



THE ART OF FUG

or

PHILOSOPHICAL GAS

Das Wohltemperierte Fanzin

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PO Box 80, Brunswick West,
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for ANZAPA and FAPA
but especially for you

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20 August FAPA 187 and ANZAPA 99 arrived today, reminding me that Life As We Know It continues unabated here and there, and I'm thankful for that, reminding me also that I will not continue unabated or otherwise in these associations if I don't have minac in FAPA 189 and ANZAPA 100. This is it. Whether it really is Philosophical Gas Number 65 I am not sure: is it really seventeen months since the last issue? Stands the Church clock at ten to three? Again? What I'm much more sure about is the first issue, published just fourteen years ago, and apparently not distributed in ANZAPA. Until I think of something to say I might as well talk about that.

Philosophical Gas Number 1 was published for a short-lived apa called APA-M, or possibly APANOVA, the distributions of which were to take place at the monthly meetings of a new group called the Nova Mob. The first meeting of this group ('a more or less informal, sociable and preferably adult alternative to the Melbourne Science Fiction Club', it says here) was devoted almost exclusively to discussing names for it, which was great fun. The second meeting, at my place on 4 September 1970, was even better: Bruce Gillespie talked to us about Philip K. Dick — truly, he did — I think I still have the tape I recorded that night to prove it. There were so many people there that we filled the two front rooms, and Bruce stood in the connecting doorway and talked about Philip K. Dick, and when he'd finished and invited questions everyone said 'Why don't we call ourselves The Returned Star-men's League/The Blog and Crotled Greeps Club/The Nova Mob/The Illustrated Men/The Higher Entelechy, Melbourne/&c?' and it was on again. I reckon '&c' would have been a great name, but 'The Nova Mob' carried the day, and under that name the group has been meeting and discussing science fiction ever since. I believe it stopped meeting for a while, but I don't have exact information about that; I lost interest a bit when all they wanted to discuss was that crazy Buck Rogers stuff.

Joe Sanders, Fapan of Mentor, Ohio, who is putting together a serious book about fandom, should get in touch with John Foyster for more details of the Nova Mob's history. That's if you're thinking of covering Australian fandom in your book, Joe. I see China there in your list, and Turkey, but not Australia. Unless we're under 'Other South American Countries'.

Fourteen years after the publication of Philosophical Gas Number 1 (or PG 1 as I shall call it from here on) I note that fanzine publishers still devote a lot of space to discussing unfamiliar reprographic technologies, difficulties in finding suitable paper to reprograph on, and the oddness of size of the paper that some other people choose to reprograph on. Come to think of it, this is probably the fanzine publisher's equivalent of the club member's desire to discuss names for the club. At the moment I have nothing of importance to contribute to the continuing debate; instead I offer (warts and all) what I wrote in PG 1.

There seems to be something awfully wrong both with my stencil-cutting and my duplicating. I have got rather out of practice in both; and I have been using cheap & nasty stencils; and I freely admit that after four years as a dyed-in-the-wool (not to mention cotton, nylon and just about every other fabric used in men's clothing that can absorb duplicator ink) Roneo man, I am not as familiar with the functions of my newly-acquired Gestetner as I hope eventually to be. And thereby hangs a tale. I call it (but you need not)....

#### RETROSPECTIVE REPARTEE ...Episode 43,874

Him: "You've been here before!" (Accusingly)

Me: "Yes." (Squirming)

Revised, this reads:

Him: "You've been here before!" (Accusingly)

Me: "Yes - and it's a tribute to your product that I'm prepared to put up with your rudeness to get it!"

I had just bought this cheap Gestetner, you see, and I decided to lash out and buy some paper to go with it. Leigh Edmonds said that Noel Kerr had said that Gestetner were selling a discontinued line of paper at fifty cents a ream. So I walked the four blocks to Gestetner and asked the girl if this was so and she said she wasn't sure and picked up the phone and asked to speak to Mr Moon.

"No! No! Anyone but Mr Moon! Don't say anything to Mr Moon! I'm sorry I asked! I'll do anything - just let me go without seeing Mr Moon!" Thus I screamed silently to myself and (instead of bolting) like the coward I am remained to tell my most unlikely story to Mr Moon, a man who treats me like the village idiot at the best of times.

Mr Moon appeared, and greeted me with the words recorded above.

Indeed, I have been there before. Once I was thinking about opening an account there, and he talked to me the way you might (if your liver was playing up at the time) address a ragged derelict smelling of metho who asked for a couple of hundred dollars worth of your product on credit.

Once I foolishly used the vulgar term "Roneo" in his presence, and he informed me in no uncertain manner that he didn't give a damn about Roneo, that in fact Roneo didn't exist.

Once I enquired about the possibility of buying paper cut to A4 size - the official Australian Government standard size - and he abused hell out of the Australian Government, me, and anyone else who could even contemplate using anything else but the quarto and foolscap which had faithfully served countless generations of satisfied customers since Poppa Gestetner invented duplicating in eighteen-oh-dot. Sure, he would cut it for me if I insisted on being regarded as a pariah in the paper trade, but I would have to take X number of reams and it would cost the same as foolscap plus cutting fee, or he would cut down foolscap for me. I then ventured to remark that foolscap wasn't as wide as A4 and he gave me a lecture to the effect that no-one really knew what these stupid dago paper sizes were anyway and if what he offered wasn't good enough I could take my worthless business to some effeminate sensation-seeking tradition-betraying fly-by-night supplier who would lower himself to pander to the eccentricities of cretins like myself.

Mind you, I am not reporting his actual words - just the impression he conveyed.

I don't know why Mr Moon is so nasty to me. Perhaps he is nasty to everyone. Perhaps he is just nasty to little customers who don't know their station. If I had a little more pride I would do without his products, no matter how good they are. But I probably won't. A trufan must steel himself to endure even worse afflictions than the Mr Moons of this unhappy world.

What interests me most, I think, about that old piece is the concluding sentence. Was I just being clever? Did I have particular afflictions in mind at the time? Memory insists that I was pretty happy around August-September 1970, but memory may be wrong. And that reference to 'your liver playing up': fourteen years ago, surely, I'd only *read* about such things, or heard of them.

Trufan or not, I have certainly put up with worse things than encounters with unsympathetic salesmen since those balmy days. One of the things I've been putting up with for years, since the mid-1960s in fact, was only diagnosed and positively identified three weeks ago. At this point, allow me to acquaint you with the Hepworth Theory of Alcoholism, or more correctly, the Beckett Theory, since that's what John Hepworth calls it. Richard Beckett (also known as Sam Orr), Hepworth's sometime drinking mate and colleague on the late lamented *Nation Review*, developed the theory that people who drink too much every day, and far too much every second or third day, are healthier than people who don't drink at all. When non-drinkers are ill they visit doctors, and visiting doctors isn't good for you, because it intensifies your awareness that something is wrong with you. When drinkers feel crook they blame the grog for it, and most of the time whatever's wrong with them just goes away of its own accord. This, I can testify, is true.

But note that qualification: 'most of the time'.

I started drinking too much fairly regularly towards the end of 1970. Two years later, after living by myself in Canberra for nearly a year, I was drinking far too much every day. (And since I had no-one to talk to, the period roughly from March 1972 to June 1973 was my most productive in contributing to apas.) Even when I met Sally I went on drinking too much most of the time, and far too much at weekends, until Easter 1977: for five or six days I was constipated, in almost unbearable agony, and I blamed the grog for it, of course, but that didn't make it go away. We were then living in Adelaide, and our doctor there sent me off for some tests I hadn't had before. They confirmed what only he had had the wit to suspect, among the many doctors I'd seen in Canberra and Adelaide, that my liver was in a bad way. I was so shocked by this that I stopped drinking red wine in large quantities and started drinking white wine in fairly large quantities, and I felt better for it. Also I felt better for knowing what was wrong with me: all the odd pangs and twinges and pains and discomforts I'd been getting mainly on my right side below the ribs were caused, I knew now, by my abused, unhappy liver. I'd been getting pains like that, though not so often or so severely, for years, since the mid-60s, and all that time doctors had been looking for ulcers and hiatus hernia and things, sending me off for barium meals and blood tests and so on, and all the time it was my liver complaining about alcohol.

Wrong! Well, partly wrong. My liver is certainly still in a bad way - to the extent that there is real doubt about whether it is capable of regenerating. My doctor told me that on 30 July (I haven't touched alcohol since, and I've lost twenty pounds in weight), and he suggested I should have a gall-bladder x-ray. I did that, and that explained what's been wrong with me for nearly twenty years. I have a gallstone as big as the Ritz. The pain that causes the mood I've been calling 'liverish' for seven years, that I didn't have a name for for more years than that, is in fact cholecystitis. There's some rather painful surgery in my immediate future, but things could be worse.

1 October Yes, I had the feeling I was rushing this issue. I'll have to rush even more to meet those two deadlines. Sally has done three pages for ANZAPA, so our membership survives. Five pages to go for FAPA. I don't know how Silverbob and others keep it up, year after year, eight pages on the dot. How Harry does 24 pages every quarter, decade after decade, is something else again. Perhaps not being married helps — though I seem to recall that I had trouble meeting deadlines before I was married. On which subject, *Jack Speer*: yep, Sally and I sure did get married. Had our official tenth anniversary in March this year. By the prescribed legal process Sally changed her name back to Yeoland three years ago, I can't remember exactly why, but it suits her.

*Banting Tales (continued)* Last page I mentioned twenty pounds. Another twenty or so have gone since then. I didn't have the psychological block that *Gregg Calkins* describes at 200 pounds, mainly because I don't think of weight in pounds (let alone mass in kilograms). I have to stop and think for a moment about 200 pounds: aha! 14 stone 4. My blocks come in stone (sorry, couldn't resist that). 16 stone is so vastly depressing that I didn't stay there long. I was about 15:12 on 30 July. Breaking the 15 barrier didn't take long at all, but it seemed to take for ever to get from just over 14 to just under. For what seems like weeks, but must only have been a few days, I have been hovering (if that's the *mot juste*) around 13, reaching 12:12 two days ago, annoyingly back to 13 today — but I don't have the precision measuring instruments that *Gregg* has, and I don't have the patience to average out the readings at different times of day, as I believe *John Foyster* does, and I can only assume that every day in every way I am getting lesser and lesser. At times I feel so good that I forget completely why I am dieting; then that rock rattles round a bit, keeping me edgy all day or awake all night, and I wonder whether this is the start of the attack that takes me to hospital before I'm ready, or just what I've been putting up with for years only now I know what it is and therefore feel more anxious about it. I've had no trouble dieting. If I eat or drink anything that the rock doesn't like, it lets me know; and the way it lets me know is the greatest incentive possible to avoiding things it doesn't like. Basically I live on muesli, broccoli, carrots, bananas, coffee and Vegemite, with a little bread and the occasional potato. Once a week I eat fish, and until the most recent all-night discomfort I was occasionally eating chicken. I'm told that I have accidentally reinvented the Pritikin Diet, which impresses me not a bit: only fools and invalids live like this. I dream of steak and claret.

My social life, such as it is, has suffered. People seem to think I'll get distressed in the presence of good food and drink that I can't touch, but that doesn't worry me at all. What does distress is the unaccustomed experience of remaining sober while the company gets merry; this I can take about once a week, no more. I suddenly have a new appreciation of *John Foyster*, who doesn't drink at all. I wonder whether his enjoyment of the things people do and say as they lose their inhibitions outweighs his annoyance. Maybe he isn't annoyed at all, or the alcohol isn't a factor in the annoyance. I must ask him.

And I must ask *Roelof Goudriaan* about *Miranda's* dirty worm song. If it's too dirty even for ANZAPA, *Roelof*, perhaps you would send me a copy. I only want it to impress *Marc Ortlieb*, who knows more dirty songs than anyone I know (with the possible exception of *Stephen Murray-Smith*).

*Roelof's* diary is the high point in ANZAPA 99, a wonderful piece of simple, economical writing, seemingly artless (ingenuous? naive? — I literally can't find the right word) yet conveying thoughts, moods, feelings and *character* with very sure and powerful art. *Gerald Smith*, in the same mailing, wonders whether I have 'forsaken SF fandom for another sort of fandom'. I couldn't possibly, *Gerald*, not while it goes on introducing me to people like *Roelof*.

*Roelof* provides the text for what I think I'm going to write about next. He and his friend *Jack* go to an exhibition of *Hiroshige's* woodcuts at the Rijksmuseum;

among them is a triptych depicting flower, moon and snow; 'To our delight we manage to unravel the symbolism behind one of the woodcuts; but oh, I should take the time one of these days to leaf through a couple of books on the period. What frustration can be worse than a feeling of total ignorance?'

One frustration that seems worse comes when you have worked for years in your field, feel competent in your work, indeed have achieved some recognition for it, even while you are aware that there is so much yet to learn, and one day you realize that your competence has made your work virtually unmarketable. This is my frustration. I doubt that I am the best book editor in Melbourne, but some people think I am, and many more think I am one of the best, and the more people think this the harder I find it to earn a living editing books. Certainly there is no place for me in the normal structure of Australian publishing firms. Copy editing and proofreading are done by women and young men; 'desk editing' — the next step up, where you deal with authors, artists, printers and so on, and are involved to some extent in the entrepreneurial side of the business — is for those women who are so competent that you will lose them if you don't promote them, and for the young men because the experience is necessary; at the next step up you are a 'senior editor' or 'commissioning editor', and this job is done by women of great determination, ability and experience, and young men; a fair number of women progress even further, into management, but they are women with outstanding ability and character to match, because this level is crowded with men — a lot of them editorial duds who can't spell, can't write, don't know how to use the expensive reference books on their elegant shelves, and have little sympathy with those people who can do these things. To be absolutely fair, there are women like that, too, at that level and higher. I don't fit into this structure because I have far too much experience to be a common desk editor, and far too much interest in words, facts, style, substance and that sort of stuff to be entrusted with a position of commercial importance to the firm. You can't have *managers* wasting time frigging around with galley proofs, writing long letters to authors and explaining the difference between 'which' and 'that' to trainee editors, can you? No, sir, not in this town, maybe not anywhere in this industry these days. So, like the women who are just starting out as editors, and the women who have been sacked, and the women who want to stay at home for their children, or have to, I try to make a living as a freelance editor.

I am not making a living as a freelance editor. I don't get work from one publisher, I have been told, because I am 'too pedantic' — which means that I correct spelling errors on galleys. I correct spelling errors on page proofs, too. For this reason I am rarely allowed to see page proofs. Another publisher doesn't give me work because I take too long over it. How long is too long? Too long is longer than the time allowed in their publishing schedule, which they were too polite to discuss with me. Others don't offer me work because they think it isn't worthy of my vast talent, or because it doesn't occur to them that I might be interested (A book on the problems of migrant women? But I thought you specialized in big historical works!). And others are just plain scared of approaching me.

This year I got a fulltime job as an editor in the Victorian Public Service — in the Ministry for Planning and Environment. It paid well, I liked the people I worked with, the subject-matter was interesting, the Ministry needed an editor, I was delighted to be there. The job lasted nine weeks. They thought they needed an editor, and they were right, but they didn't know what to do with me. Most of the material I was given to edit was not in a shape that could be edited (Oh, don't spend too much time on that! It's not the *final* draft!); most of the things that needed an editor's attention were other people's responsibility and not to be interfered with; my interest in the staff journal was appreciated, but they didn't plan to put one out every month. And so on. And there were no funds for a decent typewriter, and I could put in a

requisition order for a non-standard (that is, functional) typing table for my standard antique typewriter (But don't expect it before Christmas — better still, don't expect it!), and I couldn't just go to another department and buy a book (Anything under \$10 you can wangle on petty cash — but books are difficult: the Librarian will want to know why we should have a book all to ourselves — so let's say you bought a couple of maps at \$9.95 and lost the receipts, then you fill in this form for petty cash explaining why you haven't got receipts, then...). And so on. Then the gall-bladder attacks started. For a while, when I was too uncomfortable to go to the office but fit enough to work at home, I worked at home. Then Personnel discovered this and decreed that I was either in the office or sick. So I resigned. If I'd had no physical problems I might have resigned eventually anyway, although the money would have kept me there beyond the normal resigning point.

Does that sort of answer your question, Roelof?

Did it bring back memories, *David Grigg* — that bit about not buying books because the Librarian will want to know why...?

Does it give you tremendous satisfaction, *Leigh Edmonds*, having put up with all this bullshit for so many years, that you have mastered the system? I can only admire your patience — and congratulate you on your Class 8, richly deserved. Is it the conventional wisdom still in Canberra that you should stop at Class 8 — that levels beyond 8 demand too much more work for not much more pay?

And is there honey still for tea?

But enough of these questions. The night has gone, and here it is, tomorrow, already, and 6 a.m. at that. Six pages for ANZAPA. Two to go for FAPA. I'll think of something.

Yes, I know what I'll do. ANZAPA has seen my ode to 1984, but FAPA hasn't, so that can go on page 698. And on page 697, which according to my calculations should be just over there + (and so it is), I'll put my very latest piece of prestressed concrete verse, 'Thirteen Forewords to the Gospel of St John'.

Then I must go to bed, dammit. I have to get up early today.

Cheers!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of stylized letters 'JHB' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

THIRTEEN FOREWORDS  
TO THE  
GOSPEL OF ST JOHN

In the beginning, Word.  
Word was with God  
And dwelt God beginning —  
Became with, beginning among,  
In, was, and among.  
Beginning us was flesh.  
And Word became flesh  
And with us: the  
Word dwelt among us —  
Became, was, dwelt, the  
God among the flesh,  
Dwelt in with flesh —  
In us became God.

## COMING UP FOR BLAIR

## A Song of J. Prufred Alfröck

"Mistah Brando—he dead"

Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evenings are hung out again to dry  
Like impatient either-ors upon a table...

We can't.  
Why not?  
We're waiting for Frodo.

Let us go, through certain half-decided pages,  
The muttering last stages  
Of nestless rites in cheap three-day conventions  
And sordid affairs that no-one mentions:  
Pages that follow like a tedious agreement  
On innocuous content  
And draw you to a listless but compulsive question...  
Oh, do not ask "But can you draw well?"  
Let us go and see George Orwell.

We can't.  
Why not?  
We're waiting for Michelangelo.

In the room the women, gaunt and raw,  
Talk of 1984.  
On the road the men, debased and drear,  
Go down and out to Wigan Pier.  
At Father Bob's Anomaly Farm  
Dazed Burmese (who mean no harm)  
Pay homage to catatonia: there's laughter  
(But the clergyman's dafter).  
Inside, the wailing Jonahs fly  
Their withered aspidistras high...

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,  
What was it that made Oscar wild?  
That tint of sky that Prussians call their blue?  
But let us go now (me and you),  
Through certain half-deserted alleys,  
Singing the Ballad of Reading Galleys.

We can't.  
Why not?  
We're waiting for Mario.

To live in the midst of the incomprehensible,  
The detestable,  
That fascinates even as you abominate it...  
Imagine: the regrets, the longing to escape,  
The powerless disgust, the surrender,  
The hate... the smell  
Of napalm in the morning. (He paused.)  
The rest is sea story.

I grow bald... I grow stout...  
I have worn the bottoms of my trousers out.  
But let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,  
And watch the mermaids dance.

I do not think that they will dance for me.  
Why not?  
Ain't mermaids.  
What then?  
Whiting.

This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the  
This is the  
Not with a but a