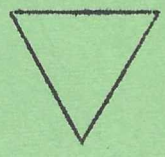
SCIENCE FICTION FORUM



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SCIENCE FICTION

FORUM

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Vol. 1, No. 2 August, 1957

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EDITORIAL

by Lester del Rey

The best laid schemes, as Burns pointed out, gang aft--sometimes so far aft that they get mixed up in a wake. Certainly this seems to apply to our schemes for regular bi-monthly publication of the Forum.

Unfortunately, no matter how professional the interests of the magazine, it is handicapped by one amateur aspect: that is the amateur status I have to confess as a publisher; I don't even have a solid background of fan publishing, which would at least have made me more aware of the pitfalls between copy assignment and final turning of the mimeograph crank. Normal delyas, some confusion in getting work back and forth between Red Bank and Milford, eye trouble at both ends, and the unfortunate but necessary time needed for making a living all help to delay things. Then there were some "unforeseen" delays. (One was caused by the need of a new typewriter. This issue would run to over 80 pages on the old typeface, which meant we had to go to elite. But here, I can't use a standard keyboard--mine is totally dissimilar; since I have yet to find the shop which can realign type accurately enough for the cutting of stencils, I had to resolder 46 slugs myself, which took time.)

I'm deeply grateful to all of you for the fact that nobody asked for explanations; such incredible patience is wonderful. I'm also grateful to Damon, whose patience was probably even more difficult. From now on, I won't promise any fixed schedule, but I hope the issues will come out nearer the supposed date of publication. I also hope that the mimeography will improve with more experience in the use of the ink and paper which is apparently standard now as ersatz for what I used to get.

§ § §

As I pointed out in the last issue, the major business of the Forum is to establish better and more general communication in the s-f field. However, there was one element of this communication which seemed so obvious that it was not covered, though it is the most important aspect of the subject, and the only ultimate business of writing. This is the communication between the writer and the reader. Without that, obviously, there is nothing else for us to communicate about, since there would be no field of s-f or any other form of writing!

Apparently, from discussions that have come up as a result of the magazine reviews, this isn't as obvious to some writers and editors as I assumed. Either the principle involved isn't fully recognized or some are confusing it with communication between writer and editor. The latter is a very necessary thing--but sometimes more communication doesn't mean better, unfortunately, and a confusion of it for the final communication to the reader can louse up the works completely.

There are a number of axioms that should be stated on this, it seems to me. (1) The reader can know only what is on the printed page; he can't have the editor or writer come around to explain any gaps. (2) The writer's job is to sell the reader on his story, not the editor; salesmanship alone is no substitute for a story, and the reader in the long run is the one who pays the

(Continued on Page 34)

THAT SENSE OF WONDER

by Poul Anderson

In the old days we forgave science fiction its literary faults because it commanded our interest. Now it may have more craftsmanship, but we do not forgive it for being dull. The moral is that while craftsmanship is certainly a virtue, it is a minor virtue which in no way compensates for the major vice of dreariness. Shakespeare, Cervantes, Melville, Tolstoy...etc....never heard about "tight plotting," and yet I find myself almost compulsively quoting them to myself, while I forget as if I'd never read it what was in the last issue of most present-day magazines.

Now certainly Verne, Wells, Weinbaum, Campbell, Smith, and the other major figures of s-f's two Golden Ages, were competent writers; at least two of them were nearly great. But they are not remembered merely for their competence. The average level of writing skill is quite acceptably high nowadays--in a few cases the style is of a hectic brilliance unknown to early s-f--and yet the really memorable, exciting story has become a rarity. When it does crop up, it's not necessarily a distinguished piece of sheer literature--"Mission of Gravity", for instance--and yet the much-talked of "sense of wonder" is unmistakably there.

I conclude that s-f is differentiated from other writing by its themes, and that whatever is especially and uniquely wonderful about s-f is thematic. I am going to suggest that the fascination of the old stories lay in their fresh treatment of certain themes which are now somewhat, if not wholly exhausted; and I will suggest that there are equally interesting subjects lying around begging to be used for the renaissance of s-f.

TECHNOLOGICAL FICTION

Elsewhere I have underlined the distinction between science and technology, a distinction which even today is not clear to many people. Technology we have always had with us, since the first flint was chipped; science, as a body of organized fact, a method for discovering new fact, and an orientation toward such discovery, is a latecomer. Of course, the impact of scientific fact and scientific method on technology has been considerable--most basic change of all, the existence of a continuously changing science (since roughly Copernicus' time) has led to the idea of continuous technological evolution (since roughly the 18th Century). Nevertheless, automobiles or industrial systems analysis are not in the same philosophical or cultural class as spectroscopes or communications theory.

A moment's thought will show that most early "science" fiction was actually "technological" fiction. If new principles and laws were discovered in these stories, or postulated as having been discovered before the story opened, it was just to furnish a rationale for the machines which the author was interested in. Verne and Gernsback are obvious cases in point. Wells, being more of a writer, dealt more with the human impact of the machines; but it remains technology that he wrote about; "applied science", if you will, rather than pure science.

Could the sense of wonder in these stories, and those which followed for a generation or two afterwards, have been simply the Christmas morn feeling of new machines, new powers and conquests over nature, waiting to be unwrapped?

This exultation in an unfolding technology was characteristic of the late Victorian-Edwardian period, when the immediate social ills of the Industrial Revolution had been corrected--or were at least seen to be correctible--and the benefits were beginning to show up on a large scale. The romance of the machine has been nowhere better expressed than by Kipling's "M'Andrew's Hymn" or the youthful works of Johannes V. Jensen. Early s-f--the first Golden Age--was, then, simply the most visionary poesy of the industrial era.

Perhaps this poesy took root most strongly in America (Gernsback having transplanted it) not because this is the most advanced country on Earth, but because we lie at the tail end of a social lag. In many respects we do, you know; American English is a modified archaic East Anglian; the American Constitution is firmly based on 18th-Century monarchy; and American skepticism about the value of technological progress came at least a generation after the European disillusionment. Apparently the Atlantic Ocean is an effective historical insulator.

To be sure, a certain loss of enthusiasm is inevitable simply through getting used to some state of affairs. Consider the recent extension of Social Security to various classes of workers such as the self-employed. Twenty years ago, this would have been hailed as a triumph; now it came in with a yawn, as an expected next step along a well-marked road. After you have seen six basic improvements in airplane design, the seventh is not going to stir you very profoundly. So to some degree, the technological theme has been exhausted by the continued success of technology itself.

But there is also that disillusionment, a growing revulsion toward the whole idea of indefinite mechanical improvement. Partly, in America, this is a recent reaction to the A-Bomb--quite a childish reaction, a temper tantrum at the realization that now we too can get hurt. But partly, older and deeper and more justifiable, there is uncertainty on moral, esthetic, and philosophical grounds. Technology does seem to be divorcing us more and more from the "realities" (i.e., from the modes of life for which we are evolved)--it does deny too many of us all sense of independence and personal accomplishment, turn us into lopsided monsters--it does overorganize our society, erode the landscape and make it hideous, crowd the earth till one could almost wish for a few nuclear bombs.

This is not a view which I entirely share; but it is a prevalent and growing one, though still largely inarticulate. And even the technophile, who retains the devout Edwardian belief in the liberating machine and the beautiful machine (both of which do remain at least theoretically possible) must feel cheated when he contemplates the actuality. So much of our "progress" is pure hokum--a new-model car is five inches lower and we're expected to have orgasms. So much other "progress" is in the realm of trivia. The technophile may wonder bitterly if man is capable of reaping any genuine benefit.

Even during the second (ASF) Golden Age, some of these doubts crept in--as was only natural, for the Campbell renaissance was after all a perfection of the Wellsian human-impact concept of s-f. Since the last official war, a revolt against technology--badly confused, so that even its own adherents tend to think of it as a revolt against science--has been spearheaded by Ray Bradbury.

I'm afraid I can't share Mr. Bradbury's nostalgia for a lemonaded past-that-never-was; with all due respect for his style, his themes tend to be a petulant kick at the car which won't start. As for his occasional rhapsodies toward the rocket, those are merely rhapsodies, which could be still more effectively directed at the clipper ship or the blooded stallion. However,

these are personal strictures. The important fact of the rebellion itself, and its continued growth, remains.

From this viewpoint, Bradbury's opposite number, Robert Heinlein, must then be seen not as the pioneer of a new literary form but as a gallant and gifted defender of an old one. Heinlein is among the last of the technophiles. But then, of course, he's not a realist, but an extremely romantic writer. (Consider his usual hero, the absolutely competent idealist; his charming, ridiculous assertion that man is a wild animal--man, next to aphids the oldest domestic animal on Earth!--his reincarnation hobbyhorse; his almost mystically conceived nonhumans.) Heinlein is only in part a creator of technological fiction, even of the social-impact voriety. However, he is so much a master that he will serve to illustrate one point: that the technological theme is not yet played out. No theme ever is in any field of literature.

However, this one has been so heavily mined in the past, and faces so much subconscious resistance, that it takes a writer of Heinlein's stature to be really successful with it nowadays. And there are comparatively able men who simply can't master his enthusiasm for it. So if the peculiar excitement of s-f is basically intellectual, where are we going to find new themes as mind-capturing as technology once was?

BLIND ALLEYS

Lesser writers have tried to continue in the track of the masters. But lacking the solid foundation of knowledge possessed by Verne, Wells, Gernsback, Campbell, Heinlein, the understanding of what technology actually involves, they have only developed a bastard version: pseudotechnological fiction. The theme is the pseudo-development of a pseudo-idea, seldom even a new pseudo-idea. So we get the eruption of "cybernetic" stories committed in total ignorance of what cybernetics is all about (oh, that tired old computer that suddenly acquires consciousness!) or the more recent epizoötic of "psi" fiction. I don't condemn either psi or cybernetics in itself, of course, but I do deplore the use of the words as an incantation designed to substitute for thinking. There's no intellectual excitement in watching Joe Hero acquire one psionic power after another--not if we're never told how or why. There is only a sequence of events.

Then we get the clever little variations on "sociological" themes. Imagine a future where wives go to the office and husbands stay home doing the housework, and get very cute about how purchasing power gradually shifts back to men. Or since you can prove that the number of garbage men is increasing every year, do a novel about a future in which everybody is a garbage man; this will be editorially labelled Extrapolation.* (As far as I know, neither of these plots has actually been used--yet. Go ahead; you're welcome.)

Or land your hero on a planet. Somehow, there are always these planets floating around, always convenient to the spaceship, always Earthlike, their astronomical location never specified even in the vaguest way. Some infinitesmal variation in the society of the natives or in the non-intelligent life forms--variations from other stories, not from authentic anthropology or sociology--is considered acceptable in place of originality. Have you ever noticed the complete lack of geography on these planets, even local geography, the complete lack of history or intercultural influences among the natives?

As Oliver Saari once remarked to me, this sort of thing doesn't expand the human mind toward galactic magnitudes; it merely shrinks the galaxy down to rather low-grade human dimensions.

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* I owe this particular concept to Philip K. Dick.

"The Caine Mutiny" was a general success because it made its readers think. Even those who disagreed had to think if they were to refute it. When will we rediscover what we once knew, that this is the whole purpose of s-f, its only excuse for existence?

But there's hope. There is even an occasional story which fulfills the hope. Consciously or not, a few authors have been using certain themes which can perhaps form the basis of a third Golden Age. Let's look at them.

SCIENCE FICTION

I don't know what else to call it. What we've had to date has been mostly technological fiction, or disguised fantasy fiction, or the vacuity I was just inveighing against. But because science is not identical with technology, or with fantasy, there is potentially a fiction of pure science. So far only a few stories of that type have been written.

If technology is organized accomplishment, then science per se is organized knowledge. Therefore, if technological fiction reflected the excitement of achieving, science fiction should reflect the excitement of learning, of discovery. Three possible fields of fresh discovery would be (a) new planets and peoples; (b) other human societies, past, present and future; (c) new branches of science itself.

Of course, there have been many stories nominally under (a), but on reflection, few of them appear to be reallyaabout the planets in question. Rather, the planet is only a setting for some other theme. This is not bad in itself, unless the setting be merely a costume West or a costume South Sea Island, which is all too often the case. However, it's not what I had in mind.

Weinbaum wrote several fine stories about other worlds. Their science may look a bit crude today, but the feeling of discovery, of what's-around-the-next-bend, remains. The leading practitioner of the art today, is, of course, Hal Clement. In fact, he's almost the only one; and there's no excuse for it. Clement is a brilliant pioneer, but one man can't settle a country. To be specific, who's going to write fiction as plausible and intellectually captivating as "Mission of Gravity", while developing more fully the history, lives, philosophies, and adventures of the aliens, through plotting and style not limited by Clement's slightly pedestrian approach?

To some extent, de Camp was doing it for a while in his Viagens stories. I've just completed a novel-length attempt--heaven knows if it will sell or deserves to sell, but at least several months of calculations and thinking lie behind it. Who else? If enough of us try, some of us are bound to succeed.

In the line of (b), the different society, there are many attempts and few successes. Chad Oliver does it best, because he knows anthropological principles. His foreign and future cultures aren't just slapped together, but planned to be cohesive and plausible. Henry Kuttner has also done notably, and there are some few others. (My personal stabs at it include "The Man Who Came Early"--an alien society which really existed--and "Delenda Est"--a somewhat detailed alternate past. I suppose the science involved in these was historiography.)

Actually, though, the best work ever done under (b) appeared in Unknown--those wonderful lunatic universes with their uncompromising logic. It's that really thorough thought which is the sine qua non of science fiction.

Category (c), the new branch of scientific knowledge, is also often aimed at and seldom hit. Again, good honest thinking is usually lacking. This category is much more than pseudo-science; it's the complete working out of a

postulated new field of natural law, where the postulate should preferably lie not too far from established fact (because a great deal of interest lies in the relationship of what we already know). It is as much concerned with limits as with potentialities--for when everything is possible, nothing is very exciting. Probably the most well-deserved success in (c), psi, was Sturgeon's "More than Human"; I've tried to do it in a few stories, such as "Journey's End". Jones has done it well for physics and mathematics in a number of yarns, especially "Fifty Million Monkeys"--which was only incidentally technological. Whether you liked it or not (I did), and despite all its fallacies, van Vogt's "World of A" was science fiction under (c). So was Farmer's "The Lovers". (Both these latter, of course, have strong elements of (a) and (b) as well.)

I won't multiply examples, but merely point out what a wealth of ideas there is at the frontiers of sicence--in astronomy (what about the two stellar populations?), physics (the parity principle), cytology, biochemistry, games theory, communication theory, mathematics, etc., ad infinitum.

Or has the class of s-f writers grown too lazy to study science?

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

The eternal human interactions, such as love, politics, and war, have seldom been considered from the intellectual angle, the treatment of basic underlying principles--not even in s-f. Asimov's early "Foundation" stories did some excellent spadework, by the fictional illumination of the logic of history. One would think that the military science of the future offers rich fields for speculation, but it has been almost as badly neglected as the traditional theory of war (which latter, being more solidly grounded, is still more intriguing). Clarke's "Superiority" is one of the few examples.

In this connection, at the risk of bragging, I'd like to reinforce my thesis with a personal case. "The Double-Dyed Villains" was not well written--I'd not been writing very long at the time--but it was well received, and I'm still being complimented on it. Why? It was an intellectual novelty, to this day one of the few political science fiction stories. On the other hand, the two recent sequels show much greater skill--after all these years, I should hope so!--but they have been very rightly received in the spirit in which they were written: as minor entertainments, mere variations on a theme.

I don't mean that the s-f of human interaction should have an exclusively cold, detached approach. On the contrary, there is, at least potentially, a great gain in passion and vividness through its symbolic relationship to the most urgent problems of our time. When Euripedes wrote "The Trojan Women", he was dealing with an existing Peloponnesian War via an essentially imaginary Troy. Why can't we consider the questions of war and peace, freedom and tyranny, which torment the present age, by projecting them onto imaginary planets?

The purely esthetic aspect of science is another field which has been oddly little cultivated--occasional praise of capitalized Science is about all. Yet the scientific world picture is certainly a splendid one. The scientist's professional virtues are almost inhumanly austere; what an opening for the tragedian! And, while I don't think the main purpose of s-f is to generate intellectual excitement, there's no reason why we can't also write about that excitement.

In fact, the new territory waiting for us is literally infinite. If we fail to take possession--if we stay in the same old sociological-psionic-cybernetic-pseudotechnological-pseudoslick rut till we all die of boredom--it will be nobody's fault but our own.

END

THE MARKET

by Lester del Rey

The biggest market news this time is that American News Company, the biggest dristributor of magazines and paperback books in this country, suddenly shut up shop in June, discontinuing all distribution. The first shock of this has somewhat worn off in the market by now--but its effects will continue to be felt for quite a while.

The immediate effect was to tie up funds on which publishers had been counting to meet their regular bills--and to pay off writers, in many cases. The financial end of the distribution business is far too complicated for any simple statement. A certain amount is usually advanced to a publisher on the issue of a magazine or paperback--the money on which many publishers operate. Much later, accounting is made at intervals on the sale. Inevitably, it takes months before the final accounting is made on any issue. But normally, at least, there are periodic sums of money coming in to meet the bills.

However, when a distributor folds, all these normal returns of money are tied up completely. Payment must now wait for a final accounting--which must mean until all returns of magazines can be determined and net sale figured. This will take months, in this case. With luck, the publishers can hope to be paid for their publications in about four months from the time of the discontinuing of distribution, and it may well take longer. Obviously, this is a serious delay. Also, in many cases, it means that issues of magazines that were released to the distributor but not yet on the stands were not put on sale as they should have been; and this can represent a heavy loss indeed. Even when other means of distribution could be located, the delay in getting an issue onto the stands could make a serious decrease in the percentage sold.

Fortunately, most of the magazines in the s-f field were not distributed by ANC, which apparently lost interest in s-f some time ago and offered a less attractive deal to the magazines than had once been the case. Street & Smith switched Astounding to SM years ago. Galaxy changed to Kable in 1956--long enough ago that final accounting should have been made by now. Many of the lesser magazines were always "independently" distributed. If you're curious, you can usually check this by examination of the magazines. Somewhere on the cover or backstrap, there is usually the identifying sign or group of letters: ANC, SM over a star, ID inside the outline of North America, PDC, K, MAC, etc. Most of the paperback book publishers who were interested in s-f were also independently distributed.

However, this does not mean that there will be no effects. Inevitably, any shock as severe as this will spill over beyond its immediate circle of influence. As an example, take any magazine which was distributed by Kable in the past. At one time, a smaller distributor could buck the prestige and number of outlets of ANC only by offering a larger percentage of advance on publication or by giving a more favorable price per copy. (On a 35¢ magazine this could vary from 19¢ to 23¢.) Also, a smaller distributor would be willing to consider handling almost any magazine, even one which was issued in fairly small numbers. With a smaller number of outlets, they were geared to handle such publications. Now things are different. As a result of the scramble for distributors that took place after the news on ANC, Kable will probably be the largest and most powerful distributor. Obviously, the money

which is used for advances must be spread out where it will do them the most good. Equally obviously, they must be prepared to cover all newsstands, and they will prefer magazines which can be distributed to all stands. It's only good business in such a case to give the break to the magazines which sell best--and that does not generally mean s-f magazines. Quite probably, the magazines now handled by them will find things somewhat tougher. There are an amazing number of ways in which this toughness can manifest itself, too.

To most people, a print order of 200,000 copies of a magazine (representing sales of from 80,000 to 120,000 copies) is a lot of business, and in the s-f field it is. But to a distributor, it can be very small. I have been told that ANC once covered 110,000 newsstand outlets. That would mean less than two copies per stand! In practice, many stands will receive no copies, to provide enough for others, but this is a lot less satisfactory to distributors than having something good for all outlets. With a small printing, the best way to assure maximum sales is to shuffle slow-moving copies to other stands (which is sometimes why magazines show up late or sporadically), but this is hardly worth while to a company geared to Life or the Post! In the case of paperback books, the lack of dating helps, but the smallness of the printing still applies.

Or take it from the printing angle. Printers often work on delayed payment from advances and later returns. Now a printer may find some of his old ANC magazines forced to hold up expected money, or even needing longer terms. If they're good accounts, he'll try to carry them. But then he can't be quite as lenient with others supposedly unaffected by the change! Again, s-f business represents only small contracts to him. Most publishers have no more than two magazines--the old chains broke down--and about the only way a printer can offer the price break the magazines can afford is to run more than one through his plant at once. He has to give the best break to the contracts that represent the largest part of his business. It's quite possible for the financial crisis to hit a magazine that never had any business with ANC.

On the other hand, there is one potential advantage to the change, at least for some of the magazines. Heretofore, ANC had the edge at all railway, subway and other terminal stands. You may have noticed that these didn't carry some of the s-f magazines at all. Yet one of the best places to sell magazines and pocket books is at just such stands, since men waiting for or planning to ride on public conveyances have a need for some way to kill time. In the larger cities--where the best audience for s-f seems to be located--it may well be that some magazines will pick up a significant number of sales on such stands. That, however, won't mean anything for some time, due to the lag between the release of an issue and final accounting; and it will require considerable reëxamination of what the proper print order should be--it must be enough to take advantage of these outlets, but too optimistic an order can easily ruin the breakeven point on which publishers have to operate.

What all this means to the writer is hard to say. For a time, it may mean slower (!) pay in some cases, though this should not be too true of the sales to magazines generally. It will probably mean the somewhat quicker folding of some of the sub-marginal magazines that pay rock-bottom prices but take the otherwise useless rejects, but these would inevitably have folded in time, judging by publishing history. In the paperback field, it has already resulted in the end of Lion Books, according to the last information I have. (There was same hope expressed for the future, but it's doubtful.) In this case, they had just switched <u>to</u> ANC when the blow came. So the expanded line of s-f they were planning dies before birth. Generally, there will be

more of an upset here than in the magazines. Yet the biggest s-f market--Ballantine Books--is still very much in the market for s-f. In the long run, I think the writer will benefit more by the loss of ANC's control of the terminal stands than he will lose from other effects.

In the case of writers with agents, it will be much tougher to get advances for several months. The agent's funds will have to be spread much thinner, to take care of writers who were counting heavily on checks now tied up by ANC, and advances against even a sure sale are going to be curtailed heavily. It won't be an alibi from the agent, but the cold hard truth when he says no.

The one thing all this does not mean is that the market is dying! Every time a magazine folds or anything else happens, the rumor that the death of the pulps has caught up with s-f begins to circulate. In this case, the folding of the largest magazine distributor, following the death of such magazines as Collier's, would seem to give the rumor an element of truth. But ANC didn't pull out because of the declining circulation of magazines, by any means. There are a dozen long and complicated stories, any one of which may be true, to explain the event. Certainly there was evidence of trouble long before the announcement of discontinuance. For some time, the price offered per copy had been reduced to publishers, which probably drove more of them to other distributors. But probably the major blow came when Time and Life left. The newsstands depend on such large-sale weeklies heavily, naturally, and if one distributor can't supply them, they'll go elsewhere. In the end, I have been told that ANC was covering only about 60,000 stands--about half of their original number--which made them less attractive to the magazines, and set a vicious circle of cutbacks into operation. The general market for magazines had nothing to do with their decision to liquidate.

In the next issue of the Forum, I hope to expand this section to cover most of the magazines and paperback book houses in the field, together with their reaction to the ANC folding. By then, it should be possible to make a much better estimate of just what the long-range effects of it all will be. In the meantime, most of the markets are still screaming for stories.

GRIPES

MARGARET ST. CLAIR:

Does Gold really get most people's mss back in three weeks? He almost always keeps my things, even the few he has taken, for two or three months. The only editor I know who gets things back promptly is Russel, at Playboy.

G. C. EDMONDSON:

The two or three week report time may represent some ideal which Gold and Campbell hope to attain. In actual practice, their slush is two or three months behind. Boucher (Allah praise and keep him; he buys my stuff) will hold mss a year or more. § I think this may be one of the reasons why s-f isn't getting new blood. I'm not a pro. I'm old enough to remember Gernsback and Weinbaum, but my floruit came late and I didn't start work until about three years ago. At my age it's difficult to make up for lost time, so, grateful as I am to Campbell (who bought my second story), Boucher (who bought the 15th, 20th, etc.), and Gold (who bounced all the rest with sardonic but accurate comment), I just haven't time for s-f. I'm learning a trade and the crime and men's mags return my lessons within a reasonable time. Hence, 90% of my doubtful potential is now directed toward those markets. Undoubtedly, slow reading does disgust a goodly number of eager boys who want their money or their manuscripts.

by Theodore Sturgeon:

I learned a lot at Milford last year. It wasn't until I began to extrapolate into this year's Conference that I understood just how very much I had learned. There was, you'll recall, something of a "love feast" atmosphere about the thing. There was a universal (almost) moratorium on most old feuds, a courtesy and a waiting for the other guy to make his point--and lo and behold, an opportunity to reëvaluate old convictions about old acquaintances. If here and there the barefoot bacchanal revealed a bit of clay under this or that old idol, that was more than compensated for by the too-tardy realization that this long-term shlemiel was a Santa, and what do you know, old Esdras is a worthy wight after all. There was a lot of valuable work done and I got new ideas from others and crystallized some of my own I didn't know I had. In short, I felt good there and profited, in the sense of getting far more than I paid for.

Then I found I'd left all my good-feelings-at-Milford--at Milford.

For the longest time I couldn't understand that, and spent a lot of time up to about Christmas trying to put my finger on it. Well, I did, and thereafter was even unhappier about it. I wanted to make a noise about it but couldn't bring myself to attack the convictions and hard, good work of my friends at Milford.

But it comes to me like a revelation, why not? I can attack what they're doing without attacking them. They are good friends--not only the kind who loan and listen and lend a hand, but also the kind who will energetically pitch a pal into the kitchen midden, no hard feelings, when that is clearly the thing that will do him the most good. So let that be understood. I'm not mad at anybody in Milford. I ferociously disagree with this and that, and I'm making my disagreement public because I concur with all the things Lester said in his dedicatory editorial in the first Forum; I feel importantly that these gripes concern us all.

Rather than carp and criticize, I'll fall in with the theme of Bert and Harry and their brother Norman Vincent, and posture myself to the posit of powerful thinking; to wit:

I AM LOOKING FOR A CONFERENCE

--Open to any professional able to pay his own freight.

There is a Thing, a canker, a perilous beast I call the PMC Syndrome. It sets up screens, all wired on the bias, a personal warp on a weft of whim. It cannot coexist with the concept that our common craft is prime. It must, by its very nature, transcend everything else in the place. A Permanent Membership Committee broke the back of the old Hydra Club. A PMC killed the Author's Club altogether dead. I cannot understand the opacity of the blind spot in those who create this carcinomous clique. Listen--this is an axiom: No dearest friend of mine can gather about him fifteen dearest friends of his without including one of my enemies. I concede that Management rates a privilege or two, but in the light of that axiom, I am being asked to make the sort of association which Management refuses to make, and under these circumstances I feel put upon. Let Management protest, "But it's MY Conference, and I'll ask whom I please," and my answer is that that is precisely my objection. I am looking for s-f's professional Conference, where I can meld up

to my work and join no teams. As to what "any Professional" means, that can be arbitrary; I don't mind that. Like the agencies say, "anyone who has made $500 worth of sales in the past 12 months", or some such. I think too that one or two openings should be made for promising tyros. I agree too that agents and editors and publishers should not have access to all of something which is by and for working writers; they should appear and speak their pieces and clear out. But no one who is writing--working--on the creative end should be excluded. And if it really is the case that our field is more important than any one of us, then it ought to be made quite clear that we're not foregathering to feud, nor to haze even the character who goes around butt uppermost asking to be kicked, nor to commit comeuppances to settle old-sore old scores. ...I heard somebody say recently: "I certainly wouldn't be at any Conference the same time as him," and it made me sad. What was most important to that speaker--s-f? Personally, I always like myself a little better when I learn something from somebody I don't like. It makes me feel a little farther removed from the incredible character who won't agitate for better housing because he heard the Commies agitate for better housing. There isn't any pro in this field that each of us can't learn something from, even You-Know-Who.

--Open to my wife, spouse or helpmate any professional sees fit to bring.

There are wives who are part of a writer and whose concern is deeply with every nuance and technicality of a writer's insane existence. There are writer's wives who live in isolation--whether she created the sanctum or he did doesn't matter--from their husband's rack and ratchet and tiptoe around saying shh, Charley's working. And there are writer's wives who genuinely don't give a damn. Whether or not a writer brings a spouse is the writer's business. If he and she want to share these arduous, lengthy and sometimes dull sessions, wonderful. Really wonderful. If he wants her to, so she can know better what he's up against, he's doing it in one of the best ways there is. And if she's a drag and he couldn't figure a way to shake her for the Conference, that's his problem and not the Conference's. Any non-pro who annoys anyone but his or her spouse is up against a forceful majority, and a pretty damn articulate one at that. I wouldn't worry about the possibility. But to argue that the presence of Conferee's spouses may tend to inhibit the Conferee's speech and thought is to guard against a statistically improbable situation. It has been my observation that most writers are on pretty good terms with their wives, at least in the area of communication; at most, in a good many other areas as well. It is safe, I think, to say that the spouses of all of us, and we ourselves, know whether our partner's presence would be a help or a hindrance. Most of us have the ability to get the matter clearly settled before the Conference. As for the tiny minority left, they can stay home or they can accept my sympathy and struggle through as best they can. But I'm damned if I can see why the sessions should be turned into a sort of guild stag-party with secret rites, just on the remote possibility that somebody there is henpecked and has brought his hen. (I've used the "he" throughout for convenience. I'm not overlooking the scrivening distaff one bit. If he's capable of shaking the little woman should that be indicated, she's probably quite competent to arrive without the little man.)

--Which does not use a tape recorder.

At first blush, the idea of a robot scribe, without slant or fault, seems a good one, and it's sort of nice to know that your every breath is being graven on stone. But in retrospect, one is frequently appalled by things one has expressed and gets that let's-for-God's-sake-burn-down-the-library

feeling. This isn't only the result of a late realization that one's tongue may have slipped in the beer. It's the product also of the fact that in spite of pressures and appearances to the contrary, we exist in dynamic balance, not static, and we shift and change and grow every minute. So do our most solid assertions. There are moments in life when one is conscious of having passed through a gain or a change, and the monarch is not amused to be reminded of the caterpillar. ...these are philosophical conjectures merely. The more important point is, I believe, that in most cases we remember vividly that which we want and need, and if we don't we can take notes. The rest is, for each individual person, not worth preserving unless it is preserved to commit comedy at some absent person's expense, in which case it is also not worth preserving. ...It might at times be a convenience to record a session in the event that a convoluted argument arises in which someone says, "I did not say that; I said---" whereupon the tape can clear the matter up. But it is now my firm opinion that such tapes should be erased at the end of the session.

--Which attaches itself temporarily and geographically to a Convention.

This is not a point upon which I am prepared to man the barricades and bleed much, but it seems to me that the heights of success which were reached at Milford last year were peaked by the presence of so many valuable people who would not have been in the area but for the Convention. It is this--personnel--and this alone which prompts me to make this lesser and final suggestion. ...It was Damon Knight who remarked last year that Milford was what he had always gone to Conventions to get and had never found. I know exactly what he means, and my attitude toward and feeling for Conventions has undergone a radical change since Milford. I'm sure many others feel the same way. But I don't think that's going to greatly alter the fact that Conventions do attract the most of the best of the pros, and will so continue. Many of us don't want to get tempted by two dates at two widely separated places, as is bound to happen if the Conference is held yearly at any one spot. As to locale, I'd venture to say that every Convention-suitable city has in its outskirts some Milford-like spot. A Conference Committee could be told off to find one beginning immediately after each Convention election. To sum up, it's easier to arrange one trip to one place, and if we do that the chances are much better that we'll have a more interesting and valuable time because of the certain presence of more interesting and valuable people. And just because you Confer near the Convention time and place doesn't by any means signify that you have to go to the damn thing.

§ § §

To cap and close: Find ye no paradox in the repeated assertions herein that last year's Milford Conference was a rewarding and enjoyable experience, while at the same time I seem to be sniping and hacking at it. You must remember that while the PMC Syndrome kills with absolute and unfailing certainty, it does so slowly. So you'll probably have (had) a good time there this year.

Tell me about it when you come back.

END

EDITORIAL NOTE:

Some background on Ted's article may be needed for those who know little about the Milford Conference, which will follow. But it seems to me (Lester

del Rey) that something beyond the article itself is involved here. Ted has seemingly realized more quickly than most one of the fundamental purposes of the Forum, and I hope this will encourage others to make fuller use of it.

I feel that the Forum should be a sounding board for every controversy and every point a writer of s-f feels to be important, whether it directly ties into writing or s-f or not. It should be available as a public vehicle for anything that writers might consider important or interesting in private talks, and should bring into the open every disagreement, grievance, gripe, wish, need or discovery. In other words, it should live up to its carefully chosen name.

And because we agree 100% that one can attack something being done without attacking the person doing it, the editors intend to keep the pages open with as little regard to their own private opinions and feelings as possible. We have already been forced to attack the work of men we deeply admire, and we have been attacked in turn; but in both cases, we feel it is fair because we are neither attacking nor being attacked personally. Tact should play second fiddle to fact; there is very little real fellowship in a mutual admiration society; and generally, men of really good will are men of strong will, too.

It was the realization of this which probably made the first Milford Writer's Conference such a success. Many writers there were not ones with whom I was on the best terms, and I'm sure many felt the same about me (as was the case initially with Ted Sturgeon, I believe). But that didn't matter. The event took place in Milford, Penna., right after the New York Convention, with about 30 or more people attending--something of a random sampling of s-f. For a busy week, we talked shop and fought out our principles with little attention to anything but shop.

It was against this background and during this Conference that the Forum was proposed and first discussed; perhaps without the Conference, we might not have been able to realize that such a magazine was possible. Damon and I realized, however, that it must be strictly independent and not connected with any conference or other group; but it is probably because of its origin that the above article seems to take it for granted that most readers are familiar with the Milford Conference.

At the Conference, of course, there were a number of questions to decide. One involved whether sessions should be open to wives or not; most sessions were, but a few were closed (although less than originally planned, due to the efforts of those of us who had our wives along, mostly). There was also some question earlier about who should be invited, since it was felt that too large a group would prove unworkable. Generally, however, fans and editors were invited together on one day, and the other days devoted to professional attendance. Tape recordings were made of all sessions, initially with the idea that some form of printed copy of the sessions would be made; this has since apparently proved unfeasible, due to the huge bulk of copy.

A second Conference was held this year in June. Due to the short interval between and other factors, this was a much more limited and informal affair, apparently. Invitations were limited to a small number, and there were quite a few who attended the first Conference who were not invited to the second for various reasons, some of which were personal, undoubtedly. (I feel as does Ted that this was a mistake, but the situation is a complicated one.) The article--which should have appeared before the second Conference--is against this background. However, the basic principles stated are ones I feel should be given careful thought, regardless of background.

BOOK REVIEW

THE LAW OF LITERARY PROPERTY, by Philip Wittenberg. The World Publishing Co., Cleveland and New York, 1957. 284 pp., $5.00.

Reviewed by Theodore L. Thomas

This book ought to be very useful to writers. The chapters on "Plagiarism, Piracy, and Infringement", "Fair Use, Quotation, Burlesque, and Permissions", "Names and Titles", "Protection of Ideas", "Libel", "The Right of Privacy", and "Literature and Censorship" are all excellent. The chapter on "Libel" in particular is the best general statement of the law of libel that I have ever seen; the babel of doctrine comes through clearly. From it a writer can judge the risks involved in any particular piece of proposed writing, and act accordingly. I could wish it were made clearer that the truth of a libelous statement is no defense to a libel suit under some circumstances, but this is an unimportant objection to an excellent summary of libel law.

The chapters on copyright, common-law and statutory, are complete enough to guide the writer in securing proper copyright protection for his work. The common blunders most frequently involved in loss of copyright are all carefully emphasized. Out of these chapters emerges an adequate understanding of the operation of copyright law.

The book has faults. A sprinkle of legal jargon adds an occasional heaviness to an otherwise easy-flowing style of writing. There are frequent quotes of courts or other authorities; these are all to the good. But the author has an annoying habit of failing sometimes to cap such quotes by flatly stating the conclusion to be drawn from them. You get the reasoning in a case but you have to figure out who won.

The opening chapter is devoted to a brief anecdotal history of the development of the law of literary property. This is of no use to a writer unless he wants to do a story containing that kind of material, and if he does, there are better sources to draw from. The chapter is of slight interest.

The index is merely adequate. A book designed to serve as a desk-top reference work ought to have a meticulously prepared index. In copyright law the word "publication" is a word of art and requires a great deal of explanation. But in the index after "Publication" you will find forty page numbers listed with no clue as to what you will learn at each page. This situation is corrected in a modest manner by a rare separate entry such as "Date of Publication", but the "Publication" entry and others ought to be broken down with the same care that "Infringement", "Ideas", and "Libel" are. I was able to find only one blind entry in the index, however. Oddly enough, there does not appear to be a single entry under the heading "Short Story".

The typography in the book is excellent and makes for quick and easy reading. The chapters are broken down into sub-sections which present the various phases of the law in neat packages; to some extent this device compensates for the occasional lack of particularity in the index.

One factor stands out in this book, a subtle but all-important factor. The author throughout discusses the law of literary property the way it is, and not the way it ought to be. Too many lawyers in writing a book of this kind seize the opportunity to expound the right view instead of the existing view. A writer, using the book to find his way, cannot afford such luxury; he must know what the majority of the court said, and he should not be concerned at all with the beautifully-phrased and convincing dissent. The law in this book is accurate and up-to-date and ought to serve the writer well.

MAGAZINE REVIEWS

Editorial: VISION AND RATIONALE by Damon Knight

The review department touched a few sore spots last time; one of them on the Forum staff (see Letters, p. 60.) Several people felt that the tone of the reviews was unnecessarily savage. Maybe that's so. If it is, probably that will modify itself naturally in time. We criticize you; you criticize us. If we can't profit by your advice, we would have a brassbound nerve expecting you to take ours.

Cliff Simak wants to know where we get off finding so much fault. I may be putting words into his mouth, but what I gather he maens is: if the story is beautiful, does it matter how many mistakes in logic or fact the author makes? It's a fair question, and I want to answer it here: it does.

To say why, I have to begin by making a distinction between the raw stuff of fiction and the formed shell a trained writer puts around it. Let's call the first "vision"--the core of a story, the first wordless feeling or hunch, plus the additional glimpses of scenes and characters you get, if you are lucky, as you go along. The second I'll call "rationale": it's an elaborate structure of fact, logic, and argument, all designed to convince the reader that the vision is at least possible, has some base in reality. Vision is what you see; rationale is the story you tell about it.

Most bad writing is all vision or all rationale: real balance between the two is a very difficult thing, and there's hardly a one of us that doesn't tip over on one side or the other.

The two are about equally important, in the sense that you can't have a good story without either; but technical criticism begins with rationale--it has nothing to say about vision. It is unfair to criticize a story solely on the basis of its rationale--certainly it is; but it's that kind of criticism or none at all. And we need criticism.

When you have said every disparaging thing you can think of about the editors in this field--and we have some dillies--the fact still remains that none of them is getting enough good stories to put out a satisfactory magazine. There aren't that many good s-f stories being written.

About those stories that are defective because of poor vision, we can't do much--only brush them off with some such comment as "familiar" or "no surprise." But rationale is an acquired skill, it can be learned. The rationale of s-f stories can be improved. Criticism is the art of the possible.

As a writer, I am as lazy and opportunistic as the next man, and I am as vulnerable as he to this kind of criticism--see the Galaxy review this issue. I am grateful to anybody who will take the trouble to tell me when I have done a second-rate job. Even knowing there exists somebody who gives a damn or can tell the difference between my best work and my second-best, is an incentive to me.

I can push editors' buttons; I can sell what an editor is a sucker for instead of what I like myself, and that kind of thing is even easier to write; it pays more reliably. But if I know somebody is likely to call me on it, I'll think twice before I write a story like that again.

The tone may improve. But that bitter taste is honesty. We won't change it.

GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION

Reviewed by Damon Knight

April, 1957

OPERATION STINKK - Simak	C
VICTIM FROM SPACE - Sheckley	D
ONCE A GREECH - Smith	B
MAN IN THE JAR - Knight	C
THE IFTH OF OOFTH - Tevis	C
THE COFFIN CURE - Nourse	D
ARMY WITHOUT BANNERS - Wellen	D

Score - C

May, 1957

SURVIVAL KIT - Pohl	C
A TOUCH OF E FLAT - Gibson	D
TIME IN THE ROUND - Leiber	C
THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE - Sheckley	C
FOUNDING FATHER - Simak	B
DOUBLE DOME - Banks	C
QUOTA FOR CONQUEST - Wilson	C

Score - C

June, 1957

LULU - Simak	C
THE HARDEST BARGAIN - Smith	A
CONFIDENCE GAME - Harmon	C
PRIME DIFFERENCE - Nourse	C
LEADING MAN - Biggle	D
SHOCK TROOP - Galouye	C

Score - C

Out of twenty stories this time, three seem to me to be successful in their own terms: Smith's "Once a Greech" and "The Hardest Bargain", and Simak's "Founding Father". All three are minor. The Simak is a nice, quiet little vision about the nature of reality, somewhat fouled up by poor rationale, but not enough to matter. The two Smith novelettes are completely inconsequential, outrageously irreverent, and (to me, at least) very, very funny. Without once losing her pseudo-British gravity, Miss Smith impartially kids the pants off everything in sight, from xenophilia ("They went wump, wump, wump all night long, until my heart bled for them") to synthetic food ("Some people insist on being allergic to anything!"). Light as they are, these stories are constructed with care, written with elegance and wit. Note to vilbar haters: "Once a Greech" is full of made-up words, e.g. msu'gri, flim-tuu, shig-livi; but Miss Smith is kidding.

Eight more stories might easily enough have been this good; but in each case, the author has done only half a job. The Tevis is a neat little Grand-Guignol short-short, about a kind of closed loop in time and space: looking into a 5-dimensional hypercube or "puntaract", at a planet which appears to be floating inside, a man gets an unpleasant surprise--the thing puts his eye out. In his pain and fury he retaliates by grinding a red-hot poker into the hypercube until whatever is inside steams and fizzes. Nine days later, when a gigantic eye appears in the sky, it turns out that the planet was Earth. This would be fine for my money, and I would even pass over the author's illiteracy about time as the fourth dimension; but when it turns out that the man's eye has been shot out by missiles with hydrogen warheads, and the doctor talks about powder burns on the eyelid.... Horace, people with high-school educations and weak stomachs ought not to be exposed to this kind of thing--not unless you staple a stick of chewing gum and a little paper cup into each copy.

The Leiber is a nice little slice of life, spoilt by the addition of a plot. The vision is absolutely sharp and authoritative--the boys, their robot dogs, the whole landscape is not merely invented but convincingly real. The plot, about some barbarians who escape from a time-viewing device, is

strictly mechanical, and telegraphs itself a mile; but I think the point is that any plot would have been intrusive.

Banks takes a completely nonsensical premise--artificially mutated human beings with four arms, two brains and three eyes--and by treating it as a straight minority-prejudice story, succeeds in making it humanly believable, right up to a mechanical ending which twists everything that's happened into a Plan.

The Galouye has an unusual setting and problem--a microscopic task force inside a man's body, trying to take him over like a hostile countryside--and carries it forward not too badly. And then, bang, we get a chestnut on the top: the invaders are finally successful just as the man (surprise) is being led off to the electric chair.

The Biggle begins with an interesting puzzle situation, and develops it amusingly, but "solves" it by a mechanical inversion: the doctors are patients, the patients are doctors in a mental hospital. This could have been a tour de force if the author had succeeded in making it plausible; but he didn't even try.

Sheckley's "Victim From Space" is an ingenious development of an absolutely and stupidly incredible basic premise--a primitive society (on an alien planet natch) where the chief goal and mark of status is a painful death. For God's sake don't anybody quote the Kwakiutl at me, or Sioux initiation ceremonies, there is no parallel whatever: it ain't like that.

"The Language of Love" is an elaborate bawdy joke in the Cabell manner, admirably conceived, and put together with some charm; the only thing wrong with it is that the author has made a clumsy attempt to disguise it as a s-f story. The story is a parable about a young man who goes to an old teacher to learn the lost art and science of love-making. By setting this on an alien planet, "Tyana II", Sheckley puts his hero to enormous pains to learn Tyanian, not human, physiology and psychology; but this point never seems to have occured to him. If it did, please note that the alien planet and race have been introduced apparently for no purpose but to create this anomaly. There are a few other clinkers scattered throughout the story; one of them, though it's minor, I can't forbear mentioning: to prove how idyllic his future civilization is, Sheckley solemnly tells us that people gather in stadiums to watch programs of sunsets. Why, Sheckley, why?

/It's hard to say what Knight should have done with "Man in the Jar", but he didn't do it. The situation is powerful, and under proper handling could have been made to seem extremely threatening; the idea of the dominant male being challenged by the emerging creature is a classical one. Knight does well with the incidentals and with the viewpoint character, but the story as written carries no emotional burden, and is finally killed by flatly contradicting one of the story's basic pieces of information--which, since it can't be classified as a beginner's fumble, reads instead like a childish piece of nose-thumbing. -- James Blish./

Gibson introduces an interesting gadget--a sleep gun--and develops it, eventually, with decent care and intelligence. That's all he does, however; his grasp of narrative technique is so poor that plot, character, incident and everything else get lost in the shuffle.

The Wellen consists of two story-bits, unconnected by plot, and one of them unfinished. The writing is self-consciously cute.

The Harmon has an intriguing Skid Row buildup, with a protagonist addicted

to coffee. After a couple of thousand words, this seems to be leading nowhere in particular, and the author slaps on a confused and irrelevant ending about time travel and lady Mounted Policemen.

The two Nourse stories are in a class by themselves--straight corn. In "The Coffin Cure" we get the old "cure worse than the disease" cliché, unimproved by the author's heavy-handed treatment, and in "Prime Difference" the old robot lover story which was ridden to death in the early fifties by everybody from Bradbury down. Whatever persuaded anybody, author or editor, that we needed another example now, I do not know.

The remaining four are what I call "nothing stories". The writers are all technically expert enough to spin out a story even when there is nothing to speak of on their minds, and in each case this is what has happened. In "Lulu", Simak sets up an inane situation--three men aboard a robot spaceship which, he tells you plainly, does not need them--and boots it around for as long as the traffic will bear, without even coming to grips with it in its own turns. The spaceship falls in love with its crew (June was silly cute-robot month in Galaxy) due to an overdose of sloppy love poetry. With invincible stupidity, everybody ignores the obvious solution to the problem until it suits Simak's convenience. In the meantime, the story line loops from here to yonder and back again at a snail's pace. There is one funny line, when the spaceship has made an alliance with a mechanical monster on an alien planet: "Are you shacking up with Elmer?" The rest is just one big fat Galaxy anachronism: the idea that machines can keep on getting more and more complicated and wonderful while people sit still in their 1950 underwear, chewing the same old wad of gum.

"Operation Stinky" has nothing new to offer except that the interstellar visitor looks like a skunk; and if this is an idea, then we can all relax and make fortunes--the interstellar visitor looks like a hamster, a monkey wrench, a toupee, a bottle of glue...

The Wilson is about a three-eyed intergalactic spy (May was three-eyed month in Galaxy) who comes to Earth to screw all the women and get "ten thousand sons", whereupon the home planet will attack. So he gets captured by another three-eyed intergalactic spy (female) who wants him to screw her planet's women instead. My God, so what?

The Pohl gives everything away in the title; the rest is brilliant flimflam, including two sharp characters, both wasted because both are tied to the artificial plot, and a damned good creepy horror scene. It sold, and paid the rent, and did nobody any harm (except to fill the reader's mouth with colored sawdust); now, as you were saying, Fred, about "good stories"...?

COLUMBIA MAGAZINES

Reviewed by James Blish

SCIENCE FICTION STORIES

May, 1957

ZOOLOGICAL SPECIMEN - Chandler	B	THE INNOCENTS' REFUGE - Thomas	F
EXTRA SPACE PERCEPTION - Winterbotham	D	THE JANUS CITY - Cox	D
SUNRISE ON MERCURY - Knox	C	PLEASURE ORBIT - Marks	B
THE DEMANCIPATOR - Edmondson	C	HUNTING MACHINE - Emshwiller	A
FULFILLMENT - Scortia	C	Score - C	

FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION

Spring, 1957

MADE TO ORDER - Long	D	SINFUL CITY - Anvil	D
SOLITARY - Silverberg	C	THE MILE - Tara	B
THE IN-BETWEENS - Wilson	C	NIGHTMARE CALL - Emshwiller	C
	Score - C		

These magazines pay a cent a word or less, at last reports, to all comers except those whose names appear on their covers; yet both issues score C. In case you have forgotten, no issue of any of the higher-paying magazines reviewed in the first Forum got above C, and two of the highest-paying magazines racked up a D apiece. There is a lesson here somewhere, and I suspect that it lies in the fact that Robert W. Lowndes, the editor at Columbia, is a man with a broader willingness to experiment, even to entertaining the outré if it seems to be going somewhere and doing something. At these rates, I am at a loss to think of any other explanation. I don't think Lowndes is a great editor--he is capable of making outrageous mistakes--but he gives every appearance of being devoted to his job, and above all he is ridden neither by rigid formulas nor intellectual hobby-horses. His editorials show this clearly. They are not brilliantly written, but they are consistently interesting and sane even when they are fuzzy--a difficult trick to bring off; and though they are sometimes funny, the humor is gentle and is as often at the expense of Lowndes as it is at the expense of anynne else. (This is refreshing in a field where egomania is rampant). But the audience for editorials is presumably small; what counts is that the fiction shows this too. Behold:

The Chandler is a serviceable example of the kind of Chandler story that once had a ready market at ASF--quiet in tone, only moderately ingenious as to plot-problem, well put together, and almost reeking of convincing shipboard atmosphere and routine. Insofar as I was ever able to tell, these stories were all well-received by Campbell's readership, and their disappearance from the higher-paying markets can only be the product of some conviction that they are old-hat--perhaps accelerated by the fact that Chandler stories almost never contain any women. (This is probably not Chandler's fault. In the old days, when he wrote women into his stories his usual markets rejected the pieces, leaving him no place to sell them but Planet.) I liked this one just about as well as I have liked any other Chandler story; in the course of reading it, I suddenly became aware that his virtual dissappearance from the field can hardly be justified when you observe the flat heads of most of the writers who today are taking up his space.

The Winterbotham, on the other hand, is incompetent--particularly as the first piece of s-f to reach print which takes advantage of the telepathic quantum hypothesis (Teq in the story). The theory has a certain elegance, but is loaded with ad hoc assumptions: for instance, while it is true that a single quantum of light reaches the eye with undiminished energy, this does not answer the inverse-square objections even by analogy, because one photon is far below the energy level necessary to activate the visual purple; a man receiving one photon is a man as blind as a man receiving none. Winterbotham is unequipped to perceive such an objection, let alone deal with it, and so the rationale of his story rapidly disintegrates into pure foolishness. Worse, his characters never seem to feel any identifiable emotions, and they are involved in a plot which resembles closely the most idiotic Western you have ever read. I put this one down to name-sensitivity on Lowndes' part; Winterbotham was one of F. Orlin Tremaine's most frequently repeated mistakes in

the old Street & Smith Astounding, and one of Lowndes' most frequently repeated mistakes is to serve as a pasture for spavined horses. This is kind to the horse but not to the spectators.

Knox has done a surprisingly good job of writing a story around the Emsh cover, which is decorative but not very likely. The piece is reminiscent of the pure interplanetary adventures Harry Bates used to buy in the 1930's, and not inferior to most of them--which, after all, we loved at the time. S-f has changed a great deal since then, but an echo is not unwelcome; put this one down to nostalgia.

The Edmondson is a small piece of social satire; the joke is good, but the story is unpopulated. If it had been signed by E. B. White, the New Yorker would probably have bought it--and even so, you would have been unable to repress a slightly annoyed shrug.

The Scortia is obviously a reject from Tony Boucher. It contains a nice little old lady, and a lost alien, and if Scortia had signed it with a feminine pen-name Tony would almost surely have bought it and written an overheated blurb for it. It is a little better, of its kind, than most of the damp-apron-and-sopping-diaper stories Tony publishes regularly; I loathe the genre, but Scortia has mimicked the tone with great fidelity.

Ted Thomas has another of those da Vinci stories. The proposition is idiotic on its face--if all the great men of history are exports from the future, who ever <u>first</u> had a great idea?--and this sample is not credible for two words hand running. Both Lowndes and Ted ought to be ashamed of themselves.

The Cox is fan fiction, which is characterized by a confusion between stupidity and tragedy. A stupid man who blacks his own eye on an obvious doorjamb is not a tragic figure, but a clown--yet most young writers seem to feel that there is something heavily, wisely ironic in their pictures of the stumblings of knaves. Nothing but time will teach such writers that they are making fools of themselves instead--and time won't teach enough of them, I fear, to rid us of silly "tragedies" like this one. But maybe editors can learn: Eccovi: <u>Only a whole man can be a tragic figure.</u> Lowndes, are you listening?

The Marks is a slightly shaggy dirty joke, Playboy style, which manages to make fun of some standard s-f heroics in between the passages about underwear. The only other writers in s-f who deal out occasional dirty jokes these days are Damon Knight and William Tenn, and both of these men feel so guilty about their subject matter that the fun rapidly gets lost. Marks snaps the garter without a trace of neuratic embarassment, and without drooling either; hooray for him!

Finally, Carol Emshwiller's story, which is a prime example of what Lowndes' receptivity can do for the field when it is operating on all eight. I deplore most of the lady authors in s-f today, and the lady men who are imitating them, but Carol is not a lady author. She is a writer, period. "The Hunting Machine" is very brief, but it shook me down to my shoes, both the first time I read it (at the Milford Conference in manuscript) and on this reprise in print. I think Lowndes gets the credit for printing her first--and this is just the kind of exercise of editorial originality which has kept him in business all these years, despite his publishers' penny-pinching and his own unpredictable failures of taste. "Hunting Machine" is a lineal descendant of the man-against-nature stories of such writers as Jack London and Ernest Thompson-Seton, in which the author is on nature's side. It is, however, a thoroughly modern version; its subject is alienation--the increasing shallow-

ness, callousness, and coarseness with which man pays for an increasingly complex machine civilization. This is a big subject, which Carol has packed into a small space--about the size of a sledgehammer head.

The May SFS is less well balanced because the poorest piece in it is also the longest (I hope we can find some way of reflecting this in our ratings): Long's "Made to Order". It is an attempt to construct a complex plot combining the ideas--all old, to boot--of the electronically determined marriage, the Rubber Woman (an old Navy joke here disguised as an android) and revolt against tyranny with the forces of freedom concentrated on Venus. This would have been a mishmash in almost anyone's hands, but Long brings to it special defects all his own: he writes impossibly stagy dialogue, he regards all women with the wide-eyed stare of a child seeing a fairy princess, and he cannot handle a simple plot, much less a complex one. (For instance: the hero is a telepath of advanced gifts, the story says; but Long forgets this for thousands of words at a stretch, putting the hero into situation after situation which a telepath could have avoided easily.) In the old days--again those of Tremaine, when Lowndes' tastes were apparently being formed most conclusively --Long's brief poetic pieces about the far future were moving and had a certain dramatic impact because each of them had a single, central idea from which the author never departed; but in the years since, it has become evident that this mild-mannered veteran of our youth can do nothing else in fiction well.

Silverberg's "Solitary" deals with a manhunt, the target being a criminal who has been given up by a police computer, the hunter a live man who thinks he can do better than the computer. He has no trouble with that problem, since the computer is a flaming idiot even by present-day standards. At the end of the story there is the shadow of an idea with some emotional content; had Silverberg started there, he might have had a live story instead of a dead chronicle. As the title suggests, the heart of the story is the criminal, who has broken out of a supposedly crack-proof prison and hidden himself with consummate cunning--only to find that his hideout is a worse form of confinement than prison was. This is potentially a strong idea--and could have been made even stronger, presuming that the escapee could have been shown to prefer the outcome all the same--but Bob vitiates it by telling it from the wrong end of the telescope.

Wilson's yarn is reminiscent of the late Nat Schachner's "The Isotope Men", though Wilson's version is shorter, more sophisticated, and better written. To my taste, however, the notion of fragmenting a human being into separate entities each one of which represents a single human trait is false to begin with, since the real problem of human nature is its complexity, and the only honest solution to the fragment-story would be to show that it makes a bad situation worse. Wilson does not do this, but instead supplies an ending which is inconsistent even with his own premises: one of his fragments is a genuinely complex character! The result rings as tinny as an aluminum quarter.

In the blurb, the Anvil is definitely identified as a translated Western. The blurb is right. The story may have amused Lowndes for its blatancy, but that is small excuse for printing it.

Tara describes, with considerable effect, the thoughts of a baby being born, to die immediately thereafter (though he never says that is what he is doing; the editor has to tell you). This has been done before (most notably by Maude Hutchins) in the mainstream, and this version contains nothing which would convert the idea into a s-f story, but the point of view attributed to the baby --a sort of stew of mangled scraps of knowledge, philosophy and Village cynic-

ism--is startling, despite the author's fondness for bootless tricks with clichés. If this author is a beginner--as the text suggests that he may be--he can go nowhere from this beginning but out of s-f, and the faster the better; he is too good even raw to be bothered with a protracted adolescence at wonder-mongering. I hope this is exactly the case, for a writer who is capable of suggesting that apparently healthy babies die at birth because they have already had enough of the human condition is a man who should spend a minimum of time talking about cryotrons, thermionic valves and imaginary problems; people who can talk meaningfully about the human condition are in frighteningly short supply.

The Emshwiller is a brief vignette, in which a man estranged from his wife is helped to insight by an alien--who needs his help--without his being aware of the specific nature of the intervention. What there is of it is well done, but it is far too short to do justice to the idea. What Carol needs at the moment is more confidence in her ability to sustain a story. There is hardly anything specifically wrong with what she is doing, but she badly needs to do it more thoroughly.

ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION

Reviewed by Algis Budrys

March, 1957		April, 1957	
A MATTER OF SECURITY - Haggert	C	THE MILE-LONG SPACESHIP - Wilhelm	C
HOW ALLIED - Clifton	C	CALL ME JOE - Anderson	A
MAN OF GOD - Bartholomew	D	CHAIN REACTION - Sentry	B
MARIUS - Anderson	B	TORCH - Anvil	B
THE DAWNING LIGHT (1) - Randall	C	THE LOST VEGAN - McKenzie, Jr.	C
		THE DAWNING LIGHT (2) - Randall	D
Score - C		Score - B	

May, 1957

THE QUEEN'S MESSENGER - McGuire	A
WHAT'S EATING YOU? - Garrett	C
SOMETHING IN THE SKY - Correy	F
THE DAWNING LIGHT (3) - Randall	E
Score - D	

Whenever you argue with Astounding, you argue with the largest circulation and body of prestige in the field. More important, you argue with what is, generally, a contented body of readers. As Campbell has pointed out, ASF has been in the business long enough to take advantage of natural selection. Either Campbell has by now evolved his magazine to fit what the most readers wanted all along, or more likely, he weeded out until he created a corps of loyalists who like what he likes. It may seem hardly creditable that a significant part of the English-reading public would clamor for more Robert Randall stories about the planet Nidor. The fact is that it does, and there you are. Frankly, the presence of this phenomenon is what made me decide, before I reviewed anybody's magazine, that arguing with editorial policy was futile. As far as I'm concerned, the best way to go about this business is to try and isolate that policy, whatever it may be in each magazine, and then in addition to evaluating them as stories, see how well the stories go about fulfilling it. I don't see it as my business to try and change an editor's or publisher's whole approach--I would hate to see this field standardized down to my opinion of the best publishing policy. All I'm trying to do is get people to do a better job of whatever they're doing. Clear? Okay, then:

"How Allied" is by Mark Clifton, who, like Vardis Fisher, has gotten hold of a short quotation and has worked it for three titles thus far. They're all part of the series about the plant personnel manager who, in spite of the fact that he has been combing poltergeists out of his hair through something like forty thousand words, refuses to believe anyone who comes to him with inexplicable powers. Now this is not the snide quibble it seems. Nor do I intend to give the impression that Clifton is a bum writer, even though he's not as polished as I might like. The writing in this particular story isn't bad at all--but this kind of inconsistency in characterization detracts from story believability, and seems to spring from the fact that it was necessary to make Clifton's rather simple plot work at all. This story is about a gestalt entity named George, consisting of five young male human sub-individuals who try to get themselves hired as an entity. The plant personnel manager refuses to credit this notion, but he does hire them as separate individuals, and places them in five separate departments of the plant. In a very short time, trouble starts--the plant begins to operate so efficiently that it actually completes a government contract on time, and the government immediately launches an indignant investigation. Now this strikes me as something of a cartooney touch, and like all cartoons, this one delivers a single punch. In the end, the government is made aware of George and his coördinating faculties, by means of the most broadly slapstick scene in s-f this year. Still and all, it gets the idea across. Furthermore, it's not as crude a story as you would think from my summary--the writing, only-good though it is, does a great deal to disguise the over-direct plot, and there are one or two moments of genuine emotion in it. I moderately enjoyed reading it, perhaps because it pushed a personal button of mine. In any case, punching emotional buttons is a writer's business.

"A Matter of Security" has, for its major premise, the notion that security officers are only happy when the situation is completely under control. Which is true, according to my experience. But then the story goes in for the same kind of cartooning as "How Allied", without the Clifton's saving graces. I refuse to believe that either the Russian, British, or American security chiefs would kill, would have the authority to kill, or would deal with the inventor of an antigravity device, neither in order to preserve the status quo nor for any other such idiotic reason. In this story, at least, they tried to kill him. Actually, they knocked off his front man--a flatly incredible criminal type whom Haggert calls a confidence man, but who actually seems to have combined the characteristics of a safe-blower, a murderer, and a mail fraud grifter into a complex unknown to criminology--leaving the true inventor to live happily ever after on the proceeds of committing second degree murder and selling the same invention simultaneously to three different governments. Now this is cartooning with a vengeance. The only person with whom the reader can possibly identify is the front-man crook, who, you are only told, has done all these heinous things in the past, but who never acts as if he really deserves to be the focus of four separate murder plots, two of which are successful. (The inventor's and that of whichever government it was that happened to beat the other two to it.) I felt quite indignant when the author knocked this fellow off to prove his point, and I suspect almost anybody else would, too. I rated it a C, same as the Clifton, probably because I could feel the bones of the good story under the pudding-skin covering, but if we were in grammar school, the Clifton would be a straight C, and this would be a D+. The thing is, this isn't a bad story idea at all--vide "E for Effort". But Haggert has messed it up on almost conceivable level, preserving the essential idea that for good reasons new inventions are

not always greeted with hosannahs, but embodying it in an actively offensive story.

"Man of God" is a short story with a very interesting idea, the idea being that individuals, knowing they are mortal, have consciences--but that cultures, who don't know this, are amoral. In order to accept this notion, you have got to accept that conscience springs from fear of punishment after death, but that's a tenable position and fun to kick around. The story describes an alien missionary's experiences on Earth; the nice people he meets, and the implacable government red tape that strangles him. Key word: "describes". You don't live a millisecond of it, or care, or feel anything. Of all the kinds of bad writing there are, this is the one I like least to pick on, because it seems to me to come from a man who may simply be in the wrong line of work.

Now, "Marius". Poul Anderson, as I am about to say in connection with the April issue, is suddenly one crackling hell of a writer. At some time in the recent past he stepped over the line from being a dependable, competent, readable, etc., craftsman and suddenly shot up six cubits. This is a way of implying he didn't sweat himself near exhaustion to achieve his present stature, but I rather think he did. The fact of the happening gives me hope, and ought to prove that even good writers can do better. "Marius" is a pretty good example of this. In what seems to be a purposeful campaign to take standard ideas and see if they work, Anderson has taken up the notion that all revolutionary ideals eventually become entrenched shibboleths, and all liberators dictators. And this is fine treatment thereof. Except that here, I think, Anderson has come to an idea which was either done right the first time or just plain doesn't contain any new aspects. But this is a justifiable risk to run when you embark on such a program, particularly when even your misses come out as well as this one. Sometimes--and this may be heresy--good writing by itself will make the old dog seem to have a sharp bite.

April is Poul Anderson's month with a vengeance. The lead novelette, "Call Me Joe", is his bid for best s-f story of the year in ASF--maybe just plain of the year. The writing reaffirms everything I've said about him in the paragraph above. The lead character--and it's Joe, not Edward Anglesey, that I mean--is alive, potent, exultant...oh, hell, picture the king of all centaurs rampant on the slopes of Mount Olympus, and that's almost Joe. The plot is tight, resolved, subtle without being mysterious. The one drawback I can find to this story--and I'm not sure, yet, how much of a drawback it is--is familiarity. And I'm not even sure it is familiarity in the usual connotative sense. It may be that Anderson has, for all these years, been as taken with Clifford Simak's "Desertion" as I have, and as subtly annoyed by one element in it. Anyhow, twelve years ago ASF ran "Desertion", which was about people who had been run through a transformation machine, changed into Jovian animals with their human personalities intact, and who, once sent out onto Jupiter's surface, never came back out of that roaring climatic hell. The hero, in an attempt to discover why these scouts deserted, had himself and his aged dog turned into Jovian "lopers" and then discovered that, to a loper, Jupiter was paradise. Suddenly he was the focus of hundreds of new sensations he had never experienced, living under conditions in which he was young, strong, and magnificently alive. In the end, the dog says he won't go back because they'd change him back into a dog. And the man, agreeing, says: "And me into a man."

"Call Me Joe" is about Edward Anglesey, a hopeless and almost paranoid cripple, who, from a base on a Jovian satellite, remote-inhabits an artificial

pseudo-Jovian research centaur called Joe. Joe was designed by terrestrial biotechnicians to be the dominant Jovian life-form--and he is. One of the best minor touches in the story comes when Joe does not wipe out an indigenous semi-intelligent species of beast, but tames it instead. Joe is at first mostly Edward Anglesey, but the link between them depends on a psionic interlocking. And Joe has a brain of his own. Joe grows almost completely independent of the research program's desires, and pulls the Anglesey personality with him. Eventually, Joe and Edward Anglesey merge completely, and Anglesey is free to leave his useless human body. Now. The similarities between "Joe" and "Desertion" extend to similar scenic descriptions--not exactly unexpectedly, since Anderson and Simak are describing the same planet from essentially the same viewpoint--and to apparently similar conclusions. Explicit in "Joe", implicit in "Desertion" and explicit in its sequel, "Paradise", is the idea that now the hopelessly crippled and sick can inhabit new, healthy, superior bodies. So much for the similarities, except for this note: it seems to me that if you were a malicious magazine reviewer, this story might furnish grounds for quite a little hassle. There is the point, for example, that the opening gimmick, technical approach, or whatever you want to call it, is highly similar to the equivalent piece of James Blish's "Bridge", also from ASF. But all of this is not the main point. This is a far better story than "Paradise", a better story than "Bridge" (on entirely different grounds) and a slightly better story than "Desertion", for this one reason: Anderson, unlike Simak, has not missed the point that Joe is still a man. Like Blish (in another series entirely) Anderson has seen that this is a fulfillment of human destiny, and not an evasion of it. Anderson leaves room, as Simak did not, for the construction of pseudo-terrestrial forms for those who wish merely to change bodies, not types of environment. The more I think of it, the more firmly I believe that Anderson here was deliberately out to make that necessary change in "Desertion"--whether he was or not, that is the effect--and that Campbell, the man who brought out "Desertion", "Paradise" and "Bridge", didn't give two hoots in hell whether you could link these stories with Joe or not. Anderson gets A, and thanks for a damn fine hour's reading. Kelly Freas gets A for the most evocative cover illustration of the fiscal year. Campbell...well, let's see what this willingness to repeat himself gets Campbell.

Two of the short stories in this issue are "The Mile-Long Spaceship" by Kate Wilhelm and "The Lost Vegan" by E. J. McKenzie, Jr. These two stories are on just about the same level of competence--nothing outstanding, but plenty of solidly professional writing (from two names I don't recognize). And both of them derive straight from van Vogt's "The Monster" and Arthur Clarke's "Rescue Party". Perhaps they derive from earlier examples of the "We're the roughest, toughest, most ingenious, deadliest thing in the Universe" school, but "The Monster", "Rescue Party", and Eric Frank Russell's masterly variation on the theme, "Metamorphosite", just about cleaned up the subject for good and all. Here is a theme which has produced at least three all-time great stories, and a host of lesser but still good examples (along with some real dogs) but the end does not seem to be in sight. I see little point in summarizing these two completely. The Wilhelm is the better of the two, and in it the crew of an alien spaceship eventually commits suicide rather than reveal the location of the home planet to a disembodied human personality. This is directly out of "The Monster". The McKenzie uses another "Monster" device, by reincarnating its hero, but using a perfectly ordinary contemporary human hero, derives the major portion of its mood from "Rescue Party." (It also continues the recent ASF practice of not knowing what a confidence

man is. The cheap grifter in this one just might get a job as a shill somewhere, but not much more. I wonder if this is because TV's Racket Squad doesn't know either?) In any case, this has long been one of Campbell's reliable buttons. Because it's a reliable human button. I'm a sucker for this story, everybody else I know is a sucker for this kind of story, and, for that matter, the first sale I ever made to ASF was a minor example in the canon. So was the second, so was the fifth, and from there I lose count. Furthermore, I don't think anybody has to be ashamed of himself. But, once again, and twice in one issue, we see Campbell not caring if he repeats himself.

[Sentry's "Chain Reaction" seems to fit into a current ASF story pattern. In some ways, it's along the same theme as that being worn into the ground by the repetition of Randall's Nidor things. This might be called the obverse of the usual "down with white-man's-burden philosophy" theme. It takes a look at this Earthman's burden idea, to see if there might not be some justice in the idea that backward races need a ruler more than a mere guide. In this case, it makes a rather convincing story, largely because Sentry has made his characters real, and told it from the well-chosen viewpoint of the conscientious headman of the planet's native village, resenting the Earthlords, wanting freedom--and conscientiously using that freedom in the worst possible way for what he considers the best possible reasons. There are no villains here. There are old rulers, kicked out in indignation by a new set of "liberating" Earthmen, who then have to become slowly dictatorial, too, against their will. There's a native rebel--perhaps the nicest touch in the story. And there's some well-thought out background and development. In the end, an ingenious if somewhat abrupt solution is suggested. All in all, it's a story I'd normally rate high in the C bracket. But apparently Budrys uses a different scale from mine in some ways. Since it's the second-best story in the issue, and considerably better than the Anvil short, I'll rate it B in keeping with the other scores. Not a major piece, but good reading, all the way through. -- L. R.]

That brings us to "Torch", and Anvil, as I've said elsewhen, is good. This one only corroborates that judgment, even if it's a curiously crippled story from the start. It begins with what ought to be an interesting gimmick which continues to evolve and complicate itself as the story progresses; an enormous oil fire in Soviet Russia that begins to play hob with the world's climate. The story is told with a compact wealth of circumstantial detail that's reminiscent of T. L. Sherred. It isn't Sherred, but it's a pleasure to watch a man write a novelette inside 4000 words. However, what can you do with this kind of story, once you've done your best to make it interesting within its limitations? Either the whole world pitches in and helps, and unites in brotherhood to meet the common disaster, or the Russians stay truculent and everything goes to hell. The latter story is paradoxically unthinkable in today's commercial fiction. The former is mostly "Unite and Conquer", by Theodore Sturgeon, from ASF. Now this is not a case like "Joe", where Simak left a hole in the dike and Anderson sailed through it under full canvas, or like "The Mile-Long Spaceship", where the emotional button pushed is so powerful that all other considerations are minor. The unite-and-conquer idea is good, but not that good as a story idea.

Now, May: "What's Eating You?" by Randall Garrett, happens to be a pretty readable story, which sort of tends to prove that Garrett, giving himself half a chance, can write. It has to do with a familiar kind of senator's attempt to get the quarantine restrictions changed. Said quarantine regulations provide that members of extra-solar exploration teams have to spend five years on

the Moon before they're permitted to return to Earth. The hero, one of these people, finds himself in a position where he has to mastermind both sides of the campaign, and the whole story proceeds at this neat pace, going toward a satisfactory conclusion with commendable roundness. This is fine. This is a story, with a likeable hero, an interesting love sub-plot, and logcial development. But it has two superimpositions which gall me, the second of which totally impairs the conclusion. The first is a personal crochet: i.e., the question of nil nisi bonum does not interest me, but McCarthy even at the height of his powers was a sitting duck for this kind of attack. There is a story in the man, sure, but it's not this easy one. The second is another kind of case, entirely. At the end of the story, the hero spouts immunological double-talk at the senator. The senator has two paid consulting experts who listen gravely and then tell the senator that the hero is right and the regulations can't be altered. It seems, the hero explains later, that the hero was sure he could depend on the experts to lie for him because (a) the quarantine regulations are necessary (the story itself doesn't prove this) and (b) because he and the experts all three of them naturally fall into the same intelligence class and the senator does not. Now this is malarkey. The idea that being a member of an intellectual elite gives you class loyalties transcending your professional integrity, overcoming your political convictions, and abrogating all natural human impulses to slap down this wiseguy who thinks he's so smart, is almost more than I can safely bear. But this is not the issue here. The issue is that it does not jibe with reality. This does not happen, despite all the efforts of various right or left wing ideologies to say that it does. I have never seen it happen, I have seen it fail to happen. I have seen scores of intellectuals give each other hotfoots for no real reason except resentment at encountering an equal or superior, but I have never seen total stranger intellectuals conspire spontaneously to sabotage an enquiry into a problem of interest to intellectuals. If Garrett has seen it happen, then, even so, he has failed to make it in the least convincing.

This brings us to "Something in the Sky", by Lee Correy. "Something in the Sky" is a mistake, fortunately short. It involves accidentally shooting down an invisible flying saucer with a mass-detecting anitaircraft missile, and ends with: "Something still watched from the sky" (with the fact of one of its members having suddenly been destroyed fresh in its mind)..."Had the time come, or would it continue to watch its vantage points in the sky... vantage points which were no longer invulnerable? § Lacking a true understanding of the nature of mankind, it made its decision. § The End." Well, sir. An Atomic Doom story, tricked up a little, and a bad one at that. But it's interesting what Campbell saw in it. Here's the blurb:

> If you look, and there's nothing there..if you can't feel it and radar can't see it, obviously there's nothing there. Unless you have some other and more ultimately fundamental sensing system...

And there, I'm convinced, is what interested Campbell, because it advances an idea. The idea bears only casual relation to missiles and saucers and mass detectors; it is that when you say there's nothing there, what you may actually be saying is that you're incapable of seeing it. This is a typical Campbell idea, exactly in the field of one of his major interests--the definition of the limitations of mankind. It's not as widely known as Campbell's other major interest--the definition of the potentiality of mankind--but it's the other way of approaching the same end. And I think that by now in this review I can say, and back it up with some evidence, that Campbell looks at idea first and story second. Not, perhaps, by preference. We will thrash all that around some. But this is the way it comes out. This is one adjunct

of the editorial policy.

"The Queen's Messenger", by the same John J. McGuire who collaborated with H. Beam Piper on the story about Sherlock Holmes as the Messiah, is a story I think I'll find equally memorable, though not for its thematic content. As a story, it's slight; hero has to transmit information to Mars, despite counter-efforts by strong terrestrial and Martian groups. But even better stories have been constructed on even slighter bases, and McGuire does quite well. For one thing, the information involved consists of accurate dietary tables for terrestrials living in the Martian ecology. This is not only a novel baton for the old relay-race plot; it is also sound science. For another, the hero is a brilliant scientist who went to jail when his wife's remains didn't quite all drain out of the sink. The pace is fast--too fast for coherence, in places--the narrative technique is somewhat van Vogt, and the sinister villain doesn't really turn out to be much. But I would rather see this kind of thing in a flawed condition than not see it at all, and I would a hundred times rather see it done this well than put upwith the kind of ASF novelette where the last two thousand words are all explanatory speech. There is something else about this story. Offhand, I can think of twenty professionals in the field who could have written something a great deal like it. But McGuire has a touch all his own, and I seriously urge that we see more of it, and often. Here is how he ends it: (The villain lies dead on the floor of a Martian doctor's office.) "Cavendish (the hero) glanced around the lab. 'We'll use that large sink. By the way, it does drain into the main sewer, doesn't it? Good.' ... 'You may remember,' he said easily, taking a long look into his past, 'that I have had experience with this business.'" This is a picture of a writer on top of his story all the way. This is a man who knows how to write endings. This is a rare bird today.

And that brings us to "The Dawning Light", whose three installments I saved up for a review in a body. This is a problem. With this final segment, the Robert Randall series about the Bel Rogas school on the planet Nidor has come to a close, maybe, and I must confess that it is impossible to review one story in it without reviewing the others, for they none of them, honestly, say anything which was not broadly implicit in the first short story. If I were writing reviews for readers, I could ignore this. But I'm not, and no professional writer I can imagine could not have completed this series from the first 5000 words. I had been grimly hoping for just one surprise, or one unexpected plot device, but these are not there. I had been hoping to find something good to say about this work. For the life of me, I can not.

The writing is doggedly pedestrian. The series plods, plods, plods, and fills me with despair. The plotting is primitive, and often happenstance. In rolling their treadmill toward the inevitable end, the characters nevertheless manage to take one inconsistent step after another. The world they live in is impossibly visualized: there are banks with watchmen, in a world without crime...there is no crime because everyone has always had enough for his own needs, at least, in a world which suffered a depression and the collapse of a principal industry just a few years before this story opens...sailors on leave hang around the docks, singing chanteys...the harbor police (in a world without crime) fail to either look at the water line or into the bilges of a sailing vessel containing tons of stolen cobalt.... But this is shooting fish in a barrel. You can go on and on this way, and I did, in desperate search of entertainment, but even this can pall on you.

The end eventually comes, in a welter of speeches, and we learn, as though we were stupid all along, that the Bel Rogas school was an intellectual and

biological breeding ground for dynamic individuals who would smash their static Nidorian culture and eventually give rise to a suitable friendly rival for the Earthmen, who are lonely in their spatial godhead. And maybe it does make sense. Maybe it's a good story idea. But it has been fumbled around until there are grubby handprints all over it. One thing is sure; if this story can be made to work, and I have no doubt it can, it could nevertheless never happen with characters such as Randall draws. These are fuzzy, childish, ineffectual, almost contemptible little people. What is happening to them is tragic, whether it is for their own good or not. Generations to come may bless the day, but not this generation. A whole world is about to be plunged into agony, and I couldn't care less. Again, the Earthmen are soul-less robots posturing at the author's behest. Not one of them ever stops to think whether he is justified in bending an entire world toward becoming useful to human destiny. I don't mind an eventual decision to go ahead--I want to see somebody think about it, and suffer through the decision. There is a point in the story, for instance, where Smith the Earthman remarks that they once encountered another race so monstrous that there was no common meeting ground. So they "destroyed them utterly". Doesn't Smith know, or care, that Saracens and Nazarenes for centuries had no terms but these for each other? Has he no doubts, in cold morning hours, about his right to participate in the "utter destruction" of a race vital enough not to be as pliable as these foam rubber Nidorians? This is not a mature man, this Earthman. He has the black-and-white certitude of early post-adolescence, when all paths are straight, all decisions predigested, and all obstacles are obvious. He has no more right to stick his finger in the destinies of other races than a cruel child poking at an ant hill.

I see nothing wrong with the idea, as a story idea. I see nothing wrong with devoting 100,000 words to it. But not these glib (but boring) words. I just plain don't think Randall in this particular incarnation was writer enough for the job, and it makes me angry. Not because I want to review the story he should have written, instead of the story he did write. First of all, it's the same story, except that it is erected of steel instead of whipped cream. But second, Robert Randall could have done it right. Campbell, and apparently his readers, seem to favor idea over story, by some variable fraction of a degree. Okay. Fine. I like ideas too. To at least some extent, I've been evolved to like ASF's policy. But, like most other people, I have trouble accepting a new idea, no matter how valid it may be, in an unconvincing format. That isn't so unreasonable, is it? And it may be that some mysterious emanation form outer space has dulled the minds of those who, not so long ago, consistently combined idea-presentation with thoughtful, logical and lively writing. There may be nothing anyone can do about it until the mysterious emanations go away. It may be impossible for even the 4¢ markets to demand that their writers do a good job on all levels, whatever each particular editor may feel the most important level to be. It may be out of fashion to be dissatisfied with simply selling. But when writers actually walk into an editor's office, talk the story out beforehand, and thrash it back and forth--can't something be done right then, by somebody as gifted at rounding a story as Don A. Stuart, to at least make them aware that they ought to try?

THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION

Reviewed by Lester del Rey

This time I want to take a second look first. There have been a lot of jokes about Boucher's fondness for lady writers--and I suspect some of them

may have been told by Tony, himself. But has anyone studied the tables of contents lately? February and March, reviewed by Damon last time, showed only Jane Roberts. The three below show one Mildred Clingerman and one Zenna Henderson. (I don't count Evelyn Smith and Carol Emshwiller, who first appeared and regularly do appear elsewhere.) Only three in five months? Wha' hoppen? Tony...?

April, 1957

ANTHROPOLOGICAL NOTE - Leinster	C		
THE LITTLE WITCH OF ELM STREET - Clingerman	* C		
?RM - Wilson	C		
THE GIRLS ON CHANNEL N - Ottum	D		
LITTLE JIMMY - del Rey	A		
THE STATUS-QUO PEDDLERS-Edmondson	B		
LICENSE - Anderson	C		
SECOND PRIZE - Novotny	D		
DIDN'T HE RAMBLE - Oliver	B		
Score - C			

May, 1957

BETWEEN THE THUNDER AND THE SUN - Oliver	C		
WARM MAN - Silverberg	C		
OUTCAST OF MARS - Smith	D		
YOU KNOW WILLIE - Cogswell	* C		
TURN THE PAGE - Henderson	D		
UNDIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY - Anderson & Dickson	D		
THE COMING - Emshwiller	C		
ADJUSTMENT - Moore	B		
Score - C			

June, 1957

THE NIGHT OF LIGHT - Farmer	C		
THE LITTLE PLACE - Van Doren	E		
RESCUE - Edmondson	B		
LOVE, INC. - Sheckley	* C		
MOONSHINE - Goldsmith	* C		
THE SANDMEN - McIntosh	D		
DODGER FAN - Stanton	E		
SECURITY CHECK - Clarke	* C		
THE CAGE - Chandler	B		
Score - C			

Judged by rate of payment, F&SF should be only a fair magazine. It began with top rates, but couldn't match increases with Galaxy and ASF; today quite a few magazines pay better, though few yield as well on secondary rights. Nevertheless, for eight years--a year longer than Galaxy--it has been the "snob" magazine of the field. Full credit for this must go to Boucher; from what I've seen of his letters, he earns the loyalty he gets from writers.

This isn't really a prestige magazine, however--any more than it is anything else nameable. It's a damned queer mixture--a mishmash of everything, with a unique and consistent character of its own. It began as a fantasy magazine (where the literate tradition is much older than in s-f) and still mixes the unmixable--s-f and fantasy. It also mixes new stories with reprint material. It uses the best writing being done--and the lowest level of simpering tripe; it's often ultra-honest--and just as often coyly cute; it welcomes originality with the same enthusiasm as utter banality. Without losing its odd consistency, it operates on some unpredictable manic-depressive cycle; several issues will be completely delightful, followed by several others that are completely mediocre. I swear at it more than by it--and yet it's one of the few fiction magazines I regularly read from cover to cover.

Unfortunately, these issues are largely undistinguished, with little really good or bad--which makes for tough and dull reviewing. To complicate things, some stories have dual natures; those asterisked are only adequate in a fantasy magazine where the reader expects such things, but would rate good to excellent for general circulation; and their style is distinctly slick, as is often the case with stories appearing here.

Starting with April, Leinster's first appearance here is sub-standard for this fine writer. It deals with the curious spider-like breeding habits on

Venus, but the "anthropology" isn't equal to fact material about Earth critters. There's a thin story about an unlikable heroine's vengeance on a cold, unappealing villain, but I couldn't care much about it. Much detail is excellent, though needless "philosophical" asides to the reader are no help. Clingerman's reprint has good writing and fine characterization, but is a little weak in its amateur witchcraft for fantasy readers. Wilson's QRM is about a teletype that mysteriously gets signals from a Venus teletype indicating invasion of Earth. (No explanation of how Venus machines encode like Earth's.) Well done, but rather obvious. It isn't helped by the fact that Ottum's story is similar in having a TV set that mysteriously tunes to an other-space channel where Earth is to be invaded by losing its women; and here the too-coincidental ending simply lacks all inventiveness. Anderson drops from his usual level here with a story of the ethics of a professional assassin in a gangster-oriented world; the detail is free of clichés, on the whole, and good, but the story somehow never gets beyond the mildly interestnig level. Novotny throws away a potentially funny idea. He tells of a time when giveaways have to resort to femmes fatales (famous babes of the past) as prizes, but ruins it with a labored cliché relationship between husband and wife, and apparently thinks no moral or technological changes are needed in a world where this can be done!

Edmondson is becoming better, and his story shows care and taste. It is another about the survivors after the final atom war, but with a fairly fresh slant, and handled honestly and well. Good work. But for my taste, the best in the issue is Oliver's story of an old-time jazz buff who has a planetoid built to recreate Storyville with its great artists. The story has a mood and emotional content too often lacking nowadays; and while the ending is an oddball thing, it somehow seems to fit. Very nice indeed.

/I'm a sucker for del Rey short stories. I never read one that didn't get under my cuticle, which must mean I have a blind spot on the subject. I think del Rey is a better short story man than he is anything else, and this goes particularly for fantasy. LITTLE JIMMIE is a short del Rey fantasy, told in del Rey's best moody style, plotted with a degree of subtle adroitness which exceeds his usual standard, and introducing a brand new kind of ghost. I fail to see much of anything wrong with it; I do see a great deal to learn from as a writer, and a great deal that seems memorable to this reader, at least. I may be a deluded fool. I wish del Rey were neither one of the Forum editors nor my friend, for the space of time in which this review willappear. But there you are, and even if no one else agrees, I say it's an A story.

-- A. J. B./

May has one really good story--Ward Moore's. It's about a man who finds a door to a world that should be--and/or a man who cross-infects with the psychosis of another. The combination is sweetly tailored, and it's just plain good fun to read and remember. Cogswell comes close with a neatly ironic twist on witchcraft and racial bigotry, but I'm frankly prejudiced against biter-bit stories, unless outstanding in every way. Silverberg also came close, and made it while his story seemed to depend on fantasy in keeping with its mood; but the too-easy s-f ending that turns on another variant of homo mutens weakened it for me. Emshwiller sets up a good mood, telling of two who don't fit--but in the end, they still don't fit anything; they seem to lack any positive qualities. Even Oliver's lead novelette misses somehow. It covers the difficult ethics of helping a weaker race without the help ruining them. Competent, honest and well enough conceived, it just doesn't arouse any strong interest in the characters or the events.

Anderson & Dickson have apparently dragged their originally funny Hokas to the limit. This time they play international spy on Earth, with inevitable complications; but more than enough is too much. Henderson gives us a nothing about a teacher who makes kids live fairy tales, in a quasi-nostalgic style once popular in slicks, with pseudo-psychology thrown in, but nothing comes of it. And Evelyn Smith tells of a stupid (though self-termed nubile) white trash Kallikak gal who lays a Martian birdman (sic!) and then lays an egg; so does the story. If this is funny, maybe we should have Mercutian frogmen lay a fancy-talking, literal idiot and produce pollywogs. Tony indicates it's a take-off on confessions, but it bears no resemblance to the confession formula. Smith writes too well to fiddle around with such nonsense.

June's cover is a mess ill-plucked from Bonestell, and the inside varies more than May. The lows are a pointless reprint by Mark Van Doren about a magic cobbler and Stanton's ultra-tried attempt at humor, dealing with a Brooklyn fan's obsession with the Dodgers, even on Mars. Only slightly up is the McIntosh mixture of dream sequences during a mysterious alien repair of a crashed rocket; the explanation isn't quite clever enough to come off. The undiluted high is Chandler's CAGE, which suggests a means of spotting intelligence with both point and writing quite effective. Clarke uses a fairly obvious idea, but makes the most of it, with pleasant results. The Goldsmith reprint deals with moonshiners and moonshine plus invading aliens, and is at least amusing. The Sheckley story is a reprint from Playboy--a satirical bit on how the side-show world of Earth commercializes on true love; fine for its original market, and not bad here; but I'm frankly tired of satire to order.

Finally, we get the Farmer story, the only important one in all three issues. Like it or not (and I'm not sure which), it merits serious consideration as a major attempt. My rating is unfair, since I felt it deserved ABCDE and took an average, as the only solution; this is not an average story.

Superficially, it's another Catholic story, telling why Father John Carmody became a priest--a question I find unconvincingly settled. Actually, it deals with a world where periodically a solar upset triggers off all paranormal powers--but only the unconscious mind can create, with the result that a man who stays up through the "Sleep" period gets what he really wants. This is an idea, gentlemen and ladies! Carmody, who killed his wife when pregnancy spoiled her beauty, recreates her in varying degrees. A blue-stocking priest too obviously inverts to a satyr. But a second priest goes through one of the damnedest wish-horrors conceivable, and this is tremendously good. This one development justifies the story. There's also a fascinating native religion where people create the rebirth of their god--for good or evil as they really want--each "Sleep", and this is also marvelous, though inconsistent in inventiveness and handling; it shades steadily from s-f toward more and more fantasy. (In the end, I suspect the native faith appeals more than the Catholic dogma, often dragged in here by its hair; I wonder if Carmody shouldn't have become a priest of that religion.)

The build-up to all this is long, slow, clumsy in spots, and often inept. The writing varies from clumsy to genuinely powerful. The worst part is the development of Carmody as a semi-villain; it's naive, like a child's idea of a bad man, flatly drawn and unacceptable. Yet in the middle, he somehow becomes a man of tremendous strength, often convincingly. The science is often shaky--and yet eventually the conditions produced become believable. The tension of Carmody's plight varies from great to piffling... But damn it, even though flaws and virtues form an unresolvable conundrum for a reviewer, this is a story--an importantdone--that nobody should miss!

EDITORIAL (Continued from Page 2)

writer's bills and determines whether he remains a writer. (3) The editor's job is to give the reader what he wants by making sure the writer has done his job properly; it is not to establish good relations with the writer only. (4) A plot, like the writing itself, can only receive acceptance justly when it is done properly, and no amount of preliminary acceptance of an idea can be binding unless the completed work contains the idea in a form the reader can appreciate.

These would seem to be elementary ideas, once the idea that a story is for readers is accepted. Yet reviewers--and hence, very careful readers--are being blamed for not "getting" an idea. There seems to be a feeling that the story has accomplished its purpose once the writer and editor know what it is all about. In one case, five readers including myself failed to get an idea which an editor later explained was the very basis of the story. In another case, a writer admitted that his basic idea was buried in the story, but felt that it could have been seen "if you'd dug hard enough for it,"--a neat way of saying the reader was responsible for getting the story, not the writer for delivering the idea.

It has become customary in some circles for a writer to approach an editor before writing a story and discuss the plot fully. (Not merely to outline a general idea for approval, but to go into the editorial office looking for a plotting session, I understand.) To some extent, this is justified; no man wants to write an idea up and then find that for some reason it's not usable; all of us like to write against commitments, where we can be fairly sure that work = check, period. In the case of a book, I prefer to have a plot approved myself, though it seems to me that a short story depends too little on a bare plot idea to make this too satisfactory, and that a writer can afford to risk 5000 words--particularly when some market will surely take it if it has any merit.

But this approach to writing has severe limits to its value, and demands an even higher ethical consideration of the reader than does merely writing up an idea which the writer himself feels to be good. There's an old, old danger to talking over an idea too much; it gets used up, so to speak, in the discussion--and the writer then approaches it as a twice-told tale, with no freshness. Also, it's very easy for the writer--and for the editor--who already knows exactly what it is supposed to say to assume that as soon as he puts something down on paper, it <u>is</u> said. This is a danger to any writing, and normally the editor serves as a check on it. But when the editor also is aware of what the writer only <u>meant</u> to say, it's easy for him to overlook the fact that it has not been said. It takes a much better editor to judge a story the second time he hears it than the first--and it also takes a very keen appreciation of the obligation to the reader.

So far, of the work which I know to have been fully outlined and developed between editor and writer before it was written, I don't think 10% has been up to the normal standards of the magazines today. It seems doubtful that any method of work which produces consistently inferior results can be as good a method as some of its advocates seem to feel.

Maybe it's time we stopped writing stories only after we learned that the check was waiting. Maybe we should recognize that writing isn't a sure job, at best. If we can't risk our time, why should the reader risk his? In any event, it's even more inexcusable to have a bad story where there was a good idea lost. Let's give the reader a break by communicating with him!

OUT OF THE RUT

by Lester del Rey

Once an old hen found a rut. It was only a little rut, but she ran up and down it until it was deep enough for her to slip under the fence to a pile of corn. She fed on the corn and sneered at the other hens, chasing about after whatever they could find. She grew very clever at rut-running, while the rut grew deeper and deeper, until she could no longer get out. But she was happy in her rut. Then one day the corn was exhausted. So she starved to death.

The moral of this story seems obvious. Yet damned few writers are able to make a full living from their craft, because they can't see that moral. They stick to their rut, calling themselves specialists. There are crime writers, Western writers, or s-f writers. They sold their first story in one field---they find it easier to continue in that field. And they do fine, until one of the inevitable dips in their market throws them, or until the first real slump comes along. Then, with the going tough, there's no time for a change. As a result, a lot of first-rate writers are earning their living as third-rate salesmen, plumbers, or what-have-yous.

Specialization may be fine, but not for writers. Ask the man who once did only sports stories or air-war fiction! No market goes on steadily forever; but the man with flexible training can move to another where things are going well at the time. No writer can dig in one idea-field forever without exhaustion; but a new field may release a flood of new ideas. I've turned out non-fiction and historicals in the middle of a horrible s-f slump, with ease and pleasure. This is common experience among diversified writers.

Of course it's a good idea, people tell me; but it took years to learn one field well, and who can spare the time for several? Nonsense! A writer is a writer, period, or he's nothing. 99% of writing is the same for any field. Western jargon, crime background, and other formulae can be learned in a day or so of study and reading. I've written non-fiction and every kind of fiction except the love-pulp, and have yet to find a type as tough as s-f. History--which is the background for a lot of adventure fiction and most good Westerns--is only the mirror image of s-f; the ability to extrapolate into a different background and attitude carries over perfectly. Of course, we can have little hope of writing slicks that sell every time or best-selling mainstream novels--but neither can most slick or mainstream writers.

Probably no set way out of the rut will work for all writers. My own solution was to try everything--prompted by my agent and encouraged by a lot of help from Robert W. Lowndes; out of the flailing about, I eventually found a field I consider my best chance for security. I hope others will submit any solutions they have found, since a sufficient body of solutions might make it possible for a lot more writers to switch to full-time work. Meantime, as a pump-priming suggestion, I'd like to recommend serious consideration of my own answer--the teen-age novel.

§ § §

The teen-age book bears no resemblance to true juvenile books--which only geniuses or drooling morons can write; I don't quite know which. It's often called a juvenile, but it's slated for young semi-adults; 12 to 18, according to the publishers; about 10 to 14 according to the fan letters I get on them.

Like the juvenile, the teen-age novel has a brand-new audience every few years; hence it can stay in print and draw royalties for decades! The initial advance is about the same as for an adult novel, but total earnings will average much higher. One teen-age book can furnish a nice bit of royalty "gravy" for years. A backlog of several such novels can mean a fairly steady income of a couple hundred dollars a month. By doing a couple such books a year, a writer can insure a steady increase in that income. This is as close to coupon-clipping as most of us can hope for.

Why haven't more writers found this field, then? Well, a lot have, among them our old friend, Capt. S. P. Meek. Some feel it will "ruin their style"; others consider it too hard to master. Both of these ideas are nonsense; Heinlein has certainly disproved the first, and I consider my own dozen ventures disproof of the second. Of course, no great fame can be found here. (Where can it, usually?) But within the field, reputations grow quickly. A couple of good books will earn an assured welcome mat from a publisher and even make other publishers show interest. (I recently got a contract and an advance on nothing but a two-page outline from a publisher I'd never sold before.) Also, a good book in one fiction field will usually be accepted as proof of ability to do other types, unlike the magazine market.

The following section covers about everything I've learned of this field. It was originally prepared for a publisher, and meant to apply to s-f; but the same rules apply to historicals--probably the richest type of market in the teen-age field. All that is needed otherwise is common sense, respect for the reader, and a good idea. The last requirement isn't too hard, since the old s-f ideas are still fresh here, and history is full of plots!

§ § §

A good teen-age novel must be a better story than some modern adult books. It needs sound motivation, interesting and believable characters, plotting with sweep and excitement, a full resolution, and honest writing. Adults are conditioned to such tricks as multiple viewpoint and telling major scenes in flashbacks, but kids want it all directly from the view of the hero.

You can't write "for" the younger reader; writing down or simplifying your style is the worst mistake you can make. Instead, simply pick a younger hero, put him into a situation where sound drama will result, see it from his view, and tell it straight. Don't think of him as a simple person, either. He may be about 18--never younger than your reader. That's old enough to make history, fight for his country, make discoveries, and--in one state--vote. (But don't mention that he can also marry and beget at 18.) He prefers action to debate, but he can think. He lacks experience and may be unsure of himself--or defensively cocky, but he has a definite philosophy of life.

Your toughest problem is finding a sound reason for him to be in the story. It's tough for a youngster to get into men's activities, and if he's mixed up with adults, you must know why. He can't be a superboy--he has to be fairly normal, with normal limitations. He must fit the situation (even when he seems a misfit). When he solves a problem or performs a feat, he must either be in a position to do so or have abilities or experience that qualify him. It can't be simply for the convenience of the plot! He does not lecture adults, make fools of them, or think them stupid! Nothing is worse than a bratty hero. Aside from special training or ability, the adults are more able than he, and he knows it. If he disagrees with them or disobeys, he does so at a real risk, and he's aware of it; he must have good reasons. He's no sissy, nor is he overly brave and virtuous. He can make mistakes and has

feelings and fears. He should come from a background of family, culture, education. He's happy, disturbed, aggressive, independent--tall, short, or dumpy. Above all, he's capable of character development and growth, as important here as in any novel.

There are taboos, of course. Smoking, drinking, gambling, swearing, dope and sex are out--simply don't mention them. Coffee, tea and slang (if not too cute!) are fine. He doesn't reject authority completely, though he need not accept all copybook maxims. Government and law are not generally shown as corrupt, nor are education and learning held up to scorn. (Remember that you have to sell the educators on your book before you can sell it to anyone else.)

Don't cram in encyclopedic material; these books educate only through entertainment. Science, when used, should be correct--no comic-book stuff. If you use hoked-up science, show it isn't true now. Use any terms you need--though s-f gobbledegook doesn't help--but explain new terms when you first use them. DON'T use dialogue to tell the reader anything the hero should know--would anyone tell a modern boy what a car is? Put down facts in narrative, as what the hero already knows.

And don't forget to consider the ethical and moral values when you begin plotting. A tacked-on moral stinks, but an honest story should have some philosophical concept the hero can learn subtly in its development.

The mechanical construction of the story isn't difficult. You'll need 15 to 20 chapters of about 2500 words each, and each chapter should end on some note of high suspense to pull the reader into the next. (You don't need slap dash action, but it must move; however, the pace should vary, with peaks and dips of suspense, and even time to relax and let the main action wait for the normal things of life or for color.) There should be four or five major peaks of suspense, dividing the major sections of the book. I find it best to sit down with a sheet numbered from 1 to (say) 20; I put down my major peaks, then work back and forth, filling in the lesser trouble and inventing complications, until I finally get the basic idea for each chapter. The first introduces hero and situation, next-to-last is the big crisis, leading to the final chapter's solution. (This must not involve any long explanation of things, incidentally.) I juggle and arrange until it looks right. Then I write up a chapter-by-chapter outline, which should be about six double-spaced pages. You'll need this for the publisher anyway, and it helps get the plot down solidly. (I thought I couldn't write from such a thing, either. Then I found it much easier than any other way--it's too brief to ruin your freshness, and it saves innumerable headaches and makes a better book.) Here you work in background, main characters--not too many, of course--motivation, etc. And finally, while the solution must be complete, it never hurts to let the hero have something to look forward to. (Examples of how I have applied all this are Marooned on Mars and Step to the Stars, Winston S-F Series. If you study either, I suspect the rules above can be seen pretty clearly.)

Finally, to learn your market, watch for the annual mid-November Children's Book Section of the Sunday New York Times--the best possible market source. Study both reviews and major ads to see who is doing what. Then begin submitting your outlines, with a brief note giving your previous experience in writing and requesting tentative approval, if okay. With so many markets, almost any good outline will eventually get a request for sample chapters. After a sale or two, you'll be able to get contracts directly from outlines. You'll be out of the rut, and I think, damned well pleased to be out.

END

SOURCE MATERIAL

by James Blish

This column will report articles of possible usefulness to s-f writers in the major scientific and semi-scientific journals. I will try to avoid judging the material, but bear in mind that I have biases; something I find dull may very well interest you.

SCIENCE 29 March: Three major papers devoted to the information gap between ourselves and the USSR, with an example of the damage done drawn from antibiotic research. "Reports" includes a paper suggesting that maternal age has traceable physical effects on offspring--with offspring at both ends of the maternal age spectrum more susceptible to cancer and other non-survival deformities--and proposing a concept called "genetic equilibrium" roughly analogous to homeostasis in the individual. Also a report on gibberallins, chemicals which stimulate growth and early flowering in plants.

SCIENTIFIC MONTHLY April: "Ecology and Overpopulation" by L. R. Dice is a very generalized and inconclusive discussion of the problem. "When is Human Behaviour Predetermined?" by E. G. Boring discusses freedom vs. determinism; article has bearing on the nature of belief, thought control, and robots. Excellent biography of T. H. Huxley, one of the great controversialists of science. The letters in this journal are usually lively.

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN April: "The Overthrow of Parity" clearly explains this hitherto fundamental law and the implications of its being scrapped. "Experiments in Hypnosis" suggests that sleep and trance differ very little. "Skin Transplants" is about immunology--a dangerous subject if you're unfamiliar with it. "The Age of the Solar System" is 4.5 billion years, Harrison Brown says, and describes experiments on meteorites used to fix the date. "The Wonderful Net" describes a counter-current blood distribution system used by some animals. "The Whistled Language of La Gomera" may suggest something to a writer cooking up an alien race. "Plant Growth Substances" are creating a lot of excitement among botanists and agriculturalists. "Sun Clouds and Rain Clouds" suggests that we get a change in the weather 13 days after a solar flare. A regular department, "Science and the Citizen", is a first-class source of science news; there are extended book reviews and other departments. I do not see how any s-f writer can afford to be without this magazine. Among other features, there is a bibliography for every article.

SCIENCE 5 April: "Fall of Parity" is a clear explanation similar to the one in the April SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, but with more math and fewer pictures. "Outer Space in Plants" deals with osmosis in plants, not with astronautics. The familiar, fuzzy newspaper term has a precise meaning in ionization, which is one more good reason for not tossing it about loosely. The technical papers are very technical this issue; of no general interest.

SCIENCE 12 April: A paper by W. R. Thompson suggests that prenatal maternal anxiety in rats increases emotional lability in the offspring. Remaining articles are minor or duplicated elsewhere.

SCIENCE 19 April: "Chemistry of the Brain" is a historical review which should be invaluable to s-f writers, though some will object to the tone of

self-conscious religiosity with which the author approaches the mind-body problem. "Protection of Sulfhydryl Groups against Ionizing Radiation" presents another small step toward preventive drugs against hard radiation. Another paper suggests that withdrawal symptoms following long-term high dosage with "Miltown" (or "Equanil"--meprobamate) resemble those produced with barbiturates. Back of the book contains abstracts of all the papers read at the 1957 National Academy of Sciences meeting. These include: "Element Synthesis in Supernovae", a theory which gives a minimum age for the universe of 6.7 billion years; a paper on electrical mapping of the monkey brain; a paper on the stellar structure of galaxies; researches aimed at fibers which won't melt at 5000° F. (for missiles) are described; and a paper suggesting that a new cure for schizophrenia is imminent. Lots to chew on in this issue.

AMERICAN SCIENTIST March: "Psi Phenomena and Methodology" is a good summary of what is being done by bona-fide professionals in this field; particularly interesting to s-f readers because of its analysis of the difficulties besetting experimental design in such research. The account is sympathetic, and will not much convince skeptics, however; for the author fails to face, let alone meet, the most serious charge levelled against psi research: the many ad hoc assumptions which its advocates entertain. "Models of Scientific Thought" traces the evolution of scientific method, underlining the philosophical problems involved; an excellent antidote for the "cookbook" view of the subject.

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN May: "Vanishing Cultures" will be of interest to the "Ab Son of Ug" writers, if there are any left. "The Shortest Radio Waves" introduces a new physical tool with many s-f potentialities. "The Reticular Formation" describes the function of an important (and until recently, mysterious) part of the brain. "The Heart" is a good anatomical lecture. "'Nicolas Bourbaki'" is an anecdote. "Diffusion in Metals" is an interesting sidelight in solid-state physics. "The Dying Oaks" is about oak-wilt. "A Study in the Evolution of Birds" deals with polymorphism inside a species.

SCIENTIFIC MONTHLY May: "Changing Energy Scene" is a summary of our present and possible energy reserves; writers about future societies should read it. "Global Distribution of Strontium-90 from Nuclear Detonations" is optimistic--dangerously so in my opinion. "Man's Place in Living Nature" is philosophical, and includes many useful insights for s-f.

SCIENCE 17 May: Editorial and article entitled "Leukemia and Ionization Radiation" offers first evidence of measurable connection between fall-out and disease incidence; it will scare you blue. "Saldanha Man" casts doubt on the "bone-tool" cultures, such as Dart's South African man-apes.

SCIENCE 24 May: Nothing of import.

SCIENCE 3 May: "Instrumentation for Bioengineering" deals mainly with advanced prosthetic devices; will fascinate the gadget-minded, also those who feel that future humanity is going to be physically more unfit than we are. "Biological Clock in the Unicorn" is a whimsy arrived at by strict statistical methods; though intended as a criticism of current "cycles" research, it's fun per se.

END

New Subscribers: Philip Klass, Robert Sheckley, Ted Dikty, J. Budrys, Robert Briney, Stephen F. Schultheis, R. Bretnor, Neil P. Ruzic, Francis M. Busby.
Cancelled subscription: Robert A. Heinlein.

SYMBOLS—PRO AND CON

THIS SYMBOL BUSINESS

by Theodore L. Thomas

People who write on symbols rightly seem to begin with apologies. So far as I know, no one has adduced a modicum of proof that there is any validity in the assigning of symbols to certain fictional events.

What evidence is there that Blish is really writing about being born? Why is a room a symbol for a womb or a rocket ship a phallic symbol? In the proposed symbol system, there should be some causal relation, some common sense connection, between the thing and the symbol. But we have a mere allegation that this is so. The use of the word "intuitive" does not supply the missing connection, since a conclusion intuitively arrived at does not thereby rest on firmer ground. Knight uses certain tools when he reviews a novel. These tools are the common sense testing of the people, things and events that move the story ahead. As he says, a good novel resists, but a bad one falls apart. So let's do the same thing to a symbol or two.

Why is a room a symbol for a womb? The two are really nothing alike. A room is a kind of hollow container, but during its primary function the womb is never hollow. As it fills with amniotic fluid and growing tissue, it becomes less and less like a room in which air-space is the prime constituent. When the womb has served its purpose and discharged its contents, the walls immediately come again into contact with each other so that it may assume its secondary role of a conduit. A room is not, normally, a conduit; a hall is. A womb is wet, a room is dry. A womb is dark, a room is lighted. This could be carried much further. Now someone could sit down and write a list of purported similarities between a room and a womb. But when he has done so, he has not finished. He must then supply some reason for believing more in his list of similarities than in a list of dissimilarities. Until that is done convincingly, I don't think a room is a symbol for a womb.

Why is a rocket ship a symbol for a penis? A penis is a conduit, a rocket ship is not. The one has openings at both ends, the other does not. One is an aerodynamically-shaped object, the other has a shape all its own. Here too there must be some reason to believe more firmly in a list of similarities than in the dissimilarities.

A room and a womb--or a rocket and a penis--do not evoke the same emotion or image in my mind. There is no reason why they should. Yet if one is to be a symbol for the other, they must.

When Knight says that a wind-tossed forest is a procreation symbol, he is following the line of reasoning that:

Event A arouses emotion X; § Event B arouses emotion X;
Therefore, event A is equivalent to event B.

There is nothing wrong with such reasoning, although I had trouble seeing it for a while. The following is also good reasoning:

Event A gives rise to image X; § Event B gives rise to image X;
Therefore, event A is equivalent to event B.

Such reasoning leads to things like this:

Thunderclouds produce rain; § Silver iodide crystals produce rain;
Therefore, thunderclouds are equivalent to silver iodide crystals.

To a rain-user who confines his attention solely to rain, this is a per-

fectly sound conclusion. The key here is that the two things must produce an identical result. Otherwise, one is not a symbol for the other.

I have never thought that the Washington Monument was a phallic symbol. I now see why. Before the Monument can be a phallic symbol, the following conditions must be met:

The Monument evokes emotion X; § A penis evokes emotion X;
Therefore, the Monument is equivalent to a penis.

But to me, a penis evokes emotion Y, not X, and therefore the Monument is NOT equivalent to a penis. The result is not changed by substituting "image" for "emotion". So the Monument is only a phallic symbol for those to whom both it and a penis evoke the identical emotion or image. It seems more likely that this would happen to women than to men.

Clearly, the important feature of the symbol concept is the emotion or image which is common to the two statements which precede the conclusion. Unless the emotion or image in each is identical, there is no symbol at all, and the symbol concept breaks down in implying without evidence that so many things evoke the same emotion as a womb or a penis or what-have-you. It all depends on the history of experience behind each individual. Knight does not take this into account when he proposes a symbol for all of us. Diverse histories affect all of us differently, and this is true of our conscious and unconscious minds.

The same test can be stated in the form of a syllogism:
Being reminded of a certain experience evokes emotion X;
The event (symbol) reminds me of that experience;
Therefore, the event (symbol) evokes emotion X.

The syllogistic form states how the conclusion comes about, while the earlier test states the final result without giving any information as to how the conclusion is derived. But the same final result flows from each.

If there is any merit in this approach to the symbol concept, then a potentially useful tool for the writer suggests itself: In developing a story the writer wants to evoke in the reader a particular and powerful emotion--say deep sorrow; he comes up with the death of a child; but this does not fit the plot; so he thinks of events that surround the death of a child, such as a father shedding tears over a small object. With such a deliberately selected symbol he might hit it for a fair number of people; he might even think of a disconnected event and use that as a symbol.

Knight doesn't approach the symbol concept with any common sense justification. Yet there is an aura around it which gives what I think is a spurious air of authenticity. Knight thanks some five giants of s-f for their contributions to the concept--then even tosses in their wives. Where does that leave anybody who takes shots at it? I'm surprised he didn't use a symbol as a buffer, as Stephen Potter suggests for warding off adverse criticism of a novel by dedicating it "To my Mother, in the hope that God's precious gift of sight will soon be restored to her!"

One of the factors which makes the symbol concept seem valid is proof by salesmanship (or acceptance). Last fall, Arthur Clarke ended a lecture in Lancaster with a broad swipe at people who believe in flying saucers. Naturally, the papers carried his blast on the front pages with no mention of the rest of his speech. It seems a local woman is an expert on flying saucers--she has them in her back yard often! When confronted with unbelievers, she proves it by saying: "I will show you a hundred people who believe what I say. What's the matter with you?" This is proof by salesmanship. Knight and

others present the symbol concept in a way to sell it in the absence of valid proof.

Then there's proof by duplication. Knight hauls symbols out of a Blish story. Blish goes back over old stories, and by golly the symbols recur over and over again. An air of credence creeps into the concept because of duplication in a man's stories. But isn't it to be expected that much of the fruit of a single creative brain will possess seeds in common? If we read a symbol into one story, it seems to me only common sense to expect it again in other stories by the same man. This may show that the symbol concept as used by Knight is self-consistent, but we still have not produced evidence of the validity of the concept.

It seems to me that we are all in trouble if we are really each writing about a basic symbol and if we use symbols to convey meaning. We will all be writing in code, as did Phillipe de L'Isle, Moreas, Synge and Yeats; the Symbolists each knew what the other was saying, but the general reader did not.

Sturgeon, we hear, is really writing about "the coming together of two organisms", Blish about "being born". If each of us has--or believes he has--a symbol planted in his heart, mind and writing, then fiction becomes an exercise in ingenuity to see how many different ways we can say the same thing. But this can go on for a writer only so long before the audience grows tired.

Or suppose Knight is right and all of us are writing about a single thing which is fundamental and sexual. Suppose I am right and that after a while we run out of interesting variants on the same theme. Does this account for slumps? Is a slump only a period devoted to the unconscious finding a new basic symbol? Is it broken when a different fundamental, sexual concept is found? Why not look at the writing before and after a major slump to see if there is a change in basic symbols? To me, this is highly intriguing--but there's no evidence.

At one of the Conference workshop sessions, Silverberg had a story with a hero who had to exercise his psi ability in private. He had to go out to the barn and do it or bust! Silverberg commented that the hero was really masturbating. So another symbol reared its head, and one which does not stand the test of close scrutiny. People are forever seeking moments of privacy to relieve a host of tensions, zip a fly, adjust a girdle, etc. But Silverberg's symbol seems to stem from a "syllogism":

Some people go out to the barn to masturbate;
Silverberg's hero goes out to the barn;
Therefore, Silverberg's hero masturbated.

This is invalid--and unnecessary. The imagery came through in the scene without recourse to masturbation or any symbol; the tension-easing was there to be felt. Maybe Silverberg needed the symbol to create the scene--but let each reader find his own symbol, if he needs one, or his own emotion.

I told about one of the Leonard Lockhard stories that had been turned down by Campbell for no very good stated reason. On review, it became evident that the story was distasteful because of the presence in it of a baby with chlorophyl in its veins; the baby was deep green in color. Once the repulsive color was eliminated, Campbell bought it. On hearing this, Knight immediately said, "Of course. You had a dead baby image there." Now superficially, this seems to encapsulate the situation. Furthermore Hollywood now uses green to symbolize death. You can always tell when a man dies in Technicolor--his eyes close, he goes limp, and they shine a green light in his face. But I don't think my green baby *was necessarily* a dead baby image.

The feeling I finally extracted from the green baby was one of repulsion, abhorrence. A dead baby, on the other hand, produces in me a feeling of sorrow, depression. There is a big difference. So to me a green baby is NOT a dead baby image. Instead of a dead baby, the best image I can find for the green baby is a gangrenous baby. In a gangrenous baby only can I find the essential emotion of repulsion. So when you begin substituting symbols for emotions, you begin running the risk of warping those emotions.

I think Kinght is on the way to embedding the emotion in a symbol irrevocably for all of us. If a hero shrinks, he is retreating to the womb; if he expands, he's pulling out to the uterine abyss. Where can a poor hero go? Wherever he turns, he is swallowed up by the womb. This is categorizing with a vengeance, and without evidence.

Knight held up some sentences from a story of mine, one dealing with emotion evoked by viewing a wind-tossed forest. He stated that the image created in him an emotion that was akin to strong anticipation with undertones of joy and anguish. This caught me right between the eyes. I sweated over leaving these very sentences in the story; when read coldly, they seemed trite, though they brought out to me the precise emotion I felt. When Knight showed an understanding of this exact emotion, I was stunned. But then look what he did! He went on to create a different image to stand in the place of the emotion evoked by the wind-tossed forest image. He asserted that it was a procreation symbol--with no evidence. Procreation does not evoke in me the same emotion as a wind-tossed forest. In this particular case there seems to be a source for the procreation emotion. Knight also quoted the wind-tossed wheat passage from Orwell, which is as sensuous and sexual as they come. It is very easy to drag a sexual emotion from that passage. I suspect Knight did so and then slapped it on all of us. Interestingly enough, I don't get the same feeling from Orwell. Knight draws procreation form it; to me it stands for good old-fashioned intercourse. Where a writer comes right out and says what it is he has in mind, as did Orwell, I don't think intercourse is a symbol.

This symbol business is intriguing; it may be good exercise; it is certainly stimulating. But it ain't necessarily so.

UNCONSCIOUS S-F IN SYMBOLS

by Lester del Rey

Quite properly for him, Knight objects to the fact that I use the word "thing" too much in my writing. Naturally, he doesn't like things. He prefers symbols. And never the twain shall meet.

I suppose that the next time I get a shot of novocain for an extraction, I should realize that it isn't the drug-thing that does the work, but my unconscious biting on a symbol. Since the hypo needle is an obvious phallus, being injected must symbolize intercourse; therefore, at its completion I naturally feel drugged, relaxed, numbed, etc. It may seem a little queer to react thus to the needle-prick, but that's progress! Probably in time I'll learn to realize that a pretty girl against the sunset only interests me symbolically because her cylindrical upright body is a phallic symbol. But doggone it, I can't swallow (make what you will of that, Knight) all this so easily. I'm not sufficiently obsessed with virility to believe that a rocket shooting flame out of its end is a good phallic symbol; and if it is, then I don't like the idea of it going off into a vacuum!

True, I react to a wind blowing across a field or through a woods, just as Knight and Thomas do. But I don't think we have to hunt around for any ab-

struse symbolism here, unless we deny our similarity to a dog. Dogs react to the wind, too. Why not? The wind is like a newspaper, bringing them news of near enemies, food and perhaps females in heat. Of course they prick up their ears and lift their noses to sniff, in anticipation and excitement. Since our remote ancestors probably had a similar ability to smell the news of the wind, they must have spent quite a few hundred thousand years reacting similarly to the wind. Naturally, we do the same. It would be strange if we didn't. We don't have to go down into the unconscious with puns and gods to find good enough reason for this big point in Knight's article.

More important, in my opinion, we shouldn't go looking too hard for such unconscious double-talk, even if it can be justified. In that direction lies a very real danger of writing double-crostics instead of stories. If there were solid evidence of exactly the symbol relationship Knight suggests, I'd consider myself bound to disregard it to the best of my ability, and to try to do my communicating in fiction by the symbols which have made us something apart from most animals--words!

A story, after all, is not a guessing game. We write for entertainment, which means primarily for casual reading. Now even Knight has to pore through a story carefully and deliberately to get all the symbols, so we can't really communicate readily and reliably by them. To the casual reader, the conscious material on the surface must be enough. Hence we have to construct a story to be a complete and satisfying thing, even without the symbols. As writers for readers, it's our job to disregard symbols, at least enough to make sure we are telling an honest story that can be read and enjoyed without them. If we get off on a binge of writing symbols for our own satisfaction, there's entirely too much temptation to feel that we don't have to make our points explicitly, but to feel a smug glow of satisfaction in burying them so they only appear to those who look for symbols.

If I were convinced that symbols function as Knight suggests, I'd be forced to work harder than ever to make sure I didn't rely on them for more than added coloration for the few careful readers. And since I'd therefore have to write as if they didn't exist, I can't see that it makes any difference whether they do or not.

To me, it's all a tempest in a teapot. And if that's a confusing symbol for an elemental male principle trapped inside a womb, it's still also a symbol for much ado about nothing. Symbolic, isn't it?

UNCONSCIOUS SYMBOLS IN S-F--Part II

by Damon Knight

Symbolism: "Oh, Yeah?" and "So What?"

I don't think a room is a symbol for a womb, either. I never said it was. If it were, then every story with a room in it would be a womb story, and that would include just about everything written since the invention of houses.

Look, this symbol business is not all that hard to understand. Maybe I made it seem so, and if I did, I apologize. So let's take it from the top. Here's a written symbol of the simplest kind--a conventional sign. → You recognize it immediately as an arrow. Was that because it looks exactly like a real arrow? Nix; a real arrow is different in about one thousand ways with which I won't bore you here, from point to feathers; nevertheless, that sign has the essence of arrowness in it—a straight line, pointing in one direction.

A symbol is similar in essential ways to the thing it represents.

A pregnant womb is a round, hollow place in which a foetus is confined, supported weightlessly, protected and nourished. It has a lot of other features, naturally, but those are most of the essential ones. (If "hollow" is the wrong word because the womb is full of amniotic fluid, okay, but then it's the wrong word for a room, too, because that's full of air.) Being confined, suspended, protected, fed--that's what a womb must mean to a foetus, if it means anything. It's how we imagine a womb.

If a man writes stories about people in rooms, is that uterine symbolism? I don't think so. But if a man writes a story about someone in a room where he is confined, suspended, protected and nourished--more particularly if this combination turns up again and again--is that womb symbolism? I think it is. As Thomas points out, rooms in stories are generally lighted and dry, whereas wombs are dark and wet. Too bad, but those are the only kind of rooms we ordinarily have available for use in everyday stories.

In imaginative fiction, where the author has more license, should we expect even wetness and darkness to be added? Probably. Ted, if I show you a s-f story about a man who finds himself confined, suspended, protected and nourished in a dark, wet room, will that convince you? If so, look at my "Stranger Station", F&SF, December 1956--particularly the ending, pp. 22-23.

A rocket? It's a long, thin, hard cylindrical object that rises and ejaculates. True, it doesn't look or act exactly like a penis, which is probably just as well...

In effect, Thomas is demanding an unreasonable degree of similarity; he could reject the electronics symbol for a transformer on exactly the same grounds, pointing out that the differences between symbol and object outnumber the similarities; but I'm sure he never would.

It took me a while to puzzle out what I think is the real difficulty. Although Thomas never says so, and perhaps isn't aware of it, I think what he boggles at is the idea of a thing as the symbol of another. If I drew a conventional picture of a penis, probably he would have no trouble in recognizing it; and yet that would have even fewer points in common with a real penis than a rocket (or a snake, or a key). Can things properly be used as symbols for other things? I don't know why not: they are, every day. In Christian symbology, there's the cross, the Easter lily, the lamb and many others, including the bread and wine of communion. On Madison Avenue, there's the sincere tie; in Greenwich Village, the intellectual beard. There are flags, uniforms, robes, insignia, crowns, thrones, etc., ad infinitum. We are entirely surrounded by real things acting as symbols; the world would be unrecognizable without them.

Several of Thomas' minor points show a confusion which may be due to this same cause. In talking about the Silverberg story, for instance, he says, "the imagery came through in the scene," apparently without realizing that "imagery" in this sense means "symbolic imagery". Silverberg set up this scene, in which a character goes out behind the barn to move objects by telekinesis, in such a way as to suggest that "teeking" was symbolic of masturbation. What I got out of it, as I said at that session, was a boy going out behind a barn to urinate. Now, I think this was reasonably close--communication by symbols took place. When Thomas says "let each reader find his own symbol", he misses the point. "Teeking" was the symbol; the symbol was given; it was the referent, the socially shameful act, that each reader had to find.

In the same way, speaking of his own story about a chlorophyl-green child, (which turned out to be salable as soon as he changed the color), Thomas says that I was wrong in calling this a symbol of a dead baby: it is, instead, a symbol of a gangrenous baby. Now, again, I think that's pretty damned close. I would say that I got the message, even if slightly garbled. (Kornbluth got it perfectly; he used the word "gangrenous" in discussing this story.) Clearly, communication by symbols took place. Moreover, whereas Silverberg's use of the symbol was conscious, Thomas' was unconscious and inadventent. Ted, your own testimony makes nearly my whole case: unconscious symbols can get into a writer's work without his intention, and can communicate the original feeling to the reader of that work.

Lester's point about the wind-in-foliage experience seems to me very telling. His explanation does not (for me) account satisfactorily for the peculiar blend of emotions in that experience, but it comes very near, and I am willing to believe that similar explanations could be advanced for other experiences of what I call the symbolic. Even so--and this is a point that Lester missed--the effect on the reader is just the same. From a technical point of view, it doesn't matter to the writer whether wind in foliage is a procreation symbol or a racial memory of tidings-on-the-wind: if he wants to produce that specific, acute, emotional response in the reader, that symbol will do it.

This is a partial answer to those who said "So what?"--and surprised me more in two words than anything has in years. I'll return to that in a moment; first, for those who said "Oh, yeah?"---

In the first part of this article I gave close textual readings of Blish's "Common Time" and Sturgeon's "And Now the News..."; I took the Blish story apart almost line by line. This documentation cost some labor and I'm proud of it. I set it up deliberately in such a way that it could be attacked on the grounds of logic and evidence. If (in Boucher's words) I am "reading in" these patterns instead of reading them out of the text, that ought to be fairly easy to prove by reducto ad absurdum--reading the same pattern into a story where it patently does not belong, or reading another, obviously absurd pattern into the same story, using my quotations or another set equally comprehensive and coherent. I am tired of hearing people say, "You can find any symbols in any story if you look for them." It ain't so. If you think it is, I will set you a simple problem: find me a coherent series of puns in "Common Time" that describe a man making and eating a ham sandwich. Onerye, with a pickle on the side. The story appeared originally in Science Fiction Quarterly for August, 1953; it was reprinted in Shadow of Tomorrow, a 1953 Permabooks anthology edited by Fred Pohl.

Thomas suggests that I should have found examples of sperm symbolism in somebody else's stories besides Jim Blish's. Right; I should have, and did--in my own "Cabin Boy". If that's too close to home, sorry; I tried to avoid my own work, but it's what I know best.* Meanwhile, what about the womb symbolism I pointed out in the work of Sturgeon, Ray Gallun, Wells, "Miss Mulock" and others?

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* For an example 'way out in left field, remote from any possible connection with Blish's work or mine, see Satellite E One, by Jeffery Lloyd Castle, Dodd, Mead, 1954; Doubleday S-F Book Club, 1954. The sperm symbolism in this one is so obvious that it struck me long before I got hipped on the subject, and I pointed it out in my review at the time: cf. In Search of Wonder, Advent, 1956, p. 139.

If I am wrong about this, show me--you'll be doing me a favor. Symbolism is cluttering up my notebooks, my desk, my library list: if it's a blind alley, I'll be glad to clear it off and start afresh.

If I'm right:

(1) For writers: This study will show how certain specific, simple situations can be used in fiction to produce specific, strong emotional reactions in the reader. This holds true whether you subscribe to my interpretations of these situations or not.

(2) For critics: This study opens up a new avenue to the previously inaccessible non-rational elements in a story. It provides clues to the tantalizing question, "Why do we write this kind of fiction? Why do we read it?"

(3) For editors and publishers: This study contains the germ of a systematic plan of packaging, merchandising and promotion, directed at the unconscious level where the decision to buy often originates.

So look. My article is speculative, and it deals with intangibles. The answers to questions like these just don't come any other way than by intuition, but intuition isn't evidence. So I tried to demonstrate my conclusions by any kind of supporting evidence I could get hold of. This included traditional and mythological material, but a lot of people don't consider that evidence, either. The only thing left was to read the text more closely, and by internal evidence to show that the story itself supported my point. I did that in the case of Blish's "Common Time" and Sturgeon's "And Now the News..." In both cases, I showed that the plot of the story, the incidents, and even the choice of language all fitted the same pattern.

This documentation took some labor and I'm proud of it; it seems to me that you can't attack my position logically without disposing of it. Either the pattern is there, as I say it is, and means what I suggest it does, or else: (1) the pattern is there, but means nothing, or means something else, or (2) the pattern is not there, but has been read in by me.

If any skeptic of this theory will once confess that the pattern is there, I don't care whether he thinks it's meaningless or not--the point can't be proved either way, but I think most people believe with me that complex patterns are meaningful. If, on the other hand, I'm reading the pattern in, that ought to be fairly easy to prove, either by reducto ad absurdum--reading the same pattern into a story where it patently does not belong--or by reading another pattern into the same story, using my quotations or another set equally comprehensive and coherent. I set this up deliberately and laboriously just so that it could be attacked on the grounds of logic and evidence. If the theory is potentially important to you as writers, then it seems to me I have a right to expect that some of you will take the trouble to knock it down if you can.

My article was originally intended to appear in one lump; that turned out to be impossible, and I'm afraid I didn't realize how little sense the first installment of it would make by itself. Since the response was so negative, I'm running this apologia here, instead of the second installment. If, after this explanation, the subject is of interest to enough of you, please write and tell me, and I'll continue running the article. If not--the Forum isn't my private hobby magazine, or Lester's, and this subject has already taken up more space than it's worth.

END

SERVICE

In this department, we'll try to run suggestions and answer questions that may be helpful generally. If you have a suggestion for doing something easier, cheaper or better--or a query someone can perhaps answer--send it along.

CHARLES L. COTTRELL: I have found that slicing a half-inch off one end and one side of carbon sheets makes it a lot easier to build the stack and faster insertion in a typewriter.

KNIGHT: Columbia Rainbow 740 carbons are made with two opposite corners lopped off. These are heavyweight carbons, half an inch longer than letter size--easy to handle and remove from stack. DEL REY: Better still, cut off one line--1/6 or about 3/16th inch--from one end. This will mean turning a sheet of carbon end-for-end gives you a chance to write between double-spaces, and doubles the life of carbon--one of the most expensive items of all. Easy to do with a fresh razor blade against a ruler, if you do it before breaking up a package of carbon.

EARL KEMP: If you are at all interested in buying a new typewriter, you owe it to yourself to investigate the German OLYMPIA before you buy. Many excellent features. It costs a little more but is well worth it.

DEL REY: Absolutely. No American machine since the War is assembled properly, and German and Italian machines have been better for decades. You can get service on the OLYMPIA, too. Or for a portable, the best machine ever made--equal to, or better than, most standards--is the East German GROMA, which never seems to need service under any conditions. It's dirt cheap, too, if you can find it. (Forum #1 was cut on a GROMA; #2 on an OLYMPIA Standard.) If interested, I have an address where Gromas are sold. For God's sake, don't buy an American machine without investigating these!

General suggestions: Stationery supplies vary tremendously in cost from shop to shop in some sections. Your best bet is to query all shops in your area. And to get the best deal you can, I strongly suggest that every writer should have a small batch of letterheads printed up--not to be used for editors, but for other business--and write the queries on these. Many places will give a 20% or greater "business" discount, even in small lots. You can't get any quotation that means anything--paper prices change often. But once you get a discount, you at least have a good deal. This applies to typewriters as well as stationery, incidentally. I got this OLYMPIA at much under the regular list price, using such a system.

Many writers feel that they must use expensive paper for mss. This is not generally true. High-rag paper is much too expensive, and has only the virtue of standing up under hard usage. Use a cover and backing sheet, and even the cheapest paper will last for as many submissions as you'll ever need. Above all, writing on assignment needs no fancy paper. I've found that even 20 # mimeo paper is excellent for any purpose; it is opaque and dull--which makes it easier reading than even the best papers, so that editors actually like it. It takes editorial corrections beautifully. And it erases well, if you don't bear down too hard--better than expensive papers. DON'T, in any event, throw money away on "erasable" papers; they smudge, they're dull-grey, they glare, and they're hell to read and handle, to the editor's disgust. It's often wise to get a lot of ten reams of 20# mimeo paper (NY Times on Shopping Page often carries ads as low as $1.25 per ream for this on Sunday), and use it for both original and carbon--for which it's excellent.

LETTERS

JOHN W. CAMPBELL, JR.:

I'd really like to know what's biting Jim Blish's tender artistic soul so hard. When he was talking to me, he didn't explain or indicate that the psionics idea was so loathesome as he now indicates. § He seems to be somewhat unusual; most of the people who come in have their own ideas, one way or another, and express them. I am, too, interested in his comment anent "Where are the fictional votaries of d.....s now?" primarily because, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it happens that Jim Blish was the only author who ever sold me any story using dianetics in it in any way whatever. One of his Oakie series did; it's possible I'm wrong, but I believe that a scrupulous check will show that was the one and only instance of dianetics appearing anywhere in the fiction department. § He sounds like a compulsive conformist who hates what he conforms to--and so compulsive about it he doesn't stop to find out whether conformity is required, desired, or even appropriate. § In view of his intensive dislike of psi, Damon Knight's review of his story is amusing.

I'm strongly in agreement with Fred Pohl's points on writing good stories, in contributing your own, original, creative concept of what science fiction should be. Your own editorial points out the strong interaction between authors that made possible the development of science fiction from the juvenile material of the 30's through the 40's into adult level material. We need to know what can be done with science fiction; nobody does know yet. It's fine to dream about perfect stories--but, dammit, if a congress of gorillas assembled to design the supergorilla, I doubt that they'd come up with a blueprint for a human being. § Authors, no matter how good they may be as writers, do have to study the market, however, in one sense; a top-notch western writer can't write science fiction unless he takes time out to find out how far the field has already gone. The fact that he is a good, proven writer does not mean he can write science fiction without studying the market. The market study, however, should be for the purpose of finding out what has been done--so you can start from there, and go somewhere new. § However, there's one thing Pohl doesn't adequately bring out. It's worth any author's while to make personal contact with an editor. Reason: an editor has, through wearisome work and long hours of hard study, been taught something that no author has a chance to study. To wit: how not to do it. I dunno how many manuscripts I've read--quarter of a million, maybe. The authors may see some that they consider stinkeroos--but they ain't seen what I've had to see! Any editor gets a very effective, liberal education on the subject of "How Not to Write a Story", in the only way that education can actually be acquired--by reading one hell of a lot of 'em. § Sure--so sometimes an editor slips and buys one the boys think is pretty sloppy stuff. On his desk, it looked good --by comparison with the last 79 pieces he waded through. § Another point worth mentioning: you're right in saying that the modern s-f magazines are highly personalized. They are, and I (naturally) think they should be. But there's a two-way gimmick here that a lot of authors overlook. This October I'll have been at Street & Smith for 20 years; quite some few of my readers weren't born when I started editing ASF. Now some people like the stories I happen to like; some don't. After 20 years, however, it's pretty probable that those who are still reading ASF must like pretty much what I like--otherwise they'd have gotten disgusted and quit buying the magazine. § This doesn't say "I'm right, because I have 20 years of experience behind me".

It says, instead, "I donno whether my likes and dislikes are good or bad--but after 20 years, the only ones still reading the magazine must be people who think that what I like is fairly satisfactory." The readers must have tastes sufficiently like my own private, personal tastes to find interest in what interests me--be that for better or worse, it's a pragmatic fact.

That's sort of like saying, "The people you find eating in Chinese restaurants in New York City are people who like eating Chinese food." The probability is at least 0.95, let's say--or they wouldn't have bothered going to a Chinese restaurant. § If I turned down a story on the basis of purely personal "I don't like it", then it's reasonably probable that the readers of my particular magazine would also dislike it. Not because I'm inherently, innately right in my dislikes--but solely because the readers of my magazine are not at all a random sampling. They're selected sample--selected by the process of choosing ASF.

The proposition that I'm trying to make somebody like psi annoys me; the suggestion that I'm running psionics stories almsot solely also annoys me. Maybe I have a fetish for the word the, too; if you look, you'll find that every story I run uses the word dozens of times. Why not comment on the fact that most of the stories I run concern physics in one way or another, and everybody knows I took my degree in physics, so that proves I'm trying to push physics. § Let's check back on what s-f has been for the last 30 years or so. In "The Skylark of Space" there was a psionic machine, maybe? The educator machine that made Seaton and Dunark mind-brothers. And the Lensman series was a psionics series, of course; you can see I've been getting in my dirty work for decades--even before I edited ASF. Of course I influenced A. Merritt in his psionics stories, such as "The Moon Pool", "Ship of Ishtar", and the like. My own "Solarite", back in the 20's, was a psionics story, too. I had the Venusians get into communication with my heroes by telepathy. Very original idea it was, too; of course that had never been done before in s-f. § In case you hadn't noticed, there's damned little basic scientific research being done these days--it's nearly all engineering developments of previous basic research. So now they have atomic energy, and they have functioning rocket ships. And the good old days of Weinbaumian excursions thru the strange and wonderful zoo of another planet's fauna are sort of gone for good. Hal Clement can pull a little something on that order once in a while, but not often. § But science fiction is supposed to be a literature of extrapolation, isn't it? To suggest new lines of development, new approaches to the universe. § It's an annoying and at the same time amusing thing to see the outraged reactions of a number of part-time, have-been, or wish-they-were "scientists" in the field of the psionics business--as compared to the reactions of the 100% full-time, first-rank real scientists who are engaged in basic research. Clyde Tombaugh, the discoverer of Pluto, now working at White Sands, is much interested. He's worked with the symbolic Hieronymus machine that Harry Stine, of the White Sands Flight Safety group, an electronics engineer, built. The Rand Corporation has been distinctly interested. The Yale psychology department is doing some research with one, and there's a project at Fordham. The Director of Research for Bell Aircraft was down investigating the one I have a few weeks back; he came out here for the purpose. § I am not trying to make anyone like anything they don't want to--but apparently some top-rank scientists engaged in basic research want to find out about it. Sorry Jim Blish and Sprague de Camp don't like it; they certainly don't have to. § But since my essential business is extrapolating from the partly known and half-guessed at into future possibilities--as I did with atomic energy a quarter century ago--and since nearly all of modern

science is engineering research, with no basic research to do much extrapolating on... Pardon me, while I see if I can't stir up something new, huh?

BLISH:

I doubt that any poet would regard the word "artistic" as a swear-word; anyhow, I don't think that sarcasm advances the argument. For the record, I did tell John, the last time we had lunch together, that I wasn't convinced of the existence of psi. My position in the Forum was arrived at later--the luncheon meeting in question took place well over a year ago--and is my considered position today. § John's memory of my use of dianetics is both long and precise. Half a sentence in "Bindlestiff" (December 1950) referred to dianetics: 10 words in the 85,000 of the Oakie series. I will not stop now to list ASF stories which I consider to have been entirely based on dianetics, but I think Jones' "I Tell You Three Times" is a representative example. § Nobody could maintain, as John points out, that telepathy and related subjects are new to s-f; I've certainly never taken that stand; all I claim is that John is currently hipped on the subject of psionics. Everybody in the field knows this, including John, and the page-count I cited for the two issues I reviewed documents the point. I think it disingenuous to make out that it ain't so, when it's perfectly plain to all that it is so. § As for the argument on authority: speaking as a "has-been" scientist of a very minor calibre indeed, I am not impressed. Indeed, I had thought that Roger Bacon had disposed of that impediment to thought centuries ago. The fact that Tombaugh is working on the Hieronymous machine is interesting, but has no logical force. Just a few weeks ago, one of the world's most eminent scientists, Lee de Forest--inventor of the triode, which made the entire science of electronics possible--declared to the newspapers that men would never fly in space; somehow he failed to notice that Bill Bridgeman had done that very thing. § Let me repeat here that I have no objection to psi as a subject for stories, if the stories are good. I center my objections on (1) the topheaviness of recent ASF issues, due to the weight being given this one subject; and (2) the accompanying editorial insistence that the existence of psi is proven. The artistic dangers which are, I think, inherent in this particular subject, are outlined in my review last issue; perhaps they are unreal, but I believe they are real and that is why I wrote about them. § And I am delighted that John wants to argue about this; it's high time the subject got a thorough ventilation. I believe my miniature revolt on the subject of psi expressed--at least in large part--the feeling of a great many writers who simply haven't gotten around to articulating their uneasiness up to now. If this is true (and I have talked to so many s-f writers about it that I can't doubt it any longer), then it is something John ought to know about, no matter how much it may irritate him at first.

POUL ANDERSON:

I think the magazine has a real possibility of developing into the communication medium we all hope for and all need. In my opinion, we in the s-f and fantasy business may as well forget any ambitions we once cherished to be taken seriously by the literati: we've been type cast, along with mysteries, westerns and historicals, and dynamite won't move a mind which thinks in stereotypes. This is no great loss to us, except perhaps financially, provided that we keep in touch with reality and keep trying to write fiction which relates thereunto. But with the regular book review columns and discussion media effectively closed to us, we certainly will need something of our own. § By way of suggestions for improvement, which may not be worth a

damn, I might offer a comment or two en passant on certain features of the first issue.

The market news: A good thing, if it can be kept timely. However, without forgetting that writers must eat, it would be well to play down this angle; presumably you're after an audience less interested in What Will Sell than in what will be worth writing--and reading. § Magazine reviews: This will be difficult to handle. Not that you need be afraid of insulting people --if anyone takes such criticism personally, to hell with him. But it's so easy to fall into either of two traps: (a) the review becomes merely a reflexive expression of the reviewer's personal reactions, which per se are worth not a nickel more than yours or mine: or (b) while relating its discussions to some literary standards, the review proceeds on the assumption that there is only one possible standard, i.e., the type of thing the reviewer himself goes for. Horrible examples of (b) are the New Yorker or, in the s-f teapot, William Atheling. Neither one will--neither one seems able to--consider an adventure story for instance on its own merits or demerits; it isn't "adult" or "sophisticated" or something (whatever those words mean), therefore it's no good. § I am not implying that your current reviews stumbled into either of these pitfalls--generally, they are pretty valid--but the possibility is there. Especially in Damon's review of Miller's "The Last Canticle". I grant you every one of the faults you found in the story, and add: So what? Literature of any value is always superior to its own blemishes, and Miller's story was a profound, moving study of an aspect of human behavior which s-f has too much neglected: religion. (I speak as a non-partisan of any and all faiths.) When Damon complains he is "repelled...by (the theology's) bloodlessness and its reliance on dogma," he merely indicates his own inability to accept the author's story postulates, whose truth-value to him have no relationship to their literary effect. As for protesting "who could imagine there is anything artistically to be gained by writing about 1970 and calling it 3781?"--Damon completely missed the symbolism: man being given a second chance, and muffing it, and nevertheless--in the shape of a few refugees from Earth--getting a third one. § Having duly scolded you for your obviously reprehensible failure to see eye to eye with me, I'll proceed to other questions. Such as Budrys's totally inexplicable enthusiasm for the normally excellent Sturgeon's totally pointless "The Other Celia" (Don Wollheim did it better, about 15 years ago)--but no, that would be mere wrangling over private opinions. Apologies, Ted: in most cases, I'm quite a strong partisan of yours. § "Unconscious Symbols in S-F": Very interesting, but I wonder if the interest is more than academic. Look, it's no trick at all to find phallic, uterine, or any other kind of symbols, not only in literature but in the physical universe. In fact, has it occured to you that the penis is a phallic symbol?--Seriously, I do not doubt your genuine purpose here, but fail to see its relevancy to literature; at best, it's a psychological question, a scientific problem, and as such to be investigated with more rigor than an essay affords. Also, if symbolism of this type is as universal as you hint, it becomes meaningless for our purposes. There is no significance in the fact that a man wears trousers, in the Western world; we can only be interested in his trousers insofar as they are unique. Likewise, if we are all writing about birth, or sex, or toilet training, or whatever, analysis is only relevant on the next level: <u>how</u> and <u>what</u> we write. § In short, an occasional excursion like this does no harm, but I wouldn't recommend very much.

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there is one enormous gripe of mine, pH about 3, which he didn't mention. It concerns editors who rewrite. § This is more than a question of one's own beautiful prose--though every craftsman worth a damn takes pride in the sheer detail of his product. A number of editorial changes, made without my knowledge or consent, have probably gone unnoticed by everyone except me; however, they jar on an ear sensitive to the metrical character of prose. More often I've been saddled with some editorial jerk's crude idea of phrasing; under my name, there appears a sentence I'd have thrown out five hard-studying years ago as shoddily put together. Or a change may be totally senseless--the first name of a character, for God's sake! § What makes it intolerable, though, is when this primitive surgery changes one's entire meaning. Item: in an otherwise poor story, fortunately forgotten, the basis was some speculation as to how free will in man could coexist with a divine plan for the destiny of the universe. The editor or publisher or some idiot cousin went carefully through the ms, changing "God" to "Providence"--a mealy-mouthed agnosticism even worse than the cheap Eisenhower religiosity currently drenching our national character. (Repeat: I am not an advocate of any particular religion myself, nor an enemy of any except a few.) Item: In another story, an extraterrestrial listening to Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto reflected that at least Earthlings could write music. Some shnook changed the composer to Wieniawski, whose music I do not much enjoy and would not plug. More "sophisticated" maybe? Item: This same story had a simpering happy ending sewed on which bore no relationship to anything which had gone before and destroyed everything I'd been trying to say. Item: I am absolutely never again going to submit to Aaron Mathieu of the Writer's Digest outfit; not only did he redo my article in the most incoherent and sophomoric fashion I have ever seen, but put into my typewriter a description of the Bridey Murphy nonsense as "serious research, done with a tape recorder." Item--but why go on?

This is not to say that an editor has no creative role. On the contrary, I am glad to admit my debt to such men as John Campbell, Tony Boucher, Peter Ritner of Saturday Review, and some others, for suggestions which led to real improvement. Furthermore--bless them--Boucher and Bob Mills either have the author himself make desired changes, or get his okay. Campbell makes no important alterations without consent, though apparently his publisher forces a few pussyfooting taboos on him, so that he has no choice but to substitute a weak cliché like "lifeblood" for a strong word like "guts"--but this isn't John's fault. § Now the point of all this is not so much to complain as to suggest to Pohl that a writer who knows that such-and-such will be unskillfully excised from his ms will tend to leave it out in the first place, not because he's afraid of not selling, but to avoid smudging his own name through someone else's inept work. If we're to have completely honest writing in s-f, editors and publishers will have to do their share. § Or am I just being hypersensitive?

KNIGHT:

No, I didn't miss the symbolism in "The Last Canticle". I just thought it was badly chosen--or perhaps not chosen, drifted into. The Leibowitz trilogy seems to me a prime example of the pitfalls of sequelizing. The first story was a delightful little thing, complete in itself; the second was grotesquely overblown and boring; the third, in having to make room for the first two, lost all its plausibility. § I suppose you think you're kidding about the penis as a phallic symbol, but dig this, from Jung's Modern Man in Search of a Soul, p. 25: "Psychologically speaking, the membrum is itself--as Kranefeldt has recently pointed out--a symbolic image whose wider content cannot easily be determined. As was customary

throughout antiquity, primitive people today make a free use of phallic symbols, yet it never occurs to them to confuse the phallus, as a ritualistic symbol, with the penis. They always take the phallus to mean the creative mana, the power of healing and fertility..." § No, I'm sorry if I gave anybody the impression that these symbol patterns are universal in fiction. I agree that if they were, they would be virtually meaningless--you'd never be able to tell if you were reading them out of the text or projecting them into it.

BLISH:

I have a complete file of my writings as "Atheling", and can find no point at which I condemned any story, whether an adventure story or any other kind, for failing to be "adult" or "sophisticated". My criticisms as Atheling were almost wholly technical; I confined myself as much as possible to jumping on stories I thought badly put together regardless of category. In his present note, as in a previous one about Atheling to Skyhook, Anderson seems to have invented his antagonist.

LARRY T. SHAW:

Generally speaking, the material is excellent. The only thing I find myself fairly cold toward is, I'm sorry to say, Damon's job on symbols. The substance of it is about equally fascinating and repellent to me; Damon's research and analysis is thorough and preceptive as usual--but I still find myself saying, so what? The trouble seems to be that I expect everything in the Forum to be genuinely useful, and I can't see that this is. Not until we find some way to control the unconscious, anyway. § The best item in the issue is easy to choose, as far as I'm concerned. It's Lester's defense of the chase. I applaud heartily; this needed saying, you said it well, and I'm glad you did. One of the very few things in In Search of Wonder that annoyed me was Damon's offhand dismissal of the chase as the thing that killed the pulps, which I think is ridiculous. (If any one thing killed the pulps, it was stupid editing.) I, for one, will buy a good chase story any time, and I just wish to hell I saw a lot more of them. You can, if you wish, emblazon that on your cover and charge me for the ad space: Larry Shaw wants chase stories!

Needless to say, I disagree with your reviews of Infinity, in many ways. However, I am happy that Infinity was included at all, and your reviews of it are certainly no harsher than any of the others. However, I do think you were unfair, slightly, in two instances. In the case of "Utter Silence" by Edward Wellen, I disagree violently with your conclusion, but won't debate it. I do object to your leaving out the entire point of a story which you take a third of a page to synopsize, especially when you take such pains to point out that you want to "avoid missing any important steps." There seem to be several possibilities: you read the story hastily and carelessly (perhaps because you expect everything in Infinity to be easy to read); you dislike Wellen for some reason that has nothing to do with the story in question; you legitimately hated the story but didn't really know why; etc. Whichever is correct, I still think you're unfair in this case.

The other instance really isn't important; it's this bit about how "no other magazine in existence has ever had such admiring blurbs." This is nonsense, and I defy you to prove it using quotations from the two issues you reviewed. I'll grant that "most brilliant robot story" is pretty admiring, but I could show you plenty of similar cover blurbs on other magazines. Aside from that, you haven't a leg to stand on. You dislike the blurb for the Wellen stories; do you mind if we stop to analyze it? It says: "We think Ed-

ward Wellen is one of the best new writers to hit the s-f field in many years." This is a simple statement of fact. "Usually it takes any new writer a long time to make an impression on the readers and gain recognition." There are exceptions, of course, but I said "usually"; and this is a statement I would not be surprised to find in the Forum itself. "To help bring Wellen to your attention, we are presenting the special double feature that follows immediately." We did present it, it did follow immediately, and the reason given is a true one. "Running two stories by the same writer in one issue of a magazine is practically unheard-of in editorial circles." It is. I didn't say it had never been done; I was well aware that both Palmer and Planet Stories had done it with loud fanfare--louder fanfares than mine, I'd say offhand. "But we feel that both of these stories are so good--and so different from each other--that we are violating this long-standing taboo to bring both of them to you at once." This is also fact--and even you admitted the stories were different from each other. "We think you'll enjoy discovering Edward Wellen." Well, we still think most readers did or will, though you are obviously one of the exceptions. But what is there in that blurb that is so admiring or so difficult to live up to? All I see is "one of the best" and "good"--this is extreme? § Actually, neither of these items played a large part in my reaction to the Forum, and I hope I haven't made it seem as if they did. But I know you like a good fight in the letter column--and you know that I do, too. So maybe this will provide at least a minor one.

DEL REY:

I'd say stupid editing was only a result, not a cause, Larry--the result of stupid publishers, who confused editors with production men. They forgot about men like Bob Davis and went looking for everything but judgement. To prove they were geniuses, the idiots--bloated with the power of what money they could hold back from writers out of the distributors' advances--cut word rates to the bone; this saved them perhaps 5% of total cost--less money than an extra 2% sales would amount to--and expected the readers not to notice the changed quality. The innovated countless imitations; whenever some editor made a sports magazine click, they promptly killed the sports market with fifty sports magazines edited by (often literally) office boys. When the bad fiction their budgets produced failed, they decided readers wanted fact instead of fiction. They also cut out the serials, because one magazine did well on complete stories. Result was that the pulps didn't die--they simply moved to pocket-style books where the old pulp novels are still doing nicely, thank you. Finally, the long-eared geniuses went bi-monthly, because they couldn't understand that magazine stands won't keep magazines on display an extra 30 days and never realized that followers forget more in 60 than 30 days. In s-f, the old traditions of the pulps were saved--largely by Street & Smith's example--and the true pulps are still holding their own, steered by men who are at least genuinely interested in what they put out.

As to "Utter Silence", I not only read it carefully and re-read it, but had others read it. I don't dislike Wellen; I don't know him, but have heard only good things about him. As to not knowing why I disliked the story: Larry, you know I spent three years at a job where I had to know precisely and repeatedly why I liked or disliked every kind of story--and I was pretty damned good at that job! I offer the suggestion that I just may have been right about this one. § The story's point, as I got it from you over the phone, was that the hero took a second look instead of throwing things at the frieze in blind emotionalism, thus proving to the unrevealed great race that he was a worthy life-form of self-control

and good will. That's still pretty weak (shades of cavalry rushing over the hill!), but the story would have been better had it been written into it. It wasn't. § Don't confuse leaving steps out with implicit plotting, either. In an implicit plot, nothing is omitted, but simply prepared so deftly in advance that when the point arrives, it needs no explicit statement. Anyhow, only after he's mastered the explicit plot can a writer on rare occasions achieve the rare, wonderful successful implicit story. In most cases, "implicit plot" is the alibi of those who can't plot at all. Writing has no relation to cryptograms--its object is not to confuse but to please directly. § There is an implied contract between writer and reader; the writer contracts to entertain or inform; the reader only contracts to begin the story. The reader does not agree to do any plotting, characterization, etc.--though he may do so, if the writer can win him over by sufficient other rewards of pleasure and lucidity. The responsibility and obligation for the success of a work--like the rewards--are entirely that of the author; the reader isn't even obligated to finish the story, much less do the writer's work. This is often violated by bad writers, who then complain that the readrs are yukhs--though such writers couldn't logically expect to attract any other type of reader! § As to the blurb style: Seems to me a writer who is referred to as having made an impression and gained recognition hardly needs a special double feature to bring him to the readers' attention. Anyhow, if you consider that something is "practically unheard-of" and "a long-standing taboo" when you also admit that it has often been done in other magazines, what can I say that will more clearly demonstrate my point about the somewhat wild language of said blurbs?

CLIFFORD D. SIMAK:

I have read the first issue with careful interest and must admit to considerable disturbance. I was enthusiastic over the idea of such a publication when I first learned of it, for I felt that it might offer a platform where s-f writers might meet, exchange ideas, work out mutual problems and in general make of it something of enduring benefit not only to themselves, but to the field of s-f as well. My enthusiasm still remains, but somewhat modified and a little battered and with some rather strong reservations. § There are some encouraging things in the present issue, but by and large they are overshadowed by the same things which, from a writer's viewpoint, have been objectionable in even the better fan magazines. This reads and smells exactly like a better written fan magazine and that is a far cry from what s-f writers need or want. § I feel that professional writers will not be too impressed with smart-alecky criticisms that tend to viciousness or with the flip, defeatist attitude that unless something is done about it quickly, s-f is going to hell in a hand basket. § While the defeatist outlook and the clever, superficial approach hold true throughout the greater part of the issue, I believe that I would take greatest exception to the magazine reviews.

I am willing to admit that reviews such as these may have their place in the pages of a professional magazine of general readership, but it seems to me we should have something considerably more constructive in a magazine meant to appeal to writers. The reviews, in general, are not reviews at all, but mere fault-finding and at times descend almost to the level of fishwife complaint. § You would doubtless point out to me that the letters which you propose to publish in succeeding issues will give any person who feels himself aggrieved an opportunity to protest and to offer rebuttal. But the point is that the criticism, if responsible, should be helpful and that a writer should not be placed in a position where he feels he must make rebuttal. It

is unfair, and I suspect un-American, to kick a man when he isn't looking, and this is what some of the review techniques amount to. I get the impression, as I read the reviews, that the reviewers believe each story must contain a brand new idea; time after time a man's work is held up to scorn, if not ridicule, simply because he has used an idea which someone else has used before. You have been in this business long enough, Les, to know that there just aren't enough new ideas to go around. In mainstream literature, no story that is written today could escape a similar criticism. S-f, I maintain, has far more idea material than the mainstream, but even so new ideas, even new approaches, are mighty hard to come by. § Time and again, likewise, a story is condemned because it contains no surprise. How many surprises do you find in Proust or Galsworthy, Hemingway and Steinbeck? I am not attempting to place s-f writers on a level with those authors, but simply am trying to make the point that surprise is not universally considered a literary virtue. A case in point is Sharon's "The Lady Was a Tramp". The reviewer complains that the reader was always six jumps ahead of the hero. I think I, as well as your reviewer, spotted the gimmick fairly early in the story, but this did not detract from my enjoyment of it. I thought it was extremely well done and that an unusual (in terms of our present day) human situation was well handled. Perhaps this is because I do not insist that each story must have a new idea or develop surprise, but am old-fashioned enough to be satisfied with a sound literary handling of an old idea in a fresh and human way of writing. § I do not want to spend too much time on specific examples, but I do feel that it is necessary to point out at least one more--Miller's "The Last Canticle". Your reviewer objects to it because he believes that Miller was writing about 1970 and calling it 3781. And that 3781 under such conditions might even so be much like 1970 is not inconceivable. During those centuries in which technology, the great changer, had been in suspension, the Roman Catholic Church had been the dominant power. The Roman Catholic Church does not change except as it is forced to change by outside political and social pressures and whence in Miller's world would come those pressures? So the Catholic Church would stand still, and the dogma, which your reviewer complains about, would still be the mainstay of the Church. And Miller, by God, might not be as wrong as you try to say he is.

Now I am no reviewer, and I make no pretense of knowing anything about writing, never having approached literature in a scientific manner, but I liked Miller's story. That story had some of the best writing in it I have ever seen in a s-f magazine. It got me by the throat and wouldn't let go and at the end of it I had tears in my eyes, but that's because I'm not up on these new ideas about what makes a good story and what doesn't. But it does seem rather peculiar to me that a reviewer can overlook that kind of writing and rip the story to pieces because of personal prejudice, pulling out one hair at a time. It boils down to the fact that the reviewer did not like the story because it was not written the way he would have written it if he had been the man who was writing it. § A further minor point is that even in those cases where a reviewer may praise a story he will end the paragraph or two of favorable mention by pulling out of context some minor point over which quibble can be made, saying in effect: "This man is pretty good, but look it here, what the stupid bastard did." § In case you may suspect that I have written at such great length on the subject of reviews to set up a preliminary defense when some story of mine should happen to come under fire, I should like to say that I shall feel abused if I should in any wise escape the general shin-cracking which seems to be your review policy. I would, as a matter of fact, be considerably embarrassed if through some oversight some-

one were kind to me while taking a hefty wallop at Russell, Anderson, Piper, et al. In other words, I demand similar treatment. It is an honor, as I see it, to be put through the gauntlet with such distinguished company.

The worst of it is that all of the men who wrote those reviews are men whose work I admire. I cannot, for the life of me, understand how they have been able to do such outstanding work if their attitude actually is what it seems to be if one were to judge only by reading what they write about other people's work. § I am forced to the conclusinn that the attitude is no more than a pose and a rather silly one. If so, I wish all of them would take off that cute little black, sophisticated mustache and in the future write reviews which are responsible, non-vicious and perhaps even thoughtful. Honest appraisal would be helpful and appreciated, not only by the authors but by everyone else who may read the Forum.

DEL REY:

To my surprise, this is one of the only two really strong objections voiced at our reviews--though I thought it might well be typical before receiving the letters. If your view is shared by still others, I wish they'd write and let us know. It certainly isn't our intention to arouse the ire of the readers of the Forum, but only to be as honest as we can be. § Cliff, I'm no more sophisticated than you, and I had no desire to be smart-aleck. My reviews were actually somewhat tempered from my first reactions to the stories I read--written to be less rather than more on the clever side. And it was because I felt good work in the field was of much greater importance than the bad that I included the reviews of Venture in spite of a desire to keep the reviews within reasonable space. § I don't condemn work because it is "familiar"--if you'll check back, you will find that both stories to which I applied that label were ones I gave ratings above the average. I do feel, however, that originality or its lack is as important as any other facet of writing. Nor do I demand an element of surprise. Miller's "Vengeance for Nikolai" had absolutely no surprise in it--and there a trick at the end would have ruined it. On the other hand, a twist ending story without surprise is obviously nothing at all. Sharon's story bothered me because the hero seemed to find the situation so surprising that he was made to seem pathetically and naïvely unsuitable for any identification. The story was written as if the reader should be surprised, damn it, along with the hero; the whole tone of it was as if something were being held back. Then when there was no element not already foreseen, the whole thing suffered.

As for un-American, I thought that applied to a denial of the right to kick about what one likes, not the contrary. Nor is criticism "kicking a man when he's not looking"--unless it concerns something he never meant for publication. A story submitted for public scrutiny is automatically posted for public reaction, and any writer who isn't looking is more of an ostrich than a man. If work can't be examined by any buyer, it has no business in the marketplace--whether writing or any other product of work. A mechanic who does a rotten job gets fired--which is not very constructive criticism, but necessary. Why should writers be exempt? We're not sacred or superior to laborers, doctors, lawyers, etc. Not in my book, anyhow. § Really constructive criticism can only be done before a story is in print; afterwards, it's too late for anything but reaction and a statement as to its success and failure. Boosterism won't help it. Anyhow, the only helpful criticism I ever got was in the form of kicks; praise was nice, but didn't help me to learn a single damned thing. Most writers, it

seems, have found the same to be true. § Basically, Cliff, I think our real argument is over whether what is being reviewed is good or not. You feel s-f is good, as I did until a couple years and much reading ago. Now I have to face the unhappy fact that no more than 10% of the stories are ones I want to finish; maybe it's because of the same feeling that the fan magazines have stopped shouting in the Amen corner and begun taking the attitude you seem to resent. Maybe there has been some stylistic progress, but only a minority of the stories published today would have been acceptable fifteen years ago. Editors still want good stories, but they have to use what they get--and even five years ago, I got better submissions to the bottom-pay Rocket Stories than some top-pay markets get now. I might be willing to watch us go to hell in a hand basket--but I start grabbing for the brakes when I see us skidding downhill to Lethe in a garbage truck.

You cite Miller's "The Last Canticle" as a good story, and an example of our false standards in reviewing. I'll agree that it could have been a great story--and that I still liked it, in spite of its faults. Yet I feel that Damon's point was sound. First, there was obviously some outside pressure to force change in that world--else, where did the mysterious enemy dropping Lucifer come into the picture? Second, this wasn't a world that had stood still under the influence of the Church; it had been rebuilt to its pattern, not held rigid. Third, don't swallow the old myth about the static Church; like it or not, the Roman Catholic Church is one of the most flexible, adaptive social organisms that ever existed. It made almost unbelievable changes from 500 to 1000, and it changed radically again before 1500--even without the outside pressure of the Roform. Nor could it ever hold society rigid. The Romanized Goth of 500 was not the serf of 1000, nor yet the freedman of 1500. § But that doesn't bother me as much as the useless and careless internal falsities in the story. When a writer makes his whole point of a story revolve about some particular faith (and as an agnostic, I don't care what faith, but will accept any for a good story), he must be as honest with that as he can be. Any writer must stick to his basic postulates. If he bases his story on modern chemistry and then drags in phlogiston at the end, it's intolerable. If he has fairies at the bottom of his garden in a strictly materialistic story, he needs his head examined, and no reader need respect him. Yet Miller based his story on rigid Catholic dogma--and then violated some of the basic value-judgments of that dogma. § His hero priest seemed to condemn both mother and child on the way to euthanasia, and took no care of the child's soul; for suicide, this was correct, perhaps. But suicide is not the same as the death of a child being killed by its mother and by the government. One is a sin--the other is not. What sort of a priest is unable to tell the difference? § Or take the second head. First, in the past, "attached twins" have been baptised, rather than risk losing a possible soul. But once the second head came to life, we had a new and conscious being capable of the perception of beauty and certainly the possible vessel of a soul. Now even a layman must baptise a new life in jeopardy. But this righteous priest refused to do his duty or even to realize it! I can't consider him a sympathetic character after that. Nor can I accept a story which is grossly false within its own postulates.

It's easy to let the smooth writing of such a story pass as a sign of s-f progress. But no honest reviewer can accept such a lifeless and slipshod handling of the postulated dogma without kicking a bit. Miller can do better, and it would be no kindness to encourage such work as this.

CHARLES L. COTTRELL:

Having read the first issue of the Forum, I was reminded somewhat of the old cartoon we have all seen of the circle of politicians with their hands in each other's pockets. Only I visualized a circle of writers and editors with exposed cerebra and mallets held poised above them. I like it that way. Let's keep frank criticism frank. I was particularly impressed by the way the critics lambasted each other's works. I didn't even mind Blish's criticism of my own recent yarn even though he did view with some contempt the vehicle I used. § "Of Gutless Wonders"...it would be nice, Mr. Pohl, if most of the yarns printed were of first-rate quality. I imagine the sports world would like a legion of four-minute milers, too. Pohl doesn't agree with Campbell's present story (and article, I presume) policy. Too much psi. Maybe so, but the Great Test is the circulation figures. I personally am exceedingly fond of psi stories, that is, good ones. Should someone perhaps start a new magazine called Psionce Fiction dealing totally with psi? § Dept. of Strange Mathematics....Pohl would like to buy poor yarns for one cent, good yarns for two cents, and excellent yarns for three cents. At those figures, how can yau compete with Astounding which pays three and a gambling four? Or three from Galaxy working towards a permanent four? § "Unconscious Symbols"...Sorry, but my reaction to that was "So what?" The remaining contents were enjoyable, especially the reviews. § Del Rey says "Utter Silence" was the worst story he has ever seen in print. I didn't read it. But for that undistinction I'll nominate "The Time Capsule" by Eando Binder in the first issue of Science Fiction +. Read that one and it'll make your worst seem like a classic by comparison.

FREDERIK POHL:

I be damned if I see what is plausible in what Cottrell says about the 4-minute milers. If the point is that it is odd, or impudent, or fanatical of me to want all stories to be as good as possible, I can only say that in that respect I may very well be odd, impudent or fanatical. As a practical man, I don't expect every story to be perfect; and anyway, I don't know what a "perfect" story is. But as an editor I propose to buy what seem to me the best of the stories offered to me, generally speaking; and also, generally speaking, I propose that the better a story is, the more I shall pay for it. As to the question of how, with this system, I hope to compete successfully for material with the established three-cent-and-up markets---well, ask me that question again a year from now. By then I may know whether I have.

JAMES BLISH:

I think the reviews would not leave quite so overwhelming an impression of disliking everything if those of us who review for Forum try to bear in mind that not every slip or oversight on the part of a writer is the result of deliberate malice or dishonesty. I am often guilty of this myself, God knows. When Damon says (apropos of a story of mine) that a writer said to himself, "This is a bad story which I can sell, and I'll make it up to my conscience later," he is accusing the writer of conscious dishonesty--which is not the real problem at all. It is dishonesty of which the writer is unaware which produces 90% of all bad stories. It is up to us to point it out, but not to savage the writer as though he were a criminal for it. § This is part of a larger problem of reviewing: that of knowing the difference between reviewing the author and reviewing the story. In reviewing my piece, Damon assumes that he can read my mind; but he can't. He says I wrote "Get Out of My Sky" in an attempt to push Campbell's cockeyed-solar-system button; this is not true, as he found out afterward. The story was written for a Twayne Triplet,

and the "cockeyed solar system" is an invention of Fletcher Pratt and Willy Ley which I had to follow, those being the terms under which Triplet stories were contracted for. I'm glad Campbell liked it too, but it was not aimed at him. § I think it's entirely within Damon's province to say that the story is bad, and to say why. But let's not be quite so quick to assume that a bad story was intended to be bad; or that because we see that the story is bad, we can read the mind of the author. Perhaps we will get better results --in terms of learning--from the writers we criticise, if we bear in mind that not every failure in execution deserves being snarled at as though it were an act of moral depravity. In fact, I think it might be interesting to see how much critics like Damon and me have left to say once we weed out the self-righteous ill-temper people have learned to expect of us, and sometimes of Lester too.

GROFF CONKLIN:

The magazine reviews are, it seems to me, if anything a bit too kind. There were only two stories in all the issues reviewed which I rated higher than your critics--Budrys' "The War Is Over", which (despite the golem aspect --really, gents, never forget there is NOTHING really new under the sun!) struck me as an overwhelmingly impressive job; and Anderson's "The Light". I agreed with Algis on that story on first reading--but I couldn't forget it. So I went back and reread it a couple of times, and found that it stood up better and better and better. So what if the punch line did appear in Planet Comics? Unlike Nourse's incredible little nausea-maker "Prime Difference" in the June Galaxy, where the author takes Bradbury's "Marionettes, Inc.," and crudely downgrades a slim but pointed idea into vulgar, cheap farce, Anderson has picked up another slim but pointed idea and, I think, made an unforgettable thing out of it. § But--enough on the minutiae. I wanted to write primarily to urge that Pohl's theme be continuously plugged and promoted in all future issues of Forum. In particular, I want to reemphasize his point (which is made pretty strongly in the reviews, too) that I would much rather read an awkward, or even a bad, story that has guts and punch, than an endless stream of almost-identical tales tailored for the non-science-fiction, flip, empty-headed, formula-minded audience. This is why, even though I quite violently disliked Miller's "The Last Canticle" (even more so than Damon did), I can bear reading it--because it's toughly trying hard for something. I feel that if Miller really sat down to that story and re-did it with the kind of care that went into the first item in the series, he could work out a very important story--mainly by throwing away a good part of the strictly formula ideas that it contains. I think he simply got tired of the series and wanted to wrap it up as fast as he could.

KATHERINE MACLEAN:

I remember the Blish story "Common Time" with deep pleasure. At the time of reading it, I thought it probably symbolic because of a kick from an unspecified source. I did not get any sex-kick type of feeling. Got a feeling of being instructed, of pilgrimage to the source of wisdom within, the clear vision that answers all questions which, however, must be carried back in a mirror which cannot pass the narrowing successive doors of reentrance to the usual self. The mirror is splintered as you try to jam it through and one winds up, on returning to consciousness, holding a fragment of mirror reflecting only some simple observable piece of reality, an obvious small verity, not the vision of vast scope and compass, the overall pattern one saw and captured at the distant source of vision. § Thus the mood of the mystic experience, the search for knowledge on the levels within; in yoga training, passing one barrier of internal silence after another, seeking always a deeper

level of deeper silence in the country of the mind. The man in the story seemed to be dropping down through doors of unconsciousness, into lower sub-levels of awareness and mental activity. § It is unfortunate that the discussion of symbolism in s-f should start with Freudian symbolism. It might be just a coincidence, but it gives rise to an uneasy suspicion that Damon thinks all symbols must be Freudian. Seeking Freudian symbols in plots must of necessity be a dull search, for you know what you are going to find before you start. And among s-f writers, seeking sex symbols in the stories might be a sterile search, since the development of a complex subconscious symbology on a subject implies that conscious thinking is shirking the problem. I've rarely noticed s-f writers shirk discussion of sex. § The Blish story is somewhat dim as a memory, but has been given back some immediacy by Damon's discussion. I always automatically classify stories by content. This story I filed mentally under Class-of-Statement: MYSTIC; Area-of-Event-Experience: DREAM--Falling Asleep and Awakening. I filed it by my own feeling tone as affected by the story. So far as I know, that is the best way to recognize the content of any art form, to see what it got across to oneself; analysis can come later; when you ask why, it's usually easy to find the concealed symbolism which produced the reaction. § So I say again: Sleep and the wisdom available to the sleep self in the depths of calm, when the narrowing tensions go. Now, my reactions might have flubbed here; it might be that there is a distinct sex-experience impression in the story, to be received by anyone receptive. It might be that I was walled off from it, or not tuned to that wavelength due to the fact that it would be male sex experience, and I'm female.

On dipping into Forum again, I find that I disagree totally with Damon's review of Miller's "The Last Canticle". It is an implicit, not an explicit, story, piling up incredible detail which all points in one direction, toward some sort of a statement that I felt rather than saw, but which no character in the story was aware of. I don't know what the two-headed girl means. I don't even know what she meant to the priest. Maybe people-are-nicer-when-strictly-instinctual-and-innocent-of-thought. That interpretation fits with my theory that the story says the human race in progress is--roughly in Odd John's phrase--"like an ant trying to climb out of a very slippery bowl. The going gets harder as the bug nears the edge, for the slope increases and eventually he slips and slides back to the bottom. He'll never climb all the way and get out. He's happier at the bottom." I feel that I'm totally missing a complete set of religious meanings, perhaps thru lack of acquaintance with the Catholic symbology. There is a possibility that Walt might be astonished that I read this instinctual-limitation-of-humans into the story. § In fact, I'd like to hear from Miller on this. Inside magazine, edited by Ron Smith, makes itself fascinating by passing around comments on people to the people commented on, before publication, so that they can reply in the same issue, and then counter-reply, so that the debate bounces back and forth page on page. I have a bad memory and so hate to read someone's clever riposte to some statement in a previous issue. Let's submit articles to the people mentioned, for remarks, interlineations, or extended reply.

KNIGHT:

Katie, I didn't get any sex-kick type feelings out of "Common Time", either. Like you, I got a sort of mystical-apperception thing, very hard to describe: this was what made me interested in digging into the story, and when I dug, the intercourse-and-death puns were what I found. So far, as I can see, there's nothing overtly sexual in the story at all, and so it's not surprising to me that you didn't find anything of the kind: you

didn't dig. § Believe it or not, I was never hunting for Freudian symbols. At the time of the conference, I was still convinced that these symbol patterns could be identified with Jung's archetypes, and if I was looking for anything, it was that: you may remember that I said flatly, "These symbols are not Freudian." I am no Freudian myself, I find Freud's personality and writing style repugnant, and I dislike all the crude attempts I've seen to use his system as motivation in stories. I think I can honestly plead not guilty of reading Freudian symbols into anything. I looked to see what was there: I found what I found. § Incidentally, I took Miller's two-headed woman to be a symbol of grace--a soul given to the product of man's obstinate sinfulness.

DEL REY:

We considered sending everything to the man under discussion for his comments. But it won't work, I'm afraid. As it is, we seem to have trouble reaching our deadlines in any state of readiness. Knowing most writers and knowing ourselves, somehow this would really louse things up. § On Miller, we did try--or Damon tried--to get his response to all this. The answer from him was: "I have not seen the magazine or the review you mentioned. It was very good of you to invite me to reply to your review, but I do not feel that LAST CANTICLE or the trilogy as a whole needs any defense." I'd be interested in his reaction, too, but... § It's not the responsibility of the reader, incidentally, to bring to a story full familiarity with the background; it's up to the author to supply it, unless it is common knowledge--whic, of course, Catholic theology is not really. Hence, I can't agree that the fault is yours, Katherine, if you missed any of the meaning. § By the way, on the symbol business, I notice Damon is unconsciously living up to his death-and-intercourse (or sex) belief; he seems fond of "dig"--well rooted in 16th Century English as symbolizing death--and in "dug"--which is an old word for teat.

ISAAC ASIMOV:

After reading the Forum, I thought very seriously for days and have come up with what I think is an excellent idea. Sooner or later, you are bound to decide to run an article entitled "Isaac Asimov: an Appreciation", or "Isaac Asimov, the Greatest", or something like that. Well, just to play it really safe, how about I should write it. It's not that I don't trust you guys, you understand----

DEL REY:

I agree that no one could bring to the writing of "The Naked Asimov" greater love, empathy, or appreciation than you can. However, for your own good, I'm afraid we must decline. After your experience with "Second Foundation" (even with my helpful suggestions), I'd hate to saddle you with another story where the final ending might be in any doubt. Now if you could positively show that the end of "I, Asimov" was definite, fixed and known.....

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, Territory of Hawaii:

In the past months, many large-circulation magazines have published both fiction and non-fiction which used the following clichés:

...he treated me as if I had leprosy...the man is a moral leper--stay away from him...they avoided me as if I were a leper...loathsome as a leper...

These phrases--with countless variations--are written without any intent to harm. However, they are a disastrous blow to the morale of patients with Hansen's disease (formerly called leprosy). They also reinforce public prejudice against those who have had Hansen's disease and are now non-infectious.

Occasional novels or short stories with plots based on inaccurate, sensational concepts of the disease also keep alive the stigma still directed at present or former patients. § I am asking your aid in eliminating such writing. These are my reasons for making this request:

Hansen's disease can now be treated successfully with sulfone drugs. Patients, diagnosed and treated promptly, can be restored to health and are non-infectious by the time they leave a treatment center. All too often they meet such ostracism that they cannot get a job or gain community acceptance. This happens to patients discharged from Kalaupapa in Hawaii and from Carville on the mainland. § One type of Hansen's disease is not even infectious; yet the patient is shunned as if he were a source of contagion. § The stigma attached to the disease has existed for centuries. Publication of phrases which link the disease to horror, fear and ostracism helps keep this stigma alive. Efforts to educate the public are hampered each time a simile such as I have quoted is published. § Authors have a real opportunity to help simply by avoiding destructive comparisons and by writing of Hansen's disease as it now is--an illness which can be treated. § The coöperation of writers, editors and literary agents is needed. If you can relay this message to others, I shall be deeply grateful. (Signed)-- Ira D. Hirsch, M. D.

(The above letter was kindly forwarded to the Forum by Hans Santesson, editor of Fantastic Universe.)

KNIGHT:

Science fiction writers could go a little farther, it seems to me. How about a leper hero, somebody?

DEL REY:

Or perhaps even better, the casual use of a man with Hansen's disease among others in a group, with acceptance taken for granted. As in race prejudice, sometimes the fight against false belief can best be made by acting as if it didn't exist. § Also, how many other clichés are being used which are useless, but which do actual harm to some group?

ROBERT BLOCH:

I think you've done a good job for the s-f critic, the s-f editor and publisher, and those writers of s-f who play part-time roles as critics, editors, or publishers. But what about that forgotten man--the s-f reader? § An analysis of writers, of stories, of editors, of magazines, is all very interesting and commendable. It may help to show us what's wrong. And yet, critical opinions and differences aside, I'm sure we will all agree that one thing is most self-evidently wrong with s-f--it just doesn't attract enough readers! § Can it be that we have spent so much time and effort in analyzing and criticizing ourselves that we've totally neglected to take a look at our audience? Can it be that we're coming to know everything about stories and plots on the symbolic and subliminal level except the one thing which is most important--what do most people want to read? If so, then what Forum needs is more articles along the lines of Lester del Rey's discussion of the "chase". § I happen to believe that an analysis of mechanism is more useful than an analysis of masterpieces; that consideration of s-f as entertainment is preferable to examination of aesthetics. I think we are all in agreement that writers, editors, and readers want better stories. But I also believe that in the Forum and elsewhere, we place entirely too much emphasis on what writers and editors consider to be "better"--and dismiss the reader's reaction almost entirely. I am firmly convinced that the majority of people read for entertainment--and that unless the s-f field is willing to analyze, and

recognize, what constitutes entertainment, we will all find ourselves behind the eightball or back at the ranch, doing westerns. § There are certain fundamental ingredients which make for entertainment in all media. A discussion of these ingredients is of practical value. For example, I'd like to see something said about characterization; an element I feel is most particularly lacking in s-f--including a goodly share of the so-called masterpieces. I'd like to see a frank approach to that most-despised mechanism, the "gimmick" or "twist"--which many writers, most editors, and virtually all critics profess to scorn--but which continues to interest and attract the bulk of the audience in every other field. In fact, I'd like to see a discussion of everything which does interest the general audience, from the standpoint of just how these elements can be integrated into s-f. § Som professionals may be satisfied with "snob appeal", but there just aren't enough subscriptions at MIT or Oak Ridge to make for continual growth. At the other extreme, certain elements may frankly pander to the comic-book trade, but the adolescent audience is not loyal enough to support our field with continuing readership. Yet, by and large, we continue to direct our efforts--as writers, editors or publishers--to one or the other of these limited groups. § So far we have not considered s-f from the standpoint of its potential appeal to the 90% of the readers who fall between these two categories. It's about time we oriented our thinking, our criticism, and our consideration of techniques, to an examination of the psychology and reactions of the general reader and forget our in-group preoccupation with chasing and swallowing our own tails. § What we need, I think, is more material on how to write, and what to write to please that general reader...rather than the extremist specimens we have heretofore catered to, with such a self-evident lack of critical and/or financial reward. In fact, if I were to boil all this rambling down to just one sentence, it would be this: the future of all of us--writer, editor and publisher alike--depends on just how well we can come to understand and satisfy the wants of the general reader.

If we are too smug, too complacent, too set in our personal opinions, too anxious to protect our own egos, too superior, or just too damned pre-occupied with our specialized interests to go about this effort, then we may well continue in our present pattern; we may find it amusing and interesting. But we will have no right to call ourselves professionals in the true meaning of the term; we will be dilettantes at best. It may be that, once we undertake an analysis of the psychology of the general reader, we'll find it impractical or impossible to interest him in s-f. If so, at least we'll have the satisfaction of knowing we made the attempt. I think it's worth the effort.

DEL REY:

Bob, I'd like to see such an analysis--but even the limited reader research done by Popular Publications several years ago--which showed that pulp readers apparently have an average higher level of schooling than the general reader, as I remember--would be too much for us to try. And I don't know how it could be done at our present level of market research theory; on the commercial level, that hasn't been good enough to predict television audience reaction, even. § I'll agree that what we need is to learn to entertain--otherwise we won't be doing westerns, by golly! But I don't think that eliminates consideration of the artistic or esthetic angles. What we have is the need to master the art and the techniques of being entertaining. And because of that, I find myself in strong agreement with you--and with the men discussing the art of writing.

JANE ROBERTS:

I thought "Of Gutless Wonders" the best thing in the magazine; and have

always thought that you have to be a writer first and a s-f writer second. The only other thing I'd like to mention is Lester del Rey's "Pillar to Post". I agreed with him whole hog until the very last. But his "If you want to write quality fiction, I don't think you or I or any other writer in this field can succeed often, at our present stage of skill and understanding" was a shameful commentary on the self-respect or lack of it, of writers in the field. Most of the writers have been working at their craft for at least ten years, and many for a longer time--it seems to me that you should expect to do quality work by now; and that beginners should strive toward the same with even greater vigor.

DEL REY:

I think you misunderstood me, due to my taking the expression quality fiction too much for granted. Actually, the phrase refers to a type of fiction, just as slick fiction does. It does not refer to high quality or low quality. Certainly I think many writers in s-f can do high-quality writing. But I still doubt that many can ever learn to succeed often in the quality field. For that matter, most of the "quality" writers don't succeed often. (I'm not referring to the little pretentious "avant garde" magazines with their deliberately tortuous style, their intense monolineal characterization, and their constant playing with the same adolescent themes. Nor to the New Yorker type of clever cynicism and self-conscious superiority.) Real quality fiction is rare now--apparently very few men can write it at all. Harper's runs some. Fundamentally, it requires a story that has depth and significance beyond anything you can put your finger on; it depends on the writer's ability to say far more than his words can say, and to say it with meaning and passion. Nobody can tell you how to do it. In my own book, it's a pulp story grown up to maturity. It has the universal, almost timeless quality of the pulps, but it has a truth, a vital validity, and an ability to become a better story to you the longer you live, even if you only read it once--or it improves on the hundredth reading. I can give you formulae for slicks, and I won't deny that most of us could sell the slicks once in a while, if we really worked at it. I still say most of us can't succeed often with a quality attempt. When you can convey as much with once sentence as the Bible conveys with "Jesus wept", or build a character to equal King Lear, or base a plot as deep in a man's soul as Lord Jim, I'll not only admit you can write quality fiction, but I'll gladly make a pilgrimage to bow before you. Me, I can't do it. I haven't got the guts to spend the years of slavery to my "art" I'd need with my limited talents, and I haven't got the drive to try. I don't think many people who are writing in our field have. I respect the quality of their work in many cases. I consider that in some ways s-f writers are writing higher quality fiction than can be found in other fields. But if you want to convince me I'm wrong, you'll have to find even one example of a s-f man who really wrote a quality story. (Not Bradbury's work in Mademoiselle, please! That was really damned nice work of its type, but it wasn't "quality" work.) And I don't think it any service to writers to try kidding them that I secretly or openly consider them all-time geniuses. If they were, the Forum would be a waste of time, and I wouldn't be able to sell anything of the type I can write.

H. KEN BULMER:

Del Rey's comment on Infinity and my story in particular prompts me to offer a word or two. Anyway, Forum does give this opportunity of a writer giving his angle on why he did what in a story and thus bring up further crits

from the reviewers, which you wouldn't dream of doing in the general press. Del Rey says I insult the reader. This is a serious charge and I must say that the story as originally written had the hero telling the fellow what to do and to put up a double at the point in the story where it logically fitted. Larry figured that it would "keep up the suspense" if it was concealed until the end, although he acknowledged that it "cheated the reader a little bit." As he was the editor and I have a great respect for his editorial capacity, I okayed this, but said: "I have a thing about this concealing of vital facts.", and went on to say that although well-known writers did it all the time and made it good, I thought that the reader identified himself with the protagonist and therefor that if the protag did anything, the reader ought to know. One does read good stuff where vital info is kept back, even though I don't feel it is strictly fair, but I do accept responsibility for doing it this time as I okayed Larry's alterations. § You can draw symbols of anything at all into any writing at all, within reason, if you try hard enough. Some of the experiments with mescalin have brought to light fascinating unconscious desires--as for instance that we all have a Chinese landscape in our unconscious--and that your forest examples would fit into that as well as the explanation you give. Your axiom assumptions embedded--they strike me as being akin to the philosophy of Sartre, which is due for some reappraisal.

DEL REY:

I was surprised in reading the story that anyone who could write as well as you did would make such a slip in a first-person story, Ken, and I feel relieved to know that you had avoided it originally. Darned shame a reviewer can't know the story behind the story. § Of course, a suspense story sometimes conceals material from the reader; but it's rarely successful if the reader is closely following a character who knows the material--and even worse in first person, because the cheating then is so obvious. Generally, I feel that any story which depends on such concealment from the reader for suspense is depending on strictly false plotting and must backfire in its effect. It's like revealing at the end that the hero was never in danger, but just lying to keep things going. (Like having a hero go through a terrific battle and then revealing he was wearing an invulnerable force shield, to use an extreme example.) § I can certainly sympathize with your going along with an editor on such a thing, however--it's always hard to be sure that he isn't right, after all, when you respect his judgment and realize how hard it is to be objective about one's own work.

E. J. CARNELL:

The first issue of the Forum is most interesting and in parts highly controversial, and I feel quite sure that as subsequent issues are published it will play an expanding part in integrating publishers and authors in what must ultimately be of great mutual interest. § I do not propose at this early stage to stick in my "foreign" oar, as the Forum must of necessity be based mainly upon the American publishing field, but while foreign markets never will play a primary part in the bread-and-butter lives of American authors, such foreign subsidiary markets must of necessity be considered for additional sales. In this respect, I have no doubt that I shall from time to time throw a small hand-grenade your way, and may even in time be considered an honourable but distant ally. § In any case even though I may only contribute in some small measure to the expanding success of your publication, the price of the first year's subscription is already repaid in the copy of number 1.

DEL REY:

You've been an honored and not-too-distant ally of ours for years, Ted. And how about reporting on the foreign markets for us? I don't think most of the American writers realize that payments for such sales are as good as they are--perhaps not huge by our standards here, but a lot more than I once thought, at least. Also, since there's such a small market for straight fantasy here, it seems every additional market should be most carefully considered. I'd like to see some good information on your rate of payment, specific needs, etc.

A. J. BUDRYS:

I see in my review of Galaxy, on page 20 of the Forum, in paragraph 5 you have me saying: "I am thoroughly convinced that what some critics have called a smart-alecky streak in Pohl or Pohl/Kornbluth is a more or less deliberate attempt to be innocuous."

That's all right as far as it goes, but I think we dropped a phrase somewhere in the process of reproducing the issue. What my original typewritten copy says I said is: "I am thoroughly convinced that what some critics have called a smart-alecky streak in Pohl or Pohl/Kornbluth is a more or less deliberate attempt to get something actually said or done within a framework designed to be innocuous." That, I think, is a horse of a slightly different feather, and, since I have in the past lacked the wit to make or publish this observation on my own hook, I wish you would now do it for me.

DEL REY:

Since I cut the stencils, I'll take the blame. You know my sight is fuzzy at best, and I guess I skipped a whole line, without catching it because it seemed to make sense. I don't believe in changing another man's words in anything as important as his personal opinion--which reviews must be. § This issue, to the best of my ability, contains every word of the copy you turned in for reviews--with, however, some running together of paragraphs, since review space was already spilling over, and since your copy did run a bit longer than we expected. But that shouldn't distort your meaning, at least. Okay?

ROBERT M. GUINN:

I have received a letter from a blind fan. He states that he has read everything that is in the Library of Congress and there have been no new books put out in the Science Fiction field in Braille. I was wondering if you have any information on Science Fiction Books done in Braille so I can forward the same to him and spread the information to others so afflicted.

I read your Volume I Number 1 and at certain points my hair would have curled, if I had any. However, I think it is a wonderful step forward in the Science Fiction field and hope that this might be the first step towards an association that will seminate information to the non-science fiction readers and let them know that science fiction is more than Buck Rogers.

DEL REY:

Perhaps Damon and I work on the idea that "whom the clods love best they most chastise." Frankly, Bob, sometimes my own hair curls a little at seeing how things come out in cold print.

On the Braille books, everyone who should know tells me the Library has everything. If anyone knows of any other source, I hope they'll send the dope to you at Galaxy. § I wonder if some of the boys with tape recorders couldn't volunteer to work up a pool to put s-f on tape for the fans who can't get it otherwise--such as current magazines. Any ideas?