



DIASPAR II

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This is DIASPAR #11, November 1968, published for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association by Terry Carr, 35 Pierrepont St., Brooklyn N.Y. 11201 because after all these years I'll be goddamned if I'll let myself get dropped from the rolls for lacktivity. Mimeo by QWERTYUIOPress.

A fascinating thing is happening in fandom these days. It's also happening in science fiction itself, and in the Great World Out There. Primarily it's happening Out There, really, but that science fiction people should be not only responsive to mundane movements but in some ways in the forefront of them is a source of surprise and hope for me.

There's this cultural revolution taking place right before our eyes, and I say honestly that nothing has so jogged my sense of wonder since the ancient Mars-god Rhiannon answered Matt Carse's call in The Sea-Kings of Mars. I'm not talking only about the revolution in popular music, though that's part and parcel of it; I'm not talking solely of hippies and pot and love power or lack of same, though they're all in there too; I'm not talking about the New Wave as such, either. (As a matter of fact, I think "the New Wave" is already an outmoded concept, as I hope to get around to explaining a bit later.) All these things are part of the revolution, together with Marshall McLuhan and the Negro revolutionists and Laugh-In and Eugene McCarthy and the Baycon. Student power. Vietnam. Ex-Nixon voters talking this year of voting for Eldridge Cleaver or Dick Gregory or Pat Paulson. (I know of no one who's even joking about voting for Pogo or Snoopy this year.)

A random list of "In" phenomena and controversies? No, not quite. For the first time since I've been alive I believe I see truly hopeful signs for the future of people in this country, eventually for people the world over (if we have any luck at all continuing to stave off the bomb). Because this time it isn't just politicians making promises; this time it isn't just disgusted societal dropouts writing bitter polemics in verse and prose because not enough people agree with them to make political or social action practical; this time there's a tremendous and growing body of opinion in favor of change in this country, and the revolution is gaining momentum. It's the kids, the 17-year-olds (or maybe even 14-year-olds) who'll be voting in the next Presidential election: for once they're going to shape the future, rather than being shaped by it.

Look at the Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour. Pretty standard format, with songs and jokes and skits and the union-required dance numbers, and at the end of the hour the cast stands and waves while the credits roll in front of them. But notice that two or three of them are holding up two fingers in a "V" sign. If you don't know what that means, ask the clean-cut honor student next door; he knows.

Today in the mail I got a fanzine that was as bad a crudzine as any I've

seen since the great days of THURBAN I and LOOKING BACKWARD. It was ineptly typed, crudely written, badly reproduced, with execrable artwork shakily stenciled and book reviews that were often just plot summaries and a story of which I had only to read three random lines to get the gist and know there was no need to read it. But: the editor, the contributors, the lettercol hacks were at least talking about the right subjects for once. I was astounded; not only were they praising Delany and Lafferty and Zelazny and putting down reactionaries like Lester del Rey and John J. Pierce and Sam Moskowitz, but there were filler quotes from Dick Gregory and Bob Dylan and Archibald MacLeish, and in the middle of the book reviews was a review of Yevtoshenko's new book of poems. This from a group of young fans probably about 14 or 15.

They didn't understand it all, they wrote some silly and naive things, but give them a few years, Meyer.

There was a discussion of the "New Wave" at the Milford SF Writers' Conference this past summer, and one of the main points raised was that the new writers mostly came to fiction writing by way of poetry. But poetry is dead, you say; no one has paid attention to it outside college classes since the twenties, or at best since Dylan Thomas died. Wrong. Poetry has snuck back into popular culture, disguised as song lyrics. Donovan, Bob Dylan, Lennon-McCartney, John Phillips, Marty Balin, Simon & Garfunkle, Janis Ian, Brian Wilson, Leonard Cohen...they're just a few of the people on the rock-pop scene who are mixing poetry and melody, raising rock from the oop-shoop atrocities and pop from the depths of moon and June. The kids are listening to the words today, not just the beat, and the words are giving them a new kind of consciousness, a poet's consciousness.

Fancy words, but I don't mean anything fancy by them. That's just the point: poetry is no longer fancy; it's commonplace. Poetry is, if you will, a non-linear medium as opposed to the point-by-point development we're used to in most fiction, science fiction or mainstream. And this is a post-McLuhan world, where the techniques of television commercials are among the most sophisticated forms of communication ever developed. Laugh-In exploited a number of those techniques, with a pair of stand-up comics about as talented as Martin & Rossi and a flock of gags straight out of vaudeville, and suddenly it's the hottest television show in years. Richard Lester showed us in A Hard Day's Night that collage-scenes can add a whole new dimension to the movie (or tv) screen, and half the directors in the world, including Lester himself, have been copying the idea ever since, with mixed but interesting results.

Non-linearity is an approach you wouldn't expect to see flourishing in science fiction, a form of fiction until recently measured primarily by its rigorous attention to logic, which is linear as hell. But so much of the most popular sf today ignores logic -- is a-logical -- that it's clear the forces spotted by McLuhan are at work here too.

This can go too far, I believe. Chip Delany told me last week, "What most intelligent people like about science fiction is invention, ideas, new juxtapositions, new viewpoints. What they don't care for at all is plot." I don't believe this for a moment, but I do agree that the emphasis has shifted away from pure story values -- and I mean on the part of the readers as well as the writers. THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION's plot is rudimentary, but it has so many other things going for it that this doesn't matter. And is anyone going to tell me he voted for LORD OF LIGHT for the Hugo because of its plot? (LoL does have a fine, and rather complicated, plot -- but how many of you were concerned enough with it to work it all out? Was it, therefore, of prime importance?)

What's happening outside our little world of sf and fandom is obviously having a profound effect on the microcosm.

The Baycon? Somebody whose name I don't have permission to quote wrote me a paragraph's worth of impressions:

The convention hotel is a sprawling, gothic semi-circle. The oxygen inside is inadequate and one must thread his way to the emergency room, the square, stapled-on patio, to breathe. Here it is not the same. You look up into the night and find a lighted attic window, the outlines of a madwoman holding a candle. The fire exits are laundry chutes, you were told; you do not like to think where they end. The corridors are wide and winding. They have absorbed every known type of halitosis and breathe it back at you as you wait for the elevator that never comes. The rooms have a simple push-button lock while outside Berkeley simmers with "incidents" which threaten to spread to the parking lot, the lobby, the incense-clouded light show. A knock at the door brings silence inside. Maybe it's only a Star Trek fan wanting to get in. The coffee shop is a prop, the waiting room to somewhere else. Somewhere else is a huge expanse of tables supervised by waitresses who order the food from the Leamington. (Is that where the laundry chute ends?) Nothing is real. Joe Frap from IBM turns up high in love beads, and somebody's grandmother is freaking out in the pay toilet. The revolution is happening now, inside and outside. Meanwhile, back where the action is supposed to be, the scotch and bourbon flow at the usual rate and the people are talking shop while all the shops are boarded up and the hotel radio pipes in acid rock from nine to two a.m. The costume ball is redundant. "What's new?" is not an idle question.

That's a good capsule commentary, though I'm sure a lot of fans and pros won't recognize the con they were at in its descriptions. Not surprising: it was an amazingly fragmented convention -- not just because the hotel was sprawling, nor because so many attendees had to find rooms at outside hotels like the Leamington, but because there were so many different types of people there that it was a potpourri of conventions. As in years past, it splintered off into an sf convention, a fannish con, a Burroughs dum-dum, a comicscon, a gaggle of monster fans and a babble of Star Trekkers; this time, though, add the generation gap. A lot of hippies came over from the Haight-Ashbury or up from Telegraph Avenue, but these weren't outsiders; the hippies are very turned on to science fiction these days. (They even are going through some of the growing pains regular sf fandom had to endure: water-brotherhoods a la Heinlein, even Scientology. I had a flash-fantasy about hippie first, second, even seventh fandoms, but I resolutely shove it aside as too grotesque.) Conversely, a fantastic number of the newer, younger sf readers are turned on to hippie phenomena. When Harry Harrison, seconding Columbus's bid for the '69 worldcon, asked the audience what kind of music they'd want at the costume ball, the response was an overwhelming "ROCK!" And though it would be impossible to judge how many of the fans -- and pros -- were turned on to other things at that con, I do know that a criminology major at Cal dropped by the con to go out to dinner with his brother and said, "I was in the lobby for five minutes and I saw at least four narcotics agents I know by sight." There were no arrests, however, nor even raids that I heard of.

Yes, a lot of generation gap. The newer fans and the hippies were sometimes indistinguishable; the First Fandomites must've been appalled. Norman Spinrad, Roger Zelazny, Harlan Ellison were surrounded by the young fans; the older fans seemed to be flocking to Larry Niven and hailing him as the second coming of E. E. Smith. The Baycon was so fragmented in these various ways that it seemed like a

collage-con. And maybe it was: maybe the Baycon was the first of a new kind of sf convention, the post-McLuhan convention.

I know that one of the standard lines of the con was "Isn't this a weird convention?" Nobody could quite seem to put his finger on the theme of the con, the running set of topics and preoccupations that would characterize it in our memories later. (As, for instance, the NYCon3 was the "New Wave" vs. "Old Wave" convention, and the '68 Lunacon was where everybody argued about 2001.) This one wasn't unified in that way, so it seemed strange. Yet despite numerous gripes about the hotel, the banquet, lack of air conditioning, etc., when it was over the feeling seemed to be unanimous that it had been a fine, fine con, and the conreports I've seen so far seem to bear this out. Maybe (just maybe -- I'm only speculating) this is another sign that sf fans no longer feel the need for a totally ordered universe, a logical, linearly developed environment.

McLuhan again: In the tight little island that used to be our in-group, patterns could be perceived and defined; in the global village that has now stretched its borders to include our territory, phenomena pile on top of one another and must be understood like a collage.

I'm not in favor of all of this, either the fannish and stfnal aspects or those of the world around us. As a white man, I'm threatened by the Negro revolution even though I'm in favor of most of its goals; the probabilities are that I'm going to have to give up some of the more gracious aspects of living I've worked for, as that revolution progresses. I don't think I'll begrudge giving up my fair share to repay the dues my father and his father never paid, but the nature of revolutions is that many people get hurt, lose more than is their "share." And I think there's danger of drug abuse, too -- not just because amphetamines can cook people's brains and LSD can freak out people of certain psychological dispositions, but marijuana abuse too. Sure, we're told pot is no worse than alcohol and doesn't give you hangovers either, so it should be legalized. I'll buy that; but some of the same people who advance the first line say they feel no compunctions about driving a car while high on pot. Seems to me that's just as bad as driving while drunk on alcohol -- and if we're to accept the comparison on one hand, we should accept it across the board. Is it a necessary result of a non-linear worldview that one-for-one relationships like this are lost to us?

I also hold a little corner of my heart aloof from the very, very nice talking and writing and singing about Love that we hear from the flower children. I think the hippies' emphasis on love is fine, perhaps beautiful; but it's too often naive. I know they believe love is the answer, I know they want to love everyone and have everyone love everyone -- but why do they believe it, why do they so desperately want it? The hippie phenomenon is a middle-class one: kids from well-to-do homes get sick of hypocrisy and materialistic values, so they drop out, leave home and try a new kind of life. But what was the underlying emotion they had when they made this decision? Love? Or maybe hate? And if the latter, which I think is the more understandable and probable, then what emotional response is it likely to set off in these kids? I think it's guilt, and I think that's where the love generation's at, all too frequently. Not to belabor an obvious, rather superficial Freudian point, you can't so thoroughly reject your parents and not feel guilty about it; and if hate is mixed in there, what better psychological prop than a commitment to love? When that gentle kid in the Village hands you a flower next spring, don't doubt that it represents love -- but remember the fertilizer that grew it. And don't be too surprised if, on a day when he just can't make it, he dumps the fertilizer in your hand instead.

Norman Spinrad has written a very powerful novelet about just this; it'll be in the next ORBIT. It's about an acid-rock group that grooves behind the H-bomb.

It's well worth reading --- and after you've read it, you might take a look at the jacket for the latest (as of Nov. 2, 1968) Jefferson Airplane album, Crown of Creation. It shows the group superimposed inside a beautiful color photo of a mushroom cloud. Crown of creation?

As for the effects of the cultural revolution inside science fiction, I don't like the idea that plots are irrelevant, as the non-linearists would have it. I happen to like a well-plotted story -- it's not the only kind of story I can appreciate, but it's one of them. Fortunately, of course, the changes that are upon us won't be universal; we may have a swing away from pure story-telling in favor of other techniques of construction, but I don't believe that even at the height of this reaction there'll be a serious lack of people interested in writing, publishing and reading plots.

I think I see some evidences of post-McLuhan attitudes in fanzine publishing already, and I don't always like them. There was a fanzine I got a month or two ago -- was it GENOOK? -- whose editorial was almost a model of non-linear development: page after page of commentary on this and that subject, usually to do with rock or politics or fans, but with no unifying theme and frequent little trip-outs, flash-fantasy schticks of imaginary conversations brought to mind by the preceding topics. It was a mixed bag, but on the whole I thought it was one of the best fanzine editorials I've read in years. Still: this guy was very much on top of what he was doing; he was good. I doubt many fans could handle that form, and I suspect that a bad editorial of that type would just read like an interminable Betty Kujawa letter. (I'm told Betty Kujawa is a nice person, and I have no reason to doubt it. She writes godawful letters, though.)

For that matter, if we get a real spate of collage-type fanzines, might we not find ourselves faced with a mailboxful of DYNATRONs every day? Marshall McLuhan, what're you doin'?

But enough of negativism. It's easy to spot the flaws and excesses in a new movement, particularly one so amorphous as this one is now during its beginnings. My caveats notwithstanding, I'm excited by the new vistas opening up before us. The less rigid consciousness of our mixed-media world, the greater commitments demanded by the issues that are producing violence and conscious misery in our country, the long, long overdue challenging of our accepted values...all these and more are changing our world right now. They are having a vastly more profound effect on the world than space flight, our great dream for the past several decades, is likely to have for a century or two. It's possible that we wouldn't be able to recognize the world of 1988 if we were transported there now; the revolution has that much potential.

Oh, the "New Wave"? I said earlier that I think it's an outmoded concept already; what did I mean? Simply this: The "New Wave," as best it could be defined by those either in favor or opposed to it, was a matter of experimental styles and constructions, sometimes of attempts at new subjects. But that's all superficial, symptomatic. What's happening now, what the "New Wave" began, is a new consciousness, more flexible attitudes, a realization that science fiction has come alive again as a possible contributing force to changing the future. I think a lot of us lost that hope when sf's warnings about the Bomb failed to stop anything, and when our pet, space flight, became a political propaganda tool, bread and circuses. It seemed for awhile that we were on the wrong track, and maybe we were; at any rate, when sf's writers and readers show (as we are showing) that they're in tune with the very real and very important changes that are reshaping our environment and us, then it seems to me our old sense of lasting excitement must come back. I know it has for me.

And you know? -- it feels exactly like the sense of wonder.

I wrote the following brandonization while visiting the Willises in 1965; it was intended to be a submission for HYPHEN. But HYPHEN remains dormant, and I've never finished the piece -- largely because I haven't been able to work up the interest to finish reading the model, THE DROWNED WORLD. Enough people have read the Brandon version and urged me to publish it, though, that I do so here.

THE GAFIATED WORLD

by carl brandon

Soon it would be too hot. Looking out from the Mount Royal balcony shortly after eight o'clock, Jophans watched the sun rise behind dense groves of giant gymnosperms on the east side of the lagoon. Over there was the area in which Slater's van had bogged down leaving the hotel, and in the succeeding months the pulp paper had decomposed in the rapidly ascending heat and moisture, forming a rich bed of compost from which lush vegetation had grown in a verdant riot of color that put Paul, Bergey and Powers to shame.

Halfway across the lagoon was the testing station, where he, McAulay and Eney labored desultorily day after day. By now, Jophans knew, the routine of the station was mere ritual: up at the crack of noon, check the sheets of mimeo paper pressed the day before and throw out the soggy pulp they had already become, stir yesterday's mimeo ink mixture and pour out the water-thin liquid that it was today. Then back to the formulae charts for new compounds and substances to try.

As Jophans watched, the launch set out from the station toward him, trailing a white spray which settled slowly into the sluggish waters, almost reluctantly, as though Virgil Finlay might be around somewhere sketching. In a few minutes the launch had reached the hotel balcony; Jophans caught the thrown line and secured it.

As Eney stepped up onto the balcony he said, "We're supposed to start in half an hour, but we can't think of a title."

Jophans turned away, slowly leading the way back inside. They turned a corner and started down the block-long corridor to his suite. "I don't really know that there's any point to it," he said.

Eney shrugged. "Perhaps not. But it's got to be done."

"Why? What's the use?" Jophans stopped midway down the hall, gazing steadily at the other. His eyes held neither challenge nor even interest; the question was rhetorical.

"If we stop publishing," Eney said, "then that's the last of it. No more fanac anywhere in the world. Even the newsletter from the Pole Station has stopped coming. We're the only ones left."

Jophans started slowly down the hall once more, not saying anything further for several minutes. He knew this conversation in its entirety, almost word for word; they had held it at least twice a week for five months now. It too was a ritual, like the work itself. It was as though the remaining fans were retracing mankind's path up from savagery, Jophans thought. When the cataclysm had first struck, the various fan-units had gathered together under strong leaders -- Ella Parker, Bruce Pelz, Charles Platt and the rest -- in an instinctive return to the

tribal level. But that period had passed for most of them; now there was a nomadic anarchy in most of the fanworld, an anarchy born of apathy and near-animalism. What structure remained was that imposed by ritual, no more.

And soon, he thought, that too would pass. They couldn't continue to cling to the myth of publishing schedules and the mailing of fanzines when they knew that in the new heat-and-moisture permeated atmosphere all mimeo papers congealed into shapeless masses before reaching their destinations.

Perhaps we should try hektographing. Hektograph paper is more slick, less absorbent; it might last longer. But then he smiled wryly: that would be another retreat into the savagery of the race.

"I don't think I'll join you today," he said at last.

Eney glanced sharply at him; then, seemingly irrelevantly, he asked, "Have you been having nightmares?"

Jophans frowned. "No," he said shortly. He avoided the other's gaze.

"McAulay's been having them," Eney said. "Strange dreams, full of purple oozing slime and black carbon forests, and a never-ending storm raging through it all. Shapes like Leo Morey drawings, and unreal colors, like old prozines with sun-faded covers. He's getting close to the edge, I'm afraid."

"Regression," Jophans muttered.

"What?"

They were coming now into Jophans' suite. Nine months ago, when the violent solar storms had started, shattering the ionosphere and turning the Earth into a vast tropical heat zone, Jophans had moved his entire collection into this suite, guessing correctly that the Mount Royal would be one of the buildings which would still have its top floor above water when the polar caps melted. The collection was still there, but by now it had crumbled, melted and fallen in upon itself in the thick, fetid atmosphere; now Startlings and Captain Futures were brown silt from which mushrooms burgeoned, QUANDRYs and SPACEWARPs sprouted phantasmagorical blossoms and vines, and E.C. comics were putrescent masses spilling from the shelves, not even the seals of the Comics Code Authority showing any longer. All around the room the vegetation had taken over, spreading a carpet of dark green tubers across the floor, climbing the walls and choking the windows. As he looked around the room, Jophans noted idly, for the thousandth time, the small red dots on the wallpaper where some forgotten conventioneer had drawn in nipples on the Victorian ladies pictured in the print.

"Regression," he said again. "We're all going back to our beginnings. The beginnings of the race, the beginnings of fandom; they're all mixed up together in our subconscious. We've developed our brains, but we retain the spinal nervous systems which carry the fluids of racial memory: instincts, ingrained fears, neuro-impulses passed down in the gene-patterns for hundreds of thousands of years. We're like the dinosaurs, with a second brain in our backs -- and that second brain is gaining dominance, stimulated by the change in our environment. Back to the primordial jungles both inside and out: ferns, vines, creepers, Burroughs and Haggard scenes, swamps of hekto slime. Regression, all of it."

"Back to the womb, then," said Eney.

Jophans frowned. "Not at all. That's Freudian; this is Jungian. God,

sometimes I think fans don't know anything."

"My mind remembers, but my spine is a little weak on psychology," Eney said calmly. "Well, perhaps you're right. But if so, it's just another reason we have to keep going with the fanpublishing. Don't you see? -- we're sliding backward, even away from literacy. If fanpublishing stops, it will be the end of civilization as fandom knows it."

"Is there a fandom any longer?" Jophans asked. "There's you and me and McAulay, that's all. And McAulay's almost gone; he'll be dreaming of printing presses next, and you know that means the end. We've already lost."