

# DIFFERENT

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## HOW I WAS DRAGGED, KICKING AND SCREAMING, INTO THE ARENA AS A RELUCTANT ANTAGONIST OF THE NEW THING

By Sam Moskowitz

I am no longer young. Rapidly moving into middle age, occupied with editing three trade magazines, supervising a full-time editorial staff of six, what little time remains is devoted to science fiction research and reporting on the results of same. I avoid crusades. The time involved with them can cost me money to be made in more lucrative assignments.

For that reason and for the reason that it didn't really arouse any special emotion either pro or con, I have up to now made no statement about The New Thing, formerly called The New Wave; that is supposed to be exemplified by the writings of J. G. Ballard, Brian Aldiss and various others contributing to the British New Worlds.

I had tolerated seemingly senseless barbs in print by various members of the New Thing movement, but as Harry Harrison began to express these in public, at the Eastern Science Fiction Association meeting of Sept. 10, 1967 in Newark, N.J., I felt moved to ask why these persistent attacks on me, since I had never said anything specifically against the group in public or in print at any time.

He replied that my views were on the record. I responded that I liked some of the things that Ballard and Aldiss had done, and had even editorially termed Aldiss "one bright new author." He said that while that was a point in my favor, it would in no way affect the fact that I was, whether I wanted to be or not, an enemy of The New Thing and would have to accept the consequences.

I implored him to tell me what I might do to curry favor with the movement and avoid an altercation. He replied that there was nothing, since the doors had shut in my mind at the age of eight, that my reading was too circumscribed to permit me to begin to understand what The New Thing was about. Besides, I had once implied that "The Dark Light Years," by Brian Aldiss, which had been dedicated to Harry Harrison, might be less than a masterpiece; therefore, there was no success.

I have always believed that if a man or group acts against you without reason, you should give him (or it) one. In the future, I will apply this philosophy to The New Thing. In the meantime, I am very worried about Harry Harrison. Does he actually believe it is a compliment to have a book that is about and full of shit dedicated to him?

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THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: Writers who delve into the "profundities" of excrement at great length suffer from a constipation of thought and a diarrhea of words.

## BLISH ON BLISH

a book review

By Sam Moskowitz

THE ISSUE AT HAND by William Atheling Jr., Edited and with an introduction by James Blish, Advent: Publishers, Chicago, 1964, 136 pages

One of the great frustrations of modern science fiction writers has been the elimination of reader columns in many of the magazines and the diminution of these sections in others. "Man does not live by bread alone" applies in spades to the writer. An occasional book review (if he is fortunate enough to have a book published) helps assuage the need, but does not entirely compensate for it.

Most conscious of this void has been James Blish. He not only has lamented the dearth of reader commentary in print; he has preached its resurgence from the pulpit of the science-fiction convention.

Since I commenced the professional phase of my career by selling fiction in 1940, I am entirely empathetic to the lament and sense of loss experienced by Mr. Blish. I have made mental photostats, enlarged them until the type is a foot high, then had them framed and hung in the best-lighted corridors of my mind -- comments on such of my stories as "Man of the Stars"\* (Planet Stories, winter 1941): "Man of the Stars" by Sam Moskowitz was unchallenged for the number one spot" -- Milton Lesser; "I rate it as one of the best I have read in a long time; a definite first place for 'Man of the Stars'" -- William A. Conover; "Seriously, I consider his 'Man of the Stars' one of the best S.F. stories I have ever read" -- Josephine Morrison; "Man of the Stars" was the best story" -- Larry Shaw; "Moskowitz leads off a really brilliant parade with something new in SF -- A truly gifted piece of writing" -- C. Hidley. In fact, the only criticism in 11 pages of six-point type of readers' letters was from Damon Knight, and even that was inadvertently flattering because he took two-thirds of a page just to talk about me!

In the immortal lines of George Gobel, "You just can't hardly get that kind no more."

Blish publishes two chapters on the need for a revival of readers' columns in science fiction magazines in this volume. This is a legitimate view, worthy of airing and consideration, and one which can be applauded by fellow writers. But how this apparently long-standing need was acted upon by Blish is disconcertingly shown in this book.

James Blish began to use the pen name of William Atheling, Jr., for a column of criticism entitled "Pro-Phile" which he inaugurated in the Summer, 1952, issue of Sky Hook, a Fantasy Amateur Press Association magazine published by Redd Boggs. Ezra Pound, a grand passion of James Blish's, once wrote music criticism for a Paris paper under the name of William Atheling -- which explains its derivation.

The two reasons given by Blish for utilizing the pen name were to enable him to criticize without being "excessively cautious" and that "I wanted to discuss my own work in the column as legitimate

\* included in "Exploring Other Worlds," Collier Books, 1963

occasions arose."

He did both.

Under the guise of Atheling, Blish was repeatedly able to slip his name into a variety of evaluations. A typical example from his column in the Winter 1952-3 Sky Hook: "If you are interested in the intensively complicated story as a technique of fiction -- only incidentally because such men as van Vogt, Schmitz, Harness, Blish and even Knight himself have written science fiction by this method..." This was subtly intended to convey the impression that Blish was a master of plotting and technique, and made it possible to place his name in good company, implying stature through association.

The real opportunity came when a 25,000 word novelette by Blish, "A Case of Conscience," was published in If, Sept. 1953. At last, William Atheling had raw meat. His column in the Autumn, 1953 Sky Hook admitted to "several re-readings." The illusion of objectivity was provided by passages like: "Part of the length of the story is contributed by sheer physical description of the planet, in which the author indulges so extensively as to delay telling the reader the story's central problem until he is nearly two-thirds of the way through -- and probably losing two-thirds of his readers in the process; but the detail, as it turns out, is valuable, first because it establishes a slow and discursive tone before the reader is plunged into the elaborate four-way argument which is the essence of the piece, and second because most of the details (though not all) are integral to the argument itself."

Therefore, we see that when Atheling talks about Blish, every knock becomes a boost.

Despite modest asides, Atheling's real intent becomes evident as we find him comparing "A Case of Conscience" to G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown stories, and concluding, "Conceivably, 'A Case of Conscience' is well enough told as a story to carry a similar general appeal; although intricate, it is anything but incoherent, and it is so paced -- as I've noted above -- as to make the final argument seem highly dramatic, in the face of obvious obstacles to such an impression.... This took considerable doing. I have made no secret of the fact that I mistrust the average reader's ability to weigh technical competence, or even to recognize it, so that I can make no present assessment of the effectiveness of what Blish has done here; theoretically, he should have captured his audience, even though most of it will not know why it is captured or how the trick was turned; on the other hand, he may have captured nobody but a cross section of other writers who are in a position to appreciate how much work this kind of a story takes, without being any better able to weight its effectiveness with a non-technical reader than I am."

This particular evaluation ran for nearly 2,000 words. Obviously feeling that he had written an exceptional story and fearful that, like others in the past, it would not receive its just due, Blish may have hoped to force a general discussion and critical evaluation of his work, with Atheling's comments as the trigger.

In this hope he was to be disappointed, but not through any lack of enterprise, for he rallied to reply to Atheling under his own name in the Winter 1953-4 Sky Hook, saying: "Mr. Atheling's examination of 'A Case of Conscience' is flatteringly lengthy, and of course I'm grat-

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ified by his recognition of the labor which went into the story. I'd be prepared to defend the long conversation between my Jesuit hero and Chtexas as an attempt to show the workings of the Lithian mind.... On the other hand, I agree that the ending of the story is confusing for precisely the reasons Mr. Atheling sets forth. As soon as I receive the galley proofs from Twayne, who will publish the story in a book sometime this winter, I'll take pains to make the necessary changes. Could any critic ask for a more practical accolade? .... I've discovered -- to my own surprise -- that much of my recent work seems to be centered on the nature of various kinds of faith....Mr. Atheling's demonstration that there is a growing place for it in the magazines too helps to convince me, especially because I can add to it as evidence the stories magazine editors have been buying from me ever since I began thinking about the whole question of why people believe what they think they believe."

Eventually, the fact that Atheling and Blish were the same was officially codified in Fancylopedia II, edited by Richard Eney. Previously, Blish had let the information leak in various fan magazines and fan meetings, but the Fancylopedia II inclusion caused several commentaries and "lifted eyebrows" by Richard Bergeron in Warhoon, Jan. 1960 and by Walter Breen in Tesseract, March 1960. Breen concluded a three-page article, "The Case of James Blish's Conscience," by stating: "Without making any libelous remarks about Blish, one may nevertheless question his motives. Propaganda? Would a really good book need this? Why was Blish making an apologetic about his own book? Was he perhaps aware of some of the points I have brought up here? What was the state of his own conscience about the whole affair? How honest is it to pretend objectivity as a reviewer, while reviewing one's own book under the cover of a pseudonym, particularly when using adjectives like 'unique?'"

"As Bergeron put it: 'How can you trust a man like that?'"

In this form, Blish received a slap on the wrist for his subterfuge, and that would have seemed to end the matter. Certainly the average individual would not have been proud of the exposure. Certainly, there is a difference between reader reaction to the revelation that Henry Kuttner was Lewis Padgett writing stories like "The Twonkey" or that his wife, C. L. Moore, was actually Lawrence O'Donnell, author of "Vintage Season," and the disclosure that Jim Blish was in fact posing as William Atheling Jr. and busily engaged in writing love letters to himself.

Society can understand an attractive woman fanning desire in a man she passes in public, and looks with indulgence when he releases an expressive whistle of appreciation. Similarly, Blish's deception, while not approved procedure, is understandable and forgivable. But his sanctifying his lapse in hard covers is comparable to our previously aroused male exposing his eager genitals in public. That sort of thing "just isn't done!"

Yet it all may be unblushingly found in the chapter "Cathedral in Space," and the only thing left to be grateful about in this blatant abrogation of good taste is that Blish did not also inflict on the readers his letter of appreciation to Atheling!

As if conscious of this omission, Blish did add a 1964 commentary on Atheling's 1953 views with blase asides such as: "For example, Athel-

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ing complains of the 'catalogues of local raw materials;' but eventually it becomes important to the story that one of those raw materials is amazingly abundant, whereas certain other more likely ones are very rare -- and both these facts are buried in the catalogues, detective-story fashion, for the reader of the novel."

What baffled me particularly in Blish's account was his references to C. S. Lewis's novels "Out of the Silent Planet," "Perelandra" and "That Hideous Strength." I checked back to the original in Sky Hook and they were also there.

I had good reason to be puzzled.

When my book "Explorers of the Infinite" was published in 1963, as part of the promotional program I appeared on the Long John Nebel radio show as a guest author for a five-hour discussion on science fiction. Among those participating were James Blish, Lester del Rey, Fred Pohl and Michael Girdsanksky ("The Shape of Us to Come," Worlds of Tomorrow, July 1965). During the course of the discussion, I was outlining the plot of a C. S. Lewis novel when, with considerable indignation, Blish interrupted me with the "correction" that my plot outline was for his "A Case of Conscience." When Girdsanksky assured him that the story I was relating was indeed C. S. Lewis', Blish gave every indication of never having read it. This entire session was taken down on tape and was preserved.

At the time Blish wrote and published "A Case of Conscience," William Atheling, Jr. had admitted his familiarity with C. S. Lewis's science fiction trilogy. After the success of "A Case of Conscience," as a novel, James Blish seemed to have no memory of it.

Atheling had said in 1953: "The interplanetary novels of C.S. Lewis ("Out of the Silent Planet," "Perelandra" and "That Hideous Strength") offer more recent examples; they set out to impose upon the solar system a strange Anglican-cum-Babylonian theology and cosmogony, with amazingly convincing results despite Lewis' decidedly foggy view of astronomy and most of the other sciences he seeks to diabolize."

Had he failed to read those novels and merely referred to them through hearsay, implying scholarship?

Had he actually read them, but now feared that such an admission might leave him open to a charge of derivation?

In "The Issue at Hand," he makes a strange reference to my criticism of M. P. Shiel's "Lord of the Sea:" "and it is ridiculous, but characteristic of Sam Moskowitz to call the book anti-semitic."

Since "Lord of the Sea" is probably the single most vicious anti-Semitic book in the entire canon of science fiction, and a prototype for the Nazi movement; and since Shiel returns again and again to anti-Semitic references in many of his works that follow, is it possible that Blish has actually not read Shiel? Or does his admiration for Ezra Pound's poetry extend one step further to embrace certain aspects of that man's political and social philosophy?

The second-longest chapter in "The Issue at Hand" is devoted to a single story by an author named Arthur Zirul, who almost receives more attention than Heinlein. The story, a novelette entitled "Final Exam,"

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appeared in the March 1954 Astounding Science Fiction and was the first story Zirul ever sold. He later published three more stories in 1958, and has not appeared since. Science fiction was merely a bit of fun for him; by profession he was an electrical engineer.

Blish proceeded to rip that story apart, examining dialogue, grammar, plot and syntax, and then concluded that "this is one of the worst stinkers ever to have been printed in the field." Aside from the fact that the first story Blish ever had published (which would appear to be "Emergency Refueling," Super Science Stories, March 1940) would not have survived so surgical a literary exploration as he subjected Zirul's to, the Analytical Laboratory shows Zirul beat out Walter M. Miller Jr.'s "I Made You" in the same issue by a good margin, and was rated not too far behind an Isaac Asimov serial. It raises the question of whether, Blish's criticisms being valid, the readers of Astounding Science Fiction have values different from Blish's; and instead of the publication of "Final Exam" indicating "a case of collapse on the part of a great editor," it is a validation that Campbell knows what his readers want!

That Zirul must have infinitely benefitted by Blish's "criticism" is perhaps indicated by Judith Merril's inclusion of his short story "The Beautiful Things" (Fantastic Universe, May 1958) in "SF: '59, The Year's Greatest Science Fiction and Fantasy."

The entire book runs only 135 pages, which is far from a substantial quantity for five dollars. This could be justified if it was compensated for by quality, but the entire volume is a melange made up from fan magazine columns, speeches and asides; and some chapters are merely reviews of a single issue of a magazine. The best piece is the commentary on "Stranger in a Strange Land" by Robert A. Heinlein, but it is questionable as to whether eight pages are worth the price tag.

If Blish were a truly outstanding and revered figure in the science fiction or fantasy field, someone of the stature and reader fascination of H. P. Lovecraft, Edgar Rice Burroughs or A. Merritt, this marginalia might have a relevance and interest beyond that of trivia. This does not happen to be the case.

Add to that a fatuous pomposity and a degree of perceptiveness of which the kindest thing that can be said is that it is warped a bit to the right of obtuseness, and you have flaws that are in no way relieved by the patently obvious vanities and spites that appear to motivate many of the pieces. The man apparently so badly needs to feel important that when he is not blatantly telling you why he is, he is advising on how to go about changing a critical situation to help ensure him his just due.

If Blish were as adroit stylistically in his criticism as even Damon Knight, whom he attempts to emulate, the results might at least have been readable. Sadly, "The Issue at Hand" is the work of a man who, after years of agonizing application, writes criticism that moves about as effortlessly as an aged pachyderm with a double hernia dragging himself through the African mudflats on his way to the Elephants' Graveyard.

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IS THE MAINSTREAM GOING SANE?????  
OR "COLIN WILSON TALKS BACK!"

a few quotations from Mr. Wilson's  
"The Strength to Dream" pub. 1962

"It is to be suspected that literary pessimism is usually an expression of intellectual laziness. It can be used as a convenient cover for any amount of loose thinking. Like the surfeit of deaths at the end of many a tragedy, it produces an impression of conclusiveness. Like positivism, it preserves its virginity by declining to consider anything outside its narrow bounds. And examined on its own terms, it is almost impossible to refute.

"The literary premises of experimental writing are closely analogous to those of pessimism. Pessimism discounts human effort. The extreme experimentalism associated with "Finnegan's Wake" and Pound's cantos discounts time and space and all that most people understand by "meaning."....instead of humanism and optimism, the new basis was authoritarianism and tragedy.

"As a practicing writer, I am personally concerned to discover how literature can again become purposeful and exuberant."

"Experimental," "New Wave" writers -- are you listening????

How about you "serious critics" -- check your motivations!!

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SF CONFRONTATION: STORYTELLING VS. NEW WAVE  
by John J. Pierce

(reprinted by special permission of the Daily Advance of Dover, N.J., Sept. 14, 1967 issue)

NEW YORK -- "I'm sick and tired of 'artiness' in place of art, and I've been sick and tired of it since 1928," guest of honor Lester del Rey told the recent 25th Annual World Science Fiction Convention.

The four-day convention, attended by more than 1,400 science fiction fans from across the country and overseas, was billed in advance as a sort of confrontation between the "storytelling" and "new wave" schools of thought in the SF field. That it was.

But it was also distinctly del Rey's convention. And it was high time. Lester del Rey (his full name is Ramon Felipe San Juan Mario Silvio Enrico Smith Heathcourt-Brace Sierra y Alvarez del Rey y del los Verdes) is that kind of man, rare in our times, who is a success upon his own terms.

Long John Nebel's legion of radio listeners know del Rey as that frequent guest on Long John's nighttime show who can outdebate anyone in the house on anything from flying saucers to segregated schools, and who can unstuff a shirt faster than you can say his name.

Yet little do they know the full wonders of this remarkable personality.

Here is a man who was born into poverty, and who endured repeated financial reverses in his formative years, but who never whined about

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the world being unfair.

Here is a man who has almost lost his life more than once to serious illness (he was saved on one occasion only by an experimental operation), who can say, "I've never had a major illness I didn't thoroughly enjoy -- there's something about having to fight for your life that brings out the best in you."

Here is a man who abhors the state of the world, who yet argues: "I'm not interested in any utopia, but in the most amount of evil that forces man to work toward his own perfection."

Lester del Rey is a man who has no tolerance for the phony and the incompetent -- and some of the promoters of the so-called "new wave" at the convention must have wished they'd never heard of the man.

When one Norman Spinrad complained in a panel discussion that Galaxy magazine editor Frederik Pohl is "suppressing" the "new, important" works of himself and his followers, del Rey jumped to his feet to say:

"I've read the manuscripts. I've seen these 'great unpublished masterpieces.' They STINK!"

The current darlings of the intellectual establishment don't rate too well with del Rey. On being asked once if Andy Warhol's productions were a triumph of "package over content," he declared:

"No, they're a triumph of LACKAGE over content. Andy Warhol combines the absolute conformity of the 'non-conformist' with the technique of the pseudo-intellectual critic for making the audience see something that's not there."

When Spinrad raved about William S. Burroughs (author of "Nova Express," a pastiche of pornography and SF), del Rey shot back, "I read two pages and regurgitated. Burroughs is sneering at his readers, and the so-called critics are too stupid to realize it."

Lester del Rey will take on literally anybody -- and get away with it. His "For I Am a Jealous People" is the story of a minister who discovers that God has renounced man in favor of alien beings who are invading Earth. Where does man's responsibility lie?

Del Rey doesn't hesitate to give the answer, as the story concludes, "'God has ended the ancient covenants and declared Himself an enemy of all mankind,' Amos said, and the chapel seemed to roll with his voice. 'I say this to you: He has found a worthy opponent.'"

## OTHER "CON" ATTRACTIONS

Not that there weren't other attractions at the convention. Of particular interest was the second annual "Galaxy of Fashion" show, which attempted to predict what the female of the species will be wearing in 2000.

Particularly enchanting was Barbara Silverberg's synthetic white fur bikini embedded with tiny lights that twinkled like stars on a romantic evening. One can only hope that it will be put on the market even before 2000!



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There was a preview of one of the forthcoming "Star Trek" episodes, presented by Gene Roddenberry, producer of the show (the script was by Theodore Sturgeon, a leading SF writer).

A superabundance of Mr. Spocks marked Sunday night's costume ball; but there were redeeming features, such as the girl who came as C'Mell, the girly-girl from the late Cordwainer Smith's "The Planet Buyer" (Smith's real identity was Paul M. A. Linebarger, one of President Kennedy's foreign policy advisors). Another girl spectacularly filled another fur bikini (natural this time) as Dian the Beautiful from Edgar Rice Burroughs' "Pellucidar" stories.

The inimitable Isaac Asimov, recently featured in Time magazine, was in top form as he argued, during a panel talk, for retaining the emphasis on hard science in SF: "Now more than ever before, our planet needs people who are capable of talking about science to the general public," he declared, arguing that SF is a major training ground for these writers -- he being a prime example.

If SF writers get lazy about their science, he predicted, "We will lose our richest source of science writers, with dire consequences for the world.

Ted White, a leading writer in the Lancer Books stable, debated Hollywood SF and free-lance writer Harlan Ellison, a proponent of social realism and the idea that "all art is madness." Said White of this movement, "These are people who don't like people; they hate and fear their fellow man."

At the convention's business session, members voted to revise the convention "rotation plan" to include overseas' cities every fourth year

Heretofore, the world convention has been held alternately on the East Coast, West Coast and Midwest regions of North America. Starting in 1970, however, the fourth year will be open to bids from anywhere outside the continent -- Germany is seeking the 1970 "WorldCon." This action pointed up the increasingly international appeal of science fiction, once mostly an American phenomenon.

### DEL REY TELLS 'EM

But the climax came Monday at the Awards Banquet, where SF's "Hugos," named after SF pioneer Hugo Gernsback, are given annually to the novel, novelette, short story and magazine voted best of the year by the fans. Del Rey, as guest of honor, welcomed the chance to speak his mind on the "new wave."

"Long after the surf riders have landed on their such and suches," he declared, "The ocean will still be there, the land will still be there, and the universe will still be there.

"Artiness is the confusion of means and ends. It confuses the tricks that the artist uses to put his passion down on paper with the passion itself. It is the product of little men trying to equal big men whom they can't understand.

"I will not try to gain fame at the risk of becoming meaningless. I am very bitter at the proselytizing, the pimping and the pompering that

## CONFRONTATION -- continued

are being used to try to take science fiction and drag it back into the lowest depths of the mainstream."

So-called "subjective writing" bores him: "Most people who write about their own selves aren't interesting enough even for me to write about," he declared. And he wants art and literature to make sense: "I have no use for anti-rationality, particularly in science fiction, whose very basis is rationality."

Del Rey is unabashedly a romantic: "Science fiction to me is such stuff as dreams are made around. I see nothing wrong with that. I see no reason why nightmares are superior."

Evidently the fans agreed. The "Hugos" went to Robert A. Heinlein for "The Moon is a Harsh Mistress" in the novel category, Jack Vance for "The Last Castle" in the novelette division, and Larry Niven for "Neutron Star" as the best short story of the year. If, another of Pohl's publications, was voted best magazine. A raft of "new wave" nominations vanished into obscurity.

All of which was quite pleasing to del Rey, who knows what he wants. "Let me master the art of dream telling," he concluded. "I want to spin a few dreams -- and I don't care whether it's called art."

### NOTES ON THE CONFRONTATION: RANDOM THOUGHTS OF A NEOFAN

by John J. Pierce

As you can see by the general tone of the foregoing article, my sympathies are wholeheartedly with del Rey's philosophy in the current "confrontation." Most of the fans agree, I believe, but few of them are articulate enough to translate their emotions into sound reasoning -- they just know what they like. This makes the few voices like del Rey's all the more important.

It rather disgusts me to see pipsqueaks like Spinrad rant about how "revolutionary" they are and how "intolerant" the fans are. In the case mentioned in my story, check the record and I'll bet you find Fred Pohl is a lot more tolerant of him and his fellow-travelers than he has ever been of Mr. Pohl. Do the "new wave" hacks think the market owes them a living it didn't owe to previous generations of struggling SF writers?

As for being "revolutionary," they are -- in the same way that the Sudeten Germans were in 1938! All they want is the security of an "anschluss" with the monolithic pseudo-intellectual establishment that now dominates the mainstream and that has just about killed off the mainstream as a source of worthwhile fiction. As a group, they are absolute conformists, who live in constant fear and terror of not being accepted by the "in" people who write the reviews for whatever the latest "in" publication is.

From what I can see, there is an Unholy Four heading this pack:

1. Harlan Ellison -- his superficial enthusiasm, born of self-hatred (see Eric Hoffer on mass movements) makes him a natural leader for the "blow your mind" clique of writers and an admiring clique of "blow your mind" fans and would-be hippies who think a story about a jerk chased by a Christ-symbol icebox with flashing lights is the most "pro-

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found" thing that ever happened to SF.

2. Judith Merrill -- she started out writing stories about children who were Things, I understand; now she gives critical puff-jobs to fictional abortions she terms "New Things." Observe how she turns up her nose at traditional values in SF, while reserving her greatest favors for life slanderers like Thomas Disch within the genre and William S. Burroughs and John Barth without it.

3. J. G. Ballard -- the purveyor of spiritual catatonia. For a man to act upon his environment (that which makes Man Man) is original sin, to judge from his writings (see "A Question of Re-Entry," "The Drowned World"). He claims to be a surrealist, and he certainly has plenty of dreams -- all bad. "I've always thought of life as a sort of disaster area," mouths one of his characters in "The Burning World." This is mere projection -- it is Ballard that is the disaster area.

4. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. -- The ultimate cynic, and a connecting link between "pseudolectual" critics in both SF and the mainstream, who all profess to see Profound Meaning in his work. Yet Vonnegut himself took it upon himself recently to chide critics for seeking meaning in "The Sirens of Titan," pointing out that there isn't any. That's hard to argue with -- but to a "pseudolectual," meaninglessness itself is the most "profound" thing going.

What is the common denominator of these Unholy Four? Why do they see each other as soul brothers? Why do lesser lights of the "new wave" traipse after them, notebooks in hand? Ted White put his finger on the reason at the WorldCon when, referring to such writers as Thomas Disch, he observed, "These are people who don't like people -- they hate and fear their fellow man."

Why this hatred? It is because the negative elements in the "new wave" identify with the dogma of nihilism that is the cornerstone of the modern mainstream -- the dogma that all life and all existence is "meaningless" and "absurd" and that it is the sacred duty of the artist to go around trying to convince everybody else that "life is not worth living."

Now science fiction originally evolved out of the Romantic tradition, and has traditionally been written by people who accept life, and who find purpose and enjoyment in it, and reject the "cult of the meaningless." Colin Wilson has denounced this cult in his book, "The Strength to Dream," and praised science fiction for escaping it. But much of the "new wave" is produced by individuals who find their own lives "meaningless" and "absurd" and who can find safety only in numbers.

"It is chiefly the unreasonable hatreds," writes Eric Hoffer (in "The True Believer"), "that drive us to merge with those who hate as we do, and it is this kind of hatred that serves as one of the most effective cementing agents."

Where is this hatred directed? A quote from Philip Wylie (in "When Worlds Collide") may be instructive: "There is no hate like that of men who have lost their morale, against those who have retained it."

As Robert A. Heinlein has noted, the mainstream is "sick and dying." It is sick and dying because it has nothing to offer but the anti-novel, anti-hero, the cult of the meaningless and the fallacy of insignificance. It's time for a Holy War against the pro-mainstream "new wave" premises!