

entire
contents
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1960
by
a.j. budrys
--
a churl

Once, long ago, there was a happy land far, far, away, where all the people were people except for one, who was a bear. He lived in the village with his mother and father and all the other people, and for some time he was just a good citizen of the community.

One day, however, he was standing around and watching a bird fly over the village, when he noticed something.

He said: "I notice that the bird has flown away over the mountains that surround this village. What's on the other side of the mountains?"

"Mountains," answered the Mayor, who was standing nearby. "And villages much like this one."

"How do you know?" asked the bear. "Nobody ever leaves the village, so how do you know, really, what's on the other side of the mountains?"

"It stands to reason," the Mayor replied, and the other villagers nodded their heads, saying: "There, now, he really put it in a nutshell."

The bear scratched his head. "Maybe I'll just amble up over those mountains and check your reasoning," said he mildly...

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Once again, the management wish to acknowledge their continuing debt to Lawrence T. Shaw, Esq., none genuine without the brown jar and the picture of Shirley Temple on the label.

uncle ajay's sacktime sagas #2
"The Curious Bear" continued within

"Oh, no you don't!" the villagers cried, pouncing on him and wrapping chains around him. "We need you to do the Spring plowing!" And the bear wasn't allowed to say anything.

Late that night, however, the bear managed to pull and rub at the chains until he was able to scrape out of them, and without saying a word to anyone, he limped off down the road and across the fields to the mountains.

When the townspeople awoke in the morning, they saw the bear had rebelled against their authority, and sent dogs after him. In a while, they could hear the baying and snarling and barking far away like music on the mountainside, and after a while a few of the dogs came crawling back to the village with patches torn out of their hides and bits of fur stuck between their teeth. And there was no further news for several days.

Then the bear could be seen coming back across the fields, and everyone rushed to meet him. "Well, Mr. Smarty-Pants, what's on the other side of the mountains?" everyone asked as the bear came into the village and sat down to rest his feet for a minute.

"Mountains," the bear said. "And villages like this one."

"Ah hah!" the people said. "Didn't we tell you?"

"Mm, yes," the bear admitted unhappily. "It looks now as if I'll just have to find some way to be contented here." And he ate them all up.

Ah, sing a song of postage;
Snag fingernails on staples--
Postal Regulations as thick
as sugar maples!
When the sap is rising
Toward Form 3547,
Bow to Arthur Summerfield
But roll your eyes toward Heaven!

Those of you who wondered will be pleased to learn your wild surmises were correct...last ~~issue's~~ mailing list was drawn from the FA for Mailing 89, y'rs truly having misplaced #90. Why is that? (See also the editorial note a few pages on.)

memoirs:

The Rollo Transit Corporation--"Roll with Rollo"--services the New York-Asbury Park bus route, on which I dwell seemingly no matter where I move to, and which is an infinitely better way of getting to New York than the God-damned railroad.

Some years ago, when the figure known to me by hearsay as "Old Man Rollo" was still living, all Rollo busses stopped at an inn and curb-service hamburgery in Keyport, which is Rollo's home base. The inn, of course, was also owned and operated by Old Man Rollo, and the Keyport hiatus was probably the only half-hour rest stop in the world to be scheduled into the middle of a two-hour run.

It was on one of these sojourns in charcoal-broiled purgatory that I happened to glance at the fellow in the seat across the aisle. Like me, he was probably too broke to take advantage of Mr. Rollo's U.S. Patented process for carbonizing sausages. I saw, with a thrill of shock much like the one I feel whenever I run across someone else named Algis, that he was reading a paperback science fiction novel. Furthermore, one of the damned good ones.

Now I very rarely meet anyone casually who read science fiction before 1950, or who reads it now well enough to remember authors' names or the titles of their stories. In short, I've never met a real fan by accident--not since the War, anyway. So I wasn't about to start any conversations with this fellow across the aisle on the strength of boredom and a mutual interest that might not be mutual at all. But then, to my considerable astonishment, I saw him open an attache case and take out a 1939 Amazing which he had evidently bought in a secondhand store earlier in the day and was now taking home to complete his collection, or something. I decided that the way to approach him was to let him know instantly that I had felt the same lash he himself had doubtless suffered under on many an occasion. Leaning across the aisle, I said: "Read that crazy Buck Rogers stuff, do you?"

He looked up, then stared thoughtfully down at the book and magazine in his lap, and said in a bemused voice: "You're right--the stuff isn't much good, is it?" He brushed the '39 Amazing and the half-read novel to the floor and, turning back to me, said: "Thank you." Then he sat there, his chin in his hand, gazing vacantly out his window, and the smell of burnt hot dogs was thicker than ever in the muggy air of Old Man Rollo's rest stop.

grot:

First of all, there is the overpowering impression of being a functioning organism. The accustomed silent indraw and out-push of breath is replaced by a hollow sigh and a wet rushing. As the pressure increases--and this is true even of the slightest upward inching from 14 p.s.i.--there is a tightening in the chest, and the consciousness of the need to breathe deeply and calmly --above all, calmly, if the distorted muscles of your mouth are not to let a sudden jet of water spurt into the back of your throat--increases toward a breaking point. If you cannot manage your way past this point, you must stop and go back up. If, on the other hand, you can train yourself to accept this new vibration in yourself as an ordinary and normal part of the universe, then you can go on.

Somewhere around six feet--the surface is still a silver mirror very near your head, and you can see yourself waiting up there to welcome you when you return--the squeaking in your ears begins. Now you press one hand over your mask, and blow out through your nose. There is a rush of snorting air through all the passages of your head, and suddenly you know, as you have never known before, how complex and cavernous this simple grinning skull can be. Then your ears bang open with the sound of a heavy door being unseated from its gaskets, and once again you are free to hear the welcome reptilian hiss of your buddy's regulator, off out of sight somewhere beyond the constricting lip of your mask, but close enough to hear.

The currents in the water bubble past your ears. The stream of the exhaust from your single-hose regulator flutters the edge of your mask, and water seeps in. You roll over, press all but the lower left corner of your mask tightly against your face, and once again there is an explosion in your head as you snort into the mask and the water is blown out.

The handle of your knife tinks against the rear weight on your belt. You arch your back to direct your narrow field of view toward the bottom, and your tank scrapes its bottom against that same weight. A little water goes down your throat from the corners of your mouth, and you cough into the regulator mouthpiece. More water bubbles in. You could blow it out, but this is river water, so you might as well drink it. The gulp of your Adam's apple pops your ears.

Down on the bottom, the rocks are rolling in the current, and somewhere far away--miles away, perhaps--there is a sound like a fishing reel spinning frantically. Later, when you come up, you'll forget to ask your buddy whether he heard it too, and what he thinks it might be. One thing it couldn't have been is a

fishing reel, for the events of the air-enclosed world are shut out as soon as the water has closed over your head and the last dragged-in bubble of air has detached itself from your body and your gear and has gone singing up the short way to the top.

On the bottom, the buckle of your weight belt scrapes across a rock. You reach for a handhold against the force of the current, and sand grates as the rock stirs in its bed. You abandon the hold, and the rock thuds into place again.

This is the silent world...this place of fluttering and squeaking; this self-contained area of no-gravity, where every homely sound is menacing until identified and rendered harmless to the mind, and the one anchor to safety and the old, familiar ways of the loud, sane world of the air is the quiet, menacing sound of your buddy, somewhere out of sight but very close behind you.

.....

The next day is different. The river is shallow, but running very fast, and it is about a hundred yards wide. The plan is to cross it on the bottom, tied together by about ten feet of line. Swimming is out, but by working from handhold to handhold across the rocky bed you can probably do it without being edged far downstream. Your buddy has a compass, and even though the river is silty and visibility is about six feet at best, there shouldn't be any trouble. The line is looped around your weight belt and your buddy's, and when you tested it yesterday by pulling as hard as you could, the plastic sheathing of the braided cotton line cut into your palms, but never broke. Even if it should, there's no danger of any appreciable kind--the surface is near, a man will be up there with a boat, and the worst that could happen is that you might get swept downstream a few hundred feet before you re-took control of the situation. A safe danger--the best kind.

Halfway across, you feel slack in the line. You pull it in, and there is the empty loop that had been around your buddy's belt, like the shoe on the stairs with the foot still in it.

Now you don't want to surface. Now you want to lie hugging the bottom, under the worst of the current. The cold water has slowed your thinking, but you don't know this. You cling to a boulder with one hand, and reach behind your back. The knife is gone out of its sheath, and that's the last floating knife you'll buy. But still you stay under, for here in the water, with its accustomed ways and your clear eyes you can see, but if you surface you leave your unseen lower body in the water.

Slowly, it works its way into your head that this is not the Zambesi or the Amazon but the upper Delaware. You laugh outrageously, and the mouthpiece pops free. You catch it and push it back between your teeth.

But now you have a problem. Correct procedure for this situation is to blow out the mouthpiece with your exhalation. But you've already wasted that. Now your mouthpiece is full of water and you need a breath, but if you breathe you will draw water into your lungs.

Drink it. But you need the air now. You could surface, but with no air in your lungs your bouyancy is negative, and you might not make it in time, while the effort of kicking upward will burn out what remaining oxygen is still in your bloodstream, and you'll lose consciousness, under water in a strong current with a full mouthpiece.

Hit the quick-release buckle on the weight belt, then, and shoot up--well, not shoot up, but tumble up quickly, into the main force of the water, and hope to come up in time for a breath?

It all goes through your head, every bit of this, and then you simply reach up to your regulator and push a button. A blast of air comes down the hose, and the water's out. You breathe. A handy little device--a selling point, unique with the Snark II model regulator, which you've trained yourself never to use because it wastes air. You surface, now, without dropping the weight belt --you hate to drop a good weight belt; you hate to drop anything into the water, because once you've done that, somehow anyone else can find it and keep it, but you can't. You can look yourself blue in the face for it. Part of the rules.

So now you're up, beside the waiting boat, and a hundred yards downstream you see your buddy, searching for you, and you look at each other like two Negroes in a crowd of ofays, across that distance. Later you learn your buddy's quick release fouled on a rock, and he damned near lost his belt, and did lose the loop of line, but now, as you put one hand on the gunwale of the boat and it drifts downstream toward your buddy you laugh up at the people in the boat, because now you're back in the safe danger again; this afternoon you can go and buy a new knife, and discuss the new technique you'll use to cross the river tomorrow, but my God, man, don't ever laugh down in the water again.

Your attention is directed to: Speculative Review
 From Dick Eney, 417 Ft. Hunt Rd., Alexandria, Virginia.
 Available for letters of comment, exchanges, or 3 for 25¢, 3 for 2/ in the sterling area. (A dubious unsolicited service)

how's that again?

7

Bob Lichtman tells me dubious had a predecessor in a SAPSzine named Dubious. Obviously, the two are nothing alike, but if the previous tenant objects, I'll do something about it. Otherwise, no title changes are planned here for at least a year.

However, there is now a new publishing policy in effect. Dubious is going genzine, with no fixed schedule whatsoever, and the tentative plan to follow FAPA deadlines has been abandoned. New issues will appear as new material accumulates, and the bulk of it will continue to accumulate from me. Otherwise, all previous policy statements hold good.

Algirdas Jonas Budrys is the full legal name, and, occasionally, when pressed by red tape, I even use it. Algis Budrys is the most prolific of my bylines. Not Algis J., not A.J. Budrys, nor any other variation. Just plain Algis Budrys, of which Algis is to Algirdas as Joe is to Joseph, only not so frequently. But only as a byline. My friends, including my excellent wife, call me A.J., or Ajay, or Ayjay--I never know exactly which, until some of them happen to spell it out, and I don't care which. I don't like being called Al.

Gregg Calkins wants to know whether "Door into Summer" and "Star Beast" were also cut by F&SF, and how come Campbell gets his readers to go for long serials if Boucher/Mills can't.

It seems to me, to answer the second question first, that F&SF's audience is inherently different from that of any other sf magazine. From the beginning, the appeal was to the literati, and, very sensibly, the appeal was in the form of short stories and occasional cautious novelettes. Sensibly, that is, if you agree with me (and presumably Tony Boucher) that the "serious" literary readership is more accustomed to seeing its fare in short form, as in the Atlantic and Harpers, where novels and longer pieces are excerpted, and short stories are the rule. I rather suspect that this readership is suspicious of magazine serials in full. In any case, a novel is much less likely, these days, to have literary merit.

This hard-core audience is, I think (and Bob Mills seems to think) still the backbone of F&SF's readership. Tangential to all this is the reported fact that a marked drop in circulation resulted from the publication of Bring The Jubilee in one gulp. This could be taken to indicate that F&SF's audience prefers stories that can be read in twenty minutes or a half hour sandwiched into a busy schedule--or a short retention span, if you prefer.

How much actual truth there is in all this surmising, no one knows. It is, however, a fact that "Star Beast" failed to raise the cir-

culatation. "Door Into Summer," which lacked the virtue of being the first Heinlein serial in quite some time, also had no noticeable good effect. It may be as a consequence of these things that the first serial Bob Mills edited at F&SF was cut to two installments. I gather that Mills would just as lief publish full novels he thinks are publishable and interesting, but that he suspects the readers do not agree with this view. Accordingly, "Starship Soldier" may have been a test. F&SF is a special case in so many ways that it really can't be considered the same kind of publication that ASF and Galaxy are...the suspicion grows that, except for fandom, they share practically no readers between them.

And I think that if you will read over the paragraph above once more, you will find that I've also answered the first question. One more thought occurs to me--but I warn you I'm not a disinterested party in the matter--which is that Venture may very well have suffered from being so closely tied in with F&SF and F&SF's audience. This is not to say that it would have survived the current slump if the identical magazine had not been identified as a stablemate of F&SF. Nobody can guess about that, but I rather think it would not have. But it might not have died so young, or left such a good-looking corpse, in the light of the quality and nature of some of the prozines which did manage to stagger on for some time afterward. And I would much rather it had left a matured corpse, if it was going to leave one at all.

Bob Pavlat wants to know am I going to be at the Pittcon. I want to know, too. Nobody ever tells me anything.

Sid Coleman: Your quote from G. Ratray Taylor is a variation on a theme by Richard McKenna, not Budrys. And I warn you all, on Sid Coleman's experience, that sending me mail addressed to Long Beach, New Jersey, will get you nowhere, or, at best, to Long Beach, New York, where many a happy night of mine was spent in the parking lot behind the railroad station, but where I never ask for mail.

Wyatt Earp will be the subject of a brief little essay sometime in the future. Meanwhile, I am grateful to various contributors of valuable data, one of whom, a Mr. Ashworth, has taken advantage of my offer and asked me one soggy question in return: "What will the rockets push against out there when ther's no air?"

I must confess I don't know, but a search through the letter columns of the 1937 Astounding--Can that date possibly be right? Maybe it was a year or two later--will reveal that a Mr. Taurasi was also preoccupied with this problem, and the solution he suggested to Mr. Campbell was that all spaceships carry sand to

scatter behind them. Mr. Campbell's reply was short and somewhat cryptic, but I commend it to you all for whatever it may be worth in the consideration of this baffling mystery.

Norman Metcalf asks whether I ever received some mail he sent me c/o Pyramid Books. The answer is no, but I wish I had. My advice to all of you is never to send anything but First Class mail c/o publishers, and even then not to be bemused when nothing happens.

Robert and Roberta Rucker have written one of their heart-warming letters in reaction to dubious 1, but are surprised to find me so hedonistic in its pages. So am I. I had no idea I was doing it. I can only say to any and all of you who are staying up nights wondering what's gotten into Budrys, that it's not worth it. I'm still, underneath it all, the same solemn fellow. (A solemn, of course, is a sorry golem. A sorry golem is defined as a tally scored by pure mischance, as by tripping and falling backward across the opponent's end-zone marker while attempting to run the ball in the wrong direction.)

Walter Breen: You may be right. However, while retreat into one's own mind, or into a colony of like-minded people, is a perfectly valid solution to the problem posed by the nature of the world--and a solution which I myself have often been much inclined to apply--it is a personal solution only. It seems to me that the true liberal humanitarian--I assume the two words are nearly synonymous--must concern himself with applying practical solutions which effect the general case, rather than the particular. In order to do so, it seems to me, he must first have an exact idea of what humanity is, and of all the organizational schemes which might be offered to it. In that light, it is absolutely essential that the humanitarian liberal expose himself to as many repugnant social doctrines as possible, for any doctrine which is to his liking is, ipso facto, one which is comfortable to humanitarian liberals--a very small, atypical, and unrepresentative sampling of humanity as a whole. Any doctrine which pleases an atypical minority is almost sure to be displeasing to the majority, and vice versa. Consequently, repugnance is not a test of practicality. Applicability is, however, and I see nothing in the Heinlein body of work that is inapplicable to humanity as I observe it. Perhaps your observations differ, but it seems to me that the view from within an enclave such as the one which appeals to both of us is bound to be narrower than the one from the position I have outlined above. It is nothing against Heinlein if he makes such a scheme as attractive as he can, for it would surely be so presented in the real world. The only possible logical objection to his presentation would be to an instance of patent deviation from the logic of human psychology, and no such example can be found, I think.

New Products:

The Smith-Corona electric portable typewriter has apparently failed to storm the general market, and is consequently selling well below its list price. I acquired mine for \$120.00 plus my practically unsalvageable mechanical portable, and I could have done better if I had not insisted on time payments despite my zero credit rating.

I bought it because, after seventeen years of one-fingered typing, one-handed driving, and general refusal to use my left hand for anything but not knowing what my right hand was doing, my shoulder packed up and it was either learn touch-typing on an electric machine or go into the street-singing business. For my purposes--I do a lot of running around from here to New York to God Knows Where--and considering the prices on electric office models, the portable was the best answer. It may be likewise for you, too.

It seems to be a reliable, reasonably flexible machine. As a typewriter, it does not measure up to the performance of the Olympia portable, for one example, though it is at least as good as any U.S. portable. It does not have a half-line space, or a half-character space. It has the highly impractical "page gage" method of determining how far down the page you are typing, but because of the presence of this device, the standard length platen is widened enough to take a business envelope without wrinkling it. Wider platens and special typefaces--not particularly well-designed ones--are available on order.

The carriage return is not powered. Only the keyboard is. As standard features, the hyphen/underline key and the spacebar repeat when held down. Any other key may be set up to do so. There are touch and impression controls--effective ones--so that a hard touch can be combined with a light impression, and vice versa. Our laboratory recommends the use of silk ribbons, and our dealer recommends not depending on the red half of a black-red ribbon.

There is a universal tab including fly-off clearing, and other attractive features include a motor drawing only 44 watts, AC, and a very full keyboard. Annoyances, apart from the machine's inability to keep from swallowing the last few sheets in a multiple carbon sandwich, are the sliding card tabs which cut half an inch off the effective length of the typing line, and the inhuman chuckle with which the motor's idler pulley bounces up and down on the drive belt.

But it goes like hell when approached with the proper degree of skill, and you can go at it for hours without tiring. It may be damned useful to you.

Two years ago, an analysis of 120 Gold Medal and Crest novels yielded the following common storyline:

--A mature, self-reliant hero trained in undercover warfare becomes involved in larger events through the agency of a close personal friend. Shortly after the hero enters the story, the friend is killed and the hero sets off in pursuit of his killers. He becomes involved with a woman, a villain, and another woman, all of whom are at cross-purposes with him. One of the women is in league with the villain. The other will become the hero's property after he has killed the villain in personal combat. At least the villainous woman will meanwhile have slept with him. As a result of the working out of this personal story, the larger events will reach a satisfactory conclusion in accord with current U.S. mores.--

service: From time to time, dubious will carry an extra section under this heading. Whenever this occurs, the mailing list will be temporarily expanded to include an additional number of recipients for whom the included material may be of interest. Such individuals will find a checkmark appearing in the "service" box beside their names on the mailing wrapper. Permanent retention on the mailing list is available to anyone writing in and asking for it specifically. Any member of the permanent mailing list may ask to have the service section excluded from his copy, and whenever the makeup of the issue permits, this request will be honored.

These novels, of course, were restricted to recognizable entries in the Foreign Intrigue category, and so this analysis represents only the particular

sub-type of this category which Fawcett chose to market in this manner. Gold Medal is the original paperback line here, and Crest is the reprint label. In general, both publish the same kind of Foreign Intrigue material, but the Gold Medal stories are more recognizably constructed to these standards than are the Crest.

So far, so good. But this kind of derived formula can be useless or even misleading unless a number of other precepts are kept in mind. These are general observations of other essential elements, some derived from the same source and some from ordinary experience; unlike the particularized skeleton above, they are as applicable to other types of commercial fiction as they are to this particular category:

A unified frame of reference must be assumed and followed. That is, the writer must have a firm mental picture of the kind of world in which this story could take place, and must never violate the logic of that world. If he sees that world and its people as being totally amoral, then the only legitimate use for a moral character, motivation, or line of dialogue is as comic relief. Perhaps the simplest way to state it would be to say that the writer must make himself a citizen of that world.

Direct statement of motivation and objective is always the technique of choice. Subtlety may be exercised by the characters upon one another, but never on the reader.

Every incident and line of dialogue must directly advance the plot. Ideally, nothing should appear in the story which is not a dynamic and essential part of that story.

One of the most important things to remember in this connection is that all the important characters must have force and motion. It is of paramount importance to keep the villain moving as energetically and skillfully as the hero, though it is of course not necessary to go into as much continuous detail in describing his movements. It is necessary that the villain have as legitimate a motive for his actions as does the hero, and that their clash be a motivational one. The villain, in short, must be an inverted hero--he cannot appear in the book only as a figure against which the hero may break lances of his own choosing.

To an appropriate extent, the same things must be true of the villainous woman and of the good one. Perhaps the only permissible exception to this rule is the character who plays the hero's friend. His function in the book is to die, and he must exercise it at the most advantageous plot-turn.

It seems to me that the paragraph immediately above begs the question, and that in any case it is high time it was asked: Why? Why does the formula take these particular twists, and for what reasons do these general principles apply?

I don't know. That is, I have no assurance that I have isolated some great Universal Truth, and thereby accomplished a description of an absolute standard toward which all commercial novels of this type must strive. Or, in other words, the following consistent (I think) analysis works for me, but is probably only a working hypothesis which may be of no use whatsoever to anyone else.

First of all, I assumed that this particular formula--being derived rather than explicitly stated by someone at Fawcett, but being clearly present in a number of successful books over a long period of time--fulfilled some kind of expectation on the part of the readership. If it is, indeed, a response to a demand, then it ought to be possible to examine it and extract the shape of the demand--to get at why this story satisfies a large number of people who buy entertainment in this form.

Well, since the commercial novel is intended to entertain--that is, to divert the reader--it likely follows that the universe pictured in commercial novels diverges from the universe in which the reader lives. And, since the reader of commercial novels shares the common human trait of being inherently logical, though not a logician, it follows that the universe depicted in commercial novels, whatever its relationship to reality, will be self-consistent; logical on its own terms, however primitive those may be. This study proceeds on the assumption that these two propositions are true. Now, if they are taken as true, then we can postulate that the universe of the commercial novel is probably in some kind of one-to-one relationship with reality, for several reasons: One, it would be an easy universe for the writer to describe without faltering. Two, it would be an easy universe for the reader to grasp--and the less effortful his grasp, the better.

Working from that, we can proceed to a detailed description of the hero; the viewpoint character with whom the reader is to identify.

He is never at a total loss. By his very nature, he is largely independent of environmental pressure. He is never faced with a setback for which he has no response whatsoever. The initiative is never out of his hands for long. He is, for lagniappe, physically dangerous to other men, and attractive to women.

This man, we may assume, is the reader written larger. Not only larger, however, but much less complex. And it is the latter of these two attributes which may be the more attractive.

Anyone, after all, may acquire physical strength, a measure of dexterity, and training. But very few people are free to do so. They are tied to a routine which, if they are storekeepers, for example, prevents their having the time to learn judo. Or so, at least, most people might be inclined to feel. So it is the hero's freedom--underscored by his ability to manipulate his environment, but established by the nature of the less demanding world in which he lives--which is probably the key to what makes him a desirable object for reader identification.

If we find such a hero in these novels--and we do--and if we hold to the opinion that the universe of the commercial fiction story is self-consistent--and we postulate that it is, for it takes a rare kind of mind to follow and enjoy illogicality--then it follows that the universe is much like its inhabitant; more assured, better organized, harsher and more attractive than life. Its events will all follow logically and clearly from its basic premises, whatever those might be. Its inhabitants will all either always know exactly what they are doing or will have logical grounds for their errors. Nothing they do will be based on the universe that is. In a paper universe, it is insanity--illogic--to base an action on the ways and wants of the universe of flesh and blood.

This, I think, is the most important thing for the writer of commercial novels to remember; that once the paper world has been established, it is not permissible to touch upon reality. I have been jarred, time and again, by characters in Foreign Intrigue novels who regret their murders, except for practical reasons, once they have fairly moved into the world of Foreign Intrigue. I am always disconcerted to encounter genuine lust, or genuine love, in a novel of this type, when properly considered lust is what is to be done with any woman, while love is an emotion with which the hero was once endowed, but which he lost some time before the story opens. (Here, again, we see the reader, with his high school passions magnified into an epic of romance, but lost, now, in mundane conjugal relations, and remembered fondly.)

So, ultimately, the most important choice to make in setting out to create a commercial novel is the choice not of a protagonist, nor even of an intriguing setting, but, rather, of the kind of stage on which he is to move. The writer must, perforce, find a universe he can live with and believe in for the length of time it takes to write the book. I think this is why the most successful writers of this kind of book are usually a little at odds with reality--they can fall into alternate universes so easily that what is work for others is recreation for them.

a final page

Because this issue of dubious was much delayed, for various reasons, there's an accumulation of remarks that might as well be made now, instead of being held for the next issue.

With regard to the material on the service pages:

I've never found bare formulas either useful or attractive. But whenever I move into a new market, I do something like the highly condensed version of the job I did on Gold Medal. I do it because any popular market has been shaped to suit its readers, and the assumption is that there is some pattern of logic to this shape. Once the logic is understood--and it can be understood a lot better once it has been reduced to a diagram--it ought to be possible to find viable variations on the established ritual which guides the choreography of the form. The ultimate aim of any study such as this one ought to be an arrival at originality, which is the most lucrative commercial asset of all.

I say these things in prior reply to those who habitually trust in inspiration, or those who feel a writer should trust in nothing else. I hold no brief for inspiration as a trustworthy source of work, since it has never worked that way for me. I have enjoyed it when I had it, but I haven't had it more than three or four times in my career, and perforce I've become hyperanalytical in my approach to the trade. I find that very few people are visited by the muse with any frequency whatsoever, when it comes to having complete stories occur full-born. I also find that once a story has been roughed out by whatever means come to hand, little inspirations will occur in a continuous stream to carry the structure into completed life. And so we limp along, my peripatetic muse and I, she on her concerns and I on mine, exchanging little get-well cards from time to time.

With regard to the (HAN!) letter column, and the (nonexistent) fanzine reviews:

Since I copyright the magazine, I'm loathe to include material by other people who might not care to thus turn over their rights in it to me. So, up to now, I've quoted no letters at any length whatever. However, what I can do, and probably will, is to include a separate copyright notice in the author's name with every piece of quoted material, and leave it up to him to register it if he chooses to. (Costs money.) So you may see some format changes.

I much appreciate getting fanzines from other people--particularly FAPA members who usually have few to spare. But if I launch into a large-scale program of reviews, I embed myself in a morass of time spent which will probably mean I have to cut out dubious altogether, or go broke. Once in a while, I'm sure to find something that piques me into an essay, but a systematic program of comment is impossible. So--you don't have to send me fanzines, or anything, unless you really want to, and if you do you may get a letter from me, or you may not--I hate writing letters. You'll keep getting dubious anyway.

What a lousy way to run a railroad.

dubious

A.J. Budrys
631 2nd Avenue,
Long Branch, N.J.

a note:

That's Long Branch,
New Jersey

RETURN POSTAGE G'TD
Form 3547 Requested



TO:

"CREDENTIALS"

% Bill Evans

Box 86

Mt. Rainier

Maryland

service ☐

Out:

June, July,
August, 1960

Linard saves.
Sauve qui peut.

Mimeod by: ...
the award-winning
QWERTYUIOPress