



thirsty boots--11

ally. A bottle of Chateau de Nizas, "Appellation d'origine simple," does wonders for the mind but nothing good for the fingers. At 99¢ a bottle, though, it's an amazingly good wine, vastly superior to the other cheapo French imports that are labeled simply "vin rouge (or blanc, or rosé) supérieur." Since I last wrote for this fine group, I've settled in Washington, DC, gotten a full-time job as a secretary for the National Legal Aid and Defender Association (the national association of all the legal aid offices around the country, and likewise for the public defender offices--a very schizophrenic organization), and gone through seven months of that job and this living situation (a group house in one of the more interesting neighborhoods of DC) before deciding that I'd had enough of both and that it was time for a new cycle to begin in my life. So I quit my job earlier this month, and at the end of the month (Saturday, actually) I'll be moving out of this house and putting most of my belongings into storage in rich brown's attic. (The attic belongs to both rich and Colleen brown, but I think of it as rich's because he's the one who actually uses it, as an office and place for writing, except in the summer months. This area is hellishly hot and humid in the summer, which is one reason why I feel it's time to leave.) I don't think I'll actually leave the area until I find out whether I've won DUFF or not, since that makes a big difference in my summer plans, but whether I win or not I'll be hitting the road and going someplace else for the next few months. (If I win, you can simply give me the Aug. mailing at Aussiecon; if I lose, I'll send you a CoA.) I hope to do a lot of writing this summer, which is the one thing I've found almost no time to do over the winter and spring, despite all the other things I've been involved in around here. In a way, if I lose the DUFF race, it will be liberating in that I'll have nothing to keep me from writing--but that's a rationalization if I've ever heard one.

This is really nothing more than a bit of minac to keep my finger in the ANZAPA pie. I doubt that I'll try my hand at any mailing comments, simply for lack of time, but consider me to have had the intention.

I've been reading a fascinating book lately. It's called Hemisphere, "Asian-Australian Viewpoints and Ideas," and it's published by F.W. Cheshire, of Melbourne, Canberra, and Sydney. Or it was published by them in 1964. Now I have no idea whether the magazine this book was culled from, HEMISPHERE, is likely to be one familiar to all of you, with perhaps firm images of it planted in your mind complete with scurrilous jokes, or something that you've never heard of in your lives. At any rate, it was completely new to me when I stumbled across the book in the library, and I've found it fascinating. I love to get new or unusual perspectives, and something like Asians' views of Australia and Australians' views of Asia is definitely not one of the day-to-day perceptions of the average American. Nor of me. So, while I haven't read the whole book yet by any means, I've been stimulated over and over again as I've read one article after another.

The book reminds me of John Bangsund's fanzines in some ways: it has that same feeling of being a collection of creative, intellectually-stimulating articles by a circle of literate people. There aren't, of course, a great number of fannish jokes, but there is occasionally something akin to the best fannish wit, as in the opening sentence of "Towards a Mutual Appreciation" by geographer A.A. Wilcock: "One of the disadvantages of geography as a study is that everyone has done geography at school and is therefore quite an authority on what it is that a geographer can be expected to know."

Some of the insights that I've gained by reading this collection of articles have shocked me.

I had wondered for quite some time whether there was a different sense of the English language and how it should be put together in Australia from what I'm used to in either this country or the British Isles. There seemed to be certain blanket similarities in the Australian fanzines I received, yet they were offset by just enough exceptions that I figured maybe what I was seeing was just the usual range of differences and sloppiness that I'd find in any random sampling of American fanwriting. After all, I wouldn't pick up an issue of MOTA, say, and make generalizations about the use of the English language in the United States from it, so why should I do the same with a handful of Australian fanzines? I imagine there's a lot of that in my approach. But still, it shook up that conviction to read what is presumably a collection of writing by a large number of Australia's educated intellectuals, and to discover that in most of those articles the comma and the semicolon are lacking nearly as often as in any Leigh Edmonds fanzine. That is symptomatic of the biggest difference I've noticed: a tendency for Australian writers to string together long sentences --and, within those sentences, long sequences of words--without the slightest pause indicated, even where you could not possibly say the phrase out loud without at least one or two pauses for breath. I'm curious now: do you, as Australians, see this as characteristic of your prose? (I'm particularly curious about your reaction, John, since your writing never gives me the impression I've just described.) This incessant production of run-on sentences drives me crazy when I'm trying to read the things--but I have no idea whether I'm justified in calling it a peculiarly Australian characteristic. I've noticed the same tendency in a lot of English fanzines over the years, yet I know it's not true of the vast majority of English literature. And I deliberately chose MOTA as an American example above because of Terry Hughes's tendency to write very much the same way.

Aside from pricking the pedantic grammarian's side of my soul, this book also gave me a great many tentative insights into the Australian cultural mind. I knew the country had a basically isolationist, pure-Anglo-Saxon tendency, but what came through in these essays--a lot of them, anyway; perhaps most--and what amazed me in a journal supposedly devoted to Australian-Asian cultural exchange was the assumption that Australia should,

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indeed, remain a white, English-speaking bastion in an Asian and South Pacific world. The attitude of many of the writers seemed to be to deplore the lack of knowledge of Asia among educated Australians, and to insist that a better understanding was necessary to Australia's future, yet never to question the basic concept of Australia as a homogeneous, European nation. (The idea of a homogeneous culture is a little foreign to me, as I've lately been realizing, for, although I grew up in a homogeneous rich suburb, and although United States culture has been subject to the homogenizing forces of the suburbs and television for many years, this country is basically one of incredible diversity. A stroll down any of the main avenues of New York City would confirm the cultural, linguistic, and racial variety of America at a glance.) At the same time, ironically, before reading this book I had no idea of the enormous number of Italians in Australia and the prevalence of Italian as a second language. ("Yet it should be remembered that there is no country in Asia where English is spoken as widely and as well as Italian is spoken in Australia. An Italian journalist, businessman or tourist in Australia would find hotels, restaurants and shops where Italian was spoken wherever he went. A visit to the local Dante society would guarantee him a wide range of contacts with people who spoke his language either as native speakers or as an acquired language. He would either learn to avoid places where he would experience language difficulties, or--more likely still--he would hardly be aware that such places exist." From "A Case for Asian Languages in Australian Schools," by H.F. Simon.)

Then there was the quote I have been unable to find again, describing in passing the "dry, detached thoroughness" with which Australian public servants conduct the business of government--which I thought said a great deal about Australians' self-conceptions and ways of dealing with things.

Another curious attitude that I detected was the overwhelming tendency to talk of "Asia" as a single entity, somehow juxtaposed with Australia in the scheme of things. Even at their most ignorant, I don't think most Americans would lump the whole of Asia together like that unless they were speaking in global terms and referring as well to "Europe," "North America," "Africa," and so forth. There seems to be a widespread practice of thinking about Asia as an amorphous whole, then of mentally dividing it down into equal and almost interchangeable building blocks ("the nation States of Asia") and speaking of them the way you might speak of the component states of the United States. The writers are always protesting that the various Asian cultures are not really interchangeable or even very comparable, but these protestations seem to be set against the widespread assumption that they are. I've simply never encountered that attitude before.

Of course, I'm also not used to a view of Asia that thinks first of Indonesia and Malaya (as it still was when this book went to press), but that's not surprising when I think about

tan shoes with pink shoelaces--v

what you would see first, looking toward Asia from Australia.

This book has also taught me a great deal about some of the Asian cultures I was least familiar with. I knew nothing, for instance, about the Indonesian language except that it had been created recently to foster a national identity and that it had some Dutch words in it, until I read the article on "Translating Modern Indonesian Literature." And until I read this book I didn't even know that Malaya had aborigines of non-Asian race.

I'm very curious to see how the insights I've culled from reading this book strike the rest of you, as Australians. If you aren't familiar with the magazine or the book, I would recommend them both (if the magazine is still being published). And I wonder how many of the truths mentioned in 1964 have changed radically in the more than a decade since then.

There really isn't any time to delve into the four ANZAPA mailings I have sitting beside me and attempt to comment on them. With luck I'll get to them eventually, perhaps doing a massive catch-up issue the way Bruce Gillespie did back in October (but not, I hope, then disappearing from sight as Bruce did). In the meantime, about all I can do is briefly give a little egoboo to a few things I particularly enjoyed in those mailings. This is by no means complete, since there are quite a number of fanzines or pieces of them that I put aside to "read carefully later" and have not yet gotten around to picking up again, and I'm sure that among those are many of the best items to appear in ANZAPA over the past year.

But anyway, I particularly liked: John Bangsund's cover for the February mailing, "Criticizing Confucius in Ancient Anzapa"; Bruce Gillespie's WORDY-GURDY #1; Leigh Edmonds's brief summary of his DUFF trip in SUGAR TOOTH #27; THE NEW MILLENIAL HARBINGER #12 and 13; "How Fandom Got Into Me" by John Foyster; PHILOSOPHICAL GAS #30 (of course!); the cover cartoons on VAN DIEMEN'S FAN; Mervyn Barrett's travel stuff; most of Eric Lindsay's mailing comments.

I know there's a lot more, but I'm rushed and that's all that comes to mind.

This afternoon I waited in line for half an hour at the foreign exchange window of the biggest local bank, intending to exchange some of the cash in my pocket for one (1) Australian dollar bill, so that I could send it in to ANZAPA as my \$1.00 levy, but when I finally got to the window I found that the bank had no Australian money at all. Neither did the only other one within easy walking distance. I'll try again between now and the 10th, but if I don't manage to get a dollar in, Derrick et al., will you give me the benefit of the doubt and not kick me out? Any other way of sending the money would take a lot of time and cost us both extra.



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A NOTE FROM THE PRINTER

4 June: I hope we make it in time for the June mailing, John. Your stencils arrived yesterday and I haven't run them off yet (too bloody cold in the garage). Stunned Mullet 1 and Stunned Mullet 1 have still to be collated, too.

My printer came back from Surfers Paradise or wherever and told me that the job was finished before he went on holiday. He looked at me as though I were an absolutely heartless and mean class of person for complaining about the stuff being late - and I hadn't even complained! Anyway, that's why there are two editions of Stunned Mullet 1, and why I'm still looking for a cheap, good, reliable small-offset printer.

Instant pre-mailing comment: 'Hemisphere' is one of the nicest fanzines going, John. As luck would have it, part of my new job entails acting as Standards Officer for AGPS. Crazy. What I don't know about printing and typography would fill a - whaddaya call them things? - oh yeah - book. Anyway, I go through mounds of stuff each day, scribbling rude remarks about the layout or the imprint or the inking or whatever all over things, and occasionally issuing a dreaded C45 (or, for the benefit of those not public servants in our midst, Substandard Work Report). And, as I was about to say, the nicest publication that has passed through my approving hands while acting in this position is 'Hemisphere'. (Certainly it beats any Parliamentary Paper I've seen so far.)

The June issue of 'Hemisphere' - vol. 19 no. 6 - has 44 A4-size pages, 32 colour photos, five main articles, poetry and reviews. The magazine costs A\$7.50 per year, single copy 75c. Subscriptions to The Editor, Hemisphere, PO Box 826, Woden, ACT 2606, Australia. (528 pages for \$7.50 seems a bargain to me.)

I won't comment yet on your thoughts about Asia and Australia, John, except to say that your observations are an excellent example of why we need overseas members in ANZAPA.

The weather blokes are tipping something like -6° tonight, so I'd better get out to that garage before ice forms on the Roneo.

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