

This issue of PHILOSOPHICAL GAS may be referred to as "Topsy". It started out as a few pages of mailing comments on ANZAPA 23. Then I started reading OMPA 65 and felt impelled to record immediately my reaction to Dick Eney's contribution to that mailing - or one of his contributions, I should say (the second had something nice to say about me, so I'm glad I wrote what I did when I did). At this point I felt the issue was becoming rather more than a few mailing comments, so I decided to publish Bruce Gillespie's letter of comment on Scythrop 26. Then, while working on something else - to be exact, a batch of ads for Australia in '75 for the LACon handbook - I discovered a letter from Lindsay Cox which I couldn't resist publishing and the long-lost letter from Ursula Le Guin commenting on Scythrop 23. That's the story. I hope you enjoy what is here, because I think this is my last fanzine for quite a few months.

The artwork: There are no page numbers in this issue, but if there were the credits would read like this -

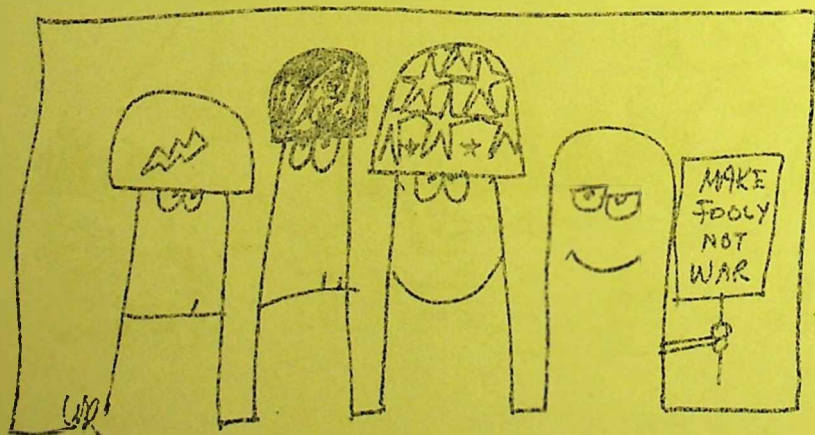
Lindsay Cox - cover, 13

Terry Jeeves - 17

Bill Rotsler - 2, 5, 11, 12

The stuff on (page 9) just happened to be on an electrostencil Noel Kerr sent me, so I used it. I think he stole it from Punch.

I ran out of yellor paper, so the back cover is a page I did once for Scythrop and wasn't very happy about.



PHILOSOPHICAL GAS

Number 13, June 1972, is published by John Bangsund PO Box 357 Kingston ACT 2804 Australia for reasons beyond comprehension and members of ANZAPA.

16th June 1972: Last night Carolyn and Sandy and I went interstate to Queanbeyan and had a fabulous meal &c, retiring early to our respective beds without having talked about half the things we really wanted to. Today I was late for work - only the second time (first was a genuine honestgoodness puncture, believe it or not) in over three months - and at lunchtime the three of us went up the street to Kingston shopping centre for things to eat (them) and whatever might be in the PO box (me). What was in the box was ANZAPA #23 and OMPA #85, to both of which I seem absentmindedly to have contributed.

Did I mention that my new policy is not to use corflus unless absolutely necessary?

Last weekend Shayne McCormack was here - slept in my bed, I'll have you know (blush, young lady) - and said something about this new policy. I won't repeat it here. You'll have to learn to live with it.

Haven't read OMPA yet, but I have waded through ANZAPA, and as usual I feel like commenting right away. You know how that feeling wears off after six or seven weeks? That's why I don't comment very often. Anyway, tonight I have so many things to do I don't know where to start, so I'm solving the dilemma by writing this.

EDMONDS: OFFICIAL B----Y ORGAN: Thought you didn't recognize post-mailings? This isn't one, and neither is no. 12, because copies are only going to members. Damned if I'll send extra copies for you to shove away in some cupboard somewhere. Not a good turn-out this time, is it? Twenty-nine members, and only eleven in the mailing. Ten, if you don't count my FAPA leavings. Sorry to see Bill Bowers out; amazed to find myself still in. Three bucks? Arghhhh. Seems to me I have to do an Anzapoll next mailing, right? More work. Hell. Hey, I hit more mailings than anyone except that O'Brien fellow. Gillespie's just a show-off, putting 317 pages in in that time, but it's interesting that only five of us have managed more than 100 pages in twenty-two mailings: that's only five pages per mailing, after all. Not good enough. Lead on, OBE! Show 'em all that ANZAPA lives yet!

ALLAN ST BAKER: YINAL: If Yngvi is not a louse, you've just fouled up one of my pet projects. In the ACT, all number-plates start with Y, and you can choose your own number, under certain conditions. I had planned (when I can afford it) to reserve YNG-006, and just see how many fans thought that was appropriate on the VW. I think you've blown it. You pack a lot into one page, Allan, and know how to write a final line - that's for sure. Hope to see you at Syncon. I'll be in a two-piece cord suit, beard, and surrounded by female admirers clamouring for my autograph. Dammit, you used to write to Foyster for "Sawra" - before I ever wrote anything for a fanzine. Why aren't you a BNF?

JB: BUNDALOHN QUARTERLY: That piece will continue to haunt me. FAPA has yet to arrive, so I'll see the damned thing again. Wonder what it was all about.

NICK SHEARS: ENTROPION: It looks and feels like a British fanzine. A nice breath of fresh air, to be sure. The more I read of yours, the more I would like to meet you. If DUFF continues, I have a feeling someone might be nominating you. South Africa seems as alien and backward and unlivable to me as Australia must sound to a lot of people in other places. Thank Something for people! Keep in touch, Nick, and do try to get to Australia in '75. A long time ago I invited someone else in SA to be official agent for A75, but haven't had an answer. Does the job appeal to you?

(Just ashed my cigarette in my burgundy. Does that mean I've had enough for one night? Thank Ghu it was only the flagon stuff, and not the real red I had for dinner. In any case, I think I might pause here for a few hours/days/weeks.)

17th June: What the hell am I doing, typing stencils for ANZAPA at 6.30 on Saturday morning? Have I no shame?

CAREY HANDFIELD: TEENAGE FANED: I think it was Deems Taylor once wrote an article about what Wagner would be doing if he were alive now. It's a long time since I read that article - like maybe twenty years - but I have the feeling RW might have approved the space opera you describe, providing he had devised it. ::: "Proninical" nearly killed me: It isn't in Oxford, so I reached up for Webster's Unabridged and the bloody thing fell on me. Big book that. Not in there either, so I guess you meant "provincial". ::: If you look closely you'll see that the PhilGas version of that story was written after the Lodbrog version. Naturally pleased you like my "ramblings", but wonder why you want me to write an auto-biography. I think the VW is about my twentieth car, and some of its predecessors were quite interesting, but I'd rather write about their driver if I could remember him. A couple of years ago I listed all those cars, and all the places I've lived in, and all the jobs I've had. That document is still around somewhere; I wonder if I should publish it. (How did you get that much comment from a 2-page "4-page" fanzine?)

MICHAEL O'BRIEN: COMMAND MODULE: Have they stopped the Mavis Bramston Show? I must get a tv one day and find out things like that. ::: Can't quite picture you as Oberon.

DAVID GRIGG: IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE &c&c: If Nietzsche was right, Leigh won't be the last person to be OBE twice; next you'll get me for one mailing, then Gary again, then Dennis, then Leigh, then me for one mailing, then... ::: Agree that Dennis's last was a vintage mailing. Everyone was in fine form. ::: Who is Wendy? Watch it, Grigg. When I left you in Melbourne I thought I could rely on your continuing to be the good little fan you've always been, but suddenly you have a car and a Wendy. No wonder we haven't seen a Fanarchist lately. Ou sont les Griggs d'antan?

PROCEEDINGS OF THE THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK
SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA No.2

The Secretary reported that the President, Secretary, Treasurer and entire membership had moved to Canberra. The work of the Society nevertheless goes on. Three illiterate Senators have recently quoted Peacock, according to Hansard. A fund has been launched to provide a fourth Senator, much given to quoting Burns and obscure Australian poets, with a volume of Peacock's verse. The Society's endeavours have been recognized by the Australian Society of Authors, which recently elected to associate membership the President, Secretary, Treasurer and entire membership of the Society.

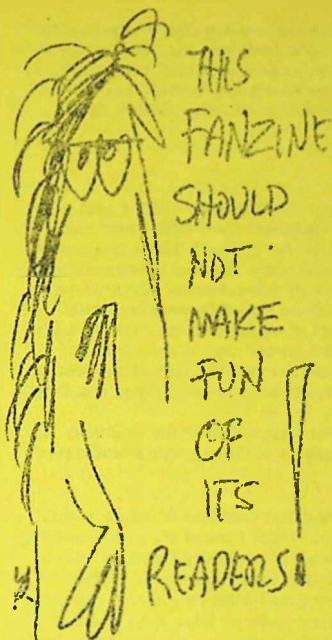
You ask, David (yes, I'm still talking to you), "Will Success Spoil John Bangsund?" I am as anxious to find out as you are. Bring on the Success, someone! ::: You get to Syncon, Grigg, or I'll never mc you again. "What with work and all..." Yeah, we know what that "all" means. Innocent young margins, indeed. ::: At least six of your quotes sound vaguely familiar.

THE RETORT COURTEOUS: Didn't understand a word of it. "What happens to momentum in a Slaver stasis field?" Ah, what indeed? (Science fiction is rotting your mind.)

ROBIN JOHNSON: THE BUTTERFLY MIND: Hoorah for sexual morays! Wonder if I could write one of those double-dactyl ditties. Higgledy-Piggledy, /R. E. R. Johnson, /Imposing, /Inventive, /Witty and dapper, /Sits at his typewriter, /Incomprehensibly /Bashing out stencils /For some weekly apa. A double-dactyl, of course, is a pair of wingless prehistoric reptiles.

ALEX GAS: MUSTUD PIKL: Funny about "Anon". When I was very very young (yes, I was just that, once) I really did think that the most prolific hymn-writer in the Churches of Christ hymn book was *Arthur Unknown*. True.

JOHN BROSAN: WHY BOTHER ABROAD? (A question you still haven't answered.)



Apparently Bob Smith will have to go to Bristol to get the material he wants for "Kangaroo Feathers". John Martin Baxter is a hoax. At least, that's the way I heard it. Memory is not good at the best of times, but I understand that John doesn't have a middle name. (And I'll bet that's blown your mind, whether it's true or not.) :::: As Dick Jensen said once, in a different context: Of course Mervyn Barrett doesn't look old - but you should see the painting in his attic. :::: I only wish I had as much money as I'm not interested in your filthy, lurid underground film career. No, I've already got that much money; better change "not interested" to "agonizingly envious". :::: John, last time I heard, you were a publicity bloke or something - or had you just left or been fired or something? In any case, you didn't deserve that job, or if you are still in it you won't last much longer. There you go on for nearly half a page about your James Bond book, getting us all worked up about it, exhorting us to go out and pester booksellers for it - and you didn't mention the name of the bloody thing! (Dirty movies have rotted your mind.)

BILL WRIGHT: INTERSTELLAR RAMJET
SCOOP: The cover is intriguing. I think it has something to do with Women's Lib. I mean, there's that formidably capable looking dame on the left, with an enormous something-or-other in her right hand; and on the right that bearded gentleman who has just done something, or is about to do

something with those shears. Faith and courage indeed! :::: You, Wright W., have hidden your light under a bushel far too long. Since joining ANZAPA you have revealed yourself as one of the best writers in Australian fandom. Don't deny it: all this time you've been standing back modestly while Kevin Dillon and I make great names for ourselves as fan writers, just because you are a nice guy and felt we needed the break. Couldn't you have just stayed under that bushel a little while longer, until Kev and I get our Hugos? Why have you decided now to upstage us? Has... has egoboo gone to your head, Bill? Seriously, you've raised the standard of ANZAPA tremendously. Your approach to the apa is a shining example to all of us, each issue you publish the very model of what an apazine should be. I don't intend to comment specifically on any item in this issue (except to remark that the conversation between Helen and me was apocryphal, and you know it, but it read well), because you've had too much egoboo already, but if you don't scoop the Anzapopoll this year there ain't no justice. :::: You don't really want to see two pages of my poems, do you?

LEIGH EDMONDS: SUGAR TOOTH: Dammit, Leigh, you are writing better all the time, too. Even your spelling is improving. What is that girl doing to you? (Don't answer. That's what's called a rhetorical question.) Agatha - if my fading memory of a long-dead tongue serves me - literally means "the goods". Not in the colloquial sense, but as opposed to "the bads". On which analogy I think I might start referring to the red beast as Kaka. (Hm. Some people might think I was going a bit funny if they saw me standing there fuming over the latest flat tyre, slipping clutch, dangling pongbox or whatever, screaming at it, "Dirty rotten bloody effing stupid Kaka!")

IN SUM: Another curate's-egg of a mailing, perhaps better than average - and if so, mainly because of Bill Wright's 12 pages. I think we can all do better. Let's do it?

Tonight, over my steak sandwich and flagon claret, I have been reading OMPA mailing 65. I got about a third of the way through the bundle (I'm a slow reader) and suddenly hit something which has driven me to the typer. I am about to write something which I shouldn't, something which one part of me says should be kept quiet for diplomacy's sake, but the hell with it - publish and be damned! - and let's start just a little ironically by calling this:

IT'S ENEY'S FAULT

For the benefit of readers not members of OMPA, in mailing 65 Dick Eney (who I gather is a full-time soldier in Viet Nam) has published a letter and postcard from John Boardman (New York fan). Dick's 4-page fanzine is entitled "Rave Review". John's letter is a pretty restrained statement of the anti-Viet-Nam-war position, with some personal references to Dick which I can only imagine Dick provoked. (The postcard, for example: Dick writes to John - "Loveable John, Did anybody ever tell you how cute you are when your face turns purple?" Above this message is a printed message, standard on such postcards, which reads: "The soldier of United States Army, Pacific, is ready on the ground and in the air to defend peace and the Free World." John's reply, apparently scribbled across the foot of the postcard Dick sent him, is "You'll be even more welcome when yours is pale in death, you murderer".

That's not a very restrained message, but I think John can be understood if not forgiven, and his letter is not what I would call a "contribution to the study of pathological mental states" - as Dick calls it.

Okay, I've got nothing against Dick Eney. I've been sending him fanzines for some years, and have seen some of his, but we have never corresponded. What I mean is, I have nothing against Dick as a person; I don't know the guy. As an enthusiastic soldier, I have a general dislike for him. As publisher of this particular fanzine I dislike him even more. (The odd thing is that we might easily get on very well in person, but that's a bit irrelevant maybe.) (I get on very well indeed with a whole heap of people whose views on Viet Nam and a whole lot of other subjects are somewhere between odd and nauseating. I am employed by a government which backs the Viet Nam war. But all that is just a little bit irrelevant to science fiction fandom, per se.)

What gets me is that when someone goes off in a fanzine, or in some other fan activity, about politics, and takes up a leftist-pacifist position, there tends to be an outcry of "You're dragging politics into Fandom!" and the fan is sat upon. Do the same thing from a rightish-militarist position, and no-one says anything. As a leftist-pacifist, I know I don't normally do anything or say anything in this situation. This time it's different. Dick's little fanzine, easily written-off nor long remembered, has triggered off something in me which is very personal, but by God you're going to hear this, whatever its consequences.

At this moment I am chairman of the Australia In Seventy-Five Committee. I'll let you into a little secret: I would rather not be. But as the person who first suggested a Worldcon in Australia, and through circumstances which I will describe in a moment, Fate has decreed that I be chairman of the committee.

I forget who was first chairman. Not that it matters: the bid goes on, and goes from strength to strength, whoever happens to be sitting in the chair. Last year Leigh Edmonds took over for a while. Then Robin Johnson took his place, when Leigh discovered s-x and other more important things. Early this year, John Foyster and I put ourselves forward as co-chairmen, and we succeeded Robin. John was to handle the dirty work of administration and co-ordination; I was to continue with publicity and so on. The committee voted us in, and I was delighted. Not because I'd achieved this dizzy eminence, but because at last John Foyster - the most intelligent, most industrious and most experienced Australian fan - had taken over the bid. In the next few months John, in association with Leigh, Robin and Bill Wright - and myself, before I left for Canberra - got the A75 bid into shape properly for the first time. For the first time I became absolutely confident that no-one had a chance against us. Here, now, we had a programme - finance, publicity, strategy, the whole thing - and John leading us.

Then, in May, President Nixon announced the mining of Halphong harbour, and it became obvious that the Viet Nam war had suddenly escalated to a more dangerous level than ever.

World opinion was virtually unanimous in denouncing Nixon's decision as provocative in the extreme. But the hell with world opinion: more important to us, much more important, was John Foyster's decision to register his protest against Nixon's act by resigning from the American organizations of which he was a member (including FAPA and SAPS), and from the co-chairmanship of the A75 Committee. I'm quoting from memory here, but John's reason for the latter was along the lines that we were basically asking Americans a favour in bidding for the Worldcon, and that he couldn't stomach this.

Can I make myself clear? I don't understand John Foyster. I respect, admire and like him. One of my chief regrets in leaving Melbourne is that I was beginning to get to know him and appreciate him. What I appreciate is that John saw things this way, and did what he had to do. He is the most moral person I have ever met. I don't understand it, but I appreciate it. Can you follow that?

Anyway, I suddenly found myself co-chairman of a committee 400 miles away from me, and no-one to be co- with.

I took the following action. I sweated out a motion to put before the next committee meeting in Melbourne, sending copies to the interstate committee members. It read: "The Australia in '75 Committee accepts, with full understanding and deep regret, the resignation of its co-chairman, John Foyster.

As individuals, most members of the Committee join with John in deploring America's aggressive actions in South East Asia, and Australia's support of these actions.

As a Committee, however, we feel that science fiction fandom makes some contribution, however small it might be, towards international understanding, co-operation and peace. We therefore will proceed with Australia's bid for the 1975 World Science Fiction Convention."

I then made it clear that if the motion was defeated I would resign from the Committee myself.

My motion caused more furore than John's action. One simple element of this furore was that some members of the committee could not understand that, by definition, if the motion passed it was true that "most members...join with John", and if it didn't pass it didn't matter. Anyway, there it was: everyone apparently getting uptight about my motion, eclipsing John's action.

The committee meeting was held. John announced that his resignation would take effect from the end of the meeting, and proceeded to rule my motion out of order, on the grounds that it was introducing something irrelevant - namely politics - into the affairs of the committee. Several other motions were thereby also ruled out of order. I don't know exactly what they talked about after that, but when the news trickled through to Canberra I was just a little surprised. To me, John had introduced politics into the committee's affairs and then ruled out of order my attempt to clarify the committee's attitude towards introducing politics into the committee's affairs. Don't ask me to explain it. It was a brilliant thing to do, on John's part, and possibly averted a split in the committee, but I don't understand how it was done.

The above is all utterly out of order. No-one, certainly not the chairman, should divulge more or less secret stuff like that about committee proceedings. The hell with it: now you know how Dick Nixon mucked us up and what we did or didn't do about it. If the committee wants to depose me as chairman for doing this, it's their privilege.

I have gone into this at such length for one simple reason. John Foyster is the most capable person in Australian fandom (amongst a lot of other things). We have lost him as co-chairman of the A75 bid, because of America's foreign policy - and that's your loss, too, dear reader. I have nothing to support this speculation, nothing whatever apart from my own ability to think and reason (limited as that ability may be), but I think that John took this step to show American fans - and people like Dick Eney in particular - that he is fair dinkum about where the world is at, that his money is where his mouth is, and that a World SF Convention in Australia isn't worth winning if it means some fellow man in Viet Nam has to die for it. As chairman of the A75 Committee, I have no opinion on this. As John Bangsund, I agree with him.

[illegible]

PHILOSOPHICAL GAS

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It's hard for an Australian to be a member of an overseas apa. Consider: Nearly six months ago I spent several nights doing Lodbrog #4 for OMPA. OMPA has just arrived - yesterday - and the deadline for the next mailing is 1st July, 13 days off as I write. FAPA hasn't arrived yet; the deadline is 13th August or thereabouts, and the last June overseas mail to Los Angeles closed four days ago. I'll send this stuff SAL to OMPA, and surface mail to FAPA. With luck, this should only cost me around \$20. About October I will know what FAPA members thought of the stuff I sent in March; about January - no, I've miscalculated again - about March next year I'll know what OMPA members think about what I've published in this issue. If I miss the next FAPA mailing, I won't know until April or May next year what members made of this stuff. I'm beginning to think that it would be cheaper to pay extra for OMPA and FAPA to send mailings airmail to me. Wish I could afford it. I believe that ANZAPA sends overseas members mailings by airmail, without extra charge. Australians are nuts.

Listen, people, there are a few things I have to face up to. One of them is that I am still flat broke, despite my highly-paid position here in Canberra. The chances of producing another Scythrop before the end of the year are just about zero. I have the time, and the inclination, but not the money. That's the breaks. In PhilGas 12 I said I wouldn't publish Bruce Gillespie's letter of comment on Scythrop 26, but I can't bear to have that letter lying around for six months or more, so here it is. When #27 becomes feasible I will probably reprint it there, but I think you should see this now. I still have a few hangups about the mutual-admiration thing, but Bruce has so much worth saying in this letter that it would be approaching the criminal not to publish his letter now. Also, most people reading this will have seen Scythrop #26. If you haven't, either your copy is still uncollated or you are not on the mailing-list. (FAPA members will see that issue at the same time as this; OMPA and ANZAPA members will receive individual copies. Tough luck there, OMPA, but I don't feel like sending 50 copies for a membership of 29 or whatever it is, especially since half a dozen members will get Scythrop in any case. Speaking of which, Ken Cheslin, OMPA will have to throw me out: I don't feel like resigning, but your rules make it hard for me to keep up. Maybe I should suggest to Dave Piper that we have a joint membership or something. I would like to stay in, but it's hard, and (pardon me) not particularly rewarding.)

BRUCE GILLESPIE
GPO BOX 5195AA
MELBOURNE 3001

May 10 1972

Well, what do I say?

Firstly, THIS ISN'T SF COMMENTARY 26 means far more to me than gaining a place on the Hugo ballot. It might even be the first time that one fanzine editor has published an imitation on issue of another fanzine. SFC is hardly worth all that trouble, but then, the Hugo nomination itself is rather puzzling.

Secondly, since various prominent members of Melbourne fandom have dropped hints that none of my articles are funny, I'll agree reluctantly with them and repeat that "I don't write humour because I can't". I know I can, but nobody else does. Therefore, this letter does not take the form of THIS ISN'T SCYTHROP 26 and I'll do my best to

eliminate all puns. The following is my normal, earnest, good-natured, dull reply to your hilarious magazine.

Given a couple of years, I'm sure I can arrange to have Messrs Astrov, Heinlein, Surgeon etc. appear in SFC. We're working on it. The rest of the cover is a bit more puzzling. The obvious significance of the cover is that I am the little bloke who operates the robot called SFC. Indeed, in SFC 26, which should have come out weeks ago, I say somewhere that "SFC is a monster that has got out of control". The cover's less obvious meaning is that J. Bangsund is the boy with the controls, and the robot is B. Gillespie. Keep feeding me those 24 batteries, that's all. Whatever the Deep Meaning Of It All, Lindsay Cox and you did a good job - you fooled Bill Wright and Robin Johnson, anyway, so I'm sure you can fool hundreds of other fans as well with that cover.

I'm all in favour of your "Let's hear it for Bruce Gillespie!" slogan; in fact, I'll probably put it in every issue of SFC from now on. But I cannot work out why. I feel like somebody who has been given a medal for breathing - you know, the medal is very beautiful and I'm filled with gratitude, but I couldn't imagine doing anything else. Because I was so puzzled about this matter, I read the rest of Scythrop 26 to find out the secret of it all. The following are some random comments:

The Thomas Love Peacock item "Mulum in Pavo" was entertaining and gives me even more encouragement to read all of Peacock's books. But the Deep Significance of the passage eludes me as surely as does the cover of this issue. I'm sure it's all very Freudian, which is some feat, since Peacock was writing a number of years before Freud published his findings. Again, I'm tempted that Scythrop represents (fill in the space for yourself), and Mr Listless represents, but the place of Marlonetta in this pattern is puzzling. Speaking for myself, I can only agree that young ladies today not only do not care for Dante, but they don't care much for SF Commentary either. (Tender readings of Rataplan in young ladies' ears seems to have a better effect.) In fact, the whole party that met in the library seems to have passed away altogether.

Puzzling pleasantries finished, let's talk about what your magazine is (presumably) all about. I have no chance of winning the yellow rocket; Locus will, because it has a print run of 1300, and SFC has a total print run of 330, of which 225-250 go to the USA. Because of these relative numbers, I've given up already. John Foyster thinks that SFC (or Scythrop, I hope) has a chance next year, but I don't think he has recently published 500 copies (which would be the minimum number of copies printed by any future Hugo winner) of a magazine of 50 pages. We both have some idea of the agony of a week or more of uninterrupted work that is needed to publish such a magazine. For myself, I wouldn't bother.

For Australia in '75, it's worth the bother, but I hope somebody else publishes the actual magazine that can win. Perhaps the real answer is to publish an offset-printed fanzine, but in Australia I would need to print at least 1000 copies, and sell most of them, in order to afford such an operation. I think you lost heavily on ASFM, and I suppose any offset fanzine-type magazine (such as the old Melbourne Film Bulletin or the journal Retrieval) loses heavily without subsidies or lots of subscribers. At Eastercon, Ron Graham and John Foyster showed just why an offset edition of Vision of Tomorrow is economically impossible in Australia at the moment. Perhaps you've thought more fully about this problem than I have, but at the moment it seems impossible for Australia to produce a Hugo-winner.

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You're right: you really should have had a letter of comment from me to start your version of "I Must Be Talking To My Friends". However, this is the third letter of comment I've written in 15 months, and I expect it will be another 15 months before the next one. Scythrop 22 was the best fanzine produced anywhere in the world during 1971, and no. 26 takes the prize already for the most ingenious fanzine of 1972. No. 25 was pretty good, too. (Someday I'll finish my letters of comment on those issues.)

If I found it hard to reply to your own good wishes, I find it even more difficult to say anything to George Turner's remarks. This is the unique occasion which every writer or fanzine editor craves - an assessment of his own work by somebody else: the chance to escape from one's own assessment of one's own work; the chance to see oneself as somebody else sees you. This is very different from praise or blame, because people who write to me praising or damning my work usually reinforce my own ideas about my magazine. It's very different when somebody like George Turner, for whom I have the greatest respect, takes the trouble to write an article like "The Phenomenon That Is Bruce Gillespie/SFC" in a magazine like Scythrop. The article, and your Interlude and Footnote, are even more valuable because they give such a clear picture of some of the developments in Melbourne fandom during the last few years. Because of George's article, a lot of things have become clear that were always obscure before.

I can still remember the first time I asked a favour from George Turner. During November 1968 I had made all the big plans to publish SFC, had bought the stencils, and had even typed some of the contents on that doom-laden Olivetti that did not type stencils properly. For a month or so, I was staying in a flat in North Carlton, and on a very hot day I walked down to a phone booth about a mile away and, with great fear and trembling, rang George and asked him if he would like to contribute some reviews to the fledgling fanzine. Let's face it: who contributes to first fanzines? Most people who say they are going to start a fanzine never type the first stencil. I expected that George would be so busy that he would put me off then. Instead, George not only agreed to write the reviews, but several weeks later he visited the flat when I wasn't home and left the finished reviews there. So, right from the start, George has been one of those people with enough faith in SFC to ensure its survival. Since the first issue, he has contributed reviews and articles in a never-ending stream. Therefore his comments about SFC are doubly valuable.

I'd be very grateful if George could ever diagnose "what goes on in the deeps" of Bruce Gillespie, because I don't know. If I find out sometime, I'll write an autobiography. Perhaps there are a few factors that I can cast light on. For a start, I have such a vast respect for George Turner that probably each time I speak to him I have such a fear of saying the wrong thing that I don't "let go" anyway. Perhaps that's the answer to your question: my life seems to have been governed by certain morbid fears, one of which was the fear, constantly reinforced in childhood, of saying or doing the wrong thing. I always had the feeling when I was a kid that nothing I did was ever right; my parents didn't have the slightest clue about the things I was interested in, and I wasn't faintly interested in the activities they recommended for "all little boys". On sports days, for instance, I used to stand out in the middle of a football field and think, "What an utterly stupid thing for people to do: why do people spend so much energy chasing a wretched rubber ball?" I still don't know the answer to that question. My parents had this instant formula for everything: "exercise"... football, cricket, running, walking, anything and everything that was most unpleasant.

You'll excuse me if I sound as if I developed a persecution complex combined with schizophrenia; if you think that, you're probably right. A very, very Protestant Christian background didn't help either. In a recent Review, Owen Webster was talking about the crippling effect that a Roman Catholic upbringing might have on a person; but a rigid RC background could not be nearly as debilitating as a Churches of Christ background. In RC theology, as I understand it, the church stresses original sin, but it also provides the "lightning-conductor" of guilt, the father-confessor. Catholics who cut loose from their confessors seem much less guilt-ridden than Protestants who try to cut free from their churches, because in Evangelical Protestantism one is made fully responsible for one's own guilt; that is, "sin" or whatever you want to call it, becomes far more internalized under this conditioning than it does for a Catholic. So, not only did I react against my parents' ideas in many important ways, but also I had the feeling always that they were right, because it was sinful to disobey one's parents, etc., etc. The only freedom from



the situation came through the world of the imagination, although it was precisely that pursuit of the world of the imagination that led to much of the conflict anyway. And because of these conflicts I had always had this feeling that I could never do anything about anything; that no matter what I did, life was a fairly miserable affair.

The first real freedom from these problems, the first signs that I could accomplish something for myself, even though my parents and others didn't have a clue what I was up to, occurred when I went to university. During Leaving and Matriculation I managed to pass most subjects, but it was very difficult because I only kept working when I had to. During first year of my course I learnt to like work, because I had to work under my own steam to achieve anything. I'm not sure whether this acquired taste for work was liberating or deadly; when I finished university I continued writing as much as I had during the Arts course by writing articles and reviews for John Bangsund. A year later, SFC started, and I lost myself completely in the production of that, especially because school-teaching was such a miserable existence (and that was primarily because I had never learnt to get along easily with people, and I don't suppose I can now).

Does all that answer your questions, George? The main reason why I find it very difficult to be spontaneous, and indeed am embarrassed by other people's antics (quite against my better sense) is this feeling, which John Bangsund and others only reinforced, that whatever I did, it was wrong. My only "defence", if I may use another psychological in-term, has been rationality, and over the last few years, mainly under the tutelage of people like George and John Foyster and even good old Franz Rottensteiner, I suppose I have learnt to think a bit more clearly than before. But even that's hard work, so it's no wonder that, deliberately or subconsciously, I've cut off many ordinary social contacts because I've felt that nobody really wanted to listen to me anyway (in person), but people wrote marvellous letters to me when I took the trouble to talk on paper. Actually, George supplied me the key idea himself some years ago when he said, "If something's worth doing at all, it's worth doing well". To which I've always added the corollary: "If you can't do something well, don't do it at all." Hence the peculiarly single-minded course of my life during the last few years.

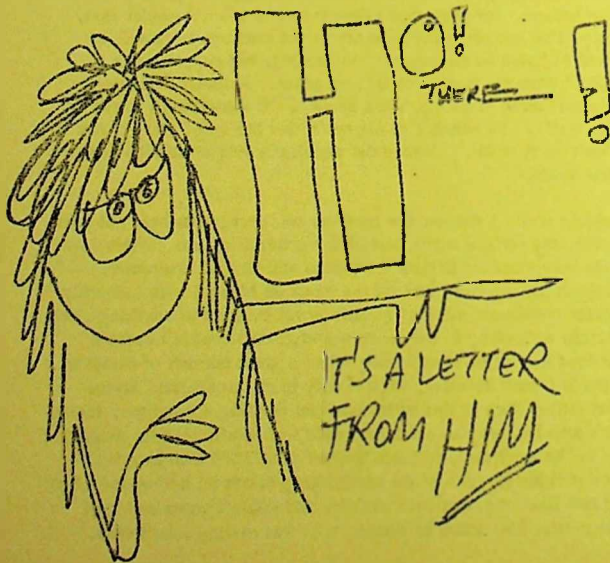
When it comes to writing style - well, I suppose the previous two paragraphs bear out your statements, George. However, my style is again part of the general pattern. When I was in Form 6 I failed most of the essays set for English Expression and English Literature. This used to drive me to despair; all my life I had set my heart on being a writer (mainly because my parents had finally convinced me that I would never be good at anything else), and yet at the age of seventeen, according to the exam marks, I still couldn't express myself clearly. During the next four years at university I had a great number of essays to write, and gradually I did teach myself to write, even if only in an "academic" style. I wrote the first article about Philip Dick in this style, and Lee Harding showed me, taking examples from John Foyster's articles, why an academic style was insufficient for magazine articles. So I set out again to "be a writer", to learn how to write ASFR articles, SFC articles, etc. John Bangsund still has no idea of the electrifying effect he had on me when he said that he and Harding had liked my first Dick article, and could I come and visit them at Femtee Gully. No matter how much he denies it, it was mainly John's idea.

This fanzine has got out of hand! I've just unearthed Ursula Le Guin's answer to David Comp-ton, Paul Wheelahan, Peter Roberts and others - and a letter from Lindsay Cox (which appears opposite). Why didn't I ask George to write something for this and call it Scythrop 27?

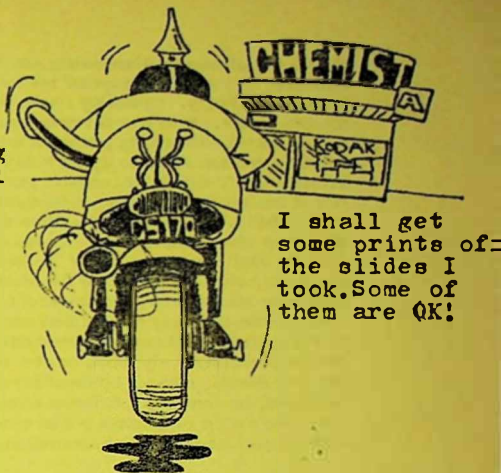
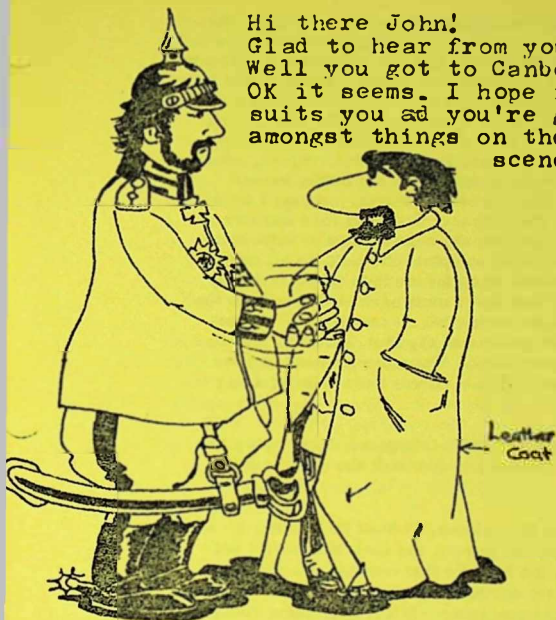
This was the first sign I had that anybody outside a school/university environment would actually like to read what I had to say. After 21 years of being regarded as a freak, at last there was the chance that somebody might actually take me seriously as a writer. (This was in 1967.) To get back to your remarks, George: the main styles I reacted against were my own tendencies to academic writing, and also the fulminating style of somebody like Harlan Ellison. I tried to go in the direction of writers like - well, John Foyster, and Gustave Flaubert, and Lee Harding and Henry James. My ideal has been cool, calm, rational, biting writing. Obviously I haven't achieved that ideal very often, but I keep trying. (Which may explain why I don't wear my heart on my sleeve.)

However, many people will find that I've worn my heart and anguished soul in full view during most of the time that I've published fanzines. I hope that people who disagree with George on that point will disagree with him in print. George says a lot of other things about SFC that are just as perceptive. He wants some information, for a start: The first issue of SFC was officially dated January 1969, although for reasons which John outlines it did not appear until the end of March or early April in that year. Yes, I do need a 25-hour day (preferably a 36-hour day). This year, in particular, I have run out of time, which is one reason why I am even a bit annoyed that SFC made the Hugo ballot; that means I have to produce no.26 as fast as possible instead of letting it go another month. I try to read widely away from science fiction, but even the sf field is so huge these days that I have to read a fair bit of it to know what is happening in the field.

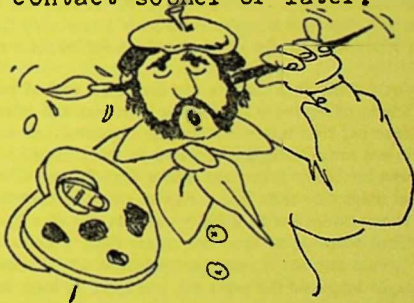
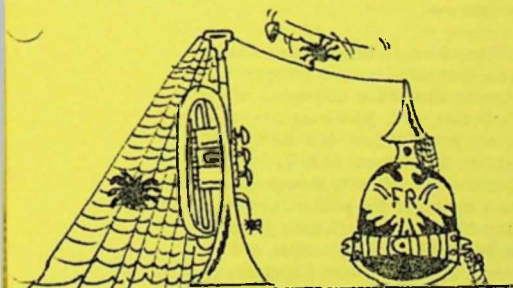
Like George, I also am always surprised that the Big Names write to SFC. Perhaps they know that they will always get an argument from somebody. Perhaps they like to see their names on the cover. Perhaps nobody else prints the type of material they want to read. Certainly nobody else prints the material that I want to read. Speculation does, but it hardly ever appears. Warhoon does, but it hasn't appeared for about 20 months. Scythrop does... Well, we won't go into that. Franz Rottensteiner sent me Lem's material (and most of my best letters answer Lem's material) because some American fanzine editor said it was "too difficult" for his readers. SFC's readers didn't find it too difficult.



Hi there John!
Glad to hear from you.
Well you got to Canberra
OK it seems. I hope it
suits you ad you're getting
amongst things on the local
scene.



Lettuce know what you want in the way of Art-work. I've given a stack to Pal Stevens as I didn't know where you were exactly, but I figured you make contact sooner or later.



Well as far as the Eastercon went it was a flop from the point of view of the Kaiser Wilhelm Jass Band! We were there for the friday and saturday nights to play but due to all things running rather late we got a bit sick of waiting and the fellas left. A little diggruntled I might add. We weren't gonna be paid but we did look forward to a good blow. But.....

Now I know where you are I shall be able to keep in touch. I shall do a stack of drawings for you to do with what you want to do with them.

Well this is just a shorty John so I'll leave it at this & I'll write soon,



Lindsay

George is particularly illuminating when he discusses our different views about reviews and criticism. My own handbook for reviewing is George's article "On Writing About Science Fiction" (ASFR18). Obviously I have interpreted it differently from the way George interprets his own advice. Your own summary (p.12 Scythrop 26) describes, for me, the way that I review a book. Obviously you think that I don't follow this advice. My first concern is to "decide what the author is trying to say", and then I try to "consider carefully what he has actually said"; then I "get on with the business of how effectively or ineffectively he says it"/ I don't believe in doing these things one after the other, but in one hit; Indeed, often I think that a book is so badly written that I will just try to prove that the author has no particular idea in his mind at all, and forget about the rest of the process. Always I try to find out what this or that author "is really up to". The only way to do this is to consider the whole book, the pattern of the whole. Often I find that the author wants to write one particular kind of book, but he doesn't have the powers to complete the task, so all sorts of other elements destroy the finished work. The essential thing for me is to prove each step in my argument; if I make a generalization, then I feel that I must have evidence from the text to demonstrate my point, or else the reader of the review has no reason at all to trust my judgement. Also, if I present the evidence, the reader can say that, based on the same evidence, he comes to a different conclusion about the book. The reviewer must in some way give a sense of "what it is like to read the book". The reviewer must write in a way that is itself interesting and entertaining.

I haven't room to elaborate this point. I'll just say that I think George and I are trying to do the same thing anyway (most of the time) and that we just approach the same task in very different ways.

You are right when you say that the centre of SFC is the column, "I Must Be Talking To My Friends". Without my "friends", the people who send me letters, the magazine would not exist. Happiness is a full mail box. Incidentally, the idea for that column was pinched from Outworlds #1. Unfortunately Bill Bowers did not continue his idea of a "multi-media fanzine", but he has made Outworlds into a very fine magazine. Bill is one person (other than John) who should be on the Hugo ballot form rather than me.

The only thing that disturbs me about the end of your article, George, and indeed, about the whole of Scythrop 26, is that both you and John assume that there is some competition between us, that in some way John Bangsund can be compared with Bruce Gillespie. If there was some underhand motive in this I would just admit that, yes, John Bangsund is a helluva lot better feller and editor than Bruce Gillespie, and yes, Scythrop is a helluva lot better magazine than SFC. At one time, during the first five or six issues of SFC, I did see it as a successor to ASFR - but that was in a year when nearly everybody thought that John had given away fandom. After that, I began to enjoy exploring the possibilities of SFC for its own sake; I enjoyed publishing SFC most during 1970, when each issue was only 26 pages long and the print run was 170. It took exactly two days to print, collate and post; but now it takes over seven days to do the same thing. The only reason I continue is because I enjoy publishing fanzines, getting letters, and for the Deep Psychological Reasons I outlined a few pages earlier. If John wants to make it a competition between SFC and Scythrop, let him; he'll beat me hollow every time. But you make the comparisons; I'm no longer interested.

John's "Footnote" shows the other side of the question. No, I didn't "hit the downward fannish trail" in 1967, but in 1966, when I bought ASFR 2 at McGill's Newsagency. (I had been reading fantasy and science fiction all my life, so needless to say I was pleased to see that there were magazines written about science fiction.) I kept buying ASFR at McGill's for well over a year. I didn't write to ASFR then because I had too much work to do for Arts III, and because I was afraid to approach such august identities as Bangsund, Harding and Foyster. In my first letter to John I recall saying that I was so amazed that there were intelligent people who talked about sf: previously I had only seen the work of Fred Pohl and Algis Budrys in Galaxy.

So that may explain why I acted as I did when I visited the Bangsunds and the Hardings for the first time in early 1968: it was like stepping among the gods. For the first time in 21 years, here were people who were actually interested in sf... the Dark Ages were over, etc. etc. Of course, it never occurred to me that perhaps at least two of these people

weren't very interested in science fiction, and that I had stepped among people whose motives and actions were entirely alien to me, and I to them. Despite all that, I fail to see why Diane didn't like me... I mean, what hope has a person got, if he goes to visit people who invited him, and then he finds out two years later that he wasn't all that welcome after all? I feel as if The Curse still haunts me, that the universal gun is still pointed at my head. So, John, in words of one syllable, please explain why Diane didn't like me, because I would like to mend my ways sometime or other. If she didn't like me because I was "shy, retiring, introverted, insecure and twisted", then I can feel proud of having been hated by Diane Bangsund, since these are the attributes of nearly all the sf fans that I know, and the essential attributes of all the people that I admire most: Beethoven, Berlioz, Philip Dick, Flaubert, Hesse, Borges, etc. But, if something else...? If it was the fact that I cannot make jokes - well, I could never make jokes, I cannot make jokes and I never will be able to make jokes. Can a person be blamed for just existing? It sounds as if Diane makes personal judgements in that way. Or all females take an instinctive dislike to me, which I suspect. Well, I'd just like to say that I like them.

Enough, enough. This letter probably has no ounce of sense left in it. Your magazine was brilliant, hilarious, illuminating and every other adjective you thought of yourself. I don't know why you don't do something more useful, like a magazine dedicated to John Foyster, or Leigh Edmonds, or George Turner, but you had the choice. I wish I could return the ~~flattering~~ compliment, but Scythrop cannot be imitated, so I won't try. Perhaps we could do a joint issue of THIS ISN'T LOCUS.

(ps: I've just realized that by contributing to Scythrop I've put it out of action for at least another year.)

((JB:)) Bruce, that is possibly the best letter of comment I've ever received. Thank you.

I will try, very briefly, to answer your queries and refute your errors; but please understand that like most of my fanzine writing this is being composed straight onto stencil and is therefore not a considered reply. From the beginning of your letter: No, not the first time someone has published an imitation of someone else's fanzine, and SFC is worth the trouble. ::: I don't know who has said you don't write humour. You're rarely funny, but I have often envied the humour in your writing: it's along the line of precisely what I am striving to achieve. If that doesn't make much sense, think about the development of Brian Aldiss's writing: it took him years to suppress his wit, his word-play and so on - or, rather, to know when to use it - and to write true humour. Humour comes from wisdom - something you have started out with. ::: Subconsciously I might have intended the cover to mean any of the things you suggest; similarly the Peacock passage. But the cover illustration was the best artwork I had on hand, and the Peacock bit just happened to fit the page. ::: I refuse to believe that a fanzine needs a print run of 1300 to win a Hugo. Regular appearance and good material well presented are much more important, and I will not be surprised if you win this year. ::: Wish I'd been in on that Eastercon discussion: an offset "Vision" is becoming increasingly feasible in Australia. If I were not still paying for ASFM, I would be attempting to prove it right now. ::: Your remarks about the debilitating effects of a Churches of Christ upbringing are right on the ball, but I will not say any more about this for the moment - beyond asking you to consider Bruce Petty along with the other CofC people I've mentioned lately. ::: "If you can't do something well, don't do it at all" is a damnable heresy. You want to do something; you do it as well as you can; you learn from your mistakes and other people's comments; and eventually you do it well - if you want to badly enough, and persevere long enough. If my reinforcement of your belief that everything you did was wrong, or anyone else's, helped you to achieve what you have achieved with SFC, then it tends to prove my point. ::: You are a freak, and don't forget it. All fans, all writers, all intelligent people, are freaks. All you need is other freaks to communicate with. We have them, and we are lucky. ::: Diane didn't like you because (a) she is Diane; (b) she is a lady; (c) the incident I described, funny as I might have made it sound, was enough to offend any lady; (d) Diane is not a freak; (e) by the time you came to our place she had had a gutful of science fiction and fandom. There might be other reasons. Diane might care to comment herself. ::: My reference to "shy, introverted" and so on was meant to be funny. I misfired. Your comments on these things being the

attributes of nearly all the fans you know, might be true; that they are the essential attributes of the people you admire most, is sheer bloody crap. It is their overcoming of these things which is admirable, their transmuting of what they are into art (in some cases, immortal art) - and this, Bruce Gillespie, is what you and I are doing (just to keep the thing on a personal level), and it is what I admire, respect and envy about you. :: If George and I gave the impression that we assumed there was "some competition between us" there is a very simple reason for this: there is. But don't mistake the nature of the competition. It is not a competition for subscribers or personal glory; it is not a vendetta, not a battle. It is a competition to see who can do best with what he has. That is the only worthwhile competition there is, and among other things, it is the true spirit of fandom. :: I would love to publish an issue devoted to George Turner, but if it takes a George Turner to write about us, who do I get to write about him?

Speaking of whom: Of course, someone has written about George Turner, at length. I do not know the gentleman's name, nor whether his work will be published, but someone has written a thesis on George's work, someone at the University of New England, I think (but I could be wrong about that). George has a copy of it, and just between you and me, I rather think he is quietly proud of it. :: I was anticipating with much joy a visit from George a week or two back. Unfortunately he couldn't come, but this does mean that if and when he does eventually get to Canberra my flat should be in the sloppy and utterly disorganized state he has come to expect of places I live in. George's lame excuse for not coming this time is that he and Peter Mathers have been working on a syllabus in English Language and Literature for the Preston Institute of Technology. I wonder, George, when this work is completed, whether I could publish it. It would be fascinating to see what you and Peter - both of you extremely well-read, both highly-regarded novelists, but with such apparently disparate viewpoints - have come up with.

Enough of me. Here's the letter you've been waiting ages to read:

URSULA K. LE GUIN
3321 NW THURMAN
PORTLAND
OREGON 97210 USA

19 September 1971

Dear Bangsund,

I thought that the handsome and sensitive Beard on the cover of *Scythrop* 23 was The Bangsund himself, and thought aha, that's just what I thought he looked like, only a bit older, but that's the reproduction. Well, so I soon discovered it was D. G. Compton. With that suppleness of intellect which is called "feminine logic" by rigid-minded males I instantly thought, aha, that's just what I thought he looked like - how nice!

His letter is nice, too. I agree that he did not wholly understand my impressively unreasonable article, because I could not agree more heartily with his belief that "the author's original intention should have been as wide, as inclusive, as all-inclusive and world-regarding as he could possibly make it". It was a great pleasure to read that. Even outside of people rarely have the courage to say it; they admire Hemingway for his "honesty" in saying he wrote for money and there was no other reason for writing - a patent lie and a silly one. Mr Compton's honesty is one of the things I admire his books for. I never have got up the courage to write him of my admiration; and it sounds as though not many other people had, except you. I hope he begins to realize that he shines, lighthouse-like, in a lot of odd corners of the world such as Oregon, Melbourne and British Columbia.

Paul Wheelahan's letter is very funny, and I do apologize to him for coming on formidable. I mentioned so many names in my piece for you that it did look like a Freshman Term Paper. But the thing is, I am interested in traditions, and what my father used to call antecedents. (What are that young man's antecedents? he would inquire after my latest scruffy youth had left. He never disapproved of the antecedents, he was merely curious - being an anthropologist he was interested in antecedents right back to the Pleistocene - but it was rather daunting.) And it never occurred to me that whether a writer was alive or dead was of any real importance, except of course to his family and friends, and himself. Classics schmastics: one makes up one's own mind. To be afraid of owing the influence of a

writer because he died in 1910, or of talking about him because he's a classic and it might sound affected - no, that's a sorry little phobia (I confess I had thought it an American one). As for Algren, Steinbeck and Donleavy, I confess they never entered my head, as I was talking (I think) about fantasy, wasn't I? but I'll make a bet with Mr Wheelahan: I'll back Patrick White and Angus Wilson against Algren and Donleavy (omit Steinbeck - he's dead) and in 500 years we'll meet, and find out which, if any, are being read. I can't think of a good meeting place. Can you?

My piece must really have been a masterpiece of unclarity. Here's Peter Roberts thinks I'm saying "the Novel is Dead" instead of being funny, as I intended, about the fancy critics who keep saying it. About the novelistic tradition in America he is absolutely right, of course, and in a sense one could fit even some of my books into that Escape-to-the-West pattern. But that's not quite what I meant. I was talking from the writer's point of view, not about theme but about form, perhaps? The fact remains, I feel that I have a lot of antecedents - but none of them are American. Whereas Heinlein, now, is intensely, almost supremely, American. You could argue STRANGER as the Great American Novel, and have fun doing it. But honestly, not my books, nor Phil Dick's. There are individual American novels I rank very high; but as a tradition, even in Mr Roberts's use of the word, I think it is a much narrower, more constricting affair than the British or the Russian. Not that that matters much. Definitions by national boundary are tiresome anyhow, in the long run.

Plumbers of the Cosmos is splendid. I did not think George could live up to that title. I believe Mr Couchman missed the punch of FROLIX 8 a bit, but I say this from the unfair vantage point of just having re-read it - I thought it a minor Dick the first time around, too. He tends to sneak up on you. Perhaps we should assume that there are no minor Dick novels?

Bangsoond, old man, I do hope you have got a job by now, an interesting easy RICH job. Life sounds a bit dreary and I do not see how you come up out of it with unfailingly first-class Scythrops. The Mozart of Melbourne.

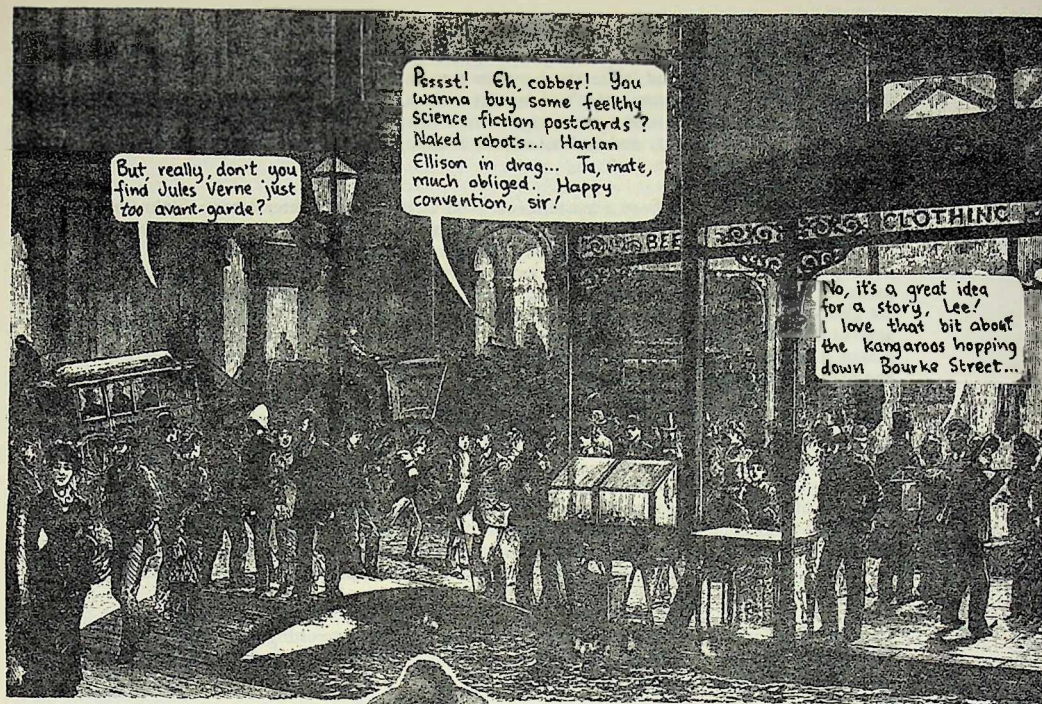
Best wishes -

Ursula

(formidable, but ever lovely)

(JB:) I don't recall ever dancing around the kitchen to keep warm, but I love the title: Pity I've moved; I won't be as flattered if someone calls me the Khatchamrian of Canberra... The new job is dull, easy and rich, and I hope to start enjoying the rich part about a year from now when my debts are paid. ::: And that's all for now.





AUSTRALIA IN SEVENTY-FIVE