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$3.

Edited by BILL BOWERS and BILL MALLARDI

Floyd Wiggle, Jr's

the double:bill SYMPOSIUM

The

DOUBLE : BILL

Symposium

...being 94 replies to 'A Questionnaire for Professional Science Fiction Writers and Editors' *as Created by:* LLOYD BIGGLE, JR.

Edited, and Published by:

BILL MALLARDI & BILL BOWERS

D:B

Bill Bowers ■ Bill Mallardi

press

1969

Portions of this volume appeared in the amateur magazine *Double:Bill.*

FIRST EDITION, September 1969
of 500 copies--300 copies of which are available at $3.00 or £1.5s.; or $2.25 to members of the SFWA who were not contributors. [*Contributors* may acquire additional copies at $1.50 each.]
[...in the United Kingdom, from: B. Terry Jeeves, 30 Thompson Road, Sheffield S11 8RB, U.K.]

15% of all proceeds to be donated to T.A.F.F.; the remainder applied toward publishing costs.

'D:B Press' is a non-profit, amateur hobby...devoted to, in the main, the fields of Science Fiction and Fantasy, and to the People who write/illustrate/edit/publish/read 'the stuff'.

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Designed by Bowers

LLOYD BIGGLE, JR.

...an Introduction

...by way of an *EPILOGUE* to the
original magazine version...

"Once in a while you find yourself in an odd situation. You get into it by degrees and in the most natural way, but, when you are right in the midst of it, you are suddenly astonished and ask yourself how in the world it all came about."

Thus the opening paragraph of KON-TIKI.

Thus *The DOUBLE:BILL Symposium.*

Summer, 1963. The day may have been hot, but I insist that the weather was irrelevant. In my mail was a letter from Bill Mallardi asking, among other things, if I had anything for the *DOUBLE:BILL ANNISH* -- then on the drawing boards, or in the ink tubes, or wherever it is that an annish spends its gestation period. I didn't, but my subconscious twitched, I put paper to typewriter, and wrote out the plan for the Symposium.

Whence the idea? Without a psychoprobe it is probably too late to determine; but its conception no doubt derived in part from the irritation I have felt with convention panel discussions. Despite occasional brilliant individual contributions, these never quite seem to come off. The scheduled participants too often fail to appear, and their places are filled with protesting innocents hastily drafted from the audience, who must pause when they rise to ask what the subject is. The discussions meander, become entangled in arguments, spread out senselessly or contract unreasonably. The panel may be dominated by one garrulous personality while the other members hover mutely in the background like a Greek Chorus waiting for a cue (which does not come). None of this makes for the kind of illuminating discussion, the highlighting of various facets of a subject that is, or should be, the real purpose of a panel discussion.

Why not, I asked myself, a kind of *written* panel discussion, which would group together a number of brief comments or answers to questions. The participants could mull over their responses at their leisure; the brevity would keep the discussions to the point and impose a minimum of inconvenience on those taking part; and, because none of the participants would know what the others were saying, the arguments would be left to the readers.

So I typed out the plan.

There had to be ground rules. First, and most important, the project needed a Worthy Cause. The answer sheets, completed and signed by prominent writers, would constitute a valuable collector's item. We agreed at the beginning that these sheets would be bound and offered at auction, with the proceeds pledged to TAFF. [The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, a fund intended to take Britons to American Worldcons and, in alternate years, *vice versa*. -- FANCYCLOPEDIA II, *1959*.]

The other rules were routine: that the addresses of the participants would be confidential (having taken the trouble to answer the questions, we did not want them to suffer the further inconvenience of becoming embroiled in correspondence with the individual readers. The readers could harass the editors with their comments -- which is what letter columns are for); that the participants would receive copies of the number(s) of *DOUBLE:BILL* containing the Symposium; that the answers would not be cut (entire answers could be dropped if space required or if repetition made this seem desirable, but any answer used would be used in its entirety); and so on.

"You furnish the questions," I told the editors, "and I will try to get them answered."

The editors responded enthusiastically with a list of twelve questions.

The questions deserve more than a passing comment. Obviously the eventual success of such a project must depend to a considerable extent upon the questions asked. To answer one participant's query -- "Who composed those devilish questions?" -- this is how they evolved:

The trouble with questions--and I speak as a former college teacher who has asked more than his fair share--is that too often they fail to elicit the type of answers the questioner has in mind. Ideally, the best question for the Symposium would be one that encourages,or even demands, the exposition of different viewpoints. It should be aimed at a subject upon which the participants are likely to have varying opinions, the stronger the better. At the same time, the question should be composed with the Symposium's audience in mind. We wanted the right kind of question, but we also wanted the sort of question our readers would like to have answered--the question they themselves would ask professional writers if they had the opportunity.

We were under no illusions, either before or afterwards, that our list of questions would actually satisfy those ideal requirements. Producing even a workable list of such questions is a formidable task, and the editors were probably aware of the likelihood that their questions would please no one. The finest tribute to their efforts, I think, lies in the fact that in all of the commentary on the Symposium that I have seen, no reader has criticized the questions. (Several writers were highly critical, but their viewpoint was entirely different -- they had to answer them!)

The editors furnished the original list of twelve questions. Dean McLaughlin and I worked over the questions and tossed answers at each other. Then we threw out some of them, noted suggestions for reworking the others, and sent the list back with a request for revisions. The editors provided a new list of twelve, Dean and I subjected them to the same treatment, and asked for more revisions.

As an example of the problem we faced, one of the original questions read, "What do you as an individual and as an author consider your *best* S.F. book or story?" Dean answered immediately --"The one I'm working on now." My own answer was that I piously hoped that I hadn't written it yet. Few writers would take this question seriously, or care to commit themselves if they did; and at best it could only produce a list of titles. While such a list might not be without interest as concerns the individual writers, the question could not be said to provide the basis for an interesting *discussion*, so we eliminated it.

The fourth or fifth revision produced the final list of eleven questions. Of these eleven, Dean McLaughlin contributed one, I contributed one, and the editors furnished the other nine. Of their original twelve questions, eight, variously revised, survived in the final list (though two of them were combined into one question). The editors can regard that as a testimonal.

Once the list of questions was agreed upon, I designed question sheets with three or four questions per page and space left between them for answers. Asking writers to take the time to answer a questionnaire of this kind represents at best an imposition and at worst a damned imposition, and the objective was to arrive at a format that would at least enable them to suffer the inconvenience conveniently. I reasoned that they could quickly and easily answer the questions by running these sheets through their typewriters, and the format would likewise provide the uniformity that was essential if the answer sheets were to be bound as a collector's item. In most cases this worked out well. A few participants wrote their answers by hand; some answers needed more space than was provided and were, in accordance with the instructions, completed on the backs of the pages.

The editors mimeographed the answer sheets, and I set about compiling a list of names and addresses of professional writers.

The original intention was to invite twenty-five or thirty to participate, and to hope for fifteen or twenty replies. This sounds like a simple practical objective until one is confronted with the question, "*Which* twenty-five or thirty?" We kept thinking of important omissions. Those to whom I wrote asking for addresses kept adding names, saying, "These weren't on your list, but you may want them." The list grew. And kept growing. I typed up the names that I had collected and circulated them, asking that they be checked for omissions, and it seemed that almost everyone could suggest some. The list grew. To more than a hundred.

Addresses are much more difficult to obtain than names, but thanks to Dean McLaughlin, Howard DeVore, Earl Kemp and Ted Cogswell, who generously culled their files for me, my collection of addresses also grew.

A persistent question has been, "Why wasn't So-and-so included?"

So-and-so may not have been on my list. In spite of all the checking and rechecking, embarrassing omissions occurred.

Or So-and-so's address may not have been available, or may have reached me too late. I am prepared to offer evidence that no one lacking the full resources of the F.B.I. could determine the whereabouts of some writers. There are also a few writers whose addresses are known to most everyone in fandom and prodom, or so it seems, except those one chances to ask. The questionnaires were mailed out as I obtained the addresses -- *as long as the supply of questionnaires lasted.* The list could have been extended by another twenty or thirty names without too much difficulty, but by the time the last questionnaire was mailed the project had already gotten out of hand, there were more replies than could be included in even two issues of *DOUBLE:BILL*, and we decided not to run off any more questionnaires.

Or the addresses furnished to me for So-and-so may have been incorrect. Because I don't want to discourage young would-be writers, I am withholding my statistics on the number of professional writers who abandon their abodes in the dead of night, leaving no forwarding addresses. It is sufficient to say that more than a few questionnaires went astray because of incorrect or obsolete addresses. I attempted to reach some writers through agents or editors, but I have no way of knowing how many of those letters were actually forwarded.

Or So-and-so may not have had the time or inclination to participate. Some writers kindly wrote explanations as to why they could not or would not; a few ignored the questionnaire. Knowing only too well my own probable reaction to such a request (a damned imposition!), I cannot bring myself to criticize anyone for not wanting to take the time (the only capital a writer has to work with) and trouble to answer a questionnaire; and I have taken such precautions as were possible to ensure that no one else does.

So-and-so, whoever he may be, was not included for one of the above reasons. No one, So-and-so and myself excepted, knows which one -- or, as far as I'm concerned, will know.

For the record, the replies received totaled nearly 80% of the questionnaires mailed to known addresses. All of these mailings produced only one refusal that could be termed vituperative. Call that one percent. Let those figures ring out resoundingly the next time you hear fans criticizing the pros for their lack of interest in fan projects and fan causes.

The volume of response quickly produced an unexpected problem. When the number of replies passed thirty-five I suggested to the editors that they consider running the Symposium in installments; they had already made that decision.

There remained only the problem of how to organize the Symposium. The editors have been criticized for the arrangement by which the responses were broken up to place the answers to each question together. This was part of my original plan, and though we laboriously exchanged letters discussing other arrangements, in the end I typed up a specimen page and the editors followed it faithfully. The whole responsibility was mine. Criticize me -- c/o *DOUBLE:BILL*.

[Ed. Note: This is in reference to the *original* magazine version; this volume is our fault]

A few fans were kind enough, or perverse enough, to inquire as to why I did not take part in the Symposium. Originally I planned to do so; but before I quite got around to filling out a questionnaire, the deluge of replies was upon me. The original plan was that each participant would answer the questions without knowing what the others were saying (and with a very few exceptions all replies were received before the 1rst installment of the Symposium was circulated). My own experience would indicate that this was one of the Symposium's soundest features. I was in the unique position of seeing *all* the answers first, and after reading seventy-plus answers to a question one naturally shrinks from any attempt to say more on the subject. Considering in addition my role in shaping the questions, my own participation seemed inappropriate, if not (assuming that there are ethics in such matters) unethical.

Finally, I offer my personal tribute to Bill Mallardi and Bill Bowers--my thanks for their whole-hearted co-operation and my congratulations on a job well-done. They made no complaint when I requested second, third, fourth and fifth revisions of the questions. They did not even growl--at me, anyway--over the endless stream of suggestions and comments that I sent their way, though there must have been times when they felt like shipping me their mimeograph machine with the suggestion that I do the job myself. All of this is even more remarkable when you consider

that many of these suggestions involved spending their money.

Through the many weeks of work and the voluminous correspondence that the Symposium required, I cannot recall a single disagreement. I have never been associated with a project that remained so faithful to the original plan throughout. The only significant difference between the published Symposium and my first conception of it was one of size--and in that the editors were not the only ones who were faked out.

But the ultimate tribute belongs to the seventy-two professional writers and editors who took part.

What did *they* think of the Symposium. Here are a few of the things they thought about it and their own contributions at the time that they answered the questions:

These things are always hell...

Thanks for giving me the chance to talk about myself so much.

Long may TAFF prosper!

I hope my comments will contribute something. In any case, I enjoyed writing them.

I think this is the first thing of this sort I've ever answered, since I don't feel I have any right to mix in with the writer crowd -- However, here it is!

What's TAFF?

I'm all in favor of such projects, and am only sorry that distance keeps me from participating more often.

How on earth are you going to bind these sheets with the margins allowed?

I am afraid I'm not being very profound, but perhaps in lieu of that a quick answer, without too much thinking about it, does insure some honesty.

And so it went...

It was fun while it lasted, eh, editors?

And now we three will join hands for one rousing chorus: *"Never again!"*

LLOYD BIGGLE, JR.

DOUBLE:BILL 10; Aug. 1964.

. . . . . .

DOUBLE:BILLINGS

...Never again!

Yes, we said it--and we thought we meant it. But Time, among its other qualities, dulls the dreary, mechanical aspects of something like this project -- and enhances the remembrance of the finished work. You might call it a Sense of Accomplishment.

When the 'original' Symposium was published, too many years ago, *DOUBLE:BILL* had a circulation of approximately 250 copies. Since that time, there has been--at least--a 75% turnover in readership--and we would be very surprised if as much as a hundred copies of those three issues are still in existence. Mimeographed fanzines have a survival value slightly greater than hectoed products, but one considerably less than last year's newspaper.

Therefore, since the majority of you reading *this* are unfamiliar with the *D:B* of six years ago...and since the possibility exists of this falling into hands unaquainted with 'Science Fiction Fandom'...and its array of publications...a brief Explanation is in order.

First, though...Lloyd Biggle's 'Introduction' (preceding this) was written as a postscript, an if-you-will *raison d'etre* for the Symposium, itself. As such, we feel that it serves to give essential background as well as, perhaps, giving a little idea of what actually went into the monster. It appears here, *sans* updating, as it did in *DOUBLE:BILL #10* (Aug. '64). We should note however, that Lloyd himself expressed doubts as to whether his piece would be 'suitable' to this publication. Obviously, *we* thought it did, and overruled him. (One of the advantages enjoyed by being editors.)

As indicated by Lloyd, the serialized version appeared in three separate issues of *DOUBLE: BILL*: #7, Oct., 1963; #8, Jan., 1964; and #9, June, 1964. Those three issues had a total of 256 pages; the Symposium used 95 of those pages. (This, it should be noted, was in pica type, unreduced. Therefore, each page in the following contains approximately twice as much wordage as did the earlier pages.)

...Ah-ha, you ask, "But *what* is a *DOUBLE:BILL*?"

(...Actually, it started out as DOUBLE-BILL, but that's another story.) The source of the title should be obvious, but lest anyone get the wrong impression, we are not a 'movie' magazine --or at least we weren't until *2001--A Space Odyssey* came along.

DOUBLE:BILL was (and is) a *fanzine*. A 'fanzine' is an amateur publication--a dread by-product of the addiction known as Science Fiction Fandom. The latter term is completely unexplainable to anyone who has not experienced it... But a fanzine is NOT a *little* Science Fiction magazine. Nor is it (except in notably unsuccessful attempts) a 'little magazine' in the sense applied to 'literary' publications. Sometimes a fanzine will mention, review or comment on an item of S.F.; ofttimes it does not. Some are devoted to other faans; some are devoted to nothing in particular...but everything in general. This last species is known as a 'genzine', of which variety *D:B* is only one example. The entire emphasis here is on the 'amateur' nature of fanzines. Though a number of pros delve into fandom from time to time, and despite the fact that a large number of pros have emerged *from* fandom -- Ray Bradbury, to cite the example you use when trying to explain fandom to the average mundane man-in-the-street -- irregardless of all this, fanzines are *not* a training ground for would-be writers of S.F. (Though it can be used for this ... but ironically, a good percentage of those who have become Dirty Pros concentrated on articles, and light banter, rather than godawful amateur stories during their fannish days.)

...All in all, Fandom is more of a social unit than a critical body, or a training ground. It is either a Way of Life; or Just a Ghoddamn Hobby--*that* particular question will never be answered to everyone's satisfaction.

The only 'payment' a contributor to a fanzine receives is a copy of that issue, and hopefully some favorable comments in the next issue's lettercolumn.

As far as the editor/publishers (usually interpreted as one-in-the-same) of these things... they do it because they enjoy putting together something or because of the 'egoboo' involved in putting out a particularly 'good' fanzine. Some offer subscriptions; others are circulated only among friends and peer groups. Those that actually charge money do so in order to get a cover offset or perhaps help out with the postage. There's a rumor that one or two fanzines actually break even in regards to publishing costs...but you couldn't prove it by us!

...and *that's* a fanzine.

...back to the booklet you're now holding:

There is one item in Lloyd's 'Introduction' that is outdated. The original Symposium had 72 participants. When preparing to collect the three segments into one, the temptation arose to try and contact some of the authors we'd missed the first time. In addition--there have developed in the past several years, a brand-new corps of S.F. writers, and we thought their opinions might also prove interesting. Twenty-two responded to this Spring'69 mailing of Questionnaires. (Bear this in mind while reading the answers, because there is a difference of 6 years between the two groups of writers, plus a difference in outlook, *etc.*, that shows the gap quite clearly.)

Again, you may ask, why So-and-So wasn't included. Some, again, didn't reply, for the reasons Lloyd cited. However there is one definite case of Post Office malfeasance--Juanita Coulson mailed in her replies ... but they never made it the two hundred miles between Indiana and here. By the time we found out about it, the final typing was too far along to include any additional comments. Our sincerest apologies to Juanita...and we hope to have her in the *2nd* D.B Symposium.

We hadn't planned on separating the two groups, but when the new ones began coming in, it seemed best. Please remember that the majority of answers (the first section in each question) were written in the Summer and Fall of 1963. Since then editors and 'waves' have come and gone. A few of the original writers have even passed away. We did not feel it was our right to attempt to 'update' the references; besides, it would have been impossible. (Just as impossible would have been a 'Subject Index' to the booklet--it would have taken nearly as much space as the answers did.)

This is not intended as a 'critical' work except in that critical observations are included in the authors' replies. Rather, it is hoped, it will serve the function of letting you get better acquainted with those who create and publish the things we read. Perhaps it will also help acquaint the writers and editors with each other.

We make no recommendations on *how* to read this booklet. Some will undoubtedly start at the beginning...and finish at the end. Others will skip about. For those interested in reading one author at a time, an Index is provided on pages 110-111.

This is a fun book --- Read and Enjoy!

Our profound and deepest thanks to ALL the contributors...past and present. This is their Symposium; it represents valuable time (a writer's only commodity) donated for a fan Project. We hope that they, more than anyone, will receive a little enjoyment out of this volume, as an inadequate compensation.

In closing, we have dedicated this booklet to Lloyd Biggle, Jr. -- he had the idea, did the *hard* work, and in general was our 'Guiding Light'in helping us with this project. Thanks, Again, Lloyd!

Note: The families of the deceased members of this Symposium will also receive Contributors Copies...we sincerely hope they will keep it in remembrance of them. We regret their passing, and wish beyond hope they had not left. They are sorely missed.

...to everyone Lloyd thanked for the first version...to the new writers...to Bill Glass for sending in, unasked, an Index to the magazine version (the one at the rear is based on his format)...to Joan Baker/Bowers for Indexing *this* monster...to Mallardi for proofreading it...to Joe Marcinko, the Printer with a Heart...to Anne McCaffrey for forwarding some of the questionnaires ...and to all those we're going to coerce into collating this thing:

...to all of these, and more: Thanks for Everything...and a Query:

Want to try it...*one more time?*

BILL BOWERS
BILL MALLARDI

August 1, 1969
Akron, Ohio

...for having more faith in us
than we had in ourselves at times;

...and despite the sometimes curses he earned
for the sleepless nights he caused us;

...it is with admiration and Thanks that we
the Editors
respectfully Dedicate *this volume to:*

LLOYD BIGGLE, JR.

For what reason or reasons do you write (or edit) Science Fiction in preference to other classes of literature?

DANIEL F. GALOUYE: Science fiction provides the only truly satisfying vehicle for exploring the full range of future developments along any of the facets of human experience. By its very nature, it is free of the convention which restricts other forms of literary expression to relatively mundane circumstances. Any plot line that offers no opportunity for stimulating a sense of wonder in the reader hardly seems worthwhile.

DAMON KNIGHT: Kicks and money. Science fiction is more fun and pays me better than anything else I've tried; and to tell the truth, I've never been much interested in anything else.

PIERRE VERSINS: Because I don't think *a)* that everything is going well in our world; *b)* that one can find an answer to every question and problem through the habitual way, science, technology, philosophy, morals and the like, and hence another mean must be used; *c)* that other classes of literature are able to replace science fiction as a way of thinking.

RAY BRADBURY: For the same reason I started in this field in the first place, for love of the subject, for excitement concerning man's place in the universe and what he will do with himself and his machines in the next 10,000 years. This was exciting in 1928, when I was 8, and remains just as overwhelming now.

CLIFFORD D. SIMAK: *1)* Basically, I suppose, it's a matter of sticking to what I know. I know I can write science fiction; I'm not so sure how well I could write anything else, so why waste my time. *2)* I believe in it as a fiction form, and have faith in it. And, more than likely I'd get terrifically bored writing anything else.

TED CARNELL: As an editor, this is a more difficult question to answer than if I were a writer, but basically, s-f literature has always given me a bigger 'bang' than any other writing in 40 years of perusing the printed page. Where, however, the pleasure was confined to one of personal reading when I was younger, the last 15 years has seen that pleasure changed and intensified in helping to develop new writers into the field and giving other publishing houses the benefit of my many years of experience in the field. Creatively, I can apparently do more good as an advisor than as a practitioner.

Basically, the changing patterns of s-f fascinate me and I get a great deal of enjoyment out of predicting such changes and trying to guess ahead. Without doubt, the novel is changing in style and tempo, whether the hardened short story readers acknowledge the fact or not.

ANDRE NORTON: I don't prefer S-F -- I alternate between such and historical-adventure.

RICHARD WILSON: The freedom of expression permitted in the field, plus its lack of taboos, are important factors. Also, in no other accessible field, outside of amateur publishing, are the chances of getting printed so good. (Thanks for the implication that my s-f, or anybody's, is literature.)

(16) THE DOUBLE:BILL SYMPOSIUM

JOHN BRUNNER: a) I've been reading it for entertainment since I was about 7 years old; *b)* I appear to have a knack for it; *c)* I make a living out of it now.

But I enjoy the mere act of writing--even composing ephemerae gives me a considerable kick --and to write S-F (which to my mind is a genre with some substance) is to have jam on the bread and butter.

DEAN McLAUGHLIN: I write the stories I think of--not the ones I don't. For reasons of personal interest and mental bent, this happens to be SF.

ARTHUR PORGES: Because I developed, rather early in life, a strong taste for the imaginative and fantastic in literature. The preference probably had its roots in my particular environment and rearing. Some people are of so severely 'practical' a bent that they have no patience with any kind of fantasy; obviously, writers of science fiction are a different breed of cat.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL: There's room to think and move!

JOHN CHRISTOPHER: Not so: I write other forms of fiction as well. Why do I write science-fiction at all? Because a certain kind---Olde Englishe Science-Fiction---offers scope for studying the way people might behave under the stress of environments stranger than those we know, yet not utterly incredible.

KATHERINE MacLEAN: To work out ideas, to learn something while I'm working them out, and to spend my time with the conviction that it is possible that what I am doing will make some kind of a difference. That is, will be useful to people and stir up their thinking in the direction of some more ideas and possibilities. Writing strictly to present emotional entertainment is a drag, because I get bored with it, cease to be entertained, and because mere entertainment is interchangable. Lollypops can be had easily anywhere.

Intellectual entertainment is the most lasting kind of exhileration. New ideas are more intoxicating and exhilerating than alcohol. (Although a mixture of alcohol and good company swapping new ideas is hard to top.) The nearest approach to the exhileration of a really strenuous wrestling match with an adventure story solid with difficult logical jumps, is an article presenting a genuine breakthrough in science, or the skiing down a fast tree-studded slope.

WILSON TUCKER: Not quite true, here. I prefer mystery and suspense first, but write science fiction as an escape (!) from those; and also when I work up a theme or plot which is not acceptable to the mystery field. Or, more simply, science fiction is a counterpoint.

MARTIN GREENBERG: I think it represents a greater creative challenge than contemporary literature.

FREDERIK POHL: Because I enjoy reading it; because I think I can write it better than I can most other kinds; because there is little opportunity to write candidly of human foibles in most magazines today, except science-fiction magazines. ('Little' does not mean 'none': *PLAYBOY, NEW YORKER* and the 'little' magazines do print such stories, at least sometimes.)

H. BEAM PIPER: In my 'teens, which would be in the early '20's, I decided that what I really wanted to do was write; I wasn't quite sure what, but I was going to write something. About the same time, I became aware of science fiction, such as it was then, mostly H.G. Wells, and fantasy, Bram Stoker, H. Rider Haggard, and then I began reading the newer science (more or less) fiction--Burroughs, Merritt, Ralph Milne Farley, Ray Cummings, *et al.* This was the Neolithic, or Hugo Gernsback, Period of science fiction, and by this time I was a real 200-proof fan.

This first enthusiasm waned slightly after while. I got interested in history and historical fiction, and for some time read little else in the way of fiction, and every historical novel I read started me reading up on the history of the period involved. I wanted to know just who this guy Richelieu was and why D'Artagnan & Co. had such a down on him. Then the Prohibition period was in full swing, and I became interested in Chicago gangsters for a while. All the time, I was scribbling stories, few of which ever got finished, thank God! And gradually, I found myself returning to my first love, science fiction.

Well, along the line somewhere I bought a second-hand typewriter, and for years I squandered my money on paper, ribbons, and two-way postage on manuscripts, and I sent stuff to everything from the *AMERICAN BOY* to the *AMERICAN MERCURY*, and finally, lo and behold, instead of a returned manuscript, I got a check, from *ASTOUNDING*. And then I began getting more checks instead of bounces, all for science fiction stories.

So I found that science fiction was easier to write and easier to sell, and it was simply a matter of knowing what I was best at and doing it. For the last few years, in between science fiction stories, I've been tinkering with a historical novel, and to some extent I am applying science fiction methods to it. After all, the influence of the invention of gunpowder and the development of the arquebus on the politics and warfare of the Sixteenth Century is just as much a science fiction theme as the influence of the development of the space-ship on Twenty-Sixth Century society.

ISAAC ASIMOV: *a)* Because I enjoy reading it more. *b)* Because as a scientist I know more about science than I know about police routine or about the Old West. *c)* Because science fiction, in these times, is the most significant literature one can write -- or at least that a person of my limited talent can write.

ROBERT BLOCH: For me, when I do turn to science fiction, it's because of sentiment and nostalgia--or because I happen to have something to say which is not easily presented in another *genre*.

J. FRANCIS McCOMAS: For money.

P. SCHUYLER MILLER: When I did, it was because it was fun. I have the usual notebooks full of gimmicks and festering ideas that 'bleeged to be turned into fiction -- and I did *not* have Dr. David H. Keller's drive to write 'em for personal amusement only. As a matter of fact, I read mysteries for fun and would have liked to write them, but haven't enough logic in me to make them hang together, or enough objectivity to tell that they really do when they don't seem to.

BRIAN ALDISS: I am a surrealist at heart; that is, I'm none too sure whether the reality of the world agrees with its appearance. Only in sf, or near-sf, can you express this feeling in words. Also, it is easier to make a worthwhile contribution to sf than to the far larger field of general fiction--and of course if the contribution is good enough, it serves also to enrich general fiction, of which sf is but a part.

I should add that for me there is immense excitement in discovering new facts; and to convey this excitement (rather than the facts, for I don't write that sort of sf) I turn naturally to science fiction.

BASIL DAVENPORT: I shall be happy to answer your questions to the best of my ability, but I always feel that I am at SF gatherings under false pretenses, since I don't write it, on the one hand, and I am not a real autograph-hunting fan on the other. I enjoy reading it, and have written a little criticism on the subject, and that is all.

If you ask why I write criticism of SF (and I don't, much), I can only say that the field appeals to me, that I think the span between good and bad SF is enormous, and it seems to me has not been sufficiently treated by most critics--has, in fact, been ignored, with of course a few exceptions.

FRITZ LEIBER: Because I can sell it more readily. I like to write fantasy and truth-telling 'mainstream' fiction just as well. I have a somewhat better background in science and philosophy than in other fields. I like all fiction writing because it teaches me about myself and the world, including of course other people.

PHILIP K. DICK: Its audience is not hamstrung by middle-class prejudices and will listen to genuinely new ideas. There is less of an emphasis on mere style and more on content--as should be. It is a man's field, and hence a happy ending is not required--as in all the fiction fields dominated by women. It is one of the few branches of serious fiction in which humor plays a major role (thereby making s-f more complete, as was Shakespeare's work). Being one of the oldest modes of fiction known to the Western World it embodies some of the most subtle, ancient and

far-reaching dreams, ideas, and aspirations of which thinking man is capable. In essense, it's the broadest field of fiction, permitting the most far-ranging and advanced concepts of every possible type; no variety of idea can be excluded from s-f; everything is its property.

ZENNA HENDERSON: My stories are more fantasy than Science fiction -- I like it because I can change 'reality' to suit myself.

ALLEN KIM LANG: Reading S-F, as I would in any case, allows me to avoid (sometimes) clichés...I really don't care much for mysteries; haven't the genius for poetry, but like the freedom to approach poetic notions through prose that is possible, without cuteness, without genius, only in S-F and fantasy.

GORDON R. DICKSON: I write it because it provides the greater share of the writing income that makes my living. I also write it because I enjoy writing it--as I enjoy reading it. I write poetry, historical and contemporary fiction for the same reason of enjoyment, but the science-fiction, being my bread and butter field, has priority, and will probably continue to do so for the next four or five years. But in any case, science-fiction will still offer a chance to tell certain types of stories better than they could be told in any of the other *genre*, or in the medium of so-called mainstream (what I prefer to call contemporary) fiction.

JAMES E. GUNN: The dramatization of ideas has always interested me more than the dramatization of the eternal and the commonplace. Change fascinates me. I think that change basically is good, that progress is possible, and that Man is perfectible. I have no urge to return to earlier periods; I much prefer to look forward and go forward. There is a bit of the preacher in every science fiction writer; science fiction is almost the only pulpit around.

POUL ANDERSON: I don't -- at least, not from preference, although the larger part of my writing is still sf. However, I got started as a writer in that field because at the time, sf was my favorite kind of popular entertainment, and anyone does best to write about what interests him most. (I still like it!)

JERRY SOHL: The lack of taboos and set standards allows a writer to flex muscles and titillate gray matter that might not otherwise be affected. In addition, it's a hell of a lot more fun, though I have nothing against other classes of literature. I think there are more divergent types of a single *genre* in s-f than in any other single classification of writing, which is all to the good. Conversely, I don't think s-f will ever be stereotyped (except by idiot TV producers).

MARK CLIFTON: A wider scope for the exploration of new ideas (or new slants on old ideas)and an audience of readers alert enough to appreciate what is done.

HARLAN ELLISON: Sorry gang, but I don't write s-f in preference to *anything*. It's roughly tantamount to your suggesting that I eat Yorkshire Pudding in preference to any other food. Which takes care of my starches, but what about the scurvy I'll come down with, from lack of fruit, or the absence of calcium in my system from ignoring eggs, or -- but you get the point. My talent (and I hasten to add that it is a very erratic, wild sort of talent) is nutured at various founts. There are stories I could no more tell as science fiction than I could stop writing altogether. Along about now, the s-f fan has got to get it through his head, to learn, to be rudely awakened, as I was, that science fiction, while it has some incredibly important areas in which it functions better than any other literary form, is a terribly restricting form usually, and is constricting the writer who wants to deal with His Times. And the restrictions are made more unpalatable by the fans--of whom I am one--who know what they like (a faculty, James Abbott McNeil Whistler pointed out, we share with all the higher forms of animal life) and are a tot too quick to put down any writer venturing outside the well-trod compounds they have approved. Vonnegut is a case in point. In a year when his *SIRENS OF TITAN*, an unbelievably adroit and inventive book, vastly superior to anything else even attempted that year, was published, the Hugo went to a second-class, inept, paucive, adolescent, hysterical piece of nonsense, strictly on the reputation of the author, who has done infinitely better work in the past. With examples

like this to learn from--where the truly imaginative writer is laughed at in his own land--what authentic challenges are left to the s-f writer who desires to shock, awaken and explore? Why do I write s-f in preference to other forms? I don't, gang. It would have been impossible to do stories like my *Final Shtick*, *Daniel White for the Greater Good* or *Neither Your Jenny Nor Mine* (upcoming soon in a magazine called *KNIGHT*) in the field. There is precious little room for human values. A great deal of room for gidgets, gimmicks, gadgets and boffs, but not nearly enough for eternal human values warped by human problems. Sorry to level the charge, but it's the way I see it.

THEODORE STURGEON: It gives me almost complete freedom of speech, and absolute freedom of thought.

TERRY CARR: SF is the field I know best and am therefore best at. It's ten times as easy to write in a field in which you know the clichés backward and forward, know what's a new idea, *etc.* A couple of my stories are illustrative of this: *Brown Robert* [*F&SF*, May, 1962] which rang in a time travel ramification which has been treated remarkably seldom in sf; and *Hop-Friend* [*F&SF*, November, 1962], which sort of takes *A Martian Odyssey* and turns it upside down.

There's also, of course, the fact that sf is a comparatively easy field for the beginner. The literary standards (alas, from the fan's standpoint) aren't as high as in non-category fields, and the competition isn't as tough either.

A final note: I've written (and sold) other stuff than sf. However, sf is certainly my primary field, and is likely to remain so.

AUGUST DERLETH: I write everything except Western stories (I always had difficulty staying on horses and bicycles) and true confessions (I'd rather live them).

CHARLES BEAUMONT: Originally it was because I liked this sort of thing; later because I realized certain social comments could be made which otherwise couldn't or would come too hard. Sf accounts for only about 20% of my output, which is much too variegated, I suppose. *TWILIGHT ZONE* has for some years taken up most of my time.

ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES: I am no longer sure that this is the case, but if it should be, it would most probably be that (so long as I cannot afford to write fiction for love) it seems as if I have the best chance of making a little money in science fiction. Could I afford to write on speculation, I might go into another field entirely.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE: Because most other literature isn't concerned with reality.

WILLIAM TEMPLE: One writes s-f for love or money. For me it used to be love. Now it's money. Because the kind of s-f I love few authors write nowadays, and fewer editors will buy. I like *stories* about *people* adventuring in a strange environment. Too often these days the story element (narration: *i.e.*, "What happens next?") is thin. There are no people, because efforts at characterization are frowned on. As there are no people, there are no adventures, because adventures can only happen to people. And the strange environment is taken for granted, as a matter of fact, as if it's not strange at all. No wonder--and no wonder!

JOE HENSLEY: I suppose that the best answer I can give is chance. I read science fiction in the late thirties and in the forties and was a fan, edited an amateur magazine, and the rest. When I began trying to write I wrote all sorts of things, but was more successful in selling the science fiction, probably because I liked it better than any other field I was writing in...

MACK REYNOLDS: It is increasingly the field in which a non-conformist can express his opinions. By compromising only to the extent of laying his story in the future, or on some other planet, the writer can say considerably more of what he believes needs saying.

LEIGH BRACKETT: The reason is certainly *not* economic, and that is largely why I have turned to 'other classes of literature.' But the reason why I began as a s-f writer and still return to it whenever I can is simply that no other field allows such a soaring freedom of the imagination,

and no other field is so much 'sympatico' with my particular temperament -- *i.e.*, though I loved cowboys, Indians, and pirates as a kid, I would always drop them with a bang for anything science-fictional. As a more mature comment, too, I would say that only the s-f field has turned up anything really different and splendid in the way of literature (using the term 's-f field' in its broadest sense, which is the only sensible way to use it, I think). Who else could have given us a NIGHT LAND, a PURPLE CLOUD, a LAST AND FIRST MEN, an ISLAND OF DOCTOR MOREAU...?

ROBERT SILVERBERG: Because it's fun to write, because editorial taboos are relatively restricted instead of restrictive, and because it's one way of making concrete my own speculations and daydreams.

ANTHONY BOUCHER: I never have, and I'm not sure anybody should. I suspect most sf writers would be well advised (both esthetically and commercially) to keep at least one foot in some other market--like Anderson, Biggle, Brown, and so on down the alphabet.

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL: I scratch where it itches.

E. E. "DOC" SMITH: Two. *a)* I like science fiction better. *b)* My efforts in other fields were not very successful, and there's not much sense in writing something that no one will ever read.

JAMES BLISH: Only about 60 per cent of my output is s-f, but I guess that's enough to constitute a preference. I have no logical reason for it; I'm just fond of it. In some directions it gives me a feeling of freedom that I enjoy; in others, I find it very restricting but I love it anyhow. On the other hand, if I were forbidden to write anything else I wouldn't last long.

RICHARD LUPOFF: This is a curious self-intensifying phenomenon. SF was a hobby with me long before I wrote or edited *anything* professionally. As a result, it is the field which I know best. It was because of a hobby interest that I first became acquainted with a number of writers, editors, artists, and publishers in the SF field; through one of these acquaintanceships I received the offer of my present job, and through my present job I am becoming better acquainted than ever with the field and the people in it. See? A self-intensifying phenomenon. If that original schoolboy hobby interest had been in detective fiction, westerns, historical books, *etc.*, the whole process might have taken place in *that* field instead of SF.

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY: *1)* Because I like it, and I don't think anyone can really write, sincerely, fiction which he does not enjoy reading. I couldn't, for instance, write for women's slicks --because I don't believe in the premises behind their fiction. *2)* Because I think it's probably the only way in which one can comment, without fear of criticism or accusation, on the society in which one lives.

JAMES H. SCHMITZ: I don't. I write more of it because I've always been able to sell it.

AVRAM DAVIDSON: I do write 'other classes of literature', and have attained success therein, too; but my natural inclination seems towards SF or F, my first efforts were in this field, and I suppose its lack of rigid form and its infinitely imaginative possibilities continue to appeal to me. Also, I have more success in selling SF than 'mainstream literature' -- though not much more than with crime fiction.

LESTER DEL REY: *1)* It pays better on the average. *2)* My reputation is now better established in the s-f field. *3)* It's the only major field of pulp fiction appearing in magazine form -- and I prefer both writing for and reading magazine pulp fiction to the supposedly superior type of junk appearing elsewhere. Mostly, I write the type of stories I'd most enjoy reading.

HORACE GOLD: I'm more interested in writing science fiction--and fantasy, which is very closely related for most of us--because it has greater survival value than other popular fields. However --science fiction and fantasy account for less than 5% of my total production in the past. I regret that; though there were very few such markets at the time, I might perhaps have been wiser to speculate on future prospects -- I can't say, because making a daily living by writing of any

kind was a tough grind. However, it's a fact that I still get sales on my s-f and fantasy stories 25 years later, whereas my other work is as dead as many of the magazines it appeared in.

GEORGE O. SMITH: I'm lazy. Science fiction comes easy.

TED WHITE: I started out writing non-fiction professionally: jazz reviews, personality pieces, and journalistic pieces for magazines such as *ROGUE*. My development into the field of fiction has been slow and difficult. It was only three years ago that I made the basic breakthrough and learned to plot. I still have difficulty with the finer points of characterization and dialogue. Therefore, my reasons for writing sf have hinged upon two facts: it's easier to get around one's failings as a writer while developing and mastering them and still sell; and science fiction is the field I grew up with, have always loved and aspired to write, and know a great deal about. However, I also have a high regard for the branch of the mystery story created by Hammett and refined by Chandler, and I'd like to work in that field as well. I regard these two branches of literature as the most rewarding.

ROGER ZELAZNY: [*I've lumped together my first two answers. It was easier than untangling them.*] I have a feeling for SF which I do not have for any other class of literature. I do not normally view SF in the same critical light in which I would regard other writing. SF's subject can be anything, set anywhere, in or out of time and space. I like that notion; I like it a lot because it involves a premise of sorts to the effect that anything *might* be possible. It also indicates that any angle of vision might be brought into play in regarding a particular situation. In operation, this demonstrates hitherto unexplored/unexploited areas of the human condition--mainly by confronting its people with possible, eccentric happenings. This, in my opinion, is sufficient justification for its existence as an independent class of writing. This is one of the reasons I prefer writing it. Another reason is the fact that it represents more immediate opportunities for developing writing ability while still selling stories than any other area. This, because of the variety of specialized ways in which an SF story can be 'good'--*i.e.*, if a writer is weak on characterization he can focus on an idea, gimmick, or gadget, and play down the human element; or it might be the other way around, in which case he can set the people in the foreground and use the science only as a prop: if weak on both, he can still try a space opera. Because of these alternatives, the new SF writer has crutches available to him which he would not possess elsewhere. SF gives him a chance to make sales while still struggling with his weaknesses, to turn out competent stories while still at a loss regarding many phases of story construction. As a highly unskilled novice, I have been appreciating this fact since I began writing. When I decide to write a story I make a quick mental checksheet of all the items I consider myself capable of handling with impunity; I then think about the debit entries and consider the best ways to cover over the majority--and always I pick one, usually the one I deem my most egregrious current failing, and I force myself to write it through. Thus, SF permits me to learn some things about writing and to market some things at the same time.

]*The 1969 Entries*[

PIERS ANTHONY: I don't really. My preference leads me toward historical fiction and non-fiction, but I keep turning out science fiction because that's all I seem to be able to sell. I began with SF because that provided me in childhood with a better universe when I needed one; when I read it, I was oblivious to all else, to the sometime aggravation of those who thought I was snubbing them. When I pondered taking up writing, my prior years as an SF addict had familiarized me with the field, so it was natural that I try what I knew best. In addition, the advent of SFWA (Science Fiction Writers of America) encouraged me to stick with the field so actively protected thereby.

ANNE McCAFFREY: I wanted to write s-f because I like what I read of it, and because I have been successful, and thoroughly enjoy working in s-f, I continue. My attempts to write outside the field have been notably unsuccessful so I've come to the conclusion I have nothing to say in the contemporary vein--yet.

HANK DAVIS: Since I'm just beginning, such a question may be premature. However, I suspect that most or all of any fiction I do will be sf, simply because I love sf. I can hardly remember a time when I wasn't grooving with some kind of sf or fantasy; comic books or the Oz books if nothing else. Writing should be fun and sf is fun. Other departments of the printed word--maybe. Besides, I think in sf terms. I may have a warped mind, but that's how it is, gang.

T.L. SHERRED: It's easier.

DEAN R. KOONTZ: First of all, I *do* write other forms of fiction. I have done two mainstream novels and two suspense novels. I find in science fiction, however, a freer medium for the use of words. It is not alone in the freedom of ideas, but the freedom in the use of language that one cannot bring to a suspense novel. For example, I can write a surrealistic dream sequence in an sf novel and have it accepted. In a suspense or mainstream novel, the dream must be much more realistic, less cloudy, done in staid paragraph form. SF may not always offer a freedom in discussing sexual matters, but it does offer freedom in the use of exceedingly colorful words.

JOHN JAKES: Two reasons, covering the two kinds of sf I write: *1)* To tell a colorful and hopefully entertaining story. What Anthony Boucher once called 'a really good bad book'. This type of thing I love to read; as a direct result of my mind having been poisoned at an early age by Sax Rohmer and Warner Bros. films featuring Zachary Scott in a pinstripe and Max Steiner music to underscore looming headlights that roll over the latest victim... *2)* To entertain while still dealing with somewhat more fundamental issues or questions.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK: I began writing sf and fantasy as a boy because that was what I chiefly read. Originally it was undoubtably an escapist occupation but gradually, as I grew older, I began to see the serious possibilities of the medium and have, since about 1965, been experimenting with ways of using certain aspects of sf and fantasy in the construction of the kind of fiction I like to write. I attempt to get the *spirit* of 'GoldenAge' sf into what I write (and publish, for that matter, in *NEW WORLDS*).

GREG BENFORD: SF is singularly equipped to deal with the story of process, of events beyond the scope of one or two characters. I like that kind of tale; it's not found in ordinary fiction because most writers don't know enough to understand even the present, much less what the present implies.

Personally, I also write the stuff because it allows me to use another area of interest -- science -- without imposing the discipline of hard research (which is what I do for money). The science in sf is playful and amusing and sometimes even correct, so I can fool around, explore wild ideas without backing them up. It's a relaxing hobby.

This is what SF *uniquely* has; many other inducements to be an author operate in all fields, so I leave them out.

JOANNA RUSS: I like it and I seem to think that way. Actually I do write other stuff and have been published in other magazines, but everything I do has a touch of fantasy in it, or some oddity. S.f. is peculiar stuff -- it's also a way to write traditionally solid and realistic plots, characters, *etc.*, while expressing things that are fantastic.

H. KEN BULMER: For one reason writing sf is more fun--that is, a writer is more totally immersed in everything about the story than in most mainstream, although my mainstream material also shares some of that attribute. It's a lot easier to set a story against a background familiar to readers than it is to invent and construct the overly-propagandised new universes the sf writers habitually create. Also it is much easier to write sf than straight novels because in any difficulty you can create a way out by your own invention which is where the work aspect comes in.

LEO P. KELLEY: I prefer to write science fiction as opposed to other forms of fiction (which I also write) because it makes me ask questions about the future, about human beings, about non-human beings and about life in general which have answers that become peculiarly mine in that the questions themselves are usually extrapolative ones and the answers, be they joyous or alarming, are inevitably stimulating. And I suspect that the reasons why I prefer to write science

fiction are the same or similar reasons why many people prefer to read science fiction.

KEITH LAUMER: I write the kind of story that appeals to me -- the sort of thing I'd like to encounter in a magazine or book. I am told this is called science fiction. Actually, I am more interested in the dramatic situations in which characters can be put, than in documenting life, say, on a suburban street in Duluth *circa* 1934 -- or any other specific time and place you could name. The emotion-producing stresses applied to the characters make the story. The rest is, for me, secondary. I am also intrigued by the kinds of stresses men will be put to in situations not of the here and now. *Q.E.D.*

EMIL PETAJA: A lifelong interest in imaginative and speculative fiction reading. Have been a fan since the middle '30's. (Although not active at all times.)

ALEXEI PANSHIN: At one point, I thought my only reasons for writing sf were the fact that I had grown up reading it and that I was selling more sf stories than other kinds, but that eventually I would have to abandon the field. More recently, I have concluded that nobody had to be bound by what has been done in the field, that the potentials of what we have been calling science fiction are largely unexplored, that compared to other literary forms it is a wide-open field. That is an extremely good reason to continue to write science fiction.

DAVID GERROLD: I do not write science fiction to the exclusion of all else -- but I do tend to favor SF because it is so limitless. When you have all of time and all of space to mess around in, the temptation to do so is irresistible.

LARRY NIVEN: *1)* I get science fiction ideas, usually. The idea shapes the story. *2)* I'm a science fiction reader. I write what I like to read. (Which is why I've tried a few science-fiction/detective stories.) *3)* My strength is not character development. I *must* concentrate on the idea.

DANNIE PLACHTA: SF is far less demanding in terms of delivery (style). On the other hand, SF demands a more imaginative effort in regard to substance.

HARRY HARRISON: Easy answer. It's the kind of fiction I enjoyed the most starting at age seven and continuing for many years. I enjoy reading all kinds of things now, but find that in the writing of SF I can say more and do more than I can in any other kind of fiction. I have written mysteries, westerns, mens adventures, confessions, comics, articles, medical reportage, *etc.* All dull compared to SF.

ANDREW J. OFFUTT: Probably the *numero uno* and most usual reason among all of us--I prefer *reading* it. Obviously, of course, because it also allows leeway: for imagination, for creation, for Saying Something. It is also the only 'free' form of fiction I know of, with the possible exception of 'pornography' -- erotica.

PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER: I have written mostly s-f because it allows my imagination and extrapolative faculties full play. But I plan on writing crime stories and am presently outlining a long mainstream novel. Although mainstream, it is about the science-fiction world. I suppose I became a specialist in s-f because I used to read more of s-f than anything else. That's no longer true.

NORMAN SPINRAD: I do not necessarily write sf in preference to other classes of literature. I also write 'mainstream' stories and one mainstream novel as well as criticism of sf and film, and political and social commentary in essay form. I write sf, when I do, because it is the proper mode of expression for what is demanding to be written at the time.

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS: Frankly, I cannot define science-fiction hence I cannot say that I write it at all. Usually I define myself mostly in the negative and say of myself that I am one of the free-lance writers who has stayed alive for 30 years and who has never written a word of pornography. If you think this is not a neat trick, take off a quarter of a century and try it!

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What do you consider the raison d'être, *the chief value of Science Fiction?*

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EDMOND HAMILTON: By a slow leavening process, science-fiction has made the possibilities of the future familiar to at least a good-sized section of the popular mind. As of now the American people are spending billions on the conquest of space. Such an idea might have seemed outrageous if forty years or more of science fiction, in all media from comic strips to movies, had not given them an idea that space-travel was inevitable and possible.

KATE WILHELM: For me, enjoyment. I learn what science I know from science books, philosophy from philosophical books, psychology....*etc.* From science fiction I expect to learn little that is new, but perhaps to be goaded into looking up something, yes. For me so often enjoyment goes hand in glove with aroused curiosity, so perhaps that is what science fiction should do, give enjoyment, and for some, arouse curiosity. But if it gives enjoyment, that is enough.

HAL CLEMENT: Same as other literature--it provides a substitute 'struggle for existence', which our evolutionary history forces us to *need*, on a mental level which makes it unnecessary for us to harm our neighbors.

ROBERT F. YOUNG: To me, its most important value is its ability to improve our perspective and in the process point up mankind's insignificance in the microcosm. Humility is a quality that is sadly lacking in the world we live in, and if s-f can elicit it even to a small degree, then s-f more than justifies itself.

JACK WILLIAMSON: In an age when the effects of pure and applied science are turning the world upside down, the imaginative exploration of the process needs no apology.

REGINALD BRETNOR: The science fiction story should always be an experiment performed in the imagination, a speculation as to where our exercise of the scientific method is leading us--or our failure to exercise that method, an attempt to participate vicariously in the great adventures, the magnificent successes, the dreadful failures and defeats of the history of men. Of course, it should also speculate on the other life forms, but I think that we will find that even in this area we can never divorce our material from ourselves; it will always,because we are human, remain centered on humanity.

Socially, the function of science fiction should be to bridge the widening gap between scientific speculation as such and the vastly deteriorated (by comparison with the generations which preceded us) speculation of the 'non-scientific' intellectual, of men in the liberal arts, or TV-spawned teen-age leadership types.

CHARLES BEAUMONT: It imposes upon the writer and the reader a sense of structure, in terms of the universe. However, science fiction as a *genre* is quite as diversified as any other literary *genre*. Detective stories are usually one thing; sf stories aren't and never have been. Any field in which Ray Bradbury and Robert Heinlein can labor together is a field without boundaries.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE: Entertainment.

ROBERT SILVERBERG: S-F at its best enlarges the reader--provides him with new images, new ways of looking at things and ideas, new sensory stimuli. I'm a believer in s-f as escape literature, meaning that it can take the reader out of mundane realities into a more colorful, more vivid uniiverse. The best s-f provides this enhancement, this enlargement, this view of the strange. Of course, most of the stuff is too mired in pulp cliches to accomplish this.

ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES: Stimulation to imagination, appreciation of the range and limitations of the scientific method, a vehicle for (possible) meaningful exploration of the human condition which is not as well served by mainline or other branches of fiction. I cannot, however, assert this as positively as I might have a decade ago.

TERRY CARR: It's fun. It provides, alternately and sometimes even concurrently, a chance for both wild imagination and glamour and, on the other hand, fascinating scientific and/or logical extrapolations. In the former category, I think most fondly of Leigh Brackett's best stuff; in the latter, of stories like Charles L. Harness' *Fruits of the Agathon* and *The New Reality*, that story by Rog Phillips in the first issue of *OTHER WORLDS*, Leroy Yerxa's *Zero A.D.*, Weinbaum's *Shifting Seas*, and an upcoming story by William F. Temple in *ANALOG* titled, as I recall, *A Hitch in Time*. [*A Niche in Time*, *ANALOG*, May, 1964.]

LESTER DEL REY: Same as any other fiction -- its entertainment value. Since science fiction *can* be less stereo-typed and formularized than other categories, it *can* be more widely entertaining, at its best. Once it served to interest readers in some amount of science but that's largely gone. When literature *must* have 'value', it stinks.

MACK REYNOLDS: Mental stimulation beyond that which can usually be found in other fiction forms. I consider intellectual curiosity the greatest gift man can be given. Its continual exercise should eventually lead us to the solving of the problems which confront the race.

GEORGE O. SMITH: The what? Oh. Its entertainment value. What else?

RICHARD LUPOFF: Ho, some question! All right, the Seriously Scholarly reply first: it broadens one's mental horizons, *etc.* It is also, reallyreally, the only branch of fiction that gives serious consideration to *a)* the future, where, cliché though it is, we are nonetheless all going to spend the rest of our lives; *b)* the impact of science on society, a profound and widespread influence which has changed and is continuing to change every facet of our lives, from medicine to education to transportation to communication to nutrition to entertainment to government to economics...to *everything!* Now, another answer: SF contains some of the best 'fun reading' that exists, and I like fun. Don't you?

JAMES BLISH: The best exemplars of it deal with ideas and human relationships and problems that couldn't be handled adequately in any other way. And even the poor stuff--which means of course the bulk of it -- usually manages to suggest a kind of boundlessness to human aspiration and achievement that is ruled out by the tidy problems, cozy solutions and arbitrary mechanisms of other forms of commercial fiction.

One oddity about s-f that has always puzzled (and delighted) me: among writers, it seems to attract a higher proportion of dedicated craftsmen than does any other idiom I know. This is highly important if you are a writer yourself.

E. E. "DOC" SMITH: Its scope; its flexibility. It is far and away the best medium for untrammeled, unbounded imagination. It is also the best rostrum from which to deliver a message.

TED WHITE: I'm not sure sf has any. Does any form or branch of literature require a *raison d'être*? Isn't its very existence sign enough that a demand existed and was met?

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY: *1)* [See (2) above]; *2)* To stretch the imagination. Our children are subjected to a systematic warping and stunting of the imaginative powers, designed at making them docile consumers and voters, subject to mass manipulation. Science fiction, or any fiction capable of arousing the emotions of 'pity & terror' makes them think of the unheardof, the unknown,

the undreamed; it makes them think about, and criticize, the world they live in; or think about how it could be changed. It lessens complacency.

JAMES H. SCHMITZ: Ideally, it permits you to use your imagination as freely as fantasy does while providing a more definite illusion of reality.

EPIC FRANK RUSSELL: Doesn't have to have a value--any more than Hollywood does.

JOE HENSLEY: There are no boundaries to it. In writing a mystery novel, for example, there's a fairly loose form that needs to be followed to have any real success in selling the book. In science fiction the further you get away from previous form and from the old tried and true characterization and plot the more chance the story has of being sold and admired. I think Sturgeon is an outstanding example of this. I think it's the only field where, consistently, the editors themselves are experimenters. Most of them, anyway.

AVRAM DAVIDSON: It does or should stimulate the imagination and expand the mental and physical horizons of the reader, preparing him for the changes now taking or about to take place in the world we live in. But anything which enriches the poetic vision is for good.

WILLIAM TEMPLE: S-f is a general term. There are several types: Technical extrapolation. Pure entertainment (fairy tales for grown-ups). Satire. A fumbling guess at the nature of the universe. The first and last type overlap somewhat. Have space here to deal only with them....

Seers have extra long, extra sensitive feelers. They reach into the misty regions of thought where reason cannot. They *sense* the shape of things to come and things unseen. Their kind of s-f is crystal ball gazing. Earth satellites, rocket-ships, airplanes, TV, atom bombs, mechanised war, *etc.*, were all first sighted in that crystal ball. (Paul, in the Gernsback magazines of the 'twenties and 'thirties, pictured jet-airliners with swept-back wings--but not from cold reason.) Again, time is only one of the unknown dimensions around us: strange environments, which s-f seers dimly penetrate to and bring back samples: alien mores, machines, creatures... They perform a kind of mental scouting of the unknown territory the human caravan must cross. (Lousy metaphors--but I washed my feelers last night and can't do a thing with 'em.)

But that kind of thing is probably s-f's chief value.

ALFRED BESTER: For the reader: the fact that it is mind-stretching; it is probably the most iconoclastic form of literature existing today. For the author: the fact that it offers the opportunity to exercise a free-swinging imagination, and a canvas so broad that he has the opportunity to be genuinely creative.

JOHN BRUNNER: *The raison d'être* -- obviously -- is that people read fiction for entertainment; some people read SF. This is not the same as assigning hypothetical values to it. But I do feel it has considerable value. Apart from accustoming its readers (occasionally) to the idea that a changing world can be exciting and challenging, I find it an excellent vehicle for conveying social and political concepts shorn of their present-day emotional labels. I'd instance the picture of a warless world, with its primitive nationalisms gone the way of religious hysteria.

KURT VONNEGUT, JR.: I do not think that science fiction is logically a separate form of fiction. It is simply fiction with an emphasis on technology. The term has meaning only because there is a little society of writers who are for some reason, pleased to think of themselves as separate.

RAY BRADBURY: To deal symbolically with our problems, to tell parables about us to ourselves. Man's trials are so great, they cannot be written about realistically. The parable has always been the most compact and telling way to gather up our sins and virtues in one packet. Good science-fiction is Biblical, then, and has much in common with the mythologies of all imaginative religions.

JEFF SUTTON: Freedom of the mind. In writing science fiction, and in reading it, we escape the shackles of today. In writing, particularly, we escape the conventions that bind--drop the whole social order, in a manner of speaking, to explore a new one. It is travel to a strange land.

ARTHUR PORGES: Entertainment, although many would argue that its main value relates to criticism of society, particularly in regard to future trends.

PIERRE VERSINS: It seems to be (in the best cases) that science fiction is written--and read--by people aware that something is lacking in common ideas taught us by common people.

DEAN McLAUGHLIN: This is like asking what is the principal use of scotch tape. It can be simple adventure entertainment in an exotic setting. When well and intelligently done, this is nothing to disparage. Or it can be satire--a vein I've myself been toying with of late. Or perhaps the simple chewing of an intellectual bone. (*Brotherhood of Keepers* was such a piece.) But it should be none of these exclusively--I dislike pigeonholes.

DAMON KNIGHT: Kicks and money.

CLIFFORD D. SIMAK: The purpose of all fiction is to entertain and that also must be the prime purpose of science fiction. If while entertaining, fiction also can instruct or can force the reader to think, then that is a further value. I believe that science fiction, perhaps, can do this better than any other form of literature.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL: Gives a chance to consider how else things might be--and decide whether those 'elses' are better or worse.

DANIEL F. GALOUYE: It would be gratifying to indulge in idealistic camoflage and proclaim science fiction as an *avant-garde* medium opening the doors on and stimulating the developments of the future,prophesying the fortunes of the human race and sounding tocsins against the social pitfalls that lie ahead. But let's face it: Perfect honesty will have to recognize science fiction, and all other forms of literature for that matter, fundamentally on the basis of entertainment value. It is satisfying to know, though, that besides discharging its primary function, science fiction can and does provide these other services in the nature of bonuses. In that respect, the *genre* stands out as the most thorough and most appealing.

ANDRE NORTON: Stretching the imaginations of the readers and making them wonder for themselves 'what if--'.

FRED SABERHAGEN: Ideally, science fiction gives a chance to impose different co-ordinate systems upon the human condition, and to try to see what will change and what will remain the same.

ALAN E. NOURSE: As a sounding-board for ideas and speculations that can't be well advanced in other media because the other media are more rigidly limited (through custom) to demonstrable realities and provable facts. Reality is no speculative, and science as a description of reality doesn't permit speculation. In science fiction any approach to speculation about anything is permissable, even approaches that violate the rules of logic or involve fallacious argument, as long as the approach used is consistent within its own framework. Thus, science fiction *can* be the most unrestricted of all fictional media...except that very few people using the media are able to free themselves from the necessity to 'obey the rules' long enough to utilize their freedom from restriction that science fiction offers them.

MARTIN GREENBERG: Science Fiction has a base that is so broad that it forces the individual who reads it to think. I believe that the need for children to read is tremendous and contemporary fiction just represents no or very little challenge in competition with the idiot box.

ROBERT BLOCH: As a vehicle for social satire at one extreme -- the other extreme being escapist entertainment.

WILSON TUCKER: Sheer entertainment. I don't go for the 'sugar coated science pill' line, and only a few science stories by a few intelligent writers are really educational (Examples: Clement, Anderson, Asimov, *et al.*). Sheer entertainment in a relatively free-thought, free writing field is its chief value. It has novelty value.

PHILIP K. DICK: To present in fiction form new ideas too difficult or too vague as yet to be presented as scientific fact(*e.g.* Psionics). And ideas which are not scientific fact, never will be, but which are fascinating conjectures--in other words, *possible* or alternate science-systems World-views which we can't 'believe' in but which interest us (as, for example, we find interesting the Medieval World-view but simply cannot any longer accept it as 'true'). So s-f presents to us, in addition to the World-view which we actually adopt, a great range of 'as-if' views: the possession of these have the effect of making our minds flexible: we are capable of seeing alternate viewpoints as co-equal with our own.

ISAAC ASIMOV: The chief value of science fiction is that it affords a means by which thoughtful people can consider the possible effects on human beings of changes in the state of science and technology. These changes will come to pass and at such a rate that we must be as prepared as possible for them if we are to avoid discomfort and even disaster.

H. BEAM PIPER: The same as the *raison d'être* of any other form of fiction; the entertainment of the reader. The term entertainment labels any activity for pleasure rather than necessity. It covers everything people do because it's fun. Science fiction entertains the type of reader who enjoys speculation on different hypothetical, philosophical, scientific, sociological, political, military, economic, technological, *etc.*, possibilities. This type of reader is not inferior nor superior to others, but he is *different.*

JERRY SOHL: Science fiction examines all aspects of Homo sapiens, not just his romantic urges or his criminal tendencies or the inhumanity of man. As a result, we are able to see ourselves as a rational animal being examined clinically and at the same time entertainingly, and I think we learn through the medium. I like the undercurrent of hope and ultimate fulfillment that permeates s-f.

FRITZ LEIBER: It makes readers more aware of the real world and especially of science and technology, elements wrapped in mystery for many people.

KATHERINE MacLEAN: Being geopolitical about it, S.F. comics and kid book translations are major reading matter for kids in all languages around the world. Muy educational. Being personal--certain kinds of people seem to need it. I couldn't have lived without it as a kid. The boredom that accompanied listening to adults and my kid friends talk about the weather, infantile politics and what brand of chewing gum they preferred gave me a distinct pain in the head. After I discovered s.f. I didn't have to listen. I could speculate about wild evolutions of custom, alternate possible histories of how we got here, doppler effects, canals, *etc., etc.* and stay awake. Whenever I wasn't playing games with kids or reading, where someone was mumbling slowly on with some fallacy, such as school, I could mentally retreat to a s.f. puzzle, sit and look interested.

HARLAN ELLISON: I suppose the proper pompous answer is: 'as a vehicle for social satire, allegory, and parable'. But if that's the best we can do, then we ought to pack up our typewriters, and silently steal away. Such vehicular qualities should be side-effects, fillips to the main course, which should be the portrayal of the human condition. When science fiction does this, it has a reason, when it doesn't, it is precisely what the clods call it: escapist fiction. I love it, but the best I can come up with for a reason is: it *is*, because it *is*.

J. FRANCIS McCOMAS: Entertainment.

ALLEN KIM LANG: Pacifism, non-violence, negro equality were accepted in S-F long before *NEWSWEEK* caught on. It's the outer fringe of liberal thought...the best of it; some (Heinlein) is the best expression of conservative notioning.

POUL ANDERSON: Entertainment. This though, does not necessarily imply triviality. Shakespeare's plays are entertainment too. The best sf, besides having literary value, gives something to think about to readers who enjoy thinking. The second best, if reasonably well written, at least gives relaxation.

To some extent, sf is useful as a vehicle for social analysis and criticism; it's about the only fiction which tries to study the impact of science and technology on society.

Evidently it also arouses an interest in such matters among young people, and so acts as a recruiting agent for science and engineering.

]*The 1969 Entries*[

HANK DAVIS: The same as any other artform--pleasure. However, you probably mean a value peculiar to sf and not to be found in, say, Jane Austin. The job of fiction is to lie entertainingly (proponents of Realism I will not argue with, referring them instead to C.S. Lewis' AN EXPERIMENT IN CRITICISM), and sf has the additional impact of newness. Fiction should make that happen to you which, normally, would not have happened to you, pulling you from the reality that you are in to another reality. Sf can make things happen to you that have never happened to anyone before, and thus its value.

Such things as messages for peace, for world brotherhood, for more active PTAs, for bigger pieces of chicken in TV dinners, as well as Judith Merril's SIGNIFICANCE are not necessarily in conflict with the business sf ought to be about, but they are definitely subsidiary to it, as they are to any other artform.

PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER: The chief value of s-f (for me) is that it stimulates the imagination, gives the intellectual joy of extrapolation, and conduces (or should conduce) to broadening one's education, tolerance for humans and ideas, and to making one's mind more flexible. All fiction, mainstream, crime, western, s-f, consists of the reader sharing, for a time, the private world of the writer. The private worlds of the s-f writer appeal to those who find more joy in the wild worlds of s-f than in the more prosaic worlds of the other fields. It's a matter of resonance, that's all.

HARRY HARRISON: Entertainment. After that--the fact that it lives in the real world where science affects every part of our lives. It considers that fact and speculates at times about the results.

T.L. SHERRED: It's a possible better world; at least one that is more desirable than the one in which we exist... Was it Bruce Bairnsfather that suggested the 'better 'ole'?

JOHN JAKES: The best definition I've ever heard of the best sf, I heard in a speech given by Fred Pohl and I presume it's original with him: he characterized sf stories as "cautionary tales."

JOANNA RUSS: That people like to read it. Looking for a justification for existence for any kind of literature is a mug's game. Its chief value seems to be *1)* its trashiness--trash being the primeval muck from which all literature springs and *2)* its taking science seriously--NOT in its self-conscious, putative extrapolations, but unconsciously, in metaphor, as part of fun and games. Possibly a concentration on things rather than individual psychology. The unrealism of it intrigues me most, the silliness, the 'imaginativeness' (really crudeness) or fantastication. I'm not derogating it at all; this is how I like to write and do write.

LEO P. KELLEY: The chief value of science fiction is its mind bendingness.

ANDREW J. OFFUTT: It provides intelligent reading for intelligent people. It provides a sort of Freudian dream-fiction escape--but a thinking one. There are many other reasons and values. But I am convinced that these are paramount. You can escape into a Western--but after 10 or 20, who needs more? Also, they do not require or stimulate thinking on the part of the reader--in general, he added, cautiously.

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS: I do not know what the chief value of sf is. After entertainment, it begins to open the minds of its readers to the idea that there exists a fantastically wonderful-

ly brilliant fluid universe in which most anything can happen and in which all dreams can eventually come true.

DAVID GERROLD: As an escapist literature, science fiction has no equal--but it can and often is much more meaningful than that. The chief value of science fiction is that it allows a writer to say things that are impossible to say any other way.

LARRY NIVEN: Entertainment.

EMIL PETAJA: Science Fiction at its best points a way toward progress and states blunt warnings to the young people who number its main bulk of readers. Even at its less-than-best it stimulates the young and provides a kind of 'time machine' to let us glimpse a future we will never see, hence provides us a kind of immortality.

DANNIE PLACHTA: Imaginative stimulation for both reader and writer. Novelty.

PIERS ANTHONY: Values are individual things, so no definitive answer offers. The value of SF to me originally was escapistic, and I remain very glad it was available because my mundane existence at the time was not happy. I can't claim much educative, moral or literary content for it, much as I might like to, because too much of what is published is weak in such elements. So the simple answer must be: Entertainment. The complex answer, however, is that SF, as a part of the total body of human literature, reflects the needs and knowledge and aspirations of the culture that produces it, and can in that sense become a monument to the species. I feel that a good story or novel is as worthy a relic as a temple or pyramid, and offers more to the beholder. If Man is more than an animal, his literature is one of the surest proofs of this.

ANNE McCAFFREY: "Ours not to wonder what were fair in life
But finding what may be
Make it fair up to our means."

GREG BENFORD: It gives writers and thinkers a way of exploring just where events and ideas could take us. It can cry 'wolf!' and make it stick vividly, horribly well. Sf is traditionally the literature of optimism but that just means people prefer pleasant, exciting futures; such visions have some value just because they're positive stimulants for change. But the principal value is as a vision of where we're going -- optimistic or not -- and, sometimes, even preparing ourselves emotionally (always the hardest adjustment) for the future.

KEITH LAUMER: Entertainment -- the same as any other form of fiction.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK: The chief value of sf in its primitive form--*i.e.* in the pulps and so on--was that it was a popular literature that was at the same time trying to get to grips with certain issues not dealt with in so-called 'mainstream' fiction of the day. As such it has contributed hugely to the general body of fiction--influencing a great number of modern writers and helping them to get to grips with many of the problems -- both social and literary -- of the day. To my mind, however, pulp sf (or, at any rate, the kind found in most US magazines) no longer has the vitality that made it so attractive in the forties and early fifties. Honourable though its history is, it has now been superceded as a living literature by the work that has developed from it. Its function nowadays seems to be to comfort the mind rather than to expand it -- to protect it from the present rather than to prepare it for the future -- and so it takes its place neatly alongside the Western and the Love Story. At its best it can produce a Dry Academic Joke--and at its worst it supports all the unreal and neurotic notions and assumptions of a Hearst tabloid.

H. KEN BULMER: The chief value of sf today can be argued--and is--all the way to the moon. It opens up the skull-bones to a fresh breath of non-habit-formed-thought. As to the overall *raison d'etre*, that is already clearly apparent in every branch of the arts today which have either absorbed or been infiltrated by sf to the extent that sf motifs are so accepted by everyone no one recognises them anymore as sf--and this is nothing to do with sf 'prophecies' being realised in the sciences.

ALEXEI PANSHIN: I think the chief value of science fiction is that it restores the 'removed stage' to literature, something literature has been missing since the world has been explored.

DEAN R. KOONTZ: The chief value of any fiction should be to entertain. The reason, I think, that mainstream literature is selling less well than it once did is because it has ceased, in many cases, to entertain the reader. A second answer to this question might be: 'warn of possible futures.' Somehow, I disagree with this. By saying that sf's chief purpose is to warn, you are ruling out all stories that present an interesting, pleasant future. No, I think, besides entertainment, the value of science fiction lies in its ability to show that Man, despite what he has done to himself and what he still might do to himself, can grow, can expand, and can one day raise himself. He may still have war and hate, but science fiction can affirm that he will still progress.

NORMAN SPINRAD: The chief value of science fiction is that it gives the writer total mobility in space, time, and reality and therefore enables him to create a work of art independent of historical or present-day contexts.

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What is your appraisal of the relationship of Science Fiction to the 'mainstream' of Literature? 3

JEFF SUTTON: Science fiction is *part* of the mainstream of literature, and in time to come, will be recognized as such. As people become more oriented toward space and the future, they will become more cognizant of some of the writing of the past. Science fiction writings, that is.

ROGER ZELAZNY: There is no relationship between SF and the 'Mainstream' of lit. I do not believe that SF has ever exercised any influence on non-SF writing. It has been a steady one-way affair, as I see it. In recent years SF has been responsive to many outside influences, influences which I feel have been salubrious--to wit: the falling away of some of the taboos, as demonstrated by the success of Philip José Farmer's stories, and the currency given some of Mr. Heinlein's more recent work; greater acceptance of purposely stylized pieces of writing, as shown by the continuing success of *MAGAZINE OF F & SF*; and the increased occurrence of humorous stories, Kingsley Amis to the contrary. This would not have occurred if sufficient readers had not approved and enjoyed the same. To me, this implies that the SF reader of today, more aware of what is being done in other lit-places, has lost something of the first-generation provinciality that typified early SF, and has come to expect more. It is not a loss of wonder so much as a loss of naivete, and it bodes well, I believe, for the field itself; a raising of standards and an extension of the range of subject-matter attracts new readers and should not but please the old.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL: 'Mainstream' literature is a very limited fraction of the total field of fictional exploration -- the here-now fraction. 'Science fiction' properly explores all time and places.

JOHN BRUNNER: It lags considerably behind. Aside from the area I've already indicated under 2, I don't feel that the techniques of most of our writers are properly matched to the size of their preferred themes. You get a phenomenon like Sturgeon who stands up in any company... but I've just read Vance Bourjaily's THE VIOLATED, and *there's* a picture of a changing world for you. (And Bourjaily isn't top in his own league, either!) You have to list the qualifiers, chief of which would be EARTH ABIDES, but we have few by-any-standard great works.

ALFRED BESTER: It has very little. It is a special art-form, only indirectly related to reality. I would class it with *cliches-verres*, the glass prints with which the Barbizon artists amused themselves in the middle 19th century. They achieved some spectacular effects, but after a brief vogue, glass prints died out.

ARTHUR PORGES: It could and should be in that mainstream; as to why it is not, see [11] below for my opinion.

RAY BRADBURY: It is at the center of literature but, paradoxically, nobody knows it but us'n writers and you'n readers. The central problem of our time is Machinery made by men and the choices involved in using it for good and evil. It follows that our time is, by its very nature, science-fictional. Any literature that speaks of this is automatically Mainstream. SF has been *avant-garde* always and forever, but again, how rarely has this truth been drummed forth upon the land by the intellectual critics.

DEAN McLAUGHLIN: Commercially, SF will never be more than a tiny corner of the market. It appeals to only certain types of mind. But any specific SF piece can occupy any position along the spectrum covered by the 'mainstream' term, from shallow froth to elaborate, many-levelled Literature with a capital L. (I've always been a bit suspicious of the term by the way--it's merely a convenient way of saying non-specialized literature--yet almost any specific work can be classified more narrowly, be it Western or Eastern, Love story or business story or...)

GROFF CONKLIN: There is too little relationship -- because there is too little *absolutely top* science fiction and *much* too little emphasis on 'real' people and 'real' events. (Natch!)

PIERRE VERSINS: It depends on what you mean by 'mainstream': for readers and critics of mainstream literature, science fiction is either no literature at all, or literature and nothing else when successful (those idiots who say that BRAVE NEW WORLD is science fiction, you see?); for us (or for me), there are two kinds of science fiction, one which, being well written, *may be used as* mainstream literature *without ceasing to be* science fiction, and another one which is science fiction without being literature (this lacking of literary interest being of no importance).

TED CARNELL: In recent years, s-f has come a long way along the road to recognition as a part of general literature, largely due to leading writers in the genre tackling novel themes acceptable to general readers of fiction, as opposed to the regular readers of short story s-f. This widening of writing horizons by writers such as Robert Heinlein, Jim Ballard, Poul Anderson, Arthur Clarke, Brian Aldiss, Frederik Pohl, and many others with first-hand experience of the *genre* over many years, has made a large part of s-f acceptable to the mainstream literary critics--and because of *their* acceptance, s-f itself is becoming accepted.

DANIEL F. GALOUYE: As noted above [#1], science fiction is the most generally satisfying form of expression and, as such, enjoys a distinctive relationship to the mainstream of literature. That relationship is one which sets it apart, with a certain degree of justified aloofness. It would be a bold prediction to say that eventually this distinction will cease to exist, with the 'mainstream' conforming itself to the 'offshoot'. But such a prediction is not unreasonable. Today's narrow viewpoint determines that man's principal concern is with his past and present. Sophisticated appreciation of the long-range perspective will inevitably generate the mature realization that the future is equally valid exploratory ground in the literary field. It may very likely be a case of the offshoot dragging the mainstream along by the scruff of the neck until the former becomes the dominant force.

RICHARD WILSON: If a science fiction story (novel, play) is good enough, it is literature. If it's not, it isn't. It's not the subject matter that counts, but the quality of writing and the accuracy and intimacy with which it reflects a period or era. Science fiction has a big handicap because the question of whether writing is literature is usually not answered for a generation or more, and science fiction, by its very nature, is highly perishable.

ANDRE NORTON: Same relationship as other specialized types such as westerns and mysteries--pure action relaxation.

HORACE GOLD: Peaceful coexistence, which is to say that neither is going to take over the other, now or ever.

REGINALD BRETNOR: To my mind the answer here is almost the same [as #2], for this gap exists in literature as well as in our daily life. At present, science fiction is living in a ghetto, and very largely a self-made one. It's quite natural that the academic mandarin whose livelihood depends on kidding kids with his Ph.D. should resent a literary form which can fire their imaginations and capture their interest--and the almost universally hostile reaction from these people to the s-f boom of the 'fifties illustrated that. It is also natural that s-f should take a beating from the staffs of magazines like *TIME*, which have not exactly been noted for foretelling the Age of Space. But it's a damned shame that so many elements which associate themselves with science fiction should contribute to what has become a very bad public image.

THEODORE L. THOMAS: An enlarging sidestream, possibly blending with the mainstream.

GEORGE O. SMITH: About the same as the dime novel, the old *ARGOSY* adventure stories, and *CAPTAIN BILLY's WHIZ BANG* without sex. Now you define the so-called 'mainstream of literature' for me.

JAMES BLISH: It is a kind of specialty, like Westerns or detectives or slick stories, and like them can either bridge the mainstream or spill over into it, depending upon the intentions and the skills of the writer. The mainstream critic in the latter case tends to say then, "This is *more* than a s-f novel", when what he means is, "This is what a novel should be, and it happens to take the form of s-f." All good s-f novels are mainstream novels. All bad novels are backwaters no matter what form they take.

TERRY CARR: It's problematical. On the one hand, I'm half convinced by the argument put forth by Bill Donaho that sf's aims and values are diametrically opposed to those of Literature--that to the extent that an sf story concentrates on characterization and such it's ignoring its duty to consider ideas first and foremost. On the other hand, I'd still like to see someone really good come along who'd be master enough to combine idea-extrapolation, characterization and meaningful writing, color, and all the good elements of *both* fields. I don't really feel that it's impossible...just damned hard, particularly at the rates of the sf magazines.

LESTER DEL REY: Unfortunately, lately too many writers have been trying to create a relationship. Should be very little. 'Mainstream' is a tight, confined, rigid and 'now' type of literature; s-f should be loose and free. Also, science fiction should not be obsessed with the 'arty' pseudo-quality mainstream style now in vogue. The more s-f fits the mainstream, the less fit it is as science fiction.

CHARLES BEAUMONT: Since the best sf is concerned with human problems, as the detective story is not, I would say that it does not greatly differ from 'straight' literature. It was first, in the Gernsback days, without literary value, being concerned wholly with machines. Then came ideas. Then people. Now the three are often combined, with excellent results.

ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES: At its best, science fiction ought to offer a (possibly) more effective approach to many (but not all) aspects of being human. The differences ought not to be blurred, but in the process of becoming 'respectable' (and more profitable for the writer) they often are blurred.

(34) THE DOUBLE:BILL SYMPOSIUM

RICHARD LUPOFF: After a period of almost a decade in which SF attempted to ape Mainstream, and came off pretty bloodied, I believe that SF *as a genre* is now moving in a more independent course once more. The resurgence of 'action' SF, sword-and-sorcery, the Burroughs boom, *etc.*, all indicate a greater emphasis on the independence of SF. At the same time, Mainstream authors will continue to turn out a few successful 'quasi-SF' books a year *a la* ON THE BEACH, FAIL SAFE, A SHADE OF DIFFERENCE, *etc.*, utilizing certain of the techniques and concepts of SF, but vehemently denying that their works really are part of our field.

E. E. "DOC" SMITH: For 'hard-core' science fiction--which is what I like--I don't believe there is any. The average main-stream reader simply has not got the imagination to understand what the writer is writing about.

ROBERT F. YOUNG: Anything written in any given age belongs as much to the literature of that age as anything else written in it.

EDMOND HAMILTON: I think that people either like to read s-f or they don't, depending on whether or not they possess some necessary quality of imagination. As I do not believe the majority of people like to read s-f, I think that science fiction will always remain a separate field.

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY: That question is irrelevant, incompetent and immaterial. Just for the record, though; I think the 'mainstream' is a clogged sewer. Give me science fiction ANY old time. Mainstream literature has lost sight of story value to inept and ill-digested psychology, and is chasing its own tail around a maze of abstractions. Maybe the future will call US the mainstream--we wrote to entertain people. So did Shakespeare, so did Johnson. Dilettantes deserve oblivion.

KATE WILHELM: The population mark passed the 190 million mark recently; as long as any field of literature appeals to only 100,000 or less of that number, it will not fall into the Mainstream, but, it seems to me, the limitations are those imposed by this small group and the writers, not by the rest of the population that does enjoy science fiction under other names and with the preponderance of weight falling on the fiction, rather than on the science. If your speciality is in the making of fine hand wrought silver jewelry, you don't get into competition with Roger Bros. in turning out silver plated table ware. On the other hand, the two are never, or seldom confused by the buying public.

HAL CLEMENT: Science fiction, at least at its best, has higher standards of realism. The difference is, in my opinion, quantitative rather than qualitative.

WILLIAM TEMPLE: An extra-bright but emotionally retarded younger brother. A genius in the family who finds communication difficult because he lacks the common touch. He doesn't want to keep up with the Joneses, for the Joneses are not of his world. He feels isolated, misunderstood, frustrated (except maybe at Cons). The fault of this gap is partly his. He's 'different' and Mainstream isn't. That's his pride and ignorance. Partly the fault lies with Mainstream -- it plods along too many well-trodden roads, lacking 'feelers'.

AVRAM DAVIDSON: It should really be a part of it and in fact really has always been. *The Odyssey* is SF; so are the Arabian Nights. A SF story must, in addition to other and special requirements, be guided by or judged by the same standards as any other kind of story.

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL: There's no relationship. S-f is part of the 'mainstream' already -- regardless of whether or not a few literary snobs recognise the fact.

ANTHONY BOUCHER: All of the ghettos (sf, suspense, western, *etc.*) are capable of producing work worthy of serious 'mainstream' consideration. The microcosm repeats the macrocosm; there are as many levels of quality within sf as there are in 'straight' fiction. The trouble is that the 'serious' critics seize upon the highest level and say "This is fine! Therefore it isn't sf."

FRED SABERHAGEN: I see no sharp line between them.

TED WHITE: Science fiction is both more and less than 'mainstream' literature. In many respects it transcends and surpasses mainstream literature: it deals more imaginatively with root problems and the nature of reality. But as a form of writing it suffers badly. Most of its practitioners rely upon the scope of their imaginations to substitute for writing skill. One needs only read the occasional attempts sf writers have made to go outside their field to realize how wooden their writing is, deprived of the prop of Wonder. But see [#11] for more of this.

JOE HENSLEY: I consider science fiction to be closer to mainstream literature than to any of the other specialized fields, if by 'Mainstream' you mean the basic novel field, dealing with current or past events. But I think the structuring required in the mainstream novel is more rigid than science fiction, which has few requirements.

ROBERT SILVERBERG: S-F can do things the 'mainstream' can't, since it isn't limited to the here and now. So-called 'mainstream' stuff can give us cards and spades when it comes to technique, expression, insight into character, *etc.* Attempts at synthesis are only rarely successful, but that's not due to any inherent failures, only to lack of gift.

LEIGH BRACKETT: I think a lot of people in the field worry entirely too much about being, or not being, 'mainstream'. 'Mainstream' is merely a term, which translated means 'Successful financially' or at least, 'Formally reviewed'. If you want to write a best-seller and make millions, obviously s-f is not the place to do it, and most reviewers are sniffish. However, it is interesting to note that the great geniuses of the Mainstream seem to be terribly short-lived--there is always a shoal of new ones coming on, and where is Galsworthy now?--whereas the timeless and enchanting legends of s-f keep being reprinted for generations of new readers.

AUGUST DERLETH: No relation whatsoever. Science-fiction is a branch of fantasy, and there is no fantasy of any kind in the core tradition of American literature.

P. SCHUYLER MILLER: It is a minor division of Mainstream literature which split off, became a *genre* by acquiring enough readers to maintain a corps of magazines, evolved its own discipline and techniques, and may in the end rejoin the mainstream while (I hope) impressing its own sophistication about ideas on general writers. Mysteries have done the same thing, but the urge to crime seems to be more prevalent in the average individual than the urge to see Mars, or shake hands with a BEM. The way in which most Mainstream writers fumble with SF techniques when they attempt them, and the total lack of comprehension which Mainstream critics show when confronted with almost any SF idea, indicates to me that we are *not* going to make over the rest of mankind in our image. They just aren't interested in the same things.

MARK CLIFTON: I have long advocated that science fiction should not imitate mainstream, nor adopt its standards, but should remain a distinct art form with its own standards of merit. Each form can learn techniques from the other, but the trend of the past decade of pushing science fiction closer to the standards of mainstream has harmed it greatly.

BRIAN ALDISS: What a hellish question! When a sf novel is really good enough, it transcends the narrow category and becomes a genuine and general contribution to our literature. We saw this happen with *1984*. But unlike Orwell, the ordinary sf writer is generally too prone to stay within the conventions of the field; as a result his work remains within the field. Because of this, the rather artificial idea has grown up of sf *versus* the rest. It is an impoverishing idea, fortunately less strong that it was once.

ROBERT BLOCH: Science fiction is a stepchild, a poor relation. While ardent sf fans tend, by and large, to denigrate fantasy, it is only when science fiction is classified as fantasy that it gains any great critical acceptance or a wider general readership; *cf.* Bradbury (whom many sf 'purists' disavow).

JERRY SOHL: It is the single new facet of writing of the past fifty years, and it should be considered both independent of it, yet as a part of it. The truly great sf stories and novels will live as a part of literature for all time, so it should not be sold short.

DENNA HENDERSON: For the last few years I have avoided the 'mainstream'. Too much sewage in it -- insofar as SF resembles 'literature' in this respect -- I avoid it, too.

GORDON R. DICKSON: The word *mainstream* bothers me. It seems to imply a *genre* where there is no such thing. In practice the so-called mainstream field is a catch-all from what is left over from easily-identified areas of *genre* fiction such as sf, mystery,historical and so on. However, people using the word normally use it to connote fiction with a background of the current, theoretically real, world of the present. It's for this reason I prefer the term 'contemporary fiction'. This draws the lines against the loose thinkers who like to sweep into the net of 'mainstream' anything much praised, or successful, or acknowledged to have literary quality, and defend the robbery of these things from other literary areas with the looseness of the'mainstream' label.

However, if we can restrict 'mainstream' to the area of contemporary fiction, I might say two things about science-fiction in comparison with it. The first is that sf is a speciality field where its very freedom from rule or taboo is bound to bar it from the conservative majority of general readers -- as a regular literary diet. Mainstream or contemporary fiction on the other hand, being apparently anchored in current reality, keeps its firm hold on this majority. And this is as it should be. For the very qualities which make sf attractive to the imaginative and experimental fictioneer are the very ones which would have to be sacrificed if the field had to play to the mainstream readership.

The second is that science-fiction, from Verne and Wells to the present, is very much a product of our immediate technical period in history--in contrast to contemporary fiction which runs back to Fielding's TOM JONES, in its form of the modern novel. Sf, therefore, is restricted not only in the bounds of its own area of speciality, but in the modernity of its appeal. Both these restrictions--and they are not bad restrictions at all--make sf an outlier of the contemporary field. I don't see sf becoming much more important among the other *genres* of writing than it is now, for these reasons. But I'm glad rather than sorry about it. If we weren't out in the boondocks the laws would be stricter--and there would go most of our pioneer freedoms to explore the yet uncharted areas of theme and subject and character which will eventually richen the whole field of writing.

THEODORE STURGEON: Like Moliere's *Amateur Gentilhomme,* who was astonished to find out he had been speaking prose all his life, the mainstream reader is unaware of the vast quantity of sf he reads and really enjoys, and will heatedly deny that it's sf. FAIL SAFE, *1984,* ON THE BEACH, YOU SHALL KNOW THEM, and hundreds of other books, many of them mediocre, some brilliant, have had wide public acceptance. But if a really good sf pro wants to make the classic buck (given that he has a really good book to sell) he'd better change his name and hide his history, because the lay reader is convinced that everything called sf is Buck Rogers from 20,000 Fathoms.

JAMES E. GUNN: Except as 'Mainstream' literature is concerned with ideas, it has little relationship to science fiction (and vice versa) in a meaningful sense. Sure, both influence each other, 'Mainstream' literature with its experiments in style and its loosening of subject matter restrictions (which is all it has to offer) and science fiction with its content (which is almost all it has to offer). Some 'Mainstream' literature approaches science fiction by its dramatization of ideas; some science fiction approaches 'Mainstream' literature by subordinating content to style.

HARLAN ELLISON: We are separated from the mainstream by a self-imposed gulf, and too few writers try to bridge that gulf. It is much easier to work where we always have, where the chances of being drowned or stoned are slighter. I find the writing in the mainstream better mechanically, often imaginatively richer, frequently much more thought-provoking. When the mainstream is bad, it is dreadful, but when it is good, it beats the best s-f by a hatful. Bitter, but true.

BASIL DAVENPORT: I don't know how to answer... At the beginning, I don't think there was much. BLEAK HOUSE, or even THE WOMAN IN WHITE seem to me proto-detective stories which are much closer to mainstream than is THE TIME MACHINE or VOYAGE ROUND THE MOON. That is, I think it may be said that the detective story has been moving away from mainstream, while SF, having exhausted some of its most special material, is moving toward it.

MARTIN GREENBERG: Science fiction has a definite place in mainstream literature. When doing a satire or critical study, science fiction or fantasy, to use a generic term, must be used. Wells used it to promogulate his sociological theories. Other writers have used it similarly; the recent FAIL SAFE is an example, tho they didn't call it SF.

PHILIP K. DICK: S-f fails to explore the depths of interpersonal human relationships, and this is its lack; however, on a purely intellectual level it possesses more conceptual ideas as such, and hence in this respect is superior to mainstream or quality fiction. And (supra) it does not need to dwell on mere style as such but can range further in terms of its content. But s-f (excepting Bradbury) is for younger, more optimistic people, who haven't yet truly suffered at the hands of life; quality fiction tends--and rightly so--to deal with the defeated, those who have lost the first bloom...hence quality fiction is more mature than s-f--alas.

FREDERIK POHL: The best sf is a part of mainstream, in that it affects, and is affected by, the common feedback of good writers on each other. If most sf is not read by the mass 'mainstream' audience, this is not a weakness of sf but of the audience, who are not willing, and perhaps are not able, to stretch their imagination enough to enjoy sf.

ISAAC ASIMOV: If by 'mainstream' we mean writing of the scope and value and intensity and significance of the material written by a Shakespeare or a Dostoyevsky, then there is no comparison of course. If, however, we refer to the run of the mill novels being written today, science fiction is incomparably more important since it is the only branch of popular fiction dealing with the really important problems that face Homo sapiens today.

ALAN E. NOURSE: As stated above [#2]...'mainstream' being the restricted medium, science fiction the unrestricted. To the extent that science fiction writers restrict themselves when working in the unrestricted medium, they are wasting their efforts, and science fiction merges with 'mainstream'; to the extent that the 'unrestrictedness' of science fiction is used, it moves away from the mainstream and becomes more and more a rather awkward, uncomfortable and peculiar variant of idea-propounding and truth-seeking. Personally, I think this is the direction science fiction must take in the future if it is to survive at all: it must become more and more experimental, queerer and queerer, more and more elastic, less and less concerned with its adherence to rules of logic or to reality itself...in other words, farther and farther from 'mainstream' writing. The alternatives are for it to remain as it is, ...a progressively more boring fraud which simply doesn't do what it pretends to do...or to merge closer and closer with restricted 'mainstream' writing ... in which case, it just gets pretty silly, since there is less and less distinction.

Of course, whether there is a readership which will support greater and greater experiment and elasticity, or an editorship willing to gamble on it, or authors willing (or able) to extend themselves in playing with it, with the resources to do so for little or no financial return, is quite another question. Again personally, I think it is the authors who have the most to gain by pursuing the potential here, yet it is the authors who seem least able and/or willing to get working at it...present company included. It's much easier to turn out pretend-science fiction you know will sell, or turn to money-making writing, and the kind of writing I'm talking about, to the writer, would be both risky and unremunerative as hell.

FRITZ LEIBER: SF is part of the Mainstream. The division into 'genres' is largely a matter of merchandising. When we say the Mainstream we are talking of *a)* popular fiction appealing to the widest possible audienee; *b)* books written to please the English professors, the literary quarterlies, and the critics.

ALLEN KIM LANG: *ESQUIRE* ignored it, so it can have no such relationship.

KATHERINE MacLEAN: I don't give a damn about the mainstream of literature. Some of the classics have given me insights I might not have gotten by living and seeing real people, but not many have. When I am in the right receptive mood I can be stirred emotionally to the depth by the purest piece of hack hokum. Every writer has his own slant, his personal philosophy, and when there was something I was ready to learn about human nature, I learned as suddenly and as pro-

foundly from the characters of one of the British popular novels of W.J. Locke; from Tarzan, from a science fiction story, from H.G. Wells, from Arthur Koestler, from the *Ill Made Knight*, from A BIT OF TAPESTRY, from the GOLDEN BOUGH, from YOUNG DOCTOR KILDARE, by Max Brand, from SPQR which appeared as a second story in a Doc Savage issue (someone who remembered it recently said it was by Alfred Duggan). Impact does not relate to critics votes.

WILSON TUCKER: I hold it to be a distant cousin. Distant cousins like Arthur C. Clarke are worming their way into the mainstream, whereas writers like Philip Wylie and Nevil Shute occasionally try to ply the far out waters but fail miserably. It would appear to be a one-way river; distant cousins may come in, but those already in cannot journey out--however briefly.

CHARLES DE VET: Gradually merging.

POUL ANDERSON: I detest these artificial distinctions. All writing belongs to the 'mainstream', and should be recognized as such. But to the extent that sf is *de facto* a separate category, it is derivative in its literary techniques, reserving originality for ideational content.

H. BEAM PIPER: I deplore this term 'mainstream'. It is currently used, in fiction, to label novels, *etc.*, of psychological characterization, and nothing else. As stated above [#2], difference does not imply superiority or inferiority, but only difference. However, a certain clique of critics, pretending to intellectual superiority (Orville Prescott will do as a specimen), prefer fiction of this *genre* and refuse to give works of any other kind serious consideration. It might be noted that most of this critical clique are themselves non-scientific if not actually anti-scientific in orientation. It might also be noted that most of the characters delineated in such fiction are immature, semantically disoriented, bewildered, complex-ridden, unhappy and often neurotic if not psychotic. (I do not claim this as an original discovery: Reginald Bretnor pointed it out ten years ago.) It might also be noted that 'm--------m' writers who experiment with science fiction themes usually butcher them atrociously.

J. FRANCIS McCOMAS: What is the 'mainstream' of literature?

]*The 1969 Entries*[

ALEXEI PANSHIN: The 'mainstream' is tired, limited and quickly dated. I doubt that sf will become swallowed by it, though science fiction could certainly stand to borrow standards of writing quality from somewhere.

On the other hand, in such works as GILES GOAT BOY and SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE we have cases of the mainstream coming to sf. I think this will become rather more common.

JOANNA RUSS: S.f. is generally way behind 'mainstream' in style although there are signs that it's catching up. The catching up is mostly imitative and not especially good. There is a rapprochement at the top--the most 'experimental' modern stuff and '*avant-garde*' s.f. S.f. may very well end up losing its existence as a *genre* and a whole load of material, imagery, themes, notions, *etc.*, will pass over into mainstream at the very top. But it will be the *very* top (in the sense of self-consciousness, rarefiedness, literary awareness, not necessarily quality). See *NEW WORLDS*, for example.

NORMAN SPINRAD: In the past, sf treated subjects of cosmic import with massive triviality, while 'mainstream' examined the navel with great literary skill. Now the terms 'sf' and 'mainstream' are meaningless since 'sf' is now part of 'mainstream', a term which was never more than a publisher's way of describing what got first-class promotion and treatment. The distinction now is between '*genre* sf' and sf which is also literature; I see this distinction as continuing into the indefinite future.

KEITH LAUMER: I believe that science fiction (terrible name) is slowly engulfing the main

stream. This week, reviewed in *TIME* are: Kurt Vonnegut's SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE; and WHEN THE ENEMY IS TIRED, by Russell Braddon. Both are within the SF canon. The third book dealt with is by Anthony Burgess, best known for his SF. Of course, none of the above call themselves SF writers. But WE know.

GREG BENFORD: While stories are always about people, sf gets as far away from this as is possible, and that's why it's a *genre*. The more people think in terms of constant change, the more readily they'll accept sf. But sf always deals with potentialities rather than actualities and that narrows our focus somewhat. It's too bad that sf writers on the average don't write well, and perhaps that's the penalty we must pay, but so what? Strong imagination will always be a virtue and we can hold our own in other areas. While I would like to see more 'standard literary values' brought to bear on sf, the people who talk of this thus far have done little to credit it. I would rather see more concern with simple storytelling than with the current literary indices of quality. If anyone wants to change the world with his books, he should write to the people instead of the critics.

DEAN R. KOONTZ: By its very definition, some of science fiction will always remain a separate *genre*. For one thing, it requires its readers to be basically grounded in a number of concepts that can only be absorbed through regular reading of the field -- gimmicks such as faster-than-light travel, time paradoxes, and so on. Most readers, people who cover a dozen or two dozen books a year, will not be willing to read enough of the field to get the grounding they will need for full enjoyment. On the other hand, some of sf will achieve the respect and critical study that serious mainstream now does. But this sf will have then assumed many of the traits of mainstream and will be accepted for that reason, not because of any science fictional qualities it may have.

We can see this happening today. The books that are mentioned by mainstream critics are those by Kurt Vonnegut and Ray Bradbury, men who have adapted their sf concepts to the mainstream technique. In the future, it will be people like Norman Spinrad who will have achieved recognition by critics without the field.

I am not entirely convinced we should seek critical acclaim outside the *genre*. For one thing, the critics we hope to impress are generally five years behind the current trends. Presently, a naturalism-stream-of-consciousness type of combination is regarded as worthwhile. But the trend now seems to be back to the book that tells a solid story. Witness such bestsellers as TRUE GRIT, THE SECRET OF SANTA VICTORIA, THE GODFATHER, FORCE TEN FROM NAVAROONE, and many others. The solid story concept has, until the beginning of this century, always been the dominate one in the writing of novels. It appears to be cycling back again. Instead of trying to cultivate the mainstream critics, I think sf writers should concentrate on writing the best books they can within the strong story concept. *Avante Garde* experimentation is good--I've done a bit myself--but should be indulged in to stretch one's boundaries, not to impress and win the favor of a group of hitherto impartial or antagonistic reviewers.

ANNE McCAFFREY: I have never bothered to appraise the relationship; I am merely too delighted that s-f exists to question its right to be.

EMIL PETAJA: I feel that Science Fiction ought to be blended into the 'Mainstream' eventually, rather than remain aloof. At its best it already is, *e.g.* Ray Bradbury, Arthur Clarke, *etc. etc.*

ANDREW J. OFFUTT: Rather like that of Jesus to God (Christianity from Judaism). It's the son... which is now becoming so tall and important that 'mainstream' and 'mainstream' writers borrow from sf, or see the necessity for using a sf base for their stories. Here are Philip Wylie, Allen Drury, Marya Mannes, John Barth, even Burdick.

It will always remain though, the son: Reading is many people's bag. Reading sf ain't everybody's bag! (For one thing, it requires a bit more imagination; the ability to accept that basic premise.)

DANNIE PLACHTA: The Mainstream continues to gradually absorb SF, which is as it should be.

DAVID GERROLD: Mainstream writers are limiting themselves.

(40) THE DOUBLE:BILL SYMPOSIUM

PIERS ANTHONY: SF is a subsection of mainstream literature, one of a number, though theoretically mainstream is a special case of SF. SF ranges all time and space and concept; mainstream is limited largely to the present, and doesn't even cover all of that. Unfortunately for SF, the best writers are in mainstream. Strange inversion! It is a sign of how backward the field of SF is, when the very attempt to utilize techniques long known in mainstream is ridiculed as 'new wave.' I regret that SF, instead of being the leader its potential suggests, is instead a rather conservative follower with many intolerant voices seeking to hold it back even more. (That doesn't mean I approve of foisting off ludicrous anomalies as quality science fiction, however. Proportion is necessary.) But there is hope; SF is young yet.

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS: As to the 'mainstream of literature', I have no idea what this is. On the bookshelves behind me can be found the 'mainstream' of yesteryears, well bound--and dead as hell.

LEO P. KELLEY: Science fiction is to the mainstream of literature as the tail is to the dog or the tributary to the river. The important thing is not to lose sight of the value of the tail to the dog. It gives him balance. It wags. And tributaries fertilize areas of land not reached by the river with the delightful result that those areas blossom and bloom, are fertile and productive.

PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER: There should be no categorization of mainstream or s-f or other fields, even though we all do it. The elements that make for 'good' mainstream are the same that make for 'good' s-f. The typical s-f reader, I believe, doesn't care for 'literary' values, though I think he should. But then the typical reader of so-called mainstream doesn't care either.

T. L. SHERRED: None. If some of the junk that I have been reading lately or hearing about (I'm including PORTENOY'S COMPLAINT, PAST MASTER---Lafferty should have stayed boozed---and any novel detailing the tribulations of a poor Jewish boy in Brooklyn) is literature, mainstream or otherwise, I'll say "Arf!" to your Orphan Annie.

HANK DAVIS: What is the mainstream? The deathless prose of Fletcher Knebel? The works of writers who were popular with today's English professors when they were callow youths and which, in their maturity, they make required reading in their courses? Books that are reviewed in *SATURDAY REVIEW* (in which case John Norman's TARNSMAN OF GOR is mainstream)?

Science fiction is up to the same tricks that all other fiction is up to: manufacturing entertaining quasi-realities. Its balloon has a longer tether than most. And, by its nature, it tends to be occupied with matters of long range concern (quick example: the ultimate destiny of the human race), whereas the mainstream is occupied with matters closer and more mundane (a few days in the life of a football player, to use an example that I saw recently in *PLAYBOY*). Most of this mainstream/sf-*genre* hoohah is noise about the commercial aspects of the publishing biz' (packaging, marketing, promoting, *etc.*) or about current fads in literature (I consider fads of 30-40 years duration to be current, though some of the current ones are more recent; a century isn't very long). This sort of noise, being extra-literary, may be of great interest to the writer but are irrelevant to his writing.

JOHN JAKES: My theory is that science fiction, as a *genre*, will never 'become' a part of the 'mainstream' but certain writers and/or certain books may. I think Tolkien and Heinlein's STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND are examples of this happening; I don't think we as writers can hope for more, for the *genre*; and can hope for no less for ourselves, individually....

H. KEN BULMER: The above holds true; the mainstream which really has been in a bad way is having a shot of invigorating new blood from sf. Sf is not literature, as I've said elsewhere, but literature is getting an almighty kick in the pants from sf and is being forced to reconsider and mend its ways. There should always remain a niche (the cant word is '*genre*') for sf as she has been known. The attempt to combine sf and mainstream literature is unreal in that literature will take, is already taking, what it requires from sf in the furtherance of literature's aims which are self-evidently different from those of sf.' At the moment, I understand, publishers find it easier to sell hardbacks with an emblem '*SF*' than they do ordinary novels. This is unhealthy and will eventually change. But sf ought to go on forever.

Do you believe that participating in fandom, fanzines and conventions would be a benefit or a hinderance to would-be writers?

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JOHN CHRISTOPHER: It depends. If they want to become science-fiction writers (and presumably they do), probably not. But one needs more general literary interests in one's formative years if one aspires to writing in the more general field. Science-fiction tends to put blinkers on its adherents.

FREDERIK POHL: Generally speaking, a benefit. I don't think they would learn anything worth knowing about writing; I do think they might receive encouragement and impetus.

GORDON R. DICKSON: To tell you the truth, I believe something like this is a purely individual matter. Some would-be writers will be stimulated by fandom, fanzines, and conventions. Others will find their literary energies being bled off in related fields. I've become rather hard-minded on this topic in the last twenty years. I now think that if anyone is going to write, he will write, irrespective of benefits or hindrances.

ZENNA HENDERSON: Hindrance for me--it's impossible to make a blanket statement covering everyone. If one can listen to the field being cursed and discussed without distorting his own work to some one else's warp--it's ok.

MARK CLIFTON: Young people particularly need the companionship of like minds for full development, but there comes a point where one's intellectual substance is wasted in talking about ideas instead of spent in carrying them out. If we can gain the acclaim of our companions and the reward of their admiration for bright chatter, why go on and do the hard work of turning it into literature? Further, our companions are often too easily satisfied and we can never develop our potential to the point we can satisfy an audience which doesn't personally know us. Limited and rationed participation is probably the better course for the would-be writer who really means it.

P. SCHUYLER MILLER: There's no question that such activities are beneficial--though "Cordwainer Smith" told me that a convention, or even a small group of fellow writers, would ruin his writing readiness for months. (He has no such inhibitions in his professional field of political science, apparently.) The SF field is so small and closely knit that it is practically a 'family business'--and the better you know the family the better your chance of marrying into it.

FRED SABERHAGEN: Until after my first sale, I never did, so it can't be a necessity. Time and energy put into organized fandom can't very well go into writing; but conventions and clubs can help you learn something about SF as a business.

PHILIP K. DICK: A benefit, but not a very great one. It would be a benefit if the fans allowed the writer to do the talking, instead of trying to instruct him. It is the job of the writer to do the telling; he should not be turned into a listener. But the concepts in s-f writing are not derived from fandom, from within the field anyhow; they are--or at least should be--derived from the wide world itself, its far shores in particular. From everywhere but s-f fandom.

BRIAN ALDISS: To the beginning writer, fanzines, *etc.*, are probably great props. But when you have had quite a lot of writing published, you can't help noticing that fanzine critics often have not got sufficiently critical equipment to say something really pertinent (though they may well say something really impertinent!). Of course it's tempting too for a writer to write for fanzines rather than for the public; it's easier, gets more immediate egoboo returns perhaps. Cons are a different matter--these a writer should not miss.

ALLEN KIM LANG: A benefit: There you meet writers, and bitch about the fen together over beer. Therapeutic, since we don't discover, so engrossed, that the fen haven't even heard of us.

THEODORE STURGEON: Depends on the writer. I believe that total participation in *anything* benefits a writer. However, some people are so constituted that they are looking for limitations to obey, and if they took some of the more vociferous 'Back to the Thirties' fans seriously they might never recover.

But anyone strong-minded enough to be willing to evolve the field could get nothing but inspiration from fanac.

HARLAN ELLISON: A benefit of inestimable value. I owe it *all* to fandom. Whatever *all* may be.

KATHERINE MacLEAN: It's fun. The only benefit to writers is investing in a good typewriter and glueing one's bottom to the chair. That's work. Work is not the same as fun. Rationing both is recommended.

H. BEAM PIPER: If nothing else, fan-activities gives the would-be writer an opportunity of learning what his potential customers want, and of familiarizing himself with the medium in which he intends to work. I have heard it argued that fandom tends to make a sort of cult of science fiction, restricted to a narrow circle of the initiated. This I seriously question. The people who contribute to fanzines and attend conventions are merely the most articulate of the class enumerated in [#2], and I have never attended a convention at which I did not hear all sorts of opinions, often quite contradictory, vigorously maintained.

CHARLES DE VET: Serves little function other than conviviality.

WILSON TUCKER: I cannot deny my own existance, or career. All these definitely helped me, most especially writing for the fanzines. About ten years of fanzine writing preceeded my first sale; I still write for them, sometimes experimentally and then use the results of that experiment in some story or book. The would-be writer could omit the conventions with no real loss, but fandom and fanzines can be a real benefit if he will use them.

J. FRANCIS McCOMAS: A hindrance.

POUL ANDERSON: Probably it benefits some, to a small degree, and hinders others by diverting their energies. Most, I suspect, wouldn't be much affected one way or another.

ALAN E. NOURSE: Would-be writers only become writers because something drives them to write and write and write. Fandom can do this, if it will. Fanzines provide a medium for would-be writers to see their work in print of one sort or another. Conventions can stimulate excitement, ambition and imagination, and help obliterate that 'awesome gulf' between the would-be writer and the established writer that so often just paralyzes early efforts. Participation in all these things can be an enormous benefit to the would-be writer who has it, and a great disappointment to the would-be writer who is really an admirer of writing and writers and doesn't have it. And these things could be a lot more beneficial, too. It's always been a great mystery to me why the annual conventions have never turned up with a Hugo award for the best pro story by an erstwhile fan writer, judged by a panel of fan editors and pro editors and guaranteed publication in that year's Hugo-winning pro magazine as a prize, with 'no award' made in years when nothing fit for pro magazine publication turns up.

The key to the whole thing, though, is stimulation of the would-be writer to write. I never in the world would have started writing when I did, or in the field I did, if I had not become

involved in an active competition-collaboration relationship with Joe Meyer when I was a junior at Rutgers, with several student-members of the editorial staff of the college 'literary' magazine prodding us on. We set fire to each other and began to assault John Campbell with stories; I guess John knew when he was licked because he made the grave mistake of buying, and as far as I was concerned the die was cast. But the important point is that that focus of people at that place and time set up a stimulating atmosphere that fired off down-to-business writing from half a dozen people: myself and Joe Meyer in science fiction; Mike Shaara in science fiction and later in slick fiction; S. Leonard Rubinstein in social novels; Will Shapiro in I-don't-know-what-all .... I swear, even the English professor we all tormented retired in terror and published a volume of poetry.

I have heard of this sort of chain reaction occurring other places and with other people; I'm interested, and would like to document, if anybody had other examples. Maybe I would have started writing something professionally, sometimes, regardless ... I had already been writing fiction of one sort or another long before I met Joe ... but the stimulus brought vague efforts and ambitions into sharp focus then and there. The fan/fanzine/prowriter/pro editor relationship that exists in science fiction is utterly unique in American letters, to my knowledge, and I think it *ought* to be firing off far more serious creative sparks than it is.

BASIL DAVENPORT: I think it is always a benefit to exchange ideas with other workers in the same field.

FRITZ LEIBER: Benefit, as are all contacts with reality, provided the would-be writer leaves himself lots of time for the lonely work of writing and studying and practicing writing.

ROBERT BLOCH: Depends on their temperaments. The outgoing personality is apt to suffer--he can get his kicks and ego-gratification rather easily by mingling with fans at fannish occasions as a 'big-name pro', and often tends to neglect actual writing in favor of living it up. On the other hand, the introverted writer may well benefit by the reassurance afforded by his reception at such affairs. This is a situation not limited to science fiction writing.

ISAAC ASIMOV: A benefit, by all means. It gives you a feeling of belonging, and that is important. The feeling of isolation that usually besets a science fiction writer because there are usually so few among the people he meets who are 'fans' can discourage him to silence.

CLIFFORD D. SIMAK: I don't suppose it would be a hindrance; it might even be a help. But it takes time and that is a commodity of which any writer never has quite enough.

JOHN BRUNNER: Benefit -- provided said writers bear in mind two important facts: first, that these vociferous enthusiasts aren't their audience, just a conspicuous and influential segment of it (the whole of fandom, past and present, at one copy each, wouldn't by a long way use up even an Ace Books print order); second, that to be a working writer is to be a WORKING WRITER. We aren't all chips off the old Bloch. How much real talent have you seen dead-ended into duplicated publications? I've lost count!

ALFRED BESTER: Participation would be a hindrance. Fans have an extremely special and distorted point of view (as a rule), and some of this might rub off on the would-be writer. Writers must mingle with people, not with fans, enthusiasts, or even other writers.

PIERRE VERSINS: Would-be writers aren't one precise kind of people: the question seems nearly pointless, since people either like meeting people or dislike it without being, for that, less or more would-be writers. Science fiction fandom is nothing really different of literary coteries; in going to conventions, publishing a fanzine and participating in fanacs, you don't do anything mightily different to haunting publishers' parties, putting out little reviews of prestige and corresponding with other writers of your kind.

JEFF SUTTON: No knowledge. Have never participated in either. As a rule of thumb, I'd say that participation in any convention dealing with a specific subject matter would be of value to anyone interested in that subject matter. We can always learn from the next fellow.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL: As they are now--a hindrance! They have become Mutual Admiration Societies--and are highly conformal. Precisely what a good, new science fiction author should *not* be.

ARTHUR PORGES: That depends entirely on the writer. I am essentially a hermit, and would find any such activities intolerable.

RAY BRADBURY: Very important. Young writers need to know other beginners, to laugh and cry with them over similar problems. I couldn't have survived my teen years without being a member of the L.A. science-fiction group which put up the money to finance my own fan magazine *FUTURIA FANTASIA* when I was 19. Time and again my flagging spirits were sustained by contact with other young writers and older established writers in the field, met at meetings or conventions.

RICHARD WILSON: Participating in any activity which gives you a chance to observe your fellow man is valuable to anyone who would write. It's impossible to speak, except in self-centered dullness, from a vacuum. After having observed, of course, you go hole up and write. You can't write in a crowd.

TED CARNELL: Experience proves that a combination of all three is a great benefit to would-be writers, especially amateurs, although participation in any of them does not necessarily mean that a professional writer in other branches of literature will benefit. Undoubtedly, new writers to the *genre* learn a great deal from fellow-fans (and one can quote a whole list of present-day prominent s-f authors who started from such small beginnings) but an essential quality for would-be writers is to read and study contemporary literature as well as actively participating in the above.

DEAN McLAUGHLIN: Can do little harm, unless the tail begins to wag the dog and the student never gets around to graduating. For some, anyhow, it's good for practice, making contacts, getting a good grounding in the business before plunging in.

DANIEL F. GALOUYE: The answer to this one, of course, depends on the definition of 'participation' since there exists the danger of having too much of a good thing. Association with fandom, interest in fanzines and attendance at conventions can, in moderate amounts, be both stimulating and conducive to copy production. On the other hand, by its very nature, writing requires a large measure of withdrawal, isolation, go-it-aloneness, if one expects to maintain a steady flow of manuscript from the typewriter. Only the individual can be the judge of what best suits his requirements.

ROGER ZELAZNY: A benefit, doubtless. Fandom provides an outlet for his first attempts at writing, it renders opportunity for him to observe the reactions of SF enthusiasts to his work -- to hear their criticisms, to enjoy their praise--and this gives him an ego-boosting incentive to go on, to improve. There is, of course, a seductive side to fandom, wherein the would-be writer finds himself, after a few stories, writing mainly *about* other writings, spreads himself too thin across too broad a spectrum of activities, and ultimately becomes a professional fan--which, while a very proud and *etc.* thing, can be deleterious in that it can cause him to lose sight of his original goal. A sense of proportion in *re* time-commitments is vital. My first story, back in the elder world, appeared in a fanzine, as did my second, as did....

JAMES H. SCHMITZ: If they don't spend the time they should spend writing on such activities, it needn't hinder them and might very well be a benefit. Many people develop their ideas better if they have an opportunity to kick them around freely with others.

JOE HENSLEY: Very beneficial. I think the conventions would be more of a benefit to me personally if I could manage to stay sober, but hell, you got to have fun too. So let's have one more beer. Kidding aside, I think that being a fan is as much fun as being a writer and fanning is a great place to cut your teeth.

CROFF CONKLIN: I do not know, since I have never participated. Perhaps that means I think it would be a hindrance?

HORACE GOLD: I have no opinion, not having participated before I became a writer, and not being involved now, aside from the very loose and informal contact of the pro Hydra Club here in N.Y. once a month or so, which I enjoy but find of no other consequence as to ideas and/or sales. A number of writers came up from fandom, but I'd say that by far the larger proportion didn't and doesn't. I don't see how participating would be a hindrance, though.

CHARLES BEAUMONT: It could be a hindrance only to wouldn't-be writers. I was helped, years ago, by the necessity for well-composed letters and editorials. If sf fandom is as it was, there are many excellent writers whose challenges must be met.

TERRY CARR: Either or both. It's a help because writing for fanzines gets a person used to communicating with a typewriter -- and the importance of this can't be overestimated. It's a hindrance because the standards of fandom aren't particularly stringent, and a writer can get awfully lazy writing for comparatively easy egoboo. (Though it must be mentioned that Poul Anderson once told me quite seriously that he considered it easier to become popular as a pro writer than as a fan writer.) It's a help because through fandom you can meet various important pro contacts It's a hindrance because you can get so interested in fandom for its own sake that you may put off any serious effort at pro writing. *Etc.*

JACK WILLIAMSON: I can't see much hope for benefit; I imagine that the fan activities might dissipate energies that would otherwise go into creative writing.

AVRAM DAVIDSON: This depends on the individual. I came back to fandom after only the briefest contact in early teens and after I was already an established writer. I cannot say if or not my writing since then is better or same or worse, but I think I am the better for having more friends and more experience with an additional (pardon) social milieu. I think it is possible that fannish activity might become a substitute for actual writing, but again this depends on the individual and his own tendencies and capacity for discipline. In general, I think that such participation should be a help -- again, if the would-be writer doesn't devote to fanthings time he should devote to writing. In other words: In addition to--okay; instead of--nix.

WILLIAM TEMPLE: A benefit. All contact -- additional to the copulating kind! -- is generative. Ideas breed ideas, and a handful of fen rubbed together produces idea-sparks and sometimes flames.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE: Very good for beginners, should be taken in moderation by old pros.

THEODORE L. THOMAS: Neither help nor hindrance; only writing makes a writer.

REGINALD BRETNOR: A hindrance--with one qualification only: If the present situation in fandom changes and the tail quits wagging the dog, then fandom could be a help. Too many active fen today are either exhibitionists or people trying to write and edit without real effort. I have met too many of these lately who confess that they "have almost quit reading" the s-f magazines, and then explain that it is because nothing produced nowadays meets their exalted tastes! Conventions can be fun when your friends are there. Otherwise--well, can any writer who takes his metier seriously really derive much advantage from *a)* giving his time to self-appointed amateur critics? *b)* getting his picture in the papers with Monster Men and other Halloween characters?

MACK REYNOLDS: A benefit, though I have done very little of this myself. I didn't know fandom existed until I had sold several science fiction stories, but I suspect that had I known of it and participated I would have been writing and selling sooner, and would have developed more quickly. As it was, it took me years to learn things that many fans, and fanzine writers pick up without effort.

GEORGE O. SMITH: The question is immaterial, irrelevant, and something else that Perry Mason uses. Some it hinders, some it helps, and some it does nothing for. One thing, writing for fanzines pays no rent, and because editorial standards are low, it does not improve the batting average.

LESTER DEL REY: No importance to the writer, unless he takes his fan activities too seriously. The fan slant on writing isn't the same as most readers, so fan activity can't give him much experience. But it is fun to be a fan, so why not? To learn writing, a would-be writer should practice writing for the pro markets.

LEIGH BRACKETT: Certainly enough fine writers have come up from fandom to prove that participation is definitely no hindrance, and may well be a help through the exchange of ideas, mental stimulation, and an increased prodding of the desire to succeed. But a would-be writer should be very careful not to be overwhelmed by any one particular clique, out of friendship, hero-worship or any other reason, lest his own spark of individuality be warped around or even destroyed by someone else's idea of how s-f simply has to be written. Many writers, of course, have evolved satisfactorily without fandom.

TED WHITE: I think that any time a would-be writer spends writing will be valuable to him later. The most important single need for a writer is the ability to express himself fluently and without inhibition at the typewriter. Every bit of the time he spends at the typewriter will strengthen this ability, and make the typer more an extension of his thoughts, less a machine consciously manipulated. Fandom is one way to gain this typing experience. *But*, I do not think that fandom serves as a specific stepping-stone to prodom (I had this out in print with Bob Silverberg once in 1957), and I do not believe it should be perverted to serve such ends in an exclusive fashion. I think very little of amateur attempts at fiction, and I would recommend that would-be writers spend a great deal more time consciously analyzing published material and a great deal less time blindly striking about on their own. I think it's significant that most of the pros to come from fandom have been in some part critics while fans: They've cultivated a conscious awareness of the criteria of writing--they've profited by the examples (good and bad) set before them. No matter how weak their writing style when they start attempting sf, they know certain basic facts about such things as plotting and grammer. I should say that 80% of the manuscripts I read for *F&SF* (some 60 to 90 a week) are written by individuals whose knowledge of story construction is entirely unconscious, and who commit the most basic errors over and over again. Many of them don't even know what a story is.

Fandom is most valuable for the would-be author, then, for the typing skills it gives him (not the ability to type an error-free 80 wpm, but to express himself easily at the typer), and for that part of it which serves as a critical arena (and not criticism of fan stories, but pro stories).

Conventions are for fun, and--if you're a pro--possible business contacts. But mostly for fun.

AUGUST DERLETH: Any writer worth his salt can turn any experience into profit for himself. All contact with fellow human beings is of value to him. Participate in fandom, by all means, but never take it seriously lest it injure your work, because fandom represents only a very small--if articulate--segment of the readership.

RICHARD LUPOFF: From the viewpoints of contacts with people professionally active in the field, this is a highly beneficial activity. From the viewpoint of a serious would-be writer, it all depends on *how* he 'fans'. If he pays attention to SF, studies it and its practitioners, *etc.*, he can benefit professionally. That is why so many pros came from the ranks of fandom. If a fan restricts his fanac to 'faaanish' activities, I do not think it will contribute to a professional career, but it still can be a fine enjoyable hobby.

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY: Benefit, if he uses it to enrich and enlarge his knowledge of people, to supply the intellectual stretching-of-the-mind which he may not get in his own conformist milieu.

Hindrance, if he becomes so in love with the easy egoboo of fanzine writing that he neglects to try the cold hard world of the professional with its rejection slips and harsh editorial comments.

ROBERT SILVERBERG: It can't hurt--except when fan activity becomes a drain on the creative energies. Fans trapped in the stencil-cutting grind dissipate impulses that might otherwise go into their writing careers. Convention-going is certainly beneficial to a would-be writer; any ex-

perience that staggering is bound to be useful for material later on, and it's also useful to meet editors and other writers now and then.

HAL CLEMENT: Could be either, depending on his own critical powers. He would be helped by practice, or ruined by trying to satisfy all his critics.

JAMES BLISH: It depends on how sociable the individual writer is, at any given time in his life. At one time fans annoyed and repelled me. Now I enjoy fandom hugely and learn a great deal from it. Who knows what I'll be like tomorrow? As a generalization, though--and one with the usual perils--I'd guess that the beginning writer ought to stay clear of mass friendships and uncritical admiration until he has learned the fundamental lesson that writing is a lonely art. Once he has swallowed that large bolus and managed to keep it down, fandom cannot at the least do him any harm, and if he finds he likes it, he's lucky.

]*The 1969 Entries*[

ALEXEI PANSHIN: Neither, necessarily.

H. KEN BULMER: In 99 cases out of a 100 of tremendous benefit. The odd loner will not benefit and in that sense will not need fandom. After a pro has gone a certain way the continued absorbtion with fandom usually ceases but his links with fans and convention attendance can in the normal run of things do him only good. Much as I regret the time wasted in fandom--in the climate of opinion, particularly, that existed in 6th fandom--I wouldn't have missed it. I'd like to do a whole lot more fanning right this moment, maybe even bring out another series of *NIRVANA*.

JOHN JAKES: A hindrance. I enjoy fandom, fanzines, cons and the like very much now, but had next to nothing to do with them in my early years. The danger is exactly the same as the Mother-in-law Pitfall. My mother-in-law loves this story that I read to her aloud over bourbon and water so what's wrong with the flapheaded editors? The first task of the beginning writer is to get himself published; the opinions that count are the opinions of editors who might buy from him. Fandom offers the same dangerous distraction that you might get from reading your novel to your friendly filling station attendant. Too much blab-blab spoils a writer, anyway....

KEITH LAUMER: It depends entirely on the personality of the writer. It would sap all the energies I would otherwise employ in writing.

HARRY HARRISON: A help. One of the attractive things about SF is the fans who give real positive feedback to a writer. Any new writer has time and energy to burn, so he (she or it) should thrash about in the fanzines a bit and meet the readers and fellow writers at the cons. The ivory tower has little market value.

T. L. SHERRED: I don't know. I do know that early in the '60s I spent a New Year in Milford, courtesy of the Knights. It was such a pleasure meeting people like the Carrs, the Blishes, and anyone who did not start a conversation with "Whaddya think of them Tigers today?" that in my boozed-up, personal-life-mixed-up state it took not too long a time to start the flywheel turning. If you want to marry a Methodist, hang around Sunday School; if you like Catholics, make a novena; if you like bowling, try the nearest alley. Yes, I do know. Hang around the people who like the same things you do.

PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER: I believe that it depends on the would-be writer. If he has the drive and the talent, he'll be a writer first and a fan or conventioneer when he has time.

ANNE McCAFFREY: I cannot see how commerce and communication with one's peers and fellow-worshippers would be a hindrance to would-be writers. I'm only sorry I didn't know about fandom when I was first starting out. I'd've come along a lot quicker as a writer if I had known.

LEO P. KELLEY: A definite yes to this one. Would-be science fiction writers should get to know who reads science fiction and why they do--learn what is going on in fandom--discover what fans are thinking, doing, liking, hating in order to avoid a virulent case of ivory toweritis which can be fatal to fictioneers.

LARRY NIVEN: Participating in conventions is a fun thing. So is fandom, if your tastes run that way. Neither is a help or a hindrance to writing, which is another thing entirely.

JOANNA RUSS: Depends entirely on the writer. It would have scared me off entirely. Some people obviously learned a lot that way.

NORMAN SPINRAD: I have never met or read the work of an sf writer whose literary skill or seriousness of purpose or level of insight was anything but damaged by intimate contact with fanzines, fandom, and conventions. Any writer or would-be writer who aspires to anything beyond hard-core *genre* sf should shun deep involvement with fandom like the plague.

Of course fan activity has secured Hugos for the works of writers who otherwise might not have garnered such laurels.

HANK DAVIS: Everyone should have a hobby (FIJAGDH!). This business of publishing your sf in fanzines and getting useful criticism is a crock, though. A piece of sf appearing in a fanzine is rarely mentioned in subsequent letters of comment. When it is mentioned, the comments are seldom useful. The appearance of his story in a fanzine may do a writer's ego good, but he would have been better advised to send it to a prozine, no matter how lousy he thinks it is. Editors are strange critters and it may be bought. I didn't think that the first story I wrote was worth beans, but I sent it in and it was purchased and printed.

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS: Since I have never been to a convention, I know nothing of the benefits or hazards of such experiences. Really, I have never been a fan, nor am I now a fan. I have, however, seen some brilliant works of art come out of the fan field, with an appeal to the educated tastes of a very limited audience.

ANDREW J. OFFUTT: Benefit, obviously. A writing career can be 'hindered' by it (I have begged Ted White to lay off letters and give me more like SORCERESS OF QAR). It can also be furthered by it, in assorted ways. Some have obviously made valuable contacts/friendships via fandom (Lin Carter, Ted White, Terry Carr, *e.g.*). Others become better known, creating more of a market for their fiction (Alex Panshin, *e.g.*, and I think, me).

PIERS ANTHONY: That depends. I was a fan and a would-be writer for many years before being recognized as either, and I entered formal pro status and fan status simultaneously, so can't draw on experience. My thought on it however: if a person's primary objective is to be *involved*, fandom and its paraphernalia are good. If he wants to be a pro writer, he's better off *writing*, since fannish involvement may siphon off the energies that would otherwise go into it. I note that the majority of successful writers do not participate actively in fandom, and some explicitely shun it. Those who *do* participate are not, as a group, the best writers, though their work may be boosted even into award status by appreciative fans. Yet, if reasonable limits can be enforced, I would think some fannish participation should benefit the beginning writer; critical commentary on his work can mean a great deal, if he listens to it. (He certainly won't get it from the editor!)

DANNIE PLACHTA: Fandom can be a stimulating factor.

GREG BENFORD: Depends on the writer. It's helped me, but then I started as a fan (and still am one). I don't think of myself as a pro so it's hard to see how associating with fans could hurt one. Maybe I'm already so badly degraded I can't fathom it.

Most pros in my acquaintance are too sensitive about their work (but then, most writers are). There are obnoxious and rude fans but fans are the only feedback pros have; they should be listened to. Some fans know a lot more than the writers give them credit for, particularly on the technical side.

DAVID GERROLD: So much depends on the people involved that it's almost impossible to make any kind of general answer to this.

However, I would say, "Yes, in small doses." A writer should not insulate himself from the mainstream world, because ultimately that is his source material. But he should also keep the channels of communication open to his most receptive audience.

(I'd like to note that there is really only one major difference between a would-be writer and a pro. One has learned the disciplines that enable him to turn out readable and satisfying work--the other has not, or is still in the process of doing so.)

MICHAEL MOORCOCK: I think that it is probably a hindrance to most would-be writers. Sf conventions these days seem to share much with the sf magazines already mentioned. Their function seems to be to offer mutual consolation to what might be called the Old Guard in sf. As such, they serve a purpose---we all need consolation from time to time---but they offer very little in the way of stimulus to the writer seriously interested in tackling real problems. Fanzines vary. The most intelligent of them do give a writer an insight into a certain section of his readership which is worth listening to. Would-be writers, however, might be made cynical about their audience if they read most fanzines.

EMIL PETAJA: It all depends on the writer. I tend to be a loner, yet I have found attending fan gatherings and especially conventions to be very helpful. If nothing else one meets other writers with similar problems and motivations. Even when the object (as often) is simply social drinking, *etc.*, there is an en rapport and a boost in the mere knowing that SOMEBODY is reading your stuff.

S.F. writers are damned lucky to have readers take so much interest in them.

DEAN R. KOONTZ: I think that a new writer must be careful of fanzines. It is the tendency of many fanzine editors and reviewers to be vicious in their expostulations on a writer's works. A beginning writer, reading bad reviews, may feel so discouraged that his ability to produce is endangered. If, however, a writer can approach fanzines with a great deal of flexibility and confidence, he will be enriched by the criticism and the ideas exchanged. Not to mention the fact that he will often be highly entertained.

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What source or sources would you recommend to beginning writers as having been, in your experience, the most productive of ideas for Science Fiction stories?

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DEAN McLAUGHLIN: Anything will do, from *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN* and/or bits of information gathered here and there -- to elements already common (or uncommon) in SF. It's not so much the material you start with but what you finish with. For myself, I don't think I've ever cribbed from the same source twice except in the sense of doing sequels.

ANDRE NORTON: Charles Fort--books on Folklore, native magic, anthropology, archaeolgy, natural history, and travel.

ARTHUR PORGES: A wide and general background in good literature--for style; and intensive reading in science and fantasy -- for ideas. However, as in most creative enterprises, serendipity plays a significant part; one often finds his best ideas while reading for pleasure.

KURT VONNEGUT, JR: I would recommend that the beginner associate himself with a large organization engaged in varied scientific research.

PIERRE VERSINS: Here is a great point. Through extensive studies of the field, I feel I've discovered who are the near relatives of science fiction writers and readers, and this, I fear, will send some people jumping high: I'm sure that the mind of a science fiction writer is by no means different from the mind of an astrologer, a magus, a sorcerer, in one sentence those who seek knowledge outside of 'mainstream' science. Example: you can't discard Charles Fort's books as one of the most powerful source of ideas in science fiction; but Charles Fort was not different from lots of men who, before him, were finding flaws in our knowledge and trying to stop up the gaps, like the medieval authors of some *Imago Mundi*, or like Restif de La Bretonne in *Philosophie de Monsieur-Nicolas*, or..., or.... Nonetheless, there is sometimes a difference between those men and present writers of science fiction (besides the fact that writers of science fiction write *fiction*--but at times they write non-fiction, too, and may well be put in the class of Fort and the like, you see? Heard writing on flying saucers.) The difference is--and not always --that science fiction authors use logic instead of analogy, analogy being the mental instrument of magic, sorcery, astrology, *etc.*

JOHN BRUNNER: Other people's stories--picking up ends they overlooked. The newspapers. Textbooks of social and psychological theory. Mainstream novels. Handbooks for laymen in all scientific disciplines from archeology through zoology. One's own reject file. Casual conversation with friends or acquaintances. Quotations which would make good titles if a story were hooked on. (Sorry -- I'm one of these people with more ideas than they can handle. I have over 100 items in the card-index box where I keep plot germs.)

RAY BRADBURY: Some poetry, like a good medicine, should be read every day of one's life. The metaphor of the poem, compacted, can open out into the larger metaphor of the short story, given a will and a ready and perceptive imagination. Essays, also, provide good seed-bed material. Catholicity in taste, a total approach to life and all the arts is certainly necessary.

JEFF SUTTON: Science itself. My first four books of science fiction extrapolated present systems and vehicles into their near-future use. For example, BOMBS IN ORBIT and SPACEHIVE dealt with future uses of vehicles which since have come under study; in fact, under R and D. I pick up many ideas from such magazines as *SPACE/AERONAUTICS*, extrapolating such ideas into what seems their logical uses.

GROFF CONKLIN: SCIENCE and *one's own head!*

RICHARD WILSON: H.G. Wells. Gernsback's *WONDER STORIES*, in that it taught me to consider the variety of plots considered publishable. Gabfests with other s-f fans. Odd bits in a newspaper story or in the science (or medicine, or education, or even business) section of a news magazine. Lying under a tree in summer, face up to the universe, and wondering what's out there.

DANIEL F. GALOUYE: The everyday world. For myself, scouring scientific journals has from time to time provided authentic technical background and, admittedly, an occasional story idea. But commonplace things have a way of suddenly thrusting themselves forward as 'sleepers' insofar as plot material is concerned. For instance, the appearance of a blind person being led about by a Seeing-eye dog is likely (as it once did to me) to suggest the possibility of induced telepathic empathy between man and dog which allows the sightless person to actually *see* through the trained dog's eyes.

DAMON KNIGHT: Sources are not important. What you have to learn is the peculiar attitude of mind that keeps you ready for ideas and able to manipulate them when you get them; then you find them everywhere.

JAMES E. GUNN: Speculative articles of all kinds--in newspapers, magazines, books, and elsewhere have been the major source of ideas for me. *TIME* magazine has been particularly fruitful. In the beginning the work of a science fiction writer -- or any writer -- is usually derivative; many stories are reworkings of old themes or variations on old themes. An early source then, is and probably has to be the science fiction magazines themselves.

ALLEN KIM LANG: *1)* Clever thinking being done in my professional (*i.e.*, breadearning) field all unbeknownst to those not banking blood and culturing throat swabs; *2) SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, NATURE* (the bloke, not the Yank), *etc.*; *3)* Conversations with otherwise-literate, but non-s-f-reading people over beer.

FRED SABERHAGEN: Ideas on the deep level must come out of the writer's own mind. For new things and 'odd' things in science, one good source is the magazine *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*.

JERRY SOHL: A thorough reading of all that he can get his hands on in the field is the most provocative thing, I have found, particularly if the writer does not, in the reader's opinion, make his point well. I could do better is the best thing a beginner could say to himself. Then, having the challenge, he can try to do better. Some do, as the new lists show each year.

THEODORE STURGEON: For the Science part, there's no better source than Science. For the rest, there's no better source than Fiction. The best sf writers are invariably widely read in many fields, in and out of science.

CHARLES DE VET: Introspection.

POUL ANDERSON: Current science (alas, much neglected these days!), as found in books and in journals like *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, SCIENCE, NATURE, etc.* Current events to some extent--of some passing phenomenon. History, anthropology, economics, *etc.*, extremely valuable. 'Mainstream' literature, not so much the usually shoddy modern product as the great works of the past. Though often silly in themselves, polemics of any kind can be very suggestive of sf-type situations.

P. SCHUYLER MILLER: *1)* Reading everything. *2)* Reading science fiction. *3)* Reading science. The general journals such as *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN* may be all you need, but if you find an interest in some particular field of science (as I have in archeology), then you should dig deeper. Look at the depth of understanding in Poul Anderson's recent appraisal of the possibilities of life on other worlds. I haven't seen a professional astronomer or biologist who came close to him in looking at the whole problem.

MARK CLIFTON: Science fiction stories which didn't do it the way I would have done it, or failed to develop the real potential that was there. Also apply against any basic idea the seven forms of thought I outlined in the frontispiece of EIGHT KEYS TO EDEN.

H. BEAM PIPER: Now, I won't attempt to answer this. Ideas for science fiction stories like ideas for anything else, are where you find them, usually in the most unlikely places. The only reliable source is a mind which asks itself questions like, "What would happen if--?" or, "Now what would this develop into, in a few centuries?" or, "How could so-and-so happen?" Anything at all, can trigger such a question, in your mind if not in mine.

WILSON TUCKER: First, a book designed for mystery writers: MYSTERY FICTION, THEORY AND TECHNIQUE by Marie Rodell (Duell, Sloan, 1943). It teaches the halfwit to plot and narrate, and science yarns can be superimposed on the suspense framework. Next, any and all issues of the *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*. Next, any and all natural history books by Willy Ley. After that, any serious work on a writer's favorite field: Mine is archeology, and I've used Ceram and Kramer often. The magazine *SKY & TELESCOPE* is both an idea springboard and a research tool. Finally, if you can resist the urge to copy, almost any 'scientific romance' written by H.G. Wells.

ISAAC ASIMOV: Other science fiction stories. Before anyone can hope to write good science fiction -- he must read good science fiction -- and a lot of it.

BRIAN ALDISS: Speaking from personal experience, as if one can profitably do anything else, I get most of my ideas from current fiction (non sf) and current biographies, travel, Johnson's *LIVES OF THE POETS*--anything, anywhere. These can all be digested into sf. Of course I also subscribe to and enjoy scientific journals, but unless you blow life into fact, you don't have fiction at all.

J. FRANCIS McCOMAS: The world and the people around them.

ALAN E. NOURSE: Science, philosophy, history--you name it. I've never read anything, nor talked seriously with anybody who hasn't been productive of ideas for science fiction stories. The problem isn't to dig up ideas, it's to cull the surplus. I think any sf writer will say much the same.

ROBERT BLOCH: The work of other writers. Almost all beginners are unconscious plagiarists, in that they admire certain styles, certain themes. By modelling their own work on that of other, accepted writers, they get a start; gradually, if they persevere, an individual style develops, and an individual outlook--from which ideas emanate.

FREDERIK POHL: Scientific books and periodicals, particularly magazines like *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN* and books like those by Gamow, Weiner, Hoyle and Loren Eiseley. Also books on history and particularly theoretical studies in history, like those by Herbert J. Muller.

PHILIP K. DICK: Journals which deal in the most advanced research of clinical pyschology, especially the work of the European existenial analysis school. C.G.Jung. Oriential writings such as those on Zen Buddhism, Taoism, *etc.* Really authoritative--as compared with popularizations--historical works (*e.g.*THE BRUTAL FRIENDSHIP). Medieval works, especially those dealing with crafts, such as glass blowing--and science, alchemy, religion, *etc.* Greek philosophy, Roman literature of every sort. Persian religious texts. Renaissance studies on the theory of art. German dramatic writings of the Romantic Period.

E. E. 'DOC' SMITH: Apply the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair and THINK. NEW ideas have *got* to come out of a writer's own head--by definition, they do not pre-exist.

ROBERT F. YOUNG: What this question boils down to is "Where do you get your ideas?". It is a question which I dread above all others, because I have never been able to answer it to anyone's satisfaction, including my own. It seems to me that getting ideas is a facility that has to be developed, the same as any other facility has to be developed. As a rule, I think that you will find that the more ideas you think of, the more ideas you will be able to think of. There are no sources that I know of, although I think it helps to read literary fare that has nothing to do with s-f -- literary fare that no one else would think of reading. Granted, you should read s-f also; but to read s-f and nothing else would lead to what Stendhal called 'painting pictures of pictures'.

EDMOND HAMILTON: I can do no better than to repeat the advice that A. Merritt gave to me when I was a new, young writer... "Read scientific works and let your imagination play around the facts you read."

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL: Ideas come when an active imagination is coupled to a good memory. The two are inseparable; one's no use without the other. I don't believe those faculties can be acquired. Either you've got 'em or you haven't and that's all there is to it.

HORACE GOLD: The single greatest idea well in s-f and fantasy is other s-f and fantasy stories. The more you read, the more ideas you'll get. But writers aren't doing their science homework as they used to, when s-f predicted such current news as anti-matter, radar, tranquilizers, not to mention rocketry, at a distance of two and three decades. One of the best sources I can recommend is *INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH* magazine, Beverly Shores, Ind. It's edited by Neil P. Ruzic, a former s-f writer. Tell him I sent you. With a magazine like *I.R.* around, there just is no excuse for a poor science background.

HAL CLEMENT: Looking for the word 'obvious' in scientific articles, and trying to picture what things would be like if the 'obvious' weren't so.

ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES: History, psychology, all the 'humanities', a general course in science sufficient to avoid absurd and elementary errors, and such special fields which are congenial to the individual, are certain requisites. It's difficult to think of anything which might not be productive--but universality is certainly important. Writing science fiction, ideally speaking, should engage the whole person, and not just one section of the person; and the person should be whole, not lopsided. The beginning writer should sample all possible types of what is considered the best 'literature', then dwell most deeply on what seems most congenial -- outside of science fiction. Acquaintance with the best of science fiction is also needed, as well as cautionary acquaintance with the worst junk.

ANTHONY BOUCHER: The inexhaustible works of Olaf Stapledon.

KATE WILHELM: Old science fiction stories; anthologies; the Bible; old masters; newspapers; anything and everything in print. A science fiction writer can get his ideas from the *Farmer's Almanac* if that happens to be his only source of reading material at any given time.

REGINALD BRETNOR: Most important today is the source I would recommend *against*. The beginning writer should begin by smashing his TV. 99 44/100 per cent of the stuff on it is garbage -- and don't kid yourself with this 'it's just entertainment' guff. The writer gets out of himself just what his parents, his teachers, his environment and associates, and he himself--just what all of these have poured into him. Pour garbage into a blender and you'll get blended garbage out...And the 'occasional good program' justifies nothing. We used to hear the same thing about commercial radio -- and what does the 'serious literature' of commercial radio consist of now? Half a dozen volumes of mediocre plays by screwy leftists experimenting with strange noises. The best thing any beginning writer can do is read: read the great periods of the language -- the Elizabethans, the writers of the 17th Century especially, perhaps the Middle Scots poets because of the rough wonder of their tongue; read Jane Austin and the Brontës, read Smollett and Sterne; read great storytellers -- Conan Doyle, Conrad, Kipling, Maugham; read all people who knew when *not* to put words in, Voltaire especially. Read what you feel is good, not what a mess of newspaper critics tell you is good. If you feel that Henry Miller writes filthy drivel--which he does--don't let anyone tell you otherwise. And remember that a strong story, a beautifully written story, an effective story is what it is no matter where it may appear: academic quarterly, pulp magazine, or fanzine. Above all, don't model yourself on *anyone*. Don't copy Saroyan or Heinlein, Dickens or Faulkner. Read as much as you can; then do the best you can to be yourself. I have discussed literary sources. There is no need to discuss 'idea' material. Just walk into the public library.

GEORGE O. SMITH: Mostly *ASTOUNDING*. Whoops! I mean *ANALOG*, with *GALAXY* second.

JAMES BLISH: I am a purist; I like writers who keep up with the scientific journals and know how to use them. These give you background ideas. As for fictional ideas--that is, ideas for the foreground of the story--there is no substitute for close observation or people watching. And I don't just mean sitting on the front stoop and watching them go by, although that can be fun; I mean close, intense, snoopy, eye, ear, nose, throat and heart observation. Science-fiction is fiction, and there are no sources of ideas for it that doesn't apply to all forms of fiction. Its uniqueness lies almost entirely in the background ideas, and keeping up with the sciences seems to me to be essential for that.

LESTER DEL REY: Science fiction magazines first -- it takes a heck of a lot of reading in any field to serve as a background for writing. Second, the current science magazines. The s-f writer who doesn't keep up with honest science is crippled -- like a one-legged skier. Above all, avoid like plague any college literary courses or 'little' magazine writing, since the worst slant on s-f writing comes from such sources.

THEODORE L. THOMAS: There is no particular source. A reasonably alert mind and a recognition of what constitutes a valid story idea are needed.

MACK REYNOLDS: Since my own particular interest is political economy and my best received stories deal with the social sciences, I can comment intelligently only along this particular line. However, I believe that the world is currently going through the most revolutionary period in history, and the writer who is not up on the subject is inadequately prepared. I would strongly suggest that the ambitious tyro science fiction writer study everything from anarchism to technocracy and to study these things from their sources. That is, if he wishes to obtain a clear picture of Socialism and Communism, go to Marx and Engels, and in this country Daniel DeLeon, rather than to the propaganda of either the West or the Soviets.

JACK WILLIAMSON: First, the science fiction magazines; second, science itself--books, lectures, articles, especially such magazines as *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*.

WILLIAM TEMPLE: The only source is imagination. An imaginative mind can create an idea from almost any incident of everyday life. Take the dreary business of commuting, *e.g.*, Once my train ran into a station I'd thought it had already passed. Result: An *AMAZING* yarn about a man who kept slipping cogs in time. Another day, I couldn't recall my train passing a certain station; it was as though a whole section of the line had been removed. Result: A 4th-dimensional yarn in *THRILLING WONDER*. But the initial idea is only the seed. It needs fertile soil to be planted in. To grow a plausible plot, s-f wise, you must have some store of knowledge concerning 4th-dimensional geometry, physics, *etc.* But general reading in popular (at least) science, which provides this, seldom provides the actual initial seed. Not to me, anyhow.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE: All general scientific journals (*e.g. SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*).

TERRY CARR: Other science fiction stories. Bullsessions with fans and/or pros. (My story *Stanley Toothbrush*---published under the penname Carl Brandon--grew out of a conversation with Poul Anderson and Gordy Dickson.) Science articles. In my own case, most of my ideas come from other sf stories--I have often been reading a story, decided I saw a fine twist coming, and found that the author had a different idea. So I wrote my own idea, and had a different story entirely.

AVRAM DAVIDSON: Extensive and indiscriminate reading has been, in my opinion, in my case, to begin with, the chief source--but I've gotten ideas from newspapers, conversation indulged in or overheard, and not infrequently from the Universal Aether. I would discourage trying to take stories, SF stories, already written, and turning them inside out or on their heads -- although certain successful (commercially speaking) SF writers have done this. But it requires a very special talent and is always a substitute for genuine creativity and can become a dead end. Conversations on possible stories with other writers--conversations with other writers, to clarify --can be productive, if you don't wind up arguing about who gets to write the stories thus engendered.

]*The 1969 Entries*[

KEITH LAUMER: Voracious reading, of all kinds, plus as much living as possible. But in the end the ideas come, not from new paraphenalia, but from the perception of relationships, real and potential.

HARRY HARRISON: All around you. Read *NEW SCIENTIST* (weekly, England), *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*, all the new and popular books on science as fast as they are published, and whatever technical scientific books and journals he is capable of understanding. The material is all there. It just needs to be fed into the hopper of the brain and be processed.

ANDREW J. OFFUTT: *Just reading.* Reading history, and about sex (Freud and Havelock Ellis, *etc.*) and religion, history of, is valuable to *any* writer.

Reading sf, too. I read 5 anthologies one weekend, for instance, and a book about Edgar Cayce. From the Caycee book came an *IF* novelet that wound up in Ace's WORLD'S BEST anthology. From Clarke's 'White Hart' stories came the germ for *The Defendant Earth*, (*IF* 2/69), although it

doesn't have a damn thing to do with any of Clarke's stories. Any 'writer' is a Jackass if he doesn't *read* the encyclopedia, too.

PIERS ANTHONY: People are forever asking me, as they do all writers, "Where do you get all your weird notions?" and I'm forever at a loss to reply. I used to list all my story ideas, but when the numbered summaries passed 200 and I found myself way backlogged on unsummarized ones, I quit. I am blessed with imagination, if you want it straight; as a child I conjured fearsome monsters to flee from (and this was no voluntary or fun thing), while as an adult I write fiction. But I realize this isn't much help to the would-be writer who is short of notions. And of course the ideas do originate from somewhere. So, stimulated by this question, I delved into a score of my successful stories (*i.e.*, those published, sold, or hot prospects), pondered each one, and tabulated the results. What I sought was not so much the basic content of the story, but the origin of the original germ -- the thing that actually crystallized into a going piece of fiction. In some cases the story hardly resembled that focal point. This, I feel, is the only objective way to come at the truth. Results: Five categories, several of which require further explanation.

A) Nonfiction research: 5 stories suggested by my various delvings into dentistry, astronomy and paleontology (also fertile fields for novels).

B) Collaborations: 3 original stories done unsuccessfully by other writers, that I reworked and sold, or passed on for further rework. Obviously I can't take credit for the original notions--but possibly novice writers can benefit from collaboration similarly. Sometimes one writer is better at correcting his own, so why not?

C) Personal experience: Four stories suggested by things I was involved in.

D) Random notions: 4 stories whose origin I can't quite pin down or classify.

E) Miscellaneous: 4 stories.

A and *B* can stand, but the others still aren't particularly helpful. So -- some detail on them. One personal experience story arose from my frustration at the way things seemed to change, and everyone else knew about it except me. Such as the Unicorn, a real enough animal, that somehow became mythological when I grew older--and everyone else had the gall to insist that it had always *had* been a myth, despite the truth. So I made it into a story, and it became my very first sale. I'd call this turning a liability into an asset; if I'm not a Secret Master who can blithely alter reality, at least I can make a little money off that change. Another personal experience involved the death of one of our parakeets; I put a science fiction framework around it and sold it, though I'd gladly renounce that sale if I could have the bird back. Another was the expensive dental work done on me; again converting a liability into an asset, I drew on the experience for SF, and the success of that led to a whole series of dental stories. Another was drawn from my hitch in the U.S. Army. Just about any experience can be turned to fictive use, if the right approach is taken.

The four random notions [*D*] just came to me, and I jotted them down while they were hot. I always keep a pencil and a bit of paper on my person for such emergencies, and it does pay off. One was about human beings being milked like cows, another was based on a dream, another on a close-fitting fabric I imagined and the last on an extreme sexual thought. Windfall notions, really, available to anyone willing to look stupid by stopping on the street and scribbling down the gist when it hits him.

Of the Miscellaneous [*E*] ideas, one occurred to me while I was reading a published SF story. There was a wall in a city, and I anticipated the ending, and when the story didn't turn out that way I wrote it up myself and sold it to the same magazine--my story about a wall in a city. Another came to me while I was correcting a high school student's spelling exercise. I have a long history of bad spelling myself, and that was one of the roughest things about being an English Teacher. The students had to use this word in a sentence, and this student had something about a fog in his sentence. My mind wandered, and soon I had a SF story about a horrendous fog. I titled it *Phog* and it was published in due course. Another stemmed from my fascination with some accelerated-motion cloud photography I once saw; I shaped a tiny story and punchline around it. And the last was based on a riddle I remembered from childhood: How do you slice a cake fairly? That became a 14,000 word cover story for *ANALOG*.

What sources do I recommend for beginning writers, then? No source; only a frame of mind, an openness that realizes the potential in every experience for a new story, be it ever so prosaic as a spelling paper, a piece of cake or a toothache.

DANNIE PLACHTA: If a writer has to actively seek story ideas, he shouldn't be writing SF.

ANNE McCAFFREY: A well-read mind, a knowledge of touch-typing, and a determination to succeed IN SPITE of everything.

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS: Indeed, all of what we call 'science' today I can but regard as variations on an ancient theme. Bookstore salesmen and my agent both tell me there is a tremendous increase, a really high surge, of interest in the field that may be called the 'occult'. This is a very general term which could be considered to include s-f as one of its minor departments. If this is offensive, I am sorry, but I am no worshipper at the shire of science and in the main I consider its enormous advances to be grotesque and out-of-balance warpings of the human soul, for which our children may pay a very stiff price. The 'occult' field is at least as old as the human race. No doubt it has also produced its warpings.

The most effective source for producing ideas for stories? This one I can answer. A fertile brain! If you don't have this, please be so kind as to go away. However, since the lack of it is also the lack of the mental equipment needed to notice its absence, no one who lacks it ever really goes away. Instead, his voice is likely to become the loudest in the council.

And, as I said in my article on writing, of all and everything, love is the foremost. In the long run, however, both love and wisdom are needed. How do you get wisdom? By getting hit on the head often enough that you begin to smarten up some!

HANK DAVIS: Read great quantities of sf. Everytime you get an idea (and they will start coming) write it down. Try to write stories, and more ideas will come. They will start coming while you are in the middle of another story. The idea will seem infinitely more brilliant than the one behind the story that you are writing now. Ignore this; your mind is trying to get out of working, because ideas come as naturally as athlete's foot but writing is work. IF you can't get an idea, pick someone else's story and see what you can do with the same notion. This is not plagiarism. Compare William Tenn's *Alexander the Bait* with Heinlein's *The Man Who Sold the Moon.* Compare the movie *2001* with Murray Leinster's THE BLACK GALAXY, both of which start from the same idea.

NORMAN SPINRAD: If you have to look for sources outside your own mind to cop ideas for stories from, you better forget writing and take up bricklaying.

JOANNA RUSS: One's own head. Anything. Everything. 'Ideas' are not identical with notions or gimmicks (*i.e.*, the tit-bits one finds in *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*). Real ideas come from one's own life, and from one's reading. Stories built only around technical gimmicks usually don't last, and aren't meant to. Every s.f. writer has an individual style and concerns as any other kind of writer. I would say a beginning writer should read lots of s.f. It would help if he (or she) would read good literature. Too many who could benefit from it don't. The more the merrier. Soup labels, *etc.*

EMIL PETAJA: Factual science is the best for the hard-core science fiction writer. Bone up on the latest knowledge and the way it's going. For myself personally (more on the adventure-fantasy fringe) I find mythologies of various countries, archeology, social customs, *etc.* of great help and fascination. It seems that the very beginnings of Man point out where he is going--and it must surely be like that elsewhere in the universe. I sometimes visualize a great cosmic mythos which includes all manner of intelligence. God-legend and hero-legend is a fine source.

DAVID GERROLD: Basically, this question is the same as asking "Where do you get your ideas?"

My answer to that is (and always has been) it's not the idea that counts (there are no new ideas). It's what you do with it after you've got it.

You can't write science fiction unless you read science fiction--but it might be a nice idea to keep up with a good daily newspaper.

GREG BENFORD: *SCIENCE, SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, NEW SCIENTIST* for the latest in technical and scientific innovation. Books on archeology, natural wildlife and history for 'soft' ideas. Conversations with knowledgable people in their own fields is usually worth much more than a browse through the library, though.

DEAN R. KOONTZ: The Christian mythology has offered me a great number of story ideas, though I am agnostic myself. *A Darkness in My Soul, In the Shield, Where the Beast Runs,* (the novel FEAR THAT MAN, which was constructed from the last two stories mentioned) were all products of thinking about Christian mythology. Or, expanding that, I would say any mythology would be a rich source of ideas.

A bookstore with fifteen or twenty thousand paperbacks on hand makes a fine source of ideas. An hour spent browsing will almost always lead to something. I found Marshall McLuhan's THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE while browsing in a bookstore and started writing THE FALL OF THE DREAM MACHINE the very next day. Also, while perusing a book on music and sound, I got the idea for THE DARK SYMPHONY which eventually proved to be my best sf to date.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK: One's own psyche.

LEO P. KELLEY: Life.

PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER: Everything.

LARRY NIVEN: *1) SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN* magazine, and other science journals. Read the article whose *subject* is interesting, and re-read until you can visualize what's happening. *2)* Cultivate friendship with Hal Clement and Poul Anderson and, if you are a pretty girl, Larry Niven and Isaac Asimov. Get their phone numbers. This is great for ideas *and* research.

T. L. SHERRED: No one that I know of. Either you like the stuff, can visualize the way things would be if they were different, or you don't. No source, no root material, no writers, no references. Either you is or you ain't.

JOHN JAKES: The daily newspaper. Actually, there are simply just too many to mention, but one which I like to mention (because it shocks a few of my less Establishment-oriented friends) is *THE WALL ST. JOURNAL*, perhaps the best-written journal of our culture today, and jampacked with stuff on new technology.

ALEXEI PANSHIN: I know of no writer who depends on a source for his ideas.

H. KEN BULMER: After you've read all the scientific journals and a lot of sf and seen a lot of films and done what you can about formal scientific education and read all the classic authors; then take your head out of the sand and go look at real life.

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Do you feel that a beginning Science Fiction writer should concentrate on short stories as opposed to novels--or vice versa? Why?

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JOE HENSLEY: I don't think it makes a particle of difference. I consider novels easier to write than short stories, but this is a personal thing.

LEIGH BRACKETT: Depends on the writer and the idea he has. Some writers--like myself--are not happy in a short length. Others cannot write a novel to save them, but are brilliant in four or five thousand words. I'd say this was up to the individual.

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL: Given that he knows the technique, a writer should develop any plot to its natural length. Some writers have an aptitude for concocting short-story plots, others for novel length ones. Some can do both. The rule is not to force the issue one way or the other, *i.e.*, by cutting to shortness or padding to length.

AUGUST DERLETH: An individual matter. Form and length are determined by subject matter, and only any given author can decide for himself whether he ought to write short or long fiction. A good short story is harder to write than a good novel.

ROBERT SILVERBERG: Short stories, by all means. Many amateurs can find a 3,000-word opening for themselves in a magazine, build their own confidence and technical skills, and then go on to write novels. Beginning with novel-writing is putting too much demand on a beginner's ability, and puts him in immediate competition with every top-flight pro.

TED WHITE: To each his own. My first two published stories were shorts -- one of them far too short. It embarrasses me now to see how much was left out. Then came a novel, and now long shorts and novelettes. Terry Carr started out with a short novel. I think that stories over 7000 words and under 30,000 are the easiest and most relaxed to write. Shorter ones require a great deal of discipline and skill; longer ones encourage meandering. But really each story will have its own length, and after you've conceived its basic outline it's folly to attempt to set it to any rigid word-length.

JAMES H. SCHMITZ: Depends on his reasons for writing. If he's doing it primarily to get sales, he should practice the short form. If he's writing for enjoyment, his own and that of his friends, and has a sufficient interest span, the novel gives him a better opportunity to bring ideas, characters and background to life, although the finished product probably will be more difficult to sell.

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY: It depends on the writer. I like writing novels because my forte is atmosphere and character, and in a short story I can't develop them properly. But queerly enough, I think the short story is the ideal medium for science fiction, which is fiction of ideas. What I write, of course, is really adventure fantasy with a few scientific trimmings, not S.F. This is true of all but a handful of the writers around.

ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES: Any beginning writer (unless he is a 'natural genius-type writer', and these are rare) would do best to concentrate on short stories for awhile in order to learn structure, brevity, *etc.* What has been most sadly lacking is the discipline of learning craftsmanship (which should not become an end in itself, but is needed nonetheless). Unfortunately, far too many writers find that they can sell stories with little or no such discipline; and repeated sales to style-deaf editors are no help. In writing, you can 'earn while you learn' true, but there's the danger of deciding that you do not have to learn because the earnings look so good--for a time.

MACK REYNOLDS: I concentrated on short stories -- and shouldn't have. I must have published a hundred, before trying longer lengths. Shorts seem to be easier. They aren't. The amount of effort put into writing ten one thousand word short-shorts, is considerably more than that put into one ten thousand worder.

Besides that, if you don't have anything to say, beyond a cute gag, it is extremely difficult to say it in a short. I wish I had found this out sooner. It took me damn near ten years.

LESTER DEL REY: Let him do what he can do best, to his own mind: However, if he wants to sell as quickly as possible, the short story is obviously in most need by the magazines. The story of 3000 to 5000 words is always a good bet, since this is long enough to be a real story but short enough to be not too attractive to most established writers.

HORACE GOLD: Why? For the same reason that composers should do sonatas and fugues before trying to write a symphony--you have to learn how to orchestrate and the only way to learn is by doing it. By degrees. You can't expect to know how all at once. This holds true for most, not all, of us. There is the occasional hotshot who rings the bell with the very first thing he writes, be it play or novel, and some even manage to repeat. But they're so far in the minority that they are statistically negligible.

TERRY CARR: Short stories, definitely. The competition in the longer lengths is virtually prohibitive -- the established, accomplished writers are naturally writing the longer lengths, both because editors like names on the cover and because established pros don't like to throw away an idea on 5,000 words when they can write 15,000 or more around it. (As it happened, my second sale in the sf field was a short novel to Ace, but I consider this atypical and count myself as plain lucky.

E.E. "DOC" SMITH: That depends entirely on the writer--his attitude, his knowledge, and what he wants to say. I started with a 100,000-word novel, but I wouldn't recommend that kind of a start for everyone. Consider Weinbaum, who was at his terrific best in the short story.

REGINALD BRETNOR: Concentrate on short stories. Unless you are one in a million you'll need the discipline. The novel too often uses its length to cover up poor writing and other defects.

JAMES BLISH: Short stories. The beginning writer seldom has enough control to give a 60,000-word piece a coherent structure and a sense of movement. The short story is the natural place to gain confidence and control. In addition, short stories keep your name before the public and prepare a better reception for a first novel than it is likely to get if it comes in cold. In the long run, though, the novel becomes a better proposition in terms of money, and more satisfying to write. (Also, you can pat them; magazines decay.)

FRITZ LEIBER: The second sf I ever sold to a magazine was GATHER DARKNESS! Yet a short story involves less investment of time, obviously. Though I've known perfectionist would-be writers waste months on one short story. Yet when the writing bug hits some talented people they want to put everything they know and feel into one yarn -- so the novel's right for them. On the whole, SHORT STORIES, simply on the same basis that if a new driver asked me, "Should I take a 20 mile trip or a 2,000 mile one?"

MARTIN GREENBERG: I have no feelings on this...short stories are much more difficult to write but the novel requires special handling and there are some writers who will just never become novelists, tho they may be fine short story writers.

HARLAN ELLISON: Short stories by all means. Learn to walk before you run. Common sense dictates this.

KATHERINE MacLEAN: It depends on who's supporting you and how much ego you have in reserve. Novels sell well now, bring in more money and egoboo. BUT--with the usual small or non-existent amount of money in the bank and the usual inferiority complex alternating with moments of confidence, few people can stand the suspense and tremendous investment of time, confidence, backache weight of paper and expense of typewriter ribbons, sceptism of landlords waiting to be paid, *etc.* Most people can't stand the course.

BRIAN ALDISS: Oh, yes. For one thing, it's so much easier to write a short story than a novel. When you begin, 3000 words can seem an intolerable length. I remember when I first wrote a 6000-word story I was exhausted, and thought, "If they don't buy this, I'm sticking to the short story!" From short stories you get the idea of planning, and from them you should get interested in the particular problems of the novel, the development of character, the exploration of environment, and so on. Even for a 'born novelist', if there is such a thing (does one have 'born engineers'?) this should be so; a short teaches one to make points concisely.

ALLEN KIM LANG: Short stories: Do as I do, that's why.

JERRY SOHL: Novels are easier for me. Actually they are less work than short stories, for the short form is much more disciplined. But I think it depends on the writer; the novel looks difficult from a distance.

FRED SABERHAGEN: A short story is finished with less investment of time and effort, so less is lost if it's a dead end. Editorial decision and comment comes back faster on a short story. But if you really want to write a novel, by all means get at it.

WILSON TUCKER: No rule should be imposed. The beginner should try both and then concentrate on whichever serves him best, whichever sells more readily, with good results. Generally speaking, the short story takes far less time but the field is more crowded, competitive; the novel may take a year or two: The reward is greater if it clicks, the failure worse if it does not. Some writers will discover that they simply cannot write one, or the other.

JOHN CHRISTOPHER: Short stories. The short story is in no way inferior to the novel as a form, but it is undeniably less exhausting. No one should mind getting a 3,000 word story back with a rejection slip. An 80,000 word book, which may have taken months to write, is a different thing. And in the process of writing bad short stories, the young writer can be learning *how* to write: dialogue, narrative style, the means of organizing the simpler episodic plot of the short story.

J. FRANCIS McCOMAS: This is like asking if a beginning medical student should concentrate on ophthalmology or urology. It's all determined by talent and inclination.

CHARLES DE VET: Learn the trade with short stories. Vast time and effort spent on unsuccessful novels tends to discourage a beginner.

ISAAC ASIMOV: Of course, concentrate on short stories. One's first stories are training, apprenticeship, schooling, whatever you wish; and it's foolish to invest the time and effort necessary for a novel. After you have learned to write fairly well in the hard school of the short story (and it *is* a hard school) there will be time enough for a more ambitious effort.

GORDON R. DICKSON: Though this, again, is an individual matter--I think I would recommend short stories first, for most beginning writers. The short story is a stricter form and the beginner, feeling his way, has less chance to go astray, without catching himself at it. The chance to learn by repetition is better than in the case of novels which take much more time to write per unit. The trick of successful writing is not to sell what you write, but to be able to figure out what you did wrong when the inevitable day comes when something you were sure of didn't sell --to anyone. The learning process in writing is unending and short stories are more conducive to it. But it's up to the individual--If a writer really wants to write novels, and is in no hurry to get to short stories, he shouldn't ever let himself be persuaded to do the shorts when his heart is elsewhere.

If you are considering the matter solely from the standpoint of necessary income, of course the answer is obvious. The beginning writer is foolish to gamble on the time-investment required for a novel, when he can spread his gamble in the same period of time over anywhere from half a dozen short stories on up.

PHILIP K. DICK: Short stories first, to master this easier form. Then, very slowly, work toward longer pieces, say up to 25,000 words. Then at last try a full-size (*i.e.*, 60,000 word) novel, based on the structure of some writer who is admired. I, for instance, based my first novels on the structure used by A.E. van Vogt. Later, when I was more sure of myself, I departed from this. Be sure, however, that you select a writer who is skilled in the novel form (for instance, don't select Ray Bradbury).

THEODORE STURGEON: I think a beginner can learn more about structure from short stories than from novels -- as long as he is a beginner. Then, I think he should study, and study *hard*, the very real structual difference between a novel and a short story, lest he fall into the error of thinking the former is only a longer version of the latter: It is NOT. Finally, he should learn that for most novelists, the short story becomes somewhere between difficult and impossible.

ALAN E. NOURSE: Short stories fool you because they're short and therefore apparently easy, and then you find out they aren't. Novels on the other hand, demand a hell of a lot of time and effort that beginning writers hate to kick in for fear the end result will be a mess. It often is ...but the end result of a short story is a whale of a lot more likely to be a mess because you can get away with ineptitudes in a novel length that just murders a possibly-good short story. I'd say the beginning author would do best picking the length of story he most delights in reading, whatever it may be, as his best bet....

FREDERIK POHL: As a practical matter, on short stories, because he is more likely to get short stories published than novels. However, it depends on the writer. Some writers simply cannot function well in less than novel length.

MARK CLIFTON: Short stories for several reasons. *1)* Less time is invested in what might be a poor idea. *2)* Better chance at selling. *3)* It costs a lot of money nowdays to publish a book and publishers are wary of investing in an unknown. Best way to build up a name is through shorts in the mags--then expand to novelets--and finally to novels.

P. SCHUYLER MILLER: On the surface, start with short stories. You are more likely to sell them. Each one is an experiment, and the more experimenting you do the faster you learn. On the other hand, if you will admit the distinction between 'novels' in the literary sense and 'book-length stories' in the pb and serial sense, you may well find it easier to write the long ones. For a beginner, I think it's important to find out what you can write, and write it, rather than spend years, waste energy, and develop ingrained frustration trying to do something you can't do--yet.

ALFRED BESTER: Short stories. For the simple reason that editors are reluctant to allocate too much space to an unknown whose name will not be a draw with the readers. I would suggest that a beginner *never* write a story longer than 3,000 words until he has published at least a half a dozen. If he could keep the lengths below 3,000 words so much the better.

DEAN McLAUGHLIN: For most, probably the short is best. Learn to walk before trying to run--especially a marathon! Nevertheless, a novel is probably easier to sell in the present market (magazines excluded) and adds more to a writer's personal *mana* than a whole bunch of shorts.

PIERRE VERSINS: Here again, the question seems unanswerable: It depends on who is the writer. Some will be at ease in the novel, and some in the short story. And it depends, too, on what you think is a novel and a short story. In most cases, the books labelled novels are merely short stories expanded (one short story dilated or several short stories bound together, the first being the most atrocious). In other cases, the argument of a short story could have been used instead to write a novel. Rare are the books which are really a novel or collection of short stories. I'd hate the idea of putting a beginning writer in the short story path when he'd be able to write novels, and *vice versa.* To say nothing of writers who aren't writers at all and will write against the whole world.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL: Yes -- because he has a better chance of a sale with a short; because he can get more practice in story-*telling* per month of effort, and because rewriting isn't so apalling an effort.

JEFF SUTTON: Novels. I never managed to publish a short story (and I tried!) until after I'd published seven full-length novels. The good short story requires high art. Characters and situations must be depicted with minimum words, yet depicted with punch. The novel is not so demanding. You can ramble and, within bounds, get away with it.

JOHN BRUNNER: Yes: Start with the short ones. They hurt less when they get bounced. Also, anyone seriously intending to live by writing--unless he has congenital logorrhea like, say, Frederik Faust/Max Brand -- has to realize that time equals care equals effort equals a chance to avoid making the same mistake twice. Also, the best aspect of SF's technical qualities that I know is the way the finest writers have carried through, from their early short stories, attention to detail in their longer work.

DANIEL F. GALOUYE: Again, this is a matter of personal preference and specific talent. Bradbury, Sheckley, Leiber, seem perfectly at home with shorts in which they can generate terrific impact. Heinlein, Clarke, Pohl, on the other hand, appear to appreciate more elbow room. For the beginning writer, however, there is this pertinent consideration: Shorts offer an economical, less time-consuming means of becoming familiar with the tools of the trade. Unless a beginner's talent lies compellingly in the direction of book-length work, tooth cutting on less ambitious projects is desirable.

ARTHUR PORGES: This is a matter of aptitude and temperament. I've never had either the 'right' idea for a novel, or the patience to develop one even if it should occur to me. One practical point from my own sad experience. If you haven't written a novel, it's almost impossible to get even your best stories out in book form.

TED CARNELL: Short stories around 5,000 words (this eliminates the itzy-bitzy idea with the O'-Henry ending and requires some guts in it to keep it going). Thereafter spreading to 10,000 words until the art is mastered, and so on. If there is a market for 25,000 to 30,000 words, that's the place to try out the short novel, both from a writing and plot viewpoint. Very few novelists I know ever started with a successful novel and even their early novels have shown the signs of immaturity in plot formation -- and especially *endings*, the greatest weakness in s-f novels today.

ROGER ZELAZNY: Yes to the first. If a short story is bad it's a lot less wasted time than if a novel is bad. You can write a lot of short stories in the space of time it takes to compose a novel, and each short story is a separate educational experience. It might be argued that you're permitted more mistakes in a novel, but the argument might be effectively countered by the reply that if you make one bad mistake in a short story you know it, because the story won't sell--whereas, if you write one semi-good novel, and succeed in selling it, you have logged the sale of your strong points, and your weaknesses remain uncorrected.

RICHARD WILSON: Yes. He'll find out much more quickly if he has talent. Also, a sale here and there does much to keep inspiration alive. Meanwhile the author will be improving his writing and learning little trade tricks, such as using the tab key for paragraphing. My index cards show that I wrote 40 short pieces before I finished a salable novel; and all but three of the 40 shorts sold.

]*The 1969 Entries*[

LEO P. KELLEY: A beginning science fiction writer should work in the form most comfortable for him, be it short stories or novels or vocelettes or novellas or short-shorts. But as he grows as a writer he should experiment with forms in which he may not be so comfortable at first. It stretches his talent. And if he is at all money-motivated, he should concern himself with the market for the various types of fiction and write for the portion of the market that's, at any given time, healthiest.

ALEXEI PANSHIN: It might be a good idea for a beginning writer to experiment with stories at a variety of lengths, simply to learn what he can do.

There is at present a more open market for novels than short stories and a beginning writer probably has a better chance of placing a first novel than an equivalent wordage in shorts.

KEITH LAUMER: It depends entirely on the individual. Some ideas are novel ideas; if the beginner is possessed of (and by) such an idea, he should write it. Vigor compensates for lack of finesse. If the writer has no powerful impulse to write a particular thing, he should try another trade.

ANNE McCAFFREY: I'd say that it would be easier to work in short stories, although the short story form is not the easiest. However, a novel takes so much time that a new writer might become discouraged with his progress and throw the whole thing up in a fit of frustration.

HARRY HARRISON: Do what he can. Short stories are easier in time and content, so they should be tackled first to prevent despair from overcoming. But if a novel is trying to get out -- let it. Ghu knows there is a far better market for novels than shorts. But short stories should still be done for the powerful discipline they force on the writer.

JOHN JAKES: Short stories. Easier to control; easier to learn the craft in this medium; less time invested in the inevitable failures. I expect that most writers moving from short pieces to novels also have their failures, but at least you have some success to buoy you up, and some understanding of first principles to help you master things like a vastly more sprawling plot structure.

H. KEN BULMER: Immaterial. Write what comes to him. Shorts are naturally easier to sell first off; but some writers are natural novelists and others natural short story writers. In sf there is a greater percentage than anywhere else of people who do both. This cobwebby question comes up at every writer's gathering.

LARRY NIVEN: Short stories. Writing bad short stories, one learns much faster and with much reduced expenditure in time.

PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER: Some writers are better with short stories than with novels, and others are the opposite. Each will find his own field.

T. L. SHERRED: I've stopped beating my wife. I'm divorced. Someone--not me--said 'begin at the beginning and go on till the end'. Just as a matter of idiosyncrasy, a good short story is real hard to do. The facets of character that would come out in a novel get the short end of the stick in a short story. Recipe for a short story: Use the blue pencil on every third adjective.

PIERS ANTHONY: That, too, depends -- on the writer and the market. If the writer feels at home short, he should write short; if long, long. If either will do, start short; it takes less time and effort. But the market is important; at the moment, novels seem to be a better bet than stories, because there are more and better editors there. That's why I shifted from the stories I preferred to novels that were difficult for me, and others may have to do likewise. Had the mid-60's market resembled the early-50's market, I might never have written a novel, and been happy. Maybe the '70's will swing back.

GREG BENFORD: Short stories. Short works teach you how to build scenes and sketch people. Later you can work into longer forms, just like learning to juggle more objects at a time. Some people are natural novel writers, though, so this rule is only for the average. Personally, I think you should write whatever feels right. The length will work itself out.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK: Some writers are natural short story writers, some are natural novelists--some, for that matter, are natural poets. It is probably best to start on short stories (or novellas, perhaps, if you really are the kind of writer who feels happier writing novels). But you should have something to say before you try doing anything. It's no good just liking the idea of being a writer. You should want to *write*.

DANNIE PLACHTA: Many beginning writers expend much wordage upon meager substance. For these writers, short stories may be quite beneficial.

EMIL PETAJA: Yes. Because he hasn't the time to waste writing a novel which might not sell and will become discouraged after spending up to six months on something and finding it 'not quite'. Unhappily, there aren't many markets to hit for now, but it's still the best thing. He can turn out a lot of shorts in the time he would spend writing a novel and ONE of them might hit.

NORMAN SPINRAD: A beginning writer should concentrate on whatever form or length seems most natural to him. In general, most beginning writers would do better with short stories because for a given length of time or amount of effort,you'll learn more doing 10 short stories than one novel. But if you think you're a natural novelist, don't hesitate to plunge right into a book.

DAVID GERROLD: I feel that a beginning science fiction writer should concentrate on doing what he does best.

DEAN R. KOONTZ: There is a tendency today for a writer to concentrate on the novel. For one thing, the market has never been better. For another, the short story and novelet market has almost never been worse (though it is improving slightly). In a way, I think this is tragic. I firmly believe that the very rudiments of writing are best developed in the short story and novelet. The writer has fewer details to concentrate on and does not have to worry about sustaining his story past the ten or twelve thousand word mark. Many of the very best novelists first forged their ability in the short story. It is a shame that finances prohibit this today.

With the necessity to write novels to make a living, the beginning freelancer may have to write a number of them before he can even begin to comprehend the form he is handling. This happened to me. I am just now, after six rather mediocre novels, beginning to understand the makings of a good book. THE DARK SYMPHONY, I hope, will show this. However, it is interesting--to me, at least--to note that my understanding of the novel did not come until my understanding of the short story was complete.

ANDREW J. OFFUTT: I did both. The short stories got published. Now the novels are going. If he's a writer, writing's a compulsion. Thus he writes because he must--and *what* he must. Most likely he'll publish the shorts first, but...has Andre Norton ever published a short story? (The shorter the better, by the way.) Chances are high that Fred Pohl will buy a fair serial by Van Vogt or Blish; slim that he'll buy one from Elmer Crogh, even if it is very good indeed, until Crogh has made a bit of a name by publishing shorter stuff. A serial by Crogh just won't draw newstand readers as a Name will. This is an old story, and naturally it's scoffed at. Don't.

JOANNA RUSS: Short stories, absolutely. A failed short story is, perhaps, 10 pp. of misery and dreck and two weeks of wasted work. A failed novel (much easier to do, *i.e.* fail, since novels take so much sustaining) is a year's or at least months worth of wasted time and wretchedness. And there's a much bigger investment of emotion in something that takes months. Some people, (like Chip Delany) seem to be born novelists, but most aren't at all, at all. I also suspect that short stories are *still* a more natural form for s.f.

HANK DAVIS: The market for novels is, I am told, more open than for short stories. (Also, my jaundiced opinion is that standards of quality in writing is lower in the paperbacks than in the prozines.) On the other hand, how many beginners can write a novel? If a writer feels that he can write a novel, he should do so. If it takes him a year and it doesn't sell, he'll be a year older. If he hadn't written it, he would still be a year older. What the hell?

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What suggestions can you offer to the beginning writer concerning the development of 'realistic' characters and writing effective dialogue?

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ANDRE NORTON: Put yourself in characters' places and then follow what you would do and say in that situation. Write always in *pictures*.

CLIFFORD D. SIMAK: Watch people all the time. See how they act and talk. There is no better way, because you are working with a true human source. Do a lot of reading. Find out how other writers do it.

RAY BRADBURY: Write every day of your life. Characters and dialogue will come to you if you write honestly, from passion, about things you love or hate. If you write for money your characters will never ring true. If you write for intellectual acclaim, the same is true. There is only one answer, write out of a wild declaration of affection or detestation for or against something. The rest will follow.

DEAN McLAUGHLIN: Try to 'hear' the people talk. When the words on paper, read without recollection of inflection, seem to sound alive, you've got them talking. It's not easy. Characters? Try to be inside them, looking out; they're people--individuals--not specimens for clinical examination. Avoid actions motivated only by requirements of the plot--that can be *your* reason, but not your hero's.

ALFRED BESTER: Experience, cold-blooded observation, and constant thought and comparison, so far as characterization goes. For dialogue, one must develop an ear, and only constant practice can do this. Many successful professional authors still have a wooden ear and write miserable dialogue. I suspect that the ability to write good dialogue may be inborn, and after years of hard work the writer who doesn't have it will never achieve it.

PIERRE VERSINS: The development of 'realistic' characters comes in meeting people and the writing of effective dialogue in hearing them. But a question arises: Is it necessary to draw 'realistic' characters and to write effective dialogue? Writing has nearly no more to do with real people than painting with photography (I mean ordinary photography, not photography as an art). Here, it depends on what you think literature is: If you feel you must translate reality by means of words, then you must follow the advice in my first sentence right above; if you think you're a creator, then create and don't bother with 'reality'. Anyway, your reality is nobody else's reality.

RICHARD WILSON: Carry a notebook. I use a size that fits into my shirt pocket, next to the ball-point pen. Listen. Take notes. Look. Put it down. Think. Write it down. Too often a wonderful phrase, or thought, or idea vanishes because you're 'sure' you'll remember it and don't make a note. But when using your notes, edit. Compare what you have heard and recorded with spoken American speech as transmuted into readable dialogue by such writers as Steinbeck, Richard Bissell, Mark Harris, Red Smith, Ring Lardner, Art Buchwald, or playwrights such as William Gibson, George Axelrod, Paddy Chayefsky, Tennessee Williams. There's magic in these people's selection. It's the selective writer, not the non-discriminating tape recorder, who is the magician.

ARTHUR PORGES: My critics hold me quite unqualified in this regard, and I agree. My stories are based on gimmicks, and what I hope is an entertaining way of writing about them. But my 'characters' are cardboard, and have neither form nor being as people.

JOHN BRUNNER: Oh...honestly! Keep your ears open! Keep your eyes open! Read some historical fiction. Read some comparative philology. Get a sense of the processes that are operating on language (for the dialogue) and society (for character). Shut the door firmly on anyone who attempts to enter with a line of light banter and a stiff upper lip. If necessary, start by asking, "What would *I* do?" (If the result seems foolish, maybe that's due to the writer being a fool...?) The foregoing, of course, assumes that the question implies the need to develop characters and dialogue for a type-SF story--*i.e.* one set in the future. Otherwise, the answer can be found in any writer's handbook.

EDMOND HAMILTON: Only this: If doubtful of a character's action, or his speech, ask yourself if you ever actually saw a person doing such a thing, or heard him saying a comparable line of dialogue. This is a general statement, not to be too closely applied, of course.

ANTHONY BOUCHER: Read read read--watch watch watch--listen listen listen--write write write.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL: Let the characters act and do and talk -- *don't* try to tell the reader what they're like; let the character show *what* he is.

ROGER ZELAZNY: First, *re* characters: In most of my stories, thus far, I have begged the problem of character development by making the action revolve about some sort of plot gimmick, or by invoking some kind of stylismus. This was not pure laziness, it was self-defense; I wasn't sure how to go about producing the kind of characters I wanted, and the other things were selling pretty well, so I let the problem pend awhile and did a lot of thinking about it. Finally, I hit on a method which seems about right for me. First, I take a story out of the air, usually a pretty flimsy one, and I sit down and put a few sets of characters through the paces, interchanging them quite often, just to see what happens. I never name them. Names are tags, and I'd rather think of them as bundles of characteristics and reactions at first. As I run them through the plot itself is altered and the characters become more and more prominent in my mind. I finally wind up with just a trace of the original plot, or maybe not even that, and a handful of people I feel reasonably comfortable to work with. By the time I've reached that point, names usually present themselves. I then write a one-page, single-spaced synopsis of whatever action I now anticipate, to help crystallize matters. I never follow this synopsis. Seeing the thing written out, though, makes me feel sort of committed to carry through on a complete transcription. Then, if I've hit things off right, the story flexes of its own accord after a few thousand words and suggests its own lines of development. When I've completed it I retain no critical faculty whatsoever towards its possible validity or schmaltziness. The thing to do is let it lie about awhile and write something else, and later "cast a cold eye on life, on death--horseman pass by" if necessary. I wish I'd started doing things this way some time ago.

Re dialogue: There isn't too much I can say about dialogue. I write it up, and then before I type the good copy I read it aloud to see if it sounds like somebody talking--if that's how I want it to sound; it is not always the effect I desire. I make some changes at that time, and that's it.

CHARLES BEAUMONT: That's like asking how to learn the art of writing. It can be learned, but not taught. I found that out while teaching a class in science fiction at UCLA this summer.

ROBERT F. YOUNG: Try to become as involved in the story you're writing as possible. Once you become involved in it you will start caring about what happens to your characters, and once you start caring about what happens to your characters you will get to know them, and once you get to know them you can't stop them from coming to life. After that, you simply write down what they say. Lord knows, this isn't easy, and it can never be accomplished completely; but the degree to which you accomplish it will be in direct ratio to the realism of your characters and the effectiveness of your dialogue.

JACK WILLIAMSON: Let him study good mainstream fiction, and standard texts on fiction writing.

JAMES H. SCHMITZ: To develop a realistic character, first establish in your mind what kind of character he is, and then have him act and react consistently throughout your story in accordance with the character he is. If that clashes with the plot, either change the character or change the plot. For most purposes, that's quite sufficient. Don't worry too much about getting the character established with the reader. If you have a sound story, the reader will take care of such details.

Your dialogue will be effective enough if it moves the story along and the reader doesn't have to guess at who's speaking. Keep it as simple and everyday as possible, and you'll probably find it's the easiest part of fiction. Don't be afraid of clichēs in dialogue; they're common verbal shorthand, often very expressive, and make most speakers sound more natural. If you'll imagine you're listening to a real conversation, keep it from straying from the point and cut whatever isn't essential, you should have a useful line of dialogue. Later on, you can get more elaborate about it, if you want to.

JAMES BLISH: Watch; listen; participate; and write. It also pays, though it's painful, to reread what you wrote ten years ago. If you don't find it painful, there's something wrong with your ear.

[illegible] FRANK RUSSELL: Good characterization derives from the writer's own sophistication plus adequate time to take pains. Many writers with a living to earn outside of the writing field just haven't got the time to rewrite several times over before submission. In such cases the writers must take their choice between low output well-polished or higher output with less polish. The unsophisticated writer won't achieve polish anyway. Dull minds write dull stories.

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY: None. Either you see those people, down to the color of their underwear and the way they talk to their mother-in-law, or no one can help you make them 'realistic'. The same thing goes for dialogue. You have an 'ear' for it, or you don't. The novice could try reading his dialogue aloud to see if it sounds natural when spoken. If not, rewrite till it does.

ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES: Be open, be alert to life experiences, both first hand and vicarious. You can get the vicarious ones from the best literature, drama, cinema, and other reading, *etc.* The danger is the assumption that since anyone is likely to be surrounded by lunkheads at any times, and their jibber is certainly 'realistic', lunkhead jibber is the only way of achieving realism. It isn't.

TED WHITE: This is a weak spot for me. I try simply to make them realistic to me and hope for the best. One of my few devices is to incorporate some trait or character insight which is not common to the field, to upset a cliche or transplant one from another field, thereby giving it new freshness. But, I'm not too consistent or too good at this.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE: Look and listen -- no other method available!

AUGUST DERLETH: Develop his seeing eye and hearing ear, and NOT by way of printed science-fiction.

E.E. "DOC" SMITH: I'm very glad indeed to answer this question. First, develop *all* your characters, however minor, in outline. Then put yourself in the place of each character. Live in and with each character so long and so strongly that you *know* him or her very intimately -- so well that you know exactly how he or she would react to every situation that will arise in the story. Then have each character talk *exactly* as that character would talk in real life.

AVRAM DAVIDSON: Much depends here on the accuracy of his own eye and ear. He might keep a notebook of bits of overheard dialogue or observed personality traits and tendencies; he might also --though cautiously--take a model from a writer whose skill in these two things he admires; not trying to copy but to extend or extrapolate from what he sees is done by said writer. In other words, x 'ask' Writer X how to get there from here, but don't climb on his back and try to ride there. He might not go there, after all.

HORACE GOLD: A hell of a lot of reading, a hell of a lot of listening to everyday speech, and a hell of a lot of writing character studies and dialogue--and comparing these with what you read. Writing for sale is built on the foundation of writing for practice, listening and reading as intently as you would study for any other profession, and considering rejection slips as school grades--until the first check comes in and tells you that hard work pays off.

WILLIAM TEMPLE: The realism of characters is geared to one's experience of life and people. As most editors seem to go along with Kingsley Amis's concept of 'the idea as hero', to attempt to depict 'the hero as hero', though it may make the story more realistic and adult, may equally diminish the chances of its sale--as things are.

Dialogue: Don't attempt to 'see' the words as on a printed page. That's remembering dialogue you've read. Just sit back and wait, and *listen* to your imagined characters when they begin to speak for themselves. If they're only cardboard characters, only rubber-stamp cliches will fall from their mouths. If they are human beings...well, you've been warned.

LEIGH BRACKETT: Out of twenty-odd years of writing experience I have evolved this one ewe-lamb of wisdom -- and it applies to any field. Write every story as though it had never been done before. Write it as though every word of it were true, as though page by page it is actually hap-

pening, in real life, to real people. And if you hit a snag, stop a while and think--would these real people do and say what I am making them do and say in this particular case? Generally you will find that you have been forcing the story along reconceived lines instead of letting it develop itself. Above all, *like* what you're doing--or nobody else will.

LESTER DEL REY: Forget such damned nonsense! You don't want 'realistic' characters -- they tend to be dull. You want the most interesting characters (often alien or non-human, at that) you can find. As for dialogue, if the ear of the writer is good, he'll learn dialogue automatically; if the ear isn't good, he'd better use dialogue only when he has to. Anyhow, *what* he has to tell means more than *how* he tells it.

REGINALD BRETNOR: Read writers who know how to bring their characters to life. Again, this means going back in time to a great extent, when character creation was a bit more than some New York intellectual writing about the Degenerate South for *HARPER'S BAZAAR*. Read Mark Twain. And remember that, in order to bring your characters to life, you have either to love or hate them--at least, you must have some respect for them, for their essential humanity. Whatever you do, if you take any writing courses, take them from a professional writer. Don't fall for the academic non-writers' 'creative writing' pitch. If you intend to write for a living, learning to butter up the mandarins isn't going to do you a great deal of good. (Once in a while, you'll find an academic man who is a good pro, but take the trouble to find out first, because most of them in this racket are would-be's.)

POUL ANDERSON: Pay close attention to the people around you. Try to get inside their skins and think as they do, as nearly as you can reconstruct that. Read the great writers for psychological insights they offer. In actually thinking up a character, especially for a long story or novel, spend some time in getting acquainted with him; give him individualising characteristics, a biography, likes and dislikes, casts of phrase, *etc.* Remember that people nearly always speak in short passages, using simple words; avoid long, involved monologues except where they are absolutely essential to the story.

HARLAN ELLISON: Look at people, listen to them talking, go everywhere, do everything, live at the fastest possible rate, don't fear to die or get your hands dirty. Suck air and drink of the night and let it all lie back there till it's needed, but not before. Anything you ever see or hear or taste or feel or know anywhichway becomes the raw material the tools of your talent uses to construct work that matters.

JOHN CHRISTOPHER: Reading other writers is the only way I know. And in the general field of fiction, where the more effective writers operate. (This is not, of course, to say that all general fiction writers are better than all science fiction writers: Only that the very best writers are in the general field.)

ROBERT BLOCH: Study films, television, live drama -- which depend on characterization through dialogue. 'Realistic' is a tricky term; what is 'realistic' to one generation is phoney to the next. Actually, it's all phoney, in the strictest sense; the dramatic unities insure that. But a convincing representation can be found, if the writer knows where to look for it. It's a matter of his judgement and selectivity. I think few science fiction writers work well with 'realistic' characters; not many can do a job like THE LONG LOUD SILENCE. But then, they may not want to--if so, they'd probably gravitate to mainstream fiction instead.

JAMES E. GUNN: Only one suggestion is really helpful: Do a great deal of writing. But here are a few others--listen to people talk, try to understand why they act as they do, and learn to be critical of what you write so that you know when something is good and when it is bad. But mostly: Write.

H. BEAM PIPER: Know your characters intimately. Plan them just as carefully as you plan the action of the story, and let them develop in your first draft, and by the time you are ready to start on the final draft know their background, past life, education, experiences, *etc.*, and understand how they will react to any situation.

This, of course, is most important with the means-of-perception character, the 'viewpoint' character as the old technique writers called him, through whom the reader experiences the story, because not only what he experiences but his reactions and attitudes will be a part of the narrative. You don't include the thoughts, as such, of the other characters, but you have to make their overt behavior *plausible and consistent.*

And don't break means of perception. Switch it from one character to another in different scenes if you can't get the story across with a single means of perception, but never change means of perception in a single scene or action-sequence.

Name your means of perception character in the first paragraph, if possible, and don't name him thereafter unless someone addresses him by name, or something like that. You're giving his thoughts along with his experiences and actions. You don't think of yourself by name; not often, anyhow.

In dialogue, knowing your character, think how he would express himself. Everybody has individualities of speech; make use of that, but don't overdo it. (Don't overdo anything, of course.) Dialogue, of course, is people talking; they talk to convey information (or misinformation)to one another. In a story, dialogue can also be used to convey information to the reader. This, of course, can be overdone, too. I recall a movie, *The Iron Curtain,* I believe, in which two Communist spies in America went into a five minute dialogue about basic Communist doctrine and Soviet policy, a terrible false note, because these were fundamentals to which they both subscribed, and would have no business to discuss with each other.

Just have your characters do and say what you think people of their sort would do and say, under the circumstances.

ZENNA HENDERSON: Write characters you can identify with yourself. 'Hear' your dialogue when you write it -- use words people use when speaking -- not when writing.

FRITZ LEIBER: Use the people you know and the conversation you hear, remembering to fit the former to your story and to prune away the excess verbiage of the latter.

KATHERINE MacLEAN: First I don't know. Developing realistic characters seems to start out as a few mechanical moves and then go over to spontaneous generation by me. Writing dialogue always leaves me shook. Some act of God has to intervene to bring them all the way alive, or they don't talk, I can't hear them.

However, anyone who wants lessons can join my Creative Writing courses, given through University of Connecticut Tuesday nights at Hartford, Conn., $60.00 admission for the term. Advt.

[*Editorial Interjection: Remember, this was written in 1963--but if you want to try...*]

What I tell my audience in these courses, is for God's sake, you have to mean it. You can't be cynical about your characters. They have to say what they *would* say in that spot. Plot mechanics are something which you use to help a live story over the rough spots and speed it up when it slows. They come after you have a real story that means something to you. You can't *make* a story out of plot mechanics. You can't get grapes out of a trellis.

FREDERIK POHL: He should model his characters after real people, but so disguised that no one, not even the subject, can recognize them. (Otherwise he has legal problems.) When the characters are weak, stories are weak -- this is very important. (After all, you are more interested in any event when you know the people it is happening to. You are more interested in any piece of fiction when the author has made you know the characters.) It isn't so much a matter of knowing what the characters look like as knowing what they *think* like -- you don't tell your reader much when you tell him your hero has a beard; it's more important to say *why* he has a beard.

ALAN E. NOURSE: I can't offer any suggestions, because I don't have any idea how to 'develop realistic characters' or 'write effective dialogue'. I just write stories the way they seem best, and sometimes they come out fine and sometimes they don't. Only advice here is to read and read analytically so you find out by example how this or that problem was solved. And then try to solve it yourself some other way.

THEODORE STURGEON: Keep his ears open and his mouth shut, and carry a 'Men's Room' notebook: That is, don't ever let anyone know he has it on him.

PHILIP K. DICK: Read modern 'quality' writing, especially the short pieces of Algern, Styron, Herb Gold, the so-called 'New School' writers. And the fine left-wing writers of the '30s, such as Dos Passos, Richard Wright, and go back as far as Dreiser and Hawthorne -- try to stick to American writers (including of course Hemingway and Gertrude Stein) because it is among the American writers that realistic dialogue has developed. Try the French realistics, such as Flaubert, for plot and characterization. Avoid Proust and other subjective type writers. And by all means intently study James Joyce;everything from his early short stories to THE WAKE.

MARTIN GREENBERG: Each writer must develop his own technique, based on his own outlook and environment and this comes from just plenty of writing.

GORDON R. DICKSON: The only way of a writer in achieving realistic characters is to work up the characters in his head to the point where they are as real to him as actual living people he knows. This usually means knowing a great deal more about the character than appears in the story. There are a thousand and one ways to do this -- you can write biographies of your characters, rewrite the story a large number of times, or simply sit and think about it or about the characters in it. Every writer has his own way or combination of ways. In my case, my lead character has to come alive, and then the other characters, being forced to measure up in their contact with him, eventually come alive also. --But, however it's done, the rule of thumb remains. The reader cannot be fooled. If the writer has kidded himself that a name, blue eyes, and a habit of grinding his teeth has made the stick-figure of a character into a living representation, the reader will sense it and (though he probably will not identify the cause) will lose interest in the story in proportion.

Dialogue: As with characters, the writer will have to learn to develop an inner ear. If the characters are really alive, they will talk effectively--because words that do not suit them or the situation will ring awkwardly in their mouths. After the writer has developed the inner ear to the point where he can trust it--and only then--he will probably gain by a technical study of dialogue as written by those who are masters of the art. --If he likes that sort of study. If not, he is probably better off sticking with his inner ear.

The reason for this is that dialogue is one of the trickier subjects. Effective dialogue is not realistic dialogue -- it only gives the appearance of realism. This is necessary because the written word has a different effect on the man reading it than the same word spoken aloud. One example is the matter of obscenity. The obscene word, spoken, ceases to exist except in the memory of the hearer. The obscene word, written, is printed on the page before him and continues to exist as long as he looks at it. This is why written obscenity is always more shocking than its spoken counterpoint. Another example is the matter of a character in a novel who speaks with an accent. The experienced writer will soften and remove much of the accent from that character's written speeches as the novel progresses until only a few tag elements of it remain. The reason is, that in life as we become acquainted with someone who speaks with an accent,our ear tends to tune it out with familiarity, so that we hardly or no longer notice it. If the accent is written in with the same value later on in the book as it was to begin with, the reader is continually faced with the shock of discovery and the accent seems overdone.

These are large examples, but the difference between the spoken and written dialogue is unvarying, and results finally in superb examples of writer control like the dialogue of Hemingway's characters, which gives such an effect of realism while actually it is almost completely unspeakable. If you doubt this, try reading the dialogue aloud as you would on a stage. The difference between heard and written dialogue in fiction is just that great.

ALLEN KIM LANG: I hope to do so by reading Malamud, Sturgeon, Irwin Shaw, and the others who've learned to have 'ears', as the splendid Mark Harris puts it.

WILSON TUCKER: Books have been written on both problems, in vain. Every man has to learn for himself and suffer criticism when he fails. About the only thing I have learned is that certain dialogue actually builds the character, or certain behavior patterns coupled with a definite viewpoint, will build him. I prefer short sentences which push the plot forward, or which reveal character by speech and mental patterns, or which pull the reader deeper into the hero's problem. I detest long, windy speeches -- the kind some writers use to promote pet themes, or to explain the background, or to pose the problem like so many piled bricks. I was badly burned by the

science fictioneers of the 1930 era, and now detest their styles.

]*The 1969 Entries*[

JOANNA RUSS: Think. Work. Watch other people. Eavesdrop on conversations. For character: WATCH YOURSELF (most authors' characters are in part facets of themselves). For plot: WRITE PLAYS (I found this extremely helpful).

EMIL PETAJA: Study human nature around you. Use specific people for given characters. By the time they are boiled down nobody will recognize himself. Read your dialogue aloud as if you were speaking it. If it sounds stilted it's no good. SF writers have a special problem here when delineating aliens amd how they look, act, and talk. The tendency is to make them bookish and professorial or something. Try to think deep into what kind of a race they are and give them individuality on that basis. (Are they humorous? Humorless? Heavy science? Whymsical?)

HARRY HARRISON: Read all the good writers *outside* of SF. Greene, Burgess, Amis, *etc.* Analyse their work and find out how they get their effects. Read all the books on writing. They are 99% valueless, but they help one to think. Read E.M. Forster's ART OF THE NOVEL, the only good book on writing that makes real sense. Listen to people's speech patterns. Work hard. All the time. A writer is working all the time he is awake. All of life is grist for the mill.

KEITH LAUMER: Become an actor; act out all your scenes, even to the extent of getting out of your chair and going through the motions, keeping the relationships, both temporal and spatial, of your characters and the objects straight. Speak the dialogue; this aloud should be enough to prevent you from having your characters deliver four-page lectures to each other, detailing what would be obvious to them if they weren't made of thin cardboard. Live your scenes; BE there, feel, taste, smell, experience. If you (the hero) are shot, you HURT. If they tell you your girlfriend is dead, you REACT. Keep speeches short. Don't explain too much. "The reason I happen to have this gun is..." The reader will accept anything reasonable. And don't create stock characters based on movie actors, comic strip characters, *etc.* Base them on real people, or imagine them entire. There's good in every villain, bad in every hero; the closer you can come to a 50/50 mix, the better.

PIERS ANTHONY: Experience or a good ghost writer.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK: Read plenty of good 18th-19th century fiction--Dickens, Jane Austen, Laurence Sterne--the good Edwardian stuff--Conrad is probably a good example--then writers like Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Graham Greene. There's no other answer I know--just *read*. Then it's up to your own skill and keenness of observation.

ALEXEI PANSHIN: I don't think that characters are realistic or dialogue effective in any one single way. Different types of stories, including different types of sf stories, demand different approaches to character and dialogue.

Dialogue takes a good ear. I'm not sure there is any way to teach that.

The most obvious deficiency in sf characterization is that the characters have no history, no families, no thoughts, no inner life. Until sf writers begin to provide them, most sf characters will remain automations.

H. KEN BULMER: Look at real people. Don't copy from books.

T. L. SHERRED: Well, one of my favorite subjects. Write about not the people you know -- that's illegal and sueable -- but about people you know like them. Why write about the Monmarte or the Ginza if you don't know what saloon is on what corner? Listen to people, what they say and, more important, what they would be apt to say. You're the writer--what would they say?

LARRY NIVEN: I'm still working on that.

DANNIE PLACHTA: Characters and dialogue should be created with, and are a natural extension of, the basic story at hand.

JOHN JAKES: 1) Character: Watch closely those people you deal with in everyday experience. I like to make little 'character lists' ... a simplified Good and Bad ledger; things I like about them, things I don't. Plus notations on reasons why they might behave that way. The sides of the lists, except in the case of outright s.o.b.'s, usually balance. People are all gray, as I am and you are. That makes them people, and people in stories become good characters. 'Cardboard' people for fiction that's basically adventure-oriented is another bag entirely.

2) Dialogue: The old saw: Listen. And read published versions of successful plays -- the great dialogue writers like Neil Simon will amaze you with how much information they can structure into a sentence or two -- at the same time capturing the absolutely genuine ring of contemporary speech....

PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER: Live more than a little. Listen and observe and in between get in there with the rest of them. Rough it up, dirty it up, get hurt.

LEO P. KELLEY: In a very moving scene in *Death of a Salesman*, Linda Loman speaks to her two sons about her husband Willy, who is obviously disturbed. She says, "Attention! Attention must finally be paid to such a man!" Now Willy Loman is not a distinguished gentleman nor is he rich or powerful. But Linda's demand is valid. Attention must be paid to every man and every woman--particularly by a writer. Only by close observation of behavior and sensitive speculations about the whys and wherefores of that behavior can a writer hope to develop realistic fictional characters who speak believably to the reader's heart and mind. If a writer is a sensitive observer of our not-so-divine comedy, he will inevitably be able to dramatically reflect that comedy in the mirror called fiction.

GREG BENFORD: There are two ways to do characters, I guess: Write about people as you understand them, or write about yourself. I use the latter, probably because I'm self-centered. It has the disadvantage of saddling you with one type character who turns up in everything you write. That's fine if the people are as interesting as some of Heinlein's or Zelazny's, but that's damnably hard. The alternative technique is more easily understandable to the reader but it may grow dull and lead to less reader involvement. Take your pick.

HANK DAVIS: Write. Put it aside for a week or two. Reread it. Keep writing. And rewriting.

ANDREW J. OFFUTT: All my characters have a lot of *me* in 'em. Me as I am -- and my wish fulfillment phantasies. I also frequently give them traits or mannerisms of this or that person I know.

Dialogue comes easily to me, but obviously it doesn't to a lot of people, including some prizewinners. Mine gets changed plenty 'twixt the typewriter and the envelope--because I read it aloud. If it isn't really the way people talk, it *sounds* wrong when you read it aloud (to your wife, friend, roommate, mistress, or mirror).

Listen to people; *and* listen to what you write.

DAVID GERROLD: When I was in college, I was quite sure I wanted to write, direct and act in motion pictures and television. Consequently, I took courses not only in writing, but also in acting and directing. This turned out to be the greatest help to me as a writer.

As an actor I learned what kind of dialogue worked well, and what kind of dialogue fell flat on its face. As a director I learned about staging and structure and pacing. And I learned things about characterization as well. I'd advise a new writer to read what Stanislavsky and Boleslavsky have to say about the observation of other people -- and incorporation of specific traits into a character.

Many of the characters I write are based (in part) on actual people or *types* of people that I know. A character in one of my stories is most likely to be a synthesis of several individuals incorporating traits from all of them.

Actually, what it boils down to is that you can't write well about something you don't know. You have to be able to visualize the people and the situation before you can write it.

As for dialogue, you almost have to play the conversation aloud or in your mind -- and as a

director, you have to ask yourself, "Is this believable? Would people actually say these words?"

ANNE McCAFFREY: Concentrate on *being* the character while you write.

NORMAN SPINRAD: These seem to be things which you either can or can't do. They probably can't be taught or learned. If you have no inate talent for dialogue or characterization, give it up. The only advice I can offer is *never* write a scene without writing it through a viewpoint character and don't use more than one viewpoint character in a given scene. Of course both these rules have been successfully violated.

DEAN R. KOONTZ: Interesting characters can only be created when a writer makes them individuals. This can be done as simply as making the character physically odd. A broken nose, a mutant with horns on his forehead, a goatish character like Delany's Lo Lobey. Or it can be as complex as giving the reader visions into the characters' psyche, examing his sexual, religious, and social hangups and showing why he has them in the course of your story. I like to use dream sequences that show the characters' fears, or which relate to past experiences that transpired before the story opened. Through this device, the reader can glimpse a little bit of WHY the character acts as he does, and this is most essential to good characterization. In short, I guess you could say understanding character motivation will solve most characterization problems.

For effective dialogue, a beginning writer should read Hemingway, Webb's THE GRADUATE, and SHE LET HIM CONTINUE and PIT BULL by Stephen Geller. They are all relatively modern books, and the three mentioned by title are largely dialogue -- and very good dialogue. Lastly, just listen to people. Listening carefully is better than any ten writing courses.

Do you believe that an effective novel requires a message or moral? Please Comment. 8

KURT VONNEGUT, JR.: Every effective novel has a message and a moral. It is impossible for a novel to be effective without both. A novel *is* a message, a long one. A person without morals can't write one.

GROFF CONKLIN: I like it better if it does--but it doesn't absolutely have to--*explicitly*. Implicitly any work of written art says something: *i.e.* a 'message...'

DANIEL F. GALOUYE: To be effective, in the general sense of the word, a novel must primarily be entertaining. Any particular moral or message that goes along for the ride is, in a sense, icing on the cake. There are, however, those novels whose *raison d'etre* is 'viewing with alarm' or some such purposive objective. These, of course, comprise a special and very acceptable category and have often contributed much to the mainstream of social development. But I would be appalled at the great number of excellent novels that would have to be rejected if it were a rule of thumb that all novels had to carry a message or moral before they could be considered effective.

DAMON KNIGHT: If you mean propaganda, no. A good novel always has something to say, but it's always something that can't be said in an essay or a broadside.

TED CARNELL: Not necessarily. Even though three out of four of Bob Heinlein's last novels contained moralistic viewpoints or personal philosophising, they can be read upon a purely entertainment level -- as can most of the s-f novels 'with a message'. Novels without a message have been just as successful.

Like abstract art, novels with a message or moral can be viewed from many angles, the beauty or reverse being in the eye of the beholder (or his mind). Basically, *all* novels should primarily be based on entertainment value first with the moralistic viewpoint subsidiary. This is the old one of 'sugar coating the pill', but is still as effective now as when Gernsback did it in the late '20's.

JEFF SUTTON: Not necessarily. We usually read fiction to be entertained, to escape--not to be lectured to. In more serious fiction, the moral is...by convention...included as the 'reason' for the story. More often than not, I believe, the moral serves, as an excuse for what the writer really wanted to say. Oh, yes, some publishers demand messages.

RAY BRADBURY: Any good novel automatically has imbedded in it some message or moral. If it is not imbedded, not part of the true blood of the novel, it is a false and mediocre novel.

PIERRE VERSINS: Yes, to be effective, it *must*. But I find out that even the worse popular book has a message to deliver. Be it only a message which was delivered 3,662 times between 1700 B.C. and 1963 A.D. And even in this case, the message may have a peculiar flavor of its own, unlike any other's. The most terrible writer has always something to say; he says it in an unpalatable form, certainly, but you're not bound to eat and drink all a restaurant has to offer you.

ARTHUR PORGES: no; no; no--NO. The matter was settled years ago.

CLIFFORD D. SIMAK: It has to make a 'point'. A message or a moral sounds too obvious. Perhaps, in some instances it doesn't even have to make a point, but it should stimulate the reader to think toward the point.

JOHN BRUNNER: Every work of fiction which ever impressed me was capable of providing a message or moral. I think what the question is aimed at is more than merely the presence or absence of an overt sermon; I think it should refer to a point of view...though on reflection that's still vaguer. Put it like this: You can't escape having an opinion on something you write about. The opinion, particularly in SF, may be a borrowed one, adopted to throw a problem into fresh perspective (A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, say). But if *you* don't think your subject is important enough to have a personal attitude on it, why should your reader?

RICHARD WILSON: Not an explicit one. The message or moral, or credo or banner, will be there in some form if it is a good novel. It will reflect what the writer believes, and reflect it honestly. (FAIL-SAFE, for instance, is a dishonest novel.)

ROGER ZELAZNY: No, unless 'message or moral' can be stretched so thin as to include the satirizing of particular persons, apart from their functions in society, or good graphic descriptions of neutral objects, or stories that are patently hooks on which the author wishes to hang a stylistic experiment, like an overcoat. All of these can be, in some hands, very fine things indeed. Personally, I do not find a message or moral in Malcolm Lowery's UNDER THE VOLCANO, and I have never known anyone who has. I consider it a literary *tour de force*, however. Ronald Firbank was a singularly brilliant writer, but THE ARTIFICIAL PRINCESS, for example, possesses approximately as much of a message or moral as THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST. The picaresque novel is also an area thin on message or moral, except in its sometime reflection of class values while satirizing innkeepers, cutpurses, petit bourgeoisie, and *etc.*--these things are present, but they could hardly be called the 'aim' of a book such as GIL BAS OF SANTILLANE.

J. FRANCIS McCOMAS: What is the message or moral in TREASURE ISLAND?

DEAN McLAUGHLIN: Depends. An adventure job doesn't. But if it's one that you want people to remember, it's best to leave them a little more educated than when they started. (Oh sure, there's exceptions -- MISSION OF GRAVITY, for one, but everybody isn't Hal Clement.)

ISAAC ASIMOV: I believe an effective novel will *have* a message or moral, willy-nilly. I don't think it ought to be put in on purpose.

P. SCHUYLER MILLER: Depends on your definition of 'novel'. The serious literary critic -- maybe Damon Knight or Jim Blish -- might say that a SF book should meet the same standards as a Mainstream novel. I don't. It can tell a good story very well. It can create or recreate a world or society. It can show a scientific concept in a new light. It can be the farthest-out of 'what-if' yarns -- maybe SIRENS OF TITAN. And through any of these approaches it can *also* satisfy the literary criteria of development of character, social commentary, revelation of essential truths, *et al*, that are supposed to differentiate the 'true' novel from ordinary fiction.

BASIL DAVENPORT: Certainly not a 'message' or a 'moral' in the ordinary sense. To be effective, a novel does require a *Weltanschauung*, a way of looking at the universe. EMMA has one, and WUTHERING HEIGHTS has another, and that is part of what makes them both great, but I don't think either has a 'message'. You cannot have a *Weltanschauung* simply to make novels out of it; it may be something you are born with, as I think Jane Austen and Emily Bronte were; or it may be attained by trying to decide what you do think about life in general, as I think Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky did.

BRIAN ALDISS: A message or a moral implies something rather extrinsic to the book; this generally makes itself obtrusive and is an artistic fault -- a case in point, the sort of Victorian novel like Mrs. Craik's JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN, that lets you know every chapter that the bad are going to hell. But a didactic novel can be very successful, as most of Graham Greene's novels demonstrate. Better than message or moral, I think, is *viewpoint*; from a sane viewpoint, you can draw your fictional world clearly without falsifying too much (Thomas Hardy's novels would qualify here); if you're plugging some sort of propaganda, as in STARSHIP TROOPERS, you are likely to turn out a false and laughable thing; people will say: "But humans aren't *like* that, events don't turn out like that."

JERRY SOHL: Any novel that is effective has a built-in message or moral. It may not be apparent, but it is there. In my own novels it is often darkly hidden, but if they are exaimned one will see that my viewpoint is liberal in all areas, that I am against enslavement, morally or spiritually, and that I believe that man can and will solve his problems if he will only apply himself and the scientific method.

H. BEAM PIPER: Absolutely not. If kept within decent limits, and not advanced with any Hyde Park soapboxery, a 'message' or 'moral' won't do any particular harm. It is not, however, the business of an author of fiction to improve or inspire or educate his reader, or to save the world from facism, communism, racism, capitalism, socialism, deros, or anything else. As stated above, his main objective is to purvey entertainment of the sort his readership wants. If he has done this, by writing interestingly about interesting people, human or otherwise, doing interesting things, he has discharged his duty and earned his check.

FRITZ LEIBER: YES!--though not the sort of message you could put into a sermon or essay or article, else it would be better to write one of those. A novel conveys a message about life that can't be put into simple words. At the least the writer conveys an illusion of experience, which can't be done without giving feelings and insights about same.

FREDERIK POHL: No, it doesn't *require* a message; but it is simply inconceivable to me that any sane man would go to the trouble of writing an effective novel unless he has something he wants to say about life, people, fate, morality -- or *something*. And if there is something he wants to say -- that's the message.

MARK CLIFTON: Yep. Anybody who knows my work needs no comment. Why bother saying something if you haven't got anything to say?

HARLAN ELLISON: No.
It's nice if you happen to have something to say, but the dying art of storytelling is the prime requisite. Entertain. Or as Charles Reade put it: "These are the three instructions for the popular novelist: Make 'em laugh.
Make 'em cry.
Make 'em wait."

FRED SABERHAGEN: I believe it requires a dramatic climax, involving the interior life of the main character. Then some message will likely come through, though reader and writer may not agree on what the message is or what it should be.

THEODORE STURGEON: To call it either message or moral is to fall into a veritable gluepot of semantics. Hacking aside, I think a man undertaking a novel makes a moral commitment. He has to have something to say or he has no real right to say anything. What he says may not be what he believes or believes in; but what he says is going to harmonize or contrast with that belief, and the reader--even a stupid reader -- can tell apallingly soon whether or not this writer has any real convictions. There exists on earth no lasting work which did not spring from it's creator's convictions. Convictions, of course, are not enough; they have to be compounded with validity and with skill.

PHILIP K. DICK: Absolutely not! The notion that a novel needs a moral or message is a bourgeois concept. In the days of the aristocracy it was recognized that art did not need to instruct or elevate; it could be a success by merely entertaining. One should never look down on entertainment; Mozart string quartets do not instruct--show me a moral or message in say the late Beethoven. Music is pure; literature can be, too; it becomes more pure as it drops its intention of improving and instructing the audience. The writer is not a bit superior in morals that his audience anyway--and frequently he's inferior to them. What moral can he really teach them? What he has to offer is his ideas.

KATHERINE MacLEAN: I enjoy reading novels by intellectual novelists, who are exercised by moral issues. If the man knows something I don't know that clarifies some aspect of life for him that looks difficult for me. If he-she has an attitude that makes life more exciting, comfortable, easier to take, or more clear cut on moral issues and action choice in a crux--he-she has something I might want. It will show up in that person's view of the world, and projected value, (good, bad, coloring of it) I'll get it by seeing the writers view of the world in his-her book. People who have something others don't have (in the philosophy-insight line) know they have something to say, but often *think* it is some moral point that they are *conscious* of because they are still arguing it with themselves. They labor to write their books to sell that point. So let them. It's an incentive to write. Good thinkers are not fascinated by certainties.

ROBERT BLOCH: No, I do not. If by 'effective' one means entertaining and/or emotionally stimulating, it is possible to cite many so-called mainstream novels which have no message or moral ...apart from the attitude taken by the writer (*i.e.*, virtue triumphs, *etc.*, as part and parcel of the adventure novel). The same criterion holds true, I think, for science fiction novels. I'd say that THE DEMOLISHED MAN was an effective novel, but I fail to detect a message or moral in it, *per se.*

ALLEN KIM LANG: Terry Southern's MAGIC CHRISTIAN has none; Romains' MEN OF GOOD WILL has none; Hemingway's messages are often his only sour note. Preaching belongs in the pulpit. Be there message, it is second to story-telling. ANIMAL FARM and *1984*, two great moral-carriers, catch the reader with the story, and let him smell out the message as he will.

JACK WILLIAMSON: A good novel will probably have a message, but a novel written to convey a message will probably be bad.

ANTHONY BOUCHER: Possibly I'd go so far as to say it should have an implicit viewpoint or attitude, though I'm not 100% certain of even this. More overt 'messages' can be perilous (*cf* the later works of Heinlein; but then on the other hand *cf* the works of C.S. Lewis).

WILSON TUCKER: Not in so many words, no. The most effective novel I've written (LONG LOUD SILENCE) carries one hell of a message, but it was not intended during the actual writing. If, after a novel is completed, the writer finds that message or moral has snuck in unawares -- well and good. But those who set out to write such a novel often wind up dull and unreadable. Omit them, and write entertainment.

MARTIN GREENBERG: Not necessary....Burroughs never wrote a message or moral in any book.

GORDON R. DICKSON: Not at all. I, myself, happen to like and to write thematic novels. But a Theme, in the sense of a Message or Moral is not at all necessary.

A thematic element, on the other hand, is a part of fiction as we know it. LOVE'S LABOR LOST, for example, is a play with the thematic element enunciated in the title. But the thematic element here is neither a message nor a moral. On the other hand, ANTIGONE is a play with a Theme which is both a Message and a Moral. But the writer can please himself and still have quality.

ROBERT A.W. LOWNDES: An effective novel *has* a message or moral or whatever you want to call it. It doesn't have it because the author decided he had to present a message or moral, *etc.*, and cast around looking for the 'right' one. It has it because the author is a (reasonably) whole human being, whose state of being makes it impossible for him to write a novel that doesn't say something more than a plot outline plus cliché gestures, *etc.* Great art cannot escape including elements which someone will consider propaganda of some sort, but if instruction or uplift is the main purpose in writing then all you will come out with is propaganda and no art.

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL: Only if a message or moral is an integral part of the plot. Otherwise it's superfluous. An *effective* novel (my italics) is one that suceeds in entertaining the reader regardless of its ethical content.

TERRY CARR: Absolutely not. A story's a story, and messages and morals are simply extras--nice if you can get them in (and keep them out of the way of the story), but not necessary.

The above statement gives my feelings as a reader. As a writer, I confess that book-length manuscript writing is so arduous for me that by the time I'm approaching the end if there's no goddamn *meaning* to all this by-now-almost-nonsensical action and chatter, I lose interest. I bogged down two chapters from the end of WARLORD OF KOR, and was able to come back and finish it only when I'd managed to think of a moral to be drawn from the action of the story. This is, however, merely a personal quirk of a guy from whom writing is often hard work. As I say, the reader in me disagrees.

THEODORE L. THOMAS: Depends on what you want the novel to accomplish.

MACK REYNOLDS: Yes. Maybe I'm old fashioned but I believe that the modern story teller differs little from his ancestor who squatted before the fire outside his cave and spun his yarns for the tribe's youngsters, teaching them in the telling the tribal mores. And excuse me for being square, but I think something goes out of a culture when those mores are no longer 'crime does not pay', 'do unto others, as you would they do unto you', 'good eventually triumphs', *etc.*, but become 'never give a sucker an even break', 'if I didn't do it, somebody else would', *etc.*

AUGUST DERLETH: No. An effective novel should tell a good story. Most novels carrying a message are poor novels and slightly silly besides. As for carrying a moral -- isn't this pre-adolescent fare?

REGINALD BRETNOR: Every novel--and every story--carries some sort of message, and contains some sort of moral or, if such a term can be used, anti-moral. Every writer is, willy-nilly, a propagandist, in that he changes -- however slightly -- the frames of reference of his readers, for things don't just go in one ear and out the other. The mind records them, in their entirety or in part, and they do have an effect. No one should ever think of their work as 'only entertainment'--or believe that writing 'entertainment' absolves the writer from moral responsibility for what he writes. With that as background, I personally think that, certainly, any effective novel

or short story contains--not should contain, but *contains*--a moral or a message. However, when a serious novel is conceived only to present a moral, it often falls as flat as a TV science fiction show, for such novels seldom have a life of their own.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE: No--when you define 'effective' to mean having a message!

LESTER DEL REY: Good God, no. Must we abase ourselves to the Marxist idea of purpose in art, long after the Russians are no longer 100% devoted to this idea? The purpose of a novel is to entertain. If it has a natural moral (through character development), okay. If it has a 'message', it should be an honest tract. There's too much social significance written by the socially insignificant already.

E. E. "DOC" SMITH: A message--positively. A moral, not necessarily: But it is usually implicit in the message. This message, however, should not be over-apparent, blatant, or 'preachy'. It should be buried deeply enough so as not to interfere at all with the story -- but it should be plain to the reader who is interested enough to give the story a careful re-reading. Witness my 'Lensman' series.

AVRAM DAVIDSON: It isn't a matter of asking, "What message or moral should I put in?" If you tell an effective story, without even thinking about a message or moral, just working at the essential story, the result is bound to convey a message or moral inevitably; even if it is not obvious or blatant...and, in fact, the less so, the better.

Don't be like the college girl who said, "My faculty advisor liked my story and we're going to meet tomorrow to put in the symbolism."

JAMES BLISH: No, I don't. But I do think that an effective novel ought to raise a question, whether it offers an answer or not. In other words, it ought to be about something, rather than being just a 60,000-word bite of raw observation and transcription. S-F is peculiarly endowed to raise large questions and I wish it did so more often. If the author has a solution in which he believes, all well and good, as long as he hasn't started out consciously to ram it down the readers' throats at the expense of drama, emotional content, structure and richness. (That last word is my personal substitute for beauty. I have no objection to beauty in a work of art, but many great works are ugly. Both kinds are rich if they are well done.)

WILLIAM TEMPLE: Nutured on H.G. Wells, I used to think and write so. And it's a strong habit to break. But I still try to break it. For I believe now it's true that 'Wells sold his soul for a pot of message'. His artistic soul, *i.e.* Sam Goldwyn (was it?) said: "Messages are for Western Union." And certainly, preaching is for the pulpit...or, anyhow, for non-fiction works. S-f authors should be artists, and an artists job is simply to 'hold the mirror up to nature.'

CHARLES BEAUMONT: Anyone who sets out to illustrate dramatically a 'message or moral' is certain to write a less than first rate novel. Melville thought he was writing a story about a whale, you know. It is necessary to write about oneself, one's fears and dreams. Thinking is always a mistake for a writer, *when he is writing.*

KATE WILHELM: Everything I have encountered that left any impression whatever on me had a message or moral of some sort, except Thorne Smith's works, and I don't seem to remember anything but a lot of fun in them. So, starting to answer yes, I finish by answering no. Depends on the definition of 'effective'.

LEIGH BRACKETT: NO. Far be it from me to say that *1984* and LORD OF THE FLIES should not have been written; both were great books quite apart from their message, and the message was powerful. Well and good. But most writers are story-tellers, and there is often a painful insistence on writing 'message' novels simply because the writer somehow feels ashamed to be just a story-teller and feels that a 'message' will make him more important. Generally speaking--in my opinion -- messages belong with soap-boxes, tracts, and scholarly works of non-fiction. Trying to sugar-coat some piece of knowledge or philosophy with fiction usually results in the ruination of both.

RICHARD LUPOFF: This depends on your definition of an effective novel. If you mean one that can be read with interest and pleasure (that 'fun' business again), the answer is most emphatically NO! Look at LEGION OF SPACE and all the other towering space operas that exist in our field, and look at the fine entertaining novels that exist in other specialized fields, or in the mainstream. If I have a single credo as an editor, it is: *Author, tell me a story.*

ROBERT SILVERBERG: I'm against morals per se: The pat little homily on the last page. On the other hand, a novel should be *about* something, have a theme, a point of view, or it's a waste of everyone's time. The theme amounts to a message (Don't Distrust Aliens; Space Travel is Good; Fallout is Evil; *etc.*) but should be implicit in the story's structure, not tacked on sermon-fashion out in the open. The basic thing wrong with s-f today is that half the stories aren't about anything, and the other half ram their themes into your eyes.

GEORGE O. SMITH: Hell no! If I want a sermon, I'll go to church.

HAL CLEMENT: All that I can think of offhand contained such a 'message', though I have at times suspected that the author had none, or a different one, consciously in mind. I think, but am not *quite* sure, that it *is* a necessary part of a novel.

]*The 1969 Entries*[

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS: Yes, I believe an effective novel requires a message or moral. I agree completely with Robert Graves in his statement that Life in Death and Death in Life were the only acceptable themes for great poetry. So with novels. Sex, by the way, is not enough.

NORMAN SPINRAD: An effective novel does not require a message or moral but it does require passionate involvement of the writer with his material.

PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER: It's impossible to write an intelligible novel without embodying a moral or a message. The writer may have no intention of doing so, but he can't keep them out, disembody the moral or message. Of course, the message or moral and the presentation thereof may be utterly trite and conventional and usually are.

LARRY NIVEN: If you don't have anything to say, you won't write, or shouldn't write. If you do have something to say about the state of the world or the human condition, it will work its way into a novel.

JOANNA RUSS: No piece of writing longer than 3 words can avoid having a message, whether the author intends it or not. Novels can certainly do without a detachable message, and most are the better for not having one (a 'moral'). There's far, far too much idiot didacticism in s.f. If you want to be a preacher, don't write fiction. Your beliefs will get into anything you write, anyway. I find didactic novels usually highly annoying. The best of fiction is not done that way or if it is, people often skate right over the moral, thank Heaven. S.f. has a messiah complex, like most small and discriminated against (or merely unpopular) arts. Don't.

HANK DAVIS: I frankly don't see how anyone can write a story without saying *something* normative. If I write fifty words in which a man in bed wakes up and gets out of bed, I've said something about an approach to life.

EMIL PETAJA: I am of the old school. I believe in a well-plotted and motivated story, not a random job that starts anywhere and dribbles off when the writer gets tired or has written the requisite number of words. Life may be like that but 'art' ought to be more disciplined, I think. Life at its best is disciplined, too, not hodgepodge. I believe that any novel should have a premise of some kind. It could be a simple one like "Be good, everybody--don't fight", or sharply defined and specific. It ought to mean SOMETHING. Yet, not preachy. There's a difference.

DANIEL PLACHTA: A great novel certainly requires a message or moral. An effective novel requires neither.

DEAN R. KOONTZ: Any novel that is effective will say something to the reader, whether it was designed to or not. For instance, Theodore Sturgeon doesn't pound the reader over the head with moral or message in MORE THAN HUMAN, but it is an effective book because it says something about loneliness, something about the interaction of people that applies to our own times--indeed, to almost any time. A writer may create a book strictly for entertainment's sake, but that book will be effective only if its characters are real, only if the action, in some way, says something about life. Surprisingly, almost all books have some message to one degree or another. It may be as simple as an Aesop fable moral or as complex as a systematic analysis of the fundamentals of Freud or Christianity, or Bircherism. All authors are in contact with life and its problems. It would be truly amazing if they could write a book without making at least some comment about their world, conscious or subconscious.

As for purposefully constructing a book around a moral -- this is dangerous stuff. I would prefer to structure a book around a certain point of view or certain concept rather than around a moral that I was trying to teach the reader.

JOHN JAKES: The words 'message' or 'moral' strike me as terms for something you force or jam (or try to) down your reader's throat. The best English professor I ever had had a different slant: You want the reader to finish and think, "Yes, that's true; that's the way it is." Or, in the case of sf, perhaps, "That's the way it should be." Or, "My God, that's the way it better not be." Again, in the case of slambang stuff, 'good always triumphs' is hardly a moral people will believe in any more...yet millions, clutching for a semblance of order, read this sort of thing with a secret "That's the way it should be" feeling...much as kids read Grimm.

T. L. SHERRED: Not since we stopped reading "the stag at eve had drunk his fill and staggered off to Moran's rill." Moral, in this world, don't get caught. Message, do unto others before *you* get it. Parson Weems died a long time ago; Waugh might have had a message with his sign of the T. I read it because it was supposed to be dirty. Come to think of it, maybe it was.

Come to think of it, it was Huxley, not Waugh.

KEITH LAUMER: Certainly not a self-conscious 'this is the message of this novel' message. Most compelling books have a message, usually a simple one. But this grows out of the material and the author's convictions; it isn't something you stick in like a paper flag on a cake.

DAVID GERROLD: I think it's almost impossible to write an effective novel without some kind of meaning behind it. Indeed, if I had to choose one criterion to be the standard for judgement as to whether a novel was good or bad, that standard would be how meaningful the book is to me as a human individual.

Actually, it's a three-part standard. "What is the author trying to do (or say)?" "How well did he do it?" And, "Was it worth doing in the first place?"

ANNE McCAFFREY: No, not 'requires', but any book should instruct or comment as well as entertain. For myself, I never 'try' for a message or a moral, but if the situation from which the book evolves is valid, there will be some food for thought by the end of the novel.

H. KEN BULMER: Yes. Very involved question; basically no artistic creation however casually contrived or intended merely as 'entertainment' can exist let alone survive without presenting some attitude, some 'message'. This is a fact of the function of the thing expressed. What the question really means I suppose, is should art and literature propagandise? Normally, no or only with the utmost restraint; but more and more, and particularly in sf, the writer's position in society is forcing him into the older and more committed avenues, despite all the glib talk of free artistic expression. I do not mention communication. This is another question.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK: It should contain an *intention* on the part of the novelist. I do not think that an effective novel needs to contain an explicit message or moral. Messages and morals are implicit to any decent work of fiction.

ALEXEI PANSHIN: I think writers have responsibility for what they write.

ANDREW J. OFFUTT: 'Course not.

But they're nice, aren't they? I've always been nuts about de Camp, van Vogt, and Heinlein. I can't recall that de Camp or van Vogt ever gave me a message or a moral, other than a very simple one, perhaps. Heinlein always gives me several.

PIERS ANTHONY: No. Let's not confuse effectiveness with quality. The novel is essentially entertainment, whether of high or low estate. For some readers (I among them) a message/moral greatly enhances the value of the novel; but for many, perhaps most readers, it is superfluous. It would not be fair to insist that every reader absorb dual-purpose material, when so many read merely to relax.

HARRY HARRISON: No. But all good, thinking writers have thoughts about the world, morals, interrelationships, *etc.* Their attitudes will come through.

GREG BENFORD: No. A novel should pick a reader up, carry him along, shake him by the neck if possible, and put him down again. We can experience many different lives through reading in a way not possible in other media, but there is no necessity to lecture, or illustrate some lesson. If you want to, fine. But some great books have been written without a line of 'message' other than what came through directly from the author's subconscious.

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To what extent do you think it possible to detect a writer's viewpoints as to politics, religion or moral problems through examination of his stories?

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HORACE GOLD: None at all. A writer who amounts to anything will adopt any point of view that will benefit the story, no matter how it might violate his personal beliefs. And he will stick to the logic of that premise unswervingly until the story is finished, at which time he can go back to his own views. To hold a writer to his premises in any other way is to call Steinbeck an Okie for THE GRAPES OF WRATH and Hemingway a Spaniard for FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS. Or let me make this distinction: A *good* writer won't let himself be detected through his work, whereas a writer will use it as a microphone to broadcast his dogmas.

JAMES BLISH: If the whole corpus of a writer's work is available to the reader, the attitudes and beliefs common to them all can usually be separated from the temporary assumptions made for the sake of a single story. It should never be attempted on the basis of a single work, however, and particularly not in s-f, where temporary assumptions are as common as squirrels in a park.

But if a writer is skillful and also has fundamental beliefs, they will show. He doesn't have to push them--they will come out willy-nilly.

JAMES H. SCHMITZ: That might depend on the writer and the stories you're examining, but I wouldn't regard it as a reliable form of analysis in any case. For one thing, writing is often a front for the writer, and it can be a very deceptive front.

JACK WILLIAMSON: That depends on the writer; nobody is very sure of Shakespeare's private opinions.

TED WHITE: It depends on how overtly he states his themes, and how much they reoccur in his work. Then too, it depends on how much of himself he feels like putting into his stories. I personally like to express different points of view in different stories -- aspects of my personality, perhaps, but far from indicative of my whole personality. But then, I've written comparatively little, and much of this has been set in the simpler, more action-oriented framework. Heinlein is a writer who has received a lot of examination for what he's reitterated in recent books, and I think that sexual themes are the most significant of all he's expressed. Gordon Dickson, in DORSAI and NECROMANCER has been deliberately groping for a new area of insight into human intuitive faculties, and I understand he plans these books as part of a mammoth three-fold trilogy. In his case I assume there is a complete deliberation in this expression. In Heinlein's case, I think he's writing more or less as he feels like it, without much if any discipline.

JOE HENSLEY: Personally, I doubt that anyone could detect my own. You build a character and you give that character certain values and beliefs. In a novel I recently finished the main character was a lawyer who was fighting capitol punishment and the book, basically, was a diatribe against capitol punishment. At the time I was writing it I was a member of the Indiana Legislature. I voted to kill a bill which would have outlawed capitol punishment. Characters are what you make them and making the protagonist in this book an enemy of capitol punishment gave him a good basic motivation for some of his actions.

ROBERT F. YOUNG: To a very large extent--if you read everything the writer turns out. All writers paint a portrait of themselves, but they don't do it in one story or even in one novel--they do it little by little, down through the years. This holds true for realists as well as romanticists, and you can get to know Hemingway as well by reading Hemingway as you can get to know Curwood by reading Curwood.

CHARLES BEAUMONT: It's always possible, but never, in good work, demonstrable. The Melville example must be resurrected. When the characters took over, Melville could only sit and watch and discover things about himself which he hadn't suspected. In a way, writing may be considered, if I may coin a phrase, auto-psychotherapy.

LESTER DEL REY: Not too much. If so, he's a poor writer, who can't handle any character or viewpoint but his own. In s-f, why should a 'way-out' story reflect the here and now of the writer? Burroughs didn't like apes better than people. A good writer adjusts his viewpoint to the limits of his story. So far, those who judged me by my stories have been remarkably wrong. The same for Heinlein, Asimov, de Camp, *etc.*

GEORGE O. SMITH: Only when the writer is so bound up by his religious views that he cannot present an angle that is contrary to his dogma. In other words, no writer should try to write something alien to his nature, unless he has the inner strength to look his own dogma in the eye, and find the faults in it with the same ease and willingness as his neighbor with an opposing dogma.

JACK REYNOLDS: Fiction is autobiographical as has been many times said. You can only write about what you know about--if you expect it to be read to any extent. Which, by the way, is one of the short comings of writers who begin publishing in their teens. They haven't usually had enough experience in life to be interesting, nor are their opinions on politics, religion or moral problems very deep. --I said usually. There are probably exceptions.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE: 100%

ANTHONY BOUCHER: On the basis of The Complete Works, probably you could do a fair job; but any smaller sample is dangerous. It's too easy to blame an author for the opinions of a character; and especially in s.f., a writer may easily be taken as advocating what to him is only an interesting basis for speculation.

THEODORE L. THOMAS: Quite possible, but requires skill.

TERRY CARR: To a large extent, though you can often be misled--as Heinlein has apparently done often, by throwing out ideas just to kick up a fuss or to play around with them himself without actually believing them. But Sturgeon's warmth and love for people comes through like a bell, on paper, and Avram Davidson's good-humored interest in a wide variety of things is equally clear in his stories.

I think it's harder to tell an sf writer's real attitudes, by the way, because by and large sf is a more cerebral medium than most, and thus you get (as with Heinlein) a lot of people who are just toying with ideas for the fun of it. Emotional attitudes (as in the two examples I've given) are usually much easier to detect, because no writer who's worth a damn toys with emotions.

EDMOND HAMILTON: Depends on how much 'author to reader' the writer puts into his stories. Some writers, and I am one of them, consider a story a thing apart from themselves, to be made as vivid and real as possible to the reader. Others consider the story a vehicle for self-expression, for their ideas about the universe.

ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES: If you have a thorough experience with a great deal of an author's work, over a long period of time, and certain elements occur consistently, then it *may* be a fair guess that these express his personal viewpoints (or at least are viewpoints not entirely incompatable with his own). With hack writers, one can never tell. But one cannot be certain on the basis of a single exhibit, and personal, intimate acquaintanceship with the author may be necessary in order to be sure. In order to make a character convincing, you have to make his viewpoints convincing; you have to try to think the way such a person would think (and feel, *etc.*); and in the end you may find that people are ascribing these viewpoints to you, personally.

KATE WILHELM: I came across a statement somewhere to the effect that a lifetime of any writer's works will reveal the man--or woman. Probably that is true, but remember that the statement said --a lifetime of his works, not a story, or a book, not even this year's output.

E. E. "DOC" SMITH: In the case of a skilled craftsman, none whatever--unless he is deliberately waving a flag of some kind or other, and sometimes not even then. To develop his theme a writer can -- and does -- use any universe he pleases. This universe may or may not (depending upon the message) agree in any given particular with the writer's own opinions or beliefs.

HAL CLEMENT: Inversely proportional to the author's professional skill -- a poor one could present only his own ideas convincingly, an expert could present a wide variety so well that I don't think any analyst could be sure which the author held himself.

REGINALD BRETNOR: The question cannot be answered. It depends entirely on the writer and on the critics, and anyhow *who cares?* One of the obscenities of the present literary scene is that the function of the critic has been extended into the writer's private life, into the public examination of his subconscious, and into the fraudulent explication of what makes him tick. Another, incidently, is the increasingly noticeable tendency of editors and publishers to treat writers as though they were show people, which most of them aren't. The important thing about Mark Twain was TOM SAWYER, and HUCKLEBERRY FINN, and every other work he gave the world. Very little written by his regiments of critics has enriched those works or aided any intelligent reader in his enjoyment of them. Stories, in any field, should stand on their own merits, not on the dubious foundation of an editor's smarmy blurb, or of a 'conceptual analysis' by some mandarin, or on who the public press says the writer sleeps with.

DANIEL F. GALOUYE: Possibly to no extent whatsoever. One does not have to *subscribe* to a particular idea or creed or viewpoint in order to appreciate its potential as intriguing background for a story. For instance, one might readily recognize pantheism, or universal acceptance of the Code Duello, or some of the precepts of an alien political system as compromising interesting stepping-off points -- without surrendering his Christian, democratic, or what-have-you convictions.

JEFF SUTTON: To a considerable extent, although the writer may try to hide this. When we are motivated by what we believe, and although we might dodge around the issue, I believe our viewpoints *are* discernable. The writer might even learn a bit about himself from what subconsciously has emerged. However, we all fight to avoid the crusade, at least in fiction. The obvious message curdles the publisher's heart.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL: If you can, he's sold his birthright as an author for a pot of message.

PIERRE VERSINS: See my answer right above [#8]; it's the reader who plays there. Or the critic, if you prefer, the critic being often a reader who says what he thinks. Its always possible, and depends always on the reader's ability in finding little drops of politic, religious, and moral problems in a gigantic compound of printed words. When a critic or a reader tells you that a book has nothing to say, be sure that he's not a good critic or an honest reader (after all, he may be honest). Even by saying nothing on a particular question, the author says something. Example: The Archbishop of Paris wrote to publisher Hetzel that Jules Verne's books were just lacking *something*; what? Religion. And it was discovered not one year ago that Jules Verne was a strong atheist and even 'red'. Is not this lacking a message. And Sartre used to say that people claiming not to be interested in politics *are* nonetheless interested in politics: They only think that their actual government is doing well.

ARTHUR PORGES: For many writers, it is easy to determine their attitudes; for others, like Shakespeare, it seems impossible. I believe there are more writers in the first group, by far.

TED CARNELL: You have to know the author personally to be able to detect any of his viewpoints, although you may reasonably guess at some of his pet problems. Usually such guesswork turns out to be wrong in the long run, although side issues can colour an author's thoughts. As an editor, I often see authors personal problems entangled with their plots and characters; at times I wish that I did not know them so well, because the same viewpoints continue in story after story and becomes personally annoying. Nevertheless, such viewpoints never affect my personal judgement of a story's worth and even if I disagree personally, I am just as likely to publish the story. Often, just to provoke controversy.

KURT VONNEGUT, JR: If the writer is a good writer, he will imply answers to all those questions about himself.

CLIFFORD D. SIMAK: I suppose it's possible. A man writes what is inside himself. He expresses himself. He must leave a lot of clues as to himself scattered along behind him. But it irritates the hell out of me when someone tries to figure out what kind of man I am from what I have written. The picture is always overdrawn, because I overdraw.

DAMON KNIGHT: It's tricky.

RAY BRADBURY: To every extent.

DEAN McLAUGHLIN: Depends on the writer. Heinlein, Piper, and Poul Anderson are fairly clear. But Bob Silverberg? Rule of thumb: What he tells you three times, he believes. Thus, the author of CITIZENS OF THE GALAXY, STARSHIP TROOPERS, and, say, PUPPET MASTERS can be charted with fairly good accuracy. But don't let personal opinions intrude so much. Arthur Clarke, for example, would be hard to interpret.

JOHN BRUNNER: [See 8.] This depends very largely on the writer's current intention. But...well, to start with a writer's choice of theme is partly conditioned by the personal opinions he holds; next, the way he handles his characters generally reveals a sympathy or antipathy (some writers, for example, just can *not* portray a really nice guy, because they don't believe in nice guys, and this may suggest that life treats them roughly); finally, he may wish to persuade his readers without preaching at them. I do this much of the time, as a matter of policy. My future worlds tend to be internationalised, pacified, and so on; I use colored characters deliberately, and non-WASP names.

RICHARD WILSON: If the author has written enough, his work, if not simply space opera, is bound to reflect his conscience, provided he's not a hypocrite or a ghost writer. Generally speaking, I would say that reading half a dozen stories by an honest writer (who is not writing hack) is the equivalent of knowing him personally for as many years.

POUL ANDERSON: Depends on the writer, though I suppose close examination of the whole body of anyone's work would reveal a good bit about his *Weltanschauung*, and even his tastes in minor matters. Most writers being less preachy than, say, Chesterton, their stands on specific questions are not very obvious. I daresay many have, like me, been accused of advocating the direct opposite of what they really believe -- so interpretation is tricky and, in my opinion, an overrated pastime.

ALAN E. NOURSE: Since the 'truth' a writer is seeking in his stories is really 'the truth as he sees it', the answer has to be: To a very great and embarrassing extent. The writer is washing his dirty laundry in public view, consciously or unconsciously, whether he likes it or not; if he doesn't like the idea, he ought to quit writing.

JAMES E. GUNN: A good writer always puts himself into his work. He writes out of his own interests, his own passions, and his work is a reflection of his viewpoints. Certainly his viewpoint can be detected by a study of his stories, but equally certainly not always on an obvious level of afvocacy. Writers--and people--are not as simple as that. On the other hand, the job doesn't demand a great amount of subtlety; I don't recommend Freudian analysis or academic literary criticism of the most abtruse sort.

HARLAN ELLISON: If he's a good writer, you should always be in doubt, because he feels obligated to take many sides of a question at various times, and argue them all equally well, equally brilliantly, for story value, for effectiveness of the story he's telling. It's no contest if one of the combatants is blind and one-armed.

FRITZ LEIBER: This is generally possible. Though of course real writers generally aren't conventional people (conservative or radical) with simple rubber-stamp views on politics, religion, moral questions. Pretty clearly Heinlein isn't a pacifist, Bradbury isn't a fascist, *etc.*

MARK CLIFTON: Can't avoid it. But lifting from context to make a point is like lifting individual letters, spelling a naughty word, then condemning the author for having it in his work.

ZENNA HENDERSON: The 'detecting' is often the imagination of the author gone wrong. As to what an author writes in of himself--he *might* be able to say--It's much the same as having your conversation reveal your character.

JERRY SOHL: Every writer's words speak volumes about him personally, if his work is examined closely. His choice of words, the way he strings them together makes him bombastic, cold, lovable, arrogant, turgid, evasive -- name it. Some writers we hate because we don't like what they write. People that I have met thought I was tall, ugly and coldly intellectual when they read my stories; others thought I was young, cute and lovable. Actually, I am just like you. I don't think anyone could not see the Unitarian viewpoint in everything I write, or that I think sex is great, or that I'm not a John Bircher.

ROBERT BLOCH: That's up to the author--the extent to which he wishes to reveal himself, or desires to use his work as a polemic. It is possible to 'psychoanalyze' a writer through a study of his efforts, but I doubt if the results are necessarily valid...unless the writer is willing to help. In science fiction, of course, with its heavy emphasis on sociological commentary, the writer usually does reveal his viewpoints; *cf.* Orwell, Huxley, Wylie, Bradbury, Heinlein, *etc.* But a skilled writer, like a skilled debater, can take both sides when necessary -- and fool the audience.

MARTIN GREENBERG: If he is a good writer you would detect nothing, unless he wanted to present a specific point of view on a specific problem.

BRIAN ALDISS: Depends on the writer. Often his attitude may be ambiguous, even to himself. Take Shepherd Mead's BIG BALL OF WAX; isn't there love mixed with hatred in Mead's description of all those awful gadgets, cathedrals with turnstiles, and so on? Of course, a poor writer will be at pains to obtrude his attitude on the reader; this is where much sf loses necessary subtlety: As soon as you come on a description of someone "thick-lipped and with mean eyes", the writer is signalling to you "I hate this guy, you must too". A better artist will let you make up your own mind, and not only on characters but their morals, politics and so on. There are many exceptions to this; the true satirists *en masse* are exceptions: They fail if they do not make their targets clear.

H. BEAM PIPER: To a very large extent. The story comes out of the author's mind; it will, inescapably, drag at least some of the author's attitudes out after it. This will be most evident in authors who are most careful to cling to their means-of-perception; they will be much more likely to endow their means-of-perception character with their own attitudes than to take the trouble to adapt themselves to his. Considering the one author about whom I am uniquely qualified to speak, I question if any reader of H. Beam Piper will long labor under the misconception that he is a pious Christian, a left-wing liberal, a Gandhian pacifist, or a teetotaler. Although he really tries to avoid it, there are times when I suspect him of climbing onto a soapbox under the Marble Arch himself.

BASIL DAVENPORT: That depends on the stories. THE TIME MACHINE contains a clear indication of Wells' views on the class struggle; I don't think you can detect anything from THE INVISIBLE MAN except a desire to entertain.

THEODORE STURGEON: To a very great extent if you don't mind being wrong. I mean wrong in two very important senses: *1)* Incorrect--for it requires a highly concentrated form of ignorance to confuse empathy with sympathy. There are those who think the author of THE LOST WEEKEND is a drunk because he wrote it, and a fairy because he wrote THE FALL OF VALOR; he is neither. *2)* Four times in my life I've watched damn fine, sensitive writers dry right up because of being publicly analyzed by their inferiors -- not because the analysts were getting close to the mark, whatever that might have been, but purely because thereafter the writer began to wonder, concept by concept, story by story, what he might have to be defending himself against, or silently nearing some outrageous onus because any defense might seem an admission. Such 'detection' is inexcusable, except when an author clearly seeks it, as in non-fiction or fan-pub explication.

FREDERIK POHL: I think it is a very fascinating guessing game. I doubt that it is very reliable as a guide. On the other hand, I don't think it should be. In my experience the better I know a writer the less I am able to enjoy his books.

GORDON R. DICKSON: If the writer is relaxed -- that is, not grinding the axe of a Message or Moral in his writing--I would think the possibility of detecting his viewpoints would be pretty good, because they will be reflected by the viewpoints of his characters, and his choice of subject and setting and situation.

On the other hand, if having detected these viewpoints you meet the man personally, you might brace yourself for a shock because what you will have been seeing will have been the inner rather than the outer viewpoints--and people can be very complex.

KATHERINE MacLEAN: Why try? What's in it for the detective, or for the writer? As a reader--I go to a story for my own profit, the ideas I get in politics, religion, morality from the stories. The entertainment of the plot as a separate thing is more or less inextricably interwoven with the interest of the ideas. I can get as much kick from thinking of ideas in reaction against some really far out but rationalized viewpoint as in *agreement*, maybe more. It doesn't profit either me or the writer to psychoanalyze him. Writers take an extreme view and push it all the way for the entertainment of it and to see how far it can be pushed, the same kick that is in reading it. Pinning these ideas on the writer himself as if they were permanent and tatooed on his skin is by me merely a form of attack, rather consciously wrong and probably done just to annoy the writer, by would-be competitors.

ALLEN KIM LANG: If he's any damned good at all, they should show through clearly. I'm sure I grok (if that's the word) Heinlein's political views; I'm surer still he's a moral man, and a strong one. You can't lie to a typewriter. To quote a barroom epigrammatist I overheard last night, "Everytime a fool opens his mouth he shows his ass." Often I feel a chill.

ISAAC ASIMOV: A good writer should be able to write from all points of view and be capable of 'explaining' a character with whose views he is not personally in sympathy. However, I suspect a writer's personal viewpoints probably shine through just the same--provided he has any.

WILSON TUCKER: That will depend upon how consistent a writer is, through how many stories. These days, it appears easy to read between the lines of a Heinlein yarn because his last several books have consistently espoused certain views reflecting Heinlein's supposed viewpoint. But other writers appear to have no political, religious, or moral views at all. Simply put, this is a variable.

PHILIP K. DICK: If the writer is a good one, it's impossible. Only a bad writer details his personal viewpoints in his fiction. However, it is always possible that some good writing may be found in an 'instructive' work. But at the moment I can't think of any (*e.g.* Ray Bradbury. There is no way, in reading his work, to tell really what his personal views are; the writer in this case disappears entirely, and his story reveals itself on its own. This is the way it ought to be.). It is one of the cardinal errors of literary criticism to believe that the author's own views can be inferred from his writing; Freud, for instance, makes this really ugly error again and again. A successful writer can adopt any viewpoint which his characters must needs possess in order to function; this is the measure of his craft, this ability to free his work of his own prejudices.

FRED SABERHAGEN: To a large extent, if people in his stories are much involved with these problems.

P. SCHUYLER MILLER: Through examination of the whole body of his work, maybe, but it is one of the essences of science fiction that writers are free and bound to approach ideas from all angles, *especially* the unfamiliar or unpopular. In one fine story he can insist that all extraterrestrials are innately fine people with whom we can get along. In the next he may convince his readers that we and they are necessarily so different that we will annihilate each other at sight. In reviewing Heinlein's STARSHIP TROOPERS I used "Wiswell syndrome" to tag the attitude that what a writer writes, he necessarily is. He may be--but he needn't be, and the more skilful he is, the less likely he is to be what he writes.

]*The 1969 Entries*[

ALEXEI PANSHIN: To the extent that a writer repeats himself without outside necessity, it is possible to tell what things are on his mind. Usually there is little profit, but there may be a certain interest if a writer regularly makes his villain the hero's mother or endorses force as the best method of settling disputes.

HANK DAVIS: Some people seem to think that the writer's viewpoint is obvious. I wrote a story (so far unsold) in which the people of the future about a century from now regard Hitler as a hero. The world is nightmarishly overpopulated and anyone who, in the past, caused the death of large numbers of potential progenitors is looked upon favorably. The people in this future prevent the other characters, in a less distant future, from using time travel to keep Hitler from happening. One editor was so upset by this idea that he used most of the rejection slip to argue with the story (though he seemed to think that he was arguing with me). "I'm not about to consider Hitler a good guy," he said.

Neither am I. The characters thought that. I didn't.

I suggest that people who are anxious to determine the opinions of writers by dissecting their fiction read DORSAI! and NAKED TO THE STARS, both by the same writer, Gordon R. Dickson.

DEAN R. KOONTZ: There are writers, such as Heinlein, who can write diametrically opposed books (STARSHIP TROOPERS and STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND) but they are rare. If a writer touches upon politics, religion, or moral problems in his work, and if he does so with skill and power, it is usually pretty safe to assume, I believe, what that writer believes. When I was in high school and had no contact with science fiction writers, I *knew* what Poul Anderson's political outlook was. I *knew* where Damon Knight would stand in the political arena and on a religious basis. Now that I have seen these writers expounding their views in fanzines and in the *SFWA Bulletin* and *Forum*, I see I was correct.

JOANNA RUSS: Depends entirely on the writer and on the critic. A general attitude to life certainly (James thought this was the most interesting thing a writer's whole work could offer). Unfortunately it is often possible to detect specific axe-grinding points, made with Godawful baldness. Often the covert message and the overt message are not the same; highly interesting. When moral, religious or political point dies, so does the story if it has been conceived only as a vehicle for a message. Sorry to harp on this, but it's one of our faults.

LARRY NIVEN: To a very great extent. However, a versatile writer may adopt an unfamiliar viewpoint in order to write an unusual story. Amateur psychoanalysts should beware of the versatile writer. Consider, for instance, Sturgeon's *The Loverbirds* and *If All Men Were Brothers*, or Poul Anderson's *Kings Who Die* and *Inside Straight*.

LEO P. KELLEY: To a sensitive and perceptive reader, it is almost totally possible to detect a writer's viewpoint on any number of matters. This is particularly true when the reader has a body of work by an author to exanine. But it can be done on a more limited basis with a single novel or short story.

PHILIP JOSE FARMER: It depends on the intent of the writer and the acuteness of the reader. I sometimes have a central character whose views are not mine (not consciously mine, anyway). I like to put myself in another's skull, now and then.

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS: As to Question Nine, to what extent do I think it possible to detect a writer's viewpoints from his stories, I don't know if these can be so easily *detected*, but every story is 99.99% projection of the author.

DANNIE PLACHTA: In the area of SF, I don't think that these viewpoints can be readily detected.

NORMAN SPINRAD: Not at all.

GREG BENFORD: Sometimes, but not that often. The better the writer, usually, the easier to correctly read things into his work. But it's tricky. People have done this to Heinlein for decades and often missed by a mile. It's an irrelevant question, anyway. What matters is not what a writer thinks but what he can show.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK: I think it is a foolish pursuit trying. All part of the mania for analysis and interpretation doubtless brought about by the increase in further education and the creation of thousands of academics with nothing better to do.

What makes writers like Heinlein and Ayn Rand boring is not the fact that they have stupid ideas (we all have them) but they insist on offering them to us as a substitute for a decent, dramatic narrative. Franz Rottensteiner: *Sf is stupid answers to stupid questions.* This isn't literature. It's barroom debate. As such, it shares much in common with Ian Fleming's work (half of which is the braying of opinions you wouldn't bother to listen to for two minutes if you overheard them in a bar). That sort of thing is cheap journalism--not good fiction.

HARRY HARRISON: In some cases very clearly. (Ayn Rand -- all of her stuff is pure propaganda. Graham Greene, Catholic suffering all the time.) Or closer to home, Heinlein's attitudes are fairly right-wing and it's always clearly visible. About 90% of the time the detection is right. But Sturgeon is not a hermorphrodite because he wrote VENUS PLUS X nor is Blish a Catholic despite A CASE OF CONSCIENCE.

PIERS ANTHONY: I like to think that no reader can detect my viewpoints solely through my fiction. Those who attempt it are apt to decide that I have some calamitous sexual hangup or mental aberration. The former conclusion is erroneous; the latter valid. I make it a point to understand what I choose to condemn or disbelieve, as part of my writing discipline, and may passionately argue the case for something I detest if it suits the purpose of my fiction. I assume that most writers are capable of the same. But for those who figure they can read me through my writing, an answer sheet: I am a registered independent, an agnostic, and believe in integrity above all else; I am also a vegetarian. Does it show? I'd hate to guess about any other writer.

ANDREW J. OFFUTT: To what extent?

To about 90% effectiveness. Even in short stories, even in tiny phrases. If writer A within a story, refers to the Age of Robber Barons, and another to the Age of Free Enterprise (the same: 19th Century) you know precisely where they stand and who they voted for, don't you? Some of us, of course, are at great pains to be *certain* you know (and this ties in with #8) and to try to sell you. I always do. I catch hell for it, too.

DAVID GERROLD: It depends on the writer. For instance, it is almost impossible to separate Harlan Ellison the writer from Harlan Ellison the human being. The same applies to Robert A. Heinlein and Ray Bradbury and Larry Niven. These men are writing what they know and believe.

On the other hand, I know of one or two writers who play games with themselves and with their readers. One story will argue one point of view and their next may take the opposite tack. (A writer like this is not only versatile; if he does it well, I would tend to suspect him of being a genius.)

For the most part, I would say that writers put quite a bit of themselves into their stories.

H. KEN BULMER: Unless he claims them self-evidently, or they are clearly apparent in his handling of his theme, one has to conduct a most careful study of the internal evidence of the text. Even then a good writer can fool you. Just think of Shakespeare's attitude to religion--they'll still be arguing about that on the starships to Alpha Centauri.

ANNE McCAFFREY: A writer writes the story as it comes out, or as he has consciously directed. (I never am able to consciously direct a story ... at least one that has proved successful.) He may personally be in direct conflict with the views set forth; therefore *I* would not presume to detect another writer's politics, religion or morals from his stories.

KEITH LAUMER: Unless the writer is a cold-blooded hack, churning out stuff between yawns, he reveals himself fully in his work -- with the exception of those personal faults of which he's conscious, and succeeds in concealing. Quite often, of course, there is compensation in writing; we see, not how the writer behaves, but how he'd like to behave -- whether it's a 97 pound weakling coming on like Superman, or a shy retiring soul indulging in orgies. But this, too, is revealing.

T. L. SHERRED: Almost impossible, probably. But I'll bet I know who Heinlein voted for in the last three elections. Poul Anderson, too.

EMIL PETAJA: Any honest writer shows himself in his work, even when he is trying to avoid it. The best-liked writers (Bradbury, for instance) are the ones who lay it on the line. The readers feel that he is being honest with them, not phoney.

JOHN JAKES: If a writer is any writer at all, in a so-called 'serious' work, this will come through. If not, what the hell's he bothering to write for?

During your formative writings what one author influenced you the most? What other factors, such as background, education, etc., were important influences?

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ROBERT SILVERBERG: *One* author? Kuttner, Vance, van Vogt, Heinlein, and half a dozen others in science fiction; Maugham, Mann, and some others from the 'mainstream'. The rest of the question is too involved to answer here--or even think about.

AVRAM DAVIDSON: Oh, boy! EVERYTHING I EVER READ INFLUENCED ME, EVERYWHERE I EVER WAS INFLUENCED ME, EVERYTHING I EVER STUDIED, EXPERIENCED, THOUGHT OF, HOPED FOR, HOPED NOT FOR, INFLUENCED ME. And I'm sure this is true of everyone else.

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY: First of all; I had solitude and leisure to read and write. I keep wondering how today's over socialized, peer-group-reared kids ever have the long hours alone, which are the key to creativity. I worked hard--but at manual tasks which kept my hands busy, and bored me enough so that I HAD to develop an active inner life, or go crazy. A farm is good for that. I also cared (and care) little for ordinary socializing, and have no distaste for my own company.

Definite influences: Robert W. Chambers; Mary Renault; Leigh Brackett.

WILLIAM TEMPLE: H.G. Wells, all the time. Background was a dull, dismal environment to escape from via s-f. Education (apart from self-education) was merely a long process of being whipped along *cul-de-sacs* I knew to be *cul-de-sacs*...but no alternatives were offered or available.

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL: No one author. There were fifty of them, or more. As for background--I'm a dreamer; aren't we all?

AUGUST DERLETH: My informative influences are perfectly clear in the range of my work--Thoreau, Emerson, Lovecraft, Mencken, Masters, Frost, Machen, Thomas Hardy, Proust, Mann, Doyle.

MACK REYNOLDS: I suppose that Hemingway influenced me most as a writer. My family background was also a strong influence toward arousing my interests in the material to be found in my stories. My father was a Socialist who twice ran for President of the United States (1928 and 1932). I consider myself still to be in my formative years, the several wars and revolutions I have either participated in or witnessed continue to fuel my beliefs in the need for striving for a more workable world.

LEIGH BRACKETT: As must be obvious, Edgar Rice Burroughs. Though there were others, chiefly Kipling, Haggard, and Merritt. As to other factors--I don't know. My interests were always dissimilar from those of my family--just natural cussedness, I guess.

ROBERT F. YOUNG: Logically, Burroughs should have. I used to read him all the time, and I'm not ashamed to admit that occasionally I still do. He had the most vivid imagination of any writer I've ever read, and in my opinion his imagination more than compensates for his shortcomings in other respects. However, I don't think he influenced me at all. Bradbury did undoubtedly, as he was just coming into popularity when I first began to write. No doubt, a lot of other s-f writers did also, as well as writers in other fields.

LESTER DEL REY: First, I really had no 'formative writing'--my first story sold, and it was already pretty well formed. Second, I don't know what writer--probably Isaiah or Gibbon; in s-f, maybe Ray Z. Gallum. Background and education were of no relevance, except for a great deal of reading. I think millions of words of reading are the *sine qua non* for any writer.

JOE HENSLEY: I think rather than one writer it was a mass absorption of literature by reading. I like Thomas Wolfe and Hemingway and Steinbeck and Heinlein and de Camp and Dickson and A.J. and MacKenna and almost all of the rest. My undergraduate degree was in English with a strong Journalism minor. Everything that you see and do helps.

GEORGE O. SMITH: Old E-square Smith, long may he.

The rest is simple; I've been involved with electronics since about 1933 and interested in astronomy since I was a kid.

HAL CLEMENT: The 'one' limitation prevents my answering this. I was aware of the influence of Neil R. Jones, E. E. Smith, John Campbell, and Ted Sturgeon; I can't say which had the most effect. My education has influenced the situation heavily; I have degrees in astronomy and chemistry.

THEODORE L. THOMAS: As an MIT graduate, my science background was very influential.

ANTHONY BOUCHER: Much too complex to try to answer. If one must have a single author, I guess maybe John Dickson Carr.

EDMOND HAMILTON: Homer Eon Flint. His vast, if slightly crude, cosmic adventures kindled my imagination, although I was well aware that there were better writers. The fact that I destroyed the whole world, or nearly destroyed it, over and over again in my early stories would seem to imply a maladjustment to the world as it was.

JAMES H. SCHMITZ: I was influenced by a rather large number of authors, but the effect was always a blended one, so I can't give an answer to the first question. The only other important influence I can think of was the early notion that writing would be a way to get rich fast and leave me plenty of leisure for other occupations.

REGINALD BRETNOR: Sorry, I don't think this is pertinent, or that it could possibly help an beginning writer. I do think that everyone who wants to write should, where reading is concerned, try to swallow the world whole. He should read its history, its geography, the memoirs of a dozen centuries and a dozen cultures. He should certainly read at least some of the literature of Greece and Rome, of China and Japan--not critical works, but the stuff itself in translation. He should read good historical novels and great adventure stories (things like Robert Graves' COUNT BELISARIUS and Tolstoy's WAR AND PEACE). He should take hours and hours to rummage through files of *ADVENTURE* in the 1920's. He should read the entire file of *ASTOUNDING* and *ANALOG*. He should read the great British contemporary writers of fantasy: Tolkien, Eddison, Mervyn Peake -- because these are literary vessels which have been filled, and a salutary contrast to the empty vessels which no application of Madison Avenue techniques can possibly pump up. Especially important to the beginning writer is good conversation: Good conversation near him in childhood--think what advantages Aldous Huxley must have had! -- good conversation as he matures--bull sessions with friends till the crack of dawn, with stone-cutters and engineers, with old soldiers, with cowpunchers and horrid old real estate women, with alcoholics and with gunsmiths and with horseplayers and with expert craftsmen, with the women in your life and the women in other people's -- and, in the darkness when you are alone, when the hours are there for thinking, with deadmen's bones. But all anyone can say is that all these roads are good roads; the individual writer must choose which ones to follow.

JEFF SUTTON: Newspaper background and M.A. in psych got me thinking a lot about people, individual motives and society in general. Former work as a research engineer in the areospace industry awakened ... or sharpened ... my interest and curiosity concerning this future world into which we are moving so fast. Future man plus future vehicle can be intriguing.

JACK WILLIAMSON: I began imitating A. Merritt; I have always admired Wells tremendously and studied many of his short stories. After I had sold a few stories, I worked for a year or so in collaboration with Miles J. Breuer, and learned a great deal from him.

CHARLES BEAUMONT: Originally, L. Frank Baum. Then, probably, Edgar Rice Burroughs. Then Ray Bradbury. The last was especially difficult to break away from, owing to his strong, personal style. Other influences are too numerous to mention.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE: Stapledon; Wells; 'Don A. Stuart'. Science hobbies.

E.E. "DOC" SMITH: While I liked Haggard, Verne, Wells, Burroughs, and a couple of others, I do not believe that I was influenced very much by any of them. The ideas for the SKYLARK OF SPACE came strictly out of my own head, and I have tried to keep things that way ever since.

JAMES BLISH: *One* author? Then I'll have to name Henry Kuttner, though the margin between his influence and that of several other writers is rather narrow, and I name them in different orders on different days. For the record, the others are del Rey, de Camp, van Vogt and Heinlein. The fact that I was educated to be a limnologist obviously couldn't have failed to influence me, too. And I think I was influenced for the worse by the fact that I began writing s-f when the rates were so low, and magazines so plentiful, that it was relatively easy to get a bad story into print by giving it away.

TED WHITE: I have always thought most highly of Heinlein, but my immediate influences are Chandler, Ross MacDonald, Ed Lacey, and the other mystery writers of that type, and sf writers like Poul Anderson and, most recently, Keith Laumer (whom I admire despite his limitations).

HORACE GOLD: There weren't many around in the late '20's and early '30's. Even those who were selling were pretty unskillful, which makes the call for a return of 'the sense of wonder' pure nostalgia and nothing more. Of those who mattered, Wells and Verne, and Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD and Philip Wylie, and an undeservedly neglected master, T. S. Stribling -- all these and others outside s-f helped form me. Let's not overlook A.E. Coppard, one of the great short-story authors of our time. You don't know his work? Fie--trot to the library right now and get acquainted! Later, when I was selling, I think Heinlein and de Camp and I influenced each other quite a lot.

TERRY CARR: Ray Bradbury, of course...I think every young writer of the last 15 years has gone through his Bradbury phase. Leigh Brackett was and still is a big influence on me. Others: Sturgeon, Poul Anderson,Matheson, Eric Frank Russell, *etc.* Weinbaum, too, of course. Background? I was the only person even slightly literary in my family, though I had an uncle in Oregon who could spin some fine tall tales. (He appears as a character in *The Old Man of the Mountains*, *F & SF*, April, '63.) Education? I went up through 3 years of college, English major. I learned a lot about symbolism, mainly. Fandom was also a tremendous influence -- primarily in giving me a more natural flow of style.

ALFRED BESTER: No one author influenced me the most; many different authors influenced me in many different ways. As I've said before, background, education, and experience are the raw materials with which the author works. The background can never be altered, but education and experience must continue constantly throughout the author's life. At the moment when he becomes incapable of learning and unreceptive to life, he ceases to be an author.

ARTHUR PORGES: Kipling, now much under-rated, but whose later stories like *Dayspring Mishandled* and some of his very earliest, like the powerful *Little Tobrah*, are incomparably good. If anybody wants to see how a master deals with the supernatural, let him read *The Wish House*, or *The House Surgeon*. Without any raw-head-and-bloody-bones fustian, Kipling makes the reader's skin crawl. Other influences were general: I read a great deal as a child, and ever since, and in wildly unrelated fields--from archery to bell-ringing.

ROGER ZELAZNY: One author: Stanley Weinbaum.
Other factors: A fondness for oddity.

ANDRE NORTON: Haggard, Merritt, Mundy, Dornford Yates--wide and constant reading helped me most. Very keen high school class in creative writing under inspiring teacher.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL: A) E.E. Smith, C.E. Scraggins, James Jeans, Arthur Eddington. *B)* M.I.T.

CLIFFORD D. SIMAK: It's hard to pick any one author. The only influence any of them had was style--I admired the way they wrote. I wouldn't say I tried to copy style, for that would be fatal, but I did unconsciously follow along the way they showed. If I had to name anyone it would be Galsworthy and Marquand in my early years--and crazy as it sounds, Proust in later years. And I am sure that my early life on a farm and my love of the outdoors has been a solid core of my writing attitude.

PIERRE VERSINS: Jules Verne, naturally, (I'm French and 40, hence Verne was one of the first authors whose works I read), and, a little later, J.-H. Rosny Aine, Jacques Spitz and Rene Barjavel; the French School, to be short and precise. But I was influenced also by mainstream authors and by philosophers; mainstream authors: Kafka, Joyce, Samuel Beckett and Raymond Queneau; philosopher: Soeren Kierkgaard. Background, education, *etc.*, were important factors certainly, but one event was predominant: I was in concentration camps at 21, and I can't forget it.

DANIEL F. GALOUYE: Odd as it may sound, I think my interest in imaginative literature might be traced directly back to Aesop, Grimm, Homer, *etc.* -- all of whom were encountered at an early reading age. Later came Verne, Wells, Burroughs. Then the moderns whom we today know as 'science fiction' authors. It would be difficult to conceive of a more influential factor, however, than Wells. My particular background was contributed to, in large measure,by an impelling interest in science courses--physics, astronomy, and the like--while persuing an arts degree in journalism. Helpful, too, was considerable wartime experience as a naval test pilot, lapping at the fringes of automatic guidance, loran, radar, JATO, drone planes and remote-control buzz bombs.

KURT VONNEGUT, JR.: George Orwell, George Bernard Shaw, Mark Twain, and H.G. Wells all excited me.

I was editor of a high school daily, liked it. I was managing editor of the Cornell Daily Sun, liked it. My literary training was newspaper work. Academically, I was a biochemistry student, with post graduate work in anthropology.

DAMON KNIGHT: Kuttner, I guess; I always thought he was the best craftsman in science fiction.

RICHARD WILSON: H.G. Wells, unquestionably. Please, everybody who hasn't, read THE COMPLETE SHORT STORIES OF H.G. WELLS. *The Complete*, mind you, not *28 of*, or *Selections From*, or *The Best of*, but *The Complete*. I found my sense of wonder in this volume; and years later in Gernsback's *WONDER STORIES* and Lord Dunsany's *Books of Wonder*.

An important factor was the opportunity of publication at an early age. I was probably 9 or 10 when I was first published, and regularly in the children's pages of a Sunday newspaper. No pay but plenty of exposure--and what a boost to the self-confidence.

RAY BRADBURY: Fairy tales to begin with, the Oz books next, then Edgar Rice Burroughs, then Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon, Jules Verne!, Walt Disney, Jack Williamson, Leigh Brackett, Henry Hasse, Henry Kuttner, Ross Rocklynne, Charles Hornig, Thomas Wolfe, John Steinbeck, Eudora Welty, Katherine Anne Porter, Willa Cather, Sherwood Anderson, Bernard Shaw, Shakespeare, in that order. All important, all needful. Oh yes, *POPULAR MECHANICS* and Tom Swift, and Joe Strong, Boy Magician. I have no college education. Not necessary!!!!

DEAN McLAUGHLIN: Exposed to science fiction from childhood. Find an intoxication of sorts from seeing odd, unrelated material put together in a logical structure. (Or old, familiar items seen suddenly from new point of view.) My own influences? Asimov I'm sure of. Probably also Heinlein (I've certainly been impressed by him). Poul Anderson. Don A. Stuart I suspect. (But not so much John Campbell, if you can grasp the distinction.) At one time, was much enamoured of the elaborate stylistic ventures of Sturgeon, but have long since abandoned that particular field to a man who can master it.

JOHN BRUNNER: Almost certainly, Rudyard Kipling, whom I regard as probably the most complete short-story writer ever to use the English language. (Read his science fiction and fantasy, if you haven't done so.)

As to background, I suppose growing up in a house full of books is as good a start as anyone could have.

TED CARNELL: No individual author influenced my formative *reading* (not writing); it was an accumulation of all the early pre-magazine era novelists, plus magazine writers such as Jack Williamson, E.E. Smith, J.W.C., Jr. in the early 1930's who were the giants of that era. By 1940 I was greatly influenced by the new writers developing -- Heinlein, van Vogt, Bradbury, *etc.* Background influence, however, was tremendously affected by joining the British Interplanetary Society in 1937 and meeting Eric Frank Russell, Walter Gillings, Arthur C. Clarke, William F. Temple and many others who were early members. The discussions at those early meetings all centered around astronautics and the fact that we were at the dawn of the space age. It seemed to me at the time that what had been almost a dream might conceivably come true within my own lifetime. The fact that technological advances during 1940-1946 were to hasten this possibility was completely unknown to us in 1939. Nevertheless, it has almost come true and I am still young enough (I hope) to expect to see a man on the Moon while I live. A fantastic thought to look back on in retrospect.

While the BIS was the focal point factor, the people I met -- many of them to later become outstanding authors of science fiction--had the greatest influence on my s-f thinking and indirectly led to editorship.

FRITZ LEIBER: H.G. Wells. Only less so: Isben, Lovecraft, Poe, Shakespeare, ERB, Doyle. The theatre--as background. College majoring in psych and minoring in physiology and math.

MARK CLIFTON: Can't answer what author. I'd read five books a week for twenty-five years before I sat down to the typewriter.

J. FRANCIS McCOMAS: Theodore Orchards. A desire for easy money.

JOHN CHRISTOPHER: In science fiction, difficult to say. John Taine, perhaps--I had a great admiration for the cool authority in his writing. (THE TIME STREAM; WHITE LILY.) Otherwise, beyond a shadow of a doubt, Aldous Huxley. I hope I've grown out of the latter, because I think his influence was bad. As to the general spur to writing, I have a feeling that a miserable early adolescence helps. I could be wrong, though.

JAMES E. GUNN: One strong early influence was Thomas Wolfe. A later, modifying, influence was Ernest Hemingway. The reading of much science fiction undoubtedly was a determining influence. A family environment of many adults interested in books and ideas, willing to discuss them with a youngster, dedicated to the 'truth' and the 'right' to the point of argument--this no doubt was important. A college education helped broaden the influences at work, particularly graduate study in English. Playwriting may have had a part.

ALLEN KIM LANG: Probably H.G. Wells: Half-baked sociology and splendid ideas, though (as Aldous Huxley says) "Like a rice-paddy--acres and acres of shiny water, nowhere over three inches deep". A long time in the army filled me with admiration for American speech, a shallow education in biological science convinced me that nothing is quite what it seems; I most acutely hurt for a weakness in math that I'm working to correct. As it is, I lean heavily on Asimov.

ROBERT BLOCH: H.P. Lovecraft was my mentor. A prosaic background led me to seek out fantasy; a limited formal education caused me to interest myself in general literature to fill obvious gaps.

JERRY SOHL: First it was H.G. Wells, then Hugo Gernsback, Jules Verne and Jack Williamson and A.E. van Vogt. It was Bob Tucker who got me into writing s-f, God bless him; he thought I could do it when I had my own doubts. A firm foundation in the sciences (even to the extent of operating a chemical laboratory once), the *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*, and a host of interesting friends who all spoke the way I did helped a lot.

FREDERIK POHL: I really don't know. The first writers I remember reading were Mark Twain, Voltaire, H.G. Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs and the usual array of children's books -- but I swear I can't find any real influence from any of them. Other factors--I don't think any of them were as important as science fiction itself, which I began reading at around ten. And never stopped.

CHARLES DE VET: van Vogt. An interest in that type of literature.

ZENNA HENDERSON: I am not conscious of being influenced by any one author any more than I am of being influenced in the development of my character by any one person in my life. The fact that I read omnivorously may have contributed.

POUL ANDERSON: Hard to name any one author. If pinned down, I'd probably say Kipling, but that doesn't mean that others didn't have comparable influence. As for non-literary factors, I'd hesitate to single out anything from the whole body of early experiences. The effects of a strictly scientific college education might perhaps be noticeable.

GORDON R. DICKSON: This is a question I've run into a number of times. And I've got no good answer for it. I can't pick out any one particular author that influenced me. Generally the English authors prior to the 1900s had the heaviest effect I think. Close beside these the American authors of the twentieth century and the classic Russian authors. Kipling, Chekov, Thomas Mann... I can't begin to name one or two without naming fifty more. As for other factors, it's impossible to sort out their relative influence. Everything that makes an individual goes into making that individual a writer, if he ends up being one. I will mention one thing--I've served two apprenticeships in writing. The commercial and practical apprenticeship began in the late 1940s when I dived into full time writing on a sink or swim basis. The academic apprenticeship began in 1939 when I went to the University of Minnesota from which (after time out for the war) I graduated in 1948 with a major in creative writing. This has given me a sort of binocular vision. I have sat in seminars of writing taught by Sinclair Lewis, Robert Penn Warren, and such -- and I would like to say that what is to be acquired by such methods can be extremely useful to an experienced writer, or highly destructive to an inexperienced writer.

As always, there is no invariant rule. I stick by my principle that those who will write, will write regardless. But there can be helps or hindrances along the way. In my case, the undergraduate and graduate work I did in writing is now proving to be extremely valuable to me. But for the years in which I was trying to learn the practical trade of writing while selling what I wrote, it was a continual conflict and befuddlement to the habits and processes I was evolving.

The reason was, I learned a great many principles of writing before I understood them. This is a somewhat esoteric point, but what I had to say about the inner ear was a point in reference to it. In the final essential the author writes by unconscious creative process. To attempt to examine or analyze that process consciously while it is still in a formative stage can be very destructive to it. However, once the process has developed, and justified itself, by producing successful writing, so that it is beyond hurting -- then the writer can gain by comparing it through analysis and study with the principles of writing and the work of other writers. And that study should never cease.

But each writer must, in the final essential, remain his own touchstone. That is where you have to look for help when real difficulty is encountered. Nowehere else.

FRED SABERHAGEN: Question seems impossibly vague. I hope I'm still formative.

ISAAC ASIMOV: The one author who influenced me most was John W. Campbell, Jr. As for other important influences, the fact that my father owned a news-stand so that I came across all the sf magazines at an early age was one; and the fact that I received a thorough education in science was another.

WILSON TUCKER: In mystery, Tiffany Thayer. In science fiction, it was Ray Cummings. I don't believe any particular background or education influenced me -- none that I am aware of now, at least. I did not come from a writing family, nor a scientific one in any respect. My education contributed nothing (formal education, that is).

P. SCHUYLER MILLER: Merritt, beyond a doubt--at least, so far as playing with strange words is concerned, though I think not with themes. (Any Merritt story utilizes information about locale, legend, *etc.*, that the average young writer just doesn't have.) Having read anything and everything long before I started grade school helped. Getting a couple of degrees in Chemistry (which I have used only incidentally) may have helped: Without them I might never have dared use technical themes or ideas, and would certainly not have known where to look for information to develop a scientific gimmick. On the other hand, if I had wound up a sociologist (unfortunately, we didn't know the depression was coming, and anyway, I avoid people), I might still be writing.

THEODORE STURGEON: To name 'one' author would be like picking out one tile in a mosaic as most influential. I'd say Wells, Dunsany, Burroughs, Blackwood, W.H. Hudson, Simak, Heinlein, Fletcher Pratt (as a person, never as a writer), Campbell and other editors, and Sturgeon -- I mention him because of his overweening conceit that, having soaked himself for years in the field, he finally came to the conclusion that he could write it better. I had a good academic home background coupled with very little schooling. This has its advantages, because living literature concerns living people and you get closest to them by living. I think, though, if I had it to do over again I'd stick with schools a little longer: college at least.

H. BEAM PIPER: My formative writings go back a long time, and one tends to forget. I am sure, however, that their name is legion. In the early days, as soon as I'd discover a new favorite, I'd decide that I was going to write like him. I was going to write like James Branch Cabell, which would have taken a lot of doing. Before that, I was going to write like Rafael Sabatini, and like Talbot Munday, and like Rider Haggard, and even, God help us all, like Edgar Rice Burroughs. I never wanted to write like H.G. Wells; he spent entirely too much of his time on a soapbox. Eventually I decided to write like H. Beam Piper, only a little better. I am still trying.

As my stories all have a political and social slant instead of a physical-science slant, I think the one author who influenced me most was Nicco Machiavelli, with H. L. Mencken placing and Karl von Clausewitz showing.

PHILIP K. DICK: van Vogt influenced me the most. Also Tony Boucher (*i.e.* his critical views, not his fiction). Also my interest in the Japanese novelists in the French department of Tokyo University, who wrote after World War Two. And my interest in Depth Psychology and drugs. And in 'stream of consciousness' writing, as with James Joyce. And -- but I wouldn't recommend this for the would-be writer--my own 'nervous breakdown', which I experienced at nineteen and then again at twenty-four and at thirty-three. Suffering of this sort educates your viewpoint, but at the expense of your creature-comfort principle; it may make you a better writer but the cost is far too great.

BRIAN ALDISS: I read a lot too much seventeenth and eighteenth century poetry; but one author? Sterne, maybe -- TRISTRAM SHANDY; Hardy, possibly; I still like his wry view of the world. The three years I spent in India, Burma, Sumatra, and Hong Kong at the age of 18-21 have a continuing effect on me. And all the trash I read as a boy, lapping it up hungrily, has taken its toll.

HARLAN ELLISON: No one writer ever did it. I made it a point never to read enough of one man at any one time to influence 'my style'. Algis Budrys helped me the most, personally, and Lester del Rey was there when I needed help, and mostly it was myself. I suppose I have been influenced by Hardy, Hemingway, Hammett, Steinbeck, Dickens and Twain, but mostly I'm me. And I like it that way. As to background, the best thing that ever happened to me was learning about bigotry first-hand when I was a kid being kicked unconscious in the schoolyard by anti-Semites.

KATHERINE MacLEAN: H.G. Wells. His SCIENCE OF LIFE, an encyclopedia of biology, gave me the trust in his ideas to read his novelized ideas and his science fiction and get a habit of screening the ideas-for-possibility from the ideas-for-kicks from the cooky ideas introduced for the needs of the plot and the real facts from the phony 'facts' that the plot had to have. Next year, age ten, I ran into a kid collector with a stack of magazines dating back to 1927 and read all twenty or forty of them in three-four days, and was hooked. But the screening habit and the science basis of the encyclopedia and BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE made it a good reliable source of science education too.

]*The 1969 Entries*[

KEITH LAUMER: Everything I ever read, everything that ever happened to me, influenced me. I can't pick out specific items that seem more powerful than others.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK: Edgar Rice Burroughs--P.G. Wodehouse--Anthony Skene--Frank Richards--it's hard to say which single author influenced me most, but say ERB. Background--parents'broken marriage, unwillingness to face reality--resulting in excessive and unhealthy reading of popular fiction. It might be fair to say that the serious elements of science fiction saved me in the nick of time.... Gradually I've grown up and been able to face the things I was perhaps unable to face and now the influences are, of course, a different bunch of writers.

JOANNA RUSS: Sidney J. Perelman was actually the greatest influence, I think, and possibly Dickens. After that I got too old to be influenced by writers I loved. My parents encouraged my writing, we had poetry games when I was little (identifying lines), my parents had a decent-sized library, and in general I was encouraged very early. Ideal, that way. I had a very good liberal arts education at Cornell, though it taught the kind of lit. criticism I still can't stand and immunized me to criticism (not reviewing, please!) for some 10 years, which were in that sense wasted. Writing was well-received by everybody around me all through and I had an early start. Also a conviction (age 12) that I was a genius which carried me through the early, awkward stages without too much upset. Useful.

HANK DAVIS: I'm doing my formative writings right now. My first three favorite writers are Sturgeon, Heinlein, and Clarke and I'm damned if I can see any influence that they are having on me, except possibly for a tendency to write trivial trick-ending short shorts which might be the result of reading Arthur C. Clarke's non-trivial trick-ending short shorts.

Before I began going to school, my parents read comic books to me. The ones I liked best were sf. Even in the Mickey Mouse-Donald Duck department, the groovy ones were when Mickey discovered a land of giant ants, or was fooling around with some invisible tank submarine gadget or when the Duck revived ancient Egyptians from dust or was in the jungle tracking down zombies, or looking for the place where the chickens lay square eggs (even ERB never thought of that one, by cracky!) or going to the moon and like that. When I was in the second grade, I read SLAN as it was reprinted in *FANTASTIC STORY*. Along about this time, the special issue of *COLLIERS* with the symposium on spaceflight came out.

With groovy stuff like this coming off, how could any normal human not wind up addicted to sf? Which lead eventually to writing it.

JOHN JAKES: I started early on Mr. and Mrs. Edmond Hamilton. They are equally responsible for foisting me on the public for good or ill, and I have told them they'd have to bear the blame! After them, Bradbury.

Though I completed my M.A. in English, with the exception of the professor referred to in #8, no so-called 'creative writing' teachers anywhere were helpful. This is because the world of the university is, at base, analytical as opposed to creative. All school writing courses that I had anything to do with were--like fandom and your Cousin Fred--too much talk, not enough writing.

DEAN R. KOONTZ: This is almost impossible for me to answer.

For one thing, I read at least three books a week, and therefore cover a good bit of ground. Many authors influence me. But, while I was beginning to write, I guess you could say I was most influenced by Robert Heinlein, Roger Zelazny, Samuel R. Delany -- and, in my mainstream work, by John D. MacDonald. Heinlein because of the concrete reality of his prose. Zelazny because of the intimacy with which he writes. Delany because of the wildly brilliant scenes he paints. In mainstream, and I guess in sf a little too, MacDonald because of his sure hand with characterization.

ALEXEI PANSHIN: Robert Heinlein and Walter Kaufmann are both important to me, along with many others. Other than that, it is all grist for the mist: background, experience, education, reading.

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS: Abraham Merritt certainly influenced me, and at a very early age too. I still think the first third of THE MOON POOL to be one of the best pieces of writing I ever read. Edgar Allen Poe! I cut my teeth on his short stories.

GREG BENFORD: Heinlein, Clarke, Mark Twain, Raymond Chandler, Kingsley Amis, Waugh (Evelyn). I've always liked science and that led me to sf at an early age. Most scientists I know have read sf at one time or another. I suppose the fact that I was a bookish kid led eventually to a heavy involvement with fiction which has a lot of wish-fulfillment in it, like sf. During most of adolescence I didn't read much sf, though, and took it up in my 20s for entirely different reasons--speculation, ideas, strange environments. I've always liked to travel and sf is as far as you can go in armchair touring.

PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER: This is a question that could require a long essay to answer. For one thing, the time of my formative writing can't be distinguished from my formative years as a child or youth. And I'm still forming--changing, that is.

I would say -- and the list is not long enough to be closely accurate--that I was formed by Baum's OZ, Grimm, Andersen, Jack London, E.R. Burroughs, A. Conan Doyle, Mark Twain, *The Arabian Nights*, Swift, Dumas, the Norse mythologies, Homer, the Greek mythologies, HIAWATHA, the Bible, Jules Verne, H. Rider Haggard. Especially Baum, Burroughs, London, Homer, and Mark Twain (and Swift). Later, Weinbaum, Dostoyevsky, Melville, Heinlein, Homer again, Williamson, Sturgeon, C. S. Lewis. Presentday authors who've impressed me: Kazantzakis, Pynchon, Ballard, W. Burroughs, E.R. Burroughs (revisited after many years of neglect), Vonnegut, Mailer, Tolkien, and a number of others. Some of the younger s-f authors, of course, and a small number of the older ones who have continued to change and to improve.

EMIL PETAJA: I started with H.P. Lovecraft and *WEIRD TALES* but was redirected later, as much out of necessity (to sell) as anything. Actually, following in the footsteps of a writer as individualistic as Lovecraft is a bad idea. You may admire him terrifically, but don't. Since I started in the late '30s and '40s I didn't have some of the finest s.f. writers to study. They came later. My background and education did not include advanced sciences, hence I was stuck with adventure-fantasy. Which suits me fine, yet a bit more would have helped. I keep reading.

ANDREW J. OFFUTT: My college education was of little value; I was too busy going about the business of obtaining a degree to study or learn much--except about People. My self-education since has. de Camp and Heinlein influenced me strongly, early on. Later, after I began to grow up, Vardis Fisher and Ayn Rand changed my life. And anyone who'd write is an ass if he doesn't *study* Twain and Robert Ruark. Twain's influence is very apparent in my *Population Implosion*. And Ruark has got to be (was) one of the finest *Craftsmen* who ever wrote in this country.

PIERS ANTHONY: I am aware of no single influence in my formative writing; I generally go my own way and do my own thing. I do devolve from an educated family--both parents have PhD's--and have had an expensive education. To this I attribute most of the writing finesse I may have. I consider it to be a tremendous advantage. Yet, for all that, I am learning more and better now than I ever did in school, because of the difference in motivation. I suspect that motivation -- the sheer, blatant drive to excel -- is really the most important influence on my work. And I think that only a profound egotist could actually believe that other people would *pay* to read what he writes.

LEO P. KELLEY: Which writer? Dylan Thomas. Which other writer? Thomas Wolfe. Both of them have that--what?--lyricism, I guess, that speaks in a loud clear voice to and gets an answer from my mystical Irish Blood--the material with which I write.

ANNE McCAFFREY: The single most important influence on me as a person and a writer was ISLANDIA by Austin Tappan Wright. A. Merritt, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and Edmond Hamilton undoubtedly influenced my thinking towards s-f. I wrote my senior honors thesis on 'Utopic Novels', Evgenie Zamiatin's WE being the main topic under discussion. It wasn't until 1950 that I began reading, and recognizing a firm interest in, s-f. Then Andre Norton came within my ken and I read her, and still do, avidly.

DANNIE PLACHTA: Reading of Ray Bradbury and listening to Roger Zelazny were influential.

DAVID GERROLD: In terms of science fiction, I always was a prodigious reader. Clarke, Bradbury, Sturgeon, Pohl, Kuttner, Kornbluth, Leiber and others were (in a manner of speaking) my childhood companions. But one, above all else, was a constant companion. Robert A. Heinlein.

In terms of writing in general, there is one other human being who had a most profound effect on me. Irwin R. Blacker, a screenwriter who also teaches at U.S.C. He taught me more about structure, characterization, plot, dialogue, and theme in one semester than I could have learned in ten years anywhere else.

LARRY NIVEN: Heinlein was the author. The most important influences were science fiction and money: A trust fund that allowed me to write for a year without selling one damn thing. One must (usually) write badly before one can write well. I was able to write badly faster! Because I didn't need to work on the side!

T. L. SHERRED: Author? O. Henry, possibly. He plays such snide tricks on his readers. Background? Shanty Irish, not lace curtain. *Real* poor. Education? College. Bored stiff. Experience? Truck driver, brush salesman,editor, engineer(military, which requires no degree and no brains), piano player in a whorehouse (this is cross-my-heart, and I had fun), radio script writer, ad agency copywriter, technical writer, cleaner and dyer (I can still, I think, turn out a razor press on a Hoffman), and die maker.

I wish I could say some one of these made me want to write. I'd go do whatever it was again.

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What do you consider the greatest weakness of Science Fiction today? | 11

GROFF CONKLIN: Low quality. Period.

CLIFFORD D. SIMAK: I wish I could detect these weaknesses. If I could, then maybe I could write better. I think all of us would write better if we kept in mind at all times that we were writing about the human animal, not about ideas or contraptions or gadgets, but about how these ideas and contraptions and gadgets affect humanity. Which, of course, is no answer. Sorry I haven't got one. Maybe if I had I'd be selfish and keep it for myself.

ARTHUR PORGES: The basic weakness is not in science fiction at all, where much excellent writing is being done, but in the reading public. The average person will accept the most wildly improbable treatments of sex, but lacks the courage (or flair) to grapple with the most obvious and inevitable extrapolations about the future of our society. Add to this the wide spread illiteracy about science, and the emotional freeze about social change, and no further explanation is needed.

KURT VONNEGUT, JR.: You are asking about a little social unit about which I know almost nothing.

ANDRE NORTON: Pretentious and self-conscious writing, but this is a fault shared by all modern fiction writing--the *story* must be the important thing.

PETER WEISINS: And *this* is a question! It could be that science fiction has hardly anything to do with science and with fiction, but, for my taste, this is not a weakness, since I don't think that science is important in science fiction (see my answers: 1, 2, and 5), and since I can perfectly read a book written by a literary moron, or else I'd have little to read each year (in this case, I seek in the book something else than literature). It could be that this kind of printed words appears only in specialized magazines, *but* it does appear also elsewhere (in France at least). Now, if you want an answer, I think this 'greatest weakness' is that science fiction writers and readers seem to live in a ghetto and are always asking for the sunny side of the street. But we have got it already... After all, if they're happy to live in the ghetto in which they think they live...

RAY BRADBURY: Not enough people are writing it. I wish more so-called mainline writers like Steinbeck, or name your own hero, would come into our field and push us around.

JOHN BRUNNER: It has lots of them! Some of them are foisted on from outside, like its (happily diminishing) 'bad name'; others are intrinsic and maybe connected with the matters raised under #3 above.

But what we need more than anything is a body of first-rate critical opinion scaled to the same criteria as general fiction. In other words, we need an army of damon knights crossed with gadflies. (This may be a personal complaint--I feel I work largely in a vacuum, with only occasional reader-comment and the editor's acceptance or rejection to tell me I'm on the right track. But I think plenty of people agree with me.)

DEAN McLAUGHLIN: Conditions are such that few, if any, can survive writing it with no other source of income. Therefore, it becomes hard for SF to hold what talent it has. Even harder for new talents to develop. (Yet some striking ones emerge in spite; was struck just this evening by Roger Zelazny's *A Rose for Ecclesiastes*. If it's not a fluke, and I don't think it is, we have a man with Bradbury's different-ness but without Bradbury's gosh-ain't-I-cute flashiness.)

ROGER ZELAZNY: Oh damn! Beardless am I. I carry no bombs. I am just not qualified to sit in judgement, to suggest that SF's greatest weakness is also part of its greatest strength -- its autonomy, its appendix-like position in the body of modern prose--nor to observe that this specialized character is, of course, the reason that it attracts so few new writers, as compared with other mediums which produce a plethora of interchangeable competencies with every passing season. I do not possess sufficient authority to suggest that while the weakness of this position lies in the fact that SF can generally only draw onto itself writers from its own small, circumscribed segment of the population -- people who are aware of what has gone before and who are familiar with the present exigencies involved in writing for the field--that the strength of this position lies in the writers' odd integrity, their dedication to the principle of The Different Thing That Has Not Happened, But Might; and the cohesiveness that is born of their near-incestuous self-fertilizations -- the latter allowing for many stories to explore, over a period of time, the alternatives to any given concept. I feel that this situation cannot but be salutary in the long run, because I do not believe that SF will always be so insular a thing as it is today.* Such being the anticipated case, SF's uniqueness should ultimately be the key to its drawing of more unique writers onto itself, and in greater quantity, once its slow-growing circulation indices have been upped. Present though, re this inherent paradox, is SF's inherent verity (I'll wrench poor Santayana out of context to say it for me, since I do not presume to speak on these matters): "To attempt to give such things a wide currency is to be willing to denaturalize them in order to boast that they have been propagated." Beardless am I. I carry no bombs.

[*] If, for no other reason, than by positing that the percentage of SF readers in the total population is a constant, and assuming that the population is likely to increase. Mainly, though, I feel that the reading of SF may be expanded during the coming decade because of the nature of most college degrees being handed out these days, and the attraction of new readers after any big scientific break-through.

ALFRED BESTER: See #3. As a rule it is written by people who know little else but the small world of science fiction; and read by people who read little else. There are exceptions, of course, but in general the readers and writers of science fiction have limited horizons.

RICHARD WILSON: Lack of a sense of wonder. (That's a cheap answer; I don't really know. Whatever the weakness is, it is what keeps me from haunting the newsstands for the latest issue of every magazine, as I once did; what keeps me from reading more than about 1% of what is written in the field today. Maybe reality has outmoded old-fashioned s-f and a properly sophisticated form has not yet come along with enough regularity to replace it. Let me put it another way: Science fiction has lost its power to awe us; now it should entertain.)

JEFF SUTTON: Too much of it is merely the horse opera moved into space. Too much BEM, too much 'fiction' and not enough science. We need more of the Isaac Asimov approach -- the helluva good story which is soundly based and realistic, regardless of how deeply the future is penetrated. Asimov's worlds evolve from today ... his people, machines and total environment. I don't like 'horse operas' in space; I do like a plausible future history written now.

DAMON KNIGHT:

Editors.
Publishers.
Writers.
Illustrators.
Readers.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL: The failure of authors to carry out the basic function of exploring *new* idea-areas. After 30 years, they're still yakking about rocket ships and atomic power.

DANIEL F. GALOUYE: Science fiction appears to be running scared. Having fairly well exhausted major themes in all categories of extrapolated development, the field is attempting to reach ever farther outward in an almost frantic search for the bizarre. Part of this complex derives from the hot breath of contemporary technology which frightens us away from contemporary subjects and settings. It's too easy to be tripped up these days if a writer stays close in--unless of course, he happens to be an Arthur C. Clarke. Apparent sanctuary lies in going far out where technology hasn't yet managed to reach. But this is an unfortunate reaction. Along the main avenues and boulevards lie so many interesting lanes and alleyways that invite exploration.

TED CARNELL: Insufficient experienced writers, especially with a good general background of the *genre* as a whole.

BASIL DAVENPORT: The fact that I am no longer fifteen years old. I am sorry, I don't want to sound flippant, but I find myself reading much less of it than I once did, and I felt that it was just becoming jaded. I haven't read enough of today's SF to generalize.

JERRY SOHL: The weakness isn't in science fiction *per se* but in the public's lack of information. Most people still think of it in terms of Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon and are pleasantly surprised when they discover the field for themselves. We need to proselyte more, try to reach these would-be readers. But the movies and TV are turning them away from us. I don't know the answer.

WILSON TUCKER: Failure of writers to strike off the beaten path, failure of editors to buy those submissions that *are* off the beaten path. Literary incest is killing us.

(All right, do you want a typical gripe?: I am unable to sell an off-beat novelette dealing with a woman whose job it is to revive male corpses and put them to work in factories -- let the stiffs work while the masters enjoy themselves. Of course, sooner or later she revives one stiff who won't co-operate and he makes the novelette. It won't sell because ☺ I don't understand this.☺)

FREDERIK POHL: The laziness of writers. There are any number of honorable exceptions, but most writers find a format they can write with ease--and go on writing it.

ISAAC ASIMOV: An overconcern with the headlines of the moment. To attempt to be topical and to write stories dealing with a one-step advance beyond the present is treason to the whole purpose of science fiction.

JOHN CHRISTOPHER: I don't know much about it today. The great weakness of science-fiction seems to me inevitable in its form. Its concern is with ideas rather than people. The writer has to concentrate on background, and while he is doing that the figures in the foreground deteriorate into solid cardboard. The best function of imagination is to provide insight into the human condition, not to toss off mentally tittivating extrapolations on the social or technological scene. Compare, as examples of the highest reaches in both cases, Stapledon with Shakespeare.

JAMES E. GUNN: Lack of vigor may be science fiction's greatest weakness. The sense of mission seems to be gone. For lack of it, having misplaced it, science fiction turns to style and other amusements. In a misleading effort to be reunited with 'Mainstream' literature, science fiction may give up its reason for being--ideas, content--for a concern for "the eternal themes of love and death", as one critic once recommended. Science fiction is sociological fiction primarily, in which the hero is society which changes; mainstream literature is concerned with the eternal themes of love and death--here things happen to people, but not to society. Science fiction cannot achieve 'maturity' by sacrificing what makes it science fiction--content.

ALLEN KIM LANG: Poor marketing. The magazines hit the stands in a random pattern (*GAMMA* has never been seen here); the hardbacks get little advertising and back-of-the-hand reviews. I know, you mean the literary quality. Better, I think, than the economics of S-F writing deserves. What general novel of '63 was superior to SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES? Or funnier than CAT'S CRADLE? Campbell demands clear thinking, Davidson's a poet, Pohl has a sense of humor. With such editors (all three have helped me), the field seems broad enough to accomodate any sort of new talent.

MARTIN GREENBERG: The average writer does not work at his trade.

FRED SABERHAGEN: I have pondered long over this one. Think I'll just say we should all pursue excellence more eagerly.

POUL ANDERSON: The lack of good workmanship shown by all too many writers. Not only are the elementary principles of literature neglected, such as characterization, but there isn't enough effort to be original, to explore the implications of an idea, or even to get the science straight. I must admit, though, that the field has improved markedly since it struck a dismal low point a few years ago. I haven't the least notion why this is.

P. SCHUYLER MILLER: I don't know how it can be done -- maybe Ted Carnell has the answer--but I feel it isn't catching and holding enough new readers out of the great population pool. Fewer than a hundred thousand readers out of 180 million people just isn't enough for the *genre* to be really flourishing. The stale old themes and gambits do have to be worked over and over with ever-greater skill and scope and imagination, before neophytes can be led into the special concepts and sterotypes of 'advanced' SF.

PHILIP K. DICK: Its inability to explore the subtle, intricate relationships which exist between the sexes. Men, in their relationship with women, get themselves into the most goddam difficult circumstances, and s-f ignores -- or is unable to deal with -- this fundamental aspect of adult life. Therefore s-f remains pre-adult, and therefore appeals--more or less--to pre-adults. If s-f explored the man-woman aspect of life it would not lose its readers as those readers reach maturity. S-f simply must learn to do this or it will always be retarded -- as it is now. The novel PLAYER PIANO is an exception to this, and I suggest that every s-f fan and especially every would-be writer study again and again the details of this superb novel which deal specifically with the relationship of the protagonist and his wife.

CHARLES DE VET: Undue stress on writing that will appeal to the technician with loss of popular appeal.

ROBERT BLOCH: Low rates, in commercial magazines. Few professional writers can hope to make a decent living by devoting their fulltime efforts to the field. I believe economic incentive is important. A young beginner can prate and even practise idealism, but when he assumes adult responsibilities he has to worry about income. As a result, we have many part-time writers of science fiction who do, at times, excellent work. But how much better if they could really immerse themselves in the field!

FRITZ LEIBER: All attempts to turn it into a 'genre'--as by filling it with scientific or technical jargon without making those concepts real to the reader, or by writing it as a form of adventure story without interest in the speculations involved, or by avoiding deep feeling, or by making it only tricky and clever, *etc.*

THEODORE STURGEON: Not enough writers who give a damn about themselves, their work, or their world.

MARK CLIFTON: Lack of idea substance, and development. We haven't exactly tried to take the science out of science fiction but, intent or not, that's what we've nearly done.

GORDON R. DICKSON: I'm not sure that I can identify any weakness. Something I dislike or think is a weakness is too liable to develop in the next few years and turn out to be a factor of strength. I'll have to pass on this question.

J. FRANCIS McCOMAS: It has largely forgotten how to tell a story. It has forsaken entertainment for a dull sort of pseudo-sociology. But then, most writing, save mystery-suspense fiction, has done that of recent years. Science fiction deserves some praise for dealing so little with unhappy suburban marriages.

KATHERINE MacLEAN: The writers don't know enough. They aren't keeping up. And God knows it's not easy to keep up. Part of the reason progress has been accelerating so and it's getting hard to keep up with the trends, is that the scientists read science fiction and have the budgets to research anything that seems plausible. It's hard for s.f. writers to stay ahead of that, with the scientists right behind, and the *scientists* read each others research reports. They usually have subscriptions to technical journals as part of their expense accounts. At twenty dollars a subscription, where's the writer who can afford it? It's not part of *his* expense account. I've dropped out of pro - writing and am teaching and studying to be a Counselor particularly as a breather in an attempt to catch up. Also the fans don't know enough. You'd think a fan would at least have a sub to the *REPORTER* or keep up with the world politics as presented in *LIFE* before sounding off on politics. Intelligence without enough facts is sort of a waste. For the pure game of thinking, imaginary countries running by the logic of their own history is good as fun and exercise, and has the truth of logic.

HARLAN ELLISON: Oh, shit, the greatest weakness is bad writing, and being behind the times. I'm too tired to go into this in detail, but it angers me, and sometimes I'd like to talk to someone about it. Perhaps an analyst.

ZENNA HENDERSON: Sin, sex, and sadism--same as most writing today. I get awfully tired of bathroom and bedroom conversations and cruelty and violence. Also most SF stories sound like rather weary ditto marks. We need a new direction--a new emphasis--since space has been taken away, but why such a *sick*, dreary one?

BRIAN ALDISS: Its writers and readers.

E. E. "DOC" SMITH: There is too much smart, superficial, precious writing. Too much imitation; too much rehashing of old and beat-up themes. There is not enough honest-to-God THINKING.

JAMES BLISH: Lack of feedback between writers and readers. There are as many good authors today as there have ever been in the past---maybe more---but despite the good offices of fandom, they are disastrously out of touch with their audience.

ERIC FRANK RUSSELL: Lack of completely new ideas or of completely new slants on old ideas.

HORACE GOLD: I think it's stronger that it's ever been, and going to be stronger still. Something that annoyed me, but had no other effect--outside of witlessly dominating the awards--was the incredible fact that people who came to Conventions didn't read s-f! They were voting on stories, books and magazines they had not read whatsoever! This irritated me when I was editing, but it had no influence on what was being written and published, since the enormous majority of writers don't attend Conventions. It's the greatest weakness of fandom today. S-f itself is in fine shape. Don't let it be dominated by non-reading fans.

KATE WILHELM: Too few editorial desks. Too few people deciding what the general reading audience will get to see, and thus influencing what gets written. Why write a short story that will not be bought because you know the people who buy don't go for that particular kind of thing? And so many sf ideas are short story ideas. With novels there is more variety, but unfortunately Book editors don't seem to know the field as well as magazine editors, and can't tell a good sf novel from a bad one.

ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES: Impossible to give a fair answer as I read virtually no current science fiction. Perhaps this is a partial answer though: Very little current science fiction, even the best, arouses my interest, while I can re-read much of the (let's face it, far from good) science fiction of the 30's with enjoyment.

JAMES H. SCHMITZ: I'd say its greatest weakness, which isn't a weakness specifically of today, is that it ordinarily lacks the elements that are employed to develop interest and hold it in ordinary fiction. Or if they're used, they're not used skilfully enough. While the ideas remain fresh to a reader who happens to like fresh ideas, that's not so important, but eventually he has seen most of them in previous variations. After that, there isn't really much left to keep him interested in Science Fiction, in general, although there always have been exceptional SF stories which were satisfying by any standard.

LEIGH BRACKETT: Lack of vitality, too much introspection and self-consciousness. It is not alone. All fiction and drama these days seem to be suffering from the same thing--loss of splendor. And this at a time when man stands actually and physically on the threshold of space, with all the universe before him!

WILLIAM TEMPLE: Lack of human warmth.

JACK WILLIAMSON: The lack of great science fiction writers.

JOE HENSLEY: Magazines which publish good old formula stories and writers who write them.

TERRY CARR: The complexity of the present frontiers of science. When sf started, scientific innovations were comparatively simple -- spaceships, radar, televison, *etc.* Nowadays if a writer wants to deal with what's actually new in science, or upcoming, he has to study DNA, contraterrene matter, atomic physics and a thousand more things I can't even mention (because I'm virtually illiterate, scientifically speaking). In order to deal with these ideas in a story he has to give a short course in a complex subject...and that's all too often either damnably difficult or downright impossible.

I think this is a prime reason for the recent concentration on sociology as the science in science fiction. Sociology isn't as complex as the other sciences, and since it deals directly with people it can be translated into plot terms much more easily. But it lacks that ol' Sense of Wonder.

LESTER DEL REY: Dullness, caused by lack of ideas. Except for a few writers such as Heinlein, Anderson, *etc.*, most in the field today are simply rehashing minor variations on tiny fragments of old themes. Most writers have learned to write skilfully now and have forgotten to think, imagine and dream before writing. Again, *what* is said and how rich the contents means far more than how prettily it may be penned.

EDMOND HAMILTON: Too much talk about science-fiction, its nature, its requirements, its exact definition, is, I think, the reason for the arbitrary pontificating which gratifies a coterie of like-minded critics, but which leaves possible new readers cold.

RICHARD LUPOFF: I think that SF is in one of its periodic times of consolidation and preparation for the next Leap Forward. After all, since Hugo created the universe in 1926, we've gone through a number of periods: Wiring-diagram SF under Hugo, followed by the Big Breakthrough under Campbell, to magnificent storytelling based on broadened extrapolation. Then the sociology and introspection of Gold and the literary highlights of Boucher. Today, the lead has passed from the magazines to the paperbacks, and we are in a period of revived adventuring. I think this is grand fun, and I hope there will always be a place for pure-adventure SF. But I think we are all stirring around looking for the real key to the future, to the next great movement in SF, and I hope somebody comes up with it pretty soon. I got pretty tired of examining XXI Century Man's navel a few years ago, and gave up contemporary SF for the Golden Age stuff I'd missed Now I'm reading the new adventure stuff with great pleasure, but I'm looking forward to a new burst of imagination.

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY: Frankly, I *like* science fiction today--James White, Heinlein, Andre Norton, *etc., etc.* I could do without the burlesque s-f such as *Ferdinand Feghoot* and the itty-bitty vignettes where one never quite knows what's coming off or what's happened, but in general I like modern s-f *better* than that written thirty years ago, and I'll follow it where it goes. I like the trend, too, towards a renaissance of fantasy-adventure, such as Andre Norton's WITCH WORLD and my own Darkover stuff.

MACK REYNOLDS: No guts. Conforming.

THEODORE L. THOMAS: Needs many new young writers.

CHARLES BEAUMONT: Generally poor writing, resulting from low rates. One cannot support a family when one is strictly a sf writer, though a few do try. The situation is not likely to change, either, for the world is catching up with sf. The orbiting capsules and plans for the lunar shot caused not the expected boom but, instead, a terrible bust.

TED WHITE: The greatest weakness in sf today are almost mirror opposites: *1)* Bad writing (as I mentioned earlier). *2)* A pretentious desire to be accepted as part of Literature by writing slickly and sickly. One group could not meet the standards of good writing in any area which does not focus upon ideas instead of people, as ours does. The second has fallen prey to the *NEW YORKER* School on Non-writing in which plotting and most particularly *story telling* are ignored. As near as I can tell, the motivation for this second school of writers is to appear in *PLAYBOY*, and thus and thence in Judy Merril's collection.

REGINALD BRETNOR: Three weaknesses: the s-f market, the s-f image, and s-f's friends. Cure these and you have it made.

GEORGE O. SMITH: The inability of the great mass of casual readers who find it hard to follow and hence hard to swallow unless it's a simple old bug-eyed-monster story from inner ocean or outer space, which is the lowest form of science fiction, if it can be called that. Second, because of the first, a dearth of outlets that pay enough to attract the better writers. A great many of our better tale-tellers started off in science fiction. They left it for the main reason for writing, or digging ditches, or inventing, or pushing a bookkeeper's pencil. Shhhh, it's money.

AVRAM DAVIDSON: There seems a certain lessening of the imaginative faculty in today's SF. We are resting on our oars and just eddying around.

ROBERT SILVERBERG: Ignoring the need to supply scenes of wonder. Concentration on meaningless plot complications instead of color and insight. Excessive use of near-future settings. Unwillingness to take chances with a story.

ROBERT F. YOUNG: Its attempt in too many cases to appeal to the intellect rather than to emotions.

AUGUST DERLETH: In all too many cases story is sacrificed to almost everything else--to science, to sociology, philosophy, *etc.*

ANTHONY BOUCHER: Dullness. To be more specific; repetitive, derivative reiteration of hackneyed themes and devices.

H. BEAM PIPER: Not enough people read it, and there doesn't seem to be much of anything anybody can do about it. I remember, years ago, Fletcher Pratt was bemoaning this situation and saying that we must enlarge our readership. I said then that it couldn't be done, and I still think so. It's like the attempt of Charles VII of France to create a French archery to compete with the English longbowman. He found he couldn't grab a lot of peasants out of the fields, give them bows, and expect them to stand up to the English, who trained an archer by starting with his grandfather. We wouldn't have to go back quite that far to make science fiction readers, but the type of inquisitive and speculative mind needed for the enjoyment of what we know as science fiction must be developed rather early, and our present school system seems to be doing little to help.

When Charles VII found that he couldn't train French longbowmen, he settled for training crossbowmen. They weren't as good on the battlefield, but they were the best he could do. What I'm afraid of is that the publishers who decide which stories will be bought and which bounced back will buy stuff suited to the mentality of a large mass readership, a readership that will accept as science fiction anything that casually mentions a space-ship or a World Government, without any confusing egg - head stuff about what the planets the space-ship goes to are really like, or what a World Government would have to do.

Then we'd be back where we started, only it wouldn't be nearly as much fun. Instead of Ol' Space Ranger doubling for Hopalong Cassidy and the cattle-rustlers all in the space-pirate business, we'd have psychological stories with robot psychologists, and Boy meets Girl--or maybe Boy meets Boy, to judge from some of the recent Mainstream stuff--on a space-ship to Mars instead of a Carribbean cruise, and sagas of the ad-agencies, in which thought transmitters take the place of TV.

And the only real science fiction writing left will be in the fanzines.

I am almost sixty now. It gives me the most inexpressible pleasure to reflect that by the time this has happened, I shall be dead.

]*The 1969 Entries*[

NORMAN SPINRAD: Fandom.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK: It no longer looks squarely (or even obliquely) at the real problems of the present and future.

DEAN R. KOONTZ: The greatest weakness, as I have hedged around before, is that sf strains so hard to be approved. I disagree with those who would pattern their prose after what mainstream critics seem to desire. Surely, borrow what is good from the mainstream, but don't give up that which is good in sf. I think, once the New Wave subsides, we will have devised a science fiction that is molded from the best of the stylistic principles of mainstream and the best story-telling concepts of sf. That will be one helluva literature! It will be a literature that has discarded the triteness of space opera and a literature that will have taken into consideration the advances of Heller and Mailer, Roth and Updike. If sf gives in to the present weakness to win critical approval and does not retain that which has given it life for years, it will be nothing but an imitation of mainstream, which is regression, not progress. Of course, those that would reject the New Wave out of hand are weakening sf just as much. Fiction without advancement is as dead as the fiction of imitation.

H. KEN BULMER: A lack of responsibility.

T. L. SHERRED: I wish I knew. I let my subscription to *ANALOG* lapse years ago. I never saw *IF*, and the *MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION* I haven't read since Avram Davidson published sentences with no predicates and damn little objects, and *GALAXY* I should read because Fred Pohl is such a nice guy. Doubleday sends books through the SFWA; the covers are excrable but every once in a while John Brunner shows up. The last Judy Merril anthology was not science-fiction, nor was it anything. I don't like sideburns, beards, nor any piece of music written after 1928, which might explain everything.

ANDREW J. OFFUTT: Come on. In this space? Essentially this: For a long time we've accepted and loved and revered writers who were barely competent, barely literate. Suddenly two or three guys came along who work well with this language, and, in general, write quite well indeed. So -- we adulate and revere and shower praise and prizes on them because of their competence as writers. But--to a very great extent they ain't writing science fiction, and I think it's a childish and ridiculous spectacle---and *dangerous*.

JOANNA RUSS: Staleness -- the same weakness every other field has. And a kind of thinness that may be unavoidable. We can't delve into individual psychology in the taken-for-granted way that realistic fiction (18th Century and on) has always done. But this thinness also shows up in much contemporary Mainstream fiction. One of the greatest advantages of being in s.f. is that there are things to write *about*, and that nobody bothers much about the thing that does bother other writers: The feeling that everything's been done. Also, the physical sciences are a fund of metaphoric thinking and feeling that the 'mainstream' writer just doesn't have access to, a real treasure-trove. There is also the fixed idea that we ought to be prophets or religious figures or Great Teachers, which is pretty silly. The teaching will be done by the medium itself, and quite unconsciously (therefore uncontrolledly). An interesting example of the latter: I know people who are radically Left (New Left) for whom s.f. by people like Heinlein and Poul Anderson was very important when they were growing up. They seem to have been influenced not by these authors' obviously stated ideas (which are, in fact, incompatible with their own ideas) but by the very fact that the stories were about colonizing the Moon, traveling into another galaxy, the fantastication, the wildness, *etc.* I know people who fell in love with Flash Gordon movies for the same reason, and whose ideology is Communist or communistic or groupy or what-have-you. The covert and the overt message here are very different. The serenity with which some of those people will throw away the explicit moralizing in a story is astonishing.

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS: I have no idea of the greatest weakness of s-f today. The fact is I did not know it had a weakness.

LARRY NIVEN: Judith Merril, Alexei Panshin, Sam Moskowitz. Take your pick.

ALEXEI PANSHIN: Most of it is ill written.

PIERS ANTHONY: The editors.

DANNIE PLACHTA: Inadequate writers.

DAVID GERROLD: The greatest weakness of science fiction today is its casual and almost callous disregard of science. Too many of our new writers (and a frightening number of those who should know better) seem to be too lazy to be scientifically believable. Or even valid, for that matter.

What I'm talking about is that we are getting too many stories that pander to the Saturday Matinee mentality. The "My-Lightening-Is-Stronger-Than-Your-Lightening!" school of science fiction. The worst offender on this count is Roger Zelazny's LORD OF LIGHT. (Yes, it was a good book--and yes, it did deserve its Hugo; but that does not change the fact that it was more fantasy than science fiction.)

Perhaps this trend is happening because too many of our new writers feel that all of the old ideas have been mined out, so they must reach for action and excitement instead of thoughtful extrapolation. But I don't subscribe to that theory.

DEE F. KELLEY: Science fiction's failure to gain acceptance is due not primarily to a weakness of science fiction itself but to the muddleheadedness and snobbery and just plain ignorance on the part of some (too many) school teachers, librarians, book reviewers and editors.

HANK DAVIS: The greatest weakness of sf at present is the inability of most writers to create characters about whose activities and fortunes or misfortunes the reader can feel deeply.

PHILIP JOSE FARMER: The low pay to authors. Publishers, printers, distributors, *etc.*, have gotten much more money as the years go by and the cost of books (and everything else) goes up. But the author is being paid very little more, far less in proportion than others mentioned before.

Another weakness is the fossilization of many of the s-f readers, both young and old but mainly the old. Too many don't have the flexibility of mind to grow along with a field that is evolving.

JOHN JAKES: Too much of a narrow view: "Let's see, I think I'll write a story about how this particular new kind of light switch will change mankind's history. For the worse." Exaggeration, of course, but I...and many other writers, I fear...are guilty of evading the future's effect on basic human subjects. Birth. Death. Love. The tired old parade of clichés that are clichés because that is what humanity is made of. We're still looking for our Twains and Tolstoys. I am confident we'll find them though.

GREG BENFORD: The inability to seem real. Sf has weak emotional impact because the situations and characters don't grab the reader. Intellectual content is high and for people who are captivated by ideas sf is fine. But too much sf is cold, austere and inhuman and ordinary people find too few emotional handholds.

KEITH LAUMER: Poor writing, of course. We have the Hearty Engineers' Prose school, with its open contempt of any standards of story-telling; and at the other extreme we have those who have just discovered the magic of the typewriter--and that you can string words together in curious, unlikely ways, and that many critics will leap on this with glad cries. We have too few writers who are genuinely concerned with the craft--the art--of writing, who love words, who know their beauty and their power. And we have too few readers who appreciate a powerful prose style when it turns up in the pages of their favorite mag. To the bulk of SF readers, it seems to me, a discussion of a story means a discussion of its plot. The plot is nothing--it's what the writer does with the plot--and how he does it.

EMIL PETAJA: I hesitate to mention any, since I feel that modern S.F. writers are doing such a marvelous job. There are so many really good ones working right now and seemingly getting better and better. The difficulty is to keep up with one's reading them all. I would like to add my pet peeve, though. Science fiction encompasses more than physics and chemistry -- it concerns itself with the entire scope of Man's life and all phases of human behavior: sociology, psychology, *etc. etc.* Hence the worry about 'hard-core' science writing ("give us more SCIENCE") is not necessarily valid. Science Fiction as the term can be defined nowadays, wears many, many hats--and rococo or severe, they all fit. To each his own. Good!

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...a Note to the Contributors:

While planning this volume, the Question arose as to whether or not we should attempt to contact as many of the 'original' participants as possible -- and offer them the opportunity to update/change/revise their answers...if they so desired. In the end--mainly for reasons of time, although there were others--we decided to publish the fanzine version as it stood.

But now that it is over and done...*now* we say: Should any of you desire to further persue a theme on which you were cut short by the questionnaire's space limitations...or to change, take another look at, or in some way alter any of your answers/comments as they appear in this volume --the pages of *DOUBLE:BILL* are always open to you.

...the same is true, should you care to comment (favorably or not) on the answers of some of the *other* participants.

...and, once again...Thanks from both of us to all of you, for being a part of all this!

...a Note to Potential Contributors:

You're Out There; that much we know. As Anne McCaffrey pointed out, there are over three hundred current members in the SFWA...and this doesn't encompass the entire field, at that. Provided this volume generates enough interest, it might be nice to attempt compiling *one* more Symposium, utilizing the same Questions, and with a tentative publication date coinciding with the *1971* World SF Convention.

...if you consider yourself a Professional Writer or Editor of Science Fiction...or Science Fantasy...or SF, or...and you would be interested in participating, please contact us. (We would prefer to furnish you with standard questionnaire sheets.)

(As an aside...If you consider yourself to be a Professional Writer or Editor of something called 'Sci-Fi'...that's another field, and you have our sympathy.)

Again, the original signed answer sheets will be bound and offered at auction for the benefit of TAFF...as will a percentage of the final volume.

Please Note: This is by no means restricted to American or English-speaking/writing authors. There is an ever-increasing number of (to us) foreign writers of Fantasy & SF, and we'd like to include them also in this invitation.

...a Note to the Reader:

We welcome comments, general or specific, discussions, agreement or dis-, or whatever you might want to add to what's been said in the preceeding pages. We reserve the option to publish any such comments in *DOUBLE:BILL*...but such a course is by no means guaranteed.

And we hope that, overall, you've enjoyed our monster.

We did.

BILL BOWERS & BILL MALLARDI : Post Office Box 368 : Akron : Ohio : 44309

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