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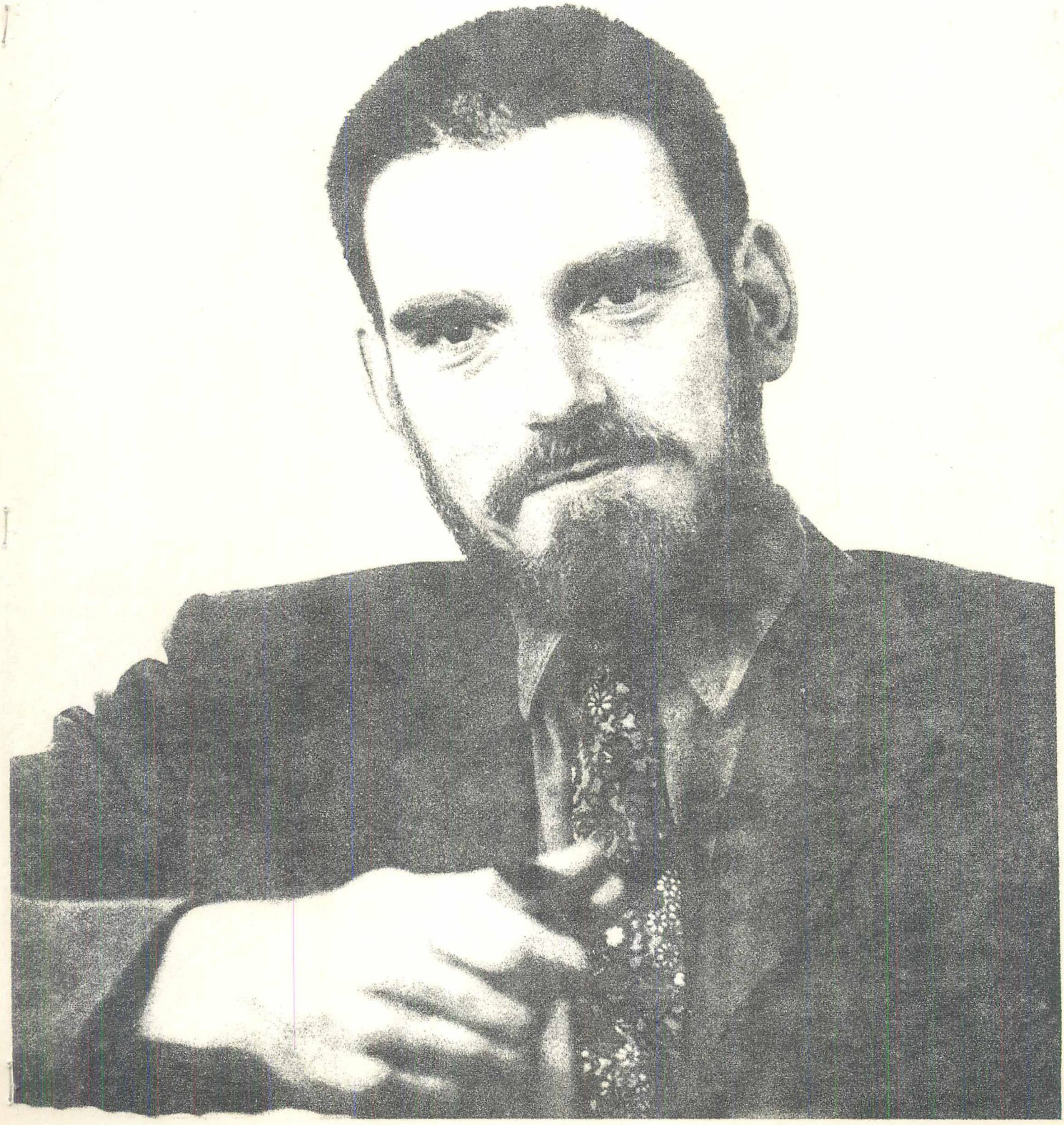
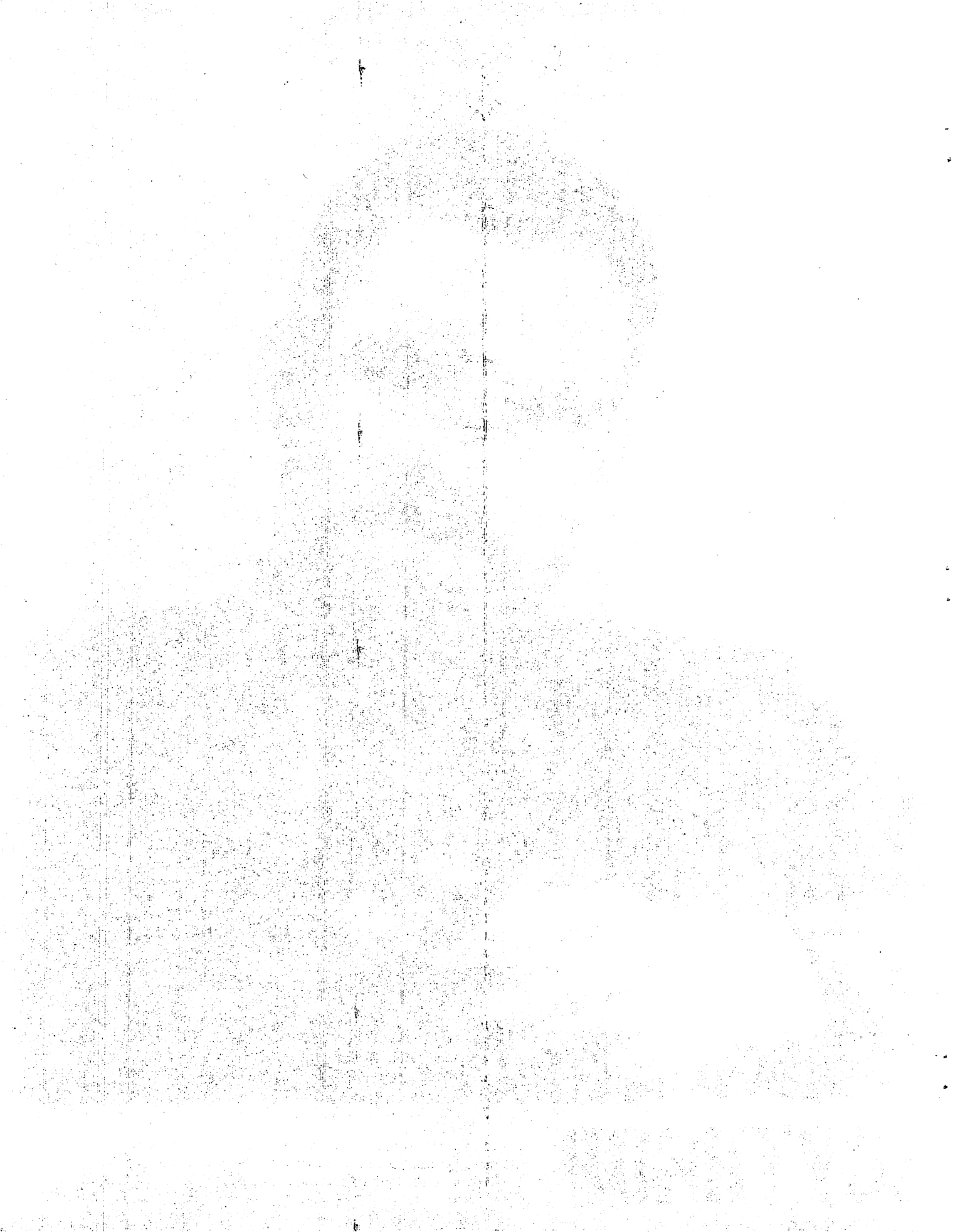


SCYTHROP 23

International Edition



SCYTHROP 23 JUNE 1971

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SCYTHROP, formerly Australian Science Fiction Review, is edited, printed & published by John Bangsund: Parergon Books GPO Box 4946 Melbourne 3001 Australia BWV 100

SCYTHROP 23 is published in two editions, with a total print-run of close enough to one thousand copies - 750 for Australia, 250 overseas. A word of explanation for this apparent insanity is called for, and it is... insanity. But if I were to use more than one word, my explanation would go something like this:

There are a lot of science fiction fans in Australia - the majority of them, I would say quite confidently, loners, unconnected with and uncontacted by fandom. How many? I couldn't guess. But I do have on my files the names and addresses of over 700 people in Australia known to be interested in science fiction. The Australia in 75 Committee decided to send the August issue of A75 Bulletin to every last one of these 700 people. (And at this point perhaps I'd better anticipate your question and say, no, the A75 Bulletin is not available outside Australia.) A good friend donated the cost of production and postage. I asked the Committee if I could come along for the ride, as it were, by producing an issue of Scythrop which, together with the Bulletin, would not exceed the postage weight limit of 2 ounces. They said yes, and I was thereby enabled to get another Scythrop out. Believe me, I can not afford to publish anything at the moment. To get free postage in this way was delightful, and I have taken the calculated risk of banking on getting 25 subscriptions out of those 700-odd copies to pay for the paper.

The Australian edition was identical to this, from page 3 to 19; the material added here is the Petty strip on page 20, this extra contents and explanation sheet, and the ad on the back cover. The front cover was slightly re-designed, too.

About a hundred overseas readers will not have seen Scythrop 22, and I'm sorry about that. At the moment of writing (6.40 pm, 30th August) there are about fifteen copies of that issue left, and they are reserved for new subscribers. No. 22 was twice the size of this issue, well-illustrated, printed on white paper, and most important, contained a superb short article by Ursula K. Le Guin. (Other contents you can guess from the letters in this issue.) It was worth 50 cents or whatever, I think, and it's just possible you might even think this one worth that much. Future issues will revert to the normal size - about 40 to 48 pages.

There will be no August issue. Instead, between 23 and 24 I will be publishing, in association with Ron Graham, a one-shot entitled JOHN W. CAMPBELL: AN AUSTRALIAN TRIBUTE. This will go automatically to subscribers and regular contributors, and a few copies will be reserved for new subscribers.

Dear me, how I do go on. The important thing for you, dear Reader, is that if you did not receive no. 22, it is rather unlikely that you will receive either the Campbell volume or no. 24, unless you Do Something About It. The print-run next issue will be cut back to subscribers-plus-25%.

How to subscribe? Simply send money to one of my agents (or to me directly, if you prefer) and preferably also a note to me. Agents and subscriptions are: USA & Canada - Andrew Porter, 55 Pineapple Street, Brooklyn, New York 11201 (6 for $3.00); Britain: Ethel Lindsay, Courage House, 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey (6 for £0.90); South Africa - Tex Cooper, 1208 Carter Avenue, Queenswood, Pretoria (6 for R2.00); Germany - Hans Joachim Alpers, 285 Bremerhaven 1, Weissenburgerstr. 6 (6 for DM 10.00); Scandinavia - Ulf Westblom (a new arrangement, and details have not yet been worked out). Outside of these countries or areas, subscriptions should be sent direct to Parergon Books, GPO Box 4946, Melbourne 3001, Australia (6 for A$2.40). Cheques sent to agents should be made payable to them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Duplicating equipment and materials supplied by Roneo Vickers. Electrostencils by Noel Kerr, 85 Morgan St, Carnegie, Victoria 3163 and he accepts overseas orders.

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THE MARCH OF MIND

John Bangsund

(0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0)

"Hullo."

"Hey, I've got this great idea for a story. There's..."

"You brought them?"

"Sure. There's this guy, see, who's..."

"Come in. Coffee?"

"Thanks. This guy is nuts about this girl, see, and she likes him all right but not quite the same way, and she rings him and invites him to dinner at her place. So he goes, of course, and they have a pleasant evening, until he gets a bit carried away and..."

"Drunk, you mean?"

"Carried away. And, you know, there's sort of a misunderstanding and one thing and another, and he says he never wants to see her again and storms off into the night. His own stupid fault, of course..."

"I wouldn't say that. I..."

"Anyway, there it is. All over. Beautiful friendship ended and so on. But next day there's a phone call from her, and it seems he, ah, he's got the keys to her car in his pocket. So..."

She smiled.

"... he goes to her place again that night, and everything's lovely again, and he's happy and she's happy, and he leaves about midnight, and..."

"They live happily ever after?"

"They never see each other again."

Silence. Then: "It'll never sell."

"With luck, it'll never happen."

"You should write, you know."

"About us?"

"Well... I don't know... about anything. It's such a waste."

"But I do write."

"For fanzines? You call that writing? I mean real writing."

"Like great stuff about engineers and hi-fi and caravan parks and..."

"You know what I mean."

"Yeah. Oh well, maybe one day... Sorry about the keys."

"Not to worry. It was a nice day for walking."

"How can you bear to be so beautiful?"

"The kettle's boiling. You could put a record on if you feel like some music."

* * * *

I've been having some funny dreams lately. One night I dreamt L. Ron Hubbard had moved into the flat upstairs. It was a sad dream, but I can't remember why. Another night I dreamt it was my first day at the new job and I had slept in until midday. I woke in panic, switched the light on, discovered it was 3.30 am, and remembered I didn't have a job at all. That was pretty sad, too.

Seven weeks out of work now. Days run into nights into days into weeks. Countless letters of application, the occasional interview, phone calls, raised hopes, hopes that would be dashed only you've become so pessimistic that a few hours after the interview the excitement has worn away and the adverse news comes as no surprise, doesn't get to you. The days roll on. Going to bed later and later, sleeping less and less, until you lose track of time. Dead tired at midday, and it seems absurd to go back to bed - such a beautiful day outside - and you remember you went to bed about 5.30 am and slept until the phone rang at 9.15, and you've forgotten who it was, forgotten when you last ate, no idea what day it is. The weeks are punctuated by Wednesday's and Saturday's jobs-vacant ads in the papers. The weeks speed up. You find yourself wondering vaguely why you haven't written any letters of application for a while, and realize it's Friday and you've forgotten to buy Wednesday's papers. The kitchen stinks. The rubbish collector calls twice a week, and you've missed him twice. Three times? Could be. Not a clean cup or plate or spoon or knife left, yet surely you washed the dishes only yesterday, or the other day, or the other week or whenever it was. No time to do things. All the

time in the world, but no time. Too tired, too busy, too something. The cat has stopped whingeing about not being fed; just looks at you accusingly. You feed her, noticing absently that this is the last can of Biff. You're counting cents as it is, to keep yourself in bread and milk and fags, and you haven't thought about running out of pet food. You begin to realize what it would be like to be really poor. Dismal. Dies mali. Evil days. Sell some more books, some more records. Sell something else. There's nothing else you can do without, but you've already sold things you can't do without, like the stereo and the spare typewriter and the Tandberg and... you'll find something. The first lot of books you confidently expected to get maybe $200 for. It took the best part of a day to select that enormous pile, a fortnight to get around to putting them in the car, another two days before you actually took them to the secondhand bookseller, and only then because you had written a cheque for the rent the day before and knew as you wrote it that that $95 represented about $94 more than you had in the bank. You get $100 for the books. There's the rent, a few cans of Biff, cigarettes for a few days and a flagon of claret (which visitors will help you finish in no time). For some days you've been drinking beer, not by choice but because it happens to be there; cans left over from... when? Easter? Good god, three months back. No wine since... since the night Mervyn's bookshop opened. Red burgundy and champagne, on an empty stomach. A night remembered with mixed feelings: sharing Mervyn's delight and pride in the fact of the shop, vague memories of puns and bad jokes and lots of laughter over coffee with Noel and Irene and Bruno and Keren and Bill, and starkly clear recollection of waking up at 4.30 to undergo the stomach's retribution. That was the seventh of July: 7.7.71, easy to remember. One of the lease payments is due on the seventh. No-one has screamed. Presumably the bank transferred the money then. That means the rent cheque hasn't been paid in yet. Some trouble when that happens, for sure. Sell some more books, some more records, something. Get a job, any job. No time, too busy, too tired, too something.

And people keep asking When's the next Scythrop?

You can see them thinking First ASFM now Scythrop the man never finishes anything he starts letting the side down bad impression overseas Australia in 75 dirty trick etcetera.

You wonder again whether you should tell the definitive detailed sad story of ASFM but can't be bothered. For them it's just a rather boring story about something that happened a long time ago. For you, a pile of debts still unpaid, commitments to be met whether employed or not for another two and a half years. Ironic. Way, way in the future, at Dallas or Toronto in 1973, we'll know whether it's Australia in 75 or not, and you'll have only six months payments left on this typewriter and the duplicator and the addressing machine, a bit longer on some of the other things, a bit less on the VW's third-time-round mortgage. If we win in 1973, that'll be great. That's when the hard work will really start, but it'll be great. If we lose, the whole ASFM thing and all the rest will be dragged up again. Let the side down bad impression Australian fandom dirty trick etcetera. And I won't care. Only six months then and I'll have paid for my crimes and I won't give a stuff what the fans think.

That is, if I get a job soon and manage to catch up and keep up for the next two years.

It's something to aim for, really.

* * * *

There was a letter in our local paper a few months ago from a lady of the district:

"I own a double grave site in the Catholic section of the Fawkner Cemetery - however I do not anticipate requiring the grave and would be glad to give it to any reader who would like it."

I wonder what her secret is?

* * * *

Mervyn Binns's Space Age Bookshop seems to have got away to a good start, considering the bad-time-of-the-year, the depression of the economy in general and the fact that he omitted to consult both his horoscope and Leigh's cheap imported plastic yarrow stalks (which Leigh received, gratis, in a bright yellow package, with his cheap imported plastic copy of "The I Ching Designed To Be Read As Literature"). All he needs really is customers (no experience necessary: apply within).

Last time I visited the shop, Mervyn was wondering whether he should stock records. I wondered where he would put them. What he needs, maybe, is a few skyhooks - or perhaps just a lot of very thin customers. (Don't crush that bookseller - hand me the tongs.)

Inadvertently he mentioned that a customer ordered a copy of THE BEST OF MYLES after reading about the book in Scythrop. While pestering him for a commission on this sale, I noticed that glazed look which appears on Mervyn's face whenever (a) he is thinking, or (b) someone is inflicting physical injury on him; so I stopped pestering him just to see whether he was thinking, too. And he was: thinking so hard, in fact, that when he attempted some elementary gesture a few moments later he was actually surprised

to find his arms cruelly twisted behind him. (If he doesn't answer your letters, dear customer, blame me. His typing-tentacles are busted.)

Ah, you say, and what was he thinking?

I reply: what else but of bribing me to run record reviews in Scythrop with a view to inciting customers and filling his greasy fur-lined pockets?

The man has more ideas than a hen chickens. Most of them, I report thoreaufully, are ducklings - and this one no exception. But to humour him I immediately scribbled a record review on the blank pages of a Thames & Hudson art-book which happened to hand, and thrust it at him, with the words, "Take a gander at this".

Not only did he fail to appreciate the delayed foul pun; he failed to appreciate the value I had added to his book about Salvador Dali (or some other obscure dauber) by placing priceless original words by me in it. His lack of appreciation he expressed in some priceless original words of his own, which I have passed on to the editors of Boys' Own Fanzine.

The review, or such of it as I have managed to piece together from the fragments scattered confetti-like about the floor of Mervyn's shop, went something like this:

GARDY-LOO REVISITED

Professor W. C. Head, Dean of the faculty of Comparative Plumbing at the University of Ard-Knox, is perhaps better known as a writer of science fiction (under the pseudonym "John Jakes", I understand) than as a musicologist, but the record under review * serves to show why this is so.

Professor Head has, it seems, spent some years recording the sounds of flushing toilets and arranging them into almost recognizable renditions of popular and classical melodies.

Most of the items on this record, I must say in all honesty, are pretty rotten. Once you have heard a few flushing toilets, as most people listening to this record will have done at some time or other, you have more or less heard the lot. (One must admit that the thrilling choleratura of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club's convenience at Somerset Place - recorded, of course, before the evacuation of the club to South Yarra late in 1970 - is something of a collector's piece; and I believe that in fact John Breden or some other notorious connoisseur has collected it, although it is no longer in working order. But such a virtuoso performance can only be regarded as a flush in the pan, to coin a phrase or, as we sometimes say, spend a penny.)

I won't bore you with a list of the tracks on this record. Those which rise above the crushing futility of the majority to achieve something approaching mediocrity include "All I Want Is A Room Somewhere", "Unchained Melody", "Claire de Loo" (which has nothing to do with M. Debussy's masterpiece: it's something about oysters) and the theme music from the film "Five Oozy Pissoirs".

The one worthwhile feature of the record, academically speaking, is Professor Head's theory about the final movement from Haydn's Farewell Symphony, which he sets out in the sleeve notes. (The rendition is abysmal, incidentally.) According to Dr Head, this symphony, far from being a symbolic protest by Haydn against the lack of tea money and sick leave for musicians, in fact attained its present form simply because the members of the orchestra rehearsing its first performance happened almost simultaneously to answer a call of nature (to use the Professor's own elegant phrase).

There can be no doubt that in its own way (and in a remotely biblical way: refer Deuteronomy 23:13) this record does break new ground, and must be regarded as yet one more example of the value of cross-fertilization of disciplines. Both musical historians and plumbers will be in Professor Head's debt for the scholarly light he has throne on their mutual interests.

The average listener, however, seeking merely entertainment, or perhaps even some cultural value, from gramophone recordings, will be bitterly disappointed by this one.

Technical Footnote: I should perhaps mention that my stereo system failed to reproduce adequately all of the sounds on this record (which I have to admit caused me no great concern). If you insist on acquiring the record and are wondering if your record-player can cope with it, you should refer to the handbook which came with it, or consult a hi-fi expert, either of which should tell you whether it handles water music.

° ° ° °

Boy, you've gotta be careful when you're editing a fanzine! I had a flimsy postcard from John Brunner the other day, in which he asks, "What is a Gary Mason?" Now, the awful truth is that when I was typing up John Brosnan's article in the last issue, I could not decide whether he had written, "John

---

* Dunny Boy, & Other Lood Songs: an experiment in Hydrophonics. (Ajax Recording Co, Upper Ferntree Gully. Mono only. POQ-44329)

Brunner is a kind of rich man's Garibaldi" or (Brosnan's typing really has to be seen to be believed) "John Brunner is a kind of rich man's James Mason" - or even, possibly, "John Brunner is a kind old Richmond supporter" (but it didn't really seem likely that a British sf author would follow the activities of an Australian Rules football team). So, I decided Brosnan probably meant to write "John Brunner is a kind of rich man's Gary Mason". I didn't know what it meant, but it sounded vaguely complimentary, and I enjoy letting sf authors feel that I am allowing my contributors to say vaguely complimentary things about them, so that's what I published.

So far so good, but now I have a flimsy postcard from Gary Mason, in which he asks, "What is a John Brunner?"

Oh hell. Knowing Brosnan, he probably sent both postcards and at this very moment is sitting in his little office, pressing fountains for all he's worth (and don't ask me what a fountain-presser does: I just know he does it), and laughing himself silly about his little practical joke. Well, you just watch yourself, Brozzer me lad. If I get a postcard from James Mason or Garibaldi - or even a phone call from a Richmond supporter - I'll know for sure that you are behind all this, and I will Reveal All about You!

(What gave the game away, folks, was that first postcard. John Brunner always writes me long, interesting letters of comment, so I knew instantly that that scrappy little bit of cardboard couldn't possibly have come from him.)

• ° ° •

I said, some pages back, that I've been having some odd dreams lately. Some, I am truly sad to say, are based on facts that are hard to accept. Dreams about people dying, people I've never met yet feel I know.

Kenneth Slessor. He wrote that beautiful "Earth-Visitors" reprinted in Scythrop 21, and was - is - one of my favourite poets.

August Derleth. The first sf book I ever bought was one of his anthologies.

And now... John Campbell. What can I say?

Next issue will be devoted entirely to the thoughts and reminiscences of Australians about John Campbell. (Some photos would be appreciated.)

"... let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings..."

(0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0)

VOICES FROM THE WELL

David Compton

(0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0)

I am astonished. More than that, incredulous. Even though I have Scythrop actually here on the desk in front of me - and also, because it coincidentally arrived only a few days ago, its confrere (rival?) Granfalloon - I still have difficulty in believing it. All this enthusiasm, and for love rather than for money. In my own hermetic way (bloody Pommie insularity, if you like) I have never for a moment imagined that such things could be. I'm all of a heap. You ask me for my comments on Scythrop... what can I say? I'm afraid that for the moment I find myself still in the position of thinking it a wonder, not merely that the thing were well done, but that it were done at all.

Of course, I've heard of SF Conventions - via Don Wollheim of Ace, whom I only meet when he's here in London attending them. But all I learned about them from him was the curious fact (still unsubstantiated) that certain conventioneers dressed up in cardboard armour and hit each other with wooden swords. Perhaps I got it wrong... But anyway, I failed completely to realize the obvious: that where there are conventions there are enthusiasts, and that, where there are enthusiasts, outlets for their enthusiasm will not be confined to an annual flourishing of wooden swords. In short, that fans get up to fanactivities.

I can't altogether be blamed for my stupidity. In the various corners of rural England where I have lived for most of my writing life, even a third World War would seem distant and irrelevant until the enemy (Russians? Americans?) were actually seen encamped on the village green. And as for local attitudes to my own particular craft, these are best summed up in the words of my six year old daughter after meeting the child of a not inconsiderable neighbouring painter: "I've just met Jennie - her daddy doesn't work <u>either</u>."

And now, suddenly, all that is changed. With a flourish, not of wooden swords, but of fans. (A new collective noun: a flourish of fans?) For which I am, although disturbed, very grateful. Grateful because it proves that out there somewhere are <u>people</u> who actually read my <u>books</u>. And disturbed because it proves that out there somewhere are people who actually <u>read</u> my books. Up to now there has been - as with my radio plays that are performed in

Germany and nowhere else (I don't speak German and never visit Germany) - a reassuring lack of reaction to my work. A few reviews, maybe, but reviewers have livings to earn. For the rest, nothing. Each book or play dropped into a well so deep that it wasn't even worth waiting to hear the splash.

But now, with a flourish of fans, I exist. Which, although very nice, does mean that I must answer at last for past aspirations and past iniquities. When there was no splash, at least there was (wait for it) no chance of getting wet.

I read somewhere once that writers are taking over the priestly duties of celebration, of prophecy, of encouragement and admonishment. I decided there and then that that was why I wrote sf. And perhaps I was righter than I now give myself credit for. All right, so I write about tomorrow mainly because it is fun and because it is an easy way of finding new angles on today. But I write about tomorrow also as a way of celebrating today. I write to encourage and even, presumptuously, to admonish. And I write centrally about people rather than mechanisms - which was once a prime priestly concern.

I notice myself sounding high-flown, and refuse to apologize.

For I am brought, with fiendish cunning, to my one reservation about fanactivities as they seem to be directed at present. You see, it looks to me as if they encourage the continuance of sf as a genre, and I have this thing about genre books - any kind of genre books. Romance, Crime, Avant Garde, Pornography, SF, Teach Yourself Stamp Collecting... they will always exist (and are not necessarily A Bad Thing), but I don't think they need to be encouraged. They so quickly stop talking about people and start talking about themselves. And we all know what happened to the above-mentioned priests once they fell into that trap. Congregations dwindled, and the survivors became fan-atical.

Are you, dear readers of Scythrop, fan-atical?

Of course not. All the same, the possibility exists. The possibility that fandom might find itself using the genre-ness of sf as a defence against the perils and indifferences of the great outside. SF needs no such defence. We shouldn't be encouraging the compartmentalization of writers and their work. We shouldn't be building compartments; we should be tearing them down.

Genre books are exclusive and self-regarding. They do their own thing in their own bag. And I still believe - in spite of Mrs Le Guin's impressively reasoned article (which I didn't wholly understand) - that, irrespective of a book's final contents, its author's original intention should have been as wide, as inclusive, as all-inclusive and world-regarding as he could possibly make it. Anything that encourages it to be otherwise is a strait-jacket.

Even today, although in fact sf broke out of its strait-jacket long ago, it is still identified in most people's minds with space opera, bug-eyed monsters, mad scientists... John Christopher, for one, was aware of this difficulty and, although he wrote some good solid sf, he refused to allow his publisher to label it as such. More recently, would THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN have done so well under an sf label? Or SLAUGHTER-HOUSE FIVE? Or - to come right up to date - would VANDERBURG be on the American best-seller list if it had been presented as what it manifestly is - sf, and very derivative and mediocre sf at that? I doubt it.

Many people are responsible for the general persistence of this false notion of sf's nature. Authors and publishers first, seeking a safe, known readership rather than the dangers of the open market. Critics next, pigeon-holing as a substitute for thought. Readers also, the general readers who tolerate blanket classifications, glad to have vast areas of literature they feel they can safely despise. But how about fans - fanactivities as they seem to be directed at present - are not these also to blame? Have not they - have not you - fallen into the genre trap of talking to themselves?

Perhaps, through ignorance, I am being unfair. Perhaps the sf convention, the end product of all this fanactivity, is indeed outward-turning, a serious attempt to talk relevantly and interestingly to outsiders, to the rest of readerkind. I've never been to one, so I don't know. But that's certainly what it ought to be.

Not that I personally can talk. Like Mrs Le Guin, I write sf simply because that is what my publishers want to call it... and I let them. The label creates a potential readership (which is nice) but also limits it (which is nasty). We - writers, publishers, fans - have two alternatives: either to get rid of the label or to make it respectable. For myself, I'm all for making it respectable - by which I mean I'm all for publicizing sf's potential breadth rather than its occasional narrowness. Nothing interests people more than people. And that is sf's prime subject - people, their relationships with each other and their relationships with things. This is what we should all be shouting about.

MORE PEOPLE SHOULD READ SF. (For their own pleasure and enlightenment quite as much as for the sake of my private bank balance.) If Australian fanactivities are directed to such an end - in 1975 or in any other year - I'll certainly drink to that.

(0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0)

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TWO POEMS

James Goodwin

(0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0)

AD ASTRA

Well, well, little man,
Going out into Space?
Leaving poor old Mother Earth,
The ball of mud that gave you birth?
That's nice,
Now don't forget to take your coat,
It's cold out there you know,
And vast.
Your insignificance will show.

I wonder just how it will be
Face to face there with Eternity?
Like a moth perhaps,
But newly free of its cocoon,
That sets its heart upon the moon,
Then, in its flight,
Espies the cold and glorious light of stars
And yearns ----
But - in attainment - burns.....

BEASTIE

Beastie,
Where you by?
What way go you
And why do you to cry?

You say so, you?
You are the last one of your race.
Excuse me while I wipe this snail-slug
From my chitinous wing case.
It thinks I am a flower, I.
Not so,
It is that I'm more pretty,
Is it no?

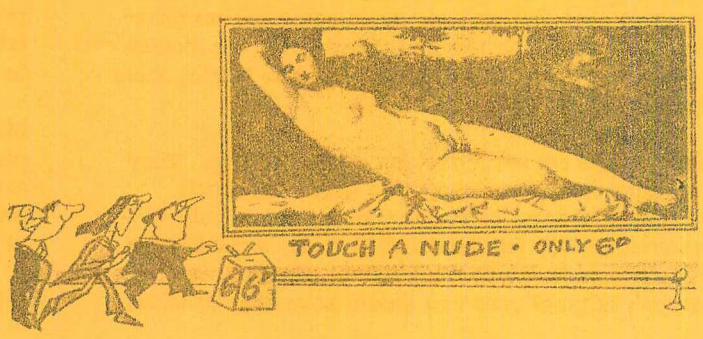
Beastie,
The last one are, you say?
That, I am no surprise,
(The I-we are all-knowing,
ever-wise).
You look so soft and pulpy.
Excuse, my feelers must explore
Your pallid, slimy skin.
What, ichor there?
Your epidermis it must be
Of most surprising thin.

Don't kick so,
Beastie.
I must to hold you up so high
So the I-we-all may see you
Through my lower eye.
There, your paw fell off,
I told you not to kick.
Well, mind you never,
I'll just hold it on
It might be, maybe, stick.

What ate you,
Beastie,
All you otherness, your race?
You don't look taste-good to me,
I'll just nibble off a piece from here
So the I-we-all may see.
Don't be so noise,
You've upset forty-seven of my ears
And at least two dozen of my eyes
Can't function for the tears.

Here, I'll give you back the bit I bit,
Consider it not done.
Though why you make a nuisance must?
Just grow another one
Not to shout.
You die,
Why?
Your ichor all fall out...???

The Atom -
You curse?
Not to do,
Blasphemous you.
The Atom is all-powerful.
It made the I-we-all to grow.
You know?
Why your all-race pass is plain
If,
Same you,
They took the name of GOD in vain.....



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INDUSTRIAL DRAMA: A REPORT

Peter Mathers

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(From the files of Research Ltd:)

Recently we received an anguished call for assistance from a theatre management with what appeared a major problem: lack of audience. The theatre operates in a small factory in an inner suburb. Facilities are adequate, with seating for up to one hundred if the performance is a monologue, or room for one in a net from the ceiling if the play requires crowds of one hundred.

We attended the theatre the second night after opening. There was an audience of twenty-nine. The short one-act play was loud, bitter and effective in that it showed ruined workers at leisure. We were frequently shocked by lewd gestures and coarse language but maintained at all times the inscrutable features of skilled Researchers.

We afterwards discussed things over coffee with the management. Their despair. "Why?" we asked. "Surely an audience of twenty-nine is better than no audience?"

"But where are the workers?"

"We beg your pardon?"

"Workers. Look - do you think he's one, over there?"

It appeared that the play was being produced as part of the Australian Council of Trade Unions festival of arts. Therefore workers should be present. A man in plain strong clothes came over for coffee.

"Are you a worker?"

"Well, er, in a sense I am, er, but then I'm not, I, er, mean I work but, er, with animals..."

"Wonderful!" we enthused, seeing him as a zoo or circus attendant, stable hand or milkman.

"Er, actually I'm a bacteriologist."

Still, he was a pleasant person.

"That's what we're up against," said the management. "Not one of these bejeaned, sueded, business-suited, furred or op-shop-suited persons is a worker. Unions just don't want theatre."

"Are you a worker, sir?" we asked a shiny-suited man. "No!" he screamed, as he strode towards the door. "I'm a bank clerk with a broken washing-machine."

"Is not a bank clerk a worker?" we asked.

"Not in this context. We can only accept tradesmen and manuals."

* * * *

Research Ltd offered its services. Costs to be met by an arts council and a radical philanthropist. We telephoned the Trades Hall and forty union secretaries, sent out circulars and organized fly-posting.

Three days later the management visited us. Audiences had grown satisfactorily and probably included workers. But there was anguish. Yes, the management anguished. They did not know for certain: probable-workers was not good enough. We agreed. It was essential that workers be positively identified. So we rose to the challenge and decided to conduct a Worker Survey.

Outright questioning was rejected because interviewees would be likely to exaggerate or falsify. It savoured of simple-mindedness and indicated blatant inquisitiveness. We were determined to use subtle means.

CCC (Cursory Corporal Check) was utilized. We examined people as they entered and left the theatre for traces of metal, sawdust, woolgrease, dirt &c under finger-nails, in hair or on dome.

Alas, we lost a fine Researcher who frantically and lasciviously searched a crown of splendid red hair and was karated by the girl. There were also irrelevancies, such as the doctor who had changed a wheel.

The following night we applied TJC (Trade Jargon Comprehension) testing. A Researcher at the door greeted ticket holders with selected trade terms. Dunnage? Tapclicker or Welter? Involuted helicals? Running guts?

This last expression lost us another good man. We also encountered much ribaldry. Our injured Researcher has been offered a place in the company and will join it as soon as he is able to walk.

We resorted to PJA (Professional Jargon Apprehension) to pick Professionals and be left with Others - i.e. workers. Tibia? Bicuspid? Aspects of tort? Free-flowing spandles? Reverse feedback? Neo-Leavisite? Interaction? &c.

PJA was abandoned after several ugly scenes.

* * * *

We decided that we could offer but one solution: hire a worker. (And we have registered a subsidiary - Blue Collar Appointments.)

We secured what we considered a suitable type in a pub near a woolscour. Lane, P. G., 43, married, three children, votes Liberal, Labor, DLP or Communist according to whim, moustached, contented &c. He arrived at the theatre wearing a dustcoat heavy with woolgrease, hand-rolled cigarette behind ear, devil's claw (Martynia spp.) in hair, burs in moustache and ram's pizzle prominent in breast pocket. We were impressed.

We had arranged with the management for his reactions to be filmed and taped. He appeared to revel in the attention accorded him. He sat quietly appreciative until five minutes from the end of the play, when:

"No, no, no. God help us."

We were appalled. He forced his way between the seats in front and stood amongst the players. They tried to make the best of it by making him a supernumerary, but he ignored them and began his speech.

The players sat down. He mentioned: the awfulness of honest labour, the ambiguous nature of the foreman type, despicableness of manager and owner, the credulity of workers, traffic conditions, mortgages, the baseness of sheep, the desirability of wearing wool next to the skin, the decline of the wool trade and the sad plight of drama.

A few patrons applauded. He then returned to his seat. The play resumed. Of course we refused to pay him. He left quietly.

We sent his employers a confidential report of his behaviour, and our helpfulness has been rewarded. Research is synonymous with industrial harmony, the arts and money.

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PLUMBERS OF THE COSMOS

George Turner

(0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0)

The habit of titling science fiction collections "The Worlds of Soandso" is perhaps indicative of editorial desperation. We have had "The Worlds of" Robert Heinlein, Robert Silverberg, &c and mostly these have been misnomers, with little of the contents showing more than variations on everybody else's world. But in the case of THE WORLDS OF FRANK HERBERT (New English Library: A$1.00) there is some justice in the title, for most of the nine stories offer alienness in truly inventive manner.

The difficulty of creating a true alien has always been that of making him comprehensible to a human mind when the chances are that he would be utterly incomprehensible. 99.9% of science fiction's aliens turn out to be humans in fancy dress. Ursula Le Guin got round the problem by making her aliens human, but that trick can scarcely be played twice. Herbert gets round it by providing just one link in each case which makes a modicum of understanding possible but leaves the total nature of the alien veiled and enigmatic.

Thus the complicated Pan-Spechi game of sexual musical chairs in "The Polite Saboteur" gives only an inkling of what such a race might be like, and the folk in another story who procreate by means of music remain as remote as ever in all aspects but that. The same is true of the "primitive" shepherds in "The Push": one glimpses possibilities but no more. And so the feeling of alienness is preserved. No mean feat in a universe of familiar monsters.

Constant readers of Analog and Galaxy will remember most of the stories. I found only one new to me but re-read them all, which I hope says something for their quality.

And in respect of quality I must withdraw my remark last issue about Herbert's lack of humour. Drearily absent from his novels, it is present in full force in this collection. If there are no belly laughs, there are plenty of smiles, and the conceptions are presented with sly good fun. All in ail, this is a superior group of entertainments.

There could be an advantage in reading "The Polite Saboteur" mentioned above before turning to WHIPPING STAR (Berkley: US$0.90), because in that story a major character of the novel is introduced and a fuller explanation of the Bureau of Sabotage is given than in the longer work. This is not essential, but it does help to set the framework in mind.

BuSab is one of those whimsical creations whose business it is to keep political extremism in bounds by creating pitfalls and pushing the extremists into them. In WHIPPING STAR BuSab runs into a problem which is not truly political but certainly demands the use of its snide techniques.

The "jumpdoor" is the universal method of interstellar travel. The mechanism is not understood, but is controlled by the mysterious Calebans, about whom nothing is known save that they exist, and who are in fact very difficult even to see and then only in a very

vague fashion. It is discovered that the Calebans have withdrawn from the universe until only one is left to control the jumpdoors for all the trillions of users. That one is the prisoner of Mliss Abnethe who, for sadistic reasons, is having it slowly whipped to death, and it appears that at the moment of its death everyone who has ever used a jumpdoor (most of the inhabitants of the universe) will die with it. The reason for this has a kind of way-out logic typical of Herbert's manipulations.

Abnethe has two aces in the hole. For one, she has a perfect legal cover for her activities, and for another she has a hideaway which will protect her from the universal death. The nature and location (if the term can be used) of the refuge is one of the key ingenuities of the story.

Needless to say, BuSab saves the day at 59½ minutes past the eleventh hour, but the plot is only framework for the Herbert pyrotechnics. The whole thing is a delightfully tongue-in-cheek pseudo-thriller, too light-hearted to really thrill but loaded to the plimsoll with twists, ideas and gimmicks. It is utterly different in tone from all his previous novels and, for what it purports to be, more successful than any since DRAGON IN THE SEA.

Most of the action hinges on the nature of the Calebans. Only a determined spoilsport would reveal that nature here; suffice it to say that they are a laudable contribution to sf's small but growing gallery of interesting aliens. Herbert would not be Herbert without an intellectual puzzle embedded in the book, and in WHIPPING STAR it is the matter of communication with the Caleban. It can talk, but most of what it says is unintelligible or means something quite different from its apparent import because of its utterly different mental orientation, and puzzling out its meanings is as much a challenge to the reader as to BuSab. Herbert is always logical in such teasings and if you are alert you might beat him to the meaning now and then.

WHIPPING STAR does not carry the all-too-pompous trappings of some recent award winners, but is a thoroughly enjoyable piece of relaxation. Heartily recommended.

With A WHIFF OF DEATH (Sphere A$0.80), Isaac Asimov adds to his diversity with a mainstream novel, genus "mystery". Not that science is missing, but it is real science with no extrapolation beyond the possibility of its use for murder.

Yet this book is only secondarily a mystery, for murder is only the hook which catches the mass reader. The real attraction is the description of university life in the research departments. Asimov's scientists are not the gently scatty dons poked fun at by Michael Innes and Edmund Crispin; his approach is closer to that of Thomas Keneally in THE SURVIVOR, though he lacks the Australian's bite and wit. His scientists and students are human beings whose problems involve the reader, and one actively wants his hero, Dr Brade, to get the promotion too long denied him. Nor is Brade an sf hero, chopped from whole-cloth; he is a man with weaknesses and fears, and the troubles with his wife are the genuine troubles of marriage and career.

The atmosphere of humanity fulfilling itself under the artificial conditions of academic life is competently evoked, while the murder story deftly complements and furthers the over-all theme. And so Asimov becomes one of the few sf writers to confront successfully the perils and pitfalls of mainstream fiction. The book is no masterpiece, but it is entertainment with a sure touch for realism and craftsmanship. And the atmosphere of science is more successfully evoked than in any random dozen sf novels you care to name.

Dr Asimov takes all nature as his province - not excluding Shakespeare, sex and scripture - and in 20th CENTURY DISCOVERY (Ace US$0.60) he has turned out another primer of odds and ends under a unifying title. He has done it all before, and must be hard put to it now to dream up new ways of presenting his facts.

In this book he treats of five technological advances of this century - pesticides, sub-nuclear particles, planetary observation, space travel and biochemistry - and does so with his usual chatty charm. The determined simplicity of his explanations leaves the impression that these essays are intended for teenagers, but the method provides a considerable clarity of expression. I have certainly never found the confusion of sub-nuclear particles (about 200 of them) reduced to such simple order. The articles, though elementary, are more interesting than the interminable series done for F&SF, which every so often bogs down in boredom as he stretches a small idea to the required length.

While we have for a moment escaped from novels, I want to give brief mention to a group of books which have delighted me recently. They are the sort of books which science fiction writers in particular should read in order to get much of their background material straight, and which most fans would find rewarding if only to get some insight into the realities behind the dreams of the fantasists.

The first is Gordon Rattray Taylor's THE BIOLOGICAL TIME BOMB (Panther: A$1.35). It deals with the most inherently dramatic aspects of biological research and the burden of his message is that tomorrow is closer than we think. The work already done on cloning,

retardation or elimination of death, prosthetic replacement, genetic engineering (and even the possibility of gene warfare) and the creation of life is startling, and Taylor's peeps into the possible future might well be studied by the fiction writers. The whole book shimmers with that old desire, the sense of wonder.

Next come three Penguins. WE ARE NOT ALONE (A$1.55) is sub-titled "The Search For Intelligent Life On Other Worlds", and that is just what the 340-odd pages are about. This is a matter which many scientists take very seriously indeed, and Walter Sullivan, science editor of the New York Times and himself a stout believer in a populated universe, details their ideas about exotic life and methods of communication with such in a beautifully written and detailed book. Again the sense of wonder is tremendously present, and again the scientific imagination outstrips sf.

THE DOUBLE HELIX (A$0.85) is a less technical book, being a good-humoured account of the discovery of the structure of DNA by James Watson, one of the co-discoverers. It is a bright and debunking look at scientists as they are, warts and all.

The very splendidly produced THE PROMISE OF SPACE (A$1.70) by Arthur C. Clarke will have little new to say to the space travel fan except perhaps in the chapter on FTL travel. I quote: "... the theory of relativity does not say that nothing can travel faster than light; it says that nothing can travel at the speed of light... As Professor Feinberg puts it, the speed of light is a limiting velocity, but a limit has two sides. One can imagine particles or other entities which can travel only faster than light; there might even be a whole universe on the other side of the light barrier..." Well, at least it helps us get a little further off that hook which everyone ignores because it is too difficult. Clarke even draws parallels from other physical disciplines to indicate that passing the light barrier might not be the impossibility it seems. For the newcomer to sf and for those who occasionally wonder about the practical possibilities of some of their favourite fiction, it could be invaluable for its work in setting fact and imagination firmly in their respective places.

All four of these books are easily readable by the layman at whom they are aimed, but for the reader (and especially the writer) who likes to keep abreast of the work of the scientific world, I recommend New Scientist, an English weekly which covers the field of all disciplines in easy language. In Australia it retails at 30 cents and is not too difficult to find on sale. Even in this down-to-earth journal the sense of wonder is not far away.

JB: And now, here is a brief note for music fans: E#. Thank you for your attention. On with the books.

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THROUGH THE MILL

Henry D. Couchman

(0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0)

But first, an Introductory Note by your editor: In Australian SF Monthly I made a plea for people to review books and things for that publication. Some time after I had scrapped (and almost been scrapped by) ASFM, I received a batch of reviews from Henry Couchman, a citizen of this town, formerly, I believe, of the US&A, and a lecturer in something which passes my comprehension at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. The reviews arrived, also, after I had decided to run no reviews in Scythrop (unless George Turner felt like reviewing something). What a quandary! Should I pass Mr Couchman over to some other fanzine - such as SF Commentary, which is already overstocked by several reams with unpublished reviews - or should I reconsider my policy? The decision took at least twenty seconds of agonized mental struggle, and I am delighted to introduce Mr Couchman's first column here.

Clifford Simak: Why Call Them Back From Heaven? (Ace: US$0.75)

"Why call them back from heaven?" is a slogan used by the Holies, an underground movement of the 22nd Century; a century in which every person is promised life renewal and immortality; a world with a population of 50 billion, with a further 100 billion in suspended animation awaiting the day, supposedly ten years distant, when an immortality treatment will be perfected; a world where food synthesis has been perfected and agriculture abandoned, where endless cities of vacant apartment buildings await the resurrected while the living strive to achieve a better competitive position in the future world. The book is concerned with the structure of this society, and the characters pass through a search for truth exemplified by the contrast of fleshly and spiritual immortality.

It is a well constructed book, with a taut plot. It may be read as a good story, or as a stimulation to thought; in either case it is thoroughly enjoyable. But it is far from perfect. It is littered with anachronisms, chronoclasms and lesser inconsistencies. The various aspects of the environment which is exclusively white North American include individual taxi drivers, rubbish bins in back lanes, slums typical of present-day New York, and a commercial morality

directly derived from the present. While it might be a valid truism to state that human nature never changes, one of the most important factors forming a civilized community is the education of individuals towards a desirable morality, and it is unrealistic to think that this will be fruitless over the next two hundred years. Also it is hard to believe that the investment theories presented would not be thoroughly demolished by an average high school economics student.

The book is pleasing. It is a pity that no more effort was put into it. More substantial thought and more reasoned characterization might have made it a classic.

Philip Jose Farmer: The Wind Whales of Ishmael (Ace: US$0.75)

The cover calls it "science fiction's incredible sequel to MOBY DICK". For a start, it is not science fiction: it is fantasy. Why Mr Farmer decided to write a follow-up to MOBY DICK is obscure, since the characterization, the scene and the message are entirely different from Melville's. The literary worth of MOBY DICK derives from the conflict of fundamental human elements, but this book has no inner significance and little surface value except as light reading. Is it possible that the author really did start off attempting a sequel, became half-hearted about it, and then finished it off quickly?

When Jules Verne wrote his sequel to Poe's "Tale of Arthur Gordon Pym", the change in style and method of treatment was dramatic, to say the least, but in spite of this it was complementary to the original. In THE WIND WHALES the creation of a sequel is pointless: the resurrection and re-characterization of one individual in an unrelated environment adds nothing to either story.

A fundamental error of fact in the book is the whole concept of sailing ships in the atmosphere. The author has these ships and small craft sailing, tacking and running close-hauled with no external motive power, and this is a physical impossibility - and an affront to science fiction, which requires that when physical laws are violated an apparently logical explanation should be provided. Ships in the sea may be impelled by the action of an external medium, the atmosphere, acting against the inertia of the supporting body so that the ship may progress along the resultant vector at the point of action. Mr Farmer, it should be realized, is not alone in his delusion: many supporters of lighter-than-air craft, a century before his time, hung sails and rudders to their balloons - although most realized the need for motion relative to the atmosphere and also supplied paddles or wings as motive devices. The ultimate exercise of this type of thought was the expedition of the Swede Andree to the North Pole in 1897. The account of this balloon voyage, the loss of the participants, and the miraculous recovery of the documents and diaries in 1930, is factual science which far exceeds most sf in its dramatic content. I sincerely recommend THE ANDREE DIARIES (Bodley Head, 1931) to all readers. Unfortunately it is out of print and commands a substantial price. Mr Farmer's book, on the other hand, is here and cheap: you could pass the time quite adequately with it, but without much benefit.

D. G. Compton: Farewell Earth's Bliss (Ace: US$0.75)

Mars settled by convicts: a run of the mill story of how the survivors of the twelfth convict ship are received and fitted into a community whose survival is marginal. The narrative is principally concerned with human relationships of a simplistic nature. It is adequately written, but once read it leaves little nourishment for the mind or the imagination. It is not my type of story: others might like it, but I question their taste.

The Times Literary Supplement is quoted on the back cover as saying that "this novel stands out for its Kafkaesque relevance to the total human predicament". I have spent my life so far without Kafka, and firmly intend to continue doing so.

The cover is the best part of the book: it illustrates nothing inside, but may be presumed to be symbolic of something such as a sheila in a fishbowl hat.

Philip K. Dick: Our Friends From Frolix 8 (Ace: US$0.60)

The scene in this book is set with great care and in great detail: the description of the New Men and the Unusual Men arising from mutations in the population of Old Men, the Malthusian world with its unrestricted population living at the edge of its resources in high-density housing with ration tickets and drug bars in every home - all this is well established. When the players come on the scene they are all limited: small in mind, stereotyped in character, a cast out of 20th Century Greenwich Village types mixed with Levittown conformists.

There is little evidence of any attempt to portray social or economic relationships at this future date: they are borrowed wholesale from the present.

The story revolves around the return of the dissident man, Provoni, with alien assistance, to free the Old Men from domination by the New Men and Unusual Men. For me, the end is unsatisfactory: the immediate solution is by negative action, the type of action which will never provide a valid and lasting solution. The question of the aliens' relationship with Earth is left unresolved. This is not the type of question that is deliberately set to involve the reader in creative

thought or speculation, thus prolonging his enjoyment of the book past the end of the text: it is a question by omission - one in which the parameters are not defined, which offers the author the maximum freedom in starting a sequel.

The whole action - and the book is packed with action - is on Earth, and follows a usual pattern of some common clot looking for meaning in his own life and at the same time being involved in the major events of his time. A good story written by a craftsman, but not a classic.

Robert Moore Williams: Beachhead Planet
(Sidgwick & Jackson: $3.30)

This is neither science fiction, fantasy nor horror fiction: it is a blend of all these in an action-packed story. While it reads well, it seemed to me to be a disquieting action because the rules governing the actions of the participants are deliberately left undefined, and while this helps to create the designedly uneasy atmosphere it also makes it difficult to make running judgements on the logical validity of the actions of the players. The author has succeeded admirably in creating a most grotesque scene, with actors to match.

While no reference is made to an earlier volume using the same principal persons, the name of the protagonist, Valthor, in a scene otherwise peopled by Smiths and Joneses, and the ideas and skills ascribed to him, imply some earlier account in which these are explained. This is in no way detrimental to the present book of 190 pages, which is complete in itself and which keeps the mind intrigued even while it is boggling. Earth is invaded from another dimension: the enemy has established a beachhead, and this is the account of the efforts of a small group to destroy this salient.

Poul Anderson: The War of Two Worlds
(Dobson: $2.35)

A well-written addition to the well-presented Dobson series. In this short (108 pages) account of a defeated Earth occupied by victorious Martians, Anderson shows the same partiality for the virtues of Teutonic military discipline and a military caste of aristocrats which appears in much of his writing.

In the past generation the United States has exemplified the way in which the most impassioned vilification of an enemy during a war is followed by a reflex of admiration when he has ceased to be a threat, and when every aggrandizement of the defeated reflects added credit to the victor. Add to this the guilt resulting from qualms about the way victory was achieved, and you see the motivation of much American military thought for the past twenty-five years. You see also evidence of the state of mind which has shaped a whole generation of their youth to the praise of their fathers' enemies. I do not know Mr Anderson's thoughts or even his age group, but I do detect this trend in many of his excellent works.

Whatever one might think of the glorification of militarism or, as others might say, the recognition of the positive qualities of a disciplined sub-group of society, this is an account of the events in a military environment where a few of the victors and of the defeated join to expose the force behind the throne - the faceless individuals who encouraged a twenty-five year war of attrition leading to a Pyrrhic victory.

An adequate story, but one which is not quite up to the usual standard to be expected either from Poul Anderson or from Dobson's generally excellent sf series. In the review copy the stitching machine had not penetrated to the centre of the fold of one section; consequently two leaves were not sewn in.

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S W A G

Wherein Gentle Readers have their say - and eat it, too

(0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0X0)

POUL ANDERSON
3 Las Palomas
Orinda
California 94563

Thank you for your letter and for the copy of your fanzine, which was enjoyed. .... Since San Francisco wants to bid for 1975, I find myself already committed to endorse that. Living right in the area and all... But again, if people change their minds (I've never understood why anybody wants all the toil, sweat and tears of putting on a convention) I'll be happy to support Australia. We definitely plan to visit your country some day, and a convention there would be an added attraction. :::: Sorry to be so negative. Perhaps, by way of making amends, the following might amuse you, since it goes to the tune of Waltzing Matilda. I wrote it to commemorate the infamous banquet at the San Diego Westercon. The food/swill really was as described, including the rubbery potatoes:

Once a jolly fan came to attend a Westercon;
He had duly registered and paid every fee;
And he sang when he saw what the waitress set before him there:
"You'll come a-bouncing, potatoes, with me!"

Chorus: Bouncing potatoes, bouncing potatoes, &c

"Is this a musket ball that was fired at Lexington?"
"No," said the waitress, "that is a pea."
"But," said the fan, "that is here within my coffee cup!"
You'll come a-bouncing, potatoes, with me!

"What is this piece of grey-green greasy Limpopo,
All set about with a strange fever-tree?"
"That," said the waitress, "is roast beef and salad, too."
You'll come a-bouncing potatoes with me!

"Is this a hippie type that I see before me here?
It is unshaven as hairy can be."
"No," said the waitress, "that is your icecream dessert."
You'll come a-bouncing, potatoes, with me!

Upchucked the fan and leapt into the swimming pool.
"You'll never bake me alive!" cried he.
And his ghost may be heard by the call-girls at that swimming pool:
"You'll come a-bouncing, potatoes, with me!"

#JB: We are amused, Poul - and edified, since Robin Johnson has since told us the whole story of that Westercon. Do come and see us: we'll organize an instant-convention for you whenever you come, if we dip out on '75.

ROBERT BLOCH
2111 Sunset Crest Dve
Los Angeles
California 90046

How kind of you to favor me with Scythrop! If it is, as you suggest in your editorial, an exercise in bridge-building, then it's an eminently successful one and serves to span the communications gap between the continents.

Communication, of course, is sometimes an awkward matter - particularly if there are some subjects best avoided.

I have in mind the occasion when Keats and Chapman found themselves at the meeting of a literary society in Chicago. The chairman of the affair led them across the room to an elderly Italian woman. "Be nice to her when you're introduced," the chairman whispered, "She's Al Capone's mother." Keats and Chapman exchanged glances: what can one possibly say to the mother of a notorious criminal when presented to her at the meeting of a literary society? A moment later they were introduced, and it was then that Keats solved the problem neatly. Flashing a solicitous glance at Mrs Capone, he discreetly inquired, "Bred any good crooks lately?"

#JB: They do get around, those two, don't they? Chicago, eh? I must remember to have them visiting Moscow sometime and overhearing one traffic cop asking another, "Booked any good Reds lately?"

JOHN BROSNAN
1/62 Elsham Road
Kensington
London W.14

Funny, I thought to myself, when did I send a story to Parergon Books? But no, it wasn't another rejected ms, but Scythrop itself. I didn't expect to see it for some time, so I was more than a little surprised when I opened the envelope.

Bert Chandler, Ursula Le Guin, John Brosnan... my god! - how do you manage to get all these big names to write for you? But seriously, folks, it was a great issue and one of the best fanzines I've read in ages. Takes one back to the good ol' days of ASFR (though of course in some ways it's better). The layout was marvellous, the illustrations all good - and I must say you've become a rather good cartoonist. That drawing of the bus wasn't bad either. Having something printed in one of your fanzines, I've now decided, gives as much satisfaction as having something published professionally (though I'm not really qualified as far as the latter is concerned). For one thing, what I've written reads much better when it's re-typed by a Bangsund. I wish all fanzine editors were capable of improving one's material in a similar fashion.

I'm typing this epistle at my new place of employment. I am now (wait for it) the Promotions and Publicity Manager of Fountain Press Ltd. Sounds impressive but the title is misleading as the promotions and publicity department consists of a staff of one... and I'm it.

#JB: Hope you don't change your mind about Scythrop's fabulous layout and illustrations when you see this issue, John. And "re-typed" is the most interesting euphemism for "rendered into English" I've yet seen. (Joke, John.)

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER
Cell 7, Tara Street
Woollahra NSW 2025

I was very sorry to read that Parergon Books never got off the launching pad. Meanwhile Scythrop 22 is to hand. Might I suggest that you get a job with Ace Books as Title-changer? Your "My Life and Grimes'" was brilliant. One wishes that whoever thinks up new titles for Ace were in the same class as yourself.

#JB: I met a bloke the other day who was in the same class as myself - at Helen Street State School, Northclump, 25 years ago. He's earning $12,000 a year, and not by publishing fanzines or changing titles. Where did I go wrong?

DAVID GRIGG
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Research Vic 3095

Your editorial is revealing in some ways, and also more than a little cautionary. What strange universes we build for ourselves, and how they limit us...

Echoes of Ursula Le Guin's article: fantasy is limitation, yet it can be worthwhile. But it is still "a view in, not out". There is a good deal about Scythrop 22 which evidences your change of attitude: there is a far greater editorial presence than in the former Scythrop, a deliberate and enlivening intrusion of John Bangsund into the whole fanzine. I like it. It shows in the titles of the articles, in the illustrations, in the introductions and even in the choice of the contributors. Apart from the utter beauty of the layout and reproduction, which has often, alas, been the most bangsundian feature of the production...

Bert Chandler's article was very enjoyable, but I must admit to not having read very much of this gentleman's work. But then again, I haven't read (dare I whisper it?) LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS yet, either. This doesn't stop me liking the authors' talk about their work, but I imagine it dulls the edge a little. Foyster's Syncon report is fabulous. It seems to reveal a Foyster that doesn't often come out in his Anzapazines, at least. Far from being old, this was fresh and entertaining. I enjoyed Myles na Gopaleen, too, but the Bangsund imitations don't show the same, well, clarity. Rather you than me.

Your symbol for Parergon Books fascinates me: is it your attempt to bring order (via the straight line) into the fundamental asymmetry-within-symmetry of the monad, symbolizing natural order? Science probing the non-ordered universe with ordered tools? All of these? None of these?

In all, if ASFM was the nadir of your fan publishing, then Scythrop may well be the zenith. Good luck.

#JB: Your explanations for my use of the monad (or "yin-yang symbol", as I have always innocently called it) are very ingenious indeed, and I wish I could claim to have had precisely these things in mind. ("You will, Oscar, you will.") But in fact there are only three meanings or symbols intended. The yin and yang, of course, tenuously linked - or further divided, depending on how you look at it - by that impudent vertical stroke: symbolic of my well-meaning but usually disastrous attempts to cut across the natural order of things, to bridge the irreconcilable, to grasp in a moment what can only be attained slowly, carefully, by degrees. (Did I hear some astrillogical remark then? Yes, I'm a Taurus: how did you guess? But with a dash of Arianism, too: born on the cusp, I think you call it. Does that make me a cuspidor?) (Forgive my rambulling.) The second symbol is simply a dollar sign, clipped top and bottom and extended into a circle. This - making the dollar go round, as it were - is symbolic of my socialistic inclinations. But the third is the really important one, and I have to confess that the first two were really afterthoughts. If you look closely you will see that the symbol is merely a "P" in reverse and a lower-case "b". Which sort of takes all the fun out of it, doesn't it?

ARCHIE MERCER
21 Trenethick Parc
Helston Cornwall

Two things in particular in Scythrop 22 seem to call for comment. One is your psychiatrist's extraordinary statement/question: "Words are important to you, aren't they? I wonder why." I mean, of course words are important to you. They're also important to me, to your psychiatrist, to Ron Clarke, to the man in the street and Queen Elizabeth II and Ainsley Gotto and Isaac Asimov and virtually every other member of the human race - whether the individual in question realizes it or not. Their importance lies in their being the principal medium by which people communicate with each other - and also communicate about each other. This seems so obvious that one tends to wonder precisely what your psychiatrist did mean, if anything. For all I know, he might be one of the many people one encounters who have much knowledge and little understanding. But if he meant anything, there are two possibilities I can think of. One: "You realize that words are &c &c" Two: "Words to you have an additional importance over and above that which is implicit in their nature as words: I wonder why?"

The other matter concerns this Myles na Gopaleen, of whom I don't think I've previously heard under that name. (It's pronounced Cooley, naturally.) I would take issue with the too-definite equation of "small horse" with "pony" - a small horse could equally legitimately be a runt or an immature - besides being used endearingly of a full-grown adult specimen. That, however, is by the way. The main thing your article seems to indicate is that Myles na Gopaleen was the real inventor of the feghoot.

Keats and Chapman, though...

It was the occasion of Chapman's birthday, and his friend Keats, knowing of this, presented him with a small memento. "If I may say so without sounding too self-conscious," said the poet as he presented it, "I have very much enjoyed the times we have spent together." "I, too," admitted Chapman, wiping a small tear from his eye. "Possibly we might seek to thank the person who first saw fit to introduce us one to another?"

Keats agreed, and so the two friends arranged an appointment with Mrs Medling, the celebrated medium, to whom they explained their wish. Mrs Medling gazed above their heads. "The person who brought you together," she murmured. "That should not be difficult." And she requested Chapman to lower the room's illumination. In the near-darkness she began talking, in an outlandish-sounding tongue. Presently she was answered, in a male voice. Keats and Chapman, tensed up with frank nervousness, now became noticably excited. "Are you," said Chapman, "that is, is that Myles na Gopaleen?" "I know not the name," replied the voice in English, but with a heavy accent. "I am he for whom you sent:

men call me Homer." "Oh," said Chapman, crestfallen. However, Keats leant over and whispered in his friend's ear: "Let us talk to him anyway. After all, a myth is as good as a Myles."

#JB: Lovely, Archie! But I don't know whether to believe you about the pronunciation of Gopaleen. I thought "Cooley" was some kind of Irish bull. Mind you, you have the edge on me when it comes to Irish pronunciation, since you live so much closer to Ireland than I do. But, as Maria once essayed to remark, what is that edge worth?

PAUL WHEELAHAN
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Thanks for Scythrop. Enjoyed same very much and never cease to be impressed by intellectual aspects of sf fandom & of course its writers & adherents.

Was rather puzzled by your wordy self-analysis in editorial. Good stuff & stimulating, but I suspect its accuracy. You draw a picture of an etymological introvert or whatever, whereas if you are the J. Bangsund (and could there in the sweet name of God be more? I seem to hear a J. Ryan type whisper over me shoulder) that I met at the Syncon ding at Fairfield, then all I can say is the private & the public Bangsund are at a rather appreciable variance.

While on subject: keenly dug Anecdotes of Keats & Chapman. Same were unknown to me previously, but will certainly be adding them to my collection of pornography, westerns with transvestite overtones & the complete works of J. Joyce. I've always loved punning & the shaggier the dogs the better. My favourite was Byrne roarning. A must for me bookshelves.

Item I liked best was by Brosnan. I was more than surprised. The Brosnan I met in Sydney impressed me as a nice feller with a sense of humour on par with A. Hitler. This stuff was really class, a free-wheeling perceptive humorous style that is professional. I don't know what John does for a crust but if he can't make a living writing I'm not a sound assessor of talent.

Was enlightened & intimidated by Ursula K. Le Guin, who even without her classy analytics would convey by her photograph that this is a bird with a steel trap mind not about to take any crap from anybody. Re the formidable Ursula: I am aware that there is an entire grandiloquent and stupefyingly erudite cult of literary criticism & essayism surrounding the Novel in general & apparently sf in particular. But I must say it does tend to bore me shitless when people like young Ursula confronted by some critical chore flex their latissimus dorsi & proceed to name-drop with the predictable ruthlessness of a wheat-broadcaster. I mean good old Flaubert sitting by the fire all day long with 10,000 adjectives which might or might not describe a French tart's left nipple & flipping the rejects one be one into the flames until he's left with one grubby scrap of paper inscribed with the simple "nice", almost demands inclusion whether the critic is writing on the novel or chemical fertilizer. Then of course the leviathans Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Forster, Turgenev et al & good old Pat White just to show you read your contemporaries, naturally follow. It ill behooves a western author to knock such heavyweights, but to listen to Ursula one could easily believe that men like Nelson Algren & Steinbeck & J. P. Donleavy spent their lives laying bricks instead of putting down stuff that will be read 500 years from now.

I seem to have lost me thread. What I meant to say, John, was that Ursula writes like a critic & academic & not an artiste. But if that background to her chilling head is her stuff, then I'll be trying to get my hands on some, by God. Anybody who says "bare feet beating in the surf of leaves" knows a thing or two about what writing's about even if she does feel it obligatory to touch the forelock to the Big Ones & the Dead Ones.

John, that I tend to run on should be yawningly apparent long ere this. What I meant to say when I took me pen in hand, was that I enjoyed Scythrop cover to cover, am glad you mailed me a copy & that you're to be congratulated on a grouse job.

#JB: Thanks, Paul. I would comment at length on what you say, but space is short. Re the "formidable" Mrs Le Guin, though: I know from correspondence both with her and with people who have had the happiness of talking to her that she is a very lovely and very stimulating lady. The background words in that photo are, indeed, her stuff. On the left, the opening paragraphs from PLANET OF EXILE; on the right, extracts from two letters - the first telling me of her "rather peculiar" novel which had just been accepted, the second about the Hugo it won. Do get her books. The lady is a superb writer, and it is science fiction's good fortune that (as she said in her article) the publishers chose that label for her novels.

JOHN JULIAN
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Parkville Vic 3052

Firstly, congratulations on your new address. I thought Bugalugs Court was rather nice personally what with that lovely Val lady and the dirty dishes and all but no doubt things have changed since I was last there. Anyway I once knew a very respectable family of sparrows who lived in a post office box and they had no complaints so I'm sure you will be very happy.

Secondly: On one of the many delicate and sometimes dangerous missions entrusted to Keats and Chapman by a grateful and often desperate British Government, it so happened that the friends found themselves resident in the court of an extremely powerful yet benevolent Eastern potentate. This ruler was

sorely troubled by a mysterious epidemic which had broken out in his palace. Virtually all of his servants, Oriental and Occidental alike, had succumbed to a strange malady which left them helpless in their beds with a high fever and sundry ancillary syndromes. Eager to be of assistance, the pair set to work with microscope and stethoscope and were quickly able to identify in all the Chinese servants a peculiar virus which was undoubtedly the cause of the disease. The ruler was a trifle puzzled by this and, while clearly grateful to the friends, enquired why, since the servants all obviously had the same disease, it had only been possible to isolate the cause in those servants born in the East, and not in those with white skin. "Ah, Your Highness," said Keats, "Such a thing is of no surprise to Western medicine. Have no fear: it is only a matter of time before the same virus is detected in the blood of your white servants as well."
"Indeed," added Chapman, "In Medical School we knew the phenomenon well, and the great Doctor Strabismus even had a saying to impress it upon our memory. 'Gentlemen,' he would say, 'Remember, you will always find it faster in the yellow pages.'"

#JB: You sure it wasn't something the Eastern potentate?

PETER ROBERTS
87 West Town Lane
Bristol BS4 5DZ

This is something of a note of appreciation cum LoC for Scythrop 22, which impressed me as being the finest single issue of a fanzine I've seen this year. Anything that contains the immortal, though unfathomable line, "Argh! The erns gone bung" must be bloody good, though there's obviously more to Scythrop than that.

Ursula Le Guin's comments in "The View In" are interesting but include some peculiar and rather doubtful generalities. "The novel is dead", for example. For proof it seems I'm supposed to ask the French (perhaps in a national referendum or somesuch?), but I seriously doubt whether there's any truth in that statement. I'll accept it as a slightly cliched piece of rhetoric (exaggeration, I should think) to spark off a discussion, though even then it doesn't appear very credible. The novel certainly isn't dead in the same way as, say, the masque or the verse epic (although I'll grant that even this exists in such cultural centres as Albania and Siberia), nor is it even moribund. In some vague and lofty sense it's possible to suggest that DON QUIXOTE, as the forerunner of its species, marks the beginning and end of the novel, and that all thereafter has been a mere elaboration on Cervantes's original. But if you don't accept that, and I wouldn't honestly recommend it unless your digestion is good, then it still seems a little curious to pounce on Flaubert as the creator and destroyer of the novel. Anyway, why be half-hearted? Choose Homer. Bring in all written literature. Make a meal of it!

The novel, as Mrs Le Guin points out later, is a product of an individual mind and an individual interpretation. This is why the form continues to exist and flourish (and I'd stress "flourish" because I think there are more excellent and creative novelists alive at this moment than in any past period); each novel is a singular reflection of its author's singular view and thus the novel will only expire with the death of the printed word as it becomes overwhelmed by the visual media.

Yet more curious is the statement that "There is no major native tradition for a novelist in America". If there is one country that does have a strong native tradition, I would have thought it was the US. Its central theme is the freedom of the individual and this carries within it the revolt against the bogus values of society and the liberation of the individual by departure from it (to the frontier, whether the West or even the planets) or a doomed stand against it (often involving a retreat into fantasy). The American assertion of individuality runs through its native literature from Cooper through Twain, Melville, James, Fitzgerald and Faulkner to Bellow, Barth, Vonnegut and contemporaries, as does the concomitant fear that everyone else is bent on controlling your life through the forces of society, social institutions or something even worse (as THE SIRENS OF TITAN suggests). This is particularly clear in American sf: the individuality of a Heinlein hero, for example ("All You Zombies" is a nice instance), or the planetary manipulation and recurrent illusions that surround a Philip Dick or Fred Pohl character. Compare this American fiction with the standard British disaster novel - a different genre altogether. All this comprises a native American tradition, and a very powerful one, too.

#JB: Mrs Le Guin and Mr Wheelahan can answer you, Peter, and good luck to all of you. At least I know what "Argh! The erns gone bung" means. Maybe this means, as John Ryan suggests in a long, beautiful letter which I haven't room for this issue (damn it!), that I am a secret comics fan. If you read "erns" as "urn has", and understand that "gone bung" means "ceased to function", you'll get the drift. ::: Why I haven't room for your letter, John Ryan, is that I am determined to get a Keats & Chapman anecdote of my own in here somewhere, and this is it:

Keats and Chapman visited a shy, earnest young friend, a philosophy student who, amongst even worse problems, had the misfortune to be named Claude Fiddle. So devoted was this young man to his studies, that he rarely had visitors to his rooms, so the friends always felt honoured when invited to intrude on his valuable time - and a little awed, since this enthusiasm for work was somewhat alien to them.

Fiddle, the friends were sorry (but a little amused) to learn, was having troubles of a not unusual kind:

often, he confessed, he spent hour after hour pacing his room, thinking about... Women. On a recent evening, unable to control his impulses, he had flung from him the volume of Descartes which he should have been studying, and plunged out into the night to find a female.

The only ladies abroad at that hour were not "such stuff as dreams are made on": rather, the opposite. The unhappy young man had heard of the oldest profession, but was aghast to meet some of its practitioners, and soon returned, blushing and in great vexation of spirit, to his lodgings.

What should he do? he asked his friends. Should he summon up courage from somewhere to - you know - or should he suppress these fretful fantasies and immerse himself even further in his books?

"Oh, definitely the latter!" cried Chapman (a confirmed bachelor). The young man turned to Keats for his opinion. "I agree entirely," said the poet. "You must put Descartes before the whores."

* * *

Some weeks after visiting young Fiddle, Keats received a letter from him, which he hastened to show to his friend Chapman.

"So," said Chapman, after perusing the letter, "our Claude has decided to become a student of divinity. An excellent plan, don't you think? The Queen of Sciences should take his mind off the ladies of the street!"

"That might be so," said Keats, "but I think he will regret his decision when the time comes for him to take out his Doctorate."

"Oh, fiddle-dee-dee!" exclaimed Chapman.

* * *

At this point I think it's about time I burst out of this narrow column and attempt to mention all the nice people I can recall offhand

We Also Heard From: John Ryan, as I mentioned earlier, and I really feel rotten, John, taking up your space; Alex Robb, with a long comment on Ursula's article which I still don't quite understand; Dave Piper - another lovely, witty letter; Jack Wodhams, who compares himself with Oliver Goldsmith and gives me an idea thereby for a K&C story; John Addleson - no, it's really Alderson, but I warn you, John, if you don't get my name straight you'll be Addleson in my publications (and I've left a few speling erors in this issue specially for you); Peter Blackwell; Ted Serrill; Phil Muldowney, who says the trouble with us Australians is that we are all such bloody good writers, revealing that he's never seen an Anzapa mailing; Hilary Richards; David Compton (a magnificent compliment: a hand-written covering note with the article in this issue, and what hand-writing!); several other people I've overlooked and to whom I apologize; and of course the Sales Tax Department and the National Library, but I get letters from them every few days and could fill an entire issue each month with their (adj.) correspondence. And that's all for now. Cheers, all!


I'm from the New York Times..
..were the 'All the News that's fit to Print' people. Could I see all your documents and evaluations on the Vietnam war?
Rittle STAMP
'THE THREAT FROM THE NORTH:' -SEE WORLD WAR II.
? ??
Were the 'Only what's needed to keep us in Power' people.
Petty

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JUDY & ROGER ZELAZNY

Make mine milk . . .
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ANDRE NORTON
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PAUL ANDERSON
ROBERT BOWDEN
DAMIEN BRODERICK
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GEORGE TURNER
WYNNE WHITEFORD
JACK WODHAMS

. . . and six hundred or so other Australians who look forward to meeting you in '75 - including, of course:

The Committee

(Make ours strong black coffee - with aspirin...)

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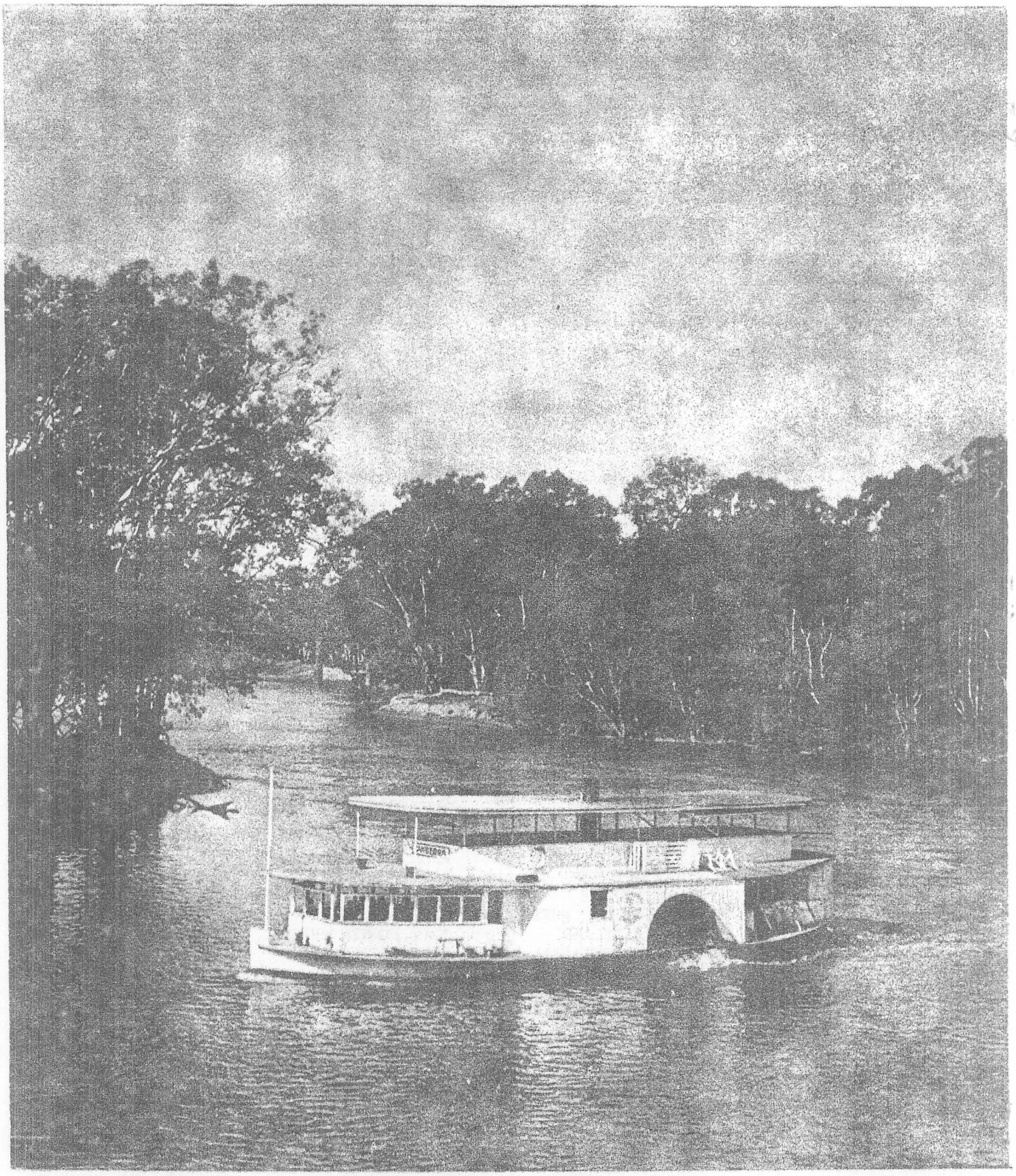
THE AUSTRALIA IN 75 COMMITTEE GPO BOX 4039 MELBOURNE 3001



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