

# DAGON

#75

26 October 1968

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Barbarella, whatever else it might be, is a hilarious parody of the vastly over-rated film 2001. Techniques that Kubrick uses with a straight face in 2001 are played for laughs in Barbarella, and aspects of space travel that he overlooks altogether put in an appearance in the Jane Fonda film.

Of course, it isn't as good as the book; films never are. In Jean-Claude Forest's original comic strip, translated from French and made familiar to American readers by Grove Press, Barbarella is a Bardot-faced blonde who has knocked around the universe too long to have any illusions about sex, power, or fortune. When the old rebel Durand introduces her to the blind angel Pygar he describes her: "This girl has a face as pure as that of a vestal virgin, but she is more desirable than all the prostitutes of Sogo."

The Barbarella of the film is much more innocent. (Or maybe it's just that Jane Fonda does not turn me on. Now if Barbarella had been played by Leslie Uggams or Linda Ronstadt...) For one thing, sex no longer exists on Earth, except for poor people who can't afford ecstasy pills. (Barbarella is presumably an exogene.) The film begins with a strip-tease in free fall, an art form of which our descendants will undoubtedly see much more. The President of a totally disarmed and peaceful Earth commissions her to search for a missing scientist who went astray while on a trip to the North Star, and wound up on Tau Ceti. (In terms of terrestrial journeys this would be like starting out from New York for Los Angeles, and getting lost in New Haven.)

Tau Ceti has already appeared in science-fiction as the star about which L. Sprague de Camp's famous planet Krishna revolves. The planet where Barbarella lands is about as far removed from Krishna as can be imagined. Her space ship has a mind of its own, like HAL, but with a faggy voice and a mild sense of humor. And it looks like a lacquered Japanese box with three mammaries. Its name is Alpha, or Alfie.

Once on the planet of Tau Ceti, Barbarella discovers that old-fashioned sex still has its fans - though she draws the line at the planet's tyrant queen. The major attraction is Pygar, probably because his feathers tickle. (Thought for speculation: what does a winged man have in the place of pubic hair?) After a brush with a singularly ineffective bunch of rebels, whom the Forest Men of Mongo would have scorned as allies, she makes her escape from Sogo draped over one of Pygar's arms. Over the other arm is the queen, apparently on the principle of "waste not, want not."

The episode of the "Excessive Machine" indicates how much the film has been changed from the book. The Grand Serrurier puts Barbarella into a machine designed to make her die of pleasure. The book Barbarella, worldly as she is, is pleased into submission by this gadget. But the fresh-faced innocent of the film causes it to blow all its fuses.

As if to mock the kitschy sound track of 2001, Barbarella does her derring-do to a moderately heavy infusion of Bach and near-Bach. Whenever her space-ship goes out of control, or she enters one of Sogo's pleasure-pits, the psychedelic effects come on strong - not detached from the action, like Kubrick's, but consonant with it. Though Barbarella does sometime try to pad out a weak story-line with special effects, it doesn't depend on them as a crutch.

Barbarella is not likely to get out to the "nabes" - the profusion of nipples is not likely to be too popular in Ray Ridge or San Marino. So see it where you can. It's not great art, but it's funny - sometimes even intentionally so.

EXCUSE ME, BUT YOUR CREDIBILITY IS GONE

There used to be "investment trusts", which were bad. Now there are "mutual funds", which are good. There used to be "trusts" and "cartels", which were bad. Now there are "conglomerates", which are good. Unscrupulous politicians used to be "liars", which was bad. Now we merely have "credibility gaps"

The 1968 presidential campaign kindles a nostalgia for the older, franker, terminology. George Wallace now maintains that he has never said a prejudiced or bigoted word against anyone of any racial group. Yet, as the quotations cited in DAGO's #71 and #73 show, he hates not only Negroes but also white Americans of eastern and southern European ancestry.

Eubert Humphrey is also in on this game. During the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, he tried to excuse the suppression of his opponents by claiming that an assassination plot was afoot against him. Humphrey got this story from Mayor Daley, and Daley got it from three police informers. Polygraph tests and investigations later showed that all three men were lying.

But the story still goes on. Daley repeated it in giving his side of the Chicago violence. However, neither the Federal Bureau of Investigation nor any other federal official places any credence in it. Now the Un-American Committee has taken up the matter. According to a thorough report on the "assassination plot" story by Lois Mille in the New York Post of 10 October 1968, a Chicago policeman named Robert L. Pierson told the Un-American Committee that he had heard Yippie leader Jerry Rubin order the deaths of Humphrey, Daley, McCarthy, and McGovern. Under the circumstances, it is hard to avoid the impression that Pierson is sucking this out of his own thumb, and that Daley and Humphrey rushed to endorse the story as an excuse for the violence which they let loose against McCarthy's supporters.

But of all the men on the Nixon-Humphrey-Wallace ticket, Richard Nixon has been dealing most freely in lies. On 9 October, in Santa Monica, Nixon asserted that "pornographers actually buy and use the mailing lists of Cub Scouts". He was given the lie the next day by a scouting official, who said that there is no such mailing list. (New York Times, 11 October 1968.)

Previously, trying to milk the "crime" issue for all it was worth, Nixon asserted that in Washington D. C. "bus drivers have to carry weapons". The truth of the matter is that Washington bus drivers are forbidden by District law to carry weapons! Anyone who violates this law is both arrested and fired. If Nixon has the names of such men, then in the interest of the "law and order" he professes to support he is obliged to inform their superiors.

But, as with any matter of idiocy in this year's campaign, it is George Wallace who has the last word. He professes to be against some evil vaguely described as "crime in the streets". Yet, on 27 June 1968 George Wallace showed how he stands on "crime in the streets". In Eutaw, Alabama, an ABC cameraman took a picture of Wallace shaking hands with Robert Shelton, Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. Wallace bodyguard ordered the cameraman to give him the film. When the cameraman refused, Wallace ordered his bodyguard to "Take it."

The bodyguard, who refused to identify himself, forcibly took cameraman Charles Jones' camera and removed the exposed film. The Secret Service men assigned to guard Wallace - one of whom is also his press secretary (!) - did not interfere.

So the alleged "anti-crime" candidate has ordered and abetted an act of theft in a public place. The reason, of course, is that Wallace couldn't care less about hold-ups when he says "crime in the streets". By this phrase he means, as segregationists have meant for a decade, the civil rights movement.

"And must the Senator from Illinois  
Be this squat thing with blinking, half-  
closed eyes?"

"This brazen gutter idol, reared to power  
Upon a leering pyramid of lies?"  
- Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931)

This is  
O At  
P Great  
E Intervals  
R This  
A Appears  
T To  
I Inflamm  
● Optic  
N Nerves

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