each seperate social group does, to a certain extent, conform in the direction of a mutually agreed ideal (it's the Hero thing again), but that ideal does change over the years, albeit more slowly than many would like to believe - your own example, of the evolution of Rat-fandom towards the takeover of the BSFA is a good one. I'm told that the Surrey Limpwrist group does little but talk about BoSFA these days. Still, whilst it is true that Conformity Rules - a bit perhaps - it is a qualified conformity even within fanzine fandom.

Your own efforts with CS are rather different from those of your fellow faneds...but you're not immune from fanzine trends: there's still a lot of space being devoted to music, mostly of the variety that I find repulsive... And yet CS is idiosyncratic - quality alone would set it apart from the herd - quality of writing and reproduction. The fact that you do care enough to make an effort, rather than take the low road of minimal effort in the hope of maximum return, does show - and is appreciated...

...One of these days I shall found the state of Arnoldia - which will be a place in which my every whim is law, my every dream comes true, and there will be enormous signs around the borders saying no admittance to nerds - nerds being shorthand for everyone and everything I dislike. It's a fairly common fantasy this state of Arnoldia or Johnstown or Sneydville, and we all holiday safely in our own imaginations - it's when we try to impose our dream-worlds on others that all hell breaks out. But why? What could be more reasonable than a world devoted to making me happy? I'm even prepared to make one or two concessions that will allow a group of like-minded people to be happy in Arnoldia - US against the world, eh wot? I'll

even drop the state's title in favour of one slightly less, shall we say, egocentric...We could call it Fandom. We could take holidays there, write our own magazines... but then, someone's already thought of it, haven't they? That's the trouble with utopias - they aren't very practical and someone else always thinks of them first.

Heroes aren't created by the media. I realise that this is a fairly contentious statement, but I believe that I can justify it. Let's start with your mention of the recent lifeboat disaster, since it is as good an example of the media's treatment of public adulation for heroism as we've been treated to in recent years.

The bare facts are that a ship was in trouble off our coast in one hell of a storm; a lifeboat went to the rescue of the crew of the ship and, tragically, that lifeboat sank, killing its crew and a good many of the people they were trying to save from death. The lifeboat crew had sacrificed their lives without counting the cost in advance - they were unpaid and had left families not quite destitute but certainly bereft. A wave of public sympathy swept over those bereft families, and this sympathy was recognised by the media who used it to sell newspapers and soap-powder and...you name it...by focussing the public attention in the direction in which it was already trained. They took that public sympathy and trained it to suit themselves for as long as they could, for no-one knows better than they that the public's attention is fickle.

In the course of the public adulation for the lifeboat crew, those who died with them - and who suffered an identical fate - the victims - were largely ignored. A few platitudes were thrown their way, but the public's sympathy, and its money, went to the lifeboat crew. Why? Because they were Heroes and the crew of the stricken ship were victims. We do not like to identify with victims; we prefer to see ourselves as heroes - though we hope never to be required to demonstrate that we, too, belong in the company of Valhalla. The media recognises this basic reflection of human nature, and use it - to sell newspapers and soap powder and whatever...they do not create heroes, they seek to discover who the public - or part of the public - regards as epitomising the heroic virtues. You could call it a principle of constructive envy: we envy the hero and want to be like him (or her). The media recognise this fact and use it to direct the public's attention into constructive channels, namely into buying newspapers, soap powders, et al.

...So the media, or the government, or the...(name your own institution) don't actually create heroes; rather they recognise the patterns of heroism that exist in any society and then try to match individuals to those existing patterns, and to recognise minor variations in those patterns...

...Once upon a time, on Jean Froissart - who was a foreigner, don't you know - wrote: 'The English will never love or honour their King unless he be victorious, and a lover of arms, and war against their neighbour...They take delight and solace in battle and slaughter." Of course, old Froissart was a foreigner, and he did say the above some time around 1330 to 1400ish, so that's quite a long time ago. But he does have a point; nobody loves a loser. We pity victims but we don't admire them. The people come out at the top of the heap are either villains or heroes, and which is which rather depends on who's side you're on. One thing is certain though, the media - whatever that is - may mould public opinion, it may direct and shape it, but it cannot create it anymore than an army can create a Cromwell or a Napoleon. The Cromwells or the Napoleons - or the Stalins - of this world aren't created by the media; they exist among us, waiting their time as potentialities that may never come to fruition. Remember, Cromwell was a hero in his life time, and a villainous butcher shortly after his death...as was good ol' 'uncle Joe' Stalin. The media of every

age plays the tune that keeps the customer satisfied. How many of Shakespeare's plays were propoganda for the winners of a squalid struggle between rival noble houses, whose ancestors were no more than pirates? The Wars of the Roses were an awful medieval boys' game - with the children covered in blood rather than mud - but from this nasty mess heroes did emerge..on both sides. Men who embodied the bloody ideals of the time did fight on either side but to the winners went the prize - the governorship of English history and, in what was after all a totalitarian state, a great measure of control over what went into the history books or was presented to the largely illiterate populace as entertainment. So long as the Tudor dictatorship lasted the media - such as it was - had to toe the party line, which was that life under whatever Tudor dictator (King or Queen) was in power was ever so much better than it was way back before the Wars of the Roses. The Heroes of the Wars were Tudor heroes - at least as far as the media were concerned - whether the populace in general swallowed the party line hook, barbs and all must remain moot. But then, this was all a very long time ago, and we do live in a modern democratic society which means that life is very much more complicated for image makers."

*****

And that represents maybe 30% of Arnold's letter! I should have known better than to encourage him. (No offence meant, Arnold - keep 'em coming this long!)

And now for a late loc from the multi-talented Iain Byers.

IAIN BYERS,
9, Shaftesbury Park,
Dundee,
Tayside,
DD2 1LB

訴衷情

"It's always difficult writing a loc, more so when it's of a good fanzine like Crystal Ship; well-produced, stunning artwork, variety, and interesting editorial, but I did find that it lacked...oh,bite, I suppose. Something that grabbed by the throat and made the reader (or this reader, anyway) feel angry or induced fellow feeling. And there were a couple of places which I just couldn't relate to myself; but then I haven't read every Sf or fantasy novel ever written, nothing like it, so it is inevitable that articles about certain books or writers with whom I am unfamiliar are going to hold little interest. However, that is no fault of the writer or editor - I'd have to produce my own fanzine if I wanted something entirely interesting and meaningful to myself. The problem of reader relevance is something that applies particularly, therefore, to such things as reviews and music articles, and is doubly problematic in a zine as eclectic as Crystal Ship. However, I think eclecticism is laudable, despite these troubles. It makes the zine an inconstant, and that in itself is a good thing, particularly nowadays when things are being increasingly categorised, regulated and fixed. Specialisation is everywhere, and the all-encompassing spirit of renaissance is dying. It seems that no longer are people permitted to have diverse qualities. It is the age of the predictable. Crystal Ship stands as a constantly changeable island in a fandom that is being more and more prescribed by 'those who know how things should be'. People actually have the audacity to say there is a certain way to produce fanzines, when, after all, they are the personal creations of a few individuals. With individuality being undermined by governments and peoples, a self-imposed homogeneity, I'm glad of such things as Crystal Ship and hope that you will continue to go your own way with it...."

*****

Aw shucks! It's locs like that which make it all worth while.

Seriously though, I'm heartened by Iain's comments, since it does mean there are a few folk out there that refuse to 'toe the party line', and simply specialise in this or that. I

personally have many interests and am uncomfortable when restricted to just one. So I spread out into all the areas that I feel like. Is that a crime? Some people seem to think so - more fool them, say I, and a good few of my correspondents agree with me. There is too much uniformity in the British fanzine scene, with too many look-alike zines around. If CS is seen as a different route for other faneds to follow well, more power to their faneds and welcome aboard!

W.A.H.F. Letters of various shapes and sizes were also received from: David Bateman; Pam Boal; Judith Buffery ("...Many amateur magazines that I've come across are written in a kind of pseudo-style that I personally find difficult to cope with. It makes such a change to be able to read something without having to make a running translation at the same time."); Mat Coward; Paul Crofts, Andy Darlington; Richard Domar; William Ewing; Keith Fenske ("There won't be a movie of THE LAST UNICORN since Beagle disagreed with the director, or some such..." So how come Allen and Unwin are plugging a movie tie-up with the reprint?); Alan Freeman; Ian Garbutt (who says he does not mind being WAHFed - just as well, really); Noel K. Hannan; Martin Helsdon ("Thinks - is this guy Owen an Agent of Chaos?" Who? Little me? Of course!); Terry Jeeves ("The latest issue of CS is so superlatively produced that I go green with envy".); Geoff Kemp; Steve Lines; Matt Mackulin; Hans Juergen Mader; Ken Mann ("CS is restful after the trivial fannish bitching masquerading as reviews or portentous, tendentious articles on Sf/Fandom...keep on being yourself (that's not eclecticism, it's commonsense.)"); Jim Meadows III (Fanzines! I'm up to my hips in fanzines! Ahahahaha!); David R.Morgan;Peter Muller; Joseph Nicholas (About whom the less said the better); Lawrence O'Donnell; John Port; Peter Presford("There is no doubt that CS goes well. It just riles me that such zines never reach popular acclaim with fannish critics (no names!), even though they are far better than some of the critically 'great' fhannish crud."); Kevin K. Rattan (On RIPPLES:"...You jammy x@*&.Why can't I get as much mail as that. WAHF columns like that should be tantamount to a personal insult; you should be cast out from fandom" Hmmm! Look out for Kev's own AD NAUSEUM real soon now, and loc the lad into silence with a monster pile of mail. It'll keep him off my back!); Dave Redd ("I presume the cover depicts the Midgard Serpent having hiccups."); Andy Sawyer; Moira Shearman ("Thanks for CS - although both production and content are enough to make me ill!" Sorry about that, Moira. Hope you have recovered.); Nick Shears ("After Dave Redd's comments about Welsh names, I shall change the name of a character in a story I'm writing - 'Rhys' isn't that common around here, but probably is in Dyfed. Bloody Hell, 'Dyfed' would make a beautiful name for a planet. Any takers for a story about this group of Welsh Nationalists who steal a spaceship and...."); Steve Sneyd; Martyn Taylor; Julie Vaux; Roger Waddington ("On first opening CS, I had a picture of myself watching the Old Guard watching the New Guard watching...but I couldn't sustain it. It seems that everyone just follows their own way, regardless of any labels, and Terry Jeeves and Joseph Nicholas might actually have more in common...then their often debated differences."): Jon Wallace. And that's the lot as at mid-July. About 40% more response than on CS4, and great fun to receive. I enjoyed the many fanzines that came my way, too, which were too numerous to mention. All were read and gratefully accepted, and most were also locced too (Jeez, and I wonder why I don't get an issue out on time - I must have written the equivalent of a hefty novel in letters, articles (look out for AD NAUSEUM, RAA, A FOREIGN FANZINE) and CS! I still contend that I'm lazy, though - something's wrong somewhere!) Until the next issue - All the Best.

John d.