

HOLD HIGH THE GREAT BANNER OF THE PROLETARIAN CULTURAL
REVOLUTION, THOROUGHLY EXPOSE THE REACTIONARY BOURGEOIS
STAND OF THOSE SO-CALLED ACADEMIC AUTHORITIES WHO 'PROPOSE
THE PARTY AND SOCIALISM, THOROUGHLY CRITICISE AND
REPUDIATE REACTIONARY BOURGEOIS IDEAS IN THE SPHERE OF
ACADEMIC WORK, EDUCATION, JOURNALISM, LITERATURE AND ART
AND PUBLISHING, AND SEIZE THE LEADERSHIP IN THESE
CULTURAL SPHERES

Number 1, September 1970

ANZAPA 13

Published for the October Mailing of the Australian and New Zealand
Amateur Press Association by John Foystor, 12 Glangariff Drive,
Mulgrave, Victoria 3170, Australia, and numbered FF 190 (I think).
Don't you dare abbreviate that title, Gary!

ON CHANGING HATS QUICKLY

"On May 26, 1956 at a meeting of the Chinese Academy of Sciences
and the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists Lu Ting-yi,
director of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of
the Chinese Communist Party, made a speech in which he explained
the policy of the Communist Party on art, literature and science.
'If we want art, literature and science to flourish,' he said, 'we
must apply a policy of letting flowers of many kinds blossom, letting
diverse schools of thought contend.'

....."Socialist realism, in our view, is the most fruitful method,
but it is not the only method."

Thus an editorial article in the third 1957 issue of CHINESE
LITERATURE (latterly CHINESE LITERATURE MONTHLY). This of course
was one manifestation of the policy which became known, in the West
at least, as 'Let the Hundred Flowers Bloom'. It is conventionally
accepted (e.g. by Stuart Schram) that Mao expected a brief contention
followed by the victory of Maoist Marxism. Schram also argues that
Liu Shao-ch'i was a strong advocate of the Great Leap Forward which
accompanied the cultural policy and also that Liu was less than
enthusiastic about the power of Mao Tse-tung Thought (or Mao Tse-tung
Thought as it then was) in the extreme areas ('the omnipotence of the
human will' exemplified, perhaps, by the story of THE FOOLISH OLD MAN
WHO REMOVED THE MOUNTAINS). The publishers (western) of Liu's work

(in abbreviated form - QUOTATIONS FROM PRESIDENT LIU SHAO-CH'I), Paul Flosch in Australia and Walker and Co. in the U.S., would have us believe otherwise. Quote - "On October 13 ((1957)), Liu attended an important state conference presided over by Mao Tsetung to discuss the problem of 'rectification'. It was at this meeting that Mao proposed the Blossoming-Contending Campaign. Liu was said to have taken exception to the policy, lest it should get out of hand, and this difference is believed to mark the beginning of the Mao-Liu rift." (pp. 162,163)

Now we know from the previous page that this is not exactly an accurate description. Furthermore, Mao's ON THE CORRECT HANDLING OF CONTRADICTIONS AMONG THE PEOPLE was published on February 27, 1957 (also the little red book), and it was here that Mao discussed the policy. Consequently one cannot take too seriously the claims made about Liu's motivations.

But to return to that issue of CHINESE LITERATURE, which is, after all, the point of this exercise. The editorial quoted above was followed by another piece by the editor, Mao Tun, titled OPPOSE DOCTRINAIRE AND PETTY-BOURGEOIS THINKING: Mao Tun, writing of an article which was concerned with the 'poisonous weeds' which sprang up as a result of the Hundred Flowers, said: 'While I sympathize with their concern for the worker-peasant-soldier literary principle and for the preservation of socialist literature, as well as their ardour in attacking petty-bourgeois thinking, I find their article unconvincing because its criticisms are doctrinaire.' If you regard that as fence-sitting you should try reading the whole four pages. In essence, though, Mao Tun said that though writers need a 'Marxist world outlook', they don't necessarily acquire this at birth, and that consequently it is to be expected that non-Marxist works will come into being during the Hundred Flowers.

The next article is an interview with Chou Yang (the 'hero' of this little story). Chou Yang was Deputy Director to Lu Ting-yi. Chou Yang's comments are very similar to those of Mao Tun (even though he is on the other side, in the sense of being nearer to the momentary winner). However, he places emphasis on the importance of studying older works. These two articles were published in March and April, 1957. The 'poisonous weeds' article (January 1957) is also printed, the authors being Chen Chi-tung, Chen Ya-ting, Ma Hap-ping and Lu Leh. Several other articles follow, of the fence-sitting type, but mostly following what I will call, following Schram's view of Liu's policy, the Liu line.

We now take up the third 1958 issue of CHINESE LITERATURE, to find Chou Yang in action again, giving it to a faction he describes as 'headed by Ting Ling and Chen Chi-hsia'. Two years before Chou Yang had been sniping at Chen Chi-hsia ('Critics like Chen Chi-hsia sought to slash down new writers and new works' - 4/1956). As for Ting Ling - well, in 1954 she had been pushing the Hundred Flowers line, so could be considered slightly to the 'right' of Chou Yang.

But back to 1958. I quote a particular sentence of Chou Yang's: 'They ((the 'rightists and revisionists')) claimed that Comrade Mao Tse-tung's TALKS AT THE YENAN FORUM ON ART AND LITERATURE was "out of date", that the principle of socialist realism should be modified or abandoned.' (CHINESE LITERATURE 3/1958 p 106) Of course, one can get tied up in those things. Chou Yang criticizes Ai Ching, who back in 1957 he had used as an example. But I'm not going to go into this subject in the detail it deserves, merely present an outline.

Next we come to the July 1970 issue of CHINESE LITERATURE. 'Our great leader Chairman Mao's TALKS AT THE YENAN FORUM ON LITERATURE AND ART, as epoch-making work published 28 years ago, is a critical and revolutionary Marxist document. With penetrating Marxist-Leninist analysis, Chairman Mao has in this work thoroughly criticized the bourgeois line in culture represented by Wang Ming, smashed the fallacies spread by Chou Yang and his ilk.....' (p. 81). And also: 'The renegade, hidden traitor and scab Liu Shao-ch'i and his agents in cultural circles, Lu Ting-yi and the "four villains" - Chou Yang, Hsia Yan, Tian Han and Yang Han-sheng...!' (p.88). In view of the quoted criticism of Ting Ling, I include part of a footnote (p.92): 'Chou Yang and company opposed Chairman Mao's TALKS AT THE YENAN FORUM ON LITERATURE AND ART and claimed that it was "out of date"...' (hmm, that last phrase is familiar....)

Of course, Chou Yang and the others have been under attack for several years, so this is nothing new. But this issue does have some nice little poems about the Chinese satellite, from which I shall quote just one stanza:

What the foreigners have
We will have,
What they have not
We will create.
Behold!
The red satellite
Is circling the universe;
Scared to death are
U.S. imperialism
And Soviet revisionism.

9 (from Looking Happily into Space I Declaim
My Determination by Li Shou-yi)

Mailing Comments

ANZAPA 12 Despite John Bangsund's efforts to the contrary, we remain the 'Australian and New Zealand APA'. Since my suggested 'Australian and New Zealandish APA' didn't exactly meet with wide approval, maybe we should use Bangsund's title: 'Australia and New Zealand APA'. It would be much better to use the original title, APA-A, of course, but that is much too simple a solution.

One of the things I thought I should do for this mailing is prepare an index to the first 12 mailings. But you are not looking at it.

ROBBERY without violence

being reprinted (without permission) from the Robb-Gillespie correspondence, as provided by Alex Robb

Letter to B R Gillespie, 2/1/1970

'To get back for a minute to Foyster. What riles me about him is not so much the arrogance that went into a review like VOYAGE TO ARC-TURUS but just the general hatred of sf as a medium that lies behind it. To be able to detach yourself from a novel is good, the essence of pure criticism, but for my boots he goes beyond this and slogs the poor novel in the gut. His technical excellence can not be doubted (eg. see letter in SFR 34) but what can be doubted is his elevation of personal opinion and bias to the rank of criticism. ((Or, I would be inclined to say now, mixing it indiscriminately with technical-based criticism.)) That same issue contains his thoughts on The Best Stories from New Worlds - 2 and if I didn't know better I'd be tempted to say 'This isn't a good story, therefore it isn't sf'. Joanna Russ did something rather like that in F&SF some time ago now and I could have screamed and very noarly did.

((Russ's trouble is just that she is a Conservative down to the last dot and tickle; and that her knowledge of literature - non-sf - is just too limited to be of any use; I'm certainly not lumping you directly in with her!))

... Provincialism is a besetting sin, and when continued, it is a bore. Actually Judy Merril fits in far better with my style of reference, she has a considerable openness to new forms and styles, and it is apparent from her writing, a considerable knowledge of literature.

At one stage John Foyster also gave a review of John Baxter's Pacific Book of Australian SF. He was (for once) friendly but in the course it he said of the author's own 'Beach' story that it showed Baxter 'determined' to be new wave' (emphasis mine). Poppycock! Far from being 'New Wave' the story Baxter wrote is simply a continuation of the latest developments in contemporary - and especially Australian - literature. If John had ever examined any Australian literature he would have known this in a day.

((A hackneyed example, I know, but it had a point: my aim here primarily although I may not have succeeded, is to get across the idea that you were not God and had never in fact set yourself up to be so: I am certain Gillespie for instance sees your writings as a sort of 'sacred cow' or windmill that's not to be tilted at.))

The New Wave is a fake, there isn't any, all it is is the 'thing' in literature that's been going around the world in the last 5-7 years, and now it's entering Sf (big deal) - When you open your .. and say 'This isn't sf because...' you open it wide enough to let a whale swim in

Thirty years ago no doubt the purists were screaming the same thing - this new stuff coming out in the market isn't Sf etc. etc. and in thirty years' time they'll be screaming the same. Pohl & Kornbluth & Heinlein were probably beyond the outer pale but no one gives them a second glance now. As for the new stuff, the stuff is Sf: but you may need your mind widened to see it.

((Blood dripping?))

Relations between me and John have always been onigood terms and I greatly hope that they stay that way. To hate a thing gives you good criticism, sure, you can impressively tear it to bloody pulp, but to continue on with BRG's picturesque simile, it's up to you to put the pieces together again.

Letter to B R Gillespie, 21/7/1970

((starts off saying I think what I have to say about you is important and should be published. I don't think I convinced him on that score.))

...Perhaps what I have said is inane, or just plain out of date, but I am determined that this thing should be done.

While realising I am not within miles of his standards yet I am not happy with all that he does, particularly as it seems to rely as much on personal taste as anything else. Difficult as it is to separate personal taste from literary value I think the attempt should be made...

Yes. I just looked up that other letter I wrote as I felt sure there was something more to say. It's just this. I feel at heart that a man who writes about sf should like sf. And this dislike of sf as a medium is a very poor qualification for a reviewer. Perhaps I'm old-fashioned in this but that's my feeling. You may find that the following speculation is dragging the bottom of the barrel but I ask myself a question and that is why people who don't like a medium should continue to write about it and I get the answer: because in some ways it pays them to. Not in money, heaven knows, but in knowledge I guess, in being known. Egoboo if you like. John Foyster may be (and is) one helluva a good reviewer but out there in the big bad world there are many other fish in the sea, and some of them are of similar size. Now what's so great about Sf? Just that you become known. No matter how good George Turner or John Foyster might become as, say, reviewers of Australian novels ((and I would hazard a good livelihood or side-income awaits you there if you'll take it)) they would be unknown in this country except to a small cove of dedicated (fannish quasi-literary) intelligentsia: Australia literature is people like White, Randolph Stowe, Thomas Keneally, just as the painting is Nolan and Drysdale. But in a little puddle even a small fish can make a mighty splash! That's why they stick around as I told K. Dillon and I don't blame them (there are worse things than being remembered by fandom and featuring in the Australian edition of ALL OUR YESTERDAYS) but I'd be happier if they liked sf.

(both the above written by Alex Robb)

Letter from B R Gillospie to A. Robb, 27/6/1970

...Tried to get through some recent sf novels last week - the effort is killing me. You say 'I like sf' and Foyster doesn't. I like what sf could be, not what it is. I think Foyster likes what sf was in the forties - entertainment for boys about the wonders and dangers of science and he just gets sick of people pretending that all the new stuff is so good. I once asked him in fun: 'Are there any books that you like?' He said 'Yes, a few' John Foyster just values the word 'like' or 'approve of' far more highly than most people do.

I thought everybody did French at some stage in their agonized school careers. 'Not just' = 'the right word' Foyster uses words as scalpels not sledgemothers or syrup spoons. Also, I think Foyster likes the madness of fandom, rather than merely science fiction. They are different things, you may believe. But all this is speculation. Why don't you ask him all these questions? (I know he won't answer, but you might as well try.)

END OF QUOTE

I have always admired the straight man who knows just when to stop. The you, Bruce. So here we are, Alex, printed.

A few minor points. I suspect you have mislabelled Joanna Russ and Judy Merrill (especially considering their present position and past scholarly activity respectively). Miss Merrill, I suspect, is not so much open-minded as empty-headed: an empty vessel, et cetera. For her position seems to be one of taking the attitude 'it is good, therefore it is sf' (by analogy with your own suggestions). For her, riding the New Wave has meant dipping her foot into any available puddle. By contrast, Joanna Russ (and I confess to having read too little of her work) seems to me to have an entirely suitable point of view - that of assuming that sf must be handled by its own lights, and that dragging in every example of off-trail fiction is not merely incompetent but distracting. Inproaching to the mob it may very well be the In Thing to display the (in one's own opinion) breadth of one's reading: but I dislike being preached at.

In writing about John Baxter (and I was talking about him, as you quote it) I may have suggested that he was 'determined to be new wave'. This statement must be verified or falsified in terms of John Baxter's attitude rather than in terms of recent literature. On the basis of my knowledge of John Baxter over a period of ten years or so I am prepared to stand by my suggestion. Nor did I suggest that the new wave 'existed, merely that John Baxter wanted to be a part of it (in this story).

As for VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS, the misinformation that it was written by a young man has rather warped opinions of the book: Loren Eisley in his introduction almost admits that the book is bad - are we to praise a book, then, because it is the best written by a left-headed two-year-old spaniel in 1836? VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS is and was a bad book, no matter who wrote it or at what age, and only the incipience of a cult of the bad could possibly have brought about the apparent adulation which followed its republication. Or. A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS shares with such

mishmash as 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (the film) that gooey sentimentality which clogs the brains of 13 or 14 year-olds and sometimes manifests itself in a 'religious' experience. Given the almost universal immaturity of science fiction fans (and probably science fiction readers), we might expect 'instant adulation' for the film (and perhaps VOYAGE). (Now who is the straight man?)

Did you know that George Turner and Thomas Kenneally spent one morning of a writers' conference (last year??) plotting a science fiction novel? (All part of the service). And it certainly is true that by choosing small puddles one can make a big splash: several fairly prominent SF writers rely on that, in fact, and some even admit it.

There are some other minor matters, but I think they can safely be ignored. Bruce raises a couple of points on which I might comment.

I don't particularly like SF of the forties - my favourite writers (of science fiction) produced the bulk of their work in the late fifties and sixties. But it is true that there are some things about the science fiction of the late forties which appeal to me: perhaps they are connected. On the one hand, then, science fiction didn't have to pretend to be something other than what it was - an entertainment medium. It entertained a particular class of people (and did it rather well). A consequence of this situation was that writers, though under forces of various kinds, did not feel bound by the knowledge that they were writing Significant Stuff, nor, to a large extent, was the level of personal involvement in the published work as high as it is today. Today's writer too often feels that in criticising the work one is criticising the man (which is probably true for Leavis-style criticism), and I suspect that this feeling was less widespread in the time I am writing about.

I like quite a few books. It happens that few of them are science fiction. I incline towards the view of Andrew Sarris who suggested that there must be some humanity lacking in people who want to divorce themselves from the real world to the extent that they prefer fantasy worlds (any fantasy world: there are people who prefer to live in a fantasy world, but those who don't mind what the fantasy world is, just so long as it is not like the real world, are in a different situation.). Science fiction, on the whole, has little meaning for me.

And of course Bruce is right in suggesting that I like the madness of fandom: though there are fakes amongst the feon-type fans, their population density seems lower than amongst professional writers, say (who have more to lose...).

In writing about James Blish's SF criticism (in COR SERPENTIS, a fanzine which will be seen by almost no fans or pros - yeah, there's nothing like becoming 'known') I began as follows:

'The critical function consists in saying what you like and why you like it: less often it is a matter of dislike which is involved. ... Furthermore, since many human beings are inclined to pretend that they are so far above their fellows that their judgement is impartial, we also have a class of critics who relate their work to absolute 'objective'

standards'.

I think this clarifies the difference between us. I see no point in pretending that I can look on a book 'objectively': if scientists cannot perform experiments 'objectively' (and many cannot) then it seems rather futile to try to examine a piece of fiction 'objectively'.

I assume that everything I write is taken as merely opinion: I do not intend to preface each sentence with 'I think'.

But, if I wish to communicate with other humans on other than a "tis", "tisnt", I must do more than put down some opinions. If I wish to persuade others to my view (which, as it happens, I do most emphatically not want) I must choose some evidence which supports those opinions and which is reasonably accessible to the anticipated readers. If you examine the works of many professionals who write in the fanzines you will find this idea discarded in favour of the appeal to authority.

Furthermore, to make the opinions worthwhile to a small class of readers, they must be related to other opinions - perhaps make use of the results of other essays. And so on.

Perhaps one of the most obvious differences between you and I, Alex, is that shown by the articles of ours which have recently appeared in ANZAPA - yours on Thodre Roothke and mine on Sappho. My comparison of those would run along the following lines: in my article on Sappho I tried to get behind the poet (or actually, as you know, a poem) and try to lure the reader towards the poem and the poet (at the same time nipping behind the reader and giving him an occasional shove). In another sense, I stand before the poem helpless and lift my hands. (And since the plotline of that article followed E F Russell's META-MORPHUSITE's, how can you possibly suggest that I dislike sf?)

Now I see your article on Roothke as being something different (as I said in ANZAPA last time): as being a matter of Alex Robb standing up and discussing the poet, pointing out what Robb had learned about him. As being Alex Robb, tourist guide, dragging readers through a museum of literary figures, nailing to each an analysis - or perhaps an autopsy. As being Alex Robb, student of the arts, cramming for the Big Finals In The Sky. I was hardly surprised to learn in your letter that the piece was prepared for a tutorial.

Just as mathematics is the handmaiden on science, so criticism is the handmaiden of literature, and the critic should approach his work in suitable humility. Many critics take the opposite view of course.

And there is the problem of the feet of clay. To have such an idol is painful, and the observer of such a phenomenon might well be advised to change his object of worship.

But at the same time one must contrast the true believer, who can see no wrong, with he who strives for perfection and hates that which falls short of your nature, I think, is that of the true believer. And mine is not.

Peace and love to all beings. John Foyster, 9 September 1970