

A semi-official organ of the SECOND FOUNDATION

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issued by J. J. Pierce

PROSPECTUS

Renaissance is being published expressly to advance a certain point of view. We make no apology for this, and state it at the outset in order to anticipate any possible objections that may be raised to the publication.

Our point of view is that romanticist principles of storytelling, the vision of science and the sense of wonder have traditionally been and should continue to be the basis of legitimate science fiction. We are opposed to the anti-science fiction of the "New Thing," with its emphasis on anti-heroes, plotless disaster stories, the condemnation of science and intelligence as fundamentally evil or useless and its aura of cynicism, cruelty and disgust.

This viewpoint was argued at considerable length in an article for Sam Moskowitz' fanzine, Different (Oct., 1968), "Science Fiction and the Romantic Tradition." Lester del Rey, foremost defender of storytelling in science fiction, expressed himself eloquently in the prozine Famous Science Fiction (Fall, 1968), with "Art -- or Artiness?" We also commend to our readers the 1968 Lunacon speech of Donald A. Wollheim, which has appeared in both Niekas 20 and Scottishe 48.

The above-mentioned issue of Different also announced formation of the Second Foundation, a movement dedicated to the defense of the same principles. Lester del Rey himself is First Speaker of the Second Foundation, and Dr. Isaac Asimov has generously consented to its use of his literary properties. As a movement, rather than a formal organization, it allows some latitude in the personal opinions of its adherents, within the framework of the general principles already set forth. It is for this reason that Renaissance must be classified as a semi-official organ of the movement.

Renaissance is being published on a somewhat tentative basis; its continuance may well depend on public response. We will welcome contributions from fans who support our general principles, and will publish them at our discretion. Articles and essays on significant subjects are to be preferred to mere letters of comment, at least for the time being. We propose to publish quarterly.

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All material in Renaissance not otherwise bylined is the work of John J. Pierce, editor of Renaissance and liaison officer of the Second Foundation.

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THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"The real 'haves' are they who can acquire freedom, self-confidence and even riches without depriving others of them. They acquire all of these by developing and applying their potentialities. On the other hand, the real 'have nots' are they who cannot have aught except by depriving others of it. They can feel free only by diminishing the freedom of others, self-confident only by spreading fear and dependence among others, and rich by making others poor."

-- Eric Hoffer, Aphorism 115
"The Passionate State of Mind"

Remember the above as you read both honest science fiction and the New Thing. Which kind of person makes the honest science fiction writer? Which kind makes the New Thing writer?

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OTHER TIMES, OTHER VALUES

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by Lester del Rey

Once there had been a crudeness to Rome, but with it had been a strength and freshness that had builded the leges tabularum into the greatest Republic on Earth. Now the young men laughed at that. In their little groups, they mocked the sources of their riches. They spoke much of art and beauty and "new" ways; but the ways and the art were those of Greece -- or the legends their simpering Greek slaves had judged suitable for them about Greece. The gladii rusted in old trunks and the only point they made was the stylus that carved limping hexameters on the yielding surface of wax tablets.

The older men in the Senate cried a bit about the times and the mores, but most were unsure; maybe they were the barbarians without culture that their sons proclaimed them to be, and maybe these were other times that needed other values. The few who could see that the real barbarians (a fine Greek word, that) were those lisping and imitative youths could not stem the tide of "progress." And so they fell back to a despairing and philosophical set of mottoes that are learned yet by every schoolboy who is lucky enough to get a smattering of Latin. Sic transit ---

Maybe there was comfort in their philosophy. Maybe now we should combine their "transit" and their "mores" and find a motto of our own suitable for our tombstones. Ah, well. Sic transeunt mores mundi. So pass away the customs of our world -- the little world of science fiction that we built in a generation that is due for retirement. Or in another translation (since trans does not take the accusative) -- so pass all men into complaisance. Or maybe it means that all humanity must go through Moria, where the ancient demon rises from the pit of nightmare to destroy the wizard who represented the science of the world.

Other times, other values. The day is done and the darkness falls....and now is the time for all men with night(mare) vision to come to the aid of the partition of the spoils. Poeta nascitur non fit....the artist is born and nothing fits. Now is the time for great new ideas.

The only time I met Mike Moorcock, I was impressed by the clarity and directness with which he discussed financial matters with Ted White. Obviously, I was finally in the presence of a lucid and forceful oracle of this strange new wave. So when I had a chance, I endeavored to learn what criteria were used in selecting such stories. And he kindly strove to enlighten me. He wanted stories with ideas.

Excellent! But what kind of ideas? Precisely what did the term mean for him? And again he answered, in plain and simple English. "I mean....ideas!" Ah, who but a true oracle would have known that a word could be defined and delimited by itself?

It's funny, though. Poeta exauditur....the poet speaks clearly, but still nothing fits. Ideas, forsooth....

Long and long ago in the times men now refer to as the golden age -- oh, twenty or thirty years ago -- the progenitors of science fiction used to meet. Skulking around their little fires and surrounded by the great and fearsome darkness of the hostile world beyond their caves, they sat upon their haunches, and an almost human spark would come into the eyes beneath their beetling brows and low foreheads. And to those privileged to understand the fumbling terms of this Ursprache they told what interested them most.

Ideas!

Those primitive discussions were filled with little else. They gloated over a hint of an idea in some story and how they had figured where it should go and the story that could be built around it. They listened to a half-formed notion and all pitched in savagely to make it come forth in full form. They chuckled as they gnawed the thighbone of some ass who had not produced even one original idea in a story. And they sang ancient tribal lays to the glory of what Jack Williamson had done with the too-helpful robot or George O. Smith's setting up a situation where Earth could only win by being conquered, or the sudden

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realization that speeding up time ran into considerations of thermodynamics. And they spoke of old friends: Giles Habibula, Trrrrweel, DuQuesne....

But they were primitive, and they knew naught of art. All they knew was the sock in the guts that came from sudden insight, or a character that grew mighty and beloved in a story, or the laughter that was evoked and the tears that might be drawn by a story that somehow at some crucial moment was unexpectedly but innately right.

They were exceedingly primitive. Homo hackiens! They didn't even discuss the art of transmutation much, except as a story idea. They spent little time on how to turn the word to gold. And the poor bastards never even once mentioned how to cajole by new art the attention of the mainstream critics or win acceptance or seduce the approval of the academic world.

Now the sun has risen over the broad world, and new waves are washing grit over the beaches where their little fires burned. And I wander down the beach, seeing where the primitive footprints have all been carefully covered by new prints as poeta nasciturien's blazes his new trails. And as one of the privileged relics of antiquity, I am favored to join in hearing the new discussions.

Other times, other values.

I hear of a college writing course, and how it was extremely successful. Seven stories in it were sold to a lecturer who was paid more for his week's appearance than our primitive ancestors got for a month of work on a novelette. I hear that our lecturer has been smart enough to capitalize on it further, since a publisher has given him a very handsome advance on a new anthology to use four of those stories that didn't sell -- surrounded unfortunately by a requirement that most of the stories shall be by more primitive writers. But it's all right -- his anthology will probably lead to more paid lectures.

I constantly hear bewailing of the market condition and the fact that it's so hard to sell stories. There's the classic Spinrad-Pohl debate, where Spinrad proclaimed that there should be enough magazines to print all the stories by all the new writers. Ah, yes, other times, other values. When I sat by the old campfires, we were dull to the value of art. We thought it fine that Nat Schachner reacted as he did; he heard that Campbell was not interested in his stories, so he up and said: "By God, I'll show him I can write stories he can't resist." Obviously a primitive reaction, this matter of deciding that if his work wasn't good enough, he'd make it better to hit the market. The enlightened course would have been to bring the market down to his artistic level. But we didn't know that.

I hear much of criticism and how the new art will soon fit into the old grooves of the mainstream. I hear how the day will come when science fiction will be accepted by the masses, with every writer who can please certain critics making a mint of money.

And I hear great discussions of how some writer has cleverly managed to stir up a controversy that gets his books mentioned so often that they begin to sell. The content of the books (art, of course) is discussed less than the fact that it's controversial, and hence must make money.

I hear about art, too. But the one art I really hear is the new art: the uses of publicity and controversy for publicity; the wooing of publishers; the sympathetic critics and what they can do for a writer; the prestige that can be gained from college appearances; and the magazines like Rogue that must be more artistic than Analog because they pay more and don't set such rigid standards for science fiction.

Ideas? Well, sometimes they are mentioned. A character is memorable because he's really a take-off, a lampoon, on some early science fiction hero, and half the copy is inside joking from new writer to new writer. Symbols that really let the informed reader know just how filthy man is and how unimportant in the universe. And yes, even ideas of plot. I can't deny that a few writers still discuss such ideas; recently one was telling me of how lucky he was that a doctoral thesis in literature was filled with the Homeric motifs he had used in his

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OTHER TIMES, OTHER VALUES -- continued

new science fiction; and hence, I gather that nobody could quarrel with the fact that the ideas were new -- at least with Homer.

Once upon a time the Jews were primitive people, with a primitive interest in ideas about their religion. But their early nomadic fires burned out in the desert, and their temples rose, each with stalls where the money-lenders sat talking of the art of their craft. And it was progress. Only a crass primitive would reject such art and attempt to scourge them from the temples.

But my senses are too blunted, perhaps even for philosophy, and surely for art. There is still the smoke of those early fires in my nostrils, and to me the great good lands of daylighted mainstreams are shadowed with the gloom of night into which one goes to be lost or devoured by demons known as critics. And my ears are blunted to the golden clinking of the tokens of value and fame by the sound of some ancient voice raised in savage delight at a mere plot idea.

Sic transit....and thither....

Leave me then, and go. I would stand here for a while, drawing up my robe against the saltiness of the spray that drizzles from the new waves that cover the ancient sands with froth as they die upon the shore. I would cling to the ancient banner with its strange cliché: Ad astra meam surgam.

My insight is still too weak to appreciate the flag that now flies over the land, proclaiming its artistic credo: Aura pro nobis!

Sick transit....

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VERY INTERESTING

Galaxy publications recently conducted a tamper-proof (a random sample of subscribers was polled) popularity contest for cash awards to the best stories to appear in Galaxy and If during 1968. Results have been announced in the current Galaxy.

First prize went to Clifford D. Simak for "Goblin Reservation." Second was Larry Niven with "Slowboat Cargo" (published by Ballantine as "A Gift from Earth"), and third was Robert Silverberg for "The Man in the Maze" (said to be one of his less New Wavish novels). The top three are all novels, but votes for short stories and novelettes were all mixed in together. The 1969 poll, it is reported, will provide for voting by categories.

Harlan Ellison is said to be one of the most popular writers in science fiction. His most popular story, however, came in 20th out of 50 -- and it had 12 other novelettes, mostly non-New Wavish, ahead of it. Viewed as a whole, the readers' choices are a pretty mixed bag -- but they do prove that the much vaunted New Thing bandwagon travels on square wheels.

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The original manuscript of Stanley G. Weinbaum's classic, "The Black Flame," is reported missing, probably stolen, from the collection of Forrest J. Ackerman in Los Angeles.

The chance is vanishingly small that these words will be read by any person or persons involved in the disappearance. But we would wish them to consider these facts:

1. No other copy of the manuscript is known to exist.
2. All previous publications of "The Black Flame" are based on a version by Mort Weisinger that cut out 15,000 of 65,000 words in the Weinbaum manuscript and inserted a chapter and other material of Weisinger's.
3. Ackerman's manuscript was needed by Avon Books for its paperback reprint of "The Black Flame."
4. If the manuscript cannot be recovered, the full text and meaning of Weinbaum's work will be lost to readers forever.

This is a case of conscience -- pure and simple.

1. Robert Silverberg's Editorials

Robert Silverberg, who sealed his alliance with the "in" group of the New Wave-Thing by writing "Thorns" and similar works, is now in the midst of a series of editorials for Fantastic which purports to be an impartial survey of the issues between "traditional" science fiction and the New Wave-Thing.

We don't object to Silverberg contributing editorials to any magazine; it's a free country after all. We merely wish to call to our readers' attention the fact that his assumption of impartiality does not stand up to close inspection. A few examples will serve to make this clear.

Silverberg's first editorial in the series, "Diversity in Science Fiction" (Fantastic, Feb. 1969) is relatively balanced insofar as the bare facts presented are concerned. But Silverberg's bias is manifested in his choice of phrasing.

For instance, he states that New Wavicles-Thingamajigs "see no reason why a story's central character must be 'strong' in a physical or moral sense, or why he must necessarily triumph over obstacles." Yet he cites no reasons given by "traditionalists" for the opposite view, and thus implies that "traditionalists" have no "reason" for their methods of characterization whereas the New Wavicles-Thingamajigs do have a "reason" for theirs.

"Traditionalists" are referred to repeatedly by the "hiss-word" "conservative," while New Wavicles-Thingamajigs are referred to by the "purr words" of "unconventional" and "uninhibited." In a typical instance, Norman Spinrad's prose in "Bug Jack Barron" is referred to as "uncompromisingly difficult." The implication, of course, is that Spinrad is a man of "uncompromising" literary convictions, while a Lester del Rey or an Isaac Asimov either has no convictions or isn't "uncompromising" about them. Other words used in talking about "traditional" writers and editors are "simple," "unadorned," and "naive," while those endorsed by Silverberg are "strange and fascinating," or "complex" and have "wide literary taste and high ambitions." And, of course, mere imitation of the mainstream is "liberation."

Silverberg's bias is shown more clearly, however, in his next editorial, "Characterization in Science Fiction" (Fantastic, April 1969).

He begins by lumping together all characters of pre-New Wave-Thing vintage as "built....out of two or three exaggerated traits and some sleight of hand," and condemns them for having no "inner-ness." (We always thought D. D. Harriman and the Black Flame, among others, had "innerness," but perhaps this isn't the kind of "inner-ness" Silverberg has in mind).

Where do we find the "innerness" Silverberg demands? Well, at various points in his editorial, he gives examples. Let's throw the lot of them together and see what we get:

"A long night of insomnia," "the breakup of a marriage," "what they really believe is the proper relation of man to man in society," "sexual hangups," and "childhood traumas."

Mind you, these are Silverberg's examples, and they are the only ones he gives as signposts toward "richer, deeper characterization." Four out of five of them relate to neurotic behavior -- one gets the clear impression that to Silverberg, "characterization" is 80 percent the cataloging of neuroses (or, at least, that the fewer neuroses in a character, the less "innerness.").

Another Silverberg assumption is that the plot of a story has nothing to do with character -- in fact, he asserts, a "homosexual cowboy," a "football player," a "scientist" or a "retired colonel" would be interchangeable in a man-against-the-aliens story! Aside from the fact that such a story would be changed markedly by changes in character as mentioned, does Silverberg really believe that the way a person acts has nothing to do with his character? That, say, Adolf Hitler and Count von Stauffenberg couldn't have been told apart by their actions?

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Apparently. By contrast, Silverberg clucks with approval at the way Joseph Heller allegedly avoided imposing a plot on "Catch-22" in order to build the "action" around the "aims and needs" of the "subtle, complex" character of Yossarian. A puzzling statement, since Yossarian is about as "subtle and complex" as Gomer Pyle: he scarcely has either innerness or outerness, unless one counts a rudimentary social consciousness. But he has plenty of slob appeal; that's what makes him a hit with the mainstream -- and sophistication, to a New Wavicle-Thingamajig -- means blind adulation of the mainstream.

Silverberg's thinking is scarcely original -- sometimes it is hardly even evident, as in another editorial (apparently independent of the Fantastic series), "S-F and Escape Literature" (Amazing, Jan. 1969), in which he "solves" the problem of why SF is abused so often as "escapist" by asserting that all literature is escapist and thus (ha ha) there's no issue. It's really too bad that a writer of his stature should identify himself with such nonsense.

2. In Reply to Norman Spinrad

Norman Spinrad's incredible ravings against the Second Foundation, which have appeared in the Science Fiction Writers of America Forum with the apparent blessings of Alexei Panshin, hardly deserve serious consideration.

Spinrad's ludicrous epithets -- "street gangs," "ku kluxers" and the like, which he hurls at the Second Foundation in order to "expose" it as a "hate" movement, reveal far more about the attacker than the attacked. His Forum letter reads almost like a parody of itself -- in fact, it is far more entertaining than any of his "New Thing" stories. We will not take up space replying to all of Spinrad's charges -- Jerry Page and others have done so eloquently in the pages of the Forum. We will only remind our readers that this is the same Spinrad who publicly labels editors he dislikes as "pimps" and refers to non-"New Thing" writers as "prostitutes;" the same one who threatened one prominent editor with a libel suit for panning "Bug Jack Barron."

We also make the following predictions:

1. Lester del Rey will not resign as First Speaker of the Second Foundation.
2. Isaac Asimov will not repudiate the Second Foundation.
3. Norman Spinrad will not win a Hugo this year.

3. Sic transit Blishus Americanus

James Blish recently announced that he is forsaking Brooklyn for merry old "New Thing" England.

That figures.

4. The "New Math" of the "New Thing."

One of the favorite lines of the New Wavicles-Thingamajigs goes somewhat as follows: "Analog sure is a bore these days; nobody but an engineer could understand it, and anyway it's unreadable. But Fantasy and Science Fiction is really with it; it has the most interesting and original writing in S.F. today. No wonder so many people are being turned off by Analog and being turned on by F & SF."

Recently, both magazines released their paid circulation figures for 1968. Analog's circulation had increased from 90,000 to 100,000 over the past few years, while that of F & SF had decreased from 60,000 to 50,000. Apparently the "new math" of the New Thing holds that increased boredom is directly proportional to increased circulation.

Isn't that amazing?

5. The Enigma of Harry Harrison

Renaissance hereby proposes a contest -- a contest without a prize, save possibly the enlightenment of our readers.

The winner will be that fan who can come up with the most convincing explanation of why Harry Harrison, who writes such wonderful science fiction of the romantic tradition as "The Horse Barbarians," should reserve his favors as a critic for "New Thing" writing.

Don't ask Harry; that's cheating. And he probably doesn't know.

RACKET SQUAD REPORT #1

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"PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITICISM"

One of the favorite games critics play is labeled "psychological criticism." It's an old mainstream standby; for at least a decade it has also been de rigeur for any status-seeking member of the Milford Mafia in science fiction.

The appeal of "psychological criticism" lies in the fact that a critic can use it to make all sorts of outrageous, even malicious, remarks about a writer under scrutiny while disclaiming responsibility for them on the grounds that he is merely revealing psychological truths about him. From the comments of such critics, one would think this to be as easy as noticing the writer's height or hair color.

It's not that simple, really. For one thing, "psychological criticism" is a misnomer, since its interpretations are based on the Freudian-Jungian schools of psychoanalysis to the exclusion of other, more modern schools of psychology. For another thing, even practicing psychiatrists can frequently misdiagnose patients they have right on the couch -- whereas the "psychological critics" make the implicit claim that they are infallible, working only from books.

The late C.S. Lewis, in particular, objected to "psychological criticism." "This procedure is almost entirely confined to hostile reviewers," he observed in "Of Other Worlds" (Harcourt, 1966). Such reviewers, he noted, rely on evidence which "would not be thought sufficient by a professional (psychiatrist)" to debunk writers they dislike. Moreover, he adds, they will be found "wholly overlooking the....perfectly obvious conscious motive for some things. If they mentioned this and then discounted it as the author's (or patient's) 'rationalization,' they might be right. But it is clear they have never thought of it."

With Lewis' remarks in mind, let us look at how the late Cyril M. Kornbluth, otherwise a top-ranking writer of science fiction, was able to go completely off the deep end when he decided to assume the mantle of "psychological critic" to E. E. "Doc" Smith (now dead, but then living) in 1957.

Smith, as we all know, was the master of space opera; a man of limited talents but great enthusiasm who through the "Skylark" and "Lensman" novels became a virtual saint to Golden Age fans. He never pretended to be an artist, but he took his work as a storyteller very seriously -- "the remuneration per hour does not compare with what a bricklayer earns, and it's harder work -- I have done them both, and know," he wrote in "Of Worlds Beyond" (Fantasy Press, 1947).

A number of writers and critics who emerged during the postwar era were irked at Smith's popularity. They regarded it as manifestly unfair that a hack-adventure writer, as they considered Smith, should have eclipsed them in popularity with the fans. Adventure writing is, of course, considered extremely lowbrow by the "mainstream," and to newer, more "serious" writers eager for acceptance by the "mainstream" as literate men and women, Smith's very existence was an affront.

Was Kornbluth one of these? Perhaps. Perhaps, too, there were other factors involved -- we may never know.

Kornbluth's attack on Smith was part of a speech delivered at the University of Chicago in 1957; it was later included among the essays in "The Science Fiction Novel" (Advent, 1959).

The piece claimed to deal with social criticism; in fact, it was titled "The Failure of the Science Fiction Novel as Social Criticism" (asserting, without proof, that literary quality and effectiveness as social criticism are synonymous).

He starts off on Smith by seeing in the background of his first space opera, "The Skylark of Space," a "strange blend of naive Marxism, a fascistic leader principle and despair of democracy." Examples given in proof of this interpretation are the existence of the World Steel Corp. monopoly, militaristic cultures on other planets, and so on in the story.

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This sounds like making a mountain out of a molehill to begin with, but Kornbluth betrays his ignorance when he warns his readers against dismissing these plot devices as mere "notions that were floating around during the Depression which Dr. Smith hadn't really chewed before swallowing."

During the Depression? But "The Skylark of Space" was written between 1915 and 1920, as Kornbluth could have easily discovered. It wasn't even published during the Depression -- serialization was in 1928. If World Steel Corp. has any social significance, it has to do with the pre-World War II trust-busting era. And the autocracies Smith places on other planets are such an obvious carryover from the Edgar Rice Burroughs "scientific romances" that began to appear in 1912 that one wonders how anyone of Kornbluth's intelligence could have failed to notice it (Burroughs' doubtless followed the lead of the Victorian historical and lost-race novelists, of course; no real social significance there). So much for the "naive Marxism," "fascism," "despair of democracy," etc.

But Kornbluth won't leave well-enough alone. Having raised the issue of "Depression" influences only to dismiss it, he switches to a search for the hidden "psychological reason" locked in Smith's mind to account for everything in the "Skylark" saga.

The primitive "love interest" of Richard and Dorothy Seaton is, to Kornbluth, proof positive that Smith had the "attitudes and emotions of a boy seven or nine years old" (Were seven-year old boys in 1915 interested in girls at all?), it seems. He is unaware, it seems, that Mrs. Lee Hawkins Garby was originally responsible for the "love" scenes, which can thus hardly represent the views of a boy of any age. Aside from that, Kornbluth doesn't bother to consider how much of the sexual Victorianism is actually the authors' and how much of it was dictated by limitations of the market at the time.

Continuing to pursue his thesis, Kornbluth interprets the plot of "The Skylark of Space" as representing seven-or nine-year old "Doc" Smith in the guise of Seaton "tearing off down an alley" around the corner of which "lurks an impossibly malignant black-haired bully who may be all of twelve" (Blackie DuQuesne).

At best, this is simply a sarcastic way of labeling the book as a juvenile. But Kornbluth completely overlooks the probability (noted by Lester del Rey and Sam Moskowitz) that DuQuesne is the real "hero" of the book and its sequels -- as Smith himself apparently conceded in "Skylark DuQuesne" in 1965. This changes the whole "psychological" basis -- if any -- of the series.

Kornbluth goes from bad to worse when he sets out to debunk the "Lensman" series through "psychological" analysis. Smith himself had explained the Manichaeian universe of Arisia and Eddore that forms the background of the series as simply a "deus ex machina" device that he was forced to accept as a solution to the problem of developing a foolproof indentifying symbol for his Galactic Patrol -- the Lens. It is significant that there isn't a trace of this Manichaeianism in any of the books Smith wrote either before or after the "Lensman" series. But Kornbluth shows no awareness of Smith's explanation (published in "Of Worlds Beyond" ten years before the Chicago speech).

Instead, asserts Kornbluth, Smith's setup proves that the doctor had "retrogressed" since he wrote the "Skylark" books to an emotional level "about eighteen months old." Arisia and Eddore thus serve as mother and father figures, and the Lens as an amulet to appease Mom, and so on.

Kornbluth gives no reason for Smith having suffered such a psychological collapse -- and Smith himself was apparently unaware of it. According to Moskowitz, he spent the year prior to writing the first "Lensman" serial working 18 hours a day, seven days a week, helping a doughnut firm where he had just taken a job get "over the hump," even designing new equipment to implement his plans. No doubt such activities are typical of eighteen-month old mental cripples!

Further proof, to Kornbluth, of Smith's "symbolic regression to infancy" lies in the fact that his "characters have a penchant for climbing into spherical or pear-shaped space ships."

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As any engineer knows, a sphere is a very sound and economical shape for a space ship. In fact, Russian space capsules have usually been spherical for this very reason. Pear-shaped ones? We don't have those yet, but if they're built, the bulge at one end will be for the atomic engines -- that's all. Even Freud once admitted that a cigar could sometimes be just a cigar -- but spheres and pears must forever be womb symbols to Kornbluth, even when it doesn't make sense (his wording seems to indicate that it's okay to have a spherical space ship as long as you don't get into it!).

Kornbluth also notes with sarcastic glee that the Galaxy-wide Galactic Patrol once had its headquarters "inside an armor-plated hill where they were safe from everything." Another womb symbol! Only Kornbluth betrays his ignorance again in failing to know that "The Hill" appeared originally in the serial version of "Triplanetary" years before the "Lensman" saga was conceived of. "Triplanetary" was only grafted into the series ten years later, and any symbolism it has can have nothing to do with the symbolism in "Galactic Patrol" et. seq.

But what proof is there that "The Hill" is a womb symbol in the first place? None, really. The North American Air Defense Command constructed a similar installation in Colorado nearly 30 years later as a defense against nuclear attack. Is NORAD a womb symbol too? Or did Smith merely anticipate the military requirements of the future?

We're still not through with Kornbluth, though. As the "coup de grace" of his piece, he informs us that the Eich, those disgustingly repulsive hench-monsters of Eddore, are really shit symbols. And the proof? A mother disgusted at her infant's soiling the crib would be sure to yell, "Eich!" ("Eich," one would suppose, is pronounced the same as "Ike;" therefore a certain Republican campaign slogan used in 1952 and 1956 must have been intended to express disgust with respect to a certain candidate the GOP was running.)

Kornbluth doesn't specify exactly how this shit symbolism fits in with the structure of the rest of the symbolism. But it doesn't matter; Kornbluth's whole argument in regard to the "Lensman" series is so full of shit it's pathetic. His "evidence" was apparently missed by Dr. James Enright, a psychiatrist from Hawaii who was one of those advising Smith during the writing of the "Lensman" saga, but who failed to have the doctor committed to an institution for treatment of his eighteen month-old regressed personality!

Well, "Doc" Smith has survived Kornbluth. Let us hope Kornbluth also survives Kornbluth.

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The Racket Squad Report will be a recurrent feature in future issues of Renaissance; it will be devoted to exposing pretentious nonsense that is all too often passed off as serious criticism among gullible fans -- and pros.

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OBITUARY:

We feel compelled to announce the spiritual demise of "Star Trek." Oh, it's still on the air -- maybe it will even be back next fall. But as a science fiction program, it is dead.

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HAD ENOUGH
OF THE NEW THING?

Tired of sick stories with sick characters by sick writers?
Don't give up hope. Fight back. Join First Speaker del Rey --

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THE DEMON BREED

by James H. Schmitz
Ace H-105 * 60¢

James H. Schmitz, in a jacket photograph for a previous book, seems to have an air of benevolent mischevousness about him.

That's hardly surprising, for his stories, by and large, have the same air. Schmitz' latest piece of mischief, "The Demon Breed," is no exception.

We're back in the author's favorite stamping ground -- the Federation of the Hub -- again; and, as usual, there's deviltry afoot. The Parahuans, amphibious aliens who didn't do too well when they tried to conquer the mostly-ocean world of Nandy-Cline some 70 years before, are back for another try.

Being convinced of their own innate perfection as they are, the Parahuans seem at a loss to account for what went wrong the last time. Their working hypothesis is that the human race must be led by a secret cadre of invincible warriors -- "tuelas," they call them.

Ticos Cay, a research scientist captured by a group of the Parahuans who have established a beachhead on the floating island that happens to include his lab, has gotten wind of his captors' "tuela theory." He also knows that his good friend Nile Etland is due to pay him a visit shortly. So.....he lets it be known that she IS one of the dreaded tuelas.

Nile, a delightful Schmitz heroine, is quick on the uptake. If the Parahuans insist on believing she's a tuela, then there's nothing for it but to live up to their expectations! Which she sets out to do admirably in a bizarre and fast-moving plot of the type that has become a Schmitz hallmark.

Suffice it to say that "The Demon Breed" packs the full Schmitz punch. Its characters have courage, intelligence and dignity; there is a truly Weinbaumian array of flora and fauna (including Nile's comrades-in-arms, a pair of mutated intelligent otters); and a hint of dead-serious philosophizing in the story-line will leave readers wondering whether the "tuela theory" wasn't so far off the mark after all.

It's the December, 1968, Ace Special, so head for your nearest bookseller with 60 cents in hand. And while you're making out your nominations for the 1969 Hugo ballot, think about this one.

BROTHER ASSASSIN

by Fred Saberhagen
Ballantine 72108*75¢

Too little attention has been paid to Fred Saberhagen, a rather enigmatic Chicagoan whose "Berserker" stories have been appearing, mostly in If, for the past several years.

Saberhagen's first collection of these stories, published by Ballantine in 1966 simply as "Berserker," was relegated to the category of "summer reading" by one prominent critic. Another reviewer, who allegedly "likes everything," saw nothing remarkable in it.

Such judgments did the author an injustice. For "Berserker" was no mere repetition of weary cliches about men vs. robots, but a great epic of life embattled against Death reminiscent of Saint-Exupéry in its power. The theme, expressed in short stories and novelettes with varying characters and locales, was at times grim, wondrous, tender or comic -- but never cynical or degenerate. Though hardly noticed by the "in" group, the book deserves to become a classic.

In "Brother Assassin," Saberhagen continues to mine the theme. Unfortunately, the new volume, a "novel" made up of three related novelettes that appeared in the magazines in 1967 (but with a number of stylistic revisions since then), doesn't measure up to the standard of the first.

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Set on the planet Sirgol where (for some reason or other) time travel is possible, "Brother Assassin" involves a battle carried out in the past as the berserkers seek to destroy humanity by intervening at a number of historical turning points -- after having already devastated the surface of Sirgol in time-present.

Introducing time travel (which is impossible elsewhere in the Saberhagen universe) is awkward to begin with; it violates what Jack Williamson used to call the "logic of premise." Moreover, no convincing reason is given why the time war can be ended for good in only three encounters, instead of going on indefinitely -- as in Fritz Leiber's "The Big Time."

The first two parts of the book, centering on Time-Ops agent Derron Odegard and his conflicts with Lisa, a mysterious amnesiac girl who appears on the scene following a berserker missile attack at time present, and Matt, a Stone Age warrior rescued from the past during one battle only to be sacrificed in another, come reasonably close to Saberhagen's best potential, despite the previously-mentioned illogic of premise.

But the third bogs down in a wholly implausible set of historical parallels involving a replay of the battle between Galileo (he's even given an Italian name, though this should be impossible according to the story line) and the medieval Church, with the further infusion of a mystic apparently based on St. Francis of Assisi. The tale ends on a relatively conventional religious note.

Overall, there is no diminution in style over "Berserker," but there is a certain lessening of intensity and conviction. Fortunately, two shorter "Berseker" stories not part of the time-travel group remain uncollected, and, after a long interval, more have been promised for If by Frederik Pohl. Saberhagen can come up with a Hugo winner yet!

THE UNDERPEOPLE

by Cordwainer Smith
Pyramid X-1910*60¢

Unlike so many who claim to be inspired by him, the late Paul M.A. Linebarger, alias Cordwainer Smith, was a sincere innovator who tried his best to enrich science fiction with new story material and new ways of telling it. Sometimes his experiments succeeded. And other times, they failed.

"The Underpeople" is the second half a novel written by Smith as "Old North Australia" and chopped up by Pyramid (the first half came out as "The Planet Buyer" in 1964). Perhaps editorial mangling can account in part for the second half's failure to get out of the doldrums in spite of a wealth of invention, but only in part. Mainly, it is Smith's experimenting itself that doesn't quite come off.

It's the tale of Roderick Frederick Ronald Arnold William McArthur McBan (CLI), dispossessed heir to an Old North Australian station who has managed to escape to Old Earth -- after the family computer buys it for him -- and finds himself in the thick of the struggle of the underpeople (mutated cats, dogs, birds, monkeys and what have you) for recognition of their rights by the Lords of the Instrumentality.

Unfortunately, McBan is the biggest problem with the book. He is apparently intended as a Christ-like figure sent to redeem the oppressed who toil forgotten in the corridors and caverns under Old Earth. But he has no dignity. His motivations are confused (aside from a too-cute desire to add to his stamp collection). He feels sorry for himself because he cannot "hier" or "spiek" (i.e., telepath) like the normal men of his home planet, but doesn't really change much after the Catmaster cures his infirmity at the Department Store of Hearts' Desires. At his worst, he is a suicide maniac whose impulses toward self-sacrifice seem, not noble, but idiotic. At his best, he is still pretty much of a jerk, too dim-witted to respond to the cat-mutated girlygirl C'mell's attempt to seduce him.

C'mell and Lord Jestocost, Smith's finest character creations in "The Ballad of Lost C'mell," play only supporting roles here (and her

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stature is diminished, because it is impossible to tell what she sees in McBan. Besides, according to the earlier story, she is supposed to love Jestocost.).

Smith's structural and stylistic innovations are interesting, but not really compelling; the gimmickry is too obvious. In fact, the strongest point of "The Underpeople" lies in the further glimpse it gives into the complex and wondrous universe of the Instrumentality, the Rediscovery of Man, and the underpeople themselves -- the things that have been the backbone of his best fiction. So read it for that, but don't expect a classic.

ISLE OF THE DEAD

by Roger Zelazny
Ace 37465 * 60¢

If you can make it through the first 20 or 30 pages of Roger Zelazny's latest novel, you're in for a treat.

This advice is necessary, for the story opens on a sour note with the glumly stoic philosophizing of the hero, Francis Sandow, and that is about as limp as the condoms (sic) that he sees washing up on the shores of Tokyo Bay. It takes the rest of those 20 or 30 pages for the story to really get off the ground -- but when it does, it's worth waiting for.

Sandow, like so many Zelazny heroes, is blessed (or damned) with the promise and peril of immortality -- something like Conrad in "This Immortal," but not quite. A worldscaper by profession, he wears the aspect of Shimbo of Darktree, Shrugged of Thunders in the pantheon of the alien Pei'ans (for one must, after all, be of godlike power in order to create worldsapes). Mythology again: But here, Zelazny has created his own mythology instead of borrowing from that of Hinduism ("Lord of Light") or Egyptian religion (As in "In the House of the Dead," which must not be confused with "Isle of the Dead," despite the similarity in titles). This is a step forward for him.

One day, Sandow receives in the mail a month-old tri-dee of his wife Kathy, the only woman he has ever truly loved -- and she has been dead for 500 years. It is not the first such reminder he has received of men and women -- all dead -- whom he has known over the centuries. But who is sending him these pictures, and why? He answers an urgent summons from Ruth Laris, a woman-friend from the nearer past, to meet her on Aldeberan V -- only to find she has disappeared without a trace by the time he arrives.

Another picture of Kathy, and a note: "If you want your women, seek them on the Isle of the Dead. Bodgis, Dango, Shandon and the dwarf are also waiting." The note is signed by "Belion" -- a member of the Pei'an pantheon not known to be presently attached to anyone. And the Isle of the Dead is one of Sandow's own creations, on the planet Illyria.

It would spoil things to reveal the plot further, or to go into who Bodgis, Dango, Shandon, and the dwarf are. But be prepared for some surprises -- the publisher's blurb is subtly misleading. And be prepared for a world of wonder, wonderfully wrought; a sense of the infinite, hair-raising action, strong characterization and scenes of memorable poignancy. The mood seems vaguely reminiscent of Vance, or perhaps Simak, but the style is pure Zelazny, and well so.

In this present time of the Great Debate in science fiction, the New Wave-Thing has attempted to lay claim to Zelazny as one of its own. But he has denied it: for he is a literary law unto himself, and for that we may be truly thankful.

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Not that this has anything to do with the review, but we want to state it anyway: It is high time that some enterprising publisher issued a new anthology of Zelazny's shorter works. The only Zelazny anthology to appear so far has been Ace's "Four for Tomorrow," and -- as the title implied -- that had only four novelettes in it. Since then there has been "Damnation Alley" -- which should have won a Hugo last year -- to mention only one example. What are they waiting for?

FROM SAM MOSKOWITZ

"THE MAN WHO LOOKED LIKE POE," edited and with an introduction and notes by Sam Moskowitz. Doubleday, July, 1969.

For 75 years, writers and readers have been trying to turn a fictitious character, Sherlock Holmes, into a living person. There is scarcely a year that goes by when three or four volumes of "evidence" do not appear from Baker Street Irregular members and other followers of The Great Man. William S. Faring-Gould has written his "biography," linking together all the events of his "life;" Michael Harrison and others have personally investigated every London address at which he involved himself, and every attempt is being made to bring a legend to life.

Sam Moskowitz asserts that the direct opposite has been the fate of Edgar Allan Poe. For even more years than Sherlock Holmes followers have been trying to prove Holmes' existence, Poe followers have been trying to prove that Poe was a character out of fiction and not a real man at all. No real man could have lived as strange and bizarre a life as his. What Moskowitz is doing is presenting a collection of the best stories in which Edgar Allan Poe appears as one of the leading characters. Most of these are stories trying to fill in the gaps in the biography of Poe, and because Poe appealed to many audiences, these stories are in turn science fiction, mysteries, humor, fantasy and what have you.

In order to provide a focus for the reader to increase enjoyment of the stories, a 5,000-word biography by the late Prof. T. O. Mabbott of Edgar Allan Poe leads off the book. The most unusual story will be "The Valley of Unrest," by Douglass Sherley, privately published in 1883 and unknown to any Poe scholar. In the light of recent evidence, it may turn out to be fact rather than fiction in its account of the origin of certain of Poe's works and his days at the University of Virginia.

"My Adventure with Edgat Allan Poe," by Julian Hawthorne (son of Nathaniel Hawthorne), has Poe come back to life in 1889. "In Which an Author and his Character are Well Met," by Vincent Starrett, tells of the fantasy of Poe's last days. "When It Was Moonlight," by Manly Wade Wellman, is from Unknown, and gives the "basis" for three of Poe's works. "The Man Who Collected Poe," by Robert Bloch, taken from Famous Fantastic Mysteries, may be taken literally. "The Man Who Thought He Was Poe," by Michael Avallone, is a variant on "The Cask of Amontillado." "The Dark Brotherhood," by H.P. Lovecraft and August W. Derleth tells of the return of Poe to Providence.

There are two previously unpublished stories in this collection; one a mystery, "Manuscript Found in a Drawer," by Charles Norman, and the other science fiction, "Castaway," by Edmond Hamilton -- the latter involving Poe's career as a publisher.

There was a novel titled "The Atlantis" published in an 1839 magazine, which some of the greatest Poe experts believe is actually a story of his. The first 5,000 words are reprinted so that the reader can judge for himself.

"The Lighthouse," a Poe fragment completed by Robert Bloch, is also included. There are six poems about Poe -- three were written in a graveyard he once walked by Adolphe de Castro, R. H. Barlow and H.P. Lovecraft; another by August W. Derleth and still another by Poe's wife, Virginia. The final item in the book is a new poem written by Robert A. W. Lowndes.

-- Sam

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Sam Strikes Again!

Did you see "Stranger than Science Fiction" on the CBS program, "The Twenty-first Century," Feb. 9?

Well, much of the material for it -- shots from old magazine covers and illustrations -- came straight out of Sam Moskowitz' huge collection.