

Dr. Gregory Benford kindly passed this relic of the Nebulas in the 70s along for its historical interest.

Thank you to Dr. Benford and Dave Truesdale for cleaning up the original scan in order to make it readable. It's intriguing to see what has and hasn't changed, but SFWA's mission of protecting writers seems to have been the same even then.

-Cat Rambo

...and furthermore...



Grant

BETWEEN WORLDS

THE SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS OF AMERICA

Proceedings of the Day Program and Nebula Awards Banquet: 1970

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INTRODUCTION

The Third Annual SFWA Day Program and Nebula Award Banquet was held on the 14th of March, 1970, at the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley. It began about 9 AM and flowed and eddied from bar to conference room throughout most of the day. I have edited this transcript as little as possible, constrained only by the laws of libel and grammar. During the discussions many points were raised, some of them fundamental to the present predicament of SFWA—whether it is a literary appreciation society or a union, whether it should serve the neopro or the hardened trooper. A few panelists expressed revulsion for fandom; others (usually beyond earshot of the mike) felt just the opposite. There was ego-tripping, but then there always is.

I think the statements in this transcript reflect well the attitude some of our finest artists take toward their work, and the difficulties they have in getting adequate reward for it. Their words can be taken as instruction or warning, literary criticism or sound business advice, perhaps even as useful historical data. Season to taste.

-- Gregory Benford

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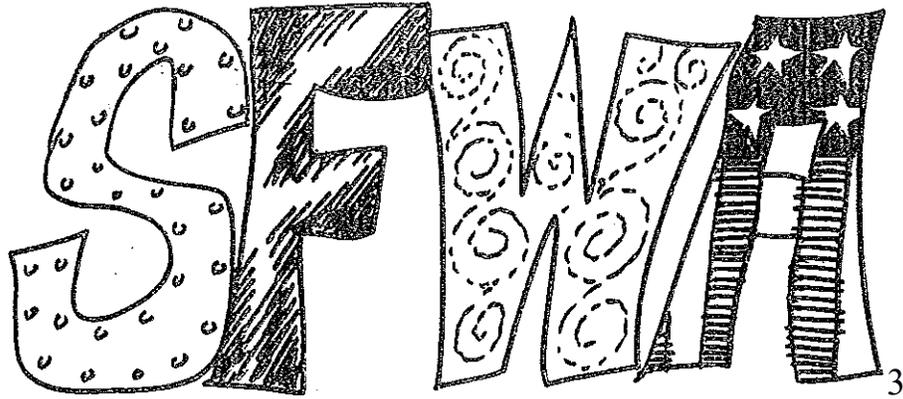
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KEYNOTE SPEECH

Keynote Speaker: Poul Anderson

This meeting gives me great pride as well as pleasure. As Alva said, the idea of holding a conference in connection with the Nebula banquet was mine originally and here we are in the third year of the series. I have not lived in vain. To the world I have contributed the Nebula Conference, the Hokas and Astrid Anderson. Of course, in all of the works I had collaboration and I must admit in every case the collaborators contributed more than I did. In the first conference, Harry Harrison and Joe Poyer were co-chairmen and let's not forget others who helped valiantly like; Rosco Wright, Dorothy Jones and again Astrid Anderson, Joe Poyer ran the second conference by himself and did it superbly, although I imagine afterward he took to his bed for a week. Now we have to thank Chelsea Quinn Yarbrow, Greg Benford, and Alva Rogers. I meant to name them in order of beauty—but while Quinn ranks first by a long ways, I am not qualified to judge between Greg and Alva. Of course we owe an equal debt of gratitude to speakers and panelists, and, for that matter to everyone who comes and thereby helps make these affairs successful.

Well, I was asked to make a keynote speech. At first I thought the keynote could simply be A-flat, but I can't carry a tune in a basket, as those know who have been unfortunate enough to hear me, along about 3 a.m. of a party; besides, I soon realized there was a more meaningful possibility. I am now going to sound the keynote of this meeting, "HELP!" Seriously, I mean it, though not in the sense you probably think. If you ardent Democrats bear with me a second, I would like to paraphrase Mr. Agnew and announce that I intend to do an unusual thing for a keynote speaker, I'm going to say something. At least I'll try to.

What I want to discuss briefly are certain ways in which I think we science fiction writers can help each other, and in fact help the entire field. The most obvious way to help the field is by writing the best we possibly can. We should not be satisfied to turn out yard-goods. Every story deserves everything we have to give it and we should keep learning and growing so we'll have more to give the next story. I might add that this also pays off in crass financial terms. Otherwise, what I said would merely be a pious exhortation—were it not for two things.

First, I happily believe that a great deal of very good science fiction is being written these days. The average of quality has never been higher. We may no longer have the green pastures of ideas that writers enjoyed in the Golden Age of 30-odd years ago, but we're compensating for that by drawing more and more on resources of characterization, background and style. We're letting the great writers of all past literature help us. Let's keep that up.

The second point I want to make about quality is less pleasant. It seems to me that some of us are wasting energy on quarrels, manifestos and the striking of attitudes—energy that should go into our work. The "New Wave," "Old Wave" nonsense is a case in point. No doubt some of you have heard of the Second Foundation, the fantype outfit which has declared what it calls "A Holy War" on the New Wave. A certain talented young writer got all hot and bothered to find his name led all the rest. I hope he won't think I'm patronizing him, because I'm not, when I point out that I am a good deal older than he is. Therefore, I've had quite a few "Holy Wars" declared on me; after a while one

gets used to it. Really, the Second Foundation is doing nothing more than addressing a preference among its members for a certain group of themes and styles in science fiction. So they're entitled to their preferences. So are the people who disagree, entitled to their preference. The whole thing is a tempest in a teapot. No, it's not even that; if you ever took the lid off of a pot of tea and saw a tempest—waves, wind, rain; needle-thin lightning bolts, tiny schooner heeled over with sails reefed to the last point—that would be something. But why get embroiled in a fanzine controversy?

Besides, this whole notion of old writers with old styles and themes, versus new writers with new styles and themes, is a lot of generation crap. Practically every writer associated with the New Wave has denied that he belongs to any such thing and has been perfectly right. Take Chip Delany, for example; he tells an old-fashioned, straightforward, well-plotted story in his novel *Nova*. He even throws in a most interesting piece of Hal Clement type astro-physical speculation. What makes his work distinctive is that it's so well written. Now take for a contrasting example, old-time writers who are still with us;

like Robert Heinlein, Clifford Simak, Fritz Leiber. Contrasting, did I say? What contrast? They are diversifying, experimenting, progressing just as much as anybody and more than most. So there, I believe, is an area where we can help rather than hurt each other. Instead of sneering at what somebody else does, merely because it's different from what we do, let's see what it may have to teach us. I don't mean that we should form a mutual admiration society, I only mean we should stop our infighting, backbiting, and really rather childish games of critical one-upmanship. The only criticism that counts, in the long run, is sales figures and I mean the long run—decades or centuries, specifically.

More of us might contribute to the shop-talk department that Terry has begun in the SFWA Forum. We can each tell how we ourselves do something, not how somebody else ought to have done something. As a general rule, the only result of putting a man down is—that he gets his back up. Science fiction writers are as rambunctious a bunch of unreconstructed individualists as you'll find on this planet, in addition they're accustomed to dealing with words. So in our disagreements we have too much tendency to get on our high-horses and fall in love with our own rhetoric—and I might add, to mix our

metaphors. We think of a good cutting phrase and use it without stopping to think that the person on the receiving end is not a fictional character, but a live human being. Let us absolutely continue to be independent individuals and to state what we believe, but let us remember the old definition of a gentleman as a man who never gives pain unintentionally.

Now of course, there are some people and outfits who ought to have pain inflicted upon them, who ought to be punished until they stop doing whatever obnoxious thing they are doing. It seems to me that this is another area in which we, through this association, can and should help each other. It is perhaps not desirable and it is certainly not possible for SFWA to become a real union like the Auto Workers, or even a real medieval guild like the AMA, but I do think we can cooperate more closely than hitherto. By the way, I should make it clear that I'm speaking strictly for myself. I hold no office in this organization; nobody is using me for a trial balloon, no matter how full of gas I may seem. These are only thoughts for your consideration.

Let me give you a specific example of the kind of action we might take. Certain publishers have certain practices which are legal enough, but ethically deplorable and practically harmful to the writer. I'm thinking especially of a paperback house which has been printing stories by a man who is not only not getting a cent, but feels that his reputation is being damaged by the resurrection of old pot-boilers.

There are other houses of ill-fame, doing bad things too. It has been charged that sometimes their conduct is outright criminal—like faking royalty statements. So rather than single one out by name, let's just let one name stand for the lot, besides I don't want to risk a suit for slander. If you wish the details, see me privately. In fact I should emphasize here that we ought never to take concerted action without competent legal advice; fortunately some excellent lawyers are included among our members. Well then, this publishing company, let's call it Charnel House, has been doing evil.

What might we consider to make it mend its ways? Boycott is one possibility. I don't mean not buying Charnel House books on the newsstands. A few hundred writers and their friends are insignificant as purchasers, to a company that figures in terms of a good

many thousands of buyers. I do mean that at the moment, we science fiction writers are in a sellers market and we ought to take advantage of it while it lasts because it may not last too much longer. So Charnel House, or its owner, under a different name, also prints original material, so we individually inform Charnel House that until it changes its reprint policies, or whatever it might be doing wrong, it will see no more manuscripts from us. If enough of us will do this the idea may get across. Another punishment to think about is publicity. I don't mean in fanzines which have negligible audiences, but perhaps we can get cooperation from the editors of the professional science fiction magazines and their book review columns. There are also magazines for writers, that reach an awful lot of would-be writers; they ought to be interested in the facts. Then there are the general interest magazines of frequently large circulation, like *Esquire* and *Playboy*. Or there are magazines that don't really have mass circulation, but do reach many influential persons—like *Harpers*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic*, *National Review* and so forth. Various among us have already sold to these periodicals from time to time. What I am suggesting is that there may be room for some thoughtful, temperate, well-researched articles on this general topic, and these could really put pressure on bad publishers. I'm suggesting that SFWA might begin with an exchange of information; this should probably not be done through our publications, both because this could be actionable, and because, as I said, our arguments in print tend to get a little over-heated, but members might well be publicly urged to send their horror stories to a particular individual, such as the head of our grievance committee, he would assemble these stories and verify them. When the facts were in hand either he would write an article himself, or he would find people to do so, always under competent legal guidance. It just might work.

At this point, I should make it absolutely clear, (here I seem to be quoting Mr. Nixon) that I want to make it clear that the enemy is Charnel House, not the publishing industry as a whole. There are crooked and incompetent writers too, just as there are crooked and incompetent publishers, but in either case, the large majority is honorable and knows what it's doing. Our interests and those of the good publishers are not opposed,

they are identical. We ought to seek closer liaison; among other benefits this would help us work for improvement. For example, Doubleday is a fine company which has done a great deal for those whom it has published. At the same time, certain clauses in the typical Doubleday contract should perhaps be changed. I think if we go about it properly, representatives of SFWA and representatives of Doubleday could sit down and negotiate like gentlemen. To further this end I would like to make a suggestion—that SFWA institute an annual award, not a Nebula, but perhaps a scroll or some other token of appreciation for good publishing practices. Let us always bitch and fight where necessary but those should not be the only things we do. It behooves us likewise to return courtesy for courtesy and, by the way, a publisher of the year award would be unique among writer's organizations, as far as I know, and this would give this outfit some added useful prestige. Having mentioned Doubleday by name, I'll say that in my opinion they'd be right at the head of the line for such recognition. Of course, we'd have several other equally deserving candidates.

So once again we have the motif of mutual help. I'll briefly cite a couple of more things we could do. First we could give some assistance, if only in the form of a brochure, of professionally prepared advice to the heirs of those who have dropped from our ranks. Let's face it, as time goes on more and more of us will die. The survivors, grieving and bewildered, are not always in a good position to settle an estate. This is particularly true with regard to taxation, which falls as unfairly on the dead writer as it does on the live one. But Charnel House also preys on what he has left. I suggest that heirs of SFWA members be automatically made dues-exempt associates and that some kind of advisory service be created for their benefit.

On the unpleasant subject of taxation, I suppose you know that the so-called tax reform bill which recently passed, has for all practical purposes, terminated the deduction we were getting for material contributed to libraries. As of July 25, 1969 you can no longer claim fair market value for your notes, manuscripts and so on. You can merely claim price of materials, and just how much is a box of used paper worth? This change in

the law is going to cost us, collectively, many thousands of dollars a year, Meanwhile exemptions go merrily on every organization that has a lobby in Washington.

I don't delude myself that SFWA can support its own lobbyists. I do suggest, first, that we make an effort to join forces, on an ad hoc basis, with other writer's groups in the attempt to get a fair break. There are many aspects of government that bear directly on us—besides taxation. Think of the Post Office, its rates, regulations, and quality of service. Think of copyright law. Think of censorship. Those are only the most obvious. Therefore I suggest second that SF'WA make it a policy to keep members alerted to these matters. My third and most important suggestion goes straight to you and you and you. Don't sit on your duff. You have a congressman, write to him. Write to both your senators too. In certain cases it also helps to write to your State legislators, your Governor, and your local paper too. Such letters have more influence than most people realize. They're especially effective if they're brief, to the point, courteous and literate. You too can help slay dragons, and you know if this organization SFWA is to continue growing it must continue to find new dragons. We've disposed of several already, but let's face it, those were the easy ones. Other writer's groups did similar things in their early years, then they sat back and have rested on the laurels ever since. Unless SFWA can keep on improving things for its members, I see no reason for existence except for a meeting like this being a good excuse for a party.

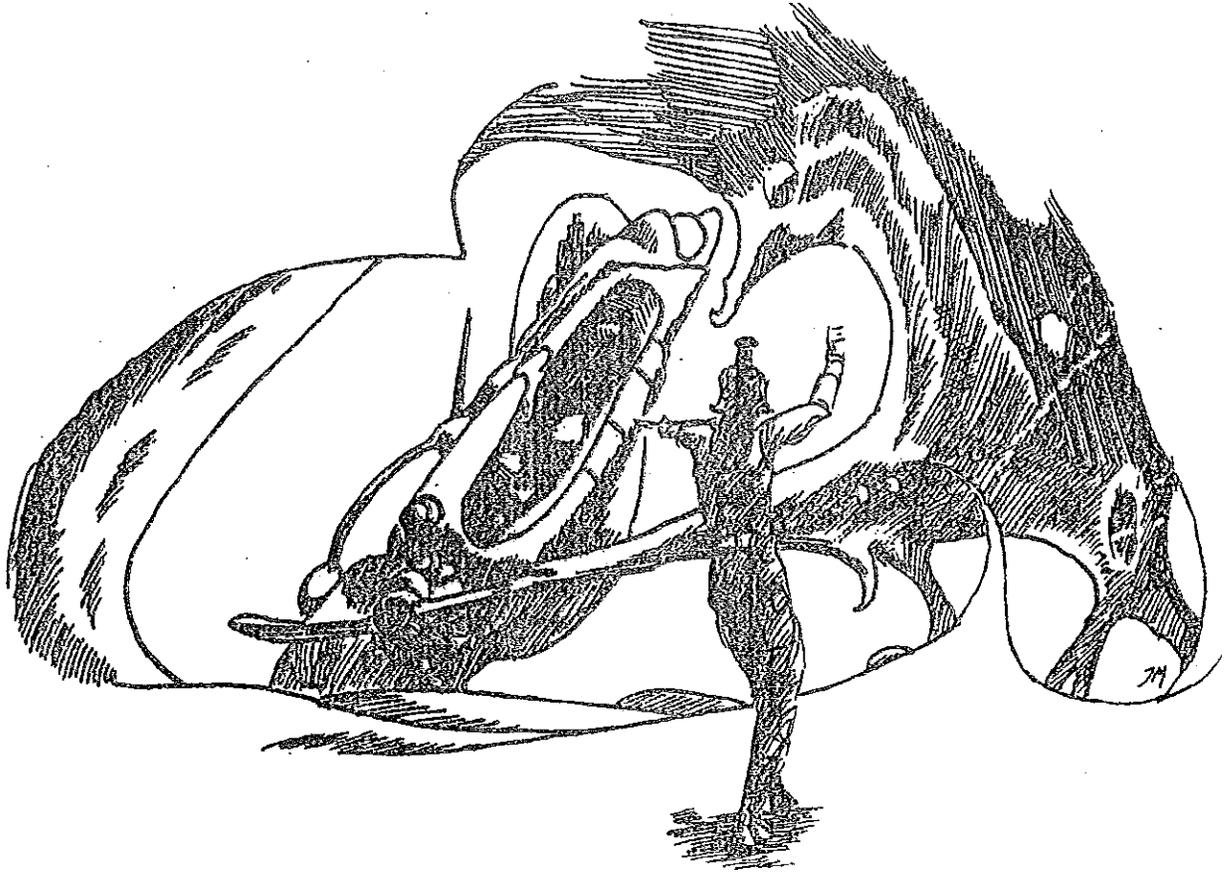
So I come to the last area. I'll discuss where we might help each other. Actually, a great deal of good work is being done that we rarely hear about. A lot of inquiry, negotiation, and so forth necessarily takes place behind the scenes. Our elected officers, our trustees, and committeemen really are doing a terrific job, at a large cost of their own valuable time and effort. How about the rest of us pitching in and giving them some help? I've heard it said that SFWA is run by a small, self-perpetuating clique. This is not true, as certain people believe, but it does have some truth; however, there is no wicked conspiracy by power-hungry megalomaniacs. It's just that a handful of people are doing all the work. Therefore, inevitably, they make all the decisions. I'm sure they'd like to get

out from under. It's noteworthy that they are among the leading writers. They give the SFWA far more than it gives them, or is ever likely to give them.

And you know it really makes no sense that somebody with a talent like Anne McCaffrey should have to cut stencils and crank a mimeograph and so on, dismally. If we had more volunteers, in the first place, they would find themselves making decisions, and otherwise helping run the show. SFWA would thus become more democratic, which is a good thing in itself. Second, with more man-hours to draw on, the organization could accomplish more to start with. Those of you who have occasion to write to the President or other officers would get your answers much sooner. At present these people are simply snowed under. But from there we could go on to really valuable undertakings like an organized campaign for meaningful tax reform. That sort of thing involves a hell of a lot of necessary schlock work. I call especially on the newer writers, the upcoming writers who have the most to gain from concerted action. Quinn Yarbro and Greg Benford are shining examples; let's have more like them.

I'll stick my own neck out here and now. Suppose you think you can do something. For instance, maybe you can take over the physical production of the Forum. Maybe you could lick stamps, address envelopes, or ring doorbells for some special campaign we might put on, like petitioning for improvements in copyrights and tax laws. Maybe you have access to people or places or information that would be valuable to other writers. But mostly it's a question of getting hard, lonely, unglamorous work done for the benefit of the whole profession. If you think you might like to serve, give me your name and address and other specifics after this session. I'll pass them on to officialdom. You see, I think it would work better to have this volunteering arriving in one piece, rather than trickling in. Besides you might put off writing until you forget. Once they have those names and capabilities, our officers can start planning how to use them.

We'll put a lot more muscle into this outfit. So perhaps you'll find yourself with the dull job of collating the publication. Perhaps I'll be collating right along with you. Afterward we'll have a beer-bust, knowing we've earned it. Thank you.



* * * * *

AGENTS AND BEDFELLOWS

a panel discussion

Moderator: Gregory Benford

Panel: Randall Garrett, Michael Kurland, Norman Spinrad, Larry Shaw

BENFORD: Good morning. This is a panel on agents and marketing and selling your soul. We have some entertaining and knowledgeable panelists, and I imagine we will be treated to a few spontaneous ejaculations from Harlan Ellison, the Bonaparte of science fiction. I encourage audience participation; nay, I demand it. The intention of the panel is to get people who know something about agents and publishers, people who have experience, however raw and unexpurgated, to spill the beans. One of the prime problems of the SFWA is just how to circulate such information; this panel is one of the attempted solutions. Everyone has heard rumors—the conventional wisdom, the shop talk—that says the Scott Meredith agency is an impersonal IBM machine, that Henry Morrison is uncommunicative, that Virginia Kidd is too isolated from the publishing business in New York City. How much of this is true? To find out, I'll start off by asking Michael Kurland: Does a worthwhile agent exist in the known universe?

KURLAND: Well, having an agent is very much like having a wife or a husband, whichever you prefer. Your ideal mate in this field is probably not going to be anybody else's, so the idea of the perfect agent is doubtful. And the question is, what is it that you want from an agent? What is it you need? (Say, why can't I fix this microphone?)

BENFORD: Welcome to the technological millennium.

KURLAND: Yeah, back in the old days we didn't have to worry about these kind of gadgets. Nobody heard us, and we didn't have to worry about that either. Several years ago I was very dissatisfied with my agent, for the main reason was—he was slow. So I said, "Well, I've got a slow agent and I have to get a fast agent." So I started asking people. I was living in New York, I started asking my fellow New York writers. "Who is your agent and is he fast?" And I won't go into the specific names—

just, you know, real quick—one of them says, "Oh yeah, he's very fast. He sends'em out, get into the office. He sends'em right out. Of course they don't go to market so you can never tell where they're going to show up, you know, but they're fast." I asked someone else, "How about your agent, is he fast?" He says, "Well I don't know, I haven't heard from him in a year." (This is true. Some of the stories I got over a one-week period.)

"Well," he said, "I gave him a manuscript and he swears that it's at Random House."

So I said, "What's wrong with that?"

He says, "Well, I haven't heard for a month and I happen to know the editor that it's supposed to go to at Random House and I called him and said, 'What's with it?' And he never saw it. So he checked into the department and it never came in. So he called up my agent again and discovered that on reaching him, after a month and a half, he discovered that he had lost it. So he might be fast but he loses manuscripts."

He loses them fast. It took my agent three months to lose a manuscript. Then there is the agent that very quickly gets the story out, very quickly sells it and very quickly spends your money. Then you have to chase him. So it depends on what particular. All agents—I hate to say this—are human, except those that aren't. But even the most human have human failures, you know, and it depends on what you need from an agent. What I need from an agent is money, and selling my stories and books, you know, to the highest market, and all that kind of stuff. Some writers need an agent that holds their hands and sits down with them and says, "Now look, Ralph," (I hope there are no Ralphs around.) "That's a very nice story you wrote and it was very enjoyable reading it and I'm sure that someday there'll be a market for it." So it's impossible to say what a good agent is. Given all the facts of the writer, what it is he requires, and I might be able to decide what the agent is. Then he doesn't exist and so the whole thing's pointless. Take it.

BENFORD: Larry Shaw is now editor for Brandon House. He has bought science fiction, he has even *read* science fiction.

SHAW: Well, I'll try to take up more or less where Mike left off. I think, generally speaking, a writer should have an agent. There are writers who get along very well without agents, but then there are mavericks who do everything for themselves in any field. There are people who build their own houses, starting from scratch. In general, a writer should devote himself to writing as much as possible, he should be free from other problems and harassments, and just as much of

his time as possible, sit at his typewriter and turn the work out. So a good agent is a good thing for a writer to have. While there are great difficulties in finding just the right agent for you, it's worth it if once you do find the right agent.

I'll assume for a moment, that everybody listening at the moment is a writer, that all of you are California writers. I've run into a rather peculiar thing since coming out here from New York, about seven months ago. I've met a lot of writers who have been based in California most of their working professional lives. I've run into a kind of awe or fear of the so-called New York markets. There are a lot of writers out here who sell to the California markets, which we all admit are rather minor and second rate, except for some. Some, perhaps, specialized University presses, and a couple of new hard-cover houses that have started up within the past few years. There are some very competent writers in California who could be cracking the New York markets, but who are just a little bit afraid of them. They think that somehow the New York markets are bigger and better and somehow magical in a way, so they content themselves with writing and selling—let's face it—pornography.

GARRETT: I don't even own a pornograph.

SHAW: If you are a writer and if you have even a small tinge of that attitude, forget it. The New York markets aren't all that different, What is different is that they're 3,000 miles away and generally speaking they don't know you. If you send your manuscript in, even with a covering letter, you are just another writer among the many millions in this country and they're not going to give you any special consideration. It helps, it helps a hell of a lot, you have no idea how much, if your manuscript is neatly typed, double spaced, has your name and address on the first page. These are the things that you, as a writer have to learn and that a lot of beginning writers don't know.

KURLAND: Will you please use a black ribbon and all.

SPINRAD: I think what we're getting here is the publisher's view of the function of an agent, which is one of the problems with agents. Well, let me run it back from the beginning. There are two kinds of agents, really, there are writers' agents and publishers' agents. Now if you look at the mathematics of it, you find that an agent works on a ten percent, right? Which means that an agent works off ten percent what you make. Which means he's gotta have a lot of writers to make what you make, Most agents are making more than what you make, which means that most

agents, at least in the United States, are dependent on a certain volume. In other words, selling a lot of stuff from a lot of writers to a lot of publishers or maybe selling a lot of stuff from a lot of writers to one or two publishers, which means that there is a danger that the agent becomes an agent more for the publisher than for the writer. The agent becomes a funnel for channeling material into a publishing house or into a magazine and when that happens you're in trouble.

SHAW: That's one of the dangers, but in favor of agents let me say that a really good agent will do things for you—you the writer—that you don't know about, don't expect, that surprise you, that you wouldn't ever have thought of doing for yourself.

SPINRAD: Larry, they're not necessarily good things. You'll have agents submit, as I have, to places you didn't want them submitted to in the first place. You'll have to tear up contracts and send 'em back in little pieces, because you didn't want the contract in the first place.

KURLAND: You don't have to sign the contract.

SPINRAD: No you don't, but your agent—many agents—feel that you do.

BENFORD: That's called a bad agent, Norman.

SPINRAD: My basic thesis is this—that there are very few good agents.

SHAW: Yeah, that's true.

KURLAND: There are very few good editors. There are very few good writers.

BENFORD: Sturgeon's Law.

SPINRAD: I have one in England.

SHAW: I can't agree more and I can't over-emphasize the necessity of finding just the right agent for you, but once you do—

SPINRAD: Yeah.

GARRETT: I'm reminded of the story they tell about these two agents that were talking. They kept talking about those writers that kept taking 90 percent of their income. And there are agents who really do resent they've got to give 90 percent of their income to these writers who own them.

SPINRAD: If you think you own your agent, you're living in a dream world, because your agent doesn't need you, Randall. Nobody's agent needs them, unless you're one or two people, like on the level of Norman Mailer, or somebody like that. Your agent doesn't need you, because

he's getting ten percent of you, he can get ten percent off somebody else, he can get 20 percent of two other guys.

What, after all, is an agent's job? An agent's job is to mediate between writers and publishers. Right? Which means that he's got to be sharp enough to be sharp with the publishers. So how do you think he's being with you?

KURLAND: The average agent doesn't have to be sharp with writers. The average writer is so dumb, when it comes to marketing or anything else, that he believes whatever the agent tells him.

SPINRAD: The point is, the average agent makes his living being sharp, being tricky, dealing with publishers in the best way possible to get the most money out of them. There are two kinds of agents really. There are the sharpies and sharks and then there are the hubbies. Now the hubbies are nice people. They're the people you want to deal with. They make you feel good and they may be accurate judges of your work. Some agents may even improve your work. I've had some experience with that, you know, agents who can give you meaningful literary advice on a particular problem you may be dealing with—that is not a financial problem, you know, in terms of actually a book or something. That's a fine kind of agent. But you also have to have an agent who can be a son of a bitch, 'cause if your agent can't be a son of a bitch—you gonna have to be a son of a bitch, and you gonna be the guy that's gonna be the son of a bitch with the publishers. So an agent—say it's a schizophrenic thing, an agent-, the ideal agent, in terms of dealing with the publisher, is ruthless, smart, and a son of a bitch. *Then* he turns around and deals with you.

GARRETT: Norm, I've had experience with—well, my present agent is Scott Meredith and I wanted to get down to specifics particularly with Scott and I'll tell you what kind of an agent Scott is. If you're looking for this kind of agent—if you are an established writer—Scott will not give you any literary criticisms, he sells that on the side as a gimmick.

SPINRAD: It depends on who you deal with there.

GARRETT: I'm talking about Scott.

SPINRAD: Ah, ha, but that's fiction. That's a complete fiction. Don't talk about Scott. Scott Meredith is a corporate entity; don't talk about Scott as a person, forget it.

GARRETT: Yeah, but well I'm saying that if you are a selling writer, the Scott Meredith Agency doesn't give two hoots in hell about the literary quality of what you are sending in.

SPINRAD: There are some people there.

GARRETT: They might not even read because they are getting in so much paper that is typewritten on and they say, "Now what are we going to do to sell this bunch of paper, for the highest price we can get?"

SPINRAD: Randy, to start, well alright, probably for the fastest price we can get. Alright, let's deal with Scott Meredith first, 'cause it's the biggest agency. First of all, Scott Meredith is a big corporate entity, and you've got to understand that. You get a letter signed "Scott Meredith." Scott Meredith didn't write it—somebody else did.

GARRETT: Oh?

SPINRAD:

[... ...]

Once in a while you get a letter from Scott if you owe him money, or if it's on something big. Scott Meredith, human being, only deals with the biggest deals. The point is that they're a corporate entity, four or five guys that are handling about two or three hundred writers among them. Maybe, I don't know, 100 science-fiction writers. That's the first thing you've gotta understand. Now these guys are individual personalities. To some extent, it's a revolving door process and a lot of people are running through these jobs, like you know—like chili through you in Mexico City or something. But there's a few guys who have been there for a while. Now, I have gotten—I have personally gotten some pretty good literary advice from some of these guys, like when Joe Elder used to be there for instance; you know, like do this and this and I can sell the story to *Playboy* and I did and he did. You know occasionally you can get that kind of advice. I've gotten it from my English agent, Janet Freer, and sometimes it's valid. That's fine, but the basic job of the agent is to sell your work and again there's a schizophrenic thing going.

[.....]

GARRETT: You were talking about getting letters from Scott Meredith the individual, not Scott Meredith the corporate entity.

SPINRAD: I'll show you how to tell who wrote the letters, by the way. See me after class.

GARRETT: Tom Watters used to write them for him, I know. I sent him a letter not too long back complaining about something or other. At the bottom—he keeps addressing me as "Dear Randy" for which reason I cannot figure out. Anyway, T wrote back to him and said, "Look

Scott, if you'll quit calling me "Randy," I'll quit calling you "Scotty Wotty." I get back this letter, you know, neatly typed letter, (by the gal in the office or the guy in the office, whoever was doing it) signed "Scott" and underneath it, in his own little handwriting it said "P. S. Scotty Wotty! My God, I'll never call you Randy again."

SPINRAD: He might have written that part—but he doesn't type anything. I don't think he can type, can he? No, he can type. I've gotten four or five actual personal letters from Scott and you can tell. When they are from Scott they're in a different type-face. He's got a Smith Corona, the others are Royals.

BENFORD: This is getting rather Byzantine, isn't it?

SHAW: Back about 1948 I spent a year working for Scott Meredith. I wrote a lot of those letters myself. Around the same time, such people as Damon Knight and James Blish wrote a lot of them.

GARRETT: They were very literate letters.

SHAW: The point is, all modesty aside, one of the gifts Scott has, is choosing good people to work for him.

SPINRAD: Beyond that, a gift for taking anybody that's working for him and squeezing the last bit of work out. That's an organizational genius. See, now for instance, one of the good things about Scott Meredith is something that just came through to me. The guy that I had working there—you know, my man there—slipped a disc in his back and was in the hospital in traction, well you're in traction too because nuttin's happenin'.

ELLISON (from audience): That's not true.

SPINRAD: Shut up.

BENFORD: There will now be an advertisement for Bob Mills.

SPINRAD: Will you let me finish my untrue statement first and then you can tell me what a liar I am?

No, because basically, if you've got a one-man agency working, then obviously it's pretty dependent on one man and if anything happens to the man—lots of luck. There have been agents who have died for instance, you know, they've sort of stuffed them and put them in chairs.

GARRETT: Do you remember the Dirk Wylie Agency?

SPINRAD: On the other hand you're getting more personal attention maybe, with a one-man agency, but if the guy is out of it for a while—you're out of it.

KURLAND: And you're being handled by one man at a large agency, which has to happen, and he goes into traction, somebody else will take your stuff, but he doesn't know what's happening to it.

SPINRAD: Well you gotta tell him what's happening. You gotta find out about it and bring him up to date, tell him what to do, but at least there's somebody there you can tell what to do. If your man's in the hospital, he's in the hospital.

BENFORD: Harlan?

ELLISON: This isn't being recorded?

BENFORD: This is all being recorded for radio. The universe is listening. Bob Mills' moment draws nigh.

ELLISON: I have all sorts of valid and interesting things that I can add to what you said. First of all, Norman, since you are not and never have been a Robert Mills client, you have no way of knowing, do you?

SPINRAD: I know a lot of Robert Mills clients.

ELLISON: You did your wrong number, now I'll correct you. I happen to be a Robert Mills client. And Bob Mills has gone away to Europe for a month, and I've had my work taken care of. I've had my manuscripts sent where they were supposed to be.

SPINRAD: By who?

ELLISON: By Helen, who happens to be his secretary, who also happens to be a member of the agency. She is just as equipped to do it as Bob is, and she's in the business, for Christ's sake for 20 years, and she knows exactly what to do. There's never been one moment's lapse in the line of work that has to be done for me as a Robert Mills client.

Now what is it with Henry Morrison? I don't know, I'm not a Henry Morrison client. There are probably Morrison clients here who can tell you. Chip is a Morrison client; he can tell you. In the Matson agency if Congdon should drop—

SPINRAD: That's a big agency! That's a big agency!

ELLISON: Matson a good agency? Charley?

SPINRAD: I didn't say good, man, I said Matson is a *big* agency. It is not a one-man agency.

ELLISON: Okay. Then the only agency I know of where there's only one person is Virginia Kidd and I'm sure that if Virginia got sick she would drag herself from the hospital to take care of the manuscripts. There are disadvantages, but there are some remarkable advantages to being with a small agency,

SPINRAD: Yeah, there are.

ELLISON: You know like if you want to talk about—see, that was the question I was gonna ask you last night at dinner. You know what a louse Scott Meredith is. You know what a schlockmeister he is.

[.....]

SPINRAD: That's an exaggeration.

ELLISON: An exaggeration? Larry, is it true or is it false?

SHAW: That's an exaggeration.

ELLISON: How big an exaggeration? 'Cause I know of entire magazines that were put together for Arthur C. Clarke, who got a lot. So the guys in the back of the book got very little.

SPINRAD: You're talking about five years ago.

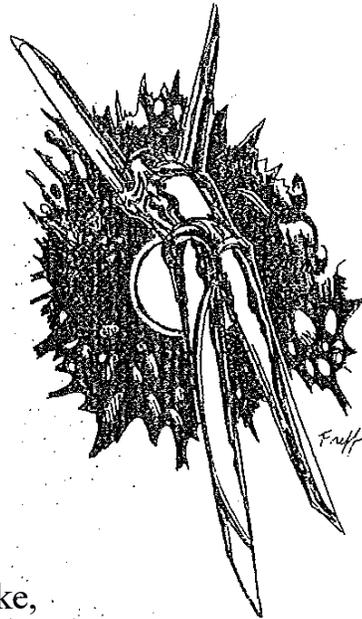
SHAW: But if those deals hadn't been made, the guys who got a half a cent a word wouldn't have gotten anything at all.

SPINRAD: Some of those guys go to bubkes writers. They handle a lot of bad writers too.

ELLISON: Nonetheless, I'll tell you I'd rather make nothing off my work than have myself sold down the tube, which is what Meredith does. Meredith will concentrate on Evan Hunter, Arthur C. Clarke, Norman Mailer. And guys like—who the hell's he been handling for years?—have been sitting around in the penny-a-word market and never got out of it. He has personally destroyed half a dozen writers that I know of, whose work has just been—you know. Phil Dick is a classic example.

SPINRAD: Yeah, there are bad examples.

ELLISON: Okay.



SPINRAD: You're asking me now. The basic thing you want to ask me is why I'm still with Meredith?

ELLISON: Yeah, why you're still with Meredith knowing from the inside what a dreep he is?

SPINRAD: Well, I'll tell you why. For one thing, better the devil you know than the devil you don't. I've been pretty close to some of those other agents and if I saw a better agent I'd go to a better agent. Most of them are just bummers all around. I can tell horror stories about Bob Mills if there's any point. I can tell you horror stories about Henry Morrison. If there's any point, I can tell you horror stories about almost any agent. They're all pretty bad.

ELLISON: Now let me finish. There's an underlying point there that is really at the core of it. It's what Larry said a little bit ago. You've gotta find the agent for you. Right? Okay? Like on the coast here my film agent, Marty Shapiro, is the best bloody agent I've ever had in my life. He has done incredible things. Another guy, another writer, who's a very good writer and sells a lot, left him because he couldn't get the service he wanted.

SPINRAD: But you don't know why. You gotta be honest about that. An agent has a list of clients, you know, like this, like some of these guys. You're getting good service from Bob Mills. He makes a decision that Harlan Ellison is one of his important clients and gives him good service.

ELLISON: Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong.

SPINRAD: Every agent does this because, Bob Mills—

ELLISON: Wrong, wrong, wrong. You are wrong. You get what you demand of an agent, you get exactly what you demand. (Shouts, garbled exclamations.)

GARRETT: May I have a piece of the action here? I'll support Harlan in that when I first started out with Scott Meredith, Scott you know didn't know me from Adam except that I'd sold science fiction. Okay, he'll take me on and I went ahead and sold stuff, sent stuff into him. Did most of my own selling, as a matter of fact. I'd personally cart the manuscripts over to Campbell, for instance. Campbell would buy them, send the check over to Scott and I'd go over and pick up my 90 percent. This made it very easy on Scott, you see, but one day I blew up because of some little thing that went wrong. I went into Scott's office and I gave him a lecture and I pointed out that he worked for me. I did not work for him, regardless of what he thought. I knew better, but I was trying to convince him, you see. And it worked. I have not had any trouble with Scott

Meredith since. I write and say "Send this to so-and-so." And he'll write back and say, "I think I can sell it at a higher market. Do you mind?" "Well no, go right ahead, Scott." But he asks me, you know.

ELLISON: One other thing. It's not on this 'cause I don't feel like standing here and you don't want me standing here. But there's one thing I really want to say about the agenting thing; putting together the *Dangerous Visions* books the last year or two, I have discovered one thing, really ugly, really unpleasant. I've been dealing with all the agents, not just in the science-fiction field, but all the big ones. One agent, whom I will name gladly, has caused me so much aggravation that I will never, *ever* buy from a client of his and the same thing was said to me by another anthologist, in New York, in a telephone conversation, just the other day. That's the Matson Agency and Don Congdon.

SPINRAD: Who has a *very* good reputation.

ELLISON: Who has a very good reputation and I imagine his clients think he is the end-all and be-all, but let me tell you something. How I, as an anthologist, feel about it.

SPINRAD: As a publisher.

ELLISON: I am not a publisher.

SPINRAD: In this case you're acting as a publisher. You're being treated as an editor.

ELLISON: To my grave I will fight that.

SPINRAD: You're on the buying end instead of the selling and suddenly you find—

ELLISON: Norman: I'm an editor not a publisher. Chip, am I an editor or a publisher?

YARBRO: You 're an editor. You're an editor.

ELLISON: Thanks, Jesus!

SPINRAD: It does matter. If an editor dislikes an agent and won't deal with him, it hurts you.

ELLISON: Can I make a point? Yeah, that's true. Can I make the point, Norman? I mean before you object to it, can I make it? From Don Congdon, the Matson Agency, I have bought, with great trouble: Bernard Wolfe, Robert Sheckley, and Ray Bradbury. I'll say very quickly what happened. Bernie Wolfe had a couple of stories, quite long, that I wanted to buy. He wanted to sell'em to me. He was happy with the price I offered him—not the greatest price in the world, but he couldn't sell the stories any place else. They were kind of 'twixt and 'tween, so he and I got together and I said, "I want to take these stories." And he said, "Fine, Go through Matson."

Right? So I go through Don Congdon and I say what Bernie wants to do and we've already talked it out and blah, blah, blah, here are the contracts, right? I get the contracts back. I got Matson Agency contracts back which completely negated everything in my contracts, which had been signed by some 70 or 80 writers and their agents. Right? And so I sent 'em back. I said "No, I need *my* contracts and if you want to make addendas or changes—writers do it." It came back with a lot of little pieces of paper hanging on it, it looked like confetti, it looked like a Christmas toy. Right? So it was impossible and he asked for five times the money, He asked for \$2000 for these two stories, which was *Playboy* rates, which is what Bernard Wolfe gets, but which is not what I was able to pay. Great agent. Great agent. If I had not known Bernie Wolfe personally, I would have had to say "forget it." And Bernie Wolfe would have had those stories lying around as he had for the last five years. Right? I went to Bernie and he got so pissed off that he called Matson and he said, "I want this deal and I'm doing it and we made it personally."

To get Bradbury I had to go around Matson again.

Now on Sheckley. Sheckley, it was beautiful. I've got a stack of correspondence, I swear to you, with all sorts of horrendous things. They took the story away after they had already sold it to me, after it was already in my possession. After I already owned it, they sold it some place else. We had a whole fight about it. They returned the money. It was incredible. Sheckley had to write three more stories. Three more stories, before he wrote one that I liked to put in the book. Right? And now we've got a contract that looks like you wouldn't believe it. So I will never again buy from Don Congdon. Any of his clients are, just forget it, I don't even want to speak to them. I wouldn't care if he had the greatest writer in the world.

SHAW: I'd like to add just a minor anecdote to that, Harlan. I was putting together a little anthology, that nobody ever heard of or bought apparently. I made a deal with Bob Sheckley personally, now this was for a reprint story. The story was from *Infinity*, which I had edited myself. It was a deal among friends. I made Sheckley an offer, since the story was very short, at a considerably higher word rate than I was paying other people that I wanted stories from and it was fine. But, of course, Bob said, "You have to call Don Congdon and get his okay." I called Don Congdon and told him what the proposed deal was and Congdon said, "You science-fiction people are all alike—cheap, cheap, cheap, cheap."

SPINRAD: I don't know all the ins and outs of this Don Congdon thing, but maybe Don Congdon has a list of clients that just fundamentally can't afford three cents a word. And maybe that's the message he's trying to give you.

ELLISON: What if you're Joe Schlump and you happen to have Don Congdon for an agent?

SPINRAD: But you don't have Don Congdon for an agent if you're Joe Schlump.

ELLISON: Yeah, he's got a lot of beginning writers, 'cause he sent them to me.

SPINRAD: Well maybe he charges less money for the beginning writers.

ELLISON: Maybe the moon is blue too, Norman. What I'm saying is, you've got to be careful your agent isn't in your way.

SHAW: That was essentially the story. That was the line I wanted to get in, but the overall point, I think, is there are not just two kinds of agents, there are as many kinds of agents as there are agents. Don Congdon has an enormous reputation. If the *New York Times* decided to write a feature story on agents he is one of the people they interview and quote and run photos of and so forth. But he is still not the agent for me. I will avoid, if possible, ever dealing with him as an editor. I don't think he is the agent for most of us here. Scott Meredith might be just right.

BENFORD: A lot of people feel that way. But none of them appear to be on this panel.

ELLISON: I think Norman ought to go with Don Congdon.

BENFORD: As an experimental probe for the SFWA?

GERROLD: I've been listening to Norman and Harlan arguing who's got a worse agency and I'm still waiting for someone to convince me I need an agent.

BENFORD: You don't need an agent.

GERROLD: I've had two agents, one was a bubbie, and one was an SOB. Well anyway the thing is, I fired my last agent well over a year ago. I've been selling my own stuff since then. Like, I negotiated my own stuff. There's been a couple of times when I've gotten an editor to offer me two cents a word. I've gotten him to pay three cents a word. And my book contract, I've been getting pretty prices on, for a beginning writer. So my question is, what do I need an agent for? I'm enjoying the negotiating and not only that, I'm getting the agent's ten percent too.

BENFORD: But you're a son of a bitch.

GERROLD: I'm proud of it.

GARRETT: Just a second, Mike, I had my mouth open first.

KURLAND: By ten years.

GARRETT: Anybody who cannot see any reason for having an agent; who thinks they can do a better job themselves, actually does not need an agent. If they had one they wouldn't be happy with them. You said you fired two already. If you 're happy, go—I'm not going to try to convince you and I don't think anybody else on the panel is going to try to convince you that you need an agent.

SHAW: You don't absolutely have to have an agent, but if a really good one, and the right one for you, calls, take him. You may not hear from him for weeks at a time and then suddenly one morning the phone will ring and your agent will call you and say, "Hey, I just sold the Martian T.V. rights to your latest book." Which you never even would think of doing.

GARRETT: Oh God, yes, that's one thing Scott has done for me and I'm sure for Poul, too. They've sold the German rights to a novel, or the Spanish. Did you ever get a check from a Spanish publisher? You know, four million pesetas. Comes out to \$12.37, but you know \$12.37 will buy you and your wife a very good meal in a restaurant. My wife doesn't eat.

BENFORD: One remark from Michael Kurland and the panel's over.

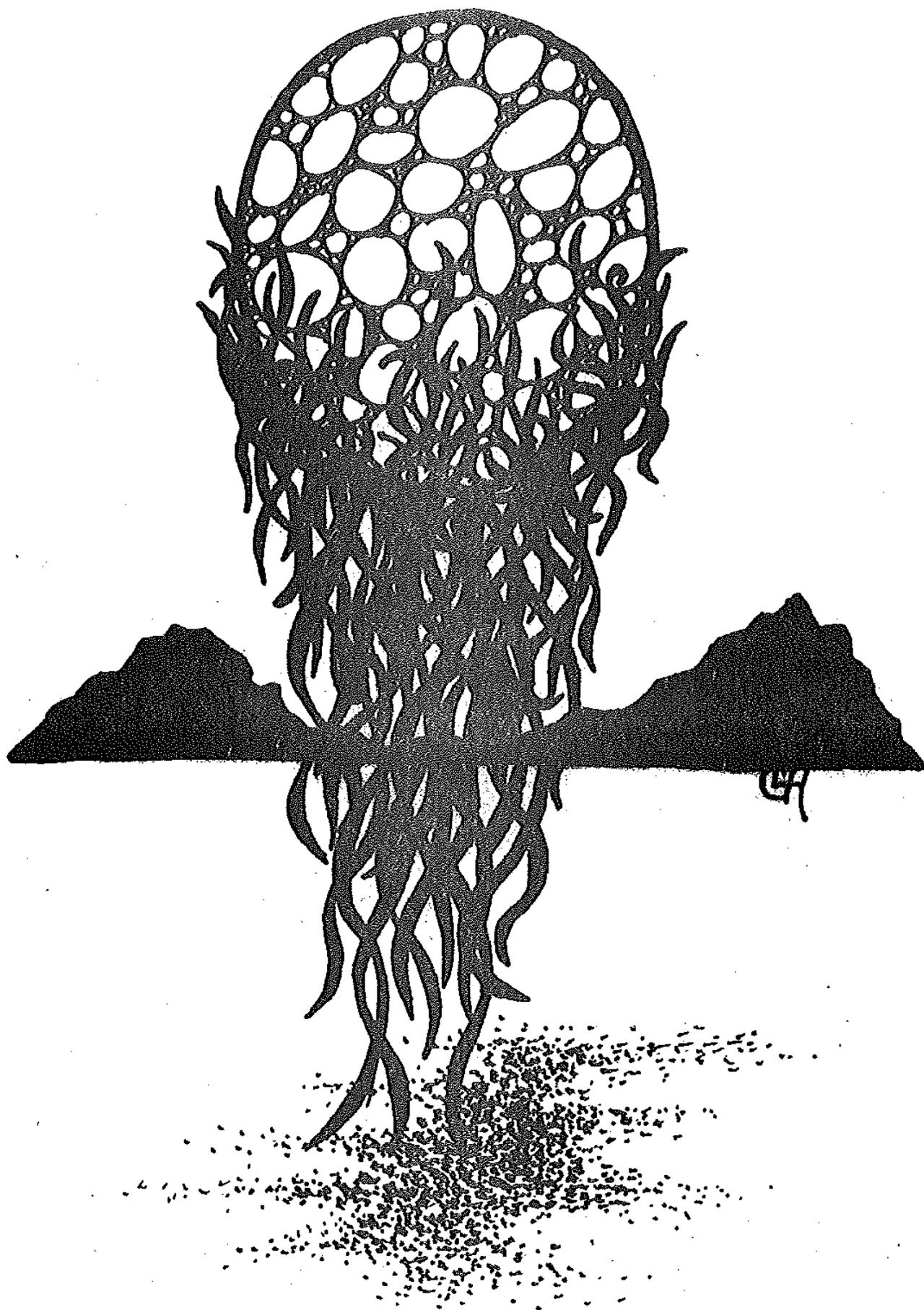
KURLAND: I have figured out that if nothing else, I have made more than my agent's ten percent in the foreign rights he's sold that I certainly would not have. I have made more than the original ten percent has cost me. In foreign rights is what I mean and you know financially I'm a little bit ahead and as I say the only reason I have an agent is to make money, and that's it. Okay.

BENFORD: Yes?

GARRETT: I asked Greg why he was closing the panel at this point and he said because the bar is open. Up to that I was ready to go on talking.

BENFORD: Thank you very much, and may God rest your souls.

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SCIENCE FICTION AND THE LITERARY SCENE

Moderator: Quinn Yarbro

Panel: Harlan Ellison, Ursula Le Guin, Hank Stine, Samuel Delany

YARBRO: The title of this is very vague and very general and it deals with science-fiction in the contemporary scene, so we have a bunch of contemporary authors; Ursula K. Le Guin, who I think is probably one of the finest women writing today, and Hank Stine who is sort of a stranger in our midst, like all of us, and Samuel R. Delany, who is an absolute pig, when it comes to things—like getting Nebulas. You’ve got three of them now, don’t you?

DELANY: Yes. I don’t think the word “pig”—

YARBRO: Sorry.

DELANY: Don’t let the blue shirt fool you.

YARBRO: Do I have to introduce him, the one with the lunch? If any of you out there, who have not encountered him, that’s Harlan Ellison, and lots of luck.

Hank says he wants to make an opening statement, which gets me out of a real mess. So go ahead—

STINE: Well, first of all, I was originally told that this was going to be about science-fiction and the literary scene, which sort of terrified me. But, I can instantly see what we’re going to get into eventually—without any trouble at all—is the “Old Wave” - “New Wave” controversy. So to foreshorten that somewhat, I thought I would point out something very obvious, that seems to have been overlooked by people that write science-fiction. Since I don’t, it’s probably somewhat easier to see. Until very recently, almost all of the stories were written in what we have to call the “pulp tradition.” Since science-fiction, until very recently, was a pulp art form—came out of the pulps—the authors who went into writing it, went into writing mostly to make a living, and to enjoy themselves; and the values and the attitudes with which you approach pulp writing are of a particular kind. They will, at the very best, produce a particular kind of story. This isn’t to say that they won’t necessarily produce a really good story, in some way like Roger Zelazny and Samuel Delany are now writing, at the very end of the pulp tradition, at the highest possible level of the form. I’ve been reading science-fiction for a long time. Many of the younger writers were

reading in the pulp field and cut their teeth on it, at a time when people like Poul Anderson were taking it just about as far as you could go with the good, entertaining, pulp science-fiction novel. I mean Poul puts every possible value of characterization and plot, that you *can* put into a pulp story and still satisfy the editor that it's going to sell a certain number of copies, that people are going to enjoy it, that it's going to have an entertaining plot that the reader will like. And having been raised with that, I felt, with that as my base level for a story, that there was something even more that I wanted out of the story. I wanted to be able to write. I felt the need for a more convincing kind of story. You always go beyond what you were raised with—to a degree—and so many of the younger writers have felt that there was a great deal in science-fiction, since they read it and enjoyed it, but that they wanted more out of a story. So instead of going at it and approaching it from the attitude of a pulp story—now I'm not going to try to define what those things are, 'cause you could tear me apart about the particular consciousness and various values in a pulp story, but I think that we all have to agree that there is a difference between the attitude taken by a writer like Jimmy Breslin or Norman Mailer or Harlan Ellison—who can all probably all be listed together safely—

ELLISON: I love you.

STINE: —than that taken by say, A. E. van Vogt or Robert Moore Williams, to use bad examples. And it's not merely that they're writing a different type of story or they're putting sex in it, or they're trying to put nitty-gritty, little reality things in it, it's an entirely different *attitude* that's been taken.

ELLISON: May I break in?

STINE: In a minute. And it's this difference, this difference, in the way writers are coming to their stories that creates this thing that is being called "Old Wave" and "New Wave." It's not style, or technique, or inventiveness, it's a particular attitude toward a science-fiction story that's different from the attitude of a pulp writer. Now I'm through.

ELLISON: Boy, is that irrelevant.

SPINRAD: That's the heart of the matter.

ELLISON: Well, *you* think so, of course.

STINE: It is the heart of the matter.

LE GUIN: May I make a—?

ELLISON: Yes, of course. Please do.

LE GUIN: I think, perhaps in a sense, I think the really good new writing, in all fields may be coming up out of popular—what’s been called popular—writing. And I mean I think the mainstream is in a very bad way, it’s much worse than science-fiction. And that’s the reason Zelazny and the others are coming up out of what was a pulp and pop tradition. That’s where the action is. Is that possible?

STINE: That’s definitely true. That’s definitely true.

ELLISON: There’s a tradition that you can write experimentally and you can write things that really get something said—as long as nobody’s paying any attention to you. You can write, like—I do this television column for the *L. A. Free Press* and I can really say, you know, Spiro Agnew is a clod. You know, in much broader terms than that even. (“Asshole” is the word I usually use.) And I can say it because it’s in the *L. A. Free Press* and nobody’s paying any attention, really. Like, if it was in *Life* magazine I couldn’t say that. Most of the writing that’s being done these days, of any consequence, is not being done in the established media, it’s being done in the new magazines. It’s being done in the magazines, you know, the offbeat places like the men’s magazines, but mostly they’re buying pictures of girls in the undress. The kind of words that are around it don’t really matter to the guys, you know, who buy it in the gas station and look at it by the grease rack. As a consequence an awful lot of us are selling to those kind of markets and writing the kind of articles we want to, but the minute those markets get legitimized then we can’t do it any more because then they have something to lose. They have advertisers and they say, “We can’t do it.” But I think that everything you said, Hank, was perfectly valid a year ago or two years ago. I don’t think it is even today, the last two years have moved this field so fast and so far.

STINE: I agree.

ELLISON: That I don’t think when Poul said the New Wave/Old Wave thing was passé he’s absolutely right. I mean it was passé for openers, but it was a nice kind of dialogue to get going because it got a lot of juices flowing. Today we’re someplace else entirely and the things that are being written now no one apologizes for and no one has to think about it, they just go and do it. I know all kinds of writers, who five years ago would never have thought of writing experimentally. Guys like Ross Rocklynne, for Christ’s sake, who’s been writing for what, for 30

years, for 35 years? Ross Rocklynne is writing experimental fiction today that's as good as any of the young Turks are writing and I think it's because this field has become a very, very viable, very valid kind of fiction for our times, at long last. And that's I think the heart of it, that's where it's at.

STINE: That's where it's at today. Where I said it was about a year ago, it was just changing, but this field right now as it stands, the SF field is where it's at in literature. It's where it's at in reading, it's where it's at almost in the entire American consciousness, it's almost beginning to pinpoint into the kind of freedom and the kind of excitement that's going on in SF. Things are being picked up in rock music from SF. Fed back from rock music to SF, things from it are going into films, new wave films and non-new wave films are coming back from it. The mainstream is definitely dying. SF has all the power and all the excitement now; there is almost no novel you can read by a mainstream writer, that does not have some aspect of the fantastic, the bizarre, of the science-fictional in it, because there's just nothing left in those fields, there's no way to describe reality now in America any more without going beyond contemporary reality into something more exciting, because no contemporary reality you can pin down in this country anymore is in any way valid. You have to go beyond that to be valid and SF is the only media to do it.

ELLISON: Just say to yourself, Shirley Temple is the delegate to the United Nations, I mean just say that. And you know where the world is at.

LE GUIN: You don't have to go beyond it. I mean it's here, we're living in it.

DELANY: I hate to sort of start espousing such terribly conservative attitudes that were apparently popular a year or two ago, but I think that there are some distinctions in attitude between some of the new writers and some of the old writers. I think one of the things about pulp writing in general is that it's a terribly safe field. I think that what categorizes it in a way is that the package sells the writing. And the thing, for instance, that I hear again and again—and it makes me just wonder—is when a writer in this fraternity will come up to another writer and say, “Oh, you got such and such for a certain book. I'll ask my agent to get the same amount for a book I'm doing.” These are cases where the figures are up in six, seven, eight thousand dollars which is unusual even now for things that are going on in our field. And the whole idea being because this price has opened up, it is now there for everyone to get and it's something that

should be done universally. I think this is a holdover attitude from the pulp era, you know, the fact that it is SF. Nobody should get more than anyone else, nobody should get less than anyone else. And it's because it's opening up it's becoming much less safe to write.



LE GUIN: In a sense, though, mainstream writing is also an in-group. For instance, if you get to be in the *New Yorker* stable or something you're about as safe as you can be. I mean, these in-groups almost always do form. I think they're kind of changing at the moment.

DELANY: That's the point. I think in a way that's part of the health we do have in the field, is the fact that a lot of these cliques, which aren't

even cliques, not necessarily cliques of personality interests, are breaking up and reforming. Well, when they get set I'm sure they'll be as stultifying and as dead as any cliques ever were.

LE GUIN: Uh, huh.

ELLISON: Hey, Chip, I want to—last night Greg and Norman and we all were over at Ursula's mother's house and we were talking—I want to just ask you a question. Is there—do you believe the myth that there is a New York literary establishment? An East Coast Literary establishment?

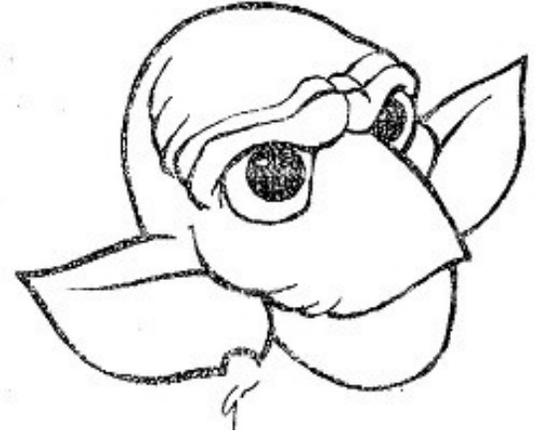
DELANY: I would go so far as to say there is a World establishment, that you can trace back in, you know, who knew who, who went to bed with who? Who was married to who? That probably goes all the way back to Shakespeare, if you want. Yeah, I'd say there probably is.

ELLISON: Well, we were talking about it last night. And we were talking and I guess it was Norman Spinrad said as that I knew Vonnegut, could I explain why Vonnegut didn't want to be called an SF writer? And why he put down SF readers and I said that as far as I knew he didn't put them down. What he did was, he talked about them very realistically. That Vonnegut had never really been an SF writer, he'd been his own kind of writer and his first stories were published in SF magazines, and consequently no attention was paid to him at all and he was getting the same penny, or two, or three cents a word that the worst sci-fi writer got and here was Vonnegut doing all this and he finally just got tired of it and he just said "no more." No more,

you don't call me an SF writer, and he went into the mainstream just by saying "I'm in the mainstream." And now you see Vonnegut in *Horizon* magazine and you see him in the *New Yorker* and you see him in *Life* magazine. That's because he finally got rid of that hideous pejorative, SF, and he just became his own kind of writer.

SPINRAD: What's that got to do with his literary style?

ELLISON: Well, what happened was when he was in our crowd, the New York literary establishment would not look at him, would not consider him. He was not serious. Now a book like *Sirens of Titan* was published, in paperback original and *Cat's Cradle*, well, *Cat's Cradle* was a hardcover, but *Mother Night*, *Canary in a Cat-House*, all of those were paperback originals, right? The minute that he moved out of it and the minute he got legitimate. Right? Then all of a sudden his books were published. *Cat's Cradle* was not published as SF and began getting the underground's acceptance. And so the New York literary establishment began taking notice of him and now with *Slaughterhouse 5* a best seller—it's up for the National Book Award, didn't win but it was up for it, right? Now all of a sudden he is accepted. He's an accepted writer, but there's no SF writer, none, not even the best of us, not even the most popular of us—Isaac Asimov, Arthur Clarke, Robert Heinlein—none of us are accepted by the New York literary establishment. The only one is Kurt Vonnegut.



(Voice from Audience): Ray Bradbury.

ELLISON: No, not even Bradbury.

YARBRO: One of Kurt's books was a book of the month club selection.

ELLISON: Well in the first place it wasn't fiction, it was a non-fiction book, and second of all, that is not what we're talking about. What I'm talking about is getting serious reviews in the *New York Review of Books*, you know, getting Martha Foley to include the latest Clifford Simak story in *Best Modern American Short Stories*.

YARBRO: If it did happen though, suppose it was accepted? Would it be constructive or destructive for sci-fi?

DELANY: Before you get into that, I think there's reasons for it, what you say Harlan, and I think one of the reasons is something that doesn't reflect too well on us as a fraternity. I think about every five years the mainstream literary establishment—or at least the ten years I've been in sci-fi, I've seen it happen at least twice—generally sends a representative to see what we're doing. And we behave, on a perfectly social level, so abominably. You know, here you have a bunch of writers at the various conventions and writers conferences and all I can see is you have essentially a bunch of artists desperately trying to come on as though they're businessmen and they're as important as any collection of businessmen, you know, practically shoving cigars in each others mouths and slapping each other on the back and there's one of the things that I think is unpleasant about the sci-fi fraternity purely as a social fraternity. Essentially, on whatever level you want to say it, it is a collection of artists and there seems to be a vast embarrassment about the fact that this is essentially what we are. And I think that this is probably what, on a perfectly social level alienates the literary establishment, if you have any desire to be accepted by them, if you ask why it's happening.

SPINRAD: It's also that the internal standards of the field are ludicrous.

DELANY: Yeah, exactly. Or nonexistent.

ELLISON: Have been, have been.

SPINRAD: Still are.

ELLISON: That's not true. The standards in this field have raised more in the last ten years than they have since the damned field began.

LE GUIN: Well, I'm not sure how to put it, I think Norman's talking about the standards within the field. I'm just not so sure there's a field any more; I mean, the reason Vonnegut made it big is that he's influenced the Mainstream; a lot of people in the Mainstream are writing like Vonnegut. They're writing like J. G. Ballard in England. I mean, the field is losing its coherence.

SPINRAD: The point is that within the field there is no reasonable criteria, no proper critical attention that has been paid to the relationship say between Kurt Vonnegut and Hank Stine or Harlan Ellison or Chip Delany, that would make sense to somebody outside the field. So when people from outside the field come in to take a look at it and the first thing they do to try and orient themselves is to try to look at some critical literature, what they see is a lot of fanzines.

ELLISON: Wait a minute, wait a minute, man, you go at it from the rear end, and you see the toches and you think you're looking at an angel and it's actually a jackass. What you're saying is that they're coming in and they can't orient themselves according to their way of thinking literary-wise. Well, maybe it's because we're breaking those rules finally. You know, maybe it's because we're doing it a different way. Look, you take a look at Ira Levin's new book, *Perfect Day*, which is sci-fi, it's sci-fi and it's a bad bad book and it's getting bum-rapped everywhere and the amazing thing about it, it's being bum-rapped, even in *Life* magazine. It wasn't Richard Schickel, I don't know who the reviewer was, but he said, "Mr. Levin is trying to do a sci-fi novel. It's a shame he didn't bother to do more reading in the field before he did it." You know, for the first time, someone who comes in from the outside, to do our thing is getting put down because he didn't take the time to learn what we're about. See, what we have to offer is not what the mainstream has to offer.

SPINRAD: Before we expect these people to pay serious attention to us maybe we ought to get our own house in order.

ELLISON: I don't think we have a house and I think it's—

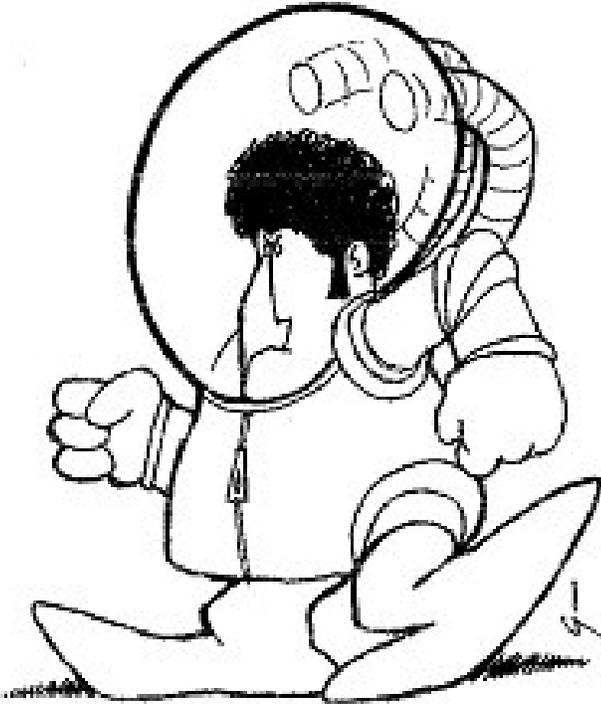
SPINRAD: Well, metaphorically speaking.

LE GUIN: You want to wait a long time, Norman, too.

DELANY: I think in purely literary terms, Ursula made the main point. That the field itself as an area of literature has lost its edges. I mean, it's not a matter of its *losing* it, it's *lost* its edges and also, outside the field you already have a critical standard that's perfectly willing to look seriously at popular culture of all sorts and so something that I remember you saying several years ago, Harlan, is that the fusion has already taken place. I think literarily the boundary isn't there any more and essentially what you do have is something that exists sort of as a social fossil and this is what we are talking about.

ELLISON: There's something else, there's something interesting and I've seen it a lot on college campuses. Older people—you know, and when I say that I don't mean chronologically, I mean in their heads there are an awful lot of very young seventy-two year old people. I met one last night. There are also a lot of cornball square fifteen year olds. There's a strange thing happening. The people who are older in their thinking aren't too interested in sci-fi, but people who are younger

in their thinking are, and I think part of this whole thing about sci-fi not being accepted with the establishment is a dying-out thing. I think that the older people who are fighting all sorts of change in all sorts of areas are being phased out, a little too slowly for my tastes, but that's all right. I think one of the new things that's going to be happening is that sci-fi is no longer going to be categorized, it's going to be just one part of one whole big thing and I think that's all to the good.



LE GUIN: I think what Hank said about popular music—about rock—is very important. That's where music is, too. And there is a connection. I mean, sci-fi and the Beatles and so on are working; they're doing the same thing.

ELLISON: Exactly. It's not coincidental that so many big rock groups are fans of many big sci-fi writers. The Mothers of Invention say their work was influenced by Cordwainer Smith, for God's sake, and the Rolling Stones have been reading Burgess and Heinlein and Zelazny and Chip here. Almost every rock group I ever came in contact

with, knows one or more sci-fi writers and are reading them regularly.

LE GUIN: And it works the other way around.

ELLISON: Yeah.

SPINRAD: But you're not satisfied with that. You are writing an entirely different kind of story. It has more to it than just maturity as a writer, because a lot of people in the science fiction field have matured as a writer and still gone on writing the same kind of stories. I don't know if you'd say they've written them even more perfectly, but they're still doing the same kind of thing.

ELLISON: Well, why shouldn't they, Hank?

STINE: But wait a minute, why shouldn't *you* go on writing the same thing *you* were writing? Ursula's novel—a fine novel, an unbelievably fine novel—is infinitely superior to the novels she was writing before, and even to the approaches she was taking before. Ursula, why did you,

suddenly? Your writing has changed in a way. You've just become more committed to the material.

LE GUIN: You learn. You learn, honey, as you go on.

SPINRAD: You learn, sure you learn, but—

ELLISON: What's the matter with you? What's the matter with you?

SPINRAD: I don't know, what is?

ELLISON: That's the silliest thing I ever heard of. Of course a writer who can do more and better is going to do more and better.

SPINRAD: But a lot of writers *can* and *don't*. You know that's true.

ELLISON: Well, that's cool, what are we supposed to do, stand them up against the wall and shoot'em?

SPINRAD: No. What is it that's happened recently? Writers in the field didn't go out and do this until recently.

DELANY: I think in a way this is sort of indicative of, on a tertiary level, of some of the things I was saying before. To wit, any sort of art is essentially a private business. And it's something that one does by oneself. No one (least of all the writer) is aware of all the exigencies of his own artistic growth. And again what I keep on coming across is this sort of attitude; that because one person does it therefore everybody somehow should be doing the same thing, and this is what I hear implied behind what you're saying. If one person in the field does better work than someone else, somehow everybody else must, you know, be doing the same thing. You know, as artists we are essentially individuals with all our quirky little things.

ELLISON: I will fight that to the death.

BENFORD: Oh, come on.

LE GUIN: But that isn't really what you think, Hank.

STINE: Not entirely, no. Not at all, really. It's true that in my heart of hearts, I have occasional moments when I feel like that, but really what I feel is that all of a sudden in the last few years writers have been doing something in this field, whereas before they never tried or at least they never seemed to try. Now why is that?

DELANY: It isn't that. The reason they never tried is because they never succeeded.

STINE: That's the question. Why is it in the last few years that this has been happening more than ever before?

LE GUIN: I think the audience is ready for it. I think. That's the change of feeling I've had since I started writing, about ten years ago. When I first started I felt there was a very small audience, mostly consisting of fans. And now there are people out there who want it. The people who listen to rock music, the kids in college and so on.

ELLISON: There's something even more than that. I'll tell you something that just recently happened to me, that kind of opened my eyes. Like a couple of years ago I was saying, yeah, the fusion has begun and we're taking in the Mainstream, the Mainstream is taking us in, like that. Well, I just did a story, I don't know where it came from or how I did it, called "At the Mouse Circus," and it's a very strange story, it's a very experimental story, of the things I like to experiment with, it's a very different kind of thing. All right. When I wrote it I said this is a story I will send to a big mainstream market, right? I will start with *Playboy* because they pay the most money, and then I will send it to *New American Review* and then it will go to *Esquire*, ('cause I hate them.) Right? And on and on down and at the bottom were the SF magazines because I figured, well, this is the kind of story that kind of falls between the chairs. (It doesn't really. I don't know what it is as a matter of fact.) Well, *Playboy* rejected it totally, just didn't understand it. I mean, didn't even know what the hell it was. *New American Review* sent it back without even a letter and then Damon Knight and Bob Silverberg both who are doing anthologies, both wanted it. They both grabbed for it at the same time. Now that's a story that, five years ago, I would have not been able to—I would have thought only been able to—send it to, like *Sewanee Review*, or *The Prairie Schooner* or some place like that. Because an SF magazine would never have taken it. Today the only markets that will take that kind of story are SF markets.

YARBRO: But Harlan, you say we fuse with the mainstream. And at the same time you say it's being bought by the sci-fi markets and you think of yourself as a sci-fi writer.

ELLISON: No, I just think of myself as a writer.

LE GUIN: I think the markets are behind. I think the markets are four or five years behind what's really being done.

ELLISON: Exactly, that's the point.

SPINRAD: And the readers are always behind what the writers are writing.

STINE: I don't think that. I think it's the markets and the editors who are holding it down. I think the readers now are ready for even more than we're doing.

ELLISON: Call on your Old Lady, Chip.

MARILYN HACKER: I think one of the exciting things about sci-fi at this moment is the unique relationship it has with its audience that is unique among other fields of literature. I remember having a discussion with a friend's who's a painter, saying the problems that painter's have and that poet's have today is that, well, basically a painter has two audiences. One audience I an audience of other artists who have essentially a blue pencil attitude toward fellow artists. If you're an artist you can't help looking at another artist's work and saying what is it he wants to do? Did he succeed in doing it? Well this is where he didn't. And suddenly you become an editor or a critic. And the other is the relationship with the audience with a capital "A". The audience who are not artists, who come to it, for what people need art for, whatever that amorphous thing is. This is a relationship rock musicians have with their audience today. This is the relationship filmmakers have with their audience today. This is a relationship that the legitimate theater has lost. This is a relationship that science fiction writers have with their audience. And I think this is one reason that sci-fi writers are becoming aware that they have this unique opportunity; i.e. to reach the audience that all artists want to reach. They don't have to talk to themselves in a way that somebody who can just sell to the *New Yorker* is sort of talking to himself. And I think this is something that other writers are realizing. Writers outside of the sci-fi field and wanting to get in on it, wanting to get in on the 100,000 people who buy every Ace book. And I think it's something that sci-fi writers, as such, should realize; what they've got, and how to make the best possible use of it, the way Jean Luc Godard and the Rolling Stones are making use of the same thing.

ELLISON: To amplify what Marilyn said. You know, it's like having a kind of strange historical perspective, like being at the end of a tunnel and looking back down because I can remember when I was a kid, and I was reading SF and I would have to carry the magazines around with the covers hidden. You know, because I was one of those numbers. Today, like, I was on the staff of

Univ. of Colorado Writer's Workshop with Alan Dugan, Pulitzer Prize poet, and Richard Eberhart P. P. W., and Vance Bourjaily and I guess he's the National Book Award winner and George P. Eliott and Richard Gehman, right? Well, I would go to the parties with these people and I would find out all of a sudden that Dugan is an enormous SF fan, really loves it, and writes his poetry as if it were SF. He talks about firing off the Statue of Liberty like a rocket, and comparing it to a pistachio ice cream cone and all he could do was talk about SF. I mean, here I was in awe of Dugan who is an incredible poet and all he could talk about was SF. And all of them kind of really are into it and look at us in a strange and wonderful new way. I made a phone call, long distance phone call the other day, calling New York such and such.

"What is your name please?"

"Harlan Ellison."

"Oh, are you the writer?"

You, know, a telephone operator. All of a sudden people know who we are. And you don't have to hide the cover of the magazine any more. We're achieving, all of a sudden, a very strange place in the literary scene and it's nice, it's a good feeling and I think it's about time that we got it. Of course we've deserved it for many years, and I don't think we take it seriously enough yet. And I don't think we should get sententious about it 'cause that's what killed jazz, right?

YARBRO: Yes, David?

GERROLD: Well this is just something I realized while Marilyn was talking. I have a degree in Theater Arts, a T. A. Major. And everybody in the T. A. department is playing the game of "God, I hope he fails in his next scene, 'cause then I can say I told you so." We put these shows on, college shows, they'd be pretty good because everybody'd be working, but you know, everyone off the stage... "Jesus, you were bad, your motivation here was bad, you muffed it, blew that." And you know, all very deep into their heads and saying it was terrible. The audiences who weren't trained specifically for theater, but who had come to see a show would come up to the actors and start talking about the play; that shows that they didn't care too much about the technique of the acting. They were there to see the show and were concentrating on the ideas that the basic writers had been after. And I think we've got the same kind of thing with maybe the

fans and fandom, all they can do is pick, pick, pick about words and technique and style and they're missing the ideas.

YARBRO: Michael Kurland just recently got a letter from a fan on *Unicorn Girl* and the guy basically liked the book but he referred to two paragraphs on page 149, quoted it, tore it to pieces, and another one on page 200 something or other, quoted it to pieces. Now I know anyone who's been in the field find this—

GERROLD: I'll bet that letter was written in crayon, too.

YARBRO: No, it was written in pencil on foolscap. This sort of thing, I know that anyone who's done any kind of writing, finds that the people closest to it, or the most involved in it are the best suited to tear it to bits. But I don't know, I've run into many fans who are not into the fannish scene who'd rather read and discuss as a literary society, heaven forbid, than as a, you know, a fan group doing a fannish thing. I'm wondering if any of you have experienced the thing that even the reaction of certain sorts of fans is changing as your work is changing?

ELLISON: Yeah, there's two different kinds, now, I get mail from. Fan. It's the same kind of nonsensical time wasting garbage where they'll say something about a story or a book if they even bother with that. Usually they want something. Which they don't get. They lend nothing, they offer nothing. It's as though the vacuum still existed, they have not filled it. On the other hand I will get letters from people I have never heard of in my entire life, that come through the publishers or they'll come through the Writer's Guild or they'll come through the *Free Press* or something, of someone who's picked up a book cold and it is the purest, grooviest kind of letter you can get, because you know, even if they hated the book, even if they thought it was terrible, man, they were just readers who went at you cold and took in what you had to offer and they either grooved with it or they did not, but what they are saying are the valid things because they're the people that are actually doing the reading. They're not playing with this whole mystique about SF as an idiom or you as a writer who is involved with fandom or anything like that. They're just reading you as a writer. That's the most enriching kind. And I've never had that before. It's only the last four or five years that I've been getting that.

YARBRO: Ursula?

LE GUIN: Yeah, there was one who told me he didn't like my book because it had black vibrations.

ELLISON: That's heavy, that's heavy. Yeah.

YARBRO: Kathleen.

KATHLEEN SKY: I've had rather unfortunate experiences with fans over the first story I'd sold. It was sold to an editor that fandom was not particularly happy with, at the moment. I was downgraded and my story, unread, was downgraded, simply because this particular editor was disliked. And it's a pretty disgusting scene for your first story.

ELLISON: Well, that's just this back biting thing that gets going.

SPINRAD: I'll speak to the subject of the effect of an organized fandom that seems to be one of the central problems.

YARBRO: Does anybody want to digress on that?

ELLISON: That's what we were just doing.

DELANY: I think fandom—again another very conservative statement—has its good and its bad qualities. Very often, to most of us, the bad qualities are infinitely more apparent than the good ones. I sometimes wonder what Tom Wolfe is going to do when he discovers fandom and gets into, you know, this is a new thing. By and large I think fandom to the writers is detrimental—to the writers *as writers*.

ELLISON: Hear, hear.

DELANY: For exactly any sort of extra literary attention is detrimental to any artist, to any writer, whether it be condemnation, or whether it be praise.

Essentially all of it's distracting from what you're doing, which is something you do between you and your—

ELLISON: Maker.

DELANY: Okay, yeah, there you go. And that's it.

STINE: I find that to a large degree people who exist within the mystique of fandom are much more conservative in their tastes. And like all groups, they have the things that they like, that's why they're there, and they become conservative and they want those things to remain. Organized fandom is a kind of mystique in that it's much more conservative in terms of its relationship in reading of sci-fi, than the non-fandom SF reader.

ELLISON: Fans don't read SF, man. The biggest fans read, like, maybe three books a year or four books a year. And the ones who are supposed to be reviewers and critics, God save us from them. It was unbelievable. Yesterday some fanzine was laying around Quinn's house and I picked it up and there was a review. It was *Locus*. Some kid, Tony Lewis, and he was reviewing an issue of *F&SF* and the last line was like the classic of trenchant criticism. It said, "The cover is by Mel Hunter, it is the beginning of a new robot series. It's kind of nice, but I liked the old robot series better." I

swear to you now that's the level of criticism. What can a writer in our genre possibly learn from that? Nothing. It took me a lot, you know, my sick ego and my hideous needs predicated that I would hang around fans for a number of years. I was into that whole bag. That's where I came from, is fandom. As a fostering ground for new writers fandom is valuable because an awful lot of good writers come out of fandom, but once you get away from that, once you start making your living by writing, once you begin to think of yourself, as Chip says, as an artist, and I don't think that's a pejorative even with a cap "A", fans become a hideous burden and it's like Bob Silverberg says, you end up like the Chambered Nautilus, you know the snail that carries its past on its back. It moves, from chamber to chamber to chamber, until it comes out, but you always carry fandom with you on your back like an enormous rock. And no more, man, I'm delivered, brethren, I'm delivered. No more.

BENFORD: I doubt you'll keep that promise, Harlan.



DELANY: Although I still wonder, I still wonder. Why at a gathering like this that somebody has to explain that being an artist with a capital “A” is not a pejorative. That’s the thing that keeps on getting to me.

SPINRAD: Because the evolution of this field is a commercial genre of literature.

DELANY: Again, this is the bad thing that hangs over from that, is an idea, and all of us have it somewhere down underneath our little wiggling subconscious, that there’s something wrong with artists. It’s not something basically wrong that we should somehow—

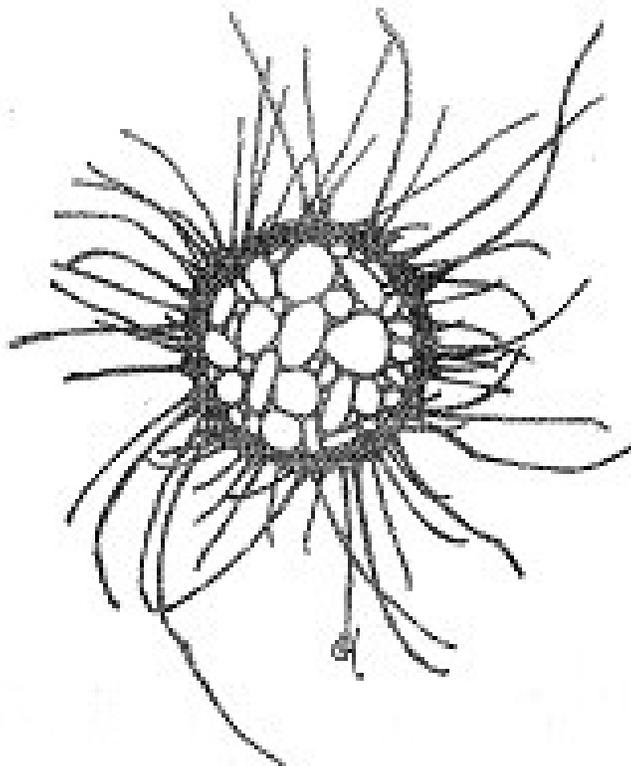
ELLISON: That’s American anti-intellectualism.

SPINRAD: Somewhere deep down, in the Spiro Agnew bowels, inside you. The notion that anyone who is an artist is a faggot.

ELLISON: You watch your mouth, please.

GERROLD: The classic line is, “Are you still writing or are you working for a living?”

###



BOOK CONTRACTS

(a fearless attack on the Establishment)

by

Harry Harrison

The first thing I want to say is—you're all amachooors. We heard that panel of illiterate ex-agents, a while ago, running down their trade, which they did very well. They should, but did you get the feeling after a while that all agents are bad? They don't know anything; they package you like a salami, you're lucky to get a cut from the dry end. They want you to agent yourself and that means you should be thinking about contracts, but you don't know anything, I mean nothing, I mean nothing at *all*, even less than they do, and you're already told they're bad. So do me a favor—listen, because there are a few things, which, if you know, can help you no end. And I can prove the amachooors bit.

How many here in this smiling audience—which is half empty because the bar opened, another faux pas on the part of the management—how many were here two years ago for the same reason? Let's see a hand, okay. Of the hands—keep'em up, keep'em up, this is important—how many of these hands have sold a book in these last two years? If you haven't sold a book put your hands down. Okay, now we have about four left. How many of these now get six to eight percent of the paperback rights? Keep your hands up, oh well, what do we have, three survivors, four?

Do you remember the point I made two years ago? I'll make it again for the people that weren't here. A funny little story. I've been selling paperback rights for about 10, 12, 15 years. In the good old days when you made more money selling paperbacks. Then I was enveigled into selling hardcover. At a great labor I made almost as much selling in hardcover, as I made on an original paperback. Then I went back to paperback, so I held my old contracts and one day I was talking to Larry Ashmead and he said Doubleday had sold the paperback rights to one of my books. I said, "Oh, really." Normally you just get a little letter—"We sold the book rights." "Money," I said. "Oh, you know." Ashmead said, "But we had lunch together, an expensive

lunch.” In that overblown firm, you know big money, big lunch. And I said, “What were the terms?”

“Well,” he said, “a coupla grand, but with one third on signing, one third on publication, and one third six months later.”

I said, “What kind of a deal is that?”

“The publishers always do that, because we don’t need the money like writers do and he prefers to do that. We get, in the long run, the same amounts. We get other benefits.”

I said, “What other benefits?”

“Well, six and eight.”

I said, “Six and eight what?”

The standard contract—go look at your paperback contract—says four percent of the cover price—up to 100,000 or 150,000 copies. Six percent after that, that’s what you all have. Doesn’t sound very big, does it? I said, “How do you do that?”

He said, “Book publishers sell the paperback reprint rights. Publishers are publishers, after all. We always get it.”

“You mean you’ve always been getting it and we haven’t?” So I went to my agent and I said, “Look, um, yum, um, Doubleday gets it. Now I want it.”

I was just signing a contract, called up the editor and said, “Harry, um, hum, hum, six and eight.” And the editor said, “All right. But don’t tell anyone else.”

I came here to the SFWA Day Program a month later and told everybody. That was in 1968. They didn’t do anything about it. Now look here, what the hell does that mean? I went through some figures there, at a great expense. Here’s my first book, *Deathworld*, sold back in ‘56 or ‘57 or ‘58, a good ten years ago. I got \$2,500, a very good dale at that time, from Bantam, and a good old six percent, since it sold other places. I’m just talking about sales now—period. One hunk of sales—that’s what it means. Now, they just put a new edition out and since it had run up to breaking even (they owed me about four dollars), I said, “Give me some more money on new editions.” They gave me \$500. Very sweet of them. Bantam can’t afford very much money. I’ve had a total of \$3,000 and on both printings, up to June 30th, which is only just one

sale. I haven't sold much of the second edition because it was just out. It sold 164,600 copies at four percent. I got \$3,271; they sent me a check for \$3,271. (How generous of them. Like a lot of loot isn't it, \$3,271?) I figured out if I had six and eight to begin with, it would have risen to eight on the 50,000 break. I would have made, instead of \$3,271, \$6,636. By just poof instead of pah, they stole \$3,000 from me. And that is the difference. It happened before I learned about it. With Berkeley I sold my book *Best Science Fiction of 1967*, all the newer, best SF, at six and eight, four and six. Sold like crazy. Right after it came out from Berkeley, Tom Darzois in New York, says "Harry, we're doing Putnam next year."

I said, "Why?"

"This book sold more copies than any other sci-fi book we've done at Berkeley. Which is like 60,000, didn't print very many, but sold out the complete printing." Great, then we went to hardcovers. The paperback edition, it sold—they must have printed 65 or 61 thousand—it sold 58 thousand. In other words, the only thing left were the copies that fell out of the box when they were distributing them. Sold every single copy and brought in the massive sum of \$1,766. Oh, poor Harry. I got two and a half thousand dollars for it, a big advance that I didn't earn out. So all the writers, I gave'em half of that (which is more than Ace does, believe me). You know I'll never see any more money. If I'd had six and eight it would have got \$2,650. It comes out \$150 more, but notice what I said, it's not two percent and four percent, it's twice as much money if you have the six and eight rather than the four and six. (**Spinrad**: Will you explain that?)

Oh, well, how do you explain it? It's four percent of the cover price. (**Spinrad**: How can six and eight mean twice four and six?) It works out this way; six is fifty cents more than four, right? You get the break not at 150,000 copies sold, you get the break at 100,000. At 100,000 copies it jumps to 8 percent which is double the original four. (**Spinrad**: Ah.) It jumps another point, don't forget, at 100,000 copies. (**Spinrad**: And you don't get any royalties until it hits the eight percent anyway.) Right. Yeah, okay.

What it adds up to is twice as much money in the long run, even on a book that only sold 40,000 copies. Now isn't that nice? Think of what you've lost. Go open your files. Look at your contracts and just burst out crying. If you have three or four books you've lost 8-9-10 thousand dollars. (**Garrett**: Boo-hoo.) The first tearful one just broke down. Poor old Garrett, you know.

Give him a nickel go buy a half a cup of coffee. (**Voice:** I don't have a nickel.) A cup of coffee, it costs a dime now.

Think about this, and as you think about it, think about the fact that all things are negotiable in contracts. They have this thing here, it's printed on 85 pound card stock, in two colors, very impressive. Throw it away, quickly, right away. You don't want to be impressed. What they have inside is also all printed up. *You* can change everything in there. It maybe printed. Sure. There may be a few little holes to fill things in, and you might think it's a closed issue, that's it; but it's *all* negotiable. All negotiable. On paperback contracts they really try and do this to you. Look at your paperback contracts, it's printed on there, as if God himself came down with a finger and wrote it in sandstone—four percent on 130,000 copies, sic percent later, the whole graft. It's so much pennies per copy. It works out like that. I'll show you my contracts; what they simply do is “x” out all that crap right off. They “x” it all off and put six and eight percent and they “x” out 150,000, put 50,000 in; everything is negotiable, ignore it. Take this thing; this contract, and hold it in your hands and think of it as a work of fiction and you're an editor, you *better* be an editor.

Hemingway said it, we all said it. The writer first is an artist and he's creating. You know, you wear a beret and you don't shave and when you masturbate you wear velvet, like old what's his name. And you're an artist and you're walking around very delicately. And then you write the damn thing and the second it's done—a little switch in here you pull it down like that (click) and the dollar signs appear in your eyeballs. You become an editor and then you pull the handle and become an agent. The editor in you turns around and looks at this lovely piece of work, you know, and Hemingway said every good writer has an inborn shit-detector and you write something and you go “sniff.” You take it out and after being an editor, after it's good, you become an agent. What you have in your hand is not a work of art any more. Think of it like Scott Meredith does, hold that man up there like a Holy Grail. Someone said that maybe he doesn't read all the manuscripts that come in. I suggest that he just *opens* the manuscript that comes in. He weighs it to see how many pages are in it, (that one'll weigh, that's a pound, \$1,000). Looks at the artist's name, Poul Anderson, \$4,000. And then the big stapler, he staples the edges shut so he can't open it. The girl who puts it in an envelope takes the staples out so the targeted editor can read it. A question already? Yes? (**From the floor:** You were mentioning x-ing

things out of the contract, isn't it a great deal easier for a Harry Harrison to "x" things out and to say "I'm going to get this" than for a neo-writer?)

Of course it is, but you have to start somewhere. You get screwed in your first contract, always, take it for granted, this is the law of life, but what you do—each time you negotiate a contract, you push them one way, they always ask for too much, so you give them something they don't want. You give them the movie rights for a book that takes place—somewhere, yeah, the mind boggles, it couldn't possibly be a movie. You say: "All right, I'll give you all the movie rights for this book and I want THAT!" And what you do, every time you negotiate, anyway a contract, you pull it up one notch more here and there. It's an important thing to look for in paperback, four and six on hardcover, very important what to do; give them the second serial rights—you don't need it—take back all the foreign rights, take back British rights, let them have Canada. (The British want Canada because it's a part of the Empire, but *you* say they can't have it {because the Americans pay more.}) No, take it from me, the British publisher will say "Give me Canada."

"I sold it to the Americans," you say.

"That's too bad. Means I can't. Oh, well."

They always buy the British rights. Well, the publisher is not in the foreign book business, or in the television business. He's going to screw you on the paperback rights, you can't get away from the 50 percent he takes, and he's going to screw you on book rights. He's going to get half of that. These are things you can't even touch. Forget about it. Go for the important areas, go for the throat where you know it *counts*; get the foreign rights, get the English rights, make sure of the cancellation clause (very important), make sure they have to be published in a year or 18 months or you get the rights back, make sure that after five years if it's not in print, that you get the book back.



Ask someone like Poul, who's been writing a long time. Those books come back to you and go out again and make more money the second time around. Perfect example: Pyramid bought a book I did, a series of three stories for *Analog* put together and called *The Stainless Steel Rat*. Got into print. Sold. Pyramid paid for 3,000 copies sold or something. \$1,500 advance never earned out. Six years later I review my contract. (I kept a little list of dates. Six years later I review *all* my contracts. The publisher, a figure worth remembering, will never reprint under six years and usually won't let it go eight years. But they have a sort of a holy thing in their heads—six years they can reprint a book—eight years it's simply getting too tired.) Six years—I wrote the old registered letter to Pyramid saying print *Stainless Steel Rat* or give me the book back. Whereupon I started a complicated deal. As a writer you can do this to yourself. I knew Walker wanted new science fiction for hardcover and they groaned and mumbled about doing a reprint. I finally got a \$5,000 contract out of them for *two* books by promising them a new book. To me it was the writing of one book. I got five grand, one new book to them. They bought two books for 2½ thousand apiece. They were very happy because they turned around and flogged *Stainless Steel Rat* for \$3,000 to Dell. There right away, they're only two grand in the hole. So I had a three grand and a five grand sale, things were going better all the time. I wrote the other book figuring I could get a serial sale on that, but the book came back to me. It took eight months to make this contract. It was a good idea. I dreamed it up because people had asked for a sequel. I went down there and they were shy virgins at Walker, because they had never paid more than \$500 a book. Before I multiply it by ten, let's talk about 5 thousand, I say. Gasp, heart attacks in the bookkeeping department. But we did it, okay.

I'm saying (the point was, remember?): Make sure that the five year clause is in your contract.

Some things. The book is yours. We talk about selling this, selling that. We don't *sell* anything; the good old days of slavery are gone. There used to be a time when they did it. Like, Mike Moorcock sold books in England, literally for 100 pounds, all rights. He's regretting it now, his books are being sold here for a lot of money. The publishers are giving him \$25 a book to cheer him up. Ed Hamilton sold all rights to *Captain Future* and now he's going—he's not going broke, but he's watching books come out—10, 15, 20 books with his name all over the cover. He

hasn't made one sou from those books. The publishers said, "Screw you, we own all the rights." They're very nice people, these publishers.

The book, the story, whatever we sell, we *don't sell*. We *license* rights, period. We license the paperback rights for a certain number of copies, a certain period of time. You license the foreign edition for one edition—or a certain number of copies. We license rights and these licenses should not be given the publisher free. We give him the book to give to the hardcover publisher. I say, he's not in the T.V. business, why should he make money off a possible T.V. sale of ours? He will make—it's written down there—you pull back what you can, you license only these things.

Not always the biggest advance helps, really, the contract helps. A question immediately comes up; do you do hardcover or paperback? The economics of the field, right now, are that frankly most of the hardcover publishers are better off selling original paperback rights. Because on a normal sale of an average book, say a new writer or a writer who is not really so very popular, with no book club sales, you make less by doing hardcover and paperback, unless you take advantage of the new thing going around and only two publishers have it and they're the ones should be on the top of your list. When you consider selling, automatically, you should submit books first to Dell-Delacorte and Berkley-Putnam. Why should you do that? Because, if you ask them nice and sneak around back, they will give you all the hardcover money and all the paperback money. Big difference; remember up to now, we've only had half the paperback when we sold hardcover. They will give you *all* because they are one firm. Each firm owns itself; Putnam owns Berkley, Delacorte owns Dell. The only better deal you can do is this—and only if you have a good name and sell regularly—is to sell to a very big publisher who will keep a book in print, like Harper. Harper will give you a moderate advance like two or three thousand dollars from them, or one thousand dollars or five hundred dollars. They *keep that book in print*, selling over and over to libraries. You get half a paperback sale, but they'll negotiate a *good* sale; this is happening now.

These things have to be weighed, whether to go hardcover or not depends on your relationship with the publisher. Doubleday, they're nice people out there, but the firm is a crumb firm in the sense that they pulp the books the second they come out. They have an on-sale

on the average of two or three months—no more. They have a secret figure I’ve never been able to find out. They publish a book. It goes out; sells to the Army, sells to the Navy, sells to libraries, on the shelves of Doubleday book stores, and they keep track of that, when it drops below something, say 10, 20 sales a week, whatever this magic number is (they have too many books and four books a day they’re publishing!), they pull all the copies back and instantly chop ’em up and throw them away. (**Question:** Don’t they remainder them?) No, they can’t afford to remainder them. (**From floor:** They don’t really pulp them all.) Right! Now, that’s two things they do; they pulp the ones you want to buy. You go down to this pulping plant, all these big art books, \$85 art books being chopped up. Something valuable—gaaah—they tear the covers off—gaaah—men who do nothing but tear covers off, little fiends. But occasionally, because they’re such a great big octopus, sitting there, they have a lot of copies and they say to themselves, as happened to me, “Say, we have a lot of copies, shall we pulp these?” And then the other head said—sitting there on the shoulder—said, “Hey, you know I got a book club called the Science Fiction Book Club.” This head says, “Well, you didn’t buy this book, it wasn’t good enough to buy.”

“No, it wasn’t good enough to buy but it’s good enough to give away free to the members. Tell you what, why don’t I buy those old copies you were going to pulp?”

“Okay, but we can get a penny a hundred pounds for waste paper.”

“We’ll give you a penny a copy.”

“Would you *really*?”

All right, so they move him from that office to this office and they give it out as a book of mine. *Plague in Space* wasn’t good enough to buy, but it was good enough to remainder to themselves and give away to the poor suckers in the club. (**From floor:** You don’t get a dime.) A dime—a big sum like that? You get a slit in the little fore-hands or other parts unmentionable here. So, my, they’re very nice people, though. They can sell good—hell if they had ’em they’d go out and pulp it, then call down to you, “Can we have a copy to pulp?” You know, we don’t feel right if we don’t have something to pulp.”

All right now, this is what the publishers think of themselves, this is what their books really sell in paperbacks. Over here in the left hand column it says ACE-CURTIS, which is

SIMON AND SCHUSTER, and BALLANTINE, DELL-FAWCETT, and over in the right hand column is a sales—percent of purchases—and this means the number of copies sold in relation to the number of copies printed. If you know the economics of book printing and distributing, the breaking point depends on a lot of factors—how much you cheated the writer out of in the beginning, how much you paid for printing, how many copies you got out, how bad your distributor is, but you're gonna have to need at least 50, 60, 70 percent. Fifty percent to break even, sixty you're making a lot of money, seventy you're in heaven according to these figures. The breaking point has gotten a lot lower, I'm happy to say. Now, they may send these books out again and this is reprinting them. So you look at the relationship. Now, going from the sublime to the ridiculous, Ballantine, a good publisher to deal with as far as sales go, because they sell 62 percent of all the books they get out on the stands. Now they don't print very many copies, that's the unhappy part, but they sell them, which means it will earn out.

The bottom of this pile is somebody called LANCER, yes, who sells 39 percent of a small print order—so you know right away that you're screwed. You're getting a small advance to begin with, they're not printing very many copies and not selling very many of the few copies they print. So what you do is, look at this and find out the ratio of sales which will mean the amount you're going to make, and then submit in this order. With the other thing, submit where the advances are bigger or smaller. Some publishers jump out of the category, they're cheating us blind. They make a lot more money than they say they do—so you do two things; you submit by amount of sales you can expect, you submit by the size of the advance and nothing else. There's no loyalty involved. A publisher told me once, "Harry, where's your loyalty? You went to another publisher!"

I said, "Well, where's your loyalty to me buddy-boy? You know if I stop sending or selling well tomorrow, you throw me out the door."

Looking at this thing, Ballantine is right at the top. Fawcett is maybe higher, 63 percent. They don't buy many science fiction books, but this explains why Fawcett gives you an advance on print order. They tell you how many copies they're going to print, they give you money as they print the book. You don't buy the bookkeeping? Why should they? Which also proves how bad other advances are. Other publishers, 63 percent they can afford to pay in the advance.

Jumping down a notch, Bantam sells 65 percent very, very good. So now we have the ratio roughly here, forgetting the figures for a moment, the amount of money you can expect to get back from a publisher. Try it on Bantam, try it on Signet and Mentor, they may not happen to be buying books but this is the figures, that's the uninteresting part. Of the ones that are buying books, I'd say off-hand, N.A.L.'s the best as far as the size of the sales you're going to get. Look at these figures, Bantam is better but they don't buy many books just now, they're just buying reprints, but try and sell them reprints, well—in this field. (No credit to them at all, science fiction is doing well.) Larry has very good taste, he buys good books, doesn't pay much for them, but they take all their books when they're published, send out copies to all the paperback publishers and say, "Three months, lads, bid in." And a certain day, in come the bids and the highest bidder gets. And if the paperback publisher is a little mad and they want to start a new line, the bid high; 10 grand sale for Phil Farmer on *Flesh*, they just sold the Dick book, the name is gone, for \$15,000!

This pulping books instantly! We worked very hard, we finally got to keep one book in print. The only book that's ever been kept in print; in detective or science fiction dealing out there, in the history of the firm. This was a very fine volume called *The Collected Editorials of John W. Campbell, Jr. from Astounding, Edited by Harry Harrison*, and it sold like, 300-400 copies. You know, it was a real—well, you wouldn't call it a bomb, but it's not the world's snappiest title. They usually figure, I don't know—my figures are about a year or two old. I haven't talked to Larry about this recently, but as of two years ago, a year and a half, they could count upon a sale of 2,000-2,200, for the average good novel, the average writer, myself say, or Randall, you know typical average writers—Poul would do much better—other people would do much worse, i.e. three or four hundred copies for an unknown writer, but they could break about 2,000. If they figure they sold about 2,500 they're happy as pigs. So this book sold—they're doing much better now—like, 1,000 copies at a \$1,500 advance; they weren't losing money. God, nobody could sell paperback at all—frightening thought—that is people, all over the United States collecting editorials of John Campbell, Jr.. But dear old John wrote up an ad and he put it in *Analog*, a half page ad every month, and Larry went to the advertising board, "Let's keep this book in print."

"What, it bombed!"

“No, we’re getting a free half page ad every month in a magazine with 120,000 circulation.” They said, “You know, that makes sense.” So they have kept this book. It earned \$43 above the guarantee, I don’t know, we sold about 200 copies last year. Every week or two, you know, about 12 *Analog* readers say, “I never heard of that before, I can’t read very well. I never heard of that before. Look, there’s an ad here for a book.” They send in their five bucks. That’s the only time they’ve ever broken the law of pulping and they’ll never break it again because they’ll never have this kind of situation again.

Well, this is for your own conscience on hardcover—paperback. You have to remember these things, you have to think about it. It’s much simpler in paperback. I have here, *Paperback Survey, January 1968* which is roughly the way it is now. These are the publishers’ own figures of percentages. These are what the average book sells, nothing has changed in this. (**Randall Garrett:** I was just going to tell you about this pulping business. I don’t know if they’ve pulped *Too Many Magicians* yet or not.) If it’s more than two weeks old—it’s pulped. (**Garrett:** Because it made my advance back in the first three months.) More reason to pulp it. (**Garrett:** Really!) Yeah, they don’t want those copies lying around, they can’t handle it, they don’t fill orders, they just send all the books out, the books come back and they throw them away. (**Garrett:** I don’t think they had any of mine left to pulp.) Oh well, probably give a big advance on reprints. And then comes Ballantine. Berkley, unhappily, only sells 42 percent, under the advance. Mind you, Berkley and Ballantine pay the same advance, the average advance they pay is \$1,500, but unhappy to say, Berkley is my publisher. Ballantine will make more money for you in the long run. So you should submit in that order, period, unless you can get a Berkley-Putnam combined deal. Then you should go to Berkley-Putnam because it is better to have all of a smaller sale than half of a larger sale, it’s the logic. You know the spread isn’t that big on these sales. And right on the bottom, the one you expect to be right on the bottom, dear old Lancer. Popular Library sells forty-five percent so there’s a reason for the size of the advances.

You are selling something you worked a long time on. You deal with it as an agent; now we all know that agents are very bad, we heard that.

Before I close this, one last word on the new thing in science fiction, which is the original hardcover anthology. These are a good deal.

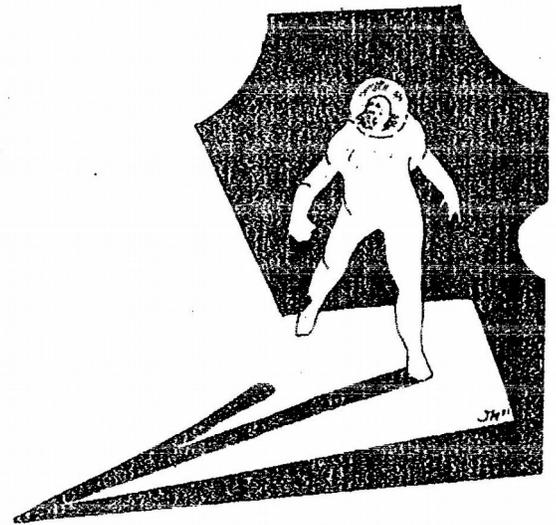


There's a new phenomenon in the world. It's come about as magazines die. Paperbacks sell very well, books sell very well and the magazines for all accounts really are dead. You know that, don't you? There's only one viable magazine around here and that's *Analog*, which all of you can't read here which explains something, I'm not quite sure what. The *Galaxy* group were dying. That means their sales are less than their income. They were sold at a profit to a publisher who wanted a tax write-off. I hope you'll get up their sales. So far they don't look that way. *F&SF* runs at a debit every year. They make less money, they put out less money than they earn. They break even by selling their anthology. That's the figure that brings them up. We, the writers, underwrite them as well. They make money on their foreign rights, that's also part of it. We give them foreign rights. We don't get them ourselves. We are underwriting that magazine 'cause we don't ask extra money for their foreign editions. What else is there? That's the field, for all apparent purposes. *Analog*. As John Campbell says, "Every time I raise the cover price, I get 30,000 new subscribers, ha ha ha." He just raised the price again. He now has 120,000 readers. He's a good man, he knows what he's doing, he's got his finger on the engineer's pulse.

There goes our magazine market, but boy-oh-boy, we have this lovely, booming hardcover, original book sales. In this room you are lucky to have two editors with you, myself and Chip Delany, all looking for good manuscripts. The deal is this; it is still a book, don't let anybody con you into saying it's still a magazine. Hoskin keeps saying it's a magazine. It's not a magazine, he's out to screw you—not personally, his publisher's going to screw you. He's the kind of publisher that likes to screw people. I'm not mentioning any names—Lancer's that way. He is the only one. There's four anthologies: there's *Nebula*, Putnam-Berkley, there's my *Nova* with Dell-Delacorte, there's Silverberg's thing, *New Dimensions*, with Walker-Avon, and Chip's with Paperback—Pocketbook Library—okay, and there is Lancer's thing; these last two are original paperback. Now what you should do, submit to these magazines, these books, in the descending order of price. Of course, you do this anytime, which doesn't affect the editors because they'll have all different tastes completely. Damon's, Chip's, Silverberg's give you a

hunk of change, a piece of money which is an advance against royalties. Just what you should be getting because it's a book. It's not a goddamned magazine, it's a book that sells more, you should get more money out of it. Lancer does not, they take all rights. They literally buy that story from you for a very small hunk of change. They can sell it wherever they want. They can reprint it. They get foreign rights. Worse than that, you can't even put it in your own collection. You can't put it in an anthology. They own it, outright. They're selling you down the river. So therefore, think about that. These are books and you want to get a book contract from them. You just don't want a piece of paper saying, "I bought the story." You want to get a hunk of the action and you can get it. You can get, from these 3-4 honest ones and if you want to sell it—can't sell it anyplace else, you want to get a penny a word or two cents, fine. Sell your child. (**Spinrad:** Foreign rights can get tied up forever. I sold a collection in England. I originated the collection because, well, it worked out—a story I had in *Dangerous Visions*, 'cause I worked it out because D.V. hadn't been published in England. Three years later, they didn't want me to put it in my own collection.) Right. What you must do is push. We have to squeeze these editors, it helps, really it does.

Look at my contract. I'll send a copy to anyone who wants. I've never seen the contract from *Nova* and I'm just getting one from Silverberg. I haven't seen it yet. On my own contract to writers, what it says in great detail, I'm giving you a hunk of change. I'll keep giving you more change. I'll make some money on this book for one right only. I want so that you can't sell that damn thing to anywhere until I have printed it. I want first publication rights back. I wrote it in there myself, but *you* make other editors write it in there.



Editors are writers and they're editors as well so they can screw you for two reasons; 1. 'Cause they want to screw you. 2. 'Cause they're kind of stupid as editors. Editorial work is a very complex job and to be a good editor requires not as much talent as to be a good writer, but a separate talent altogether. They got to fall on their face and bomb; good writers who can't edit. Either they can't do it, or they hate it when they do it. I mention Mr. Anderson here did a very

fine job on *Nebula Awards*, said, “I’ll never edit a book again till the day I die.” He doesn’t want to edit. He did a nice job but he doesn’t like it. (**From floor:** Remember Howard Brown?) I remember Howard Brown very well. Hated every moment of it. Loathed it. He’s now alive and well in Hollywood, as you know, writing movies which he always wanted to do. There are good editors, and every editor is an amateur. Don’t forget there are no schools for editors. Every editor I know, present company included, got their job by saying, “I’m an editor,” and there he walked on, and they have to learn, too.

All the ones I’ve mentioned, with one possible exception, but everybody here in this room, and everybody I’ve talked about here are honest guys who want to help us. They will help us. We say to them—nine writers who are selling stories say, “No, I won’t sign this.” Look, I got a good book here. I can’t do it without changing your crappy contract and mumble, mumble, groan.

You’re all dazed by the barrage of facts, I can see that. To sum it up, read the contract in fine detail. Read the SFWA contract information. Go for the throat in certain things. Go one at a time. Go for the throat first on the four and six and then try and get your English rights. Then try and get your movie rights, but in just about that order. Somewhere right after, early on, get your five year return right. You get the book back.

I thank you. (Applause.)

