

A F T E R T H O U G H T

F Issue Number 2

T September-October, 1945

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Published for the Vanguard
Amateur Press Association,
and the Fantasy Amateur
Press Association, by Robert
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Street, New York 14, N. Y.

".. my current job gives me writing to do that has just
as much effect on the nation as stories in pulp maga-
zines (precisely none) .." HORIZONS, June 1945, pp 4.

It's regrettable that Harry Warner let so thoughtless a
phrase slip into an otherwise well-founded article, for the
reasoned logic of his reply to Wollheim gives this boner undue
weight.* While it would take an exhaustive survey to measure
the precise amount and exact direction of influence pulp maga-
zines have upon the nation (through the indirect method of in-
culcating attitudes or opinions) it is a case where the mere
assumption that such influences are non-existent are fantas-
tic.

For the most part such influence takes the form of sub-
stantiation of the basic propoganda-lines the individual en-
counters everywhere in our society -- from the schools, the
pulpits, the movies, and the radio. The sheer shibboleths of
"democracy", the "crime doesn't pay" line, and the apposite
assurance that clean living will bring the pie out of the sky
before you die, are the most common of these. However --
there are other influence-directives, too.

Recently the OWI circulated a brief wherein writers (pulp
writers in particular) were castigated for perpetuating stere-
otypes: ie, various nationalities were persistantly represen-
ted in a single manner, resulting in a decided influence upon
the more indiscriminate-thinking public which is dangerous.
The examples are familiar enough: the Italian is the gangster,
or the vegetable man (humorous); the Jew is the shyster; the
Negro is either the shiftless, ignorant comic, or the near-
savage killer, and so on. It isn't that some members of each
groups would fit the stereotypes, but that this constant
hammering away at the single thoughts: "wops are gangsters",
"n[redacted] are lazy", "kikes will skin you alive" (to what ex-
tent the terms "wops", "n[redacted]", and "kikes" have been used
in the past, I can't tell; in the past few years, while I have
seen enough of the stereotype-perpetuation, the actual use of
these terms has been negligible) and so forth.

Now to say that this practice, continued over a period of
at least twenty years, thrust month after month upon an un-
reflecrive audience has "precisely ho" effect upon the nation,
is to go to great extremes for the apparent purpose of segre-
gating causes and effects.

* The article to which Warner is referring appeared in the
second issue of K'taogm-m, Vanguard Mailing #2, and was a
series of personal analytical opinions of Wollheim concern-
ing Warner.

Your individual may never have heard, in the formal sense of "racist" propaganda, yet, through constant perusal of stories wherein such attitudes are promulgated (without, in probably 90 % of the cases, any such intention on the author's part), he is in a position where a competent agitator can easily swing him over to a conscious and deliberate "racist" attitude.

Your fictional attitude-fixing is accomplished through emotional appeal to the reader's better nature. One Claretti is depicted as a vicious gangster; many members of his mob (and the opposing mob) will also have Italian names. When Claretti finally pays for his crimes, the reader thinks: "That damn wop got what was coming to him!" (While, on the other hand, when a villain with a good "American" name -- whatever that can be -- is dealt with according to the law, your reader thinks: "That damn Jones got what was coming to him!" Ten -- or more -- million "Americans" are not affected by the resentment the reader may feel against Jones.)

Now, this attitude established, when a demagogue comes along lambasting the Italians for some political advantage, appealing not to the audience's better nature, but to hatred, envy, spite, resentment, perversity, and every other sheerly destructive element in human nature, that part of his audience which is already in the habit of thinking of all Italians as Clarettis, is a sitting duck for such propaganda.

(For extended documentation merely study the Third Reich, the rise of Mussolini, Huey Long, Senator Bilbo and others, too numerous to mention.)

On the other hand, when such propaganda is foisted upon persons who have not already become infected with the racist manner of thinking, the demagogue's task is not so easy. I do not propose that pulp magazines can foil present or future two-bit (or \$64) nazis by (a) discontinuance of stereotype-perpetuation (b) positive presentation of the individual villain as an exception and not the rule in his group or nationality or race. The first steps in this direction have been taken -- both by the pulps and the slicks.

A certain Western story editor received a story from one of his authors wherein the secondary lead was Jewish. The author had tried this, not without considerable doubt about the story's sales possibilities. That editor not only took the story but asked for more dealing with this same character.

In my own publications, whenever I write to an author's magazine stating our needs, I say specifically: "No Indian, Chinese, Negro, or Mexican villains -- or, if bad men of these nationalities must be used, then they must be balanced by sympathetic characters of the same nationality in the story." (I haven't included "Jewish" in these write-ups, because in four years of reading Western stories, both in printed form and in manuscript, I have yet to come across a Jewish villain!)

If this type of bad-guy presentation can be adhered to, it can have a beneficial effect upon at least ten million Americans. The vast majority of pulp readers (while not necessarily stupid -- the fact that an increasing percentage of pulp writing has been approaching the so-called "slick" standards proves that) are not of a discriminating cast of mind when it comes to ideas -- or attitu-

Afterthought

Do deep-sea divers use bath-towels?

No,

Comments from the waiting-list
by James BlishDIVERS SUNDRY

Fellow Vanguardifs, apologies. The following material is FAPA-centered. I have discovered myself to be still on the FAPA waiting-list, and in order that my welcome be suitably cordial, I've decided to scatter a few pearls-in-vinegar in advance.

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The best item for a beginning is the now-extinct Vanguard Record project. In looking over the last mailing, I discovered a number of references to V-R Record Review, all favorable. Among the Futurists where (it is true; I confess it) I live, the idea was greeted with similiar encouragement. Everything was rosy.

But nobody sent us any money. We got seven subscriptions two of which were for the full amount, the remainder for a half as provided for in our arrangements. We had figured that 10 half-subscriptions would justify our beginning work on the records. We never got them. We waited quite some time for that tenth one to come in. Then, in the face of the growing tide of verbal enthusiasm and the magnificent actual apathy (as attested by how many really wanted to buy the records), we called the whole thing off. I don't think our reasons for quitting will be obscure to anybody.

So we can now offer some documentation for DAW's K-tadgm-m thesis that in fandom, talk is cheap and action microscopic; and I for one think it a sad business, for some of the music in the album was damn good, and those fans who expected the records to wait until they got good and ready to buy them have been deprived of considerable pleasure, and have deprived others of better faith.

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Know ye, all and sundry, that Blish is not the Apostate. The ☉ is V. K. Emden. Neither one of us is much pleased about the false identification.

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Blitherings #4: In my opinion, music is a means of communication of a certain class of ideas; its appeal to those who like it is the result of its having, for them, objective meaning. From a manuscript book I've been working on: "Music over the short period of its history has developed a surprisingly long list of conventions and expressive devices, which we may use as guidposts to the context of a composer's message... These devices have emotional connotations. It would be pointless to recite the whole list upon which today's music can call, but a few examples will serve to show to what I refer: the convention that the minor key is a sad one; that the flute tone is 'pure,' 'cool,' 'silvery'; that the bassoon is a comical instrument, the oboe a pathetic one, the horn a 'romantic' one; that the string tremulant is 'agitated,' the apogiatura sad, the mordant sentimental. These are the 'symbols' or 'images' of music. "It is necessary to point out here the psychological truism that none of these images actually carries with it any emotional quality whatever as an intrinsic part; any emotion which they may call forth in the listener is purely associational, and the process is one of evocation rather than presentation. They are not in any sense fixed in their emotional contexts, but they have been used so often for the same purposes by so many composers that the emotion which they are designed to indicate has become justified and centered in the symbol itself. The association is in essence a product of respect for and imitation of earlier attempts at imagery, and as such is an arbitrary one.

"I do not mean by this to imply that there was necessarily anything arbitrary about the original selection of these devices by the first composers to make use of them. Doubtless there was some subconscious, perhaps empathetic, reason for their being selected to serve the purposes for which they were used, and for other men to agree that they were evocative enough to be used for the same purposes again. But... be wary of oversimplified theories of tonal activities and lines. Remember, for example, that the unpleasant sound of parallel fifths is an association which comes to us from a time when all music was sung that way, and that the prohibition of them in formal harmony, though now 'common harmonic practice,' arose originally because people were sick

Afterthought

of hearing them all the time, not for the very good scientific reasons which were thought up later after the tempered scale was invented. Similarly, when a Bach melody moves up or down, the composer generally has no such subtle emotional ideas as exaltation or depression in mind; he had no swell-shades on his organ and often used up-and-down in place of loud-and-soft. Remember too that the contexts of the images may change with time as styles of composition are changed in the accretion of techniques - nobody in Bach's time thought the minor key to be a sad one, nor, indeed, were the emotional contexts of keys even suggested until Chopin; and occasionally whole new sets of symbols may be evolved, sometimes for special purposes, sometimes for general use, as in the case of Scriabine and several other moderns."

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FAPans interested in the arts are invited to examine RENASCENCE, a creative & critical review put out by the Usher Society and edited by Doc and me. 25¢ a copy, 10¢ to members of the armed forces and C.O.'s. For sale at this address.

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Indirection

(continued from page two)

des -- presented between the lines. They are inclined to be retentive. Give them the desirable attitude-suggestions between the lines long enough and they'll be in a position to resist your demagogue when he starts ranting.

They may not know why, but their instinctive reaction will be "what he's saying isn't so; it isn't fair". How long that could be maintained against incessant assault is another matter.

But if the pulps can, by altering the indirect propaganda-influence, affect their readers to the extent only so that they question inflammatory demagoguery (such as emanating from Senator Bill Bo, for example) the first time they hear it, then the pulps will have accomplished much. As it is now, pulp fiction must bear a certain amount of responsibility for a considerable numbers of individuals having fallen for "racist" propaganda upon first hearing.