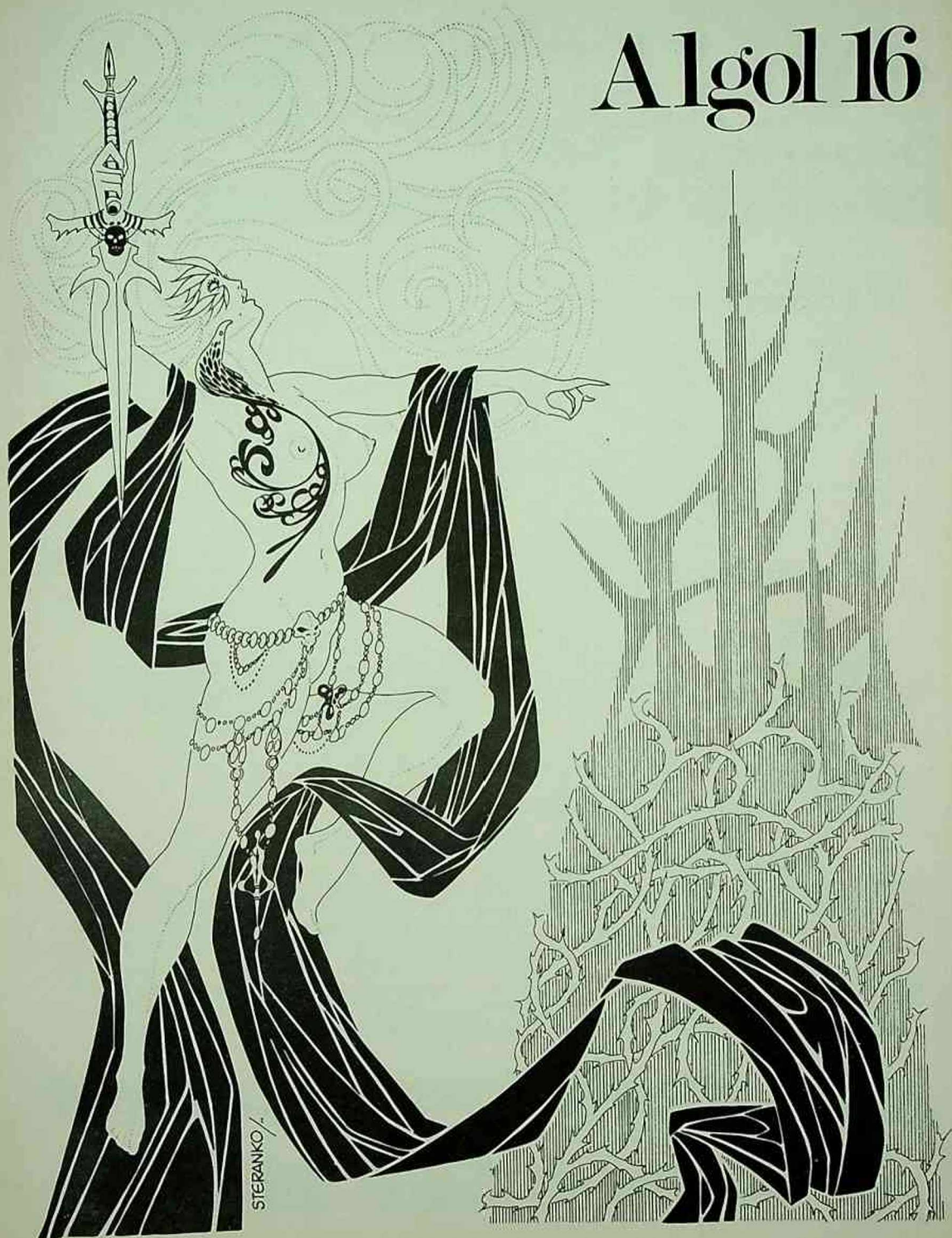


Algol 16



ALGOL 16

December, 1970

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Beate-Juice/Editorial

The thought and concept of an editorial is a distasteful one to me, and so I have delayed writing one, and incidentally delayed this issue. I've been told things I should write about -- International Fandom, TAFF, the state of modern genzines, the Sense of Wonder, etc. -- and I've tended not to write about these or any topics as a natural result of where I've been shifting to personally, fannishly, since the last issue of ALGOL.

The essence of what I could be saying has already been said, without my words, in this issue. It's been said in the way each page looks. It's a vaguely unworded philosophy of doing, of what I think a fanzine should be, should do. The communication of a "show-me" concept is easier than a "tell-me" one is. So: a style of layout, spacing of articles, attitude and relationship between text and art.

I've replied, personally, to none of the letters received. You will each have your own replies; why should my immediate reactions be any more worthy of being published than yours? Seeing no answer, I've not printed them. My reactions can be found between the lines, in design and interaction of the issue.

About the worthy topics -- TAFF, genzines, etc. -- I suppose they need some discussion. TAFF is a wonderful idea, an altruistic idea in a mundane world that needs something like this for its own. I've voted in each TAFF race since 1964 when I was first eligible; it deserves the support of all. Besides, Pete Weston is a good fan as well as a good person, one whose ideas of design and concept of science fiction and fandom are well formed and knowledgable. It would be a Good Thing for more than the few he has personal contact with in England to see, to meet him. It may very well benefit them both as fans and as people.

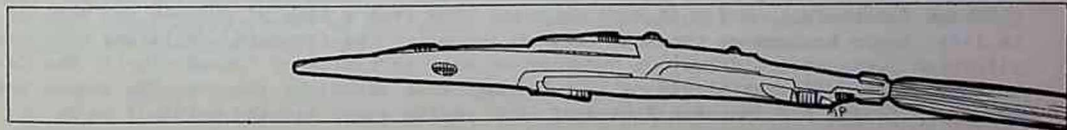
International Fandom -- it saddens me to realize the vast quantities of excellent artwork that never achieve recognition beyond their own limited audiences. The works from the Italian magazine *URANIA*, displayed at the Heicon artshow, illustrate this well. So, too, how many Europeans have seen the best that the Dillons, Richard Powers, even Freas has done? Too few I am afraid.

The state of modern fanzines cannot but be reflected as the state of ALGOL. One issue a year, perhaps two, are all that I publish. The very best possible is all I try for. Others, I feel, try for the same -- but the list is small, too small. Richard Bergeron, Pete Weston, George Scithers, Bill Spicer; perhaps a few others. My first issue appeared in December, 1963; this is the 7th anniversary. The thought that Things Go On remains in my mind, and I take the long view. If articles promised in years past come through, then issues in the years to come will be, hopefully, as good as I think this one is. And if I gaffiate, why, perhaps, ALGOL will still be here. It is the long view: at times I feel very old, fannishly, but the thought that ALGOL continues is a stabilizing one. It stems the tides of gaffia for this once more...

And the Sense of Wonder: it is where you find it, chiefly in looking at old things with a new light; for this reason few of us in fandom really grow old, or even grow up. But mostly the Sense of Wonder is within ourselves, not to be found, but to be used.

Read, learn, enjoy.

-- Andrew Porter



THE DEVALUATION OF VALUES

J. J. Pierce

C. S. Lewis, in "The Abolition of Man," had some interesting observations to make on what might be called the "devaluation of values" in modern culture. Lewis, an atheist-turned-Christian, was anxious to defend the traditional religious system of values, which he called the Tao, but that need not concern us here.

What is especially interesting even to those not in agreement with Lewis' personal views is his insight into the subtle ways of the the "debunkers". Much of "The Abolition of Man" is taken up by an analysis of the elementary English textbook -- "The Green Book," Lewis calls it -- widely used in British schools.

To give one example cited by Lewis, "The Green Book" sneers at Coleridge agreeing with the tourist who called a waterfall "sublime," instead of with the other tourist who called it merely "pretty."

"We appear to be saying something very important about something," he quotes "The Green Book," "and actually we are only saying something about our own feelings."

Calling attention to the words "appear" and "only," Lewis sums up the meaning of the debunking passage: "Firstly, that all sentences containing a predicate of value are statements about the emotional state of the speaker, and, secondly, that all such statements are unimportant."

In another example from "The Green Book," the romance of the sea is ridiculed in order to debunk a silly advertisement for an ocean cruise. What the authors should have done, as Lewis points out, is compare the ad with an example of good writing about the sea. Instead, they merely encourage cynicism. Lewis gives other examples from "The Green Book" and other texts. They all imply that value judgements are meaningless. "On this view," concludes Lewis, "the world of facts, without one trace of truth of falsehood, justice or injustice, confront one another, and no rapprochement is possible."

That the "debunking" is done almost off-handedly makes it all the more effective on schoolchildren, he believes. "It is not a theory they put into his mind, but an assumption which, ten years hence, its origin forgotten and its presense unconscious, will condition him to take one side in a controversy which he has never recognized as a controversy at all."

The "devaluation of values" as meaningless and irrelevant has far-reaching effects. A number of psychologists are now saying that values of some sort are necessary to human functioning, and that most neuroses stem from a lack of purpose and meaning in life. Lewis touches on the same concern in noting the frequent complaints that civilization needs more "'drive' or dynamism or self-sacrifice or 'creativity'". The debunkers -- even if unwittingly -- have brought this about, he asserts. "We remove the organ and demand the function," he says; "we castrate and bid the geldings to be fruitful."

Now consider science fiction. Like any art form, it has -- or should have -- certain values to justify its existence. And the record seems to bear out that it does have them, even if they have never been adequately defined. As Lester del Rey pointed out in "Art or Artiness?" (*Famous Science Fiction*, Fall 1968):

"The virtues and values of honest science fiction have permitted it to survive for forty years in a chaotic market that has killed off most other categories, and have created a fandom and reader loyalty unique in popular literature."

Many science fiction fans have always felt this sense of something unique about their genre. A number of writers must feel the same way; certainly there are easier places for any writer -- even a hack -- to make a living than SF.

I first became seriously concerned with the values of science fiction three years ago when I attended the 1966 Lunacon and became aware of the Great Debate between "traditional" SF and the "New Thing." The arguments, it seemed, avoided the fundamental issues, and did little to contribute towards an understanding of SF. My concern increased as I watched similar confrontations during regional and world conventions during 1966 and 1967. Eventually it grew into an essay, "Science Fiction and the Romantic Tradition," for Sam Moskowitz' fanzine, *Different*. It also resulted in a movement called the Second Foundation.

Much could be said about that essay, and about the Second Foundation. But it can be said elsewhere. For this article, let me confine myself to the conclusions I drew as to the underlying values of honest science fiction:

1. *Romanticist principles of storytelling.* By this I mean the emphasis on plot and dramatic conflict, ideas and ideals -- not "love stories" or even "sentimental" writing. This in opposition to the plotless vignette or anecdote that is often called a "story" these days.

2. *The vision of science.* This means an appreciation of the aims and methods of science, and of the values of science -- not only in the quest for knowledge, but in the victory of intelligence over brute matter and the limitations of environment. It implies a rational world-view.

3. *The sense of wonder.* The liberation of the human imagination from "present consciousness" into a heightened perspective, an awareness of the great vistas of space and time and the possibilities of life and intelligence. It is an "opening" attitude towards the universe.

In the best science fiction, these three elements complement and reinforce each other. And I dare say that every work of science fiction that has any claims to being "classic" owes its stature to one or more of these elements at least. Ideally, they unite into the "wondrous visions" Donald A. Wollheim spoke of in his 1968 LunaCon speech. It is this fusion, I believe, that underlies the uniqueness of SF; there is a similar, but not identical, foundation to SF's closest literary cousin, rational fantasy. True fans know what they experience, even if they cannot articulate it.

But sometimes it seems those who ought to understand the most understand the least. We sometimes find experts strangely blind to the values of science fiction; even more strangely, some seem to understand it one moment and cease to understand it the next. Take Damon Knight, the founder of "serious" criticism in science fiction, a man who has worked tirelessly -- and sincerely, I suppose -- to bring maturity to the genre. I can applaud much of his work; his crusades against "chuckleheads" and Van Vogt's "Null-A" nonsense, his insistence on good grammar, syntax and style.

Yet Knight has a curiously ambivalent attitude towards the worth of science fiction -- an ambivalence Algis Budrys noted, for instance, in his selection of stories for "Worlds To Come" vs. the introduction to that book. Knight, the champion of

Heinlein, has shown himself capable of recognizing good science fiction when he sees it. One gathers he understands and appreciates it, from the comments he writes on such occasions. But what are we to make of the following, taken from "In Search Of Wonder," page 109, where Knight is discussing the work of Ray Bradbury:

"Bradbury's strength lies in the fact that he writes about the things that are really important to us -- not the things we pretend to be interested in -- science, marriage, sports, politics, crime -- but the fundamental prerational fears and longings and desires: the rage at being born; the will to be loved; the hatred of parents and siblings; the fear of things that are not self...."

An extraordinary statement indeed. For, if we take it at face value, Knight is telling us that there is no justification whatever for science fiction. Science, he tells us, is something we only "pretend" to be interested in -- and at that, it is no more important than sports or crime. While the things he claims we are "really" interested in could be handled just as well in "mainstream" fiction, without the slightest element of science or fantasy.

Knight's assumption that "real" human concerns are largely neurotic, or that these are the only basis of Bradbury's writing, are dismaying enough, but they are still side issues compared to his declaration that, in effect, science fiction as a genre is completely irrelevant to human values and concerns.

Perhaps this is just an example of Knight's ambivalence -- a notion lent weight by his comment on page 125 that his only basis for deciding whether to write "optimistic" or "pessimistic" stories lies in what "silly convention" needs debunking at any particular moment. Such a statement betrays a lack of conviction on his part.

Knight's ambivalence is shown in other places, too. For instance, he praises Heinlein's characterization at one point. Yet on page 135, he applauds the anti-heroes of John Bowen's "After The Rain" thusly: "Nearly all these people are marvelously real and undramatic. They are unsuccessful, resigned, faintly comic people."

In reviewing Poul Anderson's "The Enemy Stars" (page 136), Knight objects to the fact that Anderson's characters "begin to mount soapboxes or pulpits" (i.e., express ideals). Yet Knight doesn't always object to soapboxes; on page 230, after quoting a passage from Philip K. Dick's "Solar Lottery," in which a character makes a speech about how everything is a hopeless ratrace, he delivers the judgment:

"Unanswerable...And then you realize, while that speech resonates in your mind, that it isn't only the imaginary society of 'Solar Lottery' that Cartwright is condemning: it's all society, including our own."

Apparently soapbox idealism is a Bad Thing, but soapbox fatalism is a Good Thing, to Knight. At least, I doubt if he's ever declared one of Anderson's pronouncements "unanswerable." As I have said, Knight seems to be ambivalent; he was only a part-time debunker. Still, his very ambivalence contributed to the "devaluation of values" in science fiction that took place during the 1950s, even as technical standards of writing improved. There was no overall vision of what science fiction was for.

But there are false visions.

Consider Cyril M. Kornbluth's "explanation" of science fiction's appeal in his 1957 University of Chicago speech, reprinted by Advent:Publishers in "The Science Fiction Novel":

"We are suspending reality, you and I. By the signs of the rocket ship and the ray gun and the time machine, we indicate that the relationship between us (writer and fan) has nothing to do with the real world. By writing stuff and reading it, we abdicate from action, we give free play to our unconscious drives and symbols, we

write and read not about the real world, but about ourselves and the things within ourselves."

One can recognize in this an outgrowth of Knight's idea of our "real" interests -- but Kornbluth applies it to all of science fiction instead of just to Bradbury. The Kornbluth view was later endorsed by James Blish -- hardly surprising, since Knight had recently convinced Blish of the Freudian symbolism in his "Common Time."

Aside from that, however, Kornbluth's view presents an even more serious devaluation of science fiction. It has nothing to do with science and intelligence, or space and time, he tells us -- it is merely a pouring out of Freudian symbols that may be of interest to the psychologist, but hardly merits serious interest as a literary form and is devoid of any genuine value.

The implications are farther-reaching: science fiction is worse than useless, it is psychopathic and degenerate. Kornbluth's "analysis" of "Doc" Smith, aimed at proving that author a psychological cripple whose "Lensmen" series reflected a mentality "about eighteen months old." was directed as much at the fan as at Smith. It said: if you enjoy the stuff, you're a psychological cripple too. (Knight had a similar effect when he used the well-known hangups of Robert E. Howard and H. P. Lovecraft to theorize: "All the great fantasies, I suppose, have been written by emotionally crippled men." A distinctly unglittering generality!)

Robert Bloch, in a speech also delivered at the University of Chicago in 1957 and published in "The Science Fiction Novel," was even more hostile toward traditional values of science fiction. Bloch saw in novels like "Gather, Darkness" and "The Space Merchants," which glorify rebellion against authoritarian regimes, an "adolescent" rejection of authority, while most SF -- especially Heinlein's -- he regarded as an appeal to bloodthirsty a la Mickey Spillane (to whom he alludes several times). He resents the notion in traditional science fiction that people "are the masters of their fate," and in particular the "primitive and immature" heroes of Asimov and Heinlein who try to master it. SF could use more "real" characters, he feels (like a motel operator who carves up women guests in showers, perhaps?).

Bloch is particularly disturbed by the idea of science fiction's tendency to "shore up" science in the post-Hiroshima era; what it should be doing, he feels, is reminding readers that the atomic bomb makes all science a Bad Thing (you know, the way prostitution makes all sex a Bad Thing). His message is clear enough: science fiction is a "primitive" and "immature" genre that reflects the worst in contemporary culture. Its readers are mostly perpetual adolescents driven by sadistic compulsions -- and possibly the desire to become mad scientists and go around blowing up everything with atom bombs.

Men like Kornbluth and Bloch -- and, in his less lucid moments, even Knight -- did little to explain science fiction, but much to explain it away. The effect of their debunking was to make SF into something "dirty" and shameful. They, and others like them, contributed to the "anhedonia" Murray Leinster saw eroding the genre during the 1950s. Fans and writers were told again and again that they were "really" interested in science and intelligence, ideas and ideals, space and time. All these were "revealed" in a mask for oedipus complexes, sadomasochisms, cultural chauvinism and the like.

There were parallels between the impact of debunking critics of science fiction and the "men of words" Eric Hoffer wrote of in "The True Believer:"

"The militant man of words prepares the ground for the rise of a mass movement: 1.) by discrediting prevailing creeds and institutions and detaching from them the allegiance of the people; 2.) by indirectly creating a hunger for faith in the hearts of those who cannot live without it, so that when the new faith is preached it finds an eager response among the disillusioned masses; 3.) by furnishing the doctrines and



slogans of the new faith; 4.) by undermining the convictions of the "better people" -- those who can get along without faith -- so that when the new fanaticism makes its appearance, they are without the capacity to resist it."

It is the "men of words" of the 1950s who created, whether consciously or not, a mass of writers and fans alienated from the "traditional" values of science fiction. During the present decade, the "new faith" appeared -- first called the "New Wave" and later the "New Thing."

Except for a few voices, like Lester del Rey, the defenders of "traditional" science fiction had been rendered inert. There had come to be a double standard that required "traditionalists" to argue their case only in the most apologetic and half-hearted manner, while leaving the "New Thing" advocates free to promote their new faith in strident, authoritarian tones. The purveyors of the "New Thing," of course, had a built-in advantage: they did not have to originate anything. They were free to borrow ready-made slogans from "debunkers" of the 1950s, who in turn had borrowed them from the "mainstream." And the fact that the "mainstream" and "New Thing" slogans were identical lent them a note of conviction and authenticity they might otherwise have lacked.

What were the slogans of the "New Thing?"

One was that "Science and Intelligence are Evil." As Isaac Asimov commented in a letter to *If* (Nov. 1968), "There are science fiction writers who think that science is a Bad Thing and that science fiction is a wonderful field in which to make this plain."

This is an attitude that goes beyond legitimate criticism of perversions of science -- say, germ warfare. It regards science itself as a perversion, inimical to humanity, which must be abandoned in favor of some sort of "instinctual" relationship with the universe. "Blow your mind" has become a popular expression of this attitude.

Thomas M. Disch's "Descending" presented science and technology as a treadmill down which suffering humanity is being carried to an inescapable doom. J.G. Ballard's "A Question of Re-Entry" condemned the "psychopathic projections" of such horrible twentieth century phenomena as -- not atom bombs, but Echo satellites.

At its extreme, this attitude is inimical even to human consciousness; Judith Merrill, high priestess of the new faith, praised Ballard's "The Crystal World" in *Fantasy & Science Fiction* (Aug. 1966) for doing away with time-binding: "[It] presents us with a [literally, physically] crystallized pattern of time -- now -- the frozen moment in the instant I AM...the only moment of reality we know at all -- the eternally passing present we call now."

Another "New Thing" slogan is that "Humanity stinks." Not some of humanity, or even most of it, but all of it. There is much talk of "real" characters, but though they are usually discussed in terms of "innerness" and "psychological insights," the examples given by "New Thing" advocates nearly always turn out to fit a common mold. Lester del Rey in "Art or Artiness?" again: "What I discover is simply that the too-strong hero of old has been replaced by the hopelessly weak anti-hero of today. Courage, intelligence and dignity have been dropped away. Instead we have a sickening morass of petty people and unpleasant characters."

Sometimes this is given "symbolic" treatment. In Robert Silverberg's recent "The Man In The Maze," the evilness of the protagonist is shown by having him continually telepath unpleasant emotions (the result of an operation performed on him by nasty aliens for reasons never clearly explained). This is rather reminiscent of the TV commercial for chlorophyll chewing gum which warned, "Don't broadcast bad breath!"

We have a spate of nightmarish stories from Harlan Ellison aimed at proving every

one's a "monster" (what, even Anne Frank?). And aliens fare no better -- Twerreel and Dear Devil have been relegated to Limbo and the nasty BEM is back. Silverberg's and Disch's aliens seem to exist for the one, sole and only purpose of doing nasty things to people -- the only difference from the 1920s is that the victims are supposed to deserve it.

Looking at the "New Thing," I am impressed the most, not with its breadth, but its narrowness; not with its advances, but its retreats. This is true even in areas where it claims to be making the greatest breakthroughs.

There is much talk, for instance, about the "liberation" of sexual treatment in science fiction brought about by the "New Thing." On close examination, however, it turns out that while the "New Thing" authors write a lot about sex, they don't seem to like it much.

In novels like Silverberg's "Thorns," sexual relationships are invariably disfigured by cruelty and disgust. There are plenty of hangups, but no joy; lots of explicit description, but no love. The "New Thing" writers don't say in so many words that sex is "dirty," but they manage to convey that impression.

Indeed, the "New Thing" is, in a sense, more puritanical than even the "Victorian" pulp fiction of old. There were no explicit descriptions in A. Merritt's "The Ship of Ishtar," for example -- but it was clear enough that Kenton and Sharane were sleeping together, and that they both enjoyed it.

It may be significant, too, that when a "traditionalist" writer like Ted White puts more positive "sex scenes" in his fiction, the "New Wave" critics are in no hurry to praise him for it.

There is much talk, too, of new ideas, but nobody seems to know what they are. During an exchange at the 1967 NYCon, Lester del Rey tried to find out from *New Worlds* editor Michael Moorcock what some of them were. But Moorcock could only hem and haw, until finally Judith Merril came up and hustled him from the podium.

Most of the "idea-filled" books turn out to be routine social criticism on the level of "Waiting for New Lefty" (as in John Brunner's "The Jagged Orbit"), or weary "symbolic" repetitions of tired and ancient oedipus themes and Jungian archetypes (as in Piers Anthony's "Chton").

One recent story appearing in *Fantasy & Science Fiction* dealt with children who were born with dangerous psionic powers because their parents took LSD. It was a re-hash of a story that appeared in the 1950s -- only that time, the parents had been exposed to atomic radiation. Another "idea" story of the past few years was shamelessly plagiarized from Stanley G. Weinbaum's "Graph."

There are plenty of stylistic gimmicks, but they usually conceal a lack of real substance. As Eric Hoffer wrote in a newspaper column, "Total innovation is the refuge of the innately clumsy and untalented: it offers them a situation where their ineptness is acceptable and natural. For we are all apprentices when we tackle the wholly new, and we expect the new to show the apprentice's hand -- to be clumsy and ill-shapen."

Everything about the New Wave betrays a lack of inner conviction, a "world without values." Many writers have absorbed the feeling of "futility" and "meaninglessness" that pervade "mainstream" literature and art -- Thomas Disch betrays this explicitly in some "disgusting" poetry he turned out for *Fantasy & Science Fiction* not long ago.

For the "new faith" of the "New Thing" is largely a false front, like a Hollywood set. Behind the surface slogans lies a great void. The "devaluation of values" has been one, not of science fiction only, but of all genuine conviction. The roots

of this are not hard to trace: Western society is now in a state of cultural shock. God is dead, and traditional religious systems of value have collapsed. We have had a host of self-appointed prophets offering new faiths, but none has taken.

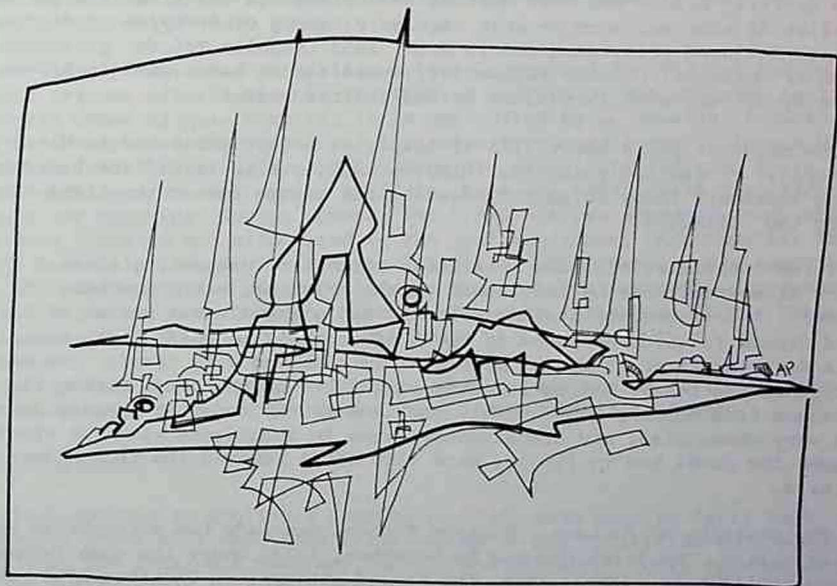
One thing is clear: both "mainstream" culture and the imitative "New Thing" are only symptoms. The real enemy is Nihilism, the Religion of Negation. But that is a subject that could fill a book -- and has filled many. In science fiction, and the values it represented, one could see at least the glimmering of hope, of a way out of the philosophical cul-de-sac. For SF was a genre that accepted, even embraced the new age, with all its promise and peril.

At its best, science fiction realized that life and intelligence could still be meaningful in the universe, despite the demise of the churchman's eschatology -- that while Man might not matter to the universe, the universe could still matter to Man.

And we have writers who still realize this -- like Roger Zelazny, Bob Shaw, Larry Niven, Fred Saberhagen and Ursula LeGuin. But there are too few like them; and the older writers who built up the genre will not be with us forever. Too many others find it easier to go backwards -- to retreat into a prehistoric fear of the universe and of their fellow men.

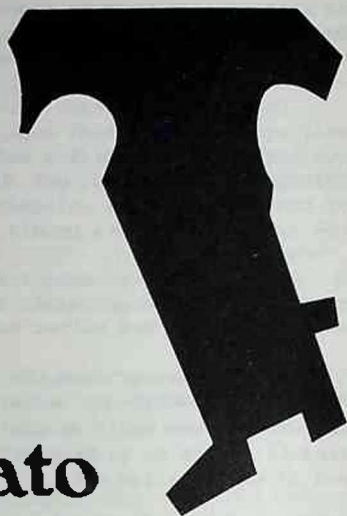
Science Fiction cannot grow and develop if it is cut off at the root. And that is precisely what the "debunkers" have been doing. Should the "devaluation of values" continue unimpeded, it can only destroy the genre -- and the consequences may be farther-ranging than most of us imagine.

-- J.J. Pierce, 1969.



SCIENCE FICTION IN ITALY

Gian Paolo Cossato



Before the 2nd World War the word SF was practically unknown in Italy. Any story whose plot embodied something more than fiction was rejected by the general public as a sub-product of American comic-strips and as such suitable only for the young reader. When, though, some novel with the same characteristics but by an established and well-respected author was published, it was usually called utopistic, which made it somewhat acceptable to the orthodox reader.

It must be pointed out that none of the American SF writers had ever been published in Italy before the war. *West Selezioneiana* was the first Italian magazine to publish SF stories, more or less regularly, among other types of fiction. Other magazines followed this trend and in April 1952 Lionello Torossi published the first Italian SF magazine, *Scienza Fantastica*, where famous names such as Arthur C. Clarke and Lester del Rey were introduced to the Italian reader.

The magazine had a short life (7 issues, the last published in March 1953). Unfortunately, SF was too young that time: a small publisher did not have many chances of long survival. Today *Scienza Fantastica* has become one of the items eagerly looked upon by the collector.

Torossi had also made the remarkable attempt of presenting stories by Italian writers alongside those by Americans. In the meantime, since October 1952, Arnaldo Mondadori, one of the top Italian editors, had started a new series of SF novels called *Urania* to which he added in November of the same year a twin magazine called *Urania Rivista*. After 14 months *Urania Rivista* merged with *Urania*. The magazine is still published today, having recently passed its 500th issue. During its long life it changed from monthly to bimonthly back and forth; today it appears fortnightly. Being very commercial, its translations, made in accordance with the standard number of pages the novel has to fit in, have very often removed the true flavor of the originals.

The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction has made two attempts at holding the Italian market. The first one was in November, 1954, under the name *Fantascienza*. It stopped publication in May, 1955. The second attempt, in December 1962, this time dubbed *Fantasia e Fantascienza* folded in October 1963, after 10 issues.

1957, the year of the Sputnik, saw two new important magazines: *Cosmo*, and *Oltre il Cielo*. The first went on for 10 years, ceasing publication in May 1967 with 202 issues. The second, of a very large size, was part SF and part technical, illus-

trating all aspects of space research and indulging sometimes in more mystery-surrounded subjects such as UFOs and lost civilizations. Today its whereabouts seem uncertain, but it still appears irregularly. Both magazines very often published novels and stories by Italian authors, concealed sometimes under an english pseudonym, which seems to attract a larger audience.

The Italian edition of *Galaxy* appeared in June 1958, edited by "La tribuna" of piacenza. This fine edition was ended in May 1964 (72 issues), when the more powerful Mondadori bid for it and amalgamated it into *Urania*, depriving us of the American look the magazine had kept until now. But "La tribuna" decided, in January 1961, to launch another series called *Galassia* under the editorship of Roberta Rambelli. It started like any other SF series, but it soon became, thanks to Roberta, a bright example of how an SF series should be run. Its price had to be slightly increased and varied according to the number of pages but we could finally enjoy an uncut Italian edition, fairly translated, of the most famous American and English books, especially those very long ones that even cut to pieces would never fit the Mondadori's *Urania* or whose subject matter would not agree with the taste of its average reader. Today, *Galassia*, whose editorship has been taken over by Ugo Malaguti is approaching its 100th issue.

In the meantime Roberta Rambelli had been organizing the Italian SF Book Club; it lasted only 3 years, but all its books were the cream of the world's SF and they were superbly translated. Every two months the club issued a bulletin describing the two choices (one in the series "Il libro del Bimestre," the other one in "La Bussola" a parallel series of small size and less expense) and there was no obligation whatsoever to buy a pre-established number of books. Moreover every book contained a coupon and six of them allowed you to get a special book at the end of the year, free.

In 1962 Sandro Sandrelli, a journalist from "Il Gazzettino," the Venice daily paper, started publishing *Interplanet*, an anthology whose contents for the first four issues was entirely Italian. It has vastly contributed toward the popularization of well deserving Italian writers. Some of the stories were recently included in an Italian anthology published in Russia.

Futuro, mainly dedicated to Italian writers, appeared in 1963 but had to fold for economic reasons after 8 issues. The Italian edition of *Planete* came to light in 1964. Formerly under Jacques Bergier, it is now edited by L. Pauwels. Valentino de Carlo started *Gamma* in October 1965 but the magazine turned recently into a hardback series. In May 1967 Ugo Malaguti launched *Nova SF*. Beautifully edited, it is one of the best SF magazines to ever appear in Italy. Malaguti again, with Lino Aldani is working on a new magazine, *Europa Domani*, which has not yet appeared. Many more SF magazines have appeared and disappeared in the last ten years; unfortunately their covers were profusely packed with bikini-clad girls, which has largely contributed to discredit SF. Another series of short life, although worth mentioning, presented only Russian authors, among them Dneprov, Epremov, Savcenko, Arkadj and Boris Strugatskij. It was of course called *Fantascienza Sovietica*.

SF has appeared sparsely in hardcovers. When it appears it is usually presented with some other name, such as "Fantapolitica," "Fantasociologia," etc.

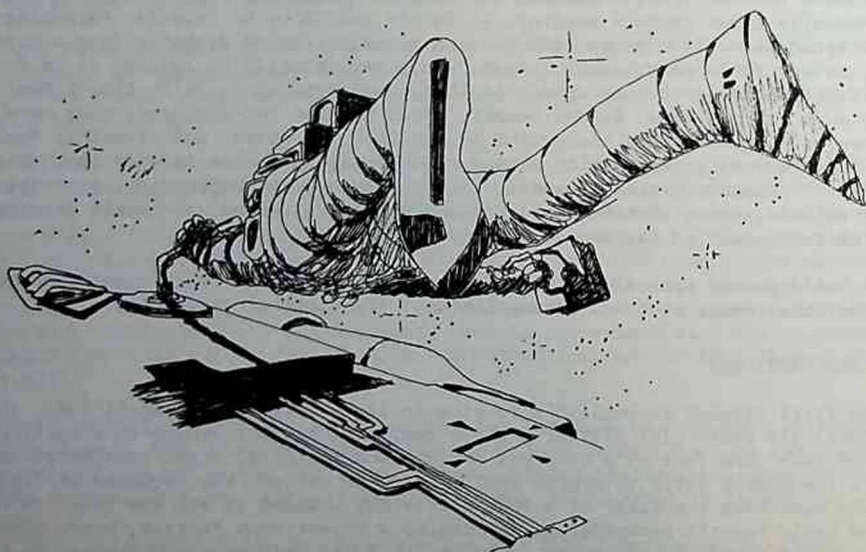
FANDOM AND FANZINES:

The first attempt to publish a fanzine in Italy goes back to April 1963, when Luigi Cozza (15 years old) delivered a few copies of his *Bollettino* to a restricted number of fans. The fanzine's name was *Futura* and *Fantasia*. Cozzi reproduced the same number a few months later in a much smaller size to satisfy the requests of fandom. It should have been the first of a long series but instead it was the last. In the meantime Carlo Pagetti succeeded in publishing a typewritten fanzine, *Nuove Dimensioni* which appeared regularly beginning in August 1963 and lasting for 5 issues. We had real results only at the beginning of 1964 when Luigi Ciccone from Naples started his

typewritten fanzine *Nuovi Crizzonte*. After its second issue Vittorio Curtone from Piacenza joined in and the cyclostyle was introduced, allowing the fanzine to have a larger circulation. From number 4 the editorial staff was increased by a new member, Luigi Naviglio from Milan, and the zine became something comparable to the French *Mercury*. Nevertheless with number 5 Ciccone disassociated himself with his collaborators and decided to go on typewriting his *Nuovi Crizzonti* helped by Luciano Izzo. Naviglio and Curtone joined forces and decided to produce a new series, *Numeri Unici*, each issue dedicated in turn to a specific SF subject. The same year a club, Centro cultori SF, was formed in Venice. Only locally known at the beginning, it is today well established with agents all over Italy and correspondents in various parts of the world. Many Italian fanzines' editors belong to the club and help it in its development. The CCSF is working tightly with the international contact department of the British SF Association, Ltd., and is now launching a campaign for Heidelberg in 1970 [at the time this article was written -ed.] after a meeting its representatives had during the ThirdManCon with the German committee. At the moment the club publishes the *Notiziari*, *SF Cronache*, and the Italian edition of the *European News Bulletin*.

From 1965 onwards many other fanzines appeared in Italy. They include *Apidistra* edited by Riccardo Leveghi from Trento; *Interplot* by Sandro Sandrelli of Venice; *Micromega* by Carlo Bordoni and *Verso le Stelle* by Luigi Naviglio that later incorporated *Orsa Maggiore* founded by Paolo Brera and Maurizio Lipparini. During July 1966 two new fanzines came to life in Trieste: *Decimo Pianeta* by Gian Franco Battisti and *Hypothesis* by Francesco Carrara. At the same time in Turin Diego Gabutti was publishing his *Numeri Speciali* which changed its name in February 1964 to *Parallel SF*. In Turin again, Riccardo Valla had in the meantime started *Sevagram* and Roberto Temporini *Hibrid Clan*. Last year *Parallel SF* merged with *Sevagram*. The active fandom movement started in Turin by Riccardo Valla is intended as an instrument to allow the general public to become more acquainted with SF; its activities will be worked out together with the CCSF of which Riccardo Valla is the representative in Turin.

--Gian Paolo Cossato, 1968





Ted White:

MY COLUMN

Sitting on my desk as I type this are copies of *TV GUIDE* for April 19-25, and *TIME* for April 18. On page A-1 of *TV GUIDE* appears a full-page "Special Editorial." It is headed "Smothers Out: A Wise Decision." In *TIME*'s Television Section, under the heading, "Censorship," is a piece titled "Fickle Finger of CBS." They make interesting reading in parallel, and if one reads them side-by-side, one is forced to several inescapable conclusions.

Of course, anything I may say here about the cancellation of the Smothers Brothers show will be old hat, and perhaps even dramatically outpaced by subsequent events. Therefore I should explain now that this column is not primarily concerned with the cancellation of a television program, but with the reactions to that cancellation, and their implications. After all, far better programs have been cancelled before and will be again -- among my own favorites this season are *The Outsider* and *N.Y.P.D.*

The irony in the entire Smothers Brothers brouhaha is that the brothers were themselves the least interesting part of their show. It has amazed me over the past three years that they have had the gall to milk a single joke -- brotherly jealousy -- so far past its last remaining drop of humor. They may have talent as producers -- and they were certainly responsible for "discovering" and presenting fresh talent -- but as musicians, the Smothers brothers have never been much more than mediocre, and they are indeed a joke in the music business. The success story -- if that is what it is -- of Tom and Dick Smothers has been simply another example of the triumph of clever packaging over worthy talent. (It cannot be coincidental that one of the program's idea men, Mason Williams, represents exactly the same sort of success.)

Where the Smothers Story departs its script, however, is that success was not accepted by the brothers in the same spirit in which it was attained. Once given the leverage of their own popularity, they did not hesitate to thrust forward into the television spotlight people of much greater talent, who had thus far received much less recognition. This seems to have been their mistake. They rocked the boat.

"The Smothers Brothers have been saying plenty to arouse a substantial part of America," *TV GUIDE* asserts, apparently taking the part of that aroused segment of America.

"Where does satire end -- and sacrilege begin?"

"Where does criticism end -- and affront begin?"

"Where does disagreement end -- and national division begin?"

"To many good, sensible citizens of this Nation, the Smothers Brothers have been

crossing these lines too often."

By implication, then, if you did not find the Brother sacriligious, if they did not cause you affront, and if you are only amused at the notion of their creating "national division" in this era of civil disobedience, police riots, Vietnam, Chicago, Watts, Newark and all the rest that fills our headlines -- if, as I say, you don't go along with the notion that the Brothers have "been crossing these lines too often," then surely you are not among the "Good, Sensible Citizens of this Nation."

And if you *do* agree with TV GUIDE's view of the situation, I suggest you read on, and rethink your position a little.

TV GUIDE has the largest circulation of any periodical distributed in these United States and Canada. I don't know whether it reaches more people than the Smothers Brothers program did, but in its own way it has top ratings: it is to be found in more homes, these days, than even the *READER'S DIGEST* -- a formidable accomplishment indeed.

Therefore it must be argued that TV GUIDE holds a heavy responsibility. This responsibility does not lie in appeasing the attitudes of any minority (no matter how large) of its millions of readers. Its responsibility is to present the unvarnished truth, and to do nothing that would aid or abett ignorance, superstition, or jingoistic thinking. This is not a responsibility to be taken lightly. But I'm afraid it was.

"Freedom of speech is not the issue," the editorial states.

"The issue is taste. And responsibility. And honesty. And perspective. And a proper respect for the views of others."

I submit that TV GUIDE fails its own criteria.

"The issue is: Shall entertainers using a mass medium for all the people be allowed to amuse a few by satirizing religion while offending the substantial majority?"

Several things must be said at once: TV GUIDE has no evidence that anyone, tiny minority or substantial majority, was offended by the satire referred to, *inasmuch as the program was not shown*. Therefore, this line is mere rhetoric. Further, is it true that in a "mass medium for all the people" no one may do anything considered offensive by anyone else? Does the fact that *anyone* may tune in mean that it must be assumed *everyone* will? Are the masses of this country a captive audience? Has no one the ability to turn off a program he considers offensive? I admit that I have turned off the Smothers Brothers program, not once but several times because I was offended -- largely by the over-emphasis placed on their singlestring sequence of "jokes," which I found tedious and boring. *Never once* did it occur to me to demand the censorship of these jokes. I assumed that since at that time the show was highrated, many other people found those low-level jokes exactly to their taste. (I preferred Pat Paulson's dry wit.) Tastes vary. Is there to be no accounting for this fact? Or, more important to me, will no one cater to *my* tastes?

A *TIMES*man watched the special screening (for newsmen) of the censored show. He reported, "The sermonette that CBS felt would have been considered 'irreverent and offensive by a large segment of our audience' [and which had already been deleted by the Brothers] turned out to be rather mild, even in an Easter week following the Eisenhower funeral. Comedian David Steinberg's retelling of the story of Jonah was more in the vein of Mark Twain than Lenny Bruce. Jonah, in Steinberg's version, was swallowed by a giant guppy. Many clergymen appreciate Steinberg's mischievous Biblical homilies and he has often been invited to speak in churches and temples. Because new types of humor seem foreign to people, they assume they must be in bad taste," says the impish Steinberg, who is now sermonizing at Manhattan's Bitter End. What they don't know is that I know the Bible and love it."

In other words, it was the estimate of a CBS censor -- or so we're told -- that "a large segment of our audience" would be offended. *TV GUIDE* rhetorically rephrased this into an offense against "the substantial majority." Is this responsible? Is it honest?

"The issue is: Shall a network be required to provide time for a Joan Baez to pay tribute to her draft-evading husband while hundreds of thousands of viewers in the households of men fighting in Vietnam look on in shocked resentment?"

Again, rhetoric gets the better of the facts. Since CBS did *not* allow a or even the Joan Baez to pay tribute to her draft-evading husband, the situation hypothesized never occurred. Instead, CBS allowed Joan to dedicate a song to her husband, "who is now in jail," or words to that effect. Joan was not allowed to say *why* he was in jail, and the implication was irresponsibly given that he was a common criminal. There is draft-evasion and there is draft-evasion. Think what you will of it, the man in question did not flee to another country or go in hiding. He stood up for his beliefs, and paid for them in the coin of the realm. That much should have been made known -- it was nothing less than the truth. I was offended by the evasion of the truth, and the implied smear involved in this most particularly nasty piece of censorship. Was either CBS's action in this regard, or *TV GUIDE*'s report, presented in perspective? Was a proper respect for the views of others shown?

TV GUIDE reports as gospel truth the statement by CBS that the Brothers "in their arrogance, made [previewing and censoring of the show] impossible by delaying the delivery of their finished tapes." *TIME*, however, states that "CBS's stated reason for cancelling the *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* was one of those rationales distinguished by the fact that just about nobody believed it." Except *TV GUIDE*. "As one CBS official put it privately last week, 'Tommy had been sticking his finger in the network's eye and something had to be done,' " *TIME* reported.

TIME adds, "Tom Smothers pointed out that: 1) there is no Wednesday-deadline provision in the contract; 2) the tape was submitted to the CBS Los Angeles office on Wednesday anyway; 3) the brothers had agreed to snip the offending sermonette. CBS's real motive, said Tom, was to find a costless way to cancel the \$4.5 million Smothers contract at a date so late that the other networks could not fit them into next fall's schedule." In other words, 'something had to be done,' and was done.

"Freedom of speech is not the issue," *TV GUIDE* says. But freedom of speech clearly was the issue, as *TV GUIDE* itself made clear. Free speech -- the voicing of viewpoints found offensive by some people because they differ with their own viewpoints -- was the only issue. "Taste" is an evasion of this fact. I found *TV GUIDE*'s pious hypocries in bad taste. But no doubt others -- the ones in sympathy with *TV GUIDE*'s stand -- will cheer its "good taste." Taste, like beauty and like offense, is in the mind of the beholder. I can imagine bad taste in television viewing -- it confronts me most of the time I turn the set on -- but my response is to turn the set off again. I object to the tasteless moronisms which pervade television today simply because they deprive me of many chances for intellectually stimulating fare -- but I would be opposed to censorship in this regard. What I very much do fear is that those who constitute the audience for this pap consider it their right to impose their tastes on me, by virtue of shutting out anything I might like.

I was not a big fan of the Smothers Brothers show, but I watched it occasionally. As a jazz and rock enthusiast, I enjoyed the occasional groups and singers who were shown. Some, like Jackie & Roy, have rarely if ever been on national television before -- and it was long overdue. Joan Baez has a sizable following (I am not part of it myself), and she is a rarity on network television. Clearly a great many intelligent, responsible tastes are being ignored. I doubt we'll ever see the Mothers of Invention on tv.

The youth today know this. Although they buy millions of records, they rarely

see the musicians they like on television except in laundered versions, and then only briefly. And they know why -- or think they do. The "Establishment" is suppressing rock music, along with marijuana, healthy sex, and open discussion of unpopular subjects (like racial strife, Vietnam, and the manipulation of our "democratic" processes, as well as drugs and sex). The "Establishment" is the "They" on the other side of thirty -- the wrong side of the generation gap. The "Establishment" is repressive, entrenched, status-quo-seeking, rigid, and mostly old. The "Establishment" is CBS.

And the "Establishment" has made Tom and Dick Smothers into Culture Heroes, when in actuality they have been rather timid spokesmen for youth-oriented subjects and are themselves much closer to the wrong side of thirty.

Distrust is the name of the game. And both sides are playing it.

When a mass publication like *TV GUIDE* fails its responsibilities as it did here, quoting half-facts cloaked in rhetorical questions, deliberately playing up to ignorance, hypocrisy, fear and stupidity, it feeds that distrust. Worse: it fosters it. And the next time *TV GUIDE* lives up to its responsibilities and reports the truth, less people will believe it, especially if the truth that time appears to support the "Establishment" position.

-- Ted White, 1969



IT'S A

SING-ALONG

SENSATION!

IT'S FIVE IN THE MORNING
AS I EAT MY ICE POTATO



I'M SHAVING THE FUR COAT
THE FIRST THING I DO!



THE CUFFLINK ASH-TRAYS
ARE MOVING SO SLOWLY



THEY DANCE IN THE MOONLIGHT
AS WE GET OUT OF SCHOOL;



YOU LAUGHED OH SO GENTLY
WHEN I KISSED YOU THIS MORNING

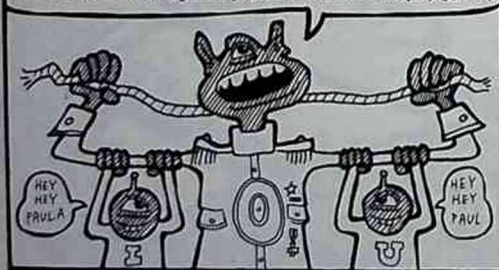


WHEN I KISSED YOU WITH GUSTO
BY THE MICKEYMOUSE NIGHTLIGHT.



AND NOW, THE CHORUS...

THE DECALS ARE PEELING
MY MIND, IT NEEDS HEALING
BUT THERE'S NO REST IN SIGHT FOR A HOT-PORRIDGE MAN



THE COLD FLOOR'S UNFEELING
AS THE PIGS ROLL ON, SQUEELING
IT'S A KNEE-HIGH REBELLION LED BY OLD DIVER DAN!



WATCH FOR THE NEW SING-ALONG SENSATION LP... IT'S KOOKY!

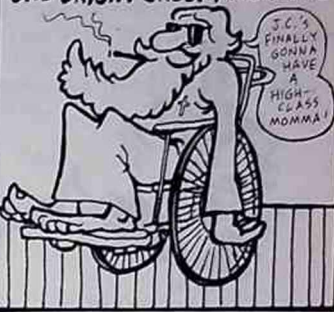
SO I'LL FOLD UP MY PUP-TENT
AND GIVE YOU A WARNING:



OH, WE'LL MEET SOON AGAIN
'NEATH THE GREEN CHESTNUT TREE.



AS FOR GOD, HE GOT MARRIED
ONE BRIGHT CHEERY MORNING



TO A GIRL WITH A HAIRNET
AND A LOVE FOR THE SEA...



I WISH THEM THE BEST
(HE STILL WEARS THAT VEST!)



YES, IT'S AUNTIE JEMIMA
AND SEAN CONNERY



I'D WRITE YOU A LOVENOTE
BUT IT'S RAINING SO QUICKLY



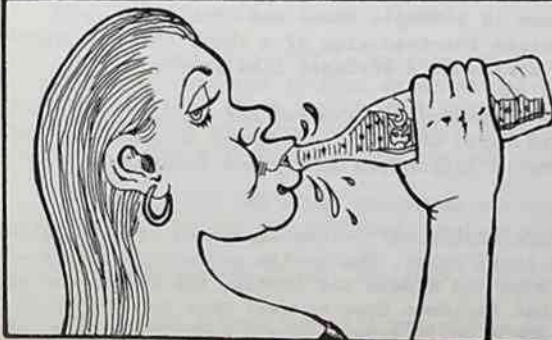
THAT I'LL JUST SAY GOODBYE
TO THE SCOUT JAMBOREE!



THE
END

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT



HERE'S MARCIA MOSHANE
A RISING YOUNG U. OF I. STUDENT...

She's a Real Comer!

MARCIA SAYS: WHENEVER I HOST SOME
OF MY HIPPIY-TRIPPY FRIENDS OVER
FOR A LITTLE GETOGETHER... I
SERVE THEM

ROYAL COSMIC COLA



LUPOFF'S BOOK WEEK

Dick Lupoff

THE PHOENIX AND THE MIRROR by Avram Davidson, Doubleday 1969, 209 pp, \$4.95.

Strange and wonderful are the ways of the publishing industry, and the ways in which those ways change. Time was when the words *science fiction* were the mark of certain doom, when their application to a book was a virtual kiss of death. Nowadays science fiction sells (although Greg Benford predicts the end of the current boom by 1971), and as long as SF is popular, books of astonishingly varied content will carry the label.

Specifically, it is bruited around the industry that Doubleday has enough standing orders from libraries to guarantee, virtually, the success of every SF book it publishes. Library sales pay basic production costs and overhead. Additional hard-cover sales to mad collectors like thee and me provide a little gravy. There's a good chance of SF Book Club selection (it being convenient that the Club is owned and operated by Doubleday; this does not mean that all Doubleday books are selected but the proportion is high). And the high proportion of paperback or other subsidiary sales makes for a tidy, profitable operation.

Despite the fact that the present novel is written by a well-known SF personality, despite the fact that a magazine version appeared in one of Sol Cohen's SF mags in 1966, and especially despite the fact that the book is conspicuously marked *science fiction*...such is simply *not* the case. The book is an historical adventure novel, set in late pre-Christian Mediterranean lands. Its hero is the Roman poet Virgil, identified by Davidson as a magician as well as poet. The story concerns his travels and travails in obtaining the materials for and manufacturing a "magic mirror," in which his patroness will be able to see events at a great distance.

There are heavy infusions of fantasy -- the magic mirror itself is one, the presence of legendary manticores early in the book is another. As the manticores disappear after a single incident and are never mentioned again in any significant manner, one wonders whether their presence is a simple loose end (but Avram is a better craftsman than that!) or a deliberate foreshadowing of a theme to be reintroduced in a projected sequel. The latter does seem a stronger likelihood.

The phoenix of the title is not the legendary flame-bird, but rather a supernatural creature, man-like in all outward ways, who must perish and re-arise in flame periodically to survive. This theme is introduced subtly and developed to a shockingly valid climax.

But the main elements in the book are historical -- the capturing of the Mediterranean lands of two millenia ago, the local color, the smells and noises and personalities of the people, the adventures on the Middle Sea itself, the encounters with pirates and barbarians, and the humor that Davidson does so well when he does it at all. (In-group references, such as one scene built around an old fanzine cartoon, are

so well integrated as to cause no distraction for the informed reader.)

The book is excellently done and I recommend it if you care for this sort of galleys-and-togas fiction. Certainly it has a long association with SF, including most prominently the late R. E. Howard and the later L. Sprague de Camp (among many, many others). Fantasy, yes. Historical adventure, emphatically yes. But despite the label tacked on it by the publisher, the book is *not* science fiction.

THE FINAL PROGRAMME by Michael Moorcock, Avon 1968, 191 pp, 60¢.

I think that Michael Moorcock has to be the prime schizo of the science fiction community. And that's a title not to be captured by default, not with the kind of coo-coos we have writing, editing, and reading this stuff.

But here's a guy who started off as a Burroughs nut (Ed, not Bill), and whose books tend to reflect that background (pure Burroughs in the "E. P. Bradbury" trilogy; Conan-esque in the Elric stories). Yet as an editor Moorcock was one of the first great advocates of the New Wave, an admirer and publisher of J. G. Ballard; his influence shaped *New Worlds* from a stodgy pseudo-Analog into the experimental journal of the avant garde that it is today.

In *THE FINAL PROGRAMME*, Moorcock the author is finally faithful to the precepts of Moorcock the editor. Instead of projecting adventure stories into barbaric or neo-barbaric cultures where everything is simple and where the solution to all problems lies in the good guy's skewering the bad guy and marrying the virgin, Moorcock addresses the real problems of society as it is today and as he seriously projects it for the near future. *THE FINAL PROGRAMME* is set in the world of mod clothing, rock music, drugs, new sexuality, racial awareness and social malaise that really exists today in most of the "civilized" world. No wonder that Harlan Ellison's famous science fiction fans in the two-tone shoes and 1946 suits have reacted to this book with anguished outcries, in at least one case going so far as to write a letter of protest to the publisher and then publish it, also, in a fanzine.

Moorcock's hero Jerry Cornelius and his associates inhabit a world that these fans never made, cannot make, and will forever hate for passing them by. Cornelius's world is where the Earth is headed, for better or for worse; it is the world of the mass media, automated labor, vast material wealth but simultaneous economic dislocation and even famine; it is the world in which Man has at last shut himself off from the "natural" life that the 19th Century sometimes longed to return to.

Moorcock's world -- Jerry Cornelius's world -- is the urbanized, mechanized, computerized, hot, swinging, sexy, druggy, racy world that exists right now! That *THE FINAL PROGRAMME* first appeared in *New Worlds* almost five years ago makes it an old book by today's accelerated standard; it was remarkably predictive in 1969 and it is still valid in 1970.

It is funny, ugly, tragic, flawed.

It is a book that will be rejected in horrified shock by those repressed 1946-suiters who use science fiction as an escape valve from a reality they are unable or unwilling to face. It is a book that will bring only a disgusted response from those repressed readers who have to get their kicks from blasters fired through irising spacelocks because they can't face the unsubliminated realities of existence.

Those who need *THE FINAL PROGRAMME* the least are those who are most likely to accept and appreciate it, but then, that is the usual case with significant books.

THE TIN MEN by Michael Frayn, Ace 1969, 190 pp, 60¢.

This one is a book that I'd have loved to have for review in a column I wrote for *Twig* some years ago, called "Borderline Books." The idea was to concentrate on

books that were "...not quite science fiction, and then again, not quite not." The book originally appeared in 1965, and is currently available again as an Ace paperback.

The setting is a British computer research institute; computers, of course, are very much the stuff of science fiction come true, along with television and space ships and atomic energy, and this book, which would have been science fiction a couple of decades ago, is now publishable as an uncategorized novel.

You should not miss it. It is a book that is extremely funny and yet profound. Frayn's comments on technology, business, academics, and (ultimately) the nature of reality, are vastly stimulating and consistently amusing. The interwoven threads of life in the research institute are beautifully handled, and those SF fans who deal intimately with computers (I believe the number is large) will probably agree that the proposed computer applications are entirely feasible.

One project, for instance, is the creation of an automatic newspaper: computer-aided analysis reveals that most of the stories in most newspapers are really the same few standard stories, endlessly reshuffled to fit the latest set of variables. It's true of course! Today my wife and I were driving our car when a news broadcast came on about a canine mascot in a tavern who drank beer regularly and suffered from hangovers. It was, of course, one of the standard silly-season stories that come on when there's too little real news: it pops up on the average of once every four to six months and the only variables are the location of the bar, breed of dog, number of quarts a day he drinks, etc.

Another, related, project is to use a computer to create automatic headlines, based on the fact that most newspaper headlines are composed of a limited list of jargon words which can be arranged in any combination to carry any desired meaning. Or no meaning at all. An example from THE TIN MEN:

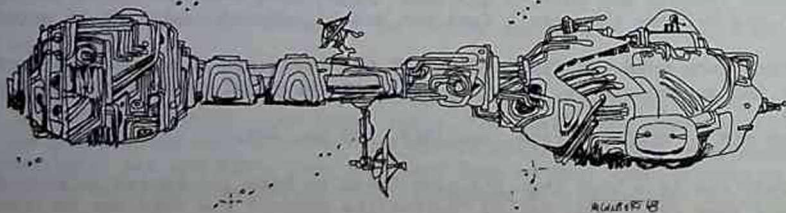
ROW HOPE MOVE FLOP
LEAK DASH SHOCK
HATE BAN BID PROBE

("Asked if they thought they understood the headlines, 86.4% said yes, but of these 93.7% were unable to offer any explanation of what it was they had understood," Frayn comments.)

Then there's the would-be novelist who doesn't know how to start, so he writes the reviews first, then the jacket, leaving the book itself for last. And the fellow trying to build an ethical machine -- pure Asimov Robotics, and hilarious! And the project to write pornographic novels and/or sex novels by computer. And finally the visit by the Queen, which may be all a mistake or maybe not. One realizes, by the end of the book, that it doesn't matter!

Beautiful, funny, profound. Read it.

-- Dick Lupoff, 1969







OGGAWAY

GREG BENFORD: A COLUMN

Writing a book is a lot of work. It's also a strange experience. I've written about twenty novelettes and short stories, and I suppose I always thought of a book as a series of connected short stories. Actually, it's both easier and harder than that. Easier because there's a hell of a lot of room in a novel. If you want to lecture the reader on politics or describe a field of flowers, you can usually find a way to work it into the plot somehow. The point is that you can do a lot of things that aren't directly concerned with the main thrust of the novel; you can dally in random fields for quite a few pages. Likely as not it won't be cut.

A novel is harder than a bunch of short stories because it demands a concentrated effort. You have to keep the elements of the story in mind for a period of months, not weeks. If you made a remark about the ecology of Venus on page 35 you'd better remember that and not throw in some conflicting chemistry on page 176. On the purely factual level that isn't so hard. If you've done your homework and have your head on straight an extensive outline of the background will keep things straight even if your memory is lousy, like mine.

For other things I find the going rougher. I've always had trouble with the characterizations I've done, for several reasons. One is that I'm always conscious that people are damned complicated. I can't predict the actions of most of my friends and neither can anybody else I know, Secret Masters included. So how can I believe in a character in a story who's got one or two prime motivations and follows them religiously for the whole time? There are certain dramatic conventions. A character can't be so complicated that his actions are incomprehensible. As a reader this point doesn't often bother me, but as a writer it does. The only way I've learned to do a character in a story is to identify with him completely. Every time he has to react I sit at the typewriter, clutched up in the circumstances of the plot, background details aswirl in my head, and write what I feel. I don't know why it's necessary for me to do this; I envy people who aren't tied to their characters and dragged down by them. I think they probably do a better job of characterization than I do. But I don't write this way

from conviction that it's the way to do the job right; it's simply a reflex with me.

All this means I have a rather complicated character (to me) that I must follow through a lot of action and keep his reactions convincing to an ordinary reader. That is hard; usually I don't even try. Instead I write from the character's viewpoint and if the reader doesn't understand him, too bad. That's the only way I know how to do a decent job. Otherwise I don't believe in the guy and I might as well forget the story; it doesn't have any life for me, and that's fatal. I've got a few stories lying around in partially completed states that'll probably never see print; I just don't have any emotional touch with them anymore.

So for me characterization is in some ways harder for a novel than a short story. I can generally sustain a mood internally for a week or so. But for six months or a year? I have no idea how I felt about, say, technological progress vs. rural environments last year. So if my character runs into a situation in which he makes a comment on it, the remark may be in tune with earlier impressions of his personality, but at the moment it may well contradict my own feelings. Then the dialogue may come out wooden, just because I don't feel it.

Some of the above sounds like Harlan Ellison: I write from the guts, baby, and I can't control what comes out. I've always smiled wryly at such comments, thinking them self-indulgent. They are, too, if you don't look back at what you've done. Harlan says he never rewrites. Okay; everybody to his own methods. But Harlan is unusual. Most writers need far more criticism than they get. Discarding your own self-criticism is often a foolhearty gesture. I may write from the guts, but I'd be frightened to send such stuff out without a careful re-examination. I've always followed that policy and for the first year or two of casual short story writing I found myself completely rewriting everything. But for the last two years, when I was free of graduate school and had a chance to put in some solid hours of writing every week, I've found that I needed rewriting less to get across what I was trying to say. I just finished a cover story for AMAZING that was almost entirely first draft. Before I wrote it -- there was a deadline hovering around -- I spent two weeks plotting the thing out in detail, wrote an outline of the background information and checked out a few technical details in some scientific references. The story, "Sons Of Man," is almost totally a mystery. Scientific detection; two converging lines of action in which two characters each have part of the puzzle; not much characterization. It's a sort of story I've always liked, so I decided to write one.

I had an early stage in 1964-66 in which I imitated a lot of what I'd read for the last fifteen years. It was pretty bad, I guess, because I managed to sell about half of it and the rest appears to be hopeless. But even then I tended toward stories of process and now, I think, most of the material I write is directly concerned with how things are done. It's a peculiar hangup I have, I guess. Even though I like it, I don't think that sort of theme is the *sine qua non* of SF; implications of ideas are much more important for human beings. Otherwise you get what I call light-bulb stories: "Gee, Frank, look at that glowing sphere." "Yes, Ted, that is an incandescent gas enclosed by a glass envelope; it is powered by an electrical current and its elements have a calculated heat loss which just matches the power input necessary to cause significant optical illumination." "How long can it work, Ted?" "It's simple, really. Just estimate--" You see what I mean. But processes are important to SF because without a sound knowledge of what might happen, and the imagination to see that and convey it to the reader, the writer finds himself talking about situations that haven't the feel of the future to them.

A lot of people disagree with me about this. There's a lot of the "I am a Writer and I Write What I Must" talk. Like "Why did you have the people on this planet wearing laser guns and riding in space ships when they use horses and carriages in the towns?" "Well I had to write it that way something told me to do it I just couldn't get at the problems I wanted to talk about without a primitive background." Of course, the line between freedom and license is defined differently by each man. I just don't think a story gains any effectiveness by introducing wildly improbable

elements; the reader's credibility is strained as it is, usually. As time goes on I find it harder and harder to believe in a lot of the SF that's coming out. Most of it is lacking in background detail that conveys a sense of reality. Phil Dick has always done this to me in his non-hallucinogenic SF -- everything is flat, one-dimensional, peopled by stick figures. (In his better work, of course, that's an asset because it isn't even supposed to be real.)

Then too, a lot of the themes are so old they provoke laughter rather than involvement. Delany irritates me in this way. He's using old pulp plots and turning them to his own ends, sometimes successfully, usually not. I don't think he really understands the impact of myth on most people. Occasionally he hits something, such as the paragraph or two in *EINSTEIN INTERSECTION* when his character ruminates on the myth figures of The Beatles, including the one who couldn't sing, Ringo. That's where it's at, now. That's what will grip people. Greek figures mean something to a handful of scholars but they're a curiosity to the masses, me included. Delany gets by because he's got a lot of ammunition in other departments. There are signs he's getting better: *NOVA*, which I'm finally reading, has its moments.

On the other hand I mentioned some of these thoughts to Len Bailes when he was up here from Los Angeles last Fall and he touted an old Delany novel, *EMPIRE STAR*, as a counter-argument. So I tried to read it. There's this quest, see, by a simple, innocent kid who nonetheless is Something Special only he doesn't know it, and he's going off to the night stars to see a lot of complex nonsimplex civilizations, carrying this funny kind of jewel thing which he has to deliver to the Empire Star and you see Only He Can Carry It (why not mail it? oh well) so it's lucky he has along his wonderful ocarina because he has to play music to these funny beings the Lill, you know, and he must sit in the hold of this ship and play and it's very hard work because the Lill make everybody who is around them sad (so why not pipe music in? oh well) but luckily he gets a friend who is a computer and together they go off to find the Empire Star (why should the computer care? oh well) and it's kinda nice y' know because this kid is like Huck Finn a little bit and... Garbage.

On the other hand now I can sympathize with every SF novelist I know because writing a novel has impressed me with the work demanded. At first you think it's so loose that you can put anything you like in. But then I started to think. (Always a dangerous tack.) I've seldom liked books that were constructed as though a monomaniac had written them. That is, books that had lots of wallop in its science or characterization or background or plot or fundamental idea, but never in more than one or two of these things. Balance, yes, that's the thing, I thought. But this means there's suddenly not enough room left in the book, because those things take space to do correctly. If you opt for a standard length then you've got to make every word work for its' money. This sort of thinking got me back into the basic short story claustrophobia I'd just escaped. Suddenly the prospect of doing things the way I'd fondly thought I'd do them assumes enormous proportions: I'd have to write a quarter of a million words, just to get it all in. And in fact in SF we're starting to get people who do just that. John Brunner seems to be following Dos Passos in constructing huge tomes like *STAND ON ZANZIBAR*. Piers Anthony recently talked about his novel *THE MACROSCOPE* which runs somewhere around 200,000 words. I suppose these are legitimate apporaches and I wish their proponents well. But the thought of writing that much myself is frightening. For me the answer lies in a comment Damon Knight made on a novelette I wrote last year (*Deeper Than The Darkness*): "This story should be like a poem, condensed." Perhaps so. Except that requires a very high standard of writing; words so clear they slice the air; phrases that won't let go.

That prospect is even more frightening than the million-word novel. And mind, this is all in pursuit of a mere well-balanced SF novel, not an item that will win the Pulitzer. It was then that I began to realize just how difficult a field SF is and why we have so little that will stack up against the mainstream on strictly mainstream terms. The specific areas in which SF is strong lie outside most writing as it's viewed today. That old Cosmic View we know so well is as fascinating and valid

as it ever was, but it's diffusing slowly into other areas of writing. The bestseller stock item that comes closest is probably the historical chronicle like HAWAII or EXODUS or other Michener efforts.

So I suppose SF will retain all of its present vitality and continue to interest a small segment of the population. Certainly a lot of the new consciousness that is welling up through the New Wave is now bringing a lot of new people in. There's not much communication between the factions, either. ANALOG continues to pick up circulation among some mysteriously growing crowd of engineers and logicians, but I honestly don't see why. Tim Leary was in Berkeley recently and commented on the student strike at Cal Berkeley over the Black Studies Department. He pointed out that on one side was the administration and the Reagan administration, average age 55; on the other were the students, average age 20. There wasn't any question who was going to win, he said, spreading his arms and smiling in that fuzzy way he has. By analogy I'd say there isn't any question about what will happen to ANALOG either. The audience for that sort of thing has to die. But things are never that simple. Somewhere there are a lot of uptight kids who love to read Christopher Anvil puzzle stories. There must be. I won't be writing for them, though. It's a waste of time.

Terry Carr recently mentioned a sense of wonder he gets about the prospect that SF may again have something to say about what's happening to mankind. I can dig that; I feel somewhat the same way. A lot of the kids are into Delany and Disch and I suppose I can see it. But I still think the most moving combination of these divergent tastes have yet to be made. Somewhere there's a middle ground that doesn't discard plot but also doesn't get hung up on sophistry and cute ANALOG-style games. (Imagine living in the conceptual universe of a Campbell editorial!)

To some extent all this concern is misplaced, anyway. The rev is indeed upon us, thank God, but SF is only a small corner of what's coming down. The printed word is probably the last medium in which the McLuhan ideas should be applied. It's by necessity pretty linear. Movies, rock, visual arts, yes. I think the attempts in this direction haven't cut much ice (so far) in SF. In our little corner a lot can be suggested by those ol' nonlinear techniques, but a lot can be obscured, too. SF casts the reader into totally strange situations. Hand him a new viewpoint or insight without any of his normal referents and there's some chance he'll get lost. So this approach must be handled carefully and I think it often isn't. NEW WORLDS presents some of the best and the worst in this line. Two items that *did* work were the Ballard pieces on the Kennedys. The Downhill Motor Race bit was fantastic.

A lot of all this is highly personal. I sometimes wonder what James Blish would be saying if he dealt intensively with some New Wave stories.

All this theory and speculation places a heavy weight on the shoulders of anyone who wants to write decent SF. The field is damnably difficult; it seems to be very easy to just plain run dry and never have anything more to say (few writers stop there, though -- they just keep turning out hackwork). All I've written here is shop talk by a guy who thinks of himself as basically a fan, not a pro. So I don't let the weighty significance of my obligations bow my head. I don't think anybody should. It doesn't seem improbable that new writers can get fouled up trying to decide issues like how to characterize people in the future, if they just sit around and ruminate on it. The only way to find out is by doing. After all, anybody who goes into writing should like the act of writing itself, not the talking about it. The woods are full of the grandmothers who attend writing workshops and gab about character and pace and style. All the good theory in the world doesn't put one word of fiction on a page unless somebody somewhere likes to write.

The more I've written, the more I've realized that for me the best stuff comes out when I relax, do my homework before I come close to the typewriter, and just let it flow. It may not be a coincidence that it's also the most enjoyable way to write. For me all this is a hobby; if it isn't fun it's not worth the time. And if some readers enjoy a story of mine, all the better. That's really what it's all about.



RANDOM FACTORS

letters...

Walter Breen
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Ordinarily I have great respect for Chip Delany but this time (Sketch for 2-part Invention) I must conclude that he has not been equal to himself. The analogy quartet:symphony :: x:mainstream novel requires for the missing x part not science fiction but mainstream fiction using a more intimate approach and more exiguous means. Here this would require, not to work the poor old analogy to death, that x have greater condensation, compression, terseness, concision; fewer characters and less leisure for development; and withal a type of pacing consistent with all this. Clearly, what is wanted instead for x is either *short story* or *novella*, and a little thought will show exactly why.

It strikes me that a more proper analogy might be science fiction:mainstream fiction :: Expressionism:the world of modern painting (or modern music). When the Expressionist movement was recognized, decades ago, it was explicitly seen as exploring a specific range of idioms, methods and subject matters not well handled in the mainstream (and these remarks hold equally for music and visual art). You can fill in the rest yourself; it seems clear enough. As an attempt to rehabilitate SF from the usual label of category fiction which it happens to share with westerns, nurse novels, sex novels, gay novels, and now, ghodhelpus, occult/witchcraft novels, Chip's effort seems hardly necessary. "Gild the farthing as you will, / Yet it is a farthing still." Why feel any compulsion to defend SF? It doesn't need it, as Chip himself pointed out -- though it was not excellence that originally made SF a seperate form, but early concentration on ideas rather than character/plot/atmosphere/entertainment value.

Explaining a joke may make it hard for someone afterwards to laugh, but explaining art does not destroy its "beauty, meaning, etc." As a little thought might have shown to John Foyster, some forms of art are so foreign to us that explanation of one kind or another is going to be necessary if we are to understand them at all. Nor do I mean contemporary absurdities, either; I had in mind such things as Chinese classical operas, Noh dramas, certain types of Indian dance where the story being pantomined is likely to be unfamiliar to a western audience, and even midieval art where only through a knowledge of iconography can you figure out who is doing what to whom and why. I am not here concerned with his wrist-slapping at Piers Anthony, but with a principle. Possibly I have an axe to grind, being now to an increasing degree a reviewer, commentator, and (in one sense) critic and analyst. I would hate to think that writing which points out some powerful thematic materials in a work of art thereby destroys it; rather, I'd like to believe that it helps make the work more accesible to interested or potentially interested people.

If George Fergus doesn't know whether sense of wonder is in the story or its reader, at least this much is certain: his own S of W could use some freshening up. I am paraphrasing for his benefit something that MZB said at the 1967 Westercon: to a person with that One Touch of Goshwow (which is what the Sense of Wonder is really all about), even something other people might find overfamiliar can be encountered for the first time, or even on rereading, and his perceptions will be alive, aware, sensitized, without the "is this just old hat?" prejudgment -- and he is likely to see things overlooked by others. It is, not to be blasphemous, part of the inner meaning in "Unless ye become as little children..."

Neal Goldfarb
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The Bug Jack Barron Papers were great. The last four paragraphs sum up my feelings about New Wave almost exactly. And if J.J. Pierce is right that New Wave is out to destroy SF it is only out to do that in the same way that Modern Man destroyed the Neanderthal Man. I suspect that if Pierce sees a copy of this, he'll write in saying how Spinrad is conceited and this and that. Maybe he is conceited, but if he really believes BJB is a great book, why shouldn't he say so? Anyway, what does how conceited a guy is have to do with how good a writer he is?

Mike Gilbert's folio, along with the rest of the art, is excellent. I'm glad we're getting to see more of him.

John J. Pierce
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Was interested in Spinrad's commentary, since I had just finished reading BJB when your spring issue arrived. But while he may have proven himself to be enthused about his work, he hasn't proved BJB is a good book.

It didn't bother me in the least to see "shit," "fuck," and "piss" in print, since I've been aware of these words for years. Nor was I at all upset at seeing explicit sex scenes (though some of them seemed to me to be rather silly).

What does bother me is Spinrad's triteness. To begin with, we have a trite man vs. machine plot -- the same sort of thing the ancestors of the New Thing were objecting to a decade ago. Of course, I have nothing against man vs. machine plots myself -- properly handled, they can be a lot of fun. BJB might actually have been a great novel if Spinrad had shown more genuine feeling for his material instead of trying to play the prima donna.

This book is supposed to take place in the 1980's, but even the background is sloppy. Population is 230 million (check Census Bureau projections!), and 20% of it is black (vs. 12% now). How does Spinrad account for this? The New Left has seceded from the Democrats to form the Social Justice Coalition -- yet Democrats are still the dominant party. The power structure is the same as today's -- yet, for some reason, marijuana has been legalized. Mississippi has elected a Negro governor -- how? Whites have been a majority there for years. Think the rednecks are going to vote SJC? So much for the background. Now all the principal characters talk and think in slang -- but 1969 slang. Does Spinrad really think that in 1984 (or whatever year it is) everyone will still be saying "where it's at," "name of the game," "nitty gritty," etc., ad nauseum? Then we have Spinrad's attempts at imagery. Some of them might have been good -- if only they weren't repeated endlessly. But by the sixth or seventh time we read "fading black circles," "knight in soft-flesh armor," "mind-fuck," "tubes up nose down throat," "fetaled," "phosphor dot image on the prompt-board of his mind," "lizard man," and similar atrocities, the emotional reaction is exactly nil. Then there's the lame pun that gives the book its title, and which

Spinrad nurses through 327 pages as if it were the idea of the century. And his belief that to be "evocative" means merely stringing a bunch of words together with hyphens. And constant allusions to "slimy" this and "wet green" that are straight out of *Wierd Tales*, man!

At first I thought maybe this was all deliberate camp. But Spinrad indicates in your fmz that he was dead serious about it all. Yeccccchh! Thank god we've got some REAL new writers like Zelazny. BJB a work of genius? Man, that bugs me -- right where it's at!

Fergus made some good points about "Chthon." So it's an elaborate structure. Big deal -- all the structure does is conceal a moldy old plot -- boy meets minionette, boy loses minionette, minionette turns out to be boy's mother. So what else is new? My GOD, man, have you any idea how fans are starved for *really new* ideas in SF?

Mark Mumper
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Norman Spinrad's article was an excellent behind-the-scenes look at his monumental novel, which appears to be the best this year. I like explanatory, enlightening articles such as this -- they not only provide insight into the writer's personality but add to the enjoyment of work under discussion. BJB is unique (to say the least) in its excellent use of the McLuhanesque technique of electric, direct sensory prose. Spinrad's characters are ever more real by the shifting viewpoint and extensive use of subjective third person. Utilizing the characters' thoughts brings the reader closer to them, and combining this with faultless objective characterization increases the power of the story.

The Gilbert folio was good -- he combines some elements of Gaughan and Powers, but with a definite style of his own. His thin lines and light shading are in his favor; he has the quality of these artists without copying them, and with some development he should come along nicely.

Delany's article epitomizes what I'd like to see happen to SF: an acceptance of the valid premises of the New Wave by its opponents, and a serious critical evaluation of contemporary works as science fiction, not as mainstream. Something great is happening to science fiction, but some people are under the impression that it will destroy it or turn it into an unrecognizable monster. On the contrary, the established forms such as space opera-adventure and "hard science" will be as strong as ever, nor will the sense of wonder die; an expansion will take place, is taking place, that will include these things and more, and it will improve the field immensely.

Harry Warner, Jr.
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Samuel R. Delany makes much better sense in his new wave explanation and defense than the Foundation people do in their jeremiads attacking it. But I still get an uncomfortable feeling that both sides are personifying too much. There really is no such thing as "science fiction" but people are writing about it as if it can be captured and wounded and brainwashed. Science fiction stories actually do exist, they are written by science fiction authors, and arguments over the new wave might be more intelligent if people tried to say occasionally which stories they mean and what authors they're referring to. (I've abandoned completely any hope that anyone will ever define his term when he says "mainstream.")

The artwork is magnificent. I can't honestly claim that Michael Gilbert's art

means as much to me as that by a Gaughan or Bode, but I can admire it very much in a more intellectual way -- it's something like the difference between a photographer's excellent portrait of a friend and an equally fine photographic study of someone you've never seen before. Maybe more exposure to the Gilbert world is all I need. Maybe you didn't plan it that way, but the work of other artists in the issue seems to have a unifying theme: surprise because it's different from your expectations from these particular people. Even Rick Sneary's heart must be softer now that he's seen the Bode full-pager near the start of this issue, a Bergeron drawing of a man's head and shoulders is almost as rare as Bergeron's own head and shoulders at a fan meeting, and Steve Stiles on page 48 is remarkably conservative for Stiles. I liked the changes.

Rick Sneary
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I started the Spinrad piece with little enthusiasm. Spinrad effects me as being an interloper, who has entered our field without any real feeling for it, and who wants to change it to his own ideas of what it should be. Ellison, who is all out for change too (what kind depends on when you see him), has "paid his dues" as it were, and has demonstrated a love for the field. I'd also read about all the praise or damn of BJB I care to, but as this delved into the background of how it was written, and what he felt about the problems resulting from it, turned out to be pretty interesting. More so, I suspect, than the book would to me. I don't agree with [Spinrad] any more than before, but maybe I understand his feelings better.

I personally disagree with Foyster's view. While there may be a minor thought that writing about one's book might help the sales, I hardly think this is the main motive. There is always more to a story than meets the eye. I recently read C.S. Forester's *The Hornblower Companion*, which largely deals with how he wrote the series, and it is just as interesting, if not as exciting, as any of the novels. Seeing how any skilled craftsman works has always interested me. As someone said in a review recently, these articles about how a book was written tell more about the author and the story than three or four regular book reviews, and are usually more interesting.

Ted White's column was probably the most pointless bit of writing I've seen him do. Certainly for a column in another magazine. There was nothing wrong with it; Ted is a good writer, and can make almost anything mildly interesting.

I wonder if the lack of contact with the new fandoms in Japan, Italy, etc., might be similar to those expressed by Ethel Lindsay about the generation gap in English fandom. The problem in England, in part, seems to come from the fact that so many new fans came in at the same time they banded together, rather than mix with the older, established fans. I was wondering...as there were so few fans in the world, those who lived in Germany, France, etc., almost had to join Anglo-Fandom to have anyone to talk to. Now there are so many fans, as well as so much home grown SF, that they can supply [their own] demands. The feeling of, "why go to the effort of trying to correspond in a foreign language, when there are so many people here to write" is quite understandable -- to a very lazy fan.

John Foyster
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I got all choked up reading about Norman Spinrad's great new invention: "punctuation" was a very good name for it, and I can't understand why someone didn't think of it before. Breaking up sentences so that people will read them in a particular way is breathtaking and groundshaking. Just as well that was there, though, because I couldn't make much sense of the article as a whole.

This time I get to comment on the book reviews. If Dick Lupoff was 'far from being an expert Egyptologist' then surely it would have been better to have reviewed one of the other volumes in this series -- one that contained more familiar material. As it is it looks as though Isaac Asimov has managed to get across a few wrong impressions -- Manetho, for example, lived around 300BC, and that's hardly midieval these days. His list of kings, which only survived in mucked-up form in Josephus et al., was viewed with hesitation until various other lists came to light which confirmed much of what he listed (king-lists at Abydos and Sakkara, for example). His suggestions as to the lengths the kings reigned have not been boxed out, overall, most particularly in the early cases, which is hardly surprising.

As for the race of the original (?) Egyptians, it might be worth noting that Manetho's first king, Menes, got to be a big shot by uniting Upper and Lower Egypt, which until then had been separate nations (and there generally was rivalry in the One Kingdom). The Upper Egyptians were certainly of basic African stock, if that's any use as a classification, but I don't know that it has been possible to say much about the Mediterranean end. They must have been semitic, I guess. It is interesting to recall that in Durrell's *CLEA* (I hope -- might have been one of the earlier volumes) Nessim Hosnani makes it plain that today's Copts regard themselves as the original Egyptians ('gypt's'), at least in the sense that we normally think about Egyptians. Lane's *Manners And Customs Of The Modern Egyptians* is a pretty good volume on life in Egypt over the few years before the 1800's and Lane-Poole's volume on Cairo gives a fairish but sketchy picture of that part of Egypt over the years of the present era.

I haven't read *Chocky* -- but I was pretty sure that *Venus And The Seven Sexes* had a magazine version: Dick's punch-line was perfect.

I got knuckled enough last time I commented on this piece of Delany's, and I'm not going to go through that again: but it is worth noting that this piece is different in subject matter and apparent intent from all the other stuff you've had in issues 14 and 15 (Ted White's piece excepted). For that matter, the '1965' after Ted's column makes me wonder when it was really written. The fact that Ted's concern was to stop stuff in his pockets getting wet is incongruous, but shows that Ted keeps a cool head when he is in a capsizing canoe.

I certainly did misconstrue your basic reasoning for publishing the articles in *ALGOL 14* if it was as you suggest. What I didn't misconstrue was the nature of the articles. As a matter of fact, looking through the printed section of the letter I see no suggestion that I'm concerned with your basic reasoning. But you start your explanation with: "The basis for what I hope to publish..."

Surely what you said is true, but that doesn't mean that this is the intended effect. Science fiction writers are human, that's all, and one can't expect them to be altruistic. This is, in essence, what I said, and the fact that you were moved to reply (and, if John Bangsund's info is correct, so were several others) suggests that indeed some people may be upset at the thought that SF writers have feet of clay. Perhaps it is the remoteness effect, which has occasionally been suggested to me as a disadvantage to Australian readers. On the contrary, I suspect that this very remoteness helps to insure that an Australian's view is more objective -- we don't have to remember favours done, drinks bought, pleasant parties etc.

Would you like to publish my proposed article *Who's Up Who In Science Fiction?*

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Many thanks for *ALGOL 15*. I find myself particularly impressed with your bracketed comments in reply to John Foyster's letter; the more so because these remarks

appear in an issue containing articles by Norman Spinrad and Samuel Delany which illustrate the point you make.

I find their contributions illuminating, and that's more than I can say for Mr. Foyster's objections to what he terms "advertising". It seems to me that writers -- science fiction and otherwise -- are, if anything, far too modest. In a world where politicians campaigning for election indulge in endless self-praise, and where statesmen (politicians who have succeeded in being elected) issue self-congratulatory bulletins on the hour, it is difficult to see much positive virtue in self-effacement on the part of the so-called creative talents. Indeed, such personal effacement is singularly lacking on the part of their fellow-artists in other fields of endeavor. The public is quite accustomed to boasting and pretension from actors, musicians, conductors, composers, vocalists, television "hosts" and "guests", painters, sculptors, motion picture directors and producers, professional athletes ("I'll molder the bum in the foist round!"), dress designers, etc., and I've yet to read a "humble" interview with a so-called successful business-man. Why is it that the illiterate braggadocio of a baseball player is regarded as "quaint" and the bombast of a Mike Todd producer-type hailed as "colorful", but a writer's discussion of his own work is stigmatized as conceit? My criterion is one of interest. Sports fans are interested in their champions, movie and television fans dig "personalities", and as a science fiction fan I'm interested in what Spinrad, Delany and any other writer has to say about creativity and the products thereof. If Mr. Foyster can inform me as to just why writers -- and, apparently, only writers -- must assume a demure and blushing posture of silent self-depreciation, I'll listen with open ears and open mind. Meanwhile, I hope to continue reading and enjoying "advertisements" of my fellow writers in ALGOL.

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John Foyster raises an interesting point. Suddenly pro authors are all over fandom, explaining their works, defending them, touting their own earnestness and intensity. Not just engaging in theoretical discussions of the nature of SF, that is, but speaking out in reference to specific works. The acme of this endeavor is Norman Spinrad's job on "Bug Jack Barron," which succeeded in stirring more interest about an unpublished book than anything I've seen in SF before, the "Dangerous Visions" promotion included.

I don't object at all to self-promotion, and in Norman's case he did indeed have a position to defend, since his book had been widely attacked before publication. What John objects to -- and I do too -- is the artistic insecurity that a lot of this shoptalk reveals. If a writer knows what he's doing, he doesn't need to explain himself to his public. There's the book; take it or leave it. A work of art shouldn't come with footnotes. Cf Delany's contribution in this issue; it puts forth a theory of the art of SF (a completely incorrect one, I think, but that's another matter) but doesn't attempt to "explain" any particular Delany work. Which is as it should be. Of course, we're all avid consumers of literary gossip, which is what makes the account of Spinrad's trials with BJB so fascinating; but I think it's unhealthy for writers to spend energy telling fans what it was they were trying to do in their books. Describe rejection woes, yes; interpret your own symbolism, no. It leads to a paralyzing self-consciousness or to an inversion of the artistic process in which the writer starts planning his theoretical explanations before he writes his book.

I find it fascinating when a writer Tells All about his conflicts with the publishing world. I find it embarrassing when he sets out to explain in explicit fashion how he packed all sorts of clever goodies into his novel. That sort of stuff leads me to think that the writer isn't confident he's getting his point across; and overexplicitness is an artistic sin, whether done in the writing or after the fact in fanzines.



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Norman's article on BJB may prove valuable to some people who are still trying to figure out where his head's at; he manages to project successfully onto paper the friendly, quite serious and generally unassuming guy that I see him as. I'd argue with only two things in this article: the tacit assumption that *The Men In The Jungle* was a good novel and a credit to Larry Ashmead (on the contrary: if Larry had rejected TMITJ with scorn and then happily bought BJB, instead of the other way around, his record would've been improved immeasurably), and second, Norman's statement that "If you want to know whether a given writer is New Wave or not, ask him: 'Do you consider yourself an artist?' If he says yes, he's New Wave. It's as simple as that." No it isn't, as I'm sure Norman would agree if he'd thought twice about it. Ask Ted Sturgeon if he thinks he's an artist and he'll say yes; ask Ray Bradbury and he'll say the same; so probably would Arthur C. Clarke, Avram Davidson and any number of other SF writers who have written excellent stuff that would be hard as hell to classify as "New Wave." For that matter, so would a number of the worst hacks the SF field has had. On the other hand, I bet if you asked R. A. Lafferty the same question, you'd get a horselaugh.

Harry Warner is operating under some misassumptions about hardcover SF publishing at Doubleday when he suggests that perhaps it would be most sensible to publish in hardcover only those novels which show that they'll be long-term bestsellers of their type. Doubleday's SF program isn't at all geared for exploiting the long-term sales potential of their SF books. Look at Bob Silverberg's *Hawkshaw Station*, published just a few months ago and already out of print, as I understand it, with absolutely no plans for a reissue. Or ask Harlan about *Dangerous Visions*, a book with vast sales potential if ever there was one, but which Doubleday is reportedly not keeping in print. I offer this not as a slam against Doubleday -- I know little of their business reasons for not reissuing these and other books, and I assume they do have such reasons -- but to explode the myth that the value of hardcover publication is that it gives the kind of permanence to a book that Harry Warner wrote of.

One more argument and I'll retire. Piers Anthony leaps gladly on Dick Lupoff's contention that *Picnic On Paradise* was only a mainstream novel transposed to another planet, and says that this insight tells him (Piers) a lot about my editing of the Specials. Actually, it doesn't, because the insight is spurious. *Picnic On Paradise* is a mainstream novel in exactly the same way *Flowers For Algernon* is just a character study: superficially only. Dick missed the point of POP, and so will anyone else who regards it as just a trek adventure starting at point A and going to point B. That's the construction of the book, all right, but it's not the book. The book itself uses this simple story-line as the base on which to string a series of incidents revelatory of the characters of the people in this future world -- and their characters in turn allow us to see what kind of world they must have grown up in. That's what the book is about; it's not an adventure story as such, not a novel of character as such, but a novel that, like so many unquestioned SF novels from *Brave New World* to *Fahrenheit 451* to *The Space Merchants* to you name it, shows us the godawful kind of future world we may well be heading for. And that is absolutely dead-center pure science fiction, by my lights.

Roy Tackett
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In re Lupoff's questions on the Egyptians in "Book Week", one reason Asimov skipped lightly over the origins of the original Egyptians may be because nobody knows for sure. They came into Egypt from somewhere else around six or seven thousand years B.P., displaced the primitive hunter-gatherers who then occupied the area and settled along the Nile. Possible origin, since they had agriculture, is

the Iranian highlands, although that is just a guess, as is any other speculation on their origin. They were caucasians, not black Africans; this is not speculation but is shown by their paintings, etc. Indeed, during the 12th Dynasty, about 3850 B.P., a series of fortifications were built along the upper Nile to prevent passage of Negroes into Egypt.

Richard Labonte
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I was impressed by the Mike Gilbert portfolio you presented; I had seen several of his paintings at Boskone, and, while they were as good as most other paintings, I wasn't seized by any of them. But the art in the portfolio is something else...it's very impressive -- worth looking at, instead of merely skimming over.

I quibble with John Foyster's quibbles over the appearance of pros in ALGOL explaining about or elaborating on their books. I like to compare what an author thinks he has with what I think he has done in a book. We both may be folling ourselves, but it's a good way to appreciate a book more.

Bruce R. Gillespie
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62 pages is a beguiling figure, and one could be forgiven for expecting 62 pages reading. This proved not to be so. Mike Gilbert's illustrations and set-pieces will please some, but for me they were a waste of beautiful heavy paper. 62 pages should provide two or three hours reading if one lingers, but ALGOL didn't.

I haven't been very nice to ALGOL have I? My expectations are perhaps different from the wares you are flogging. John Foyster's suspicions must surely have been on the tips of the typewriter fingers of many fans before he put it bluntly. Take one Norman Spinrad for instance: producer of several entertaining short stories and a couple of novels that gave him a bit of writing practice. Burst into prominence for Australians with the news that NEW WORLDS 180 had been banned in England and Australia because of the third episode of *Bug Jack Barron*. Gained notoriety when Moorcock slashed the centre from the novel in serialization, and announced that Avon were releasing it uncut. The Spinnish legend capped off when I finally got around to reading the *New Worlds* serialization. And now -- the Bug Jack Barron Papers, as pretentious a title as I've seen. Yet another author self-advertising, will be the first reaction of many.

But the extraordinary fact is that Spinrad is a novelist who actually knows what his own novel is about! This must be unprecedented in literature. Apart from that bit where Spinrad tries to tell Ashmead where to get off while handing him his coat politely, the rest of the article is quite interesting. Among other things it makes my review in ASFR redundant. Annoying. The book did "write itself", although it did take a few too many pages to do it. Spinrad doesn't do himself much credit by seeming to write with a typewriter on one side and a McLuhan volume on the other. However, BJB seems to me to be the first novel that converts the current McLuhan wash into an artistic framework. The television sequences must be the most exciting stuff to appear in SF (or, at least, American SF) for years. A magnificent understanding of what it is like to be reduced to a series of phosphor dots.

The old saying is that you must know the rules before you can break them. Spinrad's flare for breaking the lingual rules correctly is, in general, done in a most convincing way. The rhythms, again mostly in the television sequences, are well-regulated. The extrapolation of current sociological trends is never better than gouache but is still more on the track than any SF novel previously published. (That is not

a contradiction -- "Society" as an organic identity has never been treated well by SF writers, and Brunner is not half as acute a writer as Spinrad.) As for "getting inside the minds" of the characters -- well, it was as good a way as any of noting that Barron and colleagues could match Benedict blow by blow for vulgarity and paranoia. Spinrad's world is pretty nasty, which is the main reason why it comes over so effectively.

As for all the other stuff in Spinrad's article -- it seems just another reason for not taking up writing. But why is BJB, an extraordinarily Red-Blooded-American-Bhoy-Ultra-Moral book at base, so hard to seel when Portnoy's Complaint is selling like nylon stockings? The possible answer is that PC (which, naturally, our government will not let us read) deals with sex in a realistic manner. If Barron is a Bastard, then his bedroom antics are not much more tasteful. Score one against Spinrad, but don't worry too much. The book's basically a slightly woozy metaphysical novel ("the only fantasy in the world is the news program" type of thing) with occasional swathes of reality to make it interesting.

Lenny Kaye
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I found ALGOL very enjoyable, making me long for the days of mailboxes jammed with fmz, ripped fingernails, etc. etc. In a way, it was strange to read...new controversies, issues of Great Importance, fannish strife, all over the place and me in the midst of it, bewildered. Well, not really, but it's really amazing how just being Away From It All for a couple of years can change things. Anyway, after the initial cultural shock, I dug in and really had a good time.

Since the most interesting thing I've found since making a semi-return to fandom is this New Wave controversy, I was especially interested in Spinrad's article on Bug Jack's creation. I spoke with Dick Lupoff at the Lunacon about the New Wave controversy and he filled me in on all the latest gore. I also picked up there that fanzine of the Genteel tradition, *Renaissance* and read it with a little of the Sense of Wonder that I used to have back there in ye olden times. "Tired of sick stories with sick characters by sick writers?" Wow. Anyway, I figured to gain a perspective, I should do a little reading, so it was a natural thing, since *Bug Jack Barron* had just been released in pb, to pick up Spinrad's book and read it. Which I did.

It took a while for me to get into it. I had a lot of negative reaction at first, for a number of reasons. For one, Spinrad's world of the 1970's annoyed me because it was so clearly an extension of the cultural symbols of the 1960's....i.e., Acapulco Gold, etc., etc. And while on one level, this is A Good because we're clearly only one year away from the next decade, it also struck me as the kind of cutesy thing to do, and also something which will probably date in a kind of extraordinary way, at least by the time of the mid-70's.

But then, I guess I'm just being picky...not an untrue statement since I read the book in a picky, critical sort of manner. But the real point of all this is that as I neared the end, I began to realize just how good *Bug Jack Barron* really was. When Barron and Howards are face to face via the boob tube, and the confrontation between the two rises towards its climax, I was so involved that when I ultimately looked up, I had a strange sense of not knowing where I was...that the real world was in the book and I was in a state of non-reality. It was really fine, since the last time that happened I was about twelve and reading Tarzan. And in the end, this only showed me that Spinrad wasn't really that revolutionary an author. Discount the styling (which, as part of Joyce's bequest to the future, is not really all that New), and Spinrad's recognition that we live in a world where Sex, contrary to popular belief, does exist, and what you have is a good, down-home adventure story in the Olde Traditions. Not so strange at all. *Bug Jack Barron* has a good vs. evil theme set forth in nearly black and white dichotomy, a love story to stir the ages, and a

confrontation in which the world is at stake. Take John Carter from Mars and place him in New York, 1975, and what do you have...

Which brings me slowly around to Samuel Delany's piece. Science fiction is coming of age and in a sense, it makes me sad since it forbodes a very heavy time on the horizon. Science fiction is a genre, much like rock and roll used to be before the days of the Beatles. Since then, writing about rock and playing it, I've watched the growing pains, the erection of critical standards where none existed before, the slow transformation of a genre into an Art form. And seeing it in rock, I fear for the same in SF. What I'm talking about is the conversion of the kind of intense innocent seriousness that has been part of science fiction for years, now begin to be changed into pretentiousness when it thinks in terms of Art. What is lost is the freedom and the spontaneity...what is gained must be weighed against it and I'm not sure that the gain offsets the loss.

John Brunner
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Yes, it was yours truly spotted on TV by Ted & Robin...but please don't remind me of the party at which the film was taken. We were conned into it by a smooth-talking guy who asked for lots of intelligent and interesting guests -- and then flooded us out with people we didn't know, dredged from some Chelsea cellar discotheque, who drank 70 pounds-worth of liquor, did over 70 pounds-worth of damage and did nasty things like vomiting in wardrobes.

Never again, baby. Never again.

Ed Cox
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I found the article by Norman Spinrad very enlightening. I do think a story ought to be able to do all the work on its own without sidenotes from the author. I disagree with some of his interpretation of "New Wave". Long before NW came along some SF writers probably thought of their work as "art". Possibly Ray Bradbury as a prime example. But let's face it, many SF writers wrote for a living turning out all types of stories besides SF. And a lot of their work had something to say even if they didn't consider it art. I figure a lot of guys would starve trying to sell "art" if they didn't try the bread-and-butter stuff first!

The Mike Gilbert art segment displays talent, imagination and a firm grasp of an essence of science fiction feeling. I'm not sure how to say this; perhaps that is why he has expressed it so well visually. This portfolio is another in what seems to be an increasing number to appear in fanzines in the last year or three. There was a long time when 90% of such work was not worth the trouble to put it in print. Luckily, those days appear to be done.

Richard Delap
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Spinrad's Bug Jack Barron Papers was rather good on the first reading, but I've since read BJB and the article now seems heavy with biased opinion and heavy "advertisements for myself." "Explicit sex scenes were required for certain plot reasons" says Spinrad, though the *only* reason he does give is "because Barron's involvement with television and politics was complexly bound up in his feelings about his estranged wife." This leads into an explanation for his use of four-letter words, a limp explanation, I might add. In other words, Spinrad keeps implying he [is] going to explain then goes on to offer no explanations of any kind! Spinrad's

ideas of complexities are on a par with "Hi Diddle Diddle" -- what the author (or reader) would like to read into it, not what is really there. There are individual scenes which are sometimes impressive -- especially the television show episodes -- but the book on the whole is only striking in its mediocrity. Spinrad should save his drumbeating for someone who deserves it...which, if read the right way, might mean he *should* do it for himself.

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Norman Spinrad's Bug Jack Barron Papers interested me, and not solely because I had a spot mention therein. I had, you see, a similar experience with Doubleday and Larry Ashmead, and I have the impression that a number of other writers did too. The truth is, that publisher has been pretty arrogant about such things, while receiving applause for the number of SF books it publishes. It has been said that Doubleday does not buy your novel, it buys the reputation you made on the preceding novel. I suspect it bounces better books than it publishes, all too often.

Certainly BJB far surpasses most of this years output there. But maybe I'm teed off because of all the novels of mine bounced there.

Also an interesting definition Spinrad makes for new wave: if a writer considers himself an artist, he's NW. So does Larry Niven consider himself an artist? Does Lin Carter? Mack Reynolds? Keith Laumer? Richard Shaver? Could lead to an interesting situation.

John Foyster's discussion of me and others who elect to discuss their own work in fanzines reminds me of the old test for witchcraft. Dunk the suspect in water for five or ten minutes, completely submerged. If she survives, she's a witch. Or the American Negro: if, growing tired of waiting for rights that have been promised but not delivered for a century, he makes a public demonstration, then he is condemned for hurting his cause. And if a writer explains his work, he has relegated that work to limbo.

One or two guesses where such reasoning gives me a pain.

George Fergus: why are the parallel sequences in *Chthon* reversed? Because, in order to unify the novel, I had to begin and end with the prison episode. All else followed. I was, as Spinrad implied, primarily concerned with artistry, not chronology. But I doubt I could have sold the novel at all, had I started at the beginning; editors simply don't read that far about seven-year-old boys. This is one of the things I mean when I complain about the narrowness of editors; unreasonable compromises have to be made in order to get a book into print, and so it suffers. I make the best compromise I can between art and commerce.

And why did I insert deliberately obscure passages, especially since I don't approve of obscure writing? Same reason. Had I described Aton's penis and his mother's vulva and how the one penetrated the other, I would have been banned from publication outside the pornography field. So I made it figurative and obscure, talking about gardens and meanings and warm waters, trusting that the perceptive reader would comprehend while the average bookburner would not. With the easing of censorship recently, I have become more explicit; I refer you to stories of mine scheduled to appear in *Again*, *Dangerous Visions* and *Worlds Of Tomorrow*. If you thought I was just being contrary, you betray which side you are on. There may be writers who do things without good reason; I am not one of them.

I believe it would be pointless to attempt to discuss symbolism with you, so I'll skip it.

Richard Delap: thanks for pointing out the obvious to those who evidently found it too obscure: my essay on *Chthon* showed little but contempt for my readership. It was an explanation written after I found that *not one person* understood the novel. I was put out, and I was not seeking to win friends. Yet I get accused of advertising...

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Terry Alan Hughes; Jeffrey D. Smith (several letters); Thomas Burnett Swann (whose article about Dolphins will appear soon); George Turner; Mike Symes (his excellent artwork was squeezed out of this issue); Vern Bennett; Louis Morra; Leigh Couch; Gary Labowitz; Jack Promo; Dick Geis; Dick Lupoff (whose comprehensive review of DANGEROUS VISIONS will appear next issue, just before the next volume, AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS, is published); David C. Piper; Creath Thorne (who is working on a major article, maybe, which will appear some year now); Ed Reed; Archie Mercer; Peter Singleton; Gerald Bishop (who did much work for me on a never-to-be-published SFMarkets issue of Algol. Sorry for the wasted effort, but my directions have changed in the past year); Joseph Siclari; Brian Burley; Jack Williamson; Jim Young; Jerry Kaufman ("I have a very good memory for forgetting things"); Geraldo Sobral; Someone whose name is written in Japanese; Redd Boggs; Jose Sanz; and James Juracic.

THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH

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This final note: a lot of typos in this issue went uncorrected simply to get the issue out; twenty months between issues really *is* too long.

