

THE METAPHYSICAL
REVIEW SIX

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Welcome to the members of APA-45 who have joined the gallant band of people who actually read this magazine every four months or so. If you don't belong to ANZAPA or APA-45, and you have received this document through the mail, then you should write a letter of comment, or you will not receive another METREV.

And who, where, perpetrates this criminal magazine? It's

BRUCE R GILLESPIE, of GPO BOX 5195 AA, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA 3001, AUSTRALIA. In here there's stuff by me (page 2), Alex Robb (page 7), and letter writers (p 23). Good clean rubbish, dedicated to

AUSTRALIA IN 75!

by b*r*g

As I was saying to Colin Bennett the other day....

Well, that's always a good line with which to break into a conversation. And I only spoke to him for five minutes about an article I'm doing on early Australian films (yes, we had a film industry before 1930). Yet it's something of revelation that Colin Bennett, film critic for THE AGE newspaper, and some sort of hero to me for many years, has his own little desk on the huge floor that is THE AGE's Features department, and that he works regular hours, just like the rest of us (regular hours from 5pm - 10pm, that is), and that he helps a lot of small and struggling film societies and amateur film makers, as well as taking up the cudgels ^{about} the huge issues that still plague the film industry in Australia.

In order to gain information for the same subject (Part 2 - AUSTRALIAN FILM MAKERS NOW) I also interviewed Giorgio Mangiamele, who has made give films so far, and not had much luck with any of them. Should I say that I half-interviewed Mr Mangiamele? After 19 years in Australia, he still has quite a strong accent, and he had to compete against a COMET summit meeting that was taking place in my room (i.e. three highly articulate ladies debating the placing of a heading or the colour of an illustration). Mangiamele's first film, CLAY, won three awards here and overseas, was praised by critics - and was shown for two weeks down at the Palais or the Dendy, a long way out of town, in 1965. The ABC showed it once on television, and then it disappeared.

The concensus of opinion (including John Baxter's THE AUSTRALIAN CINEMA, which I used as my main text) is the Australian film industry is in a Pretty Poor State, and that Something Must Be Done. Like removing American control of the Hoyts and Greater Union cinema chains, for instance. Then everybody would show Australian films, and we would have lots of New Wave directors, and a few Old Wavers as well, and Ingmar Bergmann would rise again on Australia's sylvan shores? I don't think so.

But that's not the point. The point is that before I researched the article, I had no idea that Australia ever had a feature film industry. (In 1911 we made and released nearly one film a week.) Now I know something more about the subject - certainly more than I can write into an article designed for

11 to 14 year olds. At last I've found something which I thought didn't exist, except for lucky people like Lee Harding - some kind of fusion between my job and my real interests.

Not that I write about science fiction (says he, rubbing his hands, and plotting and scheming) but so far I've been able to write about subjects that interest me. Most Melbourne fans were surprised to learn that I was researching an article on COMICS for PURSUIT, our magazine for Forms 1 to 3 in secondary schools. That was about five months ago. I asked Noel Kerr for information. He couldn't help me a great deal at that time, but he referred me to Ken Bull, who used to belong to ANZAPA. Ken kindly supplied me with some interesting information, most of which I couldn't use in the final article. John Ryan also sent me some interesting material, including the issue of COMIC ART which talked about Walt Disney's main comic strip artist, Carl Barks. I obtained copies of Perry & Aldridge's book, THE PENGUIN BOOK OF COMICS, and Jim Steranko's far more interesting HISTORY OF THE COMICS. John Breden lent me some superb material. Unfortunately I could not feature panels from PHOEBE ZEITGEIST in my article.

However, this was my First Try, and the powers-that-be soon gave me the word that I was taking far too long to write the article. Actually I only took about three days to do the final research and write the article's first draft, but it took a long time to find the material I wanted. With a subject like that, I could have gone on all year researching material. If I had been writing for a newspaper, I would have taken far less time, and probably made a Keith Dunstan-type hash of the whole story. (Although spare a thought for the Keith Dunstans of the world, even after they make fun of science fiction conventions. Working journalists usually have to fit in two or three complete articles in the time it takes me to research one article.)

Doing research is hardly a real problem, however - except for every ^{article.} ~~second~~. For instance, I mentioned the article on Films. At the same time as I researched that, I had to find material for an article I had suggested, MODERN DEVELOPMENTS IN MUSIC. I planned to cover all areas of music, even though I don't know much about any of them except pop music. I've heard the names of Keith Humble, George Dreyfus, and our other contemporary serious composers. I had no idea what remained of the jazz scene in Melbourne. I had gathered the material about pop music, from an interview I did at 3XY about three months before. I rang up local guitarist John Graham, about folk music, at about 11 am. The interview didn't go all that well. "Well, what sort of music are you playing, John? What kind of songs? We're writing this for junior secondary students, and they may not know much about the folk scene at the moment." "Well...uh...y'know," was the tone of the reply. "We play traditional folk music. Some folk musicians play blues, but they're almost pop musicians." "Well, what sort of songs do you play? Which countries do you get them from?" "I get my songs from all over the place." "Can secondary students who want to take up folk guitar learn from books?" "Yeah - there's books all over the place. But there's only a few good guitar teachers in Melbourne - Marg Roadknight, and me, and...." "Could we tell kids that you are available to teach guitar?" "Yeah... but we only teach when we're not working. I have a few pupils for a few weeks at a time. I play guitar four nights a week... quite a decent living...." And so on. Perhaps I rang too early in the day.

Try as I would, I could not tie him down to a precise description of the

type of music he played, and the divisions there are in the folk world in Melbourne.

Perhaps it takes a PR man to speak to a PR man. When I rang up Bruce Clarke, of the Bruce Clarke Jingle Workshop (which makes many of Melbourne's radio and television advertisements) his first reaction was, "My son at school gets PURSUIT. How can I help you?" I arrived at the Workshop in St Kilda Road at 9am and left about 11. Geoff, from the Branch, came down and took a few photographs, and then left to do some other work. Meanwhile, Bruce Clarke showed me how his pet synthesiser works. He was one of the first people in Australia to import a Moog synthesiser - I knew that before I started the interview. The real thing is a lot more interesting than the rather dull records of Bach the radio stations played a few years back. The synthesiser looks like a telephone switchboard attached to an organ keyboard. Clarke makes most of the sounds on the control panel, which allows almost any channel to switch into almost any other. The control panel contains filters, and oscillators, and vibrators, and voltage controls, and a huge catalogue of other terms that mean nothing to me. Conveniently, the sounds show in green lines on the oscilloscope beside the machine. The sounds come through a heavily mounted 12-inch speaker at one end of a sound-proofed room.

Not only did Bruce Clarke explain this apparatus so that I could understand what it was doing, but he provided enough interesting details for me to write nearly a complete article on electronic music. He said that he has been experimenting with random music. I was particularly pleased because he told me the story of the latest random music concerts he's held (in the Dallas Brooks Hall, I think). On side of the stage sits Orchestra 1. The members of Orchestra 1 carry glissando instruments - clarinets, tubas, trombones, etc. On the other side of the stage sits Orchestra 2. They carry percussion instruments and strings - cymbals, triangles, glockenspiels, violas, violins.

Orchestra 1 looks at a goldfish bowl set up in front of it.. On the front of the goldfish bowl, the organisers (Bruce Clarke and a few others, I presume) painted the five lines of a musical stave. As the goldfish swims up and down, it moves around the music lines, and "composes" a tune. The glissando instruments play this (necessarily) long, gliding tune.

At the same time, Orchestra 2 wears sunglasses. On the inside of the sunglasses the organisers paint the lines of the stave. Through their five-lined spectacles, the members of the orchestra stare out at a frying-pan set up in front of them. Popcorn fries on the frying-pan. As the corn pops, the bits flick upwards - through the lines of the musical stave, as seen by the members of the orchestra. The long-suffering members of the orchestra play the notes the popcorn "composes".

I don't know whether that's credible, but I'll believe it. Better still, it makes a good yarn for PURSUIT, and that's more than John Graham provided.

On the same assignment I spoke to Keith Glass and David Peperell up at Archie 'n' Jughead's shop - but that's another story. Go and buy some records there sometime. The article ended up as a treatise on electronic music, and my learned comments about rock music were scrapped again. Warner Bros even gave me a review copy of SWEET BABY JAMES for that article - and I

have tried to fit the review into at least three different articles so far. With my luck, if I wrote an article about science fiction for PURSUIT, it would probably turn into an article about tech school students who make their own spaceships.

But that's enough trade secrets (and I'm probably breaking every Public Service secrecy rule as well). All I set out to say was that I'm enjoying the current job a lot better than the last job I had (where was that country village? started with an A, didn't it?). Officially I am still a teacher, seconded to the Publications Branch of the Education Department. I'm doing work that trained journalists could do in half the time, and for twice the salary, but don't tell that to the AJA. I get teachers' holidays, salaries, and conditions, which are not too bad if you inhabit an air-conditioned building like ours. There are catches - I can't gain promotion and stay within the Branch, or not without the Editor making a special bid for retransfer. A job like this wouldn't help me obtain a job in a newspaper, but it might carry some weight with a publishing house. As far as I can tell, we adopt standard editorial practices.

Best of all, the other members of the staff are great to work with (and when I say that most of them are married women in their twenties and thirties, don't get me wrong). I could even call the staff atmosphere "fannish", beside which there is no higher compliment. It's a lot different from The Last Place I Was In. Secondary teachers usually don't work as a team - they are usually so busy solving their own problems, and dodging the slings and arrows of outraged students. The tea room or staff room is just a haven of rest from the chaos, except in some country schools, where the staff remain after school, and use it as a social centre as well.

However, our staff must work as a team, as nearly every manuscript and proof must be checked by three or four people. For instance, my Music article, described above, originally went to Barbara, who is in charge of PURSUIT, one of our Robins, who said to delete the last section on Progressive Rock and Modern Jazz, and to Gerald, who said almost the same thing. Out went the last section. The article came back to Barbara, who asked me if I could get some more material on ways in which school children could make their own "concrete music". A phone call to Music Branch upstairs located the man who could help me. After that interview and several hours writing, the extra four pages (about 500 words, double-spaced, my handwriting) went back to Barbara, who okayed it. Our typist will type it and send it to the editor. If he has no great objections to the article, he sends it back to Barbara, who sends it off to the printer. Theoretically, this elaborate process of checking and double-checking means that we obtain a "house-style" for every manuscript, and that we leave in no spelling or grammatical mistakes. (A writer for our Branch needs to leave behind an inflated ego, if he has one. Often an article comes back cut to pieces, with pages completely rewritten.)

Our Editor (read, "boss") is probably the most interesting person on the staff, mainly because of what we don't know about him. He came over from Hungary after the war (he escaped from both the Germans and the Russians) and landed at the Newport Railway Workshops, although he had a degree in journalism at a Hungarian University. He likes to tell us the story that the railways gave him the job of "smoke-watcher" - sitting on top of a building and watching for dangerous clouds of smoke if any of the boilers over-heated. Needless to say, none of them ever did, so he learned English

while smoke-watching. He reached the offices of the Newport Workshops, convinced Melbourne University that they should accept his Hungarian degree, but took out a degree at Melbourne University anyway (with first class honours in everything). He became a teacher, and only three years ago joined Publications Branch. Since then he has risen to become the Editor. We all wonder in which year he will become Premier, or at least Director General. More important than his editorial ability is his ability to fight the enormous restrictions anybody faces within the Education Department. But that's another story, and Tibor doesn't tell us too much about his diplomatic manoeuvres.

I share a (fairly large) room with Maria, and one of the Robins. Maria is going to Italy in September, although I believe she is second or third generation Australian. The link with ye olde countrie (or the Italian equivalent) stays firm. It's a great shame that Robin is married. She has worked for THE REVIEW, at Footscray Girls High (sounds far worse than ATS), and been overseas. The other Robin attended tutorials with me some-time during Dip. Ed., but otherwise I only remember vaguely that she was at University at the same time that I was. She went to USA for a year on an American Field Service Scholarship, and still helps to administer the Scholarships. She has a husband named Les, who drives rally cars at a ferocious pace every second weekend. It sounds to me as if Les is one of the world's great hen-pecked husbands, but I haven't met him, so I can't be sure. Barbara has been (you guessed!) overseas, quit teaching three times, and worked for Nelsons, the publishers. Her husband teaches at Altona High School, and wants me to go down to the school to talk about science fiction. Fay worked for newspapers in New Zealand, and taught briefly in England. Her husband has something to do with engineering at Melbourne University (probably a professor or something, but I'm not too sure).

The "oldies" form quite another group. Even last year, there were more "oldies" than "youngies". However, the Branch obtained six people at the beginning of the year, and the balance tipped (especially because Tibor always seems more one of Us than one of Them). Stan was the Assistant Editor until he was killed in a car smash about a week ago. He should get Workers Compensation, or rather, his widow should, as Stan hated driving and suffered from dizzy spells. He was a very gentlemanly man who was sick much of last year, and should not have kept working. He was only driving because he was on a job for the Branch. His place will probably be taken by Colin, who has a rather strange position in the Branch. A fiftyish bachelor, he takes a rather fussy view of the affairs of the whole Branch. In some way I can't work out, he offends "the girls" - possibly just because he's a bachelor, or perhaps he steps over some other social boundary which guides places like ours. A long-time teacher, he's been in the Branch eight years, and probably knows more about it than anybody else on the staff.

Gerald is still a teacher-on-secondment, but it's fairly certain that he will obtain any promotions that are offered. He showed me the ropes when I joined the Branch, and I still help him with the Grades 5 and 6 magazine. A former teacher (like us all), he received a phone call about three years ago, asking him if he would like to join the Branch. Like me, never having heard of Publications Branch before he joined, he had some misgivings. He does fairly well, maintains a conservative front, reads the same sort of books as I do (except for s f), and has a wife and three marvellous kids. He may be an Up And Coming Writer fairly soon.

There are more interesting people I've met as well, including the Branch members I haven't talked about. But I ask: Can you call this a job?

by ALEX ROBB

Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel comprised the popular singing group that flourished from 1965 to 1971. Their music was pop, and sometimes folk, but the lyrics of their songs contained an extraordinary meaningfulness and richness of poetical invention, unparalleled by any except the gifted (and now proverbial) Bob Dylan. More than any other man, Dylan was responsible for the maintenance of a distinctive American mythology during the second half of the 20th century.

"Simon and Garfunkel" achieved large scale success because their listeners identified with them so closely. People bought their records in large numbers because Simon and Garfunkel expressed what they felt themselves, but could not articulate. By contrast, Bob Dylan's early vision was (and to an extent, remains) an essentially private affair, marked by a strong resistance to interpersonal relationships, and iconoclasm.

Each part of this paper deals with a different facet of Simon and Garfunkel's work, including the suggested meanings of several of the songs, and a suggested classificatory scheme. The fourth part attempts to give to the songs a specifically Christian perspective.

1. LANGUAGE AND POETRY

A typical folk song is the Gordon Lightfoot ballad, THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FOR LOVING ME. In this song, a man walks out on his baby, declaring that moving is his stock in trade and he's moving on and won't think of her when he has gone. A juvenile idea. He also includes the sentiment that "Don't you shed a tear for me," because one day he might come back. This idea might also strike the thoughtful person as silly. The song contains little except its surface meaning.

Compare FOR LOVING ME with Bob Dylan's DON'T THINK TWICE. The rooster crows at the break of dawn, and the story-teller leaves his love because "I gave her my heart but she wanted my soul." Notice the extra touches of imagery.

Dylan's early songs contain at least a modicum of apocalyptic language:

And the sands will roll out a carpet of gold
For your weary toes to be a touchin'
And the ship's wise men will remind you
Once again
That the whole wide world is watching.

Folk songs of the Peter, Paul, and Mary, or Seekers variety are more typical. They simply don't contain enough imagery to talk about the deeper feelings or emotions. Nor do they try. Songs like THE GREAT MANDELLA, THE KING OF NAMES, and BLOWING IN THE WIND sound great, but that's about all. They sound merely pleasant compared with the best products of Paul Simon as songwriter. At their best, his songs are deep meditations on life. No one else so manages to "cut" into our lives.

I could best illustrate his talent by referring to one of his more involved songs, FOR EMILY. FOR EMILY is a very beautiful love song. In it Simon works out a poetic device, the constitutive metaphor.¹

A "dream" is described as "pressed in organdy", that is, in a fine kind of muslin; and "clothed in crinoline". Crinoline is the old hooped kind of petticoat that women wore around the turn of the century. "Smoky burgundy" colours all the words that follow. Simon couples "cheeks" and "juniper and lamplight", and, with the delicate alliteration of "frosted fields", he touches each sense in turn.

Paul Simon certainly writes more than ordinary-pop lyrics when he calls a person softer than the rain. He enters into the realms of poetry.

Boby Dylan and Paul Simon are songwriters who can use imagery successfully and in large quantities, something which few others can accomplish. The only other nominations have been Phil Ochs, John Sebastian, Tim Hardin, Leonard Cohen, Mick Jagger, John Lennon, and Paul McCartney.

However Paul Simon was not a folk song writer who wrote words for the Big Beat (the superficial interpretation), but a writer who wrote poetry sufficiently close to the "folk song" to pass as a song writer. In his WORLD OF ROCK, John Gabree makes the useful distinction that Simon and Garfunkel played folk music with electrified instruments, rather than playing folk-influenced rock. He places them in the "folk movement" and not in rock. I place them in the world of written poetry.

Judith Piepe of the SBC first brought out the similarity between Simon and Garfunkel and the old troubadours, wandering minstrels who toured Europe in the Middle Ages. She sets them in the context of a new kind of musical and song endeavour, coining the term "folk poets", "implying an emphasis on the words not found in the pop songs of our time or the popular songs of the past."² If you can get a copy of her remarks they are still worth reading.

Many of Simon's words I would call "Agitative words" - "debate", "manipulate", "escape", or "vision". They are coloured words, emotively strong, words of demand and activity. The best comment I've heard on this point comes from Macquarie University's Graham Allport,³ who talks about the melancholy of the

overall tone of Simon and Garfunkel's l.p. BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER. He sees this feeling, born of lost potential ("the acceptance of the degeneration and total decline of one of the finest nations") in lyrics like:

Asking only workman's wages
I come looking for a job,
But I get no offers,
Just a come-on from the whores
On seventh avenue.
I do declare
There were times when I was so lonesome
I took some comfort there.

Simon covers a greater "slice of life" than one expects from a rock poet, and as well he gives to the words a poignant and largely undefined sense of loss. Another brief piece from the same l.p.:

I'd rather be a forest than a street.
If I could.
I surely would.

Why is a forest to be considered better than a street? A hammer than a nail? Most of us prefer driving, to being driven. But why should a forest be better than a street? In potential, we would answer. It's not better, but something would be lost if one were exchanged for the other.

The songs are simple enough for us to mistake them for folk poetry. We notice this simplicity even more if we set his words against those of a far more complex poet, such as Roethke. Roethke, who died in 1963, spoke with a comparable "sense of loss" and a "language of wrongness" in which he bestows unexpected attributes upon things. An orchid is "adder-mouthed"; he writes how "a toad folds into a stone" and "when I was a lark, I sang; when I was a worm, I devoured."

Richness like this makes Simon's lyrics look insignificant. Paul Simon's style has more affinity with the less complicated poets of the American tradition - the simplicity of a Robert Frost or Louis Simpson. In Simpson's poem WALT WHITMAN AT BEAR MOUNTAIN, he includes the line "and the light above the street is sick to death." It would be hard to imagine a simpler or more direct line.

Frost wrote a poem called SAND DUNES, which includes:

Sea waves are green and wet,
But up from where they die,
Rise others vaster yet,
And those are brown and dry.

They are the sea made land
To come to the fisher town,
And bury in solid sand
The men she could not drown.

She may know cover and cape,
But she does not know mankind
If by any change of shape,
She hopes to cut off mind.

Men left her a ship to sink:
They can leave her a hut as well;
And be but more free to think
For the one more cast-off shell.

Simple words which carry deep suggestions.

The most important thing I notice about this poem (which is not as typical of Frost as it might have been) is its compactness. It has a regular form; short enough, at 25 lines, to share in the most important feature of concrete poetry, and regular enough to avoid its larger defects, such as irregularity and lack of a clear subject.

Paul Simon's poetry/lyrics have the same kind of simplicity as expressed in this poem. And it would have been easy to make the Frost poem into a song.

2 THE ALBUMS OF SIMON AND GARFUNKEL

How important is it to see the work of Simon and Garfunkel in context? Probably not very important. Musically, it is related to several older rock groups; the Everly Brothers; to gospel and folk; musically and lyrically to the Beatles; lyrically alone to Bob Dylan. I shall consider these contexts later in the section called "Themes".

I remember that the name "Simon and Garfunkel" meant nothing to me when I first saw in Kent Street the cover of that first released album, WEDNESDAY MORNING 3AM.

Around about January 21 1966, THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE appeared in Australia. For eight weeks nobody listened to it - and then it reached the top of the Top 40.

I'm not sure what startled the public - the nature of the record, or its backing. Columbia took the best track from their first album, added excruciatingly beautiful electronic backing and overdubbed voices, and released it as a single. By the time Paul Simon returned from his travels, the amended version had made his fortune, as well as Art Garfunkel's. Not many months later, Simon wrote a bracket of four or five songs from a BBC production in London. They included the deeply introspective piece I AM A ROCK.

WEDNESDAY MORNING 3AM had the most impressive album cover I had seen. Half of it contained thick, rough white lettering, and the other half showed a subway train, two figures in a deserted railway station, a cryptic, tearing emptiness....

Four of this album's songs were Paul Simon's. The rest were either traditional folk songs or represented some of the better modern songs. Labelled as folk

music, this album sold moderately well until it attracted attention after the immense success of SOUNDS OF SILENCE.

What about this? "Franz Kafka" on a folk record? Let the significance of Art Garfunkel's concited reference sink in. Art Garfunkel gives us a fine listener's guide because he "wants as many as possible to understand as much as possible". Notice the number of times he uses the word "poet", and the adjective, "poetic", when referring to Paul Simon's work. When Paul Simon later claimed that he was not a poet but a writer of songs (compared with the earlier, more strident pronouncements), he simply reacted to consistent misunderstanding by bald-headed pop critics, who knew nothing about poetry, and were ignorant of art.

The second album, SOUNDS OF SILENCE, which includes some of their best songs, fails because it is the album that most resembles the normal rock l.p. It does not seek to interrelate subjects, yet it has a surprising amount of structure: the diagram shows that all but five of the eleven songs balance each other:

SOUNDS OF SILENCE*	RICHARD COREY*
LEAVES	A MOST PECULIAR MAN
BLESSED*	
KATHY'S SONG	APRIL COME SHE WILL
SOMEWHERE THEY CAN'T FIND ME	WE'VE GOT A GROOVY THING
ANGIE*	I AM A ROCK*

* indicates items not balanced by similar types of song.

It is more common in France than in USA to add critical notes to record covers, and so the back of PARSLEY, SAGE, ROSEMARY AND THYME was all but unprecedented: two full columns of critical commentary! The only earlier use of such commentary in the United States, so far as I'm aware, was on the very early Dylan albums.

PARSLEY, SAGE, ROSEMARY AND THYME is a masterpiece. I call it their best, because its songs have unity, delicacy and beauty. Lyrical and musical strands are evenly matched and balanced so that they complement each other (which does not happen on earlier albums).

BOOKENDS was also different, although its precedent was the Beatles' SERGEANT PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND. All the lyrics are printed on the back. But whereas the Liverpool four did this for novelty - and probably their pop lyrics were the first to stand up to such exposure - Simon and Garfunkel print their lyrics for a purpose. They focussed attention on the songs' meanings. On the album, certain tracks have been run into each other. They don't do this just for effect, but so that the album reaches a thematic unity. The first side follows a single train of thought: from the "darkness" of the boy on the cliff, to that of the young folk who have "lost"

America to the older couple whose marriage is on the rocks, to the very old folk who seem to have no purpose in living. (This side shows this chronological progression).⁴ The reverse side contains much lighter material.

THE GRADUATE can be discounted except as a popular vehicle. Many people discovered Simon and Garfunkel who would not have become interested otherwise. On the other hand, many others were disgusted. Paul Simon wrote several songs especially for the film, including the successful theme, MRS ROBINSON. Amongst those rejected were the powerful AMERICA and the light, breezy, "I wish I were a Kellogg's corn flake" of PUNKY'S DILEMMA.

BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS is the last album of the six. Although I don't agree with the majority opinion that it was their best, nor with the critics who "belatedly" discovered Simon and Garfunkel, I do agree that its much lighter tone is a natural reaction after the heavy metaphysical concerns of BOOKENDS. This album contains some heavier elements, but here you mainly notice the fun element, always present on their other albums.

3 THEMES

It's always dangerous to carve up a living artist's work, but I'll take the risk. I think Paul Simon's fall under five headings.⁵

i AMUSEMENT SONGS As I said earlier, several songs have a light tone, and I don't doubt that they were written just for fun, to express a superficial mood and feeling at a particular moment of time. Paul Simon shows "wordjoy": a contagious playing around with words for their own sake. But even when he plays arounds, Paul Simon still sneaks in a good deal of sly comment about contemporary life.

Some of the numerous examples of this type of song: BABY DRIVER, CECILIA, AT THE ZOO, SOMEWHERE THEY CAN'T FIND ME. Best known one: 59TH STREET BRIDGE SONG (FEELING GROOVY).

ii LOVE SONGS I have talked about FOR EMILY. Related to a class of songs which deal with moods or amusement, are those songs which deal with love: KATHY'S SONG, APRIL COME SHE WILL, and the track, WEDNESDAY MORNING 3AM. Other songs deal with love in the general sense rather than the particular: BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS and SONG FOR THE ASKING.

The last two don't deal with love for any particular person but for people. (First a parenthesis: You can see how easily Biblical texts can be made to relate to the songs if you look up Luke 6: 38, Living New Testament, with reference to SONG FOR THE ASKING.)

I noticed immediately when I heard BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS that it does not mention sex (except for the solitary word, "silvergirl"). Evidently it talks about a generalised love. The song is attractive partly because it uses archetypal ideas: ideas that lie close to the fabric of life or personality. We arrive at some fairly fundamental contrasts:

Friendship (loneliness)
Acceptance (homelessness)
Comfort (distress)
Help in
trouble (neglect)

In words like these we might conceivably sum up what it actually means to be a person!

In all frankness, I must admit that this song or poem does not hang together. The third section does not properly make sense in terms of the other two, unless you accept my strange thesis that this is a love poem written about John F Kennedy. I could list the clues to the puzzle in this way:

Apparently this song was written at the time of President Kennedy's death (or Martin Luther King's) - In the television documentary there were a tremendous few yards of tape of the funeral train that carried the body... "Sail on, silvergirl" is, I think, a direct reference to this silver train.

This image fitted in perfectly with both the commentary and the documentary itself. You saw silent crowds by the hundreds of thousands as they watched the train as it moved miles through the US to his place of burial.

There was something terribly "awe-FULL" and moving to see so many people paying silent tribute to the "silver girl" and the body it contained. You sort of saw a nation on its knees.... at its weakest moment.⁶

We need other people, and especially people to whom we can intuitively look with respect. John F Kennedy was such a man, and perhaps that explains why Paul Simon chose to write a poem entirely about friendship and love. Consider the number of times the word "friend" or its equivalent occurs in the song, and you will see why I believe that the song was written about President Kennedy. He was able to inspire confidence and trust in a way later Presidents did not. When you looked at him (significantly enough), you felt instinctively that here was one person you could trust implicitly; upon whose life you could model your own; who was basically honest to the core. Whether the image of Kennedy was true or not, the impression of him as myth grows steadily greater.

I have come, I think, to accept that the fundamental need of the heart is for acceptance, or "secureness". In a relationship with another person, we are fulfilled when we see someone we believe in (or someone we are capable of believing in). In turn, they are fulfilled when they can see someone in which to believe in us. For once a romantic lyric is right: "People who need people, are the luckiest people in the world". We need other people.

Acceptance includes caring for the other, showing interested concern in them and their doings. In BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS we see friendship (or love) in action. Simon considers a number of different aspects of love, e.g. love that takes no account of social standing or of popularity. The words "on the street" are significant. During a two-month hitchhiking tour of New

Zealand, I had plenty of time to learn to appreciate

When you're down and out,
When you're on the street.

People offer acceptance during eviction and positive homelessness. In "trouble" come words of comfort and interest that will "ease the mind". Our very interest in other people has a beneficial effect on our own lives. To be insensitive to other people (to reverse the moral) is to be not a bridge, but a stone. When we grow big enough to forget ourselves and our problems in order to help other people that we gain in stature. In my travels, I read somewhere about a girl named Phyllis, 26, with a lovely personality, who due to glandular troubles will always be a tiny 2' 10" tall. In her words, "I hated God, because I could not grow. Now I know that I was not supposed to grow physically, but to grow big enough to forget my problems and help others."

I have gone outside the song's boundaries in telling you about this girl, but I think that it was worth it. It is this readiness and openness to love others that comes through - the need to accept others unconditionally and look for the opportunity to believe in, and care for them.

"And in the end the love you take, is equal to the love you make."

iii SONGS ABOUT COMMUNICATION

Again related to the others: a general class that deals with subjects that I categorise as faith, loneliness, anti-war, alienation, basic communication. Simon shows a greater seriousness than in the other songs (although the instrumental backings for the musical performances vary) and shows a sense of purpose which is present, although not necessarily explicit. I AM A ROCK, SCARBOROUGH FAIR/CANTICLE, FLOWERS NEVER BEND WITH THE RAINFALL, and BLEEKER STREET, are some of the songs which fit this category. In each case Simon means us to see that something is wrong, and therefore something should be done.

The all-important signature theme is the "problem of communication". First I want to look at THE DANGLING CONVERSATION, and then the more personalised I AM A ROCK. In each of these songs we can see the darkness of THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE in action, showing what happens when the silence (fundamentally, a lack of meaning) takes over.

THE DANGLING CONVERSATION: This is a very challenging song that defies ready understanding. I will stay close to the lyrics and avoid offering my own interpretations. The two people in the song drink coffee; they are "couched" in indifference. They are indifferent to the world around them ("You can hear the ocean roar") and couched in it, both because they allow their indifference to surround them (and so cut them off from the world) and hold them up (a support one would assume is both hollow and false). Their conversation is "dangling" - it has no practical outworkings, and upon closer inspection we see that its subjects are academic, selfish, removed from life. Whether the theatre is really dead hardly affects people in the streets, Simon shows us. Psycho-analysis cannot help anyone but oneself. If these two people stand at the "borders" of their lives, they

at least show a potential which goes unused. They underline this with their words about the poets. Whatever one thinks about the quality of their poetry, Emily Dickenson and Robert Frost actually lived their lives and made them a basis for their poetry. By comparison, the song's conversationalists are spectators (and also show creative sterility and decadence).

Because they have not done this thing, or demonstrated existential concern for the other, towards whom they are indifferent, they are "verses out of rhythm, couplets out of rhyme", i.e. basically out of step with a concept of a self that helps others. Their selfishness makes them out of step with life. At the end of this process people "fade" (BLEEKER STREET) into shadows, and, by inference, become less than human, cut off by an alienation so complete that they can never touch each other.

The Biblical intonation, "A stranger now unto me" shows that they are cut off from an entire ocean of human experience, like a shell resting on a beach.

Don't let the song's simple words blind you to its maturity. One detractor calls this campus poetry, but any careful examination shows that this song contains a considered statement about the world and our relationship to it, that it is philosophical in intent, and that it contains a conception of life that is curiously Biblical. (One cannot understand alienation exclusively in terms of a relationship between Man and God).⁷

I AM A ROCK This song investigates the question of whether it is really possible for one person to live without others. The song makes most sense if we see it as an idea carried to its furthest extremity, played to an absurd extent (for some of the elements don't seem to match up). It shows that which one cannot do, in order to teach us something about wrong attitudes to life. It includes certain rationalisations.

The poem begins with a contrast between the individual and the outside world ("I am alone, gazing from my window to the streets below") and then turns into a strange affinity ("I am a rock, I am an island"). The snow envelops things, and symbolises "cut-offness", reminding one of the famous Hopkins line, "Nor can foot feel, being shod". The snow cuts off the streets from his comprehension, and puts them at one further remove. "Shroud", "snow", "rock", the very idea of an island; all these give an impression of inertness, coldness, hardness.

The speaker shows his superficiality - he wants something loving and warm, but he tries to tell himself that he loves the coldness (I say this poem embodies rationalisations. How about "I have no need of love. I never loved, I never would have cried"?). He lies to himself in an attempt to convince himself that he doesn't need other people. I need friendship, I need love because - but "the pain would be too great".

We see a man who is afraid that if he takes the risk of opening himself to other people (and it is a risk) then he will be hurt. He protects himself from this hurt by building up "walls" - books, poetry - in an attempt to use poetry etc, as a substitute for people. He also remembers a past reaction when he was hurt, was cut down. ("If I'd never loved... cried"). To reduce the strength of one's defences is to trust the other person. You give them a piece of yourself and trust them with it. If you have confidence in people, and they smash this confidence, you will feel very careful not to do the same again. In such cases you become so suspicious that you feel everybody will

let you down. But in the end you offer no permanent solution to say, "I have my books and my poetry to protect me".

You also make a rationalisation if you say "I touch no one". "I touch no one": is this possible? No - the lives of each one of us touch at least someone. We don't need a McLuhan to tell us about it. Ultimately we need people.

iii THE SITUATION SONG In his "situation songs", Paul Simon uses specific techniques from the main body of American poetry. I call these "songs that investigate a situation in the manner of Walt Whitman", or just, "the song as Walt Whitman". As the grandfather figure of modern America, Whitman developed a poetic technique which allowed him to describe the people around him and make them his poems. You can see the essence of this technique through Edward Arlington Robinson and others: not so much the sense that one actually enters another's ~~senses~~, but the ability to look on other people, as an observer, and so imaginatively re-create them for the poem.

Paul Simon does this in KEEP THE CUSTOMER SATISFIED and THE BOXER.

Arlington Robinson was the writer of RICHARD COREY, upon which Paul Simon based his version. It is ironic that a poet who spent so much time interpreting others in modern terms has himself been interpreted. Simon and Garfunkel's SOUNDS OF SILENCE album contains (probably for this very reason) the inscription, "-with apologies to E A Robinson". No one should write about Paul Simon's lyrics without knowing something about American poets.

A situation-song recreates the feelings of a particular person (not the author) in a specific situation: the boxer who wants to leave the city, or the seller of undisclosed wares who keeps running into trouble near the border. These songs' main function is "reportage", rather than "message".

iv "UBIK" SONGS This fifth and final category is perhaps the most interesting one, especially because there are so few examples. It includes SILENT NIGHT/7 O'CLOCK NEWS, THE ONLY LIVING BOY IN NEW YORK, and the track I previously mentioned, AMERICA. The term "Ubik" derives from a book by science fiction writer Philip K Dick, where "Ubik" is a commercially marketed reality support. Dick is well known in some circles for his obsession with the frailty of our supposedly "normal" reality. In these songs Paul Simon writes about a high degree of breakdown. Both Simon and Dick seem to share a similar vision of dissolving reality and fading values.

SILENT NIGHT/7 O'CLOCK NEWS works by juxtaposition. Paul Simon compares the ideal of peace on earth unfavorably with the sound of an actual newscast taped four and a half years ago. AMERICA is a far more open track which spells out its message.

Paul Simon speculates that the cohesion of a nation is dissolving, and the cohesion between individuals has almost gone or has disappeared altogether. Look at the level of communication between these two people:

"Toss me a cigarette,
I think there's one in my raincoat."
"We smoked the last one
An hour ago."

Rather pathetic, isn't it? Albee made the same point in THE ZOO STORY when he made his character say:

I don't talk to many people - except to say like: give me a beer,
or where's the john, or what time does the feature go on, or keep your
hands to yourself, buddy. You know - things like that.

Second hand communication is always a pathetic thing.

The poem contains some interesting contrasts: between the moon, the magazine, and his looking at the scenery; what he says when she is asleep and what he says at other times; the gay laughter of the couple compared with their inner feelings. The couple's easy materialism (packaged food bought in a packaged world as they board a bus from Pittsburgh) merely covers their deeper sad wistful lostness. We might express this feeling as, "America, having no unified purpose, has ceased to exist". These people have ceased to exist as well, in that they can only say to each other that which can only be communicated while one is asleep⁹ - an inditement if ever I heard one. Paul Simon here portrays Kathy - that dream figure, real or imaginary, who plays such an important part in his world - as cut off from her lover - he is "lost, aching, lonely", while she reads a magazine. As usual, Paul Simon tries to draw a more than nebulous connection between people's troubles and the troubles of the whole nation. He rejects materialism, and at the same time wants some other, any other, way of life. Woodstock. "We don't want to be nothing, we don't want money (but we can't live without it), we want something real". And I suppose that is what the search for America is all about.¹⁰

I'm more interested in the Christian idea that each man lives on two levels - that of the mouth, what the mouth says, and that of the heart. THE BOXER speaks of "mumbles" in the line, "I swallowed my resistance for a pocket full of mumbles". What do we keep in a pocket other than keys, watch, matches? i.e. accretions, not the self. The story-teller can give reasons for his actions ("mumbles"), but do they have any validity or actual content? And most fundamentally, do they satisfy? In T S Eliot's well-worn phrase, could we say that he was only "living and partly living"?¹¹

What the mouth says, the heart rejects.

The line, "Counting the cars on the New Jersey turnpike" reminds me of the strange soul-less imagery of the Beatle song A DAY IN THE LIFE: "I read the news today oh boy... Now I know how many holes it takes to fill the Albert Hall". And the curious, "Michigan seems like a dream to me, now" only serves to strengthen this impression. Michigan, Chicago, Alberta and Pittsburgh are now wastelands and America is lost. With America went any possibility for real feeling. As Ringo expressed it in his song, "Please don't be very long/ Or I shall be asleep." (BLUE JAY WAY)

These two sit in a bus, destination unstated, and leave Pittsburgh for where?

They cannot tell. The turnpike cars represent the searchers (in their mindless way, they also look for America, and grope like ships in a fog) and meaninglessness. This couple's relationship is cracking up - or perhaps we could say that it never began. Similar income brackets and the confusion of affinity for love do not make good grounds for divorce.

"The moon rose over an open field." The moon - traditional symbol of beauty and love. Their singing shows that the moon is beautiful; it connects the couple because it looks down on them, but they retain their separate lives. The beauty outside does not parallel any beauty inside; there is a wall of separateness. Significantly, the symbol of love does not "get" love, just as in EL CONDOR PASA, the song about the Condor, the bird closest to absolute freedom in man's thought, we read words about inability and lack of freedom.

I'd rather be a sparrow than a snail
If I could.

I'd rather sail away, like a swan.

And so on. Paul Simon sets the freedom of the bird against the "tied-downness" of men, and as a supposedly free agent, he manages to give the earth "its saddest sound".

4 THE HEIGHT AND DEPTH OF COMMUNICATION

Paul Simon is right in two main ways.

Firstly, he asks the right questions. A prophet need not always be against you; a prophet can also be for you (many have not seen this). As Thornton Wilder expressed it for the Western middle class of his time, "The air was thick with questions that could not be asked". We have our taboos also. Paul Simon's lyrics blow upon the shore of our particularly arid century with the first clear breeze of honesty for years:

"I think I'm a happy person, and I don't like to sound as if we're only where we are because of an emotional conflict of some kind, but all our work, by extension, derives from my problems, some that I can't do anything about, some that I've learned to live with."

SEVENTEEN magazine, 1967

Maybe you would feel particularly vulnerable if you brought your heart out into the open like this. However it's the first step in any "change of heart", the essential sign of a real desire to change one's own life.

In a story called THE SQUIRREL CAGE, Thomas M Disch tells the story of a man imprisoned in a cell, equipped with nothing (except provision for bodily needs) but a table, a typewriter, and each day's issue of the NEW YORK TIMES.

In this environment he still cannot avoid thinking about life.

But in a way that is the key to Dirsch. All of his characters question. All seek to know what purpose there is to life. Well, there is none that is external or pre-existing. A man may justify his existence to himself, no one else can do it. This is one basis for exposition in all his novels, including THE PRISONER.¹²

How can you do something about your problems if you keep lying to yourself that you haven't got any? It seems that modern man developed for himself a protective credo - repeat to yourself enough times that you have no problems, and it follows logically that have none, doesn't it? (logically?) You cannot have problems if you won't allow the possibility of their existence. (There's even a term for it: intellectual suicide!) Now self-pity may be a blight that shows we are getting mushy about ourselves - or a healthy indication that we have started, ever so slowly, to wake up to real areas of need. And with this realisation (having broken through our own defences) we can start to do something about it; and that is honesty.

The kind of honesty that promotes change will also see a need for new values. Many people have old values that we can express thus: "Love - for just me, my wife and kids. Money values. Mad for the trots, booze, sex, radio, anything in fact synthetic that is a substitute for deep human experience." The GRADUATE album has a brave line on the back: "There is no hypocrisy now, no acting in a way that does not correspond with your real feelings." Add to that what people now call a "life style" or quality of life.

When I first gave this idea as a talk to non-Christians, they responded readily to a call given like this: "Look, we're in this thing together; stop running, come on and face up to your real problems and look deeply at your own life." This last idea provided a real point of contact and sharing. For my own part, I had to be open and ready to not use the Bible as a textbook from which I could supply the answers to all possible questions. On their part, they had to recognise, or agree unspokenly that my thesis about the world as they saw it, was fundamentally correct: that it was full of problems and in some ways worse than in the past, however bitter and arid were the war years.

What is so right in the type of questions Paul Simon keeps asking? Each question is grounded in everyday life. Why are the questions that he asks real? Because they deal with the world we live in, because they talk about things we've actually experienced. For that reason, I insisted in my talk that there could be no meaningful answers until meaningful questions had been asked.¹³ I refused to supply answers, even though some people were willing to give them. What good is it to supply answers, such as "the God of the Bible" when people's questions lie in other directions? e.g. possible solutions to the population explosion, or a fairer method of changing the economic structure. To these people, the troubled intellectuals, the Bible means nothing, and it seems slick and cheap to offer it as a straight out answer. (The expression of one student is instructive - "Why, if I knew of a book like that, I'd go away and read it and live on caviar and cheese for the rest of my life!") To them it is no answer. I feel that the best way a Christian can react to this situation is to say less and live the life more.

A second major point about Paul Simon's songs: I think they are right to bring back their perspective and world view of T S Eliot. Father John Hanrahan has already written a fine article about the link between Eliot, the Beatles, and Paul Simon: THE DANGLING CONVERSATION AND MR ELIOT.¹⁴

T S Eliot the man is dead - and confined to Eng Lit courses. But has his original world-view become so obsolete? I don't think so. The "Waste Land", our parched ground of modern secularism, never left us. Paul Simon shows the same ideas, only more so, if possible. - "We're just pretending hard not to notice it".

Eliot had the cutting edge:

Human kind
Cannot bear very much reality

- MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

The ordinary person puts these feelings to sleep.

- op. cit.

The message of Eliot's THE ROCK is reflected in Paul Simon's message as well:

Where is the life we lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

As Bruce Gillespie put it, "In fact, the only proper comparison is with T S Eliot's early poetry. His poetry expressed the whole angst and wringing of hands of the twenties. Paul Simon expresses practically the same emotions in the sixties." It is important that the Church still sees through this perspective. Eliot questioned everything, including the ultimate question of life itself, but Simon's more modest poems concern themselves with the intrinsic worth of communication. William Noonan said, in THE AUSTRALIAN, April 4, 1970:

Above all he has a talent for communicating the tragic flaw in modern urban life, which is not so much a lack of communication as the absence of significant communication.

Noonan was actually talking about a novel by John Cheever called BULLET PARK, but this makes an adequate comment about Paul Simon. Paul Simon sums up the essential trouble of our age. The things that we do don't bear adequate meaning for us, and leave us needy.¹⁵

Plenty of printed matter - but does it give purpose?;
has it any real worth, any content?

Plenty of life - "living and partly living" i.e. but what is
really living?

FOOTNOTES

- 1 For the comments on FOR EMILY, I thank P Bradbury, who gave permission for their use.
- 2 They can be found in THE PAUL SIMON SONGBOOK, Essex Music, Australia.
- 3 ARENA, vol. 3.4., Tues, April 28, 1970, p 15.
- 4 The songs involve a groping after values (AMERICA, MRS ROBINSON).
- 5 I could reduce these to two headings, "fun", and "serious" - my categories i and ii; iii, iv and v; respectively.
- 6 Anne Nicholas, letter 21/3/71.
- 7 I could briefly sum up the philosophical content as: to what extent should art guide actions? Is, to do x a necessary condition of having the knowledge how to do x, assuming x to be an act beneficial to the community?

A useful phrase from Vatican II: we are called not to analyse, but to "act directly and definitely in the temporal sphere." Thinking may be a part of this, but thinking must be related to life.
- 8 For Whitman himself, this meant that he should identify to the point where he became the other person. "whoever degrades another degrades me". (SONG OF MYSELF). "I am the actor, the actress, the voter, the politician." (THE SLEEPERS).
- 9 Remember my remarks on THE DANGLING CONVERSATION. This is another portrait of alienation, less idealised.
- 10 Anybody interested might look at Creedence Clearwater Revival's WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN? Not only do they toy with the idea of divine retribution, as usual, but the second verse contains lines about the "fable" of love and brotherhood, together the main ideals and main failure of American society. We may observe that this generation is the first that is so unsure of itself that it doubts it has a future. (GENERATION IN SEARCH OF A FUTURE was the name of a speech made by a winner of the Nobel Prize, George Wald, to students at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, March 4, 1969, in the Kresge auditorium).

We need at this point a sustained look at Woodstock, Altamont and the hippy movement in America.
- 11 If one has an integrated personality, then those things that occupy the interests will correspond with those things that actually satisfy. The Bible often speaks about this fundamental integration of the human personality; the good man is "like a tree, planted by the waterside". The phrase speaks powerfully about fulfillment.
- 12 Barry Gillam, S F COMMENTARY 16, page 13.
- 13 Some people say these thoughts are banal, but try them out:

We're just a habit/ Like saccharin

- of divorcees (OVERS)

Every way you look at it you lose

- of the American political situation (MRS ROBINSON)

I threw a pebble in a brook/ And it never made a sound

- the hollowness of life (LEAVES)

The words of the prophets are written on the subway walls

- and the living hell it leads to (SOUNDS OF SILENCE)

Preserve your memories/ They're all that's left you

- a bleak view of existence (BOOKENDS theme)

Half of the time we're gone but we don't know where

- and the clearest statement yet. (ONLY LIVING BOY IN NEW YORK)

14 THE DANGING CONVERSATION AND MR ELIOT, in LITERARY PERSPECTIVES, a collection from ANNALS, which you should be able to buy at any good Catholic bookstore. Well worth having.

15 I could express this another way: they don't really mean enough to us, and don't satisfy us.

- Alexander M Robb May 1971

THE OUTER-APA

Letters from Stuart Leslie
Dave Piper Barry Gillam

(Not nearly enough of them. Please remember that if you are not a member of APA-45 or ANZAPA, you only get this magazine in exchange for letters; as a sort of outer-apa, if you like.)

STUART LESLIE

(October 10 1970)

59 Mary St
Longueville
NSW 2066

MR 4: "Dedicated to bludgers all - may we increase our numbers". The story of my life. Excuse me please, if the typing of this letter is worse than usual. I have run out of my usual asthma drug which has no side effects at all, and has made me a non-asthmatic, and I've had to take the stuff I used to take. This is an adrenalin analogue plus, i.e. it mixes speed and tranquiliser, which is some mixture, and makes me kind of freaky, even after a very small dose. Before I switched to the new stuff, I was developing a terrific tolerance, dropping up to half a bottle a day, and still not keeping the asthma away. Now that I've been off it for about five months, a teaspoonful zaps me.

I keep reading MR as "mister", which makes for some strange and incongruous sentences.

Loved both MASH and BUTCH CASSIDY, but then I am rather an uncritical film-goer. I generally find that I take a movie to pieces some time after I've seen it, but nevertheless enjoy it hugely while sitting through it. The same goes for my approach to books. I don't approach them at all analytically, but just read.... If I read a book I enjoy I tend to race about madly and read everything written by that author, e.g. James Baldwin at the moment. I read ANOTHER COUNTRY, re-read GO TELL IT ON A MOUNTAIN, GIOVANNI'S ROOM, have TELL ME HOW LONG THE TRAIN'S BEEN GONE waiting, and have also read all his essays. Also I found TITUS ALONE marvellous, and the whole trilogy brilliant. I much prefer Peake to Tolkein. The whole cult that surrounds him baffles me. LotR is enjoyable enough, but some people seem to devote their lives to his fictional world.... I shake my head bemusedly.

Glad you liked WOODSTOCK so much. It blew my mind, and I came out feeling stoned. Which gave me an idea. So two weeks later I did get stoned and saw it a second time. Incredible.

John Gibson must be joking - culture on telly! Don't be bloody ridiculous. It wouldn't get any ratings. Besides, it would probably turn out to be subversive and biased. And you know what Parliamentarians do when they decide something is... biased.

Now you know what television studio is like and you don't need me to write about it. Except that ours was not the smooth and efficient operation you witnessed. More of a slack disjointed shambles.

Glad you liked the ZABRISKIE POINT album. Haven't got it myself, but I've heard it and liked it very much. Got CSN&Y DEJA VU, which is very good, as is their second album. Other groups to keep an ear open for are: Fairport Convention, Moody Blues, Youngbloods, King Crimson, Grateful Dead, Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band, Procol Harum, Family, and Pearls Before Swine. I could go on, but that lot will take care of anyone's money for the next few years without buying the better known groups. I'm disappointed that you bought (here it comes again) THE BEATLES. There are only two really good tracks on the two records, a handful of ok stuff, and a lot of rubbish. Enough material for one fair album. The worst hype the Beatles have put out. But you don't like COUNTRY JOE AND THE FISH! Ah well, there's no accounting for taste.

Dave Piper shares my affliction: lack of drive or application. I've got some brains too, and I use them, but in a rambling undirected way. Hell, I enjoy life, and although I don't actually do much, I try to make the most of what I am doing. I have my bouts of depression and trauma, etc, but I am basically an optimist in my personal behaviour and outlook - even though I do think it unlikely that civilisation will outlast the next twenty years! To answer David's question as to what he is worth - he is worth as much as he is a human being. But don't ask me to explain that nebulous statement.

The best of luck for your future plans. There are all too few who do the things they really want to do. Of course we all have secret dreams, usually impossible to attain, but maybe we can arrive at some point high on the possibility scale, do our best, and achieve a great deal of satisfaction. We can never reach perfection, but we can keep trying.... Forgive me: I am throwing platitudes around like junk mail today. Trouble with platitudes is that they are often true, but they've lost their effect. Which is itself a platitude, I suppose.

Attending conventions: I can't help you with the 800 bucks, but if you want I can get you the LSD. Also mescaline, psilocybin, DMT, any grade of cannabis from poor Bhang to the best Charas or Hashish. As a matter of fact that's what I've been getting into lately. Probably one of my passing, aperiodic obsessions. Actually I've seen a lot of some very intelligent and aware people who are into that scene. With all the stuff around, you can't help trying it. Not that I haven't turned on before this, but the hallucinogens held no more than a passing interest for me until I tried them. The philosophical implications are rather enormous, and now I understand Timothy Leary and what he is on about, although I do think he has been carried away by it all. For the average neurotic, these drugs can also be dangerous - psychologically - but there is a hell of a lot of crap talked about hallucinogens, especially LSD. If you haven't read it, get hold of Aldous Huxley's THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION and HEAVEN AND HELL

(in Penguin Books). They describe the mescaline experience exactly, and Huxley's thoughts on the hallucinogens and their implications coincide very closely with my own thoughts on the subject. LSD and some of the others have different effects, but I think mescaline and psilocybin are the best.

You talked about your sound system - I was listening to some of my records on \$3000 worth of equipment last night; now I'm not game to play anything on my own. I was hearing things I've never heard on the records, nor suspected were there. Somewhere in the background of CHEAP THRILLS, recorded live, somebody drops a glass, breaks it; a minute later you can hear a broom sweeping it up. Very faint, it is there. Fantastic, the amount of sound that can come out of a piece of moulded plastic - if you have \$3000 to spend.

(Later - no address on letter).

"There's an article in that", you say. Your remarks ((in a private letter)) about soft drugs, the value of intelligence, and rationality, set me off. I don't drink either, and I cut right down on smoking. I don't think rationality is an absolute or a higher faculty, but I do value control. I regard with suspicion anything that causes me to lose control of myself.

Start with intelligence. A way of handling concepts. Works by the use of symbols. Can make associations between symbols when the original object is absent. Cuts out the significant from the mass of sense and personal data continually presented to us. Acts as a filter. Employs logic, principles of cause and effect - therefore man is the only animal with a sense of the future.

Can we say that the Intelligence is the major driving force in our lives - or rather, in the lives of those who value it, and try to live by it? Do we act and make decisions through reasoning? Basically, no.

Knowledge, rational processes, analytic reasoning, serve a transfer function: they do not give rise to action, but determine means. Irrational processes decide the ends. There is no logical reason why a man should choose to be an artist, a businessman, or a bricklayer. We base our purposes on values, ethics, morals, etc, none of which we determine rationally. The search for a rational purpose, meaning, or reason for life's purposes gives rise at best to an infinite regress, or, at worst, despair. We do not make these purposes; we find them.

It would not occur to a savage to investigate the nature of the atom, or climb a mountain because it is there. Why do you want to be a writer, and not a teacher? You find teaching unbearable, but why do you find the desire to communicate through the written word such a desirable alternative? Can you justify this by logic?

I don't deny the importance of intelligence in the way we do things, but once we realise that unconscious and irrational processes play such a large role in our lives, I believe it becomes equally important to try to explore and achieve some knowledge of this functioning.

So I am not seeking oblivion through the drugs I use, but self knowledge. Gautier said of drugs: "One does not dream; one is dreamed." Used for kicks, drugs will give an escape, and man has sought enough escapes throughout his history. However, hallucinogens and marijuana do not necessarily give pleasure. They may transport you straight into hell, and its infinite varieties.

However, a person may gain a tremendous amount if he takes drugs with a purpose, a consciousness, and a knowledge of their powers. What?

We deal with the world's phenomena selectively. We select what we call significant. We select that significance irrationally. We see the world through a filter, a reducing valve which is the total of our personality, and even our subconscious processes operate with limiting symbolism. Therefore what we see, hear and sense, only depends to a small degree on what things are in themselves:

The man bent over his guitar,
A shearsman of sorts. The day was green.

They said, "You have a blue guitar,
You do not play things as they are."

The man replied "Things as they are
Are changed upon the blue guitar..."

...We make our own reality.

Taken with a purpose, drugs can open to you a direct perception of things as they are, as much as can reach the undirected senses. They abolish symbols, attributed meanings, and preconceptions. They make direct, uninterrupted pathways between the reality of the world and the reality of the central nexus that is you. They abolish the conscious Self. Unfortunately the experience is just beyond words. It abolishes words, and will always remain incomprehensible, unless you realise that your personality is not some natural, given thing, but a construction, that one can reconstruct in an infinite number of ways.

All great artists are Heads. Some do not need to take drugs to bypass the reducing filter of one's own personality. They are perpetually turned on, to a greater or lesser extent. To Turn On is actually ^{to} turn off intervening, obstructing preconceptions. However artists can create symbolic representations of their experiences, in painting, literature, etc. Religious mystics abolish the ego completely.

Unsupervised trips turn bad in about one case in two hundred, or less. When one takes drugs with guidance and knowledge, bad trips occur about one in thirty thousand. One uses drugs or they use you.

Taking drugs makes noone into an artist. Without the necessary talent, one will not receive artistic gifts. But drugs can enable a person to see the artist's original vision, instead of a symbolic imitation.

I said earlier that I do not use drugs much. But I find that there is a lot more world than I ever realised or knew about. Having had my world expanded, I don't need drugs often. Paths have opened up which I can follow, to some extent, at will.

I spend a lot of money on Art books and sometimes I get stoned just looking at them. After taking drugs, works of art become much more significant. One can recapture the artist's original experience.

But the intelligence which gives meaning to the original perception. Without that, there would be no art. As we must live most of our lives in this muddy mundane old world, those of us who have had sensitivity "educated" out of us, need art. In this sense, art is an escape; an escape through symbolic forms, into the perceptions that are beyond symbols. Mescaline and LSD have not shown me anything completely new. They gave me a direct, unmodified sensory awareness.

brg That's only Part 1 of this discussion, so I won't make any comments at the moment. Part 2, and any other Leslie letters that come my way, I will include in the next issue of METAPHYSICAL REVIEW. Meanwhile, Stuart has sent some comments on METREV 5 which I will print here....**

(a later letter - also undated - must have been sometime after February):

Hey, did you know that the people across the street are neo-nazi, transvestite, heroin-addicted devil-worshippers? They are not, but it kind of grabs you at the start of a letter.

The trouble with lists is that they not only bring in storms of protest, but they also invite every unoriginal half wit and his fly-dismembering sadomasochistic brother to do the same; herewith some of my own.

Books: As I am un- or semi-employed most of the time, I read an enormous amount. Much of this reading matter is magazines; plus well over a hundred books, about 40% non-fiction. Therefore my memories of reading form a melange of half absorbed ideas, unreferenced facts, and miscellaneous undifferentiated rubbish and useless information. Which is probably why my letters about drugs are rather disorganised and incoherent. 'Twas ever thus. Here's the list:

AS I LAY DYING (William Faulkner)
MR JOHNSON (Joyce Cary)
UBIK (Philip K Dick)
THE TOWER OF GLASS (Robert Silverberg)
THE BEASTLY BEATITUDES OF BALTHAZAR B (J P Donleavy)
GO TELL IT ON A MOUNTAIN (James Baldwin)
ANOTHER COUNTRY (James Baldwin)
TITUS ALONE (Mervyn Peake)
THE FIRST CIRCLE (Alexander Solzhenitsyn.)

These stick in my mind. There are probably more, but I did not start to keep a list until about May. I must add THE GRAPES OF WRATH, by John Steinbeck.

A few non-fiction books also come to mind: AMERICAN POWER AND THE NEW MANDARINS (Noam Chomsky); SANITY MADNESS AND THE FAMILY (J D Laing and A Esterton); THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION (Aldous Huxley); BOMB CULTURE (Jeff Nuttall). I don't agree with all of these books, but they stimulated me, and helped me to understand some of things I've been trying to understand. Which, are, I suppose, the kind of questions all people ask.

Music: I'm past caring about singles, and so Pop has ceased to interest me, except as a phenomenon of modern life. I can't choose a best album as there

is no really effective way to compare styles and forms. My "Best 3" are: Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young; DEJA VU; Procal Harum: HOME; Grateful Dead: WORKINGMAN'S DEAD. Lots of good stuff around by less well known groups - Fairport Convention, Youngbloods, Pink Floyd, Pearls Before Swine, etc. I think LET IT BLEED was released in 1969 (**brg** it wasn't; Australian release was 1970**) so it doesn't count for last year. I think it will stand as a "classic" however.

I have started - embarked upon - REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST. I'm half way through SWANN'S WAY. Like you, I've retained no particularly clear memories of the book, probably because it is usually plotless. However, I retain an overwhelming impression of the narrator's childhood. The writer has an incredible perceptiveness, startling powers of memory and observation, an ability to find beautiful similes, and capture the essence of the world of the young. If I ever finish ROTP, I will probably go back to the beginning and work through it again.

MAGISTER LUDI. I left this out of the above list deliberately. Because it brings me back to (forgive me!) drugs. I see Hesse's idea as: No matter what man builds, either physical or intellectual edifices, no matter how far he delves into the life of the mind, art, science, or an ideal synthesis of the two, his life remains sterile if he does not remember where he comes from. Man still has a body, remains dependent upon, and connected with the world around him; he is still part of nature. Knecht (which means "servant") dies at the end, but dies in freedom. He dies, having found out he was whole. He was a success, but a tragic one.

If you like this book, Bruce, then you should dig acid: the feeling of the organic unity of everything which one receives if prepared to reflect on the experience and treat it seriously. Incidentally, Timothy Leary thinks Hesse may have used mescaline. However, he is probably a "natural head", especially because he has so thoroughly studied the philosophies of India.

I've also just read AND CHAOS DIED, by Joanna Russ. Bob Silverberg describes this book as a trip. He is right. Don't tell anyone, but Joanna Russ is a head. You can derive the same experience of multiple psi, from a real trip experience. Essentially, she says the same as Hesse. The more alienated we become from our natural roots, the more useless we become, and the more pointless and destructive our existence. Russ seeks an unrealisable and ideal union with the universe. She also shows how the senses blind themselves, and construct the world entirely from our selves, of repression and inhibition.

brg That still leaves one more Stuart Leslie letter on file. Oh well. You haven't really convinced me a jot, Stuart, but your arguments are interesting. I see intelligence, reason, etc, as the refinement of those very "reality filters" that you would want to abolish. I can't see that one possesses anything but the senses and the brain with which to understand the world "out there", so I wouldn't want to ruin either faculty with (for example) drugs.

- I won't talk about the "drug culture" (which you mention in another letter). But I will take those examples you mention. In SWANN'S WAY, for instance, there are two processes at work. Proust remembers what it felt like as a child, and how he thought about the world. At the same time he includes passages which no child could have written. I take it that adult Proust not only comments on the

comments by child Proust (if the incredible story-teller can actually be called "Proust"). In effect, the story-teller constantly shows the falsity of his early attitudes, as well as making many comments that are very perceptive. The total effect is an elevated joy which also contains a great deal of unstated humour. However, no one could claim that Proust achieves this effect because he is some kind of "natural head". I've been told that the book proceeds from a number of fairly firm ideas Proust developed about artistic techniques. What I'm saying is that ROTP gives rise to many emotions; but Proust generates these emotions through a number of highly rational procedures. One cannot have one without the other.

On the other hand, I see drug-taking as an essentially non-intellectual way of dealing with the world - an action which may lead to great emotions, but emotions which a person could never communicate, in principio. The basis of Western art and science involves a process of public debate and exposure: a scientific rule must be open to public testing; people must be able to discuss a work of art in a rational way before it achieves any sort of acclaim. It seems that Eastern culture accepts the idea that a person can have great experiences, but has no obligation to pass on these experiences to other people in any written or spoken form. But I will call just this lack of communication, "non-intellectual" - not subject to intellectual tests. Perhaps you can accept this plunge into chaos, Stuart; I can't. *

DAVE PIPER

(April 22 1971)

7 Cranley Drive
Ruislip
Middlesex HA4 6BZ
England

The fifth installment of MR has arrived. And I've just read it during the Stones l.p. spot on Bleedin' Top of the Bloody Pops which I can't stand watching and which Cath can't stand watching and which my bleedin' mother-in-law (curse 'er) likes watching. Well, not exactly... she watches anything...

including the adverts. In fact, I think she sometimes looks forward to the adverts. You might well ask why she's here and watching my tv. The stupid old bag fell off a bus and fractured, multiply, the top part of her arm and dislocated her shoulder. From my comments you probably think I'm a heartless and vicious and wicked bastard for not feeling any sympathy for her. Well, here I am: 32 years old, knocking me bloody head against the wall trying to buy this 6½ grand house and with at last a room for My Study, and she has to stay here. In My Study. And sit there, over in the corner, every night, and over in this corner the tv has to go on every night because she can't do anything else but watch tv and I can't stand her anyway and never have been able to stand her and during our engagement she made Cath's life a misery and.... and... My Study is right next door to Our Bedroom and the walls are thin and it inhibits one and I'm not getting me oats and... and..... (urghmm)...and... I was able to read MR during the Stones spot because there wasn't much interest in it this time. Y'see, I'm so plebian it hurts to turn me 'ead and one of the characteristics of such a pleb is a complete and utter lack of appreciation of poetry. So, from pages 10 to 19 I switched off and as the mailing comments didn't mean much to me, that left the letters and your babble.

And...er...how are you? Got a job yet? Your lists were quite interesting. Yes. You ain't got no taste, of course. I ask you! THE BLACK CORRIDOR!!

That was about the crappiest Ace Special ever. And your list of short fiction is pretty laughable as well, although, mind you, I can't remember any short fiction from last year. No, that's not true - I remember LONGTOOTH, by Edgar Pangborn, and there's something else hovering Out There, just out of my mind's eye. Best books I read last year, were mainly re-reads: CATCH 22, Lionel Davidson's books, some Raymond Chandlers, THE FATAL IMPACT, and a few new ones, such as WIZARD OF EARTHSEA, LAST STARSHIP TO EARTH, MIAMI AND THE SIEGE OF CHICAGO, and FOOTBALL DAFT by Michael Parkinson. My "all-time" lists would start off with LORD OF THE RINGS, CATCH 22, DON CAMILLO, MORE THAN HUMAN, Bester, Lionel Davidson, Chandler, Morehead, Deighton, and so on.

Thanks for METREV, for I enjoyed what I read. And, really, I suppose I oughta congratulate you on escaping from the Educational Authorities as I gather it's what you want. I wish you the very best of luck. Colour me envious.

****brg**** Congratulations received and appreciated, but, as I gave hints in S F COMMENTARY 20, I did have a lot of good luck to get the new job. My vein of good luck, which disappeared altogether in 1970, reappeared at the right time. :: I'm not going to explain again why I liked BLACK CORRIDOR. I took 6 pages to do it in SFC 17.

I seem to recall that I made some cynical comment to Dave in a letter that two people don't get married - two families do. Inspect before buying, as they say, and meet all the relatives first. I hope mother-in-law got the message, and left The Study without too much pushing. I'm not sure why you made those complaints about the Stones on TOP OF THE POPS. Presumably, our tastes vary at this point, as well. *

BARRY GILLAM

4283 Katonah Avenue
Bronx
New York 10470
U S A

(June 7 1971)

This is my junior year of college and the countdown will soon commence. Things after that are a bit uncertain because of the draft. I'll probably want to go to graduate school, though. Subjects this last term: French and Latin, second terms of each, Emerson and His Contemporaries, Shakespeare II,

i.e. HAMLET and the later works. Also, I'm in an English Honors Program here which involves writing a thesis. It will be on Poe, although I haven't yet decided the exact topic. I had been reading Proust on my own and had to postpone CITIES OF THE PLAIN because of lack of time. I'll pick it up now school is over.

A few comments on the METREVs you've been kind enough to send:

MARSHIAN CHRONICLES 4: I found your article on classical music interesting but I must admit that I have a tin ear which registers best to rock. Even there, though, I follow the field casually (we've an excellent rock station here - WNEW-FM - on which I can hear almost anything. They even have a policy of occasionally playing things like TOMMY complete.) I haven't bought a record in over a year. The money pours out into books and films, however.

MARSHCHRON 4: Page 21: You mention that THE AVENGERS "succumbed to commercialism", and I'd be interested to know when you think this happened. We've never seen the shows that starred Honor Blackman over here, but we have seen most of the Diana Rigg episodes. Admittedly, when Linda Thorson entered, taste, quality, and wit, left, but I find my view differs from that expressed by some in Dick Schultz' late EN GARDE.

I will say that I saw the season including THE WINGED AVENGER, NEVER NEVER SAY DIE, EPIC, and THE JOKER first. So I didn't pay attention to the charge of self-plagiarism. The following season did go downhill but reruns brought back all the earlier shows. I found that the old b&w Diana Rigg episodes were far from the excellence claimed by some. They're good, very good indeed. But in the early shows the characters of Steed and Mrs Peel are not as finely honed. Diana Rigg seems to be pushing a bit hard (to prove her ability after Honor's departure?). Later, in that splendid season I was lucky enough to catch first, THE AVENGERS acquired a sense of pacing superior to the early shows, and a confidence that helped the pacing. Wit replaced the sorry jokes, and better camera work and editing also contributed. The writing improved also. Here I can pick out the masterpieces: EPIC, an inspired adventure through cinema itself, and THE JOKER, that perverse, frightening masterpiece. In this season there were also; THE BIRD WHO KNEW TOO MUCH, a Losey-like mixture of sensuality and violence, if sans Losey's energy, NEVER NEVER SAY DIE, with its brilliant tantalising sequence concerning a robot and a little old man in an admiral's hat, and WHO'S WHO, a comedy of faces, to mention a few.

METREV 2: Pages 4 and 5: I've only seen three of these films but I'd nevertheless like to quarrel a little with your ordering. MY DARLING CLEMENTINE stands, in my view, as a great film, IF as an excellent, imaginative one, and BULLITT as a good, well crafted action movie. CLEMENTINE, one of Ford's four or five best films (THEY WERE EXPENDABLE, SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON, THE SUN SHINES BRIGHT, and THE SEARCHERS), is a very odd Western. Mood subsumes the action. Shadows and gestures are all that is left of a clear, unaffected melodrama in STAGECOACH. As you say, this is a totally controlled film. I saw it quite a while ago so I can't go into details.

IF is a fine film. Anderson has always had a flair for the fantastic, and in the one short of his I've seen, THE WHITE BUS, he lets the imagination of a young woman on a tour take over the "reality" of the film. The ambiance of IF is something between a schoolboy's memory and a documentary. There is one splendid moment in the film that helps explain much of the rest. The boys are in the motorcycle store, and the clerk eyes them nervously. The protagonist sits on a bike, twists the handles, moves about in the seat, and then rises and comes down on the starter. In that moment it is not so much that fantasy takes over as that fantasy is fulfilled. The image, the feel of that pump on the starter is in the minds of all the boys, and, fearfully, in the mind of the salesman. He acts out a possibility and this is also what happens later. If you can, try to see Jean Vigo's ZERO FOR CONDUCT. It is instructive to compare Vigo and the ZERO-influenced IF; the difference between a great film (and director) and a director who is, though brilliant, on the other side of greatness.

For me, BULLITT is, above all, an action film. BULLITT is a Hawks professional (Bogart in THE BIG SLEEP, Paul Muni in SCARFACE, Cary Grant in ONLY ANGELS HAVE WINGS, Wayne in RED RIVER, RIO BRAVO, ED DORADO, and

RIO LOBO) in a world which has no respect for professionals. The Ford vision of tradition creates a world (*viz.* Wayne after Fonda in FORT APACHE) but the Hawksian professional must fight against a world. He is at home in his milieu, but somewhat uneasy out of it. The conflict between McQueen and Bisset mirrors that between Cary Grant and Jean Arthur in ONLY ANGELS HAVE WINGS. But BULLITT opened out the film so that its setting is not the small working area of the professional, but the world. The job must still be done, but its significance diminishes against the larger background of the film. Yates is a good director with a fine feeling for action but compare the car chase with that in Don Siegel's THE LINE-UP, or the final shoot-out with that in Siegel's MADIGAN.

It's interesting that Yates worked creditably on SECRET AGENT (**DANGER MAN, in Australia**) before he worked for the large screen. His work in the superb tv series prepared him, because SECRET AGENT achieved what so few other television shows have done - the creation of an atmosphere, a real bias instead of a facile interpretation. There is the feeling that Drake does a job rather than waging a crusade against the world; the series creates action and impact, real tension (cf. MISSION IMPOSSIBLE) on television. The economical editing, camerawork, the quick setting shots and the excellent night and dark photography - like a visual texture of Drake's character. Well, I'm rambling - but I think you have rather overvalued BULLITT.

METREV 2: Pages 8 to 12: I suppose it is useless for me to argue with George Turner's list, but I must protest about at least a few items. Turner tosses Hemingway out because he represents a dead end. This is nonsense. I don't want to argue that Hemingway should be included (or whether or not he is a dead end), but great art is great whether it has imitators or not. I agree with you about MADAME BOVARY; and how about Gogol? DEAD SOULS is (with MADAME BOVARY, ULYSSES, Proust, and TRISTRAM SHANDY) one of the best novels I've ever read. While Turner rejects Hemingway, he includes McCullers and then goes on to skip Nabokov. Two, if not three of his novels belong here: LOLITA, PALE FIRE, and THE GIFT. Where, also, is Warren's ALL THE KING'S MEN? Faulkner? Forster? In any case, the list is an interesting and provocative one.

METREV 2: Page 29: Alf lists both Boyd's LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH and two Edmund Cooper books among his favourites for the year. After reading vague but good comments on Boyd, I just read STARSHIP and found that his impulses are the same as Cooper's. He is a better writer and provides not only better characterisations but a better cultural background. However, his tendency to melodramatic romance almost cripples the book, as it does Cooper's work.

METREV 5: Page 2: Your listing of 1984 over Proust seems more perverse than pointed. I think that you may be in part answering my criticism of 1984 in my STAND ON ZANZIBAR review. I must admit that I was bored by mere politics. Orwell may be politically sophisticated but he is aesthetically wanting. Compare the best thing in 1984 to a scene in Proust - WITHIN A BUDDING GROVE, I think. Orwell: the girl gives the hero a note in an oppressive atmosphere of fear and hate. "I love you". A shower of sparks, He burns it. Proust's hero is at a party with some girls and Albertine, I think, tells him that she is going to write him an ultimate note. The girls titter. She makes a flourish of writing, folds it, and the note passes from hand to hand among all the girls. He opens it. "I love you". But he is never sure whether she is in earnest or jesting. He evokes the sweet, bitter uncertainty of love. True, Orwell's hero is also afraid that it may be a

trap, but look at the words: Orwell's hero moves in a construct of trap and subversion. Proust works in a more lasting and subtle world - one most people (thank you, e e cummings) don't live in, but which will always be kept alive by those few aesthetically aware people. Yes, I preach aesthetic elitism. Shameful, isn't it?

I gave up Hesse after reading SIDDHARTHA. SIDDHARTHA works around the idea that there is an already existing meaning to life that one can discover. 'Tain't so, unfortunately. This unspoken (i.e. unexpressed, because it doesn't exist) profundity leaves a dreadfully resonant shell. Same sort of problem with Joanna Russ - she writes large unexplained bits into the fabric of her books. Only if you accept these holes as profound can you really like her work. She's talented, but limited by this handicap.

I read CANNERY ROW a few years ago, mainly to elucidate Bob Dylan's SAD EYED LADY OF THE LOWLANDS, and I found a charming book - and at the same time a rather sad one. Quite enjoyable. I agree with you on MADAME BOVARY. It remains, after four or five readings, one of the books I would most like to read in its original language. And ALL THE KING'S MEN is in my pantheon too. I hardly found LUCKY JIM stood a single reading. The jokes seem pale and contrived, the milieu is dusty and the novel cranks its way to its inevitable end.

METREV 5: page 7: This list is interesting, although one point baffles me. You mention seeing TOPAZ in METREV 4, but don't mention it here. I would venture to say that TOPAZ is better than anything, except possibly THE SEVENTH SEAL, on the list. Otherwise, although WOODSTOCK was a lot of fun, very well done, etc., etc., CATCH 22 and THE BEST MAN are better movies.

CATCH 22 manages to capture the sense of panic that the book has (as Vincent Canby pointed out - by the way, Canby is the NEW YORK TIMES head reviewer and the best reviewer working now in New York). There are so many marvellous conceits: as an officer paces back and forth, we capture glimpses of a picture on the wall. First it shows Roosevelt, then Churchill, then Stalin. There is also the MM Enterprises sign. What's good for MM is good for the air force. Then the US (?). And finally, in that labyrinthine brothel, over the bed in the room of Nately's whore (I think): "What's good for MM is good for the world." The feeling is that of yelling an order which is drowned out by the sound of planes. The repeated vision of the wreck with its slightly gorier admissions of pain and guilt are paced with the film. One can see that most people don't react to the film because of their cliché revulsion to the spilling of the organs at the end. This is only a physical representation of what happens to Yossarian's sanity and the world he sees. Welles made a big mistake when he misinterpreted Kafka in his THE TRIAL. He said that Kafka's logic is like that of a dream and then proceeded to film it as if it were a dream. Nichols overcomes this and the delirium provides an adequate and effective ordering of events.

As the above indicates, my thoughts are more and more concerned with the film. In fact (and I admit I boast here) I saw 22 movies during finals week. I'd love to list favourite films but any such list would be prohibitively long.

By the way, the best dramatic s f last year was Peter Brooks' Royal Shakespeare Company production of A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, a magical work in a splendidly inventive and warm presentation. Failing that, there was an adaptation of ALICE IN WONDERLAND by André Gregory which was also excellent.

The two are now touring the world, although I don't know if either will play in Australia.

****brg**** And I have to reply to all that! :: I've almost given up buying records as well, although occasionally I have a splurge. The main reason is that I rarely have time to listen to records. The best record(s) I've bought this year is FOUR WAY STREET (Crosby Stills Nash & Young). Although I bought it three weeks ago, I've only had time to play it twice. I'm too busy typing stencils the rest of the time.

I was under the impression (and this is only an impression, as I've only seen episodes of THE AVENGERS in passing - I've never owned a tv set) that the last Diana Rigg series was the first series in colour, and the Linda Thorson series was also in colour. From our point of view (colour tv still has not hit Australia) it was a sellout to change to colour - softer photography, etc. Also, the action seemed to slow down in the last few Diana Rigg episodes that I saw. I can't remember individual episodes, except for one called MAN FROM AUNTIE, which I remember as about the best. Was EPIC the episode about two faded movie stars stranded on some abandoned movie lot? Also very good. I remember one episode in which Steed and Mrs Peel go to a very remote country inn, the inhabitants of which periodically go out "badger shooting".

I wasn't ready to promote MY DARLING CLEMENTINE higher up the scale, because I only saw it on television, and I was not even sure whether it was black-and-white or not. Perhaps if I had seen it at a cinema, or if I saw all those films one after the other under similar conditions, I would advance CLEMENTINE up the list.

I think you've missed the point of BULLITT (so did all the kids in Form 5 at Ararat Technical School, when we showed it to them, but they didn't like any of the film except the car chase). I took the film as an anti-police film, and that in the long run, Yates shows Bullitt as a yokel who muffs every chance he's given to succeed. The point is that (a) he succeeds in "getting his man" by killing him, but he fails the assignment - to defend the politician (b) he kills the only people who could help him "solve" the case after the "politician" dies (c) he loses control, "gets his man" at the end, and ruins his career (d) A reasonably efficient member of the police force, given the same assignment, put under the same pressure, could behave in no other way.

The whole film is a mine-field of moral Catch-22s, and beneath the slam bang filmcraft, Yates is as stern as any preacher in his judgment of Bullitt. However, I think his film succeeds, because so many people miss the point, and think that Bullitt is the film's "hero".

LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH was complete rubbish, except for perhaps 10 or 20 pages. :: As I explained in a letter, my Book Lists only show the books I enjoyed more than others. ROTP may turn out to be the best novel I've read, but both BUDDING GROVE and GUERMANTE'S WAY are only parts of it, and individually they don't have the impact of the Top 3 books. The greatest section of 1984 is the long "explanation" of the 1984 society, which is not just another

Poul Anderson lecture, but a dramatic monologue that reveals, among other things, all the implications of our present society; i.e. if 1984 doesn't turn out like that, it won't be for want of effort. And, as I said last issue, the final section is utterly terrifying, so much so that the reader (or this reader at least) feels completely involved in the protagonist's ordeal. For every person and state that now exists, is capable of 1984-type political action: Orwell's invention is the reverse side, or part of, all the movements in "liberal" society. ROTP, on the other hand, and to state the understatement of the month, needed editing. When we consider that a bit of it, like BUDDING GROVE, is nearly as long as BROTHERS KARAMAZOV, then we may concede that BUDDING GROVE is unlikely to have the same impact on its readers as Dostoyevsky's novel. The clue is that Proust meant the thing to be read au longe haleine, at one breath. Which is the way I'm trying to read it at the moment: I've just finished CITIES OF THE PLAIN (2 volumes) and THE CAPTIVE (2 volumes), with two volumes still to go, THE SWEET CHEAT GONE, and TIME REGAINED. I'm starting to get some idea of what REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST is like. (There are so many clues, and counter-clues, and ironic strategies: for instance, JEAN SANTEUIL, supposedly the dry run for ROTP, contains very few scenes the same as ROTP. Did Proust live two lives, or....?).

The main problem with reading Proust is that you don't feel like reading science fiction afterwards. Anybody want to review books for S F COMMENTARY?

I haven't read SIDDHARTHA (although there's currently a Hesse boom, and it's available in paperback freely for the first time in some years), but commentators seem to agree that MAGISTER LUDI is Hesse's best. In ML, Hesse does not accept holus bolus Eastern mysticism. He tells the story through the eyes of a "disinterested" historian, who writes "long after" the events in the novel. Knecht's time does not bother to write history; Hesse's story-teller is a careful chronicler. In other words, the novel's perfect society failed at some time after the events in the book - we realise this after reading the first three or four pages. How does it fail people? Knecht seems to live a charmed life, rising above the book's dark currents (i.e. a man who is cast out, seemingly because the members of the community just don't trust him anymore), but he leaves the community for what seem like mysterious reasons. And there's the book's last two pages, which Stuart Leslie alludes to. Possibly the greatest ending to any novel, because it sums up in one event the irony of the whole novel: did Knecht ever "succeed" at all, and if he did (or did not), should we care? So, Barry, try MAGISTER LUDI before you give up Hesse.

I just picked up another of your phrases, I don't "aesthetic elitist", because his most powerful memories are those that most universally. Certainly, he perceives in a way nobody else did, but he perceives that which everybody has felt, but could not articulate. Proust's anatomy of jealousy in SWANN'S WAY, and again in THE CAPTIVE, examines the complexities of that emotion in agonising detail. But why agonisingly? Because everybody feels the same way at some time, but usually refuses to admit the emotion, or "covers" it in some way. Proust extends ideas and obsessions like these until they cover all cases - become universal.*

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MR S. CAMPBELL
% P.O.
NELSON
VIC. 3292.

