Crystal Ship 14

In this issue:

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PETE '86

The Captain's Slog... February 1988

February 1988, and rather later than I had hoped to have this issue finished, but since the reasons were all beyond my control, I shall content myself with a sigh of relief that it's finally done, when at one point I was beginning to think it was fated, a *Marie Celeste* of an issue, drifting abandoned by the crew.

Still, what a relief to be able to report that whatever else went wrong, the last year has been one of steady improvement for me. My health has steadily strengthened to the point where I am almost tempted to take it for granted that I shall feel well at any given time. That way lies danger, of course, since the improvements of the last year have not been won by medical science plying me with some new wonder drug (I am still using basically the same medications as before). The improvement comes from changes in lifestyle, from increased exercise, from a vast modification of diet (moving closer to vegetarian, though not completely), and from a refusal to accept the imposition of stress (which affects my work in some ways, but in the long run should be more beneficial to both myself and my employer: a sick Rastus is less productive than a healthy but laid-back one!).

That last one is an oddity: I now subscribe fully to the theory that stress *kills* people. Yet it is one of the most insidious of beasties, present in everything we do to a large extent, but always hidden from view, unless you look for it specifically. Sometimes it's there when you feel at your most relaxed. How to handle the stress of my job has been the lesson that I've learned most successfully this past year, and the trick seems to be to not take it too seriously, to be ready to laugh at the problems, to tackle them as a game, a puzzle to be solved, rather than some huge mountain to be moved. The silly thing is, that's something I've always known, but somehow had unremembered along the way. Most of the time, the things (or people, more often) that increase stress levels are irrelevant to the real problems, and can be ignored, circumvented or nullified, if you only approach them with a cooler head.

The surprise (to me, anyway) is that it turns out to be a more effective way of working than worrying one's head off over every minor hiccup and setback. The major problems get tackled, while the minor ones tend to filter themselves out into those that genuinely *need* attention and those that were figments of somebody's imagination (normally your own) anyway. And more *real* work gets done. The Catch-22 is, of course, that some senior bods may be offended that you have ignored their pet little perplexities in favour of something else, but that's the risk one takes in bucking the system.

I suppose its a truism that in any bureaucracy (and the Open University has become a *huge* breeding ground for career bureaucrats: Parkinson's Law Rools for sure) there are the written laws of procedure. There are the ways you are *supposed* to do things, and there are the ways you actually get things done. Sometimes the two coincide and the level of coincidence often indicates the efficiency of the organisation, though not always; a bureaucracy like the Civil Service has perfected the art of shutting down loopholes to the extent that by the book is the *only* way, and the Service is supremely inefficient, and proud of it. The OU is middling in this respect. In certain areas, going by the book gets you what you

want, in others conformity gets you merely what *they* (that everpresent, omniscient *they*) want to give you, which may deviate considerably from what you wanted in the first place. Then you have to improvise, or accept second-(or third) best, depending on the amount of hassle you want to endure.

I have to admit there is a certain amount of satisfaction in bucking the system, in finding a path round a problem that coerces a recalcitrant department to do things *your* way. To a certain extent, I'm encouraged to take the back routes by being an anomaly in the OU system anyway. I was a by-product of a deranged dean's imagination, a paranoid's fantasy come to life, his very own project controller, bought and paid for out of Faculty funds. I therefore owed no allegiance to anyone but the Faculty, unlike most other project control administrators in the place, who nearly always serve the senior central administration first, and the faculties they work with second, that being the way to brighter careers. A gross anomaly (getting grosser by the year, by some accounts), with a loose-fitting brief, and a free-wheeling approach to the job: that's me. Even my job title is vaguely simple: "Production Assistant", which can be interpreted in many different ways, and often is.

In the early days (twelve years ago now), I was just a project controller, a glorified progress chaser. As the years have rolled along a process of accretion has gone on. Now I'm also a financial controller for the production and presentation of the Science courses, plus resident computer boffin for the Deanery (i.e., I have six months more computer experience than anyone else). All of which goes to make the job more interesting, but potentially more stressfull, so I guess I have to add personal stress management to that list, too. Well, I always wanted to live in interesting times!

I *nearly* made it. Got three issues into 1987, that is. It was all looking pretty good until last September. Since then, it's been one damned thing after another, and nearly all of it well outside my control. Still, it's finally complete, and sitting in your hand, so why worry, eh?

Well, the fact is, this issue *has* been a struggle, largely because my options kept getting narrower, until I got to the point where I *had* to sit on my hands and wait for a few months while contributors sorted themselves out. Some didn't: there is no fanart column this issue, as Dave Collins gafiated because of personal problems, and that's a treble shame, because Dave's earlier column was a great success, because Dave's abilities as an artist were invaluable and because he was a good friend of the Shipyard. Here's to an early return.

Still, there's some choice fare for you, from Mary Gentle and Andy Sawyer, both taking time out from their other arduous labours, as author of mighty tomes of SF, and as editor of *Paperback Inferno* respectively. Also a new centrespread from Martin Helsdon, a variety of other artistry, and a loccol large enough, and diverse enough, to spark many a letter of comment (I hope). No rash promises this time about the next issue, as that will come when it comes. But there is one plea: the Shipyard seems a bit short of cargo for the next few voyages, so if there are any of you with articles looking for a home, with ideas burning to be written, why not drop me a line, and I shall see if I can't find a suitable berth for them. A few new fanartists willing to work to order wouldn't go amiss, either: I'm flogging poor old Shep and Iain near unto death!

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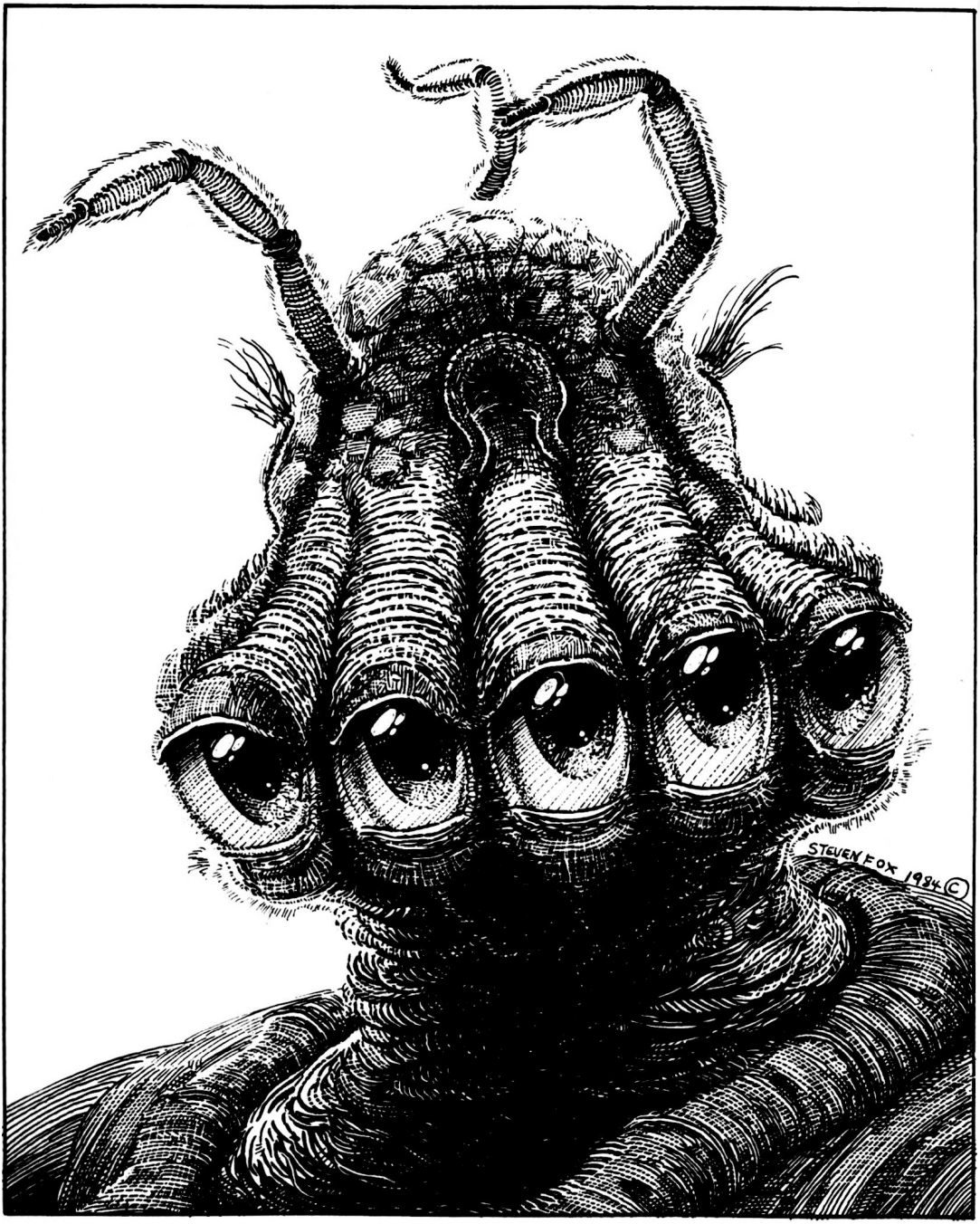
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HUNCHBACKS, SADISTS, AND SHOP-SOILED HEROES

or

"SF Author's Hunchback Fetish — The True Story"

By **Mary Gentle**

It was the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Bosworth. In spirit I was attending the historical reconstruction of the battle between Richard III and the future King Henry VII, and hoping for a better result on the replay. ("Ricardians demand a re-count" — *Market Bosworth Gazette.*) In the flesh, I was spending a wet night in Plymouth, in the company of friends who had just got equally soaked finding Plymouth's one cinema — a well-hidden establishment — and were drying out while watching the 1955 Laurence Olivier film of *Richard III* . Most of the acting was lousy — except Olivier. Everything was deplorably dated — except his performance as Richard.

The film ends with Richard dead, after committing more acts of treachery, assassination, murder, butchery and sheer unremitting evil than Shakespeare manages to get into any other play. And with the heroic Henry prophecying a Wonderful New Future for the country, and telling us how great things will be now that he's in charge, and the villainous Richard Crookback is dead. From somewhere in the darkened cinema, there came the sound of a well-ripened razzberry...

Judging by the comments I heard as we left, that was a general opinion. No one was on the side of Henry Tudor, pillock of this parish. They were on Richerd's side — on the side of the political opportunist, usurper, murderer of his own brother, and the Princes in the Tower. Three cheers for Richard! we sez. This does tend to happen with Richard III, as I pointed out to the Editor of these pages, in a well-turned epistle.

"What's this thing you've got about hunchbacks?" he asked me, by return of post. "Do you also salivate over Quasimodo?"

The short answer to that is *no* . I do not salivate over hunchbacks, and even if Richard says he's

> "Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,
> Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world scarce half made up —
> And that so lamely and unfashionable
> That dogs bark at me, as I halt by them —"

that, as they say, has nothing to do with the case. Richard is sexy, Quasimodo isn't. It puzzles academics as to how come hunchbacked, withered-armed, lame Richard manages to have it away with the Lady Anne (over the corpse of her father, who Richard murdered. Now *that's* perverse, and for that you can blame the Bard...). It


© Shep....

doesn't puzzle anyone who's seen the play acted. Olivier's long almond-eyes are pure seduction. The same thing happened in 1601, witness the diary of one John Manningham on the actor Richard Burbage:

"*13 March* Upon a time when Burbage played Richard 3, there was a citizen grew so far in liking with him, that before she went from the play she appointed him to come that night unto her by the name of Richard the Third. Shakespeare overhearing their conclusion went before, was entertained, and at his game ere Burbage came. Then message being brought that Richard 3 was at the door, Shakespeare caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Richard the Third."

Ah, the old ones are the best...

Quasimodo is a different matter. As I wrote to the esteemed Editor, Quasimodo is a non-starter as far as sexual attraction is concerned. For one thing, he's a victim. On the other hand, in *Notre Dame De Paris* there *is* Quasimodo's master, the sadistic priest Claude Frollo. Now he's something else again.

At which point I realised I'd gone from Crookback to sadist, and landed myself in even deeper shit. Okay, I thought, let's analyse this. After all, when you've done everything else with an obsession, you can always round off a good day by analysing it. Is there a link between Claude Frollo and the man my errant typewriter usually describes as Richard the Thrid? Aside from Richard III being something of a sadist himself, that is... The link is covert control: both are masterminds, concealed pullers-of-strings, puppet-masters. These are the characters who make things happen, and because of that they're attractive, no matter what their morals are. As Milton found with Satan in *Paradise Lost* . All these villains are in control of events — until the end.

You'll notice we've moved imperceptibly from leching after a character to wanting to *be* that character. The two aren't mutually exclusive. But why identify with villains? Whatever happened to heroes? Because Richard III (someone in Antony Sher's *Year Of The King* refers to him as 'Dick the Shit') is no misunderstood hero. He's an out and out bastard. This is no wide-eyed and weak-knee'd admiration for the macho man, either. This is a straightforward preference for the Bad Guy.

I'm trying to find a hero-image that's as powerful as the villain-image. What I keep coming up with are the shop-soiled heroes. Moving from Frollo and Richard III to Sam Spade, which is not such a large leap of the imagination as it seems... but Humphrey Bogart, come to think of it, was better playing villains. Marlowe and Spade are a little too clean. I fancy (if that's the phrase I want) his gangster in *The Roaring Twenties* , who dies attempting to double-cross James Cagney. And, of course, Rick in *Casablanca* . For all the patriotic ending grafted onto the film, Rick is the archetypal sexually-attractive shop-soiled hero: cynical, involved in immoral trades, with maybe the odd scruple left to throw that into sharp relief. And somewhere in his background, the Girl Who Done Him Wrong. Shop-soiled heroes have tarnished gold hearts, and they're vulnerable; they bring out the irresistable assumption that he only needs the Right Woman to make him happy. The queue forms over here... Oh, those carefree ur-feminist days of unexamined stereotypes. And Humphrey Bogart with a face like the back of a bus, too. Whatever the attraction is, it certainly isn't dependant on a handsome face.

There are two factors: control and vulnerability. Richard on the eve of Bosworth, waking terrified from a nightmare of retribution:

"All several sins, all us'd in each degree
Throng to the bar, crying all 'Guilty, guilty!'
I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,
And if I die, no soul will pity me —"

They will. They do. The common end of villains is to be killed, maimed, or sent into exile, not only to justify common morality and see justice done, but to cap the life of the villain with the reminder that even they are not immune to chance. Villains are human when, often, heroes are unsufferably armour-plated.

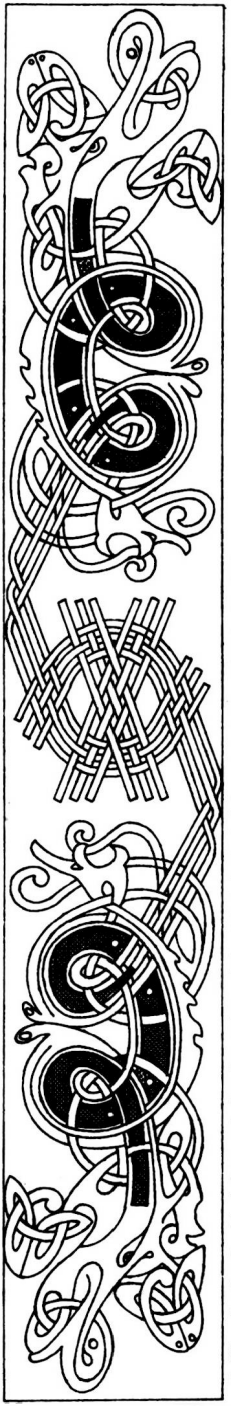
The archetypal villain, sadist, and shop-soiled hero is Iago. Once again I return to an Olivier film, the man himself playing Othello (as a West Indian, yet!) and Iago being played by a young Frank Findley. I sat in a different cinema, age 16, rooting for the villain and never wondering why... Skip a few years, a good few years. This time it's live theatre at Stratford upon Avon, and Ben Kingsley is giving it all he's got as the noble (Arabian) Moor. Fine. But who's got the audience yelling for him? A short, dark, balding, middle-aged and completely sexy David Suchet as Iago. Of course.

"And who dares call me villain?" he demands of the audience, having just put yet another con-trick over on the hapless Lieutenant Cassio. We dare. We don't care, we love him for it — he talks to *us*, puts us on a level with him, superior to Othello and Desdemona, poor fools. Wait a minute, aren't we supposed to sympathise with the Moor and his lady, and Cassio, and Roderigo, and the other victims of Iago's plots? Yes, but they're such downright pillocks...

Everybody loves a winner. The English love the under-dog. Those two contradictory statements embody the villain's career: winning all the way, until the final crunch. Claude Frollo is flung down from Notre Dame by Quasimodo, Richard is slain by Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond; Iago is stabbed by the Moor, and Bogart goes down under a hail of gangster's bullets. We can allow ourselves the admiration, if the downfall is assured. You can admire, and want to be, the unstoppable victor; your heart can go out to the doomed loser, knowing the fictional game is rigged against him.

I say 'he' because there are few female villains, sadists or shop-soiled heroines (and because it's the male villains I lech after.) And because the same behaviour can mean different things — if He is a sadist, he has years of cultural approval for that; but She is only a bitch, a Regan or a Goneril. The closest I can come is Garbo in *Queen Christina* , but she is no shop-soiled heroine, only a female usurping a male role. And usurpers bring us make where we began, with Richard III. The audience in that Plymouth cinema would have agreed with the Holinshed Chronicle on Henry VII — "a Welsh mylkesoppe". And would have cheered on Richard...

Why the sexuality? In part, because the process of gaining sympathy for the villain is a process of seduction. Both involve fast talking, flattering attention, wooing, unspoken promises ("*you* could heal my vulnerability"). And Richard's deformity, Frollo's ascetic cruelty, Iago's cat-and-mouse play, they all appeal to some part of us that loves fantasy and, aware that it *is* fantasy, is not over-fastidious. Power is attractive and aphrodisiac. That said, in the real world, most of us would run screaming from a Richard... or, more likely, end up as an unwitting victim. In fantasy we can't be hurt. Fantasy defuses fears, promotes reassurance, allows safe adventure: we can close the book, we know the film and the fantasy will end.



THE HORNS OF ELFLAND, FAINTLY WINDING

THREE NOVELS BY LORD DUNSANY

by **Andy Sawyer**

In this article I intend to talk about three of Dunsany's novels, and explain why, despite difference in surface appearance, they are linked by a common theme, Dunsany's common theme throughout his writings. This theme is one which is excellently suited to the genre of fantasy, although I do not mean to imply that fantasy is necessarily limited to the expression of a particular set of ideas or feelings: were I to do so, it would be easy enough to draw the conclusion that Dunsanian fantasy is a particularly reactionary kind of writing. It is, in fact, quite possible to read Dunsany's fantasy as hymns to a dying feudal way of life: in defence, let me only say for the moment that I think it is *more* than that.

Dunsany's constant change of form and genre can be seen as a search for different ways of saying the same thing, which can be summed up by comparing an image from *The King Of Elfland's Daughter* (1924), with one taken from his last novel, *His Fellow Men* (1951). I do not, I think, have to summarize the plot of *Elfland*, but I'm sure you'll remember how the half-elven Orion hears the horns of Elfland blowing in the twilight. By the time of *His Fellow Men* , Dunsany had left such fantasy far behind: the novel (the story of the spiritual dissatisfaction of Matthew Perry, a young Ulsterman) is a realistic 'quest' of debateable merit which I will not discuss here. The point is, though, that Perry's spiritual dilemma is expressed in language which I hardly need to point out is reminiscent of Orion's:

> From beyond the hills, and beyond the ones that to them were dim gray horizons, some call lured him, a faint, far, cry in a language he did not know. (1)

Even in a non-fantasy novel written in 1952, the horns of Elfland were faintly winding.

I've assumed that most readers are familiar with *Elfland*. I will not make such assumptions for *Pan* or *Wise Woman*, neither of which are, unfortunately, available in accessible editions. They are, I think, important novels for Dunsany fans, because they do mark clear stages in the development of his writing: a turning away from fantasy *per se* but using many of its structures and images to express a constant estrangement from 'the fields we know'. They cover a significant span of Dunsany's writing career. *The King Of Elfland's Daughter* is part of the ouevre that has earned him such a high regard with the fantasy genre. *The Blessing Of Pan* (1927) takes us out of the imaginary world of his fancy or the equally imaginary 'Golden Age of Spain' into an idealised but recognisable Kent, while *The Curse Of The Wise Woman* (1935), firmly set in an Ireland Dunsany knew as a boy, is in many ways a transitional novel in which Dunsany seems to be bidding farewell to the imagery used in previous stories. They are, however, linked by a common involvement in what this imagery stands for, an inability to come to terms with the world Dunsany found himself living in, or to formulate an alternative creed.

I've used 'estrangement' as a word to express this feature of Dunsany's writing. This appears in the short stories in the dream-framework, imagery of stately cities and exotic places, and a fatalistic view expressed in stories which end with hubris and inevitable doom. 'Idle Days On The Yann', for instance, is less a story than an idyll, in which the narrator explores his dreamworld, visiting rich marble cities until the final farewell with his guide 'knowing that we should meet no more, for my fancy is weakening as the years slip by, and I go ever more seldom into the Lands of Dream'. (2) 'In Zaccarath' tells of the complacency of the inhabitants of 'everlasting Zaccarath' to whom prophecies of doom are merely part of the evening's entertainment:

> And only the other day I found a stone that had undoubtedly been part of Zaccarath... I believe that only three other pieces have been found like it. (3)

A sense of melancholy is all-pervasive. Whether Dunsany is writing about individuals or civilisations, Time has its way in the end.

In the novels, however, this estrangement appears in somewhat different forms. We still have the same sense of nostalgia and melancholy, but in his novels Dunsany gives himself room to explore the tensions between desirable but contradictory states.

Elfland is very much a novel of feeling, of these 'states'. Both Elfland and 'the fields we know' are natural to their own inhabitants; both exotic to denizens of the other. To Alveric, Lord of Erl, whose quest it is to win Lirazel from 'the palace only told of in song', Elfland is a land of timeless magic, distilling the quintessence of all our earthly beauties:

> And the colour of Elfland, of which I despaired to tell, may yet be told, for we have hints of it here; the deep blue of the night in summer just as the gloaming has gone, the pale blue of Venus flooding the evening with light, the deeps of lakes in the twilight, all these are hints of that colour. (4)

Yet Lirazel, on hearing from where Alveric hails:

> sighed for a moment for those fields, for she had heard how life beautifully passes there, and how there are always in those fields young generations and she thought of the changing seasons and children and age, of which elfin minstrels had sung when they told of Earth. (5)

Elfland is out of time as we know it, an eternal present; contemplative — almost soporific. We on Earth are victims of time, which we know from Dunsany's previous stories will destroy even our finest dreams. Yet change has its own beauty, which attracts Lirazel and is especially magnetic to the trolls. Lurulu, the troll who becomes Orion's whipper-in, is continually distracted by events — a duck call, a man coming into a stable, clouds passing across the sky, pigeons calling, shadows moving:

> Perpetual motion and perpetual change! He contrasted it, in wonder, with the deep calm of his home, where the moment moved more slowly than the shadow of houses here, and did not pass until all the content with which a moment is stored had been drawn from it by every creature in Elfland. (6)

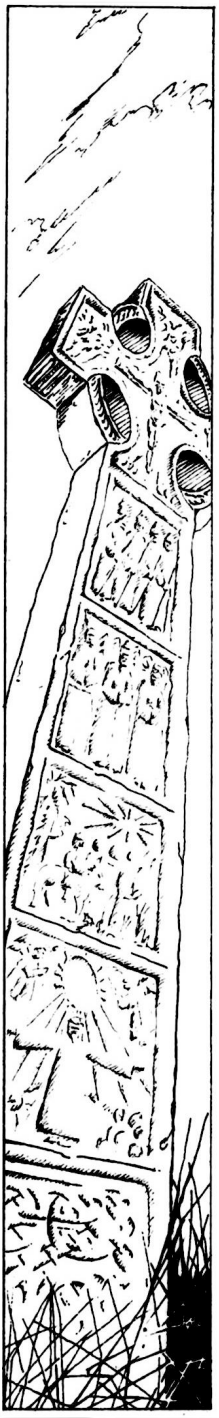
Although both states may be desirable, can they be reconciled? It seems not. Lin Carter, in his introduction to the Ballantine edition of *Elfland* praises Dunsany for writing 'a fairy tale that dares to tell you what happened afterwards'. In fact, the 'Elf bride' motif is common in folktale and nearly always results in the bride's unhappiness and departure to her own realm. Dunsany's achievement is in writing a conventional fairy tale which suggests **why** a union between Earth and Elfland brings tragedy. The two realms operate according to different schemes of logic. Lirazel is unhappy with human customs. A creature of whim and fancy, she is unable to come to terms with such quaint human customs as religion, as is eventually forced, by her own estrangement, back to her father's realm. Alveric sets out on a second quest to reclaim her, but is unable to re-enter Elfland, which the King has caused to remove, leaving a barren plain in its wake; a land from which all enchantment has been banished. With Alveric are the only companions who can search for Elfland over such desolation (we can take what metaphors we like from that situation): madmen and misfits. But although poets, fools and lovers may approach Elfland, their preoccupations are not identical to it and,

never reaching it, they eventually give up (Thyl, Vand and Rannock) or betray the quest (Niv and Zend).

Meanwhile, Orion, son of Alveric and Lirazel, hunts unicorns on the borders of Elfland, and is torn between the two halves of his nature:

> He felt then the magnitude of the gulf that divided him from her, and knew it to be vast and dark and strong, like the gulfs that set apart our times from a bygone day, or that stand between daily life and the things of dream. (7)

The tale ends with *a kind* of resolution.Erl is removed from Earth to Elfland, but the rune which effects this is the last defence against Time and Progress. 'Material things will multiply.' (8) So the book is — to quote Dunsany elsewhere — 'one of those that have not a happy ending'. The vision which Elfland represents is not 'natural' beauty but the antithesis of the machine-based civilisation which is the other side of Dunsany's idealised rural/feudal state. It is the vision which is expressed in some of Dunsany's most effective prose. It is a sad fact that some of the 'classics' of fantasy are written in language which tries too hard to be 'unworldly'. W.H.Hodgeson's *The Night Land*, for instance, smothers a story full of memorable images with a mock-medieval prose style so excrutiatingly awful as to be past belief. William Morris, too, filled his fantasy novels with grammatical and verbal archaisms which, in my opinion at least, spoil their effectiveness. Dunsany's prose is simple and clear, giving an impression of folktale through rhythm and everyday, rather than obscure, language, taking his imagery from the world of the countryside, and though his fondness for the inbetween state of twilight and sentences beginning with 'And' take him to the edge of parody, he never slips *over* the edge. The Nirvana of Elfland is saved from sickliness by the balancing conception of the mischievious trolls who add life and humour to the solemnity of the King of Elfland's numinous realm. *Elfland* surely ranks as one of the best fantasy novels ever written. Its images stay close to the original, powerful symbols of folklore, even adding to them to create a story which, albeit in a minor key, is a melancholy and beautiful tale of loss, deepened by its touch of tragedy.



The Blessing Of Pan is in some ways *Elfland* couched in different terms, more or less successful depending on whether

you rank Dunsany's turning of the 'real' world higher or lower than his mapping of the 'little kingdoms' of his imagination. Elderwick Anwrel, vicar of a remote Kentish parish, is troubled by eldritch music which seems to have a growing and not altogether moral influence on his flock. The music is played by a local youth, Tommy Duffin, but behind Duffin is the shadow of the parish's previous incumbent, the Reverend Arthur Davidson, whose clerical activities seemed to include some most unchristian *dancing* :

> 'And he had a joint,sir, below his spats as he danced.'
> 'Good gracious,' said the vicar, awed by her tone, 'His ankle, of course.'
> 'Yes sir,' she said, 'And he had another just above... He was dancing high in the moonlight. Very short boots he always used to wear: neat and small.' (9)

Anwrel turns for help to his Bishop, to be told that his suspicions are caused by overwork. But even after a week holidaying in Brighton, the pipes sound clearer than ever, calling first the girls, then all the young folk, then even the most staid and respectable people of the parish, to pagan rites about the Old Stones of Wolding. Not knowing to whom he should turn with his growing suspicion as to the true identity of 'the Reverend Arthur Davidson', Anwrel visits Hetley, a celebrated Greek scholar, who turns out to know little of Greek history before the Peloponnesian War — 'It's a big period, you know, the time of the Greeks...' (10) — and whose advice on improving the spiritual welfare of Anwrel's parishioners is to concentrate on building up a good cricket team. The Bishop's Chaplain proffers the same advice, while the Bishop himself discusses eoliths and chess but avoids all discussion on Pan: 'The interview was over. And he had got nothing but sanity, sanity, sanity, from three separate men.' (11)

In desperation, Anwrel seeks out the madman Perkins, who has 'lost his illusions' and recieves some encouragement, but despite everything the battle continues. Alone, disappointed, inadequate, the vicar continues to grapple with Pan's influence, but the 'battle of illusions' ends with Anwrel himself taking on the role of priest to the pagan congregation as the people of Wolding retreat from conventional society to live a self-contained, self-sufficient life.

The title, *The Blessing Of Pa*n , is significant. The tension in the book is between the 'fields we know' of rural Wolding (based closely on the area around Dunstall Priory where Dunsany spent much of his boyhood) and the timeless archaic appeal of Pan — not an Algernon Blackwood/Arthur Machen type of Pan, but an altogether more sympathetic deity. 'Pan was always friendly to Man.' (12) Christianity seems to have been more a useful and attractive convention than anything else to Dunsany, and the book is not one of essentially *religious* rivalry. We sympathise with the vicar's dilemma. Dunsany pictures him as a good man, not particularly forceful or even intelligent, but decent, clearly out of his depth in these weighty theological matters -- the irony of the advice he is given is that the kind of Christianity Anwrel preaches is that sort which is symbolised by a

keen cricket team — but desperate to do the right thing. We cannot feel a sense of tragedy when Pan triumphs, for the conflict, like that of *Elfland*, is not between good and evil but between two equal but opposed lures: civilised order and the call of the wild. The people of Wolding are hard-working, respectable, *good* people, yet:

> All followed. It was not strange that they followed, for the new tune Tommy Duffin was playing was the march of the things of the wild. There were calls in it that are known to birds that migrate which their leaders utter at the turn of the wind that shall carry them on their journey; there were notes of earthly trumpets and, following after, clear answers from Elfin horns. All manner of tides of life had moved to the notes of that music; it was no wonder they followed. (13)

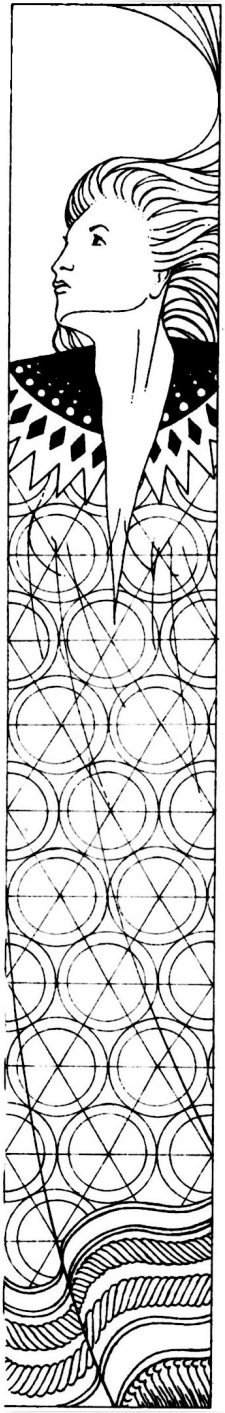
Part of Anwrel's dilemma is that he is unable to see this. In his final appealing sermon to his parishioners, he evokes the Traditions of the village. This is exactly the wrong move, for Pan is the reverse of a sudden novelty, but is the folk-consciousness of the villagers:

> And always he turned back to the bygone years, for the faith and the ancient ways were one to him, and were likea garden glowing in soft light, safely fenced from all the cares that perplex our days. He never can have reflected that it was out of those bygone years that the rites of Pan had reached them as well as the Faith, going down time together, as butterfly and pursuing bird go down the same wind. (14)

When Perkins, the madman to whom 'the illusions went out of everything' (15) and Anwrel, the vicar whose flock desert him, accept Pan's 'illusion', it is neither defeat nor victory (which accounts for the slight anticlimax I for one feel in the last two chapters) but a shift from one world-view to another. The conflict does not result in a synthesis. Anwrel is unable to see things as his superiors wish. 'Common sense' and rationality do not help. But he is unable to surrender to the spell of Pan without compromising his sense of duty. His final succumbing I see as forced, in a way, but Anwrel is too unhappy with the commonsense life of the wider world to defend it successfully.

Despite this ambiguous ending, *The Blessing Of Pan* is a novel which seems to have been neglected by Dunsany fans. It would help, of course, if it were in print. There **has** been a fairly recent (1972) UK hardback version of *The Curse Of The Wise Woman* , which is of great interest, not only because of its appeal as a novel (second only to *Elfland* , in my opinion) but because of its autobiographical flavour.

The tale is narrated by Charles Peridore, a diplomat looking back on the days of his youth from semi-exile. Ireland's political Troubles loom large: Peridor's father is forced to flee the country and is later murdered in Paris, but much of the novel is taken up by descriptions of a young boy growing up in rural Ireland. Peridore's idyll — taking advantag of his father's disappearance he delays going back to Eton until he gets the chance to shoot some geese — is threatened by a company



intending to compress the peat of the bog where Peridore hunts and sell it as fuel. This would not only ruin the landscape but cause it:

> to be encumbered with wheels and rails and machinery, and all the unnatuaral things that the factory was even then giving the world. (15)

Even a curse from the local witch, Mrs Marlin — mother of the man who teaches Peridore to shoot — does nothing to shift the threat: that is, until one stormy night when the elements of wind and water come to the aid of the red bog.

As usual with Dunsany, the political elements of the plot, and even the threat from the Syndicate, soon recede from the centre of the story which slows down almost completely to focus on a fox-hunt or a shoot, introducing what are obviously autobiographical elements. Dunsany's uncle, Horace Plunkett, a man of immense charm and a certain financial incompetence, appears thinly disguised as Peridore's uncle who takes over the running of the estate after his father's death. Peridore as a boy is obviously close to Dunsany, expressing his feelings on hunting, the land, politics and, especially, crytallising the sense of estrangement I've pointed out in the previous two novels.

This estrangement appears as a series of antitheses. First, there is the Old versus the New: the conflict between the Syndicate and the traditional life of the land, feudal and rural. There is also a deep conflict between what Peridore sees as his Irish nature and his English upbringing. He accepts his father's death fatalistically, even striking up a form of friendship with one of the men sent to kill him; feeling, at least, the kinship of a sportsman, used to hunting and death, and the kinship of an Irishman who has stronger feelings than law:

> And it's no use pretending that I do not sympathise with the Irish point of view: an Englishman honours the law and a very convenient thing it is for everyone that he does so, but its a very dull thing when all's said. Now an Irishman will honour a song, if it's worth honouring, though his doing so is of no convenience to anybody; but he'll never honour the law, however much it might suit the community, because the law is not sufficiently beautiful in itself to work up any enthuisiasm over. (16)

When his friend the 'man in the long black coat' offers his services against the Syndicate, Peridore declines his aid, but:

> It was then that my Irish heart sorrowfully regretted what my English education had taught me, to interfere with my friend who would have killed these men. (17)

Even in the 'Irish heart', however, there is conflict. The Wise Woman's son tells Peridore of Tir Nan Og, the mythical Land of Youth, to which he has set his heart and thus, in the eyes of the Church, irretrievably damned his soul. Tir Nan Og is described in terms similar to Elfland, but we are here at least on step removed from 'pure' fantasy. Marlin has 'chosen' it and is damned. He has accepted a heresy. In our terms, he is mad, and his later death is a simple disappearance in the bog. But it is also a compact with Tir Nan Og:

> For a danger threatened the bog and I swore to guard it, and they swore to carry Tommy over the water and bring him to Tir Nan Og. Eight fair girls, they said, that were queens of old in Ireland, would bring him over the water. (18)

The fantasy element in the book is all of this nature, reflecting and perhaps summing up the growing tendency got ambiguity and downright whimsy to replace the totally escapist fantasy with which Dunsany began his writing career. *Elfland* lies wholly in the imagination. *Pan* has definite elements of the supernatural — though Pan himself is seen only in the shadows. By *Wise Woman* the imaginary world of Fantasy has retreated from the **experience** of the characters in the story to their **imaginations**. It is quite possible, in terms of the story, that Mrs Marlin's powers could be 'true', but hints are all we are given. Whether 'true' or not, though, Tir Nan Og has a seductive pull, dangerous even though defeated:

> If it's a close thing, as this was, and against a country of that beauty (for could there be anything lovelier than young girls in the pride of their beauty walking through endless orchards in blossom that never grows old?) why, then the winner's always afraid he may have to fight again... it's not much more than a thousand years since they beat it. And what's a thousand years to heaven? (19)

Peridore is himself caught up in dreams of Tir Nan Og, but rejects them only to lose Laura, the girl he is in love with, for she is a Protestant and it is only by embracing a common heresy (which both are unwilling to do) that their religious barriers can be overcome. Meanwhile the Wise Woman herself dreams dreams of a free Ireland — 'Kings with crowns of pearl and jade will seek us, travelling from the boundaries of Earth in ships of scented timber' (20) — which are not congruent either with the political schemes of the ' man in the long black coat' (which are never defined) or her son's religious attraction to Tir Nan Og.

The only unifying force is the land itself. The Land unites all — the aristocrat Peridore and the resistance movement; the scientist Dr. Rory and the witch Mrs Marlin; Peridore as Catholic, Laura as Protestant. Despite Dunsany's exceptionally vivid human characters, the land and the customs of those who live on it are at the centre of the book. It is an essentially pagan vision. Peridore can discuss

hunting with the men who have come to kill his father because it is in their blood. A fox-hunt is described in terms of a religious confirmation. Man the hunter is part of the environment. It is man the mchine-maker who destroys the ecological balance. The destruction of the bog to make coal would destroy more wildlife than Peridore as a hunter ever would. Even more than in *The Blessing Of Pan* the fantasy-elements *in Wise Woman* — all, as I've said, carefully couched in ambiguity — reflect an identification with the elements rather than narrative forces of their own. But although the bog and the elements are not, as in Dunsany's earlier stories, personified, they are still the main characters of the story, for the beauty and power of nature offer a key to the numinous, which some call religion. Elfland captures this reaction by being more than nature (see the passage I quoted as reference 4 above). The villagers of Wolding seem to achieve it by becoming part of nature, rejecting the trappings of civilisation for their own self-contained agrarian economy:

> And the more they went backward, the more nature all around them, with sprouting and singing and prowling, seemed to welcome them on their journey. (21)

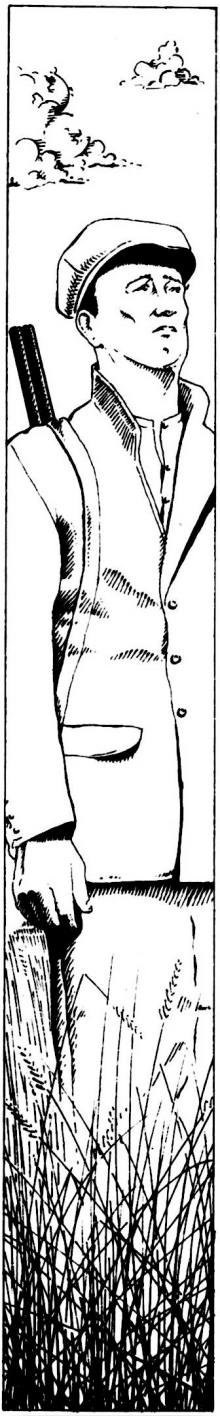
In *Wise Woman* , it is the red bog, 'of all the enemies of Man... the most friendly... it lulls and soothes him all his days,' (22) which inspires Marlin with perilous dreams:

> I fell to dreaming about the bog... and wondering where it went, and to looking at the sun on it a long way off where it goes silver and golden; and, begob, what chance has I with that upbringing; and, God help me, I turned my thoughts to Tir Nan Og. (23)

It is this sense of a semi-mystical unity through the land which underlies nearly all Dunsany's best fiction. And it is combined with the sense of estrangement I have mentioned before for one simple and obvious reason; Dunsany's own position as a member of a hereditary aristocracy. I am not, please note, suggesting that a writer's work can all be neatly explained away in class terms, but the preoccupations which Dunsany betrays in his fiction — and he was too much a 'spontaneous' writer, dependent on inspiration, to dress his writing up in the disguises of character, distancing and irony — are very much those of his class: the Anglo-Irish landed gentry.

Dunsany's lifestyle was very much that of a civilised, cultured, leisured group. It clung to feudal ties — 'God bless the Squire and his relations/And keep us in our proper stations' as the old saw has it — ties beyond politics. Dunsany's gamekeeper Twoomy was a 'faithful retainer' of the old school: he was also an ardent Sinn Feiner. In fact, Dunsany came under police surveillance at one time for apparent Sinn Fein sympathies, due to his continuing shooting unmolested. Twoomy's presence may have afforded him protection. Ironically, Dunsany's one act of 'political law-breaking' was to smuggle guns for the Unionists in 1914, an act which was done as much out of devilry as political commitment. Blood sports

were, as implied in *Wise Woman*, almost a religion. Dunsany himself was a keen huntsman — some of his autobiographical writings degenerate into catalogues of kills — and in both *Elfland* and *Wise Woman* the plot slows down while the hunting and slaughter of prey — whether it be unicorn or fox — is described. It was important, also, to be cultured — within limits. Dunsany had the conventional classical education of his time at Eton, although he was weak at mathematics, which he needed for Sandhurst and the Army, and had to be removed and sent to a 'crammer'. His literary tastes remained very much of the nineteenth rather than the twentieth century: the poetry of T.S.Eliot, for instance, was anathema to Dunsany whose own poetry largely remains at the level of the kind of 'competent verse' which could be produced at length by someone who had spent much of his childhood poring over Latin and Greek verse at a good English Public School. All this was supported by an income based on rents and shares, an income which declined (in relative terms) so that the Dunsanys, who were never in want but had what the British upper classes euphemistically call 'a certain standard of living' to keep up, were forced, especially after the Second World War, to cut back considerably on staff. Above all, it was a rural lifestyle, cut off by geography as well as status from industrial society which never appears in Dunsany's fiction except to be castigated. His idea of a city was Sardathrion rather than Birmingham.



His own life was conventional — Eton, Sandhurst, the Army, politics, etc. His response to world events was the conventional one of his class: we are told by his biographer that his attitude to the 1926 General Strike 'seems to have been tinged with the feeling that it was all an enormous lark'. (24) The Irish element was important. Dunsany was wounded during the 1916 uprising and although during and after the Civil War he showed nothing but the typical 'apolitical' reaction of aristocracy, that sense of superiority manifesting itself in a refusal to take sides which is pigheaded and admirable at the same time, it was another element in the decline of his way of life.

In short, Dunsany's fiction is marked by a sense of the inevitability of impermanence and the fallibility of humanity because he lived through a period of change — two World Wars, the Russian Revolution, Civil War in Ireland, the H-

bomb, etc. — which from his standards could only be decline. His writing transparently shows his alienation from the twentieth century. His best is generally his most escapist. Yet the important thing is that Dunsany was to some extent a misfit in his own class. Many others from his milieu managed to cometo terms with modern society. Dunsany was in many ways decidedly unconventional. The 'social whirl' had no attractions for him. He could not settle into the army or politics — both traditional careers for a man of his background. In matters of dress, appearance and behaviour he gave an impression of energetic spontaneity rather than conformity. One of his wife's relations described him as 'that undesirable Irish peer'. (25) He had a deep and genuine sensitivity of his own and it was this which urged him towards writing.

Too much of an individualist to escape into religious or political alienation despite his lack of sympathy with the way the world was going, with his idea of 'art' too out of joint with the times to enable him to be a 'great artist', Dunsany managed to create a facade of a huntin', shootin', fishin' peer with more money than brains. It was a pretty good facade. It even penetrated to some of his later stories, which are bland in the extreme. But reading him at his best, and the three novels I've discussed show him at his best, the impression is given of a man who was a lot more intelligent and sensitive than his lifestyle suggests. I certainly don't want to over-rate Dunsany as a novelist. But it does seem to me that his best novels are superb laments for a dying culture, an attempt to salvage something from the wreckage of 'civilisation', a narrow but intense stream combining pure imagination with acute observation of the natural world in a way which it is difficult to match in literature.

References:

1. *His Fellow Men p.8.* ; 2. *At The Edge Of The World p.117-8* ;
3. ...*Edge p.145* ; 4. *The King ofElfland's Daughter p.14* ;5. *Elfland p.22* ;
6. *Elfland p.155* ;7. *Elfland p. 141* ;8. *Elfland p.223* ;
9. *The Blessing of Pan p.69* ;10. *Pan p.152* ;11. *Pan p.170* ;12. *Pan p.175* ;
13. *Pan p.111* ;14. *Pan p.232* ;15. *The Curse Of The Wise Woman p.146* ;
16. *Wise Woman p.16* ;17. *Wise Woman p.200-201* ;18. *Wise Woman p.160* ;
19. *Wise Woman p.169-170* ;20 . *Pan p.235* ;21. *Wise Woman p.19* ;
22. *Wise Woman p.37* ;23. Mark Amory, *Lord Dunsany:A Biography.* I am indebted to Amory's thorough and excellent biography for all references to Dunsany's life; 24. *Amory, p.33*

A Most Genial Man

Introduction by Mal Ashworth

Over the weekend of February 13-15th 1987 a convention by the name of 'Conception' was held in the Queens Hotel, Leeds, to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the first ever science fiction convention, which took place in Leeds on January 3rd, 1937. (Contemporary accounts give the venue as the "Theosophical Hall". The writer of the following piece tells me that they always knew it as the "Queens Hall" from its location in Queens Square — which is, in fact, nowhere near the present-day "Queens Hotel". One up for serendipity.) For some weeks previous to the convention, I had (following up a lead from Paul Annis) been in touch with a gentleman by the name of George Airey, who had actually attended that original pre-dawn Big Bang event fifty years earlier, and who was still a resident of Leeds. George readily agreed to come along to Conception on the Saturday afternoon and meet some of his fannish descendants from across that half century. When he arrived he turned out to be a very bright and sprightly 71 (and, fittingly, the first person to greet him was Leeds' youngest and newest neofan, bright and sprightly Sean Wilcock). Along with him George had brought not only a collection of old fan photos and a number of pre-war fanzines (some of which he generously donated for auction) but also his long-time friend and fellow Leeds Ur-fan, Bert Warnes, a lively 77 year old. I had the pleasure of re-introducing George to Harry Turner after a gap of 49 years, and an animated group spent a few happy hours listening to reminiscences, exchanging views, comparing Now with Then, poring over old photographs ("That's not me!"). That first convention had seen the setting up of the Science Fiction Association, and in the original Leeds Branch of that George had been the Treasurer and Bert the Assistant Treasurer. And one thing which especially impressed me during that afternoon, and in subsequent correspondence with George and Bert, was the obvious high regard, undiminished by the years, in which they both held the man who had been the Secretary of that Branch and a prime mover and leading light in early Leeds fandom, Doug Mayer. I suggested to Bert that perhaps they might write something about this obviously charismatic character. This is the result of that suggestion....

An Appreciation of Douglas F. Mayer, Founder of S.F. Fandom in the U.K.
by
George A.Airey and Bert Warnes, Founder Members.

George Airey and I first met Douglas Mayer in 1935 through the medium of the American pulp magazines which were then flooding the British market, and in which Douglas appealed for like-minded people to get in touch with him at his home in Hollin Park, Leeds. This means, of course, that he was actively involved in the S.F. field some time before this, as obviously it would have taken no little time for him to obtain any replies — like the Mills of God, this kind of communication was apt to be exceedingly slow!

So, our first contact with him was at his home in Hollin Park, and here we found, as George so aptly puts it, an ebullient character eager to press on and get cracking. At the time he had arranged in the garden a display of varied scientific gadgetry which was then his hobby. However, he was keen to form a local Chapter of the American S.F. League, a project in which we were only too pleased to join him.

It was here that his organisational and leadership abilities soon became appar-

ent. Here was a young man, well over six foot (he would have made an excellent Rugby player) who was capable of adequately expressing his own views and at the same time genuinely interested in listening to and appreciating other points of view. He was never domineering, always cheerful and had that enthusiasm for whatever the undertaking, which bore his followers through thick and thin. These qualities were to become more apparent in later life, but here we could see them beginning to blossom.

In 1936, mainly due to Douglas's efforts, plans were laid for the formation of the British Science Fiction Association, which came into being shortly afterwards at the first ever Science Fiction Convention. This was held in Leeds early in 1937 in the Theosophical Hall, near what is now the Merrion Centre, not far from the 'Cobourg' pub. Unfortunately most of the records for this event seem to have gone astray and so far George's many efforts to trace them have been to no avail.

Shortly after this the mainspring of S.F. Fandom moved to London; however, again due to the efforts of Douglas, two trips to the London HQ were arranged with great success. These, together with his other SF activities, have been fairly well documented, in the mag *Tomorr ow* , etc., so I will not dwell upon this at this time.

By now World War Two was very much in evidence, the writer was in the Army Reserve and was on his way very early in the proceedings and so all our SF activities had to cease. At this time Douglas was reading Physics at Leeds University. During this period he also wrote a science column for the local paper, the *Yorkshire Evening Post* . From papers and information he gathered at the University he deduced that the atomic bomb was now more than just a possibility (circa 1940). He mentioned this in his column and as a result the editor had no choice but to refer the matter to "higher authority", who promptly descended on Doug and whisked him away to London, where he became one of the famous "backroom boys".

From then on we had no contact with Douglas nor any news of him until after the war, everyone here perforce going their own diverse ways, and it was not until 1956 that we heard of him again (see *Evening Post* clipping, 1956).

1956

Canadian Post for Leeds graduate.

Evening Post Reporter

Mr. Douglas Mayer..., son of Mrs. E. B. Mayer of Hollin Park Road, Leeds, and the late Mr. P.W.Mayer, has been appointed as World University Service of Canada general secretary from January 1 next. The late Mr. Mayer was a veteran of the South African war and died recently at the age of 82. Mr. Douglas Mayer, a graduate of Leeds University, is senior executive officer with the London and Home Counties Council for Technological Education.

After holding several Government appointments, Mr. Mayer became general secretary of the National Union of Students of England, Wales and Northern Ireland from 1948 to 1950. He was general secretary of the British World University Service Committee from 1950 to 1955 and later served the Government of Cyprus in London as student liaison officer, and was responsible for the welfare of nearly 1,000 Cypriot students in Britain.

On a subsequent flying visit to the UK from Canada he took time out to visit us in Leeds, and we enjoyed a pleasant and convivial evening in a local hostelry, quite like old times putting the world to rights. However, there was no question of our now reviving the now long-defunct SFA, and our later correspondence with Doug was necessarily rather per-

functory, mainly due to the pressure of work which he was now subject to.

Shortly before his sudden and tragic death in 1976 (see second clipping), he spent a brief holiday over here with his wife and youngest son, whom I met with happy pleasure over dinner, after which we repaired to yet another watering hole where George joined us for a goodly natter over several pints of our local brew.

Unfortunately, that was the last we were to see of Doug before his untimely demise, and all we have left now of a "most genial and hospitable gentleman, whose company enhanced the friendly and lively gatherings", as his memorial so aptly puts it, is the privilege of knowing him in the early days.
(May 1987)

1976

University Chief dies

Leeds-born Mr. Douglas Mayer, former general secretary of the Canadian World University Service, has died suddenly, in Ottawa. He was 57.

Mr.Mayer was for 12 years general secretary of the National Union of Students and later of the British World University Service. The CWUS is proposing to set up a memorial to his work.

Art Credits And Contributor's Addresses

Lotsa credits for this issue, as I've been raiding the artstore cupboard again, dusting off all those mouldering piles of filloes that seem to mount up given half the chance. (And giving Shep a bit of a quiet time, you understand, so the rest of you faneds can share in his renowned largesse).

Steve Fox: Cover, pages 5, 41 and 47.

Peter Crump: Pages 2, 30 and 39

Shep Kirkbride: Page 7.

Iain Byers: Pages 10, 13, 16 and 19

Martin Helsdon: Centrespread

Dave Collins: Pages 35 and 36

Harry Bell: Pages 26, 28 and 33

ATom: Page 45

As fine a body of fanartists as you are ever likely to see, I'm sure you will agree, but one that could still do with a little augmenting now and then.

As for contributor's addresses, It's been a little while since I gave any of them out, so here goes:

Mal Ashworth, 16 Rockville Drive, Embsay, North Yorkshire.
Harry Bell, 9 Lincoln Street, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE8 4EE
Iain Byers, 9 Shaftesbury Park, Dundee, Tayside, DD2 1LB
Dave Collins, 21 Exleigh Close, Bitterne, Southampton, SO2 5FB
Peter Crump, 11 Hazel Drive, Penyfford, nr Chester, Clwyd, CH4 0NF
Steven Fox, 5646 Pemberton Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19143, USA
Mary Gentle, Flat 1, 11 Alumhurst Rd, Westbourne, Bournemouth, Dorset
Martin Helsdon, 32 Burns Crescent, Chelmsford, Essex
Shep Kirkbride, 42 Green Lane, Bellevue, Carlisle, Cumbria.
Andy Sawyer, 1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirrall, L64 4BT
Arthur Thomson, 17 Brockham House, Brockham Drive, London, SW2 3RV

Many thanks to all of you.

Ripples : the letters

Another mammoth locpile to wade through (all very great fun, I assure you) Let's start out by egoboosting myself for the task ahead of me.

Ken Lake:
Have recently contacted a neofemfan who is finding fanzines really disappointing — illiterate, juvenile, pointless, prejudiced, ignorant, cruddy, with appalling layout and illos — not what she expected at all. I have deliberately (sadist that I am) been withholding *CS* from her, because I know damn well that once she's seen it she's going to feel even worse about the others. How do you do it? It's not just that your spelling is impeccable, or your selection of material always suitable, or your artwork the best in the world (though Shep Kirkbride comes precious close to showing me that fan artwork need not be anything like as hackneyed or as slapdash as I felt when I last locced you). But your creations as entities are worthwhile, make sense, and damn well *impress* the hell out of me!

(Can't have been that impressive, Ken: your femfan never replied!)

Nick Shears:
...I just had to say that (CS13) was by far the most beautiful fanzine I've seen for a very long time, and the interest and quality of the written material was pretty high too. Congratulations.

(Not all was wine and roses, though...)

Judy Buffery:
As far as CS13 is concerned, I am not sure about the new lettercol. It *is* more readable in a superficial way, but it smacks a bit of the letter page of a daily newspaper, and in the past your outstanding virtue was your policy of always printing letters in full and thus avoiding the pitfalls of quotes which might be misconstrued out of context.

(But then again...)

Pamela Boal:
The new rigging of the *Crystal Ship* is a delight and enhances that which is ever a pleasant voyage. I too have seen LoCs presented by subject in other zines and thought it a device worth adopting. Congratulations on having the courage to copy a good idea, you have made it work really well in *Ripples*.

(I've boggled a mind or two along the way, too...)

Christina Lake:
I'm amazed to hear that you're typing every letter into your word-processor. I can see that it would be a very nice thing to have done when editing the letter column, but the actual doing of it takes the kind of dedication I simply don't have. Your heart must sink when you receive a particularly long letter on *Crystal Ship*— however interesting — at the thought of immediately copy-typing it on to the system.

(Er, well, I don't actually type in everything, as comments on my own stuff I winnow out as I go, which reduces the volume. But contributors do get all comments received on their pieces nowadays. As for long letters, I'm thinking of easing the strain there by investigating one of the scanners that the OU has installed, directly inputting from that onto disk.)

Shep Kirkbride:
To start with, the look of the zine is what impressed me first. I'm not talking about the artwork, but more the style of the zine. Although at the time of doing the different illos for *CS13* I seemed to have a heavy workload, I now see that incorporated with the type, headings etc., the zine is not saturated with artwork as I thought it might be. On the contrary, you seem to have hit just the right balance with your choice of typefaces for the headings, and the use of 'straplines' above each page has give *CS* an even 'classier' look than usual. I cannot think of a better showcase for my work than *The Crystal Ship*. Thank you for the opportunity. It was indeed worth all the threatening letters. (Even the occasional letter from your solicitor!)

(He's joking about the solicitor, folks, honest!)

Bernard Earp:
Way back in the misty long gone days when I first came into fandom (actually only about ten years ago) the arguments in fanzines were all, it seemed, about the ideal methods of fanzine production, with the trusty duper coming out as the 'only true fannish method'. 'The Enchanted Duplicator', good though it was, has a lot to answer for.

This time, I come into fanzine fandom (or at least one corner of it) and find you seemingly right at the cutting edge of the Desktop Publishing Revolution. And why not; the medium may or may not be the message but idea transmission is certainly helped by clear, stylish presentation...

(I'll drink to that, Bernard, in spades...)

Harry Warner Jr.:
The new publishing equipment... causes me to proclaim a temporary truce with my dislike for non-traditional fanzine publishing methods. The truce will only last until I try to read another fanzine in which electronics played a role and find my shirt and pantaloons growing soggy with dripping water from overstrained eyeballs. I could wish for the use of the larger typeface in the letter section, too, but I realise this would have either run up your publishing expenses or forced more radical cutting of the locs.

(Still the same problem, I'm afraid, Harry: I have to compromise in the loccol to get so much in.)

Peter Crump:
The first thing that struck me about *Crystal Shep* (whoops, I mean *Ship*, of course) this time was how professional it looked. No doubt the result of a Mac + laserprinter + Shep. I'm glad that you didn't get overawed by all the technology at your fingertips and try to impress us with all its potential; nothing looks messier than zillions of different typefaces crammed onto a page .

Using Shep throughout certainly gave the zine a feeling of unity; though when you've finished monopolising his talents I only hope there's something left for other faneds who are already arming themselves with several varieties of blunt instrument... Shep does excel himself in the *Ship*, though; all his best work seems to appear there. This time I would single out his illustrations for the Dorothy Davies article as particularly good. They are deftly drawn and detailed, with a sensitive eye to the article, and capture several aspects of the green man. What more can I say? The cover, too, impressed me and the idea was a clever one — but I felt the ship looked a little awkward. Which highlights one problem with using one artist throughout a zine — some of the illos are well below Shep's usual high standards (though still better than many other fanartists' work). The illo on page 10, for example, is poorly (quickly?) drawn (for Shep) and not particularly funny. Compare it to the one on page 21, about which I can say exactly the opposite. On the whole there are more good illos than bummers, but I wonder if the ratio would improve if he didn't have to take on a job of such frightening proportions. I dunno, perhaps the crazy bugger *enjoys* it.

(While the egoboo is still flowing, let's give Shep his full share.)

Sue Thomason:
I like Shep's work, and thought the idea of using one artist to illustrate a whole issue (thus giving it visual continuity) was an interesting, and on the whole successful, experiment. I'm not sure how well the cover illo works as a wraparound cover — the space galleon on the front cover is an obvious title reference, so I didn't see/look at the further image on the back for *ages*. By the way, I love the way Shep has merged the pale irregular bands of 'water-reflection' with the fine sprinkling of 'distant stars', (both of these are fairly standard shorthand symbols) joining the two with an ambiguous third symbol, the white circles, which on the cover at least could be seen equally well as objects in space (moonlets?) or objects in water (bubbles?).

(And now, a terrible warning to all you unobservant fans out there.)

Harry Warner Jr.:
All the fans who are so concerned about mistreatment of artists by loccers came very close to discovering a particularly awful example of this misbehaviour. It wasn't until I spread the 13th *Crystal Ship* on my desk in preparation for writing this loc that I realised the front and back cover are one wraparound illustration, and a very fine one to boot. Just think how many thousands of condemnatory words would have been spawned, if I'd ignorantly commented on the front and back cover as separate drawings and you'd printed the remarks as an awful example of a fan celebrated for failure to give equal treatment to artists. I do like Shep's drawing very much; it reminds me of Finlay without actually imitating many of his characteristics. Maybe you could make up a rubber stamp and imprint on the copies of *Crystal Ship* which go to the stupidest fans a statement like: "This is a wraparound cover". It might prevent someone else from committing the booboo I just averted at some future date.

(That sounds like a very good way to lose readers, Harry...)

Pamela Boal:
When I am in tune with a person or their general theme I have a very bad tendency to read what they meant rather than what they actually wrote. That makes me a very poor critic as communication is the objective and a writer should be able to make his meaning clear to his or her readers even if they are not in sympathy with the writer's contentions. I still do not believe Dave (Collins) intended to say that those who expressed themselves in cartoon form are not artists, simply that it is difficult to judge work in zines from pure art criteria (visual self expression?) as zine editors seldom require pure art, more illustrative cartoons; even fillos are more requested to illustrate

a theme than to stand on their own.

I certainly regard Shep as an artist. I also regard him as a talented craftsman with a meticulous mastery of a range of techniques. Many of Shep's covers (and other fan artists also) would stand on their own as works of art. An overall title for an exhibition of Shep's works might be "Humourous reflections on man in space". If Dave *is* saying that one form of expression is inferior to another then of course I do not agree with him. Though sadly and inevitably all talents do not succeed as well in the market place. Nor are all talents interchangable, that is, a romantic novelist can not automatically write a good crime novel or science fiction novel; a good letterwriter may not be able to sell his or herself as a journalist, or write saleable articles; a good fanartist may not be able to paint the sort of picture people would like to hang on their living room wall.

(I understand there are some fans who are more than happy to hang fanartists' work upon their walls, Pam. Let's change tack slightly, and move onto fanart in general.)

Michael Gould:
Some of the letters gave me another thought about the artist piece, namely the snob attitude which seperates 'art' from 'commercial art'. I tend to prefer to avoid labels, preferring to split art into good and bad. The good cartoonist often displays an economy of line that highlights a great natural talent, while too much detail often shows a reliance on quantity rather than quality. Part of the talent of Aubrey Beardsley hinged on his ability to create a great drawing from a few lines. When I draw a few lines, that is all it is. To create something halfway mediocre, I have to graft, and I suspect so do many other artists. One of the noticeable things in recent years has been the improvement of both stories and art in comics, and even I have turned back to some of them. Particularly brilliant are the *Love And Rockets* comics of the Hernandez Brothers. The stories and characters are richly created, and the art shows an economy of line that many could learn from. In *Crystal Ship 13* I loved Shep's illustrations for 'Reflection In Green'.

(The comments on Martin Helsdon's "malicious fairy" illo in CS12 roused a further response)

Terry Broome:
Martin Helsdon's piece could be seen as being sexist, posed, but it is drawn from the perspective of a camera — the person in the foreground, the place in the background, providing a contrast, a link, and perspective. The piece conveyed a great sense of atmosphere, of things wierd and about to happen, a tension... The art was an image of symbols, rather than a direct interpretation of an 'action' scene, where the figure is doing something with which we can identify, and not simply *thinking* of something... or *anticipating*. Helsdon's piece captures that subtle flavour of *anticipation*. This technique is often used on book covers to provide the *essence* of the plot, rather than a particular scene... like a montage. The two kinds of art (action - straight interpretation of a scene; montage - symbols, anticipatory) are separable. It would be wrong to criticise either for what they never pretend to be. Now, *is* it posed? Possibly, but I am continually struck by such images in real life, and I find it just as exhilarating.

Ian Covell:
The 'objections' to the castle/fairy are hilairious; spurious misdirection (would winged people look human? Gods, there went two thousand years of myth); the 'is it real or posed' (it's posed, *posed*);

'anonymous body' (unlike every other painting when you instantly know who it is, of course...); females against a romantic backdrop (*everybody* likes a nice background)... It all comes down to the fact that any naked woman is seen as demeaning to all women. Balls!

(Let's now have the word from the man himself)

Martin Helsdon:
The 'fairy and castle' illos seems to have generated some varied comments on a number of different levels. Curiously, the potentially most hostile remarks are closer to the mood that I was trying to engineer into the picture. It's interesting that nobody has made the observation that the content and style are imitative of Brian Froud, but maybe the other dimensions I was trying to insert have hidden this. When drawing the picture I wanted to mix some of the traditional (and I mean Nineteenth Century) Fairy elements with the darker roots of the fair folk. It was also an attempt to contrast the light sunny approach to fantasy with the threatening environment that engendered the ancient world of spirits and hags. Perhaps something of the soft pom school of fantasy illustration crept in. All in all, it's not a serious picture, certainly it doesn't number among the few up on my wall.

The reaction... is divided by sex. Shep and Iain Byers seem to like it and accept it for the execution. Sue Thomason and Pamela Boal look more deeply into the subject, possibly because being female it involves them on a more personal level... Sue gets very close to the idea behind the illo and Pamela shoots down the composition. I'm not sure that it's right and proper for the originator of a piece of work to comment on it, but I'll try to show what was behind the picture.

The first section to be completed was that of the fairy and the rock. She's alien but also very human, a distortion that is intended to be even more disturbing because she is (at first glance) attractive. The wings, the long flowing hair are cliches (and made it easier to make the former look transparent). The ears and puckish face are also fairly standard components. The body is exagerated (not entirely anatomically correct) and ends in clawed feet. So the figure is improbable, apparently harmless but unsettling. She is intended to catch your eye and immediately catch you within the contradictions in the picture. The 'fairy' is very much the daughter of the Earth Mother, nymph and Hag. I wanted to catch something of the night fear of our ancient ancestors with the coy pastel-coloured aprites of modern high fantasy.

The marsh came next. If you read *Rites of the Gods* by Aubrey Burl you will find that the Keltic preoccupation with water, marshes and sacrifice hides some very nasty goings on. The sullen landscape vanishing into mist (another cliche) mocks (but does not reflect) the impossible sky castles. The grim reality supports the imagined chivalry.

The components of the illo don't entirely join up too well; I've tried to lead the viewer into the picture but unfortunately there's nowhere to go. The images are too weak to inhabit the full space. If it were darker, and the composition tighter it might work. Some of the audience have picked up the feeling of the picture. I think that Pamela's last paragraph nicely sums up one aspect of the illo but maybe the claws should have been more pronounced, the teeth sharper. Although some of my other pictures may show women against an attractive background this marsh is not intended to be romantic. As a final comment on the content, you might also take it as something of a self-pastiche.

A few words on method. My most recent pictures are a combination of stipple, cross-hatching, and brush work for the solid black areas. The pen is a Rotring, the preferred nib a 0.1mm. The surface is *not* water colour board; I'm having difficulty in obtaining the Daler board that gives the best results. Most boards are too white, and the contrast makes shading difficult to control. I am left handed and put the illoes together a little like a jig-saw. Sometimes the picture just develops with the idea being virtually a doodle (like the girl and ship some issues back) and some have weeks of work (sometimes whole world creation) behind them. As time goes by I seem to be producing less. My work takes more of my creative energy and the last two years I have developed a form of arthritis of the spine. This makes leaning over a drawing board more difficult and more of my pictures are abandoned.

The principle secret of the technique is time, and very fine control of the pen. I have no real art training and trade spontaneity for style. What you have seen in *Crystal Ship* is virtually my entire finished output.

(So there you have it, the artist's view of his own piece. Interesting, n'est-ce pas?)

Chuck Connor:
...It was nice to see that Pete Crump is back into the fannish arena, and I hope that his pens haven't stodged and rusted up during his departure. But, and this is the thing that gets to me, you have artists working in their own mediums, but some have no concept of what the printing process entails or its limitations. So they work to the lowest point of delivery and leave it at that.

Faneds are, as well, to blame, and for several reasons. Firstly, they, too, don't know (most of the time that is) what their gear is capable of (and in some cases they don't even know what their gear is, those being people who just paste-up and send it off for photocopying or scanning). And, secondly, they accept any old crap to fill a hole. You ever heard of an ed rejecting a piece of art, eh? And how many artists are guilty of clipping close to the deadline and then just knocking something out in five or ten minutes?

(I've rejected pieces before now, and some very good ones too, as Pete Lyon knows -- stuff I didn't think I could do justice to in the zine.)

Bernard Earp:

I'd agree with Peter Crump when he says that his lack of 'artistic training' does not qualify him to comment. He then proves in the rest of his loc that he is qualified in the best possible way. He has been/is active in the field which he wishes to comment on and knows both sides of it. I've got neither artistic training or the slightest bit of artistic talent but that hasn't stopped me from arranging Art Exhibitions (both showcases and group) for over three years, nor of being hauled out of the Municipal Art Gallery in Bolton in the midst of an argument with the Keeper of Arts about the current exhibit there. Why was I so incensed? Well, because it was a retrospective of one artist's work starting in the late 40s right up to the the present day. He'd started out reasonably well and showed genuine talent, but to my growing horror I found I could walk round the rest of the exhibit and date them all. He'd jumped onto every passing artistic fad or fashion in the last forty years and had never generated a voice, wrong word, a view, a signature that was unique to himself. He was a hack. I've no artistic training but I could date those paintings and argue that the man had sold out his talent. Peter knows enough to put his case too.

Though I would have been enough of a barbarian to answer Matisse "Well, then in this painting the arm is too long". Matisse was doing representational work. Did he mean us to think that the girl had had a long arm, that she was deformed in fact? No, he'd made a mistake and wasn't willing to admit it. Haven't we all done that on occasion? Do we know which painting it was? It would be interesting to look at and see if the arm is too long now; perhaps Matisse scraped it off when no-one was looking, and re-did it right.

The only art critic I'll quote is Paul Hogan, in the lager ad:

"Actually, they're Jackson Pollacks."

"Well, I'd agree with you there, sport."

Is he just portraying a typical uncultured Australian, or what any artist, anytime and anywhere, should want — a fresh uncluttered mind strong enough to look at something and form his own opinion and not let his surroundings overawe him from stating it.

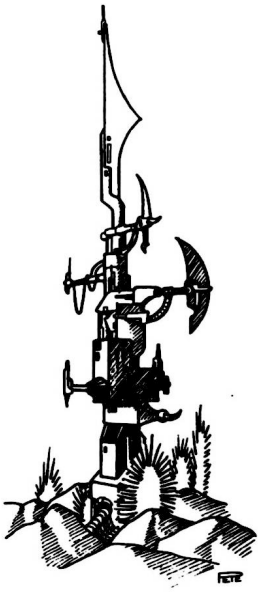
Mic Rogers:

I bet you're tickled pink with the response to Dave Collins' article. I would like to support Ted Hughes', and others, point asking about how the experienced (and successful) fan-artists work and what materials they use, and so forth. I noticed *you* mentioned your new computer with which you're now producing CS — so how can the equipment or tools of the fanartist be of any less interest to one and all? How about a Fanartists' Workshop at an Eastercon, where would-be or neo fanartists can perhaps try out some different media, or just see how to go about doing things? Or do fanartists like to keep their methods secret? Do they feel they'll be superceded if a neo sees how they produce their (very often superb) work?

(Well, you've already had Martin on his thing, Mic, and there are always people like Buck Coulson around to give away other artist's secrets, as follows)

Buck Coulson:

John Schoenherr did indeed work with a dry brush. I'm not sure that all of his stf paintings were done that way, but he also did a lot of nature work, and it was perhaps all dry brush. (I'm not sure if I've seen all of it.) Sandra Miesel once persuaded him to send his nature stuff to an art



gallery she then worked for, and persuaded Juanita and me — it didn't take much — to come down and see it. Hundreds of drawings. Sandra tried to sell me a drawing of a crocodile by saying "But it's *you*, Buck!", which caused some odd looks from mundane patrons of the gallery. I compromised by buying a wolverine, which I thought was even more me. I haven't seen that much of his stf art in the original, though. (I couldn't tell a dry brush from a wet mop, but Juanita says that's what it is, and she knows enough about art to tell.)

Oh, I remember Schneeman, all right. But if we're going to argue about older artists, how about Gerard Quinn versus Brian Lewis? (I'm for Quinn; I have one of his *New Worlds* cover paintings, though not his best one.) And since Sheryl Birkhead mentioned "artists of yesteryear" like Tim Kirk and Fabian, what's Jim Cawthorn doing now?

Christina Lake:
Lucky old you, getting the *whole* issue illustrated by Shep. It really does give an impressive look to the zine. Talking of artists — with *This Never Happens*, Lilian and I have always been keen to have a more experimental type of artwork. We can always use, and are grateful for, cartoon-like illos, but what I enjoy publishing most, and Lilian too, I know, is full-page, thought-provoking pieces of art based on what interests the artist him-(or her-)self most. Unfortunately, these days we just don't seem to get sent very much of this sort of thing.

(Too true, it's that kind of stuff that is very hard to find)

Richard Brandt:
I sympathise with Brad's agonizing over how to combine art, cartooning and illustration on his business card. "Carstrator" would have had the entirely wrong sound to it.

(An interesting response to the Collins piece came in from the States.)

Steven Fox:
My main reason for writing this time is in response to the fan artist article by Dave Collins. I agree in part with what (he) calls ill treatment of fanartists. It has been my own experience to send art off to people who end up never using it, their reason being that they have not gotten around to it. I remember a lady who requested some of my art for a *Star Wars* zine. I did a cover, a very detailed picture of an alien landscape with a large gas giant in the background , plus 7 to 10 illustrations. I have yet to see these things in print and it's been about five years.

Another issue which does bug me is the tendency for some fan editors to become angry if a piece of art shows up in another zine, their point being that fan artists should not submit art (the same art) to different zines. I do this myself for several reasons:

1. Fan editors do not buy rights to artwork, therefore they do not own it.

2. Fandom is very big! I doubt a zine on the east coast is going to have the exact mailing list..as a zine on the west coast, or England, or Canada. Maybe the editors will get the *same* zine but the folks on their respective mailing list won't.

3. Most fan editors make print runs of 100 or 200 copies per issue. The average is, I guess,150 copies per issue.

4. A good number of zines come out maybe 3 or so times a year, some only once a year. The best I've been able to find... are some Clubzines which get published every 3 or 4 months...

5. And then again there are fan editors who will publish when the fancy takes them. Once or twice every two or three years.

6. I've been in situations where I have sent work out only never to see it used for as long as a year! And during all that time the art just sits there, not being seen by anyone.

7. Because of reasons 2,3 & 5 ... I'll send the same stuff to different people. I try to send packs like this at widely differing times months apart. I also send them to really different locations. A pack of art I send to California, and a duplicate to Australia, or in one case Belgium, or Czechoslovakia, where no English-speaking fans in America or England will ever see them I sometimes never see them either. But it does not bother me too much...

...One possible reason why people may not comment on the art as a whole is because a good amount of fan art is amateurish in appearance, so much so you wonder why fan editors use it at all... Fan editors should print the best work or ask for good work, not just use any old thing.

Iain Byers' point concerning fanart as a whole I can go along with. Too much of fanart is overloaded with 'cartoonist favour'. Granted there are good fan cartoonists, but there seems to be more mediocre stuff as well.

I believe one distinction as far as 'cartoonist' and artist in fanart is concerned could be that an 'artist' is one who can draw many things, representational pieces as well as 'cartoons'. A good example would be Brad Foster, who shows his talent with line and tone also helps him in being able to do good cartoons. It's been my experience at art shows at cons to find fellow artists who do great cartoons, but who cannot draw a well-rendered human head or human figure that is accurate! This, of course, has a lot to do with how serious that particular 'fanartist' is

about his/her craft. I don't mean serious in content , but how serious they are about craftsmanship. Even cartoons have to have a certain amount of craftsmanship to them. A good example would be cartoons by Charles Addams or cartoons in comic books, or editorial cartoons. These cartoons all have fine draftsmanship and other talents linked with good drawing based on huge amounts of hours practicing their craft.

Some fanartists wish to equate their cartoons as art. That of course, is fine, but some of these folks have not ever been to art school, when one does not have the luxury of doing cartoons as finished products. The artist in art school has to really prove his/her self capable of drawing a wide range of subjects — people, places, things, and various subjective things also have to be learned, mood, emotion, texture; the list goes on and on. An artist's work evolves and changes; much of the fanart I see does not do this, it reaches a certain style or level and does not go beyond that.

What I'm saying is that fanartists should have the skill and hard work behind them before they go about telling people that they are 'artists' in the true sense of the word, but then again if they did have the skill and schooling, would they be doing fanart?

(Enough of this fanarting around: let's talk serious for a while.)

Michael Cobley:

...I really liked William Bains' article, but I think he's confusing science with education. Science has always been an indefinite area of flux bounded by the scientific establishment's definitions of absolute truth, the never-ending supply of experimental data that always contradicts (eventually) them ol'time 'laws', and the personal attitude of scientists towards both.

Education, however, is being treated more and more as political (not to mention commercial!) property. Our current government apparently sees state education as no more than a factory for producing various grades of docile troll workers. The Education Minister (Baker the Unspeakable) has made the position clear, that education exists for the sole purpose of supplying industry with personnel. Thus as education is debased so is science and, through feedback, culture.

One example of this occurred in Terry Jeeves' LoC, also in the last issue, where he bemoaned the overproduction syndrome of the EEC, Instead of looking for ways to cut production, shouldn't we — as **Europeans** — be proud that we can produce so much, and simultaneously appalled and shamed that the various food mountains are stored rather than transported to those starving in African and Asian countries?

As for William Bains' comparisons between science and Buddhism, there was one similarity he didn't illustrate. If a Buddhist monastery has a hundred students seeking enlightenment then from the Buddhist point of view a hundred paths are being followed, and every one is valid. In an institution like the physics faculty of a university, there may be a hundred goals being pursued with the same scientific methodology. Yet even here there is room for differing ways. Not infrequently several theories compete to explain a particular scientific problem; the one that becomes recognised by the scientific community at large (as Cobley's 1st Law of LOCology, say, rather than A.N.Other's LOCistic Theorem) is the one that explains what the others do, only more simply, or even elegantly, or is the most convenient and applicable.

Funny ol'world, innit?

Sue Walker:

William Bains' article on PhDs had me nodding and muttering in agreement (now you know why I read *CS* in the privacy of my bathroom!). I must say I was surprised to learn he had to go on a course after being appointed as a lecturer — I thought the essence of being a university lecturer was to *be* incomprehensible (judging by some of my lecturers!!), but obviously the educationalists have got into the ivory towers as yet another means of justifying their existence! Mind you, speaking as a relatively new lecturer in Further Education (and who therefore is still rather idealistic), I'm all in favour of student negotiated learning. The reason it doesn't happen is that those who have already gone through the system aren't terribly interested in making life difficult for themselves, it's so much easier to carry on in the same old routine, using the same old hoops. The other problem, of course, is time. It would be wonderful to give individual attention to all my students, it's just that I'm timetabled for *x* million things (all to be done simultaneously, of course). Which brings me to why the GCSE is bound to fail. The concept is fine but there's not enough time or money being invested. GCSE is a luxury, and it's being devalued by lack of resources. The same thing has already happened with CPVE, an excellent concept which was ruined in practice due to limitations (often necessarily) imposed by external factors. And now it looks as if it's going to be ditched, just when we were beginning to get the hang of it. But failure can't just be blamed on the educators. Students must take some of the blame. I've found that some of them are the most conservative people I know — they want to perpetuate the old systems! True! I took one class early on in my

teaching career in which I followed the current fashion of getting the students to do the work and got nothing but abuse off one member of the group. "Teachers are meant to teach," she said, "so why don't you do something instead of making us do all the work. You're paid to do that". What more can I say?

David Palter:
I enjoyed Willaim Bains' article 'PhD and where to Phit it', but I do not agree with the conclusion that the attainment of this degree is more of a mystical pursuit like Zen, than a rational educational program. In any subject there is progression from theory to practice. You learn how to do something in theory, and then attempt to actually do it. Only after having done it does one fully understand the theory. This is true in any field, whether research biochemistry or the most mundane activities such as waiting on tables (although in the latter case, the amount of theoretical background is not large). So, Mr Bains observes that in one's PhD studies, one may typically be given an experiment to do, but not told what the experiment is for. Well, the serious student of science has already learned what the experiment is for, in the earlier phases of education. To stop now and explain what it is for would not only be unnecessary, but probably insulting as well.

Many religions employ highly elaborate mechanisms of indoctrination to inculcate in their postulants, a belief in the mystical principles of the religion. Mr Bains perceives a similar process taking place among advanced student of science, but although the idea is amusing, I don't take it seriously. The results of religion such as enlightenment, salvation, holiness, grace, etc., are subjective states not subject to any objective verification. Naturally they are slippery things; one never knows if one has actually achieved them or is merely fooling oneself. The results of science, on the other hand, are unmistakable by anyone. Nobody really needs to be indoctrinated in the virtues of science, since the results of science speak for themselves with perfect eloquence. There are, of course, those who choose to ignore or misunderstand these results, such as the dreaded Creationists, but these people do not need to be indoctrinated in science so much as the need to free thenselves from an unscientific indoctrination which has persuaded them not to accept reality.

This is not to say that the existing design of PhD programs meets with my unequivocal approval. Many of the problems Mr Bains points out are clearly legitimate. On the whole, there are too many arbitrary factors which may thwart one's attainment of the doctorate. However, there remains a fundamental difference between science and mysticism, which is not invalidated either by the quirks of individual scientists, nor even by the remarked oddities of quantum mechanics and advanced theoretical physics. Reality is, in some respects, very bizarre, but it does still make sense (to me, at any rate).

(And now we come to the one person who noticed my major clanger of CS13.)

Bernard Leak:
'PhD And Where to Put It' (or 'Phit It', depends where you read it...) by William Bains: a jolly piece of lugubrious self-denigration with uncertain pretensions to saying something quite serious somewhere. Work of this tendency can get away without saying anything at all, on the

grounds that only a complete grinding through the mills of God can prove that there really is no substance to it, and that then seems like victimisation of a harmless bit of fun. Never one to worry about accusations of intellectual brutality (get in there and start swinging, after the first few times one comes to welcome the knees in the groin, only softies keep their distance...), I brought my coffee-grinder along just in case.

Watching intellectuals smiling at their own masochism is strictly Sunday League stuff. Watching lecturers complain about how little they earn makes me giggle. Face it, the average University lecturer (and not a few at the Polys) has vastly better job security than the average industrial worker, has much better company and conditions, and need not seriously worry about sliding into a lower pay-bracket (which the average industrial worker can very easily do). The perks are not at all bad, especially the holidays. If you are doing more work than the minimum, you are getting paid for it — and paid pretty bloody well by the hour, too, One *can* sit back and do the minimum, especially if one has tenure, and then why complain?

Saying that there is 'a complete lack of openings' is a bit of a joke; as it happens, we are all living through a contraction in higher education which is just an echo of a contraction in a lot of other parts of the economy too. Would Bains like to be a miner contemplating *his* prospects? But then, of course, as we all know, there is no serious comparison between the average industrial worker and an academic. The latter may be paid as much, but he knows in his bones that he's worth more, while those horrid industrial workers all understand in their heart of hearts that their wages are bleeding their companies dry, and only the unspeakable and unsustainable generosity of their employers allows them to get away with it.

The fact that some people (with very insecure jobs indeed) are earning a lot more money for working much more intensively and under far greater pressure of responsibility and accountability both upwards and downwards is hardly a reason for him to feel hard done by. Of course, Bains may still feel that he does a lot of work for the money he gets. But the proof of this is that mere industrial workers earn as much.

Okay, so I'm being unfair... The contention that the ladder of academic progress has a special inevitability to it that is seductive, but silly. The same could be said of any kind of progress up any kind of hierarchy, and people get used to corporate hierarchies quite easily when they leave academe for 'work'. Naturally, in the grip of any hierarchy people will see advancement in terms of assuming a higher place within that hierarchy. Just so, most young children look forward to being grown up.

This certainly doesn't mean that one can see a path to University Lecturerhood (or even Lecturehood, which would be harder) mystically laid before each little pupil at school. It all seems to be an outward projection by Bains from within the academic ghetto, in which his own progress through the system becomes normalised. It is he who describes the academic ladder-climbers as 'successful'; those who wander off into executive positions do not usually share his bizarre belief that being a don is 'more socially acceptable'. Dons exist on the fringes of society; they are 'accepted', but only as marginal people, a sort of intellectual wallpaper at 'interesting' parties.

In fact, a sort of special superiority attached to academic study is a hybrid growth, born of intellectual ambition crossed with credentialism (being a don marks one as a real intellectual, not a mere dabbler). Luther resisted the Devil by saying 'baptizatus sum'; so that the professional academic defies contempt, at his own hands and at the hands of others, by crying 'licentiatus sum'.

A bizarre reversal seems to be taking place. Bains claims that it is stupid to do his job, and that people are seduced into it by its prestige. But the prestige is imaginary; it is a reflex of his sense of the value his work has, and his sense that it is immune to the dismal rewards of the job makes of the work a sacred trust. But to see this directly would annihilate his self-pity (it might provoke anger, and other awkward responses, instead) and would make him far too vulnerable to anti-intellectual attack.

The parallels between Buddhism and science are deliberately perverse and mocking, but he himself seems not to know at any moment which side is being used to debunk the other. On the one hand, he seems to be trying to deconstruct the 'obviousness', the self-evident compelling rationality of scientific thought and activity. On the other, his contempt for 'Doctors... who have about as much science in their make-up as Docter Who' is evident. He desperately wants to salvage a sense of value in his profession. Not to recover it — he already has it — but to keep it from foundering. So he engages in a desperate rearguard action, throwing up every possible barrier of obfustication and intellectual obstruction.

This leaves open the obvious question: why is science so vulnerable? What challenge to its value does it face, which can only be met by declaring that value to be unintelligible, and so unquestionable? Lots of different answers are possible, depending on one's sense of the kind of threat involved. It can be reductively explained as an assault upon the S.E.R.C. budget (or on his own department), or as a sense of location in a climate of philistine anti-intellectualism, or a sense that the social order no longer guarantees a moral value to intellectual competence.

I suspect that Bains does not know what he is afraid of, and is scared of finding out. His self-mocking remarks look like attempts to anticipate attack from some unknown quarter. At the end, we are confronted with a symbol of just that. Without any explicitly intelligible introduction, he presents the death of Colin Palmer, struck down without warning in advance or hope for the future. The fear seems to be that death will annihilate everything. But something must be guaranteed secure from it in order for life to be endurable. The risk of a direct confrontation between death and this security is too much to carry, so the central value — here identified as science — has to be protected behind opaque irrationalities. These are asserted all the more defiantly, because this bad faith witnesses to the dread hidden beneath.

No, I don't have an answer. There may not be an answer. But of all the ways of dealing with the fear of death, I feel less distaste for those which try to conserve rationality in its own sphere. Making a religion out of science extends

the realm of irrational terror to cover everything, which is surely a recipe for despair.

I could continue by trying to demolish his own presentation of the transmission of scientific enlightenment, but I've gone on too long already. Science-as-religion is a depressingly common intellectual disease. Nevertheless, the nature of science, although inseperable from, cannot merely be reduced to the psychopathology of its practitioner. Or so I prefer to believe.

Ned Brooks:
I got a kick out of the Bains article. I had too much trouble getting a Master's degree to want to annoy my soul with the quest for a PhD. But then I never had any desire to lecture. The actual

physical experiments and computer twiddling are much more fun. And not, in my field (aerodynamics), that likely to shorten your lifespan. Darrol Pardoe told me once that he had discovered that practicing chemists seemed to die young and he got out of that field.

Jean Weber:
I particularly appreciated William Bains' article on getting a PhD. He sums up quite neatly one of the reasons I never went on to do one: I found the whole set-up hypocritical. He doesn't mentions specifically, but part of the problem is 'connections': the old boys' network. Now this is hardly unique to the PhD mill, but that doesn't make it any more acceptable to me. Needless to say, i wasn't part of that network. And I really admired any female who (prior to the early 70s at least) fought her way thru the system, with the odds against her. But even without that problem, the whole setup offended me, and still does. However, I've never thought of it in terms of the analogy to religion — but once William pointed out the similarities, it's so obvious. A truly delightful article, well written, controversial, combining serious stuff with witty writing.

(I have to admit to being quite surprised at the response to Dorothy Davies' piece on the Green Man: which just goes to show that I should give my own tastes a bit more credit than I do!)

Ian Covell:
...I'd have supposed, had I not read this, that 'The Green Man' was simply the anthropomorphic interpretation of nature — everything has a human inside it ('Man in the Moon', etc.). It doesn't surprise me that Christianity stole some traditions from the Green Man: Christianity is a thief at the best of times, a barbarian at the worst. Everything gets subverted, or re-interpreted to fit their belief. As I've said, though, once people are taught one thing, they find it impossible to look any other way. If I have this right, not only did Christians steal the worshipping places and gods of earlier religions (bowdlerising them, or making them 'devils') but when the churches were built, the artisans were so unconvinced of the upstart religion that they included a few 'proper' flourishes to continue to protect the place. (I'm told every altar in the Middle Ages had the Earth Mother beneath it). Doesn't surprise me.

Ken Lake:
...as for the Green Man's presence in churches, perhaps I can add a word or two: when these Catholic churches were built, the Faith welcomed everyone and every shade of culture, and Christianised the person and his beliefs; cult figures were happily incorporated into the artwork and construction because the people would feel more at home with them there. When the Catholic Faith was renounced, nothing happened much; when Puritanism ran riot, much of our culture was wilfully destroyed — where Catholics could assimilate, Puritans had to burn and destroy, denounce and censor, and we've never recovered from it.

Shep Kirkbride:
Dorothy's article, 'Reflections In Green' was wonderful. I have to say that I really enjoyed illustrating it. I could quite happily have done a few more illos had you the room. It caught my imagination. So much so I found that while on holiday in Devon this year I couldn't stop myself looking for green men... and indeed spotted a few. I can well understand Dorothy's obsession with them.

Peter Smith:
Big Green Men. Yes, I certainly prefer them to little green men. Obsession. Yes, I feel obsessed with finding the remains of paganism scattered around the boring C20th. I don't know if I'm in tune with Dorothy Davies, but I read her piece over with enthuisiasm. Many comments spring to mind like trout in a whirlpool and it's going to be impossible to get them into coherent order.

The article almost divides 'Christianity' and 'paganism' into two neatly parceled boxes as though these two labels were part of a dichotomy. To me, 'Christianity' consists of a lot of pagan ideas, the process of 'Christianization' Dorothy refers to has meant Mother Church absorbing a lot of pagan festivals, deities, figures, ideas, and thus, inevitably, becoming pagan in the process.

It would be boring to list how the Christian festivals got moved to coincide with pagan festivals, how you now get a vicar thrown in free with well dressing rites, how the Church decided not to put a Celtic fire-goddess to the stake but instead canonised her. The vague boundary between 'Christianity' and 'paganism' was pointed out by Robert Graves in his *White Goddess* and other works, when he compared the Roman Catholic religion to much earlier Mother-and-Sacred-Son style religions. Robert Graves is also into trees and tree alphabets (going slightly OTT but stylishly so). You either like this stuff, and store it away in the braincells like a magpie hoarding chocolate biscuits, or it leaves you cold.

(As a minor point, all religions, from Judaism through to Maoism, have pagan origins of sorts — it is more how the fundamental ideas get reworked than what the fundamental ideas are that differentiates the world's religions. No, that's garbage. It's the rituals and thousand little customs that separate the various believers.)

If you find a pagan gargoyle ceremony place tree in Britain must it always be Celtic? The Anglo-Saxons started out as pagans, and they had plenty of nature lore. The word 'book' comes from the Anglo-Saxon for beech. It's about time that the fashion for things Celtic changed; the Anglo-Saxons have just been getting a bad press that's all.

I can't buy this tree-worship as the root of all religion line. It sounds rather like what Frazer said in *The Golden Bough*. Tree-worship is big business in some places and times but not everywhere — trying to argue so is like arguing that solar heroes are the archetype. Hanging Green Men from the sacred tree sounds a little odd to me — the Celts burnt people and animals alive in wicker cages at their sacred groves (Nemeton is the root of many Celtic places associated with groves) in order to exorcise witches and cleanse the crops and livestock, etc. The Anglo-Saxons and Norse hung people under trees in bizarre rituals (at Uppsala the Norse hung two of every sort of animal from trees every nine years, including horses, elephants, gerbils, hamsters...).

It's a strange world. But not as strange as it was. Pity.

Harry Warner:
Dorothy Davies' article is wonderful. The only thing I missed in it was speculation on whether some of those green men are the only surviving images of centuries-dead real human beings. I suspect that sometimes the most important men in a community would bribe the builder of a new cathedral to have his sculpted face immortalised by its insertion into a nook somewhere around the top of the building under construction. And maybe an occasional builder or stonemason would pull strings to have his own face placed in a wall so his features would remain visible long after the fleshy original had become dust.

Bernard Leak:
Dorothy Davies... and a few slightly green reflections of my own. The combination of autobiography, information and enthuisiasm was very well judged and balanced. The narrative and the exposition are so well sustained and integrated that I am disgracefully envious. The whole article (a silly word, but it's too complete and well-composed to be described as a 'piece') sounded like an enthusiast successfully and disarmingly taking over a private conversation. This is very hard to do without an audience providing a reaction. What audience was it written for? Usually this question is an attempt to find the causes of a failure. Here it is an envious enquiry after the secret of its success.

None of this means that I agree with all of Dorothy's opinions, nor that I can sustain an independent interest in some of the things that

seize her imagination. But then, you can't have everything! Moreover, I have doubts about some of her assertions, too. For instance, she says that gargoyles were intended to frighten away evil spirits. Weren't they conventionally explained as illustrations of Christ's victory over the devils, images of which were put to use as rain-spouts and what-not as an assertion of dominion, and to show them to be laughable? Apart from this conventional explanation, they may have been carved in order to do something with water-spouts (Gothic architects did not conceal functional parts of the building, nor pretend they weren't there), and to give free rein to the sculptors' imagination (mercifully concealing their mistakes)...

The theory that columnar temples represent sacred groves is tempting, and I can't think of anything overwhelming against it, but I am not convinced. "It is believed", says she; does she have any references in mind? For one thing, the Greek temple architecture in marble is certainly a stone copy of wood architecture anyway (complete with fake beams and rafters!). The Greeks went in for sacred groves for a very long time, and it's hard to see a replacement for them in stone seeming equivalent, though it could have echoed some of their features in an attempt to supplant them. Rather, the city-centre architectural showpiece seems to be something set over against the rustic, local traditions of sacred groves, representing a different kind of religion standing in a different relationship to civil society.

I guess that the Greeks followed Egyptian models; but can Karnak be assimilated to an oasis with palms? I suspect the dreadful influence of Robert Graves, perhaps at one or two removes, behind this idea. The oldest order was the Tuscan, which is not fluted and has a simple geometrical capital. The acanthus leaves and the rest came later.

Having mentioned Graves, it's fair to suggest that there isn't really any such thing as 'the Celtic tree spirit'. Something so abstracted sounds like a late development in official culture, like a lot of the late-republican pantheon in Rome. Far more credible is that he is the spirit of some particular tree (or creeper). Trying to guess which (there have been several such figures gradually assimilated together, of course) might be a fruitful occupation; but I don't recommend the Graves technique of self-induced trance states and botanical guesswork!

Another Gravesian touch is the assertion that "the green man with the protruding tongue is a representation of hanging someone from the sacred tree". That, or just sticking his tongue out! After all, such sacrifices were not usually stranglings, as far as I know, but more usually crucifixions or impalements. Gargoyles and heraldic beasts of all kinds are conventionally shown with their tongues visible; were they all originally hanged?...

Peter Crump:

Reflections In Green was interesting — interesting enough, in fact, for me to consider revisiting a few local historical religious sites in search of some Welsh green men. I remember when Dorothy Davies used to bait *Focus* readers with hints that she wrote fiction for men's magazines, but refused to say which one(s). Just the other day I came across some soft SF pornography in an old copy of *Knave*, by one Gilly Foyle. Now, if that isn't a pseudonym...

(Hmmm... on that note we pass rapidly on to fashion and the fannish consciousness.,starting with someone who had the misfortune to see me daily for far too long!)

Sue Walker:

I really enjoyed your *Osmosis and the Common Man* — having witnessed your sartorial trends for several years, I was giggling like a good 'un. I only wish I had a photo of you when you realised what had been perpetrated upon your person...

(It was just as well that it was in the privacy of my own home, methinks.)

James Parker:

Your article on fashion consciousness struck a particular chord with me, as I too have always prided myself on not being a slave to fashion. I've read Peter York's *Style Wars* wherein he advances the theory that we are all obsessed by fashion. Like many others at the time I rejected such nonsense... But then I began to think about it a little more. My conclusion? Perhaps it may be true that during the latter half of the twentieth century we, as individuals, are increasingly defining ourselves by what we wear, watch, listen to, eat, etc. We have, in the most literal sense, become consumer units. More seriously, this concept of a 'life style' is now encompassing political and even religious beliefs. Perhaps very soon I'll be able to determine someone's political convictions by the style of shirt collar they prefer... Peter York finds all this quite amusing in his book, but I find it quite worrying.

For the record, I am inclined to wear checked shirts, usually in blues and browns, jeans (not too tight as I do not wish to render myself infertile at this tender stage of my life), and heavy robust shoes or boots. I also prefer — make what you will of this factoid, Mr. York — conventional wristwatches... As a generality, I have a marked preference for the simplistic, even the austere, the unaffected, the 'less-is-more' school of thought... This is the 'image' I like

to project, so, yes, Peter York is right: I do make a decision as to what I wear. To make those sartorial choices I must be influenced by other sources like TV and magazines; what my favourite rock stars wear etc. Yes I *am* influenced, I admit it — reluctantly.

Chuck Connor:
Not much to say about the 'Fashion' piece, except that I've always played with images, and am a great believer in that adage about it being the prerogative of both kings and tramps to dress how they feel and not according to the dictates of fashion. Fashion always makes me think of sheep — everyone looking the same (or trying to) for the sake of it, and just milling about in clumps trying to check each other out. No originality, no drive to do something different. Yes, my war on the jeans and t-shirt mentality continues, though even some of the more basic moves need to be explained to some. CONNOTE8 ran from 3rd to 5th July. I took along, amongst other things, a baseball rig (two-piece), cap (FM 98 ROCK — a real Hey-merican number) and a pair of ankle-supportive Zemogs (kind of tech trainers that do me some good with my weak ankles). And I wore it on the Saturday morning and afternoon. I could've gone one better and brought along a radioheadphone unit, or even a personal stereo to help complete the image. Do you know, I was asked several times why I was dressed up like I was. My reply was (a) I like to change, and (b) it's the 4th of July. Every time I mentioned that date the people said "So?" *I had to explain to them, in words of one syllable, that the fourth of July was* ***American Independence Day.*** That is how 'aware of the world around them' most of the jeans and T-shirt people are.

Bernard Earp:
As anyone who's ever met me will willingly state, I'm not a trendy dresser. I did manage to get to the final of a 'worst tie' competition held at a Glasgow con a couple of years ago, beating especially made ties using a tie I regularly wear at work. At a wedding recently the mother of the bridegroom (who's also my manageress at work) was horrified to learn that the suit I was wearing was older than the bride.

I actually find that I am a follower of fashion, though from a few steps back, due to my habit of getting shirts, etc., from Rummage Sales. Wow, that is really the place to see what's out of date... Ideal for work, after all most people wear out their older shirts at work when they are slightly outdated. But one does get some curious bargains. I once bought a 'Bay City Rollers' shirt that was so absolutely tasteless that I couldn't refuse it.

I was grilled mercilessly by other members of the party before going to Glasgow this year, and received strict instructions on which parts of my wardrobe I was not to bring if I wanted to be seen in public with them. I do try for a certain style, dated maybe but one I feel comfortable with. This was really revealed at one con which had a Photo Board. I was in pictures taken about three years apart. It was noticed that the two shirts in the pictures were the same two I'd brought with me to that con. Close grilling revealed that I kept them almost exclusively for cons. That they were for me part of my Con Costume. I, perhaps unconsciously, started clinging to the image of me as I was when I first went to a con. A denial of aging in fact. In the confines of cons I was denying that I was getting older with each passing year. Now I hadn't thought out all that when I started writing and it's something I'm going to have to think about...

(And the rest, as they say, was silence...)

Christina Lake:
I'm a bit ambivalent about fashion — I like to think that I pick from it what I like and leave the rest, but I'm not sure the subconscious influences from the television, and from seeing people walking around in what I think looks good (all of a sudden!) influences me too. But I don't resent it, like you seem to. Okay, I resent the clothes being cheaply made — but then I normally buy them fairly cheaply to begin with so what can I expect? But I don't mind fashion changing my tastes; I'm attracted by what is new and of this moment, even if it is ephemeral. A taste for something new always seems like a gain, not a loss of something I had before. Incidentally, for me it would have been sacrilege to tape over the Yes tapes, not because I like them (I don't), but because even though I like taking in the new, I'm not very good at discarding the old. (Shall we get a psychoanalyst in and see what that means to our respective characters?)

(Nothing sacrilegious about the tapes, Christine, as they were merely tapes made for the car. The records stayed in the collection! I don't need the psychoanalysis either, Christine, as Bernard Leak has already done it for me! And at length, too, as the following hefty little number attests.)

Bernard Leak:
...'Osmosis and the common man'. Well, once again, there is a sense of a mind not wholly on its business here. On the other hand, I don't feel here that it matters. One may take this either as proof that your deep emotional problems are probably in hand (with merely technical difficulties), or that you didn't have anything to say. The difference is not always significant. Part of the difficulty is that it's hard to see a problem. After

all, if the answer to it is to do nothing, with a tolerably clear conscience, there can't have been much there!

The world does not obey one's wishes. You yourself suggest the heroic expedient of doing without clothes altogether, and rule it out precisely because the experience would make your limitations too obvious.

Attempting to abandon the field of conflict for an interior realm leads eventually to complete disappearance up your own metaphysical orifice. The alternative is to cheat. By seeing the world as rule-bound, it becomes predictable, and can be seen as a tribute to a perfectly internalised power of imposing order.

A sense of autonomy is only possible where you don't bash your head against the constraints of reality, with a half-conscious pretence that you could overcome them if you felt like it, and that the limitations of your lefe are freely chosen. In cases of stress, it is necessary to explain these limitations as having been chosen already, since they clearly are not current choices. Thus, one negotiates with the world through an implicit contract, and every time something unexpected happens one must suddenly discover a bit of small print which explains it.

Of course, since one has to write the contract and sign it unilaterally, these manoevres must take place unconsciously; but they do take place, and you give a lovely example of the contract in operation, and how it changes over time.

You wanted to regard your tastes as being under your own control, fixed by your own choice. Finding that they had been modified over time, you felt lost; the contract had been broken. Then, searching for a scapegoat, you decided that the television was a new factor in your life (which is not to deny it crucial and relevant importance in fact), so a clause was written in retrospectively disallowing its presence. Thus, acquiring a TV and beginning to watch it comes to be seen as a creeping sin of your own, The contract is all right after all, since now you accept that you broke it first. Thus, you score against the rest of the world at the cost of a little self-esteem. But then, loss of self-esteem won't kill you, but the rest of the world might (and one day will).

Having accepted that the contract has been broken by the one real power in the world (yourself), you now re-negotiate the contract, and redefine your tastes so that they will be less vulnerable in future to such attacks. A tactical retreat takes place, in which the choice of clothes actually worn is allowed to the mere horrible realm of necessity, and an inner freedom is offered as compensation. Now you are allowed to wear clothes you must wear (how kind!), in return for wearing them with the appropriate 'style' (you win som, you lose some). Thus is your self-respect maintained.

Having thus guarded your contract against further trouble of the same kind, you can afford to admit that, yes, your clothes and taste would have changed and will change even without the influence of television. But only when the revised contract has been made out, in terms of style rather than in terms of fashion, so that you feel safe.

Obvious, isn't it, when you see it happen? Notice the pretence that the contract hasn't changed at all ("What to do about it all, that's the

real question.... nothing!"), covering the detailed quasi-legal explanation of the contractual definition.

The two poles of 'freedom' in modern western thought are different attempts to absorb the contractual relationships so deeply into one's understanding of the world that it vanishes from sight, with all its embarassments. You seem to shift from one to another, which is the major movement of thought in the piece, underlying its overt autobiographical narrative.

Firstly, you see yourself (with hindsight) anchoring your sense of your freedom in the fixity of your tastes. In other words, your freedom is freedom of commitment; defining the contract is seen as an imposition of your own values on the world. The permanence of the contract proves the strength and autonomy of commitments supposedly independent of the world they seem to determine. But then, what may legitimately change your mind? You will not change the

contract unless forced to do so, but such a change must be seen as a free internal choice. Thus, freedom lies in the choice of necessity, invested with positive meaning, which must be negotiated delicately if one's sense of necessity changes.

Of course, even constraint by one's own past choices is a constraint; but by interpreting one's experience thus, the problem becomes one of finding a viewpoint. One can lose one's sense of historical determination by aspiring after a viewpoint transcending time. This is the Romantic position, and its characteristic heroism is the maintenance of timeless values in the face of historical accident.

Alternatively, one can deny the relevance of historical accident entirely, and cultivate values not against the world but in isolation from it. Freedom takes the form of independence, and is sustained by observing the constancy of some intellectual structure through shifting content. This begets the delusive fancy that the contract can be changed at will, that one can shape the world as you choose. The particular form of one's life can then be accepted as being as good as any, but an attitude of independence has to be cultivated in abstraction. Here lies Sartrean existentialism; freedom as a roulette wheel. Choice is preserved only in the absence of meaning. I don't think much of this. The wish-fulfillment element is too obvious, and the sheer silliness of the *acte gratuite* has no appeal for me.

The Romantic position is naturally aligned with what one feels to be within one's control, while the Existentialist position is one of confronting the vast world which is not so controlled. The Romantic plays safe, and says he is choosing his course; the Existentialist runs mad, and takes a contentless responsibility for whatever happens to him. As something is experienced as shifting from the realm of choice to the realm of constraint, the more desperate the manoeuvres needed to retain one's sense of freedom. Thus, in a crisis, a Romantic position will give way to an Existentialist one.

This is precisely what seems to have happened to you. Surrender to the flux of circumstances ceases to be seen as a weakness, a capitulation, and becomes instead an accomodating capacity for anything, in which the old values of fixity are retained in a vestigial form attached to increasingly nebulous abstractions. Correspondingly, growing mastery of the environment creates permanencies within it (for comfort and convenience) which alert the subject to the flux within his or her own feelings, whose fixity becomes desirable in the form of tastes, chosen freely against a background of alternative possibilities.

Here, a choice of specific clothes gives way to a general 'style'. On the Romantic model, tastes are chosen by the self, and form part of its self-definition. The problems of their formation can be ignored only if they are fixed (and so look timeless). On the Existential model, taste is surrendered to chaos. The clothes themselves become the paradoxical items, being the necessary occasion of exhibiting a style which is independent of them and does not modify them. This seems conceptually incoherent, if not logically impossible. A constant shift of clothes is then necessary, so that whatever vaporous traces of feeling persist across any one change can be seen as witnesses to the permanence of personal style.

But what difference does style make? What is meant by adapting the clothes themselves to a style, of 'individualising the marketed item'? This operation of linking the material to the personal seems to be purely ideological, unless it is mysteriously located *inside* the metaphysical structure of the sock, tie, or shirt in question. Presumably you don't refer to physical modification: this would from a Romantic point of view be a triumphant assertion of personal choice, but you feel a need for a state of independence in which it doesn't matter what you are wearing. By seeing your previous taste as a prison (though in fact it made no difference) you can see your present practice as a liberation.

Any attempt to define style as a matter of appearance — which clothes you wear together, which buttons you leave undone, and so on — has to be avoided, although any workable definition of style must include elements like this. Your concern is to defend your spiritual autonomy, and nothing that you merely *do* can establish that.

(Wow, thanks Bernard, I feel better already. It's almost a relief to turn to Richard Brandt's more commonsense approach to fashion and clothing.)

Richard Brandt

John, you fashion maven, I'll tell you were you went wrong... shopping for clothes. Good lord, just do what I do, wear the clothes your mom sent you for Christmas all year long, until the next birthday or whatever comes along. I'll never be a fashion template, true, but... If you were really committed to skirting the fashion tide, couldn't you find some thrift shop with perfectly serviceable duds that are really out of date? Boy, you trendy professional types really make me fling my empanadas.

(Hmm...More questions: what the hell are 'empanadas'? Oh well, never mind, let's get on with the ticklish subject of sneezes and their cure.)

Chuck Connor:
I've never been caught with an allergy yet, though I've added reactions to tetanus injections to my list of peculiarities, so haven't had the fun of the testing... But the bit about the old dust/house mite was a little bit silly. Did you know that there are tiny little mites living around the base of the hairs that make up your eyelashes? It's true, and for protection they hide in the pores of your skin up there. *It's true.* Honest. You ask someone about it. They look like flattened ants — saw

them on BBC2's *Horizon*, and in colour as well (so it must be true). And, again, all that hoo-haw about a 'bug ranch'. Really, where do you think they come from, eh? Of course they come from a 'bug ranch' — hell, there's one near us here in Suffolk. Well, it's got to be out in the open in case there's a jailbreak. They also do those little cochineal beetles as well, so you can stop thinking this is all fairytales, okay? (Cochineal beetles give that red colouring — so now you know when Mr Kipling splatters across his boxes of French Tarts 'No Artifical Flavourings or Colourings or Preservatives Used'. Ain't nothing artificial about beetles, is there, eh?) And there's all this junk about 'slaughtered carcases'. Glory be, John, do you know how big these things are? Right, bloody *tiny*, ferchrissakel I suppose you think they run around with little lassoos, doing rodeo tricks and junk like that? Very funny, laughter all over the place. Well, it isn't like that *at all*, dammit. You see, you've sat there and poked fun at these people without finding out a thing about them, haven't you? No, it's a simple, humane process: they're all gathered up and put into large tubs, and then, just like they make wine in France, people leap in and start stomping them to death with their bare feet.....

(Groan! Trust a bloody sailor to take the michael.)

Shep Kirkbride:
You certainly proved you had the ability to make us sit up and take notice of other people's problems. Not for the squeamish. Actually I found it a very funny article, John, and couldn't help but feel a little guilty laughing at your complaint. But of course, that is what you wanted. I just can't wait to see what you come up with next. I mean, how can you follow that?

(Just give me time, Shep, just give me time.)

Harry Warner Jr.:
It's now six or seven years since my last visit to a doctor and every time I read a fanzine article like "Call Me Atish-mail", I wonder if I'll ever have the courage to seek treatment for a physical problem. (My doctor was the last one in Hagerstown who kept no medical records, didn't set up appointments for consultation, didn't like to prescribe medicine except as a last resort, and until his eyesight failed would make house calls. He retired and then died and I haven't felt bad enough to seek another doctor since.) I've speculated in apa publications that modern medicine is rapidly creating a situation in which people will put off seeking help from physicians because examinations are becoming so nasty. One United States fan, for instance, refused to let his physician complete the examination he was undergoing, because of the pain and discomfort, even though the examination was meant to determine if cancer was present. I think the medical profession will be forced eventually to settle for techniques that might not be quite as reliable as the ones that are so rigorous that patients are unwilling to endure them...

Sue Thomason:
I was fascinated by your account of desensitisation treatment turning into sensitisation to something you weren't previously allergic to. I had often wondered if this ever happened. Allergies and asthma are interesting to me as a phenomenon (as I don't suffer from either, I can afford the luxury of the impartial observer attitude), because they are both recognised as containing a strong psychological component. NB: this *does*

not mean I think that the sufferers are 'making it all up' or that 'it's all in the mind' or that *in any sense* being asthma-prone goes with being weak-willed, soft in the head, or otherwise deficient in character. What I think it probably *does* mean is that asthma-prone people will respond positively to persons and practices having a strong positive *psychological* effect on them. For you, it was acupuncture/your acupuncturist. For someone with faith in 'modern medicine' and a trustful attitude to their GP/specialist, the desensitisation procedure might work very well.

*(Trouble is, Sue, I **did** have quite a bit of faith in 'modern medicine' until it turned round and bit me, so as to speak. Disenchantment followed thereafter, closely pursued by cynicism, which Bill Bains takes me to task about.)*

William Bains:

Your article on asthma shows one crucial fact — doctors have to be omniscient. An attitude hinted at in your piece and made explicit in some of the reaction thereto makes me not a little irritated. It says that doctors should be right, and if one is not, then they are all tarred with that failure. If the car mechanic fails to find out why your left indicator doesn't work, you just shrug and go to a better one next time. If the garden centre sells you some seeds and they all die (mine did recently) you think what incompetents they are and don't go back next year. But if your doctor cannot make sense of the most complex system known to man — man herself (well, I have to do my bit for feminism) — then there is all hell to pay! Wow, a doctor making a mistake? String him up by the stethoscope! Throw the whole lot of them out! Your GP cannot tell adrenocortical hypersensivity from central-immune allergic network failure? My God, surely there cannot be a doctor in the land which is competent to blow his own nose. And so we throw the MD out with the bathwater, and fling ourselves into the arms of anyone who says "I am *not* a conventional doctor". Of course, they often cannot do anything for us either, but what the hell. Better than the military-medico-industrial conspiracy.

Of course you suffered horribly from the latest quack treatment for allergies. No doubt in twenty years time others will suffer equally from other 'curses'. But if faced with a GP and an acupuncturist offering to put my insides back after a car crash, or between herbal infusions and penicillin for treatment of typhus, I know which I will choose, and I suspect that I know which you will choose too. Yes, doctors do not know everything. Fanfare, blazing fireworks, discovery of the millenium. But nearly all know quite a lot, and really *do* have their patients' interests at heart. I speak as one who knows a lot of doctors on a social as well as professional basis.

Sorry about the polemic. We (there, I admit it) medical establishment types object to being though perfect almost as much as we object to being thought criminal idiots.

I *do* sympathise with your plight, though. I had two allergic conditions when young — eczema and asthma. Former treated by cortisone creams, which made them worse. Latter by Ephedrine, which worked fine and gave a marvelous 'high'. My asthma was not nearly as bad as yours — I never needed hospitalization. It has gone now, and maybe moving away from bedbug-laden beds has something to do with that, because whenever I sleep in my parents' dust-laden spare room, it comes back. The eczema I have written about at length elsewhere — suffice to say that the steroids are a thing of the past, and I'll scratch the eyes out of any bitch that says I still take them, sweety.

The key to these and all other miseries is to *use* the experts. Don't treat them (us?) as god-like authorities. Of course they will fail. Treat them as people who have studied the generality of your condition/problem a lot, and are trying to apply that generality to your particular case. Maybe they have a foolproof answer. Maybe they don't. But be sceptical.

(I'm as sceptical as all hell, nowadays, Bill, but it sure as hell doesn't improve my chances of finding any kind of a cure, does it? But then that's something I've taken into my own hands rather than waiting for Doctor Godot to arrive with his latest 'patent cure'.)

Bernard Leak:

'Call Me Atish-mail' struck me as being too mannered, hovering uncertainly between cheerful whimsy and anger, to the detriment of both sides. The anger was the more effective, the whimsy being familiar Army surplus stock, taking a metaphor and slinging it energetically as far as it can go. It's fun in conversation, but on the page it is both too easy to do and too laboured in effect to be worth attempting....

In the last paragraph, you seem to be groping for a neat conclusion, something snappy and tidy, a final element to add with an insouciant gesture of completion. However, the statements that matter have all been made already. The glory has departed. The addition is an irrelevant rococo ornament, misplaced and pointless, thrown in with a gesture so languid as to inspire instant boredom.

The impression I receive is that you wrote it as a half-hearted exorcism, trying to tame your own feelings by releasing them in a castrated form upon the world. Just whom are you trying to

convince that it doesn't really matter, that it's just another whacky event which we can laugh at in order to re-assert our common humanity? If you felt like that, the sudden outbursts ("I was only the bloody patient", "who the hell ever listened to a patient") would be gross mistakes, and they don't read like mistakes.

Outrage at chronic and avoidable damage suffered at the hands of an arrogant and incompetent service deserves better treatment. For it's own sake, which is your own sake, it was worth a cold and sober editing process. As it is, it becomes just another fan piece, safely skirting disruptive emotions. That anger sabotages the jolly exaggerations, the quaint fugues upon the breeding of bedbugs, but exhausts itself without grabbing the reader by the lapels and twisting until the buttons pop.

(I dunno -- they made Bill Bains' buttons pop, didn't they?)

(The apparent demise of fanzines, at least in Britain, has been exercising some people's minds.)

Michael Gould:
I was particularly interested by Sue Thomason's letter about fanzines, particularly in view of my own effort. I think that people who show some enthusiasm for what they are doing will eventually produce good fanzines. I've made minor changes over three issues, but still have a long way to go. I think it's important to take note of comments you receive from readers and other fanzine editors, but a balance between what you want to do and constructive suggestions has to be maintained. To ignore everyone is arrogant, but to agree to every comment is to lose individuality. The comments on mine have been generally favourable about presentation (though I'm not yet satisfied) but critical of comment, so I'll have to try harder.

Chuck Connor:
...Sue Thomason annoys me with her comments. Compared to four or five years ago we are in the midst of a fanzine drought. What now seems to happen is that yet another convention appears on the fannish horizon, and fans push together a zine so that they can distribute it at the convention. This really puts zines into the lower end of the list of 'fannish priorities' — hell, why waste your time writing when you can get pissed at a convention *and* tell all your mates what you were going to tell them in the zine anyway? The fact is, there's no drop of inspiration, only that the form of communication has now changed, away from the zine and towards the personal/social contact. But, one question I'll ask Sue, and that is, if she feels that the faneds have been wasting their time, does she write and say so, or just not bother? I killed off *IDOMO,* and thought nothing of it. Now, and only now, apart from the usual "missing your fanzine" burbles, there are comments coming up like "the size was intimidating", "it was too hectic", "you didn't stay to one subject". (And yes, I laughed at that last one as well. Hell, what was I supposed to do? Be so selective for some poor soul who didn't have enough braincells to handle more than one subject at any one time within the restrictive confines of a fanzine?) I tell you, John, there're still some 'fans' out there that have yet to evolve into members of the human race — and these also call non-fans 'mundanes', a term I find is now only used derogatorily and as a putdown.) But, why didn't these people say something while the zine was going, as opposed to waiting for it to fold, and then come out and make with the comments?

Not that I should worry. I've now adopted the attitude of Mal Ashworth in that I now do what I want, when I want, and send it to who I want regardless of whether trades are in the offing or not. There are so many fans stuck in a rut fannishwise that it goes beyond the point of politeness not to suggest they should be tucked away somewhere for their own safety and with a warm glass of sedatives as well.

Harry Andruschak:
...Here in the USA, I notice that most of the newer fanzines fans do not much bother with anything but photo-offset. Mimeo is considered too much a problem, ditto a joke, and besides most fans use home computers for fanzine production, as you do. Not complaining *too* much, understand, but I am beginning to feel something of a dinosaur in fandom since I stick to the spirit-duplicator machine, my obsolete Selectric One typer, and have never used a word processor or spelling checker, though I could certainly use one.

(The other thing raised by Dorothy Davies and myself in CS13, was the subject of obsessions)

William Bains:
Dorothy Davies' article was fascinating. I think everyone should have such a quest, a cross between a hobby and an obsession. I am a fitful genealogist, so I cannot agree that nothing less than a few hundred years old is worth looking into. I get an enormous sense of the past when I look at the 1841 census record of my ancestors, or the fading 18th century parish register that records my great great great grandfather's birth. And it is my, personal past, not the past of great religious movements or political battles. For the feminists, no I do not just follow the male line — the furthest back I have traced is the birth of my

mother's father's father's mother's... um, hang about, great great great great grandfather, in about 1680. However, the male line is easier to follow, and I am intending to concentrate on that recalcitrant great great great grandfather Bains when I get back to it. I have a print of the village church where he was married on the wall here dating from 1797, about ten years before he was married there. Among the cold records of birth, marriage and death I have accumulated a mass of incidental information to flesh out the bones — occupations, addresses (coupled with old maps that can reveal a lot), directory entries, some old wills. It gives roots in a world when technology seems to reduce the concept of 'values' to how much money we can spend on the good cause of our choice.

And a real sense of community. I remember I was digging in the Borthwick Institute in York, looking for some old wills. I was sitting at my desk looking at the last lot, waiting for some more to be sent up, when the attendant came over and asked whether I had asked for some particular will. Yes, I had. "Well, perhaps you would like to talk to that gentleman over there, because he has asked for the same ones." He was looking into the same family, and had a family tree going back before the civil war! I just had to make a one-generation bridge, and I could tie into his tree. Ah, if only it was that simple in science, where every experiment seems nearly impossible, and half a dozen groups around the world are working on exactly the same thing.

No, I do not think that 'it was better then'. It was bloody horrible. Four of my great great grandfather's fifteen children died before they were ten, two within weeks of birth, and he was quite well off, and lived in the country. But to know where you came from, where your family has been for 200 years, that gives me a real sense of belonging. But we all need our props, and I do not have God or Socialism to prop me up, and see Science too close.

K.V.Bailey:

Dorothy Davies, writing entertainingly and discursively about the Green Man, is also incidentally, or perhaps primarily, writing about obsessions. She concludes by looking for the roots of her obsession — which lie in the past; and there is of course a fairly common obsession which concerns the roots of words and of languages. Take such a word as 'obsession' itself: it comes from the Latin *ob sedere*, to sit down before, or to lay siege to. Obsessions lay siege to the obsessed and often occupy them, bringing in some kind of madness — divine or destructive.

That Green Man, starting for the author, as she says, as an object of curiousity, was eventually joined by an army of his confreres to lay siege to her mind — a motley crowd which might find among its earliest ancestors Diana's sacrificial King Of The Woods, and among its latest recruits such creatures as Tolkien's Treebeard and Olaf Stapledon's Plant-men, all lurking behind the carven forms of those faces fringed by or peering from the leaves which drape the columnar petrified forests of church naves and chancels.

Most obsessions involve the concretization or personification of some power or source of energy lying outside one's self. Why are steam railway engines the focus of so widespread an obsession? They are rather more than symbols. Their very forms embody, make concrete, that historic harnessing of power which tamed distance and transformed the earth: forms present, moreover, to the imagination not as abstractions but as individuals (e.g. *Black Prince*; class 9F; 2,10,0), each form able to assert itself distinctively in technological and aesthetic terms, and their forms collectively comprising an obsessing, or besieging, mechanical regiment. An obsession with cars, from the Genevievesque veteran to the Formula One power-master, is a more recently emerging parallel.

Birds. The bird-spotter's mind is besieged by birds every bit as much as James Blish's protagonist in *Midsummer Century*. From titmouse to teal, from goldcrest to gannet, they ring the changes on modes of flight and aerial habit; and behind them perhaps stands, or soars, the shape of Daedalus, denoting that ancient envy of those who have command of the air. Birds — and gliders, even the silently rising balloons of *The Ragged Astronauts* — are the signifiers of this in its organic aspect; a Janesish obsession with aircraft of it in its mechanical aspect.

Photography, recording, sketching (the obsessed one's response) are often tied-in with all such obsessions, not least with that which I personally acknowledge to be a dominant one — an obsession with the celestial bodies and most particularly with the sun as observed when all too rarely it reveals its outer nature and splendours at times of total eclipse. Eclipse buffs travel to the ends of the earth to photograph and experience this. The sun itself is a local 'personification', representative of the company of stars; and every star in that company is a concretization of the energy that drives the universe. You might say that the stars lay siege to the obsessed; with the consequence that he/she comes to be a captured subject in the starry comity.

It is, I'm sure significant that Dorothy Davies's essay not only relates her obsession to photography (and I am reminded here, too, of the shadowy figure among the leaves and the clicking of the camera in that most evocative of films, *Blowup*), but is context for Shep's faces, a mini-album of variations on the vegetational creature,

suggestively archaic, contemporarily fantastic. It is an exceptionally good example of how accompanying illustration can go beyond being a visual replication of the text, further than simply providing decoration. While performing both of these iconic functions, it may also, as Shep's work does here, achieve genuine complementarity and offer some autonomously imaginative comment on the themes at issue.

Michael Gould:
Your comments on obsession are so true. My obsessions tend to go in phases, though I suppose my books and records are pretty long running, and my 'love affair' with cricket shows

no signs of disappearing. Non cricket lovers can find no sense in sitting under an umbrella watching the ground staff trying to keep a pitch dry, and they could be right, but the whole atmosphere of being at a cricket match is something I need to indulge. I'm currently writing a piece about it resulting from my latest visit to a test match. On the more unusual side, I have virtually had an obsession with ornamental frogs imposed on me by my sisters. The first two started as a coincidence, but one the twins soon picked up on. They are now up to thirty and still growing. The problem is now that I'm buying them myself.

Harry Andruschak:
You ask about obsessions of your readers. Well, I suppose I have a couple, depending on *how* you define obsession. This is not just an academic question to me. As a recovering alcoholic, my main support group is Alcoholics Anonymous, and *they* define alcoholism as...and this is the exact quote: "an allergy of the body coupled with an obsession of the mind".

I am not sure how much I go along with this, since the book was written in 1939 and there have been quite a few studies since then that point to a genetic basis for alcoholism. Is 'allergy' really the word to describe the craving that an alcoholic goes thru? Is obsession really a good word to describe the way we think about drinking all the time?

Actually, if I had any obsession, I suppose chess would be it. I have stacks of chess books, am a life member of the US Chess Federation, play in chess tournaments instead of going to Science Fiction conventions, and by and large worry about going up from Class B to Class A, and how to accomplish this feat.

Ned Brooks:
My own mad obsession is typewriters — I have about 120 of them. Of course I have 10,000 or so books, but there's nothing mad about that — surely every rational person has as many books as he can get!

(Does your mind boggle as much as mine does over that last one? 120 typewriters? Where the hell do you keep them all, Ned?)

(The debate on swearing goes on and on, it seems, witness the following...)

Ken Lake:
John, you don't really think that David Bateman's childish outburst is "equal and opposite" to the views of myself and Steve Sneyd, do you? All he's said, in essence, is: swearing is childish, look how childish I can be. His final sentences are a crib anyway, though I'm damned if I can place 'em. Help?

(Meanwhile, back at the fort, the opposition were preparing their second line of offence, in the handy shape of Bernie Earp)

Bernard Earp:
I'd agree with David Bateman that people should be allowed to use what words they want when they want, as long as they respect other people's right to be offended, rather like the person carrying a ghetto blaster on full in a public place, but doesn't he find that some people overuse the same words until they can have no cathartic effect left in them? What does someone who uses 'fuck' every other sentence do when they scald their hand? Rely on tone I suppose.

(Bill Bains comes closer to my own feelings about swearing, in the following letter.)

William Bains:
Swearing. I think it is effing boring to effing interpolate effing rude words in every effing

sentence. If you want to release internal tension, nothing like a loud 'Fuck!' in public, especially if that is not your normal way of communication. But for abuse, I think the Spock-like raised eyebrow or the occasional "I don't think that's very sensible, is it?" can be far more devastating than monotonously speculating on someone's personal habits and physiology, if done properly.

Mic Rogers:
Back to the swearing debate: it's a bit like the smoking/anti-smoking one isn't it? If someone is going to stand up for their 'right' to swear as and when they feel like it, regardless of who may receive their out-pourings, then surely I have every bit as much 'right' not to have swearing in my vicinity where I cannot avoid hearing/reading it? Whose 'right' has priority? It must be my Victorian upbringing (I can't help it if my parents were old-fashioned even then). No, I think all the swear words I've read/heard have no particular force or feeling to me — I just know that this or that one is a bad swear word. (Can anyone tell me *why* some swear words are considered worse than others?) Does one get satisfaction as a child in using a 'bad' word and so goes on getting satisfaction from it as an adult? I didn't come across most swear words until I was adult or nearly so, and then I think I read them before I heard them. Is that why they seem so lifeless to me, so boring?... I don't object to swearing as an activity, I just object to having to listen to/read such lifeless, unoriginal, ineffective words. Difficult, isn't it?

Helen Mcnabb:
The shock effect of swearing — and it really holds little other function — does depend upon scarcity to a certain extent. I went through a phase of using "Oh help said Pooh", "Oh bother said Pooh" and in moments of *real* stress, "Oh help *and* bother said Pooh". Not very striking in themselves. However, in a theatre, backstage, where the language sets the air alight — fucking this, sodding that, buggering the other every second word — and the four letter words raised not a hair -- I got the attention of everyone in the greenroom by "oh help and bother". The shock factor. I do object to gratuitous swearing. If I hit my thumb with a hammer I swear and don't think it gratuitous, it fulfills a need to express *pain*. To use "screw" as a synonym for "copulate" is to ignore overtones. "Screw" has overtones of female debasement which are not present in the word "copulate" and thus "screw" is insulting to a sensitive woman. To ignore that is to display a lack of awareness to the use of the meaning of language. To be asked for a fucking chair is both meaningless and unimaginative. A chair can't fuck. It's an inanimate object. It serves no purpose but to try and shock the reader or listener, an attitude which, when my kids display it, I find funny but find puzzling in adults, especially ones with a wider vocabulary and a choice of other words to use. Like saying "er" or "you know" or "like", it's persiflage and irrelevant and I'm curious why David Bateman feels the need. Perhaps it's a snook cocked to authority, the need to shock. It doesn't shock me, but it does puzzle me.

Ned Brooks:
I was amazed to see at this late date, in a fanzine, a request that you suppress 'swearing'! Like flag-burning and objections to flag-burning, this can only be the remnants of a belief in sympathetic magic.

(I shall leave the final word on this debate to Mike Gould, and ask you all to refrain from further comment, as the subject is running out of steam.)

Michael Gould:
A last word on swearing. In his *Schrodinger's Cat* books, Robert Anton Wilson used the names of well-known right wing fundamentalists to replace selected swear words, on the basis that they could hardly object to their own names. I can think of a few well-known names that could be used.

(The music issue still lingers on, which Uncle Chuck coming to the attack over 'Garage Trash', one of the less well-known areas of rock'n'roll. Classical fans, skip to the next letter.)

Chuck Connor:
Now, Johnny Miller, prepare for whacks. 60s punk and garage trash, both have their tootling roots in the likes of *She Put The Whammee* (later, that word was spelt *Whammy*, but that was Hawkins all over) from Screamin' Jay Hawkins (from *1954*) which details the story of a skizo breakdown and how he's going to blow his girlfriend's brains out if she doesn't take off the 'whammee' that she put on him with her mojo bone. Not until the Novas did *The Crusher* do you have such a contrived language and vocal style (akin to gargling with crushed glass, frozen gravel and boiling vinegar, and singing with what's left of the vocal chords). There's roots back in 1957, but with only one from 1959, from Johnny, what about *She Said* from 1964 (Hasil Adkins), *Psycho* and *Strychnine* from around 1965 (the Sonics), *Suicide Blues* from 1967 (Little Oscar Stricklan), and, hey, even back in 1958 with the original version of *Love Me* done by The Phantom (an accidental bigamist, who's real name was Jerry (aka Marty) Lott) which was the

B-side of his *Whisper Your Love*, and which, in 1960, was picked up by Pat Boone and released as an A-side on Dot Records.

But why go back to the 60s? *Is That All There Is* (a Rogers & Hart (?) old stageshow classic) was re-done by Christine and recorded for Ze Records (some connection with Island, though not exactly sure what, either part of, or licencee) and was immediately withdrawn owing to the writers not liking the treatment. Hardly surprising when most of the song had been obliterated and such lines as "And then I met the most wonderful boy in Manhattan, and we used

to go for walks down by the river, and he beat me black and blue. I would've *killed* for that guy. And then one day James went away, and I thought I would die. But when I didn't I said to myself, 'Is that all there is, to love?'...." I managed to pick up a 12" picture cover copy of this for 50p, only the dork in the junk shop had stuck the 50p price tag on the grooves themselves...

And what of Code Of The West, who did *Nothing Really Matters Anymore*? Or Stepp Petticoat doing *I'm So Free*, as well. No, you can stuff such as the Fuzztones, and the Sickidz, and the new style Cramps are very poor imitations of their former selves.

There's still a mass of trash available (culled from mouldering tapes or the original records where tapes have been lost or companies crashed into selling off their small collection of mother and stamper discs for the metal), with *Mayhem* and *Psychosis Vol 1 & 2*. (Absolutely no sleeve information whatsoever on any of the bands, looks like a direct repress from America. Roxy Records XS-LP 100 & 101 respectively, try distribution via The Cartel) Not forgetting the British scene, the new Bam Caruso, and their new sampler *Illusions From The Crackling Void* (a mere snip at £2.99, full-length album), comes with a listing that will surprise even your jaded taste, Owen. The one I'm on the lookout for now is the Brad Is Sex mini album, entitled *Gentlemen, Start Your Sheep.*

Sorry for going on, but you know how it is. And what of the Move's song from 1970, *Cherry Blossom Clinic Revisited*? Mainly the instrumental rendition of the classical stuff.

(Phew! I hope John Miller, at least, appreciates the potted history of Garage Trash, and goes straight out to buy all of those highly recommended rekords!)

Richard Brandt:
Shep might be amused that *Rolling Stone*'s recent round-up of the 100 best albums of the last twenty years (starting of with *Sgt. Pepper's...*) ranked *Never Mind The Bollocks, Here's The Sex Pistols* as number 2. Viewing it, I suppose, as the progenitor of a musical form that will live forever... (On those grounds, I'd say they rated *The New York Dolls* much too low...)

(David Bateman's criticism of Dorothy Davies last ish has produced the following response.)

Dorothy Davies:
No, David Bateman, I wasn't being sarcastic, but you missed the point of my letter. Published articles are not inviolate, but the *writing* is. If the editor takes a piece, as written, it is not for us to say grammar, spelling, etc., is bad. The content, sure, argue away: ignore the writing, please.

(Meanwhile, Terry Jeeves has been exercising a few people's minds)

Ken Lake:
Terry Jeeves picks up the impossibility of making sense out of automation/wine lakes/demands for more over-time/strikes/all the rest of the childishness that's making a ruin of this world of ours. Yesterday I came across what may be the definitive statement on mankind's reactions to all this; it comes from Will Rogers and it reads: "Stupidity got us into this mess — why can't it get us out?"

Andy Sawyer:
...Interested in Terry Jeeves' apparent conversion to socialism — "production for use, not for profit" being one of the slogans used by the Socialist Workers' Party, among others. Things must have changed in Sheffield since Terry's splenetic LoC in *Fuck The Tories* (or, to spare

sensibilities, should that be —— *The* ———?).

William Bains:
What on earth does Terry Jeeves mean by "We must produce for use, not for profit"? Can you name *one* company that produces something completely useless and makes a profit? *(How about cigarette manufacturers, William?)* The two have to go hand in hand, if not hand in glove. No 'nationalised' industries, please — they only survive because we, the taxpayers, pay for them. The vast overproduction of food by the EEC is the result of endless governments interference, not of the profit motive *per se*. Governments in France and Italy are too scared to say that their farmers are doing something useless, so the subsidies stay. Of course, you might say that, for example, Big Macs are useless, junk food that does no-one any good at all. (Choose your own consumer item here.) But that is your prejudice, not fact. 'Profit' is our way of measuring whether enough people want what you are making. Of course, you can do without profit. It is simple — you do without money as a measure of wealth. You can do without me too, though, in your stone age economy.

Chester Cuthbert:
...I was greatly pleased to see that Terry Jeeves agrees with my basic premise, and I hope that others will do so. With a technology capable of producing untold wealth and eliminating poverty, it is tragic to be burdened with an economic system which can only survive by maintaining scarcity.

(And Buck Coulson seems to be ducking the issue slightly in his riposte to Judy Buffery's charge last issue.)

Buck Coulson:
Is Judy Buffery claiming that British fans are a different race from American ones? It's certainly what she said; strikes me as the most unscientific, prejudiced comment in the fanzine.... Of course, most English always consider themselves, without proof, superior to other countries — "the wogs begin at Calais", and all that. But I don't recall any of them claiming to be a separate race before....Maybe she should take her biology course again. (Should I tell her that I'm putting her on? I leave that to you. But I do love people who make silly statements when they're disagreeing with me...)

WAHFs and Strays Dept.
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And that's it, finally complete on the 26th February. Editorial Address: 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Buck, MK16 9AZ, United Kingdom. All items copyright ©1988 John D. Owen, rights reverting to originator on publication. Here's to the next time, whenever that might be, and keep the mail a-comin', 'cos I'm a mail junkie!