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PROCEEDINGS OF THE INSTITUTE FOR TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY STUDIES

"We came, we saw, but somehow"

Special Series 143

Theodore R. Cogswell
Secretary
Committee on Gafiating

December 1962
204 McKenzie Road
Muncie, Indiana

FROM THE SECRETARY:

Your secretary takes great pleasure in relaying the following communication:

Avram and Grania Davidson announce the arrival of a BOY, Ethan Michael Anders Davidson, weighing in at 8 Pounds, 6 Ounces, On November 26, 1962, Cheshvan 30, 5723, At 11:18 P.M.

The Suckling will reside with is parents at Lower East Harford Street, Milford, Pike County, Pennsylvania.

Stay tuned for the next performance!

As was previously mentioned, this will be the last issue of the Proceedings until your secretary has completed his dissertation. In the interim, however, he would welcome suggestions from the membership as to the future course of the Institute and their reactions to the following questions and proposals:

1. Should your secretary exercise more control over content by eliminating some communications and cutting others or should he maintain the

IN THIS ISSUE

POUL ANDERSON
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RAYMOND BANKS
JIM BLISH
TONY BOUCHER
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BASIL DAVENPORT
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SERGE HUTIN
ROBERT LOWNDES
KATHERINE MACLEAN
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DONALD WOLLHEIM
SAM YOUD

(Continued on page 26)

POUL ANDERSON SAYS:

It was with considerable regret that I learned PITFCS must sus¹pend publication. (That was meant to be "suspend," but it has such a Sense of Wonder about it that I'll let it stand.) I was all fired up to have at the worthies -- damnit, Miriam, I wasn't there in 1910 but I've read a lot of books with that publication date or earlier, and the actual, observed amount of political dissent -- no, I must save that for face-to-face at the next MWA. The Secretary requests we confine our remarks for the valedictory issue to Fred Pohl's bill of particulars.

It does deserve comment, and since he does me the honor to say I'm a good sf writer, along with Jim Blish and Ayjay Budrys -- he might have mentioned several others too, but let it pass -- anyhow, I probably ought to make my own position clear. Apparently my past diatribes have failed to do so. But then, the older I get the more I despair of communication, even between intelligent and semantically sophisticated people.

If I'm not misreading Fred, he accuses us of (1) paying insufficient attention to science fiction; (2) biting the hand that feeds us, less in a literal sense (it's generally agreed now that sf is no way to make a living) than by heaping scorn on a medium which has been generous in offering us a platform for our ideas and experiments; (3) blaming editors for our own shortcomings. There is a good deal of truth in these accusations, but I suspect not as much as Fred maintains.

To take them in order: (1) is hardly an accusation at all. There is no special virtue in discussing sf, as opposed to science, politics, chess, music, sex, economics, and other games. The reason so many of my friends (and I am scarcely alone in this attitude) are sf people is not that they read the stuff or even talk about it much, but that people with a wide range of interests often do read sf. Why should we not argue in PITFCS about anything we feel like arguing about?

Ted Sturgeon remarked once in a review that the then-current sf was committing the cardinal sins of incest and cannibalism. The more exclusive a literature is, the sooner it falls into preciosity, then self-imitation, and presently extinction from sheer dullness. It's a healthy sign that PITFCSers do discuss something besides sf.

As for (2), well, hasn't sf in the past several years deserved castigation? It's been deadly -- repetitious, unimaginative, incompetently done, by writers who were obviously as bored with their own work as the reader became. Nota bene, I do not, repeat not say that all sf in that period was bad; there were a few very fine stories and a fairish number of readable ones. I just say that the proportion of utter trash got so high, also in the leading magazines, as to generate a certain hostility toward the entire genre, even in long-time devotees like myself.

When matters approach such a condition, it's time and past time that those of us who think sf still has potentialities, cry a warning. And it is better to point out specific horrible examples than talk in vague generalities. So such-and-such a story, or even such-and-such a writer, gets coals heaped on it or on him. So it's painful to the writer. So what? It's an occupational hazard. I've been through it myself, boys, often enough, and doubtless will many times again. Why do we have to take it so personally?

(Of course, here the critics are at fault too. Fans -- and even, on occasion, pros like Blish, Knight, and Merrill -- tend to make an assault on a story into an assault on its author. There is really no excuse for saying something like, "Writer X was obviously pushing Editor Y's buttons." Unless the critic is a telepath, he has no way of knowing what X and Y thought at the time. Impugning a man's individual integrity is, rightly, a fighting offense; but knocking down his work is not, and that's really all which is necessary.)

Fred's right, though, about sf becoming better of late. I don't know what produced the change, and suspect that nobody knows, but the average during the past year or so has

risen astonishingly -- an adverb advisedly used, with a bow of thanks to Fred for the many pleasant hours the magazine in question gave me, way back when. We haven't yet embarked on any new Golden Age, but it's at least becoming fun to read sf again, rather than a chore. Which does not mean there isn't still plenty of dreary crap being published!

In short, when we in PITFCS bitched as readers, we were entirely justified. Now that the field seems to be recovering some health, an occasional word of encouragement might not be out of order. I remarked once in this connection that the decay of sf is autocatalytic; but the upsurge can be too, if we'll all stop grumbling and make a bit of an effort -- while reserving the old meat ax for use wherever indicated.

In point (3), I must take issue. Some editors can ruin some good stories. I've watched it happen; and lest anyone take this personally, despite what I said above, I'll forbear to mention directly experienced examples. Just check back to the last few paragraphs of the magazine version of Kornbluth's "With These Hands." (Fortunately, this editorial snipper was cut out before book publication.) Or see a footnote in de Camp's contribution to Bretnor's Modern Science Fiction, p. 151. Or look up numerous other examples cited by Budrys in PITFCS a couple of years ago.

However, I deny blaming editors categorically -- or, in fact, more than incidentally -- for bad stories. On the contrary, I once went to some trouble to give credit where it was due to John Campbell, Tony Boucher, and others. I also came right out and said that Fred Pohl had never, repeat never done any harm to anything by me or by anyone else I know of. As long as we're on this fairness kick, Campbell ought to be defended against the common charge of being dictatorial. He isn't. Sometimes he rejects stories for reasons which seem curious to the author, but that's his privilege. For the record, not long ago he bought a long novelet from me ("Epilogue," in case anyone cares) with what my agent said was the fastest check on the record. About three weeks later I got a typical 6 page single-spaced Campbell letter, telling me why the story situation couldn't possibly be what I described. But he ran it exactly as written.

To the best of my recollection, Blish and Budrys (to stay with the breastbeaters Fred names) have also taken pains to thank those editors who did a good job, as well as call thos who didn't. For there are some who didn't. Editorial meddling is one case in point. But except to the extent that it antagonizes writers, it probably isn't as important as editorial passivity, unwillingness to experiment and improve and innovate. I think the sad condition of sf during recent years was partly due to editors falling down on their jobs.

But it was mainly due to writers falling down. Fred is absolutely correct about that. He just isn't the first one to say so, in PITFCS or anywhere else. I think that for quite a while we were all fumbling around, bewildered, angry, and unable to discover just what had happened. In such a mood, we were bound to strike out at any moving target -- and sometimes the blows landed unjustly, though often they were deserved. Maybe, being friends and so forth, we didn't hit each other as hard as we should have, and instead vented too much spleen on out-groupers. Let's face it, we were doing a lousy job.

Now the situation looks more hopeful. If we really can shake off that terrible sense of futility, then we should be able to take up Fred's invitation. Science fiction had two creative, exciting eras already, with bad stretches in between. One was just before and during the early part of World War Two. The other was just before and during the early part of the Korean War. The third will be -- C'mon, you chaps! Gung ho!

LLOYD BIGGLE SAYS:

In the Garrett-Sanders disputation concerning the bazooka, I wish to place myself on the side of Buck Rogers. I am not speaking scientifically, but from experience. I have personally fired a bazookannon -- fired one many times, in fact, though I cannot honestly claim to have hit anything with it.

In the confusion accompanying the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, there was a general shuffling of unit boundaries as divisions were pulled out of line to contain the bulge attack. My infantry regiment (for purposes of clarity let it be understood that I belonged to the regiment, rather than vice versa) relieved one of those bulge-bound divisions. The change-over was made in haste, and the division left behind in our area surplus equipment and supplies, including several cases of bazooka rockets. Since we had our normal complement of bazooka ammunition, and since that sector was abnormally quiet, we took advantage of the opportunity to conduct some ultra-scientific bazooka experiments.

We first tested a statement in an army manual, to the effect that in an emergency with no bazooka tube available, a bazooka rocket could be fired from its shipping container (a cardboard tube). This worked. After other carefully-thought-out experiments, such as dropping the rockets down the air shafts of abandoned pill boxes to see if they would go off (I don't remember whether or not this worked) a genius among us discovered that a bazooka rocket fit perfectly into a 60mm mortar tube. We then called off all other experiments and devoted a week or so to finding a way to shoot rockets out of a mortar.

The chief difficulty concerned electrical connections. We scrounged some thick, hard rubber, from which we cut a disc to fit at the bottom of the tube. The firing pin was removed, and a wire run up through the rubber. The other wire was connected to the metal tube. The wires on the rocket had to be placed carefully, so that one would touch the wire at the bottom of the tube, and the other would complete the circuit by touching the side of the tube.

Next we faced the problem of how to shoot a flat-trajectory missile from a high-trajectory mortar tube, inasmuch as we wanted the rocket to head in the direction of the enemy, and none of us cared to stand around and see where it would come down if we shot it with the mortar tube in its usual vertical position. A mission was dispatched to division ordnance to explore the possibility of having legs welded onto one side of the mortar base plate, thus tipping the tube sufficiently to make a flat-trajectory weapon out of it. I did not accompany this mission, so I have no idea what ordnance said, or thought, about this request, and even at this late date I'd rather not know. The legs were welded, and our secret weapon was ready for action.

The bazooka rocket required only a flashlight battery to fire it. I rigged up an elaborate control box with switch and an SCR 300 (radio) battery that put out perhaps eighty volts instead of the necessary one and a half. In a scientific experiment this approximates the layman's margin of error, and we were taking no chances. We aimed our bazookannon in the general direction of Berlin, gave the tube a modest elevation of 25-30 degrees, passed word to our men in foxholes up ahead of us to keep their heads down, and then, after everyone had taken cover (for all we knew, the damned thing would blow up on the spot) I threw the switch. "Whoosh" went the rocket, and that was the last we ever saw of it.

The bazooka was supposed to have a maximum effective range of about 800 yards, and an extreme range of perhaps twice that. With an elevation of only 25-30 degrees, our bazookannon shot rockets completely out of sight. The terrain was undulating, and we couldn't even pick out the bursts where they landed.

After four or five rounds the rubber at the bottom of the tube burned up, but this was easily replaced. We continued to experiment. Someone had the bright idea of drilling holes in the fins of the rockets, in the hope that this would produce a whistling noise as they came down -- and result in frantic reports to Hitler about the new American secret weapon. We drew up plans for a multiple bazookannon that would have perhaps a dozen mortar tubes welded to a frame, and be capable of laying down a barrage that would frighten the Germans into suing for peace.

Unfortunately, we were unable to obtain any more mortars. Regimental supply had some asinine rule about turning in old mortars for salvage before replacements would be issued.

I do not know what the Germans thought of this weapon, but as an infantryman I am certain that they didn't like it. Regardless of how they get there, shells dropping in at random are unpleasant, even when they don't hit anything. We regarded our bazooka as primarily a morale weapon, and if it didn't shorten the war this was not our fault.

As for Buck Rogers: I subscribe to Garrett's position that the essential feature of the bazooka was embodied in the rocket, rather than the tube. The means of launching the rocket depended strictly on the weapon's purpose. The bazooka functioned as a limited-range, easily-carried anti-tank weapon for infantry. An open tube was adequate for this function. The added range a closed tube would have achieved would have been superfluous (the infantry couldn't have fired at tanks that were out of sight anyway) and the added weight required for a closed tube (which would have had to be much stronger than the open tube) would have made the weapon unnecessarily heavy. Given another purpose, a closed tube could have been provided. Buck Rogers, who did not have to tote his closed-tube bazooka around on foot, probably did not mind the additional weight of the tube; and since his anti-gravity belt--or whatever it was--could take him as high as he cared to go for observation, he could have made use of the additional range the closed tube made possible. Thus for his purpose, the closed-tube bazooka would be a more effective weapon.

Incidentally, the German bazooka had a radically different design from ours, but I cannot remember it vividly enough to describe it. Could it be that the tube (which was much smaller than ours, perhaps an inch and a half in diameter) was attached to the rocket, and the whole business went when fired? Does anyone have a better memory than mine?

RAYMOND BANKS SAYS:

I will volunteer to be your treasurer if I don't have to make up the deficit. I'm sure you'll get offers from better known and closer at hand SF writers, so don't fret about ignoring this.

Fred Pohl has what it takes to be a science-fiction editor. A real Chamber of Commerce attitude. Not for him the true-life picture of us writers as people! No, we must wear our smile, show the teeth and talk in uplifted platitudes about the importance of science-fiction.

Somebody give him the key to the right men's room--science-fiction writers are maladjusted, rebellious, cold human beings who prefer a good idea to a good character any day. We are mad at society in each and every one of its multiforms, or why else would a man take revenge by conceiving worlds better than we now have, or showing the certain destruction that is coming, due to the revolting real-life situation.

A great surgeon is a sadist, he has what we call the cruelty of the knife. When dealing with society the best of us exercise the same cruelty of the knife. It takes hostile, sado-masochistic writers to write decent SF, no other kind will do. It's the bad, mad, sad screamers who shape new things, not the docile kind.

A funny thing happens to a SF writer, who has to be disgusted and disgusting to be good. If he is very good, he becomes a success. Now a real dilemma sets up. To be a success, means to give in and accept the very world that you call a failure. Therefore the meanness dries up. Where now is the early Van Vogt? The near-mad Bradbury? The subtly savage Beaumont? Even the front-runners of today have legs

in other fields, Poul Anderson, Dritz Leiber, A. J. Budrys--you name it. Robert Bloch--after PSYCHO he had no more SF fuel to burn. Bradbury and Beaumont, making it big in Hollywood, gone is the sting of AND THE ROCK CRIED OUT and VANISHING MAN (title sounds wrong).

So an editor has to catch 'em while they burn bright--before they go on to a more mundane hostility without which no writer can exist, or else crack up for slipping into beds with their sisters and other unorthodox idiosyncrasies.

Fred Pohl! Love us for our meanness, you idiot! Our bastardy is your only chance for success.

As to editorial intellect, I, like all writers of any experience, can prove by my files and cancelled checks that it does not exist. A story that Boucher wanted changed, Campbell bought unchanged. A story that drew a sneer from Gold, sold to Boucher and hit the very first anthology out. A story called by one editor (none of the above) NOT FIT TO BE PUBLISHED (his caps, not mine) sold easily on the next submission. I have the rejection slips, and check stubs to prove all of this and maybe more. I use them all the time in my talks to writers clubs to prove that editors are our natural enemies, more to be scorned than pitied. NEVER trust an editor. You hear me Scylla darling? NEVER, NEVER.

The last reason why it doesn't pay to fool around too much with SF is the word rate in the magazine. A very best effort brings 3-4¢ a word. A standard cut-and-polish I did for ALFRED HITCHCOCK brought me a nickel a word. Friend of mine, Meyer Dolinsky, who, probably none of you ever heard of, wrote TV plays at the time I was selling 10 stories a year in SF. My ten stories averaged out at a thousand (I somehow never quite caught the wave). His brought him ten thousand.

He quit teaching school, now makes his comfortable twenty-thirty thou a year for far less work than Anderson, Budrys, Sturgeon--any of our top people make from SF. His lifetime production is far less than mine.

No one but a fool ever wrote SF for money--or stayed around long when he could get a leg up elsewhere. You write SF to buy a suit, to get the old name out there once in a while, or for an idea that tickles, but kick it in the face, boys, hard. You'll get crapped on in the money department every time. The real money, the real action, is elsewhere.

So, to update the naive Mr. Pohl, most of us are elsewhere, with PITFCS as a yearning nostalgia, an interesting remembrance of the hot, bright days when we were going to prove ourselves, by God, as writers.

Incidentally, my best SF stories were all written in the first year or so, back in the mid-fifties. Does anyone else have the same feeling about their stuff?

A wave of the hand to my old '54 SF Convention buddy, James Gunn at Kansas. Hi, James, good to hear from you again!

JIM BLISH SAYS:

It's a shame to confine comment on PITFCS 142 to Fred Pohl's letter, there being much more interesting things in the issue; however, I understand that one can't fight the Head of the Department.

Out of all the rhetoric I can extract only a few points of substance, and quite a lot of Schopenhauerean debating tricks. As an example of the latter, consider the accusation that we are all whores because we write for money, not for love. The membership consists in fact of a large majority whose major income is not derived

from writing. Among the few who are full-time professionals are Will Jenkins, Algis Budrys... and Fred Pohl. I continue to think that we are within the bounds of the permissible when we complain that rates are too low; it is obviously to an editor's interest to ask us to stop thinking about this, but why should we accede? A workman is worthy of his hire.

I will grant, and have granted, that the fault for much of what is wrong with s-f today lies with the writers rather than the editors. My quoted remark, "The amount of intellection going on in present-day science fiction is almost invisible" was directed to writers, including Fred Pohl. Does Fred think I would expect intellection of editors? They don't write the stories -- though God knows they try.

For myself, I retain the cachet to wait and see what kind of editor of GALAXY Fred turns out to be, and to remain firmly of the opinion that until recently GALAXY was a lousy magazine in obvious trouble for obvious reasons. I shall also continue to write science-fiction primarily in book form until the magazine market's rates improve and the most influential editors soften at least a little their obvious belief that they can do no wrong. No amount of hectoring or truculence is likely to change either of these provisos.

I am surprised that anybody but Fred took seriously (or in Fred's case, appeared to take seriously) Damon Knight's remarks about outside typing. Damon's own typescript has always been far above that produced by most professionals in legibility, hence well above what is acceptable by publishers and printers; and as an experienced editor, he knows this very well (as of course Fred does too). I judge that his complaint is intended to produce some kind of an impression on the membership which has little to do with its formal content -- but just what escapes me.

TONY BOUCHER SAYS:

I've been wanting to write a long letter for the (sob!) last PITFCS commenting on (& largely backing) F Pohl's "controversial" entry; but it looks like I'll never get around to it. However, I'll be grateful if you can squeeze this more mundane bit in:

I'm now editing Dutton's annual BEST DETECTIVE STORIES OF THE YEAR, as of next year's book, this year's stories. & I'd love to include, if I could find one, as a story which is also a genuine detective story.

Examples of what I mean are my own "Public Eye" (TWS Apr 1952) which David Cooke included in BEST DETECTIVE STORIES IN 1953, or Fritz Leiber's "The Number of the Beast" (Galaxy, 1959, reprinted in THE MIND SPIDER).

If any of the PITFCSians come up with such a story in this or future years, I'd be grateful if they'd tell me about it (2643 Dana St., Berkeley 4, Calif.) or send me tearsheets.

REG BRENNOR SAYS:

By and large, I do not believe in arguing points of disagreement. It's time and paper wasted, both of which can more profitably be devoted to positive exposition.

In PITFCS 142, however, there is a statement so completely illustrative of one of our nastiest pseudo-intellectual fallacies that I simply cannot resist answering it. I refer to Frederik Pohl's statement concerning certain "workers in our vineyard:"

"They are also largely, by their own confession, prostitutes. They do for money what they should do for love. It is not an attractive posture, to walk around spread-legged; but it is shameful to do so and then to scream 'rape.'"

What is this? You can teach the young for money. You can preach the word of God for money, You can heal-- or pretend to heal-- the sick for a hell of a lot of money. You can do anything under the sun for money. You can even edit a science fiction magazine for money and still be a respectable citizen.

But you musn't write for money. That makes you a whore. It made Shakespeare a whore. It made Conrad, Kipling, H.G. Wells, Scott and Dickens, Mark Twain, Conan Doyle, Maugham and Melville and Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald all whores.

Very well, then-- who isn't a whore? Our present crew of ghastly little beatniks? Our Hollywood half-beats from the "intellectual" fringe of the ad agencies and TV mills? Our narcissistic dabblers in the little magazines?

The answer is very simple, and can be given in another question: How would you like it if your reading matter came only from these sources?

The brutal truth of the matter is that the whole "you must write for love" ploy serves a very practical commercial purpose, even when it is not deliberately intended to. It is a ploy which has been successfully applied, not only to writing, but to all the arts. I can imagine how Benvenuto Cellini would have reacted if anybody had told him that he should practice the goldsmith's art just for the love of it. And how Johann Sebastian Bach would have responded if Count Keyserling had offered him this grubby platitude instead of the hundred louis d'or--about \$10,000 in modern buying terms--which he received for a single set of variations. And-- but why go on? Every craftsman and every artist who is at all sincere-- and almost all working writers and artists are-- does indeed work for love. If he didn't, he wouldn't stay with it. He writes for love just as a good doctor heals for the love of it, just as a good bootmaker makes boots for the love of it, just as a good physicist makes hydrogen bombs for the love of it. And he has just as much right to expect money for his work as any of these useful people.

Actually, in all the arts, ever since the disappearance of anything remotely resembling an intellectual aristocracy and its replacement by mandarins, commercial manipulators, and a newly-rich, penny-pinching peasantry, the public has been sold the crappy idea that the working artist is, and must be, an impractical, fuzzy-headed sort of Bohemian who needs critics to tell him when he composes well, dealers to tell him when he paints well, and editors to tell him when he writes well.

What "You must write for love" means today is that you must never complain about the sweatshop rates paid by publishers who (to employ Mr. Pohl's pretty figure of speech again) are concerned only with the immediate profit of their own back-of-the-junior-high-school street-walking, ans who seem to be so damned stupid-greedy that they cannot even understand that, within a decade, "free" television will have eliminated the majority of them as effectively as it has already eliminated Collier's, the American Magazine, Bluebook, Woman's Home Companion, Today's Woman, and how many other paying fiction markets?

Now, I know all the arguments about why publishers can't pay decent rates-- how they starve their children just to keep on paying the rates of fifteen years ago, and how the reluctance of the public to buy books and magazines can be blamed directly on the authors, who perversely refuse to give the eager reader what he wants. I also know that such whinings and bleatings are no substitute for the sort of imaginative and aggressive public relations program which the publishing industry has needed for fifty years and needs desperately today-- a program to stimulate reading and individual book-buying, and to secure legislative protection against "free" entertainment. Here the interests of publishers, printers, writers and indeed

everyone in any way concerned with the production of books and magazines, are identical. We need a program which will require instruction, starting in the elementary schools, in what books are, how they can be bought, and the importance of the home library. We need a public library royalty program, like that now in force in Denmark, for books not in the public domain. We need tax breaks for individual book buyers. We need pay TV instead of bread-and-circuses TV. Visionary? Impractical? Not at all. Just as much, and more, has been achieved by industries, professional pressure groups, and trade unions-- many of which are not as essential to the life and culture of the country as we are.

Things being as they are, however, science fiction editors (like editors in most other fields) are limited in what they can pay. Naturally, I do not know what Tom Godwin got for THE COLD EQUATIONS, but I do know that a decent year's income would not have been too much for it-- or for any short story which, in the course of its career, is read and enjoyed and remembered by several hundred thousand intelligent people. It is a great story, and such stories are rare. I know that most of the middlemen of writing hold to the line that such stories are the result of (satisfactorily inexpensive) bursts of genius. However, I rather suspect that some of them are nothing of the sort, but instead the final product of thinking and re-thinking, working and re-working, with all the devotion and discipline of painstaking craftsmanship used to develop an unusual and long-cultivated talent.

Mr. Pohl, himself a writer, should be the first to recognize the fact that present rates in the science fiction field are despicable. Considered as a return for highly skilled work, they represent a wage scale which any union official in his right mind would reject instantly, and which would set the Nation and New Republic screaming peonage! Even hack writing is highly skilled labor-- just as highly skilled as hack engineering, hack real estate appraising, or (not much of a pun intended) hack surgery. Most men are hacks. They learn their trade or their profession; they do it to the best of their ability; they try to please the buying public if that is necessary. In our society, they usually get well paid.

Nowadays, Mr. Pohl, even the erstwhile two-dollar whore has become a call girl and is paid accordingly. Her customers very seldom demand their money back because she isn't Nell Gwynn, or Madame Ponpadour, or what's-her-name-- you know, the "when in Rome do as Romans do" little piece.

In other words, even ~~when~~ you buy "yard goods" you're getting a hell of a lot more than your money's worth. If you weren't, your publisher would probably dip into employment ads and come up with some real hacks to staff-write the magazine.

Personally, I deplore the amount of space PITFCS has wasted on personal attacks directed against John Campbell and Horace Gold. It seems to me that nobody has to read the articles in Analog if he doesn't want to. Much of the criticism of Horace, too, was on the vindictive side, though where it dealt with his re-writing of MSS it seemed justified to me, for in my case, at least, there was no question of "requesting a revision." But even these criticisms, though some of them are unfair and some in poor taste, do not justify an editor's screeching "WHORE!" at a rather large section of the tribe. Through no fault of his own, every editor in the field is now in the position of shamefully underpaying the people he depends on for his material, and that includes the "yard goods." He should realize this and count his blessings, and when the stuff he buys is a little shoddy, a little threadbare, a bit too carelessly tied together, then he should remember that bankers do not lend money as an act of love, and dentists don't fill teeth as an act of love, and grocers have something more than love in mind when they send their bills--or, at least, their acts of love stop awfully quickly when they're not paid for.

The decline in the quality of science fiction is in part the fault of writers, certainly. It is also partly the fault of editors, publishers, and critics. It is partly the fault of fans, and partly the fault of Hollywood, and partly the fault of the perilous world in which we live. But if some of us are individually responsible, and if many of us do not do what we perhaps should to remedy it, let us still confine our criticism to the same limits we would use in castigating members of any other profession. Let us not, in our own perfection, cry "Whore!" too loudly.

JOHN BRUNNER SAYS:

I got PITFCS 142 this morning, and had no intention of replying till I'd finished the current opus (not so magnum - more hip-pocket size). But then tonight I heard a programme on the steam radio about Lobsang Rampa, the "Tibetan lama" who wrote THE THIRD EYE, and one point in it sort of fused in my mind with what I'd read of Fred Pohl's this morning, and the consequent exothermic reaction has brought me to the typer. Fuming slightly.

THE THIRD EYE - allegedly the autobiography of a Tibetan "surgeon monk" possessed of occult powers - was written by a Devon-born plumber's son named Cyril Hoskins. According to his publisher (Frederick Warburg, who compiled the programme and narrated it) from his book, a hoax from start to finish, he made not less than £50,000.

I listened to the account of its growth with steels of droll trickling down my chin. A four-figure advance before completion; a guy assigned from the publisher's editorial department to edit the MS as it went along at a steady chapter per week; more than twenty readers, some to advise and improve, some engaged in the vain attempt to authenticate the details.

Eighty thousand words. This hand-crafted, word-by-word assistance. And fifty thousand pounds. Okay, so he had a brilliant idea and was a dedicated hoaxer.

What do I do to get service of this kind, and profits on that level - have antennae surgically planted in my forehead and seek out a rich and credulous publisher who believes in flying saucers?

Set alongside this, a case to compare with John (Rackham) Phillifent's. I think most of us - many, at any rate, who haven't easy access to JWC's New York office - have had the same experience: a long MS strong on narration, weak on plot-tightness and science, returned by Campbell with a penetrating analysis of what's wrong with it. And a second- or third-time sale of a much improved story. This is a hell of a fine trick for an editor to work; bless him for it.

But - and let me get out my 1961 diary to check the dates - things don't go quite so smoothly as that. On 17th May last I mailed 30,000 words to Analog; like Phillifent, I don't mail to Analog unless I think I have something unusually good which also matches JWC's policy.

It came back, with an excellent and constructive letter tearing it to bits and suggesting a new approach. I hated the guy for fifteen minutes. Then I read the letter again and agreed with it.

End-to-end rewrite mailed 22nd July (I didn't note when it came back, but I see I was pretty busy the previous few weeks - it probably returned by sea-mail about the end of June, and I had to clear my schedule before doing it over).

It came back, having taken longer this time, with a note requesting a cut from 30,000 to 22,500. Since I try not to write as loosely as that, I had to rewrite again; finished version mailed 12th September. (Counting? So far, submitted drafts = 83,000 words approx.)

I received and banked the cheque for \$690 on 10th January, 1962. Eight months. Of course, it finished up with a better story than when I started with it. But eight months.

Oh, I found out why the delay - trouble in the office, indispensables sick, and so on.

But say I'd written a 30,000-worder as a two-part serial for New Worlds, and Ted had liked it and paid his - British, hence low - rate of roughly two hundred bucks. I'd have been almost certain of finding a home with Don Wollheim for it, backing up a long reprint novel in a doublebook, and I'd have raised seven-fifty for that. \$950. And with at most one rewrite, because I wouldn't have had to tear chunks out of it.

Now WILL SOMEONE KINDLY RUB FRED POHL'S FACE IN SOME ECONOMIC FACTS*? (The asterisk represents suppressed anger.) (Also testifies to its presence on the same key as the ?)... anyway, hungar is why so much SF is crap, and why so many working writers know this perfectly well and hate it and can't do anything about it.

I'm not a starving-in-garrets genius. I hate the idea of starvation. I write SF because I enjoy it and have a knack for it. A knack is no substitute for genius, but it cuts corners, especially economic corners.

So scrub all three of Pohl's excuses for the non-appearance of works of genius in the SF field in every issue of every magazine, and substitute this one:

Science fiction writers don't turn out better material because they can't afford the time to do a really first-class job.

I have written a lot of rubbish, and editors generally have recognized it as such and bounced it. I have written some rubbish which got published, usually at low rates, and wished afterwards I'd stuck a pseudonym on it. I like to think that most of what I've had published was moderately good, could be read as pleasant entertainment, and occasionally - when all the factors were favourable - rated as memorable.

The last-named stories have been accidents. Once I wrote an 1800-word opening for a short, took a deep breath, and much to my amazement admitted to myself I didn't know where the hell I was going from here. I shoved it in the drawer. Months later I found it, read it over, said, "My God! I didn't know I was that good!" And immediately sat down and finished it - 5,000 words - sold first time out and had compliments from other writers when it appeared. The editor (who shall be nameless) didn't like it much, and put a pen-name on it, but it's in my forthcoming collection (plug) NO FUTURE IN IT which, contract negotiations permitting, will appear this year from Gollancz in London.

Yed was so surprised he put my right name on the title of the story when he published the readers' ratings.

So here is our plight as I see it. I've published 75 or more individual items, of which some 15 novels and short novels, and the average rating has been - at a guess - B-. One or two A's, and plenty of C's and C+'s to drag down the rest. But for economic demands; but for the fact that a rewrite all too often goes like the one I detailed above, but for haste, in circumstances not justifying patience, it might have been B+ and everyone would have been happier with two-thirds of the total published wordage.

I don't beef about working under pressure - as I once said in PITFCS, I don't think 10,00 in a day surprising, because when something grabs hold of me I let it. But I regret like hell that when I have something I know could be terrific, I can't put it away for a month or two and go back to make it terrific by reading it when it's cold and rewriting.

It's too facile to say editors have lousy taste, or the public has lousy taste. Some editors have excellent taste; most of them know at least when they see an outstanding story. The public has a little taste. Most discriminating people don't read much SF, because it's not very good, and part of the reason why it's not much good is that not enough discriminating people read it to make it worth a publisher's while to pay an author to rework his material and make it better so that more discriminating people will read it and so on.

I look forward to THE THIN EDGE. I think it's going to show that Pohl is wrong; that when the opportunity arises, when it's a case of having time to polish or time to think over, when it's a case of doing something for the hell of it, without caring whether there's a market there or not, a working writer worth the name will produce a labour of love.

The story he tells about Westlake's SPY IN THE ELEVATOR doesn't convince me. Why in hell didn't he turn it right around and say it was cheap and lousy? According to this account, Westlake had been told to produce a story Pohl would buy for Galaxy. That doesn't exclude rejection.

Now if it had happened to me, I'd have gone to the shelf and taken down a manuscript - dusty, yellowed, scuffed, because it was written years ago and went the rounds of every magazine I could think of. I'd have said, "This is a good story. I know it's good. I wrote it because I wanted to write it, and I wrote it the way I wanted, and here it is, messed up in a dozen editorial offices, probably including Galaxy's before you took over the chair. Print it, damn you!"

Or... well, maybe not. Because all the stories I believe in that much are probably in the mail: fair-copied after every three rejections if I have the time, and shipped out again, in the hope that sooner or later I'll hit an editor who honestly likes a writer to write such a story the way the writer wants to write it. I have done it. I have!

Stop here. I have to go and take hot coffee to the picket line outside the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square, protesting the resumption of nuclear tests during the test-ban talks.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE SAYS:

Although I haven't had an issue of PITFCS for three or four months, I'm dropping this note because I think the information will amuse you all.

The other day a friend from the Russian Embassy brought round a pile of books to enliven my convalescence, and one was a collection of science-fiction stories named after the titlepiece by Professor Ivan Yefrimov, The Heart of the Serpent. This story is set in the far future when interstellar flight has been achieved, though it's still limited by the speed of light. The explorers encounter the first spaceship of an intelligent, alien race and during the hours while they are making the approach manoeuvres, what do you think they do? They read and thoroughly discuss Murray Leinster's "First Contact" (referred to by name) and conclude that the situation described therein can't possibly arise. Their logic is irrefutable: all species intelligent enough to have achieved interstellar flight must have attained the ideal Communist world state and are ipso facto, peace-loving, Q.E.D.

Incidentally, the stories in this volume, although rather slow-moving by our standards, are all very interesting and well worth reading. I gather from my friend that many American stories appear in translations in Russia because he described some to me which I was able to identify. Anyone get any royalties?

I was also quite surprised to find a story on psi (in this case telekinesis) in this volume. Should have thought that was too idealistic.

At the moment I am slowly recovering from an ill-advised attempt at the end of February to find if two objects could occupy the same space at the same time. One was my head and, as a result, I was completely paralysed through most of March and only now beginning to walk again. It'll be some months before I am back to normal and my left arm will probably be permanently damaged. However, it's strong enough to work my typewriter carriage return, which is all it ever had to do.

Here's some better news, which you may have already heard. I have been awarded the 1961 UNESCO Kalinga Prize for the popularisation of science. This is an annual prize of £1000 donated by an Indian industrialist (Mr. Patnaik, Chief Minister of Orissa State) and the nine earlier winners include Bertrand Russell, Julian Huxley, Louis de Broglie and George Gamow. The Indian government wants me to go to New Delhi this summer for the award ceremony. I shall make the most of the fact, in my speech, that I'm a science fiction writer, and blow a few trumpets for the genre.

Regards to everyone - if any of you think that deliriums induced by brain damage provide good science-fiction plots, you are quite right, but the game isn't worth the candle.

GROFF CONKLIN SAYS:

My entry for PITFCS #143: 1. Sorry to see it go, even though I partly agree with Fred. Thing is, I'm not a s.f. writer, so I can agree with Fred and STILL like pitfcs! As an anthologist, I know that the last six years have been almost continuous desert (NOT dessert, unfortunately!) - with the occasional good item sticking out like GIBRALTER! 2. My dearest love to you for the cover of #142. This really moved me. A touch of basic reality to go along with all the a---scratching (this is a postcard, remember!) is a real joy. 3. Anyhow, best sf I've read this last 12 months is Yefremov's ANDROMEDA, despite the mushy translation. This is real, solid, moving, vivid, thoughtful stuff. So (on a much lower level) is Jim White's FIELD STATION (New Worlds, Britain). We don't have much on this level any more, unfortunately. Except for Reynolds & his superb stuff on Africa.

BASIL DAVENPORT SAYS:

Publisher interested in my editing "a large omnibus of tales of horror and the supernatural but using new materials fresh to the anthology field." Thinking is in terms of an \$8.00 book.

With the emphasis on the "new" and "fresh", this anthology will pointedly avoid the classic tales in the field. It will probably consist in large measure of the stories which PITFCS readers are writing and have written. Your suggestions welcome. And if there are extra tear sheets, so much the better.

I am also still working with another publisher on several TOPICAL anthologies in the SF/fantasy field. (Many of you received a letter from me on this within the past few weeks.) I'm gathering together tales on: (1) heavens, hells and here-afters; (2) vampires; (3) immortality; (4) curses; (5) utopias; (6) the three wishes theme; and (7) transformations - man into woman; man into beast, etc. Again, a request for recommendations.

My address: Basil Davenport, 132 East 19th Street, New York 3, N.Y.

SPRAGUE DE CAMP SAYS:

John Brunner: Yes indeedy, Batista was a liberal liberator in his day. Read the newspapers of the time of Machado's fall, in the 1930's. Cuba then tried a couple

of more or less democratic, more or less honestly elected presidents, who promptly stole the national treasury ("in suitcases," as one of them laughingly explained later) and shipped the money abroad for their own use. It's a complicated story, but the gist of it is that Batists, however wicked he may have become later, did give a Cuban democracy a chance and made himself dictator only when nothing else seemed to work.

Harry Harrison: No doubt your experience with U. S. State Department Foreign Service personnel is wider than mine. But I have had some contact with them, too, and have not found them a "gruesome collection of incompetents and boobs." A couple of years ago, in the Sudan, I had occasion to deal both with State and with Foreign Aid people. As far as a brief acquaintance could ascertain, I found them on the whole intelligent, conscientious, helpful to the traveler, and sympathetic to the people of the country. Some had even learned to speak pretty good Arabic. The only really incompetent diplomat whose tracks I crossed on that trip was a Belgian consul.

As for Cuba, it's all very well to talk glibly of backing "some politicians with democratic ideals"; but where do you find them? In a land where civic virtue is developed feebly or not at all, there are plenty of men who claim to be sturdy democrats but who, once they get power, prove to be motivated solely by intense and implacable self-interest. Naturally, they're not going to tell you that in advance.

As for State's backing the interests of large corporations, if the nation elects an Administration representing mainly the interests of the business class, as happens now and then, the State Department is under the President's orders, and when he tells them to devote themselves to the interests of these companies they naturally do it.

To call the average Latin American dictator a "fascist slob" is misleading rhetoric. If Batista was a fascist, so was Agathokles of Syracuse. They are simply dictators or tyrants, most of whom happen to favor a capitalistic economy. The nearest thing to a real Latin American fascist movement - in the strict, proper, European, 1930s sense - was Peron's dictatorship, and Peron was ousted because he favored the proletarian over the timocrats, who have ruled ever since.

Regarding Irgun, in the first place that was an error on my part; I meant the Stern gang. The Irgunists were only moderately extreme; the Sternists extremely extreme. In the second, whichever group we consider, I did not say they were no different from or better than the Nazis. I merely used them as an example of groups in which, for whatever reason, the sense of group solidarity and hostility to outsiders is developed to the point of dangerous fanaticism. Nobody would call the DAR just like the Nazis; yet they, too, share this characteristic.

Evelyn E. Smith: I don't seem to be getting over. I was not defending the Birchers. My points were: (a) They are nuts, who under other circumstances might be dangerous. (b) Every country at all times has nuts of this kind. (c) Right now there are things much more worth worrying about.

MIRIAM ALLEN DE FORD SAYS:

I feel a personal loss in your suspension of PITFCS though I understand why you feel it necessary. Maybe I shan't be around next year when you resume, though I hope I shall be.

Now, since you have given us one more chance, here are my few words in response to Frederik Pohl's Catonian delendum. (I hope it wasn't what actuated you to suspend.) (SUSPENSION WAS CAUSED BY THE NECESSITY OF DEVOTING FULL TIME TO MY DISSERTATION -- AND NOTHING ELSE. AS SECRETARY I APPROVE OF SUCH BLASTS (THOUGH I MAY NOT AGREE

WITH THEM); THEY MAKE FOR GOOD COPY. PITFCS WILL BE BACK AGAIN NEXT YEAR. T.R.C.))

My reaction is this: he's too severe and ganeralizes too much, but essentially he is entirely right. But what he says doesn't apply to sf writers only, but to all professional writers. If we don't write because we want to, because we have something to say, because we could just as soon stop writing as stop breathing, then we have no business writing at all. If we despise our medium we should abandon it. The hack who writes solely for money (though, ~~as Dr. Johnson remarked~~, as Dr. Johnson remarked, we do of course have to get money for our work if that is our only means of livelihood) not only dishonors his profession but also makes its practice more difficult for the rest of us.

And I do not agree with Mr. Pohl because he utters cries of joy when he sees a story of mine in the Galaxy slush pile; up to date, since he became editor, he has turned down every single thing I have sent him. But when he does, I don't say that it was because sf isn't worth writing; so far I have sold elsewhere every one of his rejects. I echo his words whole-heartedly; "If the wailers can't take pride in what they do, or can't do what they might take pride in, I wish they would go away entirely, instead of spreading shame."

But that was no reason for pleading for the death of PITFCS, which contained so many and so much better things. I'll miss it.

AVRAM DAVIDSON SAYS:

He your suggestion of Special Sub Rate for authors--Joseph Ferman, Publisher of F&SF, says F&SF will give authors subs at the cheapest sub rate going. Going at F&SF, that is. For further details, write Circulation Dept, not me. I got worries of my own.

Not among them is the tidings of, if I may coin a phrase, great joy (confirmed by not one but by two rabbits) that Mr & Mrs Avran Davidson expect to multiply by c. the middle of Nov. D.v. in a happy hour. Make checks payable.

GEOFF DOHERTY SAYS:

A few comments first of all on s-f TV drama. It would be unfair to say that it is dead in Grt. B. since we have just suffered a minor rash of major crus; the worst, by several lengths was a serial called "The Affair of R.D.7", or something. It was a crappy tale about a nympho (well she behaved like that but never lived up to expectations, not at least in the few episodes I could bring myself to watch) Dr. of Med. She was experimenting with some viruses that got out of hand. End of story. A much more ambitious programme was Hoyle & Elliot's story "A for Anromeda". This could have been good. My own feeling was that it would have made a very good novel. I believe it's just been published in this form - it might be worth reading.

The time and trouble lavished on the equipment for this serial were superb: the computer room which was the heart of the s-f element was really impressive. The story was good too when it got going (4 episodes); there were two gripping episodes when the beastly machine whowed its hand; one final, dreadfully feeble climax, which any competent old hand would have handled better. This illustrated two of the worst failings of s-f (i) stock characterisation - you can get away with this in a novel and plenty of good writers do it, consciously or unconsciously (ii) the s-f fizzle or sell-out. The ending which makes everything seem, in retrospect, a great mountain made out of a very tiny molehill, is a technique which some s-f writers have mastered to perfection...if you want to paint on a wide canvass it's only natural that some of the figures will be pretty sketchy. A novelist can produce a perfectly adequate background of official bumbledom without going too deep or

writing too much, but you can't get away with it in a play. Stock characters stick out like a set of sore thumbs, and "Afor A" was full of them. If the authors had stuck to the s-f and personal problems of the chief protagonists and left out the political intrigue the whole thing would have tightened up considerably.

This brings me to my final point about s-f drama. The best efforts we've had over here have been the "Quatermass" series. These have not been too ambitious production-wise, and they've concentrated on creating the authentic s-f horror. At the risk of being howled down I will say that a really horrid horror, or a gimmicky gimmick is a sine qua non of any successful s-f play. You expect your audience to be pretty dull. This isn't a new discovery is it? You've got to get them by the short hairs and slide in some food for thought en passant. The Elizabethans were pretty good at this kind of thing. I don't think audiences, over here anyway, are put off s-f because of world events, and I don't think they object to some thoughtful element if their interest has been sufficiently aroused beforehand. Certainly episodes 5 & 6 of Afor A produced some really heated argument and wild speculation amongst all sorts of people I talked to at the time - from eggheads to bar loungers! I would agree that TV viewers wouldn't put up with much sociological s-f, unless it were of the 1984 type, which is full of horrors! and was pretty successful, too, I should say, though I have no evidence for that.

I think there is a great opportunity for good s-f drama. All we need are some good s-f dramatists who can write plays not dramatised novels.

Now, what about Warren Michael's opinion of BBC TV. I would agree that much of it is just plain dull. However, as far as the educators are concerned the BBC can give some of the TV schools programmes a head start as far as interest is concerned. I've no standards of comparison with American TV never having seen any, but the imported films, which, with all due deference are the crapiest of crap. Again I haven't seen much - I don't watch very often - but BBC drama is usually excellent in its classical productions whereas ITV have the edge on the 'frank' semi-documentary, but you have to sit through a lot of sentimental crud to see one good one. BBC's political and current affairs programmes like 'Panorama' vary, but on the whole they're timid - in fact British: they fight shy of real controversy, or any show of bad manners in public. ITV is somewhat more daring as it's not so institutionalised, but not much. Our facade is still terribly public school, you know.

Having said all this, I'm not very happy about the jolly old 'sense of fun'... especially if this means the ITV commercial ad. or panel-game ethos - I'd rather have boredom than nausea! Perhaps Warren Michael has a highfalutin' definition of fun, but the idea smacks of synthetic, questionnaire-Kultur-for-the-Masses crap to me: the sort of thing that is slurped out by the glossy mags, over here. To believe them, everyday we're getting better and better in every way. Not true! Not true! But that's too big a subject to open up at the end of a page.

HUGO GERNSBACH SAYS:

When, late in 1960, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Science Fiction Society invited me to speak before them, I urged the members at the end of my talk to bring out their own science fiction magazine. I was much gratified when subsequently, in 1961, the society brought out THE TWILIGHT ZINE. The MIT students are doing a very creditable job and I feel certain that in time science fiction will be much benefited by their efforts.

But now for a piece of real new of PLTFCS readers.

In the TWILIGHT ZINE No. 5 (April, 1962), Doug Hoyman, one of the students, has a rather provocative piece entitled "A New Name for SCIENCE FICTION."

Says Doug in his introduction: "Now I don't want to appear ungrateful to good old Uncle Hugo who invented both the name and the art form. But sf has far outgrown the limitations which Gernsback imposed, and is still trying to impose, on the medium. The word 'science' is no longer applicable." (For science fiction buffs interested in the full genealogy of the terminology, I suggest they read the February 1957 issue of Fantasy & Science Fiction magazine: "How Science Fiction Got Its Name" by illustrious SF chronicler and biographer, Sam Moskowitz. Or if you haven't seen it, you can get a reprint from me, free.)

Doug Hoylman's piece, as he says himself, is controversial; it should be read by all SF fans. Unfortunately, he does not give us a new term to supplant the old one: "science fiction."

Instead he says: "And the first person who shouts 'Scientifiction' gets a punch in the nose!"

Touché! It so happens that I am that first person, dammit, and I coined it--much to my regret--in 1925. That horror, "Sciencefiction," was but a "logical" contraction of the term SCIENTIFIC FICTION which I began using on the front cover of the 1922 issue of my former magazine, Science and Invention.

It probably was caused by the excruciating growing pains of the genre. Let's draw a merciful literary curtain of oblivion over that unfortunate episode and step into the progressive light of the future.

May I say here emphatically that I completely agree with Doug that a new terminology is needed. The term science fiction, unfortunately, is not outmoded, but has come into universal use much too early. It probably will come into its own around the 25th century or thereabouts. I am quite serious about this. Quite.

All my life I have tried to cram the word "science" down the throats of millions of unwilling individuals who were not ready for it--and who still are not.

Unfortunately, only a small percentage of people today are really interested in science--scientists, technicians, engineers, and so forth. The public at large still thinks of science as a subject far too esoteric and avant garde. Certainly the average man or woman does not wish to read SCIENCE fiction during his leisure hours--the name is too forbidding. If this were not so, the few science fiction magazines now in existence would each have a circulation in the millions, instead of a paltry average of less than 10000.

Something more attractive, stimulating and popular is needed--in this I certainly agree with Doug.

I have worked on the problem for years, unsuccessfully so far, I admit. And you must believe me if I state now that if I had to do it all over again at this late date--knowing what experience has taught me--I should not have originated the term science fiction in the 20th Century. that was not and is not now ready for it in a universal manner.

I coined the term Science Fiction in an editorial I wrote for my former publication, SCIENCE WONDER STORIES, in the June 1929 issue. Here, for the record, is the evidence:

"SCIENCE WONDER STORIES supplies this need for scientific fiction and supplies it better than any other magazine.

"I started the movement of science fiction in America in 1908 through my first magazine, "MODERN ELECTRICS." At that time it was an experiment. Science fiction authors were scarce. There were not a dozen worth mentioning in the entire world."

In 1929 I had a forlorn hope that there finally had been a breakthrough of science into the consciousness of the world's population. Alas, it was not to be--nor will it be in this or the next century.

The average man--or woman--in the street still looks on science with deep suspicion as a vicious ogre that constantly upsets and disarranges his life and habits, that periodically causes technical revolution, throwing millions out of their jobs, as it is doing now, temporarily through automation.

Yet people know, too, that they must live with the ogre if they are to exist. But their deep unreasoning antagonism against science has become fixed and they have become conditioned through years of Pavlovian science-induced shocks of a hundred kinds--economic shocks, social shocks, bewilderment shocks of the "what's-next-in-our-future," etc.

And that is the real reason why only few of their élite will read science stories for leisure or amusement. Even the denatured, sugar-coated genre, science fiction fantasy--grown-up fairy tales--have so far never become wildly popular.

Therefore a new term, I think, makes sense. At least it could, if adopted, smooth the way for adult science fiction in future centuries.

Now let us look into the elements of an acceptable substitute term.

For Vol. I No. 1 of SCIENCE WONDER STORIES in June 1929, I wrote this slogan: "Prophetic Fiction is the Mother of Scientific Fact." I think this still means what it says. Science fiction--under any term or name--must, in my opinion, deal first and foremost in futures.

It must, in story form forecast the wonders of man's progress to come. That also means distant exploits and exploration of space and time.

As for a new term, I suggest a few, which may or may not be the best in "fittingness." But they in turn may generate other and better ones.

They probably will sound weird to you. Well, so did science fiction, when I first looked at it critically.

PREDIFCTION. Here the word prediction is fused with fiction.

FUTUFCTION. A weirdy, capitalizing on the future.

PROPHICTION. A contraction of prophetic fiction. A rather nifty term. Rather smooth, too. Propheessional to boot!

TELEFICTION. From the Greek tele--far off, distant. A euphonious term. The public could assimilate it readily as it has long been indoctrinated into similar terms such as telescope, telegraph, telephone, television, etc. I like it particularly because it could sneak into the language, catching the public unaware, so to speak, who would never suspect that it was the unpopular disdained science fiction in new sheep's clothing!!

SERGE HUTIN SAYS:

I heartily thank you for the so kind regular sending of your private magazine--which offers an extraordinary (and up to date) way to really explore the living evolution of all realms of present literary Fantasy and S.F.

I take opportunity of present letter to state to you a British fantastic and symbolic surrealist tale which I consider extremely fine, and which seems to have been rather forgotten by many critics: (The ll COLQUHOUN) Goose of Hermageres. Peter Arven Ltd. (50 Old Brampton Road - London, S.W. 7 - ENGLAND) But your own judgment may disagree from mine. With my best wishes to all your projects, yours very sincerely,

ROBERT LOWNDES SAYS:

I sympathise with Fred Pohl in general (and anyone else who is not interested in prolonged excursions into modern infernos, whether they be those of Ezra Pound, Fellini, or Pitfcs) and cannot agree with him. My feeling is that however uncomfortable it may be for the spectators, Pitfcs -- or some other publication which fulfills the same purpose -- is needed. In many instances it may be an author's only source of communication with other authors; and while learning that someone else is also in hell does not take you out of it, communication amongst the damned may be helpful. (Whether you want to stay in hell is your problem, not mine: my only comment there is that the best theology and psychology teaches that there is a way out if you really want out.)

So far as the demonology goes, Pohl's presentation of the demon's side (while containing much truth) is as biased as the outcries of the damned (also containing much truth). Having been on both sides (sometimes concurrently if not simultaneously) I need only to look in my mirror to find an editor who interfered with ms. to their hurt; I need look no farther for an editor whose interventions have been helpful to authors, if their testimony has any weight. Whilst in the role of the damned dealing with demons, I've encountered both sorts of editor and sometimes both were the same editor. And I've also either declined to write or refused to send submissions to some for some of the various reasons the Pitfcs chorus has described. Looking back on it, I do not feel that such faintheartedness was commendable, except perhaps where there was not doubt that an editor (either through established taste or pronounced company policy) wanted trash in the first place. But this is not the sort of editor you're really complaining about; you're complaining about the sort which says he wants as good material as you can possibly produce then falsifies his words by what he does when you send it to him.

There are none that are righteous -- no, not one. And that covers everyone in the inferno, damned and demon alike.

Meanwhile, though I hope you will all eventually want to leave, I hope that Pitfcs will continue for the sake of those who are not yet ready.

KATHERINE MACLEAN SAYS:

I have up to now agreed that the s-f real hero is the background, the environment, with a good plot, the history, and therefore an essentially neutral or normal foreground character is best - a man without complex internal struggles or mental diseases or elaborate entanglements between wife and mistress to clutter up the scene with private details not dependent on the time place and general crisis.

But I just flipped the pages of Pitfcs after taking it out of the mail box, scanned a paragraph claiming that s-f writers are too enthusiastic about proclaiming that s-f is not literature, and if they read that "characterization is not essential" will use this as a grateful mandate to trot out the same old grade two cardboard, or bring it down to grade three. "Remembered dimly from five minutes back, lost the place on my way to the typer."

But I am struck with a vision- cardboard vs. what? more cardboard? The "complex characterizations" are current stereotypes, not people, but what-people-are-currently-assumed-to-be by literate writers, psychoanalysts and literary critics.

Hack "Cardboard characterizations" are the older stereotypes, easier to handle because they are ideas of human nature that were handed us with our bottle of mild and whatever popular adventure junk we got the most kicks out of reading, when we learned to read.

A literature-type characterization is compounded of whatever ideas about human nature are new and not fully understood, whatever assumptions about innate nobility and hope are currently available, whatever explanations for sin-sickness-instinctive aggression etc. are popular, and the zero marks and circumlocutions of the left out things it is currently considered correct to ignore, disbelieve and pretend does not exist. The characters generated from this sausage machine will look as silly in ten years as the current woman's fashions will look, but simple hack cardboard stereotypes, myth heroes and neutrally good people, and villains of pure evil always look a little silly, but always stir a response in the deep green-corn roots of our infantile hearts. (Any adult excepted who wants to be excepted)

In the forties the stereotype literary hero was that faceless, gutless brainless sucker, the man in the street, the "common man," originally invented by Wallace and presented to us with a command to love him. This common man also appeared in New Yorker fiction with a cocktail in hand as the suburban commuter. His appearance on stage always stuns me with a boredom so instantaneous and mind-numbing that I usually have not sense to put the magazine down and must read the story through the rest of the way, seeking for something lost and by the wind mourned, the thread of the enjoyment I expected, Fred Pohl's otherwise enjoyable backgrounds are always contaminated and made hard to read about by the foreground obtrusion of these unspeakable drips. Horace Gold always had a fondness for stories with common men or subway commuters sitting spinelessly in middle, like a sack stuffed with mush. Some previous time, exercising the typewriter I wrote a few less vehement words about characters, which I shall insert. Can't find it.

Back to the shouting.

A real characterization is drawn from personal experience, not from wisdom, or what we think we know about human nature in any decade. Good characterization is drawn from one's own guts and non-verbal observations of people around, if the people are felt rather than seen.

Experience is mostly non-verbal. Verbal conversation is chiefly used to disguise the moment of crisis, enable a person in the grip of some passion to pretend to be feeling something else, to divert and distract himself with pretense until he pulls his thoughts fully to the digressions and out of the whirlpool and is brought back to the land of cloaked pretense, neat clothes, and not too much fire under the skin. When a writer draws for word output on the pool of words that have been put in, he's drawing on cardboard words, words that started as lies. They've been put in from fiction, both printed, TV and conversational fiction. Oh, no, we aren't worried about impotence, potency, anger, shame, love, age because science and politics are too complicated to make snap right judgements, Sure. Cool it man.

On wishes and motives, I want a cause, a battle, danger, security, love, peace, etc. I even sincerely hope that science will invent a cure for old age before I get old. I am probably not alone in this wish, either. It is a selfish wish. There is, against it, the advantage to the species of the progression of generations, with the advantages of flexible thinking and whatever genetic evolution or degeneration resulting from the valance of variation, mutation, multiplication and selective weeding. But I am no longer convinced that this species is going anywhere. On the good bohemian ethic of give 'em a free will, or lazy fair, anyone who wants to commit suicide just because they don't want to give up the pleasure of committing murder, that goes in spades and doubled. If they blow the species up, they blow me up, I'm human, and included in the indictment. But I still want to live personally, just for curiosity, to see what happens next, even after the last page and the back cover of the book.

How many characters in stories come up with the above set of wishes? I can't say none, because I don't read all the stories. I don't even read a few stories any more. How many real people feel like me? Probably quite a lot. Maybe a majority of reading people. Even the last wish I find people around me expressing annoyance at the persistence of this countries politicians in wanting to get us blown up. (Who knows what the other countries politicians are doing?)(This country I'm sure of) If they feel annoyed enough with the mad politicians and the boobs following their lead, they will arrive at the usual conclusion when you see a fool persist in his folly. Okay, let-em get burned! And theirs is the same human response as the one they indict. Suicide assented in for the sake of murder. Let em die, even if I go with em. But when I feel it, it feels like a healthy anger, based on facts. When the idiots screaming in the newspaper express it, its obviously just human natural-born insanity, and grounds for euthinasia.* (*I hope I'm not converting any of you efficient people to my way of spelling. I warn you. It's wrong.)

So how many people feel like the above about their brothers and kindred? Maybe all of them. Do I find it in stories? No, the people in stories live in a different world, where you don't hope for immortality, and don't wish most of the others would go quietly somewhere and cut their throats, not where a change in mood can turn the world have golden than any utopia. I've almost given up reading fiction. I don't know what the current pretense is, because I share it, but its too far out, I don't know what characters are built of and stuffed with in this decade, not the old cardboard and cold oatmeal mush, not even old dead Freudian textbooks and commuter ticket stubs, but they are not builded of flesh and stuffed with blood brains and guts.

And I don't read much fiction any more.

And I don't write none neither, because when I read it back it doesn't even convince me. Do I want to face myself? No. Would I have to face myself to write well? Yes. I'd like to be more self decieving. I'd like to pour out the truth unconsciously, not knowing what I'm saying, like some others can. I'm too analytical, too experienced in interpreting other peoples symbols to let a simple myth transformation disguise a clear message. And I can't just swallow the truth as I see it. Ted Sturgeon can let it ride, can write real, can have characters, who, within a limited paddock, are running and galloping in a continuous uncut unedited natural sequence of feeling-thought-feeling-action. (I hate to say out loud how good I think Sturgeon is as a writer, mainstream and all, I sound like such a fan.) If I tried to write like that, I'd be admitting in the characters feeling-thought-responses that I'm not willing to admit in myself. And I know there's no distinction, between me-characters-and-people-as-I-see-them. If I want to pretend I'm some sort of plaster statue, I have to pretend the others all are too. I wish I could be a puritan-blue-nose, project evidence of what I think is sin all over the place and blissfully wallow in denouncing and discribing it, and rubbing up against it. I could make money that way. Like Psychiatrist Frederich Wertheim discribing rape, lunacy and violence in mass-selling pocket books, probly under the impression he's against it, and that all these avid buyers are reading so they can be warned against it. A trace of nausea rises. Ugh, take it away. Why did I have to read that gook?

I shall read another clean refreshing page or so of Pitfix to take the bad taste out of my mouth. So far I have read only a total of 20 randomly chosen paragraphs, and each group of five has flung me back to the typewriter, because they keep mentioning characterization, in peculiar ways that stir thought or the circulating humors or just drop sparks in the fuel tanks.

I am going to graduate school and have much homework. So goodbye. I hope. If the next randomly chosen page of this nutty magazine manages to be dull, or predictable, I shall be able to return to my homework and you shall get this letter as it stands.

JOHN PHILLEFENT SAYS:

On the Fred Pohl controversy, methinks he doth protest just a wee bit too much. Unwilling as I am to antagonise one of those august persons before whom I may be laying some trembling offering, hoping for favor .. some day .. I feel he could do a lot worse than turn back to Playboy for March (I know he reads it) Then he should read .. or re-read .. Paul Getty's bit. The sub-head, alone .. 'In the restless voice of dissent lies the key to a nation's vitality and greatness' What I mean .. if the people who are actually writing s-f can't get to criticise it once in a while, then what the hell .. !

Also a general point. S-F is, notoriously, the fiction form for pulling in the reader's comment, much more than any other. And there has been a strong correlation between (a) the eras of 'peak' quality publishing (b) the eras of good 'quantity' published, and (c) the honesty of letter-columns. You know what I mean .. those letter-columns wherein the genuine readers were allowed to take an objective view. Now, the Galaxy stable has never favoured letter-columns, or any other kind of forthright criticism .. and the record of success of their magazines has been very dog-leggish. Only in Willy Ley's bit is there any hint that there may be 'readers' involved .. and that is the best bit in Galaxy, according to every reader I've met.

Think is, we read, as well as write. Probably read more s-f more critically than any comparable group. Other editors don't seem to mind letting the reader sound off .. so what's with Fred ? I've never written a letter to an editor .. not for publication, anyway .. so I've no axe to grind, here.

Still, I'm keen to see what the rest of the crowd will say. Hope you can get that last-one issue out before sinding into hibernation. And be sure and come back, hey?

FRED POHL SAYS:

Damn your eyes, I give in. I enclose what ought to be enough to cover past issues of PITFCS and at least enough of future issues so that I can see what lynch mobs are being formed consequent on my last letter to you. If the communications that have already reached me direct are indicative, the market price on tar should reach a new high while the demand for feathers will leave not a chicken unplucked between Maine and the Rio Grande.

The letters I have so far received pose two major questions. 1, "Why are you mad at me?" 2, "Why are you trying to suppress free speech?"

I did think that I had made myself clear on both points. As to why I am mad at you, whoever you are, it is because you are bitching about the lack of good science fiction instead of sitting down and writing some. As to what I have against free speech, I don't exactly know the answer. What I do know is that PITFCS has done a clearly destructive thing. You have given the dog a bad name and he has become a bad dog. By perpetuating the untruth that good science-fiction stories cannot be published because the syndicate of lunatic editors much prefer to publish bad ones, you have created a climate in which a number of writers, by their own testimony, have deliberately written bad stories when they would have preferred to write good ones.

It is paranoid logic to blame one's own deficiencies on the communist plotters, the international Jews, the capitalist encirculers or the malevolent science-fiction editors. But that's not so bad, as long as it is restricted to us old hands, who are all of us probably part paranoid anyway and take our own hyperbola with appropriate grains of salt. What PITFCS does is disseminate this kind of crap in areas where no defenses already exist. The new writers, having sold one or two stories, get their copies of PITFCS and are told by every seemingly competent voice

that there's no sense trying, everything is doomed to defeat, the best they can hope for is to prostitute themselves for a buck. What would you expect them to do? That is what they do. That is one reason why there are few (not quite no) very promising new writers on the scene.

I still wish you would kill PITFCS off, but if you won't do that at least let's thrash the questions out on their merits. Let us, for example, test out the hypothesis that good sf won't sell by writing some and daring all editors to print it.

P.S. By the way, a personal note that may be appreciated by Messrs. and Mesdames Leiber, de Camp, Merril, Maclean, Ley, Ciardi, Harrison and several dozen others who may not have heard of it: The old Ipsy-Wipsy Institute burned down the other day. This was Fletcher and Inga Pratt's enormous place in Highlands where many of us weekendened, partied and generally visited. It had passed out of the fraternity anyway, Fletcher dying, George Smith moving, Inga selling it to a doctor from Newark; but us locals feel we've lost a friend.

MACK REYNOLDS SAYS:

For the first time in about two years the Mack Reynolds have a permanent address: 33 Blvd. Mortier; Paris 20, France. I'm so out of touch that I don't know whether the Institute is still flourishing or not. I certainly hope so, and if it is please put me back on the mailing list.

We spent the summer in the Balkans, especially Yugoslavia, but wound up in Carlsbad, Czechoslovakia "taking the waters." Quite a joint. In its time half the historic Europeans you've ever heard of seem to have taken the water cure there. From Napoleon to Hitler and from Peter the Great to Karl Marx (who was on the lam at the time).

The Czechs have a cute little way of making you pony up your hotel and meals costs in hard currency before you enter the country but we foxed them. There are some five categories for tourists ranging from Deluxe to Tourist B. Tourist B costs five bucks a day for hotel and meals. Ordinarily the Czech Crown is valued at 7 to the dollar, but on the free market exchange in Vienna I got about a hundred dollars worth at 28 to the dollar. When we got to Czechoslovakia we upped our caterogy from Tourist B to Deluxe, staying in such swank joints as the Grand Hotel Moscau in Carlsbad. Also bought an Excta camera which lists at about \$365 in New York for about \$85.

Standards of living in Prague and elsewhere in Czechslavakia looked lower to me than they werd when I was in the country in both 1959 and 1957. Lines before meat stores. Scimpy portions of food in restaurants. Few food products in groceries. They simply haven't licked their agricultural problems a-tall.

Now, Yugoslavia was a different thing. We first went there in 1955 and have been through several times since. The country is booming. We were amazed, this last visit, which lasted a couple of months, at the changes. There are even beginning to be traffic problems in such centers as Belgrade and Ljubljana. Food is going up everywhere. I would say that already Yugoslavia has passed Greece, Spain, Portugal, and probably Southern (if not northern) Italy is average standard of living. They'll be passing still more Western European countries within the next few years given a continuation of their present pace. A long time before they can approach Switzerland and Sweden, of course, but man are they booming.

Our Dalmatian, Story, whom various Institute members met before we left the States, died last year in Spain. He fell in line of duty, from a heart attack while chasing a cat. So this summer, in Yugoslavia, we sought a new Dalmatian and finally found one. His father won the national championship of Yugoslavia, last year and Marshal

Tito was so impressed that he requested some of his puppies. When the litter came, two sisters and one brother of our dog went to Marshal Tito's ownership, and we've got one of the remaining. Does this, however distantly, relate us to Tito Broz?

Now that we're safely out of the country, we've named our Dalmatian Tito. We tell everybody, of course, that he's defecated to the West.

WILLIAM TEMPLE SAYS:

Maybe neutralism is a drab color, but having no axe to grind I've no reason to take sides in the editor v. author affray Rrederik Pohl describes. I've had around a hundred magazine stories published. All but one were printed word for word (apart from the inevitable typos) as I wrote them originally. The exception was a tyro effort improved by the editor's subbing out of unnecessary adjectives.

Although I've received dubious treatment at the hands of one or two book publishers, I can't say the same of a single magazine editor. Of course, I've had rejections where it seemed to me my yarn was rather better than the average stuff the editor subsequently published. But naturally authors have a bias in their own favor. I think it's presumptuous of an author to tell an editor what he should or should not put in his own magazine -- which hasn't stopped me from being presumptuous on occasions.

And all my rejects later found homes with other editors, except one story. Horace Gold put his finger straight on a time paradox in that one I'd not noticed. He said if I could straighten it out he'd accept the story. I wasn't able to straighten it out, since it was insoluble. It remains the only s-f story I've never sold, if only because I withdrew it from circulation.

These are simple facts. I'm not trying to butter up editors. Anyhow, I write so little magazine s-f these days that any effect would be negligible, even if this achromatic letter were published, which is doubtful.

I'll miss PITFCS a lot. Hope it doesn't freeze to death in cold storage.

A. E. VAN VOGT SAYS:

About PITFCS--I don't know. If you want to split the field wide open, I think this is undoubtedly a good method. W science fiction writers are clearly as angry a group as any that has ever been given access to the printing presses of the land. Fortunately, our access is limited. But now you have provided a medium of free communication that permits all this viperish stuff to come out.

I notice that some are above it. They look down on the field from some height of distance, and judge from an aloof distance, perhaps with the hope that somewhere, somehow, a discerning critic from another world (of literature) will notice that, after all, they are not mixed up in the degradation, not really mixed up. "Me? Good God, no. I'm one of you fellows who despises all this."

Some are even more subjectively caught up in the genre (as August Derleth would say) that I was in my most caught-up days. I wrote my stories from a subjective, schizoid isolation that was pretty grim--but not the grimmest, I observe with some relief.

I believe that present-day science fiction suffers from the innocence-destruction cycle. Writers who came into it long ago, sincere, excited, full of the creative juices have evolved into bitter, angry men whose maturity is questioned because of the field they are in. Such persons should draw away for the necessary time, until

they can again achieve the innocent eye and the cellular excitement that comes from thinking of a new science fiction gimmick. Above all, science fiction needs a certain naivete. When this is lacking, we can expect the worst. PITFCS, by concentrating all these bitter humors into one small space, may achieve that total fission for science fiction which may yet bring us to the day when not a single sf magazine is to be found on the newsstands.

DONALD A. WOLLHEIM SAYS:

RE Pitfcs 142, I am thoroughly in agreement with Fred Pohl's letter. It would be a good thing if you shut up shop. Because I do not necessarily think that the writers in question are as sour, or as bitter, or as sarcastic as they make themselves appear in their communications. Actually, they are writers, in the habit of catering to the mind they are directing their thoughts at. When that mind happens to be that of a cynical, filthy minded pseudo-fanzine editor such as yourself, they quite unconsciously slant their thoughts accordingly. Hence all seem somehow as putrid as yourself.

About the only good thing in your pub was the picture on the cover of 142, and considering where it was, it manages to be something of an insult to the heroes it was intended to honor.

SAM YOUNG SAYS:

I was sorry indeed to read that PITFCS is to be suspended, and even the valedictory promise of one more issue fails to lighten the darkness. Isn't there someone somewhere who can take the load off your shoulders for the time being? I would have thought of volunteering myself, except that I'm on the wrong side of the Atlantic and don't have access to a multigraph. But surely someone over there has facilities?

There are points that I would have liked to take up with M. Bordes, Miss Smith and Brother Brunner, but I will bow to your limiting stipulation and confine myself to Pohl. It is a pity he feels so bad about things, and one wonders why it is that people who bleed so easily so frequently wind up as science fiction editors (JWC and HG too). If PITFCS were forum designed to be read by the public at large, one would see a point in his plea that the boys should rally together under the tattered flag of Gernsback; though even there one might suspect the validity of that kind of positivist approach. But, of course, it is nothing of the sort; it is a place where we can and should indulge our pet gripes, obsessions, day dreams and disappointments -- where the mechanics of preparing typescripts is as important a topic as the philosophy underlying Heinlein's novels -- and above all where our own words stand to judge us, in the eyes of fellow members and perhaps in our own also. To take a couple of examples (and this is sneaking under the fence a little), my remark about thanking God we have no Indian members was badly put insofar as it gave M. Bordes the impression that it reflected the usual Anglo-Saxon arrogance -- what it did reflect was the experience of listening to Indians orating in English and reading Into-English in Indian journals; I do wish they'd gone back to Sanskrit. But I put it badly enough for the taunt, "Racist!", to seem possibly applicable. The case of John Brunner is somewhat different: there my remark that he should either start analysing his motives or let himself go in anti-American vituperation is presented as an accusation that he does indulge in anti-American howls, which is clearly untrue. My words have been twisted ingeniously into a Brunner-defence.

The point is that while there are, from time to time, silly letters, absurdly bitching letters, envious letters, even downright poisonous letters in PITFCS, these qualities are surely apparent to the members reading them. We are a democratic elite, all reasonably skilled in the use of words and capable of forming judgements on the way they are used by others. I seem to have missed most of these

complaints from writers about editors turning down their good stuff and buying the junk (and the case Pohl quotes is taken not from PITFCS but from a fan magazine, which is something on a par with criticizing GALAXY on the basis of comic book science-fiction) -- but insofar as they do exist, can there be any writers who do not register the automatic reaction: poor bastard, there he goes justifying himself? We are all unsure, all moderately manic-depressive, all cut off by our trade (or profession, or art -- I make no value judgements) from the busy gregarious mass of mankind. And we know ourselves and we know each other. We can even pierce through the avuncular air of wounded benignity that Pohl drapes his long long complaint in, and see the sad worried man, bleeding at his typewriter, wondering if the editorial chair at GALAXY really is the aim and culmination of the strivings of Western Man. And see, too that he is basically a nice guy, and most likely a good editor, to boot. He just shouldn't take himself so seriously; but then, we all do.

FROM THE SECRETARY (continued):

the present policy of complete freedom of expression?

2. Would the membership object to limiting the Proceedings to two issues a year -- say June 15th and December 15th?

3. Should the current list of members be overhauled and certain limitations implemented? Would there be strong objection if membership was limited to those who have taken a fairly active part in the discussion of the past three years?

4. It is suggested that a board of directors composed of well known writers would be of definite value to the Institute. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Its primary purpose would be to give the organization a certain air of legitimacy in its dealings with potential members and laymen. Such a board would be especially valuable if the Institute should decide to seek institutional or foundation sponsorship.

5. It is suggested that a membership committee be appointed to pass on individual applications for membership.

6. It is suggested that a financial secretary be appointed to handle collection of dues and payment of bills.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Until March 1st, 1963, please direct all correspondence to the following address:

13 Theodore R. Cogswell, c/o Engelbrecht,
15 Santo Domingo, San Miguel de Allende
Gto., Mexico

Considering the slowness of Mexican surface post, air mail would be much appreciated. A brief bulletin containing a summary of your responses to the questions above will be issued sometime in the spring.

** UNTIL THEN, A MOST HAPPY AND PRODUCTIVE NEW YEAR. GO WRITE GOOD! **

(PS. Just sat down and read through the masters. I'm appalled at the large number of typos (had a new secretary this fall) but there isn't much I can do about them at this late date. May those of you who were especially mangled have better luck next time.)