



I defy you to say this
is the worst issue of
Philosophical Gas you've
ever seen! Second-worst? Okay.

8 September Philosophical Gas 62 has occupied more time and stencils than I care to think about over the last six months, and I'm still not happy with it, so, with ANZAPA and FAPA deadlines looming, let's all forget that issue and proceed with

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## PHILOSOPHICAL GAS

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In the mail this week there have been more fanzines than I have become used to receiving lately, and I have enjoyed all of them. Jean Weber's *WeberWoman's Wrevenge* 8 was first. I like Jean, and WWW is full of Jean's character and her readers' reaction to her character, so it's always worth reading. Many overseas fanzines seem preoccupied with women's issues and reviews of books I'm not the least bit interested in reading, and I have to confess that I find them hard going. Jean's WWW is, up to a point, similarly preoccupied. I think I like WWW because it involves people I know, and because of that, gives me a bit of a toehold on some quite important aspects of contemporary fandom.

Gerald Smith's *Pariah* 2 (vol.26 no.49) is nicely enough done, and Gerald must be doing something right because he has an excellent letter column, but I found only the letter column of interest. The reproduction makes me wonder all over again whether I'm doing something wrong: *Pariah* isn't a patch on John Berry's *Wing Window* (hardly any fanzines are), but it looks much better than anything I've done in recent years. My old Roneo 750 runs smoothly enough, and I have faith in it, dammit, but I think it needs a new screen and a bit of tender loving care. Apart from that, I can only think that IBM Selectrics weren't designed to cut stencils. (Then I look at Leigh Edmonds's fanzines and wonder whether it's all a matter of leverage and pressure, as Jack Little used to say on World Championship Wrestling.)

To get John Berry's *Wing Window* 2 and 3 in the same mail as Ted White and Dan Steffan's *Pong* 40 is a bit mind-boggling. I enjoyed every issue of *Pong* — some more than others, but every one had something in it of interest to me. Now here is John, showing us how a fannish fanzine is done, quietly, effortlessly, perfectly. Ted just about had me convinced that I am so out of touch with fandom that I have nothing to say any more. John and his columnists — Terry Hughes, William Gibson, Teresa Nielsen Hayden and 'Ms Fanners' — reassure me that the fandom I've always felt part of is still around. This is really classic stuff, beautifully written, beautifully reproduced, simply excellent.

John Purcell's *This House* 13 is something else again. A lot that John has to say is not only interesting but makes me feel I would quite like to meet him, and obviously a lot of work has gone into this issue, John's, his writers' and artists', and the whole thing is nicely reproduced (photocopied, I gather) and has nice heavy covers — but it all leaves me dissatisfied. Trying to distance myself from local bias, I reckon John's fanzine is about as good (and worth doing: I tend not to waste stencils on fanzines not worth doing) as Gerald Smith's, and both show some signs of eventually being as good as Jean Weber's. And having said that, I think my reason for not liking them as much as John and Gerald deserve to have them liked is that they don't have the powerful character of Jean's fanzines.

At this point I will say something about the May 1982 meeting of the Society of Editors, because it is appropriate to the subject. Our guest speaker was a freelance journalist and author named Patrick Tennison. As our meetings go, this one wasn't particularly worth while, but Patrick did say a few things worth thinking about. He runs courses for people who want to break into journalism, and he is in the habit of telling them that three things are essential to success in this dismal profession: you must write well, you must have something to say, and you must persevere.

Applying those principles to fanzines, Jean Weber, John Berry and Ted White & Dan Steffan succeed; Gerald Smith, John Purcell and I fail. Normally I would say I write well, but I don't think that at all when I read John Berry and Terry Hughes (for example); every so often I think I have something to say, but then I read Jean Weber or John Foyster (say) and think I'm doing the world a favour by not saying anything; and as for perseverance, well, it's not a quality entirely alien to my nature, but when it comes to writing and fanzine-production you could be forgiven for thinking it is.

For the last two months I have been trying to write a straightforward account of a quite straightforward event — a trip to the goldfields around Ballarat with Geoffrey Blainey, Lloyd Robson and a bunch of university students. Of the thirty-odd stencils I've typed there are about eight that would pass in an apa where I feel no embarrassment in opening up my innermost misgivings, regrets and insecurities, but I don't feel that these days about ANZAPA (because I think you expect more than this from me) or FAPA (because I don't know half of you, and because I don't feel like baring my soul to Graham Stone anyway).

Since 1978 I have become involved in another field of fanzine-production, one I enjoy, though it's not as personally rewarding as the real thing. From July 1978 to July 1980, and since May this year, the *Society of Editors Newsletter* has largely fulfilled my urge to publish fanzines. I volunteered to do the Society's newsletter in the first place because I thought it would help what I am pleased to call my career as a freelance book editor. It certainly made me known in Melbourne publishing circles when I needed to become known in a hurry, four years ago, but on the whole I think it has been counter-productive: anyone who has time to do elegant and provocative and entertaining newsletters like mine must be doing well for himself. That's what I think they think. How can I tell them I'm flat broke but enjoy doing the newsletter because they're paying for it? I can't, and don't.

We had a meeting here at our place last week of the Nova Mob — the first at our place, and the first at my place since (good lord!) 7 September 1970, exactly twelve years ago yesterday. I have the tape of that 1970 meeting: Bruce Gillespie was talking about Philip K. Dick, believe it or not (but I don't recall him saying anything like what William Gibson said about Dick in *Wing Window 2*). Last week George Turner was supposed to be talking about 'SF and the Academic Critics', and so he did, for about twenty minutes. But then the talk got round to all the tapes that have been made of Nova Mob meetings, and who had them (John Foyster, apparently, but John was overseas at the time and could not confirm this), and how they should be transcribed and published, and how much it costs to transcribe tapes and publish things these days, and so on.

Offhand I would say that the *Nova Mob Transcripts*, properly edited and presented, would make sf and fanzine history. There's such a wealth of talk there, informed talk and insightful discussion of science fiction, that I am almost inclined to revive the old ASFR for the purpose — almost, but not quite. I am so out of touch with science fiction and its concerns, preoccupations and directions that I couldn't begin to evaluate and prepare all this stuff for publication.

That's not entirely true. If a commercial publisher asked me to do a job like this, I'd jump at it. As a love job I simply can't consider it. Neither could Bruce Gillespie. He's almost as close to bankruptcy as I am.

I have to report that Lee Harding was not entirely impressed with this. Lee felt we had lost our vision, lost sight of our dreaming. We haven't. Lee can type as good a stencil as the rest of us, but like us, he has a living to earn that doesn't allow time for this kind of job. We talked about it the day after the meeting, and more or less agreed that the dream and the need to earn a living were pretty incompatible.

In the old days, back in the mid-1960s, when we were talking about fanzines or novels or whatever, we learnt from Lee to say (tapping our foreheads) 'It's all up there!' Some of it still is. But the Nova Mob's talk isn't 'up there', it's on tape. I support wholeheartedly Melbourne's bid for the 1985 World SF Convention, but there are times when I think we could apply our collective energy and ingenuity here in Melbourne to things of ultimately equal importance, like publishing the Nova Mob transcripts.

Not that we can't do both — run a Worldcon and publish the transcripts. But we need a bit of pushing.

HARRY WARNER JR commented in a recent (that is, since I left Adelaide) mailing of FAPA on my enthusiasm for the music of Arnold Schoenberg. I must say first that I am not foremost among the world's enthusiasts for the music of Schoenberg. I like most of what I have heard so far, that's all. Some of it, I must admit, I am still having some difficulty in coming to terms with. But there is so much of his music that just sneaks in under your preconceptions and leaves you pleased with the experience, whether you wanted to be or not, that I persevere — except his *Pelleas and Melisande*, which I have not yet heard right through because I go to sleep. What Harry said, as I recall, is that Schoenberg's music must be better than it sounds.

Fair enough. It's an old joke, but there's truth left in it. There must be plenty of people around, some of them perhaps in fandom, who feel that Beethoven's music must be better than it sounds.

I used to say that the music is not on trial, I am. In my old age I have got over this excessive humility. The music *is* on trial -- but I have to put some effort into being the judge before I can say that.

In recent years I have put more effort into appreciating music than anything else I can think of offhand. It hasn't made me an expert on music, but it has opened my ears to vast fields of endeavour in the art that two or three years ago I would have considered myself incapable of bearing with for more than ninety seconds.

Take Charles Ives. His influence on contemporary American music is just about incalculable. (Forget people like Morton Subotnik and John Cage for the moment: their music is a quantum leap beyond anything Ives envisaged, and a lot of it I like, but it is not yet the mainstream.) With my ear, attuned to people like Mahler, Sibelius, Shostakovich and Britten, I have no trouble listening to Piston, Schuman and Mennin, for example. Copland and Hanson I find rather trite. But to go back and start appreciating and then loving -- no other word is adequate -- the music of Charles Ives is quite a step forward. He was America's Mahler and Schoenberg and (yes, dammit) Ravel, all in one. Your composers knew that: it's all there in their music. But we listeners have taken some time waking up to it.

What I mean is, I have taken some time waking up to it.

There was a time when I thought Debussy, Ravel and Satie effete. There was a time when I thought Schoenberg, Berg and Webern impenetrable, so obscure as not to be worth wasting valuable living time listening to. There was a time when I thought Stockhausen, Boulez, Berio, Penderecki and Messiaen so way-out that not even Leigh Edmonds could actually *like* their work. And there was a time when I thought Charles Ives was a kind of musical Grandma Moses. (You can't be much more wrong than that, surely!)

What I have learnt in the last few years is that all these way-out, odd, impenetrable, obscure, *insufferably difficult* people wrote (and in some cases are still writing) music that is so beautiful, so important to me at this time and in this place, that I wonder whether my tears are for tribute to their worth or despair that it has taken me so long to recognize it.

The hell with that. Charles Ives's father once said to his son: 'You'll not get a wild, heroic ride to heaven on pretty little sounds. ... If you listen to the sound, you may miss the music.'

I have not read a lot about music. I tend to listen, think about what I'm listening to, embrace what I like and put off for a few months what I don't like, then try again. But I think what Ives Senior said still holds true: you *can* miss the music if you listen to the sound.

The music *can* be better than it sounds. Good music, I'm inclined to think, *must* be. I can't prove any of this, but I comfort myself with the thought that just on four hundred years ago there were plenty of people who thought Monteverdi's music was just so way-out as to be beyond theoretical comprehension, let alone enjoyment.

12 September Ah, the relief! What a feeling of security it is to know that there are two hundred virgin stencils in the house!

Last Monday I rang Morgan Inks in Melbourne and the people I spoke to weren't sure what I meant by 'Roneo stencils', because the warehouse and so on here has been closed down and all they have is a little office where no-one knows anything, but they gave me the number of the Sydney office and *viola!* (as we French music-lovers are given to expleting) here are two hundred Mortype 3300 stencils, my very favourites. The 3300 has a sheet of film over it, which means you never have to clean your IBM balls, and each one is guaranteed to last longer than your Roneo almost.

Last Monday I had an insane urge to type stencils, so I bought ten from the Fairfield Newsagency. They were Mortype, so most likely you'll be able to read the four pages I used them for, but they were 1100s, guaranteed only to outlast your fleeting thoughts, and they had Gestetner heads, so I have to tape Roneo heads to them and remember to adjust the print height on the Roneo when I run them off. Also they cost 60 cents each. The 3300s (including a hefty charge for postage from Sydney) cost 30 cents each.

I sort of pointed this out to the newsagent at Fairfield. I like Mr Flint, the newsagent at Fairfield, because he always calls me John when he's by himself and Mr Bangsund when anyone is within earshot, and he had a heart operation last year and doesn't carry on about it, and he always keeps the *Gramophone* for me, something I have not previously trained any newsagent to do, and is altogether a good bloke, even when it comes to politics, because he pretends not to know that I vote Labor and know that he votes Liberal and says there's a lot to be said for both sides not that he has time to keep up with such things himself. Despite, or perhaps because of, my tattered jeans and longish hair, oh, and the beard (I keep forgetting that beards are unfashionable again), he thinks I'm some kind of intellectual. He only suspected it until the day he saw my name on the front page of the *Age*; since then he has known it, been respectful in the presence of my fine mind, and been nice to me. But he still overcharged me for those stencils. Maybe he thinks intellectuals have no head for business. Maybe he's right. Whatever, there's no way I could have explained ANZAPA and FAPA deadlines to him. I have trouble enough explaining them to myself.

October is ANZAPA's fourteenth birthday, and therefore mine in that organization; November is my eleventh anniversary in FAPA. I used not to have trouble keeping up minac and meeting deadlines, but the last few years it has been a bit of a struggle, and this year, for the first time, I face expulsion from both organizations almost simultaneously. Old Nietzsche would have called this living dangerously, I reckon, real dwelling on the slopes of Etna almost.

Well, I've talked about the stencils and the deadline, standard talk for delinquent apans trying to fill minac pages, so what next? I suppose I could always explain how I came to get my name on the front page of the *Age*.

For a couple of years I managed to scrape up the money to buy an airmail subscription to that great British political fanzine *New Statesman*. This allowed me to keep up with the Real Story behind the Great Issues of Our Time, to realize where some well-known Australian newspaper

columnists get their more interesting ideas from, and from time to time to enter the NS's weekly competition. Most weeks that's impossible for ignorant colonials, since the comp usually demands a detailed knowledge of British politics and the literary style either of contemporary British journalists and politicians or great or fashionable writers of stylish English, dead or alive. Mrs Thatcher said this week that if so-and-so then such-and-such; rewrite this in the style of Spenser, Wordsworth or Sylvia Plath, bearing in mind what the Hertfordshire Constabulary really *have* been up to lately. That sort of thing. Pretty esoteric, you might think, but every week the comp complex is flooded with brilliant, witty, entirely apt entries, and I am left wondering just how clever the average Brit is and how much spare time he must have to do these things.

Twice I have managed to submit entries in time, and to have some of them published. For a while I entertained the wild idea that I might be able to earn enough from the comp to pay for my subscription, but I just don't know enough about the activities of the TUC or NUJ to describe them in plain English, let alone in Dickensian prose or Hopkinsian sprung rhythm. But I did win two pounds for an old joke, and four for a handful of clerihews. The clerihews were published in the issue dated 27 June 1980.

On Sunday 27 September 1981 the Queen of Australia attended divine service at the Uniting Church, Collins Street, Melbourne; the Prune Minister of Australia announced that he would be standing firm on something or other at the CHOGM conference; State Education Ministers expressed concern at the over-generous public funding of private schools; and the temperature in the city reached 14.3°C. I know these things because they are among the other stories on the front page of the *Melbourne Age* of 28 September. The story that interested me most was the one headed 'Cook was a sadist and bully, says author'. The headline was followed by 'From Margaret Jones', then this:

*Captain Cook
Pretended not to look
As he sailed past Sydney
And he did the wise thing,
Didney?*

John Bangsund

(From a satirical poem in *Punch*)

At least they got my name right. Whether it registered with Her Majesty as she browsed through the quaint local press that morning, I don't know. It certainly registered at the Fairfield Newsagency, as I said, and I had phone calls about it from all over Melbourne that day. Well, two actually, one from Alison Forbes in South Yarra and one from Sandy Mackenzie in Carnegie. I decided not to sue the *Age*.

A few months ago Damien Broderick rang me to ask whether I knew I had just won a prize in the *Sydney Morning Herald's* clerihew competition — at least, someone else had, with what looked amazingly like my Cook clerihew. I was half amused, half annoyed, until I saw a copy of the SMH, and by then I was mostly annoyed. The lady who stole my verse had Cook sailing *into* Sydney, a gross historical inaccuracy: Cook named Port Jackson as he sailed past, he never saw the place that eventually became Sydney, and that was the whole subtle point of my clerihew.

I wrote to two of the three judges of the competition — David Cunningham of Oxford University Press, who had provided the prizes, and the poet A. D. Hope — and to the Literary Editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Michele Field. David was overseas. Alec Hope wrote back and said it was a dastardly business, regards to Sally, how are you both? Michele sent me a copy of the prize book, Gavin Ewart's edition of *The Complete Clerihews of E. Clerihew Bentley* (which I am pleased to have, even if it doesn't seem as amusing now as it did thirty years ago) and suggested I should write reviews for the SMH.

That's the story. I haven't taken up Michele's offer, because I don't write reviews. It was good to hear from Alec again: the one thing Sally and I miss most about Canberra is the company and friendship of Alec and Penelope Hope, and we've got out of touch lately. Since I depend to a large extent for a living on Oxford University Press, it probably didn't hurt to remind David of my existence.

If there's any moral to the story it is that Australia's literary and publishing circles are small. You don't have to be particularly important to become known. It's fairly easy to make a name for yourself. A living is something else again, of course.

Here's another story about becoming known.

The Society of Editors has for some years published a 'Register of Freelance Editors'. In my year as co-ordinator of this register, I got the Sydney editors (who, perversely, call themselves The Editors) to agree to co-operate with the Melbourne society in producing a national register. It worked for one year. My friend Alison Forbes was lumbered with the job of co-ordinating the register when I retired from the committee in July 1980. Then my friend Kerry Herbstreit took it over in July 1981, by which time The Editors had stopped co-operating; not long afterwards they produced their own supplement to the published register, and in June this year Kerry produced an updated edition that excluded Sydney-based people. So far so bad.

A few weeks ago the Society received an amazing letter from the Acting Secretary of the Printing and Kindred Industries Union, to whom a copy of the register had innocently been sent.

Dear Sir,

It has been recently brought to the attention of the above mentioned Union that although the Society of Editors is not an association registered under the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Act, those persons contained within your Register are subject to the provisions in the State Determination of the Graphic Arts Board, and, as such, cannot contract outside of the provisions of the Graphic Arts Board Determination.

Any inspection of wages books of companies undertaken by the Union must show your members as employees of that company either being paid permanent or casual rates for any work executed.

The Union will be notifying its members of the names contained in your register for the purpose of maintaining tradespersons rights i.e. proofreading, typesetting and paste-up is the work of a Compositor.

Blacklisted at last!

The PKIU is not a union to tangle with. Having been a member of the PKIU at various times since 1968 I know that. It's well organized and devoted to its members' interests (as it should be) and suspicious as hell. With the latest typesetting and printing technology available to anyone who has the money to acquire it, the union is embattled. Much of the new technology does not require the knowledge and training that traditionally have been the preserve of printers and compositors, and the line that separates PKIU members' work and journalists' work in particular has lately become very fine. Now the PKIU has picked up our scent, and (from its viewpoint) rightly so. Many members of the Society of Editors probably do work that entitles or obliges them to be members of the PKIU.

There will be a battle here, I'm sure, and unfortunately, like the bat in the war between the birds and the animals, I am likely to finish up being disowned and hounded by both sides.

The other side is the Australian Journalists' Association, of which I have been a member for twelve years or so.

The AJA is not particularly well organized. But it has managed in the last six or seven years to pick up a lot of members in publishing, mainly because of its relative success in getting an award for book editors. Unfortunately, the Book Editors Award has no provisions that I know of to cover freelance editors. (We're working on that.)

I don't know anything about the Graphic Arts Award. It may be that many of our members involved in design, setting and paste-up of books are subject to that award, and therefore liable to the kind of proscription threatened in the PKIU Acting Secretary's letter.

But the Acting Secretary of the PKIU has done me an injustice in blacklisting me. There will, therefore, be a battle, because this is not some abstract matter I am talking about, but my living.

Proofreading, he says, is the work of a compositor. This is obviously nonsense. Proofreading is the work of a proofreader. In any well-organized typesetting establishment proofreading is in fact done by a PKIU member. But the typesetting establishment depends for its living on publishers, by definition — printers are not in business to set type and print it for themselves. The publisher provides the copy; the typesetter sets it; his proofreader reads it; and it is then returned to the publisher for approval. This is where I come in. On behalf of the publisher, I read the proofs provided by the typesetter. Since I have usually also edited the material, I have the liberty (which the printer's reader does not have) and the responsibility to alter the proofs as necessary, usually, and most often, in consultation with the author. The printer's reader's job is to follow copy; mine is to make sure he has, and to make any further alteration considered necessary. My employer, the publisher, pays for my alterations; the typesetter or printer has no authority to alter the publisher's original material or to object to the publisher's subsequent alterations. I work for the publisher, not the printer. My work is editorial work, not printer's work.

I can understand publishers and printers getting into trouble over who should operate VDUs and so on, but I am employed by publishers to work with words on paper, and frankly, I object to being blacklisted simply because the secretary of the PKIU doesn't know what I do for a living.

20 September Well, I went on for a few pages more on the subject of unions and the nature of democracy and such, and I didn't like it when I reread it, so I'm saving you the misery of ploughing through it. Now, not half an hour ago, I finished typing up the *Society of Editors Newsletter* for September 1982 (vol.12, no.3), and because it won't cost the Society anything, I'm going to put most of it through ANZAPA and FAPA. It's not minac (this is), it's 90% written by me and 108% typed by me (I threw out one of its original 13 pages), and in places I had you in mind as I was writing, so I think it qualifies. At this moment I don't know whether I'll be sending you 9 pages or the 9 pages plus 3 that the editors will see, but no matter. There are two or three things I want to say about this newsletter.

First, it's the biggest newsletter I have produced so far for the Society of Editors. This is partly because of the mass of material I have on hand (easily enough to warrant as big an issue next month), partly because I have nothing else to do right now (except type stencils or get on with cataloguing my classical music collection), mainly because I've found a friendly printer who will do the thing for what the paper costs — which brings the cost per page down from \$17.50 to \$3.132—halved equals \$1.56. (If I discover that the paper I've bought works on a Roneo 750, it may work out to somewhat more than that per page. I'm not hopeful, but with 60 reams of the stuff in the garage I'm certainly going to try.)

Second, after typing stencils all these years, I am absolutely spoilt now by this amazing new technology of *composing-on-paper*. I make a mistake, or change my mind, and blip-blip-blip with the Selectric's correcting button, done, corrected, move right on, no hanging about waiting for the corflu to dry. It certainly is a wonderful invention, correcting tape.

Third, partly because I had 48 hours to do this issue, partly because I sincerely wish to lose weight, be sober most of the time and attempt to regain a place for myself in normal civilized society, I produced the entire issue without benefit of alcohol. I think it shows. The writing is crisp, efficient, to the point, full of editorial restraint and good spelling, totally unlike my stencils.

Fifth, I can't count. Fourth, I sent the last issue of the *Society of Editors Newsletter* to a whole lot of ANZAPA members. Do you know how many ANZAPA members wrote to me and said thanks? (David Grigg said thanks on the phone, and John Foyster was overseas and may be excused, but that still leaves an awful lot of ANZAPA members.) I'll tell you. Better still, I'll quote the written response to this generous gesture in full.

Dear John,

Thanks for the SocEd Newsletter. Just a reminder that you still owe pages for the October ANZAPA mailing — Well, it's more subtle than sending the boys around isn't it?

Marc [Ortlieb]

Proportionally, that's a better response rate than I had from the editors, but I rather expected more of fans. Editors aren't used to the concept of the letter of comment, after all. 1.5% of the editors responded, 3.3% of ANZAPA members (or 6.6% if you count David). I enjoy doing the newsletter and will be putting a lot of energy, time and thought into it. There's some expense but no great trouble in circulating it through

FAPA and ANZAPA. All I need is a little encouragement. Not even egoboo: just say you don't mind it cluttering up the mailing: that will do. Dear old Andy Porter, who regularly provides FAPA members with immense enjoyment by putting *Starship* and *SF Chronicle* in the mailings, and regularly gets close to zero encouragement to go on doing so, will know what I mean. (Mervyn Binns claims to have dined with you a few weeks ago, Andy. Do you recall him saying that he doesn't know why he bothers going to Worldcons? If not, the person you dined with was a fraudulent charlatan masquerading as Australia's Mister Science Fiction. Mervyn [Mr SF in these parts] has spent most of his life not knowing why he bothers.)

I am overcome by an odd memory, and I shall write about it, now.

I am standing on the platform at Flinders Street Railway Station, and I am married to the woman standing beside me, Diane by name, so it must be 1968 or 1969, because we are about to board the train for Ferntree Gully, when and if it turns up. And I am talking to Diane about my friend Andy Porter in New York. My friend Andy Porter in New York, who has encouraged my endeavours and wild thoughts for some years, has this day disturbed me, because he is thinking about changing the name of his fanzine. *Algol*, he says, in a letter I have been looking at from time to time during this day, is not the name I want for my fanzine. Only the other day, he says, I got a subscription from [the People's Republic of] China; people think I am publishing a magazine about *computers*! I am thinking, Andy continues, of changing the name to *Nova*. Talking to my wife Diane, rehearsing a letter I will write that night to Andy, I run through the many good reasons for not changing our much-loved *Algol* into ho-hum *Nova*. Diane agrees, and says she has had a rotten day in the bookshop. I do not ask her for details of her rotten day in the bookshop (thereby driving yet another nail into the coffin of that marriage), but when we get home, after I've lit the wood-fired heating system and done this and done that and not generally done much to shore up, let alone improve, our relationship as man and wife, let alone friends, I write to Andy.

Whether persuaded by my argument or not, Andy did not change *Algol*'s name to *Nova*. Whether fandom was more important to me than marriage at that time or not; whether Diane was entirely the wrong person for me to be married to at that time or not; these are things I can't answer yet. The marriage ended. I joined FAPA. I remarried. I haven't heard from Andy in years. I am conscious of something missing from my life, something I had and lost, not just Andy's far-away friendship but something more than that, a feeling of being pretty much at the centre of where most things were happening in fandom. By the time I met Sally, despite my intense (for me) involvement with FAPA and ANZAPA and Australia in '75, I knew I had lost track of the fandom I had identified myself with.

I have never since quite got back on that track. Since mid-1973 I have known that sharing my life with Sally is rather more important than anything else I'm interested in, but there is room in our life for involvement with fandom, up to a point, and I find myself at the stage of wondering how much involvement I want. Our best friends are sf writers and fans. We like most of the people in ANZAPA, and enjoy conventions, up to a point (the point comes when people get round in fancy dress, usually: we leave them to their fun and go home to things

of *adult* importance, like watching *Brideshead Revisited* or live coverage of massacres of Palestinians in colour on our small-screen television set).

Now I will go and find a book I have treasured longer than I have treasured sf and fandom, and I will find the page I want, and from it I will transcribe some words that I used to find much comfort in, and I will see whether the comfort is still there. Don't wander away, I'll be back in a few minutes.

Right. (Still there?) Wordsworth, *Poetical Works*, Oxford 1911, page 259. Miscellaneous Sonnets. Number 33.

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.

Much wisdom there, much insight, much more than I have power to describe that tugs at my heart-strings, but not much comfort. But the man is not finished. Let's hear him out.

— Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Dear old Wordsworth! He was plunged into mental anguish by the French Revolution, went off to Rydal Mount, and ended his life writing ecclesiastical sonnets. What a waste! some say. What a pompous, arrogant old twit! say others. Dear old Wordsworth! I say. When I was working at the *Age*, back in 1969-70, I used regularly to dine with Wordsworth at a dismal little sandwich shop in Lonsdale Street, and I found him a constant pleasure. Just for me, he retraced his early life and recounted his innermost thoughts and misgivings and hopes and modest pleasures through *The Prelude* — his fanzine in verse (in verse because there was no other way then to say what we say to each other these days on stencil).

When you regularly go to lunch with Wordsworth (or Tennyson, Hardy, Eliot, Gibbon, Hesse, Nietzsche, Flann O'Brien, Thomas Love Peacock) you tend not to care much whether fandom holds you in high regard. You want John Foyster's approval, sure, and Harry Warner's and Jack Speer's. I've had that — maybe still have it — and go on preferring Wordsworth and Flann O'Brien to what people tell me on TV and in the papers life is all about, and go on wondering whether that qualifies me for membership in fandom.

If it doesn't, either I am the ultimate fake-fan or fandom is of no importance whatsoever.

I don't want to get into an argument about that. The fandom that I

feel part of right now, this morning of 20 September 1982, has its roots in science fiction (that offspring of mainstream literature that dares to ask where we humans are headed, and has the audacity to posit tentative answers) and in everyday life, and is neither overawed nor overcome by either.

When I am overawed by science fiction or overcome by what I see going on in the world around me, I turn to you for reassurance — and if you don't give it to me, I turn to Wordsworth, or Nietzsche, or Flann O'Brien, depending on my mood.

And if my mood is no mood for words, I turn to music — most often the music of Bach, and Palestrina, and Messiaen, and Britten, and Beethoven, and (as I come down, calm down) Mozart, and Vaughan Williams, and Haydn.

Benjamin Britten's 'Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings' is the work I most often choose to listen to, when I want to listen to music (as distinct from having something congenial playing in the background). If I want to immerse myself completely in music, there are Mahler's symphonies, and Bruckner's, and some of Sibelius's and Shostakovich's. And Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcellae* and some of the longer works of Bach. But for a quick boost to the spirit, there's nothing quite like Britten's 'Serenade' or 'Les Illuminations', unless it's an unexpected letter from Harry Warner Jr, Dick Bergeron, Leanne Frahm or... someone. The big difference, of course, is that Bach, Britten and Beethoven are here, on tap, as it were. On tape, to be more precise.

5.43am, Monday 20 September. What am I doing here, listening to Peter Pears and Barry Tuckwell, conflating the ten absurd mistakes I have made on this stencil so far?

Talking to you, that's what, and in between wallowing a fair bit in Benjamin Britten's music.

And outside there are birds singing, chirping their silly heads off because they can see a new day out there.

At this point, at that sound, at that sight from the window I have just opened, I have to confess that this new day I have just seen, this new day that those stupid birds insisted I look at, looks as fresh and new and good and exciting and worthwhile as any I have ever seen in my life, a bright virgin day, full of possibilities.

Somewhere out there the sun is rising over West Brunswick, and the birds are high enough up to see it.

Somewhere out there, surely, beyond the world's window, the sun also rises.

There's artistry for you. I will now mention that while all that poetry was going on, six or seven lines back, just after I turned the music off to listen to the world, I heard the distinctive sound of a cat throwing up — not just any cat, but the stray, unwanted, mangy, deaf Persian cat that spends much of its time in our back yard because we don't chase it away, sometimes feed it even, that Dylan and Donovan (possibly the most selfish and possessive, albeit lovable, cats on earth) tolerate. Those birds, that poor neglected homeless cat, this stencil, the light streaming now through the window, the music I turned off, Wordsworth, the knowledge that Sally's alarm is about to wake her, this room reeking with my cigarette smoke, this self writing these words, this humming IBM, are my life, and I must make such poetry of it as I can.

26 September As usual, there's not much about this issue that I like.

I can't even work out exactly what I was trying to say in the last few pages. I'll never become Australia's John D. Berry at this rate.

There have been two more reactions to the *Newsletter*, which I'll quote in a moment, but first, since there seems still some mystification, I'll explain why I sent the August issue to most Australian members of ANZAPA. We are a publishing association, albeit amateur, and we are all editors. Some of us are concerned with publishing and editing in our everyday work. For these reasons I thought the *Newsletter* would not be totally devoid of interest. But as well as that, the Society is at present offering to new members a free year's subscription to the *Australian Bookseller and Publisher* (worth \$20), and I thought some of the people I sent the newsletter to might be interested in that. I can keep this offer open to Australian readers until about 18 October.

MARC ORTLIEB reviews the newsletter in Q36 #2: 'The sad thing is that it would almost feel like a Bangsund fanzine, were it not for the fact that it is a terribly mundane sort of clubzine.' I'd never thought of it like that, but of course, the Society of Editors *is* a sort of club. Mundane? In the fannish sense, yes, both society and zine. But some editors think this newsletter is way-out, and so it is: compared with the *Weekly Book Newsletter* or the *Australian Society of Indexers Newsletter*, it's a riot.

RICHARD FAULDER says some very pleasant, indeed quite heartening, things about the newsletter, then picks up a point that so far no Society member (and probably no reader of the original article in *Australian Book Review*) has commented on in Rosalind Price's piece on children's books: 'Ms Price seems to me to be getting awfully close to acquiescing to the spread of the audiovisual media like some awful pacifying miasma. Meeting kids halfway is all very well, but I would have thought that comics do that fairly well already. If we don't provide them with an entertainment medium that they have to actively interact with, then they'll never bother to learn to do so. After all, if they can go and see the film, why should they bother to read the book of the film?'

Richard concludes: 'Anyway, all this doesn't tell me much about John Bangsund, other than that he's moved house and sounds as though he's over the worst of the financial problems he was having before. Tell me it's so.' Richard, it is so. I have moved house. The money problems I was having last year, last month, even yesterday, don't trouble me a bit.

Enough. Let's see whether that Roneo is still working.