

# Philosophical Gas

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St Kilda, Victoria 3182, Australia, for APA-NOVA,  
ANZAPA and OMPA, to name but several.

MAINLY for the benefit of OMPA members, I should mention that APA-NOVA (pronounced, if you feel so inclined, "up 'n' over") is a new apa with absolutely no rules or office-bearers; its non-mailings appear in time for meetings of the newly-formed Nova Mob. The October meeting is to take place at the Degraives Tavern, a licensed restaurant in Melbourne formerly called "Jenny's Cellar" (scene of many memorable fannish Events, but let's not get nostalgic).

And, talking of memorable Events, nostalgia and like that there, I've had a couple of letters recently which kicked me on no end. These:

URSULA LeGUIN  
3321 NW Thurman St  
Portland  
Oregon 97210 USA

We were over in our cabin in the  
Coast Range on Slick Rock Crick,  
well insulated from Civilisation  
by a lot of firtrees and bears  
and stuff, and it was about 8 a.m.

and there was a knock on the door. Mr Smith from up the road. Mr Smith has a telephone, and he had a message for us - from our daughter, he thought they said. As our eldest daughter is 13 and was reading Mad Magazine right in the loft at the time, we were confused, but staggered up through the bears and firs and called the number he had taken down. It was Virginia Kidd in Pennsylvania, who had



forgotten the 3-hour time difference between Pennsylvania and Oregon but had a hot rumor that my book had won the Hugo. So I called a friend in Portland who was coming to visit in a few days to stop by the house and pick up any telegrams that might be lying about. Which they did; so about 5 days after the Heidelberg meeting was over I got three, hand-delivered telegrams, one which said Your novel won Hugo award congratulations Terry Carr Ace Books, one which said Congratulations your novel won Hugo award Perry Barr Ace Boops, and one which said Congratulations sinister Hugo more please John Bangsund. It was that one which made the day. I didn't believe the others, but you clinched it. When I get news from North Carlton, Victoria, I believe it. It was a lovely thing to do, and I do thank you.

Alan Nourse has the actual, physical Hugo; apparently Terry Carr (or Perry Barr, of Ace Boops) gave it to him, saying "You can give it to her, Alan, you both live on the West Coast", which is perfectly true, only he lives in North Bend Washington and I live in Portland Oregon, but what are these little provincial differences? Oh, are you from America, do you know my friend James Peebles? Well, when Mr Nourse called tonight I asked him just to put some fuel in the rocket and fly it down. He said he'd thought of that. We don't seem to have thought of any other solution yet. But that's all right. I don't need a bronze rocket. I have your telegram.

I still miss ASFR.

::: I am secretly in love with Mrs LeGuin. I am not alone.  
An excellent writer and a lovely lady.

JOHN BROSNAN  
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Earl's Court  
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I was talking to Mike Moorcock in the pub the other night and he said...

There, I've achieved something I've always wanted to do. I've dropped a big name. And if you'll hang on a minute I'll drop a couple more. Yes, I really was speaking to Mr Moorcock. It was at the Globe last Thursday, the pub where London fandom gathers every month. I also got to meet John Brunner and Kenneth Bulmer and other notables, including Ethel Lindsay, Mervyn Barrett and Astrid Anderson. It was a very enjoyable evening and I'm looking forward to the one they're having this week, the pre-Con night. Having a pub as a meeting place is a great idea that I wish Australian fandom would adopt.

My conversation with Mr Moorcock wasn't very long, but it may be of interest to you. After I had introduced myself, he said "What did you say your name was again? It sounds familiar." I said modestly, "I doubt if you've heard of me. My nearest call to fame was to have a letter published in ASFR." John Brunner piped in, "Ah, you'd be surprised at the number of people who are familiar with John Bangsund and his journal." Now it doesn't look much in cold black and white, but if you could have heard the way he said it I know you'd be pleased.

Mike mentioned that Tom Disch is planning to come to Australia. Mike seems to think it's a strange thing to want to do and I agree. Just when and for how long he intends to stay I didn't find out. Mike made a genuine Moorcock funny when I brought up the subject of "Australia in '75". He said if we extended



the Con over two years all the English fans could come out for ten quid. As you've probably heard by now, New Worlds will continue. It will come out quarterly and Mike will be the editor again.

At the moment I am living (as you can see) in Earl's Court. In every letter I write back to Australia I find myself trying to justify it. And here I go again. No, I didn't choose the place - the flat agency sent me here. I wanted something in the Kensington area, since it's near the city and I had stayed out that way on my first night in London and liked the place. Earl's Court (I wince every time I type the name) isn't as bad as the myths make out. The place isn't a "little Australia". The air is not thick with boomerangs and cooees. I admit some Australians do live here, but so do many Americans, Indians, West Indians, Pakistanis, Frenchmen, Italians, Dutchmen and the odd Englishman. It's just another suburb of London, though it does tend to be a little more colourful than most. What I like about it is that nothing seems to close. You can wander about at any time of the night or weekend and find the supermarket open or buy a meal.

What is shameful to admit, though, is my job. I'm a civil servant, and, what is worse, a British civil servant. Only temporary, of course. I'm working for the Kensington tax office. Really I'm nothing more than a file clerk, and a bad one at that. It's a dull, boring job and the pay is abysmal, but even so I had to sign the Official Secrets Act before I could start. You're not allowed to repeat anything you hear or see in the office, otherwise they take you away and strangle you with the Union Jack. Which is a shame because some of the letters I file are very funny.

Before I got that job I applied for one as a night cleaner at Madame Tussaud's but by the time I got there all the vacancies had been filled. According to the manager, half of London turned up for the job.

At the moment I am slowly typing up a first draft for my book on the bus trip. It's a hell of a job: it makes me nauseous to recall any part of it, and everything I've written so far stinks to hell. The title will either be THE DOUBLE-DECKER DUD DISASTER or ONE HUNDRED AND ONE DISEASES OF THE BOWEL.

::: Someone should warn British fandom that John Brosnan is a walking disaster area. Someone obviously warned Madame Tussaud's. The thought of John in there has given me nightmares. I fully expect to read any day now that he has gone out into Earl's Court wearing a toga and dark makeup (for some totally unique reason) and been bashed up by skinheads; or that he has become advertising manager for a strip joint, or been run over by a giraffe in Bond Street, or invited home for tea by Princess Anne. Don't deny it, Brosnan! - you're that kind of person! Keep on writing, chum.

Now and then someone sends me a dirty postcard, but for sheer downright earthiness I find the following bit of correspondence hard to beat. I quote the opening lines from Bryant's TRIUMPH IN THE WEST:

"In the first week of September, 1943, a letter reached the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.... It was dated September 3rd and written on Italian soil." (Maybe it started off as a clay tablet but crumbled in the post?)



People keep on saying that I've gafiated. I scored the front cover of SF Review because of this - about the only time I'll ever manage that, I should think - and most recently Linda Bushyager has mentioned my gafiation (twice: count them) in Granfalloon. Of course it's true. I've gafiated often. Like giving up cigarettes, it's easy - I've done it hundreds of times. But my publicly announced gafiation earlier this year was pretty serious: it lasted easily three weeks. Reading Granfalloon I began to feel an absolute has-been. Maybe I am, but I don't want to feel it! Linda says something to the effect that the last few ASFRs were thin and lacking the quality of earlier issues. I can't quite work that out. Quality is a debatable thing, but only 16 and 20 were thin issues. Maybe Linda is confused with my apazines, which usually are thin.

Anyway, it seems that some outward and visible symbol of my return to the flock is in order, and to that end I proffer one fact and two intentions. Fact: I have just committed myself to a three-year lease on an IBM Executive (I've just forgotten his name momentarily, but he's one handsome fellow) and a gleaming new Roneo 865. Intention One: Scythrop 22 will be out Real Soon Now - maybe in December. Most of the material is on hand, but if you want to get in on a great fannish renaissance there's still time. Star performer in 22 will probably be Phillip Adams - a gentleman whose name will be familiar to readers of The Australian.

Intention Two: On 1st January I hope to publish what looks like being the largest fan publication yet undertaken in this country (though Bruce Gillespie's mammoth issue of SF Commentary containing the complete run of John Foyster's Exploding Madonna and Journal of Omphalistic Epistemology might easily turn out to be larger, and he's welcome). It is called AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION YEARBOOK: 1970, and, as the name suggests, it is conceived as an annual publication.

A separate leaflet will set out the contents and so on of ASFY/70 for members of the Nova Mob and ANZAPA, but for OMPA people I will just set out here a rough outline of the book.

It will run about 120, maybe as much as 160, pages. It will have two leading articles, one by an eminent overseas writer, one by an eminent Australian; three views of Australian sf by overseas writers, balanced by three Australian views of overseas sf; several articles on aspects of writing and publishing sf in Australia; a note on sf films and tv programmes; reports on overseas and local conventions; an overseas view of Australian fandom; pieces on local fan activities during 1970 and the past decade; a run-down on the Australia in '75 bid; reports from every fan organization and group in Australia, including fringe interests; a survey of Australian fanzines, past and present; a bibliography of recent Australian sf; an enormous directory of Australian fans and organizations; a checklist of Hugo, Nebula and Ditmar awards; and many other goodies.

The price will be A\$1.00 plus postage - that is, somewhere between \$1.26 and \$1.41, depending on final size. There is a special pre-publication price, which will apply until 1st December: Australia - \$1.00, Britain - 7s6d America - US\$1.25 (all post-free). Ethel Lindsay in England, and Andy Porter in the US, will be pleased to take your money from you.

I have other large projects in mind. If you have ideas, let's hear them. Ciao!