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THE CASE FOR ESCHATOLOGICAL ROMANTICISM - A REAPPRAISAL

Science fiction is essentially the drama of man in relation to the possibilities of change. It is rooted in the discoveries of science that reveal a universe in constant change and evolution, and in man's need to make change meaningful to himself.

Major writers in the genre have traditionally used S.F. to express their ideas about the direction of evolution -- human and otherwise -- and to dramatize the problems of survival, growth and adaptation created by the necessities of change.

Science fiction ought to have some kind of unifying idea or principle that expresses its approach to the future. The Second Foundation, therefore, proposes "Eschatological Romanticism" as the term best suited to describe the "school" of writing it supports within the genre, and the one most consistent with an operational definition of science fiction.

In "Science Fiction and the Romantic Tradition" (Different, Oct. 1968), we followed a fundamentally eclectic approach. We quoted from a variety of sources, both within and without the genre, in our effort to create a rationale for "traditionalist" S.F. in its confrontation with the New Wave-Thing. Eventually, we distilled from all sources the ideas of "romanticist principles of storytelling," "the vision of science," and "the sense of wonder" as elements essential to the genre.

But the eclectic approach had its disadvantages. Not all sources agreed with each other -- particularly those from outside the genre. So no real synthesis was possible; only a consensus based on the portions of their thought that seemed to approximate what we had in mind. Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke and others helped define the purpose of the genre -- though not necessarily in connection with any "school" of writing. Eric Hoffer had some notions about evolution -- but none in particular about literature. Ayn Rand was helpful in redefining romanticism in terms of moral choice and the conflict of values -- but her own school of "Romantic Realism" has nothing to do with eschatology, being devoted to critiques of contemporary issues in terms of her own "Objectivist" ideology. Colin Wilson called attention to eschatological questions -- but the main thrust of his own school of "Existential Realism" is in relation to phenomenology, the study of the structure of consciousness. James Branch Cabell and C.S. Lewis offered their interpretations of romanticism -- but these lack precision as applied to S.F.

Science fiction has felt the lack of a unifying idea or principle that combines scope and precision. "Traditionalist," a term around which Renaissance has always placed quotation marks in recognition of its inadequacy, is so vague as to be easily misinterpreted -- unless used in a very clear context. Glen T. Brock, in Neutron, has proposed the idea of "Neo-Classical" science fiction. But this too can be defined only in a Gertrude-Stein fashion as "new classicism...a return to or continuation of the classical writing style." Just plain "romanticist" is confusing to many because of its association with other genres or with the adventure story per se. "Old Wave" is a condescending term at best -- and one often used derisively by New Wavicles.

But "Eschatological Romanticism" combines scope and precision. It expresses science fiction's role in dealing with questions of values and meaning in an eschatological context, thus applying to serious S.F. as opposed to both the formula-type of "adventure" story and the nihilism of the New Wave-Thing. And it has the added advantage of not having been pre-empted by any other movement in the genre, or elsewhere. Henceforth our cause is that of Eschatological Romanticism.

-- J.J.P.

THE PHYLOGENESIS OF THE NEW WAVE-THING

"Nearly everyone now denying it once proclaimed it," Hank Stine observed in Science Fiction Review 34. He meant the New Wave-Thing, of course.

Too true to be good. The same writers, editors and critics who in days not long past tried to create a New Wave-Thing bandwagon now claim there's no such movement -- even while many of them still feverishly or not so feverishly assemble anthologies, publish reviews and lecture at writers' workshops on behalf of it.

Perhaps a little historical background can help shed some light on this "non-existent" phenomenon.

Trend-hounds seem to consider 1964 a crucial date -- perhaps that of the birth of the New Wave-Thing. That was the year Michael Moorcock became editor of New Worlds, and the year Harlan Ellison began writing a series of dangerous visions with "Paingod."

Moorcock, by his own account as quoted by Judith Merrill in her 1968 anthology, "England Swings," had for several years "planned a large-size slick, modern sf magazine and plotted (literary) revolution with Jimmy Ballard." Ballard had been writing S.F. since 1956, but it was under the Moorcock regime that he was to become the focus of a movement and a cause celebre. His anti-science fiction soon won mainstream Recognition.

In "Paingod," according to Baltimore New Wavicle Jeffrey D. Smith, the S.F. readership "got its first taste of the New Ellison (now the New Wave Ellison)" -- a story about "hatred and injustice" that was free of "pulpish action" and "mock heroic characters." Ellison was to attract writers like Norman Spinrad and Thomas Disch to his banner within a few years. And they too would take pride in being Noticed by mainstreamers.

It was in 1964, at any rate, that the stage was set for both major branches of the New Wave-Thing: the New Worlds school in Britain and the "Dangerous Visions" school in the United States. Several influences that had crept into the field over the past 10 or 15 years combined to create a favorable climate for the movement.

First among these was the idea that science fiction inherently is an "illegitimate" literary form. This idea was not expressed in so many words, but was clearly implied by major critics who reserved praise for "S.F." books that were disguised topical allegories on current events, or exercises in Freudian or Jungian symbolism, and by attempts to "place" the genre that compared it to "regional" fiction or other categories of minor importance. Science fiction books hailed as "about something" -- nearly always -- turned out to have purely mainstream themes. Stories of future problems, serious or not, were condemned equally as "irrelevant" or "escapist."

Closely linked to the first idea was a second -- the doctrine that "science" and "human values" are incompatible. At the very best, it was held, science is irrelevant to "human" problems; at the worst, science was held to be the root of all evil (especially since the atomic bomb); political bureaucracy, alienation, war, racism, poverty, what have you. Since literature deals with "human values," so the idea went, it has to be either non-scientific or anti-scientific. This view was popularized in 1965 by the movie "Alphaville," which together with a growing band of critics, gave intellectual respectability to the anti-science fiction of the cinema (see review of John Baxter's "Science Fiction in the Cinema").

The prevailing acceptance by mainstream and S.F. critics of various successor schools to naturalism or realism (which D.H. Lawrence defined as an arbitrary view of men as "little ant-like creatures toiling against the odds of circumstance and doomed to misery") made science fiction an even more illegitimate form, in that it still had its roots largely in the traditions of romanticist literature that took a more "optimistic" view of the possibilities, at least, of mankind. "Pessimistic" stories got better reviews, all things being equal.

Miss Merrill, in her anthologies, began preaching during the early 1960's that a merger between science fiction and the "mainstream" was in the works -- either science had "caught up" with S.F., or "mainstream" critics had caught up with the genre -- it wasn't clear which. But one thing was certain, she warned in 1962 -- the "mainstream" was "not prepared to meet us on grounds of our own choosing." Obviously, then, the grounds would be chosen by the "mainstream."

What were the grounds chosen by the "mainstream?"

A minority of critics like Kingsley Amis were accepting science fiction in general. But only a minority. The real successes were being scored by writers like Kurt Vonnegut Jr., who knew what the "mainstream" wanted and were prepared to give it. Vonnegut cast his lot with "black humor," a school that included non-S.F. writers like Joseph Heller and Terry Southern who were on the way up. The idea of "black humor" was to express the "inescapable absurdity" and pointlessness of life -- mainly by treating "tragic" themes as "comical." Vonnegut was compared to Voltaire in reviews of "Cat's Cradle" in 1963, and was to endear himself to Miss Merrill and other New Wavicles in 1965 by mentioning Milford, Pa., in "God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater."

Another signal event -- and by coincidence it took place in 1964 -- was the publication of William S. Burroughs' "Nova Express," a "novel" which expressed the author's nihilism through "experimental" techniques like "cut and paste" and "fold-in" which scrambled parts of unrelated sentences and phrases together. It contained references to S.F. and S.F. terminology, and it was simultaneously embraced by "name" critics like Mary McCarthy and Marshall McLuhan of the "mainstream" -- while to Miss Merrill, it was a godsend: proof positive of the "merger" of "serious" S.F. and "serious" mainstream literature. Significantly, Burroughs has since become a culture-hero to both the British New Wave of Ballard and the American New Wave of Ellison.

From 1964 to 1967 was a transition period. When Moorcock took the helm at New Worlds, it was still a broad-based science fiction magazine. It ran Ballard's "surrealistic" stories -- but it also ran solid S.F. by James White and even not-so-solid S.F. by E.C. Tubb. Moorcock gradually eliminated "traditionalist" writers like White and Tubb. At first, he encouraged a "mix" of experimental writing by Ballard and a growing list of other "avant garde" types like Langdon Jones, Pamela Zoline, Charles Platt and Thomas Disch; together with stories by newer and more talented "traditionalists" like Keith Roberts and Roger Zelazny.

The emphasis, however, was on the "experimental" writing that was able to attract the attention of critics and trend-hounds. Ballard did "condensed novels" under the inspiration of Burroughs that were supposed to show the predicament of modern man being bombarded by too many sense impressions and unable to create anything but a paranoid "mythology" of them. Brian Aldiss fell into line with an anti-novel in the tradition of a postwar French school led by Alain Robbe-Grillet which rejects "characterization," "psychological insights" and "emotional" descriptions in favor of flat prose about "observable surfaces." Other influences were Samuel Beckett, the nihilistic playwright who won a Nobel prize in 1969, and, of course, Franz Kafka.

This policy lost Moorcock a lot of science fiction readers, which caused New Worlds to collapse in late 1966. This didn't faze Moorcock at all -- it gave him the chance to chuck science fiction altogether and start an avant-garde magazine, which was what he had wanted to do in the first place. The experimental work impressed the Arts Council enough to give New Worlds a subsidy (paid for by, among others, science fiction readers' taxes). Thus bailed out, Moorcock was able to create a prozine devoted exclusively to the sort of "experimental" writing that had shown itself capable of winning praise from "mainstream" critics and gaining prestige for its authors. The remaining "traditionalists" like Roberts and Zelazny soon ceased to appear in New Worlds, which took on the air of a monthly kaffaklatch.

Meanwhile, back in the United States, Ellison was hard at work on his "Dangerous Visions" anthology.

Ellison's emphasis was somewhat different from Moorcock's. While the British school of the New Wave-Thing favored "cold" writing, that in America wanted "hot" writing. New Worlds emphasis was on "experimental" techniques borrowed from the "mainstream" to express the meaninglessness of existence -- the writers agreed on the message; the question was, how to use techniques to make it look fresh and appeal to critics? Ellison wasn't too impressed by this -- his approach was social protest and the use of "shock" subjects. Science fiction should essentially be a protest literature -- a "Waiting for New Lefty" to shock readers into desired political action, or maybe to just shock them, period.

"Dangerous Visions" tried to be a "controversial" and "shocking" anthology. It didn't entirely succeed. For one thing, there were too few New Wave-Thing writers to fill it up -- Ellison had to include ones like Lester del Rey and Frederik Pohl, who contributed "traditionalist" S.F. For another, "shock" wasn't easy to come by -- as in Samuel R. Delany's "Aye and Gomorrah," the premise of which made no sense whatsoever. But "Dangerous Visions" created so much publicity and got such unanimous rave reviews from literateurs in the genre that it engendered the sort of bandwagon atmosphere that the New Wave-Thing had been looking for. Both British and American schools were represented in the anthology -- and though they claimed not to have anything to do with each other, the writers in each school somehow managed to endorse those in the other.

The whole affair greatly increased Ellison's prestige, and set a precedent for New Wave-Thing anthologies. Damon Knight, who had been in the 1950's a defender of S.F. against "anti-science fiction," switched sides in the 1960's to begin issuing "Orbit," a series of anthologies devoted to mostly New Wave-Thing writing. One-time "traditionalist" S.F. writers like Robert Silverberg and Philip Jose Farmer tried to give the New Wave-Thing what it wanted in novels like "Thorns" and "Image of the Beast." Terry Carr's influence at Ace Books largely displaced that of Donald A. Wollheim in selection of stories for the "World's Best" S.F. and the monthly Ace Specials. In California, much publicity surrounded Essex House, which purported to publish S.F. books treating sexuality in a "shocking" manner. Judith Merrill, meanwhile, devoted anthologies to oddments of poetry by the Fugs, non-stories by Burroughs and the like.

There was a counter-reaction to all this hoopla. "Traditionalist" writers like Roger Zelazny objected to being lumped in with the New Wave-Thing, as did idiosyncratic individuals like Delany. Before long, many hard-core New Wavicles -- apparently realizing that being part of a movement smacked of conformism -- started claiming that they weren't in the New Wave, or that there was no such thing as the New Wave. Ellison and Aldiss were among the major figures who declared themselves "out." (The actual term "New Wave" seems to have been originated in Britain by Chris Priest, one of the Moorcock stable, and picked up in America by Miss Merrill, who later changed it to "The New Thing" in order to have a handy acronymic symbolism of T.N.T. vs. T.O.T. -- "The Old Thing"). Borderline writers like John Brunner and Piers Anthony, however, rushed to adopt New Wave-Thing techniques to use on old science fiction themes.

In the midst of all this confusion -- some of it deliberate -- a number of new writers with real talent -- like Ursula LeGuin, Burt K. Filer, Bob Shaw, James Tiptree, Fred Saberhagen and others -- were barely noticed in the scramble of New Wavicles for prestige and publicity. The scorn and abusive innuendoes heaped upon "traditionalist" writers and editors by "controversial" authors jockeying for power reached alarming proportions. Nearly everyone seems to feel the need to "give in" to the New Wave-Thing -- to meet its demands at least halfway. Counterattacks by del Rey at the 1967 Nycon and Wollheim at the 1968 Lunacon received a warm response from "traditionalists," but seemed to have little lasting impact.

At present, New Worlds is still going strong -- though editors change periodically -- in propagating the British School. And in America, Ellison is on the writers' workshop circuit and preparing another New Wave-Thing anthology, "Again, Dangerous Visions," to breathe new life into his branch of the movement. "Orbit" and other anthologies continue. And "name" writers who have made it in the mainstream, like Vonnegut, Burroughs and John Barth continue to win emulators.

STACKING THE DECK

Relations between "traditionalists" in science fiction and partisans of the New Wave-Thing are often governed by a "code of etiquette," resembling in kind -- although obviously not in degree -- the so-called "racial etiquette" of the Old South.

The reasons for advocates of the New Wave-Thing imposing a "code" are clear enough, but why "traditionalists" should meekly accept it is hard to understand. For the code presupposes that all "traditionalist" S.F., as a class, is sub-literate, and that all New Wave-Thing writing is literate and artistic. This presupposition imposes double standards of conduct and criticism.

For instance, Michael Moorcock is considered honest and forthright to dismiss Robert A. Heinlein as a "meretricious writer" whose fiction "doesn't bear discussion in literary terms." Yet Heinlein would surely be condemned as "intolerant" were he to make a similar statement on the quality of Moorcock's writing. Thomas Disch is thought within his rights to label the fantasies of J.R.R. Tolkien and Fritz Leiber as "shit." An attack on Disch at the same level would be considered out of bounds. It is acceptable for Richard Delap to call Lester del Rey a "psychotic" for giving "2001" a bad review -- but it would not be considered acceptable for a "traditionalist" to reply in kind. It is not, for Charles Platt, "extremist" to dismiss Alexei Panshin as unreadable or to pooh-pooh the work of Roger Zelazny. But were Panshin or Zelazny to give bad notices to Platt, this would be considered "extremism."

The introduction and foreword to "Nebula Award Stories Four" show the influence of the code as encouraged by the Science Fiction Writers of America -- a professional group that is theoretically impartial, but tends to favor the New Wave-Thing due to the influence of Damon Knight and others.

Poul Anderson, author of the introduction, is a "traditionalist," and thus pre-judged as "inferior" by prevailing community standards of the S.F.W.A. Inexplicably, he accepts the role completely. He must not, according to the code, express his position in any but apologetic and half-hearted terms. Most science fiction, he feels, has "preserved its traditional virtues" -- but he must preface this remark by echoing the New Wave-Thing line that "traditionalist" S.F. is nothing more than "cut and dried pulp narration," beyond which the New Wave-Things must be "light years in advance" because of techniques borrowed from the mainstream of the 1930's. He does not "agree" that hard science fiction is on the way out -- but as to where the genre is going, all he can say is that whatever is (happening) is right.

He comments on what the magazines did in 1968, trying to avoid an expression of opinion wherever possible. But he steers clear of saying anything at all about New Worlds -- beyond the ritual gesture dictated by the code of conceding he can't "understand" it. (New Wave-Thing S.F. is all art, and no "traditionalist" could possibly understand art.)

To the rescue comes Brian Aldiss, whose approach is the antithesis of Anderson's. No half-hearted half measures for him. "New Worlds is no longer a magazine but a cause," he proclaims ("traditionalist" causes are "paranoiac," remember?) Not only that, but Moorcock, "as he ascends into legend, begins to look like a Gerald Scarfe portrait of the French philosopher Rene Descartes." Imagine anyone trying to get away with comparing John W. Campbell or Frederik Pohl to Descartes! Subject matter in New Worlds is "sometimes thin" -- but only because its writers are "free" and "questioning" and "wish to interpret without falsifying." Of course, the obvious implication is that "traditionalists" are slaves, never ask questions, and lie all the time. Certainly their only reason for "anger" at anything New Worlds writers say or do is that New Worlds is "against nothing but mediocrity."

Anderson indicates that he accepts -- or is expected to accept -- all this as gospel, for he expresses his "special pleasure" to Aldiss for enlightening him. It is doubtful that Aldiss would return the favor were their positions reversed.

The foreword is by Willis E. McNelly, identified as professor of English at California State College in Fullerton (a suburb of 70,000 or so, near Disneyland). The S.F.W.A. evidently considers him as eminently qualified to discuss the genre and render artistic judgments -- more so, probably, than a "traditionalist" English professor (Jack Williamson, for instance).

McNelly is as definite as Aldiss. He's quite enthralled by John Barth's black humor novels, "Giles Goat Boy" and "Lost in the Funhouse," which must be "serious" science fiction, it seems, because "Starwolf" is not. Also because of their "fragmented vision" and "mclunacy." Whatever reason, he assures us, "the gap between so-called 'mainstream' fiction and first-rate science fiction is narrowing" because of books like John Barth's.

Knowing McNelly's bias in favor of the McLuhanesque, it comes as no surprise that he lets out all the stops to praise John Brunner's "Stand on Zanzibar" ("multidimensional prose," "fugal styles," "a medium whose message is its totality," etc.) and Robert Silverberg's "The Masks of Time" (which "looks into the past and projects that vision into the future," as all static fiction must). Any reader who can't see the perfection lacks an "awakened imagination," of course. Sure the emperor has clothes, and the tailors are Artists. You aren't an Ignorant Idiot, are you?

Theology's important too. Science fiction can use it to dramatize real moral issues such as: Is "evil" creative? As in James Blish's "Black Easter." And how many angels can stand on the head of a pin? Anyway, as we all know, science has "too often robbed science fiction of its humanity," and "theology may help restore the balance." McNelly has nothing to say of non-theological approaches to moral or philosophical themes.

Readers of the Nebula foreword are warned repeatedly of the evils of "traditionalist" S.F., which is "spoon(fed) space pabulum (for) adolescents," full of "shabby characterization" and "inaneities." And wasn't John Boyd's "The Last Starship from Earth" prevented from getting nominated for a Nebula by the "xenophobia" of those unidentified "clannish" writers who allegedly think S.F. is "simply Buck Rogers updated?"

Alexei Panshin's Nebula-winning "Rite of Passage" is an example of this pernicious form of writing -- a mass of "tired, worn-out science fiction characters and devices," and really a "banal" novel. True, it's a "professional" job -- but "professional" isn't a positive adjective in McNelly's lexicon; quite the contrary.

One finds that McNelly favors themes involving "the bastard in all of us," universal "miserias," the quest for "retribalization" and the evils of "sterile linearity." McLuhan is God, and "serious" S.F. is that which recognizes the eternal truth of his teachings. Plus obligatory New Wave-Thing pessimism.

McNelly's views come with the official imprimatur of the S.F.W.A. Like Bob Dylan said, "You don't need a weatherman to tell which way the wind is blowing." Or which way the inner circles of the S.F.W.A. seek to "blow" eager young writers anxious for Recognition.

It's all a part of the code, of course. As long as only New Wave-Thing viewpoints are considered "worthy" of literary recognition, those are the only viewpoints that will be propagated.

-- j.j.p.

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I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC

by Ray Bradbury
 Alfred A. Knopf * \$6.95

A science fiction cantata. Think of it! Ray Bradbury did. Called "Christus Apollo," it was set to music by Jerry Goldsmith and premiered Dec. 21 at UCLA with Charlton Heston as narrator. One can only hope that a recording will become available shortly -- and note with regret there is no Hugo category for cantatas.

"Christus Apollo" is but one of the Bradbury creations included in this, his first collection in five years. Besides the cantata, there are 17 stories -- and they represent the full range of his interests, from pure science fantasy to pure mainstream.

The title story, revolving around a charming mechanical "grandmother," is also one of the best. It combines a piquant tale of love that transcends human bounds with Bradbury's offer to make his peace with the technological age -- and the terms he proposes are thought-provoking.

"Downwind from Gettysburg" offers another mechanical creation -- a new "Abraham Lincoln" this time. But it turns into a stunning expose of the motives of an assassin when a glory-seeker who just happens to be named Booth decides to make history repeat itself.

Psychology also dominates "The Lost City of Mars," written as the basis for a screenplay that will probably never be filmed. A group of men and women come face to face with their own psyches when they visit a dangerous city of technological "magic" abandoned by the Martians -- and survive (or don't) according to their mettle.

Also set on Mars is "Night Call, Collect," a sort of futuristic Poe nightmare about a marooned astronaut phoned up in his old age by a series of recordings of his younger self that take on a life of their own.

Two of the stories are oldies dating back to 1948 -- "Tomorrow's Child" (née "The Shape of Things"), and "The Women." The first, a tale of transcendent love on the part of parents whose child turns out to be a blue pyramid, is still charming. The second -- a rework of an ancient idea of the Sea as a jealous woman, doesn't come off as well.

Bradbury pays his debt to Hemingway in "The Kilimanjaro Device," and to Dickens in "Any Friend of Nicholas Nickleby's is a Friend of Mine." The first borders on bathos, unfortunately. The second, set in the 1929 Green Town (Waukegan), Ill., is more interesting despite (or because of) the fact that "Dickens" turns out to be an impostor.

Three Irish stories -- "The Terrible Conflagration up at the Place," "The Cold Wind and the Warm," and "The Haunting of the New" -- get off to slow starts, but are redeemed by strange or amusing twists. Slight, but nice. Nothing can be said of the plots without giving them away.

A psychiatrist finds a new calling in "The Man in the Rohrschach Shirt," an amusing leg pull. But "Heavy Set" is a throwback to Bradbury's Macabre days -- a nasty piece about a Mama's Boy and his repressed hostilities. In "The Tombling Day," another oldie, an elderly woman finds that old age isn't so bad after all. "Progress" is grudgingly accepted by a small town in "Yes, We'll Gather at the River." "Henry the Ninth" and "The Inspired Chicken Motel" are merest whimsies -- the former, a paean to Merry Old England, fails to come off because of the implausibility of the plot situation; the latter, about a magic chicken and how it convinces a Depression family that the sky isn't falling, depends on charm and nostalgia.

Bradbury's stories over the last several years have been few and far between. It would be easy to conclude that he is simply running out of steam -- but this theory is belied by stories like "I Sing the Body Electric," "Downwind from Gettysburg" and "The Lost City of Mars." Not to mention by his staking out new ground with "Christus Apollo." Perhaps he wants to reserve his talents for his best ideas -- but not all of his recent works bear this out either (of course, only Bradbury's opinion of what his best ideas are really counts).

-- j.j.p.

MAROONED

Columbia Pictures

(Produced by M.J. Frankovich. Directed by John Sturges. Screenplay by Mayo Simon from the novel by Martin Caidin. Starring Gregory Peck, Richard Crenna, David Janssen, James Franciscus, Gene Hackman, etc.)

The retro-rockets aren't all that misfire in this adaptation of a 1964 semi-documentary novel by Martin Caidin. But flawed as it is, the movie is still superior to at least 95 per cent of the screen fare that is offered to the public as S.F.

Updating Caidin's novel (as, indeed, has Caidin himself), Frankovich and crew unfold the story of a three-man mission trapped in orbit, following a five-month endurance test in a space laboratory, when their Apollo shuttlecraft malfunctions on the return trip.

Unlike movies made before the Space Age opened, "Marooned" can use the first-hand experiences of astronauts -- and NASA films -- to lend an air of authenticity to the background. Promotional material makes quite a point of this. It is surprising, then, that some glaring errors were allowed to creep in.

One cannot expect a studio backdrop to look exactly like a movie of Earth taken from orbit. But one can expect moviemakers to avoid stupid mistakes. Like a globe prepared by an incompetent cartographer that shows two straits of Gibraltar and the Italian bootheel caved in. Like a horizon that is sharp instead of blurred by atmosphere. Like showing a sunrise as seen from space -- with the stars still visible around the sun afterwards. Like using "official" NASA space suits -- and not having them "balloon" in a vacuum. Like using the wrong lighting effects. And having exhaust from steering rockets look like flame from a blowtorch.

The plot is well thought-out, and creates great opportunities for suspense. But they are often mishandled. The first half of the picture sets up the situation, and deals with the question of organizing a hasty rescue mission. But the sense of crisis is not conveyed effectively -- Peck's acting and the script share the responsibility. The launch of the rescue attempt itself -- a modified Dynasoar via a Titan III through the eye of a hurricane -- is well handled, however, as is the race against time and the dwindling oxygen supply in the Apollo craft. A high pitch of tension is achieved during the rescue operation, despite one serious flaw: the arrival of the Russian Voshkod craft beside the Apollo module is treated as a complete "surprise," although tracking crews in reality would have been expecting it for hours.

Although the actions of the Russian cosmonaut and the Americans in the climax strike a responsive chord among those who look forward to a greater spirit of cooperation in space, the movie otherwise conveys little of Caidin's "feel" for the space program and its aims and purposes. The emphasis is more on hardware -- a mockup of Mission Control Center, simulated telecasts from space, buttons and flashing lights, and other phenomena familiar to millions who have watched their TV sets during the last few years.

Summing up: better than most, but far from a classic.

ADDENDUM: Martin Caidin has updated the novel "Marooned" from its original Mercury-Gemini-Vostok background to one involving Apollo applications (Ironman One), Soyuz and the XRV lifting body -- as in the movie.

For the most part, it's an excellent job of revision. The plot is better-paced than in the film version, as is the dialogue and attention to detail. Caidin's 1964 concern with the need for longer Mercury flights is outdated, and therefore dropped; but his other concern comes through well -- the idea of symbiosis of man and machine.

The main problem is that though there are three lead characters this time, the flashbacks and inner monologues are still Pruett's, for the most part. If these led to something conclusive, it would be all right. But his death at the climax is described as accidental -- not as a possible suicide, as in the movie version. This is inconclusive, and does not seem to justify the emphasis on characterizing Pruett to the near exclusion of Lloyd and Stone.

-- j.j.p.

SCIENCE FICTION IN THE CINEMA

by John Baxter
Tantivy Press * \$2.95

Here's a book that is unusual not so much for its subject as for its approach. It's the first critical survey devoted entirely to "S.F. Film," yet it opens with the disclaimer that science fiction and "S.F. Film" should be regarded as entirely separate genres.

Nothing is said about John Baxter in the book, but indexes of the prozines show that he contributed nine stories to New Worlds and Science Fantasy from 1962 through 1966 (a transition period between "Old Wave" and "New Wave" dominance of British S.F.), and his remarks seem to show a broad knowledge of the field.

His introduction cites comments made during the 1950's by a mainstream critic, Penelope Houston, and S.F.'s own Damon Knight. In 1953, Miss Houston saw the "alarming apparatus" of science as the new basis of "supersition, the exposed nerve of society on which the horror film played in its time." While Knight, in 1956, condemned movies like "The Shrinking Man" and novels like "The Power" as "anti-science fiction; a turning away, not only from the standard props of science fiction..... but from the habits of thought and belief which underlie science itself."

Both agree that "S.F. Film" is based on superstition and horror, Baxter observes, but "To one, superstition is natural, to the other it is anathema. The gulf is profound and unbridgable -- it is the same gulf that exists between the cinema and science fiction.....Science fiction supports logic and order, sf film illogic and chaos. Its roots lie not in the visionary literature of the Nineteenth Century, to which science fiction owes most of its origins, but in older forms and attitudes, the medieval fantasy world, the era of the masque, the morality play and the Grand Guignol."

"S.F. Film" is based on two major themes -- loss of individuality and the threat of knowledge ("There are some things Man is not meant to know."). The two themes give rise to the standard props of the films -- mad scientists, monsters awakened from the Deep by atomic bombs, mind-controlling aliens and the like. Baxter's approach to criticism seems to be based on evaluating the success of various films in using cinema techniques to evoke the superstition and horror associated with these props. Much space is devoted to the "Creature" cycle and the disaster theme -- atomic and otherwise.

Baxter doesn't necessarily endorse these attitudes, however. For instance, while criticizing H.G. Wells' "Things to Come" on technical grounds, he sympathizes with Wells' vision (as opposed to his specific political program), and even quotes Oswald Cabal's final speech in full as "rich in the essential spirit of science fiction." And in a chapter on atomic bomb movies, he complains, "Few sf films deal with the peaceful uses of the atom, with simple radiation hazards, with mutation. Despite the cinematic potential of books like Lester del Rey's "Nerves," no attempt has been made to transfer it or others like it to the screen. Sf film takes from a concept only what it needs, in this case the possibility not only of danger and destruction brought on by the accession of knowledge but the end of the world itself, a pessimistic vision of truly overwhelming proportions."

Iconoclastically, he slights "Doctor Strangelove" on the grounds that atomic war movies had already been done to death before it, and as having no more "content than an episode of 'Duck Rogers.'" He believes "2001" is an honest attempt at science fiction -- "more sf than sf film" -- but slams Stanley Kubrick for "muddled development of ideas" and for editing the film in such a way as to make the result "confusing." And Baxter seems to prefer Arthur C. Clarke's novel version -- at least in some respects. Most of the films covered, of course, are distinguished from ordinary "horror" films only by the "scientific" props or explanations. They are anti-science fiction -- but Baxter admits it, and does not promote them as a basis for literary science fiction.

Most of the contents of the book would be of marginal interest to S.F. fans, were it not for the obvious parallels between what Baxter calls "S.F. film" and the New Wave-Thing. We can see the doctrines of "S.F. film" being incorporated into "science fiction."

-- j.j.p.

THE DALETH EFFECT

by Harry Harrison
Putnam * \$4.95

Once upon a time, no one could understand what kept the Sun shining. Then atomic energy was discovered.

History may be repeating itself. No one can account for the energy output of quasars -- or even that represented by the "gravity waves" a Maryland physicist claims are coming from the center of our own Galaxy. Somewhere, another Breakthrough in physics seems to be lurking.

Harry Harrison, in "The Daleth Effect," tries to imagine the consequences of such a breakthrough -- not just as a revolution in science and technology, but in terms of the moral problems facing the scientist who realizes the power of knowledge to be used for good or ill. It's a provocative theme, but it could have made a better novel.

Too much of the writing is on a pedestrian level that generates little passion. Harrison's own "Deathworld," or Martin Caidin's "The God Machine," or the average Ian Fleming thriller pack more of a punch. It is not until at least halfway through that "The Daleth Effect" really begins to strike sparks.

At first, Harrison seems to be attempting a pastiche of E.E. "Doc" Smith's "The Skylark of Space." An explosion in the laboratory of Arnie Klein, an Israeli physicist, starts things off -- sound familiar? The source of the energy in quasars has been discovered and Klein, knowing the implications, forsakes war-torn Israel for peaceful Denmark.

Before long -- shades of Richard Seaton -- Klein and the allies he finds in Denmark have turned an experimental submarine into a spaceship powered by the Daleth effect, just in time to rescue a crew of Russian cosmonauts stranded on the Moon. There's no Blackie Duquesne -- but the Great Powers act just like World Steel when they get wind of what the Danes are up to. Which isn't hard to do -- besides rescuing Russians, Denmark has formed its own semi-public corporation to exploit the solar system from a base on the Moon.

With Russian and American agents falling over each other to steal the secret of the Daleth effect, security problems mount. Two frogmen try to kidnap Klein, and the estranged wife of a Danish captain -- Nils Hansen (who pilots Daleth ships) -- is approached. This is standard spy thriller stuff, of course. A discussion between Klein and Hansen about the responsibilities of the scientist (as both are trudging across Mars) is more interesting -- and more to the point, inasmuch as it sheds some light on Klein's motivations.

In an ironic climax, Russia and America both smuggle armed agents aboard the first commercial spaceliner to Mars. When they seize engine and control rooms, Hansen has the ship -- with Klein and most of the other Daleth pioneers -- blown up as a dramatic gesture to save Klein's secret from the warmongers. But the secret is out anyway, and it didn't take spies to get it -- only other scientists doing their homework.

As John Campbell said, "There are no secrets in science but Nature's secrets -- and Nature is a blabbermouth." All good men can hope for is to keep one jump ahead of evil men. Q.E.D. Not an ideal novel -- but the thesis strikes home. We may face a Daleth-type crisis next year, or next month, or tomorrow.

-- j.j.p.

THE STEEL CROCODILE

by D.G. Compton
Ace 78575 * 75¢

"The Steel Crocodile" by D.G. Compton should not be dismissed as simply a more traditional S.F. version of Martin Caidin's computer menace novel of a couple of years ago, "The God Machine." True, Compton also writes about mysteries and murders, about a Secret Project and sabotage, and above all about the final logic of computer science with its conceivable threat; and indeed, as opposed to Caidin's realism, he has set his exciting tale in an imaginative Pohl-Kornbluth style future shaped by the rise of both a 'leisure' and a 'surveillance' society.

However, this book is about more than just "computer doom." In a sense, the computer is rational man taken to his ultimate extension, a thinking machine. The real subject of Compton's novel is a confronta-

tion between science and religion, between rationalism and faith.

There are two main characters, a husband and wife. And while they personify the conflict, they are by no means simply personifications. The remaining characters, however, are really just grotesque figures -- a student radical, a paranoiac research director, a quibbling politician, etc.

The novel is constructed by alternating the viewpoints of Matthew, a supporter of the Colindale Project, and Abigail, his Catholic wife. Compton also uses frequent brief narrative regressions, viewing the same scene from the opposed positions. It is an excellent technique for both the mystery-story plotting and the conflict theme. Unfortunately, it isn't used as effectively as it might have been.

The "Crocodile" of the title is the "brute" of science. It cannot swerve its head; it must go forward, ever devouring. The rational answer, of course, is that science is a Juggernaut only when responsibility is neglected. Like a hammer, it can be used to drive nails or crush skulls. Still, preferring as he does a creed of passive faith, Compton chooses to present the rational view as paranoiac -- the dreams of vain man.

I am in some disagreement with Compton's position; but nevertheless, "The Steel Crocodile" is a good book and one that I enjoyed. It is traditionally written, with a well-crafted story capable of carrying its proselytizing. Moreover, it presents the scientific alternative with some intellectual dignity, rather than with simple scatological dismissal. Even so, its churchman's eschatology is something of an anachronism and the brave words of faith at the close have a pathetic ring demonstrating the nearness of unreasoned faith to despairing nihilism.

-- Wayne Connelly

THE DOUBLE: BILL SYMPOSIUM

Nearly everyone has heard about the Double:Bill Symposium by this time, but there may still be some who have neglected to obtain theirs -- an oversight they should by all means correct immediately by sending \$3 to Bill Mallardi or Bill Bowers at P.O. Box 368, Akron, Ohio, 44309. If any copies are still left, they won't last long.

Ninety-four science fiction authors are polled -- including more than 20 additional ones since the previous edition of the Symposium in 1964 -- on such questions as why they write S.F., what they think it is for, its relationship to the mainstream, influences in their own development as writers, the importance of "messages," weaknesses in the genre today, and other matters.

Their answers tend to be highly individual, and it would be silly to try to arrive at some sort of "consensus." The value of the Symposium lies in the revelation of the individual writers' attitudes toward S.F., and how these attitudes may affect their work.

Thus Piers Anthony, we discover, would really rather be authoring historical fiction, and has only a vague idea of what S.F. is for. This explains the slightness of the S.F. content in his work. Harlan Ellison wants social satire, allegory and parable about "His Times," and sees no reason for the genre to have its own future-oriented thematic material. Whereas Isaac Asimov sees topical themes as "treason" to the purpose of science fiction. Damon Knight's inconsistencies about standards in S.F. may be explained by his confession that he's in the genre only for "kicks and money," and that the genre itself only exists for "kicks and money." Fans of Roger Zelazny who mistake him for a New Wave will no doubt be perplexed to learn the greatest influence on him during his "formative" years was Stanley G. Weinbaum. And what is one to make of the late E.E. Smith -- condemned by many as a "formula" writer -- complaining that the main weakness in the field in 1963-4 was "Too much imitation; too much rehashing of old and beat-up themes." (Lester del Rey says the same.)

This isn't a book to be read through, exactly, but it has to be about the most valuable reference work ever published in a fanzine. It's the sort of thing you'll want to pick up again and again -- whether as part of a project, or just on the spur of the moment -- when you want to know, "What does so-and-so think about such-and-such?"

-- j.j.p.

1. 'NEO-CLASSICISM'

As was noted briefly elsewhere in our Eschatological Romanticism statement, an attempt is being made to promote a school of Neo-Classical science fiction in opposition to the New Wave-Thing.

This movement is led by Glen T. Brock of P.O. Box 10885, Atlanta, Ga., editor of Neutron. In a "Handy Glossary to Science Fiction Schools of Writing" (Aug., 1969), Mr. Brock states:

"The basic division is that of New Wave and Classical (Old Thing). I shall speak of the Classical school first.

"The Classical school encompasses the entire evolution of science fiction from the technological to the socioscientific periods.

"Neo-Classical means exactly what it says: the new classicism -- being a return to or continuation of the classical writing style. The easiest exemplification being the authors: Larry Niven, Fred Saberhagen and Richard C. Meredith."

Mr. Brock goes on to break down the New Wave into three branches: the Dadaistic School (William S. Burroughs and similar "experimenters"), the Sensual School ("totally physical and emotional" writers like Piers Anthony, Robert Silverberg and Philip Jose Farmer) and the British School (early J.G. Ballard like "The Drowned World," coherent but plotless).

The Second Foundation's main difference with Mr. Brock is that it considers the writers he places in the Sensual School to be borderline, or chameleon cases -- rather than members of the New Wave-Thing per se. Of course, the Second Foundation cannot be responsible for any other differences of opinion that may arise.

Mr. Brock states that he developed his nomenclature by aesthetic analogies. He feels his Neo-Classicism is basically the same as our own Eschatological Romanticism, but prefers to retain his terminology on the grounds that ours might be confused with theology or allegory (we have tried to avoid this possibility by laying the groundwork in the previous two issues of Renaissance for our approach to eschatology).

Second Foundationers are advised to watch for further developments in the Neo-Classical movement.

-- j.j.p.

2. 1970 NEBULAS

The winners of the 1970 Nebula awards of the Science Fiction Writers of America represent a pretty mixed bag.

Certainly the award of the "best novel" prize to Ursula LeGuin for "The Left Hand of Darkness" is what stands out among the decisions made by S.F.W.A. members, in giving deserved recognition to a new author who knows the best values of both science fiction and literature and who has the skill and insight to combine them. Mrs. LeGuin's novel now has a head start in the Hugo competition. The New Wave-Thing vote in Nebula "best novel" balloting apparently split between Kurt Vonnegut's best-selling "black humor" treatment of the Dresden bombing, "Slaughterhouse Five," and Norman Spinrad's poorly-written but much-publicized exploration of contemporary broadcasting and power-politics, "Bug Jack Barron."

Harlan Ellison showed his power and influence remain as great as ever by winning the "best novella" award for "A Boy and His Dog," which is an obvious piece of contemporary social protest against the evils of "middle-class suburbia" disguised as an implausible after-the-bomb tale. Fritz Leiber came in second for "Ship of Shadows," from the special edition of Fantasy and Science Fiction devoted to him last year. Third was Anne McCaffrey's "Dramatic Mission," one of the "Helva" stories.

In the "best novelette" category, the nod went to Samuel Delany's "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones," which may well be the most authentically science fiction of his S.F. stories -- despite a New Wavish-sounding title, it's really sociological extrapolation of the cops-and-robbers S.F. plot told in Delany's poetic style. Mrs. LeGuin's excellent tale of cloning, "Nine Lives," came in second in the voting. Third was Spinrad's pretentious atomic doom story, "The Big Flash."

"Passengers," a Beckett monologue by Robert Silverberg disguised as an S.F. story on the "possession" theme, won the "best short story" award. Right behind that came Ellison's "Shattered Like a Glass Goblin," a vignette about life among the (lowly) hippies disguised as a weird tale. Both, significantly, come from Damon Knight's "Orbit 4," a source of frequent Nebula nominations from S.F.W.A. members who never read much else. Larry Niven's "Not Long before the End" came in third.

Summing up, the four winning stories are evenly divided between honest science fiction and mainstream items pretending to be science fiction or, at least, some form of speculative fiction. The top twelve vote-getters fall into S.F. and non-S.F. by about the same proportion. The split between "Old Wave" and "New Wave" pretty much matches that between S.F. and non-S.F. But the overall situation may have taken a slight turn for the worse in view of the fact that the "New Wave" winners -- "A Boy and His Dog" and "Passengers" -- have even less content, considered as "S.F.," than last year's "Mother to the World" and "The Planners." On the other hand, "The Left Hand of Darkness" and "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones" are both superior to last year's "Old Wave" winners, "Rite of Passage" and "Dragonrider."

-- j.j.p.

3. HISTORY REPEATS

"Mrs. Stavrogin...invited all sorts of literary figures, who were¹ immediately shepherded into her drawing room in droves. After that they started coming without being invited -- one would bring along another. She had never seen such men of letters before; they were incredibly but quite openly vain (Ellison? Ballard?), as though in being so vain they were performing some sort of function. Some, though by no means all, arrived drunk and then behaved as if there were something beautiful in drunkenness that they had discovered only yesterday (hmm...). Indeed, they seemed fiercely proud of something (Platt?). Their faces proclaimed that they had just this minute discovered some terribly important secret (Disch? Spinrad?). They swore at one another and admired themselves for doing so. It was difficult to find out what they had actually written, but they described themselves as critics (Moorcock? Merril?), novelists (Sladek? Aldiss?), satirists (Vonnegut? Lafferty?), playwrights (??) and debunkers (Collyn? Delap?).

"Mr. Verkhovensky managed to penetrate to their top layer, their ruling clique. He climbed an incredible distance to reach those who were actually at the controls, but they received him warmly. Of course, none of them had ever heard of him -- they only gathered that he was for The Idea (Milford Mafia?). And he maneuvered them so adroitly that, despite their exalted position, he managed to get them to attend Mrs. Stavrogin's receptions once or twice. These men were very serious, polite and well behaved (Academe?), and the others seemed afraid of them. But apparently they didn't have too much time to spare. Two or three former literary lions (Knight? Dlish?) with whom Mrs. Stavrogin had managed to maintain graceful relations also turned up. But, to her amazement, these genuine celebrities behaved sheepishly before the new rabble and shamefully tried to curry favor with them."

-- from (excepting parenthetical remarks) "The Possessed," by Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

"Is it possible that we have here, accidentally, observed the creation of the new type of critic in the sf field, whose number is increasing with each individual's discovery that wholesale sf author slaughter -- but with an occasional loving review of an almost-mainstream story -- is the WAY UP?"

-- A.E. van Vogt

"The formula most often approved today is scrupulously objective narration with overtones of universal meanings too elusive to be wholly captured for definition. 'Symbolism' is in favor...."

-- Richard Harte Fogle

TO THE HONORABLE SECRETARY OF THE
NAVY, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Dear Sir: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the proposed purchase of the schooner "Albatross" for the service of the Navy. I am pleased to hear that you are interested in the vessel, and I am sure that the Government will be glad to consider the purchase of the same.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient servant,
J. D. [Name]

The schooner "Albatross" is a vessel of the class of the "Albatross" class, and is well adapted for the service of the Navy. She is a fast and maneuverable vessel, and is well equipped with the necessary apparatus for the service of the Navy. I am sure that you will be satisfied with the vessel, and I am sure that the Government will be glad to consider the purchase of the same.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient servant,
J. D. [Name]

ALBATROSS

I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient servant,
J. D. [Name]