

# Philosophical Gas

Keats and Chapman attended a choral concert, and as they walked home afterwards, the poet asked his friend if he had enjoyed the programme.

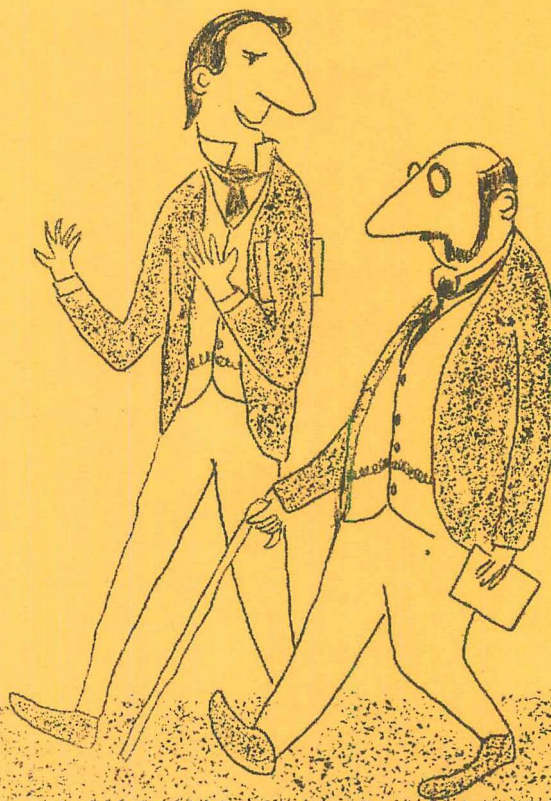
'Yes,' said Chapman 'and I was particularly impressed by the splendid themes in Bompoppoff's Eruption of Vesuvius, although the orchestration left something to be desired.'

'When you say themes' said Keats 'I imagine you mean the melodies.'

'No, I mean the themes.'

'But' Keats protested 'themes are not what they sing!'

'They so rarely are' said Chapman.







25th May 1973: This last fortnight or so, for more reasons than several, has been one of the most joyful periods in my life. It has been a time packed with incident and surprise. A month ago I could not have imagined it, mainly because a month ago I was dying slowly and alone of gastric influenza, a urinary tract infection, arthritis and a few other things not worth mentioning. At that time it did not help at all to think about the cream of Australian science fiction fandom enjoying itself at the Melbourne Eastercon; in fact I rather tended to feel that if I ever became well again, which I doubted would happen, I would renounce fandom and all its devious ways and dubious pleasures, and devote myself to pursuits of an uplifting and beneficial if somewhat vague nature.

On Thursday, 10th May, George Turner came to Canberra. I don't think Canberra was quite ready for him, but it seems to have survived. He stayed with me until the following Tuesday, and this was rather a mind-bending experience. On his very first day here he presented himself at the bar of the Hotel Civic, announced more than audibly (so I gather) that he was a stranger in the place, and within twenty minutes knew more about where the action is in Canberra than I suspected existed: all the brothels, where the homos hang out, who to contact for hash and stuff - every last bloody illegal pleasure to be had in the place. I have asked him to put it all in writing for me.

On the following Saturday I met a young lady whom, to protect the innocent, I shall refer to here as (hmm, lessee now, what's the most unlikely name I can think of? - uhuh, yes, that will do) Sally. A very lovely young lady indeed. Not only very lovely but very intelligent and perceptive, since she liked George instantly. I suspect that George liked her, too, but he's the kind of bloke who doesn't commit himself readily in this sort of area, and anyway I didn't care much what he thought, because I liked her and she seemed to like me and that seemed somehow rather more important.

While George was here I received (a) an enormous telegram, measuring about two feet by three, from most of my best friends in Melbourne, wishing me a speedy recovery from my illness, and (b) half a dozen cassettes from Robin Johnson, containing not



much less than nine hours of stuff from the Melbourne Eastercon. Looking at the telegram, which I immediately stuck up on the wall in the middle room, and listening to the sounds of my friends, I felt good - and not a little proud.

(28th May:) I've lost the thread a little while the stencil has sat curling in the typewriter all weekend, but not to worry.

While George was here the news of the Skylab failure was announced. There seemed to be some delay, some indecision in the matter. George said, 'Kim Kinnison would have been up there with a screwdriver hours ago.' I laughed, quite cleverly I thought, since I haven't read Doc Smith, and there was a lot of this light-hearted but erudite talk during George's visit. Now and then he mentioned an author I had read, but mostly he didn't. Oddly, I think he is still convinced that I am well-read. A lot of people think that. Perhaps it's just that I laugh in the right places.

We visited Dr A. D. Hope. Arthur Burns was there, and George and Arthur recalled reading each other's stuff in ASFR, and there was a fair bit of chat about sf; but mainly the talk seemed to be about ancestry and American politics and other things I don't know much about. Fascinating. Professor Burns and Dr and Mrs Hope are three of the nicest people I've met in Canberra, and it is one of the very good things about my life here that I know I can always get away from the absurdity of my job, my fannish responsibilities and other often-irksome things, to the friendly and stimulating world of Dr Hope and his circle.

And speaking of circles, Dr Hope lives on one of them - one of those nightmarish (it's quite okay in daylight) thoroughfares which abound in the better suburbs of Canberra. I knew exactly how to get home from Arthur Circle, since I'd studied the map closely before leaving, and I drove off very confidently. Some hours later George was saying slightly acescent things about my navigation, while I tried to pass the matter off lightly with jovial references to the niceness of the night for a drive and the unexpectedness of Canberra. (If some contemporary Mr Milestone - come now, you know I'm referring to Peacock again - were to ask, 'Pray, sir, by what name do you distinguish this character when a person

drives around Canberra for the second time?' I would not bite my lips in vengeful anguish as Mr Gall did in the grounds of Headlong Hall, but would invite Mr Milestone to try driving around the place at night a few times himself and himself decide by what other printable name this character might be distinguished.) Anyway, George wasn't at all impressed, and I began to feel very strongly that I was laughing in the wrong places when suddenly we were back on Arthur Circle. I am still not sure exactly where we got to that night, but I know I nearly cried when we came to a dead-end somewhere and I read the notice 'No Entry To Hindmarsh Drive'. Hindmarsh Drive is one of the few roads around here I feel confident about. Even if I had driven along it in the wrong direction I know that eventually I would have got home without difficulty.

I think it was the day George went home when I received a letter and a telegram, the first advising me that my mother was coming to stay for a while, the second that John Julian planned to call in one day. John promised not to bring his 'forty footy mates', but on the following Saturday he arrived and with him were two of his friends from Melbourne. John and David. We talked for a while, and then they went off to see Canberra. I think I mentioned that this could be accomplished in twelve minutes by sticking to the main roads, but might easily take a fortnight if they got off them. Sally called in, John's lot came back, and about 6 four of us (David had an invitation to dine and sleep elsewhere) set out for dinner. Sally had mentioned her need to visit a friend at Gundaroo, so we went there first.

Now I have to confess that although I had heard of Gundaroo I had never actually been there, and frankly wasn't even sure where the place is. I can report that it is a 1-o-n-g way from Canberra when you are hungry. In my usual accommodating fashion I enjoyed the drive and the company, but John and John soon began expressing their consternation at our expedition Back o' Burke in a quite amusing but heartfelt manner. My patience and their innocence were rewarded when we found the place: apart from Sally's friend's house, a few ruined churches, a petrol pump and a couple of dogs, Gundaroo has, of all things, a wine bar. And we stood in that bar, talking to the locals, drinking port and

generally enjoying ourselves no end for more than a few moments. The proprietor showed us his bottles of pre-war 'Coronation' brand sparkling sweet sherry, which I still refuse to believe in. Then we started feeling hungry again and drove to that Chinese restaurant in Kingston with which you should now be quite familiar if you have read this journal closely over the last year or so. Then we listened to a swag of Mahler and talked deep stuff about the inter-relationship of the arts and so on.

John, John and David departed early next morning, and I drove to Sally's place with a partly-formed idea of a quiet afternoon in mind. For the sake of conversation I mentioned that the Hansard mob planned that afternoon to play a game of softball in a park at Deakin, and somehow we got the idea that it might be fun to watch them. So we went to La Trobe Park, and as I suspected, no-one was playing softball. Instead there was a barbecue in progress. I suddenly felt the desirability of breakfast (it was only a little after mid-day, but I thought that for once I could break a habit), so we went and bought some sausages and things. I had thoughtfully packed a flagon of riesling in the car, so it was quite a tasty and satisfying breakfast by and large, taken all round, on the whole, as it were. The sun came out. I was at peace with the world. I said to Sally, 'Sally, I am at peace with the world.' 'Good for you' she said, or something like that. And I was. I felt just great. I was looking around for a nice spot to collapse happily in when someone said 'Come on! - you're in Norm's team and Sally's in Kevin's.' Yuk.

Anyway, that's how I came to be playing softball in a park in Deakin last Sunday week.

I know some of you won't believe that.

I know some of you won't even believe I hit two home-runs, but it's true. Those of you who saw me wielding that cricket bat at Foyster's Farm during the New Year BYO-Con will have realized already that I have the potential for greatness at this kind of sport, and will believe me, maybe.

I was fourth bat. I picked the thing up, then turned it round the other way, realizing that I'd never actually held a softball bat before; but then I remembered reading

Malamud's *THE NATURAL* a few months ago, and I said to the bat 'Let's kill 'em, Wonder-boy!' and faced up to the diabolical pitching of old Arch, a gentle, grey-haired attendant from Parliament House. Well, he might be close to retiring age, but he sure pitches a mean ball. I had two strikes called against me, and then somehow he chucked the ball at my bat and hit it and I ran like a randy elephant to first base and made it, only to hear the umpire call 'Side away!' For the next few innings I began to get the feel of the bat (it works better when you hold the thin end, I discovered) and the look of the ball (bloody hideous it was, too) and after a while went tearing off from first to second base. Someone threw the ball to Sally. She caught it. She turned around to see who it was she'd caught out - and it was me. We just stood there, sort of laughing and hugging and all like that, and after a while we started hearing boos and catcalls and cries of 'Stop Fraternizing With The Opposition.' so we stopped. Despite that, it was a beautiful day. A perfect day.

On Monday morning at 6.30 I picked up my mother and my nephew, Mark, at the bus terminal in town. It was great to see them. My mother is rather fantastic - if for no other reason than that she has not only put up with me but loved me for nearly three and a half decades. These days our understanding of each other is by no means complete, but more and more we appreciate each other as persons, and I'm pretty happy about that. In the six days she was here I felt we came to know each other better than we ever have, and I was really sorry to see her go yesterday.

Mark is 5½ and already a very individual person. He is an entirely loveable mixture of baby and rogue-male. The former is most delightfully evident in his conversation. One night he came into this room, where I was trying to type something important and thoughtful, and informed me that we were having 'sausage docketts' for dinner. I said 'Uhuh' and tried to go on thinking and typing, but the words were too much for me. He sort of leaned over my typing arm and said 'Granma says come for dinner - what is oo doing? - do an M for me - why does oo smoke? - what's this knob for? - poo, stinky ciganrette - what's that red stuff oo drinking?' - and that was one letter I couldn't finish. Mum and Mark spent a lot of time playing snakes-and-ladders, at which Mark cheats with magnificent panache, ignoring snakes

and leaping any odd squares between where he should be and the next ladder. Most of the time Mum was trying to keep back her laughter - there were tears in her eyes - but both of us burst out laughing, almost going into convulsions, when at one stage Mark leapt about seventy squares in one go, looked up at Mum with his big blue eyes and said 'Oo can cheat, too, if oo like.'

The rogue-male aspect of Mark's character is most evident in the way he looked at Sally (whom he won completely). I will say no more than that in a decade or so he will be positively dangerous.

On Tuesday there was a letter from Carolyn. Carolyn is thinking, again, about going overseas. She spoke of Paris. 'I got this glorious thought' she wrote 'of walking through Paris (with company, of course) and maybe having a cup of coffee.'

There are some people who know us both who don't understand why I love my friend Carolyn. Perhaps this only means that they don't understand me, because I can't imagine what you could do with a lady who can write a sentence like that except love her.

Carolyn is my favourite correspondent, and for that reason gets a lot of spur-of-the-moment stuff from me which later finds its way in modified form into my fanzines. This stuff I am writing at the moment is partly based on the letter I wrote back to her. I hope she will not mind if now I reproduce almost exactly what I said to her about that gripping sentence about Paris.

It really did grip me, no kidding. I felt almost inspired to write a musical play about her, a work which would have to be called "The Impossible Dream of Miss Addison". I can just see her, sitting all alone at stage left, chewing on a stolen biro and looking all thoughtful - just like Omar Sharif in "Dr Zhivago", only much prettier of course - and suddenly she looks at the packed house and says: 'I got this glorious thought...' and the audience is tingling with anticipation... 'of walking through Paris...' right on the edge of their seats now... '(with company, of course)... and there's a bit of a knowing giggle ripples around the crowded tiers... 'and maybe having a cup of coffee.' At that point they all throw up and leave.

A few days after I wrote the original of that conceit Carolyn rang me at work. Her first words were 'That's the last travel story you get from me, buster.' I hope it isn't. There are plenty of good travel story writers, but only one Carolyn, and I am sufficiently twisted in my sense of values to prefer Carolyn's letters to everything Charles M. Doughty and Graham Greene ever wrote.

Just don't push me by mentioning Sir Richard Burton.

Tuesday was also something of a milestone in what I am pleased to call my life. On Tuesday, 22nd May, I was finally divorced, by Decree Absolute. For nearly a week now I have been an utterly legal bachelor. It's an odd feeling, but not entirely unpleasant. (How do you find it, Diane?)

As I said, a most joyful fortnight or so (apart from the renewed where-did-we-go-wrong? feelings about Diane). Shirley - sorry: it's a bit difficult to remember what name I decided on back there on page 1 - Sally has provided the most joy in that time. (She is not a fan, and I have no intention of telling you her real name. If you find out, I hope you will honour her right to relative anonymity; if you don't, there's no harm done.) Sally is just possibly the most wonderful woman I have ever met. I say 'just possibly' because I am quite aware, dear lady reader, of just how wonderful you are, and I assure you of my undying devotion and admiration - but (I'm sure you will understand) you are there and Sally is here.

A wonderful, joyful, beautiful fortnight. And right in the middle of it a curious thing happened.

Last Thursday I picked up my mail at lunchtime, as usual. There was a letter from Phillip Adams - delightful, as you can imagine if you know anything of the man, and quite ego-boosting. There was a letter, too, from my sister Ruth and her husband Barry; which was even more delightful. The other item in the mail was, I thought, a fanzine from Leigh Edmonds. I opened it last. I opened it at work, as it happened, and (expecting the latest issue of Rataplan) I nearly fell off my chair when I saw what it was.

It was a one-shot fanzine, or slim book, entitled "John G. Bangsund: an Australian Tribute".

\*\*\*\*\*

No-Rest-For-The-Wicked Dept.

30th May: Tonight I should be going to a symphony concert, but here I am at the typer instead. For six days I have been wondering how on earth to respond to the remarkable volume mentioned at the foot of the last page. Tonight, somehow, I must respond. The next two nights look full from here, and today I had letters from John Litchen and Robin Johnson advising me that they will be visiting me this coming weekend. Also today I received FAPA 143 (postmarked 23rd May: how's that for efficiency, folks?) and I feel I should say something about that in time for mailing 144. So here I am. Now... what to say?

\*\*\*\*\*

First of all, two quotes from John Malcolm Brinnin's essay 'Emily Dickinson, The Legend and the Poet':

'... legend, unscrupulous of truth, tends to shape itself in the image of its makers rather than in the image of its subjects.'

'Legend has a way of flourishing in proportion to its degree of falsehood.'

And a quote from that other great critic and observer of human nature, Miss Shayne McCormack:

'... only the public can destroy a legend, not the legend itself...'

Those three quotations just about suffice for an introduction to what I feel I should write here, but I will add another which occurs to me in this context, and we'll see whether any or all of them make any sense as my off-the-cuff (and slightly inebriated) comments emerge in the next few pages.

'Someone asked Mr K whether there was a God. Mr K said: I advise you to reflect whether, depending upon the answer to this question, your behaviour would alter. If it would not, we can drop the question. If it would, then at least I can be of some help to you by telling you that your mind is already made up: you need a God.'

(Brecht: Anecdotes of Mr Keuner)



JOHN G. BANGSUND: AN AUSTRALIAN  
TRIBUTE

Edited & Published by Leigh Edmonds,  
PO Box 74, Balaclava, Victoria 3183  
(Recommended retail price: A\$1.00)

- Reviewed by "John Bangsund"

Homer, Giovanni Pergolesi and John Bangsund have at least this in common: that if all the comments of all the critics and scholars are taken into account, they never existed. Homer could not possibly have written the Iliad and the Odyssey; all of the music attributed to Pergolesi was written by someone else; and John Bangsund is clearly a figment of a certain community's imagination (at least, one can only reach that conclusion on the evidence of the present volume).

Mark Twain once remarked that all of Shakespeare's works were written by another person of the same name. This is a very useful theory - until one recalls that all of Mark Twain's works were written by someone named Samuel Clemens.

There are innumerable examples in literature and other arts of works attributed to some hazy legendary person. Religion and philosophy, if one may include these preoccupations in the category of art, immediately yield up the myths of Moses (who was actually four people or groups called J, E, D and P for convenience), Jesus of Nazareth (who, whether he ever existed or not, is known only to us through the writings of others) and Socrates (a patent fraud invented by one Plato), among others.

But it is necessary that these persons should exist, if only in our minds. 'Homer', 'Pergolesi', 'Jesus', 'Moses', 'Socrates' - and 'John Bangsund' - are labels for something which we ordinary mortals need. That is the first, and the only relevant, fact about these legendary persons: that for some reason or other they need to exist. And because they need to exist, they do exist. Scholars may prove beyond doubt that Homer (or John Bangsund) was an ordinary person just like you and me, but this is not an area for scholars. Always our needs and desires will overcome the dreary facts dredged up by the scholars.

The volume under review concerns the legendary character of John Bangsund, and I will concentrate my remarks on this subject.

From careful sifting of the available evidence we know that Bangsund was born shortly before the Second World War; was educated in a miscellaneous fashion at Helen Street State School and Northcote High School, and later at the Federal College of the Bible of Churches of Christ in Australia; was married to Diane Kirsten on 12th March 1966 and divorced from her on 22nd February 1973; wrote material for a kind of underground publications called 'fanzines', and published such things himself; and was variously employed as bookseller, typist, clerk, salesman, librarian, printer's reader, factory hand, motor-cycle messenger, security guard and journalist. We know also that his acquaintances included a number of literary persons, and that he seemed to gain pleasure from seeking out and conversing with persons who shared his interests. His private life - or to be more accurate, his private communication of what he considered important or would have us believe about his private life - is well documented in the publications which bear his name.

The scholar knows that his unhappy liaison with a lady named Jill came to nothing. He has interviewed the subject's associates, knows that the un-named lady in his publications was in fact named Jill, and knows that this affair, while of immense importance not only to the subject at the time but in his subsequent relationships, has considerable bearing on his essential character and therefore of his essential failings as a human being. The general reader, however, recalls only the subject's reflections on this experience. He remembers perhaps the lines, 'You must back away / For fear of coming too close.' (Scythrop 27)

The scholar knows that only a man who has hurt himself by 'coming too close' could write those lines. The general reader - especially the general reader likely to see Bangsund's publications - feels a more or less vague discomfort when he reads those lines, because he has hurt himself in that way, too.

And so the legend grows. You feel it; he says it. After a while, because he has said it you feel it. All the time you are growing in understanding yourself, yet this fellow seemingly continues to outdistance you; your feelings about him are mixed; he is no better than you, and you know that, yet you continue to feel that he is. So you sublimate him.

'sublimate, v.t. Convert from solid state to vapour by heat & allow to solidify again; (fig.) refine, purify, idealize.'

While you are sublimating him, making a legend of him, he is doing something similar, since all the time he has to relate what is said of him to what he knows about himself. This can be a painful process, for the subject and the makers of the legend alike.

In the work under review we see this process in action. Here are twenty-four people grappling with a legend. Their experience of the subject varies in intensity as much as in length of association.

And this is the book's main interest; that it tells us so much about its two dozen authors. It is twenty-four variations on a theme, and the theme is love - specifically, that peculiar love which is the essence of fandom.

At the superficial level one finds in this book much that is amusing, even much that is true, but it was neither written nor meant to be read at that level. The truths its authors intended to convey lie deep, and it is a rewarding experience to go looking for them. Although it might not seem so from my remarks here, this is what I have done, and I am rewarded.

This is a remarkable and wonderful document, and I am proud to be its nominal subject.



1st June: If winter comes, can spring be far behind - and other obligatory sentiments. Alternatively, consider kohlrabi. (So few do these days, alas.)

Anyway, I have skimmed through FAPA 143, and here are some superficial remarks about it and (as we say in Another Place) some Answers To Questions Upon Notice.

Very proud indeed, yes, to finish up equal second with Gregg in the egoboo poll. I understand that this is the ultimate egoboo in FAPA, since Harry is always first. Am I right about that, Fapans old and tired? If not, I shall (of course) be distressed not to have been voted into first place. Break it gently. ::: Seriously, I'm tickled pink. But I would be prouder still if more than nineteen members had voted.

I do not wish to vote on the matter of George Senda's proposed expulsion from the waiting list. I realize that this means effectively that I am voting for his expulsion, but I am not qualified in any way to judge in this matter, and furthermore I feel unhappy about the whole idea of voting people up or off the waiting list. I don't particularly wish to debate the matter; this is just an expression of my feeling about it.

Best thing in the mailing (for me) is Dick Eney's masterly satire on my ill-considered outburst in PG 13. The Learned Friend is well able to take care of himself, as I should know. Perfectly aimed, Dick (especially the Peacock references), and much appreciated. Shelley once wrote of Peacock: "His fine wit makes such a wound the knife is lost in it" - and that is exactly my feeling about what you have written. To paraphrase something Chip Delany once wrote to me about Foyster's reviewing in ASFR, it's almost a pleasure to be cut to ribbons so deftly.

Gregg Calkins: You are No.2; I am No.2: who is No.1? ::: Grushenka (not Griselda) outlived my marriage. I had to leave her behind in Melbourne with Carolyn, but I know she is much better looked after now than when she lived with me. I have often wondered whether I am a cat person or a dog person, and although I have only ever lived with a cat, I still don't know. More important, perhaps, is the strong conviction that I am a people person. ::: I have never seen a Red Ryder film, but I dimly recall

the comic strip, and it is from that that I remember "You betchum".

Paul Wyszowski: Of course you deserve a Stephen Leacock Award, but from the egoboo poll results it looks as though Norm Clarke might beat you to it. ::: I wonder what the chances would be of having a Lennie Lower Award organized in Australia. (Be warned, genteel readers: one of these days I shall write at length about the great and inimitable Lennie Lower. But not now.)

Harry Warner: Your speculation about sales tax is correct. As a registered business with a sales tax exemption certificate, Parergon Books (ie, me) must submit a monthly return to the tax people. The purpose of this is to establish what the business has purchased free of sales tax (such as this duplicating paper) and why. Since part of my business is publishing magazines, and magazines are exempt from sales tax, the paper used in my fanzines to which anyone may subscribe (that's important) is purchased free of the 15% surcharge which ordinary fans pay. ::: I don't want to become too involved in this explanation, but roughly speaking the Churches of Christ in Australia (of which I, Bruce Gillespie, John Alderson and Helen and Leigh Hyde have been or are members) corresponds to the Disciples of Christ in the USA. Certainly not Episcopalians, no sir. Them's Anglicans here. But I'm not sure about the United Church of Christ; I've lost track a bit since 1958, but way back then there were moves towards union between the Congregational Church (or Independents, if you prefer) and other denominations in America, and I would not be surprised to learn that what you call the "American Church of Christ" is the result of those moves. Certainly I would be interested, since I have never heard of that particular denomination. About 1956 the situation was complicated by the emergence in Australia (probably earlier in America) of a break-away group also called Churches of Christ. These people did not believe in any kind of centralized authority, were extremely fundamentalist in outlook, and denounced the use of musical instruments in church services. They called us the "Associated" Churches of Christ; we called them "the anti-organ mob". The newspapers, and the general public, were and continue to be just a little confused.







4th June: Another fantastic weekend: how long can this keep up?

Robin Johnson arrived on Saturday morning and didn't lose a thing in Canberra, which even if it detracts from his image a little is nevertheless pleasant to report. Monica and John Litchen, more or less secretly married about a fortnight ago, arrived on Sunday, and I feel very honoured that they chose to spend a day of their three-day delayed honeymoon at my place. With Sally, and Helen and Leigh Hyde, we did some weird, fannish and altogether delightful things - such as a short film sequence at the National Library. Readers of Nation Review will perhaps be pleased to know that when the short colour film for Australia in 75 is shown in Toronto this September I may be observed wearing a ferret T-shirt (or is it D-shirt?).

The milk bar at Manuka which sells papers on Sunday happened to have this week's National Times. The proprietor was a little bemused when Robin and I bought five copies each, and Sally and John at least one each. If he had seen Robin a few moments later dumping the Times in a litter bin and keeping only the colour supplement he would have been convinced we were quite insane. But that issue has a passable article about sf and fandom by Tony Maiden, with interesting photos of Robin, Mervyn, Paul, Bert Chandler and George Turner. Oh, and Batman, yes. Robin and his Norstrilian News were also mentioned in Saturday's Melbourne Age, but I didn't discover that until tonight. Since Lee Harding was guest speaker at the last Fellowship of Australian Writers meeting in Melbourne, and George Turner is writing an article and a story for Meanjin (most illustrious of Australian literary journals), one cannot help feeling that sf and fandom are getting some very useful publicity here these days. Graham Stone had a review in the Canberra Times on Saturday, too, but his sour approach to the book concerned probably didn't help much. On the other hand it was very interesting to see that the Age review by Rod Nicholls of two of Mike Moorcock's recent novels (in which Robin is mentioned) was headed NOVELS - not Science Fiction.

From Robin and John I discovered that Leigh's JGB: an Australian Tribute started out well and truly as a joke, but developed into the serious publication it is. Well,

it wasn't really a discovery: the book itself provides enough evidence of that. But both wondered how I had received it. I told them I was utterly delighted, as I am. They did make me wonder whether my reaction to it, in this issue, wasn't perhaps just a little on the too-serious side - but what is written is written. Reading my piece now I feel a little odd, thinking about how Harry Warner or Bob Tucker or Bill Rotsler would react to a similar compliment - but, odd or not, that's how I reacted and I'll let it stand.

Reverting to my announcement on the last page (typed while half-seas-over, as usual), I should mention that many people have not seen Scythrops 25-27. These issues, and a few other things I shall now mention, may be had by anyone either entitled or interested by writing to me and asking for them.

SCYTHROP 25 has articles by George Turner and Robert Bloch. Other contributors include Terry Jeeves, John Brosnan, "John Boyd", Ed Cagle, Barry Humphries and Ed Connor.

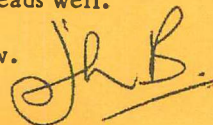
SCYTHROP 26 features George Turner, Stanislaw Lem, Mervyn Barrett, Robin Johnson, Gary Deindorfer, Jerry Lapidus, Joanne Burger, Jack Wodhams and John D. Berry.

SCYTHROP 27 seems to be entirely by me, but there's a letter from Dick Geis in there, too, to give some sense of proportion. BUNDALOHN QUARTERLY 1 consists mainly of my essay on "Is Australia Funny?" BUNDALOHN QUARTERLY 4 has articles by Shayne McCormack and Paul Stevens and a short piece by Bob Smith.

There are a few other things still lying around, such as odd issues of ASFR and PHILOSOPHICAL GAS. First come, first served; if you want them, ask. No charge, but donations gratefully received for the Bangsund Survival Fund, if you feel that way inclined.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL: AN AUSTRALIAN TRIBUTE is (still) almost finished. If you were a Scythrop subscriber before January 1972 you have a good chance of getting a copy; otherwise you would be advised to order a copy from Space Age Books, GPO Box 1267L, Melbourne 3001. Price A\$2.00, US\$3.00. I think you won't be disappointed: it reads well.

And that's all for now.





If an important decision is to be made, they discuss the question when they are drunk, and the following day the master of the house where the discussion was held submits their decision for reconsideration when they are sober. If they still approve it, it is adopted; if not, it is abandoned. Conversely, any decision they make when they are sober is reconsidered afterwards when they are drunk.

~ HERODOTUS, on Persian customs

Philosophical Gas  
A JOURNAL FOR GENTLE FOLK

from: John Bangsund  
PO Box 357  
Kingston ACT 2604  
Australia