

SATURA 1, February 1, 1964 / published maybe twice a month (and maybe not) by John Foyster, PO Box 57, Drouin, Victoria, Australia. 'Tis available for trade or comment, but outside these bounds we shall have to discuss terms. If I haven't heard from you after three issues, it's "so long, Chollie."///

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT

Yes, as a highly moral person, I think fanzines should have, not a motto, but at least a high-sounding phrase on which they are philosophically based. I don't know what yours is, but mine goes

if you can't lick 'em, join 'em.

It may not be so high-sounding, or long-winded, as the PLAYBOY philosophy, but then I can't afford good writers, can I?

But SATURA (which is approximately Latin for "hotch-potch" or "pot pourri" - both these titles have been/are being used - oh yes, it could also be loosely translated as "a bunch of fruit") has a purpose of some kind, at present one which is not clearly visible. There are quite a few writing types in near-fandom who would like to see material published. In addition, some material actually deserves circulation a little wider than SAPS, my present hunting-ground. John Baxter more or less churns out readable stuff at will, and I have a few other ideas as well - next issue will be a LETTER FROM AMERICA issue by an expatriate, and very literate, Aussifan. A regular kind of thing, I hope. And in addition, there is always the prospect of searching articles from myself on such things as underpants, fences, chalk and the relationship between RNA and DNA. Anyway, Baxter was kind enough to put the enclosed material on stencil - wouldn't it be nice if he did that again?

ON NOT KNOWING WHAT ONE IS TALKING ABOUT

Grammatically, of course, this is a little unpleasant. Grammar is one of the things fan critics are tough on. Grammar and typos. It is good that this should be so, and I expect that in the past there have been a few fans whose spelling and knowledge of elementary rules of English grammar have been improved by their encounter with fandom. There are some who never learn. Unfortunately there seems to be little concern for the niceties of the language, so that time after time the scanning eye is neatly twisted upon itself by some particularly indelicate phrase. When combined with the over-extensive use of a much-inbred argot, and gently sifted with the typos referred to above (and either too little or too much duplicator ink added) it makes a mixture unpalatable and indigestible for far too many people. But this is not what I set out to write about. One day, having more time at my disposal, I must get out of the habit of typing on-stencil.

The heading refers to the great secret of fandom, or one of them

How are you fixed for jades?

at any rate. I believe that one of the primary reasons for the extensive intercourse, both in pro and fan lettercolumns, is that most
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THE WILDER SHORES

PHL8'13

THE TRIAL OF CALLISTA BLAKE. Edgar Pangborn. Peter Davies: London, 1962.

Edgar Pangborn is probably the most recent of the sf authors to take leave of fantasy's moist irrelevancies and begin thinking about reality, although, unlike many others of the same group, his first effort has met with some artistic success. THE TRIAL OF CALLISTA BLAKE, though not always as powerful as it could have been, still strikes a painful blow to contemporary morality. More seasoned writers have published a dozen novels without making their presence so definitely felt.

On the surface, it is the unsurprising story of a contemporary American murder trial. A young matron, attractive and well-liked, a churchgoer and dutiful wife, is found dead in a country pond. The cause of death is aconite poisoning and/or drowning - either could have killed her, and nobody is sure if she fell into the pond under the influence of the drug, or was held down while too weak to struggle. There are no witnesses, but 19 year old Callista Blake - imaginative, artistic and atheistic - is arraigned on a charge of murder. The motive is there - she had been having an affair with the deceased's husband - but she denies having given poison to the woman. She had aconite in the house, mixed with brandy, and she admits that the dead woman drank some of this mixture. However, she explains the drug was to cause an abortion, her lover having made her pregnant. The wife, she claims, drank the drug by mistake, and left before she could send for a doctor.

The balance is delicate - did she fall or was she pushed? There is little evidence and no witnesses. Everything depends on the presentation of the case, and the way in which the jury is moved to view the evidence offered. Pangborn shows in chilling detail the way in which Callista, because of her unorthodox views and imaginative mind, is victimised, hounded and finally condemned to death, a victim of humanity's ignorance and bigotry. It is the story of a modern witch-hunt; the situation is new, but the dreadful hostility of the judges and the mindless apathy of the public are not so new that they would not have been commonplace in the Europe of the dark ages.

PHL8'13

THE WILDER SHORES.

Fangborn is ambitious - he has as his target the entire democratic judicial system. The prosecutor, the judge, even the widowed husband are shown in a sympathetic light, mere pawns in a bigger game than they can encompass with their minds. If there is any villain in this story, it is the system and, of course, the jury, an impleacable and stupid mob that must be cajoled, charmed, bull-dozed or seduced into a verdict. Abstracts like justice and mercy are never mentioned and never demanded. The prosecutor is an actor, playing out a part that takes advantage of every bit of his dramatic talent. But instead of entertaining an audience, he is persuading a group of witless peasants that they should take a human life. The defence counsel works equally hard to influence the jury in favour of the girl, admitting at one stage that he would fight equally hard for an acquittal even if he felt she was guilty of the charge. Brilliantly he paly's down those aspects of Callista's character that the jury would find unusual, and stresses those that they share in some part. In her case, he is not persuasive enough. Refusing to play the game, she speaks her mind the they kill her for it.

The story is confusingly told through all the tricks of the contemporary psychological novel; flashback, stream-of-consciousness, clipsis of all kinds. It is a tricky technique that often fails, but which is redeemed by a few brilliant successes, such as the final cross-examination, where the defence counsel's frantic but unspoken advice to Callista is contrasted with the girl's injudicious answers. Here is an extract:

"I do not consider myself above the law" (At least she's quieter; her hands not shaking). "Like everyone, I've probably broken a number of minor laws without even knowing it. As for the matter the prosecutor specifically mentioned, adultery, I don't know, as I said, how the state of New Essex technically regards that action. If it's a crime, then I'm a criminal - on that charge". (No more, Callista! LOOK AT ME!) "I'm quite aware you can't have a human society without laws. I try to respect them as far as I'm able - I -"

"Miss Blake" said Judge Mann, "there is no need to go beyond the question. For your own sake I must instruct you not to do so. Limit your answers to what Mr. Hunter asks, so far as you can."

(He may have saved her - I don't know - I don't know.)

This is good work, taut and clean. It marks Edgar Fangborn as a writer who could make his mark in contemporary fiction. One hopes he will move on to more ambitious things, proving that, like Wells, Bradbury, Elish and other fine writers, he has learned the only lesson science fiction has to teach - that there are better things to do with one's life and talent than write science fiction.

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initial discussions are uninformed, to put it as delicately as possible. Most fans, particularly in the USA, involve themselves in so much activity that they never have the opportunity to allow an idea to mature. There are three columns to be written by yesterday, and any vague thought must be savaged immediately. This is an excuse; there are also reasons. The average fan is a pretty uneducated nit (no, I can't prove it, but that is how it looks from here), mainly because of age, and the broad range of topics which are discussed in one part of fandom or another provide an excellent opportunity for dissemination of Joe Crackpot's idea: an idea which will be ignored or, perhaps less likely these days, strongly challenged by someone whose own ideas are more orthodox, but still influenced strongly by contact with fandom. Ignorance breeds.

how are you fixed for trades?

Fandom is a bad place to get an education because of this tendency for an incorrect idea to spread from one source of infection. As witness - Coventry.

In the next issue I shall write an article about falling off one's high horse.

REPLICATION

I am fighting off the duper repair man with one hand, and running the machine with the other. Perhaps with a little luck you won't have to read this

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SATARA

From

John Foyator

26 Box 57

Drouin

Victoria

Australia