



Harald Fairhair

PARERAGON PAPERS

are published when the mood takes him by John Bangsund, PO Box 434, Norwood, SA 5067, Australia, mainly for members of FAPA and ANZAPA, and this is the first issue, commenced 3 July 1977

oo

WHY? During 1974 I decided to publish a fanzine called *Pareragon*.

It was to be a serious fanzine of high moral tone and deep intellectual commitment, with a dash of humour to reassure constant readers that I had not suddenly been afflicted by what the philosophers call gravity, and with a fair amount of writing about science fiction to reassure fandom that I had not lost sight of my roots. *Pareragon* would have been a lovely fanzine, if I'd had the time and money and enthusiasm to do it. It might also have been a dangerous fanzine. The lead article for the first issue, Meredith Thring's 'The Creative Society', eventually appeared in *Philosophical Gas* 29, and it had an appalling effect on at least one reader: Bill Temple wrote to me in June 1975 and said that after reading it he had thrown in his job and gone back to writing science fiction. It is an awesome power that we fanzine publishers wield, friends, and it is probably just as well that a fanzine of *Pareragon*'s concentrated deep purpose never appeared. Who knows what it might have done to change people's lives? If Bill Temple went back to writing sf after one article, maybe after a few issues Bob Silverberg would have done that, too; Harry Warner might have moved to Vienna; Lee Harding might have resumed his career as photographer; Bert Chandler might have started writing sea stories; John Alderson might have bought a dictionary; Don Symons might have finished the article on wowserism that he promised me in 1969; Sam Moskowitz might have started writing mailing comments for FAPA... The mind boggles at the mischief and downright wickedness that this high-minded fanzine might have created, if I had not had the uncanny foresight to throttle it at birth.

Apart from all that, towards the end of 1975 I discovered that there already was a fanzine called *Pareragon*. Oddly, *Pareragon* looks almost exactly like the fanzine I wanted to publish, it has a high moral tone and deep intellectual commitment, and it is published in Canberra (by the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Renaissance Studies). Fortunately, there isn't much humour in it and it rarely touches on science fiction, so it poses no threat to Sam, Silverbob and the rest of us. In fact, if you like the subject matter and are used to pages of footnotes, it's a jolly good read.

I confess though that I'm still a bit peeved that the ANZAMRS stole my title. One evil day in 1970 I decided to register my publishing empire as 'Pareragon Books', thinking the word appropriate (for my empire was very much a spare-time one: it was much too late when Jim Blish said he'd seen *pareragon* defined as a useless embellishment) and the pun pleasant. Seven years later I am still patiently explaining the spelling, meaning and significance of the word, and its pronunciation, and I really think I have earned some proprietary right to it. Since I am far too decent a chap to sue the ANZAMRS

for pinching my title, but not decent enough to consider the feelings of those poor folk in the National Library's Serials Section who will be confused no end by it, I have decided to use the title *Parergon Papers* for this publication, and as it happens, this suits my present purposes nicely.

Over the last year or so, but especially since Parergon Books stopped being a publishing empire this time last year and became my job, I have been rather forced out of the habit and enjoyment of publishing other people's writing. (This accounts in part for my desire to be Official Editor of ANZAPA.) Since I arrived in Adelaide in January 1976 I have published, apart from my own ramblings, only two articles, both reprints, by John Foyster, and letters from Bill Temple, Rob Gerrand, Ken Bull and John Ryan. The sad truth of the matter is that I have very little time these days to write things, for fandom or for anyone, and when I get a chance to type a stencil I'm more inclined to write (however badly what I write turns out, and however little of it you see) than to type up other people's stuff.

But I miss other people's stuff.

So here is the compromise, and perhaps the solution to a problem that has been with me for several years. In *Parergon Papers* I will be writing my own personal stuff, pretty much as I have been writing it in variously-titled fanzines for the last ten years or so, and also publishing the articles and letters that people send me that I want to share with you. You may well ask what is new about this, and the answer of course is that there isn't anything new about it — except that I am no longer attempting to produce a balanced fanzine. What appears here will be what I like, when I have time to do it. And what I like may be anything from mailing comments to long articles by eminent folk (for example, the long articles by George Turner and Bruce Gillespie that I've had in my files for over a year, either of which Dick Geis or Andy Porter would have been glad to build an issue on — and that's partly why I've held back so long, because I wanted them to be part of a splendid issue of something-or-other). If letters are the life-blood of a fanzine, as is so often said, this is even more true of this one. The present issue is sparked off by two letters, one from Jack Speer in Albuquerque, N.M., the other from John Brosnan in London N.W.10.

And at this point I should warn all those good people who write to me that their letters might easily finish up here if they are not clearly indicated as not being for publication. The only exception to this is Kevin Dillon, who has never yet written me a letter I could understand fully, let alone one I could publish. I believe that Kevin spent two years mastering the art of writing this kind of letter, and that for the last twenty years he has been unsurpassed in his chosen field. That his name is utterly unknown to world fandom today is a tribute to his mastery. Perhaps Kevin prefers being a Big Name Fan and all-round Living Legend in person in Australian fandom to being a vaguely familiar name in world fandom through his writing — like John Baxter and John Brosnan, say — and (if so) I'm not sure he hasn't made the wisest choice.

Forty years on, when afar and asunder / Parted are those who are singing today... I don't think our headmaster at Northcote High was an Old Harrovian; more likely he forced us to sing that wretched song because he'd been forced to sing it fifty years earlier at some parched little school with tin roof and gunny-sack walls up in the Wimmera (where the crows fly backwards to keep the sand out of their eyes) and didn't see any reason why we should be spared. Naturally it was the first thing to pop into my head when I learnt that FAPA will be forty years old this month. The next thing that popped into my head was the absurd idea of writing to Jack Speer, who has been in FAPA since it started, and who, according to some authorities, actually invented fandom, and asking him to write an article about the nature, significance and abiding worth of the whole thing.

JACK SPEER	Thanks, but an article on my view of fandom would
2416 Cutler NE	be like an apologiam pro vita mea, and i don't feel
Albuquerque	final. Of recent decades i have developed such
NM 87106 USA	an ad-hoc mentality that i rarely feel like
23.6.77	expounding my ideas on any subject from beginning
	to end. I can give present answers to some of
	the questions you put:

Obviously, the big difference is that fandom was smaller and fresher when i met it. We had a higher opinion of each other in comparison to the rest of the population than today's jaded fen can entertain. This, and the feeling of being an unpopular minority, led to the tradition of hospitality toward each other. The rare occasions when we could get together, especially in large enough numbers to feel that we outnumbered the mundanes nearby, were life in a milieu where one would wish to dwell always. Fandom being a new organism, there were limitless new things to do, like adapting mundane ideas (housing, education) to it, coining new language, experimenting with spelling (this belongs to the null-mundane rather than the newness aspect), adopting fond nicknames, building alter egos, gathering its history, philosophizing about it, ktp.

I have already implied what's missing in fandom now, so will pass on to your question of what i find valuable in it still. There are other circles in which i could have enjoyed much of what i enjoy in fandom, Los Alamos for example, but i don't have access to them. So this is the place to give my opinions on everything and test them by the saying and by the feedback (which is better than one gets in most other groups), and here are people with whom i still feel more likeness than with any mundanes i see facetoface other than my family. (My son wouldn't agree that he's a mundane, that being an SCA-adopted designation for non-SCAers.)

You see how rambling this is, and therefore how likely it is to omit points weightier than those mentioned. Turning to things i don't like about the microcosm now: Aside from its lacking newness, another thing that bothers me and isn't truly a fault is its great expansion in numbers and losing definiteness of outline (is or isn't the Society for Creative Anachronism part of sf fandom?). One feels a bit the same way about all the books he'd like to read and can't

find time for, the periodicals -- mundane -- he'd like to follow, the scientific and scholarly advances he'd like to keep up with. Selected parts of fandom can still be compassed, FAPA and the local club; but i haven't made up my mind that i'd like to attend a worldcon or big westercon, because it seems i'd be awash in strangers. There are also aspects of fandom that i think are bad. An anti-Establishment attitude so intense it's nihilistic is one of these. I don't know whether this incident at an AqSFS meeting is an example or not, but i'm bound to narrate it: I expressed the thought that perhaps people would find a way to avoid atomigeddon and muddle through our present difficulties, and Vardeman, Tackett and others reacted with the surprise one shows when there's a challenge to points he thought to be thoroughly established. (The incident may actually represent idealism: a clean slate seems the only way to improve.) No, what i actively dislike about the anti-Establishment attitude is better represented by the idea, apparent in fan talk and writing, that every man is free to go to hell in his own way but he has an obligation to go to hell (a vague generalization, but i wasn't satisfied with the concreter images that crowded across my screen). I also have a negative reaction to many superficial aspects of the current fannish scene such as rock music, beards (sorry, John) and language.

What has fandom to do with science-fiction? Well, s-f at least selects most of the people who are introduced to fandom, more so in the beginning: it filtered them like the several screenings one does in looking for prime numbers. That it was fiction eliminated the illiterates and those among the human race who though literate are disinclined to read for fun, including most extroverts. That it was science- tended to eliminate most women, ignoramuses and the religiously bent. That it was science-fiction, which as a new specialty excluded the mundane, tended to leave out the old, and insofar as it was scorned by the generality, attracted chiefly those who already felt themselves alienated. When fandom became a microcosm, with internal politics and with interests ranging beyond those which had brought it into existence, this turned off many fundamentalist scientifictionists. Those who survived all these screenings, and others which i haven't intuited, made up second and third fandoms. Since the war, science-fiction has continued to play a role in defining fandom which i can feel better than analyze. I feel, for example, that Rosemary Hickey doesn't belong, and the reason she doesn't is that she's unfannish. Why is she unfannish? Partly because she has, so far as i can tell, no interest in s-f, and certainly not the kind that trufans have. The directions in which fandom has conspicuously expanded its interests beyond science-fiction have in common with s-f a romantic strain, which is away from the here and now, anti-Establishment and esoteric.



JB Thanks, Jack. If you don't mind, I won't comment on this just now; I'd like to think about it a bit. But I can't help wondering whether I'll be writing something like this when I've been in FAPA for forty years (if I can write at all: I'll be 72 then, nearly as old as Burbee), or even when I've been in fandom for forty years

(in 2003, when I'll still be a youngster of 64). I have no doubt that I'll be dismayed by the absence of beards. But for the time being, one thing I know I like about fandom is that fans write letters to me.

JOHN RYAN

PO Box 24

Yeronga Qld 4104

3.7.77

What do I know about Morris Meredith Williams?

Well, apart from the fact that he has a tendency

to alternate his signatures from Morris M.

Williams to M. Meredith Williams (*and to his full name, John: there are more to come*) he is best

known as the cover illustrator on some of John Bangsund's fanzines. He looks like a poor man's Hal Foster, and his heroic/romantic etching style seems to be ideal for captions, such as: (Harald Fairhair) 'Don't panic - it's not Moby Dick - it's Robin Johnson floating on his back!' and (Alfred at Ashdune) 'There's *got* to be an easier way to cut sugar-cane!' and so on. Also, I can tell you that his name does not appear in the Encyclopaedia Britannica or the 1973 Pocket Compendium of Australian Statistics. If there are some details I have overlooked, please feel free to ask.

Looking over all of the authors you have mentioned (*in Stunned Mullet 7*) - Joyce, Chapman, Keats, Davies, Greene, Thomas and particularly Brian O'Nolan - I can honestly say that I have never read anything by any of these gentlemen. Jan does have a copy of *Under the Milkwood* which props up our coffee table with the short leg and I once won a Pride of Erin dancing competition, if that's any help. How then could I possibly enjoy your piece for *Bottom Line*? I dunno, but I did. I guess it must have something to do with what is usually referred to as 'style'. And it helps to have a sense of humour. You are to be congratulated for completing 8 pages without once mentioning Thomas Love Peacock - or have I been out of circulation too long?

JB The extensive quote from Peacock's *Lines to a favourite laurel in the garden at Ankerwyke Cottage* was deliberately omitted from your copy, John. *Under the Milkwood Tree*, which is undoubtedly the work you had in mind, is by Hardyland Thomas, no relation. Since you, whom I have always regarded as Australia's foremost sanitary-panelologist, know nothing of M.M. Williams, I must refer the question to the mob. And for letting me down like this I will force you to share the page with Australia's answer to the Duchess of Duke Street -

JOHN BROSAN

23 Lushington Road

London NW10

22.6.77

(*And that, Brozzer, is for calling me*) the

Peter Roberts of Australia. I haven't been very

involved in fandom since the end of '75 except

for a few articles in various fanzines. Last

issue of *Scabby Tales* I did was at the beginning

of 1976 but I forgot to send it out to anyone...for good reason.

And things just haven't been the same since Merv Barrett left

England for his far-off Muldoon-ruled homeland.

Spent most of 1976 trying, unsuccessfully, to break into the film industry as a script writer. First my agent's husband Peter and I wrote a script called *Jaw Man*, which was about this scientist who injects himself with shark antibodies (he's trying to find a cure

for cancer) and turns into a shark man. Before you can twitch a fin he's going berserk in a fish restaurant and attacking people in public swimming pools. Finally he kills a girl in her own bathtub. 'Gee!' I hear you ejaculate, 'What a great film that would have made!' And I agree. A film producer even bought an option on it, but he's making a film about the Wombles instead. That's show biz.

At the moment I'm rewriting, badly, John Baxter's book *SF in the Cinema*. I wanted to call it *SF Versus the Cinema* and have on the cover an H. G. Wells Martian war machine facing one from the George Pal movie, but my publisher told me to get stuffed. It will now probably be called *The Ultimate on Film*, which is nice and subtle.

And speaking of John Baxter, he's living back in London now and has just finished a vast book about a large meteor hitting the sea off Miami and causing floods and general chaos. Baxter hopes the book will make a big splash. Not that he needs the money: he's already rich from his book about a large object hitting Siberia.



JB John Baxter — ah, that would be the chappy mentioned in James Gunn's book — 'John Baxter, film industry spokesman', right? When you see him, John, give him our regards (have some yourself, of course) and ask him how that other novel is coming along — the one I published an excerpt from in ASFR 10, barely a decade ago.

Baxter (balding, brachycephalic bard of Bowral) and Brosnan (the lush of Lushington Road) left Australia less than seven years ago. Since then there have been at least three generations or waves or outbreaks of Australian fans, most of them probably as incapable of thinking of Baxter and Brosnan as Australian fans as

Paul Anderson rang just now (while I was sitting here wondering where the hell that last sentence was going) to talk about some convention the local fans are thinking of putting on, the day after tomorrow. I must not be sarcastic about this. The 16th Australian National Convention will be as much fun as any other convention I've attended, I'm sure. But I despair at the rough-and-ready way we Australians go about organizing conventions. Even as I write that I realize that it is probably no longer true of conventions in the eastern States, that my despair is more specifically at seeing the Adelaide fans making all the mistakes that the Melbourne fans were making ten years ago. Well, maybe that's how you learn. Maybe I could have made myself more available to the organizers of this convention (but I really have had much more urgent things on my mind for the last year or so). Next issue (this one must come to an abrupt halt) I will probably have more to say on this subject.

MR BURBEE: That's not 'JHB': it's 'John B', scrawled in a hurry. I got the May FAPA three weeks ago (Foyster hasn't seen February or May yet). Assuming I am not entitled to the February mailing, may I implore/importune/beg individual FAPAns to send me their contributions to that mailing, if they have spare copies?
ANZAPAns: I enjoyed most of mailing 56, but especially the contributions of Keith Taylor, Irwin Hirsh and Carey Handfield.

(Tetelestai: 27.7.77)