

EXHYST.NTIALISM

produced for the February mailing of ANZAPA by Roger Weddall, of P.O.Box 273,  
Fitzroy 3065, AUSTRALIA. (+61 3 510 9064) Psst: Singular Productions for OBE!

Dear Alan (Ytterbium),

it's encouraging to see you churning out sections of your FFANZ trip report. I think I'd at least have to wait until I produced my own FFANZ trip report before I offered any criticisms, so I'll skip to your comment to Lyn McConchie about the possibility of her standing for DUFF.

Certainly, any New Zealand candidacy would be welcomed.... I was in fact thinking of writing Lyn to encourage her to stand, because I think she'd be a good as well as a worthy candidate. Nominations for this race (this time) are closed by now, of course, but I hope she'll take the hint and stand in '93/'94.

The 'kerfuffle' about Tim Jones standing for GUFF some years back was based on the fact that he got his nominating papers in one or two days late. Sheesh. What is it about fan funds that turns their administrators into bureaucrats?

GUFF, DUFF & TAFF all seem to labour under this curse of sorts. I remember being in Britain at the start of the Martha Beck brouhaha. Rob Hansen, normally a friendly enough fellow, was going around explaining in fairly indignant, self-righteous tones about how he'd refused to allow her candidacy, again because her papers had arrived too late. Sigh... and look at all the bitter recriminations and backbiting that followed. If he'd been sensible about things, instead of pedantic, she'd have been allowed to stand and there would have been no divisive, pointlessly enervating fan feud between US Mid-Western fans and their East and West Coast counterparts.

FFANZ has avoided such pitfalls - to date - and I don't think that any of the administrators thus far have been adversely affected by the experience of being in the position of 'power'; perhaps because FFANZ isn't seen as being such a "big" fan fund? Does that keep everyone sensible about things? Probably not; the real explanation is likely both more mysterious and more prosaic.

Speaking of prosaic, or should I say merely bloody awful, your review of Peter Greenaway's *The Falls* doesn't adequately describe how unsuccessful a film it was in every way. At over three hours in length, it was undoubtedly released for its four day run only because of his later successes, such as *The Draughtsman's Contract*, or *The Thief* etc. etc..

At the halfway mark, I had seen enough; for the first time in my life, I walked out on a film. Nothing was happening, and nothing was going to happen. During the hour and a half I sat through, Greenaway seemed unable to decide whether to treat the whole thing as a low-grade farce (and, as you suggested, not a particularly original or funny one) or whether to try to build something larger out of the ingredients he was playing with.

You were correct to describe it as a student film. Only a student could imagine there was worth in such a pretentious, trite and derivative succession of images. It is to Greenaway's discredit (and an indicator of his vanity) that he has not actively suppressed the film; indeed, I feel it exposes in his later works a tendency to intellectual fraudulence. What a wank.

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Dear Bruce (Bits & Pieces),

you continue to write as informatively and as entertainingly as ever, and I would be surprised if you ever turned out a bad review. My only complaint about your Johnathan Carroll piece would be that I wish you had spent as much time discussing his other books as you had *The Land of Laughs*. After the depth in which you discussed this novel, the treatment of the rest seemed comparatively superficial. That's not to say that what you had to say was not worth hearing, but it made the article seem a little unbalanced. Nevertheless, again you have done very well.

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Dear Cath (Wombats, Wombats, Wombats),

congratulations and welcome to the club of those who draft nearly everything they write because they're no good at writing straight onto... whatever, be it computer, stencil or just paper.

I tend to find that, the more formal the reason for writing, the more I need to draft - maybe so I can say exactly what I want? I can still, lamentably, end up completely misrepresenting my position... but how did Ursula Le Guin put it? If you strive for excellence, you may be lucky enough to achieve it, but if you set out to write crud then, by jingo, that's what you'll get. Letters to friends are about the only things I don't usually first draft, although there have been times....

Talking about the drafting of women into the service of religion, it is interesting to see the fuss in church circles about all this. It seems to boil down to being a struggle between tradition and commonsense. In the long run it also seems clear that kn every major (relevant?) denomination there will be female ministers, as a matter of course. For the same reason that the Roman Catholic mass is no longer said in Latin.

Given that the traditions of the church (any church) are such a cornerstone of the organisation - spiritually as well as practically - it's hardly surprising that there is great opposition to any change.

What might be hard for some church leaders to recognise is to what extent the values of "our" society (in the very general sense of Western Society) have changed and are still changing.

(I suppose I ought to restrict myself to Australia, now, in case this is not the case in NZ or the USA.) In a society where, increasingly, men are being seen as the equal of women, people will tend to see any organisation which systematically discriminates between women and men, for no other reason than their biological sex, as being alien, out of touch, inaccessible. Church leaders can, however, see this for themselves, although the problem is perhaps that some see it earlier than others; hence the disagreements. And then there are those who might try to turn the clock back, forcing their views on the church and further afield.

Speaking of obstacles to be overcome, congratulations also on your doggedly persistent efforts to overcome your phobia re being in the water. When you were describing being in the pool and not being able to see which way was up, you raised a bit of a tingle in my own spine... although I must admit that what really gets to me is being out of my depth at the beach where I can't see the bottom and I can imagine all sorts of sharky things racing up to drag me down or gobble me up. It's not the sharks I'm afraid of, it's the unfathomable depth. Brrr.... Anyway, I'm full of admiration for the way you're making real progress and I hope that you're completely successful in eventually overcoming your fears.

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Dear Clive (Fffffy),

I don't think it's your imagination; I think that you really are working longer hours than you used to when publishing *Thyme*. Whether the longer hours are being worked because you now have the time or not, who could say? This does not bode well, however, for when you cease being half the OBO.. will work consume an even greater portion of your day than before? On the other hand, if that's what you enjoy....

You mentioned envying your sister, the way she has up and moved across the country and her life is so full (and presumably fulfilling), and I was reminded of how I feel sometimes when I come across people (usually working in the computer industry) who have jobs that take them from country to country, more or less at their whim. I don't envy these people, specifically, but I sometimes feel a pang of regret that I haven't gone and done likewise, or even go and do

likewise right now. Do you remember that Leunig cartoon, the one with a person walking along an ordinary city street, labelled 'The Life You Lead', while light streams from a narrow side-alley called 'The Life You Could Have Lead'?

Really, however, the choice is clear: I *could* (we all could) go off and do whatever I liked, pretty much, but I choose not to because I am happier to be where I am, doing what I do.

As soon as saying that, I think of the thousand and one qualifications to what I've said:- it may take time and effort to set up the conditions where one could profitably or happily "move on"; one might be so tied up in one's current situation that to move from it would bring (even greater) heartbreak or unhappiness; there are a thousand obstacles one can put or imagine into one's way. Still, in our society, there's no-one who can't wander off into a different life, if they choose to do so.

It is an enjoyable game to play, though, that old What If. What if you decided to move to Carnarvon and go yachting; what if we all did? (We'd save a lot on postage for ANZAPA!) What if I had completed that degree; what if I had taken up that job driving trucks of contraband from Europe through Turkey to Iran for the CIA.... Hmm... yes I do wonder about that one, sometimes.

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Dear David (Giant Sloths on Toast),

welcome back to ANZAPA; I'm sure that we'll have no problem putting up with you... as long as you don't go on at any length about how terrible it was, being the Chairman of a World Science Fiction Convention. Several - in fact, dozens - of infinitely more unpleasant tasks spring immediately to mind, many of them closely connected to the one you yourself have nominated.

It's not as though you were asking for a list, however, so I won't besiege you with details. One day I would love to sit down with you in a quiet corner somewhere and hear about what Aussiecon II was like - from your perspective.

Now that most of the dust has settled (as much as it's going to), correctly or incorrectly I tend to see you at that time, in that role, as more of a pawn, caught up and swallowed up in a series of processes and events that you neither knew how to control nor fully comprehended, and I really would be interested to see how you viewed - and felt about - the whole experience.

Not, I would hasten to add, in the pages of ANZAPA.

Anyway, I really did mean it when I said welcome back; it's about time you rehabilitated yourself, you boring old fart, you. You made mention of the fact that you stopped writing fiction when you stopped publishing fanzines, and while I'm not at all sure there is a connection - apart from the possibility that some other activity came along and halted both pursuits - it would be delightful if your reappearance in ANZAPA meant that you were also to recommence writing fiction. You did produce some lovely stuff, you know. Here's to more of the same.

Speaking of unlikely stories, do you *really* recall someone who would come along the street to light the gas lamps? Was this back in England, then? I'm puzzled because you're not that much older than I am - less than a decade - and I've certainly never seen gas lamps as part of a normal street lighting grid. I suspect you're right about the pace of change in our lives quickening... in ways that we don't see until they're already upon us.

Chaos theory seems to have sprung up like a colourful jack-in-the-box during the last year or so (although probably it's been around for a good while) and I'd imagine that it could well change the way we look at the world and how it works. Consider the way that a theory - which can be used to show subtle relationships between phenomena that were heretofore thought discrete events - has sprung into public view at roughly the same time as the whole 'Gaia' set of hypotheses. And if you can tell me which came first, or whether they both

came into being at the same time, then I'll tel you whether we discovered or invented the Mandelbrot Set.

'Was the Mandelbrot Set always sitting there, brooding in some unknown corner of conceptual space?' you wrote, and I was captivated by the image you evoked of the Mandelbrot Set cooling its heels, waiting patiently (benignly, or with evil on its mind?): "I can feel them approaching; slowly they stumble closer and closer, ignorant of what they draw near to. Then, when they're upon me, before they realise what they've encountered, I'll -"

Who knows what will happen - to us, to the Madelbrot Set... isn't it an exciting time to be alive?

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Dear Gerald & Womble (Return To Sender),

in hindsight I'd definitely agree with David (if I read him right) and congratulate you on no longer being in the bidding for the 1995 WorldCon. The cancellation of the bid will prove to have been even more worthwhile if the transformation of Sydney in '95 into Sydney Fans Incorporated means there's a club or association of sorts for Sydney fans to meet through, or keep in touch via.

I wonder if the comparative absence of any such unifying body (comparative to Melbourne) might explain the somewhat dispersed nature of Sydney fandom.

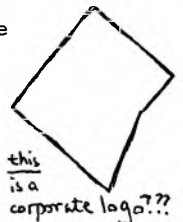
We're all friends here, right, so I'm hoping I can get away with such a remark; I know that in some quarters it would be seen as sniping, vicious..."typical of Melbourne fans" and all that sort of rot. I was thinking of how, in Melbourne, although there have always been different groupings of fans with their different personal interests, there have always been clubs or whatever which have been a combination of umbrella groups (under the auspices of which, all sorts of activities have been able to take place) and meeting grounds for people... for people from all the different groups, and for newcomers.

The Melbourne Science Fiction Club (arguably three entirely separate clubs, as the years have passed); MUSFA; MonSFA... and even some of the media-oriented groups: the Dr Who Club of Victoria springs to mind. They've always been there, whereas in Sydney, what has there been?

When the two university groups-SUSFA and the Uni of NSW group- and the Tolkien society were going concerns, they were foci of activity, and perhaps not coincidentally, this was when Sydney fandom (as an entity) was at its most active. 1983 was the end of that era; and what has there been since?

This is not to denigrate the efforts of fans on the scene since then, but in any event I welcome the existence of Sydney Fans Inc., and hope that it helps bring some focus - and some life - back into Sydney fandom. Apart from anything else, it would give all of us here in Melbourne a break from always having to have the bright ideas, come up with the hoaxes... all that sort of stuff. (Coff.)

On a completely differemnt note, isn't that a stupid new logo that the Commonwealth Bank have come up with? The first time I saw it was while walking along the street, late at night. I stopped in my tracks, had a think about what it could possibly be meant to represent... then noticed the terribly 'clever' amalgamation of the 'mm' ino an 'mm'. It's hard to believe that someone would actually have been paid money for such an uninspired, silly piece of work. For the record, my conclusion was that the logo most looked like a sandbox tipped on its side... perhaps by a petulant ~~banker~~ child having a tantrum. Hmmn.



Re Ian Gunn leaving, it's too late now for me to put this into practice but at the time I was planning to, as part of my ANZAPA contribution, issue Report Card blanks that we could all send him, ranking his performance in ANZAPA....

Re the Hanford nuclear business, yes it sounds as though there may have been many equally bad disasters covered up in the old USSR - and probably elsewhere, too. My horror was mostly at the way the Hanford business was planned by military authorities; directed against their own people for somewhat obscure military ends. Credit must also be given where it is truly due: I doubt that there are few countries other than the USA where this sort of information would ever have allowed to become public knowledge... if any.

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Dear Richard, Susan & Kelly (Q76),

you spent \$8,500 on repairs to your car?! I read it but I can hardly believe it. Couldn't you have bought an entire new (secondhand) car for that amount? I have never owned a car; perhaps this explains my incredulity. \$8,500, though... such a lot of money....

Another question: what exactly is "the Typist" handscanner, OCR. Surely it's not something that can read handwriting? I didn't think that we had technology capable of that sort of feat, yet. Does this only serve to show how out of touch I am with these sort of developments? Now what was that about gas lamps?

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Dear Jocko (Singular Productions),

'Did you ever wonder why there are 26 letters in the English alphabet', you write, to which I reply: it's one of my abiding interests. My memory being what it is, I can't reliably recall all the ins and outs of how we ended up with 26 letters; we dropped 'dh' (ð, "the") around the middle of the 13th century, and 'thorn' (þ, "thin") left us soon after. I think J was the last addition. For some reason it sticks in my mind that its first recorded usage as a letter proper was in Spain, in a book printed in 1599. So we're looking at the early seventeenth century before it was officially welcomed into the English language. Unofficially, it had been with us a bit before that, because of the was the letter I had done double duty as plain old 'i' and as a consonant ("j"-sound). I think V or Y were the most recent before J... anyone?

'It's weird but is it art?' No.

† †

Dear Lin (Wolfe),

I'm glad that I knew you before reading your potted biography because otherwise I might have thought you had a case of the Terminal glooms, whose life is filled with trial and tragedy.

By a cruel trick of fate you live in the wrong suburb.

You're nearly Old.

You don't even know what you want to do with your life!

Personally speaking, I tend to think of Elwood as a pleasantly green bayside suburb, part of the Inner Southern Suburbs which includes Elwood, St Kilda, Port Melbourne, South Melbourne & Albert Park. All those suburbs are quite different from one another but I reckon they all share a certain ambience that makes them all pleasant places to live. Elwood, stuffy & middle class? Try Brighton, one suburb south of Elwood, and I might agree. But perhaps I am beyond redemption and my opinion useless because I have lived in Albert Park, the Yuppie capital of Victoria (or at least one of the few contenders).

It was strange, moving there from "my" turf, the Northern/Eastern Inner Suburbs.

All those mega-trendy footpath cafes; all those people in designer jogging suits; all those Porsches and Rollablades. Best of all, those fantastic terrace houses <sup>expensively</sup> renovated, with the floor-to-ceiling windows with their curtains permanently open to display the wealth of the artefacts inside. In competition with one another, 24 hours a day. Too silly to be anything but amusing. We lived in Albert Park? Eh bien, it was a place to live. Close to the beach, next to a park and also a beautiful set of Public Gardens. Yuppies, shmuppies.

Anyway, Lin, so you still don't know what to "do" with your life? No, no, no, no: you "do" something with a nice sea shell you find on a beach. You "do" something with noisy children, or old Christmas cards, or used postage stamps. These days you can even "do" lunch (especially in Albert Park), but you *live* your life. If you're lucky you get to enjoy most of it.

Don't fall into the temptation to define yourself by what you do; you can search for fulfillment, but don't set yourself up to fail by feeling that you have to measure up to an undefined standard. If you have goals, that's great; but to castigate yourself or feel lacking for not having goals... what is it you want to achieve, or not miss out on?

Re the old joke about finding a (good) man out there, I thought the retort was: "They're either secretly married, crazy or gay." As an afterthought you could probably add "or all three". It's not as though it's single straight women who are necessarily the ones out of luck, however. A gay male friend looking for that special someone has the same refrain... with the word 'gay' changed to 'straight'.

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Dear Linette (the Bastards!),

this may sound slightly strange, at first, but I must say that my initial reaction to reading your October mailing was to feel slightly ill.

Reading about how you were talking about your job classification and your work conditions to your union officials, and then to your management, reminded me rather too much of the last twelve months of my own life, at work. It sounds unlikely, from what you were saying, that anything will be resolved to your satisfaction. I hope I am wrong.

My experience with union officials is that they tend to have their own barrows to push in directions which may, at times, be similar to the ones you want them to move in.... As for negotiation with your management, well, good luck.

In the meantime, is it too soon to offer encouragement for you to stand for FFANZ the next time around that you can? I was one of Rex Thompson's nominators and I voted for him also but I think you were - and are - a worthy candidate and I'd like to see you over here, two years from now, as a winner.

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Dear Lyn (Procellar),

belated congratulations on your, er, professional status. My, my; mentioned in Locus. Keep up the good work which, it happily seems, is starting to pay off. On a private note, did you eventually receive the Chrissie card we sent? I addressed it Aotearoa instead of New Zealand, as I have tended to do for the last few years - ever since it was established by the international postal authorities that this was an acceptable alternative to the name N.Z. - and for the first time ever, the Post Awful sent it back to me. Speaking of cards, thank for the one you included in ANZAPA. Urgh, I owe you a long letter; a thousand apologies until Real Soon Now....

Dear Weller (Bury My Soul Under Route 66),

although I usually don't hear much about WorldCons, yours was I think the seventh or eighth conreport I read, about ChiCon, in about a week. Far and away, it was the most enjoyable, also. The anecdote about St. Silicon was fun; it would have been even better to have been there, I'll bet.

You do seem to attend so many conventions. I read Locus or SF Chronicle every so often, so I do know how many cons there are in North America over the course of a year, but I don't know that I'll ever come to terms with the phenomenon. If this habitual convention-attending of yours is even partly a contributing factor to your having come and visited us in 1990 then it's a habit to be lauded; that much should be understood. I'm not being critical, either; it just seems quite unreal, hearing about convention after convention that you get to. Well, lucky you.

A diabetic cat, eh? It's great that something can be done, isn't it? I don't think I'd like to be giving anything an injection, let alone on a daily basis. I'd be worried about hurting them/it/her/him. Still, in your case it has to be done, and with what a good result - Frazier MacFarland continues to be well. So, what can they do about cataracts? One takes the problems as they come....

A problem that I cannot think of how to adequately deal with is the fact that, even though I am currently unemployed, I have run out of time to comment on the last couple of ANZAPA mailings. There is more that I want to say in relation to your mailing, Weller, especially the part where you comment on race relations in America. And, I was leaving the longest to last: I have a very long series of responses to what both Jeanne Mealy and Mike O'Brien have written. But I've run out of time! How is this possible, you might wonder, if he's unemployed and has all that extra time available to him? Darned if I know, says I, but it's the truth.

I could, I suppose, just dash off a few, short comments, but that would be cheating. Also, I probably wouldn't end up saying what I wanted to say. So it will all have to wait until next time, oh dear.

Next time, then, I should probably get around to explaining all the different sorts of things I've been getting up to which have come between me & ANZAPA. Yes, I bet you'll all be holding your breath for the fascinating revelations - I don't think. Anyway, Weller, Jeanne, Mike and others... seeya,

