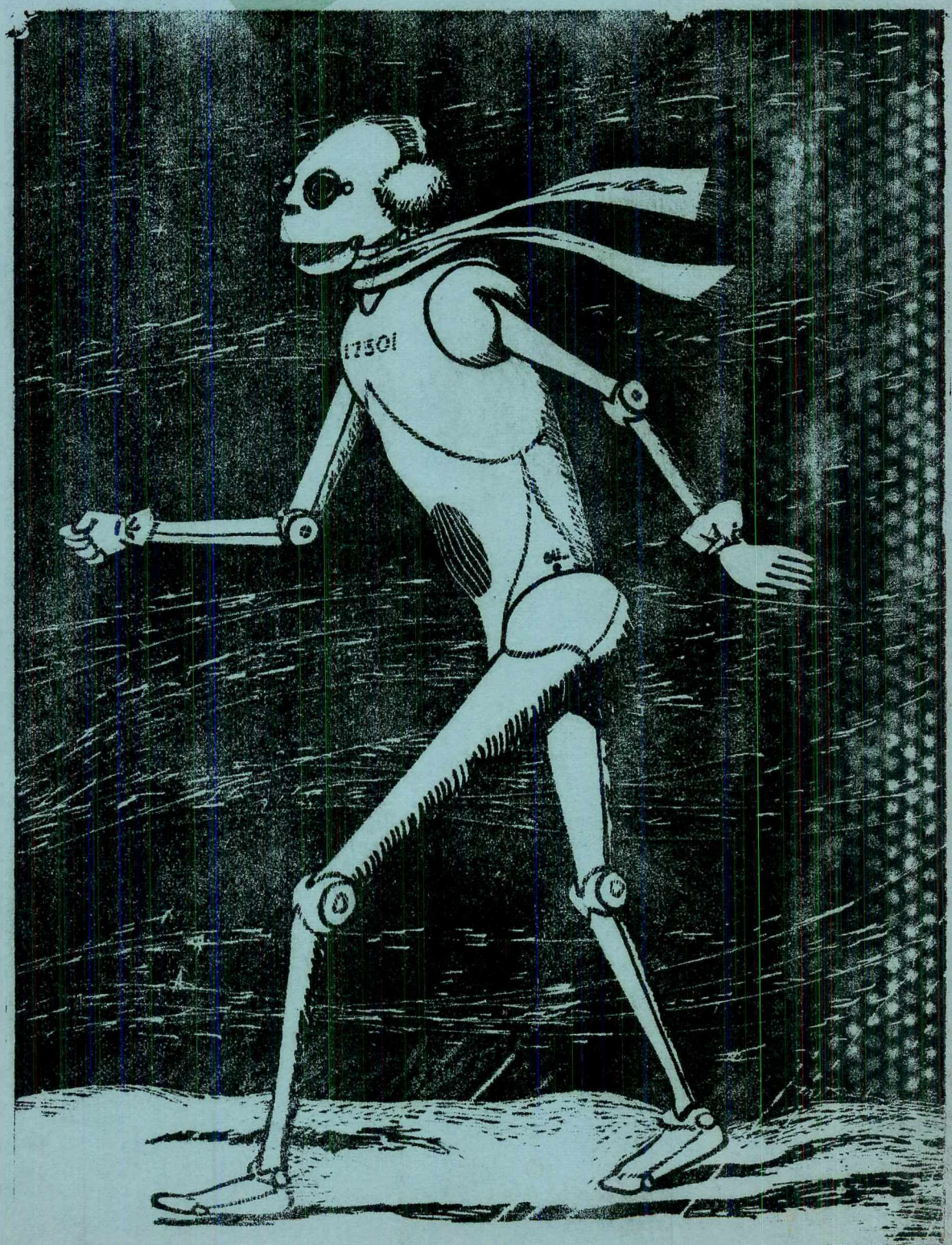
SKYHOOK

NUMBER 23 WINTER 1954-5

SEVENTH ANN-ISH



combined with Chronoscope

The individualist quarterly of science fiction
Edited and published for the Fantasy Amateur Press association by Redd Boggs, 2215 Benjamin street N. E., Minneapolis 18, Minnesota. This is the seventh anniversary issue, number 23, intended for the seventieth FAPA mailing (winter 1954-5), and is available for general circulation at 20¢ per copy. Subscriptions are offered at six issues for $1. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor; however, all unsigned material is editorially written and reflects the viewpoint and opinions of the editor 1955. A Gafia Press publication

TWIPPLEDOP

In the darkness with a great bundle of grief
the people march.
In the night, and overhead a shovel of stars
for keeps, the people march:
'Where to? what next?'

-- Carl Sandburg.

WE ARE SEVEN

As Skyhook rounds out its seventh year of existence, the editor extends greeting and thanks to everybody who has contributed so generously of material, money, and egoboo to keep this magazine going for so many years. You are a wonderful bunch of people.

Skyhook has not been without influence and even imitators during its life, but it has never been a great wellspring such as were or are Quandry and Hyphen -- to name obvious examples. I do not believe it ever will be; it operates in a limited sphere, made narrower by the fact that I call it, and consider it, a fanzine, and not a "semi-pro sf magazine" or the like.

I know perfectly well that nobody reads Skyhook with one-tenth the pleasure I derive from perusing it, but this is a realization any honest fan editor reaches eventually.

Sometimes I am convinced that nobody actually reads Skhk at all. A subsequent application of egoboo usually soothes away that notion in time, but even if the sad conviction persisted, I think I would continue to publish Skyhook for myself alone.

I had written an involved explanation for that statement, but recently I ran across a passage in a novel that summed it up better than I could. It is from Henry James' The Ambassadors, and is spoken by the hero, Strether, who, back in Massachusetts, is editor of the Review -- a little magazine with his name on the cover.

He put his name on the cover for himself alone. "It seems to rescue, a little, you see, from the wreck of hopes and ambitions, the refuse-heap of disappointments and failures, my one presentable little scrap of an identity."

And that's why I publish Skyhook.

EUTOPIA

My grandfather accompanied me downtown one day when the world was young. He went off to buy a pint of mineral water while I walked into the town library

to borrow a book. When we met again, on the city hall steps, he stared curiously at the title of the book under my arm.

"Well," he remarked, "so you're going to read Ounce-ma of Ounce."

I always figured that he (requiescat in pace) was kidding me.

I read all the Oz histories by L. Frank Baum in my childhood, but I lost contact with that magic world a couple of years after the above incident, when I read the last Baum book in the library.

In his recent article about Oz and L. Frank Baum in F&SF, Martin Gardner had a kind word or two to say about Baum's successor as Royal Historian, Ruth Plumly Thompson. I remember some amusing things in her "Oz" books -- I think the Backwordsmen were her invention -- but not even Ray Bradbury could convince me that she was writing about Oz.

I read The Royal Book of Oz, which she had finished after Baum's death, and with unbelieving grimness even tried one or two she wrote entirely on her own. My heart turned cold; I grew deathly ill and was saved for this world (I'll always be an invalid) only through the timely dosage of Buck Rogers in the funnies.

Some of my little nieces and nephews are learning to read or will be pretty soon. I am thinking of buying the Baum books for them as a subterfuge for rereading the books myself. But I don't quite dare. Once you fly back across the Deadly Desert, no tornado (Baum said "cyclone," but I won't take his word for it, which only goes to show you) can take you back again.

And even if it could, I'm afraid the magic of Oz is mainly for children, Ray Bradbury, and other Peter Pans who never grow up. I wish I could find out for sure without risking my fond recollections of the wonderful land of Oz.

FICTION FANTASY

So tell it on the mountain: Walter A. Willis, prominent Belfast watergun marksman, is to edit Ireland's first sf prozine, reports damon knight. The title of course is Gaelaxy.

"Heard about Arthur C. Clarke's newest novel?" asks Arthur H. Rapp. "It's to be the saga of how the British navy wins the race to get the first artificial satellite into an orbit around Earth, and will be titled The Wights in the Sky Are Tars."

Art also reports that a monograph by Doc Winter, "The Inhibitory Influences of Personal Dilemmas in Introverts," will be printed in a popular digest magazine under the title "The Plights in the Shy Are Bars."

Philip Jose Farmer is putting the finishing touches on a short story about a perfume smuggler who carries his contraband in his shoes but is caught when they spring a leak. The title is "The Heels of Whiff."

Bob Stewart of Texas is peddling a fine example of modern mythology in which satyrs from ancient Greece are hired by an American movie theater. He calls it, "They Follow the Hooves of Ushers."

From Japan Richard Ehey sends word of a local archaelogist who has found evidence that Earth once had two moons, one a Pellucidarean hollow world in which evolution proceeded at a higher rate than on Earth. Several decamillenia ago the hollow moon fell back on Earth, landing in the ocean, and sinking slowly enough for a thriving civilization to rise on it before it subsided entirely. The theory is that within the hollow moon evolution had developed men of the modern type who migrated to the continents and wiped out Neanderthalers and other protohumans. The whole theory is set forth in a forthcoming volume, The Men in the First Moon.

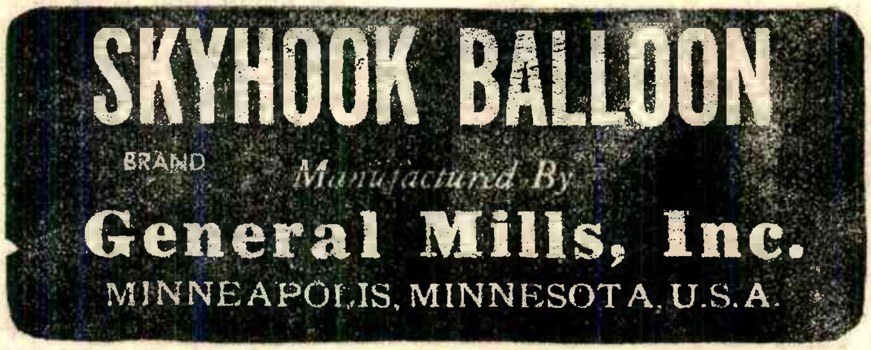
Finally, a note from Dean Grennell reveals that the next item in the gay Padgettry of Henry Kuttner will be a historical novel dealing with gold rush days in the far north. The Kuttners have just returned from an extensive trip to gather material for the book, the tentative title of which is A Nome There Was.

MY GOD, PERHAPS I AM!

It's tough not to be feebleminded.

It would be all right, though not daisy-doozy, to be just a big, simple young man, but I am cursed. Sometimes I read books.

I read John Steinbeck's The Pastures of Heaven the other day, and despite the



NAMESAKES. Reproduced above is the label from one of those balloons which bear the name Skyhook into the stratosphere. Meantime a "skyhook" has made its appearance in fiction perhaps for the first time. In Marion Z. Bradley's "The Climbing Wave" (F&SF, February 1955), the skyhook is "the free-swinging, nest-like lounge cradle" in which space crew members strap themselves during periods of free fall.

::

fact that this should please Mr Steinbeck I am not at all sure that it will. Those characters in his book who read books came to no good end.

There be three bookworms in The Pastures of Heaven: Junius Maltby, he of the consumptive chest and the taste for Robert Louis Stevenson; and Richard Whiteside and John, his son, who read Virgil, Herodotus, Thucydides.

Junius, his nose buried in Travels With A Donkey, is a lazy, incompetent farmer. When his children were stricken with influenza, "he wandered vaguely from one to the other of the dying children, and talked nonsense to them.... One life went out while he read aloud the second chapter of Treasure Island, and he didn't even know it had happened until he finished the chapter and looked up. During those days he was bewildered. He brought out the only things he had and offered them, but they had not potency with death."

One might say that a grown man who goes about reading Robert Louis Stevenson deserves anything he gets. But John Whiteside quotes from Thucydides at the school board meeting, and he turns out to be an ineffectual parent, who cannot even accomplish what he desires most: keeping his son on the family land.

For both Junius and John Whiteside, book learning and book talk are a special way toward happiness, and it seems that as long as books and book learning are impractical and innocent, they may be a feeble comfort to silly persons.

John Whiteside's downfall comes because he tries to derive a practical purpose from his books. His father tells him that "all history" is in the classics and that "you may judge the future by these books . . . for nothing can happen which has not happened and been recorded in these books." But in the end the books perish in the fire that signifies the end of Whiteside's dreams.

Both Junius and Whiteside have sons who need no books to be happy. Robbie Maltby is so unspoiled by his father's book learning that his worldly innocence keeps him unaware that he is ragged and poor. Bill Whiteside as a boy "lost interest in the second paragraph" when his father read to him, and he grows up to be a canny trader and a practical mechanic. In his own way he is "harder and brighter" than his father.

Steinbeck is very fond of the "big, simple young man" he depicts in Robbie Maltby and Bill Whiteside, but he admires the feebleminded even more. There are three feebleminded characters in The Pas-

tures of Heaven: Hilda Van Deventer, who may be disregarded here; the beautiful but moronic Alice Wicks; and the powerful foundling Tularecito.

Alice Wicks accomplishes what no one else can do: she comforts her father as his world collapses. Speaking not from intelligence but from some elemental compassion, she becomes this once "a goddess, a singer of destiny."

Simpleminded Tularecito has "planting hands, tender fingers that never injured a young plant nor bruised the surfaces of a grafting limb."

It is obvious from this novel that in the long run only those people are happy whose simple souls desire no intellectual food. Mindlessly they gravitate toward the great throbbing breast of nature herself and she nurtures them.

Books are a good only to the man who swallows them with the understanding that they are a happy nonsense.

The Pastures of Heaven is a book.

THE REVENGING CHANCE

A girl I know tells me her attractive widowed mother suffered a bittersweet experience just before Christmas.

A handsome Latin came to town, courted the mother, and proposed. Not having reached her declining years, the mother said yes, and bestowed $3000 on him as a loan.

The Latin blew town with the money.

The girl arrived home one evening to find her mother with blood in her eye and a B-4 bag in her hand. She was going after that man, she vowed.

"But, mother, you don't even know where he came from," objected the girl. "He talked like a foreigner, and he's probably skipped the country by now."

"Oh no he hasn't. I'll find him," the mother insisted. "He mentioned once where he came from, and I'm on my way. He told me he came from Buenos, Ariz."

HEE HAWS AND HOO HAWS

One of the perpetrators has informed me that a crude and illegible singlesheet circulated in the summer mailing, The Fan Speaks, was intended as a satire on crude and illegible fanzines everywhere.

I am surprised that anybody would go to the trouble of intentionally publishing a crude and illegible sheet. I am astounded that anybody would believe that publishing a crude and illegible sheet constitutes a satire on such things.

These fans have fallen victim of the same bland belief that trapped the writers of the so-called "not - poetry," quaintly popular in SAPS recently. They actually suppose that by doing on purpose what others have done by accident makes a screamingly funny satire on the whole species. Where did they get that idea?

Anybody who has ever tried it knows that it is perfectly easy to write bad poetry, and it is almost as easy to publish a worthless fanzine. Just about anybody can do it, and most everybody does. Absolutely no talent is required.

The real trick of the burlesque is, I think, to turn out, not a bad fanzine or a bad poem by intention, but a strikingly good one, in which the faults of many fanzines or most poetry are cleverly and subtly pointed up.

The satirist should thus indicate that he is a skilled craftsman in the field he presumes to poke fun at. The fool who brays at an art he does not understand may have the right to laugh, but he should not expect us to join him.

In the case of our fanzine satirists and not-poets, they should first prove to us that they can turn out good straightly meant examples of fanzines or poetry. For unless they show us that they can do so, how are we to know that their botches were intentional?

WHO STOLE DERLETH'S APPENDIX?

Having noticed that the SF Book club edition of Portals of Tomorrow contained no appendix listing the "New Fantastic Stories Published in American Magazines in 1953," I asked the SF Book club people how come.

In a letter dated 21 January 1955 and signed by Sherman Foster, membership secretary, the SF Book club people stated that "All of our books are published in the book club edition and are complete and unabridged in every way."

That's what the man said.

With such an unequivocal statement

before me, I wonder if I only dreamed that Portals of Tomorrow had an appendix, or if I was mistaken in thinking that the SF book club edition did not have one.

THE CONDENSED MOSKOWITZ

Sam Moskowitz' letter in this issue (page 29) is excerpted from a seven-page manuscript written in reply to damon knight's review of The Editor's Choice in Science Fiction last issue.

I intended to publish the whole manuscript as an article; however, Fantasy Times has already printed substantially the same manuscript as a letter to the editor in issue #213. Since the whole story has thus already been told, I see no reason for rehearsing it here in full.

In fairness to Sam, however, and for the benefit of those who do not read Fantasy Times, I'll summarize here the various points he made. If he feels himself ill-used, I will print his remarks next issue. In his manuscript Sam said:

(1) The Editor's Choice in Science Fiction was to have been edited by Don A. Wollheim; Sam was called in when DAW and McBride publishers disagreed.

(2) "On purely ethical grounds" Sam and McBride decided not to use any of the selections given to Wollheim, except for the one from Science Fiction Plus.

(3) When magazine editors and Sam and the McBride editors couldn't agree on a selection, no selection was made. In the case of Galaxy and F&SF, no selection was made because every good story had already been anthologized and nothing worth reprinting was available.

(4) In no case did the anthology include a story which the magazine editor did not approve.

THIS CORNER OF THE UNIVERSE

John Berryman, one of the best of young American poets, is teaching at the University of Minnesota. Dare I ask him if he's the sf writer, author of "Berom"?

And did Lester del Rey ever confess to being Erik van Lhin? There is an e-t by the name of Lhin in del Rey's "Wings of Night," first published in 1942, and collected in And Some Were Human (1948).

Steve Frazee, part time science fiction writer, has succeeded Noel Loomis, part time science fiction writer, as 1955 president of the Western Writers of America. Frazee wrote The Sky Block....

A review of the recent film "Robinson Crusoe" in Variety called it "Defoe's science fiction novel"!....

Anyone holding WO3W short-snorter quotecards which have become filled would be doing us a favor if they'd send them to Bob Silverberg, Dean Grennell, or myself -- unless you want to keep them for yourself. It is not seemly that such fannish artifacts should be discarded....

Fantasy Press, without a murmur, replaced my botched copy of The Legion of Time, the one mentioned in Skhk some time ago. My thanks to Mr Eshbach....

A local priest, the Rev. Max Klesmit, told a testimonial gathering what first decided him to enter the priesthood: "My father was a hod carrier on a local church building project. I brought lunch to him and saw what a hard job it was carrying cement. I also saw the priest strolling around the church inspecting the work. I said to myself, 'That's the job for me.'" It's too bad that most skypilots aren't as candid....

Here's a quote from Kilkenny, a westernovel by Louis L'Amour (Ace Books), page 55: "Just before dusk he saw two men riding trails out of town, five in each group, at a rough guess." Homo Gestalt Rides Again!....

From a review in the Minneapolis Sunday Tribune of Chinese Gordon by Lawrence and Elizabeth Hanson: "Gordon... courted death, nay invited it, because of his constant wish to enter his own heavenly kingdom. A Moslem spear finally fulfilled that fish." On Friday, I hope?

Better dial in the George Gobel show soon. There's no telling when Gobel might wind up in the discard with (a) Fred Allen and (b) Henry Morgan, as a TV panel show member. And whatever happened to Bob and Ray?

The ultimate esoteric interlineation will be incomprehensible even to God.

"As for criticism in general: _____'s criticisms are pretty small beer after all. Now I've had comments from gentlemen like Campbell, Gold, and Boucher - McComas, whose barest word of criticism sometimes means the loss of a thousand dollars because it comes in the form of a rejection."

-- Out-of-context snippet from a letter by Isaac Asimov in Skyhook #21.

AND HOW MUCH AN OPINION?

BY ROBERT W. LOWNDES

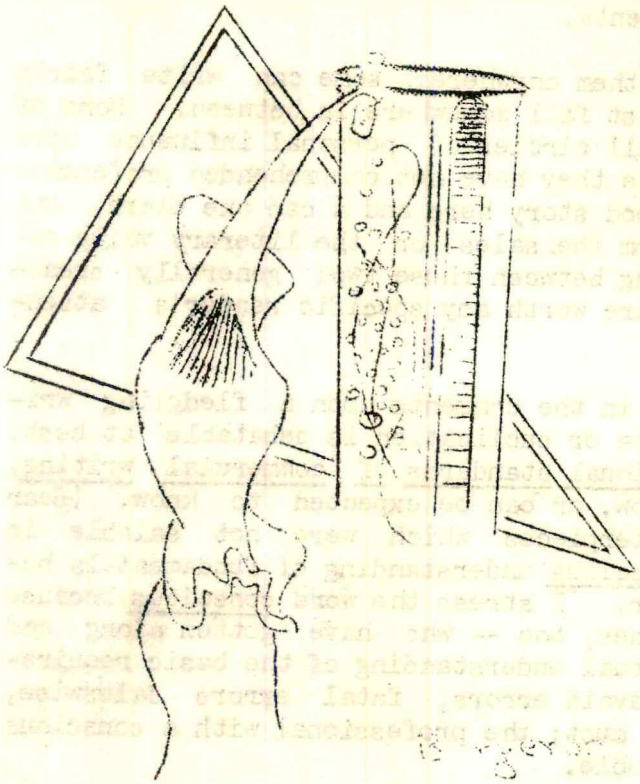
ONE OF THE BLESSINGS of a democratically-tended society, such as our own, is supposed to be that everyone not only has a right to whatever opinion he wants to hold on any subject whatsoever, but everyone also has the right to express such opinions to anyone else who will listen. Tangled up with this you'll find the assumption that, since we're all free and equal, one man's opinion is as good as another's.

Fortunately, it is generally agreed (despite certain types of advertisements) that only persons who have been trained and qualified can practice medicine, law, etc., but when it comes to things like art, music, and literary criticism -- well!

Now Isaac Asimov has a very sound point in the excerpt quoted above, and this has a great deal to do with a certain type of criticism. Before going any farther, let's break down literary criticism into a few general categories: professional sales-criticism; amateur sales-criticism; professional influence-criticism; amateur influence-criticism; tyro criticism.

These are my own categories, and I'll try to define each one as I go along. First of all, though, my initial distinction between "professional" and "amateur": For the space of this discourse, we shall say that the "professional" works for pay or with the expectation of being paid -- on the basis of having been paid for a sizeable amount of his past work. The "amateur" works either for the enjoyment of it, or with the hope of getting himself into a paying slot eventually -- or perhaps both. We shall state that both the professional and the amateur have had enough training to be aware of what are known as professional standards -- that is, the requirements for professional publication. (This last is evasive in a sense, since requirements vary greatly, but there does exist a definable area of "professional standards" and anything which does not fall within these can be considered as non-professional.) The tyro, then, we can define as the person who has opinions and expresses them, but who shows little awareness of professional standards.

The professional sales-critic (for the most part, an author's agent) evaluates a story or article on what seems to be its sales-potential; his opinion has weight in proportion to his record of good estimates -- i.e., the ratio of stories sent out to publications which were purchased by the editors in question. Where you have an



agent whose submissions are solicited and received eagerly by a number of editors, then you can point and say this man is a good critic, and it's worth the writer's time to listen carefully to what he has to say about any story. He may be wrong now and then -- a story he thought would sell did not sell; a story he considered unsalable did sell -- but he has a good average. And his sales average goes hand in hand with his understanding of professional standards in general, and his knowledge of specific editorial wants.

The amateur sales-critic tries to do much the same job as the professional. He may have read more of a given type of story than a particular professional, but his opinions -- while possibly useful at times -- cannot have much weight, simply because they haven't been tried out often enough. That is, he may have made a suggestion here and there to an author, which the author took, and lo! the story sold thereafter, but the amateur's record isn't solid enough so that someone else can judge whether the story in question might not have sold at the same market without the change the amateur sales-critic suggested.

The professional influence-critic has little direct relation to sales of stories, so far as original publication goes. He tries to evaluate after the event, to select what among the mass of material within the field he criticises is worth reading reading, and give lucid reasons for his judgments. He tries to influence both the reading public (in calling attention to what is above the common run of material, in evaluating what he believes will endure longer than the passing phase, and in hammering mercilessly against what he considers bad) and editors and publishers. He may expose flaws in some popular favorite who has been inflated far beyond his worth; he may goad a generally fine author into correcting minor faults, which only need pointing out; and so on.

When the professional influence-critic is widely read (as in the case with some in various newspapers and magazines), then his judgment can have a certain amount of weight, too. If you've come to have confidence in him from your own experience -- through reading something he recommended, or something else he suggested that you pass by as not worth your time, or if he evaluated something you read and showed you things about it you hadn't noticed the first time but which added to your experience in the story -- then what he says in his latest comments can influence your buying or not buying a new book, etc. And it goes without saying that editors can also be influenced by the comments of a critic who is known to have a large following.

The amateur influence-critic may or may not have comparable insights into the material upon which he operates, but he is trying to do much the same thing, and according to his sphere of influence, his judgments can have weight, too. In some cases, despite his limited standing, he may be more rewarding than many professionals. For what it's worth, I will state that I follow P. Schuyler Miller and Damon

Knight, both professionals, with a great deal of satisfaction; outside of these two, I consider William Atheling Jr more worth my time than any other professionals who appear in science fiction book review departments.

Now we come to the tyros. You'll find them anywhere; some can write fairly well, others can't write worth a damn, and most fall somewhere in between. None of them have any weight (outside of possible small circles of personal influence upon colleagues who know no better) sheerly because they have not comprehended professional standards. They may be able to spot a good story here and a bad one there, but don't know what constitutes worth, either from the sales or the literary value angle. (And there's a great deal of overlapping between those two; generally speaking, however, more stories are salable than are worth any specific reader's attention -- obviously!)

That is why the degree of "helpfulness" in the comments upon a fledgling writer's efforts in FAPA or any other amateur apa or publication is debatable at best. To be "helpful" the critic must know professional standards of commercial writing; and this is something which very few fans know, or can be expected to know. (Bear in mind that there are very few literary masterpieces which were not salable in their own time.) The critic must have a conscious understanding of fundamentals before he can help an author or would-be author. I stress the word conscious because there are many established writers -- fine ones, too -- who have gotten along and gotten along well on unconscious and instinctual understanding of the basic requirements. But such writers are rarely able to avoid errors, fatal errors saleswise, when their instinct falters, as sometimes it must; the professional with a conscious training is less likely to get into such trouble.

Encouragement through the praise of other fans may give a needed boost to the aspiring writer, but this is a very delusory thing at best; the non-professional critic is likely to praise what is very bad, commercially speaking, and not to see what is good. He may not see talent beneath an overlay of awkwardness; he may imagine great talent where a professional will recognize nothing but preciousness and skilled abuse of the unabridged dictionary.

I remember that in 1939 I did a short-short trifle called "The Gourmet," which appeared in Paul Freehafer's Polaris, if my memory doesn't slip. Bob Tucker made a brief comment on it to the effect that he couldn't see, after reading it, why Robert W. Lowndes wasn't appearing regularly in the big slicks. That made me feel wonderful -- but it didn't tell me a damned thing I needed to know if I wanted to write for the slicks. It could have led to a lot of heartbreak if I'd believed it implicitly and started writing for the slicks, confident that I was as good as in. Fortunately, I am both lazy and suspicious of praise; Tucker can sleep in peace, knowing that his well-meaning enthusiasm didn't ruin a life!

In conclusion, then, as we circle round toward the beginning, Asimov is partly right: the critic he chooses to ignore probably hasn't an "in" with any editor, nor does that critic accept or reject stories. But let us not confuse levels and intentions of criticism, nonetheless.

"Where are we at all? and whenabouts in the name of space?"

ARTWORK CREDITS: Cover by William Rotsler. Interiors: pages 9, 14, and 15 by Richard Bergeron; page 19 by Lee Hoffman; page 25 by William Rotsler. The cover, page 5, and page 19 were reproduced by Stenafax stencil.

WHITE WHALES, RAINTREES, FLYING SAUCERS

PARABLES TRAVEL in parabolas.

And thus present us with our theme, which is that science fiction and fantasy not only may be as valuable as the so-called mainstream of literature but may even do things that are forbidden to it.

Why forbidden? Because parables soar in parabolas. And science fantasy (by which term we will mean both science fiction and fantasy in this essay), being in essence parabolic forms, may shoot over barriers which often stop the flight of earthbound straight fiction. They adopt certain modes of presentation forbidden to the mainstream and thus strike us harder with their insight.

A definition of a good story should be one that includes both mainstream and science fantasy. The elements that make one excellent also make the other. Any good story creates order out of the chaos of this universe and invests it with a meaning we readers had not noticed before. Entertainment, always the red blood of any good story, comes from the slight and pleasant shock of having our awareness-threshold raised by the author's skill in shaping new patterns of values for us. Or in presenting at a different angle old values so they catch the light in a new splendor.

What do we mean by values? For the limited purpose of this essay, we'll define them as the grasping for good and evil, the tossing away of evil with one hand while we hang on to the good with the other. God and the philosophers know that the problem of value is the most complicated and meandering of all for the reason that it takes in the whole universe, including God and the philosophers. So far, the PhD's who specialize in axiology have not even succeeded in agreeing on a definition of value. We'll use a makeshift and admittedly arguable definition.

What is good and evil? Good is herein defined as that which breaks down without physical violence the walls that keep out the growth of human life and love. Thus we include all the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects. Fertile fields enough so no one goes hungry; soap and medicine enough so no one need go dirty or ill; science that searches for youth and immortality; love that makes us worthy of living forever so we do not sicken of the sight and rumor of each other and of ourselves.

Good is a growing and protean thing, an evolution of values. It searches and questions, and what once was thought to be good is found evil and goes on the scrap-heap of the past. Yet the things that it throws away are the secretions and barnacles that have never really mattered, though we at one time thought they mattered

---

BY PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER

---

the most. What remains is what all men, with the exception of a few diseased societies, have at least given lip service to. The old cliche, the old thumping from the pulpit, remains. Love thy neighbor as thyself. The rest is background noise, where it should be silence.

One is strongly tempted here to wander off into an analysis of the direction society should take in an effort to make the Rule a living thing. But such a discussion would be too long and would also digress from our theme. It should, however, be clear to any thinking person that man has always tried to throw up walls to hide this Rule. Most of his social inventions have been to make his love a private garden, an exclusive thing, a curbed and bitten thing. Claims to have the divine revelation, to be the chosen people, to have the skin color, to have the property rights over land and woman and child, and all the rites and laws and violence that armor and propel these claims: these must be shed like last year's skin. As if there weren't more than one divine revelation, as if all men weren't chosen by God or weren't a peculiar people, as if sun and fog didn't regulate the correct amount of pigment, as if the earth weren't mother to us all, and as if man, woman, and child should not be free to swim in the ocean of love, up or down, to whatever level they breathe easiest in, to whatever school they feel most at home in, not fearing hate or violence....

We've digressed enough. Yet the above was necessary so that one may see that when we speak of values, we are not speaking of garments or baggage but of the naked and vibrating flesh, the Golden Rule. If this sounds stuffy and pompous, one can only plead that the subject is a grave one and doesn't demand a laughing face but a steady and unprejudiced eye.

We maintain that the universe is a chaos out of which our senses abstract a world of value. Our thirst for moral values makes us abstract a moral world as well as a physical and mental one. We ignore facts and factors that might interfere with our vision. Thus we see and feel a solid table, though with a keener sense we might see the atomic particles that whirl about each other and get dizzy hanging over the infinite abysses between them. Most of us also allow our children to be smutted and frozen with the beliefs that sex is somehow a sin, that black skin tarnishes status, that war could not be wiped out in one day, yes, one day, and that we could not defeat famine in 25 years. All this we allow while ignoring the fact that there have been and are societies which have solved at least temporarily most of our major problems. We refuse their values. Inertia is our original sin.

Most of our fiction, good and bad, is devoted to a reaffirmation of that to which we pay lip service. Even straight adventure fiction displays the conventional values; we follow Hairbreadth Harry, and, if the taleteller's skill is adequate, we are, for the time being, Harry. Courage, strength, skill, keen wits -- these primitive but desirable traits we want and admire in our hero. But the pleasure we get from the average story is soon lost. We forget it. The story to which we return is that which gave us a shock because it shaped a new pattern of values.

"Why didn't I think of that? I've always known it, deep down!" we exclaim. Or we say, "What a great truth I've been blind to till now!"

Of course insight without drama is lost; there must be a story-telling skill on the writer's part. But drama without insight is also lost. We know that life is many conflicts, and we hope there's a solution for each. Or at least that the struggle was worthwhile because it meant something. The good writer has a sense of joy even when giving you a dismal play. In the midst of grime and blood and bucking the Juggernaut he says that you are more than just a spark blown upward into the

night. Or even if he says this, he says that there is a delight in burning, that the night is brighter for your tiny glow and will not be the same again, though you turn to cinder.

Our major problem here is, can science fantasy fit the definition of good fiction? Can science fantasy wave its magic wand and conjure from chaos a meaningful value-laden picture? Answer: yes. Any bad fiction, no matter the genre, is a wild exercise of the imagination which explodes in the night of our minds, makes garish pyrotechnics, then dies, leaving the night blacker than before. But good fiction is a steady light, even if sometimes a small one. By it we walk without stumbling, and we may return at any time to see under its flare other topographical features we did not understand the first time. (If you say that most of science fantasy is just that, garish pyrotechnics, we can only reply that so is most of mainstream literature. But there are many science fantasy stories that do raise our awareness threshold.)

Thus, a story that deals with unicorns and virgins, demons and talking animals, faster-than-light spaceships, self-conscious robots, or other mythical creatures and creations is not necessarily bad fiction because it uses devices we know do not or cannot exist. If the story clenches the hard core of truth or flashes a facet of life not realized before, it is good. And its magical paraphernalia, far from obscuring its goodness and truth, are the very things that bring them out. Parable in form and essence, sprung from the fairy tale, fable, and myth, it travels in parabolas. Its very mode makes it more than just a jag of fancy. It demonstrates beyond disproof and far more vividly than the so-called realistic down-to-earth story that we are mad if we pursue the White Whale to our destruction; that even if we do find the lost raintree we'll lose it at once unless we keep our innocence; that flying saucers may equate the remoteness of the stars with the abyss of loneliness between each human; that if you do not put a perfect trust in the one you love you will make her less than human; that even if you can't possess the moon yourself you can have no greater love than to break your heart getting it for others.

And always, a good story -- science fantasy or no -- shows you a hero with whom you can identify. Win or lose, he wrestles with a giant whose mask, no matter how fantastic, conceals our arch-friend or arch-fiend, the recognizable universe.

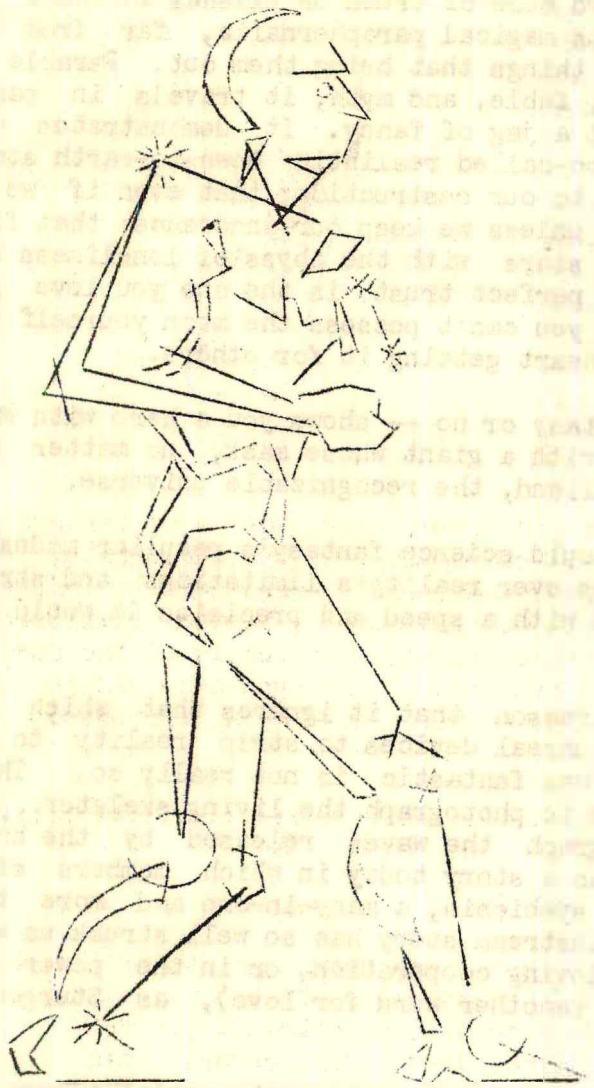
We need further clarification. Why should science fantasy's peculiar modes of presentation let it soar like flying missiles over reality's limitations and strike from the skies deep into the heart of things with a speed and precision it would not otherwise have?

Our answer is that it is for the very reason that it ignores that which the realistic tale says is impossible. It uses unreal devices to strip reality to its real core, showing us that what we thought was fantastic is not really so. Thus, there was a time when a story that used rays to photograph the living skeleton and organs in action and a voltage detector to graph the waves released by the brain would have been classed as fantasy. Just as a story today in which members of a group use ESP and TK as a means to become a symbiosis, a many-in-one and more than human, is classed as fantasy. Yet what mainstream story has so well struck us with beauty and terror and the possibilities in loving cooperation, or in the power for evil if a symbiotic group has no conscience (another word for love), as Sturgeon's More Than Human?

Sturgeon can surpass mainstream limitations because he uses unreal powers to show us the real web of flesh that hangs invisible in the air and pumps blood to all of us from the same great heart. He shows us so well that the result is almost un-

endurable in its impact. We not only feel the beauty and the evil; we quiver as if he had rubbed a file across our nerves. This is no ordinary tale of people striving to cooperate; these are one flesh and blood in the literal sense, and if one member revolts, he becomes a cancer. And by reading we realize that a man without love is truly a cancer in humankind's body.

Examples are becoming increasingly numerous in the science fiction and fantasy fields; time and space prevent a listing of the better ones and what they have accomplished. The reader who is familiar with the fields, modern and classical, may easily recall many. And I believe that he can take any theme presented in the mainstream and find that, where fantasy treated it, it has more impact because of the fantasy. This statement should be taken with the caution that the fantasy must have been written by a good writer. Not necessarily a professional science fantasy writer. Almost all great and near-great writers have experimented in fantasy and almost always have produced an opus that ranks with the best of their mainstream opera. Thomas Mann, Feodor Dostoyevsky, Herman Melville, Charles Dickens, Franz Werfel, Honore de Balzac, William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Henrik Ibsen, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Leo Tolstoy, Aldous Huxley, Robert Graves, A. Conan Doyle, Oscar Wilde, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, even Somerset Maugham, that cynical and down-to-earth writer. The list is long.

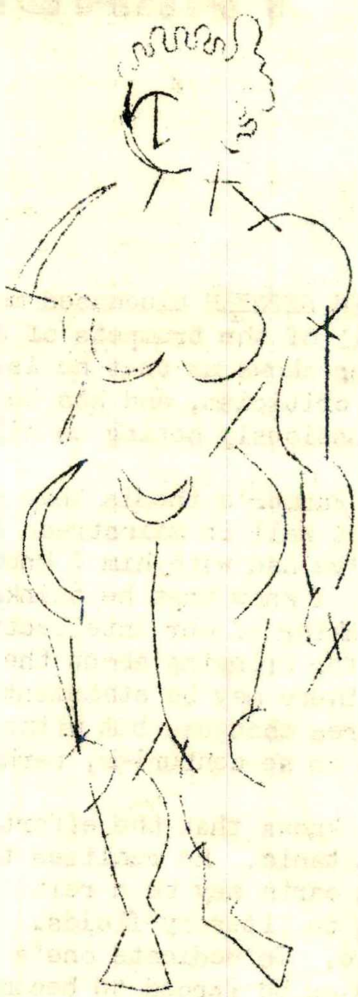


Though the reader may say that some of those named are not great but only prominent, they are at least that and have made a mark on literature. Moreover, some of the fantasies of these greats are still read and anthologized — often in preference to their weightier and more solidly terrestrial works. It is as if the mask they fashioned to put on the face of common things is more ugly or more beautiful than that which it covers because it shows more starkly and startlingly the lines and lineaments we were not able to see before. The classical masks of Tragedy and Comedy are not real faces; they are gargoyles; they leap out and strike us with their essence.

Under science fantasy's unorthodox wrappings, even orthodoxy takes on a new look. Witness Werfel's Star of the Unborn and C. S. Lewis' Out of the Silent Planet. They take us to far times and places so that we may get a perspective on what is around us now and perhaps even convince us unbelievers that we are missing something is not embracing orthodoxy. Such is the impact of sf when dealing with a world too much for us.

Fantasy we have had from the beginning of man's language. Science fiction,

I believe, is only an extension of fantasy, based on science because nowadays we accept the miracles of science but not the existence of mermaids, unicorns, demons. The old myths have lost their force; they are trying to forge new ones. The same psychic powers that created the old are still operating, but they must work through fresh forms.



The writer of science fiction is a pioneer; he has to create "out of chaos a dancing star." I believe that he may do so, but his burden is a difficult one. He has been discredited as a prophet -- a role that should never have been his -- and it is up to him, not to prophesy, but to invent. Not technological inventions, for he lacks the detailed knowledge of science and access to laboratories, even if he has the inspiration. He must use his knowledge of the workings of the human heart, plus the findings of psychology and social anthropology, and from these pick and choose the social forces that will mold plastic man into a free creature who loves and is free of sin because he loves.

There are many writers in the science fantasy field who will never be anything but hacks, who have the ability to make money in it because they have a brighter imagination than the average writer in other fields. But there are a few who have the insight and energy to create new social institutions -- or rather, models of them -- and who will display in their fiction how these may be arrived at.

And when these maps for new institutions are drawn, then the many readers of science fantasy -- the engineers, technicians, anthropologists, psychologists, educators, intelligent laymen -- will begin to exert their not-inconsiderable influence on society. Slowly but inevitably as the force of mind itself, western civilization will be guided along the new roads. And if this happens, the people of the dawning era will owe much of their understanding and abundance to the once-despised and neglected field of science fantasy. The White Whale will have been harnessed; the raintree found again.

::

SKYHOOK'S OWN DEEP FREAS

The wintry scene on Skyhook's cover this issue was drawn in Camarillo, California, home of eternal summer. It is fitting, nevertheless, that this seventh anniversary and first Stenafax cover should be done by William Rotsler. Though he was not our first cover artist (Bob Stein was), he has drawn more covers than anybody else (five), did two bacovers when we used them, and has had artwork in all issues, except the first three and numbers 14 and 22. He is, in effect, Skyhook's staff artist. I am glad to report that Mr Rotsler recently signed a new, long term contract.

PARABLES ARE PABLUM

A REPLY TO MR FARMER

A LETTER TO MR CAMPBELL

TORN BETWEEN bluenosed moralism and rednosed unmoralism, between the faraway thin call of the trumpets of science fantasy and the loud meaty blast of mainstream, Mr Farmer shows us that he is of no firm conviction. He has left himself so wide open to criticism, and has been so vague, that one is quite sure he is consciously or unconsciously hoping he will be argued out of adherence to sf's claims.

Mr Farmer's thesis that parables travel in parabolas and thus hop over obstacles that wall in mainstream literature is not at all well founded. From conversations I've had with him I know he can present many more detailed arguments for his thesis. I know that he thinks also that science fantasy will eventually influence the thinking of our intellectuals and technologists and that sf is the best persuader for bringing about the type of society he desires. Mr Farmer is no fanatic, though there may be statements in his article which might fool one into thinking so. He desires changes, but without violence, and knows that they may never come about or will do so centuries, perhaps, after we are dead.

He knows that the efforts to divert society into desirable channels will have to be titanic. He realizes that he is no titan, not even a small one. He knows his life on earth may be a relatively happy one if he confines his moralizing and reforming to literary fields. It is hard enough for a man to get food, drink, books, and love. To dedicate one's life to bucking the sociological Juggernaut is to get crushed or be forced to become a Hitler or Calvin. None of these fates is desirable; it is best to accept the limitations of one's self and of humanity at large.

Nevertheless, the angry man has to express himself. Otherwise he burns himself out inside like a smoldering log, or suddenly bursts into destructive flame. Mr Farmer is at times an angry man, because he is an idealist and a romanticist. Fortunately he has at times a sense of humor, a saving grace which enables him to realize that few things are serious enough to get ulcers over, including literature; and to realize that anger doesn't necessarily make you a good writer, especially if you make the mistake of forever writing about things that madden you. Every writer should -- and will, if he's capable of doing so -- write for the sheer joy of it, with no moral in mind. Such stories will make one laugh and result in nothing more than a good digestion and firm nerves. And these are quite enough for most of humanity.

For the purposes of this reply to Mr Farmer, the above considerations are digressive. We are to consider the main thesis. My counter is that mainstream may not only do anything science fantasy can but can do it better and reach a larger audience. Not only that, but those who devote the bulk of their reading to science

BY TIM HOWLLER

fantasy are filling their bellies with pablum and refusing the lifegiving meat that is theirs for the taking.

First, I'll agree with Mr Farmer's definition of a good story: that it creates order out of chaos and invests it with a meaning we had not noticed before. Addendum: that he means by a good story one that has become a classic -- or has a good chance of becoming one. Further addendum: that any good story is one that is "blindly seeking with a six inch blade to reach the fathom-deep life of the whale." Mainstream literature is a sharper blade and has more muscles behind it, that's all.

I must protest against Mr Farmer's choice of Moby Dick and Raintree County as examples of moralizing fantasy. Moralizing, yes; fantasy, no. Though both novels use fantasy, they work with it merely as a device to put across certain scenes or ideas. The dream sequences in Raintree County, the lower case mr shawnessy, the epic fragments from the Cosmic Enquirer, the raintree itself, border upon fantasy, but upon analysis are seen not to be really so. They are exaggerations of what do occur in life.

Just so Moby Dick. Here the characters are not realistic in that they are not merely lifesize: they are giants who walk and talk as men never did. Even the mechanically-souled and mediocre, the Starbucks and Flasks, are titans. The men are large as whales, and Moby Dick is great as a mountain. The soliloquies, the stowing away of the Parsees, Queequeg in his coffin, and many other events seem fantastic. But the work is not a fantasy in the sense that we use the term. There is little we can point to and say is impossible. So vast is the work, so overwhelmingly detailed and passionate, that we are convinced where a thinner opus would leave us shrugging with disbelief.

And that brings another point. I am surprised that Mr Farmer didn't elaborate Dostoyevsky as a fantasist whose works support his thesis. Dostoyevsky uses fantasy to great effect. Such things as the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor, the devil from space who taunts Ivan Karamazov, the saint who had to walk across the galaxy before he could reach heaven -- these are characteristic. Moreover, his characters, though not as large as Moby Dick's, are bigger than life; whirlwind events that would take years in real life are compressed into a day; everybody pours out Niagaras of confessions as if they'd been injected with some science fiction truth drug; their dreams are obviously too feverish and contrived to be natural; and many of their motivations can be explained only by saying that Dostoyevsky is writing psychological allegories.

But here, as in Moby Dick, it can be shown that there is an explanation which requires only a moderate straining to swallow. And if it is true that both Dostoyevsky and Melville wrote other stories that were pure fantasy, that is beside the point. Their great works are not in that class. Mardi and Pierre, The Dream of a Ridiculous Man and Crocodile are not the best work of these two.

What they have done, as have many other authors, is to incorporate fantasy as a minor device to facilitate certain aspects of their fiction. This, in a way, falls in with Farmer's thesis that fantasy is more striking because it uses modes of presentation forbidden in the mainstream. Agreed. But the fantasy is never used without a possibility of a realistic explanation. Ivan's dialog with the devil could be a projection of his tortured conscience working through his fever; the Grand Inquisitor is a philosophical prose-poem; whales have in fact destroyed whaling ships; Ahabs do try to punch their fists through the visible walls of this universe.

Let's take the other examples mentioned by Mr Farmer in his article. I read them as "Saucer of Loneliness" by Theodore Sturgeon, "The Lovers" by Philip Jose Farmer, "The Man Who Sold the Moon" by Robert A. Heinlein. The first is a very moving and poignant story, albeit syruped over with too much sentimentality, as many of Sturgeon's stories are. However, he succeeded in doing what he set out to do, and did it beautifully. The result was -- as William Atheling Jr pointed out -- an original and inspired treatment of flying saucers in which Sturgeon conjured up loneliness with all the artistry of which he is capable, and that is quite a lot.

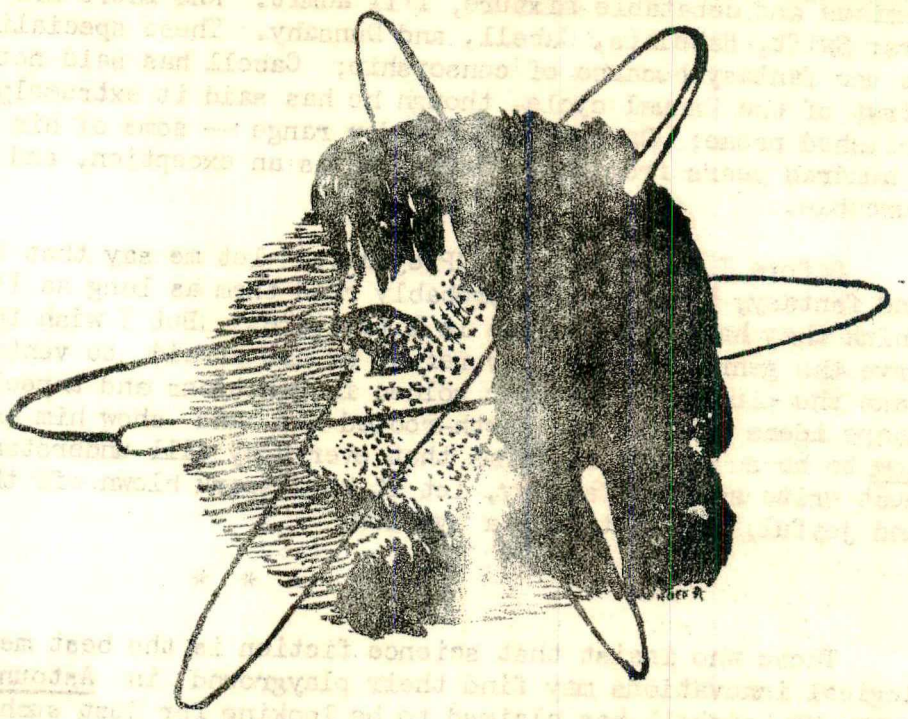
As for the second, we might wonder why Mr Farmer could not resist the auctorial egotism of including one of his own tales. We won't, for writers are notoriously publicity-seeking and proud of their own stuff. If they weren't, they wouldn't be authors. I doubt if anybody but Mr Farmer saw the moral he obligingly points out in "The Lovers." I doubt if he knew it when he wrote the story, or even thought of it until he wrote the article. That it's there may be seen, but it is so buried under a multitude of other things that only a philosopher could deduce it. Nor does the story rank with the other two sf works for smoothness and craftsmanship, though it does, I think, in characterization. It's to be hoped that Mr Farmer will smooth out the novella for its book publication and develop the wogglebug society as a picture of a desirable society. It is easy enough to portray a puritanical charitableless state; it is most difficult labor to show a convincing utopia.

"The Man Who Sold the Moon" illustrates quite well the point I wish to make. It is not, I believe, a science fiction story. Though it takes place in the future, it could be <u>any</u> time. It is really the story of a man who had an ideal and who moved heaven and earth to make it come true, even though he had at times to subscribe to the ethics that the end justifies the means. The story could just as well have been about a man who wanted to buy a forest land for the use of the people as a public park, or a section of tenaments to be remade into a wonderful housing project. That the moon is here a fusing of the symbolic and the literal, as it is in the best of fiction, is a proof of Heinlein's artistry. But the work is not science fiction, for it could be taking place today, and has little of the scientific in it.

Though Heinlein's appreciation of the worthwhile artistic things of life seems to be rather poverty-stricken and philistinish -- at least as stated in a recent autobiography in <u>Imagination</u> -- those who have read him know he is a consummate craftsman with a genuine sense of life. Also, they know he is able to touch the emotions with a few simple words, whereas the consciously artistic and poetic Ray Bradbury fails in this. Bradbury evokes our admiration because of his lyric lines and economy, but he misses the springs from which well tears. Heinlein touches them in a deceptively simple manner. Sturgeon also succeeds, though less often and with more striving for effect. The striving is smooth, but it is worked up to through a complex symphonic method. Heinlein is uncomplicated and uses straightforward, unimpassioned, unepigrammic prose. There is no exploring such as Sturgeon's; no unpeeling of layer after layer of personality, motive, and action until the core lies glistening-wet and naked before us. Heinlein drives straight to the heart and brings the tears -- a gift much to be envied; even more so when one considers that he has done his best emotional work in the so-called juveniles.

The fact that Heinlein used the moon in the above-mentioned story did not make it science fiction. Sturgeon, Farmer, and the other writers who put across their various themes could have done even better if they had tried the same thing in mainstream literature. I, for one, would like to see Theodore Sturgeon abandon sf for a while and bring his artistry to mainstream. If he wishes to communicate loneliness and absence of communication, could he not use ordinary people in an ordinary situation, instead of in an unreal situation? Could he not reach a larger audience and

reap greater financial returns, thus stimulating him to even higher reaches of artistry, if he tried to work with people as they are and threw away the paraphernalia of magic and pseudoscience?



Could he not use the vehicle of a missent letter instead of a flying saucer? True, it is an old old vehicle, not nearly so original as a disk from space. But missent letters can and have happened; the event is grounded in old Mother Earth.

And what about his favorite theme of symbiosis? Couldn't he show us much more of the evils and good in symbiosis, and teach us how to attain such a state, if he were to apply his literary magic to the Smith family who lives on Elm street? Sturgeon has come to us with a Sermon on the Mount, dressed in a strange disguise and hidden behind a monstrous mask. Couldn't it be just as strange and unconventional if presented to us as a solution to the Smith's dilemma? Undoubtedly that inside-out, Alice-in-Wonderland insight, and passionate prose could be applied to a run-of-the-mill problem to solve it in a way only Sturgeon could. And we might learn and take to heart a rule for our own guidance.

Sturgeon wants to overthrow old idols and hard walls that corrupted and channelled true love. Why, then, shouldn't he move into a larger world, now that he has long ago served his apprenticeship in science fantasy? He has something to say that is worth hearing; let him say it to as many ears as possible and not keep his dreaming jewels in the hands of a few. It is time for him to develop into the first-rate and important novelist he could become.

There are any number of professional sf writers who have served their apprenticeship, who have gamboled long in the joyous waters of science fantasy and who should be ready to take a plunge into other seas. One thinks of Isaac Asimov (who shows as increasing skill in characterization), damon knight, Algis Budrys, Cyril M. Kornbluth, Poul Anderson, Arthur C. Clarke, Fritz Leiber. Why couldn't these men, who have talent both in exploring ideas and portraying character, who have empathy and compassion, transfer to that larger world? There their works will have more chance of bringing wider rewards in readers, money, and endurance.

I mention endurance because science fantasy is rather ephemeral stuff. Little of it deserves to be called great, except in the relative sense of comparison to others of its genre. And those few tales that do tower above the rest were written by non-specialists in science fantasy: After Many A Summer Dies the Swan, Watch the

Northwind Rise, Earth Abides, The Sword in the Stone, "Peer Gynt," "The Tempest." A curious and debatable mixture, I'll admit. And there are exceptions among the authors: Swift, Rabelais, Cabell, and Dunsany. These specialize. But the first two had to use fantasy because of censorship; Cabell has said nothing he hasn't said in the first of the Manuel cycle, though he has said it extremely wittily and in perfectly polished prose; Dunsany has a wider range -- some of his stuff is likely to be read a hundred years from now. Still, he is an exception, and his impact will never be forcible.

Before I hear cries of "Prejudice!" let me say that I love both science fiction and fantasy, that I shall probably read them as long as I've eyes to see, that I do think they have their place in literature. But I wish that those sf writers who love the genre so well they refuse or are afraid to venture into mainstream would take the plunge. Use your golden imaginations and unpeeling insight and ability to shape ideas to take the earth-rooted man and show him as he is and ought to be and how to be so — but in terms that everybody will understand and believe. And if you must write science fantasy, let it be a spark blown off the central wheel -- bright and joyful, yes, but only a by-blow.

* * *

Those who insist that science fiction is the best medium for introducing sociological innovations may find their playground in Astounding Science Fiction. For years Mr Campbell has claimed to be looking for just such authors. But these authors will have to convince him to overthrow some of his taboos, such as those involving sexual situations, and to quit using stories in which parapsychological powers play such an important part in reconstructing society. Or stories in which extra-terrestrial beings overthrow Earth by one little idea.

Such fiction is quite harmless and safe for Mr Campbell to offer because its basic concepts and situations are so far removed from reality.

Would Astounding dare to print a story which depicted a future Union of Colored People, an organization with principles like a labor union which struck against racial discrimination? Such a story would be science fiction because it would be concerned with a sociological invention, one which was an extrapolation from a present day institution. To me such a story would be far more fascinating than one about a star-begotten prisoner of Earth who subtly infects and overthrows his captors' barbaric government with a few well-chosen words.

Would Mr Campbell dare print such a work, one that might strike a spark in the mind of a Negro sf reader and launch such a movement? And would the many PhD's and technicians among his readers accept such a story? They applaud the narrative of the persuasive philosophical alien, and say yea to liberal and humanitarian views. But what if there is a real and very close danger that the dark-skinned alien who makes enough money to afford the high rents in Dr Jones' neighborhood will move next door to him and there will be little Dr Jones can do about it?

What about it, Mr Campbell? You've long had a vision of changing our culture, of directing it toward the right goals through the medium of your magazine. You estimate that you reach at least 100,000 readers whose influence on our culture is tremendous in many ways: engineers, technicians, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, newspapermen, students, intelligent laymen. If they become infected with your ideas, they will pass them on in turn to those who haven't even heard of your magazine, to educated and uneducated kaffirs alike. Eventually the fictive shadows depicted in ASF's stories will take on legal substance.

There is little difficulty in your present day offerings because most of them lack the fire and heart to convince and stimulate your readership. The characters are too often cardboard figures, and the situations are set in a time and place that doesn't concern us. Such stories are intellectual exercises, and with a few notable exceptions not even good exercises. What about asking for stories set in the near future, based on slight extrapolations of present day living facts, and served with a sense of drama and of flesh and blood?

You have said that you are not too much interested in the literary value of your offerings. What about _becoming_ interested? Without literary value your stories will fail in even getting close to your goal of influencing your influential readers.

What about thawing out the icy taboos that have slowly frozen ASF's lifeblood? Compare the quality of the stories Isaac Asimov has been writing for you with that of the stories he's writing for H. L. Gold. Why are those for _Galaxy_ so much better? Can it be that Asimov feels your restrictions cramp his style, even if unconsciously so? _Fantasy and Science Fiction_ and _Galaxy_ have improved or at least maintained a high level. F&SF has presented us with solider and meatier sf stories, tending Campbellwards (the old style Campbell, that is). _Galaxy_, unfortunately, has been running too many light and cute stories, but Mr Gold's touch is not lost. The hand of Midas glitters yet; there are strange and wonderful things to be read; one blows off the foam and gets to the dark stuff.

ASF has, as a whole, been getting drier and staler and even amateurish, declining steadily for two years. If there are exceptions, such as Tom Godwin's very moving and human "Cold Equations," they form a tremendous contrast to the other presentations and make us ask why we don't get more like them. Yet, ASF is the only magazine that would have published the magnificent "Mission of Gravity," by Hal Clement. Other editors would have cried, Too slow, too dragging, too technically overburdened! And the very fact that you will give the space to develop such a story and do not at all mind a full, microscopically detailed development is encouraging. Perhaps you will allow a writer as much space and time to exhibit character, and the full growth of a psychosociological idea, as you allow for a physical idea.

The point is, "Mission of Gravity" is innocuous, from our viewpoint. It shakes nobody, has little relation to man on Earth. What about a sociological "Mission of Gravity," one as minutely concerned with psychological forces as with physical, as inventive and revolutionary? What about a voyage through another dark and heavy world -- _this_ world -- explaining its perils, suggesting how to slay its dragons? Clement's crawling protagonist revealed his universe; let's get a worm's eye viewpoint of this Earth as we know it.

With the mainstream techniques that writers have learned in your rival magazines, plus the freedom allowed in ASF for symphonic development of an idea, you could do with your magazine what you have always wanted to do. Should western culture -- eventually world culture -- arrive at peace and understanding and abundance, it may do so because of the influence of your magazine. And, to go back a step, because you used the despised and neglected science fantasy as your medium, and borrowed the best of mainstream to make the best of possible worlds.

That, Mr Farmer and Mr Campbell, is the only way you will harness the White Whale and find again the lost raintree. Realize that flesh and blood man on heavy and dirty earth is himself a parable and his own moral.

THE ISSUE AT HAND

BY WILLIAM ATHELING JR

SO MUCH WATER (or ether, if we are to believe Dirac these days) has passed under the bridge since the last appearance of this column that it seems hopeless to attempt covering all the issues that I missed. As a general observation, however, it seems to me that things have picked up a little in my absence -- which just might mean that I ought to be absent more often; a horrible thought. ASF in particular seemed to me to look up in the last quarter of the year, and Galaxy and F&SF at least got no worse. To the January issues, then. How stands the field in '55?

Astounding Science Fiction

"The Darfsteller" by Walter M. Miller Jr. This is an unexceptionable piece of work, providing that you do not share damon knight's view that its subject -- the decline of the independent craftsman in the arts -- is already old-hat. Anyone who has read the fiction printed in the literary quarterlies over the past decade could hardly help being fed to the teeth by now with such repeated keenings over the grave of handmade pottery, and probably the lament doesn't sound much fresher for being clad in the trappings of science fiction. Nevertheless, the trend is anything but over with; it is spilling over into industry now, with automation threatening to deprive human hands even of the stunning monotony of assembly line work; and the possibility of novel-writing, song-writing, sculpting, and painting machines is becoming more and more distinct.

I at least find Miller's play-acting machine and his displaced human actor highly convincing. The moral that he draws, furthermore, is refreshingly positive -- as it would have to be for Campbell -- and contrasts very sharply with the sniveling tone of most writers on this subject. (Even Cyril Kornbluth, whose "With These Hands" is in most respects his best story, could find no solution but suicide, though the futility of the act is disguised by a triumphantly sharp moment of insight.) Technically, the story is tightly constructed, told in a rather low narrative key to set off sharply individual dialog. And for any of the many science fiction writers who once worked for a certain New York television serial, there's a hair-raisingly accurate portrait of one of the show's ex-Big Wheels.

"Field Expedient" by Chad Oliver. This long novelet does not actually begin until chapter three. The first two thousand words consist of a sort of culture portrait of Earth in the year 2050, which uses a learned-sounding anthropological drone to establish nothing more than the familiar picture of a static civilization. Oliver himself sums it up in four words -- "Don't rock the boat" -- and needed no more. Once the leading characters are on Venus, the story picks up somewhat, and the an-

thropological material is used to create several interesting imaginary (and synthetic) tribal cultures, to be tied together in due course into an overall civilization which has been conditioned to respect diversity. The question of whether or not this plan is going to succeed provides the only suspense the story has (despite a desperate and wholly unsuccessful attempt to liven it up by keeping the Big Boss' real motive a mystery; the answer is utterly bathetic). In short, Oliver's decided talent is still being smothered by his over-writing.

"Armistice" by K. Houston Brunner is the only short in the issue worth noting here. The story it has to tell is far from exciting or even unusual, but the writer has a Vance-like eye for sensuous detail which I found persuasive.

Galaxy Science Fiction

"The Tunnel Under the World" by Frederik Pohl continues the writer's feud with advertising into an improbable but circumstantially-told mechanical nightmare. Competent though the story is, it is spoiled for me by the excesses Pohl commits in giving samples of the ads used by the villains. The examples offered by Pohl and Kornbluth, both together and separately, in other stories have been revolting enough but remained funny because of their visible relationship to what is being committed today. "Cheap freezers ruin your food. You'll get sick and throw up. You'll get sick and die....Do you want to eat rotten, stinking food? Or do you want to wise up and buy a Feckle, Feckle, Feckle -- " is no longer satire, however. It is the naked hatred of the author, screamed out at the top of his voice.

"When You're Smiling" by Theodore Sturgeon is a hate-piece, too, but it is never out of the author's control for so long as three words. Ted's portrait of the man who enjoys causing pain is that of a man who fully deserves the author's loathing. But by taking the pains to tell the story from that man's point of view, and to convey some of the man's enthusiasm for himself and his researches, Ted has made sure that his evil character does not emerge as an unbelievable caricature. The deeply subjective approach emerges on the page with an air of pure objectivity, as though the author were simply presenting the character as he is, with an invitation to the reader to pass his own judgment; the author is loading the dice, to be sure, but entirely below the level of the reader's attention.

"Squirrel Cage" by Robert Sheckley is another of the interminable AAA Ace series, this time so awful as to read like a cruel burlesque of all the others. Why should a man who wants his farm decontaminated deliberately withhold crucial information about the nature of the infestation from the firm he's hired to do the exterminating? Why does this exact thing happen in all of the AAA Ace stories? Why don't the partners of AAA Ace wise up? As usual, the problem is "solved" by pulling three rabbits out of the author's hat (though of course he doesn't call them rabbits -- they look like rabbits, but if you call them smeerps, that makes it science fiction). It is nothing short of heartbreaking to see a once-promising writer settled down into the production of such pure trash. Sheckley's work has been getting lazier and lazier since the slick magazines took him up, but I think few of us expected to see him hitting rock bottom as soon as this.

"Perfect Control" by Richard Stockham is almost as bad. If there is anyone in the room who believed in the "great discoveries" made by the characters in this yarn, he should stay away from Fred Pohl's commercials; he will wind up owning all the Feckle Freezers in existence.

Finally, let me record my dissent to the proposition, voiced by H. L. Gold on the last page of this issue, that Evelyn E. Smith is "becoming one of the top wri-

ters of science fiction." If "The Vilbar Party" is a typical Smith production -- and thus far it is -- she is fast becoming one of the most prolific writers of "call the rabbit a smeerp" copy, and that is all. In this instance, a "cocktail" gets changed into a "vilbar." Period. As for science fiction content, the leading character is a Saturnian who spends a long time on Earth without any physical protection. How does Miss Smith explain this? She doesn't.

Fantasy and Science Fiction

"Selection" by J. T. McIntosh raises the point that all the planets, bar none, may be almost intolerable to live upon. It also denies the possibility -- by ignoring it -- that at least in some cases somebody might get at the causes of incompatibilities and eliminate them. This quality of radical incompleteness -- of failure to think a proposition through to even its most obvious first derivative -- is characteristic of this author, and I find it distracting. No matter how well a story may be handled in other respects, I cannot rid myself of the feeling that it has a large, jagged hole in it -- a hole for which there is no excuse. What McIntosh has to say here about the adaptability of people in extreme situations was well worth saying, and I applaud it; but it is deprived of most of its force by my consciousness that the author's "inevitable" situation could remain inevitable to his characters only if they are assumed to wear horse-blinkers throughout the story.

"One Ordinary Day, With Peanuts" is a Shirley Jackson story; that is all that needs to be said for it. Like John Collier, she is an original and a specialized fantasy writer, a born story-teller, and limited in her appeal. I love the stuff.

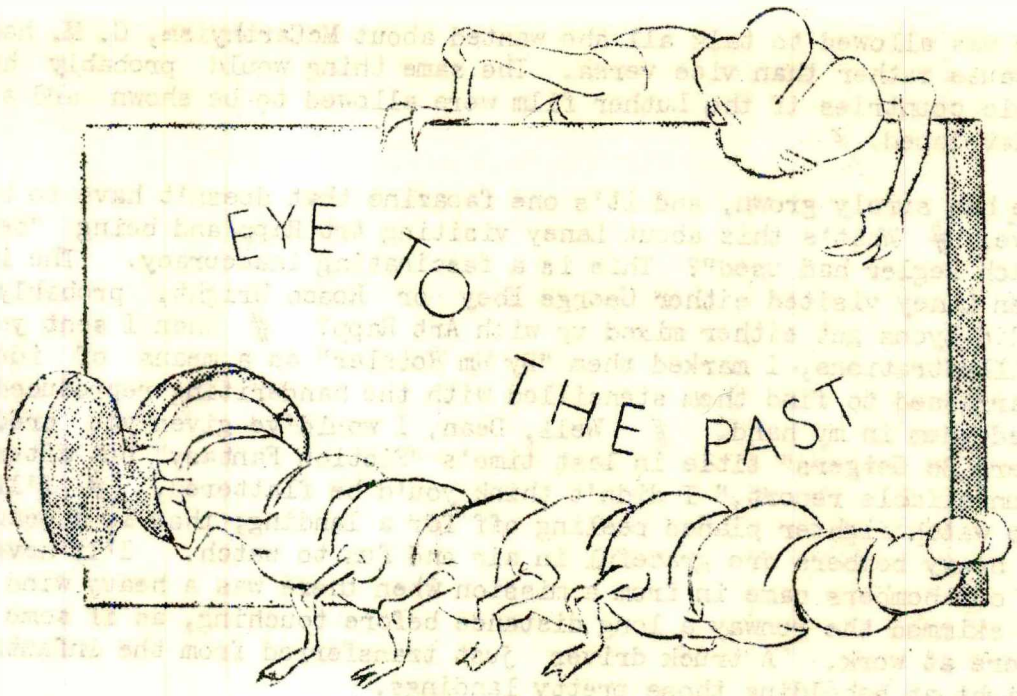
"Single Combat" by Robert Abernathy offers a character sketch of the man who will plant The Bomb in the middle of the City, and does a howling good job of it. It is neither science fiction nor fantasy, but it's skilfully handled in such a way that you may consider it either -- or both -- if you like.

Pauline Clarke's "The Potato Cake" retells the story of the Judgment of Paris in a thick Irish brogue. I cannot imagine why. "The Girl in the Ice" by Emyr Humphreys is a reprint from the British weekly New Statesman and Nation, which I remember having read in that paper. It is as quietly horrifying as ever.

"The Expert" by Mack Reynolds is a prime example of the incestuous science fiction story -- that is, a yarn which depends for its effect on overt cross references to science fiction itself. Anthony Boucher is addicted to this kind of story -- as a matter of fact he has written several -- but I can think of very few trends more dangerous to the field both artistically and financially. An increase in the percentage of yarns of this kind would be the quickest imaginable way of turning science fiction into a closed circle of mutual appreciators, speaking a jargon comprehensible only to themselves, and fatuously satisfied to have it that way. In short, a form of fandom.

There are also two detective stories in this issue, one by John Dickson Carr, the other by Isaac Asimov. The Asimov is described as the first of a series, but it is already petrified and dead -- a plain case of trying to graft part of a rigid corpse onto a living idiom. The other fiction item in this issue, "The Shopdropper," is by a man who believes that the invention of names like Schnappenhocker is a hilarious pastime. Tiptoe by him quietly; he probably picked up the idea, poor fellow, in Gavagan's Bar.

He would have bought the story, but Guy Lombardo objected.



Comments on the sixty-ninth FAPA mailing, autumn 1954

HENCEFORTH IN THIS DEPARTMENT I will make no attempt to cover each item in the mailing, but only those about which I have some particular comment to make. Lack of comment does not imply lack of favor and indicates only that I had nothing special to remark about the magazine. This new policy for "Eye to the Past" is an experiment and may be dropped if enough people find it in their hearts to object.

With its pretty blue covers and neat mimeography Dream Quest resembled the DQ of old, despite that quote-cover, an insurgent type innovation. DQ is as good an apazine as it was a subzine, which can be said for few magazines other than Spacewarp. In the convention notes I was pleased to find that you are no longer against wine, but in another respect you disappointed me dreadfully. I reread your account carefully and was unable to find any word indicating whether you believe, now that you've met him, that the Man of Many Minds has downward slanting eyes.

The brilliant indictment of McCarthyism in DQ suggests another reason to reject G. M. Carr's recent notions about censorship according to principles of courtesy. She said it was only courtesy not to go out of your way to infuriate your neighbors, especially when they are of the majority opinion, as in the case of the movie about Luther which encountered censorship in Catholic countries. Censorship equated with decorum sounds noble; however, it would forever result in the suppression of new ideas and the continuance of the status quo. G. M. would be satisfied with that, I suppose, but if decorous censorship had been enforced during the whole span of civilization up-to-now, she might not be. There would be no Christianity (originally an unpopular, minor sect in the Roman empire) and no Protestant Christianity (originally an unpopular, minor sect in Europe). There would be no democracy, and especially no American democracy — both ideas are still minority beliefs in the world community. If decorous censorship were imposed in FAPA, G. M. Carr herself would be silenced — for McCarthyism is evidently believed in by only one or two members, and it is only common courtesy not to propagandize one's neighbors who do not believe as you do. But if Mrs Carr were silenced, you, Ehey, Silverberg, and others would not have been stung into formulating your excellent indictments of McCarthyism. And thus we see how freedom of expression actually strengthens a popular opinion. Be-

cause she was allowed to talk all she wanted about McCarthyism, G. M. has undermined her own cause rather than vice versa. The same thing would probably have occurred in Catholic countries if the Luther film were allowed to be shown and a controversy over it developed.

Grue has surely grown, and it's one fapazine that doesn't have to be big to be impressive. # What's this about Laney visiting Art Rapp and being "bedded down in a bed which Degler had used"? This is a fascinating inaccuracy. The incident took place when Laney visited either George Ebey or Rosco Wright, probably the former, and how did Lyons get either mixed up with Art Rapp? # When I sent you those Bill Rotsler illustrations, I marked them "By Wm Rotsler" as a means of identification. I am embarrassed to find them stencilled with the handwriting reproduced, as if Bill had signed them in my hand. # Well, Dean, I would've given you credit for that "Here There Be Geigers" title in last time's "Fiction Fantasy" but after I'd said it was an "unreliable report," I didn't think you'd be flattered. # I'll second your desire to watch fighter planes peeling off for a landing; that is a beautiful sight. But even heavy bombers are graceful in air and fun to watch. I'll never forget one day when our bombers came in from a mission when there was a heavy wind blowing, and each one skimmed the runway a long distance before touching, as if some antigravitic device were at work. A truck driver just transferred from the infantry was wild with delight at beholding those pretty landings.

The paperback publisher's answer to Verdan's query in Spaceship, "Why didn't they sell?," in the case of Vonnegut's Player Piano seems to have been, "Because of the title." In any case I disagree with Verdan's theory that "the heroes are too important" in that book, The Space Merchants, and Limbo. Can heroes be too important? There is an older convention than the present one of depicting "average citizens against an average background," and the great writers of the past chose as their protagonists the king of Thebes, the founder of Rome, the prince of Denmark -- the great rulers and nobles of great states. Some of it was mere snobbery, but there is truth in their contention that linking the fate of the hero to the fate of his nation adds a dimension to the story. If Hamlet does not avenge his father's murder, the whole kingdom will continue to be "contracted in one brow of woe." Not just one little man's fortune is at stake, but time is out of joint. I am so sick of reading of the trivial incidents in the lives of insignificant people that I am always pleased to read about Important People. Critics have objected to Henry James' preference for characters of high social standing, and one might answer Verdan with the same argument that has been used against James' critics: there are many levels of society and each contributes significant features to our existence; the novelist who examines life in the upper crust is casting just as much light on the meaning of things as one who deals with life among the lowly, and thus his purpose is as noble. Indeed, if one believes that man determines his own course here on earth, there must be greater significance in a study of those who make decisions than in a study of members of the uncomprehending masses.

Horizons: Harry, it seems to me that you remember less about Walden than about the popular misconceptions of the book. Everyone seems to think that Thoreau intended to go off into the wilderness and live on 27¢ a month; therefore, it comes as a shock to learn that Walden pond was only a few minutes walk from Concord and was, indeed, only a stone's throw from a railroad track. So far as I can see, Thoreau never claimed to be going into the wilderness to live -- he could have gone to the frontier, if he desired that — or to be returning to nature in the Rousseau sense. He had contempt for the "natural man," as I tried to document in my articlette in Skhk #21. His purpose was rather to live the simple life, so often cited as an ideal since classical and biblical times, but seldom lived. As for the fact that he resided only a mile from town, what of that? As he says, "For the most part it is as

BLACK SQUIRREL ON COTTONWOOD LIMB'S TIP

Bright-eyed surmise on a grey twist like my mind:
Flirt-tailed punctuation, fluid sign
That branches, like phrases and mazes,
Never end but link
In aerial conjunction, I'd think
You're a luciferous nuciferous
Metaphysics that I'd like to swallow
Whole. Not for your flesh. To fill a hollow
Lust to interpret me through you, but can see
You know no me nor you, only fear food frenzy;
That tipping your tiny skull as cup, grey bead
Of brain as exquisite shot will bring no readback
Trick of using your eyes in fusing feedback.

Oh, I'd reach beyond the comma of you
To the invisible phrase, the dangling Omega! No use. No act
Of mine or mind denies the ante-cerebellum fact
Of furry you, poised fleetfully, bright flex,
Black reflex, too leaping for me to ink and fix
As period to end what has no period, no, no
End, just quo vadis? quid nunc? cui bono?
Myself am quo quid cui -- quit
Of that big black question mark on branch
Of brain only when Death'll crack me, crunch
Me, chattering quo quid cui
cui
cui?

We too. No wisdom to utter.
You've beauty, flux, and terror
To tell. So've I. And they're
Very hard to mutter
Through so much chatter and stutter.

— PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER

---

solitary where I live as on the prairies. It is as much Asia or Africa as New England....Solitude is not measured by the miles of space that intervene between a man and his fellows." The mere fact that he succeeded in living the simple life he sought -- at least in his own mind -- shows that his location was sufficiently distant from civilization. # I have seen it said that Thoreau occupied another's hut rather than build one for himself. Your description of him "knocking apart someone else's (shack) and reassembling it" is more accurate, but still not the whole truth. He bought a shanty, but evidently he used only the materials from it: the boards, nails (such as were not pilfered by a bystander), two panes of windowglass, and perhaps a latch, hinges, and screws. According to his own story, he cut and hewed the main timbers, studs and rafters for his house, carted stone up the hill from the pond, and built a chimney, dug a cellar, shingled and plastered the house, and built part of the furniture. He also built a small woodshed adjoining, "made chiefly of

the stuff which was left after building the house." # As for his "succumbing to tuberculosis a couple of years later," because of his diet at Walden, perhaps his sojourn weakened his resistance to the disease, but after all, he lived at Walden only 26 months of his life, in 1845-7. His health did not fail, according to the best reports I have read, till sometime after 1859 -- more than a dozen years later. And he did not die till 6 May 1862 -- almost fifteen years after Walden.

Mambo is an unlikely and unhappy name for a fapazine, but I liked it because it proves that you, Samuel, have been limiting yourself severely when you fill Shadowland full of other people's stuff and write very little yourself. It should be the other way around. # News that Dictaphan, the fanzine on Dictaphone Memobelts, has reached its ninth issue, must cause completists to tear their hair. I once attempted to compile a checklist on fanzines-on-wire, but never finished it. Some of the titles were Fuggheads I Have Known #1 (with Laney, Burbee, Condra, and John Barrymore); Station SKHK #1 and #2; Sneary at Bay; The Clean Spool combined with LaGar #1; Happy Jelly (with Speer, Burbee, Laney, Condra, and Widner); On the Stick; God Bless Olympia; and Cass. Here's the annotation for Wild Hair #3 Session (1 hour): "A recording chiefly of gabble picked up at random by Cyrus B.J. Condra's machine at the February 1949 Wild Hair session. Some of this was not erased until May 1950 by recording Turk Murphy airshots."

After all these years Marion Z. Bradley has finally materialized a copy of Day Star! # I was quite impressed with two sections of "Symphonic Suite": "Prelude in a minor key" and "Allegro agitato," although the others had their quality. "Elegie" was too conventional for my taste. On the whole the poem was very impressive, and by half a parsec the best thing you've printed in any amateur magazine. # Most beautiful lines of poetry in the English language? I reprinted one of my favorites as an interlineation once: "The lone singer wonderful causing tears" -- from Walt Whitman. There are many from Whitman. Or how about Dylan Thomas' "Pale rain over the dwindling harbour/And over the sea wet church the size of a snail/With its horns through mist and the castle/Brown as owls..."? And I like "I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight/I got from looking through a pane of glass/I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough/And held against the world of hoary grass..." -- Robert Frost. Then there is "At the round earth's imagined corners, blow / Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise/From death, you numberless infinities/Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go..." -- John Donne. And Keats' "Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam/Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn." I must say I am flattered to be quoted among all those famous poets.

Festura Vegaloose may be the most unlikely title yet. # The not-so-sad tale of the VA administrator who has his office in a library reminds me of the somewhat sadder story of an air force PRO man who had his office in the combat crew library. I was the man and I suffered. The library was a large, well-lighted Quonset, a very quiet and pleasant place in a rustic setting, though it was part of the Headquarters Site, bustling nerve-center of the 492 bomb group at North Pickenham, England. But I hated the place and kicked and screamed so loud that the PRO office was moved out. The reason I hated it was that religious services were held in the place, and I found it hard to bat out PRO news-releases while a priest intoned Kyrie Eleison in the same room. The priest may not have enjoyed my typing noises, either.

I wish I could think of something to say, within the limitations I set in the first paragraph of this department, about Le Zombie. Why didn't Rinehart publish this A-1 Tucker stuff?

I drank enough beer to float an iceberg, if not a Silverberg.

THE CAPTURED CROSS-SECTION

AUGUST DERLETH

It is kind of you to suggest that I might like to answer or comment on Damon Knight's review of Portals of Tomorrow, but there is no need to do so. The reviewer can do no more than express his opinion; he can say in effect, "I liked this story" or "I didn't like this story" and that is his right; his opinion is just as good as mine. If he goes off on a tangent and acts like God, i.e., sets forth without room for argument that so many stories are A, so many are B, so many are C, and that's it, departing from pure opinion, he just becomes a little silly, and nothing more need be said. # As for Knight's remark on page 9, that is wholly uncalled for. However, there is a large group of "hate Derleth" science-fictioneers, for the most part among frustrated writers or critics, and this comment is typical of the lot. They are consumed by envy; they resent my status, forgetting that I, unlike them, am not limited to science fiction or all fantasy; and for the most part they are frankly ignorant, in which class Knight falls when he accuses me of using sf "to get themselves in print" (sic) (i.e., "into print"), for he is so woefully uninformed that he doesn't even know that out of my 75 published books only nine are sf. I hardly need sf to get into print, and the injection of my name in Knight's review of the Moskowitz book was wholly gratuitous and malicious. # For all that Knight says of that magazine he edited in the field, I continue to think that it was one of the best. More of the stories published in its three issues found their way into anthologies, proportionately, than from any three issues of any other magazine in the genre. # Apropos the remarks on page 7 /about Mr Derleth's wedding/. I am enclosing, on loan please, a copy of the news-story in toto, for your amusement. Leroy did a good job, with his usual exaggeration, but the actual statements quoted in Skyhook were lifted out of context and were thus not correct. I wasn't married in a turtleneck sweater. Contrary to Leroy, the priest didn't lock himself into his house (ever try that successfully?), but out of it. # It might interest you to know, too, that I did the foreword for Gore's just published book, Joe Must Go (Messner, $2.95), and that mine was the first signature on the first recall petition. (Wisconsin)

Few couples have had as lively a writeup of their wedding as Leroy Gore gave "Sauk City's gift to the literary racket, agile August Derleth" and his bride, "lovely, 18-year-old Sandra Winters." As both the full writeup and the accompanying cuts proved, Mr Derleth was not married in a turtleneck sweater; in fact, he even wore a tie "of considerable social standing." # Damon knight replies to this letter on the next page, below Jim Harmon's comments.

SAM MOSKOWITZ

In his review last issue of The Editor's Choice in Science Fiction, edited by myself, Damon Knight denied that "I, Robot" by Eando Binder was the story about robots that swung the trend toward telling stories from the robot's viewpoint and casting the robot in a sympathetic rather than a villainous role. Knight lists several stories which he believes prove his point. One of his examples might have had some validity, but he has used that one dishonestly. # Two of Knight's examples, "Twilight" and "Night" by Don A. Stuart, had nothing to do with robots in the sense of "I, Robot." They were mood stories which attempted to humanize machines -- all machines. Raymond Z. Gallun's "Derelict," which knight also mentions, was another mood story attempting the same thing. Furthermore, its robot was not manlike; it was a manufactured creature of completely alien design intended to serve an alien race. More important, these stories, appearing in 1934 and 1935, did not create a trend as "I, Robot" did. # A robot-like machine was the hero and human beings were villains in John Beynon Harris' "The Lost Machine" (Amazing, April 1932), but it started no strong trend be-

cause the robot involved was a Martian robot in Martian form. # Another of Damon Knight's examples -- the most important of them -- was "Helen O'Loy" by Lester del Rey. This tale might be credited with starting the robots-treated-sympathetically trend instead of "I, Robot" but for two things: (1) It appeared after "I, Robot"; and (2) the story did not start the trend. # "Helen O'Loy" appeared in Astounding, December 1938, while "I, Robot" appeared in Amazing, January 1939. From this it would appear that "Helen O'Loy" preceded "I, Robot," but it didn't, and I can prove it. In 1938 Astounding appeared on the fourth Friday of the month; it was dated only one month ahead. The December 1938 issue appeared on the fourth Friday of November 1938. Amazing was dated two months in advance; its issues always appeared on the closest distribution date to the tenth of the month. Therefore, the January 1939 Amazing, containing the history-making "I, Robot," appeared on the stands about 10 November 1938, while the December 1938 Astounding, containing "Helen O'Loy" -- which Knight claims preceded "I, Robot" -- did not appear till the last Friday of November 1938 — two weeks or more later. # The distribution dates are announced in the magazines themselves during that period, and evidence of the fact that ASF was never dated more than one month in advance can be found in Fantasy News for Sunday, November 13, 1938. I wrote the item (though it was unsigned) simply as a form of insurance against Damon Knight trying to pull a fast one on me sixteen years later! # Finally, while "I, Robot" caused a furor at the time, "Helen O'Loy" won only second place in the Analytical Laboratory of February 1939. It didn't start a big enough reaction at the time to begin a new trend in robot stories. In fact, by 1947 Lester del Rey was almost the forgotten man of science fiction, and only since the publication of his outstanding collection, And Some Were Human (Prime Press, 1948), has "Helen O'Loy" received the recognition it unquestionably deserves. (New Jersey)

JIM HARMON

You saved damon knight's book reviews for fandom!!! Well, why the hell can't you mind your own business? Personally, damon (guess why I use a small letter? No. Yeah.) makes me simply york. Admittedly, he's devilishly destructive (like a small boy with a screw driver) but science fiction gets ripped apart by enough critics who don't know what they are talking about for me to glee very much over seeing sf torn apart by a critic who does know what he's talking about. It still just leaves shreds, no matter how fine you slice it. Destruction for destruction's sake, I frequently suspect. Critics as a class affect me adversely. Take Groff Conklin: "Merritt is juvenile trash," G. C. 1953; "Wonderful to get reprints of these fine old Merritt melodramas," G. C. 1954. Not knowing or caring what you said from one time to the next can be praised as the working of an unprejudiced, ever-developing mind. It also might be regarded as not knowing what you're talking about. # P. Schuyler Miller is the only sf critic to win my respect as a critic. The man's mental horizons make knight's look like he is peering through a pinhole. Miller can appreciate Tom Swift as Tom Swift, H. G. Wells as Wells, and Heinlein as Heinlein; he knows Tom Swift was never meant to compete with Wells or Heinlein and shouldn't be ridiculed for that. I wonder if knight has ever seriously considered this staggering thought? He's probably been too busy picking flies off wings. (Illinois)

DAMON KNIGHT

Derleth is mistaken (a) when he says that "the reviewer can do no more than express his opinion," and that one opinion is as good as another. The reviewer's job is to state a judgment and give reasons. I try to do so, even when I have to cram sixteen stories into one review. Some of this, moreover, is not subjective at all -- e.g., it would be possible, though no fun, to go through the back files and pull out a fistful of stories with the same one-punch plot Mack Reynolds used in "D.P. from Tomorrow." "Pure cliche" is shorthand for this; similar shorthand appears elsewhere in the review, but in two cases I've spelled out the criticisms at length. One reason for giving reasons is precisely to make it possible for a defender of the work to make a rational

reply; however, this seldom happens; (b) when he complains that I don't "even know that out of /his/ 75 published books only nine are sf." I could hardly have missed the staggeringly long list of Derleth's published works; it's appeared often enough in his anthologies. I did not say that he needs the aegis of modern sf to get himself in print; I said he uses it. He does. I also said I could stand him, and I can; (c) when he takes time off to criticize my grammar: see Webster's; (d) even, regrettably, when he compliments me. Worlds Beyond, of which I was sole editor and factotum, was not the magazine I was talking about in the review of Moskowitz' anthology; and although most of the new stories in WB have turned up in hard covers, Galaxy's the champion -- 100 per cent anthologized for months (years?) at a stretch. # I'd cheerfully answer Jim Harmon, but I can't make out whose words he's throwing in my teeth -- not mine, certainly. His first two sentences are beautiful, though. (Pennsylvania)

ISAAC ASIMOV I enjoyed the summer 1954 issue of Skyhook tremendously. Thank you for sending it and please keep them coming. Most of all I enjoyed damon knight's comments, as I always do wherever they appear. Golly, I wish he would sometime pen a thousand words or so on one of my books. Even if he ripped it apart, I somehow feel I would learn something in the process and be the better man for it. How damon can be so cruel as to write as little as he does, I don't know. He is one of the names I consistently look for on the contents page with all the eagerness of the neophyte. # Since William Atheling Jr does the handsome thing in the issue and apologizes graciously for personal remarks, it is only fair to say that I accept his apology without reservation and, for my part, am completely and honestly without hard feelings. I am sensitive to personal criticism as I said in my previous letter and no doubt many casual acquaintances may mistake the malignant expression that naturally appears on my face in repose for inner suffering. # Incidentally, Bob Bloch's comments about having introduced me with "a series of scurrilous insults" will fool no one. Anyone who knows Bob, however casually, will know that he is an authentic sweet guy and right joe whose most "scurrilous" insult couldn't scratch the skin of the most sensitive man alive. (Massachusetts)

ROBERT BLOCH Hooray! Skyhook, though delayed, is well worth waiting for. From "A Barrel of Apples" right straight through to the excerpt from Huck, there wasn't a single item which didn't attest to the high level of your creative ingenuity or editorial selectivity. Damon knight belongs in your pages -- by which I mean high and deserved praise to you both. # Perhaps I'd better set Joe Gibson straight, though, regarding my little TV spoof. /"Father, Son, and Unholy Ghost," Skhk #21/. So happens I have observed the metropolitan reaction. # For the sake of the record, when TV arrived in Milwaukee, in 1949, I was the inmate of a local advertising agency. I had a hand in the concoction of the first "live" half-hour local show produced there: wrote commercials for the medium for five years: in addition wrote about 50 kiddy shows: still do some squibs and bits for a show: have appeared and still appear from time to time there as a guest and panelist. In addition, our agency misrepresented the distributors of RCA Victor, Philco, Zenith, and Motorola -- I wrote all their ads for years on the statewide level. Many of my close personal friends were and are TV directors, producers, actors. And heaven knows, I watched the craze from the audience level all during this time. So I'm not entirely naive when it comes to observing the phenomenon. I know there is a transition, and people get to the point where they talk back to the commercials in time, but what alarms me is that very few reach the stage of just turning off their set and ignoring the glop. # There's good stuff to be seen, and I don't condemn the medium: merely the uncritical attitude towards it on the part of the great majority. # And for Joe's information, I wrote my little squib on the basis of Mr H. Melville's remark in Moby Dick: "A laugh's the wisest,

easiest answer to all that's queer." Queer indeed it seems to me that people have come to accept without question the Authority of TV. Joe is worried above arriving at a "workable code of justice we haven't yet defined" which can save us -- "but what is it?" I'd suggest that one of the approaches to the answer may lie in the establishment of a sound set of individual values. And that's where the sort of passive acceptance of TV standards is a bit dangerous, I think. People whose idea of comedy evolves from a program where the laughs are actually "dubbed in" in tape -- who believe that some crewcutted hornrimmer is a Supreme Authority because he can read the answers off a prepared script on his desk -- who think a news commentator is a Genius -- who think politicians write their own speeches and do their own thinking -- such people are perilously close to complete conformity. # What is worse, they are perfectly willing to live a passive life. You quote Thoreau in Skyhook, and some of the readers may actually, as a result, go out and look up old Hank and give him a whirl. But Mr Godfrey can also quote Thoreau to his ends: and the trouble is, the majority of his viewers get a distorted notion that Godfrey wrote the stuff, or at the very least that Godfrey took the time and trouble to read Thoreau and dig out the quote for himself. What is worse, they almost all embrace the belief that as long as they have Mr Godfrey to bring them an occasional hunk of Thoreau interspersed with the lavatory-humor, they don't have to do any Thoreau-reading themselves. That's my point. # I think Joe is wrong, though, when he says you and I don't have a truly low sense of humor. In all frankness, I am not one to pan lavatory-humor, or bedpan it, either. But my hat is off to the guy who will originate the stuff, rather than to the one who merely repeats it and thinks that makes him a Komical Kuss. And the TV habit leads to secondhand observation, secondhand thinking, a name-dropping, quote-existence. The world needs more original thinking and less parroting, whether it's in pornography or any other branch of philosophy. (Wisconsin)

RICHARD ENEY

That ghostly stem on your sun/flower was indeed effective. # "Behind the Eighth Ball" was somewhat staggering. I thought of Plato seriously imitating Cleon. # Your announcement of Atheling's absence must have leaked out ahead of publication. Certainly! When the warm air from the sighs of relief heaved by every sf author in the USA mixed with the high pressure areas over the Gulf, the...or did that explanation for the hurricane season occur to you, too? # In what manner is the sex urge of humans different from that of animals, except that we write poems and make interlineations about it? And if it were, I doubt philosophers would have much to say to technicians in the installation of it. Even if they brushed the religionists out of the way, which philosophers would you choose? Wait a minute, though -- building a brain for a humanoid robot would be a wonderful way to elevate philosophy to the status of an experimental science, wouldn't it? (USAH, 8142 AU, APO 5, San Francisco, California)

GREGG CALKINS

"Twippledop," as usual, was excellent and quite the high point of the mag. By the way, I liked your little green Skyhook emblem on the masthead, but I'll be damned if "The individualist quarterly of science fiction" explains anything to me. If I were an outsider or a neofan I think I'd be much better off with a word like "fanzine." That string of words confuses me before I begin, let alone after I finish. # "A Knight in the Library" was exceptional even for so fine a fanzine as Skyhook. "F&SF: A Leisurely Review" was not quite as good this time, I'm afraid; the first part was outstanding. This instalment was merely good and seemed to descend into the "I" department, which always leads into the "knows" and "hears." # "The Captured Cross-Section" is remarkable. You must receive some wonderful letters to be able to capture these words. (2817 - 11th street, Santa Monica, California)

I get more wonderful letters than I can publish. Thanks to all who've written.

"Snow falling and night falling fast oh fast
In a field I looked into going past,
And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,
But a few weeds and stubble showing last.
The woods around it have it -- it is theirs.
All animals are smothered in their lairs.
I am too absent-spirited to count;
The loneliness includes me unawares.
And lonely as it is that loneliness
Will be more lonely ere it will be less --
A blanker whiteness of benighted snow
With no expression, nothing to express.
They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars -- on stars where no human race is.
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places."

-- Robert Frost,
"Desert Places"

"Some writers are referred to as 'great story tellers.' They are usually men of pronounced talent whose artistic intelligence and conscience function intermittantly. They resemble the little girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead. When they are good they are very, very good, but their performances are apt to be uneven. Some critics hold that this is because they are more interested in the <u>story</u> they are telling than in the way in which they tell it. As a matter of fact, they reverse Aristotle's formula, according to which characters and incidents are included in a play for the sake of the main action, since 'the end is everything': they fail because they have not thought <u>enough</u> about the story they are telling."

-- Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate,
<u>The House of Fiction</u>

"It is not conducive to the real strength of liberalism that it should occupy the intellectual field alone. Mill, at odds with Coleridge all down the intellectual and political line, nevertheless urged all liberals to become acquainted with this powerful conservative mind. He said that the prayer of every true partisan of liberalism should be, '"Lord, enlighten thou our enemies..."; sharpen their wits, give them acuteness to their perceptions and consecutiveness and clearness to their reasoning powers. We are in danger from their folly, not from their wisdom: their weakness is what fills us with apprehension, not their strength.' What Mill meant, of course, was that the intellectual pressure which an opponent like Coleridge could exert would force liberals to examine their position for its weaknesses and complacencies."

-- Lionel Trilling,
<u>The Liberal Imagination</u>

"Say what you have to say, not what you ought. Any truth is better than make-believe. Tom Hyde, the tinker, standing on the gallows, was asked if he had anything to say. 'Tell the tailors,' he said, 'to remember to make a knot in their thread before they take the first stitch.' His companion's prayer is forgotten."

-- Henry David Thoreau,
<u>Walden</u>