

Philosophical Gas

26

A note about Scythrop:
Number 28, which you
should see about the same
time as this, was the final
issue. Subscriptions will
be applied to Philosophical
Gas unless requested other-
wise. Some copies have
been found with blank pages.
If your copy is incomplete
please write for replacement.

We also rang someone advertising a piano. They didn't answer all morning, but Sally went out about 4 and rang again, and was

Sally has an elderly Falcon station wagon, a rather frightening heap to drive, and to ride in - as Valma and Leigh Edmonds will testify - but it goes. I have the Renault 16, which I am convinced is the best car ever designed for people like me who want a fast, economical (average 30 mpg) and roomy sedan-cum-wagon. Now we both have bikes, and intend to use them - not much in Canberra itself, but a few miles out in the country. And we have a piano, which Sally plays with expertise and I with careless enthusiasm. We have a lot of books. We have a passable sort of record-player, a tape recorder and about a hundred records and sixty-odd tapes. Sometimes we listen to the radio, usually at the weekend, but not often. We do not have television. We do not have any kind of air-conditioning or central heating. We pay \$41 per week for a rather ordinary and smallish three-bedroom house in one of the better Canberra suburbs, and it takes me six or seven minutes to drive to work each morning. About fifteen minutes driving (at 40 mph) in any direction but north takes us into the country. North requires about 20-25 minutes. Our mode of life, and our situation, are not typical of Australia as a whole. Canberra is the only inland city of any considerable size in the land. We miss the beaches, for example. But it's not a bad place to live. A few weeks ago, on

Saturday, around noon, we were sitting in the Renault in the centre of Canberra, eating tomato sandwiches and drinking from a \$1.50 flagon of McLaren Vale red, and we decided to go for a drive. We went through the mountains to Batemans Bay on the coast, stopping only at Nelligen to buy some rare vintage reds from the hotel there, then went on down the south coast of New South Wales to Narooma. We booked into an enormous hotel, where we were two of only five guests. The hotel was magnificent, full of beautiful old furniture and so on, and with gorgeous views of the ocean. The place is up for sale, and probably won't be there next time we pass that way. On Sunday morning we had breakfast, checked out (it took a while to find someone interested in taking our money), and went for a walk along the beach. We had the sun, surf, sand and seagulls virtually to ourselves. I had almost forgotten the feeling of sand beneath my feet. It was glorious. Sally's parents live some miles north of Hobart, on Tasmania's eastern coast, where I gather you can walk for miles along the beach without seeing anyone, and you can go bathing in the nude and so on. I look forward to meeting her folk at xmas and trying out her beach. Unlike the legendary typical Australian, I cannot swim, but then, neither could my Viking ancestors. (Their excuse was better than mine: the water was too cold. I'm just lazy.)

We watched a couple of James Bond movies at Narooma, and frankly, they were boring. Maybe I'm getting old. On the other hand, Sally found them boring, too, and she is a decade younger than me, so maybe the Bond formula is getting old. Things become old pretty quickly these days.

On Sunday we drove on down to Bega, picked up a lady hitch-hiker who was very involved with demonstrations and such in Melbourne, but didn't know what was going on in Chile and didn't seem all that

much interested, drove through the mountains again to Cooma (catching glimpses as we went of the Snowy Mountains, gleaming in the sunlight), where we paid far too much for a rather ordinary lunch, and returned to Canberra in drizzling rain.

The following weekend Marea and Ken Ozanne came down from Sydney (or, as they insist, Faulconbridge, which is quite a way out of Sydney, up in the Blue Mountains). Ken, Leigh Hyde, Sally and I went off to the Private Cellar Club on Saturday, leaving Marea and Helen and their children to entertain each other, and they had gone when we returned. I always thought that Bob, the proprietor of the Private Cellar Club, knew more about wine than anyone should need to know, but Ken made him look pretty ignorant that day. I mention this because some people have the mistaken idea that I know something about Australian wines. Ken Ozanne knows as much about wines as John Foyster and Lee Harding know about the contents and cover illustrations of every sf magazine published since 1926. For my part, I find life too short for such scholarship. I just read and drink what I know I like, and that's it. If I'm missing something I don't mind all that much. If the scholars say I should look out for Grange Hermitage, or Lem's 'Solaris' or whatever, I will make a mental note of their recommendations - and meanwhile go on reading Ursula Le Guin and drinking Kaiser Stuhl special reserve bin J426 red, 1966. My income doesn't allow me to be a connoisseur, so I will go on enjoying what I like and can afford.

Someone - John Foyster, I think - once defined gross ignorance as 144 science fiction fans. I have to confess that I'm in that lot. Just about every science fiction fan I've ever met has made me feel grossly ignorant. But I don't mind, if you don't. Leigh Edmonds knows more about music

than I do; Paul Stevens more about comics and war history; Bill Wright more about politics; Lee Harding more about writing; John Foyster, Robin Johnson and George Turner more about practically everything; and just about every fan more about science fiction - and science. I feel awful dumb at times. One thing I thought I knew a bit more about than most of fandom is the works of Brian O'Nolan. Then I got this letter from Barry Gillam, and I'm beginning to wonder whether I really do:

BARRY GILLAM 18.9
4283 Katonah Avenue
Bronx New York 10470 USA

I'm finding it a bit of a strain to keep reading reviews of the brilliant Bangsund zines that I subscribe to but never receive. (Think we'll skip that bit.)

This awkward business finished, I have to thank you for recommending Flann O'Brien in Scythrop 22. I've been reading his praises in a number of places in recent years (particularly from Anthony Burgess and in the New York Times, whose Book Review devoted its front page to a re-issue of 'The Third Policeman' in 1967, using, most felicitously, Magritte's *The Masterpiece* or *The Mysteries of the Horizon* to illustrate the review). Finally this summer I read all of his English novels and I intend next to plunge into 'The Best of Myles'. (Good show: No civilized home should be without a copy.)

'The Hard Life' was the only one I found myself shrugging off, in a hurry to finish, although I feel that I may have missed something in the novel. Its farcical scheme of tight-rope walking opposed to gravid water seemed a bit much to me. And 'The Dalkey Archive' is hardly a complete success but I found its virtues more appealing. The injection of jargon into colloquial speech and the use of words in their secondary or tertiary meanings is delightful. Like the character who 'extinguishes his bicycle in the shrubbery'.

I was also struck by the Laffertyesque quality here, as when one character says that 'whiskey is not incompatible with theology, particularly magic whiskey that is ancient and also a week old'.

I was most pleasantly surprised by 'The Third Policeman' because aside from the Times review (which is more about O'Brien than the book and hardly hints at the riches of the novel), I had heard nothing about it. (Burgess seems unaware of its existence in 'The Novel Now'.) While it is very much O'Brien, I found many correspondences to Becket: the obsession with bicycles, the idea of men being slowly transmogrified into their surroundings, into inanimate, clayey substances, the league of one-legged men so like Becket's progression of cripples, the circular movement of the novel, like 'Molloy', the materialization of metaphor, as with the gold watch, the quality of personal recollection with which the novel begins, as in 'Molloy' and 'Malone Dies', and the narrator's 'tunnel vision' which keeps him from seeing the whole picture and which prevents him from making the logical, causal connections between events.

'At Swim-Two-Birds' is a masterpiece of such idiosyncratic charm that I suppose I may also read it annually. It has a wonderful 'spoken' texture, which it shares with Joyce, Becket and Lafferty. British and American novels generally lack this quality. The edition I read had that wonderful Dylan Thomas statement on the cover: 'This is just the book to give your sister if she's a loud, dirty, boozy girl.' Naturally I showed this to my sister. At which she laughed long and loudly. Then she got quiet and demanded to know what she had done to deserve such an insult. And then she asked to read the book.

::: 'At Swim-Two-Birds' is probably my favourite novel, though 'Such is Life' and 'Nightmare Abbey' sometimes seem dearer to me, depending on my mood. It was written in 1939, first published in Britain in 1961, and I suspect only became really popular when Penguin issued it in paperback.

of them unexpectedly ventures into the field - most recently in *THE REVOLVING BOY* and most remarkably in the writings of the South American Borges. Another notable example of the type of mind that should be in science fiction but isn't, is the Dublin writer Flann O'Brien.

Irish literature died in 1835 with Raftery the blind poet, 'my face to the wall, playing music to empty pockets'. The oldest spoken language in Europe, which the English had failed to kill, was being abandoned by its own people in face of the greater need for food, just as millions abandoned Ireland herself. What the world knows as Irish literature has been Anglo-Irish literature, written by people nurtured on English thought and trying with varying success to put down roots in their own country. For the well-springs of native Irish thought we have to go back to the literature in Gaelic, the origins of which were preserved for hundreds of years by the bards - like the book people in *FAHRENHEIT 451* - until the monks wrote it down.

Its characteristics included a certain hardness of thought, which we would now call realism; a fascination by the difference between appearance and reality; a belief in the intrinsic power of words; and a fondness for inventiveness of thought accompanied by ambiguity of expression. (St Columcille of Derry was probably the only bishop ever to put a pun in a protest to the Pope.) It seems obvious that many of these characteristics have re-emerged in Anglo-Irish writers such as Joyce, but it is only now that English influence has been removed from the country for a generation that we can be reasonably sure that this is really a new shoot from the old buried root.

Flann O'Brien has written four books so far and I have just read the last three. From our point of view I probably have not missed much in the first, because even the second is a fairly mundane story set in modern middle-class Dublin. Its characters are an eccentric called Collopy who has dedicated himself to the provision in Dublin of public restrooms for women, and a Jesuit priest, with whom he argues interminably about this and religion. Collopy contracts rheumatoid arthritis through overwork and exposure, and the

Jesuit arranges a visit to the Vatican in the hope of a miracle. The scene in which, through an interpreter, the Pope asks after Collopy's health and finds he is really being asked to use his influence with Dublin Corporation for an unspeakable purpose, is one of the great comic episodes in literature, but the book is of no importance from our point of view other than as indicating the author's inventiveness.

With the third book however - *THE DALKEY ARCHIVE* - we are transported half way to another plane. It is one dominated by a mad scientist and by a policeman obsessed by bicycles. I might draw analogies with Alfred Jarry and Franz Kafka, but I don't think this is necessary or perhaps even relevant, even if I knew enough about either. It is sufficient to point out that the bicycle plays quite as important a role in the life of the impecunious young Dubliner as the horse did in the American West, and that it is the main front on which he comes into contact with authority. The eccentric scientist, De Selby, who is a sort of humourless Charles Fort, believes that time is an illusion caused by the presence of oxygen in the atmosphere and has proved it by maturing the best Irish whiskey overnight. Unfortunately he also believes that God lost his battle with Lucifer, current thought on this subject being the result of a false communique issued by the latter, and proposes to remedy the present deplorable state of affairs by annihilating time and with it the world Lucifer has mischievously created.

The book deals mainly with the efforts of the hero to avert this catastrophe. He is aided by Sergeant Fottrell of the Dublin Police, who goes everywhere wheeling a bicycle which he never rides. This is because of what he calls the Mollycule Theory. When a hammer strikes repeatedly on an anvil, mollycules of the anvil will enter into the hammer, and vice versa. It stands to reason, the Sergeant points out, that the same thing will happen to human beings riding bicycles on bumpy roads, and many unfortunate people in Ireland have by now become more than half bicycle. Conversely of course many bicycles have become part human, making for great danger to the public and great difficulties for the police. He touches on the immorality involved by men riding girls' bicycles and vice versa, and on the element of treason involved by the fact that

all bicycles are made in England; but the most serious case was one of murder. The suspect, a man called McDadd, rode a bicycle with solid tyres, and his condition was so obvious that an enemy attacked his bicycle with a crowbar. McDadd slew him for it and Sergeant Fottrell had a very difficult choice to make, but finally he hanged the bicycle. 'Did you ever see a bicycle-shaped coffin?' he enquires. 'A very convoluted item of woodworking.'

The eccentric De Selby makes no personal appearance in the most recent book, *THE THIRD POLICEMAN*, but dominates it from footnotes explaining his ideas. These sometimes run to several pages and create another imaginary world of commentators and critics which is even funnier than the narrative itself. The narrator is a young man who kills a miser to get the money to publish an exegesis on De Selby. While searching the house he is confronted by the ghost of the murdered man and a long conversation ensues in which the concept emerges that the winds have colours. 'People in the old days had the power of perceiving these colours and could spend a day sitting quietly on a hillside watching the beauty of the winds, their fall and rise and changing hues, the magic of neighbouring winds when they are interweaved like ribbons at a wedding. It was a better occupation than gazing at newspapers.' This harks back to a 10th Century Gaelic poem which asserted 'The east wind is purple, the south white, the north black and the west dun' (the colours ascribed by O'Brien are almost identical but it would be too much to hope that he arrived at them independently) and even to the belief of the pre-Christian Irish in the Sky Boar which controlled the elements. In rural Ireland the belief is still prevalent that pigs can see the wind.

The miser says that this faculty is still possessed by the policemen at the local station, who possess other strange powers. The narrator, having now lost all memory of his crime, goes to them for help in finding the miser's money. This has all the authentic quality of half-waking nightmare, the type in which through absent-minded monomania one inexorably brings about one's own destruction, anguishedly witnessed by a more conscious self. The remainder of

the book, apart from the footnotes, deals with the narrator's relationships with these mysterious policemen. They too are obsessed by bicycles, and indeed the author has succeeded in the remarkable feat of re-selling virtually verbatim several pages of his previous book, and to the same publisher.

But while the official time of the policemen is taken up with bicycles, their off-duty hours are spent in eternity, literally. They have discovered that for some strange reason the cracks in the ceiling of one of the rooms in the police station form a map of the district, with the addition of one road unknown to them. They find this road, the entrance to which had been overgrown, and at the end of it an elevator which takes them down to a vast region of machinery-filled rooms, a sort of planetary basement. They call this eternity because time does not pass there, and spend most of their off-duty hours in it, mainly to save themselves the trouble of shaving. Its character and real nature are too complex to describe here, except to say that it is really under the control of the mysterious third policeman, who makes his appearance towards the end of the book.

The activities of the second policeman, Constable Pluck, are however more intelligible. He is simply a spare-time hobbyist, working with wood and metal, but what O'Brien makes of these simple activities is something almost frightening. Constable Pluck has, for example, made a little spear so sharp that it will cut you before it touches you, the last few inches being quite invisible, and whether or not the last inch exists at all a subject for philosophical conjecture. He has also made a little wooden and brass box so beautiful that there is simply nothing worthy to be kept in it. He solves the problem by making another box even smaller and even more beautiful, which the narrator describes as 'so faultless and delightful that it reminded me forcibly, strange and foolish as it may seem, of something I did not understand and had never even heard of'. Constable Pluck pursues the inexorable logic of his solution to the point of invisibility and beyond, in a scene which to me has the

O'Brien is of course thought of primarily as a humorous writer, and since he is very funny indeed I suppose that assessment is fair enough - though I might add that he writes like a dream and that in particular his dialogue seems to me to do for the speech of the people of Dublin what Synge did for the dialect of the west of Ireland, that is to create a new and beautifully expressive literary language. However from the science-fictional point of view our interest in him must be as an isolated outpost of the literature of ideas. I say isolated however with some of the smugness of the English newspaper headline which announced after a storm 'Continent Cut Off From England'. It seems clear that O'Brien has little knowledge of the science fiction field - in an appendix to THE THIRD

2nd December: In anticipation I said that I had permission from author and publisher to reprint the above article, but I have to confess that as of this moment I have not received Dick Bergeron's permission. The last thing I received from Dick was Warhoon 27, dated September 1970, so he might have moved or anything since then. If you see this, Dick, please don't sue me - and, much more importantly, please publish something: fandom needs y'! And what happened to the 266 pages (my god!) of Walt Willis which you said back in September 1970 you had stencilled? If they are still lying around, please, oh please, send them to me to run off. Do something! Apart from a letter to ASFR some years ago I have never seen anything by Walt Willis outside of Warhoon and the one issue of Hyphen I possess (and a book called THE IMPROBABLE IRISH of course). I have never seen 'The Enchanted Duplicator'. I have never read any instalments of 'The Harp Stateside'. Nor, I imagine, have most of my readers. Have mercy, Dick: give us this day (or some time) our immortal Willis! I wouldn't mind suspending Philosophical Gas for a year if I could publish 266 pages of the greatest fan of all time. (And I say that with the greatest respect to Bob Bloch, Bob Tucker and Harry Warner Jr. I think they would agree with me. Along with Forry Ackerman and Jack Speer, I think these three gentlemen must be absolutely the greatest fans of all, except Walt Willis.)



— the real problem of course is deciding which way is Up.

(XX)

H•E•L•L

A fearless, probing investigation of a problem of
unspeakable magnitude and significance &c by
LEIGH EDMONDS

WHEN John asked me to write this article he really made things difficult for me because I don't know too much about the place, and if it exists I would like to remain as ignorant as I am today. Last week I saw a play in which one woman said she had the suspicion that Heaven wasn't as interesting as 'the other place' but she was probably only kidding. She didn't seem like the kind of woman who'd want to chance it if it ever came to the point. Spending the whole of eternity plunking away on harps may be a bit draggy, but at least it's an easy life and beats, might beat, eternal tortures of various sorts. I've never been a very big fan of torture and despite the current fad for sadism and masochism I'm sure there aren't too many who would like to stick to it for the whole of eternity, which really is a long time.

At Sunday school I received my education in the ways of the spirit, what is good and what is bad, but there wasn't too much of an education in what Heaven and Hell would be like. This was probably because it was a Methodist Sunday school and they have an inclination towards making this life

better, in their estimation, and don't put too much emphasis on the after-life except to say that it does exist and if you are a good little boy you get to go to Heaven and play all the time and if you are naughty you get to go DOWN THERE. It was left to us little Sunday-scholars to deduce that UP THERE was a nice place and DOWN THERE wasn't too much fun.

In the furtherance of my education in these matters I have since learnt that at Catholic schools it is made pretty plain to the kids that Hell is a bad place and you get hurt a lot. There they put the fear of God into you by putting the fear of DOWN THERE into you. But getting back to my own Sunday school education, I remember best of all the time when I was told that when the first Russian cosmonaut was in orbit he reported that there was no Heaven up there. This was told to us partly in order to make us realize how godless and wicked the Communists were and partly to prove that Heaven really did exist. We were told that just because Heaven wasn't a couple of hundred miles up it had to exist even

further away because such a wonderful place as Heaven wouldn't be so easy to reach, especially by godless Russians in godless rockets. We also learnt that since Heaven really wasn't UP Hell wasn't really DOWN. Things were really far more complex than that. But since my teacher had not read science fiction he could not explain it in terms of alternate dimensions. I guess he'd never heard of them but that was the point he was trying to get at.

And then of course if things got really difficult the argument could always come back to the very simple statement which had something to do with the 'Kingdom of Heaven on Earth'. In those days I didn't really know how to put it logically but it seemed to me that if you really had to have Heaven you also got Hell - they seemed to go together like horse and carriage. This also meant that the 'Kingdom of Hell' was located on Earth. The teacher never came out and said it in so many words, but he did say there was a lot of wickedness around.

One day when I was maybe twelve or thirteen I was at a special class held by the minister in which he was comparing the various religions. He made a great point of showing how barbarous the heathen religions were but was not too hard on the various philosophies even though he made it quite plain that they were not 'The True Way'. After taking a look at the Moslems we came to Buddhism and the minister told the story of the Lord Buddha's enlightenment under a tree and figured out that the reason everybody gets so upset is because they are always wanting things, therefore the way not to get upset is not to want anything. It was the first bit of theology I'd ever heard that made the slightest sense. Unfortunately the minister never did get onto Taoism or Zen but later I found out the hash he'd made of Buddha so maybe it's just as well he didn't get into the other movements. He did make mention of Nirvana but the way he said it this thing was a place just like Heaven and not a state (or non-state) of mind. He made no mention of a Buddhist Hell which was right enough but since we had all been brought up to think of Heaven and Hell in the one thought we automatically thought that there was a Buddhist Hell. As I have only recently discovered (and it's Eney's Fault),

there is such a place. In SAPS Dick Eney circulated a little issue of Spy Ray with an article called 'A Visit to Guist Territory' in which Chinese Hell was well explained. The place is probably as hard to endure as the Christian place but you don't go there for ever and ever, just as long as it takes to work off your Bad Karma. Then you get reincarnated so that you can gradually work your way to the Buddha state. In fact the place is that benevolent that it is run by a bloke who has attained the Buddha state but is staying on in this world to give others a better chance of also achieving the state of Nirvana. That's very nice of him, I think.

Christianity is probably a very nice religion if that is the sort of thing that attracts you. Most of us have been brought up to it which is not really our own fault but if we are to believe a lot of the things that we read in the papers and in books it is Christianity which is to blame for the state the world is in today. It's not the teachings of Christ that are to blame - they are very nice but somewhere along the passage of the last couple of thousand years they've been screwed up unmercifully by the people who have been administering them. Not having made a life-long study of the teachings of Christ I can't quote examples but there is enough around to indicate that he knew what he was talking about and was probably on his last reincarnation. If the words could have come down to us as he said them then we might be able to understand what he was really saying. However it seems that the Western Mind likes to take things very literally and what Jesus may have said by way of allusion has come down to us as straight and hard fact. Only the parables escape because they are so obviously parables.

After the death of Christ his teachings passed into the hands of people who had a vested interest in seeing that people took them as gospel. If Jesus said something that could be misconstrued to make people think that they had to strive for material dominance over others and the environment then they did because as they were the teachers they were at the top of the pile and could not help but benefit in all ways. And so the tradition has been passed down until the materialistic outlook seems to have overgrown its Christian roots and is now about to smother it. Materialism doesn't hold too much faith in

an after-life and so as we are taught its doctrines and not the Christian ones Hell takes very much of a back seat in the affairs of man.

My parents are very glad that they are Methodists. They think it's a big deal to be in the church that John Wesley founded way back then a couple of hundred years ago. One of these days I must show them the bit in a history book I read which put down Methodism as one of the factors which made the Industrial Revolution possible in Britain. John Wesley taught that Work was good and fitting and as there is no need to struggle in this world for material possessions it is quite permissible to be exploited by the industrialists because you've got it made to UP THERE and they are all going DOWN THERE for sure. Methodism seems to have been the last of the large new Christian breakaway churches to be set up. There is the Salvation Army but it is reasonably small and I guess springs from the exploitation of the industrialists which Christians had earlier encouraged.

Nowadays the churches have lost their hold. People no longer bother to go to church on Sunday and community hymn singing has really gone out of fashion. The churches are shrinking back and losing their supporters as the ordinary people get sick of having to put the good life off to the next life and want it now. Trade unions have more members than churches, I'm sure. And as for the possibility of eternal damnation, who cares? There is no proof of it and there is proof that I can get to buy that tape recorder and the people down the road can afford that new Mazda with the vinyl top. The church has never really proved that it pays to be a good person and when you go and look at the history of the church it seems obvious enough that being bad now and then does have its good points. Tangible assets anyhow. A lot of people didn't have faith back then even when it was fashionable and now that it's gone out of fashion having faith is something that you don't mention to your best friends. And it's all the church's fault.

If the church had had any sense its leaders would have realized that they could not keep up the status quo forever. They tried though through the suppression of various people and their ideas and inventions. The

end result was that the ideas and inventions got to be accepted anyhow and the church was left holding the baby. If the leaders had considered the problem logically they would have realized that the ideas were going to make the scene anyhow and they would have patronized them. If some Pope had been smart enough to see that maybe Columbus had a point there they would have sponsored the expedition to the other side of the globe and when it paid off they would have had a firm hand in controlling the situation. Instead of that the Spaniards and Portuguese were the first there and made a killing before the Pope realized what had been going on and then the only real thing he got to do was draw a line separating the Spaniards and Portuguese. It was a slight meddling in the affairs of the two countries which probably made him feel that he was achieving something but it was a pretty empty gesture when you consider how things turned out.

The point of all this is that through its history the church has been far too inflexible in its attitudes. It was probably felt that you have to make people toe the line in matters of politics as well as spiritual matters but with a little bit of bending here and there it would be quite possible that we might all still be God-Fearing Christians. Looking back we see that the trouble with the Catholic Church is that it has been sometimes incredibly intolerant of any deviation from its line. In matters of the spirit this is understandable and a bit of inquisitioning used to work wonders but the Pope and his friends should have known that you can do all you like for people's spirits and that's fair game but start meddling in people's physical lives and there are going to be movements away from the source of control. Thusly we get all sorts of breakaway churches and there is where a lot of the weakness in the hold that the church had began.

So what the Hell? Answer: No church, no fear of Hell.

So what am I writing this silly article about? Jesus Christ is still more or less a relevant issue because he said some things that we can relate to if we wish to and feel guilty about if we want to. On

31st October: Last night I typed the last stencil for the last issue of Scythrop: rather a sad page, in some ways - but you and I know that Philosophical Gas is really Scythrop in a clever plastic disguise, so not to worry. Tonight Sally took delivery of her \$95 piano, and is playing Schubert on it at this very moment. (The piece is one of those usually identified as being from 'Rosamunde', but in fact I believe it comes from something called 'The Magic Harp'. Sounds good anyway.) It's been a hard day at work, with a brace of pig farmers carrying on before the Prices Committee about meat meal. Not much fun at all. I left work feeling drained and in urgent need of (preferably musical) stimulation. So I went to the local record shop and they had the set of a dozen Haydn symphonies I ordered some weeks ago, so I came home with that glorious feeling of exultant anticipation which only the purchaser of a dozen Haydn symphonies knows, and, ah, the piano arrived before I could put needle to groove and Sally and I have been playing it non-stop since. As pianos go, it's a pretty nice-looking piece of furniture. The keys are a bit stiff (and our fingers likewise), the sustaining pedal doesn't, it's almost impossible to play either legato or staccato - but we're delighted with it. Making your own music, however badly, is much more fun than listening to records - just as playing any kind of sport is really more enjoyable than watching the experts. (Maybe that's why people write and publish fanzines when they could be reading good literature, professionally printed.) I had phone calls today from my brother-in-law-in-law, Alan (he used to be my very own brother-in-law, but now he's just my sister's: I think that still makes him some kind of relation), who threatens to brighten up our lives towards the end of November, and from my sister Joy, who will be coming to stay with us this coming weekend. The call from Joy was a bit odd. I think her boss was within hearing distance, and she kept on saying things like If you see John will you tell him we'll be visiting him this weekend? I was feeling pretty confused but I said I'd let him know. Joy's husband Vern was on the telly tonight, but I couldn't pick him up on my FM radio (we don't have TV), so I guess Canberra didn't consider him sufficiently important. (I just know that American readers are going to ask me about that, but I

don't feel like going into the subject right now.) To make my day completely - as if two delightful phone calls, the piano and the Haydn symphonies were not enough - there was a letter from Bill Danner. I'm about to print it, but first I should mention that during September I posted out about sixty copies of a little thing called 'Revoltin' Tales of Sex and Super-Science', mainly designed to acknowledge letters received and not answered during the past six months or so. In it I happened to say that I don't get many letters of comment on my fanzines these days - and so far about two-thirds of the people who received that slim and eminently forgettable publication have written to me about it. (Yer can't win.) I have a few copies lying around if you really want to see it. Here's Bill:

WILLIAM M. DANNER

23.10

RD no.1

Kennerdell Pennsylvania 16374 USA

... When radio was in its infancy - around 1928 or 1929 - NBC (and I don't recall whether it was the Red Network or the Blue Network) had for a year or two a program called 'Station KUKU'. It was one hour once a week, as I recall, and it was engineered by one Raymond Knight, who was assisted by a few other choice nuts. It consisted of skits that were burlesques of all the other programs heard on radio at the time and some of them were pretty hilarious. I don't know how many other parts he played but Knight himself was the announcer, Ambrose J. Weems, and in signing off he would always say 'You can fool some of the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool some of the people some of the time.' That final statement was spoken in *Italics*, if not in Cooper Black... Most of the skits were series affairs, even as today on (ugh) TV, and they included things like 'Charlie Chu-Chu, the Chinese Detective', poetry readings by some dame whose name I forget, household hints by Mrs George T. Pennyfeather and other similar things which you can't imagine as you can't possibly be that old. (True, Bill. My memory doesn't extend beyond April 1939 - but Australian radio was a little backward compared with yours, and I seem to recall similar programs from my childhood. But not Ambrose, no.) The program had an orchestra, too - the

Symphonic Razz Orchestra, which rended the classics. It was a lot of fun and I'd gladly trade all the tv series now on the air (I watch nothing but movies on tv and there are very few now worth watching) for something similar again. Of course it was very short on violence (save when an elephant in the studio got out of hand) so it wouldn't go with today's audiences.

In today's mail along with your thing I got the latest Kwalhioqua which I've hardly glanced at yet (Wouldn't worry about that, Bill: Kwal&c these days is full of junk from Australia. Hi, Ed.) because I received also a review copy of Wertham's new opus 'The World Of Fanzines'. So far as I've read some of it is pretty interesting while other parts are dull, but this is typical of such books. The odd thing about it is that there is no slightest mention of you amazingly-prolific birds down under, though the few fanzines in England and Europe do get at least a mention. In spite of the difficulty he mentions in the acquisition of a collection of fanzines one would think that somewhere he'd have run across some mention of the activity in your part of the world. (We have to keep some part of fandom away from prying eyes like Wertham's, Bill: Lucky us.) As I may have told you before, I don't care for the ASFR sort of thing but I have enjoyed greatly some of the general interest things I've received from you and others there.

:::: And I like Stefantasy, and ASFR died in 1969, so there's two more satisfied customers. You ask, Bill, what 'Support Legacy Week' is. Um, Legacy is an outfit that looks after the interests of children of ex-servicemen, and they have a Week, and... you see? Maybe around August 1975 the post office will have a mark that says 'Support Aussiecon.' Maybe.

7th November: It was 7th November when I typed the above, too, after a lapse of a week. I'm getting impatient in my old age. Should have published all of Bill's letter: it's good. Lots of other letters around, too, but I don't feel like typing other people's stuff right now - you know what I mean? Dtek Geis knows what I mean. You spend all that time and energy and money on producing and distributing a fanzine - and you love those fantastic letters and articles you get - but somehow you hate wasting all that time,

energy and money on typing and publishing other people's stuff. Crazy. Probably just a phase we older fans go through. Fenopause. All you want to do is listen to records and write things and so on, and the mceh - oh bugger it - mechanics of fanzine production becomes a dead bore. I guess you get over it eventually. I mean, I've got a lovely letter here from Paul Anderson (yeah, Paul - not Poul), and he's a nice guy and I should really spend half an hour or so sub-editing it and typing it, but I can't be bothered. (Hi, Paul.) I think it's largely because I'm sick of typing. I'm up to the second page of Walt's article back there, and even with the stimulation of the immortal Willis it's a drudge, it really is.

(Later:) So what you do is have dinner (cooked preferably by someone like Sally), have a bottle or three of your favourite rough red, take it into your head to run off the cover that Noel Kerr has so beautifully electrostencilled for you, find that Roneo has kindly provided you with fifteen reams of A4 paper instead of the quarto you ordered - and there you are, enthused again and bursting to get another issue out. (And if you don't have a clue what I'm talking about you've never published a fanzine. Try it some time. You'll never be the same.)

Quote for Today: 'In Canberra in 1850 there was virtually no culture left, and it has been deteriorating ever since.'

The speaker was a witness before the House of Representatives Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, and he was talking about Aboriginal culture, but I liked that text-out-of-context and there it is.

And now for Something Really Different! - a letter from

PAUL STEVENS
GPO Box 2167 L
Melbourne 3001 Australia

4.11

I was horrified to see that you are also standing for DUFF, particularly since Edmonds is also standing. Here I was, convinced that I had a clear field what with Gillespie overseas, Shayne overseas, Eric Lindsay overseas, you broke and Edmonds getting married. I thought I had it won. But I don't hold it against you. Like I told Edmonds (as I slipped the ground glass into his Milo), 'I don't hold it against him.' So to prove that I forgive you, please find under separate cover a present of fifteen goldfish. They are very friendly and like to play with you in the bath. If they look grey in colour and have long teeth and

try to eat the aquarium, just don't worry - the travelling upsets them. Just tip them into the bathtub, climb in with them and reassure them of your love and devotion. If you find the word 'Piranha' on the side of their tank, just ignore it - it's South American for goldfish.

(ps: Can I have your duplicator and electric typewriter after?)

::: Gee, Paul, you're always doing nice things for me. (I'll never forget that lovely Himalayan koala bear you sent me. Its photo was in all the papers after it ate half a goods train on the way up here and tromped on Wodonga before the air force got at it.) We have a bathtub, sure, but I didn't feel the goldfish would like being in with all that coal and old fanzines and stuff, so I let them free in Lake Burley Griffin. Did you say fifteen? There were about forty actually. Anyway they're probably quite happy now in the lake. Funny thing, talking about Lake Burley Griffin: a couple of politicians in the habit of taking early morning dips in the lake disappeared recently. And yesterday Kings Avenue Bridge was closed to traffic because of some unspecified damage to the pylons. Sometimes I wonder about your lovely presents, Paul.

10th November: Careful readers will have noticed in my recent publications a certain deterioration in spelling and reproduction. I mean, there was a typo in the second sentence of Scythrop 28, for example. Yesterday I mentioned to my doctor an increasing frequency of headaches, amongst other ailments, and he has referred me to an eye specialist. I have suspected for some time that my eyesight isn't all it could be, even though the local motor licence people said I was okay (but my licence says I must have another eye test in 1981), and next week I have a strong feeling that this will be confirmed. Ah, well, almost thirty-five years without glasses isn't too bad, and I think I'll only need them for reading and typing (that is, about 70% of my waking hours). I'll look all distinguished when I get glasses, like Foyster and Edmonds and Harding and Johnson and Stevens and Binns and... good heavens! - like all the trufans I know. There's food for thought in there somewhere, maybe.

There's been a whole lot of fan activity going on in this house lately. Scythrop 28 was finally collated today, and last weekend most of a certain book which I prefer not to talk about. Today Sally's friend Rosemarie called in for a spot of renaissance music and stimulating chatter of a vaguely intellectual nature, and instead found herself collating, poor girl. Between them Sally and Rosemarie did most of the work on collating that issue. Last weekend Joy and Vern Warren stayed here, and when we weren't eating and drinking we were collating - or so it seemed. We did manage to talk a bit, though. Bill Wright is giving Joy a crash course in fandom, since she has it in mind to look up a few fans in Europe in January, and I've sort of rounded it out a bit by letting her experience a collating session. To let her and Vern get the true feel of the thing I stayed out of their way a fair bit, which is typical of my essential thoughtfulness. Another friend and relation, Diane's brother Alan Kirsten (who is still my sister Ruth's brother-in-law) (you following this?), is threatening to descend on us in a few weeks, so I'll save some collating for him, too.

Talking of religion, here's

JOHN ALDERSON

15.10

PO Box 72

Maryborough Vic 3465 Australia

So you and Leigh Edmonds are standing for DUFF. Ah now, assuming that neither Paul Stevens or myself or someone else wins, one of you is going to leave a grass widow behind. Soul of generosity that I am, I hereby offer to take Sally or Valma in my strong arms and protect them during the absence of the lucky man. Far as I can gather there is no point in me supporting that Stevens character. Rest assured that you may campaign with the full knowledge that you leave a good man in your place. ((Surrounded by friends, that's what I am: Paul sends me lethal sardines and John offers to 'protect' Sally if I win. I am all overcome.))

I appreciated your letter to Lyall Williams. He is a man I respect greatly. Somewhat surprisingly I find that his work on Christian Unity has been regarded at least in some circles as the most advanced thing since Campbell (this came from Canadian

sources). It saddens me that you are no longer with us. I believe that you tried to intellectualize too much. Theology, to my mind, is merely the smoke of the fire of conviction within. I don't believe that anything can be proved, but if and supposing that it can, where does it get one? It stimulates the mind but it does not bring conviction. And worse, convictions based on such proofs are subject to all attempts at disproof, successful or not, with the triumph going to the best disputant. ... I doubt, I very seriously doubt, that anyone believes that God does not exist, or to put it in the positive, virtually everybody believes that God exists. But to what point? This is a matter of conviction, a conviction that it does matter.

:::: Sorry to cut you off there, John.

I appreciate your letter very much, but I think I've started something with my comments on religion in the last issue which I don't really wish to continue - at least not in print. Your letter more or less says it all: you say 'virtually everybody believes that God exists'; I say (a) I don't, so you are wrong, (b) define your terms - and there you are back into theology or philosophy or just plain arguing the point. I'm not sure whether we are using the same language, so I won't dispute your belief that I 'tried to intellectualize too much'. But I will say that in college it was my firm belief that God had given me an intellect to use, that theology was something more than mental stimulation if something less than faith. I still have a fair smattering of theology, but not the faith. I know which I'd prefer to have, but that's the way it turned out.

Anyway, having decided that I don't want this publication full of religious argument, I find myself in an awkward position. Last issue I mentioned that Leigh Edmonds asked me to write an article about Jesus for Rataplan, which I have done, and that in return I asked Leigh to write an article about Hell for me. He has done that, and it's a good article, but as you would expect if you know Leigh, it is ever so gently, humanely but definitely anti-Christian. I also have a handful of sermons from Bill Wright which are much less gently anti-Christian. Now if I publish

Leigh and Bill, shouldn't I give you, John, and Joan Dick and Helen Hyde and everyone else who reads this who is a practising Christian equal time? There's no doubt in my mind: I should publish your response, in all fairness. But I don't feel like it. If I want a religious discussion I can have one any time at all, at work, in a pub, in the house next door, just about anywhere. I'm not declaring the subject closed, because I know damn well it'll crop up again and again, but I feel like giving it a rest.

After all that, I should mention that I decided not to send Mr Williams that letter for the purpose which prompted it. That volume of letters will be read for years hence, I would imagine, and I don't think my letter should be in it; someone could be hurt or upset by it. So I'll send the letter privately to Mr Williams some time.

11th November: I've just re-read the stencils I've typed during the last few weeks - and decided I should do that every time I sit down to type some more. I had forgotten yesterday that I had already mentioned Joy and Vern and Alan, for instance; that bit about being Alan's brother-in-law-in-law must be wearing a bit thin by now, especially if you've been reading my stuff for some years. (For those who haven't, a final explanation: I married Diane Kirsten in 1966 and my sister Ruth married Barry Kirsten not long after. So my ex-wife is now sort of my sister-in-law or something. I haven't heard anything from or about her for over six months, but I suspect we are still friends. I hope so anyway. And I hope she is happy. She is a rather wonderful lady, and it was just rotten luck on her part and good luck on mine that we met and married. Neither of us knew then - eight years ago - that I needed someone like her to free me from adolescent hangups and allow me to do the things I have some talent for doing; nor that in doing those things I would wreck the marriage. C'est la vie &c, but I can't help thinking of her every now and then and hoping that she is happy.)

I also note that yesterday I didn't actually say that I would not, for the reasons given, publish Leigh's article and Bill's 'sermons'. Probably this is because I'm not sure how to explain to Leigh and Bill, but especially Leigh, why their stuff is not in this issue. I hope they'll understand, and forgive me.

BILL WRIGHT

7.10

53 Celia Street

Burwood Vic 3125 Australia.

Philgas 25 duly arrived, complete with the Rotsler icecream mountain on the cover. I daresay that scores of observant readers have written in to say that there is a very nasty possibility not covered in my political philosophy. ((Nary a one so far, Bill, but never mind.)) It will be remembered that two limiting conditions were described in which either 'the government' or 'the people' gets to enjoy most of the wealth. There is of course another possibility - that neither of these clearly identifiable groups controls the wealth created by the toiling masses. Here the going becomes extremely tricky. The wealth is neither enjoyed inside the community nor outside it. The former case is less harmful for the people as a whole because, although the natural selfishness of human beings will make a rich man hang on to his wealth if he can, the massed selfishness of the proletariat will win out in the long run.

The principle of the desirability of inefficient government applies only when the wealth is enjoyed inside the community. When, as is often the case, foreigners take the wealth out, a strong government which serves the interests of the people is the only answer. It is easy enough to elect a strong government, but it is the hardest thing in the world to make it work for the people instead of for its own advantage. This is why a community must be very wary before it allows any of its wealth to be enjoyed by outsiders - and warier still in the creation of a strong government to reverse the situation.

I enjoyed reading Kurt Vonnegut's article on how to write a short story, not so much for the clues on plotting but rather for his views on Christianity, with which I do not agree.

((Oh hell! This is one of the bits I've just said I won't publish. Bill, why don't you collect your unexpurgated thoughts on Christianity, and especially the Papal variety, and publish them in your superb little fanzine 'Interstellar Ramjet Scoop'? I'm pretty sure Gregg Calkins will allow me to put that issue in FAPA, and maybe Leigh can arrange something similar for SAPS and the other apas he is in. That's if you feel like it. Your ideas deserve circulation and discussion, for sure. I just

don't want PG turning into a battleground for religious argument, as I said back there. On the other hand, if you ever feel like favouring us with your Memoirs of a Catholic Childhood, including notes of your escape into the broader horizons of science fiction fandom and the umpteen other things you are involved in, I would be delighted to publish them.))

Your little piece on the DUFF race leaves me with conflicting emotions. Each of the candidates, including your good self, is likely to mightily increase the good fellowship that exists between Australian and World fandom. So it comes to a question of who most deserves to go. In my view, it's Paul Stevens. I hope we can still be friends after DUFF 74 is all over. ANTIFAN FOREVER - PAUL J. STEVENS FOR DUFF - ANTIFAN FOREVER - PAUL J. STEVENS FOR DUFF - PAUL J. STEVENS FOR DUFF - PAUSE FOR REFRESHMENT - ANTIFAN FOREVER - PAUL J. STEVENS FOR DUFF!

((Are you quite finished there, Bill?))

... I appreciated Keith Curtis's letter.

If you really meant that comment about Philgas being a journal for dropout Christians... ((I didn't! I didn't!))

I liked Mrs Le Guin's insight into the uses of fantasy, and also her concept of fantasy as an essential part of the content of reality. Reality is so unbearable these days that people engage in all sorts of distractions to avoid seeing it. If you want people to see part of it, you have to separate that part and tell an interesting story about it before they will even listen to what you have to say. Our literature is fragmented; our minds are fragmented; our lives are fragmented; and if you think that the end of the process is dissolution then you are in the company of the most profound thinkers alive today.

((I've lopped about two-thirds of Bill's letter, and I feel bad about it. The bits missing mainly concerned Kurt Vonnegut and Christianity, and certain obscurities in Ursula Le Guin's article - such as the term 'the Flaubertian novel'. Anyway, on the 25th of October Bill said he felt his letter needed extensive editing and admitted to feeling 'crapped off with the whole social framework'. I assured him that he was not alone, that I would print the entire letter - which I haven't - and so on. Sally

added a postscript, mentioning that we were both under the influence of a '66 Kaiser Stuhl J426, and Bill responded as follows:)

Your reference to Kaiser Stuhl, Sally, somehow reminded me of the banal aphorism about falling between two stools, which in turn reminded me of the origin of this expression. In the days when England was young and Robin Hood's merry band of outlaws ranged the forest of Sherwood, it was common for folk to lose their balance in many a bout with ale and sack beneath the greenwood tree. This gave rise to the vigorous proverb: BETWEEN TWO STOLES THE ARS GOTH TO GRWND.

There are not many of us left that are at one with the spirit of Merrie England which neither black depression nor portents of disaster may quench and upon which the sun never sets.

The World Needs Us.

:::: Well, I don't know about Us, Bill, but certainly the world needs you.

I look forward with great glee to the time (surely not too far distant) when you make it off the waiting-list and into FAPA. I feel pretty confident that, with the unmatched exception of Harry Warner Jr, you will rapidly become the most popular and provocative member FAPA has ever had. Meantime, someone should give you some kind of award for being the kindest-hearted, hardest-working, least-recognized Australian fan of all time. Even if you do support Paul Stevens for DUFF...

KEN OZANNE

2.9

42 Meek's Crescent

Raulconbridge NSW 2776 Australia

Valdis Augstkalns: Pardon, my ignorance is showing. Who exactly was Tucker? Gibbs I have heard of. But I will not agree that thermodynamics is 'the only complete and completed science'. In one sense the statement might be challenged on the grounds that thermodynamics is not science at all, in that we now believe there are exceptions to its laws. On the other hand one can point to sciences that are equally complete (in what I take to be the relevant sense), such as Newtonian mechanics or Euclidean geometry. (Somewhat off centre is the point that there are theories which may be proved to be 'complete' in the mathematical sense, of which thermodynamics is not one.)

(Help! I don't know what either of them is talking about!)

(Sounds good, but. All them long words adds Tone to this journal.)

Thanks for the Vonnegut speech. Now I know how to write. Stand by for the Great Australian Novel.

(Too late, Ken; it's been done. See 'Such is Life' by Furphy, J. and/or 'Here's Luck' by Lower, L. But I'll stand by, just in case.)

I started reading the Peacock selections without first looking at the heading and thought for a while you had discovered a promising young poet. Poor feller would have been 188 if he had lived - you can scarcely call that young. Anyway, these two poems allow me a chance to display my erudition. (Careful, Ken - this is a Family Fanzine.) Since I don't have much erudition to display (oh, come on), these opportunities must not be allowed to pass me by. The friar of Rubygill, with his canary sack, is an example of the preferences in wine that obtained before the invention of the cork - sweet wines that would not turn quickly into vinegar. In 'Seamen Three', the refrain 'And our ballast is old wine' at least suggests the notion of wine aged in bottle. Of course corks did exist throughout Peacock's adult life: there still exists, for an extremely favoured few, the Chateau Lafite of 1797 to prove it.

:::: We found, if that's the word, a quite deadly plastic stopper in a bottle of spumante recently. A feather or two and it'll be just great for a game of ghoddminton. Are corks on the way out, Ken? (Around this place they usually are, but you know what I mean.)

13th November: The idea of not publishing Leigh's article has worried me incessantly. I mean, I asked him for it, and he has accepted my article (which is also more or less about religion). So I have decided to publish it after all. I'll just say this: Any further letters or contributions I get on the subject of religion - for or agin - will have to be rather special in some way to get into these pages.

What helped me make this (brand sparkling new) decision is a little poem which a lady at work handed to me this afternoon. How it gets into the 'rather special' category I will leave you to worry about. The lady's name is Anne Kilcullen, and having worked

with her for some months now, I can assure you that Anne (or Mrs or Dr Kilcullen) herself is very much in the rather-special category. Even if she doesn't laugh at my puns all that much.

The Church is a dragon, gilded, ornate,
Heroic, utterly out of date,
With gilded claws, a recalcitrant tail,
And brain not built at all to scale,

With eyes that were always much too small,
Without the dignity to expire
By a noble hand in a battle royal.

But watch your step: it may yet breathe fire,
It may guard the world's treasure after all.

:::: Okay, let's have a few more quotes
from Hansard, my favourite fanzine,
and then on with the show:

'The man is then test-driven over a pre-
selected course...' (and if he survives we
give him a job as a truck?)

'Let us start at the start, because this is
where we do commence.' (Sounds quite
unnatural to me - and unlikely. That one
belongs in the same class as any sentence
uttered by a politician which commences
with the words 'Finally' or 'In conclusion'.)

'It looks as though there will be an oil
shortage throughout the world, and it seems
to me that this sort of thing ought to be
hastened rather than just watched.'

Ah, never a dull moment in my job, folks.
(Only in my fanzines.)

A note from George Turner today:
'Having received Scythrop 28, am most
sweetly grunted. But was it wise? Think
of all the great fans upstaged, the fans not
honoured with a Bangsund special! My fan
mail will be all letter bombs and yours
poisoned Cabernet.' And he refers to
Norm Metcalf's notes on his article about
John Campbell so amusingly that I wish I
had time to ask his permission to print his
comments, and goes on to say he has no
intention of writing the article I've asked
him for. We'll see, George. After Scythrop
28 I have a reputation to uphold - and you
invented that reputation - so... we'll see.

Some more response to that issue of
Revolting Tales mentioned earlier:

NED BROOKS 23.10
713 Paul Street
Newport News Virginia 23605 USA

I am always a little surprised at the people
who don't know Tom Cockcroft - I would
have thought he would have a certain
measure of fame throughout fandom for
his index to Weird Tales. He is apparently
the only fan in New Zealand - at least I
don't know of any others. (I have four or
five on my mailing list, Ned. Show
yourselves, NZ fans!) His index appeared
in 1962 and I have been corresponding
with him since the late 60s. He has
never told me his age: I had guessed
about 50, but someone at TorCon said he
was about 70. I told him back before
Melbourne won the bid that I would go if
he would. (On the other hand, I had
guessed Cagle to be 60 or so, and it turns
out he's about my age.) (You've gotta
be older than 17, Ned!) ...
Do you know of any fans in Chile? It has
been said that fandom is a middle-class
phenomenon, and Chile has had a large
middle class for some time. When I lived
there in the late 40s and early 50s it was
often possible to buy F&SF. And yet I
have never heard of a Chilean fan,
though I have corresponded with three in
Argentina and one in Venezuela.

:::: I don't know of any Chilean fans,
Ned, but John Litchen (36 Benbow St,
Yarraville, Vic. 3013) is married to the
sister of Chilean sf author Hugo Correa;
he might be able to help you.

MIKE HORVAT 1.11
Route 1 Box 104
Tangent Oregon 97389 USA

... I bought a '52 Cadillac to zip around
with - it doesn't run too much of the time,
but makes a good hobby. Quite a prestige
car. Got a lot of lovely junkers sitting
around the yard - old Plymouths, even an
English-made Metropolitan. Not very
interesting unless one thinks of them as
cultural oddities which are fast vanishing
from the scene. There is a remarkable
nostalgia in this country for 'the good old
days' of only twenty years ago. Since 20
yrs ago was my childhood, I am particu-
larly sentimental.

:::: Great to hear from you, Mike. As you say, we have rather lost track. Seems to me the last time I saw you was that incredible weekend 3½ years ago when Diane moved out. Doggone, eh? And you've moved out of your church: it must be the end of an era or something. That Metropolitan rings a bell: was it a little two-seater Nash with an Austin A40 motor? I always wanted one of those, when I was young and silly. Is 'junks' American for 'bomb' or 'heap'? - or do you have some misplaced Prussians camped in your back yard?

ERIC LINDSAY 10.10
6 Hillcrest Avenue
Faulconbridge NSW 2776 Australia

Glad to see Bill Wright expound the 'pirate' theory of government, because it is the one I believe to be most accurate. The frightening thing is not that such is the case, but that even those in power do not really realize just what they are doing. Some of them do have the best of intentions but seem to have absolutely no coherent political philosophy that transcends party lines. Aggh, what is the use - I look forward to the day that spacecraft type 'black box' power & water producers are available cheaply (not that any way awake government would ever let such a thing be mass produced), because that is the day that communes and various drop out actions would start to work - at present they don't stand a chance, mainly because there is simply too much work involved in food production, and money is required to get power & all the other things (like the study & leisure time that night lighting will buy) needed for a long term commune.

:::: Ursula, who wants to experience reality in our reading, when we perforce (unless we have closed minds) suffer it in our daily lives. SF (whatever that term may mean) is escapism, I read it as such, and respect it as such, it is imagination, but even more it is greatness, it is heroic, it transcends the normal to show what might be if only we agree to reach for it. It is not chance that Heinlein's 'competent man', Leiber's Mouser, Van Vogt's Slans all are thought of as being from the same field. They all have a mission, and it is undertaken without any concept of mistake, without doubt, and this is where sf differs from mainstream - there doubts are rampant.

:::: Um, ah, whatever you say, Eric. Later in that rather untypical letter you say you feel like going out and kicking something to death, which is a bad way to feel, if understandable - and you even forget to spell it 'deth', so I guess you were feeling a bit bad on 10th October. Maybe you were just feeling the need of a mission. I know that feeling.

14th November: A mad, frustrating day, listening to politicians and others talking endlessly about turtle farming in the Torres Strait Islands and the 'civil rights of migrant Australians'. I do not understand, at least not fully, the feelings of those members of our society who live, move and have their very being in the (to me more than somewhat repugnant) idealism of regenerating an independent nation in Croatia. I do understand the feelings of my Jewish and Egyptian friends, I think. But I cannot quite understand these people, many of them younger than me, who want to see Ante Pavelic's utterly abhorrent political system reimposed on that part of Yugoslavia which is Croatia. The Croats are rightly proud of their history - if any national group can be said to have the right to be proud of its history. But to return to the nightmare which was Croatia under the Poglavnik - that I cannot understand any intelligent human being desiring. Again and again the Croatian witnesses before this committee have said that the Croats in Australia are simple people, peasants. I am more and more inclined to believe they are dead right, in the pejorative sense. :::: I could write endlessly on this subject, but I am sufficiently a public servant to desist.

A quote:

'When I say things like that I feel as though I am taking you for granted.'

'But I feel you are taking me for wanted.'

Another quote. The latest issue of Vector I have seen has a superb piece by Brian Aldiss on H.G. Wells (from Brian's book THE BILLION YEAR SPREE). Conrad once said to Wells: 'The difference between us is fundamental. You don't care for humanity but think they are to be improved. I love humanity but know they are not.'

I am on Conrad's side in that weighty debate, which is probably why I don't write sf, and don't feel entirely unsympathetic about Croats.

20th November: Sally and I had finished singing Happy Birthday to Carolyn (no, Carolyn is in Melbourne; it's just the sort of thing we do), and I had told her about the letter from *Philip * K. * Dick* and a few fascinating things about what happened at work today, when we sort of got talking about immigration and nationality and so on. You get to talk about lots of interesting things when you have the right company and no tv set. Anyway, Sally works in the Immigration Department, and her field is naturalization and all kinds of technical stuff about whether adopted children can become Australian citizens and all kinds of things like that which utterly bewilder me. Somehow it came round to my background, and Sally is reasonably sure (but not prepared to bet on it) that if my father was never naturalized then I have dual nationality - Australian by birth, Norwegian by direct descent. Then we took it a bit further. My father was definitely Norwegian by direct descent, but he was born in Denmark; and his mother was Danish. So it is possible that he had dual nationality also. It follows that I might have triple nationality... Then I mentioned to Sally that my other grandfather was English, and that my other grandmother's parents were French and Irish. At that point I was ejected from the living-room. But who knows? - I might be a walking one-man multi-national corporation! Gee.

I have always liked Phil Dick's writing, and as of today I can say I like the man. His letter to me contained three sentences, in which he thanked me for the stuff I've sent him and said he especially enjoyed Kurt Vonnegut's speech in PG 25. Not a letter of comment - a letter of appreciation. Knowing how rarely I thank people for the things they send me, and knowing how rarely people thank me for the things I send them, I really liked that letter. I liked Paul Anderson's letter for the same reason. When people take the trouble to write to you - whether it's a brilliant letter of comment that will set fandom talking for months or a letter of comment that I will feel sort of bad about not publishing or just a note of thanks - then you know that your countless hours of work have not been wasted. Someone out there likes you. Which is roughly what fanzines are all about, more or less, by and large, up to a point, sort of.

Sally says I move in a mysterious way. I'm not sure what she means, but she smiled when she said it.

In the last FAPA mailing Norm Clarke told us about this word game which he and Gina and their friends had driven each other mad thinking about. It involves, simply, describing in one pun how some person died. The person may be named or not. Examples (not necessarily Norm's - as usual I've mislaid the last FAPA mailing so I can't check): Shakespeare was debarred. A pot smoker would be disjointed. And so on. Yesterday I got Travelling Midget 1 from Howard Lyons, and he lists about sixty or so rotten puns of a similar nature which have occurred to him. Each was decomposed. Italy was deduced. Yogi Berra was demitted. And so on. Today I couldn't get the blasted things off my mind, and (although I got off the track here and there) this is what emerged: Fanny Hill was delayed. Cleopatra aspired. Dracula was mistaken. Eric Temple Bell was detained. Pope Gregory was disenchanted. Joan of Arc misfired. Beethoven was defended. Erasmus was defoliated. Caxton was depressed. Chaucer was detailed. Jonah was bewailed. Sir Edmund Hillary dismounted. Emmanuel recanted. 'Enry 'Iggins was exasperated. Roy Tackett will be exhorted. Jack Speer will be extinguished. Charlemagne was demagnetized. Twenty-five percent of donkeys are assassinated. Pontius was depilated. Tyrone Power degenerated. Scotland has long been depicted. Uganda could probably stand examination. Henry Ford was demoted. Hamlet was desired, Laertes desisted. Senator Withers will be wrung. Cecil B. De Mille was bespectacled. A polygon is a dead parrot.

1st December: And a fine beginning it is to summer, too. About 30°C out there, and as we drove back along Hindmarsh Drive from the Private Cellar Club I said to Sally that at times like this Canberra doesn't seem too bad a place to live in at all. All we could see in front of us (having left behind the industrial suburb of Fyshwick) was green grass and trees and distant hills. It's hard to find views like that around Melbourne and Sydney, unless you're a fair way out of town, but here it's just two blocks away - and we live about five miles, if that, from the centre of Canberra. From my window at this moment I can see three houses, four cars, more trees than I could count, a mass of green - lawns, bushes, trees - a vast expanse of clear blue sky, and between the magnificent willow on the corner and the house opposite a glimpse of tree-dotted plain beyond the airport and far-distant mountains. Closer, almost obscured by the willow is the street sign: one arm says Investigator, the other Esperance. There's probably some deep significance in those names, if I could only work it out.

I seem to have a knack for living in places which disappear after I leave them. The flat in Redan Street, St Kilda has gone; the half-house at Kingston will be demolished before too long; a building I lived in at Kallista some years ago was completely destroyed by fire a few weeks after I moved out. It's not only houses: the original Northcote Church of Christ burnt down about 1953 and last time I saw the block it was a used-car yard; the little wooden building where we used to have tea-breaks and lunch when I was working at the Northcote Town Hall, and where I played euphonium with the Northcote City Band, disappeared some years ago; the Lillydale Shire Council offices burnt down about six months after I stopped working there. So it comes as no great surprise that someone has bought this house in Red Hill, and intends to pull it down and replace it with a Cape Cod style house. Good luck to him: it's a beautiful position, and if he can afford to demolish this rather ordinary government-built house and put up something splendid, I wish him joy. I would approach this matter in a slightly different way if he hadn't made it clear that he is quite happy for Sally and I to stay here virtually as long as we want to, if you follow me.

A little investigation has revealed that my father was naturalized in November 1930, so my speculation on dual/triple-nationality was just an interesting exercise in perhaps. Like it or not, I'm Orstrilian.

More letters, the first from a young bloke who passed through these parts in August last year and who was then known as Bruce Townley:

BRUTE TORNLEY 27.10
2323 Sibley Street
Alexandria Virginia 22311 USA

I've just got me drivers license and so I've joined the ranks of normal humankind. Well, not quite. My family owns this small red Volkswagen and just now I am learning why They lost the war. This car isn't as delightfully spartanly engineered as Carey Handfield's (it's got a gas gauge) but it does share some features of that memorable machine. It's got a stickshift. Well, if He had meant us to drive then He would have given us a clutch, right? You've gotta think when you're driving a car with a clutch.

:::: I prefer Brian Aldiss's remark that if God had meant us to fly He would have given us tickets - but I know what you mean, Brut/ce. I know Carey's VW, too. Didn't quite follow the bit in your letter about no frogs and dissolving the partnership but keeping the next room shut off (just in case), so I haven't published it, but it's... nice... to hear from you.

Excerpt from conversation:

- Bitch knows exactly what she wants and how to go about getting it.
- Reminds me of myself in some ways.
- But you're not a woman.
- I have learnt to live with that.

SETH WARNER McEVOY 13.11
Box 268
East Lansing Michigan 48823 USA

Thanks for sending me your various fanzines. They are of course entertaining, witty, and better than nearly anything being published in fandom today. (Of course. Wouldn't have it any other way.) I am not publishing as often as I used to, now that I'm trying to become a professional writer. I've just about finished my first novel and will begin on the second very soon. (Seth McEvoy? Why, I knew him way back in '73 when he hadn't finished his first novel!)

The thing about Kurt Vonnegut was pretty funny, even though I had a frightening idea: there must be hundreds of writers (beginning writers, that is) who are taking Kurt as a model. Only Kurt can pull off that form of self-indulgence, and even he has a lot of trouble. (Oh balls! - self-indulgence, in the sense you mean, has a long and honourable history, and there are many fine contemporary practitioners of the art. The trick is learning when it's necessary to stop - a trick Brian Aldiss, for example, has learnt. But you are right about the Vonnegut influence. If you see Leigh Edmonds's next Rataplan you will see several pages of pseudo-Vonnegut which I wrote under the influence of BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS. *Blush*) As far as I know he is still alive and kicking. Especially the kicking part. (Saw his picture in Time Magazine, Seth, so I know that. If you can't trust Time you can't trust no-one, I always say.) Even if he was dead they should have answered your letter, since somebody no doubt owns all rights. (Don't say that! He'll sue me for a zillion!)

Glad to see you're supporting Leigh for DUFF. (Who? Oh, him. Yeah. Thanks, Seth. See you in Melbourne anyway.)

DOUGLAS LEINGANG 26.11
PO Box 21328 LSU
Baton Rouge Louisiana 70803 USA

It appears to me that you want a loc. It appears to you that this is a loc. Well, I only loc those zines and write to those people who are definitely worthy. But with you I'll make an exception. (Too kind, Doug.) The first thing I received from you was something called Sex Adventures or something. (No, you're confusing me with Dick Geis.) I liked it and you should definitely continue it. (Or maybe it was Bruce Gillespie. Anyway, Revolting Tales of Sex and Super-Science - my most successful fanzine ever! - is finished.) You noted there that you had heard from me. This is the first I'm writing you, John. Could we have met in a former life? (Perhaps, but we can't go on meeting like that. I probably had you confused with Dick Geis or Bruce Gillespie.) And then there was Philosophical Gas 25 which seeped into my mailbox. A collector's item, but I'm not a collector. Actually, it will go on record as being one of the 10 best zines I've gotten this year, and let me tell

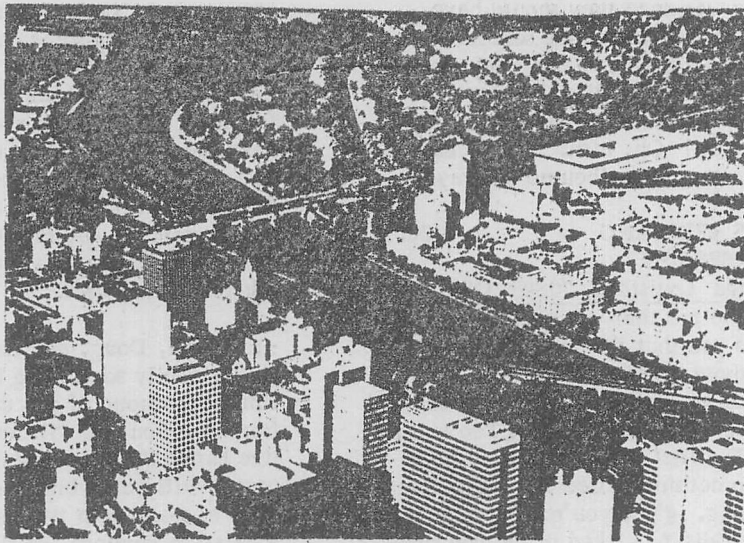
you I've gotten millions of them. (Okay, I can bear it: tell me. Millions? What ever will Dr Wertham say?) The reason is not because of the great Rotsler cover, nor the locs, nor the political philosophy of Bill Wright, but those articles by Ursula K. Le Guin and most importantly by Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

VONNEGUT IS NOT DEAD VONNEGUT IS NOT DEAD VONNEGUT IS NOT DEAD have I made myself clear. Vonnegut is alive and living in Cape Cod. You dolt, John, you infuriated me by making Vonnegut late. I may never forgive you for it, John. But better late than never, yet Vonnegut is still early. He may not write any more. (Lost me a bit there, Doug, but anyone who has written PLAYER PIANO, GOD BLESS YOU, MR ROSEWATER and CAT'S CRADLE doesn't really need to write any more. The other books, any of them, might make someone else's reputation, but Vonnegut's relative immortality rests on those - in my somewhat less than humble opinion.)

I am a writer and cannot spend time on fanzines, since novels come first. My next one will be written in a few weeks. The reason why you haven't seen me in any of the major prozines is because I never wrote for any lately. And I'm just a beginner, but a striving one. Give my regards to Australia.

:::: I did, Doug, and Australia mumbled sleepily something I didn't catch. I'm rather proud of you and Seth. Years from now you two will be household names, like Eando Binder and Volsted Gridban, and people will be saying how fantastic you were to spend your time writing to cruddy Australian fanzines, of all things. And it is fantastic: I really do appreciate it. I look forward to seeing your stuff in print, I really do. It's one of the great things about fandom that you guys make it, so often, from fan-writer to professional writer, and I admire your drive and pertinacity. One day I might try it myself. I want to, very much. No-one has ever paid me for a piece of fiction, and as a freelance journalist I have so far earned \$15. I am 34. But the Australian Government pays me over \$10 000 per year for editing other people's stuff - that's about US\$15 000 - so I haven't much incentive to turn pro. Sort of sad, isn't it. No? Oh.

See you in Melbourne
in '75 (if not before)...



John Bangsund

URSULA K. LE GUIN:
ACCEPTANCE SPEECH
FOR THE NATIONAL
BOOK AWARD

At Lincoln Center, April 15, 1973

DUFF

CANDIDATES

1. BAJESUND, JOHN

2.

3.



URSULA K. LE GUIN: ACCEPTANCE SPEECH FOR THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARD

At Lincoln Center, April 12, 1973



Ursula K. LeGuin

I am very pleased, very proud, and very startled to accept the National Book Award in children's literature for my novel, *The Farthest Shore*.

Nothing could give me greater joy than to share that honor, as it should be shared, with the people whose work and patience and constant trust were essential to the writing and publication of the book: the people at Atheneum Press, especially my editor Jean Karl and illustrator Gail Garraty; and my literary agent Virginia Kidd; and—last of all and first of all—my husband and our children.

And I also rejoice in the privilege of sharing this honor, if I may, with my fellow writers, not only in the field of children's books, but in that even less respectable field, science

fiction. For I am not only a fantasist but a science fiction writer, and odd though it may seem, I am proud to be both.

We who hobnob with hobbits and tell tall tales about little green men are quite used to being dismissed as mere entertainers, or sternly disapproved of as escapists. But I think that perhaps the categories are changing, like the times. Sophisticated readers are accepting the fact that an improbable and unmanageable world is going to produce an improbable and hypothetical art. At this point, realism is perhaps the least adequate means of understanding or portraying the incredible realities of our existence. A scientist who creates a monster in his laboratory; a librarian in the Library of Babel; a wizard unable to cast a spell; a space ship having trouble in getting to Alpha Centauri: all these may be precise and profound metaphors of the human condition. The fantasist, whether he uses the ancient archetypes of myth and legend or the younger ones of science and technology, may be talking as seriously as any sociologist—and a good deal more directly—about human life as it is lived, and as it might be lived, and as it ought to be lived. For, after all, as great scientists have said and as all children know, it is above all by the imagination that we achieve perception, and compassion, and hope.

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