

ANZAPPARATUS
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Published for ANZAPA by John Foyster, GPO Box 4039, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, but not very often

.....
Ah well, thank'ee John, and here's a boring piece for yuh.

DARE TO STRUGGLE, DARE TO WIN

Perhaps what children and adults read tells us something about the kind of culture in which they live. Of course it would be rash to expect too much, but some hints or suggestions may emerge. Taking this line of thought a little further, we might be able to regard the popularity of a particular class of literature as an indicator of the quantity of some aspect of the culture.

The British comic paper EAGLE survived with a quite high circulation for some twenty years from 1950, which suggests that whatever EAGLE served its customers was a reflection of a relatively large proportion of the culture of those readers. The recent publication of a collection titled The Best of EAGLE provides us with an opportunity to glance quickly at this latter-day BOY'S OWN PAPER.

EAGLE was intended, according to its first editor, to make use of the appeal of comics of the American kind, but without the 'deplorable, nastily over-violent and obscene' content, in order to 'convey to the child the right kind of standards, values and attitudes'. These 'children' ranged in age from 10 to 16 years, which may be a little surprising to the modern reader, for the contents of the collection seem a little unsophisticated for 14-16 year-olds.

What was it that EAGLE conveyed? Well, the violence may be absent from a few stories (whether in prose or comic strip form) but in most of them it is up front. There is violence and there are violators - for most of the historical protagonists in EAGLE stories, fact or fiction, are murderers or exploiters whose actions advance one empire or another. All this is written in a vicar's idea of how boys think and speak.

The fictional characters aren't very different, and the greatest of them was undoubtedly Dan Dare (Pilot of the Future) which was for many readers the raison d'etre of EAGLE and which also reflected the constant theme of EAGLE - that goodness is associated with wealth and power, while wickedness is associated with poverty and foreignness.

Dan Dare may well have introduced many readers to science

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fiction. Although superficially not similar to the bulk of the science fiction of the period, it did share enough characteristics with the dregs of science fiction for readers of EAGLE to feel relatively at home in the pages of AUTHENTIC SCIENCE FICTION and THE BRITISH SPACE FICTION MAGAZINE. In the section reprinted here, Dare and company are battling the n----- ('You know our green friends then?; with the aid of the noble Aryan Therons. The purpose of all this battling is, of course, to establish a colony which will thereafter exist to produce food for the old country.

Since 1950 science fiction has been moving away from this, goshwow sort of imperialist rubbish, and it would be difficult, though still possible, to find science fiction of this kind (1) Some science fiction novels are relatively sophisticated, and it is pleasing to find an Australian novel in the advance guard. George Turner's BELOVED SON, just published by Faber & iaber, is so much better than almost all of its contemporaries that one cannot help but wonder whether its virtues will be recognized.

Technically the book has vices as well as virtues: but let us first give some attention to other characteristics of the novel. The basic plot is a fairly standard one - the space explorers, sent off on a long voyage, return to find a much changed Earth - a much reduced population as a result of international violence and a society lacking some of the technical expertise of the earlier period. As a concession to his origins, George Turner has made one of the main characters an Australian, and in fact most of the novel takes place in a devastated Melbourne.

One by one the characters, whether explorers or ^arthmen, achieve power of some kind upon this new Earth and are then corrupted - empires wax and wane: states cleave asunder and coalesce. In the end all are brought low. The various actors in ^eorge Turner's passion play are sufficiently different to each excite our attention and sympathy, and each fall is for the reader a little dying.

Unfortunately BELOVED SON is very much a science fiction mystery story. The first puzzle is that the explorers can not make out why the captain (the Australian) is in the exploration team at all. Now what they found on their excursion turns out to be of no importance at all, while the question about the role of the captain is the key to the whole story, and I can not talk more about the events without answering questions which the reader should have the pleasure of dealing with. I w ll say only that the plot is fast-moving - but that

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introduces one of the vices to which I referred earlier.

I am tempted to assign the virtues to George Turner's writing and imagination and the vices to the science fiction genre. Consider for example this widely-accepted statement of Theodore Sturgeon's about science fiction:

"A good science fiction story is a story built around human beings, with a human problem, and a human solution, which would not have happened at all without its scientific content."

BELOVED SON matches that closely - it could not have happened at all without its scientific content.

On the other hand, despite a firm allegiance to this scientific standard, George Turner's main interest in the novel is the human characters and the nature of their humanity, and not in the 'science'. The people in BELOVED SON suffer real pain - the reader feels it - and they struggle to understand their changing environments - a problem with which we can sympathize. But just as we begin to involve ourselves in the human struggle, George remembers that he is writing a science fiction novel and drags another bloody scientific rabbit out of the hat. Now it isn't that these changes are unnecessary - they are essential to the plot, and I've already indicated - but that they are disturbing: they interfere with the reader's interaction with the characters and their environment, and they do so violently.

It could be, of course, that George chose this particular structure deliberately to force the reader to confront problems of the kind (though not the magnitude) which his characters face. Just as we and they think the game is sewn up, another false wall moves, revealing further intricacy.

I believe that the tension between science and fiction in BELOVED SON weakens it somewhat. The fault lies, however, not in George's arts, but in science fiction itself, which subordinates life to pseudo-science.

Despite this, one may hope that BELOVED SON will be recognized for what it is - a brave step in a new direction for science fiction. One opportunity for some initial reaction to BELOVED SON will be at a science fiction convention to be held at the Melbourne Town House this Easter. George Turner will be one of the speakers - and there will be some pretty big guns from overseas as well. Brian Aldiss will be visiting from England, and Roger Zelazny is coming from the United States. A confrontation between these three would be worth travelling quite some distance to see.

John Foyster 16-18 March, 1978

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(1) Except, of course, in Australia. It is difficult to see what benefits derived to the writing and reading of science fiction in Australia from the publication of AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW and SF COMMENTARY. It is not just that the fiction published in VOID (or more particularly ENVISAGED WORLDS) and BOGGLE is in general of a lower standard than that published in THRILLS INCORPORATED (1950-1952), but that Australian readers, for whatever reasons, nationalistic or simply fuggheaded; have deliberately blinded themselves to the inadequacies of this trash. At one extreme one finds the loonies like the chap at LaTrobe University who, in a piece in the one issue of ARGO NAVIS sent to me (and that only one issue was sent is something for which I am grateful), compared this stuff favourably with the contents of ANALOG. (Not, of course, that I think ANALOG's fiction is worth much, but that it is possible to publish worse fiction than ANALOG publishes, as is demonstrated by VOID and BOGGLE in particular.) At the other extreme, and I include myself here, are those who have preferred, when writing about these books and magazines, to seek frantically for encouraging things to say about these publications, and have ignored the overwhelming amateurishness (in the worst sense of the word) of the whole business.

Well, I think I've had about enough: in future, if I am forced to write about Australian science fiction, it is going to have to be warts and all.

.....
Except for the footnote, the above is the second draft of a talk given/to be given on 3AR on Saturday March 18 - long before you read this. And so to

MAILING COMMENTS (Mailing 60)

OBO (John Bangsund) I've read through this (well, not word-by-word) and am unable to find the deadline which you are permitted to announce: in the absence of such an announcement, may one take April 10 as the relevant date?

GEGENSCHHEIN 30.34 (Eric Lindsay) Your notes on San Francisco are what struck me this time around. In my few days in SF in Feb '76 I didn't manage a trip using BART, though I would have liked to do so. I really find it difficult to believe that they were so smooth that you could write legibly while the train was moving, but that may be a spillover from my experience on Victorian (or, now that I think of it, particularly on New South Wales) trains. // Late opening shops are groovy, provided that you and/or the rest of society are prepared to pay the costs (higher wages and so on). Down her at St Kilda we have seven days shopping, most shops are open until 9.00 pm and several until after midnight. Mostly it's ok.

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// I passed through the SF Greyhound depot several times, and didn't come across any panhandlers at all. The only time I was stung in the USA was while actually collecting my luggage off a carousel at LAX: I hadn't really expected to be flogged a copy of BACK TO GODHEAD there. Philadelphia Airport was the worst - and one is warned by the many notices strictly forbidding such activities. I had to change 'planes there several times, and it was very much a matter of running a gautlet.//

PARERAGON PAPERS 6 (John Bangsund) Originally, I think, it went something like this:

- What's Life?
- A magazine
- How much does it cost?
- Twenty-five cents
- But I haven't a quarter
- That's Life
- What's Life (ad naus.)

Over the years you have spent an awful lot of time complaining about the Australian electoral system. Can't you adjust to the fact that it is designed to place in power those to which the majority have least objection, rather than those most wanted? (Since I find 'em all objectionable it doesn't really help me much.) // Not only have I not read any of the books you list on page 73 - I don't think I have even the slightest interest in any of them: does this mean we're drifting apart?

THE SATANIC MECHANIC 2 (Marc Urtleib) Ulp - when I wrote the piece earlier on in this here fanzine I had not read of your early encounter of Dan Dare. It's a pity you can not remember which came first. // Your film list is a comfort to me in my old age, for I have actually seen two of the films you mention - STAR WARS and ANNIE HALL. // Why do you think "I had to spend my dope money/On a bunch of fanny rags," was the best line on Robyn Archer's album?

ASHBY'S SCRABBLERS' ALMANACK (Derrick Ashby) At first I thought this a possible top contender for most boring ANZAPAZINE of the year (if not the decade) but as I pawed my way through it I began to discover its rich potential. Perhaps, lurking deep inside, is a successor to THE UNIVERSAL BASEBALL ASSOCIATION, INC. J. HENRY WAUGH, PROP.

GALLIMAUFERY 4 (uncredited) You say that 'The fact that The Silmarillion is unrelievedly tragic is what makes it so difficult to read.' I disagree: it seems to me that what makes The Silmarillion difficult to read is that it is written in the worst and stodgiest prose imaginable. (This is a bit like the argument over the Brownlow Medal -

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whether it should be for 'Best and Fairest' or just for 'best' -
The Silmarillion would win an award for 'worst and stodgiest',
but not for 'worst')

MEMORAZINE 14A (Paul Anderson) Your remarks about the special
rule are very much to the point.
There has been a tendency in the past for eager beavers to use
the 'special rule' provision of the constitution as a quick way
of changing the constitution - a quite illegitimate use. The
present special rules 1 & 2 could be defended by an imaginative
person, I suppose, as not being properly part of a constitution.
The newly-added special rule, 3, is clearly an alteration to
the constitution, and should have been dealt with as a constitu-
tional amendment. Probably the only way around this is to
propose a special rule to delete the existing special rules at
some specific date in the future. But with only one of the
original Official Anzapa Fuckwits still in the apa (and I hope
your fannish health is holding up, Bill), we may have to rely
upon some of the newcomers to cause this to come to pass.

INTERSTELLAR RAMJET SCOOP February 1978 (Bill Wright) I am
concerned
by the growing tendency to pre-package computer use as you
describe it in the first page -and-a-scrap of IRS. Users are
more and more often locked-in to some software house's idea of
what they need. Commercially, one finds that it is initially
cheaper to buy a package which does something pretty close to
what you want done, but tinkering with the package as conditions
change becomes very (if not prohibitively) expensive. // I seem
to have mislaid my Mansard index: could you identify a little
more closely Billy Wentworth's motion (your reference bottom
of page 2)?

PNYTIP (Allan Bray) A sewing machine! What's wrong with
needle and thread?

APPLICATION TO CONTINUE MEMBERSHIP OF ANZAPA (Peter Darling)

Who is Richard French? //(Elizabeth) The best part about
solicitors sending letters to wrong addresses is that, since
the job then takes longer, you can be charged more for it.
Christine, should the cost of legal services be inversely
proportional to the quality of service received? //(Peter)
Yeah, but thanks to the might of C*O*M*P*U*T*E*R*S the hash is
fairly widely used.

ROUNDING DOWN

I haven't sent cheerios to everyone in these comments, but this
doesn't mean I found unreferenced ANZAPAZINES uninteresting -
just that there weren't no comment hooks. 17/3/78.