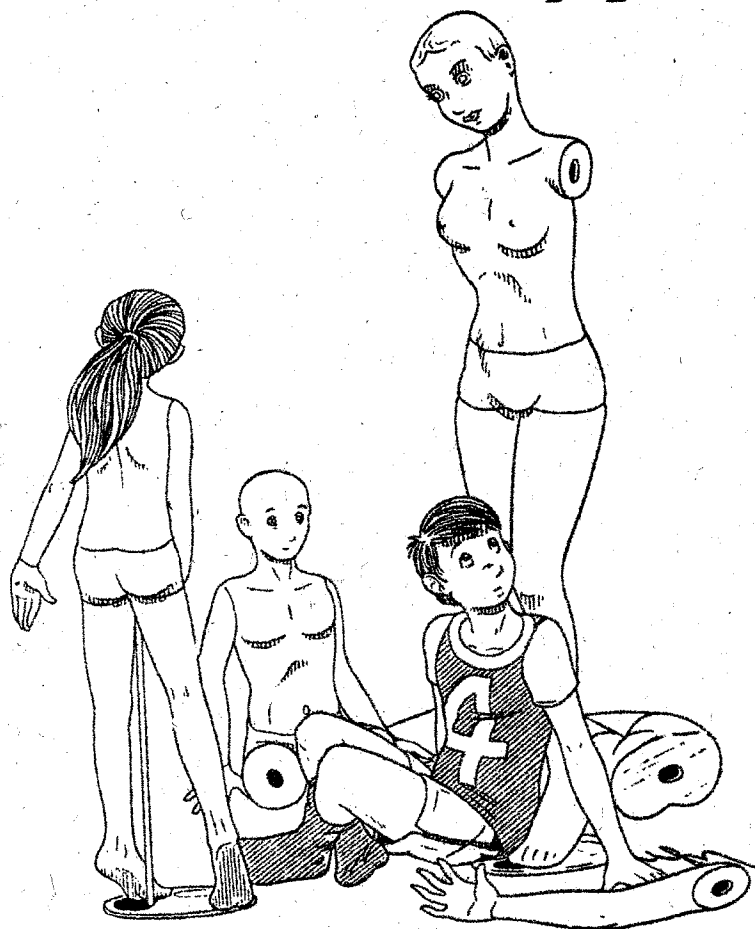




# State Of The Art



STATE OF THE ART 16  
(c) June 1988 Taral Wayne  
1812-415 Willowdale Ave.  
Willowdale Ontario M2N 5B4  
SotA is published quarterly  
in a print run of about 90  
for Rowrbrazzle, (the funny  
animal artists' apa). Extra  
copies are available in  
extra special cases.

Rather than regale the members with my usual monotonous complaints, I thought I'd do something a little different. For this issue only I've written a pro-and-con account of recent events. Looking on the bright side I see that the pros do somewhat outweigh the cons, so this is an Officially Cheerful Issue! (Ha, ha.)

Also in this issue is a parody in verse of don marquis' "archy and mehitabel". I expect most of the members are familiar with the born-again cockroach, who died a vers-libre poet, and lived on stale paste in the office of a journalist? Archy left messages for "boss" on the office typewriter. Because he was only an insect, however, he couldn't type like your or me. He jumped from the top of the carriage and

hit the keys with his head, one letter at a time. As you can imagine, he quickly learned the virtue of brevity. Even so, Archy couldn't use the shift key, and all his words were in lower case, and without punctuation.

Archy had a friend, Mehitabel. She was a common, vulgar felis domesticus with the morals of... well, an alley cat. She had spunk though, and pride. Mehitabel claimed to be the reincarnation of Cleopatra, among other royalty. The truth is, however, that if Mehitabel had made any appearance in those times at all, it would undoubtedly have been as a resident of the lowest dive in the sleeziest section of the red-lamp district of old Cairo.

Archy met many others who'd fallen to his humble state. By introducing him to the shade of a pulp writer I have added one more to a unique cast of characters... the first in sixty years. In as much as George Herriman illustrated the legitimate "archy" stories, it behooved me to imitate the artist as well as the writer.

PS -- watch for puns.

PPS -- I drew mostly upon the life of one SF writer for the book-worm in my pastiche. A prize of a copy of "archy and mehitabel" for the first person to identify the writer.

GOOD NEWS I may have been left out of the funny animal issue of Amazing Heroes, but I did have two drawings published in their second annual swimsuit issue. Those of you who did not buy AH 138 will find the art from page 92 on the cover of this SotA. They are also urged to go out and buy a back issue. Apart from my work (worth the \$3.50 by itself), there are superb renderings by Joshua Quagmire, Donna Barr, Steve Gallacci, Mike Kazaleh, Reed Waller, Lela Dowling, Stan Sakai, and Gary Fields. Some of the non-funny animal stuff isn't bad either...

BAD NEWS For one thing, they got my two bits out of order. The small one on page 48 mentions my page 92 art as "a few pages back". Worse, the caption to my cartoon beach-party drawing identifies every character in it but mine. Thompson says "an as-yet nameless creation under the parasol." Worse yet, when I checked a copy of my letter to AH I discovered it was my fault -- I'd neglected to name Saara Mar. But this is trivial.

After I sent in my submissions, the deadline for the issue came and went without a word from the editor. The issue was late in coming out too. I had no idea whether I was in or out until a friend phoned and asked if I knew I had art in Amazing Heroes. (And I'll bet he didn't expect me to answer, "no".) I didn't see the swimsuit issue with my own two eyes for another week. By then I was getting wary, and although I figured Fantagraphics owed me at least one copy, I bought one to be safe. Sure enough, it's June and haven't yet heard a word from Fantagraphics about either copies or the money they owe me.

GOOD NEWS As you'll see, there's another blue envelope from American Express with this issue of SotA. Inside is a new set of 'Brazzle Bucks. The \$1 bill I reserved for myself, and illustrated with a "ouse Gamin. The \$2 is Greg Bear's "Gran Pa Peke", the \$5 is Tom Linehan's "T.L. Coon", the \$10 is one of Robert

Haney's "Star Teddies", the \$20 Tracey Horton's "Shadow", and the \$50 Deal Whitley's "Sabina". It's safe to say, I think, that there won't be a third series. But you never know. If I'm still around in four or five more mailings, the callouses that formed from cutting may have healed...

**BAD NEWS** The three page strip I drew for "Brazzle a year ago didn't appear last mailing either! Schirm, if Scrooge McDuck still has some of those memory pills from "Back to the Klondike", take a few, you need 'em. With luck the story should be in this mailing. I've reprinted the missing page two and sent it along with the pages of SotA 16.

**GOOD NEWS** Juan Alfonso sent me a tape a few weeks ago, and I'm ashamed to say that I enjoyed the hell out of it. For years I've been avoiding this sort of thing, having seen too much junk on TV shown in the name of Japanimation. But when you've seen a class act like "Castle in the Sky", you have to unbend. Mind you, I'm not in the market now for anything with giant robots, pirates, and space-battleships. But thanks to Juan I'm open to suggestion...

**GOOD NEWS** I was the winner of the Canadian Unity Fan Fund. This is not an honour the same league as TAFF or DUFF. For that matter, I wasn't exactly the winner -- there were no other candidates, and I practically had to nominate myself. The fund is struggling to establish itself, and I was the best they could do in their first regular year. But it's the thought that counts. The idea is to send a prominent Canadian fan from one side of the country to the other side, for the annual "Convention". This year it was in Winnipeg, co-habiting with the local convention, KeyCon. While conventions are pretty much alike, I appreciated the efforts of the concom to treat me like a guest. Flying is always a treat for me, and a room of my own was quite a novelty too. (I could get away from the con for privacy whenever I wanted!) Although I knew only a few people there, making new acquaintances brought out some nearly forgotten social skills. I made a point of attending the Convention and awards business meeting, and stirred up a little trouble just for something to do. To everyone's surprise my meddling turned out constructive. On the whole, though, I wonder if CUFF got its money's worth with me?

**GOOD NEWS** If CUFF is still in the second-rank of honours, I can't complain about the Hugo. I passed the critical test of staying-power this year when I was informed by long-distance call of my second consecutive nomination as best fan artist. This means I may stay on the ballot long enough to win some year. (Brad Foster has to retire eventually.) The only thing that's puzzling about the 1988 ballot are the identities of two of the other nominees. Who's heard of Diane Gallager Wu? Or Merle Insinga?

**BAD NEWS** The week after KeyCon in Winnipeg I was offered a seat in a car going to Washington for Disclave. Normally I jump at the chance to get to Disclave. It's the only occasion I have to see several long-standing friends from the east coast. This year, however, the con followed a mere week after the one before. I flew back from Winnipeg on Monday, unpacked on Tuesday, dealt with some

loose ends from the con on Wednesday, packed again Thursday, and was on the road to Washington on dawn Friday. I was exhausted before I even got to Disclave.

By sleeping as much as I could, I was almost caught up with myself by the end of the con. My exhaustion was not the problem so much as the exhaustion of the fan circles I move in. I think half the people I'd hoped to see there were absent. Of the remaining half, a portion only dropped in for a short time. One was there for such a short while I didn't even see him. What's happening to the old crowd I asked people. Getting tired, they said, or moving on. \*sigh\* Well, I answered, I've been doing a little of that myself.

**GOOD NEWS** At least I made a hundred dollars at Disclave. Now I have to do the work, and most of the money is spent, but I brought back two handsome models, a few comics I couldn't find in Toronto, and some paperbacks I wanted. I also ate well at the con for a change.

**BAD NEWS** Now that I'm home again I notice that I'm almost broke. May went by with virtually no work completed.

**GOOD NEWS** Some of the time I spent in May will bear fruit in the coming month of June, when I get "War Birds" finished at last. I've some new sketches to ink. Illustrations for Ruralite Magazine will bring in a little money. I've a couple of possible customers for coloured prints. I've got a huge model of the B-36 to build, and my gamble on the model of the new starship Enterprise paid off. I've got books and comics to read, the sun in the morning and the moon at night, wordy correspondents, a cat who sleeps on the end of my bed, and a head full of story characters I love. Better than a BMW any day.

**JEFF WOOD** I won't beat around the bush. You come to Brazzle with a tarnished reputation, if I'm to believe what I've heard from people. Joshua Quagmire, for instance, says he had you dead to rights for ripping off Cutey Bunny. His story is long and involved. It mainly depends upon the evidence of early drawings of yours in which you clearly identify a character that looks like Sno-Bunni as Josh's character. While this establishes his case that Sno-Bunni derives from Cutey, it has to be admitted that this isn't necessarily plagiarism. I know too little about Sno-Bunni to say how far she may have developed on her own. I gather that you were forced to drop Sno-Bunni in any case. Now I hear indirectly that John Spiedel is unhappy about your new character, Kit E. Kat. Certainly the resemblance between Kitty Malone and Kit E. Kat is a lot stronger than it was between Cutey and Sno-Bunni. I'd like to know what your side of the story is.

Please don't join the Marine Corps. There's no occasion to defend your country at the moment, and it's more likely someone will be defending their country against you.

**TIM FAY** Hard to comment on "Fox Hunt". For one thing, you seem to take it seriously, even though it's a pastiche, and a funny-animal pastiche at that. For another, it seems out of character at the end for number 2 and 23 to show affection. It

leads me to think I don't understand what you're doing.

JIM GROAT

I wrote you a letter about doing an Equine cover, but never heard back. Did it get through, did I over-price myself at twenty bucks and back issues, or has the whole idea gone sour due to legal hassles over the last issue?

That little old lady in your Brazzle zine reminded me a little of your correspondence. I think that might have been why I stopped writing; you were beginning to get scary. Reservations about gun-mania aside, what is the difference between hollow points, dum-dums, and wad-cutters? The couple of gun magazines I've browsed through seem to assume you know all that stuff or you wouldn't be reading the magazine.

AL SIROIS

Good god Al, is that you? I thought you quit in disgust.

STEVE MARTIN

I never did figure out how sex and Christianity mixed, considering what the Church fathers had to say about it.

FRED PATTEN

Fraid I know less about the Calgary Olympic mascots than you do. For one thing, I was trying to ignore the winter Olympics as much as I could. Sports rate somewhere below Home Economics and Intestinal Parasites on my list of interests. To aggravate my distaste the Calgary celebrations seem to have set new standards in cheeziness. (The more hick the town, the bigger the display of public zeal.) However, I do have an order form for Heidi & Howdie pins which I will reprint for your enlightenment.

I knew there was something familiar about those "Tom Poes" strips. I must have seen the elusive "Tom Puss" version when I was younger. In Toronto we can still buy Beano annuals and other British comics in some bookstores. Now that I think of it, "poes" is probably just Dutch for "puss"

DARIN DAVIS

A cow who day-dreams that she's a samurai-hero is pretty wacky, and it's a great way to send up the current glut of samurai/ninja comics. But I worry that the notion, and the introduction, may be the best part. Where do you go from there that isn't just another tongue-in-cheek adventure story?

JOHN SPIEDEL

How about it, are you mad at Jeff Woods, or have I been handed a line by someone?

The drawing of Cuchuliand, the world's largest aircraft, is very Schirmeisterish. So much so that I wondered if it was a guest appearance. The nearest things to Cuchuliand in the real world were the notorious Spruce Goose; that dinosaur of the jet age, the B-36 bomber; and a ridiculous six engined thing called the Tupolev L-760, that the Russians built just before the war. They all had wingspans in excess of 230 feet, and in two out of three cases they could actually fly. One thing I'm a little unclear about though. Was that thing that attacked Kitty and Anton at the end of the story Cuchuliand, or some other brain-child of the evil Six?

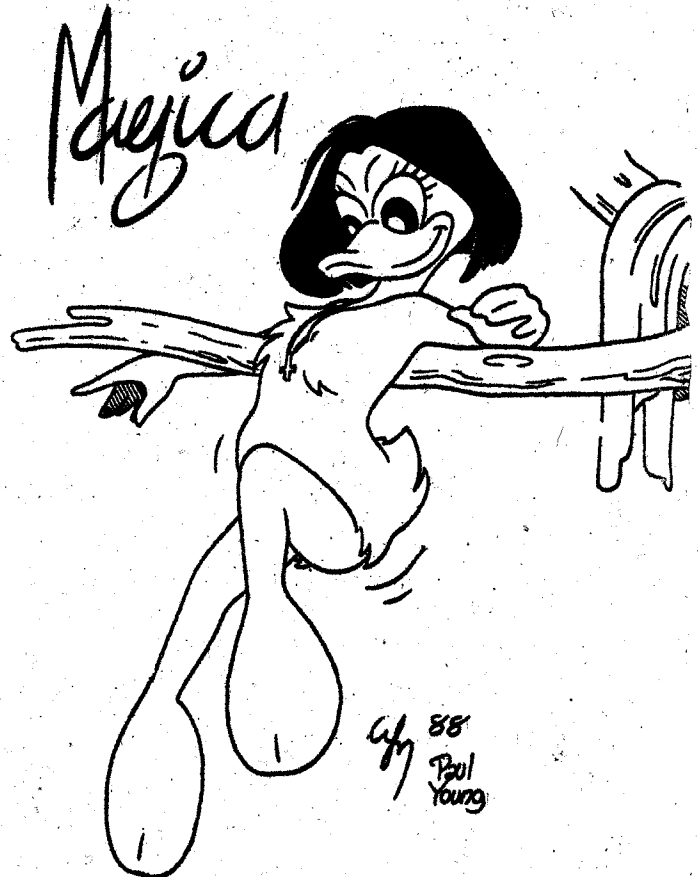
ROZ GIBSON

Did anyone ever point out a resemblance between your killer in ".357" and Ken Sample's self-portrait as a cougar? Not that I can picture "Ken Cougar" blowing people away in bathtubs, to wash the blood away easily, but I kept thinking it all the same.

I have read "The Borribles", and "The Borribles Go For Broke". (There's a new one out, "Across the Dark Metropolis", that I haven't read, but mean to.) They were good reads, and certainly had some odd twists, but I don't think the Borribles quite live up to their image. They talk tough, but they aren't half as hard-boiled as they sound. Street kids in Manilla would eat Borribles for breakfast. But as it happens I would be interested in seeing your 82 page graphic novel of the Borribles. It sounds like a testament of perseverance, at the very least.

STEVE GALLACCI

You have my blessings on Mizusako Usagi. I'd really like to see that finished, and published somewhere professionally. (And not just because of the free publicity for the Rocky interview either.) I've a partly written short story about a Japanese pilot called "Enemy Recognition". I got stalled half way, but I intend to sweat it through as soon as I'm able. Oddly enough, writing from the Japanese point of view turned out to be easier than the scenes with American pilots. Not that I know all that much about Japanese culture or it's military, but I think I had a clearer idea of what I wanted from those scenes. Do you think I should keep the joke going by adding rabbit ear markings to the zeros?



TOM LINEHAN

re: plagiarism: what is this, an epidemic?

GREG BEAR

What am I going to do with the characters that made their debut in SotA 14 you ask? I thought I explained that already, in SotA 10, but a quick checks proves that I didn't. Since then I added to and changed my "Dramatis Personae" considerably, but forgot all about it. Had I remembered that the additions were unpublished, I could have had a more substantial last issue. Rather than bury my notes on the cast of "Calamity" and "Wendy and the House Gamins" in your mailing comment, however, I'll reserve them for the last page. Don't scorch the paper on the way there...

What the notes won't tell you is that "Calamity" was invented on my word-processor rather than at the end of a drawing-pencil. What happened was that Joshua Quagmire asked me to show him short comic stories for possible use in "Cutey Bunny". I didn't have any, but I had in mind a sketch of a cartoon rabbit that I liked. Free association had led me to the conclusion that she was a bad-luck rabbit. From that meagre beginning and loose idea I just started writing, inventing one character after another, picturing them in my head. Later I transferred the images to paper.

"Wendy and the House Gamins" was less spontaneous, by far. The gamins were developed through a series of cartoons after their initial appearance in SotA 8. All the basics were established by the time Steve Gallacci phoned a few months ago. He also wanted to know if I had any comics to show him. I didn't have any for him either. But Steve's call completed a chain of thought. It had begun with the House Gamins, and completed itself as the story of a little girl who turned into one at night.

Unlike the strip to strip gags of "Calamity", "Wendy and the House Gamins" is a coherent whole. It begins with the girl's first encounters with the household pests, continues through her night-time transformations, and ends when she is faced with the choice of being either a full-time gamin or a full-time human.

Recent developments, however, have been complicating the situation. At this point I'm not sure what, if anything, I'm selling to who, if anyone. To add to the confusion, Paul Young in BC has been after me for material too, and I've half worked out an idea for "Circe's Flying Circus". More on that later, if there ever is more.

CHUCK MELVILLE

You mention Bruce Pelz's

"Fantasy Tarot Deck" among your comments. I wonder if you knew that I have a card in that deck, the Magician?

I can't help noticing that you like elevations in your story. An unusual number of panels are drawn from above, looking down; sometimes steeply, sometimes from a shallow angle. You also have a tendency to pick a viewpoint at a moderate distance. There are few close-ups, and relatively little depth of field. Perhaps it's nit-picking, but I think the unintentional effect of the sum of your quirks is that everything in the picture is approximately the same size. Without something that the eye can instantly focus on, the smooth flow of action is lost. (Rather like music you can't pick the tune from.) You have a series of individual scenes instead of a storyline.

DAVE BENNETT

While I wish you luck with your new series of cachets, you neglected to tell us what they cost, and how to buy them. That's not a good way to do business. Brazzle stamps sound like a good idea, but you'd almost certainly have to sell them, rather than give them away as I did 'Brazzle Bucks. I made the play-money for next to nothing. The xerography was free. The paper was a gift. I cut them out with an exacto knife, spending \$1.50 for blades. Judging by my income my labour was worth next to nothing. I could afford to give 'Brazzle Bucks away. But your stamp idea sounds as though it'll cost you money.

DONNA BARR

I got the impression from a mailing comment that you've been re-cycling material from Q in 'Brazzle. That's alright with me because otherwise I wouldn't see your unpublished stories about Stinz's "mule". I think they're touching.

MARK MAYERSON

I enjoyed that little (two hour?) chat we had on the phone. When I saw your address I couldn't resist giving you a call, having had no artistic contacts in Toronto for as long as I can remember. I've little to add in the pages of 'Brazzle, however. Maybe next time?

JUAN ALFONSO

Using 'Brazzle Bucks inter-dimensionally would have certain advantages. Since I printed up a limited amount of them (&24,604 altogether), there can't be inflation. However, with only &24,604 in circulation in all the universes, I figure that you could buy the entire armada of 14 American "supercarriers" with one 'Brazzle, and expect change.

Speaking of human rights violations in Cuba, I remember taking a ride with an acquaintance of mine to a convention. She admits she's a yuppie, but has many qualities in spite of it. One of those is not political savvy. She had just returned from a vacation in Cuba, and was mucho impressed by what a wonderful place it was, and how happy the people were. Her conviction, and utter lack of historical background made it futile to explain how unlikely it was that the Castro regime would permit anyone on the hotel staff who made a habit of looking unhappy, or who suggested that Cuba under Castro wasn't as wonderful as it might be. How someone so naive can also be a successful marketing consultant had me stumped. One suspects that such apparent contradictions are only possible in the age of Reaganomics, when the business world is 99% bullshit, and the rest polyester.

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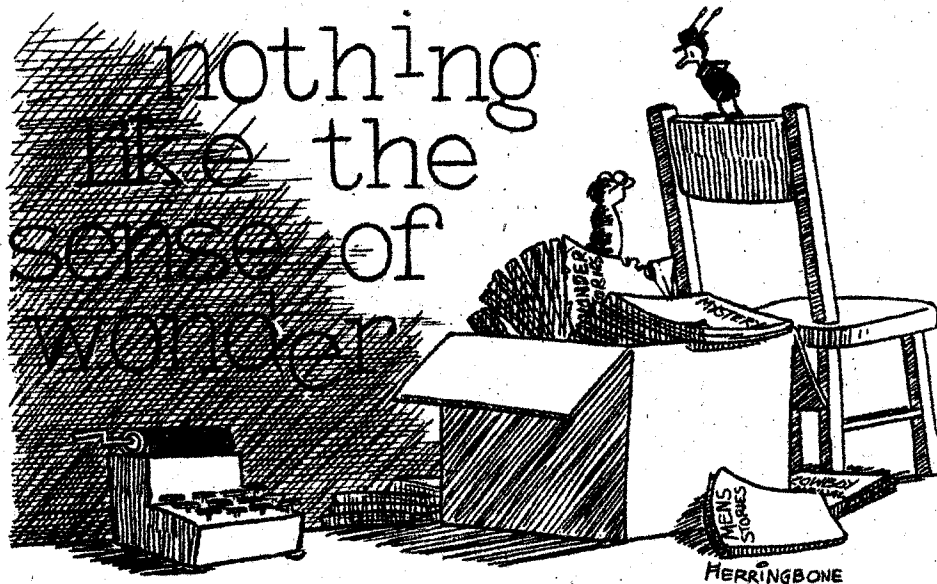
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each.



nothing  
like the  
sense of  
wonder



HERRINGBONE

well boss  
i was checking out that load of old magazines  
you saved from the trash compactor  
imagine my surprise when i met a bookworm

the weather had been horrid this last little while  
the magazine i found him in was swollen with damp rot  
and smelled of unclean memories  
disintegrated too soon from the grave  
the worm had been many years between those pages  
and he was such the worst for it  
yet he found it a home that he was plainly loathe to leave

pal  
i said  
would you object to a spot of friendly advice

not at all he replied

there is a fine dry magazine there in your box  
next to the soggy mess you call home.  
why not move in

that magazine he said  
i know that magazine  
it does not interest me.

but it is dry i replied

yes it is isn't it

he chuckled so that it was plain he enjoyed the pun  
more than i certainly  
for i didn't get it at first  
then i realized what home was to other people  
wasn't necessarily what it was to me  
you see boss  
this book worm lived in a science fiction magazine  
and the one next to him  
however warm and dry  
was not  
and provided no comfort  
even to a worm as miserable as this one

there was no talking him out of it  
take that to mean what you will  
instead i decided to satisfy my curiosity  
and asked him just why  
a sensible  
and intelligent  
looking worm  
ever took up lodgings in so garish an appointed home

the answer to that he said  
would be the story of my life  
but if you care to hear it  
i would happily tell you of things  
that not even your wildest imagination could prepare you for  
i was a pulp writer in the previous life  
he paused

for effect i suppose  
but if the worm expected a reaction  
he was surely disappointed  
since i gave none  
i have been a writer myself  
and have known others  
good ones too  
not just vers libre poets  
and had forgotten to be impressed  
it was bad manners and i have no defense  
but you yourself know how tedious it can be  
to show astonishment  
at a thing taken much for granted  
whenever it is mentioned by you

a moment ago i was inattentive i said  
if you will forgive me i would be most interested in your story

a. far back as i can remember  
he began  
i was an avid reader of scientific romances  
particularly those by the immortal h g wells and jules verne  
in 1926 the word  
scientifiction  
formed on the lips of millions  
because hugo gernsback so decreed  
and i was one of those millions who spoke it under the bedcovers  
strange bedfellows with odis adelbert kline  
and captain s p week  
i dreamed of  
worlds beyond counting  
times too old for names  
girls in atoms  
lost cities and sunken continents  
future men with braincases the size of beachballs  
and incandescent rays  
in all hues of the rainbow  
flashing across blackest space  
to demolish whole planets of the blackest villains  
i wanted to write stories of wonder like those

and did you  
i inquired politely

oh  
that i did  
but not before years of struggle  
i had hoped to go on to college  
and become an astronomer  
or even a radio repairman  
as commanded in amazing  
but father died and i had to run the candy store myself  
most evenings i was too busy for night class  
but in 1934 i answered an ad  
and joined a club of fellow scientifictioneers in brooklyn  
there was no time and no carfare for frivolity  
the meeting of minds with my fellow fan  
occurred in the back pages of magazine letter columns  
it was my only recreation

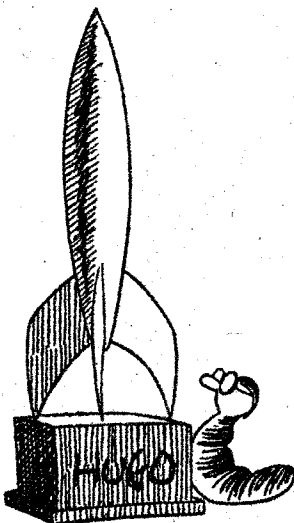
when i could afford time from my other writing  
even then i knew my priorities and practised long into the night  
shaping words into dreams

in 1941 i was drafted  
sensing my talents the examiners recommended me for advancement  
i was sent to fort baxter kansas  
and spent the next few years aiding the war effort  
behind the typewriter of the camp newspaper  
it was a dirty job  
but somebody had to do it

i had not forgotten my ambition though  
at night  
when the other soldiers flocked  
to dens of sin and vice in nearby roseville  
i remained in barracks  
with my trusty remington  
and worked its bolt back and forth  
all through the black night to reveille  
the others would stagger in at all hours  
stinking of cheap gin and cheaper girls  
drunk  
exhausted  
exhilarated  
they flopped on their bunks and fell asleep  
the fire in their olive green skivvies extinguished for the night  
they were too stupid for words  
and i  
every night i would have three thousand more words under my belt

well boss.  
there was light in those eyes  
and yet a minute ago i thought i saw private hell.  
go on i told him  
this is getting interesting.

i got my first check.  
and my discharge in the same mail  
it was back to new york city but not to the familiar candy shop  
my baby brother had grown up  
and looked after the family business now  
so i left behind the mundane life  
and moved in with a fellow i knew  
a science fiction leaguer from the old days  
there were never fewer than five of us in two rooms  
but it was cheap  
and we all wanted to write science fiction  
we taught ourselves the ropes  
proof read  
collaborated  
traded ideas  
and promoted each other shamelessly in the fan press



II WASN'T JUST  
NOMINATED FOR  
HUGOS—II WON!

UNDER THE BEDCOVERS  
WITH CAPTAIN S.P. MEEK



GOSH WOW II SAID!

not all of us took our profession seriously  
the wayward ones stayed out nights in disreputable clubs  
instead of john w campbell they talked about jazz and someone named kerouac  
and brought home funny cigarettes  
that smelled too sweetly for tobacco  
worse  
one got married  
and moved to California to draw mice  
one by one they vanished from the apartment  
to be replaced by other faces  
who also said they wrote science fiction  
the ones who worked hard made it  
as i did  
and made their dreams come true

my stories appeared in all the popular magazines  
and my name rose in the polls  
a quarter cent a word is the best teacher  
of professional skills  
i wrote a hundred thousand words in the first year after the war  
a hundred and twenty thousand the year after  
i learned all the little tricks of the writers trade  
never submit two manuscripts to the same editor  
because he may buy one and reject the other  
always include something for the editor to change  
never rewrite  
send your story six months later and let him think its fixed  
introduce a new plot complication every three pages  
and never forget  
that you compete for the reader s beer money  
i wasn t just any science fiction writer either  
i wrote the first story with true artificial gravity  
in 1942

others derive from mine  
it is often pointed out that favorite dates to 1901  
but that is anti gravity and not at all the same thing

no of course it isn't i said  
any fool can see that  
but perhaps you can explain the importance  
of the distinction later  
do go on

of course  
in 1954 i was one of the first to have a hard cover book  
a collection of stories long out of print  
and published in handsome cardboard covers.  
collectors are known to pay up to thirty five dollars.  
for a mint copy with dust jacket  
i was living by myself in the lower east and at the time  
and was selling eight stories a month  
but no one i shared digs with  
ever had their share of the rent.  
so i moved  
when i had my own bathroom and didn't have to wait my turn  
i could write nine stories  
so it was well worth it

i said to him that i sympathized  
cockroaches have big families you know

perhaps you are related to some of my former editors  
said he  
but i suppose they wouldn't be born cockroaches again  
would they  
not that i ever had much trouble with editors  
a hugo nomination or two  
calms the salvage beast  
and i rarely saw a year go by after middle age  
when my name wasn't there in black and white on the ballot  
i could do no wrong said my agent  
so take the money and run  
on the twentieth anniversary of my first story sold  
i wrote one hundred and forty seven thousand words  
some writers have never that much published in their lives  
millions read my books  
remembered my name  
could spell it on ballots  
until i wasn't just nominated for hugos  
i won  
it was more than i had ever hoped for

at the worldcon the fans and the writers celebrated  
and toasted the best of the year  
i had expected to be present  
the first year i was up for best novel  
i won  
but i was pushing a deadline  
and stayed home to write  
next year i was up again  
but my sequel to last years winner was a week overdue  
the year after i was struck by sudden inspiration  
and was up all the weekend working it out  
but i got in on paper  
which is the main thing  
the years went by and were all much the same  
writing is a harsh mistress

the year i wrote one hundred and sixty one thousand words  
i signed a six figure contract  
and rose several tax brackets  
and my titles passed the century mark  
how the little boy under the bedcovers would have envied me  
all my ambitions fulfilled  
and wonders to behold at my fingertips

just around that time  
some of the younger writers had begun to fuss  
the times they were a changing they said  
time to break down the ghetto walls  
and cultivate social relevance

of course i said  
that is our profession as writers  
to glimpse the future  
didn't we predict atomic submarines  
volcanoes on mars  
t v dinners

who is this lennon fellow anyway  
knowing what and i came to  
i sometimes wonder if that also wasn't prophecy of a sort  
people were smoking musty cigarettes again too  
honestly  
i wondered at the waste of enthusiasm  
when it had all been done before

in 1972 i appeared on television  
and saw myself in living colour for the first time  
it was unexpected but not a total surprise  
i had foreseen it in 1948  
it was the year too that nasa asked me to attend the launch  
of the last manned flight to the moon in this century  
it wasn't just that i was busy with my autobiography  
i had predicted it twenty five years before  
why need i see the denouement  
in 1984 the world no longer denied  
the foresight of science fiction writers  
our vindication was a source of pride  
such was the triumph of the imaginative faculty



i did not expect the worm to stop here  
but he did  
he looked suddenly tired and very old  
and the fire banked in his eyes

hoping to bring those pits of despair to life again i said  
indeed  
that is a wonderful story  
how splendid to have lived through such exciting times  
now that you were rich and famous  
and could open doors wherever you went  
what then

oh  
he said  
i was too busy most of the time to be rich  
very likely there was a great deal of money in my account  
i lived well in my manhattan apartment  
what of it  
my checks were all paid directly to my account  
and the bills were all paid by the bank  
i rarely troubled myself to oversee the actual transactions  
time was too short  
there were always books to be delivered  
chapters and outlines to sell new books  
meetings with agent and editor  
not to mention signings  
introductions  
and those little quotes on the back cover to help your fellow  
struggling artist  
sometimes i wished there was more  
i could have done for young dreamers  
such as i had been  
with all my money there must have been something  
but time was too short  
the future history was unfinished  
and i had had a triple coronary by pass

i finished it too  
and died  
falling face forward on my life long companion  
to bury my nose between her keys

after my death  
i learned that my fellow writers sought to honour my memory  
with a commemorative stamp  
father flanagan and william calley  
to either side of me on the sheet  
in my last coherent moments i wondered  
what would i have thought then  
beneath the bedcovers  
where all the universe was ablaze with the sense of  
wonder  
if i could have seen myself now  
my life's work worth 22 cents

boss



i could only feel downright sorry for the bugger  
if you'll excuse an ethnic slur  
it was hard to say what he really meant  
by anything he said  
whether he sorrowed to fall from the summit of his career  
or saw lost opportunities at every turn  
and regretted them too late  
for certain he saw no irony in the telling.

i asked him what meaning he thought his life had had  
if any

don't think i haven't thought about it  
he said  
but the matter is too deep for me  
i was first and foremost a rationalist  
a creature of scientific method  
not a poet or song maker  
and the meaning of life falls outside of paradigms  
i have wondered though  
why  
god or karma should reincarnate me is such as prison as this  
a helpless worm  
my form is armless and legless  
and to even the most discerning folk  
nearly the same from front to back  
i  
who once strode galaxies in my imagination  
can only live day to day  
and look to the creature comforts  
for what purpose have i been given so little

that was a stumper  
it was  
but as i looked at him  
choking down the stale pulp he lived on  
i knew what boon had been granted him

infinite mercy of the universe

and this worm was too blind to see

perhaps  
i began  
gently  
fate is not so cruel  
and wishes you the chance to enjoy a life for once

#### WENDY AND THE HOUSE GAMINS

\* Wendy -- a rather disobedient young girl  
whose parents have just moved into a new house.  
The place is a large, rambling affair in New  
England, and infested with gamins. More than  
most people, though, Wendy's folks prefer to  
ignore gamins if they have them. Wendy not only  
prefers not to ignore their existence, she goes  
out of her way to encounter them. She stays up  
at nights just to watch and see what they'll do,  
if anything. Gamins, as you may recall, are  
contagious. Wendy gets more and more  
mischievous, even comes to look a little like  
one. Her case doesn't become incurable until  
one night she dreams that she IS a gamin. Only  
it's not a dream! Her body is asleep in bed,  
but she lives and breathes as a furry six-inch  
pest. At day-break she awakens human again, and  
her Gamin body, (Wendilongurlendream), sleeps.

\* Dr. Allan Jameston, PH.D, Associate Professor  
of Languages at the University of Quidproquoddy  
University (Correspondence Campus), Fellow of  
Mawtookit College, usually called Dr. Jim, or  
#\$%&\* by the gamins -- Dr. Jim believes that  
gamins speak the original language of Adam and  
Eve in the Garden, and longs to capture one of  
the little buggers to study it. The problem is  
that the language, "Salagoosalinteht" is so  
fundamental that he forgets English every time  
he succeeds at learning it. Then he's forced to  
learn English again, to write a paper. But that  
causes him to forget Gaminish... Not that the  
doctor ever learns to leave well enough alone.  
He continues to capture gamins when he can,

letting the blame fall as often as not on  
Wendy's parents. Whether by day or night, as  
herself or a gamin, nothing delights Wendy as  
much as a nasty trick on that asshole next door.

\* Mordrebb -- short for Mordrebbregundelclich,  
which means more or less, "Mordred the  
snoopy-nosed tease who can't take a joke." (All  
gamins have Arthurian root-names, for no reason  
anyone's been able to discover.) As gamins go,  
Mordrebb is a little more thoughtful than most.  
She responds to Wendy's curiosity, once she's  
figured out that the little girl isn't waiting  
up in ambush, by visiting her. When Wendy is a  
gamin, it's Mordrebb who takes her in hand and  
shows her the ropes -- how to get into kitchen  
cupboards, how to annoy the house-hold cat,  
where all the gamin-holes are, and most  
important not to get into the liqueur cabinet.  
Alcohol turns gamins into ordinary plastic.  
Mordrebb has more than a little desire to be a  
human girl, but humans aren't catching the way  
gamins are.

#### ONE STEP AHEAD OF CALAMITY

\* Calamity -- a rabbit with the worst luck in  
the world. Whatever she does back-fires one way  
or the other. Death is too easy. Somehow she  
survives each calamity so the next can befall  
her.

\* "Scientific" Edmond -- a mole who can't see a  
fact if it's shoved in his face. He flatly  
refuses to believe in superstitious twaddle, and  
devises one "scientific" experiment after  
another to prove to Calamity that there's no  
such thing as bad luck. With Calamity suffering  
in the end. She puts up with it because every  
now and again "Scientific" Edmond gets his lumps  
too.

\* "Weak" Willy Treadwater -- a compulsive  
gambler and Big Person who believes he needs a  
pair of rabbits-feet to be lucky. Dirty tricks  
and cheating is his forte. Calamity would  
gladly give him hers, for all the luck they've  
brought her. Unfortunately, she's rather  
attached to them.

\* 'Cuz -- another rabbit, the boy next door in  
effect. Calamity has a crush on 'Cuz, but  
naturally the more she chases him the faster he  
runs, wanting no part of her calamities. 'Cuz  
is named what he is... well... just because.  
It's what he answers any question, and most  
anything else that's said to him too. Rather  
than talk he'd rather read comic books.

\* Perfume/Gossimer -- if there's one thing that  
ruins Calamity's day more than a near miss from  
a shoot-gun it's a visit by her arch-rival.  
Perfume is as lucky as Calamity is jinxed,  
over-sexed, and vain as the Lord God Almighty.  
Only one thing keeps Calamity from killing her  
-- Perfume is a skunk. Though 'Cuz shows as  
much desire for Perfume as he's ever likely for  
any girl, his desire for fresh air is always  
stronger in the end.

\* Pandora (?) -- a girl fox and indefatigable  
cynic. In a good mood she pouts. When she  
feels like sulking it actually clouds over and  
rains. And in a bad mood... well... Though  
neither she nor "Scientific" Edmond will believe  
it, every one else is convinced, and do what  
they can to cheer her up. Calamity's calamities  
are usually just the thing. You can imagine how  
this puts Calamity and her neighbors at cross  
purposes at times.