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BOOKS IN REVIEW

New Wave At-itudes. David Brittain. *Eduardo Paolozzi at NEW WORLDS: Science Fiction and Art in the Sixties*. Manchester, UK: Savoy, 2013. 181 pp. \$36 pbk.

Sf and fantasy art deserves more attention. Our standard accounts of sf tend to exclude the complex cosmologies of William Blake, the apocalypses of John Martin, and so on. A 2014 Tate Modern exhibition, *Ruin Lust*, included John Gandy's picture of a destroyed Bank of England (1830) and Gerard Byrne's *1984 and Beyond* (2005-2007), a filmed dramatization of a *Playboy* interview with several sf writers. That's just the tip of an iceberg. At Pallant House (Chichester), an Edward Burra show noted that he was "Fascinated by the supernatural, horror movies, and science-fiction novels by cult authors such as HP Lovecraft" (Simon Martin, *Edward Burra* [Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2011]. Online), and one devoted to John Tunnard, "Inner Space to Outer Space," followed his "journey from the 'inner space' of the imagination through works such as the Surrealist 'Fulcrum' (1939, Tate) to his later preoccupation with 'outer space' in the age of space exploration in the 1960s as depicted in paintings such as 'In Many Moons' (1966)" (Simon Martin, *John Tunnard: Inner Space to Outer Space* [Chichester: Pallant House Gallery, 2010]. Online). Neither artist is mentioned in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Now Scottish artist Eduardo Paolozzi is being discussed in the light of his work at *New Worlds* in the late 1960s.

Born to Italian immigrants in Leith, Scotland, in 1924, Paolozzi was interned in 1940, while his father, uncle, and grandfather were killed on a ship taking them to Canada. He was already drawing and, on release, he enrolled part-time at Edinburgh College of Art. During a brief spell in the army, he studied at Ruskin College, Oxford, and at the Slade, temporarily also in the city. After the war he continued studying sculpture at the Slade in London, where he discovered and became influenced by modernism, and then moved to Paris where he met, among others, Dadaist Tristan Tzara. On his return to London in 1949, he taught textiles at the Central School of Art and Design.

In 1952 he was a founding member of the Independent Group, along with Peter Reyner Banham, Theo Crosby, Richard Lanoi, Toni del Renzio, Nigel Henderson, Ronald Jenkins, Sam Stevens, Colin St John Williams, William Turnbull, and Edward Wright, who discussed art, advertising, car design, cybernetics, popular music, and science fiction under the auspices of the Institute of Contemporary Arts. At a lecture there, "Bunk!," Paolozzi fed collages from American magazines into an epidiascope while grunting. The following year they were joined by Lawrence Alloway, Richard Hamilton, John McHale, and Peter and Alison Smithson, and staged *Parallel of Life and Art* at the ICA, drawing on science fiction as much as futurist and surrealist imagery. The Group held further meetings, effectively culminating in *This is Tomorrow* (1956) at the Whitechapel Gallery. At one lecture Paolozzi valorized low art and popular culture—including sf pulps—over the avant garde, indeed wishing to erase distinctions between high and low even though (or because) Pop Art was the label coined by Alloway for the group's work. Among the attendees of *This is Tomorrow*, unknown to each other,

were a teenaged Michael Moorcock and a twenty-something J.G. Ballard (who may also have been to *Parallels*). Both were inspired by the work they saw; although the influence upon Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970) is easier to see, the British Pop Art sensibility was to play into Moorcock's JERRY CORNELIUS works (1968-79) as well. This conjunction of artist, writer, and editor is at the heart of David Brittain's *Eduardo Paolozzi at New Worlds: Science Fiction and Art in the Sixties*—a stunning book, one that demands to be bought by anyone interested in the era, but not necessarily a good one.

In what sense was Paolozzi “at” *New Worlds*? Brittain states that “Paolozzi was never directly involved in the editorial process of *New Worlds*, but his association with the title was nevertheless significant for all concerned” (120). The Arts Council grant partly brokered by Brian Aldiss allowed Moorcock to redesign the magazine and improve the print quality. He could then include illustrations to articles about surrealists such as Dalí and to an appreciation of the fantasist and artist Mervyn Peake. *New Worlds* issue 174 had a Charles Platt montage of Paolozzi's work to accompany the article on him by the magazine's art editor, Christopher Finch. The same issue added Paolozzi's name to the masthead as Aeronautics Advisor; Finch had introduced the artist to Moorcock, who in turn introduced him to Ballard. Aside from two illustrations—one of which was used as an illustration for the serialization of Norman Spinrad's *Bug Jack Barron* (*New Worlds* 178)—Paolozzi had no apparent input into the magazine. In 1969 he was in California at Berkeley and visited both Hollywood and road safety centers. Conversations about his experiences in L.A. no doubt fed into Ballard's exhibition, *Crashed Cars*, held in 1970 at the Institute for Research in Art and Technology on Robert Street, Camden, London—Peter Reyner Banham, formerly of the Independent Group, was one of the trustees of IRAT. Paolozzi was also to work alongside Ballard on Martin Bax's *Ambit*, a British example of the little magazine.

Brittain's account is one for which the phrase “lavishly illustrated” falls short—it is worthy of a major exhibition. Along with the Polaroids of the meetings of Moorcock, Paolozzi, and Ballard, and cover shots and layouts from *New Worlds*, there are ample reproductions of Paolozzi's graphic work and some of his statues. Hardly a page is not illustrated. An appendix has interviews with some of the key surviving players such as Moorcock, Finch, and Platt, along with John Clute and Michael Butterworth, although in some ways they end up revealing the vagueness of everyone's memories of events from five decades ago. Further appendices reproduce works by Ballard and Moorcock, and a fourth contains “Katzville,” Paolozzi's very brief attempt at a novel constructed using cut-up techniques.

Brittain's book itself suffers from a degree of cut and paste. Paolozzi's biography is not as clearly delineated as it might be: after a foreword and Rick Poyner's introduction, the Scottish artist vanishes again until page 46. On pages 30-31, Richard Hamilton and the Pop Artist Peter Blake are suddenly mentioned in a paragraph, before the discussion turns to the *New Worlds* relaunch. Hamilton's *Swingeing London 67*, a representation of an arrested Mick Jagger handcuffed to Hamilton and Paolozzi's art dealer Robert Fraser, has a feel of

Jerry Cornelius about it, but there is no obvious link between these pages. Note 36 begins “In 1968 the contents of Spinrad’s serialized novel caused the British newsagents Smiths and Menzies to refuse to stock *New Worlds* on grounds of ‘obscenity and libel’” and it records that *The Daily Express* led a campaign against such filth, with the following note suggesting that “After the British newsagents, Smiths and Menzies refused to stock *New Worlds*, deeming it ‘obscene,’ the Arts Council was lobbied to withdraw a modest grant” (56). The two footnotes do not quite overlap, but they do feel a little repetitive. Accounts of *The Atrocity Exhibition* recur, before and after the account of the meeting with Paolozzi. Brittain’s decision to present the monograph in a single chapter rather obscures his double narrative. In fact, the story of *New Worlds* dominates, and the rest of the Independent Group and Pop Art come in as apparent interruptions.

Occasionally, I was squinting at the detail. The suggestion that sf’s “repertoire has expanded to include worlds and situations that we can identify with the present ... such as *The Matrix*, *Robocop*, *Source Code* and novels such as *Perdido Street Station* by China Miéville” (21) had me scratching my head. Why that novel rather than others? It is true to a large extent to say that “The origins of *New Worlds* go back to 1946, in the midst of what is sometimes called the heyday or ‘Golden Age’ of SF as a literary genre” (22), but that is to write the fanzine *Novae Terrae* (1936-39) out of the history and John Carnell’s retitling of it *New Worlds* in 1939; “literary” is perhaps not the right word to use in this context.

There is perhaps no “at” for Brittain to write about beyond attitude. Richard Hamilton, for example, apparently hated what Moorcock was doing at the magazine, while using Robbie the Robot in his imagery and making copies of Marcel Duchamp’s work for shows in Britain. By the time of a Tate retrospective in 1971, Paolozzi was in his mid-forties and wanting to reinvent himself. Major sculptural commissions contradicted his self-perception as outsider. I suspect that he, Hamilton, and others of his circle had a greater respect for the imagery of the Golden Age than for Moorcock and his. Paolozzi needed to take sf seriously in order to use it—his collages are tear-ups, not tear-downs. The art critic and Independent Group member Lawrence Alloway wrote approvingly about pulp illustrations and robots. In a critique of auteurist film criticism, he notes in passing that “Science fiction ... has a body of expert opinion which is authoritative within the field, but unknown and unusable outside it” (*Violent America: The Movies 1946-1964* [New York, NY: MOMA, 1971], 55). We still have to trace how, say, Finch’s art criticism within *New Worlds* connects to both New Wave sensibilities and the wider history of art criticism.

In an introduction to a book on Paolozzi, Keith Hartley, then an assistant keeper at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and now Chief Curator, cites a 1971 interview in which Paolozzi says, “What I like to think I’m doing is an extension of radical Surrealism” (see Eduardo Paolozzi, J.G. Ballard, and Frank Whitford, “Speculative Illustrations,” *Studio International* 182 [1971], 136-143). Hartley does not gloss who Ballard is, nor does Ballard discuss sf in that conversation. Meanwhile, Hartley goes on to assert that

“it was in the Surrealist reviews (*Minotaure*, *Variétés* and especially *Documents*) that serious scholarly and artistic attention was paid to popular culture: to comics,

science fiction and fantasy novels, to popular entertainment, music and films. The subjects, previously considered merely shallow and derivative, were now being treated on a par with so-called 'high' art in a quasi-anthropological manner" (Fiona Pearson, *Paolozzi*, introduction by Keith Hartley [Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 1999], 10)

It would be interesting to trace—has someone already done it?—what these novels were and what was said about them. All this suggests that some of our narratives about the reception of sf are too tied to what we see as the radical and the disruptive, rather than to the pulps and the Golden Age.

Brittain offers us a starting point, and in the unavoidable absence of Paolozzi and Ballard to speak for themselves, it is the only at-ness we have to date. There is much fascinating information here, although reading something about Paolozzi first helps. There is more to be said on the science-fictional nature of his art, and he surely deserves an entry in the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Further trawls of the archives in Brittain's footsteps would be useful—the Scottish National Galleries of Modern Art, the Tate Library, the British Museum, I suspect also the Whitechapel Art Gallery and Pallant House—before we can fully map the intersections of British Pop Art, Surrealism, and science fiction, let alone the wider history of sf art.—**Andrew M. Butler, Canterbury Christ Church University College**