



ONION SOUP CONTRIBUTORS

In which Gazette staffers and others so inclined venture into the world of the arts. Creativity and criticism will ne'er be the same.

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READ

by G. Posner

Star of the Unborn by Franz Werfel, Viking Press New York, 1946 (Pt109-W4958-a7)

"What! You're not dead, B.H.? 'I'm not dead,' B. H. said with a twinkle. ". . . It's you who are dead, F.W., and you've been dead far, far longer than you can remember."

What can you say about a story that begins thus? You could call it science-fiction. I do not. It seems to me that science-fiction deals with the changes wrought on a people by some new invention or discovery. In this book the inventions come about as a result of changes in mankind's inner being. The book is about the difference between the people of a future age and our own. It is told by F. W. with B.H. as his Virgil-like guide. And, like Dante, F.W. reveals all the glories of Heaven and all the horrors of Hell contained in this world.

In the Eleventh Cosmic Capital Year of Virgo Mankind is the master of his world. Except for a few talking dogs and stubborn cats, most animals are gone. Except for the Jungles, all the world is leveled off and planted with an iron-gray sod. This sod enables Astro-Mental Mankind, as the people call themselves, to converse mentally and to move about over great distances by moving their goal

towards them.

The Jungles are the one place on this world where nature has refused to be tamed. The land, and all who dwell within, have gone backwards, backwards to a culture similar to our own. The presence of the Jungles is to lead the people of this time to yet another of the great disasters in Man's history — a war.

Besides the Jungles there are other things to be seen. We meet the Worker, who produces all the

goods for this non-economic world. We talk with the Grand Bishop and the Jew of the Era; the one sadly watching the alienation from Heaven of the people of his time, and the other warning us to beware of The Others and what they are planning to do. We see the Djebel, Man's greatest achievement, by which he communes with the stars. And at last we fight to escape from the Wintergarden, where Man's fear of death and desire to create a beautiful and voluntary demise makes a mockery of his own end.

The world we travel in is a Paradise but it is in vain. Man, who is the content no matter what world he inhabits, is not yet ready for Paradise and so destroys the world once more. The ending is hopeful, though; a sacrifice takes place which offers Mankind another chance to come into his own.

The Author, who also wrote *The Forty Days of Musa Digh* and *The Song of Bernadette*, wrote this story at the end of his life with the knowledge that he would soon die. It was a story he had always wanted to write for, as he explains, its source was a series of dreams he kept having. He does not claim this to be a prophetic tale. It is a tale about Man; what he is and what makes him so. It is a poetic vision and, I feel, a true one.



by Stephen R. Mills

The Dalhousie Film Society's showing of Ingmar Bergman's "The Silence" last week was



all but ruined because someone decided to answer one of the Unanswerables of the cinema — what is obscene.

Originally, "obscene" was a theatrical term applied to a portion of a play which did not artistically fit. "Obscene" could only be a judgement made in context. Obviously the meaning has changed over time. Scenes from plays, novels, films, etc. are now not judged in the context of the artistic creation of which they are part but within the context of society's moral values.

Bergman's film deals with the moral disintegration of two sisters and, on a larger scale, the desolation and loneliness which is all too evident in our world. The scenes where one sister engages in gross sexual acts with a waiter are necessary for a clear understanding of the film. Yet they are cut because, judged within the context of Judeo-

Christian "rightness", they are "obscene". Another example is "Gone With the Wind", currently playing in the area. At the time of its original release, the film's concluding line (Clark Gable saying "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn!") was highly controversial. "Damn" was just not used in mass entertainment. Yet to substitute "darn" was a ludicrous notion, not only to the film's producers but to anyone who understood the film at all. Fortunately, "damn" was left in but here was another clear instance of judging within the wrong context.

It is often stated that no one can judge what is "obscene". I think this is true in the corrupted meaning of the term. However, a reasonably intelligent and sensitive individual can judge obscenity in its original meaning. The benefits of doing so to the world of the arts would be almost immeasurable.

SEE

by Stephen R. Mills

Until a very few years ago, popular music could safely be divided into two distinct types — country music and rock music. There were (and still are) sub-divisions — "hard" or "acid" rock, rock and roll, soul, gospel music, bluegrass, etc. It's interesting to note, however, that the current trend is not toward a subdivision of either type but to a blending of the best qualities of both — something which has been called, for want of a more imaginative label, country-rock.

It's usually claimed that country-rock originated in 1968 when Bob Dylan, on his way from the rockish "Blonde on Blonde" to the straight country of "Nashville Skyline", "Self Portrait", and "New Morning", recorded "John Wesley Harding". Because he initiated so many trends, it's easy to believe him responsible for this one. Yet a more careful examination of this field proves this claim false.

Dylan has an influence (he always does) but the origins of country-rock must be sought elsewhere. Before Dylan's "Harding" album, groups like Buffalo Springfield, Lovin' Spoonful, the Mamas and the Papas, and many so-called "country" artists were releasing songs in which one could catch clues of things to come. The hard-edged cynicism of rock was gone to be replaced by a

gentle exuberance hitherto found only in Nashville but in the early '60s emanating from LA. However "California Dreamin'", "Nashville Cats", "Daydream", while very nice tunes, were not country rock per se. The gentleness was there but the distinctive country sound — the steel guitar, the banjo, the fiddle — was not.

It was in 1968 that the Byrds released what must be considered the first attempt at genuine country-rock — "Sweetheart of the Rodeo". It was not a particularly good album tending more toward parody than anything but the old instruments were there making new and refreshing sounds. The Byrds perfected their brand of country-rock in later albums — "Dr. Byrds and Mr. Hyde", "The Ballad of Easy Rider", and their latest "Byrdsmaniax". Following the Byrds but producing sounds distinctively their own were The Flying Burrito Brothers ("The Guilded Palace of Sin") Poco ("Deliverin") and the Dillards ("Wheatstraw Suite").

The trend continues today with such groups as the Goose Creek Symphony, the Grateful Dead, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and with individual artists like James Taylor, Delaney and Bonnie, Carole King and many others.

Why country-rock? Is it a reaction to the years of progressive hard rock we've endured? Is it a

symptom of the new age of romanticism into which we seem to be heading? It is a celebration of what remains of our natural world? One would have to say that country-rock is a return to the historical roots of popular music and at the same time a logical extension of its present form. Popular music has nowhere left to go until it understands from whence it came. A joyous experiment with the older forms is needed and is taking place.

Where we go from here no one can say. We can merely enjoy the sounds of country-rock and wait for the next innovation, whatever it may be.



HEAR