

PUBLICATIONS OF THE INSTITUTE OF TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY STUDIES

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FROM HORACE GOLD

Dear Ted:

Thanks for gutting me past the malice, stupidity and dishonesty of the few who manage to sound like so many, to the genuine sense of loss and desire for reconciliation of the very great majority. Along with those authors -- and the readers -- I share the feeling of loss, and I have disregarded the editorial dictum that there is no way of winning back an alienated writer, as most of your subscribers can testify.

Can so many writers have been alienated by ~~SM~~ any one person? The malice, stupidity and dishonesty noted above say yes. But modesty prevents me from taking the credit alone. Some writers, like yourself, aren't aware that the writing of s-f engenders ideas, that the one sure way to dry up the well is not to use it. Others made the mistake of trying to earn a living at s-f and nothing else, when s-f should account for no more than some fraction of any writer's income. Still others graduated into books and left the filling of magazines to others, because only a tiny portion of book-lengths can be absorbed as serials, while others went into different fields entirely.

So there are all sorts of reasons for the disaffection. This is normal in every field -- automatic shifts are optional equipment on all but the very rarest of authors.

There is a phenomenon that is true only of s-f, however. Writers hate to leave it, and long to come back, and would if an acceptable peace treaty could be found.

I confess under no duress whatever that I have not been any more able to find acceptable terms than the editors who alienated me in 1935 and again in 1940. I felt then that nothing more was needed than an invitation to return and a promise of better treatment, and I was hurt, bewildered and angry when no such offer was made -- and I went right on being astonished at this casual squandering of talent until this very moment, for I was far from being the only PQed writer both times. Perhaps the only formula I could have bought was yours:

"Look, let's forget the past. You need Galaxy and Galaxy needs you. Send me your best and I'll either print it as it stands or reject it as it stands."

I don't know if my demand would have had to be so extreme -- too many years and millions of words and thousands of issues of all sorts obscure that particular pickle of mine. Nor does it matter.

It would be a criminal waste not to accept these terms in the hope of winning back authors who are so badly missed. I do accept them, fully, and in the best of faith.

My acceptance means exposing myself to the few of your subscribers who are malicious, stupid or dishonest. But to let that stop me would be adding desertion in the face of the enemy to criminal waste of talent.

I accept.

Sincerely,

*Horace*

## FROM THE SECRETARY:

A member has come up with the following suggestion: "How about setting up a list of recommended agents to, in effect, tout people off wrongos?" It seems to your secretary that such a list might be of decided benefit to newcomers to the field and/or writers living in areas isolated from the New York scene. If the membership would care to make recommendations for such a list, we will be happy to run it in PITFCS - 134. In fact, the general subject of agents in itself should produce enough comment to brighten up what promises to be a long and dreary winter. For example, what about the often debated contention that Scott Meredith's mills has ruined more writers than it has helped? And it is true that Forrest Ackerman used to offer editors a story free if they'd buy three others? The pages are open.

\* \* \* \* \*

Contributions to operating expenses of PITFCS and addresses of writers not on the mailing list have been trickling in. Although enough of the former have not yet been received to make possible a switch to mimeo this issue, enough of the latter have come in (with the addition of those already on hand) to make possible a preliminary report on the geographical distribution of the profession.

New York	38	Ohio	4	Tennessee	2	New Mexico	1
California	36	Wisconsin	4	Texas	2	Rhode Island	1
New Jersey	18	Colorado	3	Connecticut	1	Virginia	1
Pennsylvania	12	Florida	3	Delaware	1	Vermont	1
Illinois	9	Minnesota	3	Iowa	1	Washington	1
Arizona	4	North Carolina	3	Kentucky	1	West Virginia	1
Massachusetts	4	Kansas	2	Louisiana	1		
Michigan	4	Oregon	2	Missouri	1	Total	165

What makes the total of 165 especially impressive is that it represents only a partial compilation of those who are, or have been, active as science fiction writers, editors, agents, and illustrators. Our guess is that there are at least a hundred more who are not in our files. If you have not as yet checked your address books for names of qualified members who do not appear on the list published in the last issue, it would be greatly appreciated if you would do so. The more members we can actively involve in the Institute, the more interesting it will be for all concerned.

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And while we are in a compiling mood, we thought it might be interesting to set up a partial peek list so that members who appear in the 1950-1954 supplement to the Short Story Index would have some idea as to their chronological rank.

Miriam Allen deFord	1888	Leslie Charteris	1907	A.E. Van Vogt	1912
William F. Jenkins	1896	L. Sprague DeCamp	1907	P. Schuyler Miller	1912
Stanton Coblenz	1896	Robert Moore Williams	1907	Jack Finney	1912
Leo Margulies	1900	David Wandrei	1908	Alfred Bester	1913
Oliver LaFarge	1901	Jack Williamson	1908	Bruce Elliott	1914
Frank Belnap Long	1903	Carl Jacobi	1908	Robert Bloch	1914
Clifford D. Simak	1904	August Berleth	1909	Wilson Tucker	1914
Basil Davenport	1905	Fritz Leiber	1910	Groff Conklin	1914
Manly Wade Wellman	1905	Kendell Crossen	1910	Lester Del Rey	1915
Eric Frank Russell	1905	John W. Campbell	1910	Raymond F. Jones	1915
Robert E. Howard	1906	Sam Merwin	1910	Edmund D. MacDonald	1916
Mark Clifton	1906	Idris Seabright	1911	Betsy Curtis	1917
Fredric Brown	1906	Catherine Moore	1911	Arthur C. Clarke	1917
Robert Heinlein	1907	Anthony Boucher	1911	Theodore R. Cogswell	1918



Sturgeon, Theodore	1918	Isaac Asimov	1920	Robert Abernathy	1924
Max Reynolds	1918	Alfred Copel	1921	Poul Anderson	1926
Milton Lesser	1918	Harry Clement Stubbs	1922	Richard Matheson	1926
Martin Greenberg	1918	Jerome Bixby	1923	Frank Robinson	1926
Frederik Pohl	1919	Alex Apostolides	1923	Robert Sheckley	1928
Horace Gold	1919	Walter M. Miller	1923	Glad Oliver	1928
Ray Bradbury	1920	Judith Merrill	1923	Phillip K. Dick	1928
Philip Klass	1920	Scott Meredith	1923	Charles Beaumont	1929

From these figures an interesting profile can be derived. Excluding those whose birth dates were not given, writers whose stories were anthologized between 1950 and 1954 at the present time have an average age of 46 and are 92.3% male.

### MEMBERSHIP COMMENT

#### Isaac Asimov Says:

I suppose I'm a spoilsport but why don't we change the subject? First of all, we're punching pillows, because editors aren't answering us (and I don't blame them for not bothering.) ((But they are. Unhappily, however, they always start out with "This is not for publication!" and then make statements that would send ninety percent of the membership leaping to their typewriters if I could just print them. TRC)) Secondly, we're talking to ourselves and weeping on our own shoulders. Thirdly, we're having it better than the editors, as I doubt that any of the complainers are having the economic difficulties the various magazines are.

So I'll talk about something else.

Tell me, Ted, has anyone noticed the poems you write for PITFCS? ((Wollheim has. His comment appears a few pages on. TRC)) Well, I'm no judge of poetry in the high-art sense, but I like what you write and I know what I like as well as does any farmer in Iowa.

In the main, I like your ballad about the streets of Jerusalem. What with my own background and my thoughtful glance at the history of the last two thousand years, my feelings toward Christ are, shall we say, ambivalent. I am even free of the compelling necessity of believing that there was a historical character equivalent to the Christ described in the Gospels.

So you see, the fact that I was affected by the ballad sufficiently to read it over a number of times and sing it, too, cannot be attributed to the overtones of religiosity that might have misled me. I just liked the poem. Or, put it this way ~~which~~ it affected me emotionally, which is what, I gather, poetry is supposed to do.

Why don't more of us use PITFCS for the publication of material we have to turn out and consider unpublishable in the usual sense. The rest of us can enjoy it then. I would myself if I had the talent for it.

I might even do it despite lack of talent, if only to crowd out some of the material which is just beginning to impress me as displaying a little too much self-pity to be palatable.

((The Secretary Says: As a matter of policy, congratulatory comments on the publication and remarks addressed to the secretary personally are removed from letters before publication. In this case, however, we are letting paragraphs three, four, and five of Asimov's letter stand because they are needed as background for paragraph six, which

contains a suggestion that has been made before in these pages. Although PITFCS is designed primarily as a journal of opinion, it was hoped that it could to a certain extent function as an outlet for current non-commercial and experimental work. The fact that members generally concentrate on science fiction does not mean that they are barred from other kinds of writing activity. We have a feeling that taking a few hours out now and then to kick words around for the sheer fun of it has a beneficial effect on the intellectual circulation since you are writing for your peers rather than your editors and your public. The pages of PITFCS are open to you. There are only two restrictions placed on material submitted: that it be of fairly recent date and that it "fit", whatever that means. The Dickson and McKenna contributions in this issue are examples of the sort of thing the membership might like to see more of. TRC))

The Magazine Institute Says:

Dear Mr. Cogswell:

We regret to report to you that, on the basis of the information provided by your Aptitude Test, we do not find you eligible for professional training in writing.

A writing course represents a considerable investment in time and money and we cannot recommend any such investment in your case at this time.

Sincerely yours,  
M.E.G.

Miriam Allen deFord Says:

I hope my fuller explanation has rehabilitated me a little in the eyes of Evelyn Smith and James Blish. Really I'm not "a forger, a faker, a peddler, or a bric-a-brac fancier"! (If Mr. Blish lacks information as to my career, he need only consult "Who's Who in America.") I still say that magazine science fiction (or at any rate a good part of it, including most of my own) is nearer to a commercial commodity than it is to a literary product, less an act of creation than an artifact. If this be treason, make the most of it.

What is a "Pollyannish bleat"? When I wrote it, it was a sheepish bleat! (( A check of our files indicates that you did say "Pollyannish". A check on our typewriter reveals that PITFCS e's sometimes look like o's. TRC))

I love Evelyn Smith's "defense" of Tony Boucher. If I weren't so fond of Tony, I could add to it--Tony, where is that tear-sheet I sent you a year and a half ago? I'm tired of asking you about it! Have you lost it? ... But in general, I have found that s-f editors are badly overworked people, much more so than editors of other magazines, and I try to be patient when they take months and months to report on a ms. (I hope this virtuous display of patience will persuade one or two editors, who shall be nameless but who read PITFCS, to answer my pitiful queries!)

Best wishes for the holidays and the new year. I'd like to comment on other points, but I'd better use the time working on a story that Horace might like.

UNCLASSIFIED ADS:

Evelyn E. Smith, Apt. 12-C, 255 West 84th St., New York 24, N.Y., would like to obtain the present address of Jerry Bixby. She assures us that a paternity suit is not involved.



Having finally gotten home, I am now faced with the need to postpone as long as possible any actual getting down to work. Writing comments on the Future and Inner Meaning of Science Fiction, as suggested by the latest and much enjoyed PITFCS, is a prime way to avoid writing science fiction.

No need to repeat my previous grumbling at certain editors --- but it's pleasing to see that I'm not alone in this "sensitive" attitude. Algis Budrys made a point, earlier, when he remarked that science fiction in its present phase is essentially an amateur field from the standpoint of an old-time pulp pro. Perfectly true, if you define an amateur writer as one who writes at least as much for the writing's own sake as for the bucks. On the other hand, A.J., isn't this almost a definition of a real writer? In different words, A.J.'s hardened "professional" seems to me to be pretty much what is usually called a hack. If science fiction is written largely by non-hacks, isn't that all to the good?

Jim Gunn has, elsewhere, made a somewhat more useful distinction between the real professional and the amateur: a pro being a man who's learned all the technical tricks of his job, who isn't using 18th century tools to work in the 20th. He adds (quite rightly, I think) that in this sense nearly all science fiction writers, even the full-timers, are amateurs; they simply don't use such 19th and 20th century innovations as the central consciousness or the multiple-sensory appeal, which by now are taken for granted in "literary" writing.

A certain earnestness --- a lack of any sense of humor, almost --- about one's own writing, and a technical mastery of the craft and the subject matter, do not by themselves guarantee quality. Any sophomore majoring in English has both attributes. But they are the foundation, I think, upon which any career of writing stories with any depth or memorability must be erected.

To be sure, at this point we do run into that much-bemoaned economic problem. Once in a very great while, perhaps, someone will come along who's got a natural writing talent, and something to say, and an undeniable urge to say it, and the patience to master the necessary skills ... without devoting all his time to writing. That is, he'll be content to make the bulk of his income doing something else, and just write on the side. I suppose cases in point would be Robert Penn Warren, Mark Harris, or (in the fantasy field) J.R.R. Tolkien. But generally speaking, these are rare birds. Be it noted, the three examples mentioned are all college professors, so that in their official jobs they are still working with words. Not many of us, though, can get such jobs, or wish for them. And the 8-hour day, 40-hour week, even if it be physically undemanding, can knock hell out of a man's writing. I know, having done it.

Therefore, most of the significant writers in this day and age are full-time writers. To forestall outraged screams, note that I said "most," not "all." Note, too, that not all full-time writers --- or even a very large proportion thereof --- are significant. But this is all beside my point, which is, quite simply, that science fiction can't expect to attract many of these compulsive, skilled, gifted writers until it can make it economically feasible for them to operate in the science fiction field.

Which brings up your leaky roof, jug of wine, crock of ... beans, did you say? ... philosophy. I quote you: "... when writing becomes secondary, a something by which payments have to be made, quality is the first thing that goes down the drain." It ain't necessarily so. Look, it's too bad, but the fact of the situation is that the age of younger sons with substantial allowances is past. Nearly all of us have to work at something. Why shouldn't it be writing, and --- as long as we can keep alive by writing --- why should quality suffer?

I grant you, it often does. I note with some dismay how many gifted writers have gone down the rathole. But this is mostly the fault of said writers. To put it in the crassest terms, they had the ability to make \$5,000 to \$10,000 a year writing well; but they decided they'd rather make \$10,000 to \$20,000 a year treading out the corn. Okay, so it's their own business. But it's also their own doing.

Your further point, "the simpler your needs, the freer you are," is indisputable. The guy who can live well enough on \$5,000 a year is --- if he has the ability --- free to write pretty much what he wishes. But (to return three paragraphs) why should he wish to write science fiction? If he's oriented toward something else, e.g. crime fiction or "mainstream," he can probably have the same freedom to write as he pleases, and two or three times the income.

Science fiction is, actually, far better written than it deserves to be. Which isn't saying much.

Jim Blish has expressed something I've felt for a long time: "most of the s=f, good or bad, that I have ever read has been weak on intellection." To be sure, my personal prejudices lead me to hold scientific speculation to be ~~as~~ valid and meaningful a form of intellection as "tackl(ing) a large philosophical question." But even the former has become vanishingly rare in science fiction, and the latter hardly ever was to be found. Certainly, if any of us feel like invading green pastures, almost a virgin field (I leave it to you to imagine the details of how one goes about being almost a virgin), philosophical fiction is waiting to be written.

Oddly, in all the discussion which has gone on for so many years about Heinlein, I don't recall ever seeing it mentioned how much of his work is this very sort of thing. Infinitely more so than, say, Bradbury, who's a nice guy and a talented writer but whose philosophy is epitomized in his belief that the highest foreseeable use for technology is the construction of electric grandmothers. You might or might not agree with Heinlein's particular views on a given subject, but dammit, Heinlein too "can plainly be seen to be thinking about something," and not just the engineering details of spacesuits either.

As a matter of fact, I myself take fairly violent exception to a lot of his philosophy. Also, though not for the customary reasons, views implicit in his recent "Starship Soldier."

I noted your quote of the Wilfred Owen poem in response to his dictum, "the noblest fate that a man can endure is to place his own mortal body between his loved home and war's desolation." I don't think it's relevant, though. War is dull and exhausting --- death in a gas attack is messy and undignified --- but the same could be said of a sojourn in a hospital, where they'll also strip you of all your money. These physical details don't affect the main issue. In Heinlein's view, as I understand it from quotes as below:

"Man is .. a wild animal with the will to survive and (so far) the ability, against all competition."

"All wars rise from population pressure.... It can be observed that any breed which stops growing commits slow suicide and other breeds move in.... Either we spread and wipe out the Bugs, or they spread and wipe us out --- because both races are tough and smart and want the same real estate."

If you believe this, then it follows that war is a permanent phenomenon and the soldier is the highest form of life. Now it so happens that I suspect:

Man doesn't exist. Only men and, to some vague extent, organizations of men, each with their own characteristics. "Man" is merely a statistical concept.



Conceivably savages, i.e. people living in a hunting gathering economy, are "wild" animals; but men have been domesticated since the invention of agriculture, and the latest dating on that is about 7000 B.C.

All wars do not arise from population pressure. In fact, none of any importance do.

Ecological balance, which implies quasi-static populations, is the norm of nature. I doubt if the population of clams or sharks has changed much in the past hundred million years, and they're still going strong.

Tough and smart races which want the same real estate don't necessarily fight to the death over it. The more customary procedure is to parcel it out, e.g. the way the European nations in the 19th century blandly settled who owned what sections of Asia and the Pacific islands.

So, having denied the postulates, I needn't accept the conclusions. But at the same time, those postulates are not irrelevant to reality. They do reflect a certain tendency. People do fight, and it's often necessary to fight back. Indeed, I failed utterly to be shocked at Heinlein's Patrick Henry League manifesto; on the whole, it seemed like rather a good idea, and I wish him luck. The concept of social responsibility, which this latest novel wrestled with, certainly is long overdue for re-examination. Not that I think restricting the franchise to veterans would help. So far, veterans have never shown one bit more responsibility, as a class, than civilians; their organizations tend to be either of the virulent Stahlhelm sort or the gimme-gimme American Legion type. But Heinlein has recognized the problem of selective versus nonselective franchise, and his proposed solution does merit discussion.

His "hardheadedness," with its mystique of eternal struggle and the Dedicated and Disciplined Band of Brothers, is romantic, yes; but that romance is a little closer to truth, I think, than all the homogenized loving-kindness and poor-fellow-he's-not-really-bad-he's-only-sick-sick-sick mawkishness of the soi-disant liberals. Even his outright mysticism adds a depth which is otherwise hardly ever discernible in science fiction.

My purpose in the foregoing dissection was not the dissection itself, nor to attack a man whom I like and respect, but merely to demonstrate with a few examples that he offers the reader one hell of a lot to think about. In short, Heinlein has been writing philosophy for 10, these many years. Go thou and do likewise.

((Cogswell comment: Poul misunderstood the point of my quoting Wilfred Owen. His poem was not a petulant lament at finding that war was "dull and exhausting" but rather a bitter blast at those who sent him and those like him off to France believing they were embarking on a glittering crusade with God on their side. -- Anderson says, "... death in a gas attack is messy and undignified -- but the same can be said of a sojourn in a hospital." Admitted, but in terms of Owens thesis, the analogy is a false one. One is not subjected from birth to a barrage of propaganda to the point that the finest thing a young man can do is to go to a hospital, that having one's appendix out is a gloriously exciting adventure from which one is sure to recover, that girls will automatically pant and spread their legs at the sight of you in hospital garb. This however does not mean that Mills should not have published "Starship Soldier" in F&SF. On the contrary, if I had heard that the story had been turned down because of its ideological content, I would have raised my voice in piping protest. The appearance of the story as a juvenile novel raises quite another question, however. I think that if I were sixteen the book, in spite of its detailed description of blood, guts, and hardship, that warfare is the only real occupation for a real man. I question whether this is a principle we should be inculcating. Because of Heinlein's well deserved reputation as an excellent juvenile writer, the hardcover edition of Starship Soldier is going to be automatically ordered by most of the junior high and high school libraries in the country. This is why I raised the question. TRC))  
(would have left with me the impression)

TONY BOUCHER SAYS:

I'm enclosing the carbon of my Herald Trib review (as by H.H. Holmes, of course) of STARSHIP TROOPERS. I'd be happy if you used this in your symposium--especially since the H Trib omitted the 3d paragraph & thereby made the review seem much more unfavorable (even) than it is.

I think (as much as one can be certain of one's own attitudes) that my dislike of the book does not stem from my vehement dislike of most of its ideas. It's a bad book from a purely aesthetic standpoint; so I don't need (as a reviewer) to get involved in the "moral responsibility" problem. (F&SF version was, if only because shorter, very much better; but even there . . .)

My review mentions the question of which audience it was primarily aimed at. The H Trib sent it to me for adult review. Putnam's catalog, however, lists it twice: once as an adult book, once as "12 & up." So there's not much doubt that the latter is the prime objective.

Once again let me express my enjoyment of & admiration for PITFCS.

There once was a journal named PITFCS,  
Delightful to all Sci. & Lit. bucks\*

For its shrewd analytics

Of writers & critics

And chortling explosions of wit (yucks).

\* does

This shd settle any questions as to the pronunciation of the acronym.  
(reminds of the girl from Pitlochry)

(The Herald Tribune review follows. TRC)

"It is hard to tell whether Robert A. Heinlein's STARSHIP TROOPERS (Putnam's, \$3.95) is intended as a novel for adults or as one of Heinlein's mature novels for teenagers. Its aseptic sexlessness might indicate the latter; but the question isn't important. For the unfortunate fact is that this is not a novel at all, but an irate sermon with a few fictional trappings.

"Mr. Heinlein, an Angry Middle-Aged Man, wishes to denounce the decadence of mid-Twentieth Century America and to advocate a more spartan civilization. Many of his points are highly debatable (especially his restriction of the franchise to veterans and his insistence upon the virtues of war as man's "noblest fate") and usually very well debated; but the author is so intent upon his arguments that he has forgotten to insert a story or any recognizable characters.

"The book opens with a brilliantly written description of future infantry combat; and there are many other excellent descriptive passages, particularly in the extrapolation of future weapons and armor. But Heinlein the didactic moralist is oblivious of the old techniques of Heinlein the novelist: time and background are fuzzy, and exposition is inserted in large undigestable chunks.

"A mercifully abridged version appeared in Fantasy & Science Fiction as "Starship Soldier." Only the specialist need investigate the complete book."



In re Mr. Bester's remarks, there is nothing I would enjoy more than being embraced and protected by well-paid artists, only I really would like to have someone explain just where the money is going to come from. If the plan is feasible, fine. If not, why think about it? I realize the reason I can be so casual about this money business is that my money comes out of my husband's wallet, but that isn't really the point. If there were a Union of substance, I would join it, on principle. On the other hand, if there were a Union only on principle...I can't think of a good end to that sentence, but there must be one.

In re Art--You know what? Art is somewhat embarrassing, for some reason. (I can't remember where I read recently that one of the things wrong with us now is that we have gotten too sophisticated to admit that we are interested in the really important questions of life. People in Philosophy, for instance, discuss this philosophical system or that philosophical system, and who said what about whom, but they do not discuss what is right and what is wrong and what is truth.). Or perhaps this is a personal reaction on my part. In any case, I think it is well to bring it out into the open and perhaps give pause to some people who may have talent and are trying to decide whether to jump feet first in out into hack writing or whether to try to develop their potentialities. The danger, of course, is that people with no potentialities will start trying to develop their potentialities, but I suppose these tragedies by the way cannot be avoided. Anyway, it's necessary, when dealing with human beings, to assume they have a certain amount of sense, even if they haven't.

I will pass on to you a valuable discovery I made about four years ago. Women are different from men. I discovered this when I started writing, and I tried to put male characters into my stories. The reason I am passing on to you this valuable discovery is that I think it accounts for the differing reactions you have had between some of the men and women authors who have written in on the subject of editorial meddling. A woman's life is of necessity one compromise after another, and if her husband and children and interested relatives suddenly stopped chipping away at her integrity, she'd think, What's the matter--don't they love me any more? I haven't had any stories appreciably changed by editors. But if I had, I would certainly not have been aware I was being mistreated unless someone pointed it out.

All of which may not be good, but it's true. And I think that also because of the nature of her occupations, it is almost impossible for a woman to be a conscious artist without also being a pain in the neck as far as most people are concerned.

which leaves me out of the art business. However, I am extremely interested in what the rest of you do.

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The Venusian double decked Billings  
 Is bilaterally able and willing.  
 Among that strange nation  
 A left deviation  
 Is considered exceptionally thrilling.

--tro

Mark Clifton Says:

I acknowledge I haven't been asked for my opinion but if anybody is really serious about forming a Science Fiction Writers' Union then I will become involved for I intend to go on writing science fiction when I choose, and wouldn't want to become a scab-writer. On that grounds, then, I'm giving some uninvited comment.

Now, as most of you know, I've been ground-level dealing with unions of all kinds for twenty-five years. I've watched hundreds of infant unions get born, gasp a few breaths, make a few feeble cries, and die. I've watched quite a few grow lusty and strong - and at least head in the direction of maturity. I've arbitrated, negotiated, advised, fought and supported unions. I've seen every trick in the bag, on both sides, and pulled a few from the bag, myself. In short, from first hand experience, I know a little about this subject.

Since most of you pros already know this background of mine, and still haven't asked for my views, I have to assume that nobody is really serious about forming a union, but rather, like naughty adolescents, are just throwing a few rocks into the buzzsaw to see them ricochet around for the hell of it.

But in case anybody is taking the notion seriously, let me say these things: If John L. Lewis had worried about how the mine owners were going to pay higher wages, the miners would still be making a buck a day; or how much expense would be involved in making the mines safer for human occupancy, they'd still be risking their lives every time they entered a shaft. If the mariners had, with cur-like adoration and tail wagging for a pat on the head, excused the ship owner and officer treatment on the grounds that anybody is apt to lose his temper, they'd still be whipped with cat-o-nine-tails and fed on wormy dog-biscuits. If any union members had worried how a strike might cause undue hardship to a few, there would be no gains at all. If working craftsmen had invited employers and supervisors to join with them on the grounds that "we are all in this together, working for the common good of the art" there wouldn't be any unions anywhere.

I've sat in on hundreds of labor-management meetings. I have yet to see one where management didn't scream like stuck pigs at the thought of paying higher rates, or humanizing the working conditions to acknowledge the dignity of man. I have yet to see such a negotiation conducted without hearing that the Company would have to close its doors, go out of business, and put everybody out of work. Yet, somehow, when they have to, they manager usually to keep going.

Let me say further that if anybody thinks all you have to do is call yourself a union and immediately higher word rates and (for a change) some adult editorial consideration for the writer will be instantly forthcoming, then he is buried even deeper in his ivory tower than I had thought.

If a union that means anything at all is formed, I will predict these things for they are all intimately interwoven into the pattern of union-forming and will continue to be:

Some people are going to get hurt.

Lifelong enmities will be formed.

Bitterness will endure for many years.

Editors will use scab-writers, or do the writing themselves, or both.

Certain writers will be blacklisted and find they can't sell anywhere.

Some magazines will, indeed, fold.

Some of the most staunch and trusted members will betray the union,

reporting on everything that is said, who said it, and continue to sell their work at scab rates under pseudonyms.



Editors, reviewers, and semi-editors will join and advise the union in moderation until it is made wholly ineffectual.

Other unions will refuse support until they are sure there is enough stamina and determination in this infant for it to endure. (And you can't make any union stick unless the allied unions will give their complete support - such as typographers refusing to set type for scab stories, Hoffa's teamsters refusing to deliver scab mags, and the like.)

I am far from sure that the issues in this field are sufficiently unendurable to cause the majority of pro SF writers to undertake and withstand these hardships with enough determination to keep going in spite of everything. But I am very sure that unless there is this much widespread determination the best you will get is a furtive and ineffectual gripe club.

I am not sure that a writers' union would be the best thing for the growth and future of science fiction as an art. I watched the Screen Writers Guild form and grow, until it has become strong and powerful. I know the conditions that prevailed in Hollywood before they were able to make their union stick, I know the kind of reprisals and reviling and namecalling and blacklisting they endured. I know the kind of support they eventually got, had to have, from the other theatrical unions - thirty-two of 'em. I see now the results of those years of strife. As a writer I cannot but be a little impressed with the currently prevailing attitude - that a screen writer (movies or TV) who doesn't make at least a hundred thousand dollars a year is a mere dabbler. But I am not at all impressed with what has happened to the product during that time. I have seen imaginativeness become routine formula, creative artists turn into book-keeping clerks (working with words instead of figures) in a dull routine of turning out a production line, standardized formula. As one producer recently said to me, "Take away their guns and fists, and the writer is completely helpless. He simply cannot produce a story without them. They are the only means he knows of resolving the issue." Even some of the writers, themselves, are starting to worry that nobody seems able, anymore, to probe deeper than meaningless action for its own sake.

For unionism, whatever its advantages to union members, leads to conformity - and finally absolute conformity. I'm not sure that's what we want, or could live with, in science fiction.

But of this I am sure, quite sure: I am made a little sick at my stomach seeing grown people, whom I otherwise respect, approach this idea of unionizing science fiction writers in the childlike innocent faith of all that is necessary to get a full stocking on Christmas morning is to get their curly little heads together and write a nice, but firm, letter to Santa Claus.

And so I say from the benefit of a quarter century experience, and from hearing this issue come up occasionally during the seven years I've been writing science fiction: Either be prepared to put up - or shut up.

#### Marion Z. Bradley Says:

May I put in a tardy word on the Great Editorial Rumpus?

I would like to say, first, that of all the editors with whom I have dealt, only one has ever printed a story precisely as I wrote it, without changing one comma, question mark or semi-colon.

His name? The much maligned Raymond A. Palmer.

I should also add that this tribute to my deathless prose was the only thing he did pay me for the story in question. To this moment I have never seen the thin side of

a dime for FALCONS OF NARABEDLA. Furthermore, he has had in his possession since 1956 a highly inferior novel written when I was in my teens, which he will neither print, pay for nor return to me.

How do I feel about editorial changes in my work? In general, I regard them as both a compliment and a much-needed Lesson.

I regard myself as still learning my craft. Editors in general are highly talented men who are well paid to discern and to know the difference between good stories, bad stories and mediocre stories. When Tony Boucher and Damon Knight, two men for whose editorial judgment and critical talents I have the highest respect, give me the benefit of their unpaid, un-bylined criticism and collaboration, and therefore turn a mediocre story into an acceptable one, I feel myself complimented, not offended. And I feel that it behooves me to look carefully at what they have done to my work, to note what they took out and what they left in, and how they changed what they changed; because, by carefully studying this, I learn perhaps the difference between my own imperfect work and the finished thing they made of it.

I don't regard my wordage as being in any way sacred; I turn out just too damn much of it. I think perhaps editors have me on their lists as an over-wordy writer whose stories are usually the better for drastic cutting. I agree thoroughly. When I take the trouble to cut my stories myself they are usually 100% better.

This is not to say that I don't hit the ceiling on occasion. Leo Margulies, in particular, has often incurred my bitter resentment for, as it seems, needlessly and gratuitously altering the sense of a story by penciling in a cliché here and a cliché there, for which my more discerning fans have taken occasion to reprove me. (I still cringe at that sentence which Margulies or somebody tacked on to the end of COLLECTOR'S ITEM in SATELLITE: "His eyes held a not inconsiderable warmth." Well, my eyes held very discernable moisture -- of pure rage, I assure you when I saw that.)

But as a general rule I tend to think of editors as knowing more than I do about how a story should shape up. (This is an example of an interesting contrast which has been frequently manifested in these pages -- males generally attack editors while females generally defend. Would somebody care to do a study for the Institute? I suggest as a working title, "Oedipus and Electra: Some Preliminary Notes on the Editor as Father Image". And those small minded formalists among the readership who object to my practice of putting the period outside the close quote where it obviously belongs can go hang. The only thing that keeps me at my typewriter is the hope that someday I will reach a position of sufficient prominence to be able -- like Shaw -- to insist that my words be spelled, and my sentences punctuated, the way I want them to be. TRC Heck -- if I were an authority about fiction, I'd be editing, not writing; and the experience of editing fanzines has shown me the stuff an editor, on the average, must work with.

*See next page for manuscript*  
I also bought a few original manuscripts at the Detention and was frankly appalled. Here I thought that I was an amateurish, slipshod sort of writer because I sometimes cross out a typographical error with Xs instead of recopying the page, or Detention -- well, the editors who have to plough through all this stuff have my sincere sympathies, for many of these -- professional stories, mind you; submitted by selling writers of talent and ability -- many of these manuscripts would be chucked into the wastebasket by any fanzine editor in his right mind. Single-spaced manuscripts. Smudged type. Corrections not neatly printed in black ink, but scrawled in illegible author-ese handwriting. X-ed out passages taking up half a page or more. And the spellin' -- somehow I always thought one of the marks of a professional writer was an ability to write and spell English. I have, as one of the souvenirs of my trip to Detroit, an original manuscript by a fairly well known young writer on which, on one page, I counted seventeen mis-spelled words, which some patient, hardworking and long-suffering editor had painstakingly indicated corrections for the typesetter's benefit.



How can an editor respect the artistic purpose of a writer who will not even learn to use a dictionary?

It's a question, I think, as a deceased colleague of ours once said, of who is going to be master. In the first place, some of our very best words can't be found in even the best of the unabridged dictionaries. For example, my typewriter, which has always had a will of its own in these matters anyway, has -- aided and abetted by a sprained left thumb -- been breaking the lexicographical barrier in new and exciting ways for the past week. To cite just one example -- the tired old word "bastard" went through a Phoenix cycle and emerged glittering as "nastard". Roll that one out, prolonging the a, giving it a good Iowa nasal quality as you do so, and note what immediately happens. You have a new kind of a bastard, a nasty, slinky, underhanded bastard who doesn't have the courage of his convictions. In the second place, once a writer learns to spell he is immediately demoted to editor, and you know what happens to him then. Let the dictionaries get their words from us (which they do anyway) and let the schwas fall where they may! TRC

Basically, I think the writers of pulp fiction have no business posing as artists of blathering about their artistic purpose. That is for venerable old men in their sixties and seventies, winding up a lifework with their masterpieces. Kids our age, Ours? Alas, sweet child, you and Harlan almost single handedly represent the wave of the future. To you from failing hands we throw . . . TRC in our twenties and early thirties, we are still learning a craft, whose discipline should be second nature, before we ever begin blathering about what we have to say to posterity.

I think we might take a hint from the very great arts of music and ballet. A young soprano is not allowed to interpret Brunnhilde or Norma before she can sing Brahms Lullaby without flatting on the final note; and no enterprising ballerina is allowed to sound off about how a great ballet should be staged until she can execute perfect pirouettes and arabesques without losing balance. Until we can write stories which can't be bettered even by the best editors in the business, for heaven's sake let's all shut up about our artistic purpose and concentrate on our business, which is learning the craft of fiction.

Or at least that's what I am doing.

*Missing One* → /make an inked-in correction. The manuscripts I saw at the/

#### Avram Davidson Says:

So, now I, too, belong to the bris Bob Mills/H Jaffe Agency. This means Production, boy. No more of this bit of borrowing \$50 from the agent and continuing the program of omphaloskepsis till next month, no sirree. So, in view of this, why I am wasting my and his time by a silly letter to you?

Earl Kemp sent a follow-up on his answers. Something seems to have happened to sf, but I'm not sure what. I mean, to say, the freshness seems dimmer--this is no answer. Why--? I dunno. ASF, I have been unable to read hardly at all for years. Stories all appeared the same. Galaxy isn't getting any better, it is not even holding its own, seems like. Only Uncle Willy seems as interesting as ever, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  the time my own lack of scientific background prevents my following him. Fortunately, this last issue of F & SF is, I think, an improvement on some several past ones. Onward & upward, F & SF! And the rest of the field I almost never read (present tense) and never read (past t.). Though from what I hear, amazing shows signs of trying to upgrade. As for paperbacks, I can't hardly get through them. AJ marches with steady feet, but I can't keep step. Damon's genius spreads too thin. Blish's CASE--my original opinion, as told Jim when book was 1st out--"Perfectly horrible, and I couldn't put it down"--still stands. I could go on, & I don't think I will. Like the rest of The Great Beast, find my fiction readings much outnumbered by non-f.

And speaking of Blish. His quoted remark in new PITFOS about The Frozen Year froze

my blood, videlicet: "Ballantine...refused to see TFY as a straight novel, which was and is my view of it, on the grounds that he does not like to publish writers outside their established categories." I may not understand what Blish meant here, or what Ballantine meant, or if Blish's quote is exact. But, on the surface, it seems to me that a statement by a publisher, "I do not like to publish writers outside their established categories", is perhaps the most indecent thing I have ever seen pass through the U. States Mails, not excluding a batch of homosexual christmas cards offered by an entrepreneur who had mistaken me on two counts. This sort of thing, carried to its logical confusion by Hollywood, is what condemned decent actors like Lugosi and Karloff to an endless series of crappy "horror" roles. If it is going to get its foot in the publishing door I think we all ought to join in a unified toe-stomping before another moon waxes or wanes. Come to think of it, it's had its foot in the door (hairy it was, and beast-like, with great dirt-trimmed yellow claws for nails): Fred Dannay, who is a  $\frac{1}{2}$  of Ellery Queen, was quoted in an interview as saying that he and Manny Lee (other  $\frac{1}{2}$ ) wanted to use the Ellery Queen name to write other-than-mystery books, and cannot get publishers' consents to do so. Yes, I've thought of the argument that the name "Ellery Queen" automatically equates with "mystery", but what's to prevent adverts, paper collars, or what have you, to the effect of, like "ELLERY QUEEN'S FIRST STRAIGHT NOVEL" or "WESTERN" (given by Fred as a for-instance) or "HISTORICAL NOVEL" etc? In fact, it could seem like a good gimmick. Anyhow but, now, Jim Blish's name, with All Due Respect, does not for the general public connote Science Fiction as EQ does Crime Fiction. So why such an attitude by Ballantine? I just met him last week for 1st time, my 1st real evidence that there actually IS a man named Ian Ballantine, not just a house-name like Betty Crocker. He had no horns no fangs no tail, seemed respectable and intelligent. Then howcome he wants to foist a system of caste and category on writers? To say, this shalt thou write and none other, and here shall thy proud talents be stayed? "Established Category" my sphincter muscle! Category, says my Webster's Collegiate, is from Greek kata down plus agoreuein to harangue, assert. Damn if I want to be harangued or asserted down by anyone! Significant that there is a Talmudic word, kategor, meaning prosecutor, & from this derives a verb-name, Satan Mekatrig, Satan Accusing, or, Accuser. For what could be more debilish than for a publisher to tell a writer that his talents are to be employed in one field only? What's the matter, we don't have enough troubles? Things aren't tough enough already?

Now, in re the Miriam Allen de Ford statement and the response it provoked: I guess I've been lucky. No editor ever ventured to do any rewriting of any of my stories. True, Tony Boucher, for reasons unknown to me, in my story, The Golem, altered the sentence "I think he walks like your cousin Mendel" by dropping "Mendel"; not realizing that all Jews have millions of cousins and that further identification is thus essential--but aside from that, he (and Bob Mills) always asked me to do any changes he wanted. Same for Dannay/Lee. In most cases I thought the story was improved, or, at least, not worsened. In a very few D/L instances I didn't produce the alterations desired and the story(-ies) remain unbought. Fair enough. As for Horace Gold, who seems to be elected Whipping Boy of the Year by a large majority--by now everyone knows that when Horace is told an idea the idea undergoes metamorphoses Ovid never drempt of. After a while I realized that I simply could not operate this way--not one story I ever did following an idea-session with HG was ever bought. So I stopped calling him up to discuss ideas. On the other hand, if presented with a MS, he either rejected it out of hand, bought it as was, or suggested a few reasonable changes I was glad to make. The only time he changed anything without discussing it with me, was in my story Help! I am Dr. Morris Goldpepper, where I rubbed my eyes to see "teleport" replaced by the unfamiliar and ugly "matterport". His explanation was, that he didn't want anyone to think he was going on a psionics kick! So it is not from experience but from principle that I think Judy Merrill's comment ("I Do Not Sell My Stories. I Only Sell The Right To Publish Them!") should be blazoned in letters of purest gold on the wall facing every editor's desk. Perhaps here I should concede that I have written sheer crap for money only, but I didn't, in these cases, use my own name, and so I didn't care what editors might do with them. But lately I did a story to order, for a new crime



magazine, and the edictrix reported a few changes were in order & offered to make them herself inasmuch as she had agreed to avoid asking me for rewrites if pos. I had no stomach for doing it over and was ill, besides, but the tale was to appear under my name, and I felt I had no right to risk it. So I rewrote. Harlan's defense of nonconsultive editorial changes, on grounds that last minute make-up requirements may require slashing or compressing, doesn't impress me a-tall. If other editors can avoid this, all can. Don't ask me how, I can barely manage my own craft.

#### Norman Dewitt Says:

I have been wondering off and on whether, as some allege, there is something wrong with SF--has it passed its peak? At times I feel, myself, that the pickin's are getting pretty slim. Then I recall that well over 1,000 tragedies were produced in Athens, and only a few over 30 have survived. And some of the survivors are of doubtful merit. Say the real classics constitute less than 2% of the total output. How about that? Aristotle's Poetics, plus half-a-dozen of the top plays, give us the impression that the Athenian theater simply dripped messages about Man's Unconquerable Dignity in the face of Inexorable Destiny, but the evidence strongly suggests that Athenian Drama consisted largely of turkeys. Plato, of course, took a dim view of the whole enterprise; if one can trust a passing reference in Plato the Athenian populace turned out, not in reverence to Dionysus or to get a load of Truth and Beauty, but simply to have a real good cry along with a real good scare. This suggests a combination of Stella Dallas and Dracula.

On the other hand, I sometimes toy with the notion that SF took a fall when the critical review boys discovered it. Charlie Chaplin was never worth a damn as a comic after the critics discovered that he Symbolized the Dignity of the Little Man. After Snow-White was a smash in the late '30's, and the critics got at him, most of Disney's production has been animated syrup.

Occasionally I get the notion that quite a bit of what's being passed off as SF with a Message is really Social Science Fiction. It leaves me cold.

#### Jim Harmon Says:

There seems to be echoes of some kind of attack on Horace Gold in these indigo pages. I am, of course, a bearer of the Gold standard, myself. I read the December Galaxy and I must say I enjoyed every story in it (especially my own). It's been some time since this has happened to me. Probably the only really significant or memorable story was the short by Fred Pohl. (I might say here that I've never met Pohl and have had virtually no contact with him -- too frequently SF reviewing and editing works on the buddy system.) However, I'm funny -- I would rather read a routine story that is entertaining, than one that is turgid and dull, if you have to read routine stories at all, and it seems that you do. I must say that I am deadset against routine, dull, turgid stories that are moreover filled with new-fascistic dogma which I have found in certain other magazines, whatever their reverse-english or other reasons. I don't like Galaxy because I write for it. I write for it because I like it. Admittedly, Galaxy isn't as good as it once was, but neither is any other magazine in the field. We aren't in a Golden Age right now. Golden Ages aren't coming as fast as they used to. In the meantime, Galaxy is one of Renaissance we hope is coming.

As for Horace Gold -- what can I say? He's done more for me than any editor in the

field or outside of it. Naturally, I love him, his magazine, his money. But aside from that, I know good things about him. I know he buys stories ON THEIR MERIT from a man with whom he has had violent personal disagreement. That is professional impartiality. He buys stories from new writers. And he is a helpful, creative editor for new, middling and I hope to one day find out for sure -- old pro writers.

On the matter of changes in mss. Gold has made changes in mine. I suppose looking at it from the loftiest heights of artistic expression, a writer's every word should be left just as it is. But Shakespeare and all classics and the Bible and Thomas Mann and Harlan Ellison have all been edited in their time. It would be difficult for me to point out a change Horace in their time. It would be difficult for me to point out a change Horace ever made in one of my mss. -- never more than a few words -- that didn't improve the story, I could recognize objectively. For instance, in a recent story I made a clear mistake in fact -- no discussion about it -- on which the main point of the story hinged. Horace did his most extensive re-writing -- a couple of paragraphs -- and pulled the story together beautifully, this time basing it on solid fact. Hell, I was grateful to him, not sore. But I guess the difference between me and the writers who resent his small changes is that they never make a mistake.

Let me say that I am all for Randy Garrett's strike plan. I'm sure this would be one of the greatest things that ever happened for SF. Think of all that new blood that would get a chance to fill up the pages of the magazines! How many new Heinleins, Bradburys, ect. would be discovered? (None, since each of us would dig up a new name, borrow a friend's mailing address, and proceed to unload the dogs that have been gathering mold in our reject drawers for 10 these many. For example, I've got one that's so bad that it came back from Palmer with a rejection slip specially printed for the occasion-but it's still ten times better than the usual slush pile product. Come to think of it, I've come up with the first valid reason for a general strike that has been advanced yet. By following the Cogswell Plan we could embark on a Militant Crusade against the Vested Interests, Preserve a United Front until they capitulated, but at the same time not only have as many checks coming in as before but be able to completely clear our shelves of shoddy, obsolete, and unmodish goods. The best thing about the plan is that nobody would get hurt and the general readership would never know the difference. TRC) And in twenty or thirty years, it would all blow over. Writers would quit reviling each other as "scabs" and "quitters" respectively and some of the publishers would tear up their yellowing blacklists. Right now, considering market conditions, is the ideal time for a strike. ... Only I have a feeling that at Columbia for instance, a strike would only cause the front office to order Robert Lowndes to use half reprints and to write the other half of the magazines himself. After all, editors, like writers, have to earn their keep.

(But writers, unlike editors, are not kept. TRC)

#### Arthur Zirul Says:

All this hoorah about pulling a strike against all the evil editors reminds me of the sad demise of the Brooklyn Eagle. The Brooklyn Eagle was a newspaper (all you Ornithologists may retreat in good grace - I make no absurd claims here). One day, a few years ago, the employees of this little paper (all of them) decided that they should get paid as much as the employees of the hugh Manhattan dailies who worked only a few miles away.



Reasonable pleas that the Manhattan dailies had a circulation many times that of the little Brooklyn paper and could therefore pay much more, fell on deaf ears. "We demand equal pay!" The irate (and we assume, emaciated) workers screamed in their picket lines. They were still screaming some weeks later when the paper softly closed its doors for good. They were still at it even during the auction when the equipment was sold and carted away. Some diehards, even then, insisted that it was just a scheme on the part of the bosses to frighten them. They were going to get theirs. Need I say more?

The saddest part of this whole little tale was that nobody seemed to miss the Brooklyn Eagle at all. A Newspaper that had been publishing for some fifty years vanished from the news stands and hardly a ripple of public indignation from the supposedly indignant public. The similarity to Science Fiction is all too painfully clear for me to enlarge on it. Suffice it to say, BEWARE! Or don't talk about killing the golden goose, especially when its only a brass plated chicken at best.

#### Bob Tucker Says:

At the moment, I haven't anything of great import to add to the discussions, although a number of them caused me to grumble "Me too." I was present at an organizational meeting for pros, at the Portland, Oregon convention in about 1951, but an observer could easily see the organization falling apart as it was being organized. I doubt that it outlived its talky life (about two hours) in that hotel room.

And, of course, I'm among the many millions who "like Gold," but I confess I don't understand him. He bought a short story for IF at a word-rate that worked out to about a cent and a half per word, but he published the story in GALAXY . . . which I'm told pays three cents at a minimum. Perhaps the rates have fallen.

About two years ago I had the dubious pleasure of rejecting a ten thousand dollar movie offer for one of my books. The bug in that ointment was that I couldn't keep all the money for myself; it had to be split with the screenwriter and his secretarial costs plus my agent costs was to be deducted from my half. I thought that was just too much of a good thing for the screenwriter and said no through buckets of tears. (Nor did I like his script---he shouldn't have let me see a copy; I might have been more kindly toward him.)

I think science fiction is literature in one dictionary sense: "the occupation of authors." Further, I think some of it is literature in the more special sense you seem to prefer. I regard Herbert Best's novel, The Twenty-Fifth Hour (Random House, 1950) to be literature in the strictest sense.

\* \* \* \* \*

Using a spell most outré,  
A witch made her rival essay  
To interpret in dreams  
By Freudian means  
The events of each previous day.

-- John Pierce

DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL REQUESTS:

"Djinny and I came up with the idea for an anthology to be entitled A BOKE OF DRAGONES. Could you slip something into the next PITFCS asking your readers there if any of them know of any shorts or novelettes having to do with Dragons that might be available for anthologising? We'd like to stick to modern or semi-modern fantasy, with perhaps a poem or two, etc."

Gordon Dickson  
Box 6310: Richfield  
Minneapolis 23, Minnesota

WARD MOORE SAYS:

I have been and continue to be shocked at the levity of your approach and the fawning manner in which you accept secondclass citizenship for "science fiction". Good writing is good writing, and the attempt by snobs, philistines, eunuchs, cutpurses, editors, agents, bores, illiterati, ignorant, clods, worms, monobuttocked critics, adolescents and such to segregate and ghettoize one portion of literature revolts my guts and brings up bile to wash against my teeth. Of course there are hacks writing improbabilia just as there have always been hacks infesting every other form of letters, but this does not justify the attitude that we are all hacks engaged in an essentially frivolous occupation.

As for the economic situation it should be selfevident that we desperately need a strong union, open to all without tests, to enforce a closed shop and decent rates of pay. At present the exploitation of writers is intolerable and drives many to silence or the operation of laundromats. The cure is literary and financial self-respect.

LEAN McLAUGHLIN SAYS:

I'll keep this brief---I think---as I'm something just this side of dog-tired. My bread and butter job is one which equips me fully to sympathize with Ebenezer Scrooge that is, before he degenerated into a sentimental fool.

But I do want to make a few comments.

First, Norman Dewitt's essay is interesting as another in a long series of as-others-see-us reports. I think, though, he's making one mistake that most of us have been making ourselves. Namely, he believes that sf is primarily concerned with science. It's an easy mistake to make, if only for semantic reasons. But consider with rare exceptions, it isn't a bare scientific principle on which the story turns (presuming, of course, that the story is legitimate sf) but rather that principle put into practical use.

This, I submit, is not genuine science. It's engineering. Most of the time (and if anybody really cares to argue the point, he can point out a story of mine which contradicts me---so there!) Most of the time(I repeat) we are concerned with the gadget that does things---the gadget being machinery, a social system differing from our own, or a "wild talent"---a mechanism used for achieving desired results; and, perhaps, the consequences of said gadget's presence in human affairs.



Often, it isn't even necessary to define the manner in which the mechanism works---for story purposes, that is. It is entirely possible to define your gadget in terms of what it does; that is, obviously, the important thing.

I need only mention numerous examples from the work of Damon Knight (oh damn! I used caps!) to illustrate this point. Speaking very strictly, Damon isn't writing science fiction as it's commonly defined---he's writing stories in which magic is used. Fantasies. Yet, when he presents us with a gadget like his duplicator in A FOR ANYTHING, all we do is nod wisely and approvingly and say, "Now here's a real science fiction idea!"

Larry Shaw once remarked to me he thought sf was a product of the industrial revolution. I think he's right. Not until then was technology a recognizable force in peoples' lives. And that's what we're writing. Technology fiction.

But I'm not suggesting we change the name. It sounds a bit cumbersome and less comprehensible. And besides, it will take enough effort to get used to calling ASTOUNDING by its name-to-be. It will probably be years before I develop the fortitude and revised habit pattern to speak of ANALOG SCIENCE FACT & FICTION, or whatever the exact way it's going to run.

Second subject---revisions by the editor. I think Judy Merrill made a very good and important point in saying that the author sells only the right to publish. The story remains his (or her) own, since it appears under his (or her) name. An author's reputation depends on what he looks like in print, and a story that has been filtered through an editor's brain is something less than the pure product.

Not that I myself have suffered from editorial treatment. Only twice have I detected editorial changes---once when Larry Shaw hung an inappropriate subjunctive mode around my neck like an albatross, and once when Damon Knight (oh hell! habit is hard to break) turned a positively horrible job into something barely printable.

And, let us not forget, sometimes the reader gets robbed because of editorial fingers in the pie. (Let the membership of the society, with one voice, repeat that immortal unpublished line, "Duck excrement," he said in two syllables.")

As for the still-running discussion on why a writers union wouldn't do us any good even if we could have an effective one---not that anyone much seems to disagree. I've said about all I have to say on the subject, but to summarize: sf doesn't pay well because it pays the writers poorly, thereby encouraging them to seek greener pastures. The pages of PITFUS are full of the evidence and cries of Geronimo.

Well, after all, why should the universe conform to the way we'd like it to be? Let's not confuse the stories we make up in our own little heads with the world outside.

And, for god's sake, Ted, I hope you don't sit down and tell yourself, "I am not writing literature," before you set to work on your current opus. Rather, I hope you say, privately and very stubbornly, "This is going to be as damn good a story as I can make it."

Maybe that doesn't make it literature, but let someone else tell you that. Don't tell yourself. (It may be true---and probably is---but why be cynical about it?)

DEPARTMENT X:

FINGER EXERCISE NO. 7

(Background Reflections on the Character)

by

Gordon L. Dickson

I'd like to point out that my method in doing these things was first to try something -- that is, try writing it -- and then sit down and try to figure out what I had done ((I thought all good science fiction writers wrote that way. TRC)) and why -- so as to get to understand how I worked, and how I could improve, change, or develop how I worked.

I would say this much is certainly true -- there is nothing much generally about writing to be learned from a sample like this; but I do believe that the writer, by doing similar things for himself, may learn a great deal about his writing. It is a good self examination technique, in short. Anyway, I found it so.

--and turning about, there in the morning whiteness and wetness of the lonely station platform, saw something approaching -- at first like some damp, unidentified winged insect struggling to break loose of the sticky chrysalis of the morning mist. Then, it growing in size, rather than seeming to near, the appearance changing so that it gradually resolved into a figure large, dark-clothes and male, plodding directly forward; and continuing to grow in size until, halting at last before me, and towering over me, the man jerked out an ink-stained, farmer-like hand, and said -- "How do?"

II

--and turned about. Then, through the disagreeable whiteness and wet of the morning fog, I saw a figure approaching. Though at first sight, it did not so much appear to approach as to seem to be ripping and tearing its way through the fabric of the mist. At the same time it seemed to grow in size until it became visible as the shape of a tall, powerful man, dressed in dark clothing, striding directly forward and continuing to expand, until, halting at last before me, he shoved forward a slightly ink-stained hand with a dirt-farmer's strength in the fingers, and looking downwards at me, said briefly -- "How do?"

The notion behind these exercises here is to try things first, and then to try to figure out what I've done. Here, we have the same physical man -- the difference is supposed to be in how the beholder sees him. In this case, trusting the beholder, in each instance we get a different character. The first -- let me see how -- is a strange bookwormish man, single, with halting scholarly instincts, who has accumulated over forty years, a fairly valuable library. Circumstances are forcing him to sell his books -- and the beholder is the book-buyer, come from the city to this backwoods community to assess the value of the books and bid on them.



The second — the beholder is still a bookseller; but the man is the brother of the book-collector, and is a hard, pauperish, peasantish skinflint of a man.

N.B. Make two short-shorts. In the first, the bookbuyer discovers that the soul of the self-made scholar has enriched the books, so that his handling and annotating has — while ruining the books for resale — made them in another way, priceless. (Bookbuyer arranges something to keep scholar above water?)

In the second short-short the scholar is dead. His brother has inherited the books and wishes to sell them. The bookbuyer discovers that the soul of the books has been killed by the scullessness of the brother, so that, while their paper and print is still there, in a curious way they are merely husks — and when one reads them, there is no learning, or feeling, to be gotten from them. One could read one of them and put it down later (Madame Bovary) with no sensation at all, and very little memory of what you had just read.

And tell the two stories with exactly the same physical incidents and movements.

All right — now, in the two paragraphs, what I've tried to do is see the people — the two men — and then describe them with the natural overtones their character suggests.

This is unfair, of course. No, it isn't. True, the bookbuyer doesn't have my advance knowledge of the man's character — but, on the other hand, being a sensitive man, he can well be reacting to the emanations of the other's actions — for instance, the scholar would walk differently than his brother. They would stop differently. They would speak differently. Their attitude toward the bookbuyer would be different — and would be apparent to the bookbuyer.

But what actually did I do?

#### Example I

The language is poetic, the sentences long, the language romantic.

Indeterminate images "unidentified winged insect." "a tall figure, large, dark-clothed and male."

"plodding"

emotional notes — "there in the morning whiteness and wetness of the lonely station platform."

avoidance of direct naming — the unconscious attempt was evidently to create an aura around the man — by a process of being mysterious about him all the way through.

Mood — attempt to create a warm, sympathetic atmosphere.

#### Example II

Short sentences (or shorter) Prosaic language.

definite images "figure...ripping and tearing its way through the fabric of the mist." "As the shape of a tall, powerful man"

"striding"

prosaic notes "through the disagreeable whiteness and wet of the morning fog."

A great deal of labeling in this example. Fog is fog, a man's a man, etc.

ditto cold business-like atmosphere (they're not meeting here for any nonsense — "disagreeable whiteness, etc.")

Cloak of mystery about what is approaching aimed at mirroring the fact that there is more beneath the surface of this man than one would guess at first glance.

"Ink-stained, farmer-like" apparent contradiction sparks reader interest?

But in this example, the surface is the man — therefore no hints of further revelation to come

"slightly ink-stained hand with a ~~firm~~ dirt-farmer's strength in the fingers" — simply descriptive.

Question: Have I cheated? If so, how?  
How far can this process be relied on to establish character?  
Assuming it is profitable, is it better to attempt this sort of thing consciously, or let it develop out of an overwhelming preoccupation with the character?

Answer: No, author unjustified only if bothers reader. Reliable process. I think. Bear down consciously.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### FROM KNOX BURGER:

When I left Western Printing I left a science fiction novel there by Kurt Vonnegut called The Sirens of Titan. I think all of you men in the industry owe it to your something or other to read it. For me, whatever that's worth, it's the most engaging work of the imagination in your field I've seen in years.

((Note to the membership: GET IT! I don't know whether it's as good as I think it is at the moment — but it is full of moments of sheer delight. Don't be misled — as I'm afraid many will be — by the title or the back cover blurb. T.R.C.))

\* \* \* \* \*

#### TOWARD AN EXTENDED TAXONOMY OF canis hirsutus

by

Richard M. McKenna

It is submitted that the classification Canis hirsutus feghooti is misleading. Not only is the feghoot a true species rather than a subvariant, but ~~also~~ new and as yet unnamed variet of the same basic morphology makes it desirable to define a new genus of which the two are species. A further speciation of this most fertile genus is considered highly probable.

Turning to comparative anatomy, it is observed that the structural nucleus of the feghoot is a pun. The supporting integument is always science fictional. Before examining the unnamed species, a brief review of von Wortspielens Theory of the Pun may be helpful. From the Beginning the Omnific Word has been sacred and exerts a benevolent despotism over man. Without relief it becomes wearying, yet a successful revolt against its power would return our ordered universe to Chaos and Old Night. Safe and non-sinful relief is afforded by the punmaker, each of whose ~~perpetrations~~ perpetrations is a token revolt, a hubristic snoot cocking at the majestic Word. The sheep hear and discharge their accumulated unconscious resentment in a guilty little stab of ~~pleasure~~ pleasure. Quickly they mask this with ritual groans and



excretions indicative of shock and horror at the blasphemy. Thus they appease the Word and unload their joint sin on the punmaker who is, in short, a scapegoat. The feghoot, with its integument, presents the pun as a deliberately achieved thing rather than as a possible fehlshandlung and hence is more shocking (and cathartic). But the smae integument, being s-f, removes itself from here-now reality and so eases the shock.

The unnamed species uses a "mainstream" integument, hence is bolder. The zygotic nucleus from which it grows is fertilized by the distortion and/or inversion of a phrase or whole sentence which in turn usually has a semi-to top-sacred status is the hierarchy of the Word. It is without question the boldest and most radical innovation in many centuries in the ancient and dishonorable black art of punning. For confirmation, tough minded students with proper credentials may consult the specimen labeled "Bradford III" in the Institute archives. They will be instantly persuaded that this is indeed a quantum jump from simple Wordslaughter to first degree Wordmurder. For the faint of heart several more innocuous specimens are appended to this paper.

Students of contemporary verbal soteriology agree that the foremost producer and perhaps inventor of the new species is a large, sad, sin-burdened pondering punstrel who is already half mythical. Before he becomes wholly lost in myth, it is proposed that in his honor the new species (defined as pun plus integument) be named Aviay and the species characterized by a "mainstream" integument be designated budrysi. Thus we will have Aviay budrysi and Aviay feghootii and a way open for taxonomic extension when needed. Canis hirsutus may remain in co-generic status, in which case a family name must be coined, or Canis may be elevated to family rank. Thoughts of competent scholars in this field are invited.

#### Appendix A: Type-specimen of Aviay budrysi

##### THE LOVE TOUCH OF GENEVIEVE DUVAL

Near Hollywood is a large building with a large office at one end and a row of small offices down an adjoining corridor. In the small offices, shackled to their desks by golden chains, sit script writers. In the large office, surrounded by beautiful secretaries, sits the wise old production manager, who knows everything. Each day the writers wrestle with insoluble problems and impossible deadlines. Their hearts faint and their brains become heavy as lead. At the nadir of their distress they cry out: "Genevieve! I perish!"

At her desk in the large office Miss Duval hears. She trips down the corridor to the afflicted one. Her right hand holds a glass of clear, cold, crystalline water and her left hand holds poised in tapering, rosy fingers a bright orange benzedrine tablet. She presents them to the suffering one with a cheery little smile. He partakes and recovers.

All the writers bless the name of Genevieve Duval. They insist that her tapering, rosy fingers and cheery little smile are really more therapeutic than the bright orange benzedrine tablet and the clear, cold, crystalline water. They vow to each other that they could not go on living without Miss Duval. But none of them ever asks Miss Duval to marry him.

In the large office Miss Duval droops and pines. The other women look trustingly to the wise old production manager who knows everything. He speaks to Miss Duval. "You have let them take you for granted," he says. "They appreciate you intellectually, like a sunrise or the spring rain. When I was scripting John Donne's sermons for Hal Roach I ran across an answer. Donne says: 'There is nothing that

God hath established in a constant state of nature, and which therefore is done every day, but would seem a Miracle, and exercise our admiration, if it were done but once. Now we have a new writer named Calvin Elbow coming tomorrow. Do not minister unto him. Let him suffer day after day until he reaches his uttermost limit of endurance. Then, in the very nick of that crucial moment, descend upon him with a bright orange benzedrine tablet poised in your tapering rosy fingers. It will be to him a shattering orlebmis, a blinding moment of truth. In that ecstatic moment his soul will fuse with your soul forever. I have spoken."

Calvin Elbow begins to work. He is not exceptional. Like all writers, he has a few small crockets. He cleans his typewriter keys with an alcohol swab each morning. He wipes doorknobs with a handkerchief before he grasps them. Days pass. He suffers. He ululates in agony and no one answers. Miss Duval's heart bleeds. The other women in the office check on Calvin Elbow at intervals. Each time they return Miss Duval's eyes mutely ask "Now?" and they mutely shake their heads, "Not yet."

Comes an auspicious day. The air conditioning has broken down. Calvin Elbow has until 3:00 P.M. to finish writing an Oedipus theme into Pinocchio. The sight and sound of his suffering is positively awesome. All morning the watch-women tiptoe back and shake their heads "Not yet." Tension rises unbearably in the large office. At 2:00 P.M. the senior woman comes back and nods her head "Now!"

Instantly Genevieve Duval is on her feet. Her left hand holds a bright orange benzedrine tablet poised in tapering, rosy fingers. Her right hands holds a glass of clear, cold, crystalline water. She trips to the side of Calvin Elbow and makes her offering with the cheeriest little smile she has ever achieved. The women watch breathlessly as Calvin Elbow takes the bright orange benzedrine tablet, dunks it thrice quickly into the clear crystalline water, pats it dry with a tissue and swallows it. Genevieve Duval bursts into tears, rushes back to her desk, and collapses into ~~uncontrollable~~ uncontrollable sobbing. The women follow and look in perplexity at the wise old production manager who knows everything.

"I ran across the answer when I was scripting Poor Richard's Almanac for a Goldwyn musical," he says. "It is very simple. A benny laved is a Jenny spurned."

#### Appendix B:

##### THE REVOLT OF HENRY CHUNGLE

In 1952 Henry Changle moved his wife and three daughters into a large new house and thereby remedied a grave lack in his existence. He took over a small spare room for a den. There, for a healing hour of apartheidt each day, he would smoke his pipe, survey his guns and books, and know that he was indeed a man. In 1954 his wife's mother came for a brief visit and took the guest bedroom. After several months she made her own circle of friends among the local elderly women and needed her own sitting room. She hung a batik curtain over the gun cabinet and put grilly cushions in



the chairs. When Henry Chungle visited his den it was to perch on a pink hassock and sip tea. His massive ashtray had been made into a bird bath just outside the window because his wife's mother thought smoking was coarse.

One day Henry Chungle sat on a park bench asking himself audibly if he was a man or mouse. A red nosed, whiskery, ragged bum beside him asked his trouble and Henry told ~~XXX~~ it. The bum spoke tersely. Half an hour later Henry Chungle strode stark naked into the small room where his wife's mother was entertaining three elderly lady friends.

"You beast!" said his wife's mother in shocked indignation.

"Precisely," said Henry Chungle, "and this is my den."

"Leave my sitting room at once!" ordered his wife's mother.

Henry Chungle waggled his tallywhacker in her horrified face. With shrill screams the four ladies rose and fled. Henry Chungle hurled the batik curtain out of the window after the frilly cushions and the pink hassock.

"The bum was right. There's no wisdom like folk wisdom," he murmured as he dumped the birds out of his ashtray. "A penis waved is a den returned."

////  
////

#### John R. Pierce Says:

I was pleased to read Norman Dewitt's article, which says many of the same things I would say. I can scarcely forgive him, however, for saying that Dr. Moreau performs gruesome experiments on human beings, for the creatures he creates are human beings of parable only. From what little I know about the theory of games, I'm also skeptical about a computer that can stand off a clever adversary and yet be defeated by a crackpot.

I like science fiction partly as escape and partly because it sometimes incorporates novel and unexpected ideas, which stories that pass as mainstream literature seldom do. Good fantasy has some of these qualities too. I regret the passing of the gadget story and the very earnest if sadly incompetent part-time author. I'm also bothered when a tremendously able author, Sturgeon who could write Killdozer and The Microcosmic God, maunders around in a sea of fantasies and complexes which shares with a world of less able people. I'm bothered when Blish spouts pretentious double-talk (I'm not speaking of Case of Conscience). Fortunately, some, including Evelyn B. Smith, never offend.

I don't see why science fiction has to be as human and moving as not-science-fiction. Why try to monopolize all virtues? All of us want to wallow in our feelings and to identify ourselves with the main stream and least common denominator of life from time to time. I suppose there's even a sort of nobility in it, as God did it. But when God sends a happy hour, we should be free to refrain. Science fiction has enough problems without assuming all of those which pass under the name of main stream.

Thus, I'm happy to see active (I never was very) science fiction writers talking sensibly in your columns about workaday matters of pay, organization and editing, although my interest is about beaten to death at this point.

## From the Secretary:

Contributions toward production costs of PITFCS have been coming in slowly, a total of \$35.00 having been received as of 15 January. A full report of receipts and expenditures will be made to the membership in the next issue. In the meantime, if you haven't, and want to -- do.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Committee on Membership reports that a total of seventy-six names and addresses of professional writers and illustrators have been sent in as a consequence of the appeal made in the form letter accompanying PITFCS SS-132 and extends its special thanks to Dean McLaughlin. Invitations to active membership were sent to each person proposed, a substantial number of which have already been returned stamped MOVED \*\* LEFT NO ADDRESS by the Post Office. All of which leads the Committee to propose an active investigation into what happens to science fiction writers after they walk around homes. Are we being Collected? Why?

However the following survivors are hereby welcomed to active membership:

Marion Bradley  
Elinor Carroll  
Mark Clifton  
Sidney Coleman  
August Darleth

Jim Harman  
Earl Kemp  
Katherine Kuttner  
Robert McGary  
John J. McGuire

Ward Moore  
Fred Shumaman  
Clifford Simak  
Bob Tucker  
J. T. McIntosh

Also proposed for active membership were twelve British writers and one French. Special letters of invitation were sent them and they were asked to suggest others of their colleagues who might be interested in the work of the Institute.

Present active membership stands at ninety-one. Copies of this issue will also be mailed to all those whose names have been proposed, however future mailings will be made only to those who have indicated an interest in receiving them.

The Committee wishes that that each member would take it as a matter of personal obligation to call the attention of the Committee to new writers who are just beginning to publish in the field. Our experience has been that many of them are isolated individuals who have little or no chance for personal and professional contact with other writers ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~. Those members who were fortunate enough to have such associations during the time they were making their first few sales will remember how important they were at the time. And also, since an unhappily large percentage of the present membership are almost eligible for Social Security, it might be pleasant to have a few strident young voices around the house in our declining years. Current issues of the few surviving sf magazines contain a number of names that are new to the committee. However, it has no way of knowing whether these are bonafide newcomers or whether our most productive colleague is, as usual, appearing in the same issue under five different names.

It would be a decided service to the profession if Campbell, Gold, Mills, Lowndes, Santesson, and the rest would supply the Committee with names and address of writers new to their pages.

\* \* \* \* \*

**MUST READING:** Ward Moore's Transient in the February AMAZING. It's a blend of Kafka, Blake, and Lewis C. -- and you owe it to yourself to read it just to see what can be done in our field. Darndest thing I've read in years. Flipped me completely.



-27-

ROG PHILLIPS SAYS:

Ever since No. 132 arrived, with its list of members, my guesses as to the purpose and potential of the Institute have been undergoing revision. Possibly a similar process has been doing on in other minds. Certainly, in the light of that list, Pohl pictured his audience as a multiplication of you in his letters in previous issues. I had visualized the reader-audience as being a few pros selected at random plus a hundred or more students of writing and/or literature.

I visualized the bald headed professor sitting at his desk in front of the class trying to concentrate on the subject under discussion rather than the exposed limBBs of shapely girl students who had completely forgotten the angle of vision of old Baldy. I pictured Poul, Pohl, Reg, etc., being examined like bugs. The Special Series, I thought, was something like a classroom field trip.

It may still be that--if you neglected to include in the Present Active Membership list the students receiving copies. However, the fact that you are asking for contributions from us does away with that possibility. Good old B.S.T. evidently isn't footing the bill. (With four exceptions, all recipients of PITFCS are associated professionally with the S.F. field, T.R.C.)

So I have been slowly waking up to the distinct possibility that this is the real thing--not a play put on for student consumption. An informal forum composed only of those people who have the most to contribute to a subject and at the same time benefit most from such contributions is what you seem to have formed, Ted. If that is so or can become so, it's possible that some worthwhile discussions can develop.

What set of circumstances combined to not only misspell Damon Knight's name on that list but also to make it the only name all in caps? At any rate, it is Damon I would like to discuss--or rather, see discussed. IN SEARCH OF WONDER is Damon Knight, as nearly as paper and ink can ever be the blood and guts of a man. It is, or should be, the most important book yet printed for those of us who still hope to write science fiction now and then.

The reason this is so is not because Damon Knight is right in his analysis of the field but because he is detailed in his analysis. For that reason and that reason alone, if the Institute is to have a classroom textbook it should be IN SEARCH OF WONDER. Anyone who is detailed and specific to the degree of Damon Knight cannot help but be invaluable even when he is seldom more than half right.

Anthony Boucher in his introduction at the front of the book defines the difference between a book reviewer and a critic. The critic, Tony states, attempts to measure a work by more lasting and more nearly absolute standards (than a reviewer,) (in relation to) the entire art of which the work forms a segment. This definition implies that the critic has a complete and lucid grasp of the entire art, which he uses as a measuring stick. In the case of (okay, I give in) damon knight this is as nearly true as it can be for anyone. () too feel like the reincarnation of a cockroach, Tony. Still, rog phillips looks sort of nice...)

But I digress.

However, I wonder if perhaps this possession of the best yardstick of science fiction extant by damon knight doesn't give him a somewhat distorted picture of any individual story? I get that feeling. Only one person other than damon has ever given me that feeling, and that was Sam Merwin, one day in New York years ago when he and I and Ted Sturgeon were having lunch together, and in that relaxing atmosphere Sam made a revealing statement. He said, "When \_\_\_\_\_ wrote \_\_\_\_\_, as far as I am concerned there can be no other \_\_\_\_\_ stories."



So many statements don't convey the whole meaning by themselves. That was one of them. It summed up what Sam and I had been discussing before we went to lunch about one of my stories that he wasn't going to buy. It was a robot story. I don't recall which one it was, but I know it found publication elsewhere.

The point was, I had written it without having read every robot story ever published. Or perhaps the point was, Sam had read it from the standpoint that I, a professional writer, must have read every robot story ever written and should therefore know it was perfectly pointless to have written the story I submitted to him.

That is the fallacious assumption that Damon Knight makes time after time after time in IN SEARCH OF WONDER. It is an assumption that Anthony Boucher poked fun at in a perfectly delightful short story whose title I can't remember. As a matter of fact I don't even remember the story—just that bit about it. The general idea was that someone with complete ignorance on a subject wrote a story or a song or a poem, and the critics raved about his insight into this famous writer's philosophy, his sharp and subtle criticism of that famous writer's choice of words, his dismissal of another famous writer's whole works with a short sentence. This ignorant writer's work was hailed as a masterpiece of satire which put all the Greats of his day very nicely in their place. But the writer himself had never heard of, let alone studied, these other writers.

Damon Knight assumes that if a story sounds like Merrit on page 96, like Lovecraft on pages 114 to 123, that (a) The author has read those writers, and (b) he has aped them deliberately. He further assumes (along with Sam Merwin) that no writer writes a story of a certain type without having first exhaustively read and analyzed every story in print that is of that type. At least that is the impression I get repeatedly in Damon Knight's analysis of story after story.

It is only on the plane of plotting and story logic that Damon grants the author the attributes of stupidity, ignorance and irresponsibility. On that plane he flatly states that van Vogt is not a writer. Such a statement is perfectly true, but it misses the point. It is true but unrealistic in the face of the popularity of SLAN and MULA. It ignores the fact that those stories could only have been CREATED by van Vogt, and only in the way they were written. In other words, they are phenomena.

For Damon Knight the critic to reduce THE WORLD OF A to ashes with his yardstick is as much a waste of time as it would be for him to reduce the Rocky Mountains to dust from the standpoint of architecture, and I will tell you why. The very flaws that Damon finds in the story are its strength as a

phenomenon. The very fact that the Josseyn setup is inconsistent as it stands is its strength. Damon seems to sense this in his predictions concerning a sequel vV might write by predicting the Gosseyns may be identified with the ~~untrained part of Damon's mind~~ wandering Jew or even with Jesus Christ. This is a feeling that the untrained part of Damon's mind got, while the trained part of his mind rejected it and assigned it to the untrained minds of the vast majority of the reader--audience which made the book popular.

The mechanism involved is quite simple. It involves analogy and sophistry. Reduced to its barest form, God's ways are incomprehensible, some ways which are incomprehensible are like God's ways. Van Vogt did not deliberately make the Josseyn setup inconsistent. It happened that way. In fact, most of the story just happened, rather than being plotted out and revised. If, before the story went to market, Damon knight had gotten together with vV and they had done a second draft of the story, I predict it would have been a much better story than it is, but with no lasting appeal. Well plotted and with all loose ends neatly tied up, it would have been very good reading, quickly forgotten. No reader would have been nagged by the inconsistency between two statements, one on page 31, the other on page 138, so that he couldn't forget the story but wouldn't know why he couldn't put it to sleep in his memory.

That is the basic trouble with THE DEMOLISHED MAN. When the reader lays the book aside, finished, everything is neatly tucked away. He has lived with characters and sciences that he now understands completely and lucidly. He wouldn't want to be one of them, though for part of the book he thought it would be swell to be there. None of the people in the story were--by any stretch of the imagination--more than people, none of the sciences were more than sciences.

But we, as writers, should read and study IN SEARCH OF WONDER. Why? Because any good story that measures up to Damon knight's yardstick of a good story will sell. Some stories that don't measure up also sell--but only, as Damon points out, because they appear at a time when better stories aren't being submitted.

At the same time, I think Damon knight and the editors who use a yardstick similar to his could benefit by a somewhat critical examination of that yardstick, such as I have attempted here. In a very real sense the function of an ~~amateur~~ editor is similar to the function of a clerk, while the function of a writer is similar to that of a politician. To too great an extent the writer is forced to write for the small audience of editors, rather than for the dwindling audience of readers. To too great an extent editors can't see beyond their yardsticks.

And, unfortunately, too often true greatness defies the yardstick while true mediocrity has beautifully exact dimensions. Damon may say that in spite of this a professional writer can and should make his stories fit the yardstick like the pros in any other field. That is true ninety-nine percent of the time. There is almost always a way to do it.

For that reason IN SEARCH OF WONDER or its equivalent is an absolute necessity to any writer who hopes to remain a pro for any length of time: i.e., who hopes to sell enough mediocre stories to keep the landlord happy so that he won't be too hungry or too preoccupied in selling vacuum cleaners to hear



the whisper of inspiration in his ear when that rare moment comes, when it is just right, in his life, for him to write The Story.

But if, when The Story comes to him, it is a mountain peak rather than a modern skyscraper, it would certainly be nice if there were an editor or two, who, by questioning the yardstick often enough (perhaps by discussion in these pages,) could come up with something more intelligent than, "The ore outcroppings impress me. Possibly you could mine them and smelt them and turn out a housing development. If so I would definitely be interested in a corner house with an impressive view."

In summing up this rather disorganized discussion of IN SEARCH OF WONDER, I think two statements will do it. (1) Most of Damon Knight's assertions in the book seem to follow a pattern of being half right--half of the truth, more accurately. As a critic he is the best in the field next to Anthony Boucher, but unlike Boucher his perception is cyclopean. (2) The era he reviews (1950-1955) is not the Boom era, but the bandwagon era. It is the era when more and more publishers fought over fewer and fewer readers until, if the laws of nature hadn't stepped in, everything would have ended with a hundred thousand publishers fighting to the death over one lone, pimply faced potential reader, each publisher offering him a fabulous sum to buy--yes BUY! --just one copy please? It was a very poor five years for such a spectacularly wonderful analysis.

Don Wollheim Says:

I enjoy reading your Studies--most enlightening. Thank God I don't depend on writing for a living, just for an occasional side buck. It's so much nicer to be a Buyer than a Seller.

Which occasions me to look with a certain amount of skepticism at the comments of so many on the sparsity of markets and rates. I know what comes to my store's counter and who is trying and who is not.

((There are however shops and shops. The Micro Electron Tube Co. of Paterson, N.J., unlike RCA, sells vacuum tubes for .37¢ each. But their advertisements clearly state that they are dealers in war surplus, used, and factory rejected materials. T.R.C.))

Those who cry the loudest are often the biggest loafers.

I wonder what activates your own little contributions, always curiously biological. Clever Joe College scribblings, but at your age you either need a good psychiatrist or a bad woman.

((While still of rather tender years, I fell into the hands of a bad psychiatrist and a good woman -- which may explain more than needs to be explained. T.R.C.))



## BALLADE FOR CONVENTION LOVERS

Each year, as it approaches Labor Day  
I feel, within my heart, a warming glow;  
Within me springs an urge I must obey,  
And so I start in saving all my dough,  
And when the time comes, I pack up and go  
To science fiction fandom's yearly spree.  
Break out the bourbon! Let the liquor flow!  
Conventions, brother! That's the stuff for me!

I wander round and look at each display;  
I go to hear each lecture, see each show;  
I go to see the fancy-dress array --  
The costumed fans, parading to and fro.  
And, at the banquet, watch while they bestow  
The Hugo on those men of high degree.  
(I don't get one; I smile to hide my woe.)  
Conventions, brother! That's the stuff for me!

And then, at night, I wade into the fray  
At parties, trading verbal blow for blow --  
Where ev'ry joke is -- at the least -- risqué,  
And every word a shattering bon mot.  
While some fans praise the tales of long ago,  
And others wince and loudly disagree,  
I take both sides and watch the battle grow.  
Conventions, brother! That's the stuff for me!

## ENVOY CUM LAUDE

But, Prince, these pleasures are but small, I trow;  
What really makes it worth my entrance fee  
Are all those lovely female fans with no  
Conventions. Brother, that's the stuff for me!

— Randall Garrett

## ADDENDUM

Ecclesiastes 1:14  
Is better far than Dexidrine.

— Theodore Cogswell

# RAILROAD FOR CONVENTION LOVERS

Each year, as it approaches Labor Day  
I feel, within my heart, a warming glow;  
Within me springs an urge I must obey,  
And so I start in saving all my dough,  
And when the time comes, I pack up and go  
To distant fiction land's yearly spree.  
I break out the passport, let the fiction flow!  
Conventions, brother! That's the stuff for me!

I wander round and look at each display;  
I go to hear each lecture, see each show;  
I go to see the fancy-dress array —  
The costumed fairs, parading to and fro.  
And, at the banquet, watch while they bestow  
The prize on those men of high degree.  
(I don't get one; I smile to hide my woe.)  
Conventions, brother! That's the stuff for me!

And then, at night, I wedge into the tray  
At parties, trading verbal blow for blow —  
Where every joke is — at the least — risqué.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE  
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