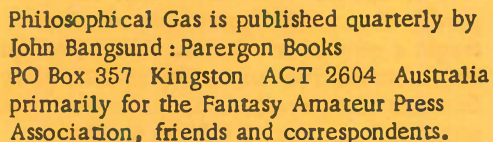




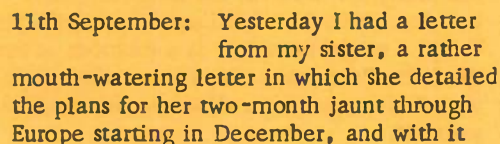
Number 25 : Spring 1973



Letters and other written contributions are welcome, and (unless I advise you otherwise) so are other publications by way of exchange. No artwork is required for the time being. (I seem to have about ten years supply of Rotslers on hand, some of which - I'm sure Bill won't mind - I will be pleased to pass on to Australian fanzine publishers, provided they do the right thing by putting Bill on their mailing lists.)

Subscriptions: A\$1.50 per annum. Subscribers to 'Scythrop' - publication of which has now ceased - may choose either to receive Philosophical Gas or ask for a refund. Where it does not contravene local law, my bank prefers cheques to any other form of payment. Your bank will tell you what A\$1.50 is worth.

The main aim of Philosophical Gas is communication. If I think you are interested in what I have to say, I am interested just as much in what you have to say, whether in response to what I publish or otherwise. I have no ambition to make a fortune from my writing, nor to accumulate trophies. But one way or another, I do want to hear from you. That's the name of the game.



she enclosed a circular from the Board of Management of the College of the Bible of Churches of Christ in Australia (of which her husband is a member), inviting friends of the retiring Principal, Lyall Williams, to write a letter to him. The letters received will be bound into a volume and presented to Mr Williams at a public farewell meeting in November. I looked at this circular and wondered whether a lapsed Christian might contribute to such a presentation volume, and I decided I should. Partly to fill in some gaps in my readers' knowledge of my background, but mainly to see whether I have written too much, I here pre-print the letter I wrote very late last night.

Dear Mr Williams,

It is over fifteen years since I left the College of the Bible, and almost as long since I ceased to regard myself as a practising Christian. But what I am and hope to be, my sense of values, of what is good and right and worth striving for, and many other things, are still based very much on what I learnt in college. And I learnt as much from your example as I ever did from lectures and books.

I was sad when my mother mentioned to me that Mr Gale and Mr Pittman had died. I valued them, and appreciate them more as I grow in understanding. My sadness came partly from never having told them this.

Will Gale was preaching at Northcote when I decided to enter college. He was quite delighted at the idea of my following in his footsteps exactly half a century after him, and he used to tell me with nostalgic joy of college life as it was in 1907. I have forgotten most of the stories (one I recall concerned a motorcycle called Boanerges).

[illegible]

From the government's point of view, what it's all about is thuggery and exploitation. However, that's not what they tell the dear pee-pul. In order to distract attention from what it is actually doing the government puts on a circus called The Parliament. In order to make it interesting for the people, they are allowed to choose the performers. The teams are called parties, and the people are encouraged to take sides. The parliamentary game is played out in arenas called Houses, where the parties engage in ritual and stylized conflicts called Divisions. It all gets very complicated, and the people never seem to catch on that it's just a circus to

Warning! A government which is successfully avoided by too many of its citizens finds ways to bring them back under its control. Therefore it is unwise to preach the political philosophy of anarchism in a spirit of missionary zeal. Simply look carefully at the lives of the people you know. If you decide that they like being exploited, leave them alone. Otherwise make them aware of the true state of affairs and leave it to them to free themselves.



Two Poems by John Litchen

LA LUZ TREMENDA

Las hojas caen
en el suelo.
Y la gente tambien
caen, como nieve.
Por la muerte
descendió con la lluvia.
Se rompió el cielo -
La Luz tremenda
que nos hizo ciegos.

ANCIANIDAD

Ya todos los días pasan sin recuerdos,
Ya no más me dicen, como me decian,
Eres Joven.
La ancianidad crece, mientras
qué la juventud se desaparece.
Como el viento, en los árboles desnudos
por el invierno,
que murmura: Todo ha Pasado.
Todo tu amor, toda tu vida,
Todo el corazón, toda el alma,
No hay más
qué la sombra de la muerte.

Philosophical Gas 21 has seen several ill-fated incarnations, and I think it's about time to admit defeat and not publish that number. One of at least four covers run off for that issue appears opposite, and two poems above. The main article in the issue was also by John Litchen and (you'll never believe this, John) I can't find it. The article was about John's brother-in-law, the Chilean science fiction writer Hugo Correa, to whom the Spanish magazine Nueva Dimension dedicated an issue last year.

Ah well, hasta luego or something, Gas Filosofico 21.



Número dedicado a HUGO CORREA
y « Nueva Dimensión »

Let's have some letters.

VALDIS AUGSTKALNS 4.7
1426 22nd Street
Parkersburg
West Virginia 26101 USA

How the hell did I get on your mailing list? ((Don't know, Val, but welcome aboard.)) I'm not going to go into detail about why I think your evaluation of Campbell as in the same tradition as Stalin is simply ignorant. Stalin is one of the statesmen under whom I've lived. Hitler, Roosevelt, Churchill, Attlee, Adenauer, Truman et seq were others. (Truman was probably the best of them.) And JWC was probably as important if not more important than any of them, as you imply. Francis Bacon is a comparable figure I think.

Where you go off the track is in trying to compare a determinist like Uncle Joe with a philosophic anarchist like Campbell. Campbell is a direct lineal descendant of Tucker, as are a lot of the American technocrats. There is no surprise that Tucker's contemporary Willard Gibbs formalized the definition of entropy that's never been improved upon. The notion and its social and physical implications were in the American air at the time. Gibbs elaborated the only complete and completed science. Tucker suggested that the social implications were indeterminate and probably painful unless men adopted common sense as the basis for conduct. In the USA despite frequent excursions in various directions, the populace largely has. Even with harder times coming now, there is a good chance that they will continue to do so. Really quite remarkable and unlike any other place I've ever lived in. I do not claim to understand why this is so. Mr Eric Hoffer is the only chap I know who claims he does. But I do know that if you try to place Campbell without dealing in Gibbs and Tucker, you are playing solitaire, not poker.

Uncle Joe is the dumb peasant out there in the dark muttering 'I am God.' He decrees a future in which poker playing is not permitted and fades out and is forgotten.

:::: Talking about poker, maybe I'd better deal in any readers who don't know what your letter refers to, Val. My essay 'John W. Campbell and the Meat Market'

was first published in Philosophical Gas 6 (August 1971) and has since been reprinted, somewhat abridged, in Andy Porter's Algol, and finally revised in 'John W. Campbell: an Australian Tribute'. Val's letter refers to the version in Algol. :::: In that article I didn't really attempt to 'place Campbell'. I wrote what I felt about the man, which is rather a different matter, and if the parallel I drew between JWC and Stalin is 'simply ignorant', as you say, or 'revolting', as Alex Eisenstein (I think it was) said in Algol, I can only plead guilty to feeling that way. The article didn't pretend to be an exercise in scholarship - which is rather fortunate since I have to admit that I don't know anything about Tucker, Gibbs or Hoffer, for a start. I shall make a point of finding out who they are, real soon now. :::: Um, I don't want to get too involved in a continuing debate on Campbell, Val, but would you care to elaborate on how he compares with Francis Bacon?

MIKE GLICKSOHN 7.4
32 Maynard Avenue #205
Toronto 156 Canada

I unabashedly admit to removing you from our mailing list after not hearing from you in some time, but we're glad to have you back. as just about anyone will tell you, I'm a right foghead in this respect.

:::: Maybe that's the way to win Hugos, Mike. (I don't get Locus either.) Congratulations, Susan and Mike, on your fanzine Hugo. As the Good Book saith (Joel 1:4), 'that which the Locus hath left, hath Energumen eaten' - or something like that.

PETER ROBERTS 28.4
87 West Town Lane
Bristol BS4 5DZ England

((Lennie Lower's 'Here's Luck')) ... I discovered a few days before Christmas as I returned from delivering the post (a temporary job), frozen and wretched. I sat down by the fire with a cup of coffee and a packet of Woodbine and read the book straight through. Very fine, I thought, and rather like the best of light fannish humour. ... Any other books from Australia worthy of mention? ((Come to think of it, you ignorant old Pom you, yes, there are! Space forbids a proper reading list, but you could start with the complete fiction of Patrick White, Thomas Keneally, Peter Mathers, George Turner, Christina

Stead, Randolph Stow, Henry Lawson, Miles Franklin, Joseph Furphy, Crieda Rohen, Henry Handel Richardson, Peter Cowan, E. O. Schlunke and Martin Boyd. There's nothing else quite like 'Here's Luck' though, if that's what you had in mind. I was talking to Nancy Keesing about this (and I only mention her name because John Foyster makes an annual award for name-dropping) and we agreed that there is no-one in Australia today who could really be regarded as Lower's successor as a humorous writer. Peter Mathers and Morris Lurie go close, and there are others who could be mentioned, but no-one seems to have exactly the right combination of brilliant wit and intimate knowledge of common folk that Lennie Lower had. And it is interesting that he could sustain it for only one novel. There was another novel, which I have never seen but I am told it is bad. His proper metier was the humorous newspaper column.)) I usually buy books on recommendation from other people - I do the same for records in fact; you are already to blame for my buying the complete novels of Peacock in two paper-bound volumes.

Glad you liked the postcard of the Minack Theatre - I've seen a couple of plays there and even slept on the beach below after one of them. The pun did occur to me... .. Scythrop 26: Mervyn Barrett's review of 'Planet of Sex and Orgies' sounds entirely plausible. If such a book exists, I'm sure Mervyn has a copy. (The book exists. Andy Porter sent me the publisher's ad for it and the others Mervyn mentioned.) At the OMPAcon he showed us what appeared to be an inoffensive underground magazine; making out the title, however, I found it to be The San Francisco Ball and the contents, once opened, proved lurid and almost certainly unacceptable to Her Majesty's Vigilantes. The excuse for buying it was the presence of a certain Big Name Fan (in a variety of poses) together with some of his admirers. No, not John Brunner. Bill Rotsler. Actually Bill, together with Dick Geis and, nowadays, John Brosnan provide plenty of justification for entering the sleaziest of back alley bookshops and pouring (You reading this, Judge Speer?) through a jumble of titillating literature. 'What are you looking for, guv'nor?' says a greasy attendant. 'Er, something fannish, actually. Have you the latest El Hombre

with the Brosnan story?' They never did, though, and I'm pretty lucky to have escaped spending money on John's fanfic (rejected by Wadezine, I'll wager). ... Philosophical Gas 13: I really should make some reply to Ursula Le Guin, but I think it would take a rather long and certainly boring essay to put over my views on the novelistic tradition in America. I liked the last sentence, though: 'Definitions by national boundary are tiresome anyhow.' And here am I, having almost completed five years of study in American Literature... But really, I should say that Phil Dick, of all the American sf writers, is the one I'd pick out as a typical product of modern American literature; his constant preoccupation with disintegrating reality places him in a massive group of contemporary mainstream writers - Purdy, Hawkes, Barth, Schneek, Barthelme and so on and so on. Tony Tanner's fairly recent survey of the modern American novel, 'A City of Words', gives a reasonable outline of themes and interests in the new writers. Virtually all of them apply to Phil Dick - hardly any, if indeed a single one, could apply to Heinlein (Ursula Le Guin's semi-serious candidate for the Great American Novelist). I know I should argue it out myself, but it's easier to refer to somebody else's book! Maybe one day I'll try to write something cogent about Phil Dick and the American Tradition - but not today, thanks.

:::: Thanks, Peter. :::: It's interesting, almost sense-of-wonder provoking, to note that your comments above refer ultimately to an article by Ursula in Scythrop 22, published about April 1971 and written some months earlier. I note that you haven't seen Scythrop 25. I shall this moment dispatch a copy to you. Please feel free to comment on Bob Bloch, George Turner or anyone else therein. No hurry in this timeless fanzine, folks. Speaking of Philip K. Dick, here's a note from

JOAN DICK 5.9
379 Wantigong Street
Albury NSW 2640 Australia

I am going to mark this as a red letter day in my diary. Today I received a letter from Philip K. Dick, the one who writes

and lives in the USA. He really wrote to me and wants a reply. He had just finished reading Bruce Gillespie's last SF Commentary before he took off for Canada and liked my comments on him. Enough to write and tell me so. I could hardly splash my way back to the house to read it.

::: I know how you feel, Joan. Like way back in '66 when a letter - and a cheque for a subscription! - arrived from James Blish. After a while (he said modestly) you get used to receiving letters from the Great&Famous, when you realize that they, too, are ordinary mortals like ourselves. Some of 'em can't even spell proper! ::: Thanks for your letters, Joan. I promise to quote more from them than the above brief extract just as soon as you write something I feel like sharing with Them Out There. ::: At this point I should perhaps mention that the numerals at the head of letters published here refer to the date of writing. '5.9' means the 5th of September, not the 9th of May. Just thought I'd mention that. And I did. Hm. ::: Last week I was talking to Maurice Dunlevy (does that rate in your contest, John?) and I tried to convey to him something of the unique writer/reader relationship that exists in science fiction - exemplified in Mrs Dick's note above. He was, I think, just a little surprised. His article on sf, fandom, fanzines and conventions will appear in this Saturday's Canberra Times. He read it to me over the phone, and it isn't too bad at all for someone who has never read sf and never heard of fandom. He has mentioned me far too often in the article, but at least he hasn't done anything like having me play the krummhorn, as that lady journalist did in The Australian!

KEITH CURTIS 31.8
PO Box K 471

Haymarket NSW 2000 Australia

Yes, it is Kevin Dillon's box number. I share it with him as a result (partially) of his having introduced me to fandom in the guise of the Sydney Science Fiction Foundation. Presuming on your knowledge of Kevin and his assorted traits, you can imagine full well the effect upon a harmless, assistant type, soft porno and secondhand paperback salesman, albeit with interest in sf, being confronted by the inimitable Dillon. (Yes, Keith. I feel for you.) I assented to

attending one of Eric Lindsay's 'mini-Faulcons' after much badgering from Kevin. Since then my library has swelled, my cash reserves belong to others, I have been sacked from the bookshop (due to 'an unhealthy interest in books') but not before your friendly sergeant from the Vice Squad lumbered me with ten pretty blue sheets vulgarly marked 'Summons' for selling and publishing 'Oriental Pleasures', 'The Professional' etc - and now I'm unemployed. C'est la guerre. All in eight months. Bruce Gillespie's letter in Philosophical Gas 13 was worth losing a night's sleep. (I'm sorry, Keith! I have omitted your first paragraph where you mention staying up all night to read Scythrop 24-27, Philosophical Gas 13-22, ASFR 1,2,4-9, Crog: 9, Bundalohn Quarterly 4, Revolting Tales 4, Chunder 5 and 'JGB: an Australian Tribute'. What fortitude! What dedication! What... what idiocy! Life is full of marvels. Pray continue.) His remarks about a Protestant background were cogitative and close to home. I went to a co-ed boarding college (there really are such things) back in the old dart. Prot ethic, prayers, services morn, noon and night, seven days a week. Religious instruction forty minutes a day, five days a week. Enough to turn anyone off. It did. I came to Sydney in '67, determined to forswear all things belonging to the Divine Succession of Canterbury and the King. So what happens? I see the light and become a bloody BAPTIST. Nice respectable short-haired Sunday-going Christian. One day I wake up and piss off down to the 'Gong for six months. Good. (Rapid note for overseas readers: 'Gong is Wollongong, a large industrial city cum outer suburb south of Sydney. Carry on:) No sooner back in Sydney Town than swearing fealty to the Anglican establishment and playing bible cricket. What's more I ran the fellowship magazine for the next three years. Hand operated Gestetner. I edited the magazine, wrote 50% of it, typed stencils, ran it off, distributed it and made a profit. I'm still inordinately proud of the fact that I increased circulation from 15 copies a year to 100 every 2-3 months. Even out to Camden and Rooty Hill groups. In the meantime I was doing the Sydney Preliminary Theological Certificate, a Christian Youth Leadership course and publicity work for the Christian Motorcycle Fellowship. (The mind boggles.) Busy little prot to say the least. I took over the running of the bike group for a while then

left it, threw the SPTC to the proverbial and now I'm back to being disenchanted (acknowledgements to Thurber who immortalized the feeling for all mankind) but at least this time I've got some damn good friends behind me, notably one Kevin J. Dillon, who's done a lot for me and to me. I started this letter off initially to say what an interesting person you are, John Bangsund, and how damned good reading your jottings make. Instead it's become 'Look what I've done.' Bear with me. I might say something for posterity yet.

:::: I have the feeling you might just do that, too, Keith. Nice to make your acquaintance. :::: My sister Joy told me something of the Churches of Christ motorcycle group last xmas, but it's still too much for the mind. Maybe I'm getting old. Just think: If I'd hung onto my 600cc Norton and my meagre faith for fifteen years, instead of copping out when I did, I might have been a real Big Name Christian now. But somehow I prefer being a small name agnostic driving a Renault 16TS. :::: This is Philosophical Gas, folks - the journal for drop-out Christians.

GEORGE TURNER 3.9
87 Westbury Street
Balaclava Vic 3183 Australia
Congratulations on your new residential/business address, which apparently has come complete with secretary, cook and automated washing-up robot. I quite approve of the 'Sally' model, which is also decorative, charming to talk to and serves to keep roving Bangsunds on even keels. (That last is problematical but I include it in good faith.) I would be happy to try the amenities of your spare room if it were located anywhere but in Canberra, where the refrigerated weather system works with a too terrifying efficiency. When memory of the last venture fades I may try again, at high summer.

:::: When you wrote that, George, Canberra was enjoying its warmest, driest early spring in years, while every other Australian capital apparently was flooded. We get a lot of rain during 'high summer', but with luck at that time next year I will be in Hobart or Melbourne - or Ruth and Barry's farm down in the Western District of Victoria. But we'll be delighted to see you again.

KEN OZANNE 26.8
The Cottonwoods
42 Meek's Crescent
Faulconbridge NSW 2776 Australia
I had previously read most of the material in the Richards memorial issue of PG (24), in addition to hearing the tape, but I am glad to have it in a more permanent form than the impression in my faulty memory. All I can say is that I would that I had known him. We would have disagreed, I am sure, perhaps to our mutual profit. ... Extraordinary that I should have happened to choose that bottle of Kaiser Stuhl '66 to bring to your place. I wish I could persuade you to lay down your remaining bottles for three years at least - it is an insult to a very good wine to drink them now.

:::: With the possible exception of Ron Clarke, Ken, I am the only person on this planet who has met both you and Brian Richards, and I can assure you that a meeting between you would have been memorable. I could say the same of a lot of people. The two people I will most miss from the World Convention in 1975 are Brian Richards and John W. Campbell. What a meeting of minds and persons that would have been! - and only Ron Clarke and John Brosnan will understand fully what I mean by that, which is sad. :::: When I become rich I shall start laying down wines. Until then I just buy what I can afford and lay them down for a fortnight at the outside. But I do have five bottles of that '66 Kaiser Stuhl Bin J426 in my cupboard, and I have a kind of ambition to save at least two of them until 1975 for Ed Cagle and John Berry. :::: Speaking of John Berry: I have an enormously long letter from you, John, and if I had the energy of a Gillespie I would publish it. But I haven't, and I can't see how I could edit it down to a column or three. I love five-page letters and I wouldn't for the world discourage you from writing them when the urge comes over you, but they are just a little too much for a slim publication such as this. I recall that Reece Morehead once wrote me a letter of about thirty pages; I was so overwhelmed that we've barely spoken since! :::: And speaking of Ed Cagle, I have a note here from John Foyster that he liked my stuff in Kwal&c.

The lady pictured opposite is, as you no doubt recognized instantly, Mrs Ursula K. Le Guin, author extraordinary, possessor of a house-full of Hugos, Nebulas and other literary awards (the latest for her novella 'The Word for World is Forest') - and as announced in Toronto earlier this month, Guest of Honour at the 33rd World Science Fiction Convention, Melbourne, 1975.

Thinking about Peter Roberts's remarks earlier in this issue I realized that probably the majority of my readers will not have seen the article by Ursula to which he and I refer, so I am reprinting it here.

I am also reprinting an essay by the late Kurt Vonnegut Jr, first (and perhaps only) published in Kallikanzaros 4 (March-April 1968), edited by John Ayotte of Columbus, Ohio.

I am at present enjoying Mr Vonnegut's posthumous novel 'Breakfast of Champions', and hope that his literary executor has many more works tucked away somewhere for our future delectation.

I confess that I am only assuming Mr Vonnegut deceased; I have no certain knowledge of his death. But I think this is the only assumption one can make in view of the fact that I wrote to him in care of both his American and British publishers quite some time ago, requesting permission to reprint this article, and have never received a reply.

His essay, or address rather, was apparently presented to the Ohio State University on the occasion of their acquiring the two millionth volume for their library.

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THE VIEW IN

Ursula K. Le Guin

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People in my line of work are forever being asked three questions: What name do you write under? Where do you get your ideas? Why do you write science fiction?

To the first I answer, What name do you beat your wife under? To the second, Out of my head. That is, I would make those answers if I didn't always remember them several hours later. To the third I have never had a satisfactory answer even several hours later. I shall attempt now to produce an unsatisfactory answer, since John Bangsund asked me Question Three and John is a man worth answering.

I write science fiction because that is what publishers call my books. Left to myself, I should call them novels.

The novel is dead. If you don't believe me,

ask the French. They know the novel is dead. They ought to: Flaubert killed it. The Flaubertian novel has been dead ever since it was born. No-one noticed this for about a century. Then, during the last ten or fifteen years, they made a great fuss about it, and a New Wave. This is very like the French.

Meanwhile, Angus Wilson, Patrick White, Boris Pasternak and Alexander Solzhenitsyn were writing long works of fiction in prose of immense power and vitality. This is very like the English and Russians, who in the teeth of the best literary theories write huge, messy books that go on forever - novels, in other words. This is the deplorable tradition of Dickens and Tolstoy, which produces nothing that pleases theoreticians and which will not even die on schedule.



It includes one renegade Frenchman, Proust, by the way.

American novels since the time of Henry James have been preponderantly Flaubertian, and dead. There is no major native tradition for a novelist in America to grow from. We have had marvellous oddballs and one-shotters, such as Melville and Thornton Wilder. But great novelists are like redwood trees, which grow best among a lot of other redwood trees. We do not have the ecological nexus, the tradition; which surely is one reason why our best writers seem so rootless, and wither so young. There are minor native traditions of great vigour: the regional (Cather, Capote &c), the committed (Steinbeck, Mailer &c) and others. There are also international traditions of equal or greater vigour.

None of these, however, is on anything like the scale, or has anything like the scope, of the genuine or Absolute Novel of the Anglo-Russian Messy Tradition, which is the greatest artistic achievement of Late Western culture, because it is more complicated than all the others, even symphonies. Life is coherent complexity. So is art. The more complex the coherence, the higher the life, or art, form.

One of the liveliest of the minor international traditions of the novel is the fantasy. No fantasy is an Absolute Novel, because by definition a fantasy contains less than the total content of reality on all levels of the Absolute Novel. The fantastic novel, like the naturalistic novel, or the philosophical novel, or the dirty novel, settles for less than the whole.

Specialization, of course, has its rewards. Fantasy's reward is the special complexity and difficulty of invention. It gives particular delight, because the use of the imagination is delightful to sane people. The use and control of the dream is a noble art. The exercise of irrationality under the guidance of reason is a sport worth playing. No invented world, it goes without saying, can match one square yard of the Earth in variety, splendour, terror and unexpectedness; but the invention of secondary worlds (Tolkien's phrase) is a participation in the inexhaustibility of Creation, which continues

inexhaustibly to create itself without the slightest rational excuse for doing so, and against all the rules of pedants and of entropy.

The tradition into which I fit by disposition and by choice (it's unfashionable to talk about tradition now that we are all Doing Our Own Thing, but I prefer accuracy to fashion) was mostly written in English: for example, Dunsany, L. H. Myers, A. T. Wright, Isak Dinesen, Tolkien. But if I have appeared to be anti-French, let me here rendre hommage tres sincere a Supervielle, St Exupery, Giradoux. From the Germans comes Rilke's one novel; in Russia, early Pasternak, Olesha and Zamyatin are related to the Western tradition. As one moves on East, through India and Japan, sometimes all the novels seem to be related to the fantasy tradition; which must surely be an effect of the fact that a Japanese commonplace can seem a wild flight of fancy to the ignorant Westerner, and also of the fact that the East sees reality differently from the West.

Anyhow, it was in this general sub-tradition of the novel, fantasy, that I began writing, and have always written. It was not until my work could be defined by publishers as science fiction, however, that it was published.

Whether or not it's worth while to try to distinguish 'fantasy' from 'science fiction' I don't know. I incline to think not. Of course Verne is different from Hugo, and Wells from Eddison, just as Dunsany is immensely different from Myers and Tolkien from Dinesen. But it is their similarities that interest me. At any rate the area of overlap is so large as to render any effort at exclusive definition useless. The most relentlessly technological Analogous novella, armoured like a tank in engineering data and rolling juggernaut-like forward through the realms of Extrapolation - even this is a fairy tale. The characters prove it. Instead of Prince Charming and the Sleeping Beauty we have Captain Hardnose and the Easy Lay. Big difference.

When you get above this level, the distinctions become even harder to make, the similarities even obscurer and more

fascinating. What possible bond of likeness is there among 'Lady Into Fox', 'A Martian Odyssey', 'Gormenghast' and 'Galactic Pot-healer'? Four decades; four utterly dissimilar stylists; four utterly dissimilar kinds of reality. Maybe that's it.

If I read Tolstoy, Dickens, Turgenev, Forster, Wilson, Solzhenitsyn, I know that what I am going to experience is reality, as expressed and transfigured through art. Reality translated to a higher plane, a more passionate intensity, than most of us can experience at all without the help of art or religion or profound emotion; but reality. The shared world, the scene of our mortality.

Whereas if I read Tolkien, Peake, Dick, Vance, Zelazny, Davidson, Ballard, Cordwainer Smith, I know that I am going to meet a personal variation on reality; a scene less real than the world around us, a partial view of reality.

But I know also that by that partiality, that independence, that distancing from the shared experience, it will be new: a revelation. It will be a vision, a more or less powerful or haunting dream. A view in, not out. A space-voyage through somebody else's psychic abysses. It will fall short of tragedy, because tragedy is the truth, and truth is what the very great artists, the absolute novelists, tell. It will not be truth; but it will be imagination.

Truth is best, for it encompasses tragedy and partakes of the eternal joy. But very few of us know it; the best we can do is recognize it. Imagination, to me, is next best, for it partakes of Creation, which is one aspect of the eternal joy.

And all the rest is either Politics or Pedantry, or Mainstream Fiction, may it rest in peace.



ON THE OTHER HAND ...

I had no respect whatsoever for the creative works of either the painter or the novelist. I thought Karabekian with his meaningless pictures had entered into a conspiracy with millionaires to make poor people feel stupid. I thought Beatrice Keedler had joined hands with other old-fashioned storytellers to make people believe that life had leading characters, minor characters, significant details, insignificant details, that it had lessons to be learned, tests to be passed, and a beginning, a middle, and an end.

As I approached my fiftieth birthday, I had become more and more enraged and mystified by the idiot decisions made by my countrymen. And then I had come suddenly to pity them, for I understood how innocent and natural it was for them to behave so abominably, and with such abominable results: They were doing their best to live like people invented in story books. This was the reason Americans shot each other so often: It was a convenient literary device for ending short stories and books.

Why were so many Americans treated by their government as though their lives were as disposable as paper facial tissues? Because that was the way authors customarily treated bit-part players in their made-up tales.

And so on.

Once I understood what was making America such a dangerous, unhappy nation of people who had nothing to do with real life, I resolved to shun storytelling. I would write about life. Every person would be exactly as important as any other. All facts would also be given equal weightiness. Nothing would be left out. Let others bring order to chaos. I would bring chaos to order, instead, which I think I have done.

If all writers would do that, then perhaps citizens not in the literary trades will understand that there is no order in the world around us, that we must adapt ourselves to the requirements of chaos instead.

It is hard to adapt to chaos, but it can be done. I am living proof of that: It can be done.

— Kurt Vonnegut Jr: Breakfast of Champions, ch. 19

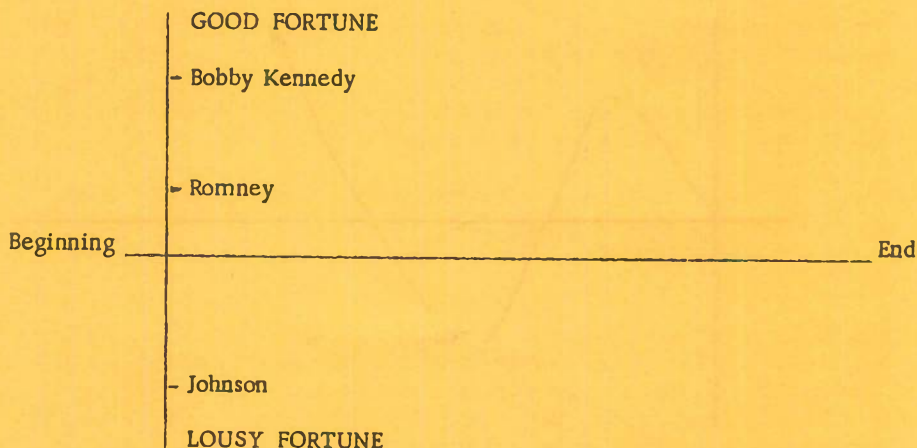
That isn't the article by Mr Vonnegut I mentioned earlier, of course. This is:

I must confess that the whole time I was at universities I was frightened of libraries. I didn't want to go into them. I got my books from the bus station. It would be far more proper if I were here today to dedicate a new Greyhound bus station. It was in bus stations of course that I discovered D. H. Lawrence and Henry Miller. One time in Indianapolis when I was an adolescent - three years ago - there was a little movie house there called the 'Cozy'. It was an old parking lot with a piece of canvas stretched over it. They showed what were supposedly dirty movies. There was one lurid poster out in front asking questions about this woman who dared all and a man who dared all. I went in and it was 'Crime and Punishment' with Peter Lorre and Edward Arnold. I learned something.

Despite being a drop-out, I've had many honours come to me lately - one of which was teaching at the University of Iowa for two years. I was rather alarmed when I went out there. You know: how would it be to face students with no education? They had education; I had none. So I talked to a friend and he said, Just don't tell it all in the first hour. Well, I did tell it all in the first hour - I told it all in three minutes. I just shot everything I knew, and they wanted more...

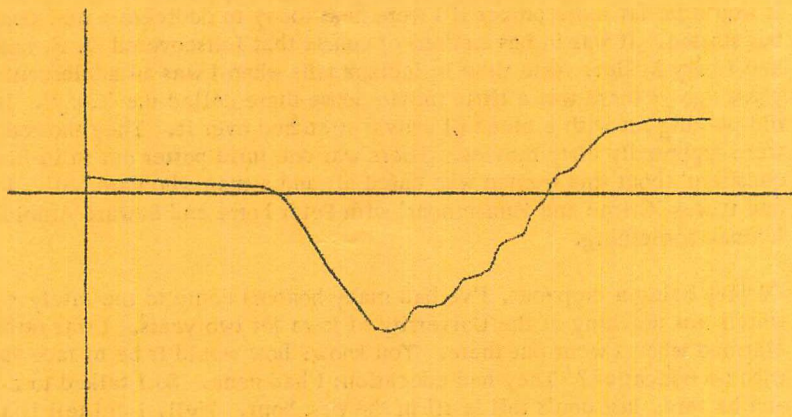
Anyway, what I gave away in three minutes (I was teaching how to write, incidentally), what I did in three minutes, and what I propose to do for you, is to give the clearest, most complete course in the short story ever offered in America. There will be no charge for this, beyond the fantastic amount of money I'm getting already.

What is a short story? Well, first we draw this axis here, the vertical axis. This up here is good fortune, and this is lousy fortune. Okay? Now we draw this axis. That's the course of the story. This is the beginning of the story and this is the end of the story. Anybody who hasn't had math can just leave. Now you take the leading character where he starts. If he's Bobby Kennedy he's up here. If he's Romney he's about here. If he's Johnson, he's there. You can start him anywhere.



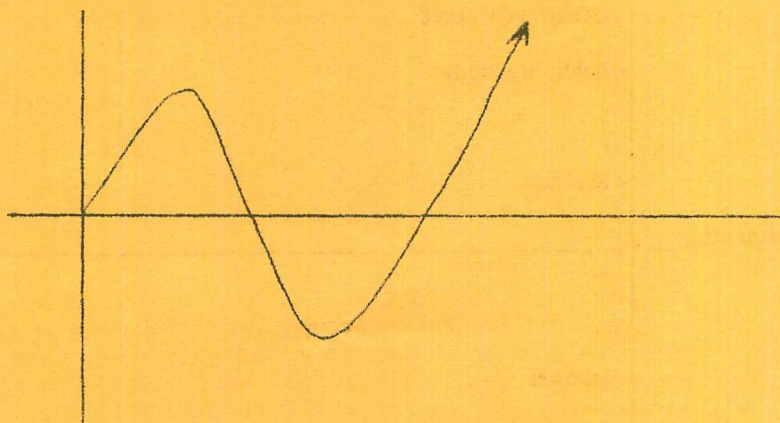
The simplest, most popular story, which has been told again and again and again, is 'The Man in a Hole'. You can tell this story as often as you want. People never get tired of it. If you have a perfectly ordinary guy walking down the street at noon, not thinking about anything, and he falls into a hole, that's bad fortune. He's down below the line. He struggles to get up out of the hole, finally makes it, and is a little happier when he is finished. He's

faced something and survived. That's 'The Man in a Hole'.



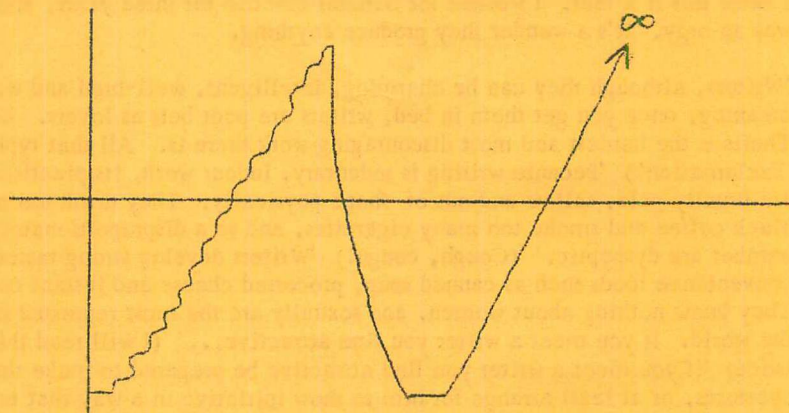
The next story is a sine curve. (The last was aesthetically a swoop and has apparently satisfied people since the beginning of time.) The next story is 'Boy Gets Girl, Loses Girl, Gets Girl'. It doesn't have to be 'girl'. The well-known Russian version is 'Boy Gets Tractor, Loses Tractor, Gets Tractor'. Anyway, it's the rise and fall pattern. It could be anything. His luck is lousy, then it gets good again.

If you are writing for an upper middle class maga... No, there's no such thing. If you are writing for a middle class magazine, you start with people on a higher level. You can't sell a story to *Cosmopolitan* that starts with anybody poor or disagreeable. If it's 'Boy Meets Girl', there's an ordinary guy - and boy: he meets this neat girl. He's terribly happy. It's the best thing that ever happened to him. And damn it, he loses her. Then he gets her back and lives happily ever after. That can just go on up. It's a sine curve - and it's the nature of the human mind that it likes this swoop.

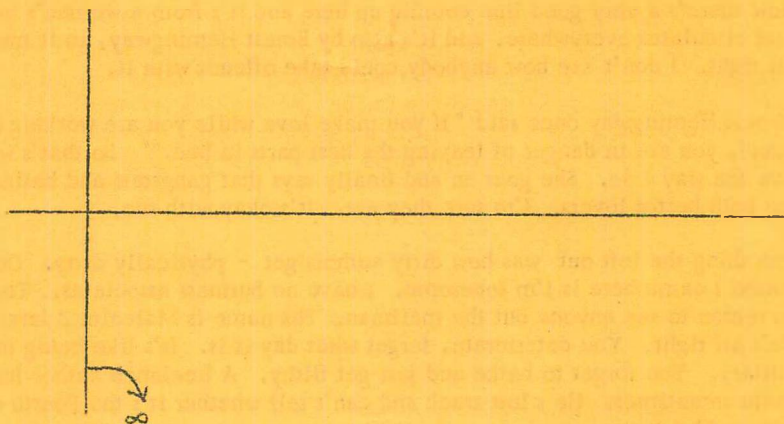


The most popular story ever told is 'Cinderella'. Why this is, nobody knows. I'll draw it for you. Cinderella starts very low. It's just lousy. Everybody in the house is getting dressed up. It's really her house - she's been done out of that. She has to dress everybody up in fine clothing and then they tell her to be sure and clean behind the toilet while they go to the party. She is really bumping along down here and the Fairy Godmother comes and says, Oh, you poor kid - I'm going to give you this, that and this. You

know, all that stuff is accumulating. She goes to the party with all this stuff and dances with the prince and - bong, bong, bong - it's midnight and she's right back down to the bottom again. She's treated badly again and the prince comes along and tries the slipper on her and she lives happily ever after. That up there is infinity. She's infinitely happy after that. Of course that's why 'My Fair Lady' was such a success.



Now you take the Kafka story, 'The Metamorphosis', where you already have the lousiest guy in the lousiest family situation at the very beginning of the story. Then he turns into a cockroach...



Okay, that's what I taught at Iowa.

Since I've become rich and famous, actually in about the last eight months, many people have been curious about my sex life. I've attempted to describe it to them and then I found out that Cosmopolitan had already covered it pretty well. So I read to you from the pages of Cosmopolitan. They told recently what kind of man makes the best lover. Brokers are discussed, and gangsters and all sorts of people.

Here it is: 'The men with the delicate egos: creative types - actors, artists, writers.' It starts out: 'Kinsey's statistics show that artists sublimate their sex drives more than most other men.' That's true. I do. 'In general, all creative types are a nuisance to women. They are usually selfish, egotistical, temperamental, and gloomy when you are gay. They are also inclined to be

poor, at least in the beginning of their careers. If an artist becomes successful, he'll probably ~~tear~~ toss aside the mistress or wife who drudged through his cold-water flat days and take up with a "social butterfly" better suited to his improved station.'

Well, this happened to me. I've told both my wife and my mistress to beat it. 'Though artists are supposed to lead free and easy sex lives, their antics seem as naive as a game of post office compared to the goings-on in the business world.' I know this is a fact. I worked for General Electric for three years, and God, it was an orgy. It's a wonder they produce anything.

'Writers, although they can be charming, intelligent, well-bred and well-meaning, once you get them in bed, writers are poor bets as lovers. Why? Theirs is the hardest and most discouraging work there is. All that typing.' (Exclamation!) 'Because writing is sedentary, indoor work, its practitioners are usually pale, sallow and out of shape physically. They drink too much black coffee and smoke too many cigarettes, and so a disproportionately high number are dyspeptic.' (Cough, cough!) 'Writers develop strong tastes for convenience foods such as canned soup, processed cheese and instant coffee. They know nothing about women, and sexually are the most repressed men in the world. If you meet a writer you find attractive...' (I will read this twice) 'if you meet a writer you find attractive be prepared to make the overtures, or at least arrange for him to show initiative in a way that tells him he cannot miss. His ego gets all the shellacking it can take from those rejection slips and he is not going to risk being turned down by you. A writer saves his best sexual fantasies for the printed page and will not dissipate or test them in real life...'

Now there's a very good line coming up here and it's from a women's magazine that circulates everywhere, and it's also by Ernest Hemingway, so it must be all right. I don't see how anybody could take offence with it.

'Ernest Hemingway once said "If you make love while you are working on a novel, you are in danger of leaving the best parts in bed."' So that's why I live the way I do. She goes on and finally says that gangsters and businessmen are both better lovers. I'm sure they are. It's okay with me.

One thing she left out was how dirty authors get - physically dirty. One reason I came here is I'm lonesome. I have no business associates. There's no reason to see anyone but the mailman. His name is Malcolm Adams. He's all right. You deteriorate, forget what day it is. It's like being in solitary. You forget to bathe and just get filthy. A freelance author just stinks sometimes. He's lost track and can't tell whether it's the Fourth of July or Christmas.

About drop-outs: One of the most famous attendees here was James Thurber. He did something I admire very much. He stopped going to classes and just read what he liked from the library. Then he went to New York and did things the entire nation admired. You have started to build memorials to him, and I'm glad.

Your two-millionth volume... (It would have been nice if it could have been Thurber. There must have been a debate on the subject.) I am startled that your two-millionth volume was 'Don Quixote'. I would have thought that was one of the first books you would have gotten. It makes me wonder if you've got an unabridged dictionary... Another good book would be 'Huckleberry Finn'...

When I heard that you had two million volumes I immediately wondered 'Oh,

my God, what do you suppose the dirtiest book in there is?' I'm sure you've wondered, too. The greatest book is 'Ulysses', the noblest 'The Brothers Karamazov', the most effective is 'Catcher in the Rye', the most important book is 'Death on the Instalment Plan', the most popular book is 'Valley of the Dolls'. Why? You would say it was sex. Lots of people have thought that to write a sexy book is an easy way to make a lot of money, but it hasn't worked out that way. Henry Miller has written probably the sexiest book in your library - 'The Rosy Crucifixion'. You can't write a sexier book than that, but it doesn't sell well. So there is something more to it than sex.

There is a publisher named Bernard Geis, who is more and more talked of, who figured out how to write best-sellers. He commissioned Jacqueline Susann to write one, which was 'Valley of the Dolls'. He commissioned a friend of mine to write one which has just come out. It's called 'The Exhibitionist'. What Geis figured out was that you needed sex - he gave instructions to his writers: sex every twenty pages, a conventional novel - but it must be about somebody in show business. 'Valley of the Dolls' is based on rumours of Judy Garland's life. 'The Carpetbaggers' is based on rumours of Howard Hughes's life. Of course he's on the edge of show business.

This is the key thing. The people who buy these books are quite touching. They are very lonesome members of our society. They are generally office girls, with very little reason to speak to anyone else. When you get a book like 'The Carpetbaggers' or 'Valley of the Dolls' or eventually 'The Exhibitionist' out - when you get enough copies out - these girls will meet each other on subways and in cafeterias. 'Oh, are you reading this? Where are you?' 'She just...' 'Well, wait till you get to the part where he...' It's a way of saying hello. It's a rather touching product of our society. These books are not bought to be read particularly. They're not found to be titillating. They are a very cheap club to join as a way to say hello to somebody else.

Those books, incidentally, using the Geis formula are ceasing to sell. Some new clue to best-sellers is going to have to be discovered. But he's made a great deal of money. Why he got into this business in the first place was to create books to sell to the paperback houses. This is where the big money is. There are five paperback houses - five large ones - and each one must have a big important book every month. So this is sixty books a year for which the paperback houses pay a lot of money. It is well over one hundred thousand dollars - frequently three, four or five hundred thousand dollars. A friend of mine has so far made, on a book that just came out, a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Which is very nearly three Nobel prizes. That's pretty good, isn't it? It took him twenty weeks to write it. His book is based on rumours, absolutely unfounded, of Henry and Jane Fonda. You simply start with the idea that there is an actor with a beautiful daughter who is an actress. Then you play with that, but you never say they're the Fondas. You don't even research the Fondas. The reader feels subliminally that she is getting the inside dope on them. I think the Fondas are going to sue. I heard that they were.

About Nobel prizes: Until Steinbeck came along, every American Nobel prize winner was a drop-out.

This is not a very bookish country, actually. Even in high school English departments.

Faulkner was a heavy drinker, so was Fitzgerald, so am I. Ernest Hemingway blew his head off with a shotgun. Somerset Maugham was rumoured to be a

homosexual. So was Oscar Wilde. I've got a cousin who's homosexual. He isn't a writer - he sells wide-track Pontiacs. But I do expose myself in department stores... I have this raincoat... these chopped-off trouser legs sewed into the hem of the raincoat there... and I have shirt cuffs. I keep the raincoat zipped up and I have a whistle on a chain underneath, nothing else. I go into department stores where these girls, brides-to-be, are just picking out their patterns, crystal, silver and all that. They're there with their mothers and aunts and everyone, and I come in. You know, they are not used to having men come in there anyway, and sort of all look at me and wonder what I'm doing. I pull out the whistle and blow it as loud as I can, then I throw open the raincoat, then I run like hell.* For you who are going to write about me after I'm dead, that's one of the things I do.

Another thing I do is invent new religions, because it seems to me that the old ones have failed so terribly. Christendom seems very cruel and greedy to me. I have, before setting out to invent new religions, wondered if there was any way to put a blow-patch on Christianity. So I did think about it some, and I was teaching the short story at the same time, and I realized that the only reason Christendom was so mean is that the Christ story is very badly told. What we can do about this, I don't know, but it teaches, now, the wrong lesson. It teaches everyone to be kind and merciful, yet we have savagery and greed among all Christian nations. They are the most warlike of all nations.

The way the Christ story goes, the way it is told, there is this man who appears to be a nobody with no important connections, so they kill him for amusement the way they killed other bums to pass the time. And, good heavens! - it turns out that he was terribly well-connected. You know, the damn fools just killed the governor's son.

This is a bitter lesson to teach people because we infer that before you mess around with a bum you make really sure he has no connections. This is what Christians do now. They're very careful before they bop somebody because they remember what happened when they did it to Christ.

The story should be, I think, that Christ is an ordinary bum from Skid Row who people regard as being utterly worthless and he has no connections. He is just another human being, and they crucify him. In the last second of his life the heavens open up, God comes down and adopts him, makes him his son with all the powers of God, and there is just going to be hell to pay. God warns everybody that every time they kill a bum he's going to come down and do this and these guys are going to be as powerful as he is.

Now, I call that effective religion. The old one hasn't worked. What we need is to doctor the gospel just slightly. We can do this by planting some scrolls around...

Okay, that's about all I know and I've told it to you in well under an hour as a drop-out should. I used to know some chemistry. That's what I was, a chemistry major, and I've forgotten it. During the Depression my father said I could go to college only if I studied something sensible, which he thought was chemistry. I don't think he ever knew what it was like. So I went to Cornell and studied chemistry for three years there. It turned out to be a very nice break because as a result every time I approached a work of art I approached it not for credit but for pleasure and relief. When I got to Iowa and saw the

* The earnest student of Mr Vonnegut's writings will recognize a similarity between this confession and an incident in 'God Bless You, Mr Rosewater'. (JB)

reading lists that English profs were requiring students to go over, I was appalled - and not surprised, after seeing this list, that Americans hate books and generally do not read after they leave college. Books sell very poorly in this country. A college professor will give a student in a junior class this list... this week we read 'War and Peace', next week we read 'Moby Dick', the week after that we read 'Portrait of the Artist', after that we read 'Madame Bovary', after that 'The Great Gatsby', after that 'Crime and Punishment', after that 'Remembrance of Things Past'. Thanks a hell of a lot, Prof. You know, it's like going through the Metropolitan Museum on a Harley-Davidson... Books were not created for this. This is an obscenity. I don't know what can be done about it. Books were written to fill people's lives with pleasure. The normal reading list is just hell, that's all.

It's been mentioned that the book is becoming obsolete. I will tell you why a library is a sacred place and why the book must not become obsolete. You are in a free society, and in order to be free we must have much new information coming from people facing life this very day. The cheapest way to do it is with a book. The number of people who are actually involved is two or possibly three, ordinarily - the author, the editor and the editor's boss. It is a simple thing. Any time you are going to do anything on film you're talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars, and properly so, it's going to be run by a committee. The book will remain the method by which individual human beings may record their experiences. The rest will be committee expression. Those are interesting. So's a Waring blender.

My motives for writing are utopian. I want my country to be what it promises to be and what it can easily afford to be. It can be a much better country. I am enraged with the condition it is in now. I don't give a damn if pot is legalized or not. I'm not afraid to say 'shit' in public, but I don't think it is a particularly useful thing to do. I will not weep if we never get a man on the moon.

There, that's it. Everything I know... less than an hour.

God bless you, Mr Vonnegut.

MULTUM IN PAVO

A continuing anthology of the works of Thomas Love Peacock

THE FRIAR OF RUBYGILL (from 'Maid Marian')

It was a friar of orders free,
A friar of Rubygill:
At the greenwood-tree a vow made he,
But he kept it very ill:
A vow made he of chastity,
But he kept it very ill.
He kept it, perchance, in the conscious shade
Of the bounds of the forest wherein it was made:
But he roamed where he listed, as free as the wind,
And he left his good vow in the forest behind:
For its woods out of sight were his vow out of mind,
With the friar of Rubygill.

In lonely hut himself he shut,
The friar of Rubygill;
Where the ghostly elf absolved himself,
To follow his own good-will:
And he had no lack of canary sack,
To keep his conscience still.
And a damsel well knew, when at lonely midnight
It gleamed on the waters, his signal-lamp-light:
'Over! over!' she warbled with nightingale throat,
And the friar sprung forth at the magical note,
And she crossed the dark stream in his trim ferry-boat,
With the friar of Rubygill.

SEAMEN THREE (from 'Nightmare Abbey')

Seamen three! What men be ye?
Gotham's three wise men we be.
Whither in your bowl so free?
To rake the moon from out the sea.
The bowl goes trim. The moon doth shine.
And our ballast is old wine;
And your ballast is old wine.

Who art thou, so fast adrift?
I am he they call Old Care.
Here on board we will thee lift.
No: I may not enter there.
Wherefore so? 'Tis Jove's decree,
In a bowl Care may not be;
In a bowl Care may not be.

Fear ye not the waves that roll?
No: in charmed bowl we swim.
What the charm that floats the bowl?
Water may not pass the brim.
The bowl goes trim. The moon doth shine.
And our ballast is old wine;
And your ballast is old wine.

DUFFers THREE ...



25th September: I talked to Leigh Edmonds for a few minutes today, and he said he wanted me to write something for Rataplan and I said sure, if he would write something for Philosophical Gas. So I said what do you want me to write about and he said Jesus! so I said okay; and he said what do you want me to write about and I said Hell! and he said okay. So next issue, folks, there should be a brilliant article (he doesn't write any other kind) by A. L. Edmonds Esq. of Melbourne on the subject of Hell. Likewise, in the next issue of Rataplan there should be a dull piece by me on Jesus. I sort of hope I can keep religion out of it, because Rataplan is a family fanzine. If you don't normally see Rataplan, write to Leigh and demand to see a copy: it's good. Leigh lives in PO Box 74, Balaclava, Victoria 3183.

Actually this madness started when Leigh wrote to me recently and said that Shayne McCormack and Lesleigh Luttrell are organizing the 1974 Down Under Fan Fund, the proceeds from which will hopefully inflict an Australian fan on the 32nd World SF Convention in Washington DC next year. The first DUFF brought Lesleigh from the USA to Australia for our national convention last year - Syncon 72. In retaliation Mrs Luttrell (do you prefer Ms, Lesleigh? - I never thought to ask you) is scheming to put an Australian through a similar agony. Anyway, Leigh said he would like me to be

one of his Australian nominators (each DUFF candidate must have two local nominators and three from the host country) and I was pleased to oblige, because Leigh is a Good Guy and Washington deserves no better. But he went on to suggest that I should be a candidate also, and offered to nominate me. Somewhat reluctantly, by return post I accepted. This will rather confuse things - Leigh pushing for me, and me pushing for him - but it seems a quite natural Australian thing to do.

The third Australian fan to announce that he will run for DUFF is Paul Stevens, and he's a Good Guy, too. If you saw the Australia-in-75 promotional film 'Aussie-fan' you will recall Paul's brilliant comic role of Anti-fan. He's a very funny bloke, and I like him a hell of a lot, and I wish I could nominate him, too - but that might be confusing things a bit too much.

There could be other candidates. I don't hear all that much about what's going on these days, and it's quite possible that someone else will come forward. But I don't envy anyone trying to decide between Leigh, Paul and me. We're all fine, upstanding fans and no better than Washington deserves. Maybe I'm a bit more modest than them, but I hope that won't prejudice anyone against voting for, um, Leigh. Yep, Leigh for DUFF. It's starting to sound absurd already. We'll survive.

Leigh and I reckon that Diane Kirsten (formerly Diane Bangsund, and before that Diane Kirsten) should also nominate for DUFF. Leigh, Paul, Diane and I shared a flat in Redan Street, St Kilda, and later another in Glen Eira Road, Elsternwick, during 1968, and it would seem sort of appropriate or nostalgic or something if we all got back together again - a kind of reunion - and all of us in friendly competition, just as we were then. But I have only heard from Diane once or twice since 22nd February, and I think she's rather out of fan activities. On the other hand, she's much more decorative than us. Ah well.

The official announcement of DUFF 1974 will be made later this year, and I invite you to watch for it in your favourite fanzine or Locus, whichever reaches you first. The rules are simple: you make a donation to the fund and get a vote. If you somehow miss the announcement, write to Shayne at 49 Orchard Road, Bass Hill, NSW 2197, or Lesleigh at 525 West Main Street #1, Madison, Wisconsin 53703, for details.

Meantime, there are more letters:

JOHN BROSANAN 10.9
1/62 Elsham Road
Kensington
London W.14 UK

Last Sunday I was typing out a short description of my involvement with sf fandom for Pete Weston... and included the following paragraph: 'On a subsequent visit Bangsund introduced me to Brian Richards, a Welshman living in Perth, who resembled Sydney Greenstreet. Listening to these two gentlemen talk about books and life brought home the realization to me that my education was sadly lacking in many areas. Despite this, Brian endured my company even when Bangsund wasn't around to provide him with stimulating conversation and together we formed Perth fandom. It was a short-lived fandom as I moved to Sydney in 1968 and soon afterwards he moved to Port Hedland. No-one has heard much from Brian since then.'

Today, Monday, I received a number of fanzines from you, including Philosophical Gas 24. Needless to say it was a big shock to learn that he had been killed. I find it hard to accept. Fans aren't supposed to get killed. Gafiate, yes, but not actually die.

Like you I sort of lost contact with Brian after he moved north and yesterday, while I was writing that piece for Speculation, I decided to write to Ron Clarke and ask if he happened to know Brian's present address... On the whole, it's been a very depressing day.

Peter Roberts has moved down to London which means I get to read the Anzapa mailings. I was rather tickled by that Tribute to John Bangsund thing that appeared recently. I would have liked to contribute to it myself but nobody asked me. I may bring out a sequel all by myself... but one full of nasty things about you. All invented, of course, just to offset all that praise which I'm sure must have embarrassed you to tears. I'm happy to learn that life is becoming much more satisfying for you now... that you've found a Good Woman etc. ... I have nothing against loneliness, I rather like being alone in fact, but I could definitely do with a better sex life. As for growing old... well, I turn 26 this month and I must admit I suddenly find the idea very disturbing. This will be the first birthday that's ever affected me like this. I suddenly realize that my youth is over ('Oh poppycock! - why am I publishing this maudlin drivel, John?') and that I'll soon be 30, which is only a hop, skip and a jump away from 40, which is only... and so on. I'm sure I'll get over it. In fact I think I'm going to be a much better 40+ year old than I was a 16, 20 or 25 year old. I've been practising for old age all my life.

Then again, with things the way they are in London at the moment I may not even reach 26. The Tourist Board, in an effort to add excitement to the city of London, has arranged with the IRA to leave bombs in unusual and unexpected places - such as railway stations. I must admit the scheme is working. London has become a much more exciting place.

Saw Merv Binns a couple of weeks ago on his way to Toronto. Still the same. He never changes. I think he's an android.

::: No, you misunderstand, John. Mervyn is an eternal youth - just like you. Fandom and clean living does it! ::: More or less on your recommendation Sally and I watched two James Bond films last Saturday. God, they were awful! I remember enjoying Bond films once, and I'm sure they haven't changed. Maybe... maybe I'm over the hill, John.

BILL WRIGHT
53 Celia Street
Burwood Victoria 3125 Australia

15.9

« I sent Bill an advance copy of page 3 of this issue, and received a beautiful letter by return. Bill expressed his particular appreciation of -» the little drawing which contained a pun on three levels that I could understand. I do feel, John, that the time has come in your fannish career to extend the range and quality of your reading. The following is a short list of recommended novels: SPAWN OF ETERNAL THOUGHT by Eando Binder
MASTERS OF SPACE by E. E. Smith and E. E. Evans
THE MIGHTIEST MACHINE by John W. Campbell Jr
But I fear that it is already Too Late. Your literary tastes have been corrupted by such degenerates as Proust and Peacock. The sublime enjoyment of primitive literature is something that is lost in the process of Education, and I cannot but feel that it is a pity.

:::: Thanks, Bill. Thanks, everyone. That's it for this issue.

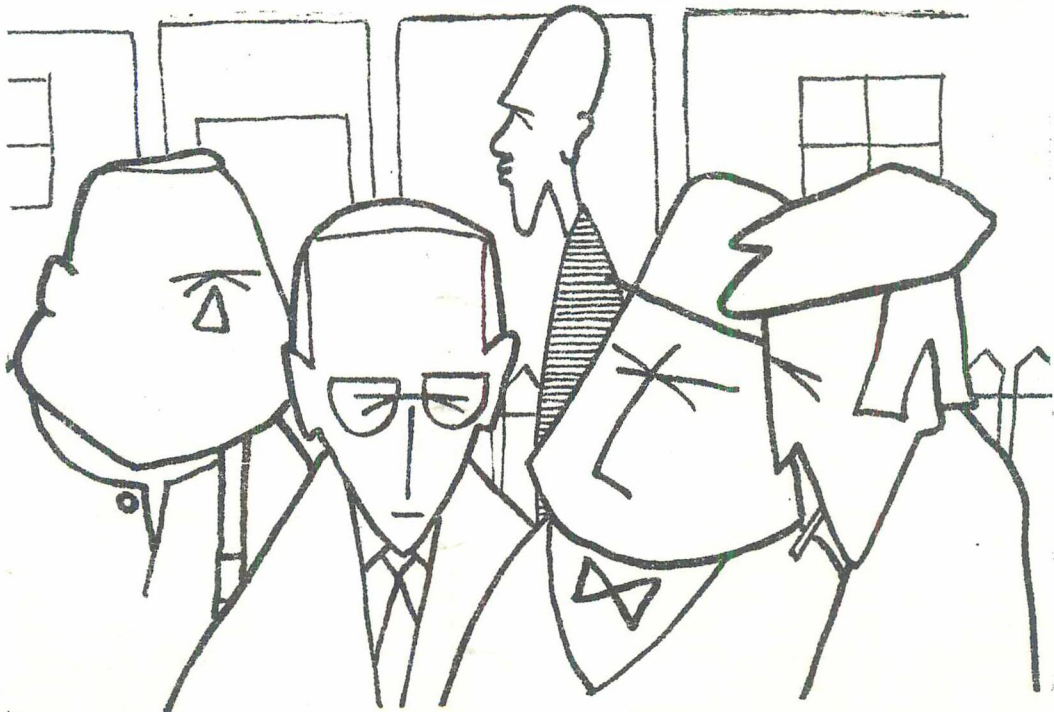
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COSMOS

MAINE

ROCKPORT

CHERRY BLOSSOMS

PICASSO

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