

RATAPLAN 5

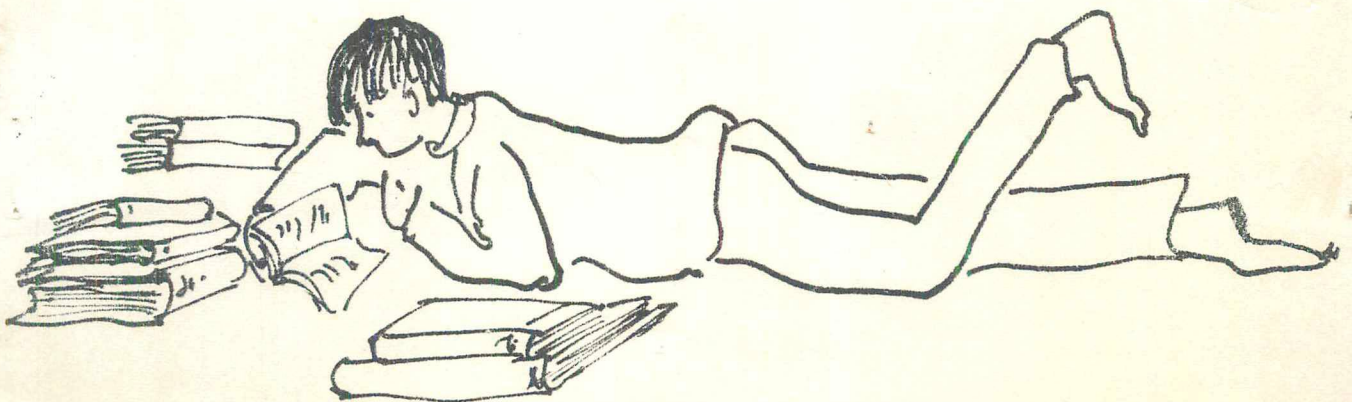
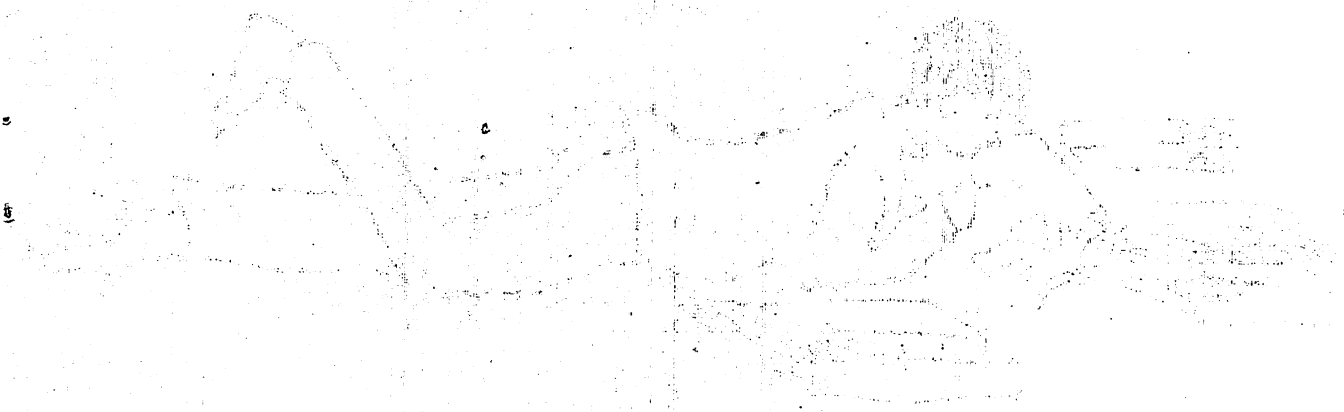


EXHIBIT 1



RATAPLAN Five

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GEORGE

For a convention issue of a fanzine nothing seems more fitting than to publish speeches from an earlier convention and a report of it. Less than four months ago Sydney fandom held its first Convention for many years, a very enjoyable affair known as SYNCON '70 and in this issue of RATAPLAN you will find the speech made by the Guest of Honour Ron Graham and talk given by John Foyster. Robert Bowden, the youngest Pro in the country, has written a short report of what happened.

So, if you are sitting at the EasterCon with a spare ten minutes on your hands, flick through this fanzine and re-live a little of SYNCON '70. Even if you weren't at Sydney over the New Year holiday, you will certainly find what was said there just as interesting.

As for this issue of RATAPLAN, let me explain.

John
Bangsund and I were supposed to be working together on a fanzine called SCYTHROP. The first issue of this came out at the end of last year and since then John has decided to back out of most of his obligations (if that be the right word) in fandom, among them genzine editing.

Back at square one I was sitting pondering; RATAPLAN hadn't appeared in general circulation for over a year, well in actual fact the last issue to see a wide distribution was number 3 in December 1968, and I had more or less announced that RATAPLAN had been superseded by SCYTHROP.

But what the hell. A mere three days before Good Friday and the EasterCon I decided to produce a fanzine for the Convention. I had all the material that was going to be used in the Bangsund-Edmonds combined fanzine on hand and you will find most of it in the following pages. I guess that unless John has a complete change of heart there will be no more fanzines from him in quite a long time, however, unless I get submerged in some unforeseen occupation, RATAPLAN should resume some sort of existence over the next few years. I've listed it as monthly but I can't promise to stick to a schedule like that, it just makes me feel more inclined to do something more often than if I listed it as quarterly.

Do you remember RATAPLAN? If you don't, go and ask Bruce Gillespie to explain it to you, if he can't then it must be a myth.

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SYNCON '70 seemed to re-kindle the dwindling flame of Australian fandom, a flame which had been existing on its re-ignition in 1966 at the Melbourne Easter Convention. There had been a couple of other conventions held in Melbourne since that time but none of them had had that magic which had come with the re-awakening in 1966 and none had inspired the bout of galloping fanac which had started in 1966. SYNCON '70

was different, again there was a glow in the atmosphere and everyone there felt charged with an excitement long since forgotten. It was almost as if we had managed to tap the mysterious power source of the cosmos, things which had once seemed to be merely dreams for fools became living possibilities. It was wonderful.

As you may know, the sprawling smog smothered city of Sydney is the capital city of the State of New South Wales and is the biggest city in Australia. It has a population which is getting close to three million and, being the oldest city in Australia, it has an old-worldliness about it which is quite lacking from any other capital city in Australia. The streets seem to follow their own ways to their own destinations, defying logic and the navigation of strangers who are used to the relatively straightforward laying out of other cities. The centre of the city is a maze of narrow streets which seem almost claustrophobic to someone more used to wide streets, as I am. The footpaths are narrow and crowded, the traffic cruises past a mere foot or so away and the other side of the street is so close that you would swear that you could shake hands with somebody you knew over on the other footpath.

Even so, and maybe because of its nature, Sydney is an exciting city after Melbourne which seems so much more open and so much easier to understand. There is a mystery and adventure down little alleyways which would be in Melbourne, just another back street. The streets criss-cross each other at chaotic angles which make walking an adventure which would seem impossible in other cities where each intersection comes at exactly the same distance from the last one as it will be to the next one. The shops in Sydney seem to have absorbed their age and made it part of their character, like aged wine, whereas in Melbourne, the wine has turned sour.

Sydney is built on hills and the roads wind where the cattle once used to draw drays. There is no rhyme or reason to the streets in the suburbs, that is the way the animal drawn vehicles of almost two hundred years ago went and so that is the way that the vehicles of this new decade follow. Up and down and around, there is a feeling as you follow the roads, that you are exploring rather than getting from one place to another. Perhaps living in Sydney for years would make it all seem a way of life and not much to be noticed, but just visiting there for a few days is exciting.

SYNCON '70

Lee Harding, John Bangsund and I were going to leave for Sydney very early the next morning so we planned to get an early nights sleep. I had my one-shot, THE EXTRA SPECIAL GOSHWOW ONE-SHOT FANZINE PRODUCED FOR THE SINCON BY LEIGH EDMONDS to run off and collate and then by the time Lee and I had sat talking for hours, it was one o'clock. Tired, as we went off to bed we couldn't really believe that in three hours we would be up again, for if we were we wouldn't be much good for anything.

Good fortune was on our side because Diane Bangsund has evolved the ability of being able to turn off an alarm clock without

waking up and it was not until an hour and a half later that we were finally roused. We had originally planned to leave at five but as it was we didn't get to pull out of Hilton Street until seven, which is a reasonable time anyhow. Off we drove, reckoning on a nice quick trip of maybe thirteem hours. 190 miles and five hours later we changed the estimate to fourteen hours, perhaps. We stopped at Albury for lunch and so that Lee Harding could get himself a couple of pens and a note book to make himself look like a real writer - before we had stopped at a place called Euroa (notable only because it is a place where Paul Stevens and I were stranded one time when his Votlswagon blew up) for half an hour and a cup of coffee.

From Albury I drove for a while. I'd not been behind the wheel of a car for maybe nine months so I wasn't that sure of what was happening. Lee and John seemed to be in terror at the way I was sliding around the bends at sixty-miles-per-hour so that by the time we had reached Holebrook fourty miles on, they were both very keen to suggest that we stop for a drink. It wasn't all my fault though, that stretch of highway just has to be the most windy part between Melbourne and Sydney.

The pub we chose for our drink was very much like any country pub; a nice friendly atmosphere, the local drunks and photographs of the local football teams from the last fifty years hung on the walls. One of the locals turned around and looked at us through his beer drenched eyes, saw John and Lee with their beards and made a typically caustic comment on them. John's eyes twinkled as he replied in his best 'strine accent, "I dunno, I go over to Vietnam and fight for youse and then I get back here and you won't even let me grow a beard. That's democracy for you!"

Then we drove half a block and bought an ice cream. Then off again, Lee driving like a maniac and John playing selections from the Beethoven symphonies on his harmonica. They both tried to demonstrate to me the art of "castrato" by singing a number by Purcell, "Sound the Strumpets"; but neither of them have been castrated, something their wives should be pleased about even if Purcell did turn in his grave.

We stopped again once or twice or three times for coffee and food and, at last, arrived at the edge of Sydney - still over twenty miles out. We navigated the streets of Sydney using a map which John's father had used twenty years ago and when we did finally arrive outside the Darling house at ten o'clock we had to thank our prayers more than our skill.

It was New Years Eve and even though Peter wasn't home his parents had some friends around for the traditional party. In we staggered after many hours of hard driving, exhausted, to become the centre of the party. Poor Lee suffered most, everybody wanted to know how he became a writer and where he got his ideas from and everything else. Then one woman wanted to know why fans didn't drink (we had politely refused any offers from Mrs. Darling) so she got a long and involved explanation about how most fans were really drunkards but that we usually restrained ourselves in public so that we wouldn't give anybody a bad impression and so that we wouldn't corrupt the young and impressionable members of our

group. That was no excuse, she claimed, for our abstinence because the only person present who could be young and impressionable was myself and I was obviously already corrupted.

So after that we joined in the merry making and the night slipped away. Fans arrived at some stage and somewhere around Midnight we sang a sad and sorry version of whatever song it is that you sing to welcome in the New Year, and that is just about all I remember.

Epping, which is the suburb where Peter Darling and his parents live, is set in hilly country so that there is a little room built under Darling House - that is where I slept, along with a folded up table-tennis table, crates of soft-drink and a dart board. The floor above creaks a little and the chiming clock in the hall can be heard quite plainly but all the same I slept the sleep of the dead: how else?

Up bright and early the next morning and off I went with Peter to where the Convention was being held; a nice little hall sunk into a valley with trees, a little gully and lots of grass around. There was still a lot of work to be done when I arrived and almost everybody was busy setting things up so that, being a lazy person by nature, I just wandered around and felt guilty for not helping anybody.

Everybody had told me that I would be mad to try to sell my crappy little fanzine for twenty cents, but I proved them wrong. On the first day nobody escaped my slick huckstering but towards the end I found that I would waltz up to somebody I thought I'd not tried before and start in only to find that I'd already tried them five times before. That was one part of my operation which needs some working out and I promise everyone at the EasterCon that I'll have it all worked out to a T.

Back at the Convention, there were so many people I wanted to meet, fans from Sydney with whom I'd exchanged the occasional letter or whom I'd met a year ago and all the people that I met for the first time never knowing before that they existed. There were many people from Melbourne but removed from their native habitat they seemed to have changed their faces and their personalities. There were the Pros and as well there were some fringe-fan heads.

From convention to convention the program doesn't seem to change very much and to a great many fans, I don't think that it matters very much. Nice things just kept on happening and the friendly fannish atmosphere was so enjoyable and so unreal that I couldn't give a clear account of everything that happened or what I said to all the people I talked to.

The bus which is going to London later in the year was parked by the road on the level patch just before the dip of the valley, serving as a lightless light-house to fans who had lost their way. It looks not unlike other Sydney double-decker busses but they have painted it blue and put a big white arrow on each side between the rows of windows. The inside is very spartan with chairs, tables and bunks, making you feel as if you are in a submarine with windows.

That night the bus was used to sleep anybody who didn't

have any friendly fannish hosts to put them up for the Convention, mainly fringe-fans. It was a nice atmosphere there so I slept there that night; lying in the bunks, listening to Beatle music on a portable tape-recorder and muttering softly to each other until we all drifted off to sleep.

By six the next morning we decided that we were hungry and away we went in Geoff Marshall's car to find something to eat. We drove to the centre of Sydney itself, through clouds of foul smelling smog and with crowds of people driving themselves to work. We came to Kings Cross (the very most depraved place in the whole of Australia) where we walked around, eating grapes out of a sodden paper bag, chatting with a woman who sold cigarettes, thumbing through the pornographic books that you don't get to see in Melbourne and studying the life size photographs outside the strip joints. But it was seven in the morning and the only people around were those who were rushing to work, the life of the Cross probably had only gone to bed a couple of hours ago and it wouldn't come alive again until the sun went down.

We drove out of the city up north to see a person that somebody knew and then, later, back again to meet another person who lived in a neat little white washed, brick wall with pretty wooden gate enclosed house in the winding street suburb called Paddington - quite beautiful and quaint.

But by now it was noon and I wanted to get back to the Convention. There was a panel I wanted to see in which Bob Smith and John Foyster were to recall the long gone days of Fandom in Australia in the '40's. But when I arrived back it had been finished and people showed no kindness by telling me how good it had been, but not telling me anything of what had been said.

The afternoon passed in a round of panel discussions, talks and many chances to converse with many wonderful people.

The program for that night was a couple of films to be shown at another venue, a much bigger hall with proper facilities for showing films. The films were "1 Million B.C." in which Ursula Andress shows her remarkable body off to advantage with and despite a few square inches of fur and "5 Million Years to Earth". Unfortunately the hall was too big and though the picture could be seen very well, the sound echoed from the many empty spaces making it almost impossible to hear properly. This was annoying but I don't think it upset anybody very much except for Peter Darling who was showing them.

At the same time Ron Graham was holding a small party at a motel a few miles away. He had intended it as a get together for the few writers and a couple of fans who were involved in his magazine (Vision of Tomorrow) but things had gone amiss and some people who should have been invited had missed out.

Just after the first film, John Bangsund and I were standing outside the hall, looking at the stars and the church (we were in a Church hall) and breathing the not so fresh Sydney air, when Ron Graham's secretary appeared and invited us to come to the party. So we went, following the taxi which she was in up and down and around corners. In the end

we got there and settled down to another bout of drinking, eating and talking. Very pleasant as it was, the party wound up all too soon and John, Lee and I crammed into the car along with John and Elizabeth Foyster, intending to drive them home to the Ryan house where they were staying for the Convention. The fannish conversation flowed like Yarra water and John Foyster kept up a continual stream by street direction of how to get out to Fairfield where the Ryans live. But me, I sat there thinking only one thing; I couldn't think of anything.

When we arrived, the Ryans had been home and in bed asleep for a long time. We shuffled into their kitchen, tripping over the chairs and things as quietly as we knew how to get a cup of coffee before we started back. John Brosnan (he lived at the time out in the back of the Ryan house, in the woodshed or something) was in his true convention form, striving his utmost to get that daily quota of claret down his throat.

The next day was just another round of wild panel discussions and talking to people, nothing much of what happened is remembered by your humble reporter; except for one hideous thing.

The idea of holding a World SF Convention in Australia in 1975 has been on the collective fannish conscious for a year or so now and the members of the SYNCON committee decided to bring it to the surface and to let people talk about it. They held a special panel discussion for this purpose. Much of what was said at this panel has thankfully been forgotten, but one thing does stick out in my mind; you remember when Lee Harding suggested that I produce a fortnightly fanzine to discuss the Australia in '75 idea much more closely. If you've forgotten it, let me assure you that I haven't, how could I.

The big finnish to the whole of SYNCON '70 was a party held at the Ryan household on the last night. It was a most enjoyable affair, plenty of poison was on hand for everyone except myself who hadn't bothered to tell anyone of my exotic tastes so that I managed the whole night on flat lemonade. The most notable person there was Paul Whelan who used to draw comic strips but who has been finding it far too unrewarding in the financial aspect of late and earns his money these days by writing a Western every two weeks under one of his many pseudonomes (none of which he would divulge to us).

Many other things happened in the two other days we stayed in Sydney. Dropping Alex Robb off at the station to wait for the first train in the morning and then staying up all night talking and then walking down to the station to see him off. Waking up in the afternoon to hear that Bernie Bernhouse had rolled his car into a total write-off. Rodney Semens describing how he couldn't get any sleep because the prostitutes and their visitors in the next room at the hotel were making too much noise. Hearing Gary Woodman tell how he had been attacked by a couple of anti-Vietnam people because he was wearing an army-surplus officers cap in Kings Cross. Visiting Bob Smith and then sleeping overnight on his lounge room floor. Lee Harding singing 15th Century songs in the car on the way back to Melbourne.

Oh, so many wonderful things happened at the SYNCON.

SYNCON '70

The Speech by the Guest of Honour

Ronald E. Graham

The Criticism of Science Fiction

John Foyster

and

A Short ConReport

Robert Bowden

RON GRAHAM

I propose to make the main subject of my speech today, the inception and progress of the VISION of Tomorrow project.

However, to put this into proper perspective, I propose to speak briefly of the science fiction and fantasy fraternity and its composition.

The science fiction and fantasy fraternity consists of three interlocking groups of people. The largest group, numerically and the most important, is the readers. Most important because in the final analysis the existence of science fiction and fantasy publications is dependent upon their interest and support of the readers.

Almost completely non-vocal, the readers nevertheless express their preferences quite effectively by means of their purchases.

The second group, and the smallest numerically, but rated in importance almost equally with the readers are the professionals - authors, artists, editors and publishers, since without these there could be no publications for the Readers to read.

The third group, small statistically, but extremely vocal, are the fans. A phenomena of the publishing world of science fiction and fantasy is paralleled only, but in a much smaller way by the Mystery writing fandom - a fandom growing rapidly and likely to hold conventions also in the near future.

Commencing back in the early thirties, fandom has grown over the years until today it is international in scope and conventions, such as the one we are here attending today, are held in the U.S.A.,

Britain, the Continent and elsewhere.

Since its inception fandom has produced an immense amount of printed matter, mostly fanzines; the greatest percentage of these have been utter trash, but quite a number, including several Australian fanzines, such as ASFR and SF Commentary, have been interesting and informative, and, some indeed exceedingly beautiful productions.

Fandom too, has produced many useful bibliographical items, such as Don Day's Index, Norm Metcalf's Index, Don Tuck's Handbook of SF and Reverend Hardy Hein's Bibliography of ERBurroughs.

In spite of this enormous flood of printed matter, and the countless cubic feet of hot air generated at meetings and conventions, fandom is statistically unimportant, and it is wise, I think, for fans such as ourselves to realise this.

Fans, in my opinion, only influence each other and the great mass of science fiction and fantasy readers go their way supporting, by their purchases, their favourite authors and magazines, happily ignorant of, or completely uncaring, of the existence of fandom.

A couple of instances will suffice to prove this. At the WORLDCON each year (WORLDCON, incidentally being the title the Americans of the U.S.A. like to give to their main convention each year) Hugo Awards; one of which is for the best professional science fiction and/or fantasy magazine.

This is solemnly voted on by the delegates, the Award usually going to ANALOG, IF, Magazine of FANTASY & SF, or GALAXY.

Irrespective however, of which magazine is awarded the Hugo, the Readers by a huge majority expressed by their purchases, elect ANALOG to the position each year and Editor John W. Campbell, in those years where he does not collect the Hugo, can still console himself that he has at least won the readers' award for first placing.

In Britain a much more interesting phenomenon was to be observed. A British author, John Russell Fearn, writing under the pseudonym "Vargo Statten" in the three and a half years, 1951 to 1954, wrote 48 novels, which in Britain alone, sold over five million copies. These were universally condemned by fandom, but were a sensational success with the buying public. As far as the readers were concerned, the opinions of fandom mattered not a jot.

As fans, I believe we should learn a lesson from instances such as these and not overrate either our opinions or our influence.

This same John Russell Fearn, mentioned in the last illustration was indirectly responsible for the VISION of Tomorrow" project.

In making a survey of the SF field from the inception of the SF magazines in 1926 up to 1960, I came to the conclusion that John Russell Fearn was one of the greats of the science fiction field, condemned mostly unread by fandom as a hack writer - probably because of his prodigious output.

During his career he wrote over 200 novles and a similar number

of short stories under his own name and 34 pseudonyms. A number of these were poor stories, as might well be expected purely on a statistical basis, but also included were a number of exceptionally fine stories.

During the 1930's Fearn was a highly respected author for the American SF magazines and was renowned for his "thought-variant" stories, such as "The Intelligence Gigantic", "Liners of Time", "Zagribud", "The Man Who Stopped the Dust" and many others.

Perhaps Fearn's greatest character was the Golden Amazon. Created originally in 1939 and printed in Fantastic Adventures, the series properly begins in 1944, especially created for the Canadian "STAR WEEKLY". These ran as a series from 1944 to 1961 -- 24 stories. 15 full length novles and nine novelettes - the longest running sf series ever, eclipsing Niel R. Jones "Professor Jameson" series of 21 yarns.

Only 6 of these stories saw print in Britian (those printed by WORLD'S WORK) and the stories have been read by only a minute percentage of SF readers outside Canada.

It is interesting to note that those who have read them consider Barbarella a direct steal from the Golden Amazon.

I decided after making the survey mentioned earlier that JRF's works and particularly the Golden Amazon series should be made available to readers outside Canada and that the only way to do this was to finance the publication myself. Just about this time I contacted Phil Harbottle, a noted fan of JRF and found after corresponding with him that he had an encyclopaedic knowledge of SF. He impressed me also by his trememdous enthusiasm, and, I suggested to him that he should work full time for me and become the editor of a new SF magazine, a post, which I am happy to say, he accepted.

We decided, after some inital planning, that we would firstly produce an SF magazine to take the place of "NEW WORLDS", which was proposing to desert the SF field and print only what they termed speculative fiction.

I wanted to see if the market still existed for what I would describe as adventure based SF rather than the morbid psychological type stories exemplified by "Camp Concentration" and the similar vein stories then being published in "NEW WORLDS".

We decided therefore to launch a magazine featuring new stories only by British, Australian and Continental authors, selected with pure entertainment in mind and the result is "VISION of Tomorrow".

Issue Number One, in spite of being banned by W.H. Smith with their chain of some eleven hundred outlets, sold some sixteen thousand copies.

Time will tell of course, but it would seem that a market does exist for an SF magazine of the VISION type; a market completely different to that catered for by "NEW WORLDS", so that, in effect, the two complement each other, only completists and a few others buying both.

We still propose to publish the JRF stories and will

launch a second magazine for this purpose, tentatively named "VANGUARD SF" or perhaps "IMAGE of Tomorrow".

This will print both new and old stories, certainly the Golden Amazon and other Fearn stories for which I have purchased the rights.

This magazine will initially be published quarterly and will alternate with a third magazine, also published quarterly, tentatively termed "FANTASY". This will be edited by Ken Bulmer, and will, as the title suggests publish fantasy. Fantasy of the type featured in the late lamented "UNKNOWN WORLDS" plus sword and sorcery stories and Thorne Smith type novels with an accent on humor.

The format of these latter two magazines has not yet finally been decided, but it is most likely that they will be digest sized publications.

In addition we are investigating the publication of paperbacks, and, if this project proves viable, we will go ahead with these also. Distribution is the great problem and if this can be satisfactorily arranged we will be in the market for original novels suitable for paperback publication.

Reverting now to VISION of Tomorrow, we are endeavouring here to foster a purely Australian genre of SF, just as there can be said to be a British or an American genre. We do not want Aborigines, Ayres Rock, or the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Kangaroos, and Wombats, but rather stories written with a naturally occurring Australian background, speech and way of life, and, not as is mostly the case now, written with overseas locales with the idea of catering for an American or British market.

I would like at this point to pay a tribute to Lee Harding for his outstanding interest and help in furthering this project of an Australian image for VISION of Tomorrow, which we hope will eventually make VISION of Tomorrow unique amongst the SF magazines.

It will be our constant aim to improve VISION of Tomorrow both visually and in contents.

JOHN FOYSTER

The Criticism of Science Fiction

"I am better than you. My taste is more refined, my nature more cultured, you will do well to become more like me than you are."

I.A. Richards uses this to dramatise the position of the 'expert' in his Principles of Literary Criticism. Though we may try to avoid it, this idea insinuates itself into all notions about works of art. That it does so is something to be noted, appreciated, and then set aside. But many readers are unable to do this - perhaps almost all - so that this rather unpleasant aura hangs about 'critics'. However, I shall imagine for the moment that no such aura exists.

Firstly let us consider how we should approach any work of fiction. I am deliberately stating this naively because I do not wish to make any major assumptions.

We may reasonably expect of a work of fiction that it be entertaining, or enjoyable, or some other synonym. Practically this means that the reader finishes the book and that if he does so then he looks forward with pleasure to a re-reading. It need not be, for the point of this argument, that the reader actually does re-read the book. We shall merely require that he anticipates such an action joyfully.

Suppose now that we have an entertaining book, or a number of them. It is not difficult to imagine circumstances in which we are required to select the 'best' of these entertaining books. Perhaps, in these circumstances, one might pick out the 'most enjoyable' book as being the 'best'.

How is this done? It is not enough to merely say that one liked Book A better than Book B, at least if one wishes to communicate this joy to a fellow being. For men are odd creatures who require more than mere assertion.

Having said that I now make an assertion: that we could choose the first among equals, or at least begin to make such a choice, by asking of each book in turn - is this book more than entertaining? Let us not worry about the ways in which this might happen - they are not particularly important.

Perhaps you are a finer judge of joy than I am, and can select one of many on the criterion of joy alone, I cannot do it- I require some other selective device as well. That is to say, I am requiring now that we can say something more of the book than "I liked it". Maybe this only means that, as potential blurb writers, we can shove another adjective down. But I hope it means more than this.

So far I do not think I have said anything that will turn anyone's hair white. At best some of you may be thinking that all of this is rather un-necessary.

Nearly ten years ago, at the World Convention in Pittsburgh, James Blish gave an important speech titled "A Question Of Content". Though Mr. Blish was at the time restricting his argument to science fiction, it is nevertheless a universal problem. Mr. Blish asked why it was that some SF books are well recieved by 'mainstream' critics and some are not. Mr. Blish thought that the answer was that the well recieved books were "about something". This speech is reprinted in The Issue At Hand, and I suggest that it is one no serious thinker about science fiction can afford to miss.

At any rate, this provides a third question for us to ask of our books in turn. "Is it about anything?" In itself this is a question with a rather brief answer, but Mr. Blish went on to imply the next question in this little series, though he did not go so far as to spell it out. It is a matter which raises some hackles.

This question is asked most frequently, so far as I can

make out, by Franz Rottensteiner, and Franz has certainly had many people aiming for his knuckles.

"Is it about anything worthwhile?"

Some people object to this, saying that moral judgements should not enter into criticism. What they mean, I suspect, is that moral judgements should not replace criticism, which is quite true. But a criticism without some consideration of moral values seems to me a rather useless thing.

All right. I am standing pat. These are the basic questions which I think a critic has to consider.

But what, you ask, of plot and characterisation, of form and content, or, with respect to science fiction, the scientific accuracy? Of style and of originality? Of grammatical accuracy and good spelling and neat typing and pretty white paper? As you may gather from some of the foregoing I do not consider these to be essential in the present context. Franz Rottensteiner comes at least part of the way with me here in his "An Aesthetic Theory of Science Fiction" (in Australian Science Fiction Review, April 1968) when he remarks: "The more criticism of SF I read the more I was dissatisfied with technical criticism. I felt that it was too limited." This article is well worth reading, by the way, as it deals with the first of the four above questions in a rather extensive way (Franz devotes more time and space to that one question than I shall here be devoting to a much larger number. This in itself should make clear to you that I am merely outlining my subject and that much more can and should be said.)

I now propose to examine what we call 'science fiction' a little more closely. This 'science fiction' differs from other fiction in one radical and overwhelming way: the author sets his fiction in a world, a universe, of which we do not have any direct experience, not even an indirect experience in most cases. The consequences are considerable.

"Its nature is to be not a part, nor yet a copy of the real world (as we commonly understand that phrase) but to be a world in itself, independent, complete, autonomous."

That could be a description of science fiction: actually it is A.C. Bradley on "Poetry for Poetry's Sake". But I am quoting this precisely because it enables us to examine more closely that aspect of science fiction which makes it unique.

Later on Bradley adds: "There is plenty of connection between life and poetry, but it is, so to say, a connection underground." Does this not tell us a great deal about science fiction? The created world is autonomous but, and we cannot avoid this, there must be a 'connection underground'. This connection may be present in many forms, and is most readily noticed when it is absent for, to make matters somewhat more complicated, it should never be obtrusive (i.e. it is underground).

I want to quote an example which makes quite clear just what is being introduced here. Nebula Award Stories Four contains a short

story entitles "The Dance Of The Changer And The Three" by Terry Carr. As you can guess from its position in this anthology it is highly regarded by members of the SFWA. It also appeared in Ace's Best SF: 1969 and will no doubt be reprinted in many other anthologies. But it fails in one important respect.

The narrator of Mr. Carr's story is stationed on some far off planet on which he is observing the behaviours of the local aliens. The story is essentially conversational and its basic point is the lack of meaningful communication on a high level between human and aliens. However the unfortunate side-effect of this, the narrator being relatively colourless, is that there is no 'connection underground'. Of course that is the point of the story, but it doesn't help the reader. For this reason it seems to me that, attractive as the notion was, it should never have been made into a story.

Now this is just an example of the 'connection underground'. The notion has widespread applications and facets of it frequently crop up in discussions of "plot" and "characterisation" and so on. All that this means is that criticism, like the rest of the universe, is essentially non-linear (by which I do not mean jumbled, which is what far too many people think it means). Thus the nature and extent of the 'connection' underground plays a part in the discussion of each of the four questions I have outlined.

In science fiction we do have this almost unique necessity: that of linking the created physical universe to the familiar one. Apart from that it is plain that the 'connection underground' has a role to play in the examination of every piece of art - in fact, a multiplicity of roles.

But let me give another example of what I am talking about. I hope that Tom Godwin's The Cold Equations is known to you all. Here is quite a fine story, even though it was published before J.G. Ballard and Michael Moorcock had been heard of, which starts from a particular premise and works out the logical conclusion. Let us assume for the moment, anyway, that it does proceed logically. The fault to which I wish to direct your attention lies in the premise. For Mr. Godwin makes some quite startling assumptions. The first is that spaceships will carry only the exact amount of fuel required for their mission. We know that from a practical point of view that this simply does not happen. The Apollo missions, which are comparatively primitive, allow considerable flexibility in the quantity of samples which may be brought back from the moon. There are other objections of a similar type which I will not go into. The other assumption which is strange, but which is nevertheless essential to the plot, is that the girl does not know about the regulation regarding stowaways. This is simply not credible. So in this case we have a poor and even an unacceptable link between Mr. Godwin's created universe and our own. This spoils the story.

I now want to look at this matter from a slightly different point of view. Suppose we have a novelist who has a message: he is sufficiently skilled that he need not be told to 'use Western Union'. But his message can be misinterpreted: the critic should try to unravel the

message, assuming that it is not quite obvious.

Writing of 1984, Kingsley Amis wrote in New Maps of Hell that it was a book "which instead of being the remote nightmare it is could have been the savage short-range admonitory satire on political force that Orwell had it in him to write..."

The following are some quotations from Orwell's notebooks, which were available for about ten years before Mr. Amis wrote those words.

"War is simply a reversal of civilised life: its motto is 'Evil be thou my good'".

"Another government leaflet this morning, on treatment of air raid casualties. The leaflets are getting much better in tone and language, and the broadcasts are also better ... but there is still nothing in really demotic speech, nothing that will move the poorer working classes or even be quite certainly intelligible."

"One could forgive the government for failing to employ the intelligentsia, who on the whole are politically unreliable..."

"... the danger of the People's Convention racket is much underestimated and ... one must fight back and not ignore it. ... thousands of simple-minded people are being taken in by the appealing program of the People's Convention".

"There is now more division of opinion ... as to whether we are fighting the Nazis or the German people. This is bound up with the question of whether England should declare her war aims, or, indeed, have any war aims. ... Vansittart's 'Hate Germany' pamphlet is said to be selling like hot cakes."

"On a wall in South London some communist or blackshirt had chalked 'Cheese, not Churchill'. What a silly slogan. It sums up the psychological ignorance of these people who even now have not grasped that, where as some people would die for Churchill, nobody will die for cheese."

"If you accept government, you accept war, and if you accept war, you must in most cases desire one side or the other to win. I can never work up any disgust over bishops blessing the colours of regiments, etc. All that kind of thing is found on a sentimental idea that fighting is incompatible with loving your enemies. Actually you can only love your enemies if you are willing to kill them in certain circumstances."

"... I suppose the idea is that it would be bad for morale to let people realise that the enemy has a case, though even that is a psychological error, in my opinion."

"Looking back to the early part of my diary, I see how my political predictions have been falsified, and yet, as it were, the revolutionary changes that I expected are happening, but in slow motion. I made an entry, I see, implying that private advertisements would have disappeared from the walls within a year. They haven't, of course - but they are far fewer, and the government posters are far more numerous. Connolly said once that intellectuals tend to be right about the direction of events but wrong about their tempo, which is very true."

(World Review, June 1950)

I hope that I am not labouring the point in suggesting that in these extracts written by Orwell in London between June 14, 1940 and April 13, 1941 lie many of the sources of 1984. Orwell was writing a short-range satire, and in missing the point we blunder badly.

As I suggested earlier the 'connection underground' is seen in many different ways. Frequently it depends greatly upon just what it is that the reader expects to get out of reading a book. Thus, in the Western, say, the reader doesn't really want or expect the author's world to be like our own and if it were the desired experience would not be forthcoming. But it is also true that the success of many novels depends upon the recognition that the world of the novel and the world in which we live are identical. And here the 'connection underground' which is interesting is a philosophical one rather than the kind I have been talking about.

I could go on for some time describing the variations on this theme in general, the importance of this 'connection underground'. But I do not want to restrict myself to one point. Of course, anything I say now is intertwined with what I have already said.

Some people believe that 'prediction' is an important part of science fiction. But there are many who believe that this is not the case. The proportion of the two classes is not clear to me, but probably those in favour of 'prediction' as a necessary ingredient would include both older readers and newspaper reporters looking for an angle. Of readers who require that science fiction contain some 'prediction' I simply ask: "What do you do about stories which are enjoyable but which include false predictions?" "If prediction is a necessity, do you enjoy the story only when the prediction comes true?"

One last aspect of the probalem, though there are many I have not introduced. If a writer proposes to change the universe to suit his story I think it reasonable to ask whether he has done a good job or not. That is, if the writer has introduced some variations into our present universe, has he examined all the consequences of that variation? Sometimes it is rather like a story about a universal solvent. If a writer does switch the universe around merely to suit the requirements of his story, then I suggest that the reader is entitled to feel cheated. If the writer is allowed to make up the rules as he goes along, then he cannot lose.

I have said some things about criticism in general, and I have said a few more about the respects in which science fiction must be examined closely. Why? There are plenty of people who believe that this is all rather useless or un-necessary or disloyal. There are those who would be happier if critics of science fiction were overnight converted into boosters.

But if you care about science fiction at all you must reject these attitudes. For science fiction, like all things, is constantly changing. What science fiction becomes depends, to some extent, upon what its readers want it to become: you pay your dollar and

take your choice.

Science fiction can head in many directions: here are two of them.

Kingsley Amis says:

What makes us rove that starlit corridor
May be the impulse to meet face to face
Our vice and folly shaped into a thing,
And so at last ourselves; what lures us there
Is simpler versions of disaster:
A web confounding time and space,
A world of ocean without shore,
A sentence to perpetual journeying,
And simplets, flapping down the poisoned air,
A ten-clawed monster.

In him, perhaps, we see the general ogre
Who rode our ancestors to nightmare,
And in his habitat their maps of hell;
But climates and geographies seem changed,
Spawning mutations none can quell
With silver sword and necromancer's ring,
Worse than their sires, of wider range,
And much more durable.

(in The Starlit Corridor - ed.
Roger Mansfield, Pergamon, 1967)

And Bill Hamling says:

"Imagination magazine presents this award
to Radio Station WBBM-CBS for their origination
of the network radio program, Space Adventures
of Super Noodle, which is in the best
traditions of science fiction."

Take your pick.

ROBERT BOWDEN

A Short ConReport

I went down to Cronulla beach to catch up on the tanning I had lost over Christmas, New Year, SF Con, and got down to the nitty gritty of it all. I haven't yet managed to completely to wash the sand out of my head yet, and the things it does to a typewriter you wouldn't believe. Beaches always put me in mind of John Baxter, I wonder why?

Alright, all you lemmings! If you want to know what it is

like to be a young, filthy pro first meeting truly organised fannish-type fandom at a first SF Convention, well, one might say it's schizophrenic! I'm a fan myself. I enjoyed being a pro, but then I could not help but get in my share of fanning.

However, compared to the type of energetic fanzine publishing species of fan (does "fan" derive from "fanatic" or "blower of hot air"?), I am very subdued. So I'll try to keep my proish dignity, and get even "filthier". That was I might avoid schizophrenia becoming paranoic. I might even be beset with sanity, heaven forbid!

I came to this, my first SF Convention, as a "Dirty Pro". I have yet to decide whether this is a term of enderament or envy. Perhaps it's both. I have only ever touched organised fandom marginally, and most of the well-known fans that were there, were unknown to me. And, except as the author of "After Ragnarok", I was unknown to them.

So I came to the Convention not knowing what to expect, Into The Unknown, so to speak. The first fan I actually met at the Con itself was Paul Anderson (that name was vaguely familiar) and after that they came thick and fast. The first fan to connect me with the Robert Bowden in VoT was John Bangsund, from whom I had purchased a whole heap of beautiful books, and who took my name for his mailing list. The second was John Brosnan, who first gave me that odious label above (good luck John, hope you're the same way yourself soon).

Then came the afternoon that I won't forget, but do not necessarily take that as a compliment. Gary Mason has placed, in his fanzine, my residence in Lugarno, a Sydney suburb: it is Loftus, Gary, but I will forgive you. The artwork on display was superb, or at least some of it was. Stan Pitt has immense talent, the art from VISION was very good too and seeing the illo from "After Ragnarok" was very, very exciting indeed (the Space Station Above Planet for anyone else who saw it and did not know).

Then of course, the great thrill was meeting the real pros. There was Lee Harding, Wynne Whiteford and Bertram Chandler. I had already had the pleasure of meeting Jack Wodhams and David Boutland, and was to meet Damien Broderick on the third day of the Convention.

On the first day we adjourned for tea to Peter Darling's home, this consisted of all the hamburgers you could eat and ice cream to follow up. Here I concluded a fascinating and extended discussion with Jack Wodhams about light-speed and the prospect of coming up with an FTL phenomenon (tachyons, tunnel diodes, etc), and discussed extra-solar palnets and ET's with Wyne Whiteford and Dimitri Razuvaev. Then we discussed the mechanics and techniques in writing with other pros. Did I ever learn a lot from them! In the meantime I had met Shayne McCormack and some others of the DUSK Star Trek group.

Then, it was back to the Brett Parker Hall and films. "One Giant Leap for Mankind" just blew my mind. The Star Trek episode was rather less impressive for two reasons: a) I had seen "Amok Time" three times already, and b) it was not in colour.

The high points of the second day were hearing Ron Graham speak on VISION of Tomorrow and his plans for the future and having A. Bertram Chandler on a panel concerning the "Golden Age". Hearing Elizabeth Foyster's talk on Education was enjoyable. Mrs. Foyster speaks very entertainingly. Laura Molesworth was informative on early Australian fandom and the photographs she had were fascinating. The discussion on an Australian WorldCon struck me as being a bit unlikely, the organisation they were wanting sounded to me like the organisation needed for a multi-generation starship.

These features came one after another, without pause, and once finished I found myself very Weary. The pro party that evening was enjoyable even if I don't remember much of it because my mind was numbed at this point and some sleep was urgently needed. Ron Graham is a marvelous fellow.

Saturday morning was a sleep-in and an arrival at the Comics segment of the program rather late. Discussing comics at an SF Convention struck me as being rather inappropriate.

After lunch was John Foyster on SF Criticism. This was well presented and objective in its content and approach. The panel on "Is there a market for SF in Australia?" was over staffed but I think that Lee Harding handled it well.

John Bangsund gave me a lift to the party that followed the Convention and an evening of listening to "Abbey Road" and "Goldfinger", talking with Lee Harding and others and various other party activities at the Ryan's.

Well, I managed to recover from the Con, saw "The Lion in Winter" - the four letter words in that were so apt - went to a party and got the idea for an SF short. And that means work.

What a way to spend a holiday!

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BOB TOOMEY

The Lamb.

Like most non-violent people, I am fascinated by violence. I am fascinated by the relationship between violence and religion. In the Christian mythos(I'm a Roman Catholic, more or less, a hangover from my Irish ancestry), God assumed the form of man and gave up His life as atonement in a foreordained ritual torture and execution. It was this sacrifice of blood, just as that of the Incas or any other bestial cult, that redeemed Man. If that wasn't enough (and it wasn't apparently), Christians continue the ritual with symbolic cannibalism and the drinking of blood.

There is more than a casual linkage between violence and sexuality. Sadism, by definition, is the derivation of sexual pleasure from inflicting pain on others. Masochism is the derivation of sexual pleasure from having pain inflicted upon oneself. Both are named after famous practitioners of these aberrations. Strangely, though, or perhaps not, priests and nuns of the Roman Catholic Church - and others - practice celibacy and self denial. Sexuality is submerged. Submerged? Or sublimated? I suspect the latter. After all, nuns consider themselves to be the "brides of Christ", while priests generally concentrate on the Blessed Virgin Mary. I'd be interested in the mystical orgasms of the truly faithful, not to be mention what REALLY goes on behind those cloistered walls. I've read Chaucer (now, if any, is the time for a knowing snicker and nod of the head). Now a strong movement is rolling along, gathering steam within the Church to relax those bonds of celibacy, which, more than taking the Pill, are a violation of Natural Law, as well as being one whale of an occasion for sin.

Back in 33 A.D. or so, when Christ was crucified, the practice was to nail the condemned up naked. But you would have to range widely to find a naked Christ hanging from a crucifix. A rag has been thrown across His holy loins to spare the faithful the site of His Manhood, the very symbol and essence of the Redemption. Moreover, Christ, a carpenter by trade for thirty of His thirty-three years, and a swarthy Nazarene Jew by birth, is pictured as pale, frail and blond. The late Mark Clifton says that this inaccuracy (I'd call it a lie) was caused by the early anti-Semitic school of Flemish painters who Anglicised the Christ. But we know: to withstand the tortures Christ went through, He would have had to be a strong man; to be a carpenter in Judea, where wood was scarce and hard to work, He needed muscles.

What kind of torture did Christ go through? If tradition is correct, and why not?, it must have been something like this...

When Christ was beaten with whips, those whips were constructed with heavily weighted handles, eight leather thongs terminating in bits of sharp metal embedded at the end. The thongs were no more than three feet in length. They were made of leather dipped in brine,

which made them knife sharp. When the whip struck the victim's back, ripping it bloodily open, the thongs curled around to the front of the body, which was not tied to a pillar as most people suppose, but bent over on all fours like a dog. The metal at the end of the thongs embedded themselves in the flesh of the chest when the whip curled around it. With a sharp jerk, then the whip was pulled back, drawing the buried metal across the chest and flaying the skin raw.

It was said that not one, but many soldiers beat Christ until they were too tired to beat Him any longer. It would be my educated guess that a normal man such as you or I could take no more than twenty strokes of a whip applied in this manner before going into pain shock and unconsciousness. Aboard Her Majesty's ships not too many years ago the whip was an approved method for punishing minor infractions. These whips, with nine thongs, had no metal at the end and the man was lashed to a mast which protected his chest. In spite of this, few men could take more than twenty strokes. Estimate, now, how many strokes a man in good shape could deliver. Maybe a hundred. I would think so. At least that. Roman soldiers were not chosen to guard the distant provinces because of their fine manners; those guys were ROUGH. As rough as the times. Figure only ten of these soldiers getting their kicks beating Christ and you have one thousand strokes of the whip. Christ was in poor shape when He was crowned with thorns.

This crowning is fascinating in itself. The Judean thorns were and are desert-bred. They were long and tough. Crown yourself with a crown of rose thorns, then imagine them to be about three inches in length and proportionately thick from base to sharply tapered end. The crown was set upon Christ's head, not just as a band around the forehead, but crosshatched over the entire skull, and the thorns driven in. Obviously none pierced the brain, which was a piece of luck (I suppose), so they must have gone in only a little way and then, striking solid bone, curved back out again like taking a stitch with a needle through His flesh. Probably agonizing but I doubt Christ felt much after the whipping.

With His flesh flayed to the consistency of ground beef, Christ was then dressed in a loose linen robe which immediately adhered to His bloody skin. The blood soaked through quickly and began to coagulate. When Christ stood on the balcony overlooking the Lotostrothas (a phonetic spelling; I was unable to find the actual name of the courtyard in my encyclopedia) and Pilot stripped the robe from His body and cried "Behold the man!" it couldn't have been a pretty sight. The stripping had to have opened all those wounds again, torn the very flesh from Christ's body as the coagulated blood had acted to make cloth and flesh as one. It was like ripping the topmost layers of skin off.

A few words about Pilot here, a man most maligned by history, cast in the role of a heavy wrongly. Pilot was a Roman procurator, sent to a distant and not terribly profitable province as a political favour. Pilot was somebody's brother-in-law or something else, and as a minor noble was given a minor job to do. The Romans didn't give a shit about Christ who was, after all, only an itinerant preacher with a solid following of around twelve. As long as the tax money rolled in,

Rome couldn't have cared less. It was the Sanhedrin, the hierarchy of Hebrew priests, who was afraid of Christ, whose teachings meant less profit for them. It was the Sanhedrin who was charged with the collection of taxes, from which they took a sizable cut before passing it along to Pilot, who also took a cut and sent the remainder back to Rome. Caesar didn't make an awful lot from the deal, but he probably didn't expect much from such an arid, backward part of the world anyway. Pilot was a figurehead. It was the Sanhedrin who ruled Judea as a theocracy - one of the simpler forms of government, combining religion with rule and keeping the people down by threat of divine displeasure. Nasty and cynical, but effective as all hell. Unless something came along to upset the applecart. Like an itinerant preacher who seemed to be capturing the public esteem. Fearful that the great grey mass were switching their allegiance to Christ, the Sanhedrin plotted his death.

Taking a quote out of context (one of the oldest and best methods of character assassination, and one that enjoys undiminished favour to this day) they fabricated a rebellion against Caesar out of whole cloth. "I will destroy this Temple, and in three days build it up again," Christ said, or some such. He was referring to the temple of His body, but those who speak in symbols must be careful of literal interpretation. Use metaphors sparingly and blaspheme not at all. The Sanhedrin came to Pilot, told him of Christ's threat (thousands would tear the temple apart, throngs of Christ's followers just ripping that temple right down, murder in the streets, wouldn't THAT look bad on your record when pension time rolls around, Pilot old chap?).

Pilot had Christ brought before him and interrogated Him, found Him not to be at fault. But the men who were ruling his province for Pilot were screaming for blood and they had to be satisfied. So Pilot, who was a politician, but no genius, decided to have Christ tortured brutally in order to soften the Sanhedrin's hearts. It didn't work. And when the choice between freeing Christ and a foul rapist and murderer named Barrabas came up, with Barrabas shouting curses to the sky and Christ bathed in His own blood, it was Barrabas the crowd carefully chosen and bribed by the Sanhedrin, chose to free. Pilot must have been shocked shitless. But he had gotten himself into this situation, so it fell to him to get out of it...

So, in this condition Christ had to carry a heavy (the wood in Judea is hard and heavy, as I mentioned earlier) most of the way to Calvary. A Negro from Cyrene helped for the last third of the journey. Christ was nailed up with the nails through the ball and socket joint of His wrist, not through the palms which was impractical - tended to tear loose, which looked bad. Probably one nail served to hold the feet in place. There was also a peg jutting out from the cross and between Christ's legs, if He was crucified in the customary manner, which encouraged Him to rest upon it and die more quickly. Why? Well, for a crucifictree (?) to breathe, he had to arch his body up and away from the cross in order to relieve the tremendous pressure on his heart and lungs that was being funneled down in a vee as he hung from the nail. Most victims of crucifixion died very quickly from acute strangulation. But Christ, after all He had gone through, survived FOR THREE HOURS, arching

His body up and away from that cross for every single breath He took.

Hardly sounds like a frail man to me. And the lack of blood on the crucified Christ in churches, and the frailty, and the Anglo-Saxon features, and the rag across the loins is a cop-out. But the point is there: torture, bloody and brutal, and death redeems man. Not a pretty philosophy, but one that is common to most religions. I won't even begin to go into the Old Testament, where God chose up sides and slew millions with water, swords, pestilences, famines and other methods with, as David Steinhilber puts it, that mystical sense of humor that only God has.

If I must have a God (and Voltaire says I must, and who am I to argue with Voltaire), mine will be good and kind and busy with other things. My God lets man alone to decide his own fate, isn't a super-omnipotent meddler. My God digs people like Johnny Appleseed who went around planting apple trees in barren country. But in all particulars, God, my God, lets people choose their own favourite way of going to hell, without help, without favour, and welcomes them all in in the great bye and bye.

Love and tolerance probably isn't the solution, not the whole solution anyway, not with as cynical and mercenary a race as man, but I believe it to be a step in the right direction.

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