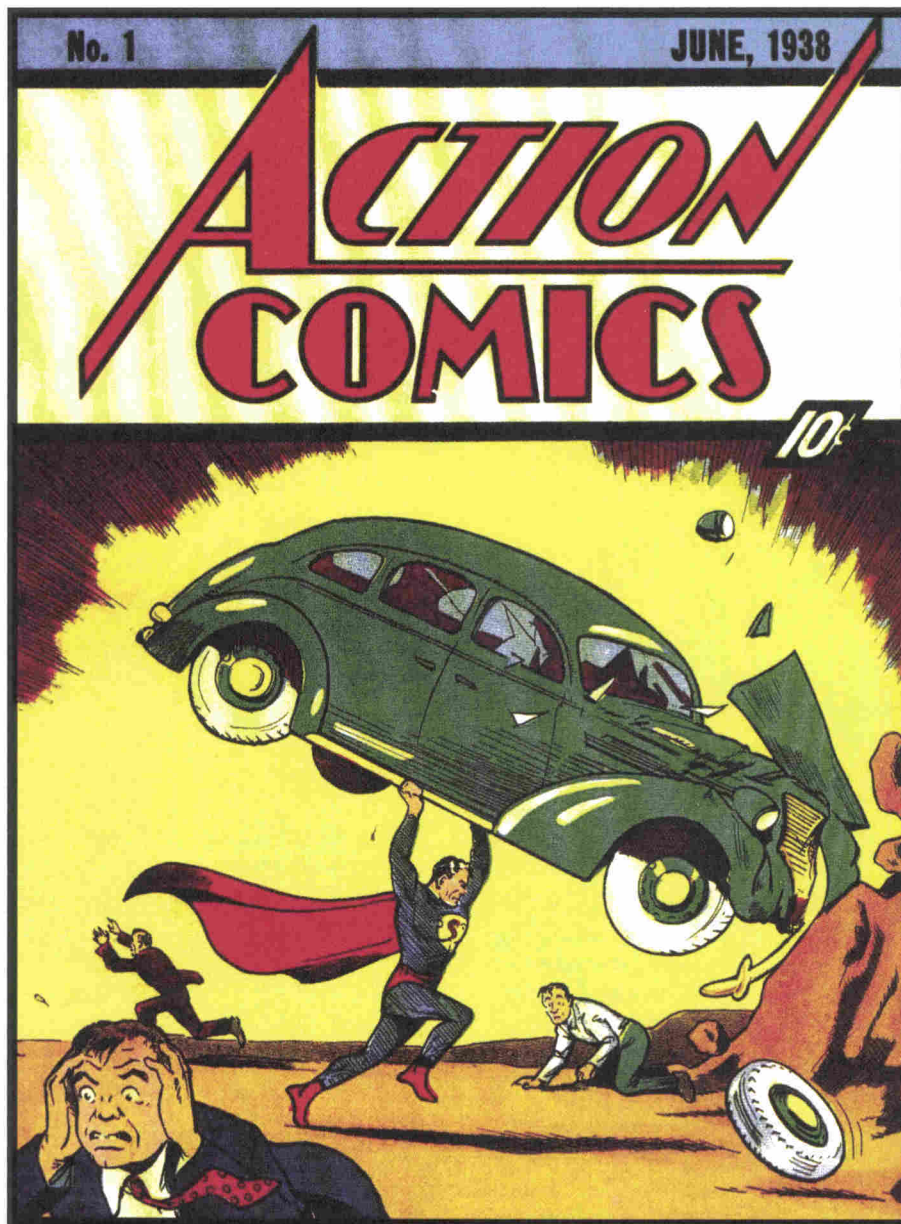


AUTHORS GUILD

Spring 2008

BULLETIN



Of Copyright and Kryptonite: Superman at 70
William F. Buckley and the Origins of Backinprint.com
Audiobooks, Video Studios and Multimedia Retail
Jay Neugeboren: A Writer's Diagnosis
Roy Blount's Good Fortune

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

It's a great pleasure to read Roy Blount Jr.'s letter in each issue, and hear it in my head in his voice. It's an even greater pleasure to offer two amplifications to what he wrote in [From the President, Winter 2008]. Roy was searching for a term for "late, slow, wary adopter, or adapter." I have it: early rejecter.

My wife, a technology widow, has rarely seen a new fob or geegaw about which she hasn't asked, "And what good is it?" She's right, of course; I suggested she write a column complementary to my own work called *The Early Rejecter*. She rejected that.

Roy notes that an out-of-copyright work cost "\$1.80." Or, rather, because he learned to type on a typewriter, he wrote "\$" then a lowercase L, then ".80." This made me unutterably happy. I was trained as a typesetter at the age of 16 in 1984, not appreciating that my profession would be mostly obsolete about six years later. Seeing an errant L instead of a 1 reminds me of the good old days. (I once noted via e-mail to Smithsonian

The Guild encourages members to write to the Bulletin. Letters should be sent to "Letters to the Editor," The Authors Guild, 31 East 32nd Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10016. They can also be faxed to (212) 564-5363, or sent via e-mail to staff@authorsguild.org (type "Letters to the Editor" in the subject line). Letters may be edited for length, grammar and clarity.

magazine after a redesign of theirs that it bothered me that they were using both fake italic—artificially slanted letters—and true, drawn italic in the same issue. I said I suspect few people noticed. Months later, I received a brief and lovely piece of snail mail on letterhead thanking me—apparently some people in the organization thought no one did notice, and I'd provided contrary evidence.)

The Kindle is a deeply flawed device because it's not book-ish enough. I spent a couple weeks with it, reviewed it for *The Seattle Times*, and was glad to return it. Its successor (a Kindle 2.0 or something from another firm) will likely feel much more book-y, and leave Roy with a warmer feeling. But I do hope he rejects it, too.

Glenn Fleishman
Seattle, WA

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ALONG PUBLISHERS ROW

BY CAMPBELL GEESLIN

Far-flung readers of this magazine comment that what they like best in this column are items that tell them what is happening in New York. The following is how **Charles McGrath**, former editor of *The New York Times Book Review*, described the current literary scene: "the horde of struggling, would-be writers . . . hang on because every now and then a first-timer—a **Colson Whitehead**, a **Zadie Smith**, a **Gary Shteyngart**—hits the jackpot and makes the game seem worth staying in for just a little longer. You can spot them in coffee shops in Brooklyn and the West Village, clicking away on their laptops—when they're not wasting time on Gawker, that is. You also see them at readings at Housing Works, KGB Bar and the Half King, dressed in black, leaning forward intently and sometimes venturing to ask a probing question. They idolize **Lethem**, **Chabon**, **Eggers**. They study *The New Yorker* religiously so that they can complain about how predictable the fiction is." One of them is **Charles Bock**. His first novel, *Beautiful Children*, was published in January, and the occasion was greeted with a major

article about him in the *Times' Sunday Magazine*. This was followed by a review on page 1 of the *Times' Book Review*, followed shortly by a **Janet Maslin** daily review.

DEAR SIRs: **P. G. Wodehouse** observed: "Every author really wants to have letters printed in the papers. Unable to make the grade, he drops down a rung of the ladder and writes novels."

VIA CELL PHONE: Are the Japanese leading the way in the death of the novel as we know it? Of the 10 top-selling books in Japan last year, five were written as cell phone novels. Most of these are love story serials told in short sentences with little plotting or character development.

While she was a high school senior, **Rin** (cell phone writers use only one name) tapped out a novel on her cell phone. Rin's *If You* was first a kind of serial (back

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