

REVOLTING TALES OF SEX AND SUPER-SCIENCE

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Published every so often by John Bangsund PO Box 357 Kingston
ACT 2604 Australia for a better class of readers

26 September: 'The attacker must vanquish; the defender needs merely to survive.' That's what the man said last night in that storehouse of oriental wisdom 'Kung Fu', so it must be right.

Some years ago, when I was working for a publisher who wanted to launch a great new magazine (but had no idea what about - just so long as it made lots of money), a friend suggested that there was a need for a regular publication which would deal with such matters as ecology, natural resources, population, war and so on, and I said it would never get off the ground - not because of the newsprint shortage (we didn't know about that then), but because no-one would want a magazine full of the kind of stuff you can read in any newspaper. (That wasn't my real reason: I just didn't want to work on such a doom-laden publication.) He said that the magazine should be called 'Survival'.

Sometimes I think that's what life is all about. Sometimes I don't.

Alec Hope wrote a great poem (which I never tire of quoting) called 'Australia'. Australians, he says, are 'the ultimate men' - and maybe we are just that.

'... the ultimate men arrive
Whose boast is not "we live" but "we survive",
A type who will inhabit the dying earth.'

This kind of thing has been on my mind a lot lately. I'm not going to say much about it, because you don't want to read that morbid kind of stuff, and I don't want to write it. I put this stencil in the typewriter tonight, and typed the words 'Revolting Tales &c' on it, because there are some things I want to write about, and I feel most comfortable about writing when I'm composing-on-stencil. So I'm comfortable. How are you?

Yesterday I received Stefantasy 74 from Bill Danner. I've never seen a dull issue of Stef, but this issue (maybe because I've been in this funny mood lately) really delighted me, and - if you'll forgive my saying so, Bill - gave me something like a New Sense Of Purpose.

For a long time I have felt that just about all the fun and delight has gone out of fandom, for me. I wondered whether it is because I get an awful lot of bills but few letters and fanzines; whether it is because my fan publishing activities are too highly organized or not organized enough. Etcetera.

And here's Stefantasy - 'the illustrated magazine that is up to 81.67% milder - published and printed for the hell of it by William M. Danner'.

'For the hell of it' - that's the clue. It might not be what life's all about, but I am more and more convinced that it's what fanzines are all about. (And it has taken me only ten years and about 300 fanzine issues to reach that semi-conviction.)

In 1970 I registered my hobby as a business, for the perfectly sensible purpose of allowing the Taxation Department to subsidize my activities. Parergon Books has since operated at a handsome loss (one of the first things you learn is that no business is required by law to make a profit; on the other hand, all income must be declared, including fanzine subs, so why not declare how much that income has cost you, and claim every 'business' deduction you can think of?), and each year my tax accountants put in a claim on my behalf for a substantial tax rebate. That's just great, and I have no intention of folding Parergon Books. But it's not much fun.

A couple of weeks ago the Treasurer, Mr Crean, announced Australia's Budget for 1974-75. No-one liked it much, but I think it was a good one. The Government has chosen to ignore the intricate problems of 'Inflation' and concentrate on social reform, which (to my innocent mind) is the correct thing to do. I'll be paying more income tax, but I don't mind. Really, I can afford it. It means going without the second tape recorder I was thinking of buying, but surely one is enough? For the first time (in my memory) Australia will spend more this year on education than defence. That means far more to me than a second tape recorder.

On figures published recently I have worked out that I am amongst the top 4.5% of Australian income-earners. Mind you, I just scrape into that percentile (it ranges from \$12 000 to infinity), but I'm in it nevertheless, and 95.5% of Australians are not. I'm not saving anything out of my handsome salary, but that's my own fault. I could drive a Holden or a Ford, instead of a Renault 16TS. I could drink rough red (\$2 or less for a 2.27 litre flagon) instead of passably-good bottled stuff (\$1.25 - \$2.50 for 739 ml). I could smoke Ardath filters (44c) instead of Kent (61c). I could stop publishing fanzines. But I probably won't. And I will try not to complain.

In the Budget speech Mr Crean announced that the basic postage rate will rise to 10 cents on 1 October. Today I have talked to my friendly post office people at Kingston and found out roughly what other increases are scheduled - and they are pretty horrifying. In future we will not be thinking so much about weight, because the whole system has been changed to take account of dimensions as well as weight. (I should say mass, rather than weight, but it's a bit hard to get used to the entire metric system in one go.)

From next Tuesday mail will be classified either as Standard or Non-Standard, within Australia. A Standard article is one that is not more than 5mm thick, and that measures between 90x140mm and 120x235mm (providing that the ratio of the sides is 1:1.414). It will cost 10 cents. A Non-Standard article is anything that doesn't conform to those dimensions, and it will cost 11c (to 50mg), 24c (to 100mg), 33c (to 250mg) or 48c (to 500mg). (Bloody hell! Forget those milligrams - they should be grams.) From 500g, parcel rates apply - and they're sheer murder.

Aerograms go up to 20 cents. Priority-paid articles go up by 50%, roughly. Airmail doesn't seem to be changed, but SAL (surface air-lifted) rates go to 90c per 250g, with a minimum charge of \$3.50.

So... Today is Thursday. I have about 200 sets of PG27, PG28, NMH11 and this sheet to post. The envelopes are definitely Non-Standard. The package will cost me 20c if I get it in the mail by Monday; on Tuesday it will cost 33c. Wish me luck.

So much for postage. Yesterday the Australian dollar was devalued by 12%. On Tuesday A\$1 was worth US\$1.50,

roughly; yesterday it dropped to US\$1.30. So all my subscription rates - not to mention my comments on the relative costs of things in Australia and elsewhere - are out of date.

So much for currency fluctuation. What's next? Oh yes:

The craziest, most frustrating thing about Australia right now is that the Government is unable to govern. Four political parties are at present represented in the Parliament: the Australian Labor Party (which has a small overall majority in the House of Representatives and is therefore the Government), the Liberal Party, the Country Party and the Liberal Movement. In the Senate, Labor has 29 members, the Liberal and Country parties have 29, and the balance of power is held by the solitary Liberal Movement member and an Independent Liberal. Since the Senate has far more power than any other Upper House in the world, and it has used that power blatantly and consistently since Labor gained office, effectively Australia has no Government.

The Senate could quite easily reject the Government's proposed postage increases. Even today - two clear days before the increased charges are supposed to come into operation - the post office doesn't know whether the new charges will operate from next Tuesday or not.

Today one of the blokes at work was talking about the Australian Aborigines. They're animals, he said. I dunno why the Government spends so much money on the bloody boongs: there can't be any votes in it. (He doesn't like the tax increases either.)

So much for politics.

Now: Fanzines. I intend to go on publishing Philosophical Gas about four times per year. The Harbinger and Revolting Tales will appear whenever necessary. From here on, subscriptions are discouraged: the rate goes to A\$1.00 per copy for PG, and there is no rate for NMH and RT. PG will be distributed through FAPA, and members of ANZAPA will receive each issue (but not necessarily through the mailings).

So: If you aren't a member of FAPA or ANZAPA, and you want to go on seeing Philosophical Gas, write and tell me why I should send it to you. By writing, I know that you are interested - and that's all I want to know, really. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a helluva lot of work to do before those new postage rates come in. Stay happy.