

STUNNED MULLET

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John Bangsund, PO Box 434, Norwood, SA 5067
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GRAPPA. Price twopence, of which at least
half must be a 1930 Australian penny. Ta.

2 September 1976 Spring came and went yesterday in a blaze of confusion.

Birds bloomed suddenly, and singing flowers were heard in the almond tree. My pharyngitis played merry hell with my back, and I felt oddly at peace with the world and Robin Johnson. Then Robin, who is staying with us this week and has problems of his own, came home, and a chill breeze sprang up, and before long it was raining outside. I sneezed, my cigarette seared my throat, my claret turned to acid, and I knew that everything was back to normal. Today it is still raining, the sky is close and grey like putty, and the flowers are silenced. I am my usual atrabilious self.

CULLED FROM THE APOPTHEGMS OF WIZARD MARCHBANKS:

A book is criticized by the reviewer in direct proportion as the reviewer is criticized by the book: no man can find wisdom in print that is not already waiting for words within himself.

— Robertson Davies: *Samuel Marchbanks' Almanack*

LAST WINTER — that is, two or three days ago — I found myself one afternoon, suddenly and uncharacteristically, quite bored with my work and dying for something good, noble, uplifting and preferably smutty to read. Listless, I wandered from room to room, surveying without enthusiasm but with something approaching resentment the thousands of books that Sally and I seem to have acquired, many of them, indeed probably most of them, books of considerable literary merit and significantly lofty moral tone (and I do not exclude my science fiction collection from this broad judgement: the seventeen volumes I failed to sell at the last auction contain no swearwords and are written in passable English), but despite the artistic, educational and other respectable virtues of these seemingly endless walls of books, I could find none that spoke to my mood.

The truth is that I had been spoilt. All winter, whenever I had relaxed from my work and felt like reading, rather than listening to Mozart trios or resolving crossword puzzles of a rather basic standard or conversing with my wife, I had gained much innocent enjoyment from a collection of occasional pieces by a Canadian writer, Robertson Davies, entitled *Samuel Marchbanks' Almanack*. This is a book that I can recommend most heartily to you for winter reading, and I hope soon to recommend to you its companion volumes, which as yet I do not possess. Mind you, if yours is not an enquiring mind, with a lively sense of the absurd and an appreciation of lightly-worn scholarship, I would not recommend the book to you at all; nor would I recommend that you continue reading this publication; you will find little of interest in either. I should also say that this book is not recommended if you do not enjoy the works of Flann O'Brien, Lennie Lower, Michael Frayn, Laurence Sterne and Thomas Love Peacock.

Listless, then, I was as I sifted through the mountain of paperbacks in Sally's study — until my restless eye lighted upon another book by Robertson Davies! I had no idea that we possessed more than one book by this man, but we did, and as soon as I found it I felt guilty. This, I am sure you will agree, is an Odd Thing: *Samuel Marchbanks' Almanack* was a present from that lovely lady, your friend and mine (and theirs,

too, if the truth be known), that soul of kindness and consideration, young Dr Susan Wood; *Fifth Business*, the novel by Davies that I found in amongst Sally's accumulation of Daphne Du Maurier, Iris Murdoch, Balzac, Dickens and suchlike, was a gift from that cad Mike Glicksohn. I am not sure what to make of this at all, except that there is obviously something of Cosmic Significance in it. It's not as though there were only one Canadian author, lord no! — everyone knows about such great and famous Canadian authors as Leacock, Buchan and, um, that other chap, whatsisname. (Bob Shaw? No, he doesn't really count, does he?) Quite incredible, really.

Why did I feel guilty? Well, you know what Mike Glicksohn is like. A cad, sure — no doubt about that. Also the kind of bloke who wouldn't know a good book if the entire first edition fell on him from a great height, each copy signed by the author and accompanied by a clipping of Dick Geis's rave review of his previous work. He has said as much himself, in correspondence, though not precisely in those words. So when Mike sent Sally and me that copy of *Fifth Business* about a year ago, I thought 'Jeez! good ol' Mike! A cad, sure, if ever I met one, but somewhere beneath all that hair there surely beats a heart of nickel-cadmium!' Musing thus, I tossed the rubbishy book he had sent us onto the nearest pile of rubbishy fanzines. After all, it's the thought that counts. So that's why I felt guilty: I could easily have lost track for ever of a perfectly good novel. (It must surely be sheer chance, or Providence, as some do say, that that pile of rubbishy fanzines happened to be FAPA mailings, about which I am quite childishly sentimental. Otherwise the book might easily have been thrown out long since.) All of this goes to prove that you can't tell a book by its donor.

I enjoyed *Fifth Business* immensely. If you are the kind of reader that has an inquiring mind, a lively sense of the absurd and an appreciation of scholarship lightly worn, you will most likely enjoy it. Having said that makes me realize that Mike probably sent the book to us because he No, I can't say a thing like that about a dear friend! (But the thumb marks only went as far as page 8.)

1 October I'm not at all sure that I can keep up this frenzied pace. Here I've written nearly two pages in less than a month! If I keep it up, not only will I exceed ANZAPA's page requirements, let alone FAPA's, but I'll probably finish up being put back on people's mailing lists. A sobering thought (almost).

JACK SPEER asked me a lot of silly questions in the last issue of his fanzine that I've seen. I suppose I'd better humour the old feller by answering them. I mean, answering some of them: I can't really be expected to comment on whether stunning mullets is a humane method of controlling them, for example.

Can there be an aorist pluperfect? (the kindly old hangin' judge asks). Well, yes and no, Jack, yes and no. Consider this sentence: 'I done saw him do it.' I ask you: is this or is it not an example of the Aorist Pluperfect? Eh? Leigh Edmonds, who naturally assumed the

reference to have some connexion with music, sex or contemporary aircraft (since he thinks of little else), ventured to suggest that 'Aorist' was a typing error, and that I had in mind 'an augmented fifth in the Aeolian mode'. Then again, his handwriting is so bad that he might have been saying something lewd about the Freudian connotations of contemporary aircraft design. All I have to say to this is that it's all very well, but what does it have to do with science fiction?

Membership of our Association was a blunder: I should have said 'membership in' or 'members of'. *Outed* is Australian headline journalese for 'thrown out', 'stood down' and so on. It is one of the most repugnant neo-verbs I can think of (which is why I used it in that fake headline), and most Australians would never use it - but by golly! they know what it means (especially during the football season, when some poor bugger is 'outed' every week for thumping the umpire or being assaulted viciously about the elbow by an opponent's eye). *Sending up* and 'taking off' (a bit older and now gentler) are quite normal Australian expressions for 'imitating for satirical purposes'. 'To send up' is the most common form, along with 'send-up'. 'To take off' is less common these days, and 'take-off' quite rare. *Bleeder* is more British than Australian, I think, and I guess it to be a back-formation from the all-purpose adjective 'bloody'. Norman Gunston has given new currency to the noun. He appeared in each show with bits of wadding on his face where he had cut himself when shaving, and explained early in his shows that he came from a family of bleeders (in that literal sense). The word is also used in connexion with menstruation, those females experiencing longer 'periods' than most being referred to (certainly not in print, and pretty rarely among males) as bleeders. (Now I'm embarrassed. Theodore Sturgeon, where are you!!)

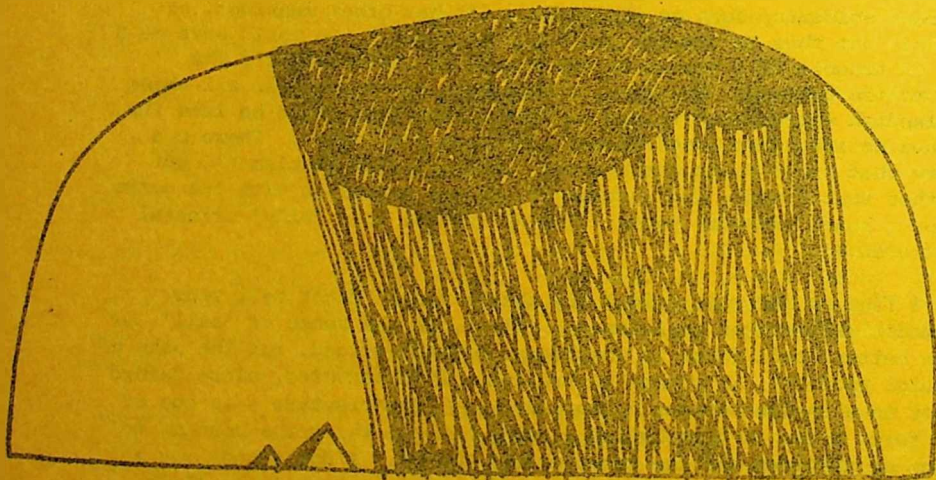
Wogs are germs, and 'the wog' or 'the wog that's going about' is the current epidemic, such as influenza. (It has other meanings, of course, but this is the one you asked me about.) It would save me a lot of trouble if I just sent you a copy of Sidney Baker's *The Australian Language*, you know, rather than try to explain all these outlandish expressions to you in FAPA! (But that would be less fun.) I have no idea when 'wog' became a synonym for 'germ'. There's a story that 'wog' is an acronym for 'wily oriental gentleman', but whether that's true, and whether it has any connexion with the germs, I don't know. (Memory prods: 'worthy' rather than 'wily' oriental gentleman.)

Don't flog to the wogs (did I say that?) means 'don't sell your commodities/services to Asians'. 'Flog', in the sense of 'sell', or even better 'sell (what is worthless, or underpriced, for the sake of a quick profit)', is common Australian. *Disorientated*, since Oxford gives me a choice between 'disorient' and 'disorientate', is one of the forms I use to distinguish clearly between the verbs meaning to place or displace and the geographical Orient. I don't know why a 'talk-show host' is called a 'compere', but in Australia he (less often she) generally is. Oxford says that a 'compere' is an organizer

of cabaret or broadcast entertainment who introduces the artistes, comments on the turns, etc. (French = gossip).

You don't understand 'locally-compact pandemics'! Good grief, sir, there is no-one in this world that understands locally-compact pandemics except John Foyster! Mind you, until you asked, I thought I understood. *Questions upon notice* is indeed a Parliamentary phrase. When some twit from Bullamakanka or Mile End gets up during Question Time in the House of Representatives or the Senate and asks the Minister representing the Minister for Locally-Compact Pandemics whether it is true that outed wog comperes are being flogged off or disorientated, and the Minister can't answer off-hand, the Minister requests that the question be placed on the notice paper. The dumb question then becomes a 'question upon notice', and is listed among all the other dumb or embarrassing questions on the notice paper until it is answered or the Parliament is dissolved. If pressed, Bill Wright or I could provide you with one superbly embarrassing example of a 'question upon notice' that lapsed with the outing (outment?) of the Whitlam Government last November. The thing is that once a question goes on to the notice paper it can be ignored for ever, with any luck.

Scythrop is pronounced 'sky-throp'. I didn't know that a 'pajock' was a degenerate Englishman in Ireland, but I shall try to remember. My pun on 'pavo' and 'parvo' was put there just for you and George Turner. George ignored it. COCKNEY BLOODY IDIOM!! Gorbimey, mate, that's really asking for it! Australians do not speak bloody Cockney bloody Idiom! We speak pure debased Irish! Just watch it there, cock! Actually, these days we mostly speak debased American. Even my wife (bless her!) has been known to say 'pre-FER-ably' and 'con-TRO-versy', instead of the pure Anglo-Australian 'PREF-ruh-bly' and 'CON-truh-vuh-sy'.



2 October Prompted by Jack's remarks about the relationship between British and American paper sizes, I wrote a page of nonsense on the subject. Rather than retype the first half of the last stencil, I have (like many a good fane before me) Resorted to Rotsler. In this case I think I've resorted to a Rotsler I have published before, but I don't mind if you don't.

Still talking to Jack Speer: The sample of 'Orstrilian' I quoted was supposed to be spontaneous, but I don't believe it. *On subverting the language:* I certainly don't like Ackerman's 'heesh, himer and hiser'. Epicene people I can take (some of my best friends are epics), but epicene pronouns, such as are not already in existence, I can't. The battle of the sexes is a good thing, but I do wish that language had not become one of its battlegrounds.

Omar Kyabram is a private whimsy. Many years ago, when I was about 13 or 14, come to think of it, I had a pen-friend in New South Wales, a girl about my own age. In one of my letters to her I quoted or mentioned Omar Khayyam (I had just discovered the FitzGerald 'translation' of the quatrains), and in her next letter she said something to the effect that she had never heard of Omar Kyabram. Kyabram is a country town in Victoria. Okay?

Sandy, Carolyn and Chloe are three ladies who live in the block of flats at St Kilda where I lived for some years. Since most pre-1972 Melbourne fans (and quite a few others) have met Carolyn and Sandy, I don't normally bother to explain who they are when I mention them in my fanzines. Chloe I was a canary-coloured Toyota Corolla, and Chloe II is a handsome dark-green 1975 model, which the girls had just acquired at the time I wrote about. They'll be delighted to know that their fame has spread to Albuquerque.

I am sure that Phillip Adams's idea of a power base is the same as yours. ::: Do you have any particular reason for spelling spelt 'spelled'? To me, spelled means being given a spell. One of Rigby's lady authors recently objected to my replacing her 'learned' with 'learnt'. Again, 'learned' is an adjective as far as I'm concerned, and quite apart from any other argument on the matter, since 'learnt' is pronounced that way it should be spelt that way. ::: *Clancy and Clem* are in no way related to Gallagher & Shean (Sheehan?), Amos & Andy or Joe & Flo. Clancy is the subject of a poem by A.B. ('Banjo') Paterson, 'Clancy of the Overflow'. Clem is Dr Clement Semmler, Deputy General Manager of the Australian Broadcasting Commission and biographer of Banjo Paterson. ::: Can't answer your question about Mowgli and Tarzan. Maybe you should ask Bert Chandler. ::: What does 'ktp' mean? Is it Greek for 'usw'?

I think you've missed my point about rusting the innards of an IBM by not realizing that the machine that gives you eyestrain is an IBM Executive, not a Selectric. ::: You were correct to pronounce 'Dai' as in Bao Dai. Now is your chance to correct me. Australians tend to pronounce 'day' as 'dye'; I pronounce Dai 'dye' and Bao Dai 'bow dye'. ::: Higher Authorities tell me that Keats & Chapman stories are not

'feghoots', and having recently read 'Grendel Briarton's' *The Compleat Feghoot* with very little enjoyment, I am happy to think that this is so. One well-known Hugo-winning lady novelist told me that the difference is that the K&C stories remain stories, independent of their puns. If this is true of my K&C anecdotes, I am pleased, since it is certainly true of the original anecdotes by Myles na gCopaleen. I aim for what I call perfect puns (the sound being exactly the same, or the syllables exactly displaced, or the consonants exactly rearranged), and now and then I achieve them. The Feghoot stories mostly conclude with very imperfect puns. James Joyce, as far as I know, is the only master there has ever been of the Aorist Pluperfect Pun — but that's not the kind of thing I should be saying in a magazine devoted to science fiction.

Do you mean they died? Yes, and normally if I meant to say that someone had died I would say he had died. But there are times when that bald statement seems inadequate or unseemly, and the one you refer to was one of those times. Shakespeare probably had the same feeling when he had Hamlet say 'When we have shuffled off this mortal coil' rather than 'When we are dead'.

When I read such comments as 'I think I don't like background music in movies' I am reminded that Americans are deprived in some ways, and that Australians are lucky (this country being the dumping-ground for British as well as American films and tv programs, for example). I know your reference was to films specifically, but I think the same comment would apply to tv programs. Here we see quite a lot of British stuff on tv, and the absence of background music (and canned laughter) is very noticeable. I think that such music would spoil *Warship* completely (to mention just one program that I watch despite myself).

I am afraid that (despite your note to good ol' Dave Hulvey implying the opposite) I still tend very much to treat the world as an extension of my own ego, rather than relating to it. But if whatever I'm doing, label it as you will, is approved by my peers, then I am happy for them. I am basically a happy person, and a discontented; towards the end in Canberra I was becoming an angry person, which is why I just had to get away from the place; and I really think that what makes me tick (if I may supply my own label) is my sense of the absurd, which I once believed to be a general attribute of humankind, but am now inclined to think is something special, something that I am fortunate to possess, and something that one may easily lose in certain circumstances. I went close to losing my sense of the absurd on the 11th of November, 1975. I haven't published much since then, you may have noticed. Nine months in Adelaide have just about effected my recovery, but I still have the scars from that experience that you may choose to label a too close relating to the world about me, and I think they may flare up still, now and then.

AND THERE'S JUST ROOM HERE to say that of all the fanzines I've read lately (not that there have been many of them: I seem to have been dropped from the mailing lists of most of the Best People in Fandom), those from Leigh Edmonds have given me most enjoyment. Leigh's writing has suddenly improved immensely. Maybe his move from St Kilda to the purer air of Carlton has something to do with it.

KAI TA LOIPA

As usual, I don't like this issue. Among other things, the reproduction is pretty bad, I have misspelt 'inquiring' and I have said 'acronym for' instead of 'acronym from'. I can't go on pretending to Jack Speer that my grammatical errors are Australian idiom!

Last week I bought a spare Roneo drum from a little old lady who only used it at weekends (she sells cars, too, yes), and I'm not entirely happy with it. The self-portrait on the cover came out okay, but another page I attempted in red didn't. Now I've messed about with the drum a bit, after asking myself what John Campbell would have done, and using only a bent coin and a piece of wire, I have turned it into a television set. If I can just figure out how to run off a stencil using only a rather basic television set and that puddle of red ink on the floor, we're back in business.

I am listening to some superb music on the drum (it picks up FM stereo radio as well). and I can feel a Keats & Chapman story coming on...

Keats, in most respects a gentleman of irreproachable demeanour, had one little failing that irritated Chapman almost to the point of exasperation: time and again he would borrow records from Chapman's superb collection and neglect to return them. Chapman was usually too polite to say much about this, but over the years it had put some strain on the friendship. Chapman was particularly annoyed that Keats had kept one of his most favourite records, the magnificent performance by Clara Haskil and Arthur Grumiaux of Beethoven's 'Kreutzer' Sonata, for nearly three years, and despite Chapman's occasional gentle hint, had still not returned it. The matter came to a head one wintry evening when Keats came in to Chapman's modest apartment and found him seated in a comfortable old chair by the fire, a glass of madeira near to hand, and apparently fast asleep — but he was wearing what looked like earmuffs, and he seemed to be smiling. Before Keats could say anything, Chapman opened his eyes and indicated with a forefinger that Keats should sit down and remain silent. After a moment or two, Chapman removed his headphones and said 'Sorry, old chap. You came in almost at the end of the Canzona in D Minor, and I didn't want to...' 'Oh, I understand perfectly,' said Keats. 'Please don't apologize. Who is playing it?'

'Ah,' said Chapman, 'Albert Schweitzer — who else! Could you stand the G Minor Fantasia? Thought you could. I'll just turn the speakers on.' For the next hour or so the friends listened to Bach's majestic music, and did not speak. When the last record ended, they talked a little about Bach, and about the relative merits of Schweitzer and more recent virtuoso organists. Then Keats asked whether he might borrow the records. 'Um,' said Chapman, 'I don't quite know how to put this...' Keats laughed. 'Kein Kreutzer, kein Schweitzer?' 'Precisely!' said Chapman, and he laughed, too.

Yeah, well, okay — but does Bretnor compose his on stencil?